









## ABSTRACT

Ugaste, Aino

The child's play world at home and the mother's role in the play

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Finnish summary

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The aim of this study was to describe and analyse the play of preschool children within the family context. The study was based on the ideas of the cultural-historical approach of play. The child's play world was observed holistically in connection with the child's everyday life, play opportunities and mother's support during the child's games. The study was carried out at home with four-year-old children and the research material consisted of interview data and observational data.

The findings showed that the mothers mostly initiated interactions with their children and the mothers acted as transmitters of knowledge and sharers of experience. The children continually wished to have necessary materials, to show their games or invited their mothers to play together with them. Thus the children needed their mothers as supporters and appraisers of their activity. All the children played role games which they often initiated themselves. The themes of children's games were connected with everyday events and the child's knowledge, impressions and experiences formed the basis of their play. The roles in the solitary games were implicit in the children's actions and the content was one-sided and consisted of repeated stereotypic actions. Playing role games together with their mothers, the children started not only to act with the toys but also to speak and interact according to the theme and content of the play. In the joint games the roles were more defined and more explicit than in the children's solitary play. In the joint games there were more play scripts and the quality of play scripts was different, consisting of the players' mutual action and interaction. The mother-child interaction during the games was related to the imaginary situation and the mother helped interpret the social meaning of the role behaviour in the context of the relevant play script. In the joint rule games the mothers paid great attention to the notion of fair play and to joint play between siblings. The mothers attempted to teach their children academic knowledge but the children were not keen to play these games. Instead, children preferred games which involved playfulness, fun and unusual aspects. In the joint games the mothers displayed wide-range repertoires of play promotion.

The findings of the study provide new information and make some contribution to a better understanding of the children's everyday life and games at home. The results indicated the importance of the different roles that the adults have in creating the children's play world.

Keywords: play at home, child, play promotion, mother-child interaction

**Author's address**

Aino Ugaste  
Department of Early Childhood Education  
Tallinn Pedagogical University  
Narva Street 25  
Estonia 10 120

**Supervisors**

Professor Maritta Hännikäinen  
Department of Early Childhood Education  
University of Jyväskylä, Finland

Professor Helena Rasku-Puttonen  
Department of Teacher Education  
University of Jyväskylä, Finland

**Reviewers**

Professor Pentti Hakkarainen  
Department of Teacher Education  
University of Oulu/Kajaani, Finland

Professor Aili Helenius  
Department of Teacher Education  
University of Turku, Finland

**Opponent**

Professor Pentti Hakkarainen  
Department of Teacher Education  
University of Oulu/Kajaani, Finland

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Aino Ugaste  
Tallinn- Jyväskylä  
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# 1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of the study is to describe and analyse the play world of children at home in a natural setting. The child's play world is observed more extensively in connection with the child's experience and knowledge of the embedded social life and how the everyday context is incorporated into play. In addition, attention is paid to the child's opportunities to have access to a place, time, playmates and play materials. Child's play world also comprises the mother's views of the child's play and the way in which she supports her child during the games. The choice of study theme has been influenced by several facts.

Profound changes have recently taken place in the development of early childhood education in Estonia. The ideas of child-centred education have increasingly spread amongst kindergarten teachers and a 'Step by Step' programme has been started in kindergartens among several other alternative pedagogical approaches (e.g. Montessori, Steiner pedagogy, Reggio-Emilia pedagogy). At the same time increasing numbers of preschool children spend a greater part of the day in kindergartens and more under three-year-olds have started to visit preschool institutions. This new situation has brought about the need to pay special attention to the wellbeing of children in kindergarten and to the quality of childhood institutions. Quality assessment not only enables the determination of the kindergarten teacher's professional activities and development but also allows parents to participate actively in kindergarten life and to influence the kindergarten in decision-making.

Parents' expectations vis-à-vis kindergartens have increased. Rapidly changing socio-economic conditions have altered parents' views and created insecurity as to how to raise children in a new situation. Old educational principles often no longer hold while new ones have not yet been established. The task of early childhood institutions is to support parents in solving educational problems and to enhance the child's growth and development within the family (Framework Curriculum of Preschool Education of Estonia 1999). As a consequence of the family's supporting function, the kindergarten staff should react flexibly to the altered needs of children and their parents. Both parents and pedagogues (and others) are in the process of entering into a reflective and analytic relationship involving a deepening understanding and

the possibility of making judgements about pedagogical work (Dahlberg, Moss & Pence 1999, 77).

During previous decades much valuable experience was gained concerning children's play in the kindergarten context in early childhood education in Estonia. Estonian kindergarten teachers have possessed a good theoretical foundation as well as practical experience in creating a play world for children in the kindergarten setting. In the curricula of early childhood education play has long been an important element and much attention has been paid to children's play at different ages and to various types of games. Children's play has changed over the last decades and it has even been claimed that play according to the true sense of the word (play as children's work, as another reality, as a conventional as-if world) is vanishing (Retter 2001). Marketing and the media have strongly influenced children's play and toys.

In this study I drew on theoretical standpoints according to which imaginative role play comprises the child's leading activity and has a decisive role in his or her cognitive, social and physical development (Vygotsky 1966, 1978b; Elkonin 1978; Leontjev 1981; Zaporozhets 1997). "Imaginative play is a leading activity because it allows children to appropriate from a given imagined situation in question as well as enabling children to rehearse adult roles in which they must engage in the future" (Göncü et al. 1999, 155). Play is a type of activity which development is promoted by adults in order to make the child familiar with human ways of object-related activities as well as with ways and means of interaction. Play first emerges between the mother and child, and play development depends on the support of parents, siblings, peers and the surrounding environment. Thus, children's imaginative play develops in social contexts during interaction with more experienced partners. In my study I have concentrated on the most important type of play for children's development, namely role play, which appears during the third year of the child's life. An essential change in children's role play begins to take place during the middle-preschool age, i.e. in four- and five-year-old children. Object role play gradually becomes social role play and for the player the importance previously attached to the object and its depiction at this age also extends to the social aspect, people's mutual interaction and relationships.

Children's play in the kindergarten context has been analysed extensively (Mendzeritskaija 1982; Novosyolova 1989; Mihailenko & Korotkova 1990; Lindqvist 1995, 2003; Johnson, Christie & Yawkey 1999). These studies concluded that the key to successful play involvement for adults is the careful observation of the child's play and the choice of a style of interaction that fits in with the child's play interests and his or her wishes. In Finland much attention has been paid to children's play in the kindergarten context. Hakkarainen (1990, 2002) has observed motivational problems in play and the connection between play and learning. Helenius (1993) has analysed children's play in the kindergarten, play stimulation and the significance of play in achieving school readiness. Drawing on Piaget's and Vygotsky's theory, Hännikäinen (1995) studied a reconstruction of the transition to role play as a developmental stage

of play. This study showed that the transition to role play and play in general is a complex phenomenon, which is impossible to grasp in full even with the help of large variety of concepts and research methods. Mäntynen (1997) examined the playing opportunities available to young children and the guidance of play in day care centres. The results of this study demonstrated that teachers strongly stressed the importance of the guidance of play but in practice the amount of guidance was rather small in most of the groups studied. Kalliala (1999) described how and why time and culture are reflected in children's play.

The games of children aged one to three with their mothers have been observed in several studies (Dunn & Wooding 1977; O'Connell & Bretherton 1984; Slade 1987; Fiese 1990). These studies have revealed that in situations where the mother plays with her child the play is much more developed, i.e. both quantitatively and qualitatively more advanced, than when the mother is not involved. The studies concluded that toddlers not only exhibit more pretence, they also exhibit a higher level of pretence when playing with their mothers than when playing alone. There has also been analysis concerning which types of stimulation by the mother in play situations are the most beneficial for the child (O'Connell & Bretherton 1984; Beizer & Howes 1992; Fein & Fryer 1995). The studies showed that not all kinds of stimulation suit the children and that the child himself or herself decides which of his or her mother's suggestions are accepted in his or her play activity and which are ignored.

Researchers have seldom observed children's play at home after the age of 36 months. It appears that how children actually play within the family context and how their mothers create a play world for them at home has been insufficiently studied.

Play is one part of the child's world and in the present study an attempt has been made to examine the child's play world within the larger context, in connection with the child's everyday life, activities and interactions with the mother. In this study the child's activities at home are described; whether he or she plays games, what type of games he or she plays and how he or she plays. The study also analysed the preconditions for play which the mother creates for her child at home, the mother's views of the child's play and the way in which she supports her child during joint play.

The scholarly aim of this study is to contribute to a broadening and deepening of scientific research of children's play with particular attention being directed towards play within the family context. The study is likely to also enable teachers to understand more about the everyday life of children at home, as well as about games played at home and the participation of mothers in creating a play world for their children. Thus, the intention is to help teachers to support children and their parents in solving educational problems according to the needs of the child and his or her family. The results of this study and the information it contains is also expected to contribute to the education of future kindergarten teachers at university.

The present study consists of an introduction, seven chapters, a discussion, a conclusion and appendices. In the second chapter the theoretical bases of the study, i.e. the cultural-historical approach to play and modern pedagogical-psychological models of play, are analysed. The stages of play and the concept of a play script are also dealt with. In the third chapter various scientific investigations are introduced in which mother-child play and adult involvement in play are addressed. The theme of play stimulation in the kindergarten context is also presented and the ways in which adults support children's games in different cultures are examined. In the fourth chapter the procedures of the study are presented. In the fifth chapter the findings of the study are presented in terms of children's activities, interactions and games played at home. The child's opportunities for play as well as his or her toys and playmates are also described. In the sixth chapter the child's everyday world and play are described. The child's activities at home, the nature of mother-child interaction and joint activities, and the way in which everyday life influences children's games are reported. In the seventh chapter solitary play and mother-child joint play at home are described along with an analysis of the amount, type and play material. In the eighth chapter mother-child interaction and the mother's role in games are reported. A description is also given of the mother's role in stimulating games. Following this, the findings of the study are summarised and compared with previous studies. The trustworthiness and ethical aspects of the study are also analysed. Finally, topics for further study are discussed.

## 2 PLAY ACCORDING TO THE CULTURAL-HISTORICAL APPROACH

### 2.1 Essential characteristics of play

Since the beginning of the history of mankind play has been an inseparable part of human life and society. There has been much discussion about the nature of play and its role in the development of both the individual and society. When defining play it is useful to consider the thoughts of a historian of civilisation: Huizinga (1956, 34) described play as a voluntary activity or occupation executed within certain fixed limits of time and place, according to rules freely accepted but absolutely binding, having its aim in itself and accompanied by feelings of tension, joy and consciousness that is “different from ordinary life”.

Several researchers have made attempts to identify the characteristics of play (Krasnor & Pepler 1980; Rubin, Fein & Vandenberg 1983; Saracho & Spodek 1998; Hughes 1999; Johnson, Christie & Yawkey 1999). First and foremost, play is characterised by a small number of dispositional factors. These are as follows:

1. *Nonliterality*. This means that actions in play are not actual or real but fictitious. For example, treating a sick doll while playing doctor differs from treating a real patient in a medical centre. However, in the play actions of treating the patient there are many realistic features – the feelings and emotions of the player, his or her wish to act as ‘doctor’, etc. In play the usual meanings of a given object are changed and replaced by new meanings. For example, a cube may be used as an apple and a wooden stick as a pencil.
2. *Intrinsic motivation*. Play motivation comes from the individual and is not externally motivated. Play is not evoked by physical needs, external rules or social pressure. Play is a player’s free will and his or her independent choice to act that way.

3. *Mean – ends.* This characteristic is connected with both the process and result of play. In play the process rules over the result, that is, for children it is the process of play and not its result which is of importance. Thus play can be characterised as a flexible activity that is not goal-oriented. Several authors (e.g. Rubin, Fein & Vandenberg 1983; Smith & Vollstedt 1985) have pointed out that, unlike in other games, the results of construction games are of importance for the player, e.g. to complete a building. However, it is well known from everyday life that construction games are often related to imaginative play. For example, first children build a shop and then they start playing shop.
4. *Free choice.* In play children feel free in the sense that they can stop playing whenever they wish; they can start a new game when the play gets boring. In play children have a free choice of playmates, play themes and objects of play.
5. *Positive affect.* This characteristic describes the emotional side of play. Play is usually associated with positive emotions – pleasure, fun, excitement and enjoyment. Even if this is not the case the players appraise play in terms of positive emotions.

In establishing criteria for distinguishing a child's play from other forms of activity one essential feature was considered to be the creation in play of imaginary situations by the child. Imagination is a new psychological process for the child, which is totally absent in animals, and represents a specifically human form of conscious activity (Vygotsky 1982).

The view in this study about play characteristics is based on the ideas of the cultural-historical conception of play (Vygotsky 1966, 1982; Leontjev 1981; Elkonin 1978, 1999; Zaporozhets 1997, 2000). According to this approach play is a leading activity in preschool children, the most important components of which are imaginary situations, rules and the roles that the child assumes.

## 2.2 The cultural-historical conception of play

The cultural-historical conception emphasises that individual development must be understood within the social context (Vygotsky 1984). Every form of cultural development and cultural behaviour is in a certain sense a product of the historical and social development of mankind. The development of a human being takes place by way of acquiring historically established forms of action. Vygotsky (1981, 163) claims that the social origins and social nature of an individual's mental functioning in this formulation can be found in the "general genetic law of cultural development". According to cultural-historical theory, any function in the child's cultural development appears twice, that is, on two planes. It appears first on the social plane and then on the psychological plane. To counterbalance, for example, Piaget's (1962) theory, which regarded children

as individual scientists who formulate and test increasingly complex hypotheses about their world and about their own experiences and interactions, cultural-historical theory emphasises the importance of the social, cultural and historical environment in the child's development.

According to cultural-historical theory an adult who satisfies a child's biological and psychological needs is seen as forming the child's environment. Through interaction and relations with adults a child acquires his or her personal subjective world. The child learns and develops in a social context, which includes more knowledgeable and competent peers and adults who pass on the cultural heritage. This transmission is accomplished primarily through the use of language and communication, buttressed by the use of cultural artefacts such as written documents and other physical, mechanical or symbolic representations. (Nicolopoulou 1993.)

The main standpoint of the cultural-historical conception of play (Vygotsky, Leontjev, Elkonin, Zaporozhets) is that children's play is not biological but social in its origins. The emergence of play in human society was a spontaneous but at the same time regular process as it was the means of education and was genetically connected with the work and social activities of adults. According to this viewpoint play is a leading activity in children of preschool age and creates a zone of proximal development.

### **2.2.1 Play according to the Vygotskian framework**

Russian research into play was led by Vygotsky in the 1920s to 1930s and was continued and extended by Leontjev, Elkonin, Zaporozhets, Mendzeritskaja, Usova, Fradkina, Venger, Novosyolova and others. Their research has created a basis for a psychological-pedagogical concept of play as the most important means of educating children.

*Vygotsky* wrote relatively little about play. He held a series of lectures about child psychology at the Leningrad/St. Petersburg Pedagogical Institute in 1933, including a lecture about children's play. A shorthand report of his lecture was published in Russian in a psychology journal in 1966 (Vygotsky 1966) in an article entitled "Play and its role in the mental development of the child" (in English in 1976). Vygotsky's interest in children's play was connected to his interest in art psychology and his study of the problems of higher psychic functions (Elkonin 1999, 6; 169). In his earlier works Vygotsky connected the development of higher psychic functions with the development of the sign. Here he develops an interest in the development of the sign during the course of the child's psychic development. Vygotsky (1983) speaks in his work "Predistorija razvitija pismennoi retsi" about the use of a single item in the function of the symbol in order to represent other items. He writes that in play one item represents the others, replaces them and becomes a sign for them (1983, 181). Vygotsky remarks that children's symbolic play can be understood in terms of a very complicated system of speech, which operates through gestures, which communicate and indicate the meaning of play objects. Only through a pointing gesture does the toy acquire its meaning. Exactly the same

process occurs in drawing, which later on becomes an independent sign. (Vygotsky 1983, 182.)

Vygotsky wrote that in order to understand why a child plays, play must always be interpreted as an imaginary, illusory realisation of unrealisable desires (Vygotsky 1976, 539). Vygotsky opposed the standpoint according to which the notion of play derives from the basis of the pleasure function (the standpoints of Freud, Bühler etc.). He gave two reasons for this opposition. Firstly, there exist a number of other activities which provide the child with much keener experiences of pleasure than does play (e.g. sucking in which the child derives functional pleasure from sucking a pacifier even when he or she is not being fed). Secondly, Vygotsky cites the idea that there are games in which the activity itself is not pleasurable but which give pleasure only if the child finds the result interesting. Thus, Vygotsky emphasises that play has to be understood much more broadly, i.e. in terms of the motives of the child's actions, his or her inclinations and incentives to act and his or her affective aspirations. A preschool child develops a large number of unrealisable tendencies and immediately unrealisable desires. It is characteristic in infants of under three years of age that he or she wants to realise his or her wishes immediately and directly. However, in the case of preschool children aged three years and over contradictory tendencies can be noticed. On the one hand, a large number of long-term needs and desires appear which cannot be fulfilled at once but which, nevertheless, are not passed over as mere whims; on the other hand, the tendency towards the immediate realisation of desires is almost completely retained. (Vygotsky 1976, 539.) Hereby play comes into being, and in order to understand why the child is playing the play must be viewed as an imaginary, illusory realisation of unrealisable desires. Vygotsky emphasises that play is not the realisation of individual wishes but the implementation of generalised affects. The pre-school child is particularly conscious of his or her relationships with adults. The child reacts to them affectively and in a different manner to that occurring during the infant age. Thus, he or she generalises those affective reactions. (Vygotsky 1966, 64.)

In his work "Voprosy detskoi psihologii" (Vygotsky 1999) Vygotsky stresses that play has to be viewed as a completely characteristic activity but, nevertheless, not as a notion that encompasses all the child's activities (e.g. experimental games according to Groos). According to Vygotsky play is a specific attitude towards the child's surroundings characterised by the creation of an imaginary situation or the transfer of the characters into others.

Vygotsky (1966) presented the most essential characteristic of play in terms of an imaginary situation, which also includes the adult's role as adapted by the child. Play in its true meaning, i.e. the existence of an imaginary situation, is not possible for children of less than three years of age. Vygotsky justified his standpoint with the claim that this is a novel form of behaviour in which the child is liberated from situational constraints through his or her activity in an imaginary situation. Play is the first activity of preschool children in which a divergence between the fields of meaning and vision can be noticed.

Thought is separated from objects. Thus, a piece of wood becomes a doll and a stick assumes the role of a horse. Action according to rules gradually becomes determined by ideas and not by the objects themselves.

Vygotsky analysed relatively little of the play of four- to six-year-old children. In his work "Predistorija razvitija pismennoi retsi" (Vygotsky 1983, 182) he wrote that verbal conditional designation already appears early in the games of four- to five-year-olds. Children say to themselves "This is a house. This is a plate," and so on. At approximately this age children employ extraordinarily rich speech to explain and announce every single movement, the sense of an object and the action involved. Not only do children gesticulate but also talk, that is, explain the play to themselves. Thanks to the long-term use of gesture children can play through certain conditional objects and relations without the corresponding gestures. Vygotsky gives an example of play experiments in which familiar objects were designated to mean things and people (Vygotsky 1983,183). Thus, for example, a book off to one side designated a house, keys represented children, a pencil stood for a nursemaid, a pocket watch for a drugstore, a knife a doctor, an inkwell cover a horse-drawn carriage, and so forth. Then the children were presented with a simple story through figurative gestures involving these objects. For example, a doctor arrives at the house in a carriage and knocks at the door. The nursemaid opens the door. The doctor examines the children, writes a prescription and leaves. The nursemaid goes to the drugstore, comes back and administers the medicine to the children. Most three-year-olds can read relatively complex notation easily. Four- and five-year-olds can read yet more complex notation, such as the following story. A man is walking in the forest and is attacked by a wolf, which bites him. The man manages to run away. A doctor treats him, after which he goes to the drugstore and then returns home. A hunter sets out into the forest to kill the wolf. Thus Vygotsky emphasised how play can be seen as a major contributor to the development of written language - a system of secondary symbolism. (Vygotsky 1983.)

Along with the imaginary situation expressed through play Vygotsky also analysed the rules of play (Vygotsky 1976). All play has its own rule or rules. The imaginary situation in any form of play already contains rules of behaviour although it may not be a game with formulated rules laid down in advance. The child imagines himself or herself to be the mother and the doll to be the child. Consequently he or she must obey the rules of maternal behaviour. Vygotsky continues the analysis of these rules by claiming that, just as the imaginary situation has to contain rules of behaviour, so every game with rules contains an imaginary situation. Vygotsky gives the example of a game of chess, asking what it actually means to play chess. His answer is that chess is the creation of an imaginary situation. Vygotsky justifies this through the observation that the knight, king, queen and other pieces and can only move in specified ways and that the protection and taking of pieces are purely chess concepts. Let us consider a simple rule game for children. It immediately becomes an imaginary situation in the sense that when the game is regulated with certain rules then

real actions acquire a relationship to these rules. Vygotsky suggests that every game with rules contains an imaginary situation in a concealed form. He emphasised that the development from an overt imaginary situation with covert rules to games with overt rules and a covert imaginary situation characterises the entire development of children's play. (Vygotsky 1976, 543.)

Vygotsky's idea that play is a leading activity in preschool age children without being a predominant activity is of essential importance. Play contains all the tendencies of development: play is the source of development and creates the child's zone of proximal development. In play a child is always operating at a level above his or her average age, above that of his or her daily behaviour; when playing it is as though he or she were a head taller than himself or herself (Vygotsky 1978b, 102). Vygotsky compared the play-development relationship to the instruction-development relationship. But, as Vygotsky notes, play provides a much wider background for changes in needs and consciousness. Action in the imaginative sphere, in an imaginary situation, the creation of voluntary intentions and the formation of real-life plans and volitional motives – all these appear in play and make it the highest expression of preschool development. The child moves forward essentially through play activity. Vygotsky emphasises that only in this sense can play be considered a leading activity that determines the child's development (Vygotsky 1978b, 103).

Despite the brevity of his treatment of the topic, Vygotsky's ideas on the development and significance of play were innovative and ahead of his time (Berk 1994; Berk & Winsler 1995, 52). Vygotsky's merit undoubtedly lay in the fact that he paid attention to play as an important leading activity in the child's development and as a source of development. Elkonin (1999, 170) wrote that in connection with the elaboration of the child psychology system Vygotsky turned to play as a leading activity in preschool children. Vygotsky worked out a hypothesis concerning the psychological nature of developed role play although he did not write anywhere directly about role play but merely about play in general.

### **2.2.2 Followers of the Vygotsky school**

*Leontjev* (1981) writes that we can already trace play in some of the more highly developed animals. However, children's play, even that of small children, differs from animals' play. The main difference is that with children play is not an instinctive activity but rather an object-related activity. In early infancy play is still of secondary importance while object-related activities are of paramount importance. However, during the course of the child's further development through the preschool years play assumes the main role. *Leontjev* inquires as to the cause of such a transformation in which play changes from a secondary into a leading activity. He explains this change by suggesting that the object world that is made conscious by the child is one that is constantly broadening out. The object world not only includes objects that form the child's closest environment along with those objects upon which the child can and does act. It also includes objects relating to adults, upon which the child is unable to act and which are

physically inappropriate for him or her. Thus, Leontjev emphasises the role of play in the transfer from infancy to the preschool stage in terms of a broadening of the world of objects relating to people. The child tries to act in the object world not only with objects that are within his or her power but also more broadly in the same way that adults do. The conflict contained within the child's activity is a conflict between the necessity to act on objects on the one hand and the activities or implementation of these activities on the other hand. The child himself or herself wants to drive a car or row a boat but cannot as he or she has not mastered and, indeed, cannot master the operations required for each respective activity. (Leontjev 1981.)

How is such a conflict solved, this contradiction between the child's need to act on objects on the one hand and his or her inability to execute the requisite operations? The only solution to this problem lies in play. Play is not a productive activity. The motive of play is not its result. On the contrary, the motive lies in the play itself. Leontjev notes that games differ from one another both in their content and in their form and source. Leontjev (1981, 488) gives an example of a child playing at riding on horseback. There is good reason behind the saying that one cannot ride very far on a stick. The operations of play do not correspond to action directed towards the achievement of a certain result. You cannot get very far with a stick – that is a fact. However, action in play does not seek a particular result. The motive of the action is in the action itself. As in real life the child cannot ride on horseback because of his or her lack of relevant skills. Therefore, a unique substitution takes place; instead of the horse there is an object that belongs to the object world, which lies within the child's power. The aim of this playful action is not to ride anywhere but simply to ride a horse. (Leontjev 1981, 488-489.)

In play there exists an imaginary situation (Leontjev 1981, 491). The structure of playful activity is such that an imaginary situation comes into being as a result. The play creates an imaginary situation, not the other way round. The playful action does not come into being as a consequence of the imaginary situation but, on the contrary, the imaginary situation comes into being as a result of the discrepancy between the operation and the action. Thus, imagination does not determine the action contained within play but rather the conditions of the play action necessitate and create imagination. Leontjev gives an example from Lukov's experiments (Leontjev 1981, 492). Two children are playing kindergarten in the room. A third child is watching. During the course of the play the children decide to take the kindergarten installation to another place on the play carriage. However, they need a horse to do that. One of the two players suggests using a brick. The third child cannot hold himself back and asks, "Can that really be a horse?" Like every other child this child remains realistic. But soon he becomes bored of watching the others and reverts to playing. According to his playful suggestions, the brick might represent not merely a single horse but a whole team of them. (Leontjev 1981, 492.)

