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‘I already know what I learned’: Young children’s perspectives on learning through play

Keywords: Children’s rights; Learning through play; Stakeholder perspectives; Children’s perspectives; Cultural-historical theory; Play

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**Abstract**

Around the world, if and how young children learn through their play in early childhood education and care (ECEC) contexts has been the subject of much debate. Yet rarely has the debate heard from the young children themselves, often due to the pervasive belief that they do not understand learning. To redress this, a qualitative case study was conducted on 28 two- to five-year olds’ perspectives about what they believed they were learning through play. Some 772 comments on learning in 683 episodes of play were analysed using cultural-historical theory, revealing how children as young as two are authorities on their own learning. Findings challenge popular ways of understanding young children’s thinking and provide educators with concrete means to understand children’s perspectives, learning and how educators can more effectively guide play towards learning outcomes, as expected in contemporary curriculum frameworks across the globe.
**Introduction**

Children are supposed to learn through their play. In western-heritage contexts, this view has been at the heart of early childhood education and care (ECEC) philosophy for decades (Rogers, 2013; Wood, 2013), strongly influenced by Romantic philosophical perspectives (Brooker, 2010) and over 40 years of psychological studies supporting play’s benefits (Lillard et al., 2013). Today, learning through play is the basis of ECEC curricula around the world (Pramling-Samuelsson & Fleer, 2008), predominated by the perspectives of Romantic philosophers, psychologists and policy-makers (Colliver, 2012). Yet little contemporary research has been directed to finding out what children think they are learning during play.

The field’s reluctance to hearing children’s views is to a large extent related to its Romantic history. Romantic philosophers such as Rousseau and Locke thought of childhood as “innocent” and unknowing (Shanahan, 2007, p. 413), but also as the “sleep of rationality” (Rousseau, 1762/2007, p. 83). The Romantic notion of the child as innately benevolent has strong traction in the field even today, yet this influence is responsible also for the notion of the child as naïve about adult preoccupations (such as learning).

Traditional developmental psychological understandings of learning through play have also entrenched this view (Broström, 2006; Hedegaard, 2008). For example, metacognition—the awareness of one’s own thinking and its uses—has been widely investigated using psychological tests such as that of “false belief” (Wimmer & Perner, 1983). Countless studies have concluded that children under four struggle to understand learning because doing so requires comparing one’s own thinking before and after the learning process (Larkin, 2010). A dominant influence on developmental psychology and ECEC even today, Piaget (1952) proposed that young children think and reason differently to adults, and devised a trajectory of knowledge development that assumes children work from an inferior understanding of their own thinking towards an adult one.

More recently, policy-maker perspectives continue to give little weight to children’s voices (Lundy, 2007). Increasingly, play is viewed through an educational lens that privileges policy imperatives to boost adult-determined outcomes through play...
(Rogers, 2013), rather than the aspects children themselves consider important (e.g., Einarsdottir, 2005; Nothard et al., 2015). Powell and colleagues’ (2011) extensive survey across 46 countries around the globe found policy-makers attributed little to no value to children’s perspectives, a view confirmed by other research (Ailwood, 2003; Wood, 2014). For example, in countries such as England and Australia, which have traditionally focused on child-chosen play to guide learning in ECEC (Cutter-Mackenzie, Edwards, Moore, & Boyd, 2014; Wood, 2013), quality ECEC provision is now expected to include as much adult- as child-initiated experiences, and half of those child-initiated experiences must be extended by the educator (Siraj-Blatchford & Sylva, 2004). Yet as McInnes and colleagues (2013) and others (e.g., Rogers & Evans, 2008) show, children are unlikely to classify adult-guided experiences as play once educators control it, meaning educators need to know how to enter into play without overriding children’s choices if they wish to uphold children’s right to play (UN, 1989) and support its benefits for learning (Singer, Golinkoff, & Hirsh-Pasek, 2006). However, doing this effectively requires an in-depth understanding of children’s choices in play and their consequences for learning.

