Research Article

Thematic Analysis of The Symbolic And Imaginary Play Indonesian Children

Dr. Dewi Retno Suminar[1], Nido Dipo Wardana[2]

[1]M.Si., Psikologi, Faculty of Psychology, Universitas Airlangga, Surabaya, Indonesia.

[2]S.Psi., Faculty of Psychology, Universitas Airlangga, Surabaya, Indonesia.

ABSTRACT: The aim of this study was to find answers about how the empirical relationship between the theme of the playing process with the background of the children. What themes emerge when children play symbolic and imaginary. Symbolic and imaginary play involves symbolism, where the children can interpret symbols and show imagination and play acting "as if". Symbolic and imaginary play is divided into two, playing the role of the macro when the children themselves play a role in accordance with the theme and the micro is when the child uses dolls to represent themselves or through a process of personification. This research kind is qualitative and the process of assessment is done during play. A qualitative study using observation method is the right method in research on playing process, which the process is more important than the results. Data were collected through natural observation. The subjects in macro symbolic and imaginary play were two girls age 5 and 6 years who play in a single episode "mother and children". The subjects in micro symbolic and imaginary play were two girls 5 years old and 5 months and was conducted in two episode.

This research showed that the symbolic and the imaginary play can reveal the background of the child. Themes that emerged at macro symbolic and imaginary play is the birthdays. The theme that emerged at micro symbolic and the imaginary play is about house situation, habits, hopes, family relationships, likes and dislikes.

Keywords: Thematic Analysis, symbolic and imaginary play, children, micro symbolic, micro symbolic

Introduction

Play is often regarded as a unimportant activity for some parents. Parents are happier when their children do learning activities / course compared with play activities. Playing is still considered to be a negative thing compared to learning activities (Kompas Cyber Media, June 30, 2006). Effects of playing can not be seen as fast as learning activities, where children were graded with certain value / numbers. However,many research showed that a lot of benefits for children could be gained such as cognitive development (Carruthers, 2002; Cohen, 2001; Guo & Harris, 2000; Hulle, Goldsmith Lemery, 2004; Kim, 1999; Russ, 2004), affection (Russ, 2004; Scarlett, 2005) and interpersonal (Gullo, 2003; Russ, 2004). In addition, Wolfgang (2004), states that when doing symbolic and imaginary play, children express ideas through movement, moving the toy or play an object. Symbolic and imaginary play includes role playing, using fantasies and symbolization.

Garvey, Giflin-Weiner, Piaget (in Lidz, 2003) states that playing has the characteristic fun, spontaneous, intrinsic motivation, flexible and naturally produce effects on the physical and cognitive growth. Furthermore, several studies showed that playing process can be used to detect developmental delays in children, boosting the childrens development, and also to detect the presence of obstacles in the emotional development of children. With that fact, playing can be used as treatment (Russ, 2004).

There are many different types of play. Each kind of toy will give a different effect on development. Effects that occur in each children are also different from one another.

There are toys that make children able to do a symbolisation of things and develop their imagination. This type of toy called Pretend play (Russ, 2004), also known as symbolic and imaginary play because of elements of symbolisation and the use of imagination in pretend play process.

This type of toy can be played with any backgrounds, making it easy to find this kind of toy in various regions. However, the themes that exist in this type of play can not be used equally between regions to one another. Indonesia, which has a wide range of areas with its own characteristic will respond differently when children play "symbolic and imaginary". When children play symbolic and imaginary play, there will be different interpretations of toy tools that exist, and consequently will lead to different play activities. The existing situation in the play "symbolic and imaginary" will bring up the themes of play that characterized the area of origin of the child which different from the themes that emerged in another culture. Therefore, since there are limited data on the themes that emerge when children play "symbolic and imaginary" in Indonesia, then the data on the themes of the play "symbolic and imaginary" has become an issue of interest in this research.

What is done by a child when they're playing is a big question to be answered in this research. Through play children behave as if that's the best way out. Children have the ability to use the game as a means to express emotion, express aggression, play ideas and fantasy, story-telling practice, and solve conflicts and problems (Russ, 2004).

When children do play "symbolic and imaginary", then the child will be faced with a variety of toys, especially when the

child is able to symbolize toys. In the process there will symbolize the meaning of these toys. Once the child will understand what the meaning of the toys, and what would be used as a means to play in any situation. This condition eventually bring in to play a different theme with each other. The difference is the underlying theme of the words that will be released and this child based on the background of the child's life. For example, the anniversary theme won't be concerned for the child of a district, but it is the theme of a familiar maneuver of the district. A tart won't annotated as part of the birthday celebration theme when their birthday celebration is commemorated with rice tumpeng. By looking at these examples it can be said that the habit of a region will affect the play of a child.