Thus, there is a typical unique relationship between the idea of the play and the real meaning of the conditions of the play that are not expressed

beforehand but come into being during the process of play itself. These are not fixed throughout the process of the play but are dynamic and changing.

Leontjev (1981) also analyses the problem of whether every object can become something else in play and comes to the conclusion that this is not the case. There are many objects such as sticks and bricks that have a wide range of usage (playing range). In the case of toys, those with fixed functions can be specified (e.g. an acrobat who whirls up ladder). This is a quasi-toy and has only a few functions. By contrast, a car, for example, has a function within a given play situation. Leontjev writes that play develops from an open role play in an open imaginary situation into rule game in which an imaginary situation and role play are present in a concealed form. (Leontjev 1981.)

Leontjev continued Vygotsky's ideas concerning play as the child's leading activity (Leontjev 1983). While Vygotsky only indirectly analysed play as a leading activity, Leontjev elaborated this issue. Leontjev calls a leading activity an activity in the course of which other new kinds of activities come into being and become differentiated (Leontjev 1983, 285). Leontjev wrote that more significant in children's play is the role in which the child assumes the generalised social function of a certain adult. More often the child assumes functions that are connected to professions, for example, a doctor whose task is to listen to the patients' heart, vaccinate people against smallpox, etc. At the same time children can also play the roles of fairy tale characters and animals. In play these animals appear as generalised, the bearers of features and functions characteristic to people. Thus, the child who plays role games assumes some person's social function and then carries it into his or her everyday activities. (Leontjev 1981, 497.)

While playing these games with various materials the child attaches increasing importance not only to actions involving those materials but also to interpersonal relations. In joint games social relations appear in an open form according to the relationships between the participants of the play. Relating to this, the child's assumed role in the play also changes. This, together with the content of the play, not only determines the child's actions with respect to objects but also actions connected with interpersonal relationships. The rule governing actions is very closely connected with the role. For example, a child, while playing the role of kindergarten teacher, also acts according to the corresponding social functions. Thus, the player directs the other children's behaviour at the table, puts the children to sleep, etc. The role and rule of play express in themselves the unity of the outside world and the social content of the play. Leontjev (1981) noted that three- and four-year-old children still find it difficult to subject themselves to the rules of play. Based on the ideas of Elkonin concerning the genesis of children's play, Leontjev wrote that play originates from classical games. Classical games are thematic games with an open play role, open imaginary situation and a concealed rule. Gradually these games are transformed into games with rules, where there is a concealed imaginary situation and a concealed play role. (Leontjev 1981.)

*Elkonin* (1978) noted that Vygotsky was undoubtedly right when he stressed the problem of motives and necessities as the key to the understanding of role play. However, Vygotsky merely set up the problem, he did not solve it (*Elkonin* 1978, 274). According to *Elkonin* for the child the object world and dealing independently with the objects therein is of secondary importance. The child plays in the way he or she did earlier. The player washes the doll, feeds it and puts it to bed. Outwardly everything is just as it was before. However, this time these objects and object-related actions are linked into a new relationship system with reality, into a new emotional and attractive form of action. The child's actions with the doll now express the mother's relationship to the child – tenderness, love, fondness. This relationship is of strong emotional-functional orientation. The child acts according to his or her own wishes often without understanding the social relationships and the social meaning between adults. The generalisation and abbreviation of playful actions are evidence of the fact that children perceive the meaning of the relationships between people and that this perception is by nature emotional. According to *Elkonin* the evolution of actions in play proceeds as follows: mother feeds the child from the spoon and the child learns to eat from the spoon, the child eats from the spoon and feeds the doll from the spoon, and finally, the child feeds the doll from the spoon as mother. *Elkonin* (1978, 187) emphasises that in spite of the level of his or her emotional involvement in the role, the child still perceives himself or herself as a child. He or she observes himself or herself through his or her assumed role, i.e. the role of the adult. The player emotionally compares himself or herself to the adult and finds that he or she is not yet an adult. Thus, through play children perceive that they are still children and thereby arises a new motive, namely that of becoming an adult and of fulfilling that function in real life.

*Elkonin* (1978) has studied extensively the features of the emergence and development of role play and has confirmed them with several of experiments. *Elkonin* emphasises that most important in play is the imaginary situation and the role the child assumes. According to *Elkonin* role play is a unique relationship of the child to society. The reality which the child inhabits can be provisionally divided in two mutually related but at the same time different spheres: firstly, the sphere of objects representing the natural world as well as the world of objects created by people and, secondly, the social sphere of people. *Elkonin* found that role play appears especially sensitive to activities and relationships between people. The playing children identify themselves with adults, their activities, behaviour and relationships. It is characteristic of the role play of preschool children that when assuming the function of adults, children depict their activities in a very generalised, symbolic way. Role play develops from object-related role play into social role play.

*Zaporozhets* (2000) accentuated the need to study the rules of the development of play, the macro- as well as micro-genesis of play. In developing and extending the ideas of Vygotsky concerning the social relation of psychic processes together with *Leontjev's* activity-related approach to analysing psychic phenomena, *Zaporozhets* put forward the idea that in order for

specifically human forms of play activity to emerge the child must have mastered certain methods of reproducing reality in play. The child must have learned how to use toys and he or she must have acquired the ability to act out certain themes and obey the rules of the game. Zaporozhets (1986) noted that there are two important changes in the development of the child's psyche associated with the development of play. The first of these is connected with children's acquisition of knowledge and skills through play. This essential part of play has to be taken into account when using didactic games. The second change is connected with the formation of internal psychic actions resulting from external actions. Zaporozhets introduced the notion of 'amplification' as meaning the use of the optimal approach for the development of the child in each age-group-specific form of activity (these are play, artistic activity, construction, music etc). Zaporozhets called for enriching the psychological development of children in their activities, which he understood in terms of individual activities. It is widely acknowledged that the constituent factor of activity is its object-relatedness.

Zaporozhets emphasised that under conditions of family upbringing various forms of play are usually learned spontaneously as a result of direct communication with adults and siblings. Zaporozhets also noted that the motives within children's play are sincere and require a serious attitude on the part of adults. (Zaporozhets 1986.)

### **2.2.3 Modern pedagogical-psychological models of play**

The ideas of Vygotsky, Leontjev, Elkonin and Zaporozhets were elaborated in a preschool education research institute headed by Zaporozhets in the 1970s and 1980s. These studies were of a pedagogical-psychological nature and included analysis of children's play in terms of the formation of the child's autonomous activities. The need for such studies had already been emphasised by Vygotsky (1978).

*Novosyolova* (1995), relying on her own studies as well as on those of Leontjev, Luria and Zaporozhets, concluded that activity continuously changes its psychological content depending on the level to which the subject generalises his or her activity. The cognitive development of young children is determined by their experiences in object activity. When a child acts with objects two kinds of results are achieved. On the one hand there is a certain utilitarian objective, i.e. managing an object and handling it. On the other hand there is an enrichment of the child's experience, which is expressed in improved skills in handling the objects. Play can be viewed as a condition of the development of the symbolising function of thinking. (Novosyolova 1978.) An experimental study (Novosyolova 1978, 1989) indicated that the development of the child's symbolising function in play is related to generalising practical experience in the increasingly abstract ways of reproducing reality in play. Through play a distinctive historically-developed transfer of experience to the child's own individual experience takes place (Novosyolova 2002, 222).

The pedagogical-psychological problems of assistance in play have been more thoroughly analysed by *Mendzeritskaija* (1982). She extended the ideas of Vygotsky, according to which during the preschool age children's play acquires sense and meaning, thus indicating a transfer to creative activity. The meaning of play develops from one of random associations to the conscious well-considered theme of play. Initial thought arises during the course of activity. The child begins to build or draw without any visible aim but, influenced by various associations, he or she then develops a wish to build a car or to draw a house. Later on children can set goals before they start play or work. Then their actions follow from certain thoughts, which are initially unstable and open to change by random influences. In realising the meaning of play children depict social reality not by mechanically copying it but rather by combining their knowledge, ideas and impressions and communicating their attitudes towards what they are depicting. Therefore, *Mendzeritskaija* made the suggestion that thematic role games should be called creative thematic role games. At the same time *Mendzeritskaija* not only stresses the creative character of role games but also emphasises the creative character of other games such as motor and didactic games, where creativeness is expressed through various roles and types of theme. In creative games children do not play as actors. Instead, they play on behalf of themselves, expressing their dreams and aspirations. (*Mendzeritskaija* 1982.)

*Mendzeritskaija* (1982) also presents the notion that assistance in creative play is one of the most complicated areas in early childhood education because a teacher can never predict what children will come up with and how they will behave in play. Further on *Mendzeritskaija* writes that this fact does not mean that the role of the adult in supporting play is less important in comparison with the performing of other activities. The most important factor is the level of trust between the child and adult through which contact may be built as well as the degree of seriousness on the part of the adult towards the child's play. The basic task of the teacher is to choose from the multitude of impressions and experiences those, which can serve as a basis for good play. *Mendzeritskaija* emphasises that in the fourth year of life the child is able to pass from thought to action, i.e. to decide independently what he or she wants to play and who he or she wants to be in the play. At this age the role of the adult in promoting the child's play appears to be essential. In addition to play *Mendzeritskaija* considered drawing, fairy tales, stories and construction important for the development of creativity. Thus, as *Mendzeritskaija* has emphasised, children's creativity in play is not born automatically but requires the systematic and continuous support of adults. (*Mendzeritskaija* 1982.)

*Venger* (1986) emphasised that in play the child forms a symbolic function of thinking, which consists of the substitution of real objects by replacement objects and the assuming of roles. Later on this substitution develops into the acquisition of such systems as oral and written speech, mathematical symbols, notes etc. While acting out one or another plot the child models the relationships of adults. Using various means as replacements the child creates

models which represent the relationships between the replacements and real-life objects. The use of external substitution is gradually replaced by internal substitution. Venger and his colleagues worked out several visual display models (schemes in the shape of plans and drawings) which have played a large role in the study of cognitive development in children.

The ideas of the cultural-historical approach have also been developed in other parts of the world. For example, *Goncü* and his colleagues (1999) have used Leontjev's theory as a guide for attempting to understand children's play and culture. They argued that Leontjev's theory includes culture as an integral part of human development. While studying the cultural variations in the play the conclusion was reached, that community features such as economic structure, adults value system, intersubjectivity and the content of children's play have to be taken into account. For example some Turkish parents did not play with their children due to time constraints. The parents often expressed positive feelings about children's play across different communities and they convey their values to children.

#### **2.2.4 Stages of play**

Children's play exhibits clear transformations both in early childhood and later on during the preschool period (see figure 1). The first stage of play - *familiarising play* - is an object-related playful activity in its motive and is mediated to the child by the parent through an object (Novosyolova, Zvorygina & Paramonova 1989). Familiarising play consists of the manipulation of objects and is of an exploratory character. In the first six months of his or her life the child gets to know the features of toys and objects while during the course of the following six months he or she discovers ways of acting and playing with them, i.e. their functions (Novosyolova 1991). Knowledge of the function of an object means an understanding of what can be done with it, especially, what results can be achieved by using it. Thus, children realise either independently or with the assistance of an adult that shaking the rattle will make a noise.

Thus, acquiring ways of acting with different objects according to their physical qualities, children learn to use them as knocking tools, to place them one within another, to throw them on the floor etc. The player learns to achieve an aim by using objects as the means. This is the stage of *imaginative play*. Children gradually begin to imagine not only the qualities of objects but also their social function, for example, people driving toy cars, or lorries and wagons carrying loads. In imaginative games children proceed from reflecting upon the individual qualities of objects to reflecting upon the socially fixed meanings of these objects. (Novosyolova 1991.)

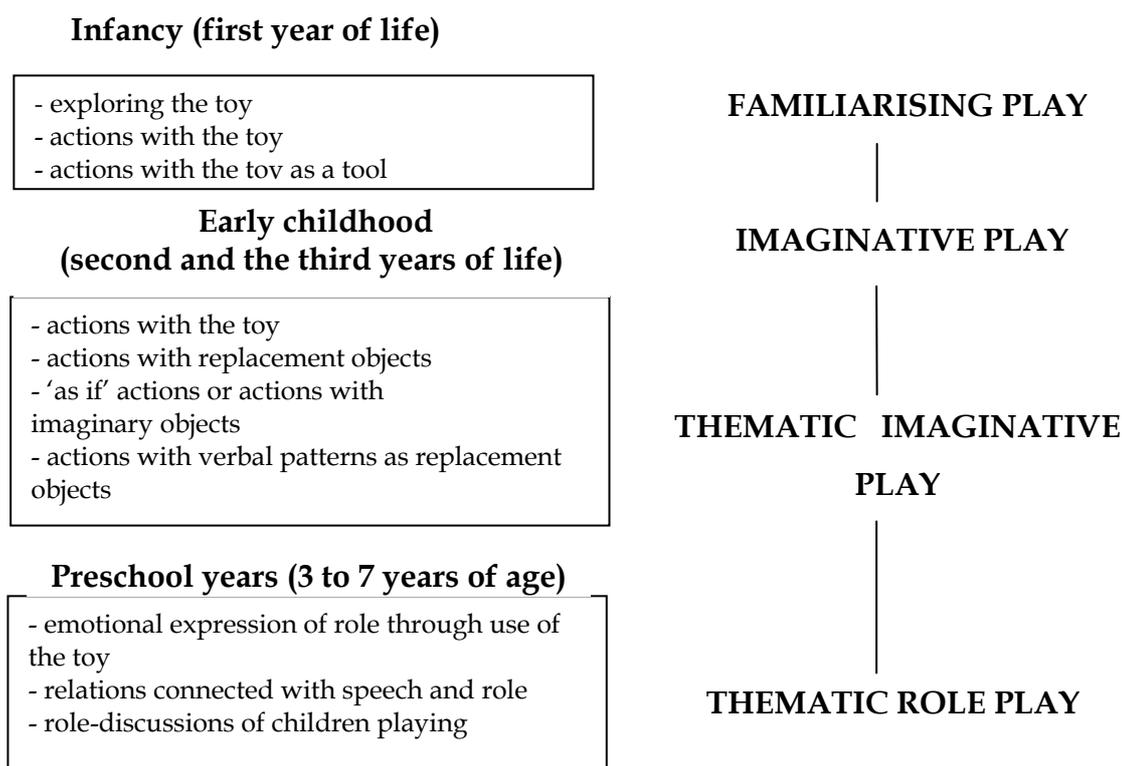


FIGURE 1 A scheme of the forms of action occurring during the development of play (Novosyolova 1991, 75)

At the beginning of the second year children's social contacts with people from the surrounding world increase. At the same time, children continue to acquire new experiences in dealing with everyday objects and playing with toys. This forms the basis for further development in children's play. Thus, driving a toy car or lorry forwards and backwards is no longer of interest. Instead, the child puts a doll or a toy animal in the car and drives it around, or she or he may cook the way mother does, or put the doll to bed and comb both its and her own hair, or eat and feed the doll by spoon. Thus, through their play children start to represent elementary everyday situations of which they are familiar and which they understand. The content of play they draw from their life experience ("activity experience" Novosyolova 1991). This stage of play is called *thematic imaginative play*.

In thematic imaginative play the player imitates and depicts the actions of adults. Characteristic of thematic imaginative play is the fact that playful actions are repeated. For example, the child puts a doll on the bed, covers it with a blanket and then takes it out of the bed again, puts it back on the bed and covers with the blanket again, etc. When children depict a certain theme in their play and use objects in accordance with their functions, the object also assumes a meaning for the players.

Children combine individual events from everyday life with imaginary situations. These may sometimes even take on a fairy-tale character yet they are always based on children's own personal experience. It can often be observed

how young players imitate familiar people in their play. Thus, they adopt their mother's tone of voice and gestures while cooking or they behave like the doctor when giving an injection to the teddy bear. (Novosyolova 1991.)

At the end of the third year children begin to assume more and more roles without, however, identifying themselves with those roles (Elkonin 1978). For example, if a girl who was laying the table and clearly playing 'mother' were to be asked who she was, she would reply, "I'm Julia." This stage of play, which is known as "role in action" (Elkonin 1978), is characterised by a highly emotional and expressive imitation of familiar people. Elkonin noted that the fact that children answer questions as to who they are in terms of their own names proves that the players realise that it is they themselves who are performing the activities. Role-related actions are more generalised as compared with object-related actions (Novosyolova 1991). The role in actions is connected with generalising object-related actions and with the behaviour of people, while emotional personality traits, which are typical of them, are displayed. Also characteristic is that the player may use many replacement and imaginary toys. This stage in the development of play is called *thematic role play*. The transition from thematic imaginative play to thematic role play is not an automatic process but is prepared by the preceding activities and games (Novosyolova 1991). First, it happens through the replacement of real objects by actions characteristic of toys. For example, in the first year of life a child plays with a toy apple, whereas in the middle of the second year the concrete object-related toy can be replaced with a ball. Further on the child can feed the doll with an imaginary apple which exists only in his or her imagination. The child brings his or her fingers to the mouth of the doll and performs appropriate gestures. Finally the time will arrive (at the beginning of the third year) when a playing child confidently explains, "The doll liked the apple very much." (Novosyolova 1991.) According to Vygotsky (1983) this is the so-called 'drawing function'.

In role play the role taken by the player is central (Elkonin 1978). Children do not name themselves by saying, for example, "I am mother" or "I am a policeman". However, of still greater significance, they begin to act in the manner that the roles require. Thus, children playing will identify themselves with adults, their actions, behaviour and relationships. Characteristic of the role play of preschool children is that when taking over the functions of adults, children depict their activities in a very generalised, symbolic way. Play consists of imitation of central, characteristic activities from adult life such as their professional or social relations (e.g. playing 'steamboats'). The facets of reality reconstructed by play build up the subject matter of the play. For example, play operations may comprise various hand and arm movements as well as movements on the ground. One example of a playful action is the smooth movement of a steamboat on the river or the bustling activity of sailors on the quay. Relying on Mihailenko's studies, Elkonin (1978) outlines four basic elements of play as follows: firstly, *role or personality*, secondly, *situation*, i.e. where the role is performed, thirdly, *objects* used by the players in their actions and finally, *attitude* towards other people.

Elkonin (1999) notes that one of the most important tasks in the analysis of role play is to ascertain the psychological presuppositions upon which the role taken by the child is based as well as the development of role content. Elkonin studied role development through several of experiments in which the experimenter assumed the player's role or participated in the play as the leader. The experimenter joined in the play by proposing changes to either the plot or the course of the play through introducing additional conditions. According to the results of his studies, Elkonin (1999, 243- 245) pointed out four levels of development of role play:

In the first level the main content of play comprises actions with objects that are directed towards the fellow player. These actions (e.g. the actions of 'mother' or 'kindergarten teacher') are directed towards 'children'. The most important and common component of such role-play is the act of feeding another person. The order of feeding and how the children are fed are of little importance. Roles exist but are usually not designated. However, if there is a functional distribution of roles during play and these roles are designated (e.g. one child plays mother and the other father, or one plays kindergarten teacher and the other kindergarten cook), then the relationships initiated are not typical of real life. The character of the actions determines the roles. Actions are one-sided and consist of repeated operations. Actions do not follow on one after the next according to any real-life sequence. For example, feeding is not connected with washing hands. Instead, if a new proceeding occurs then after performing that the child will revert to the previous one.

In the second level the main content of play, as with the previous stage, is made up of actions with objects. The difference now is that the consistency of playful activities with real life becomes of central importance. Children designate the roles themselves and the division of functions is planned. The logic of actions is determined by that found in real life. The number of actions in the play increases (thus, for example, feeding is associated with cooking and serving). Violation of the succession of actions is not admitted factually but is neither protested against. Unacceptability is not motivated by anything. Elkonin gives an example of two girls, one of whom is at the first level and for whom the main content of play is feeding without any concern for the order in which it is performed. Playing at the second level, it is important for the other girl not only to feed but also to follow the same sequence of feeding as found in real life. Moreover, this second player also tries to direct the actions of the first player.

In the third level role play and actions arising from it become the main content of play. Specific actions that depict the characteristic features of the participants begin to emerge. One example of such relationships is the addressing of other players in a way connected to the acting of roles. For example, the cook is addressed with the words "Give me the first dish!" The children designate their roles before the play and the roles are clearly differentiated and defined. Roles direct and determine each child's behaviour. The logic and nature of the actions are determined by the assumed role. The actions become varied. For example, players not only feed but also read fairy-tales, put children to bed, etc. Of significance is the emergence of specific role speech connected to the addressing of the other playmates according to the player's and playmates' respective roles. They protest against the violation of the logic of actions, the protest usually being expressed with words such as "It can't be like that".

The fourth level is characterised by the performing of actions, which are connected with relationships with other people and with roles being acted out by other children. For example, when acting out the doctor's role the player's activity is directed towards instructing the patients' behaviour. "Don't cry - it's not so painful", "Is it painful? I am doing it well so it won't be painful", "I told you to stay lying down but you are standing up", etc. The roles are well differentiated. Throughout the play the child adheres to a single line of behaviour. The functions of the children's roles are reciprocally connected. Speech is used to act out each role. The actions are varied and match the various actions of the person being played by the child. The rules followed by the child based on real life are clearly differentiated from those

actually existing in real life. Real-life logic is violated and the rules of the actions are abandoned. The rejection of such violations is motivated not only by references to real life but also to the rationality of the rules.

Solitary play predominates in the infant age. At that age children have insufficient social skills to play together with others. However, they are able to act with objects and to depict relations in their games with two or more people. The role bearers in solitary play are not the other children or adults but the toys, which represent all kinds of people (Gasparova 1989). Children bestow roles on these toys, conferring on them features characteristic of human beings or animals and speaking to them in a different voice and acting on their behalf. Such kinds of toys include dolls, toy animals, soldiers, all kinds of creatures made of Lego, etc. Children behave rather like directors guiding and directing the behaviour of their actors and actresses. This type of play is known as *director's play*. Unlike in joint play, where the children have to count on the partner's position, here the children themselves organise the play situation, regulate interpersonal mutual relationships and motivate the activities of themselves and each other. In this way children learn to observe events from various positions and put themselves in the place of the various people. Thus, they also acquire social experiences through playing the role of director. The player's partner, for example, a doll, unlike a human partner, does not demand a high level of communication from the player. This means that the player does not have to take simultaneous account of four positions, i.e. himself or herself and the assumed role, the play partner and his or her role position. It is characteristic of director's play that children usually do not adopt any permanent roles. At the same time director's play creates good opportunities for developing the child's fantasy and imagination. However, speech is the main component of these games. The children name their actions and the actions of the toys, and accompany all this with emotional sounds. The speech becomes increasingly evaluative and role-like. Every role is accompanied by appropriate speech. For example, a rabbit talks in a thin voice, a wolf in a deep voice. (Gasparova 1989.)

The development of children's play proceeds from role play, where there are open play roles, an open imaginary situation and concealed rules, to the *rule game*, where there is a hidden imaginary situation, concealed play roles and open rules (Vygotsky 1976; Elkonin 1978; Leontjev 1981). There are rules in role play too, where the player, while playing together with the other players, has to subordinate his or her actions to meet the given rules. This requires the ability to subscribe to the rules even when the player's interest is directed somewhere else. For example, in the game of 'stations' a 'cashier' would like to buy a biscuit and eat it. At the same time the experimenter wants to buy the ticket at the ticket window. The 'cashier' must first fulfil an 'actions rule' which is directly connected with his or her play role, i.e. sell tickets at the ticket window for those who wish to buy them. (Elkonin 1978.) Unlike role games, rule games lead to a result and are also connected with winning and losing (Mihailenko & Korotkova 1999).

After conducting several experiments, Elkonin (1978) came to the conclusion that the child acquires rules better through role, themes and plots. Elkonin analysed various physical games such as relay games, in which children had to start running after the order "One-two-three", and the game known as 'trains' where the children had to start running after the signal "toot-toot". It turned out that the children acquired the rule better in the latter case than in the former. In the latter game the children also started to make movements similar to that of a train and so identified themselves with the train. Thus, a role gives a meaning to the players as well as an opportunity to check the fulfilment of the rules. An essential condition in acquiring rules, as Elkonin's studies showed, is the existence of partners and their interaction during the game. (Elkonin 1978.) According to Leontjev (1981) the motive in the rule game lies in the games itself and not in the result. Rule games are characterised by finished content, a predetermined sequence of actions and fulfilment of the rules.

In spite of the apparent difference between role games and rule games in the preschool context, there is an internal connection between them which allows us to speak of an integral play development line. By the end of the preschool period there appears a separation of the rule from the plot, which is also one of the characteristics of readiness for school. The development of the game at school age leads to didactic, dramatic, fantasy and physical games in which the result has become more important than the play process (Leontjev 1981). Why are rule games important? A child's self-esteem develops through them. At first self-esteem is very simple - an assessment of one's deftness, skills and success in comparison to other those of children. From such a comparison an independent conscious assessment grows, by which the child starts to assess his or her skills and opportunities. (Leontjev 1981.)

### **2.2.5 Play script**

In addition to developing understanding of the stages of play Novosyolova (1989) and Zvorygina (1989, 1997) also paid attention to the development of the structural unit of play analysis. Novosyolova and Zvorygina understand the development of play in terms of a process in which children act out a script, which becomes increasingly complex while making the players set goals and achieve them independently.