In spite of this, research continues to demonstrate that few researchers investigate children’s perspectives. Powell and others (2011) found this was because most researchers believed young children were not competent reporters of their own experience. To redress this gap, the current study analysed the perspectives of 28 two- to five-year-olds on learning through play. In drawing upon cultural-historical theory, particularly Vygotsky’s conception of play, this study sought to examine how children discussed learning in the context of their play.

**A cultural-historical conception of play**

Through the process of listening to children’s perspectives, the current study found cultural-historical theory most productive for understanding children’s thinking about their play. Play, for example has eluded a consensus definition, but in order to understand the children’s perspectives, it was helpful to use Vygotsky’s (1976, 1978) criterion that play is defined by the presence of an imaginary situation, where children change the meaning of actions and objects to give them a new sense (Vygotsky, 1976, 1978). For example, when children play at being pirates, they establish an imaginary
situation in which players act “as if” they are pirates: sailing ships, finding buried
treasure, etc. In these imaginary situations there are rules about what it means to be a
pirate and how to act. In this way, “wherever there is an imaginary situation in play,
there are rules… the role the child fulfils… will always stem from the imaginary
situation” (e.g., rules about behaving as a pirate does; Vygotsky, 1976, p. 540).

Elkonin (2005) argued that in imaginary situations children also seek to understand
the rules and roles found in the real world. For instance, when playing a tea party, the
children come closer to reality through acting “as if” they are at a tea party, taking on
the role of being served or serving others as might be expected of the etiquette of a tea
party. It is argued by Elkonin (2005) that children take their play themes primarily
from reality, and through this come to better understand the world in which they live.
This is in direct opposition to a theory of play that suggests that children enter into a
fantasy world when playing, totally removed from reality. Vygotsky (1978) also
argued that for less experienced players, children create an imaginary situation where
the rules and roles are explicit. As players gain more experience of creating imaginary
situations, and their play complexity builds, as we see when children play a game
Tiggy (running and catching other children), then the rules of the play dominate
children’s thinking in their play, and the imaginary situation itself is less evident.
Development in play is said to occur when children spend more time discussing the
rules and roles of the play than actually enacting the play.

It is argued in this paper that when children are inside the imaginary situation, a level
of consciousness emerges through the psychological process of changing the meaning
of objects and actions to give a new sense to the situation. Through this, children
come to consciously consider the rules and roles found in their world (whether fiction
found in books and the media or what they directly observe in their family and
community). After initially struggling to understand children’s perspectives on
learning through play using a developmental conception of play, this particular
conception of play had much better explanatory power for the findings. The same was
true for how learning was conceptualised.

**Theorising learning**

Learning is not usually defined comprehensively in studies, taking the process of
acquiring new knowledge and behaviour as it default meaning (De Houwer, Barnes-
Holmes, & Moors, 2013). Sfard (1998) provides a useful framework for understanding different theories of learning, which she groups as either acquisition or participation based. The majority of Western theories of learning are acquisition-based, seeing individuals as having direct contact with an external reality from which units of knowledge can be acquired (Illeris, 2009). In this view, to understand one’s own learning requires comparing one’s own mental state (that lacks particular knowledge) before a learning activity with one’s richer mental state after. For example, knowing that you have learned how to bake bread comes from reflecting after the learning process that you did not have the necessary knowledge before.

In contrast, some other (e.g., cultural-historical) theories of learning are more participation-based, where learning is understood as the skills and know-how needed to participate in culturally-valued group practices (Rogoff et al., 2006). To understand one’s own learning involves consideration of the shared meaning that an activity holds for the group. It focuses on a group’s participation in shared practices rather than individuals’ internalisation of knowledge. This is more consistent with Vygotsky’s definition of play also, as it involves the shared and dynamic meaning of an imaginary situation as it evolves through the collective imagining of the rules that sustain it.

The two models of learning are important when reading extant studies on children’s perspectives on learning through play because how researchers have understood children’s learning and understanding of play will invariably affect the interpretation of children’s expressions of their perspectives. This theorisation can be applied in a review of the literature.