Based on the description above, to avoid the bias in achieving the purposes of the study, then research questions will focuses on its research. Research questions are:

a. How is the connectivity between the theme play with the child's cultural background?

b. What themes emerge when children play symbolic and imaginary?

Methods

a. Type of Research

This research is qualitative research. The selection of this type of research because of the qualitative research process has the characteristics of flexible and open in the play of ideas (Strauss, 1998). This research was conducted with openness to existing data and use a variety of information as data. In addition, why type of research is qualitative because in this type of study, researchers will measure the process of play.

b. Analysis Unit

A qualitative study in order to reach the right target, it is necessary to formulate what became the unit of analysis in this research. The unit of analysis in this study are utterances issued by preschoolers. The remarks will be written back in the form of verbatim or simply a result of recording field. Phrases child during play or process termed narrative in this study will be the unit of analysis, meaning that will be analyzed are expressions that children removed during the process of play.

c. Subject Research

Subject of this study is preschool children aged 3-6 years. Scarlett (2005) mentions that in early childhood is a golden bridge for symbolic and imaginary play. According to Piaget (Santrock, 2004) that when a child is in the presymbolic allows children to improve imaginations.

d. Methods of Data Collection

Data collection was done by observation. Assesment of play is making measurements when the child was playing, so it is measuring process of playing itself (Lidz, 2003). Playing can be describe as a "window" that can be used to view the entire functions in children include cognitive, social, emotional, coarse and fine motor skills and language development. According to Kelly-Vance & Ryalls (2005), improvement of the assesment of play through observation caused by Process play itself can be called as a trigger emotional

dissatisfaction of the standardized instruments years. Based on research findings, observation is a good instrument for observing child's play behavior than standardized instruments. Based on these considerations, this research using collecting data method through naturalistic observation. Observation process is done by making observations on the situation of playing without the intervention of researchers both in making play setting and stimulation settings before or while children play. In addition, natural observation more likely to obtain data about the themes spontaneously in the symbolic and imaginary play. The basic principle in play is the spontanity of a child that results in happiness.

The results of the observations will be contained as a narrative and then used verbatim. At the verbatim, narrative will be written as children phrases while playing. Methods of data records is done by recording the child's expressions using tape recorder. In addition, if it is not possible to record with a tape recorder, then use field note so won't miss moments when children pronounce words. Running records are used in the data collection because the play is a running record of the process and use the obtained picture and record everything in detail (Daniels, Beaumont & Doolin, 2002). Children at play symbolic and imaginary nature is spontaneous without scenarios, so as to be able to understand the symbolic and imaginary play is how children's participation in play and uniqueness that occurs in the interaction (Goncu & Patt, 1999).

e. Techniques of Organizing and Analysis Data

Organizing techniques and data analysis done by writing children phrases verbatim who later grouped in chronological order, by the time the process of play. Further analysis will be conducted through the thematic movement of playing time. This analysis is known as part of the analysis process (Strauss, 1998). Playing is an ongoing process so that the description of the process is variable. Therefore, the overall shape of the analysis process, but not in the sequence to be analyzed. Focus its analysis on the micro is playing on the themes that emerged during the child's play is extracted from the child expressions. In step, the macro play will be linked to the themes of the theoretical themes of symbolic and imaginary play presented by Hendrick (1991).

The data have been collected and will be interpreted based on unclassified theoretical studies. Once categorized, it will be seen the themes that are in the process of symbolic and imaginary play that is micro. Thus the beam is in the process anlisis of observation, recording, classification themes.

Results and Discussion

a. Research Setting

The research was conducted by setting the house and its surroundings that have spaces that allow children to make plays. This house is the house itself the subject of a more enabling children to explore this process to play without having to go through the adaptation process in advance.

behavior independently (acting out). Setting the first

observation is that setting that is done outside the home in settings symbolic and imaginary play that children do in the macro with the way children play with toys that are stimulating toys. In the process of play children use tools for himself. The process of play at the core of the house, next to a car garage. Near the core there is a patch of garden that is still a lot of land and vegetation. Toys used are household devices namely glasses, cups, small buckets, plate, knife, spoon and fork. The children also add to the doll.