Zvorygina (1988, 15) emphasises that while assisting play attention has to be paid to the special quality of play actions: a play action always aims at attaining a certain goal, taking into consideration the conditions of the play. In the process of a game a child acts out several play scripts. At the same time the player learns to set goals within the framework of given conditions and acquires new, more complicated ways of acting. Achieving the aim of a game is always connected with complex situations. When complex situations are located within the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky 1978a) the child performs the play script on his or her own or with the assistance of an older and more experienced partner. The most important feature of every play script is an

imaginary goal, which is understandable and familiar to the child as a result of personal experience.

Novosyolova and Zvorygina (1998) have suggested that the play script could be used as a structural unit for analysing play (see figure 2). In their games children not only mechanically imitate what they have seen, heard and perceived but also gradually learn to set goals for their play and to find different ways of realising these goals. The play script is *a system of conditions in which an imaginary situation is created, which is familiar and understandable to the child and which is directed towards the depiction and reconstruction of the life experience of the child* (Novosyolova & Zvorygina 1998, 44).

This system of conditions is emotionally close to the child and carries a special personal sense. There is a wide diversity of play scripts, for example, washing, brushing and feeding a doll, curing a sick bunny, building a house and bringing blocks for the building, etc. In order to achieve the chosen aim children may utilise any form of action of which they have had previous experience. The meaning of the child's social environment is in turn expressed by the ways and means he or she utilises in his or her play. It is not by accident that one and the same subject matter, for instance, playing 'family', permeates the whole of childhood. It not only reflects new aspects of the sphere of life but also the level to which the player has articulated meaning. (Novosyolova & Zvorygina 1998.)

*The ways of acting out play scripts* represent different actions within play. These can be elaborate actions with toys and more generalised actions, actions that gradually become gestures or words, and finally actions that are more mental in their character. Two different groups of ways of acting out play scripts have been distinguished according to the essence of the sphere of life which the child depicts in his or her play. These are *object-related* and *role-related*. In object-related ways the player depicts human activities in the world of objects and the process of the reshaping of objects. Object-related forms of play express human activities in the world of objects and in nature.

Role-related ways of acting out play scripts depict the social domain of the real world (mutual activities of people, relations and communication). Children acquire object-related ways of playing earlier as they develop practical activities with objects in their first year of life. Play evolves on the basis of activity involving material objects. The development of the role-related way of playing is connected with the self-awareness of the child and his or her relations with other people. The role-related ways develop by the third year of life. By this time the notion of "I myself" appears when the child has acquired experience of acting out play scripts in object-related ways and is able to perceive an imaginary situation and the relativity of the play, including the relativity of acting out roles such as "Me as if I were mother" or "He will be a driver in the play". Role-related actions are more generalised than object-related actions. Thus, in order to call oneself or another player 'mother', 'doctor', 'astronaut', etc. it is essential to choose and distinguish between many actions, personal characteristics and forms of behaviour typical of those people. Role-related forms are gradually reshaped and become increasingly clearly defined. The

sequence of their development is first emotional-expressive role actions and roles assumed and secondly role expressions; role dialogue; role monologue in a director's play. (Novosyolova & Zvorygina 1998.)

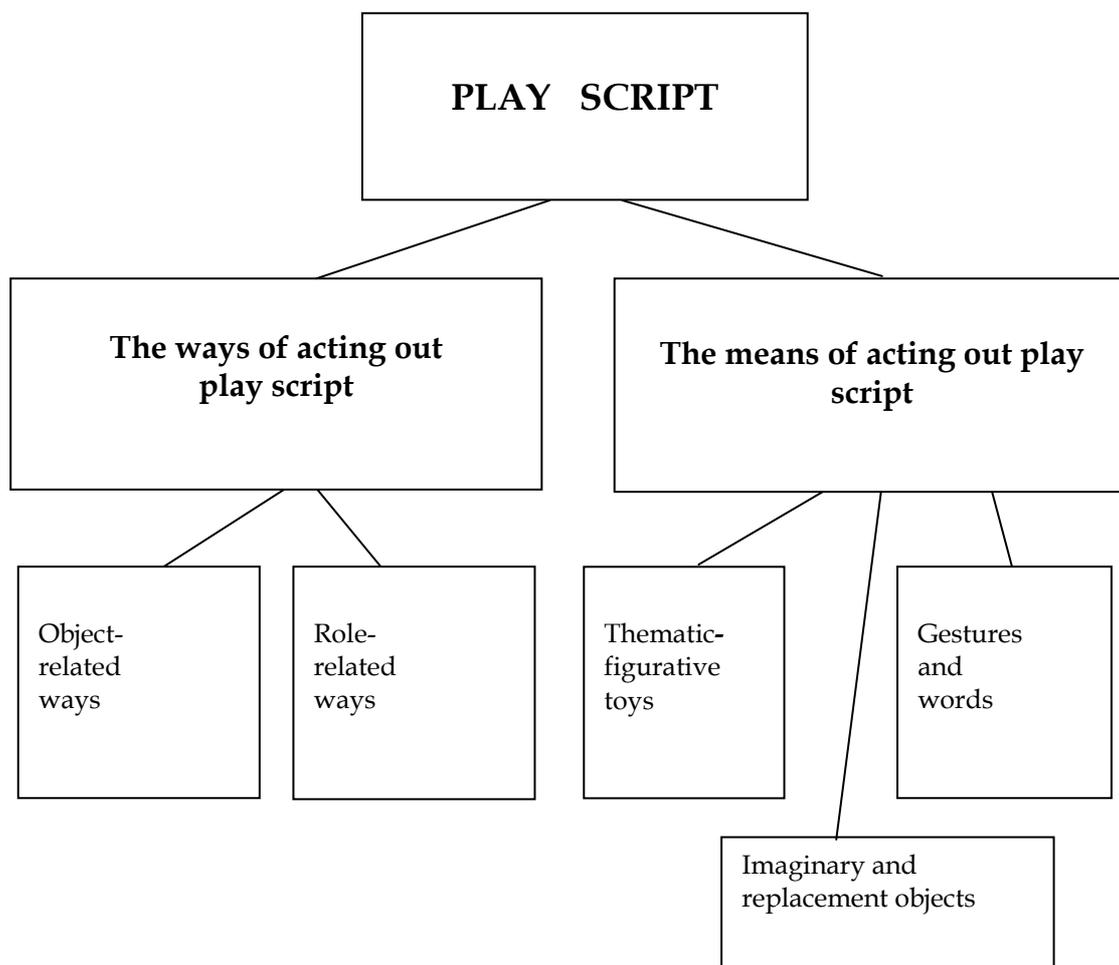


FIGURE 2 Play script

Various play materials and toys as well as gestures and words that mark imaginary objects and actions are *means of acting out a play script*. The means of acting out play scripts develop with the assistance of adults in the way described below (Zvorygina 1988, 1989, 1997). At first children acquire object-related playing actions with *thematic-figurative toys*. Thereafter they switch over to play actions with *imaginary objects*, i.e. play in which there are no objects physically present to support their actions. Later children no longer carry out familiar actions but instead designate them with words such as “the dolls have eaten already” or “they have already had their sleep”. Children individually prepare conditions for the game and carry out preparatory actions. Thus, before feeding the dolls the player ‘cooks’ food for them, lays the table and carefully places the dolls around the table. (Zvorygina 1988.)

Imitation has an essential role in the creation of child's play. According to Piaget (1962) the first independent manifestations of play are delayed imitation. Zvorygina (1988) emphasized that the child's knowledge and experience of the

surrounding life have an important role in the development of play in the first and second year of an infant. Thus, assistance in play actually begins with the introduction of the surrounding world. By the end of the first year and the beginning of the second year of life the child discovers toys and their physical qualities as well as the meaning of many objects such as household items. For example, a bed is for sleeping in, a chair is for sitting on, a cup is for drinking from, a cap is for wearing on your head. The eighteen-month-old child is encouraged to use not only thematic-figurative toys but also the first replacement toys, which are given playful names by the adult. Eighteen-month-old children may act out three to four elementary play scripts with any given toy. Thus, for example, they feed the dolls and toy animals, put them to sleep, give them rides in a car or in a pram etc.

Later on children are able to act out play scripts provided by adults as well as those given by adults in an indirect way by describing the imaginary situation of dolls or toy animals. For example, the doll is cold, the car is broken, etc. Children also learn to use *replacement objects* in their play and to denote them in a playful way. For example, a cube is an apple and a stick a pencil etc. At the same time children learn to use and name imaginary objects which are actually absent at that moment. They will describe, for example, that there is 'milk' in the cup or is 'porridge' in the bowl.

According to Zvorygina (1988) in the third year of life the play script is given to the child in a way which is not based on a defined thematic situation. Sometimes the relationship between the various roles is mentioned thus: "Why is this little girl crying? Where is the mother of this little bunny? Where is the driver of this car? Where are these passengers going?" Away from thematic situations, when toys (e.g. various types of dolls) are available a child will act out the script without making use of material objects. Thus, it is not important that the child acts out the play script using imaginary or replacement objects, but that he or she informs the others verbally about his or her actions. Children start to denote the sense of the play verbally and words such as "as if" begin to appear in their speech. At the same time children are encouraged to communicate with each other and with adults while playing out their play scripts.

Thus, according to Zvorygina (1988), the play of children aged between twelve and thirty-six months passes through the following changes. It changes from the single actions of an individual child with a single toy to detailed individual and joint play in imaginary situations containing a variety of actions of people and episodes depicting communication between them. Play becomes gradually more independent and creative as the child grows older. (Zvorygina 1988.)

A study of the play of three- to five-year-old kindergarten children showed that younger children act out play scripts individually whereas older children increasingly do so together with others (Saar 1987). Children's games were divided into two categories, namely dialogue-games and group games. Dialogue-games are games in which two players usually act out a play script

simultaneously with one play script following on from the other. Thus, a linear structure of connections between the play scripts is characteristic. An example of dialogue-games is playing 'shop'. In game dialogues the acting out of a play script incorporates individual play episodes. Thus, for example, a customer buys goods from the shop while the shopkeeper sells the same goods to the customer. Then a new buyer comes into the shop and the acting out of a new play script begins. (Saar 1987.)

In group play, for example, when playing 'kindergarten', 'café', 'birthday' or 'ships', several children act out play scripts either simultaneously or inside the group in sub-groups. Characteristic of group games is a star-like structure of script relations, i.e. every script is connected to every other scripts in several ways. The acting out of play scripts may be carried out either individually or together. For example, when playing 'birthday' the children first lay the table and then everyone separately starts feeding their dolls. Finally, all players together clear up the table and go for a walk.

As the child grows older dialogue-games increasingly become group games. This transformation happens in such a way that new roles are added to the two main roles. For example, when playing 'shop', in addition to the 'customer' and 'shopkeeper', a driver who brings goods to the shop by lorry is added. Playing 'doctors', the 'doctor' and the 'patient' are joined by the 'nurse' and the 'emergency doctor'. (Saar 1987.)

A study of the play of three- and four-year-old kindergarten children confirmed that players of that age act out play scripts individually and in object-related ways (Peneva 1987). An essential element in the transfer from the object-related way to role-related way lies in the play materials that differ on the level of generalisation. In addition to thematic-figurative toys the child's play world should also include replacement and imaginary toys. The study pointed out that children need adults in their games as they can assist primarily in solving a wide range of problems that might occur during play. On the other hand, the teacher must be able to skilfully develop the child's play using playful-problematic communication. (Peneva 1987.)

### **2.2.6 The zone of proximal development and play**

Vygotsky places particular emphasises on the *role of the environment* in the child's development. According to Vygotsky (Van der Veer & Valsiner 1991, 317):

"The environment has one or another influence on the child's development that differs at different ages, because the child himself changes and his or her relationship to the given situation changes as well. The environment has that influence... through the experiences of the child, i.e., depending upon how the child has worked out in himself the internal relationship towards the tone or any other aspect of one or another situation in the environment. The environment defines one or another development depending upon the level of meaningfulness (stepen' osmyslenija) that the child has assembled for the given environment."

Vygotsky (1978a) found that the driving force of psychical development is teaching. Only teaching that is ahead of the level of development of the child is considered to be beneficial. In connection with this Vygotsky introduced the concept of the 'zone of proximal development'. By this Vygotsky meant the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers (Vygotsky 1978a, 86). Vygotsky emphasised that the development of the internal processes of the child's development is possible only through joint activity (in the broadest sense) with other people (Vygotsky 1984, 265). For example, a teacher does not teach pupils those things that they can already do independently but rather those that they are not yet able to perform independently. The teaching process is always implemented by the child and the adult acting together. In studying what the child can do independently, attention is paid to his or her preceding development. However, in determining what the child can do in joint activity, his or her future development must be studied (Vygotsky 1984, 264).

Vygotsky emphasises the role of the adult in the child's instruction: "...in co-operation with the help of someone's instruction the child can do more and solve much more complicated tasks than alone" (Vygotsky 1982, 247). However, Vygotsky supplements the idea that together with the adult the child is not capable of doing everything but merely of acting within certain limits, i.e. the limits of his or her development and intellectual abilities. The child's greater or lesser ability to carry out activities independently or together with others is the most sensitive characteristic of the dynamics of his or her development and mental activity.

Teaching is possible only where there is imitation. The opportunities for teaching the child are determined by his or her zone of proximal development. Thus, educational process must orientate itself not to the child's previous development but to his or her future development. Teaching is of benefit only when it is ahead of development. Only then will it call into existence those psychic functions that are in the stage of ripening and are in the zone of proximal development. In Vygotsky's (1982, 252) opinion this represents the importance of teaching for development.

In Vygotsky's approach the role of the social other (teacher, more capable peer, parent, etc.) is presented as always being beneficial (van der Veer & Valsiner 1994, 6). He did not see this 'co-operation with others' with the primacy of equal collaborators in mind (van der Veer & Valsiner 1994, 317). Vygotsky considered the asymmetric relationship in the co-operation between the developing child and his or her social environment as representing the norm. The child's social environment includes a variety of 'ideal forms' of the end-product of development (i.e. adults) and the developing child starts lacking these forms. These 'ideal forms' guide the child's experiences within the social world, i.e. his or her 'co-operation' with others, and direct the child's construction of meaningfulness in his or her relationship with the world.

Vygotsky stressed the dangers for development in cases where these 'ideal forms' are not present (e.g. the case of deaf children with parents who have no hearing impairment). (van der Veer & Valsiner 1994.)

Van der Veer and Valsiner (1994, 6) noted that real life is much more complicated than any utopia and, borrowing from Vygotsky, have drawn attention to educational utopia as a real-life situation. Van der Veer and Valsiner emphasised that many researchers dealing with scientific research into mother-child interaction and the solving of joint problems find it necessary to refer to Vygotsky, although in fact Vygotsky never discussed these situations but focused instead more upon culture as providing tools for thinking.

Some years later Valsiner and van der Veer argued in their book "The Social Mind" (Valsiner & van der Veer 2000, 339) that Vygotsky was not a child psychologist but a psychologist who became increasingly interested in the theoretical problem of development. Vygotsky plausibly argued that education was important for development, that instruction by adults or more knowledgeable peers was essential. He never tried to operationalise concepts such as the zone of proximal development. Thus, Valsiner and van der Veer emphasised the great theoretical meaning of the ideas while at the same time highlighting the paucity of empirical research.

Berk and Winsler (1995), who have analysed Vygotsky's approach to play, noted that investigators have focused much greater attention on the social-interactive and signs-mediational aspects of his theory. New evidence suggests that make-believe, like other higher mental functions, is the product of social collaboration. Those more experienced members within the child's environment scaffold his or her use of make-believe, thereby facilitating its early emergence and elaboration. Berk and Winsler (1995, 63) suggested that Vygotsky-based research on play emphasises that in terms of its origins make-believe is a social activity. In Western industrialised societies play first appears between caregivers and children; pretence and games are initially learned under the supportive guidance of experts. From these interactions children appropriate the communicative conventions, social skills and representational capacities that permit them to engage in make-believe on their own. Berk (1994) also noted that in some cultural groups, children are not regarded as suitable social partners for adults. Consequently, they do not interact as equals in conversation while their parents rarely play with them. Instead, children speak when spoken to, replying to requests for information or complying with an adult's directives. In cultures around the world young children act out family scenes and highly visible occupations, for example those such as policeman, doctor or nurse. In this way play provides children with important insights into the link between the self and wider society. (Berk 1994.)

## 2.3 Summarising the ideas of play within the cultural-historical approach

In the following the main ideas about play and the modern pedagogical-psychological models of Vygotsky and adherents of the Vygotsky school are set out in brief. Various aspects of play, including its essential characteristics, play theme and types, are detailed along with differing views of play materials and opinions regarding child stimulation in play.

### Vygotsky's view of play

#### *Essential characteristics of play*

According to Vygotsky (1966) play is an imaginary illusory world in which unrealisable desires can be realised (see table 1). Play is not a realisation of individual wishes but the implementation of generalised affects. A child generalises those affective reactions after the age of three. Role play starts during the fourth year of life and owes its emergence to the fact that activity in imaginary situations releases the child from the constraints of the situation. Play does, in fact, appear before this age but not yet as a real fictitious situation. It is an imaginary situation but is only comprehensible in light of some real situation that has just preceded it.

The characteristics of play are an imaginary situation, imitation and rules. If the child is playing the role of a mother, then she has rules of maternal behaviour. The role the child fulfills, and her relation to the object (if the object has changed its meaning), will always stem from the rules. Also characteristic is that the meaning of one item is transferred to another while at the same time actions are replaced by others which are abbreviated and generalised in character. The child's greatest achievements are possible in play, achievements that later become the basis for his or her real action and morality. Play is a leading activity in preschool children. The evolution of children's play follows a development from games containing overt imaginary situations and covert rules to games with overt rules and covert imaginary situations.

#### *Play theme and content*

Vygotsky (1966, 1982) noted that children observe the activities of surrounding adults, imitate them and transfer them to their play. In play the child acquires basic social relationships. Indeed, play can be viewed as the 'arithmetic of social relations'. According to Vygotsky the main content of play is the system of relationships with adults. Thus, through play a child learns adults' activities and about work in general. In general children are subject to the authority of adults. Children's play is social even when the child plays alone.

*Play materials*

Vygotsky (1966) noted that first the child plays with realistic objects and that these objects have a motivating influence on the child's actions. Indeed, they greatly determine the child's actions. During play thought is separated from objects and action arises from ideas rather than from things. Thus, a piece of wood begins to be a doll and a stick becomes a horse. Action according to rules gradually becomes determined by ideas and not by the objects themselves. When the stick is conferred with the sense of being a 'horse', the child induces a semantic influence of one object over another.

*Play types*

Vygotsky highlights two types of games, namely role play and rule games, as coming into being only with older preschool children.

*Play stimulation*

In analysing children's play Vygotsky (1966, 1982) does not point out the adult's role in promoting play. However, when discussing the notion of the zone of proximal development he draws attention to the adult as the one who directs development. Vygotsky emphasises that teaching is possible only where there is imitation. Children can imitate a variety of actions that go well beyond the limits of their own capabilities. Through imitation, children are capable of doing much more in collective activity or under the guidance of adults.

TABLE 1 Vygotsky's view of play

1. Essential characteristics of play	Play is an imaginary illusory world in which unrealisable desires can be realised. The characteristics of play are imaginary situations, imitation and rules. Play is the preschool child's leading activity.
2. Play theme and content	In play the child imitates the adults who make up his or her human surroundings. The main content of play is the system of relationships between the child and adults.
3. Play materials	At first the child plays with realistic objects and the objects exert a motivating influence on his or her actions. As play develops the objects gradually become substituted so that eventually they are depicted only imaginarily.
4. Play types	Imaginative play during the mid preschool years and rule games in the later preschool years. Open role games together with open imaginary situations become rule games in which imaginary situations and play roles are in concealed forms.
5. Play stimulation	Teaching is possible only where there is imitation. Through imitation children become capable of doing much more when under the guidance of adults.

## Followers of the Vygotsky school

### *Essential characteristics of play*

Leontjev (1981), Elkonin (1999) and others developed Vygotsky's ideas and found that play is characterised by imaginary situations, roles, imitation and rules (see table 2). In role play the child assumes certain generalised adult social functions, especially those related to work and everyday activities. Leontjev explained the emergence of role play in terms of a widening of the object world that surrounds the child and the child's developing wish to handle those objects. The child has a need to act as an adult, that is, in the same way that he or she has seen adults acting or according to what he or she has been told about the activities of adults. This conflict may only be resolved in play.

Elkonin in turn widened Leontjev's idea concerning the origins of role play and remarked that not only do objects play an essential role in the emergence of play. According to Elkonin, paramount are the actions of adults with these objects as well as the behaviour of adults and their mutual relationships. The generalisation and abbreviation of play action is evidence of the fact that the child perceives the meaning of the relationships between people. Role play according to Elkonin is especially sensitive to the activities and relationships of adults, and develops from object role play to social role play. Elkonin noted that in role play the imaginary situation and the role taken by the player are of central importance. In addition to the role Elkonin outlines three basic elements of play. These are the situation, i.e. where the role is performed, the objects used by the players in their actions and the relationships between the players.

### *Play theme and content*

The followers of the Vygotsky school emphasised the theme and content of play, claiming that children are especially sensitive to the surrounding world of adults, the activities of adults and their mutual relationships. In terms of the theme and content of play the ethical education of children (concerning attributes such as kindness, honesty, attentiveness etc.) has been especially emphasised. Elkonin (1999) noted that the main measure of the child's activity consists of adults, i.e. what adults do, why adults do what they do, what kinds of relationships adults initiate with other people etc. Through play the norms that form the basis for interpersonal relationships shape the progress of the child's moral development. Thus, play is a school of morality for the child.

### *Play materials*

The followers of the Vygotsky school showed that the child's first toys are life-like, i.e. similar to real objects. Later on as the child grows older toys become more general and conventional. At the same time they begin to be substituted verbally and with the help of imagination. According to Leontjev a wide range of toys is used in play, which are involved in a diversity of actions. These include such basic materials as bricks and sticks. They are contrasted to

specialised play objects, which may in turn be divided into toys with either fixed or unfixed functions.

Based on previous studies, Elkonin emphasised that a child first performs object-related actions with those objects offered to him or her by adults. Later the child applies these actions to other objects, which again are supplied by adults. The child starts to label objects with the names of replacement objects only after performing actions with them and observing adults' playful labelling of the same objects. Thus, during play the substitution of one object for another takes place. This in turn enables a decrease in the technical-operational component of the action. Thus, action becomes shorter and more generalised.

### *Play types*

Leontjev (1981) identified three main play types, namely role play, rule games and so-called boundary games. It is difficult for three- and four-year-old children to submit themselves to rules and so the rule game appears later. This later appearance of the rule game is also connected with a changing of motive. Whereas the first play actions are connected with objects, later on the child finds in an object not only an object-person relationship but also relationships between a person and other people. Children are able not only to play side by side but also together with others. Social relationships in such games occur in an open form, i.e. in the form of the relationships between the players. At the same time the function of the play also changes. Its content now determines not only the child's actions in relation to the objects but also his or her actions in relation to the other participants. Leontjev considered boundary games as interim games. They are didactic, dramatisations and dreams. The development of play takes place as follows. Open role games involving open imaginary situations become rule games in which imaginary situations and play roles are present in concealed forms.

Elkonin (1999) found that the role emerges during the second half of the third year on the foundation of object activity. Reality can be divided in two mutually related but at the same time different spheres: firstly, the sphere of objects representing the natural world and the world of objects created by people and, secondly, the sphere of relationships between people. The content of object-related role play consists of actions with objects that relate to the role. The content of social role play consists of the activities of and relationships between adults. Role play develops from object role play into social role play.

### *Play stimulation*

The followers of the Vygotsky school noted that adults play an essential role in establishing the preconditions of play and in promoting children's play. Leontjev (1981), Elkonin (1999) and Zaporozhets (1986, 1997) emphasise the importance of emotional interaction and object-related activity in the emergence of the leading activity of preschool children, i.e. play. Adults are models whom children wish to imitate in their games. In his thorough analysis of role play Elkonin drew attention to the case of play promotion as an introduction to the

surrounding world i.e. the world of adults (the activities of adults including those with objects as well as mutual activity and interaction with other adults).

TABLE 2 View of play of followers of the Vygotsky school

1. Essential characteristics of play	Play is characterised by imaginary situations, roles, imitation and rules. In role play the child assumes certain generalised adult social functions, especially those related to work and everyday activities. Play is a leading activity in preschool children.
2. Play theme and content	Children are especially sensitive to the surrounding world of adults, the activities of adults and their mutual relationships. In terms of the theme and content of play the ethical education of children (concerning attributes such as kindness, honesty, attentiveness, etc.) has been especially emphasised.
3. Play materials	The child's first toys are life-like, i.e. similar to real objects. Later on as the child grows older toys become more general and conventional. At the same time they begin to be substituted verbally and with the help of imagination.
4. Play types	Object play, role play and rule games. Object-related role play consists of actions with objects relating to the role. Social role play is made up of the actions of and relationships between adults. Role play develops from object role play into social role play.
5. Play stimulation	Adults play an essential role in establishing the preconditions of play and in the stimulation of children's play.

### Modern pedagogical-psychological models of play

#### *Essential characteristics of play*

Novosyolova (1978) and her colleagues emphasised that the development of play is a process where children act out a script, which comprises a system of conditions where an imaginary situation is created (see table 3). Play has been observed from two aspects - as a way of organising the child's life and activity, and as a means towards the all-round education of children.

#### *Play theme and content*

The social environment that surrounds the child is the source of emergent play. In their play children depict the general meanings of the activities of adults as they try to get into the hidden heart of the adult world.

