

Peer-to-Peer Interaction: What develops?  
PSY 453  
W2005  
Prof. Daniela O'Neill  
Tuesdays 12:30 to 2:20 p.m.

## Overview

In this seminar, we will examine the competencies underlying children's successful peer-to-peer interactions. In particular, we will look at the domains of social competence, pragmatic language competence, and children's developing understanding of the mind in an effort to understand distinctions between these domains and how these domains contribute to more sophisticated and successful peer-to-peer interactions as children get older. We will consider these topics with readings from diverse areas such as developmental psychology, linguistics, conversational analysis, social development, narratology, and speech-and-language pathology. You will have an opportunity to put your reading into practice by attending two observational sessions at the Early Childhood Education Centre during which time you will have a chance to observe and transcribe behaviours and conversation among preschool-aged peers with the goal of "seeing" the understandings discussed in class come to life in a real-world child setting.

## Readings

1. A reader available from the bookstore. You will find the schedule of readings at the end of this syllabus. Any readings not available in this reader (for copyright/price reasons) will be made available for copying at Dana Porter Library.
2. Astington, J. W. (1993). *The Child's Discovery of the Mind*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

## Course Requirements

### a) Weekly critical comments (35%)

This is a seminar course. Its quality will depend on the quality of your contributions to the discussion of each week's topic. As such, it is important that you (a) attend the course meeting each week and (b) arrive each week prepared to discuss the assigned readings beginning on Jan. 11. In order to stimulate a lively discussion, you will be asked to bring a 2- to 3-page set of **critical comments** regarding the readings for that week, which will be handed in to me at the end of each meeting. Your critical comments can include questions for discussion in the seminar, criticism of specific claims made in the readings, independent observations related to the readings, or further thoughts about the readings or empirical ideas. Your critical notes must be type-written. You must hand in one set of comments for each seminar, except for the seminar in which you are discussion leader. Students will not ordinarily receive credit for handing in their critical comments in a given week unless they attend and contribute to that week's discussion. If you have to miss a meeting, email me your critical comments in advance

(doneill@uwaterloo.ca). Such absences will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. At the end of the term, a participation grade will be assigned to you worth 35% of your grade that will be based on your written comments and verbal contributions to the discussion (quality over quantity! (e.g., does it seem like you just skimmed the readings or have really read through them and thought about issues raised)).

### **Some tips for preparing weekly comments:**

- a) Your written and verbal contributions should NOT contain a summary of the readings, but rather should provide **additional** thoughts/questions/comments/ideas for discussion.
- b) The comments should cover issues in all the readings, not just a subset.
- c) Be careful not to just raise a question, make a comment, or propose something without providing any answer or in-depth consideration of the issue yourself.
- d) The comment does not need to be one full essay and can cover several different issues in separate parts. But don't resort to bullet points or short 1-2 sentence paragraphs.
- e) Watch your grammar and spelling. Read your comment out loud to yourself if this helps you to catch ungrammatical sentences and run-on sentences. Be sure the logic is tight. The comment itself should be well-written and clear.

### **b) Seminar as discussion leader(s) (10%)**

Each week, one or more students will be in charge of leading the discussion in the seminar from 12:30-2:00. The format for these discussions will be as follows:

12:35 – 12:50:	Discussion leader(s) present the main points of the articles read that they wish to discuss. This should not be an exhaustive summary, but rather a selective highlighting of some of the main points from each article that will be the topic of further discussion. (Maximum of 15 minutes or can be broken up in two 5-7 minute parts before each discussion leaders' part below.)
12:50 – 1:20	Discussion Leader #1
1:20 – 1:50	Discussion Leader #2
1:50 – 2:00	10-minute break
2:00 – 2:20	Open forum: All students participate with further questions/comments of their own, not addressed in the previous discussion.

**Very Important!** Each discussion leader must submit his or her written presentation notes to me by **email** at the latest by 5 p.m. on the **Monday** preceding the class in which he or she is leading the discussion.