Setting for the second observation made inside the house. Inside the house is a symbolic and imaginary play that is micro tool used is wooden house and wooden dolls. Indirect child plays for himself, but is done by using the means of play dolls for. Each puppet represents the character expected of those who are around children. Home-prepared home is two houses. One other house and left the child to arrange the furniture and let children derive meaning whose house it is. At the beginning of the play states that children who are left home alone and the house to the right is defined as the child's grandmother and grandfather ("uti" and dear). Selection of

home which is used as a home adan which are not themselves subject selection. This is done as a symbol generation process early by children. In addition, children also use the equipment you have available and select it yourself. For example, toy cars, amounting to two and placed in his house used to represent the car at home that indeed there are two. Likewise, when selecting home furnishings handpicked although not the same as the conditions in the home of the subject, but the subject chose in accordance with the desires and fantasies.

b. Results

The results described based on symbolic and imaginary play settings which used are micro and macro. In the process of macro symbolic and imaginary play, children play themselves and symbolize the play instruments in a appropriate daily habits. Playing tool that is made symbolization and daydreaming suitable with their condition. In the process of symbolic and imaginary play at the macro level, a playing tool is to play the mother and child. The phrase that emerging describes theme birthday. Classification of child expressions shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Classification of expression that is playing Play Macro Household / Mother-Child Play

Ungkapan	Klasifikasi	Tema
I took the cooking part .., you could become my child This puppet could be the child too ... he's going to has his birthday tomorrow ... I could become her sister .. ok ... yes...I could still be his mom ... ... I'm the big sister and this doll could be my little sister	Role sharing	
e..e you're going to have your birthday tomorrow ... I'm going to make a birthday cake so you could blow your candle	Culture's birthday by blowing out candles	
come on.. you're already awake… lets take a shower and then go to study	Sequence of behavior	
you could be the mom ...then you have to pick me ... so Yes ... mom is preparing to cook .... you could sleep there because you've already eat and study	Behavior rule	Birthday
The changing roles of the brother's birthday (doll) but then it changed to subject 2	Inconsistent in the role	
Become a mom, a sister, having birthday, going to school, and read (in fact, Erna is not able to read)	Expectation	

In micro toys, child using 5 pieces dolls according to conditions of the subject. The choosing of doll is also done by the child. Children chose the doll according to the desired character. Dolls that look older, taller, fit with the character whom and so on. Once selected, child found 5 pieces of doll as a representative of the people in her house. People who become her house resident is a doll that is used to represent a father figure. When viewed from the facial expressions do not actually look older than the other male characters. But it appear that in choosing, they looking for high male doll than

another. Father figure have a higher height than the other male dolls. The mother illustrated by looking at the clothes worn. In addition, mothers in the next process will be called "mother" by her, selected for it higher height than other figures. In addition, this selection is also seen in the identification of the hair, because there are other figures with white-haired woman. Based on this selection she has been able to identify a figure that is considered old and young through a phusical appearance of hair. She identifies herself as the smallest doll than the other two dolls. Male figure is identified as an older

brother figure whom she called Angga. While the female figure identified as a sister figure who summoned Lita. The process of interpretation of existing dolls to represent her family is a father, mother, brother, sister and herself.

In the process of interaction during the play shows the dialogue that took place between the three of them. During the dialogue process shows the atmosphere that occurs between them based on expressions that arise from the child.

Furthermore, the subject also identifies the figure with white hair as a grandfather figure that called 'akung' and grandmother figure whom she called 'uti'. Selection of dolls as a form of personification is done with a physical basic. After taking notes in the field and see what the childs expressed, it can be summarized in theme categories of table 2.

Table 2.Theme Categories While Playing Macro Symbolic and imaginary Play

Category	Examples of Expression / Behavior Episode 1	Examples of Expression / Behavior Episode 2
the atmosphere of house	the election of stuffs and arranging the house the position of bed, way of treating the doll as a person	nah.. the TV could be use in two different ways, one is for Lita down below... and i'm up here watch it too while laying on my bed
Habit	doing dawn prayer with Angga who's prepare the prayer sorting the behavior with the same way as at home	this is Angga, Lita and I are playing together in front of the TV... brother.. please take the laptop, i want to play it in here.. eh... Lita is taking the food..lita is feeding me while i'm playing..
Expectation	Mrs. Lia said i'm smart enough to eat by myself since i already in 1st grade... Collecting some money to go to Bali...	i'm not afraid with uncle Seger... i cant help it... i'm getting bigger..
Relationship with family members	Lita, come here.. lets sleep with me.. I'm watching TV while laying down with Lita...	then eating some snacks together.. aah yes... dad is coming home after fishing... ngeng.. ngeng.. dad is getting 4 fish... then eating snacks together...
Likes	I'm watching TV show for kids… Lets watching play house first..	I also like cocoon song Brother likes me.. we both like idel laste..
Dislikes		*i dont want to go fishing..*