**Extant research on young children’s perspectives**

The overwhelming majority of research reporting on children’s perspectives represents an adult interpretation of children’s subjectivities (Sommer, Pramling Samuelsson, & Hundeide, 2010). While much research has investigated children’s play in most cultures over the last century (Lancy, 2007; Roopnarine, 2011), explicit mention of children’s perspectives on learning in play is sparse. For example, Smith and colleagues’ (2005) claim to have invited four-year-olds to “reflect on the activities in which they had recently participated, in order to give the research team
some insight into their engagement in learning” (p. 475). Yet explicit mention is not made of what the children themselves reported.

Similarly, Morgan’s (2007) investigation of 47 three- to seven-year-olds’ perspectives on learning objectives concluded “many children found it difficult to discuss their ‘learning’ … the learning activity was more memorable than the learning outcome” (p. 219). Morgan did not include direct quotations of what the children said, so little insights into the children’s perspectives could be determined. However, psychological readings of children’s thinking—whilst beyond the scope of this paper to discuss in detail—suggest that children under the age of four cannot imagine mental states different to their current thinking, based on what is physically in front of them (Larkin, 2010). Morgan’s conclusion align with this model of children’s thinking because it described the mental and physical activities rather than the mental products available after the learning activity, and this appears to be significant in his evaluation of children’s understanding of learning.

In contrast, Robson’s (2011) study found “evidence of metacognitive knowledge” when children viewed videos of their play (p. 188), but no direct quotes from children themselves show how this claim was founded. Robson did conclude, however, that greater reflection on learning was afforded by the video-stimulated discussions used.

Richards (2011) also examined three- to seven-year-olds’ perspectives, finding that younger children spoke about play using “a different social relation” to older children, who were “somewhat serious, commonsensical and dispassionate” when reflecting on play rules (p. 316). This study suggested that younger children had a distinct perspective which was much more engaged in the “silliness” of play rather than the serious perspectives older children exhibited about their learning through play (p. 316).

While not exhaustive, this review of the research suggests younger children may have a unique perspective on their learning through play, although the paucity of research inhibits robust conclusions being drawn. Yet whilst the epistemology of traditional developmental psychology generally sees children’s understandings of learning as inferior to an adults’ (Broström, 2006), different ways of researching with children may give different insights into their thinking about their own learning during play.
Researching with young children

Young children can offer a unique perspective as we strive to improve ECEC. They are also essential to a democratic representation of all people in a society (Pascal & Bertram, 2009)—as enshrined in Article 12 of the UN (1989) Convention on the Rights of the Child—and contribute to our understanding of the unique social structure of childhood (James & Prout, 1997). To avoid “adultist assumptions” that might impair our representations of children’s perspectives (Valentine, 1999, p. 142), it is vital to take their perspectives seriously (Brooker, 2011) and with due weight (Lundy, 2007). This includes being prepared to reflexively challenge one’s own assumptions (Cousin, 2010), by re-theorising the study’s key concepts, such as play, learning and perspectives.

One challenging way to give significant gravity and deference to young children’s perspectives is to take the “least adult role”, an explicit rejection of any authority associated with being an adult among children, or being a researcher among the researched (Mandell, 1991, p. 38). While this is not without its difficulties (e.g., James, 2007), it was a useful way to take an ethical stance towards these issues and particularly to move past one’s own assumptions as an adult researcher (Sommer et al., 2010). Through the process of attempting to understand children’s perspectives in this study, it became clear how important it was to theorise the key concepts. One final concept was perspectives.

Theorising perspectives

The findings of this current study were not immediately intelligible using an acquisition model of learning and undefined conception of play. This section presents the usefulness of Hedegaard’s (2009) holistic model of child development where she shows three interrelated analyses: societal, institutional and personal. Inspired by Hedegaard's model (Figure 1), we consider stakeholder groups as the institution to which individuals belong (i.e., for educators, their institution is the ECEC centre; for family members, the home; for children, the playground). To analyse children’s perspectives at the institutional level, one must consider practices and values. Practices relate to the activities of the group, values to their motives (Fleer, 2008a, p. 89; Hedegaard, 2008, p. 17). The relationship between these two concepts is that
activities are considered the key insight into why people do things (Vygotsky, 1987, p. 282). Activities are thus agreed to be the unit of analysis in all sociocultural research (Matusov, 2007, p. 326). Accordingly, the study analysed children’s perspectives in relation to their collective activities (their practices) in order to understand their collective motives (their values) (see the institutional level in Figure 1).

