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Authors

Paes, Tanya

Ellefson, Michelle

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Pretend Play and Childrens Self-Regulation and Language Skills: An Interventional Study

Tanya Paes

University of Cambridge, Cambridge, United Kingdom

Michelle Ellefson

University of Cambridge, Cambridge, United Kingdom

Abstract

The impact of play on childrens cognitive skills has gained interest lately. This study examines the efficacy of a pretend play intervention on the self-regulation and language skills of four- to five-year-olds with English as an additional language. During pretend play an individual uses ones imagination to project a mental representation onto reality. The sample included 151 children who were randomized into three groups: (a) Pretend play; (b) Art activities; (c) Typical curriculum. The intervention included sixteen 30-minute sessions in groups of six children. The design of the pretend play intervention is based on storybook reading with an adult, and subsequent role-playing with props related to the story. During storybook reading explicit phonological awareness and vocabulary instruction were provided for the target words. In terms of the results, the children in the pretend play group had significantly higher post-test phonological awareness scores than children who were exposed to typical curriculum.