e. Discussion

House is the closest environment for children. Childhood is the phase with limitations in expressing their verbal emotions. Interview process with the child is a very difficult process. According to Daniels, Beaumont & Doolin (2002) the child has a high sensitivity. It's easier to see what people think of children through observation than by asking what child felt. Children have a tendency to follow what is said by an adult. The tendency to say "yes" and "do not know" making information about what the child feels difficult to obtain. Playing is a situation that makes children feel comfortable. The emerge of comfortable feeling will allow children to explore themselves and what they feel will be able to get out if there are symbols that stimulate them. (Russ, 2004). Furthermore, associated with emotion Kwon & Yawkey (2000) stated that in doing symbolic and imaginary play, a child will learn how to express, and control overt emotions, and understanding developments of the other emotions. In the follow-up will help the children learn their emotions and people's emotions, so it will eventually lead to the development of healthy emotional.

Based on Table 2, the themes that emerge will possible to know about the home atmosphere, habits, expectations, preferences, relationships between family members and dislikes. The themes that emerge can be triggered in a basic of play therapy. Krasnor & Pepper (in Russ, 2004) states that the symbolic and the imaginary play capable to reflect child's developmental level which can then be used as a diagnostic tool. It was previously also suggested by Fein (1989) that the symbolic and the imaginary play is a symbol of emotional meaning. Playing symbolic and imaginary play has playing themes that will provide enrichment for children to understand the emotions contained in a role that must be played accordance the theme of play. Thus through the symbolic and imaginary play can be a "window" for educators and parents to know about the child or their student. Symbolic and imaginary play is a tool to see the whole area development (Bergen, 2013).

Symbolic and imaginary play which is micro can detect how the child's relationship with family members as well as the situation in the house. The house is the closest to the child's development. Bronfenbrenner (Santrock, 2004) theory said

that the family is the closest layer in mikrosistem layer for children as individuals. As the closest layer for child, then the interaction between members greatly affect a child's development both in terms of cognitive, affective and psychomotor. Children's knowledge about the laptop, one of the show in cable television channels, cars brand and so on would be typical of children that can't be found in children who are not accustomed to the such stimuli in their family environment. Variation is what makes the uniqueness of the child's development based on a family atmosphere, habits, relationships with family members, hope, like and dislike. Child's feeling will easily come up when they said "... I like idel castel movie, I love kids movies, I .. don't wanna go, I want this and I do not want that" will probably appear when the child escape of themself than playing the macro of symbolic and imaginary play.

The process of macro symbolic and imaginary play is when the child plays himself in the play (see results in Table 1). Themes that arise when children playing mother and child or playing house as expressed by Hendrick (1991), so the theme that emerged was the birthday theme. Birthday theme is a theme that is common in preschool and culture when they did blew the candles as a sign of a birthday celebration than tradition of tumpengan. This proves that the culture's birthday by blowing out candles get rid of tradition of tumpengan as one of the birthday celebration for children. Thus it show that what happened in child will be able to be detected by the symbolic and imaginary play. The themes that emerge will be a reference in play therapy. As expressed by Stahmer, Ingersoll, Carter (2003), that the behavior of the approach by using symbolic and imaginary play will help as a therapy for children. Symbolic play and imaginary is a tool to detect in some aspects, such as disability of cognition, affection, interpersonal and problem solving. The longitudinal study conducted by Sigafoos (1999) for three years, indicating that a number of child's playing behaviors associated with the child's disability. These results indicate the need to improve assessment based on children playing behavior, particularly to detect disability of the child. Deunk, Berenst & De Glopper (2008) said that the symbolic and imaginary play allows children to move from one action to another action. It makes the symbolic and imaginary play not only one ability, but 4 ability at once, which is cognition, affection, interpersonal and problem solving (Russ, 2004). In addition to disability of children, by knowing the home atmosphere, habits, expectations, relationships among family members, likes and dislikes can help early childhood educators in dealing with children and to understand the mechanism of child psychology.