Hedegaard’s holistic conception of perspectives actively pushes against a deficit conception of the child, and foregrounds the agency, rights and capabilities of young children by focusing on the practices shaping their activities (Hedegaard, 2008).

**Study design**

The study presented in this paper formed part of a larger investigation over several months of eight mothers’, five educators’ and 28 young children’s perspectives on learning through play, in an ECEC centre in an urban part of Melbourne, Australia. The centre was play-based and focused on children’s progression through developmental stages.

The 28 children who volunteered to be part of the research process were aged between two and five. After Ethics clearance was obtained from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and the University’s Human Research Ethics Committee, a two-week “familiarisation” phase was used (Mortari, 2011, p. 349). Children chose pseudonyms to protect their privacy, and informed (Harcourt & Conroy, 2011) and ongoing consent (Dockett, Einarsdóttir, & Perry, 2012) was sought every research session to give children the opportunity to opt out frequently and to understand the research motives and procedures. In keeping with the ethical imperative of children’s participation throughout as much of the research process as possible, children from three groups were engaged in a movie-making project using hand-held Flip© cameras. The resultant 683 videos of play stimulated later discussions about learning (which were also video recorded) using a method know as video-stimulated recall dialogues (VSRD) that has been used for investigating young
children’s perspectives on their learning (Morgan, 2007). Video is a highly
descriptive medium appropriate to the holism of cultural-historical analysis and to
ensure all participants and researchers are thinking about the same episodes of play
(Fleer, 2008b). The 772 comments by the 28 children on their learning were analysed
deductively according to the practices and values represented, as in Hedegaard’s
(2008) model described previously.

Findings and discussion
This section begins by describing how the young children’s perspectives were a
challenge to the first author’s preconceptions about perspectives, learning and play. It
then shows how an analysis of practices and values resulted in a shift in the first
author’s perspective from a perception of play as developmental to a cultural-
historical conception of play and of learning, thus giving a very different reading of
the data. By way of example, the following excerpt shows a dialogue about a video
recording of Danielle and her friends pretending to be “pirates” digging up “treasure”
from the sand pit:

[Yeshe, pointing to the video of children playing pirates:] What do you think
they were learning when they were burying treasure?

[Danielle:] Pirates.

[Yeshe:] What were you learning?

[Danielle:] Pirates [looking down at fingers]

[Yeshe:] You were learning pirates? What do you mean? [Danielle
continues looking at fingers silently] (Danielle, 45#25).

The contrast in perspectives is shown by the repetition of the question and Danielle’s
silence. The cause appeared to be adult assumption that imaginary actions alone (e.g.,
being a pirate) could not cause learning about the real world (e.g., sailing a real ship
or discovering real treasure). Similarly, a two-year-old’s comment on a video of his
play with a teapot in the sandpit that he was “learning how to make tea” (Jacob, 46#2)
was initially incomprehensible within an acquisition model of learning: surely his
actions with sand could only lead to knowledge about sand, not the properties of hot
water and tea leaves? Like Piaget, the first author initially came to the conclusion that
young children confused imagination and reality.
From the acquisition model and developmental view of play came a second assumption that, before learning, we have yet to acquire relevant knowledge. Before the learning process is complete, we are not able to undertake the relevant activity, and after, we are. Thus even if, for example, Jacob played with actual tealeaves, hot water and milk, his saying he was learning how to make tea while doing it would still be a non sequitur. His tea making was seemingly evidence that he already had the necessary skills before the play, meaning he had not acquired new knowledge during his play, as his comment implied. Similarly, when Amy watched a video of herself playing with origami paper to make a dog picture, she stated, “I already know what I learned: I'm learning how to make a dog” (Amy, 39#3). Aside from a seeming conflation of the imaginary with a real dog, her ability to “make” it demonstrated her acquisition of the skills necessary, making it impossible within an acquisition model that she could have learned how to make a dog replica.