#### *Play materials*

The representatives of the modern model have specified a division of toys. Novosyolova has suggested the following division: at first the child plays with realistic thematic toys. At the same time, however, he or she also needs replacement objects, which have received playful names from adults. Later on the toys become increasingly generalised until eventually they are replaced by replacement objects. These objects become increasingly and finally the stage is reached where gestures and words substitute toys in the child's play.

*Play types*

Novosyolova (1978, 1991) regarded play as an activity already emergent in the infant's first months of life. She pointed out the following types of play. Firstly, familiarising play, then imaginative play, which develops further into thematic imaginative play, which, in turn, develops into role play.

*Play stimulation*

The representatives of the modern model have paid special attention to the promotion of children's play primarily within the kindergarten context. Play is regarded as a way of organising the child's life and activity as well as a means towards the all-round education of children. In promoting play it is important to ensure that play fulfils its developmental function and that already in the earliest years it takes the form of an independent activity of the child. The everyday life experiences and impressions of the child, the individual play experiences of each player and the diverse world of children's toys have been integrated into a stimulation method (integral method of play stimulation).

TABLE 3 Modern pedagogical-psychological models of play

1. Essential characteristics of play	Play is regarded as a way of organising the child's life and activity, and as a means towards the all-round education of the child. Play is a process where children play out a play script.
2. Play theme and content	The every-day life of the child is of central importance. Their emotional experiences, knowledge and interests find expression in games. The theme and content of play is closely connected to the child's immediate surroundings.
3. Play materials	At first the child plays with realistic toys but soon he or she starts playing also with more generalised toys (replacement objects), which have received playful names from adults. Later on toys become increasingly generalised and finally the stage is reached where gestures and words substitute toys in the child's play.
4. Play types	Play already emerges during the first months of the infant's life. Play types are, firstly, familiarising play, then imaginative play, which develops into thematic imaginative play. This in turn develops into role play.
5. Play stimulation	Play should fulfil its developmental function and already in the earliest years it should take the form of an independent activity of the child. Several methods of play stimulation within the kindergarten context have been developed.

### 3 RESEARCH ON MOTHER-CHILD PLAY AND ADULT INVOLVEMENT IN PLAY

#### 3.1 Mother-child interaction

Elkonin (1997, 114-116) wrote that by the end of the early preschool age the functions and relationships of adults start to be differentiated slowly by the child and the adult starts to become a model for the child. For the first time the child is able to act and behave as an adult. His or her behaviour is influenced by the adult's action model. A new relationship develops between the child and adult, in which the adult's model orientates the child's behaviour and activities; this is the basis for the appearance of all new psychical formations in the child's personality.

During the preschool age certain types of activities come into being that differ from one another not only in content but also in the nature of the adult participation. According to Elkonin (1997), three types can be distinguished. In the first type, *play*, adults appear through the roles that the child assumes. Play is the child's leading activity, in which he or she acquires ethical norms through his or her role actions. At the same time, through play a personality behaviour mechanism develops which is subordinate to a model given in ideal form, i.e. in the form of imagination. The other creative activities, i.e. drawing, designing and modelling are closely connected with play. The second type of activity is *organised activity*, in which the adult participates directly, leading the child's activities through certain given tasks and evaluations. Hereby the adult may appear directly as an expression of the child's relationship to adults in general, and during organised activities the relationship between the child and adult will change. At the end of the pre-school age the educator takes on the role of teacher and distinctive educational assignments and objectives are set for the child. The third type of activity consists of *daily activities* through which the relationship between the child and adult appears in a direct form.

The Russian researcher Lisina and her colleagues have extensively studied adult-child interactions (1985, 1986). Lisina placed great importance on the role of the family in child development. She wrote, "...within the family, there take

shape the conditions which particularly favour the child's development, the transfer to the child of the historical experience gained by the human race over the centuries" (Lisina 1985, 53). Within the family the child is easily and naturally able to learn to live side by side with other people and from an early age to imbibe moral values and cultural traditions. The family also becomes the child's first school in communication. Lisina (1985, 13) defined communication as the interaction of two or more people, consisting of an exchange of messages designed to co-ordinate and unite their efforts at establishing a relationship and achieving a common goal. Lisina (1985) distinguished four different forms of communication between the child and adult which children use at various stages up to the age of seven.

The first form of communication is the *situational-interpersonal form* (first six months). This form plays an essential role in the child's general psychic preparation and performs two functions in the life of the baby.

By the age of around six months the contact between the child and adult changes. Thus, it assumes a new pre-verbal and verbal *situational-practical form* (six months to three years).

Lisina called the following form of communication an *extrasituational-cognitive form* (approximately three to six years). One of the most essential means of communication within this form is speech. The role of the adult is to encourage the child to engage in communication of a cognitive nature, embarking on whole new subjects, which they had not previously contemplated. Knowledge and the minds of adults provide the main incentives for children to turn to them. The dominant motive in communication takes on a cognitive character. The leading activity at this age is role play in which communication and play are closely connected. The child needs the participation of an adult in his or her activities. Thus, children want their mothers to be involved as organisers in their activities and as models for the behaviour required. At the level of cognitive communication the driving force behind children's activities is their need for respect from their elders (Lisina 1985, 184).

Lisina (1985), drawing on the research of Boguslavskaya, remarked that after the age of three certain stages follow during which children move forward rapidly and enjoy considerable success in their overall emotional and mental development. Boguslavskaya's study showed that when children were praised for their achievements they jumped, clapped their hands in delight and some even kissed the adults present. Children's reactions to reproaches were also of an extreme nature. Some of the children cried while others turned their backs on the researcher and went away without a moment's hesitation. However, what children found hardest to accept was indifference on the part of the adults. They became tense and worried, with the bolder ones among them trying again and again to break through the barrier of the adult's indifference by asking endless questions. These features of behaviour were typical of the majority of pre-school children aged between four and five. Children see both criticism and indifference in terms of personal insult. A child's need for respect

is reflected in cognitive motives. Lisina (1986) explains that a serious attitude on the part of adults towards a child's questions reflects the attitude of the adult towards the whole child. Co-operation between the adult and the child is only possible when the adult takes the child seriously. One particularly important way of showing recognition is by giving praise. The content of the child's communication depends upon the kind of help he or she seeks from the adult, i.e. what he or she has to do in order to satisfy his or her most acute needs at the particular stage of development in question.

Children in the middle preschool period have many questions, which can only be resolved together with the adult. During the early stages of intellectual development the child feels very unsure of himself or herself. Co-operation with adults in this new sphere appears possible to the child only if the former does not make fun of him, but instead recognises his or her right to engage in discussion. The child feels within himself a new potential, one of an intellectual character, and he or she reacts keenly to the tone of the 'intellectual co-operation' with the people around him or her. (Lisina 1985.)

The means of the extrasituational-cognitive form of communication has to be attributed to speech, which enables a child to go outside of time and space. Lisina (1985, 189) noted that children's favourite subjects were those concerning the world of nature and with themes and objects within their environment. Nearly seventy-five per cent of their questions and statements were concerned with events taking place in the natural world. Speech during this stage becomes increasingly extrasituational. The main role of adults is to engage in interesting interaction with the child in new subjects and so to open up to him or her new spheres of life and new realms of knowledge. Interaction with adults helps the child to become more sensitive to words and to search for precise terms and verbal constructions. The young child's thoughts will now be directed towards the inner essence of the objects and phenomena he or she encounters while his or her imagination will be able to transport him or her into the past and future. Discovering the world of objects and physical phenomena soon ceases to satisfy children's interests. They become increasingly interested in the world of people. The theme of children's conversations with adults gradually changes. Instead of objects, it is now human beings, their lives, activities and personalities, which tend to dominate. Thus, the importance of the extrasituational-cognitive form of communication lies in the fact that it enables the child not only to understand the physical phenomena of the object world but also to become aware of the social sphere. The adult assumes a new role in which he or she is able to solve the child's anticipations and provide necessary information for the child. (Lisina 1986.)

The fourth form of communication, *extrasituational-interpersonal* communication emerges at about the age of seven and enables the child to understand the social sphere and also to participate in it. The child learns to orient himself or herself in the internal relationships of the surrounding people and this prepares him or her for life at school.

Lisina (1985) emphasised that parents must become aware of how important interaction with their children really is. Interaction with the adult is very important for the cognitive development of the child as the communication process involves not only the mediation of culture but also the formation of new activity motives.

### **3.2 Research on mother-child imaginative play**

Sutton-Smith (1993) argues that as children's play has come increasingly under scientific scrutiny it has also become increasingly supervised and controlled by adult interests. Thus, new knowledge about play quickly becomes a basis for new ideas on how to control play (Sutton-Smith 1993).

Mother-child play has been analysed and three different parental roles during playful interaction with children identified (Uzgiriz & Raeff 1995, 354). The first is the role of *audience*. Thus, the adult is available to acknowledge, admire and sometimes censor the activities of the playing child. The second role is that of *facilitator*. The adult's role can be regarded as two-layered. On a behavioural level the adult is involved in the child's playful activities, participating within the framework of the play. At another level, however, the adult considers the specific playful activity from a more general perspective and can guide it in a direction in accord with typical cultural practices. The third role of parents is that of *partner* in play. This is an expression of the modern Western ideal of parent-child relationships founded on equality. (Uzgiriz & Raeff 1995.)

Maternal play behaviours have been grouped according to the degree of directiveness or forcefulness of the mother's efforts (Fein & Fryer 1995, 378). With respect to the amount of maternal involvement in play, findings indicate an inverted U-shaped function. Fein and Fryer (1995, 378) noted that mothers who are distant or indirect have little influence on their children. At the same time, mothers who are intrusive and tutorial have a negative influence. Mothers who offer direct suggestions, solicit imaginative behaviour from their children and participate in imaginative exchanges have a positive influence on their children.

#### **3.2.1 Mother-child play in toddlerhood and later on in the preschool age**

There are numerous studies of mother-child symbolic play in the laboratory setting while most of the child's symbolic play analyses has related to children under the age of three. It has been found that imaginative play lasted longer when the mother and child played together (Dunn & Wooding 1977). Several studies concluded that toddlers engage in both quantitatively and qualitatively more diverse and advanced forms of symbolic play when playing with their mothers than when playing alone (Slade 1987; Fiese 1990; O'Connell & Bretherton 1984, see table 4).

For example, Slade (1987) studied 16 mother-child dyads twice a week at the ages of 20, 22, 26 and 28 months. Each child was observed playing for 20-minute periods while his or her mother talked with the experimenter. Observation continued for a further 10 minutes while the child played with his or her mother with freely chosen toys. Mother's participation in the play was considered to be active when she initiated the play and took part in it, and passive when she only commented on the child's play and made suggestions. It was found that when the mothers co-played the toddlers engaged in more diverse forms of games. Thus, Slade found that the duration and level of symbolic play was related to maternal availability. The exact reason for this is unclear from this study while the relatively small number of mother-child dyads tested does not allow broad generalisations to be made.

A study involving a larger number of children was conducted by Fiese (1990). 57 children between the ages of 15 and 24 months were observed for six minutes at a time in four different play situations. Each subject was rated in terms of complexity of play, direction of maternal attention (physical directing, questioning or instructing and naming or labelling objects or activities), reciprocity (degree of mutual involvement of mother and child), and maternal intrusiveness (child imitate, mother follow, mother elaborate and mother intrude). In this study more complex forms of symbolic play were observed when children were playing with their mothers than when they were engaged in solitary play. The amount of symbolic play increased more than twofold when children were playing with their mothers and threefold under the modelling condition. Maternal intrusions and questioning displayed a negative correlation to symbolic play and was positively related to more simple manipulative forms of play. Results of a sequential analysis demonstrated that maternal intrusiveness was more likely to precede simple exploratory play. The importance of Fiese's study lies in its direct examination of mother-toddler interaction and play within the same context.

Children's solitary play and joint play together with their mothers was studied in the context of two play situations, the first in which the mother plays a passive role and the second in which she is an active participant (O'Connell & Bretherton 1984). This study differed from previous investigations not only in its intentions but also in its methods. In the study a broad range of play categories that consisted of four games (exploratory, combinatorial, symbolic and ambiguous) was used. 15 boys and 15 girls were observed between the ages of 20 and 28 months. The children were presented with a standard set of toys during each observational period. The mother's influence on the child's play may be considered to be either indirect (in the sense that her presence alone and/or her ability to respond naturally might enhance the child's play) or direct (to the extent that she actively and purposefully guides the child's play behaviour). The independent play sessions at home indicated that the number of exploratory play activities decreased from the first five minutes to the last five minutes whereas the amount of combinatorial play increased over the same time span.

The results showed that children displayed a greater diversity of play when acting in collaboration with their mothers than when playing alone with the same toys. Play behaviour was affected differentially by maternal guidance as a function of the child's age. Thus, at 20 months the children showed an increase in diversity of exploratory and combinatorial play whereas on reaching 28 months they showed an increase only in the diversity of their symbolic play. The mothers offered more suggestions to their 20 month-olds than they did when 28 months had been reached. The study indicated that at the age of twenty months 43 per cent of all directives were verbal only whereas by at the age of 28 months this had increased to 62 per cent.

O'Connell and Bretherton (1984) suggested that the mother's presence alone did not seem sufficient to effect any change in play behaviour. The study demonstrated that collaborative play in which instruction is provided is effective in altering the kind of play behaviours children display. The results also indicated that children select from their mothers' instructions those behaviours, which prove most beneficial in their efforts to master new skills. The mothers offer a wide range of guidance but they do not adapt their instructions to their children's level of skills. They evidently understand the value of instruction but at the same time leave the selectivity to the child.

There are two aspects of particular importance that should be pointed out. Firstly, mothers do instruct their children and suggest a variety of activities to them, and secondly, it is the child who is 'in charge' in the play setting and the mother appears to accept this arrangement. The child decides which of his or her mother's suggestions will be accepted into his or her play activity and which will be ignored.

The child seems to have a goal in mind and accepts assistance only in service of this goal. The results of this study suggest that children tend to take advantage of their mothers' suggestions more frequently when the contents of these suggestions coincide with the task the child is currently trying to master than when these suggestions represent domains that the child has already mastered or those which lie beyond his or her capabilities. O'Connell and Bretherton found that the younger children made the most extensive use of their mothers' exploratory and combinatorial suggestions and disregarded most of the suggestions for symbolic play. This may be because children's competence in the domain of symbolic play is too limited for them to derive any benefit from instruction. The older children, however, have mastered these combinatorial activities and have moved on to more difficult tasks; they find the mother's guidance in symbolic play most helpful while they no longer need guidance in their combinatorial play activities. (O'Connell & Bretherton 1984.)

Beizer and Howes (1992) studied children's solitary and social play with their mothers as partners. This study also examined the nature of the mothers' contributions to their toddlers' early symbolic play endeavours. The children aged 14 to 38 months were observed and videotaped in their homes during two 15 minute play sessions on the same day. In the independent session the toddlers played without their mothers. During the collaborative session the

mothers were asked to play with their children as they normally would and to feel free to interact with their children as they would under everyday circumstances.

Three different types of maternal input were differentiated by Beizer and Howes. 'Inattention' referred to the mother's mere physical presence. 'Indirect support' involved the mother engaging in behaviour that might encourage the toddler to imagine but only by indirect means (e.g. physically assisting, verbalising, elaborating, positive support). Finally, 'direct pretend suggestion' included direct verbal suggestions, instructions or invitations to engage in particular imaginative acts.

The study showed that toddlers clearly engaged in more elaborate symbolic imaginative play when with their mothers than when playing alone. Greater frequencies of collaborative symbolic play were associated with greater frequencies of maternal suggestions and indirect input. Mothers seemed to be equally likely to suggest imaginative activities to older and younger children but became less directive and more likely to observe and support their children's independent play ideas as the toddlers grew older and became more competent users of imagination. In particular, the study found that mothers are more likely to verbalise about the imagining of younger toddlers than with older children with whom they are more inclined to elaborate or simply provide positive support. This suggests that the role of the mother in using imagination may shift from that of play manager to that of partner and audience as the child gradually assumes a more managerial role. (Beizer & Howes 1992.)

Haight and her colleagues (Haight & Miller 1992; Haight & Miller 1993; Haight 1999) have carried out numerous studies of mother-child imaginative play and have described mother-child play at home. These studies employed a range of research methods such as longitudinal home observations and parent interviews.

Haight and Miller (1993) analysed, for example, the development of imaginative play in nine children growing up within educated middle-class European-American families. The study was longitudinal in design and naturalistic in approach, involving a succession of extended observations of each child (at the ages of 12, 24, 36 and 48 months) for a total 116.5 hours. Each observation session lasted three to four hours. The observer followed the children as they engaged in their usual activities in and around the home. Mothers were instructed to go about their ordinary routines and to ignore the observer as much as possible. Neither the observer nor the families were aware that imaginative play would become the focus of the inquiry.

The study involved an analysis of the following aspects of play. Firstly, it looked at the interpersonal context of early imaginative play, i.e. with whom children play. Secondly, it examined the social conduct in imaginative play, in other words, the ways in which interactions are conducted (e.g. initiators of episodes, contingent responses, elaboration, prompts and direct instructions). Thirdly, it investigated the immediate outcomes of mother participation in

imaginative play, i.e. the length and content of the imaginative episode. The researchers discovered that imagination was an important part of the children's daily lives and that everyday imagining emerged as a social activity not only with respect to the setting and cultural practices in which it was embedded but also with regard to the interpersonal character of the activity itself. Analyses of initiations of imaginative episodes suggest that imaginative play with the mother was one-sided only at the earliest age. By 24 months, when the use of imagination was fully established in children, both mothers and children showed mutual interest in imagining with one another. Between the ages of 36 and 48 months the children began to use imagination to about the same degree with both their mothers and other children. Increasing involvement with other children as play partners did not dampen the children's interest in using imagination with their mothers. Mutual engagement was revealed. By 48 months the children were prolific users of imagination, spending an average of 12.4 minutes per hour imagining. Haight and Miller suggested that as the children got older they increasingly engaged in imagining and produced longer, more complex and more elaborate play episodes. Mothers and children initiated and responded to imagination. Furthermore, mothers elaborated and prompted their children's use of imagination. Both children and mothers were highly responsive to each other's initiatives. (Haight & Miller 1993.)

Haight and Miller (1993) concluded that this study, based on ecologically valid observations, supports the idea that educated, middle-class mothers make extensive and facilitative use of imagination with their children. Garvey (1990) noted that after 48 months imaginative play with peers probably begins to diverge in function, form and even content from imaginative play with the mother. Mothers often use such play in order to divert a child from performing a forbidden or dangerous activity. In other cases some sort of 'lesson' is included in the play activity in order to show how something works, how one should behave or what may happen at, for example, a birthday party or doctor's surgery. Haight and Miller (Haight & Miller 1993; Haight 1999) emphasised that the cultural context is important in understanding not only the development of imaginative play but also the development of other culturally valued activities of which imaginative play is a precursor. Future research needs to examine systematically the contexts out of which everyday imagining arises as well as the everyday contexts, which are incorporated into imaginative play.

TABLE 4 Overview on studies of mother-child play

1. Author	2. Age and amount of children	3. Place of study	4. Maternal involvement
Slade 1987	20, 22, 26, 28 months (16 mother-child dyads)	At home	1. Availability of the mother 2. Maternal involvement, commentating and suggesting
Fiese 1990	15-24 months (57 toddlers)	In the laboratory	1. Maternal attention directing - physical attention - questioning or instructing - naming or labelling 2. Reciprocity-degree of involvement 3. Maternal intrusiveness
O'Connell & Bretherton 1984	20-28 months (15 boys and 15 girls)	At home and in the laboratory	1. Verbal directives 2. Gestural 3. Verbal-gesture combination 4. Demonstration 5. Verbal demonstration
Beizer & Howes 1992	14-38 months (42 toddlers)	At home	1. Inattention 2. Indirect support - physically assisting - verbalising - elaborating - positive support - instruction or demonstration - clarifying 3. Direct pretend suggestion
Haight & Miller 1993	12, 24, 36, 48 months (longitudinal study with 9 children)	At home	Initiations of episodes Contingent verbalisation Elaborations Prompts Direct instructions

### 3.2.2 Cultural differences in mother-child imaginative play

The involvement of parents in play with their children has varied through history and varies today across the cultures (Rogoff 1990). Cultural differences in parent-child play might reflect differences in cultural ideologies about parent-child relationships, as well as larger cultural values, such as individualism and collectivism (Tamis-LeMonda, Uzgiris & Bornstein 2002). Uzgiris and Raeff (1995) pointed out that where equality between parents and children is the cultural ideal children may learn to become coplayers on an egalitarian basis with their parents; where hierarchical relations between parents and children prevail children may explore ways to navigate such relationships through play.

Farver (1999) carried out studies in three countries (the United States, Mexico and Indonesia). Participants involved 90 children, their mothers and older siblings. The mothers and siblings-child pairs were videotaped in their homes. After the videotaped play session mothers were interviewed of play importance for children. The most American and Indonesian mothers believed that play was very important for child development and had benefits for children. In contrast, Mexican mothers believed that play was relatively

unimportant and they found that the purpose of play was to amuse children. American toddlers' common play partners were their mothers and older siblings, whereas the Mexican and Indonesian toddlers' partners were their older siblings and mixed-age peers. The results of videotape play sessions showed that among the American families, children's play was more frequent and complex with their mothers than with their older siblings, whereas in the Mexican and Indonesian settings it was the other way round. Mexican and Indonesian mothers were reluctant to play with their children.

Many studies have been carried out to ascertain maternal attitudes towards children's play. Techniques involving questionnaires or interviews have generally been applied to that end. Damast and his colleagues (1996) examined the beliefs of mothers and the relation between maternal knowledge and maternal play behaviours. 50 mothers and their 21 month-old toddlers were observed at home during free play. The mother-child pairs were videotaped while playing with a standard set of toys including cups, plates, a doll and a telephone. Each mother was instructed to sit with her child and behave as she normally would. In the questionnaire each mother was asked to rank the 24 different play activities in order of increasing difficulty, with number one representing the easiest and number 24 the most difficult. The findings suggested that mothers who were more knowledgeable about play responded more often to their children's play by introducing a higher level play. The findings indicated that mothers adjust their play by responding to their children with play that is either at the same or a higher level than the play of their children. Analysis revealed that mothers who are more knowledgeable about the development of play tend to suggest play of a more sophisticated level than their children's ongoing play. This study by Damast and others supports the notion that mothers generally function within their children's 'zones of proximal development' (Damast, Tamis-LeMonda & Bornstein 1996, 1762). Mothers tend to make suggestions of a comparable or higher level, i.e. not lower level, to that of their children's play.

The attitudes and beliefs of mothers and fathers regarding imaginative play were observed separately during parent-child play, and then recorded during separate interviews at home (Haight, Parke & Black 1997). Children were videotaped for 35 minute periods at the ages of 24, 30 and 36 months. Individual differences in the beliefs of parents and their actual participation in play were related but these relations differed according to the gender of the parent. According to this study, mothers generally took primary responsibility for the care and development of their toddlers.

Ivanova (1983, 1989) has studied the problem of the assistance of children's play in the Russian family environment. On the basis of her study involving one thousand families, Ivanova pointed out that 41 per cent of two- to three-year-old children always play alone. The parents of these children are not at all interested in their play. A large proportion of the parents participating in the study did not recognise the real value of play. Ivanova thoroughly analysed the methods parents used to supervise their children's play at home. Both direct

and indirect methods were involved. Among the direct methods were the introducing of new toys to the child and letting the child play with them, and the offering of themes for play. Indirect methods included giving advice on how to play with one or other toy and organising joint play with other children (sisters, brothers and peers). In her work Ivanova (1983) suggested that the style of interaction of the parents (especially of the fathers) was authoritarian in character.

Ivanova distinguished three parental types on the basis on parent-child interaction. The first type is the democratic parent who creates a positive emotional climate in the family, respects the child's personality and makes reasonable demands on the child. Such parents value the educational importance of play and are interested in supervising children's play. The second type is characterised by a democratic style of upbringing, but their demands on their children are controversial. On the one hand they approach the child as a small person who has no right to make decisions or choices. On the other hand they see their child as a big person, whose upbringing mainly includes preparation for school, especially the teaching of reading and writing. These parents see play as a way of spending spare time and do not recognise the educational value of play. The third type includes parents whose style of raising children may be characterised as authoritarian. In these families the parents usually do not have responsibility on bringing up children. They see their child as a small passive creature. They do not recognise the importance of play in the development of the child; instead they see it as a waste of time. Concluding her study, Ivanova states that the pedagogically and psychologically correct supervision of play promotes the child's receptivity to the educational influences of the adult. (Ivanova 1983, 1989.)

Van der Kooij and Neukäter (1989) used several methods to research the parental stimulation of children's play. At first they put together a questionnaire in order to find out the educational attitudes of parents from different cultures. The study was carried out with 1371 four-year-old children from four different countries (Germany, Holland, Norway and Poland). The results showed that in the countries with democratic traditions (e.g. Norway, Germany) young parents were much more democratic in their child-rearing and more oriented towards responding to the child's personality than were the parents from totalitarian societies. In addition, 13 videotape scenes were recorded and 15-minute-long observations made of parent-child play interactions. No relationship between play intensity and parental steering behaviour could be established. The researchers came to the conclusion, however, that a moderate degree of emotional warmth correlated with higher play intensity.

The study on childrearing was carried out among Estonian mothers, Russian mothers living in Estonia and Russian mothers living in Moscow (Saar & Niglas 2001). A total of 600 mothers participated (200 from each of the three groups). The results showed that the Estonian mothers were less controlling and more trusting with their children than were the Russian mothers in Estonia

and in Moscow. The study also indicated that mothers who have had a higher education are more democratic and more flexible in rearing their children than mothers with a lower academic education.

