

SOCIAL INTERACTION PATTERNS EXHIBITED BY FIVE-YEAR-OLD
TAIWANESE CHILDREN IN A COMPUTER LEARNING ENVIRONMENT. Teng
Y.P. Department of Applied Science of Living, Shih-Chien College, 3, Lane 62, Ta-Chi
St. Taipei, Taiwan, R.O.C.

Educators have various points of views about whether computer will isolate or improve preschool children's social interactions. Considerable attention had been given to evaluate about young children's computer use (Sheingold, 1984; Swigger, Campbell, & Swigger, 1983). Yet the ethnographic account of how young children to interact with each other in a naturalistic setting was inadequate. The purpose of this study was to identify the social interaction patterns used by six five-year-old Taiwanese children to interact with his or her peer in a computer learning environment. The result of this qualitative and quantitative study could help us understand how children interact with each other in a computer learning environment in the early years.

Data were collected through classroom observation, interviews, videotaping and documents from the sites. The researcher first interviewed the class teacher for understanding the development of all the participants and the social interactions between peers. Then, the researcher used the in-depth and non-participant observation for exploring children's social interactions. Each participant child had been observed and videotaped in the computer learning center. Then, all the videotapes, cassette tapes had been transcribed. Based on various related studies and the analysis of the videotapes, the identification of each pattern of the social interactions were determined. The data was compiled in two forms, written description and numerical calculations. For qualitative study, more in-depth information will be obtained by observing children's social interactions. For quantitative study, objective information will be presented in statistical numbers.

From interviews with the teacher and observation in the computer center, the researcher learned that each child had different computer competence and used different interaction patterns to interact with their partner. In analyzing the children's social interactions in the computer center, giving orders was the pattern used most frequently by all of these six children. Giving guidance, seeking guidance, showing pleasure and solving problems were used frequently in children's pro-social interaction. In children's anti-social interaction, criticizing others, exhibiting negative physical behavior and refusing to share were presented more often.

The study provided a rich, full, and detailed understanding of children's social interactions in a computer learning environment. Almost all the participant children chose the same gender as their partner to work with a computer. And most of the social interaction frequency increased from one observation to the next. Also, child with high computer competence exhibited more giving guidance and less seeking guidance and accepting guidance while interact with his/her partner. However, child with low computer competence presented more seeking and accepting guidance and less giving guidance. This means that in an age-appropriate computer environment not only the social interaction will increase, but also children will actively observe and learn cooperatively. These findings had important implications for educators to use computer in the education for preschoolers.