However, when conceptualising the children’s play through a cultural-historical lens, and when applying Hedegaard's (2008) deductive analysis, it is possible to see things differently. The model frames children’s perspective expression as a practice. Analysing each comment in terms of the practice demonstrated, it became apparent that every one of the 772 comments stated a rule of the imaginary situation of play. On closer examination, comments were not just about any rule of play, but the very rule that appeared to encapsulate the meaning that the play had for the children: their common imaginary situation where specific rules and roles were being enacted. When Danielle said she was learning how to be a pirate, it became apparent that being pirate-like was the aim of her game. Other rules (e.g., finding treasure, sailing ships, having sword fights) were likely to be included within the main rule of being a pirate, but without that main rule, the play was likely to have little meaning for Danielle. Moreover, aiming to be a pirate was what allowed others to join the game.

Similarly, Jacob’s comments could be understood more expansively if seen as a practice: stating the aim of the game (namely, the main rule of his play). The stating also seemed to have a declarative purpose for other players: to maintain the same imaginary situation when playing with others. Here it was possible to apply the values element of Hedegaard’s model, identifying maintaining the imaginary situation as the value that was reflected by the practice of stating and enacting the main aim of the game.
Applying this cultural-historical analysis enabled an epistemological shift in understanding the children’s 772 comments. Amy’s “learning how to make a dog” (39#3) became intelligible given the practice of stating the aim of the game for other players and the value of maintaining that imaginary situation. In one sense, stating the main rule of the imaginary situation was a way for children to direct the play but also open it to contributions from others; their learning was based on their participation in the practice of creating an imaginary situation through play. Thus learning was a process of participation rather than acquisition. Central to participation was one’s ability to abide by the rules of the imaginary situation of play, as Vygotsky (1978) stated. For five-year-old Esha, for example, stating the rule when playing Trouble™ was a way to maintain the imaginary situation by ensuring all players were abiding by it. She said the players were learning “to listen; whatever the rules are, you can't cheat. You know, cheating is- If you do it when it's not your turn, you can’t do that: that's cheating” (Esha, 1:18#9931). This statement clearly had a normative purpose for the other players, who had cheated when an adult was not supervising. Stating rules is often described as a way the culture of play is maintained and negotiated (e.g., Bretherton, 1984; Kyratzis, 2004), but it also demonstrates a form of play development where the rules begin to dominate children’s play (Vygotsky, 1978). As with other competitive games, once a player breaks the rules, the play falls apart. Like foliage on branches subsidiary to the trunk of a tree, play is sustained by many rules, but those are subsidiary to one main rule. The children’s perspective was that they were learning this rule, just as Elkonin (2005) theorised children “play with” the characteristics which define a situation, just as rules in the imaginary situation. Thus Jacob appeared to play with the features of the act of tea-making (i.e., teapot, cups and pouring), and his comments reflected the rule which bound those features (the rule to make tea). Table 2 provides some examples of children’s comments (Column III) and how they resembled the main rule of the imaginary situation (II). Some of those examples show how the main rule of the imaginary situation can have two roles, for example, as in approach-avoid narratives (Corsaro, 2012) like the main rule for “dog catchers” to catch, and the “dog” to escape (Table 2). In each case, learning was

1 A board game involving rolling dice to move one’s piece around a set course. Players can cheat by moving their piece before it is their turn.
not an acquisition of knowledge, but rather the ability to participate in the practices of
the children’s play culture (Rogoff et al., 2006).