### 3.3 Play stimulation in the kindergarten context

#### 3.3.1 The role of adults in the play

In early childhood education in Russia children's play was regarded from two standpoints. These were, firstly, play as a form of organising the life and activity of the child and, secondly, play as a means of effecting the all-round education of children. Play stimulation has traditionally been divided into two: *indirect and direct forms of stimulation* (Loginova & Samorukova 1983). *Indirect stimulation* is connected with the enrichment of the child's knowledge of surrounding life and with supplying play materials. Play materials must be such as to encourage the child to play and to maintain the wish to continue playing. *Direct stimulation* is connected with the influences exerted by the adult's immediate play and by the child's relationships with others. Examples of direct stimulation by the adult include role acquisition during play, participation in role allocation, giving explanations regarding play, etc. (Loginova & Samorukova 1983.) The principle of the play pedagogy is that the smaller the child, the greater the adult's role in stimulating the child's play. In the case of younger children the adult participates in the play and acts out various roles (even the leading role). Such kind of input by the adult engenders in the child a desire to imitate the adult and reinforces his or her wish to play. In play stimulation the role of the adult is to direct every single act of children's play and, indeed, the whole play group. The principle goal of play stimulation is to develop the child's levels of independence and creativity. (Mendzeritskaija 1982 ; Zaporozhets 1986.)

Drawing on studies by Aksarina, Fradkina and others, Zaporozhets (1986) stressed that children of a certain age have to be taught to play, and that without such a pedagogical influence either play does not evolve or the development of play is inhibited. Of course, methods of didactic games cannot copy methods of teaching. Didactic games are first and foremost connected with organising children's activities. Through directing children's activities the educator teaches them a basic moral code. The teacher becomes a regulator of group relations, helps to resolve disputes in an even-handed way and raises the moral level of the child's behaviour. The adult has to take into account the fact that play is a personal activity of the child and therefore it is necessary for the adult to modify methods of instruction according to the age of the child. Elkonin (1978) and Zaporozhets (1997, 2000) stressed that the motives underpinning the child's play are both genuine and deep-rooted, and require a serious attitude on the part of the adult. Zaporozhets (2000) highlighted the role of the adult, illustrating it with an example from Skljarenko concerning the play

of three-year-olds who had just come from the nursery to the kindergarten and were not able to add any new features to their play. A child will soon lose interest in, for example, continuously lulling a doll to sleep or rocking the pram forwards and backwards. When an adult provides a new idea, a new play motive, then the play starts to become more interesting. Thus, it is much more exciting to take milk from the shop to the nursery children (i.e. dolls) in the pram and so the play acquires a new meaning for the player. Play is significant for the reason that the technique of performing single actions can be imperfect, unreal or imaginary, but the motives of the play are real, deep and need a very serious attitude from the teachers. (Zaporozhets 2000.)

In the 1980's Komarova (1986) carried out a study in tens of kindergartens from many different regions of the then USSR where she analysed the play of preschool children. Komarova came to the conclusion that often no differences could be noticed between the play of two- to three-year-old children, and children of six to seven years. Instead, the children repeatedly acted out the same old play episodes using the same old play materials. The researcher detected little imagination, speech or interaction and few substitutions in the games of these children. There may have been a number of reasons for the paucity and primitive level of playing skills displayed. One reason might have been the kindergarten teacher's overly formal or excessive stimulation of the play, which may have restricted learning to certain single role actions or thematic patterns. This would also prevent the children from developing any play motives. One of the most essential problems in play stimulation relates to the peculiarities and everyday experiences of each specific age group. Play actions that have been developed on the basis of a child's personal experience are emotionally important for that child; they contain a 'personal idea'. Without this personal experience the child will learn merely the mechanics of play. The personal idea acquires a motivating role in play activities. Therefore, the activities of real play are always emotionally loaded and contain a unity of affect and intellect (Vygotsky 1966). As a consequence of this the need arises in play stimulation to both enrich the child's various experiences and to actualise these experiences by taking them into the plan of imaginative play.

The *integrated method* of play stimulation was developed by Novosyolova, Zvorygina, Ivankova, Kondratova, Saar and Grinjavičiene (1989). The integrated method contains the following components:

- *Familiarisation with the surrounding world* in which the play motives establish themselves. On this basis the child acquires the meaning of the objects and the sense of human activities and of interpersonal relationships.
- *Play materials* - a choice of play materials and toys which actualises recent experiences and impressions in the child's memory. It is essential in play stimulation not only to enlarge the range of the toys but also to offer toys of different conditional levels (i.e. both realistic and replacement toys).

- *Teaching to play* - on the one hand, the playing of taught games (creation of imaginary situations and reproduction of the play experience) and, on the other hand, the creation of problem-solving situations in play. Problem-solving play situations develop the child's independent orientation towards the play script.

Two components are essential in problem-solving play situations: questions and the independent acting out of new play scripts. The study also pointed out that when stimulating play in children of different ages the various components have different roles. For example, for younger children the use of various play objects (replacement and imaginary) is important. By contrast, during the middle pre-school age the acquisition of various kinds of knowledge by the players assumes an increasing significance. The integrated method is based both on indirect and direct ways of play stimulation. The application of the integrated method must take into account play as an independent creative activity of the child, the individuality of the child and the relationship of the play to his or her existing everyday life and previous play experience. (Novosyolova, Zvorygina, Ivankova, Kondratova, Saar & Grinjavičienė 1989.)

The formation of a plot construction in the stimulation of children's play were analysed by Mihailenko and Korotkova (1990). They found that the play plot exists in the area of reality which children depict in their games. The child's diverse surrounding world is reflected in the plot. Mihailenko and Korotkova differentiated three stages of formation of the play plot. The first stage is connected with the learning of conditional actions with toys and replacement objects (between twelve and thirty months). The adult's task at this stage is to direct children to play with replacement objects and to mark actions with the help of speech. The second stage involves the acquisition of role behaviour, i.e. relationships between roles and mutual activity. This stage involves children aged from two years six months up to four years six months. The most important thing for the child becomes other people and imitation of the actions characteristic of these people. The adult gives the child a role behaviour model while acting with objects appropriate to the role also remains important. At the third stage from four years six months up to seven years, children develop the ability to construct plots independently. The child does not merely organise individual elements of the plot but rather entire events containing people and their actions. Adults help to bring out the succession of plot elements and pay attention to the improvement of the plot using speech only. (Mihailenko & Korotkova 1990.)

In order to develop play it is important to find themes and contents which interest the child and with which he or she can relate (Lindqvist 1995, 2003). Lindqvist's study of drama play has shown that such themes are connected with conflicts and are consequently dynamic in character. According to her observations, the literary text and its dramatic qualities were what actually finally determined whether the play could be developed or not. The adults needed to dramatise the action in order to provide play with a meaning. Thus

the pedagogues became mediators between the fictitious world and the day-care centre. Both children and adults can be inspired by the culture which surrounds them and can thereby create play together. (Lindqvist 1995.)

There has also been a study comparing the roles of teachers in different cultures, in particular, with respect to what teachers do while children are playing and how teachers stimulate children's play (Johnson, Christie & Yawkey 1999). Beginning in the 1970s, these researchers showed that teachers spent only between two and six per cent of their time involved in children's play. However, studies from the last decade have led to more ambiguous conclusions. Thus, while it was found that the amount of teacher involvement in play is increasing, there are concerns about the quality of this involvement. The crucial variable is precisely how adults become involved in play. If adults interact with children in a sensitive, responsive and supportive manner they can enhance children's play. On the other hand, if adults take over the control of play, provide too much structure or interrupt play for academic purposes, then children's play will probably suffer.

Johnsen and Christie (1991) analysed various types of play, play environments and play instruction on the part of the teacher. The results showed that play accounted for a little over half (56 per cent) of the time studied; role play (22 per cent) and constructive game (16 per cent) were the dominant play types. Joint play accounted for 44 per cent, solitary play only eight per cent and side by side play four per cent of the games analysed. In their study Johnson and Christie came to conclusion that play which takes place only in an academic setting may no longer be considered as authentic free play. Children's play in early childhood institutions depends on a great number of circumstances, such as materials, teacher attitudes, time, etc. Thus, for example, in some kindergartens children do not have enough time to play in the kindergarten and thus the teacher does not give enough thought to the children's daily schedule and does not create enough opportunities for playing. Often highlighted amongst teachers' aims is the desire to promote obedience and foster a calm, quiet form of behaviour, such as would be achieved through the reading of books and engagement in solitary play. Johnson, Christie and Yawkey (1999, 204) emphasised that in order for play to have a really positive influence on the child's development it is necessary for the adults involved to play a decisive role in enriching the children's various experiences. Play enrichment entails three basic steps: providing resources for play, observing play and becoming supportively and responsively involved in the play. (Johnson, Christie & Yawkey 1999.) These principles are probably valid both in the kindergarten context and at home.

Adults can help to set the stage for play by providing four types of resources: time, space, materials and preparatory experiences. Research has shown that preschool children are much more likely to engage in socio-dramatic and constructive play during 30-minute play periods than during shorter 15-minute sessions. Thus, for example, the study by Enz and Christie (1997) indicated that very often four-year-olds had just finished preparing for a

dramatisation when it was time to tidy up. Johnson and others (1999) recommended that at the preschool and kindergarten levels play periods last at least 45 minutes and that, in principle, the longer the play period the better. At the same time parents can foster creative play at home by allowing children to keep their constructions standing from one day to the next. Space can have an important impact on both the type of play that children engage in and the quality of their play. Parents can encourage play by permitting children to bring their toys and play into communal areas of the home. Play materials have a vital role in ensuring the quality of children's play. The realism and structure of the play materials are also of essential importance. Games, especially role games, presuppose that children have had the previous experiences required in order to act out their roles. If children possess little in the way of experience and knowledge then their play can become difficult to sustain. In the kindergarten the teacher can help to clarify the child's understanding of themes and roles by organising field trips, classroom visits, books and videos. Observation reveals what help children need in developing and extending their play and what already exists in their play. Observation serves as a bridge linking provision with adult involvement, indicating when additional time, space, materials or experiences should be provided and when direct adult involvement in play will be beneficial. (Johnson, Christie & Yawkey 1999.)

Part of the Verbal Interaction Projects, the Mother-Child Home Programme (MCHP) was devised by Levenstein and O'Hara (1993). The method of the MCHP was based on the assumption that the elements of efficacy and mother-child attachment are vitally linked to verbally oriented mother-child play interaction which fosters two-to four-years-olds children's intellectual and social-emotional competencies. The approach of the MCHP was non-didactic and also discouraged the mothers from having a didactic attitude toward their children as the latter's first teachers. The results of MCHP programme showed that the teaching and learning which occur during parent-child play appear to be much more effective when they are embedded in a warm, affectively positive parent-child relationship. (Levenstein & O'Hara 1993.)

Several studies have observed and analysed the roles of the adult in play. Johnson, Christie and Yawkey (1999, 209) have pointed out the following adults' roles in play, ranging from no involvement to complete control of the children's play activities:

*Uninvolved*

the adult does not pay attention to the play.

*Onlooker*

the adult watches the children as they play but remains as an onlooker, neither joining in the play nor doing anything to disrupt it.

*Stage manager*

the adult helps the children prepare for play and gives assistance once the play is underway. Stage managers respond to children's requests for materials, help them and also make appropriate theme-related script suggestions to extend the children's ongoing play.

*Coplayer*

the adult joins in play and becomes a play partner. The adult usually takes on a minor role leaving the prime roles for the children.

*Play leader*

the adult joins in play and actively attempts to enrich and extend it. The teacher suggests new play themes by introducing new materials and plot elements.

*Director/instructor*

the adult takes control of the play and tells children what to do or redirects children's attention toward academic matters. The adult remains on the sidelines, outside the children's framework of play.

The key to successful play involvement for the adult is to observe carefully and to choose a style of interaction that fits in with the child's ongoing play interests, styles and activities. The authors recommended four roles for adults in play: onlooker, stage manager, coplayer and play leader. When used in a sensitive and flexible manner these roles enable adults to have a positive impact on children's play. (Johnson, Christie and Yawkey 1999.)

### **3.3.2 Play and the everyday life of the child**

According to the cultural-historical theory the social environment that surrounds the child is the source of emergent play and provides the conditions for the continuous development of play. It is this knowledge and these impressions and experiences that form the base for the child's play. The main source of nourishment for play comprises real experience and a varied knowledge of the surrounding world. Play in preschool children is especially sensitive to human actions and the main content of the play comprises people and their activities and relationships with other people. According to Elkonin (1978), through play the child learns the meaning of people's actions and penetrates far into the world of adults. Thus, play is a form of orientation with respect to the tasks and motives contained within people's activities. Vygotsky (1990) emphasised that in their play children reproduce a great deal of what they have seen. Children's play very often serves merely to echo what the children have seen and heard from adults. However, these elements of previous experience are not always reproduced in play exactly as they occurred in reality. Vygotsky (1990) wrote that the child's play activity is not simply a recollection of past experience but a creative reworking that combines impressions and constructions from their new realities so as to meet the needs of the child. Mendzeritskaija (1982) suggests that the child depicts social reality in his or her play and combines his or her knowledge, experiences, impressions and attitude towards what he or she is depicting. Thus, children's play involves a creative depiction of the activities and relationships of adults.

In play, as Davydov and Kudryavtsev (1997) noted, the child imitates the general meaning of the activities of adults with the help of language. Simultaneously, in their games, children experiment with the imagination of adults, trying to get into the hidden heart of the adult world. The play of the preschool child is not an interpreting of what has been done by adults but a

creative extending of imagination and a changing of his or her zone of proximal development.

How are children's play and surrounding nature connected in the depicting of nature in play? Artjomova (1988) explains this with the claim that children depict the beauty of nature and its singularity in their stories and drawings. However, in games the child is able to express himself or herself with the help of special means of expression such as speech, actions, roles and relationships between different roles. Play has the advantage over children's other activities (song, dance, drawing), only in play can the child express himself or herself using varied and dynamic-figurative means with regard to the surrounding world.

Observations of children's play in kindergartens have shown that a game often fails because the players do not have the knowledge and experience required by the theme and the roles (Novosyolova & Saar 1989). Role play, as shown by Elkonin (1978) is especially susceptible to the interaction and relationships of adults. Elkonin (1978) gives several examples of relevant studies. For instance, children were taken to the zoo to learn about the animals and their lives there. Afterwards the kindergarten teacher brought along toys that depicted the animals that the children had seen in the zoo and asked them to start playing. However, the children did not play a 'zoo play' the same day, neither did they play it the day after. The teacher took the children a second time to the zoo but this time the excursion was more thorough. The children got acquainted with the people taking care of the animals, they were introduced to the work of a cashier and a guide, and they saw a veterinarian and animal tenders at work. During the excursion the teacher pointed out the caring and attentive attitude of the zoo staff towards the animals as well as the good relations between the members of the staff. After some time the children started to play a 'zoo game' on their own initiative in the kindergarten. They had a zoo director, a booking clerk, a guide, animal tenders, veterinarians, visitors with their children and others in their play. The roles gradually appeared into the play, the game developed and improved daily and the children played the game repeatedly over a long period. Elkonin (1978) stresses the idea that for a role play to come into being and develop it is essential to introduce children to the richness and diversity of the world and to the work and activities of adults.

The influence of different types of knowledge on four- and five-year-old children was observed in three kindergartens (Saar 1987, 1991). Three types of knowledge were distinguished, namely, concrete, general and mixed type. Concrete knowledge was considered knowledge that represents exactly, clearly and in detail objects, phenomena and processes from the surrounding environment. By contrast, general knowledge reflects only the most essential characteristics and functions of objects and processes. General is used in the sense of incomplete and inexact. Mixed type of knowledge contains a combination of general and concrete.

The results of the study indicated that different types of knowledge have different influences on children's role play. Concrete knowledge lent reproductive rather than creative characteristics to the children's role play. In such games the children themselves created little that was new. Instead, they merely repeated and imitated what they had seen and heard. However, general knowledge brings with it various problems, questions and suppositions in the players that they often cannot solve without the help of adults. Yet the danger arises that if the knowledge is too general, distant and strange then children will not act out play scripts that are to all intents and purposes unknown to them. The most useful type of knowledge is the mixed type, or 'perspective' as it was called at the end of study. Mixed knowledge creates a perspective for the development of children's play and is therefore the most beneficial to them. (Saar 1987.)

### **3.3.3 Characteristics of the physical environment for play**

Children need the presence of several kinds of conditions for their play. Firstly, they need knowledge and impressions from the surrounding world. In addition, they need time and a place, playmates and a developing environment. Through its content and character the environment must create the conditions conducive to activities that foster transfer into the zone of proximal development. The developing function of the environment means that a variable, manifold and complex environment is created, which enables the child to act extensively, in a variety of ways suitable for him or her and with the means that benefit him or her. Thus, preschool children should be given numerous opportunities to pursue their leading activity, play. At the same time the environment should create many opportunities for that, which will later replace play as leading activity, learning. According to Leontjev (1981), the developing object-playful character of the environment fosters the appearance of new activity motives. Thus, motives of learning activity emerge in play. The child's opportunities for experimentation also depend on the play materials, which in favourable circumstances provides the child with opportunities to check his or her hypotheses and set new play problems (Podjakov 1977).

A study was conducted to establish the kind of toys children aged three to six years played with in the kindergarten (Grinjavičienė 1989). The results of the study showed that children most commonly use realistic toys in their play. Four-year-old children mostly use replacement toys while five-year-olds use them relatively little. In analysing the play object environment, it was found that there were quite a lot of so-called theme corners and zones in kindergartens. These were designed and split up with the help of the toys so that they prompted particular play themes, playful plots and ways of play realisation. Play corners intended for different age groups were very much alike and varied little. A further experiment was carried out with one- to six-year-old children in laboratory conditions. These children were offered large object boxes of varying sizes for playing. The objects contained within were unique poly-functional object bases, which enabled the children to develop all kinds of

play scripts according to their experiences and imagination based on those experiences.

The study consisted of three series. In the first the children were offered large boxes without supplementary toys. In the second series the large-sized boxes were supplemented with toys. Finally, in the third series the children were given large boxes and toys and a teacher who activated their play by asking various kinds of questions and by providing new play scripts (problem-solving adult-child interaction). The study showed that large objects that do not have permanently fixed meanings are wonderful means of developing children's independent play themes in both solitary and joint play. The results of the study also indicated that children in their second year familiarise themselves quietly with objects, observe, feel by touching objects and handle them. When an adult played together with the children and showed how it was possible to play with conditional toys, the children initiated several play activities that were chronologically connected. For example, they put dolls to bed, woke them up, dressed them and fed them. In such cases the children also started to speak more, thus indicating a situation in which activity is represented by speech. The children usually acted quietly. Thus, if they spoke, it was in reference to the actions that were occurring with the objects. During the third year more speech became involved in play. This was often connected with the naming of actions (e.g. I am carrying, I am lifting). In other cases children introduced large objects into their play (Look what a drum! Let's build a house! What a big train!) and conferred on these objects particular roles. At the beginning of the play the children marked imaginary situations with statements such as, "Let's start", "Where shall I sit?" and "We're there already." During the fourth year children used the conditional play environment to develop familiar play themes, thereby determining their own play roles. For example, one player says to another, "Piret, lie down! This is our house. You are my child. I'll cover you." It was clear during the observation that the children possessed much more knowledge and experience of the surrounding world than they had before and that they were able to transfer this into their play. (Grinjavičienė 1989.)

Thus, for example, children acted as engine drivers, travellers, visitors to the zoo, etc. During the fifth and sixth years the acting out of play scripts became more generalised. However, the play of children in the sixth year was more stereotyped while the play scripts were somewhat more developed. In the seventh year children also acted out relatively familiar play themes (family, house building) but tried to supplement these familiar scripts with new tools such as, for example, building a train, a rocket or a plane. The study showed that a flexible play environment was of great importance for the further development of the child's play and the development of creativity as it was open to creative adaptation and change by the child. The results of this study indicated that children up to five years of age are able to acquire quite generalised experiences, which they can successfully apply in their play. By contrast, six- and seven-year-old children turn out to be more bound to the

stereotypes that have formed by the time they reach that age. All this goes to form an internal psychological condition for generalising the experience of actions through play. An action in an imaginary situation requires support from reality and from the conditional elements that form the playful environment. (Grinjavičienė 1989.)

In play the child starts using both object replacements (for example, a chair replacing a car, a cube replacing an apple) and role replacements. Through play the child develops a symbolic function that consists of the replacement of real objects with replacement objects. Replacement enables the child to later on acquire that part of human culture, which has been passed on from generation to generation through sign systems such as oral and written speech, mathematical symbols, musical notation, etc. The use of external replacements is transformed into the use of internal replacements. (Novosyolova 1995). Vygotsky (1966) found that replacement is closely connected with the development of language. Vygotsky noted that it is not the similarity between the real object and the replacement object that is essential but the function of the replacement object, that is, the opportunity to play with the replacement object as if it were a real one.

Einsiedler (1991) studied the specific features of replacement objects and their influence on the play of three- to six-year-old children. He made use of the concepts of degrees of *reality* and *complexity*. The degree of reality refers to the correspondence of the toy to reality. For example, the degree of reality of a toy car refers to how exactly and in what detail the toy car replicates a real car. The degree of complexity indicates the amount of toys and objects and the relationship between these and the play situation. This notion provides a measure of the player's ability to create play situations on the basis of the means available. The results indicate that toys with a high degree of reality are necessary in order for the child to be able to play at all and to imitate. Toys with a low degree of reality enable the player to imagine all kinds of situations, change the meanings of the objects and replace missing objects and toys. Toys with a low degree of reality are necessary for developing play and are thus suitable for older preschool children. During the infant stage, when the child still has little practical experience, schematic conditional toys possessing high degrees of reality are required.

### **3.4 Summarising the findings of the mother's role and everyday activity**

While studying mother-child interaction Lisina (1985) came to the conclusion that at the age of three to six years interaction is extrasituational-cognitive. The child wants the adult firstly to participate in activities together with him or her and secondly to take the child's undertakings seriously. In such an interaction

the mother is a bearer of knowledge and answers the child's questions. At the same time the mother is an evaluator and supporter of the child's activities.

As can be seen from the preceding review parent-child symbolic play has been studied by scientists for a considerable time. Results have indicated that many benefits accrue when mothers play with their infants and toddlers. Several studies showed that the mother supports more sophisticated play than the child can accomplish alone and that children will exhibit higher levels of imagination when they play with their mothers. The investigators also emphasised that the amount of adult interaction may be less important than the quality of interaction. It has not yet become clear precisely which of the forms of stimulation used by mothers are the most suitable. Several studies have highlighted that direct suggestions are more effective than indirect suggestions. However, study of the play of mothers and three- to-five-year-old children indicated that the mother's questions have an essential role in the elaboration of the child's play.

In the studies a variety of methods (observation, interview, questionnaire) and conditions (laboratory and home setting) have been used. Children's free play, play with different toys and task-oriented activities offered by the researchers have been analysed. These studies have mostly quantitative characteristics. So far few qualitative studies have been carried out. The studies undertaken have focused mainly on parent-child play during the first three years of the child's life. Mothers tend to support their children's autonomy by offering fewer play suggestions as children grow older. Children's play after the age of 36 months has been more or less neglected by researchers. Garvey (1990) noted that the continuing role of many mothers in supporting social imagining in children after the age of 48 months of age has been overlooked even during the period when interaction with peers becomes quite skilful and complex.

At the same time previous studies have emphasised that the context within which everyday imagining arises needs to be examined systematically and the way in which everyday contexts are incorporated into play should be analysed. In fact, children's play in the kindergarten context has been extensively analysed. Various researchers have noted that if a game is required to have a beneficial effect on the child's development then the adult has to pay serious attention to everything connected with the child's play. Play stimulation does not simply mean the indirect or direct participation of the adult but something much broader. It is essential to take into account the child's independence, wishes and play motives on the one hand whilst at the same time keeping an eye on his or her everyday life, experiences and acquisition of knowledge. Above all, the social environment is the source of emergent play and play is especially sensitive to human action and relationships between people. Thus, children need a depth of knowledge and a range of impressions and experiences in order to play and with which to use creatively in their games and experiments.

Researchers have stressed that conditions have to be created for games in terms of time, space, place and materials. Their studies also emphasised that when adults interact with children in a sensitive, responsive and supportive manner they are able to enhance the children's play. Thus, the key to successful play involvement on the part of adults is the careful observation of children's play. Four adult's roles in play have been put forward, namely, onlooker, stage manager, coplayer, and play leader. When such roles are used in a sensitive and flexible manner they enable adults to have a positive impact on children's play.

## 4 PROBLEMS AND METHODS OF THE STUDY

### 4.1 Aims and problems of the study

The general aim of this study was to explore the child's play world in the home. This involves an attempt to describe and analyse children's play in the family context. In this study the focus is on the social child, who is culturally and historically situated in a range of social communities (Graue & Walsh 1998, 35). Therefore, I consider the everyday life and play of the child as one part of his or her total world. The study examines how and what type of games children play and how mothers create conditions for children's games. The other purpose is to describe how mothers value and support children's games at home. Thus, the role of the mother in creating a play world for her child at home will be analysed.

This study seeks to shed light on the following questions:

- 1) *What is the everyday life of the child and what is the nature of mother-child interaction at home?*

According to the cultural-historical approach the social environment and social interaction with the adult are amongst the most important factors promoting the appearance of play. According to Lisina the interaction of three- to six-year-old children with adults is extrasituational-cognitive. Thus, the following questions arise: What are the activities of the child at home? What do children do when alone and when together with their mothers? Who initiates the interactions and joint activities between the mother and the child? What is the content of interaction and joint activities of different players?

