



Contents lists available at [ScienceDirect](#)

Cognitive Development



The role of maternal behavior in children's pretense during the second year of life



Gabriela Markova^{a,*}, Maria Legerstee^b

^a Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, Institute of Psychology, Hybernská 8, 110 00 Prague, Czech Republic

^b York University, Department of Psychology, 4700 Keele Street, Toronto, ON, Canada M3J 1P3

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Maternal scaffolding

Pretense

Imitation

ABSTRACT

In a cross-sectional study we investigated children's pretense and imitation of pretense at 12, 15, and 18 months of age during natural play and pretend play with their mothers and during imitation and causal transformation tasks with an experimenter. Maternal pretense, imitation of pretense, and verbalizations were also coded during mother–child interactions. Results showed that the frequency of child pretense increased with age across all conditions. Child imitation of pretense remained consistent in all age groups during interactions with mothers, while it peaked at 15 months and then decreased during pretense tasks with the experimenter. Children also engaged in more imitation with mothers during pretend play than during natural play. Additionally, maternal pretense predicted child imitation whereas maternal imitation and verbalizations predicted child pretense. These findings indicate that specific maternal behaviors scaffold pretense and facilitate imitation of pretense in very young children.

© 2014 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Pretend play represents, re-enacts and transforms routine events, and thus reflects children's real life knowledge (Bretherton, 1984). Because pretend play demands specific prerequisite socio-cognitive

* Corresponding author. Present address: Faculty of Psychology, University of Vienna, Liebiggasse 5, 1020 Vienna, Austria. Tel.: +43 1 4277 472 13.

E-mail addresses: gabriela.markova@univie.ac.at (G. Markova), legerste@yorku.ca (M. Legerstee).

skills, such as understanding of intention, most research on pretend play has examined children's pretense abilities starting at the end of the second year of life (Lillard et al., 2013). Pretense first emerges and is established in the context of social interaction (Haight & Miller, 1993; Tomasello & Rakoczy, 2003); children's pretense abilities are therefore best assessed in interactions with social partners who can scaffold their developing pretend play. The present study examined children's pretense abilities at 12, 15, and 18 months of age and their relation to specific maternal scaffolding behaviors in order to reveal the mechanisms that may promote pretend play development.

1.1. Development of pretense

Pretense first appears at about 12–13 months of age (Fein, 1981). At first, pretense usually entails isolated motor gestures (e.g., drinking sounds), which over time become more elaborated and integrated into meaningful sequences (Fenson, 1984). This initial period is followed by a significant increase in pretend play between 15 and 18 months (Rubin, Fein, & Vanderberg, 1983), where children not only pretend when alone but also engage in other-directed pretend acts (i.e., toward play partners or inanimate objects). By about 24 months, pretending is in full swing (Bretherton, 1984). Now, children's sequences of pretend play mimic normal social contexts and rituals, and children begin to give verbal instructions for others to pretend (Nicholich, 1977).

At around this age, children are also able to join in others' pretense when prompted. The ability to join in pretend action sequences is assessed during tasks where an object's physical state is being altered (e.g., from clean to dirty, or from dry to wet, or from empty to full). For example, a doll is given a pretend bath and children are asked to carry out a pretend remedial action that is appropriate only for one of two props, given its new pretend status (e.g., dry the wet doll with a towel; Harris & Kavanaugh, 1993). Several studies using these so-called causal transformation tasks showed that 2-year-olds were proficient at interpreting and responding to the pretend acts of experimenters (Harris & Kavanaugh, 1993; Walker-Andrews & Harris, 1993; Walker-Andrews & Kahana-Kalman, 1999). In contrast, 15- and 18-month-old children did not usually select the correct prop; rather than drying the doll, they engaged more frequently in imitating the experimenter's actions (i.e., give the doll a bath; Harris, Kavanaugh, & Dowson, 1997; Walker-Andrews & Kahana-Kalman, 1999).

Young children's ability to imitate pretense (as opposed to join a pretend action sequence) is examined in a different paradigm, where children observe and are asked to imitate an experimenter enacting a pretend scenario. Modeling, particularly with realistic props, leads to a significant increase in pretend actions between 13 and 36 months (Bates, Bretherton, Snyder, Shore, & Volterra, 1980; Bretherton, O'Connell, Shore, & Bates, 1984; Fenson, 1984; Fenson & Ramsay, 1981; Rakoczy, Tomasello, & Striano, 2004; Rakoczy, Tomasello, & Striano, 2005; Watson & Fischer, 1977). However, assessing pretense through imitation tasks may prompt methodological concerns regarding the differential symbolic nature of pretense and imitation of pretense. That is, imitating a pretense act of another person merely shows that children are capable of copying pretense modeled to them, and therefore does not shed light on the children's abilities to pretend. In a recent study, Rakoczy et al. (2005) showed that 24-month-olds, and to a lesser extent 18-month-olds, were able to imitate novel pretend acts performed by an experimenter. However, children imitated pretend actions less frequently than instrumental actions. The authors suggest that pretense is more difficult to understand and imitate than other actions, especially early during the second year.

During causal transformation and imitation paradigms, unfamiliar play partners often model novel actions for children, which could influence children's rate of joining in or imitating pretense. In contrast, familiar play partners such as mothers might include novel as well as familiar actions, depending on previously established play routines or the child's developmental level. Thus, in order to determine the true extent of children's ability to pretend, it may be necessary to separately examine their pretense and imitation of pretense during play with an unfamiliar play partner and in naturalistic play settings with their mothers.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/916428>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/916428>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)