### **c) Two Early Childhood Education Centre observations and short papers (15% each)**

In order for you to gain experience observing and transcribing children's behaviours and conversations first hand, you will be required to complete two observational sessions at the Early Childhood Education Centre outside of class time. During these observational sessions, you will

be expected to observe children closely and to transcribe an interaction (behaviour and/or conversation) or series of behaviours/conversations, that demonstrate topics discussed in class. In particular, over the course of the two observations, you should provide demonstrations of the following 6 abilities:

- a) nonverbal social competence
- b) nonverbal pragmatic competence
- c) linguistic pragmatic competence
- d) theory of mind understanding
- e) emotion understanding
- f) storytelling ability

These abilities must be demonstrated among peers with peers (not with adults). Indeed, you may wish to discuss how the ability may be unique to peer interaction and different from experiences with adults. Once you have completed the observational session, you should incorporate your observations into a short paper (e.g., 2-3 pages). Appended at the end of the paper should be your full transcription of the conversation(s). Paper #1 is due in class on **Mar. 1** or anytime before this date. Paper #2 is due in class on **Mar. 29** or anytime before this date. Further details regarding the arrangement of times to visit the ECEC will be covered in class. These two assignments will comprise a further 30% towards your final grade.

#### **d) Final experimental proposal (25%)**

The remaining 25% of your grade will be based on an experiment you design in which you can either (1) assess the relation between a measure(s) of social/social-cognitive/cognitive competence and a corresponding verbal measure of peer-to-peer interaction, or (2) manipulate a measure of social/social-cognitive/cognitive understanding to see its effect on a verbal measure of peer-to-peer interaction. This paper should conform to standard APA style with a few adaptations as described below:

- Abstract: Do not include.
- Introduction: A very short 2 to 3 paragraph statement describing the particular focus of your study. This should include your main hypothesis.
- Method: Include the following sections:
  - 1. Participants
  - 2. Procedure. If you are using stimuli or materials, do not put in separate section, but rather describe with the procedure as they become relevant.
- Results. Describe what the possible results would look like if they support your hypothesis and what they might look like if your hypotheses is not supported (is an alternative hypothesis supported?)
- Discussion Do not include.
- References Include only if needed.

There are no strict limits on the minimum or maximum length of this paper as this will depend on the complexity of your procedure. Strive to be as clear as possible in as few words as possible. It is entirely possible that your paper could be as short as 3 pages if well-written with a non-complicated design. Use tables, diagrams, graphs, pictures as you feel is appropriate. Your study should be feasible in a short time period (i.e., don't propose multi-year longitudinal studies). Think of this along the lines of an honours thesis proposal – it should be a recipe for the study you would propose to do. You must double-space and type your paper. It would be appreciated, (by my eyes) if you would not use a font size smaller than 10 or a smaller than usual font (e.g., condensed fonts). You can hand this paper in any time, but the latest date is **April 5<sup>th</sup>** at the

beginning of class. On April 5<sup>th</sup>, you should be prepared to give a short (5-minute) verbal description of your study to the class.

## SCHEDULE OF READINGS

### **Jan. 4: Introduction to seminar**

No assigned reading.

### **Jan. 11 Nature of social competence**

Rose-Krasnor, L. (1997). The nature of social competence: A theoretical review. *Social Development*, 6, 11-135.

Odom, S., McConnell, S. & McEvoy, M. (1992) Peer-related social competence and its significance for young children with disabilities. In S. Odom, S. McConnell, & M. McEvoy (Eds.), *Social competence of young children with disabilities: Issues and strategies for intervention* (pp. 3-35). Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.

### **Jan. 18 Evaluation of social competence**

Saunders, S. & Green, V. (1993). Evaluating the social competence of young children: A review of the literature. In *Early Child Development and Care*, 87, 39-46.

### **Jan. 25 Pragmatic language competence**

Prutting, C. (1982). Pragmatics as social competence. *Journal of Speech and Hearing Disorders*, 47, 123-134.

Abbeduto, L., & Short-Meyerson, K. (2002). Linguistic influences on social interaction. In H. Goldstein, L. Kaczmarek, K. English (Eds.), *Promoting social communication: Children with developmental disabilities from birth to adolescence* (Series volume 10) (pp. 27-54). Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.