- 2) *What is the character of the child's play world at home?*

Vygotsky, Leontjev, Elkonin, Zaporozhets and others emphasised the ideas that role play becomes the preschool child's leading activity and that children's play is especially sensitive to human action and relationships with other people. Thus, the following questions arise: What type of games do children play at home and how do they play them? Do children play alone or together with

their mothers? How do children represent their everyday life and the social lives of adults in their play? What are the themes, rules and materials of their games? How do the children play out the play script? What kind of opportunities has been created for children to play? What kind of games do the different players engage in?

3) *What is the mother's role within the child's play world?*

Vygotsky, Leontjev, Elkonin and others noted that adults have an essential role in creating the preconditions of play and in the promotion of children's play. The following questions arise: What importance do mothers attach to their children's play and to the promotion of play? How is the importance of play reflected in the child's everyday life? What is the mother's role when her child is playing alone? How is mother-child joint play created? How does the mother together with the child play out play scripts? What is the character of mother-child interaction during play? How do the mothers support the games of different players?

## **4.2 Procedure of the study**

### **4.2.1 The selection of participants**

At the beginning of the study the head of the kindergarten was asked to find a kindergarten teacher who worked with four-year-old children and who was fully trained, professionally competent and experienced. When the head of the kindergarten had found a suitable teacher the teacher was asked to describe children displaying different play patterns within the kindergarten group, i.e. children who played games, primarily role games. She was also asked to find children who rarely engaged in role games. Then the children's mothers were asked for their permission to observe their children in the kindergarten. The play of those children described by the teacher was observed in the kindergarten. The play of each child was observed once or twice. The time and duration of the observation, the child's actions, speech and materials used were all recorded. Based on the kindergarten teacher's description and my own observations five four-year-old children with differing play patterns were selected. Five children were selected so that the study would include different players and the study in its nature would be an in-depth study. The aim of selecting five different players was to get a profound, varied and enough knowledge and understanding about the child's play world at home.

The different players mentioned previously in the study questions were the children who played differently in the kindergarten. I classified children who played role games to a considerable extent and in interesting ways as 'active players'. Children who engaged less in role play were classified as 'passive players'. The study at home involved two active players - *Anna and Kalev* and three passive players - *Toomas, Neeme and Nele*. All the children's names have been changed. After choosing the participants their mothers were

contacted, the aim of the study was explained and their permission to conduct the study with their children as participants was asked.

#### 4.2.2 The participants of the study

Three of the five children were boys (*Kalev, Neeme and Toomas*) and two were girls (*Anna and Nele*). Two of the five children were the only children within their families and were being brought up by their mothers alone. The grandmothers of both of these children played significant roles in their upbringing. Four of the five mothers worked. The children all lived in Tallinn, Estonia, and all attended an ordinary kindergarten. The children's homes were at various distances from the kindergarten in various parts of Tallinn. Three of the children lived in large apartment blocks, one lived in an old wooden house and one child lived in a detached house. Only one child had a room of her own.

The children's play settings at home, in their backyards or gardens and at their grandparents' homes are presented in table 5.

*Anna* lived with her parents and younger three-year-old brother in a three-room apartment and she shared a room with her brother. Both children went to the same kindergarten and Anna was in her third year of kindergarten. Together with her brother Anna sang at a music club once a week. In the kindergarten teacher's opinion Anna had no difficulties in communicating with other children. For example, when the teacher talked to the children about friendship and friends on St. Valentine's Day and asked them who their friends were, quite a large number of the children answered that Anna was one of their friends. At the same time the teacher noted that Anna might have experienced conflicts with other children on occasions when her ideas did not suit the others. Anna's mother was a qualified teacher with a higher education who was not currently working at school but was involved in managing pedagogical projects. She worked four days a week.

*Kalev's* family had only recently moved to Tallinn town and he lived in a two-room apartment together with his mother, father and brother. He shared a room with his brother and Kalev had the desk of his school age brother near to his play corner. Kalev had been at the kindergarten for a year, before which he had attended another kindergarten in the country. Kalev was popular amongst the other children and was considered a valued companion. The kindergarten teacher saw him as a boy whom the others wanted to work and play together with. In learning activities Kalev always knew the answers to the teacher's questions and was also well able to justify his answers. Kalev's mother had a secondary education and worked as a secretary in a private company.

*Nele* was in her second year at the kindergarten. She lived with her mother in a small two-room apartment in an old wooden house and she had a room of her own. Nele could play on her own in the yard outside her home. The teacher remarked that it had not been easy for Nele to adapt to life in the kindergarten and it had taken her a long time. In the kindergarten environment Nele was a quiet and sensitive girl, who usually played on her own. Nele was cognitively well developed, in particular, she was good at mathematical calculation and her

speech was well developed. The kindergarten teacher considered Nele's drawing skills to be especially good; indeed, she was the best in the group. Nele's mother had a higher education and now occupied a position of responsibility in a large company. She was a single parent and often travelled on business both within Estonia and abroad. Nele's grandparents also played a major part in bringing her up and she often stayed at their place.

*Neeme* lived in a detached house together with his mother, father and 18-months-old sister. He shared a room with his sister and could play both inside and outside the house. Almost every weekend the family went to visit Neeme's grandparents who lived near to Tallinn. Neeme had only been at a kindergarten for a short time and he had adapted relatively slowly to the kindergarten environment and to the other children. Neeme drew well and he could already read and write a little. According to the teacher he was active in class, could answer the teacher's questions and liked chatting with the teacher. Neeme's mother had received teacher's training but was at home.

TABLE 5 Children's family characterisation and play conditions at home

Child's name	Family characterisation	Type of housing	Play conditions at home
ANNA	Lives with her mother, father and three-year-old brother	Three-room apartment	Shares a room with her brother. They often go to their grandparents in the country.
KALEV	Lives with his mother, father and a nine-year-old brother	Two-room apartment	Cramped living conditions. Shares a room with his brother. Every weekend they go to their grandparents in the country.
NELE	Lives with her mother	Two-room apartment	Has a room of her own. Is able to play in the yard.
NEEME	Lives with mother and father and 18 month-old sister.	Detached house	Shares a room with his sister and has a lot of space to play both inside and outside the house.
TOOMAS	Lives with his mother	Two-room apartment	Shares a room with his mother. Good play conditions at his grandmother's.

*Toomas* lived with his mother in a two-room apartment in a typical Soviet era high-rise district of Tallinn. Toomas shared a room with his mother. His grandmother played a very active part in bringing Toomas up. She usually collected him from kindergarten and he used to stay at her place when his mother was away on business. After work, Toomas's mother collected him from grandmother and took him home. Toomas was in his third year at kindergarten but had hitherto only attended for half of each day. The kindergarten teacher viewed Toomas as a child, who had his own interests (mostly of a technical nature) and whose clever technical stories were beyond the comprehension of the other children. In particular, the teacher saw Toomas as an original and sensitive child with a great musical talent. His mother had a higher education and worked as a project manager in a private company. She was a single parent and was often very busy with her work.

### 4.2.3 Data collection and methods employed in the study

This study was carried out in the form of a qualitative case study including some quantitative analyses. Qualitative case studies are particularly valuable when we wish to highlight individual differences or unique variations from one programme setting to another (Patton 2002). Case studies are characterised by the collection of research material in natural conditions using qualitative research methods, a presentation of results in descriptive terms, a search for meanings, a concentration on processes and a presentation of the analysis. The main aim within a case study is to describe what is going on and how things are proceeding. (Bogdan & Biklen 1998; Denzin & Lincoln 2000; Yin 1994.) The ethnographic features (e.g. Patton 2002, 67) can be seen in this study as I tried to find an answer to the ethnographic problem concerning the nature of the child's play world both at home and in the kindergarten.

Preparations for the study began at the end of 1997 with interviews of kindergarten teachers aimed at finding children who exhibited a variety of play patterns. I then observed the children at play in the kindergarten and interviewed their mothers. After this video observations were performed at home. Finally, I undertook stimulated recall interviews (Eteläpelto & Saariluoma 1999) in order to analyse how the mothers interpreted the behaviour of their children and themselves as presented in the video episodes. Thus, a range of data collection methods was employed in the study.

#### *Interviews with mothers*

A semi-structured interview technique was adopted in order to obtain reliable information from the mothers. Patton (2002) emphasised the idea that people being interviewed respond in their own words to express their own personal perspectives. Interviews are speech events in which structure and meaning are jointly produced by the interviewers and interviewees (Mishler 1991). In case of the semi-structured interview it is assumed that the method will enable the study of a person's thoughts, beliefs and feelings. The semi-structured interview was chosen since the aim of this method is to create a series of pictures from the life of the interviewee as well as to study people's experiences, thoughts, beliefs and feelings (Kvale 1996, 5-6; Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2001, 48). Interview topics and sub-topics provided information about the ways of life and habits of the families involved.

The interview was constructed on a topic-by-topic basis. Proceeding from the study questions the following topics were considered essential:

- the child's daily activities at home after kindergarten on weekdays and at weekends,
- the child's play materials and toys,
- the child's games at home,
- the role of the mother in the child's play,
- the importance of play and toys in the life of the child.

All of these topics were discussed with each mother although the order of topics was occasionally changed. I also prepared supplementary questions for each topic in order to assist informants in responding as well as to find out more about the informants, their ideas about the everyday lives of their children, their children's play and their toys (appendix 1). I had previously carried out pilot interviews to establish whether the interview procedure worked. With the help of the pilot interview the interview topics, the understanding of these topics by the mothers and also the length of the interviews were tested. Two interviews were carried out with mothers on an individual basis. The mothers were interviewed at the kindergarten in a separate room where it was possible to speak quietly and confidentially. The interviews were recorded with a cassette recorder. Mothers willingly agreed to speak about their children and their activities. One mother remarked happily that this was the first time in her life that someone had shown such a great interest in her child. Afterwards each interview was transcribed word for word. In all, the transcribed texts of these interviews ran to some one hundred and thirty pages.

The stimulated recall interviews were performed with each mother separately after finishing the video recordings. They usually took place some months after the recording. The mothers were shown episodes from the recorded video tape and were asked to comment on what had been going on or to give reasons why they had acted in the way they had. For example, in one episode I asked a mother to comment on why she had come into the children's room since the mother usually remained in the kitchen with the children alone in their own room. In another instance a mother was asked to speak about why the child had come to her in the kitchen and what the child had wanted from her.

#### *Non-participant observation at home*

In addition to the interviews, non-participant observations were carried out at home using a camcorder to record the child's play at home. Video recording was chosen for several reasons. The purpose of observational data is to describe the setting observed, the activities that took place in that setting and the people who participated in those activities (Patton 2002). The everyday domestic setting provides an accurate, direct and natural picture of the child's play world and the mother's role in creating that world. Video footage provides a record of social events as they occur and with a level of detail (Jordan & Henderson 1994, 13). Video helps to record people's actions, the objects used in those actions, speech and non-verbal means simultaneously. The advantage of video recording also lies in the fact that it is possible to rewind the material and view it repeatedly. The video recordings were performed by myself and a student familiar with video work. To begin with we visited each family in order to get acquainted with them. When we visited the homes for the first time there was coffee or tea awaiting us. The mothers talked about their children, their daily lives and their interests. The mothers often took out photo albums of the child or the whole family and told us about the child's life in considerable detail. The

children also showed us their own rooms, or in its absence, the place where they played at home. They showed us their toys, books, musical instruments, etc. At the same time the children were allowed to examine the camcorder and look through its viewer.

Appointments were made at times most convenient for the mothers. These were usually during the evenings when the mother and the child had reached home. I tried to ensure that the process of video recording would create the minimum possible disturbance to the family's daily life and rhythm. I also asked for permission to record in all the rooms (e.g. the child played at cooking soup in the bathroom or sometimes went to the parents' bedroom). During observation neither the child nor the mother was asked any questions, neither was communication with them initiated. When the child asked something then he or she was answered in a brief manner. When the child showed something such as his or her toy or drawing he or she received a kind and concise reply and was asked to continue his or her activity. After each video recording a text was written down which detailed all events, a transcription of the interaction between the child and the mother, and the duration of the recording.

Each child was recorded for nine to ten hours at home, thus making a total observation time of 50 hours. The data collection lasted from August 1998 to March 2001 and contained the following elements (see table 6).

TABLE 6 Data collection schedule

TIME	METHOD
August - November 1998	Pilot interviews with the mothers
November 1998 - May 1999	Interviews with the kindergarten teacher and observation of children's play in the kindergarten
March 1999 - June 1999	Semi-structured interviews with the mothers
May 1999 - June 2000	Video observation at home
May 2000 - March 2001	Stimulated recall interviews with the mothers

#### 4.2.4 Data analysis methods

##### *Analysis of the interviews*

In analysing the interviews the fact that the semi-structured interview primarily pays attention to people's interpretations of things and that assigned meanings are central was realised (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2001, 48). Mishler (1991, 54) emphasises that the respondents' acceptance of the interviewer's frameworks of meanings is a key factor in performing successful interviews. I also proceeded from the standpoint that the meanings come into being during the course of interaction. The process of qualitative data analysis is one of searching for meaning from amongst the words and actions of the participants of the study. Such texts are named cultural products (e.g. Eskola & Suoranta 1998). Texts are a part of social reality and also a part of the implementation of social reality. Texts not only describe events but also at the same time create a social life.

The interviews were analysed as follows. Firstly, each interview was reviewed in terms of topics. In this way I repeatedly analysed the material from the beginning to the end. On the basis of this theme-oriented analysis new 'significance themes' appeared. Special attention was paid to those places, i.e. physical spaces, that were concretely and directly connected to the research questions. I tried to summarise the meanings given by the mothers by rewording their statements. Long statements were compressed into briefer statements in which the essence of what was said was rephrased using just a few words (Kvale 1996, 192). After this the meanings expressed by the mothers were interpreted.

In addition to the theme-oriented analysis of interviews I also compiled graphical models, *meaning maps* (Moilanen & Rähkä 2001). The interviews findings could be classified into the following themes:

- *The child's activities and games at home:* I highlighted separately those activities which the child performed alone and those performed together with his or her mother (e.g. going to the cafe, theatre visits, sewing dolls' clothes, etc). I distinguished all the games performed by the mother irrespective of what type of play was involved.
- *Play setting:* The activity objects the child had at home were identified. Thereafter the mother's thoughts about buying toys and materials were addressed. Then the playmates with whom the child played both inside and outside the home were identified. Finally details regarding the child's play areas, whether or not the child had a room of his or her own, and the times when the child played were all recorded.
- *Mothers' involvement:* In analysing this particular sub-topic separate surveys of the child's solitary play and his or her games together with mother were conducted. The ways in which the mother involved herself in the child's play and supported the playing child were highlighted. At the same time I also wanted to find out the mother's opinion concerning the importance of play in the child's life, whether play needs any support and if so then what kind of involvement on the part of the mother.

The meaning maps were as secondary data to understand the mothers' ideas and analyse the findings more deeply (appendix 4). With the help of the meaning map it was graphically and visually possible to illustrate the mothers' interpretations of my questions. The principle guiding the compilation of the meaning maps was one, which proceeded from general notions to more concrete and specific meanings. Altogether there were 15 meaning maps.

#### *Analysis of video observation*

According to Patton (2002) the purpose of observational analysis is to take the reader into the setting that was observed. This means that observational data must have depth and detail. The data must be sufficiently descriptive for the reader to understand what occurred and how it occurred. The observer's notes become the eyes, ears and perceptual senses of the reader. The description must

be factual, accurate and thorough without being cluttered by irrelevant minutiae or trivia (Patton 2002). The basic criterion to be applied to a recorded observation is the extent to which the observation permits the reader to enter the situation under study. In this study the total amount of transcribed video film texts extended over 150 pages. This included joint and solitary games together with other activities. The children's play observation in the kindergarten accounted for 30 pages of text.

I started analysing the video observations by writing down the content of the observation, i.e. a 'content log' (Jordan & Henderson 1994, 5), after each video recording. Content logs are best made as soon as possible after the tape is recorded because the events of the observation are still fresh in the researcher's memory, and annotations and explications can be made that may not be possible later (Jordan & Henderson 1994, 5). I wrote down what both the child and mother did at home, what was done together and whether the activity was a joint game. In addition, a brief description of the content of the play was given. A short summary of the activity that occurred before the observation was also recorded.

I then began a thorough analysis, which consisted of watching each video recording through again and writing down in greater detail the content of each piece of footage. After this I transcribed word for word the child's play, including both solitary play and joint play together with the mother. Both the child's and his or her mothers' actions, speech and use of materials during the play were described in considerable detail. Firstly, the times at which each recording was started and completed were noted. Then the child's activities during the recording were set out in the order in which they occurred (for example, drawing, watching TV, looking at a picture book, eating). The content of the activities of each child was briefly noted along with details as to whether the child was acting alone or with his or her mother, brother or sister.

In *analysing play* I drew from those ideas of Vygotsky (1966), Leontjev (1981), Zaporozhets and Markova (1983a 80-81, 1983b 89-91), Elkonin (1999, 34-35, 213), and Mihailenko and Korotkova (1999, 19, 22) which concern the play of preschool children and the main characteristics of play. In analysing solitary play and joint play with the mother the following play components were described :

- The theme* is that area of reality, which is depicted in play.
- The content of play* comprises the activities and personal interrelationships that are singled out in a given area of reality. The content reflects how deeply the child has understood the world of adults. The content of the play both defines and is affected by what the child considers important in the activities and social relationships of adults.
- The plot* of a role play is defined as the reflection of certain actions, events and interrelationships from surrounding life and activity by the child while playing.

The plot of the play activity is characterised by the following basic elements: the *character or role*, which acts as a means of realising the plot; the *situation*, in which the role playing takes place; *actions*, with the help of which the role is implemented, *objects/materials* with which help the player acts, and the *relationship* with the other player.

The other types of games (didactic, verbal, physical, board games) were analysed by observing both whether and how the mother perceived playfulness and how she herself complied with the rules of the game.

The analysis of *the mother and child's interaction* in everyday life and during play was based on the ideas of Lisina (1985, 1986). According to Lisina, the child sees the adult as both an erudite bearer of knowledge and a supporter of his or her activity.

In determining *the mother's role* in the child's play I made use of the classification made by Johnson, Christie and Yawkey (1999). According to these authors the parent's role in games progresses as follows: uninvolved, onlooker, stage manager, coplayer, play leader and director/instructor.

The analysis of *the mother's involvement and play promotion* was based on the studies of Slade (1987), Fiese (1990), O'Connell and Bretherton (1984), Beizer and Howes (1992), Haight and Miller (1993), Novosyolova (1989) and Zvorygina (1989). In considering play promotion I arrived at two groups of reactions on the part of the mother, namely, those reactions, which enhance the continuation of play and those reactions which interrupt or stop the play.

Promotion was divided into three areas: verbal promotion, demonstration and the offering of play materials.

1. Verbal promotion was further divided into the following subsections:
  - Suggestion.* For example, the mother said to her child, "Let's start playing shop. You will be a customer and I will be the shopkeeper!"
  - Labelling.* The mother took a piece of Lego and said, "The Lego man will be a security man who will keep order."
  - Question.* For example, the mother addressed her child saying, "Butterfly, where are you flying?"
  - Explanation.* For example, the mother explained how to spell a word in a game.
  - Direction.* For example, the mother said to her son, "Well, sing a butterfly song!"
  - Support.* The child had built a big house from Lego and addressed his mother, "Look, what a big house!" The mother replied, "Yes, it is a big house." Such reactions as "mm-mm", "ahhaa" and "yes" belong to the area of supporting stimulation.
  
2. Demonstration.
  - For example, the mother showed how to make 'salad' in a café play or how a 'repair man' must mend a roof.

3. Offering play materials.

For example, the mother gave her child a dinosaur, which was to guard the house.

In addition to the video analysis of the content so-called ludographs for each videotape were compiled (appendix 3). A ludograph is a graphical depiction of a game in which the child's play and other solitary and joint activities are presented along with the start and end times of the video. With the help of the ludograph it was possible to determine who initiated activities and games and to record how the child addressed his or her mother. In all, a total of seventy ludographs were compiled.

According to Vygotsky (1981), the unit of analysis should represent all the features of the object being studied. The *play script was defined* as a unit of analysis of the play (Novosyolova & Zvorygina 1989). A play script is a system of conditions where an imaginary situation is created, which is familiar and understandable to the child and which is directed towards depicting and reconstructing the life experience of the child. I analysed how the child acted out a play script and how the mother helped her child to act it out. Play scripts can be of various kinds, for example, feeding a doll, building a house or curing a sick child. Two different ways of acting out play scripts have been distinguished, namely, object-related ways and social role-related ways. In object-related ways the players depict human activities in the world of objects and the process of reshaping of objects. Social role-related ways of acting out play scripts depict the social sphere of the real world (mutual activities of people, relationships and communication).

## 5 FINDINGS OF THE CASES

This chapter is organised into three sections. The first section presents the opinions of the kindergarten teachers regarding the children's games and their skills at playing with other children in the kindergarten. Following this is a description of each of the target children in the kindergarten. The second section consists of an account of each target child's everyday life at home, his or her activities alone and together with the other members of the family. The children's play settings and the presence of playmates are discussed along with the opinions of each mother regarding the importance of play and toys in the life of her child. Finally the child's solitary games and joint games with his or her mother are reported and the ways in which the mother supports the child's games at home are analysed.

### 5.1 Anna

#### 5.1.1 Anna's toys and solitary games

##### *In the kindergarten*

According to the kindergarten teacher Anna was a good player who never lacked play ideas. The kindergarten teacher thought that Anna had no difficulties in interacting with other children. The other children too, both boys and girls, wanted to play together with her. Observation of the kindergarten play showed that Anna did play a range of games with other children. In these games she was able to act according to her assumed roles and thereby interact with the other children.

For example, Anna suggested playing shop together with Sandra. She first began by building the 'shop'. They started bringing things for the shop: a table, on top of which they piled all kinds of toys and kitchen utensils. After setting the things on the table Anna called in a singing voice, "Who wants to buy anything?" Anna turned to Aivar, "Aivar, do you want to buy anything from here?" Aivar: "Hello!"

Sandra: "What do you want to buy?"

Aivar: "I want one of these?" (He indicates a small plate)

Anna: "It costs six, six eighty."

Aivar gave a hundred krooni note (a piece of paper).

Anna had obtained prior knowledge about playing shop, what was sold and bought there, that the shop assistant offered and sold goods and that customers bought things from the shop. In addition to the usual activities of shop assistants and customers, she also added other actions such as in the present instance checking the money with the help of a machine.

#### *At home*

According to Anna's mother Anna liked drawing, cutting and pasting all kinds of things since an early age. She went to a singing club with her brother once a week and she loved listening to music cassettes at home. In her mother's opinion Anna liked going with her to the theatre, cinema and café. In the mother's view going to the café was a special event for her daughter. Café experiences found repeated expression in Anna's games. Usually on their free days Anna, her mother and her brother went for a walk into the nearby forest and in summer the whole family used to go to the waterside or go hiking in the countryside and have picnics. Anna and her brother had a room of their own, but they were allowed to play everywhere in the apartment, including in the kitchen and bathroom.

Anna had a lot of play material and toys. As she shared a room with her younger brother, there were a lot of her brother's toys too and there were several toys, which both children played with. Anna had a cassette player and cassettes for listening to music. As she loved drawing, pasting and cutting she had a supply of drawing paper, glues, brushes, pencils and paints. There were several children's books from her mother's childhood (children's books in Estonia are quite expensive and the books they had bought had been very carefully chosen). Anna had her own favourite toys, in particular, a brown and white horse and a donkey were very dear to her. Outside of the kindergarten Anna played mainly with her brother Mihkel, her parents, children of family friends, other children from the kindergarten and her grandparents. Anna had two grandmothers and two grandfathers and they too were regular play companions, especially in the country during the summer.

The main idea highlighted in the interview with Anna's mother was the importance of play as a consequence of the child acting out certain situations and trying to place herself in those situations. The mother considered that play revealed how the child assumed roles and how she changed while playing these roles. The mother's attitude towards joint play with the child was varied. Before, the children had come to the mother in the kitchen to play and the mother had encouraged her children while still being busy with her own jobs. She had lately noticed that the children needed her more than before and that they wanted to play together with her. When the children called her she always went. When the child misunderstood something then the adult had to explain.

At the same time the mother noted that as she herself was a teacher she avoided teaching her own children.

Table 7 presents Anna's games at home. Anna played nine games, which lasted three hours and 32 minutes.

TABLE 7 Anna's games at home

Games	Number of games	Duration
Solitary games	4	2h 22min
Joint games	5	1h 10min

When alone Anna mostly played role games. The observed four solitary games lasted altogether two hours and 22 minutes. Anna's solitary games, their themes, duration, initiation and materials are shown in table 8. All the games were initiated by Anna herself. It was typical of these games that, in addition to playing, Anna also sang, looked at pictures and talked to her brother about things concerning her play as well as about other everyday situations. Anna usually played her games in the children's bedroom while her mother was working in the kitchen.