Conclusion

The conclusion of this research is the symbolic and imaginary play can reveal children's background. Family background will affects a play theme when the child plays symbolic and imaginary play. Themes that emerge when children playing symbolic and imaginary play which is macro is the anniversary theme. The themes that emerged in the symbolic

and imaginary play that is micro is home atmosphere, habit, hope, relationships between family members, likes and dislikes oneself. Thus, from two categories of symbolic and imaginary play, early childhood educators and parents will be able to better understand about expectations, habits, likes and dislikes of child. Will further facilitate in building communication with children and can be a footstep in the process of educating at school and at home.

Compliance With Ethical Standards

Conflict of Interest. Author A has received grants from Faculty of Psychology, Universitas Airlangga. Author B declares that he has no conflict of interest.

Ethical Approval. All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

Informed Consent. Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

Reference

[1] Bergen, D. (2013). Does pretend play matter? Searching for evidence: cooment on Lillard et al *Bulletin Psychological. Vol.139.,No.1, 45-48. Doi: 10.1037/a0030246*

[2] Carruthers, P. (2002). Human creativity; Its cognitive basis, its evolution, and its connections with childhood pretence. *The British Journal for the Philosophy of Science. 53, 2.* ; p.225 – 249.

[3] Cohen, D (2001). *The development of Play*. New York : Routledge. Second Edition Daniels, D.H., Beaumont, L.J. & Doolin, C.A.(2002) *Understanding Childhren: An interview and Observation Guide for Educators.* Boston : McGraw-Hill

[4] Deunk, M., Berenst,J. & De Glopper,K.(2008). The development of early sociodramatic play, *Discourse Studies* 2008; 10; 615. doi:10.1177/1461445608094215

[5] Fein, G.G. (1989). Mind, meaning and affect: proposals for a theory of pretense. Developmental Review. 9. 345-363

[6] Goncu, A. & Patt, M.B. (1999). Understanding pretend play. Theory Psychology. 9;718. doi: 10.1177/0959354399095014

[7] Gullo,D.F.(2005). Understanding assessment & Evaluation in Early Childhood Education. 2nd . New York: Teachers College Press.

[8] Guo, G. & Harris, K.H. (2000). The Mechanims mediating the effects of poverty on children's intellectual development. *Demography. 37,4,* p. 431-447.

[9] Hendrick, J. (1991). *Total Learning : Developmental Curriculum for The Young Child*. New York : Macmillan Publishing Company. Third Edition

[10] Hulle, C. A. V., Goldsmith, H.H. & Lemery, K.S. (2004). Genetic, environmental, and gender effects on individual

differences in toddler expressive language. *Journal of Speech, Language and Hearing Research. 47; 4* Academic Research Library

[11] Kelly-vance, L & Ryalls,B.O. (2005). A systematic, reliable approach to play assessment in preschoolers. *Journal School Psychology International, 26.398.* doi: 10.1177/0143034305059017

[12] Kim,S.Y. (1999). The effects of storytelling and pretend play on cognitive processes, short-term and long-term narrative recall. *Child Study Journal.* Sept 1999 v29 i3 p175.Kompas Cyber Media, 30 Juni 2006

[13] Kwon, J.Y. & Yawkey, T.D. (2000). Principles of emotional development & children's pretend play. *International Journal Of Early Childhood.* 32. 1. 9-13

[14] Lidz, C.S. (2003). *Early childhood Assesment.* New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons,Inc.

[15] Russ,S.W. (2004). *Play in child development & Psychotherapy: toward empirically supported practice.* New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., publisher

[16] Santrock, J.W. (2004) *Child Development. 10th ed.* New York: Mc Graw- Hill.

[17] Scarlett, W.G., Naudeau, S. , Pasternak, D.S. & Ponte I. (2005) *Chidren's Play* London: Sage Publication.

[18] Sigafoos, J. (1999). Longitudinal assessment of play and adaptive behavior in young children

[19] with developmental disabilities. *Research in Developmental Disabilities.*Vol. 20, No. 2, h. 147–162, PII S0891-4222(98)00038-9

[20] Stahmer,A., Ingersoll,B. & Carter,C. (2003). Behavioral approaches to promoting play. Autism. Vol 7(4) 401–413; 038190. doi:1362-3613(200312)7:4

[21] Strauss, A & Corbin, J. (1998). Basics of Qualitative Research : Techniques and Procedures forDeveloping Grounded Theory. London : Sage Publication.

[22] The Creative Center for Childhood Research and Training,Inc (2005), Beyond Centers & CircleTime : Scaffolding And Assessing The Play of Young Children. Florida : CCCRT

[23] Wolfgang,C.H.(2004). Child Guidance Through Play: Teaching Positive Social Behavior (Ages 2-7). Boston: Pearson Education,Inc.