Insert Table 2 near here

Thus Amy (39#3) and her playmates, in striving to make the best paper dog they
could, appeared to indeed be “learning how to make a dog”. Even though dominant
understandings of four-year-olds’ metacognition suggest an inability to reflect on
learning, Amy did appear to in fact “already know what [she] learned.” Two-year-old
Jacob’s (46#2) perspective appears to be just as valid; a re-examination of videos of
his play suggest he already knew he was learning, learning to make the best tea he
could with sand, an old teapot and vivid imagination about tea-making processes. A
cultural-historical reading of the children’s play gave another way of interpreting and
therefore understanding the statements children were making about their play. Rather
than a deficit view, the children’s comments suggest they were responding to the
question of “what are you learning through play” in an informative way that adults
could use to better understand children’s learning when playing.

**Implications and conclusion**
The findings presented here challenge the prevailing assumption that young children
cannot understand their own learning. Children’s comments about their learning
through play were incomprehensible using an acquisition model of learning (Sfard,
1998) and a developmental view of play, but through using Hedegaard's (2008)
holistic model of perspectives to analyse the children’s responses, and a cultural-
historical conception of play, it was possible to see children were learning all the
rules they believed were associated with the imaginary situation, focussing on the
central rule of the play. This is consistent with Vygotsky’s (1978) definition of play as
arising from rules pertaining to an imaginary situation. Understanding perspectives
and play in this way also allowed for learning to be seen as a process of participation
rather than acquisition. If this is indicative of many young children’s perspectives, it
may be an important consideration for psychologists and others researchers who are
likely to be using a different model of learning and theory of play.
In this study, cultural-historical theory allowed for a greater understanding of the meaning young children ascribed to their play: its main rule. Through this, the children were exploring the roles and rules of society, and moving closer to learning about how their world works. The fact that this finding was consistent across 772 comments suggests the main rule—the aim of the game—could in fact be used by adults such as educators to better understand the significance of play for children. Asking children about the aim of their game appears to be a simple and direct way for educators to understand the concepts and ideas that children are learning through their play. Such an entrance into play would be of great utility for educators in maintaining children’s right to initiate and direct play and explore ways that precisely what children are learning could be extended to match curricular learning outcomes, as demanded by longitudinal research (Siraj-Blatchford & Sylva, 2004) and curriculum frameworks around the world (Wood, 2013). However, to be able to value the significance of children’s comments about their learning, educators will also need to move away from a developmental model of play where pretence is viewed as following predetermined stages. To value the aim of the play, as a direct statement of the rules about how children understand the world, then a cultural-historical conception of play may be needed. Playing tea party, playing pirates, or discussing the rules of a game cannot be read as a theme of the children’s play, but rather it is an analytical statement about the main meaning children ascribe to play, taking into account the rules and roles being enacted and discussed. Without this reading, it becomes difficult for educators to enter into children’s play and to guide them towards learning outcomes; outcomes that have increasingly become important in many early childhood education contexts. Even if educators do not enter into play, understanding the main rule of play will give educators key insights into concepts at the fore of children’s learning that can be used to extend thinking and learning.

The findings challenge the predominant assumption which positions children as being unable to distinguish reality from imagination, because a cultural-historical reading suggests that in pretence children move closer rather than further away from reality. What has been learned from this cultural-historical study is that children consciously engage with both the imaginary situation and the rules and roles that support the main purpose of their play, which they are able to analyse and articulate. As such, the findings draw attention to the value of moving away from a developmental
conception of play and using cultural-historical theory so that the insights children give can be understood, and through this, used to inform educational research, policy and educators. Only then can we hear, respect and give weight to what children say about what they are learning through play.

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Figure 1: Individual Development from Different Perspectives

Table 2: Comparing the objective of play with young children’s comments regarding learning through play

Figure 1

Individual Development from Different Perspectives

Note: From Hedegaard (2009, p. 73). Reprinted with author’s permission.