TABLE 8 Anna's solitary games

Theme	Duration	Initiator	Play materials
1.Putting animals to bed	1 h 1 min	Anna	Toys: Tipsi, Tinki-Vinky, bunny, bird, bear, snail shells, felt-tipped pens, paper, blanket, cushions, paper gift bags, plastic cup
2.Making of tickets	39 min	Anna	Paper, roll of paper, scissors, pieces from a board game
3.Cooking a witch's soup	31 min	Anna	Water, cup, plastic straw, soap, tooth-paste
4. Playing the piano	11 min	Anna	Toy piano, plate, plastic jar cap

In the play putting animals to bed Anna played the role of taking care of the animals and children. The play consisted of three scripts. First Anna put the toys to sleep by setting them out on the floor. In the second script Anna started reading a story from the book and in the third script she fed the toys. Anna played with toys while simultaneously describing what she was doing. For example, "I am putting the bunny to sleep here. I am putting that little bird here."

The materials used in the play were both realistic and replacement toys, i.e. snail shells, felt-tipped pens, food which had been cut out of paper. During the play Anna addressed her mother a total of three times in order to get things she needed for the play, i.e. cushions and felt-tipped pens. She also called to the kitchen to ask what her mother was doing there. In the stimulated interview conducted while watching the video the mother said, "...she probably needed either a dish or a blanket or some other thing. That's what she needed. Or she wanted a drink." The mother did not want to add anything more.

In the other solitary games Anna's play scripts were full of imagination and her speech was connected with the applied role and role actions. In the solitary games Anna assumed certain roles (mother-caretaker, witch soup maker, lottery player, etc.). Anna's play was also characterised by considerable emotion and expressiveness. She played these games on the object level of the role play. She addressed her mother several times in order to get various things (a roll of paper, felt-tip pens and cushions).

Anna's mother promoted Anna's solitary games on 56 occasions (table 9). These comprised 49 instances of verbal promotion and seven of offering play material.

TABLE 9 Promotion by Anna's mother in solitary games

Type of promotion	Number of instances of promotion
<b>1. Verbal promotion</b>	49
Question	29
Explanation	10
Support	7
Direction	2
Suggestion	1
Labelling	-
<b>2. Demonstration</b>	-
<b>3. Offering play materials</b>	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>

Most of the mother's reactions were *questions* (29). There were especially many questions during the 'making tickets' play (15), where the mother asked repeatedly what she was doing, what the play was like, whether she had scissors, where could one travel using those tickets. In the 'witch soup cooking' play, the mother's questions were connected with her fear that her child might start drinking the liquid. The mother repeatedly asked Anna whether she intended to drink the liquid in reality. There were also *explanations* (10). The mother explained to Anna why the drink she was mixing must not be drunk since the 'witch soup' might be dangerous for her health. She also explained where she could find some materials for the play.

The mother's *support* (7) could also be traced in the 'making tickets' play. The mother's curiosity and constant questions about Anna's play showed that when sitting in the living room with guests and seeing the playing child, she had more time and opportunity to attend to what Anna was doing. There were *directions* (2) and *suggestions* (1). The mother herself *offered* Anna *several materials* (7): a cup, scissors and a roll of paper.

### 5.1.2 Joint games involving Anna and her mother

Anna and her mother played five games together, the total duration of which was one hour and 10 minutes. Two of these games were role games, one was a board game and two were didactic games. Two games were initiated by Anna

while the other games were initiated by her mother. On some occasions the mother suggested a play twice but Anna at first refused. However, after a few minutes Anna herself initiated the same game or asked her mother to join in. The following table (table 10) presents the joint games involving Anna and her mother, detailing their type, duration, initiator and material.

TABLE 10 Joint games played by Anna and her mother

Joint game type	Duration	Initiator	Play materials
1. Role play 'Café'	33 min	Mother	Cups, saucers, plates, teaspoons, vase, wooden flowers, small marbles, sweets, apples, paper, a big cardboard box, necklace
2. Board game	13 min	Anna	Game board, dice, game pieces
3. Counting game	11 min	Mother	Dice
4. Writing game	11 min	Mother	Paper, pencil
5. Role play 'Shop'	2 min	Anna	Plastic tray, bowl, biscuits

The following example shows how Anna played the café play with her mother and her brother. The initiator of the play was the mother. The mother said, "Let's play 'café', shall we?" Anna answered by shouting, "Yes, yeah, yeah!" and jumping up and down. The preparatory stage of the play (the building of the café) lasted 12 minutes. Anna chose genuine porcelain dishes (cups and saucers), one plastic plate, real teaspoons, a real vase with wooden flowers and small marbles as decorations.

Then the play started with Anna as a waitress and Mihkel as a customer. Their mother was sitting in the armchair and watching.  
 Anna looked at Mihkel and asked, "What would you like?"  
 Mihkel: "I want coffee water."  
 Anna poured 'coffee' into the cup from the coffee pot and asked, "Sugar too? Do you want some? I'll put some in now."

This first play script lasted three minutes and the children assumed roles for themselves. Thus, Anna was a waitress in the café and Mihkel a customer. Anna offered Mihkel coffee with sugar, then an apple and sweets. The play script was acted out by the children using role actions with the help of role speech and interaction. Anna knew what a waitress did in a café, i.e. a waitress asks customers what they would like to have. Anna addressed the customer in the correct polite form by asking, "What would you like to have?" rather than "What do you want?" After that she offered coffee to the customer, poured coffee out from the coffee pot, added sugar and washed the teaspoon. At the same time she took care of Mihkel, making sure he ate mainly healthy foods (apple) and sweets only after that. Mihkel had difficulties in perceiving the pretence of the play. At the beginning of the play Mihkel behaved according to his role. Later on he tried to steal the real sweets from behind his sister's back and a serious conflict between the two children resulted.

When the first conflict had been solved Anna addressed her mother asking, "Mummy, do you want anything? Say, yes!"

Her mother answered, "Coffee, with sugar and cream." During that dialogue Mihkel quickly took a sweet from the bowl. Anna saw what happened and the conflict flared up again between the children. Mother calmed her daughter. Mihkel was also discontented and cried.

Anna addressed her mother, "Mummy, but what about you?"

The mother answered, "But, you were supposed to bring the coffee to me!" Then her mother further instructed Anna how the café play should be played. She said, "Anna, you must also ask what I would like to have! Coffee ought to be brought to the table! And you should ask for money too!"

The second play script lasted four minutes and involved roles for Anna, her brother and her mother. Thus, her mother was a customer and Anna a café waitress. Anna - as waitress - asked her mother what she would like to have, poured imaginary coffee into the cup, looked for a cake for the play and asked for the payment. The mother's role in acting out that particular play script was greater than in the previous episode. At first she was a customer asking for a cup of coffee. However, she then instructed Anna how to play, i.e. that the waitress must come to the table to take orders and to ask for payment.

Anna acted out the script resourcefully, choosing white paper as a replacement toy for cakes. Her mother also paid money by way of a gesture and asked Anna to give her the change. The mother provided the play script for Anna, which was acted out together through the roles and role interaction. Anna and her mother played with great emotion and expressiveness. The little brother watched Anna and her mother playing from the side and clearly did not understand the pretence of the play. For example, when the mother asked for some cake Mihkel ran into the kitchen to the fridge to bring a real piece of cake. Mihkel also wanted to join in the play but Anna did not allow this and several rows ensued. Then the mother decided that she should go to the café again but this time with Mihkel.

The third play script lasted five minutes. This time Anna was the waitress while her mother and Mihkel were customers. Everything went well when all three of them played together. The mother asked first Mihkel what he wanted to have. Hearing Mihkel's answer, she repeated the request to Anna. After Mihkel had received his coffee and cake the mother herself took the customer's role in asking for coffee with sugar and cheesecake. All the time the mother developed the play by asking new questions, for example, asking for more coffee and enquiring as to what kind of salad they had. Anna accepted her mother's suggestions willingly. Mother repeated several times that it was imaginarily that way or that it existed in an imaginary way. Finally the mother asked Mihkel whether he wanted anything else to eat such as salad. That was where the idea of preparing salad appeared.

It had already become clear in the interview with the mother that Anna's favourite game was the café play. She had both real life and role play experiences of cafés. It was very important for her that she played the game in an exact way and, in particular, that her mother took part.

Games such as counting and writing were more connected with the teaching of academic skills. The initiator of these games was the mother. That these were games suggested by the mother was confirmed by Anna's initial refusal to play. As reasons for her refusal Anna stated that she wanted to watch TV or that she just did not feel like doing it. Only a while later did Anna herself initiate the same games. In the stimulated interview the mother admitted that Anna liked playing the writing game but that she did not like reading the letters together. Anna's mother added that it was not so essential and that she would not sit and pressure Anna with "let's start reading". The main content of the writing games involved one player writing a word after which the other had to read (guess) the written word. In the counting game Anna threw a dice and counted the numbers obtained. In these games some difficulties in mother-child interaction became evident. At one stage Anna could not understand the sense of a joke made by her mother and felt insulted.

Anna's mother promoted games on 196 occasions. In addition, she made two non-promotive reactions during the joint games. The promotive reactions included 186 verbal promotions, two instances of demonstration and eight of offering play materials (table 11).

TABLE 11 Promotive reactions by Anna's mother during the joint games

Type of promotion	Number of instances of promotion
<b>1. Verbal promotion</b>	<b>186</b>
Question	52
Explanation	39
Direction	38
Support	33
Suggestion	16
Labelling	8
<b>2. Demonstration</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>3. Offering play materials</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>196</b>

The most numerous were *questions* (52). There were a great number of questions in joint role games such as 'café' and 'shop'. The mother continually developed the play with new questions such as "Is there any cake?" or "Do you want some sugar in your coffee?" The mother asked questions such as why there were no plates in the play or, at the very beginning of the play, what materials (dishes, flowers) were needed for the play. In the writing and counting games there were also a lot of questions. Generally, the mother addressed the child in the following way. "How much is the total? Call me then, when you have got the total." In the writing game the mother asked, "What did you write?" or "What have I written just now?" As well as asking questions the mother *explained* (39) a great deal during joint games. Above all she explained to Anna how to play the games and what to do when playing. For example the mother told her daughter that in the café there should be a potted plant or a blue pot as a decoration and that the things had to be placed so that they would not fall over.

In the board game there were a large number of *directions* (38). The mother said to her daughter, "Roll the dice now!" When Anna got a six the mother said, "Roll it again! Go one...two...three! Look! Take it!" The directions were connected with saying aloud the number that was obtained from throwing the dice. *Support* (33) confirmation was also observed in joint games. During role games this was mostly connected with the support of pretence. The mother said several times, "just imagine it's like that". The mother also supported things said by her child.

There were also *suggestions* (16), which were mostly connected with the starting of a play, and the *offering of play materials* (8), particularly in the café play. During the joint games there was also *labelling* (8) and *demonstration* (2).

## 5.2 Kalev

### 5.2.1 Interaction and joint activities involving Kalev and his mother

#### *In the kindergarten*

The kindergarten teacher reported that Kalev was a player who never lacked ideas about how to play various games in the kindergarten. Observation in the kindergarten revealed that Kalev offered ideas to other players and that he continually discussed the theme and content of the play with the other children. Kalev repeatedly gave advice to the others concerning what they should do, how to build the road, the parking place or garage, etc. Kalev's play was accompanied by talk, as well as numerous imaginary situations (e.g. fishing, getting petrol for the cars, etc). Kalev was a favourite play companion amongst both the boys and girls.

#### *At home*

Kalev loved drawing while alone and also liked cutting and gluing things. He and his elder brother Tiit (five years older than him) spent a lot of time playing computer games or watched TV. His mother was usually in the kitchen, cooking or doing some other housework. When Kalev was not playing on the computer himself he often watched and commented on his brother's or father's games.

Several types of mother-child joint activities and interaction were observed. For example, Kalev and his mother spoke of their planned visit to a baby and its mother. His mother also showed him how to iron clothes, to snap his fingers and to whistle. She tried to teach Kalev how to count money ready for when they went out for a meal at McDonalds. These activities were connected with the child's teaching and formation of academic skills and were thus more oriented towards didactic interaction. These interactions were generally of short duration and were mainly initiated by the mother. She attempted to use humour in every-day life. For example, if Kalev was in a bad mood in the evening she would try to improve the situation using humour.

Kalev did not have a room of his own but shared a room with his brother. The mother said that her son did not have a lot of toys. Kalev's toys were in a cupboard and on the shelves. Kalev's play world contained some marvellous toy animals. Woodpeckers and a light blue teddy bear were particularly dear to him. Kalev also loved playing with Lego. However, recently they had bought a number of TV games and Kalev's father had once in a while brought home a laptop computer so Kalev played on them.

Kalev's mother did not explain the meaning of play in any greater detail. She admitted that play had an important role in her child's life, and children's play had to be respected. On the one hand she was glad that her child had special games which interested other children and their parents. At other times, the importance of school and learning and also a certain uncertainty connected with school could be traced in her interview. She said that it was important to know about letters and numbers and she was also to certain extent unsatisfied that her child had not been taught more reading and writing in the kindergarten than had been the case. Regarding the importance of joint play, Kalev's mother said that her son was able to play for hours alone and when he played alone she would not interrupt him. The mother said that she was somewhere nearby and if the child needed her she would attend to him.

Kalev was observed at home playing one solitary play as well as six joint games together with his mother. In total these lasted 58 minutes (table 12).

TABLE 12 Kalev's games at home

Games	Number of games	Duration
Solitary play	1	9 min
Joint games	6	49 min

Kalev played alone only once. He played the particular play in question with the same soft toys (two squirrels) that he also played with his mother (see Kalev and his mother's theatre play). Kalev started to play alone after his elder brother refused to play with him on discovering that Kalev had cheated. Kalev was sitting on the sofa table, his feet in a hot bath which his mother had made for him to treat his cough.

Kalev took his squirrels in his hand, put his fingers inside the squirrels' paws and said in a loud voice, "I'll play alone..." "Sure I will. I'll play with my squirrel..." He waved his animals about, singing, "La-la-laa." He waved the two squirrels above the bowl and his brother warned, "What are you doing? They'll fall in!"

Kalev: "No, they won't. I have got my fingers inside them." Then he started to play a board game with his two squirrels so that he spoke the parts of both animals. The squirrel took the dice, rolled it and moved the piece according to the score obtained. The dialogue between the two squirrels went as follows.

The first squirrel said, "Let's play with the dice!"

The second squirrel answered, "Oh, yes, let's play that game!"

The first squirrel took the dice between its paws and rolled it, exclaiming, "Ah, I can't throw it... Throw it for me! I can't throw it."

The second squirrel answered, "Then you can't play either. I'll roll...." (the play continued)

The play lasted nine minutes (see table 13). This game of Kalev's was a typical example of director's play, in which the player has taken toys and acts and speaks on their behalf. The player himself creates a play situation and puts himself in the place of the animals. It was quite hard to play as it was difficult for the squirrels to roll the dice and move the piece on the game board. Kalev himself created the interpersonal relations between toys. The speech was connected with the actions performed, i.e. with the rolling of the dice and moving of the piece. He acted out the play script with great emotion and interest.

TABLE 13 Kalev's solitary play

Theme	Duration	Initiator	Play material
Play with two squirrels	9 min	Kalev	Game board, the squirrels, dice, game pieces

At home Kalev also played on the computer with his brother. When Kalev was alone at home he asked his mother to show what kinds of discs were available. The mother brought a diskette but neither mother nor son knew how to put it into the computer. Kalev's mother said to him, "Play something else! Play cards!" Kalev replied, "You can only play cards once. I don't know how...." His mother said, "Your brother will come soon and then you can play. Find yourself something then!" Kalev's elder brother Tiit soon came into the room and the boys' computer games began. The elder brother taught the younger one how to play, showing when and which keys to press.

Whereas in the interview before the observation the mother characterised her sons' relationships as being good, during the stimulated interview she said that the boys had fought a great deal of late. The mother said, "...that the two boys are so different. The older brother usually wants Kalev to play sports and competitions with him but Kalev just wants to play alone or draw something." According to their mother the two boys were very different. The elder brother only wanted to play ball and did not like doing anything that was quiet whereas Kalev could be alone for hours.

### 5.2.2 Joint games involving Kalev and his mother

Kalev and his mother played six games, altogether lasting 49 minutes. These are presented in the table below (table 14) including details of play type, duration, initiator and materials used. The joint games involved building, theatre, guessing games and the teaching of letters and counting. One board game was also played. On five occasions the initiator was the mother and in one instance Kalev.

TABLE 14 Joint games played by Kalev and his mother

Theme	Duration	Initiator	Play materials
1. Building a house for eggs	20 min	Mother	Lego bricks, Lego man, horse, dinosaur, boiled eggs
2. Ten-out-of-ten	9 min	Mother	Paper, pencil
3. Theatre play	6 min	Mother	Toy bird, toy squirrel, butterfly, parrot, drawn and cut flower
4. Board game	6 min	Kalev	Game board, dice, game pieces
5. Guessing game	5 min	Mother	Paper, crayon
6. Letter game	3 min	Mother	-----

The building of a house for eggs started with the mother telling her son that on Sunday it would be Easter and that the eggshells had to be painted. With one egg already painted, Kalev's mother put some more eggs to boil. Meanwhile she suggested that they build a house for the eggs. At first Kalev did not accept the play idea.

Then his mother repeated, "Make a house for the eggs!"  
 Kalev started to laugh and said, "For eggs!" He then sat down on the floor and started building with Lego while still laughing and repeating, "A house for eggs!"  
 Kalev had been building for two minutes when the mother said, "Make the house big enough for two eggs, could you!"  
 Kalev replied, "OK. Look, like this!"  
 The mother continued the interaction with, "One is a male egg and the other a female egg."  
 Kalev: "Which one is the child?"  
 Mother: "Then we'll have to boil two more eggs to have a child as well."  
 Kalev: "What about a brother?"  
 Mother, laughing, "Well, then I do not know..."

Then the mother and son started to discuss how many eggs would fit in the house Kalev had built. Kalev built alone for a couple of more minutes. After that his mother suggested adding something so that it would look more like a home and there should also be some flowers. In six minutes the mother added a dinosaur to the roof of the Lego house and said, "It's here as a guard, an egg guard!"

The play lasted 22 minutes altogether. I analysed this play in terms of a single play script. The materials of the play included Lego blocks, various other materials, a dinosaur and a boiled egg. There were a large number of imaginary objects. For example, there was a make-believe fire that was heated below and that warmed up the house. To protect against the enemy's rocket fire Kalev had iron protection. The forms of play related to the imaginary situation contained within it, i.e. to building. Kalev had assumed the role of a builder and his task was to build a house. The content of his play was the building of a floor, walls, a roof and an enormous door (actually a gate). Thus, Kalev acted the play script out in an object-role way. The materials and role-related actions were of utmost importance to the player. There were imaginary actions in Kalev's play. For example, he imitated pretend movements with a lever by jumping on a

springboard. The role actions were accompanied by Kalev's own commentary ("I want to make a fire. I'm putting the brother here. No, it doesn't fit there."). The mother herself did not assume any role for herself but instead tried to maintain the imaginary situation in Kalev's play and to develop it. Kalev did not accept the mother's suggestion at first but gave his own views. At the same time it was evident that Kalev needed his mother. He actually addressed her on several occasions, "Mummy, look! It fits, doesn't it! It's...."

The theatre play involved small toys and was played in the living room around the table. Kalev had taken a toy bird and his mother had a toy squirrel. Kalev began, "Let's play!"

Mother said, "Hello!"

Kalev: "Hello!"

Mother: "Where is your birdie flying? Ah, where is your birdie flying? Ah, where is the nest? Ah, where is the nest?"

Kalev: "In the tree."

Mother: "In the tree. Do you have any young birds?"

Kalev: "Yes, I do" (the play continued)

There were two play scripts in the theatre play, both of which the mother and son played together in the manner of a social role play. The first play script lasted four minutes. Its materials were small toys, i.e. a squirrel, a bird and a butterfly. Speech and role-like interaction according to the respective toy-roles were the forms of play involved. Speech played an essential role in this particular play script. At first, the squirrel and bird said hello to each other. Then they spoke about where they flew and what their family was like. Then they chose additional toys and the play continued. Kalev, taking a butterfly, went to look for flowers on which to sleep. The mother offered a badge for a flower but Kalev did not accept it. After that they began cutting out and painting a flower. In five minutes Kalev's flower was ready. The mother praised her son, "Very beautiful."

The second play script lasted only two minutes. The play script began with Kalev addressing his mother with a great desire to play. Kalev insisted, "Let's play on! Let's play on now! Let's do it again with you talking!" The mother immediately agreed to play on. The play materials for this play script were the same as for the previous one, with the addition of the drawn-and-cut flower. As to the forms of play employed, speaking and interaction according to the respective role were continuously used. Thus, the squirrel-parrot asked and the butterfly answered. Kalev wanted to go with the butterfly to look for a flower to sleep on. Kalev managed to go to sleep on the flower stalk. Then his mother woke him up and invited him to continue the play. The butterfly flew together with the squirrel and parrot but nothing came of it. Role interaction was essential for Kalev and he addressed his mother, "Let's do it again with you talking." This can be considered director's play in which the players while playing with one or several small miniature toys confer on them the characteristics of human beings or animals. The players act and speak according to the toys selected.

During the stimulated interview I asked the mother to speak more about this play. She said that they called it the 'Tiku and Taku play'. Kalev had got the idea from a television programme. The mother also emphasised that her son had been keen on playing animal games. She added that the sheriff's badge was for Kalev far too important a play object to be made into a flower. The badge was pinned on every morning before he went to kindergarten.

The aims of the other games (ten-out-of-ten, letter game, guessing game) were to pass on knowledge, guess what was depicted in a drawing or to introduce the letters of the alphabet. Kalev was good at these games and often proved skilful or to be holding the luckiest hand. The letter game was an example of an unsuccessful game. The reason for this was probably due simply to the fact that it just did not interest the child at that particular moment. The playing of a board game by mother and son went smoothly. Both were equal partners and both were interested in playing together.

During these joint games there was total of 206 instances of promotion on the part of Kalev's mother as well as three non-promotive reactions. Table 15 presents details of the mother's promotion, including demonstration and the offering of play material.

TABLE 15 Promotive reactions by Kalev's mother during the joint games

Type of promotion	Number of instances of promotions
<b>1. Verbal promotion</b>	<b>201</b>
Question	61
Explanation	54
Support	28
Suggestion	26
Labelling	17
Direction	15
<b>2. Demonstration</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>3. Offering play materials</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>206</b>

The most common type of promotive reaction comprised *questions* (61). The majority (35) of these questions occurred during the theatre play and house building. On the one hand there were questions connected with creating a joint play world (e.g. Who is who in the play? What are those objects in the play? How should the assumed roles be acted out?). At the same time dialogue questions between the characters acted out by Kalev and his mother (butterfly-squirrel and a bird) were connected with the imaginary situation created in the play. Kalev's mother wanted to know, "Where was the birdie flying? Does it have any young ones? What does the butterfly do on the flower?" In the other games questions were mostly connected with the organising and content of the play. Kalev's mother asked him how the letter game should be played, with which letter the word started, etc. while in the guessing game she repeatedly asked who was depicted in the picture.

There were also a large number of *explanations* (54) during the joint play. The mother put the dinosaur on top of the roof and explained, "It's here as an egg guard!" In the theatre play she explained that Kalev had not counted the young birds in the correct way. Altogether there were three girls and one boy, the majority being girls. Regarding the other games, she explained how to play the letter game (the player has to say aloud names which begin with a certain letter) and who had been drawn in the picture. There were also explanations during the board game (10). Kalev had previously played the same board game and so he knew how to play. In spite of that his mother explained briefly the order of rolling the dice. Explanations during the board game were accompanied by *labelling* (17), i.e. where to move or what number was obtained on the dice, as well as directions, for example, that it was Kalev's turn to roll the dice or that now the game piece was to be moved.

During the joint games the mother *supported* her child's play a good deal (28). She supported her child's wish to play together and when there was a pause in a game she agreed to continue the interrupted play after watching TV. During these games the mother repeatedly confirmed the things said by her child. In 'ten-out-of-ten' she praised Kalev for winning such a valuable place and for knowing so much. During the role games her explanations were connected with *suggestions* (26) as to what Kalev could do in the play (e.g. "Do something else to it as well! Not only that castle! Make it like a home!"). Kalev did not always immediately accept the suggestions offered by his mother. The mother had to justify and explain several times what Kalev should do in the play and why it should be played that way. Kalev usually accepted his mother's suggestions after she had given explanations. Mother's *directions* (15) in the games concerned the arrangement of the play. Directions in role games were connected with imaginary situations, such as, for example, "Butterfly, butterfly! Wake up! Fly, birdie!" The mother also *offered play materials* (4), i.e. paper and toys during the joint games. On several occasions Kalev did not accept the things offered by his mother. During the joint play *demonstration* (1) by the mother also occurred.

## 5.3 Nele

### 5.3.1 Nele's extensive world of toys and solitary games

#### *In the kindergarten*

According to kindergarten teacher Nele was usually alone because for some reason the other children did not want to play with her. I also noticed during my observation that Nele would wander round the kindergarten room or watch the others' games from the sidelines.

For example, two girls are playing in the dolls' corner. Nele goes there too. First she watches the others playing. Then one of the girls asks, "Where shall I put the dummy?"

Nele answers, "Let's put it into her mouth."

But the other players do not accept her suggestion. Nele goes away from the doll's corner for a moment and soon returns. She says to the others, "It's a baby's bib. The baby went to sleep."

Leena says to her, "Quiet, quiet! She's sleeping."

Nele: "I'll give her something to drink."

Leena says in a forbidding tone, "No, you won't!" Then Nele wants to brush the baby's teeth but the other players discourage that idea as well.

Nele says to her doll, "Sleep well!" and then goes away.

From this example in the kindergarten it can be seen that when Nele tried to join in the doll's play the other girls did not accept her suggestions (of giving a drink to the baby, brushing its teeth or putting the dummy into its mouth). During the observation in the kindergarten I also noticed that the other children did not like giving Nele materials for playing either during games or outside games.