### **Feb. 1 Evaluation of pragmatic/sociolinguistic ability**

Gallagher, T. (1991). Language and social skills: Implications for assessment and intervention with school-age children. In T. Gallagher (Ed.), *Pragmatics of language: clinical practice issues* (pp. 11-41). (Total pages in book: 362)

Kaczmarek, L. (2002). Assessment of social-communicative competence: An interdisciplinary model. In H. Goldstein, L. Kaczmarek, K. English (Eds.), *Promoting social communication: Children with developmental disabilities from birth to adolescence* (Series volume 10) (pp. 55-110). Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes. (Total pages in book: 401).

Redmond, S. (2002). The use of rating scales with children who have language impairments. *American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*, 11, 124-138.

### **Feb. 8 The development of the child's understanding of the mind**

Astington, J. W. *The child's discovery of the mind*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

**Feb. 15      Theory of mind ability and social competence**

Capage, L. & Watson, A. C. (2001). Individual differences in theory of mind, aggressive behavior, and social skills in young children. *Early Education & Development, 12*(4), 613-628.

J. W. Astington (2003). Sometimes necessary, never sufficient: False-belief understanding and social competence. In B. Repacholi & V. Slaughter (Eds.), *Individual differences in theory of mind: Implications for typical and atypical development* (p. 13-38). Macquarie Monographs in Cognitive Science Series: Psychology Press.

**Feb. 22      Reading Week**

**Mar. 1        Emotion understanding, language, and social competence**

**Last day to hand in Preschool Observation Paper #1**

Denham, S. et al. (2003). Preschool emotional competence: Pathway to social competence? *Child Development, 74*, 238-256.

Fabes, R., Eisenberg, E., Hanish, L., Spinrad, T. (2001). Preschoolers' spontaneous emotion vocabulary: Relations to likability. *Early Education and Development, 12*, 11-27.

Garner, P. & Estep, K. (2001). Emotional competence, emotion socialization, and young children's peer-related social competence. *Early Education and Development, 12*, 29-48.

**Mar. 8        Interpersonal problem solving in young children  
(Note reader articles out-of-order for Mar. 8 and 15)**

Youngstrom, E. et al. (2000). Interpersonal problem solving in preschool and first grade: Developmental change and ecological validity. *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology, 29*, 589-602.

Rubin, K. & Rose-Krasnor, L. (1992). Interpersonal problem solving and social competence in children. In V. Van Hasselt & M. Hersen (Eds.), *Handbook of social development: a lifespan perspective* (pp. 283-323). NY: Plenum Press. (Total pages in book: 608)

Rubin, K. & Daniels-Bierness, T. (1983). Concurrent and predictive correlates of sociometric status in kindergarten and grade 1 children. *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly, 29*, 337-351.

**Mar. 15      Social competence and at-risk children**



- Mendez, J., McDermott, P., & Fantuzzo, J. (2002). Identifying and promoting social competence with African-American preschool children: Developmental and contextual considerations. *Psychology in the Schools, 39*, 111-122.
- Mendez, J., Fantuzzo, J. & Cicchetti, D. (2002). Profiles of social competence among low-income African-American preschool children. *Child Development, 73*, 1085-1100.
- Smith, M. (2001). Social and emotional competencies: Contributions to young African-American children's peer acceptance. *Early Education and Development, 12*, 49-72.

**Mar. 22 Environmental factors influencing social competence**

Kitzmann, K., Cohen, R. & Lockwood, R. (2002). Are only children missing out? Comparison of the peer-related social competence of only children and siblings. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 19*, 299-316.

Dunn, J. & Shatz, M. (1989). Becoming a conversationalist despite (or because of) having an older sibling. *Child Development, 60*, 399-410.

Black, B. & Hazen, N. (1990). Social status and patterns of communication in acquainted and unacquainted preschool children. *Developmental Psychology, 26*, 379-387.

**Mar. 29 Influence of narrative and scripts on social competence**

**Last day to hand in Preschool Observation Paper #2**

Fiorentino, L. & Howe, N. (2004). Language competence, narrative ability, and school readiness in low-income preschool children. *Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science, 36*, 280-294.

Goldstein, H. & Gallagher, T. (1992). Strategies for promoting the social-communicative competence of young children with specific language impairment. In S. Odom, S. McConnell, & M. McEvoy (Eds.), *Social competence of young children with disabilities: Issues and strategies for intervention* (pp. 189-213). Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.

**Apr. 5 Short student presentations of their experiment ideas.**

**Final Experimental Proposal due in class.**