Table 2

Comparing the objective of play with young children’s comments regarding learning through play
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(I). Play</th>
<th>(II). Main objective</th>
<th>(III). What children say they are learning through play</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pirates</td>
<td>To act the role of a pirate</td>
<td>To play pirates (Danielle, 3:06#9906) Pirates (2#49; 45#25)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I'm just learning how to jump. Up, sky! [<em>raises horizontal palm up as far as possible</em>] (Marie, 00#51)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jumping on trampoline</td>
<td>To jump high</td>
<td>Trying to escape (Flynn, 3:25#4)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Um, well, [Bindi] escaped from the house, and then she went digging out and then we three boys had to stop her. (Flynn, 3:41#4)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Dog” catching</td>
<td>To escape from the pound / To catch the dog trying to escape from the pound</td>
<td>Um, she's acting like a dog and she's doing what dogs doing [sic]. (Ariel, 5:15#4)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>How to get out (James, 6#5; 35#12)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>How to get dogs (James, 19#12)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playing music with music teacher</td>
<td>To play instruments</td>
<td>Learning how to, um, play the instruments (Ariel, 26#7)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Um, play the instruments (Flynn, 28#7)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To play the ukulele</td>
<td>Um, songs … the strumming … Putting your fingers somewhere, on the chords. (Davis, 1:29#35)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making wooden block “towers”</td>
<td>To make the tower as high as possible</td>
<td>He's learning how to stable [stabilise] them. (James, 49#8)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Uh, to build buildings. (Chris, 2:56#99)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play dough</td>
<td>To make play dough green-pa-size balls</td>
<td>Learning how to make peas (Tilly Billy, 9#13)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>How to make peas (James, 11#13)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play with wooden toys</td>
<td>To make a life-like rendition of the zoo</td>
<td>[He’s learning how to make] A zoo (James, 13#15)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playing “fairies”</td>
<td>Turning things into other things with a magic wand</td>
<td>How to turn people into nnn- anything…. How to turn people into animals and something else. (James, 3#17)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I'm learning to turn things into pigs. [Maggie, 10#38] Learning to turn things into pigs (Maggie, 52#58)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playing with plastic shovels as “baddies”</td>
<td>Shooting “baddies”</td>
<td>We’re learning shooting, aiming. (Kaiya, 8#31)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I was shooting. Shooting guns ... Yeah, so we can shoot things (Ross, 23#27)</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Trying to kill (Davis, 40#44)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scooping sand into a muffin tray</td>
<td>Pretending to make chilli- laden coffee to kill Captain Hook</td>
<td>I'm learning to kill Captain Hook because he's evil … we're just killing him. We're pretending he's here … I'm learning how to cook big adult things. (Belle, 12-56#37)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hide ‘n’ Seek</td>
<td>“It” counts</td>
<td>Well, somebody counts, and the rest of them hide. (Anna, 2:46#63)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Sample Quote</td>
<td>Tally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Looking after a toy called Mouse</td>
<td>Look after the mouse</td>
<td>Learning how to look after Mouse (Ariel, 4#39)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making a cardboard model house for her soft toy</td>
<td>Make a house for “Mr Murphy”</td>
<td>I'm learning that I can make a shade. Shade. And I make the shade for Mister Murphy. (Saule, 4:41#62)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playing with broken cameras</td>
<td>To fix the camera</td>
<td>How to fix cameras. (Flynn, 5:54#6)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the Shark Game</td>
<td>To not get eaten by sharks when in the water</td>
<td>Learning how to be in the sea (Ariel, 7#21)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>How to run away from sharks. (James, 1#19)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playing with trucks</td>
<td>Roll trucks along a mat to crashing into other trucks</td>
<td>We're learning how to do stuff which is really dangerous, which only adults can do. (Chris, 1:36#9902)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fighting</td>
<td>To win fighting</td>
<td>We're learning not to cry, we don't want to cry. (Flynn, 21#9913)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gymnastics</td>
<td>To try to do tricks</td>
<td>I have to learn how to do hoola hoops and cartwheels. But I can do star-jumps . (Belle, 1:42#38)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digging in sandpit</td>
<td>To dig a deep hole</td>
<td>Um, how to dig bigger holes. (Belle, 2:09#96)</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>To dig and pour something out [<em>raises hands up above head and makes tipping gesture</em>] (Gwen, 1:30#9925)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>