#### *At home*

According to her mother, Nele and her mother engaged in numerous joint activities in spite of the mother's heavy workload. Thus they tidied up and redecorated their home together. They went to the theatre and cinema or went for walks and they also baked and painted together. Nele's grandparents also played an important role in her upbringing. Nele stayed with them when her mother was working long hours or was away on business trips abroad. There were certain traditions in the lives of Nele and her family. One of these was connected with Sunday. That day always began with everyone sleeping later in the morning. After getting up they made pancakes. Nele made the batter and her mother fried the pancakes.

Nele had a room of her own and her mother allowed her to play everywhere in the apartment. Nele also had a wonderful opportunity to play outside as there was a small garden by the house. She had a table, bed, trampoline, books, song and fairy tale cassettes, and a lot of art equipment. Nele had a lot of toys (dolls, cars, furry animals, etc). According to her mother, Nele liked playing cooking and had various kitchen implements such as bowls, pans and pots. Her many furry animals each had its own history and name. Her favourite was a soft toy called Mister Mart, whom Nele had named after a film character. In Nele's games Mister Mart went to the bears' kindergarten. Sometimes Mart's kindergarten was closed and so he had to be taken to the real kindergarten. Her mother said that Nele was not a great player with dolls but played more with cars. In purchasing toys Nele's wishes were also taken into account.

As to her playmates Nele's mother named only a few children. These were mostly younger than her and included those which Nele's grandmother sometimes looked after.

During her interview Nele's mother did not particularly bring out the importance of her child's games. She only noted that games were, of course,

important because in them the child created a world from her things. At the same time Nele's mother placed great value on board games. She said that it was only reasonable to play those games that gave something to the child. The mother said that the child created in her games a world from her own things. The mother's exact words about playing together were, "Well, I do have to play with her and then we get tired of these games. Yes, indeed she likes playing with me. When there are board games or something where she wants me to be present then we play together."

At home Nele played 14 games which lasted three hours and 11 minutes (see table 16).

TABLE 16 Nele's games at home

Games	Number of games	Duration
Solitary games	3	53 min
Joint games	11	2 hours 18 min

Two of Nele's three solitary games were role games and one was a board game. These games were initiated by Nele herself. Table 17 shows the themes of Nele's solitary games, as well as the duration of the play, the initiator and the play materials.

TABLE 17 Nele's solitary games

Themes	Duration	Initiator	Play materials
1. Meatball soup cooking play	20 min	Nele	Toy stove, two glass balls, plastic dishes, spoons, bowls, Tele-Tubbies
2. Number game	17 min	Nele	Game pieces, game board
3. Cooking play	16 min	Nele	Toy stove, pan, ladle, spoons, cups, bowl

According to table 17, the themes of these solitary games were all connected with cooking and Nele's wish to get a big toy stove. After receiving one as a present she played constantly with it.

For example, in the meatball soup cooking play Nele says, "What a wonderful cooker I've got! I'll start playing with the stove." Nele sits down in front of the stove and says, "What shall I do? I'll use salt as well. I'll do that and I'll make that." She puts water into the pot, turns on the tap for the imaginary water, then turns the imaginary gas cooker knobs. At the same time she continues talking, "I'll put cherry salt here, I'll put cherries in there." All the while she is stirring with a spoon. She says, "I'm putting cherry juice in it." Then suddenly she says in a loud voice, "Oh! Hot!"

Her mother calls from the kitchen, "You must use a potholder!"

Nele takes a potholder. She stirs again with a spoon and lifts the pot lid with a potholder. Then she takes two small glass balls from the toy shelf and says "two meatballs", puts them into the pot and stirs again with a spoon. Nele continues her activity, sprinkling salt and adding cherry juice and pepper into the soup while still stirring.

In this play Nele was a cook preparing food for her favourite toys. The content of Nele's play was the pouring of water into the pot and the cooking of soup.

Two meatballs, salt, pepper and juice were put into the pot. The player stirred the soup repeatedly with a ladle. Then she crushed the meatballs and fed her toys. During the play the player acted out the play script alone in an object-role way using several toys, both real (plastic dishes, stove, bowls, spoons) and imaginary (imaginary water, spices, pepper, salt, cherries), and imaginary hot food. Her role actions were also accompanied by speech. Meatballs and peppercorns were represented using glass balls. Several actions were also accompanied by gestures, e.g. turning on the water tap, crushing food, etc. The mother did not participate in the play as she was busy in the kitchen. However, she heard what her child was doing in her play and reacted to that.

In the second play Nele also acted out her play script in an object-role way. She tidied up the kitchen, washed up and started to cook soup again. When I asked her mother later in the stimulated recall interview about the cooking play she replied that Nele made all sorts of amazing things in her play kitchen, often putting main courses into the oven.

Nele played a number game from her mother's childhood, which the mother used to love playing.

Nele gets out the game and starts to play it alone while watching TV. She sits and tinkers at the game. After four minutes the mother comes in, switches off the TV and says, "The game is a bit too difficult for you." Then the mother explains how the numbers are to be put in places, "See, you can't shift those buttons. You have to put them into places from one to fifteen. When it is '1' you need to get '2'. It's easier to put the first rows down, the last rows are the most difficult." The mother says that after two comes three then four, five etc. Then she added, "It is so difficult. I don't think you can do it. You can't play it. You mustn't cheat." Nele's mother has arranged the numbers from one to fifteen and then mixes them up so that the child must start from the beginning.

But Nele says, "No, I don't want to."

The mother answers, "You can do it, have a try! You'd be very good if you could!"

The mother goes into the kitchen to wash up.

This example pointed to the fact that although at the beginning Nele chose the game herself and wanted to play it, she still did not immediately accept her mother's suggestion. It seemed that the game was not exciting enough for her. However, the mother managed to arouse the child's interest in the game and Nele started trying. At first everything went well but soon there were difficulties. The mother helped again by giving advice on how to move on. Nele continued and the game went smoothly until the end. The mother praised the child and she stroked Nele's head. It was a great surprise to Nele's mother that her daughter had independently succeeded in such a difficult task. In the stimulated recall interview the mother admitted the surprise, "...because it was actually quite difficult. I even suspected her at first of shifting those buttons and putting them into the right places. She actually didn't do that."

Nele's mother promoted Nele's solitary games on 64 occasions while there were three non-promotive reactions. As can be seen from table 18, there were 63 instances of verbal promotion and one of demonstration.

TABLE 18 Promotion by Nele's mother in solitary games

Type of promotion	Number of instances of promotion
<b>1. Verbal promotion</b>	63
Question	21
Explanation	19
Support	12
Suggestion	7
Direction	3
Labelling	1
<b>2. Demonstration</b>	1
<b>3. Offering play materials</b>	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>64</b>

Most of the mother's verbal promotions were *questions* (21). Questions in role games were related to the imaginary situation in the play. For example, Nele's mother asked if the food was ready or on another occasion she wanted to know whom her daughter was cooking for. In the number game the mother asked questions connected with receiving and placing numbers (how to position the numbers, where a particular number is, whether Nele had shifted or moved the game pieces). The games contained the mother's *explanations* (19). She mainly provided explanations in the number game in which she explained in detail how it had to be played. While giving explanations about the game she also talked about the principles of fair play and of why it would be cheating to shift the game piece.

Again a great deal of *support* (12) could be traced in the number game. To start with the mother had doubts as to whether her child would manage the game or not. After her mother's explanations on how to play Nele played alone. Nele repeatedly showed her mother how she had been playing. At first the mother did not believe that Nele had managed such a difficult task so well. She praised her child, "Well done! You are really quite good. It isn't such a difficult game." When at first the child could not manage her mother encouraged her by saying "Well, try! You can, really!"

There were *suggestions* (7) connected with the imaginary situation within the play. For example, on hearing her daughter calling out in her play, "Oh, hot", Nele's mother said, "You must take a pot holder! You cannot do it with your bare hands." There were *directions* (3) in the games. These were concerned with how to move on the game board. There was also *labelling* (1) and *demonstration* (1). *Non-promotive reactions* (3) were connected with directing the child's attention towards matters unrelated to the play (e.g. the mother told the child to take away the photo album).

### 5.3.2 Board games played by Nele and her mother

Nele and her mother played 11 games together which lasted a total of two hours 18 minutes (see table 19). As shown in table 19, one of those games was a guessing game, one was a verbal game and one a motor game. The remaining

eight were board games. Of these eleven joint games Nele initiated nine and her mother two.

TABLE 19 Joint games involving Nele and her mother

Joint games	Duration	Initiation	Play materials
1. Checkers	26 min	Nele	Checkers pieces
2. Picture domino	11 min	Nele	Picture domino cards
3. Domino	11 min	Nele	Domino pieces and game board
4. Board game 'Find a Partner'	11 min	Mother	Pairs of picture cards
5. Guessing game	11 min	Nele	Toys: Barbie, spider, Tele- Tubbies, rabbit, dog, hedgehog, cup, pencil, hairclip, comb
6. Pressing game	10 min	Nele	Board game
7. Pressing game	10 min	Nele	Board game
8. Picture domino	8 min	Nele	Picture cards
9. Picture domino	5 min	Nele	Picture cards
10. Motor game	5 min	Mother	-
11. Verbal game	1 min	Nele	-

There were eight board games, including dominoes, picture dominoes, checkers and a number game. According to the interview the mother placed a high value on games with rules, especially board games. This notion was further confirmed when another young girl came to visit Nele. Nele's mother suggested to the children several times that they should definitely play board games and eventually all the three of them started to play. However, the guest did not like the game and quite soon got bored of it. The guest preferred to play either cooking or hairdresser's. For some time they played cooking (and made a tasty herbal tea) but then they switched over to another game.

The next example is of the checkers game. Nele and her mother had already played that game before. In the game the mother gives advice and makes suggestions about where to go.

Nele says, "If I take your piece away then you can have my piece this way."

Mother: "Wait, wait! What have you done?"

Nele takes away three pieces in succession from the mother and gets herself a 'dyke' too. The mother then turns to Nele, "What shall I do now?"

As Nele and her mother discuss how to move on a dialogue develops between them.

Nele says, "See, that's a tree, like that dyke of yours (in the Estonian language a single word means both 'dyke' and 'oak tree'). The mother smiles.

Nele continues, "And the tree can sometimes jump too."

Mother: "What kind of story is this?"

Nele: "I know. Magic trees can do that."

Then the mother explains that a game might end in a draw and what that means.

Nele and her mother played one guessing game. One player had to close her eyes or turn her back while at the same time the other player took one (or more) of the toys or other objects. The first player had to guess what was missing. The game lasted eleven minutes altogether. The initiator of the play was Nele. Nele's mother asked her not to take very small items from among the toys, as it

was difficult to guess them. The play consisted of seven play scripts, which were played out by both mother and daughter. If Nele could not guess immediately which toy was missing her mother helped her by giving so-called supplementary comments.

For example, Nele's mother, having hidden the toy, says, "Guess, guess, guess!"

Nele: "Did you take anything from here?" Nele points at the object.

Mother: "About that place, yes."

Nele: "What kind of thing could it have been?"

Mother: "It is not a toy. It is red. And it is not meant for playing. And you have got one of these on you, up here."

Nele shouts, "Hairclip!"

Mother: "Yes!"

The next time when the mother had to guess several things at once Nele helped her. The mother made the guessing game increasingly complicated by changing the amount of play objects to be guessed.

The word game was initiated by Nele, who replied to her mother's suggestion to eat a tomato. "Otherwise I'll... say 'trilla-trulla'." After this Nele's mother replied to several of Nele's statements with the same words, "Trilla trulla."

Altogether Nele's mother made 504 promotive reactions during these joint games (table 20) while a further three non-promotive reactions were observed. There were 484 instances of verbal promotion and 20 of demonstration.

TABLE 20 Promotive reactions by Nele's mother during the joint games

Type of promotion	Number of instances of promotion
<b>1. Verbal promotion</b>	<b>484</b>
Explanation	160
Question	114
Labelling	78
Direction	59
Support	52
Suggestion	19
<b>2. Demonstration</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>3. Offering play materials</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>504</b>

Thus, the most common form of promotion in joint games involving Nele and her mother consisted of *explanations* (160). Explanations were the most numerous in board games (137), even though they had played board games before and the game rules were familiar to Nele. Mother explained to Nele how to move the game piece on the game board and how to find matches for the picture dominoes. She also explained why a certain number was required. Thus, she said, "You need to get a five. Then you'll get home." Explanations were connected with the labelling of the correct word. Nele's mother pointed out that it was not a dolphin in the picture but a penguin, and that those words were very similar to each other. The mother explained what a draw in the game was and what it meant. In the guessing game she explained which toy had been

taken away. Nele's mother explained several times the principle of playing fair, i.e. that you must not cheat but play according to the rules. In the picture dominoes Nele herself taught her mother how to place the picture honestly and exactly. Her mother also brought up the subject of magic in a game by claiming that she had the power to bewitch. Thus, if she said the word 'six' several times then the figure six would really appear. Nele in turn qualified her mother's statements, saying "But the magic words must be uttered so that you are quiet while saying them." Explaining was closely connected with *labelling* (78), which referred to the number obtained on rolling the dice and how many spaces the game piece was to be moved on the game board. *Demonstration* (20) was also connected with explanations. Thus, Nele's mother indicated with her finger where to move and what to do with the game piece.

*Questions* (114) in the board games were mostly connected with the mother's wish to get to know whether her daughter had a certain card. For example, in picture dominoes she asked, "Who needs a shovel and a bucket? Who needs a life-buoy?" If the player had a card with a picture of the object named then she would answer in the affirmative and so receive another card with the same object, which she could match to it. In another picture dominoes game Nele's mother asked which was more useful, an apple, a banana or a grape? There was a large number of *directions* (59) given during the board games. The mother reminded her child that she had to move the game piece or roll the dice. The mother said, "Well, move! Your turn!" or "Wait, wait! Don't move yet! I must move first." There was a lot of *support* (52) in their joint games. Above all the mother praised her child for good play skills. She said, "You haven't played for a week and already you're winning." At the end of the checkers game Nele's mother said, "Well done. It was a draw. But you were more the winner. You had more game pieces left." *Suggestions* (19) in their turn were connected with the mother's wish to continue the game.

## 5.4 Neeme

### 5.4.1 Neeme's solitary games with Lego

#### *In the kindergarten*

According to the teacher Neeme was a relatively solitary child in his activities and games. The teacher said that Neeme had turned to her several times and said, "They won't let me play with them." The observation in the kindergarten showed that when the other children played rough and tumble on the floor then Neeme liked to join in. He told his group-mate Rain, "Play like that with me too!" Rain answered negatively, "No, I won't." The other children also reacted either by not replying to his invitations or by coming to have a look for a moment but then switching over to another activity.

*At home*

According to his mother Neeme loved drawing and an exhibition was arranged of his drawings at home. He attended an art club once a week. Neeme also liked listening to music. At home Neeme had many kinds of play materials, including a bike, a video and cassettes, all kinds of music cassettes, Lego, small cars and computer games. The mother said that her son had too many toys. The parents did not usually buy them themselves but as there were two children their relatives and visitors gave them presents continuously. When they themselves purchased toys the parents tried to take Neeme's wishes into account. The mother explained that they bought toys that developed the child. Neeme's father had built a play cave under the staircase for Neeme and his little sister.

While speaking about the importance of play the mother pointed out that the child should try everything. In play the child was able to put together his own world and occupy it like a master. Through play the child could realise himself in the ways in which he worked with his toys. Thus, he or she could express feelings, which otherwise would perhaps remain unarticulated. The child puts himself or herself into situations and circumstances. Play is important also because out of it is bound to raise all kinds of questions, which have to be answered. The mother considered joint play the only right solution with the parents not as mere onlookers but doing everything together with the child.

At home Neeme played 12 games which lasted a total of three hours and 37 minutes (table 21).

TABLE 21 Neeme's games at home

Games	Number of games	Duration
Solitary games	4	2 hours
Joint games	8	1 hour 37 min

Alone Neeme played four games that lasted two hours altogether. Neeme's solitary games, their themes, duration, initiation and materials are presented in table 22. All of the solitary games were initiated by Neeme himself and all the games were played using Lego bricks. He usually played in his play corner or the play cave and all the games were connected with building. Neeme built several constructions, including a spaceship, a hatchback car, ships, houses, a big bird and a tower. In the stimulated recall interview his mother said that Neeme loved building and was constantly constructing something.

TABLE 22 Neeme's solitary games

Theme	Duration	Initiator	Play materials
1. Spacecraft game	1 hour 6 min	Neeme	Various size Lego bricks
2. Ship game	45 min	Neeme	Various size Lego bricks. Paper of car model
3. Car building	6 min	Neeme	Lego bricks
4. Big bird	4 min	Neeme	Various size Lego bricks

In, for example, the lengthiest game, i.e. the spaceship construction game, there were two play scripts. In the first play script Neeme constructed a ship for Diskoomikses according to the Lego model book while in the second play script his mother suggested that he construct one more ship for Kalaksiina. Neeme accepted her suggestion immediately. In total there were five play scripts in the solitary games which Neeme acted out in an object-role way using play materials, play actions and speech. The materials of the play were Lego bricks, Lego people and a Lego model book. While playing he described what he was doing, for example, "So, I... see. Let's take then this one... It's glass. I'll cover it up from behind. Two astronauts must fit in here." It was characteristic that while playing alone he was constantly uttering sounds "whiz-whew, whew-whew!" and singing. While constructing, Neeme always had in mind what or for whom he was building. It might have been astrocartoons, Kalaksiina, Diskoomikses, a spacecraft etc. Neeme addressed his mother with several different problems.

Although all the solitary games were actually initiated by Neeme, during the course of a game he repeatedly invited his mother to play. For example, while building a tower from Lego Neeme addressed his mother with, "Mummy, let's play a little...! Let's play with the Lego!" At that time the mother was nearby and was having a long talk on the phone. After a short while Neeme addressed his mother again but she continued talking on the phone. After the phone call Neeme asked his mother again, "Let's play!" The mother answered her son, "We'll play later. I can't play all the time."

Neeme's mother promoted Neeme's solitary games on 83 occasions while three non-promotive reactions were also observed (table 23).

TABLE 23 Promotion by Neeme's mother in solitary games

Type of promotion	Number of instances of promotion
<b>1. Verbal promotion</b>	<b>78</b>
Question	47
Explanation	13
Support	9
Suggestion	5
Direction	4
Labelling	-
<b>2. Demonstration</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>3. Offering play materials</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>83</b>

As can be seen from table, most of the mother's reactions included *questions* (47). The mother's questions were mostly expressions of interest in the child's activity. For example, the mother asked what her son was doing or whose ship it was which Neeme was building. When he was constructing a ship for Kalaksiina his mother asked repeatedly, "Have you completed your building?" *Explanations* (13) in Neeme's solitary games were connected with his mother's principles on how to play games or with what kinds of toys to choose. There was also *support* (9) of the child's play by the mother. For example, Neeme went

to complete his eagle and came back to his mother to show her the Lego eagle. The mother then praised her child.

The questions asked by the mother were also connected with *suggestions* (5) about new things in the play. *Directions* (4) in solitary games consisted of instructions from the mother concerning what Neeme was supposed to do in the game. The mother *offered play materials* (car pictures and car paper) to Neeme (3). For example, the mother offered Neeme a sticker book for him to have a look at but Neeme did not want it. The mother answered with a sigh, "Do whatever you like!" There were also *non-promotive reactions* (3) to play. As he played alone his mother repeatedly asked him things unconnected with his play. She asked whether it had been cold in his clothes in the kindergarten or whether Neeme would start tidying up his play corner. On other occasions she asked him to tidy up his toys off the kitchen table and not to shout so much.

#### 5.4.2 The world of Johannes and Marek in the joint play of Neeme and his mother

Neeme's mother was at home with the younger child and tried to find time for her children as well as doing the housework. The video observation revealed a number of joint activities involving Neeme and his mother. According to the interview his mother was worried about Neeme's relationship with his sister. Neeme was inclined to tease her and so their mother tried to teach the children to play together.

Neeme and his mother played eight games together, including four role games, two word games, one game of hide-and-seek and one board game. Altogether these joint games lasted one hour and 17 minutes. Five of the games were initiated by Neeme and three by his mother. The following table (table 24) presents the joint games involving both Neeme and his mother, detailing their type, duration, initiator and materials.

TABLE 24 Joint games played by Neeme and his mother

Theme of joint games	Duration	Initiator	Play materials
1. Marek - Johannes play	31 min	Neeme	Lego bricks, Lego people, toy bear, motorbike, cars
2. Riding a motorbike	19 min	Neeme	Motorbikes, slide, Lego people, cars
3. Trap game	17 min	Neeme	Blanket, cushions, teddy bear
4. Travelling by balloon	16 min	Neeme	Lego people, polar bear, boat, play helmet, house
5. Board game	10 min	Neeme	Dice, game pieces, game board, play instructions
6. Turf game	2 min	Mother	Blanket cover
7. Word game 'She sells seashells...'	1 min	Mother	-
8. Word game 'Grandfather's old trousers'	1 min	Mother	-

The mother and son had many common play interests, including particular play characters and play themes. There were Lego city houses that were built for Lego characters named Johannes, Marek, Martin, Enar and Anna etc. Everyone had his or her own role to play. As the mother claimed, Neeme was a great inventor of names.

The main character in Neeme's play was a Lego man called Johannes. Then the mother invented a name for herself, namely Marek. Marek and Johannes were grown-up people who had jobs and families of their own. Marek and Johannes's jobs varied. Sometimes they were boxing coaches while on other occasions they became policemen or guards of the treasure chamber, etc. Below is an example of the beginning of one Johannes and Marek play.

Neeme makes a suggestion, "Let's start boxing now." The mother answers to him, "Ah, right. We didn't finish boxing. Well, has the boxing to be like that?" Neeme answers in the affirmative. Neeme then begins to box, after which his mother makes a new suggestion, "Oh, I'll go home. I don't feel like doing any more. I am tired." After that Neeme invites her, "Come, come and see the motorbikes!" The mother asks, "Are these motorbikes on TV?" Neeme: "Yes, on TV 1." After that they watch a TV commercial together.

That play consisted of 15 play scripts. After watching the commercial Johannes and Marek rode motor bikes and new helmets were bought. They then received a birthday invitation so they went to buy a birthday present, the criminals were caught, etc.

The play scripts were initiated both by his mother and by Neeme himself and they were acted out in both object-role and social-role ways. Also worth noting was the fact that they both accepted each other's scripts willingly and started acting them out. Toys used included Lego as well replacement objects. The mother also found an imaginary letter from the toy mailbox, in which they were invited to the birthday party and other imaginary events. Neeme's toy man climbed onto the roof, looked around for a moment and then said that everything was all right. Pictures were also taken. The photographer was a teddy bear who was at the edge of the Lego town; the picture was ready when you pressed the bear's stomach. During his play Neeme was constantly uttering sounds, making car siren sounds "whew-whew-whew", motorbike engine noises, doorbell and school bell sounds and the sounds of juice being drunk.

During play Neeme and his mother often spoke very politely to each other. For example, mother said to Neeme the roof repairer, "Would you please go and have a look! We have a kind of hole there where the rain is coming through." When there were problems with the arranging of a play, Neeme addressed his mother with, "Wait, mummy. What shall I do now? I'll bring flowers into this play..." At some point he said to his mother again, "Listen, mummy! I am making something here!" Neeme started making a lawn and asphalt. He mainly played Johannes in the games but also acted out the parts of roof repairer, shop assistant, customer and car repairer. The mother mainly assumed the role of Marek but occasionally played Marek's child Martin.

The end of the play was closely connected with the play theme. Neeme's mother said that the child Martin had to go to Johannes' place as his father Marek was going to cook something.

The other two role games were also connected with Marek and Johannes but these games were shorter (each lasting 16 minutes) and Neeme's little sister also took part. In those games Marek and Johannes glided down a slide, found a fortune, ate a pizza, went into hiding from the bombing, flew by balloon and put a scorpion to guard the house. There were always difficulties while there were three of them playing as the little sister wanted to take toys away from Neeme. Neeme's mother had to calm him and offer other toys to the sister. The games did not last very long as they were continually interrupted and the play scripts were not so substantial. Altogether there were 12 play scripts contained within the three role games. These play scripts were acted out mostly in a social-role way.

In addition to the role games Neeme and his mother played two word games, one game of hide-and-seek and one board game. In the word game resembling 'She sells seashells on the seashore' Neeme had to repeat the sentence quickly but couldn't manage it. Neeme particularly liked this game and they often played it together.

Thus, in his solitary role games Neeme mainly played in an object-role way. In the joint role games with his mother they mainly played in a social-role way. Neeme and his mother interacted with each other according to the adopted role. They each initiated script in the joint games. These joint games contained numerous substitutions of both materials and actions. When Neeme's little sister joined in the games, problems and interruptions appeared.

Altogether Neeme's mother made 466 promotive reactions during their joint games (table 25). These were almost exclusively verbal promotions (463) with the exception of one act of demonstration and two of offering play materials. In addition there were 13 non-promotive reactions.

TABLE 25 Promotive reactions by Neeme's mother during the joint games

Type of promotion	Number of instances of promotion
<b>1. Verbal promotion</b>	<b>463</b>
Explanation	151
Question	129
Support	73
Labelling	50
Direction	32
Suggestion	28
<b>2. Demonstration</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>3. Offering play materials</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>466</b>

The verbal promotion of Neeme's mother chiefly consisted of *explanations* (151) and *questions* (129). There were numerous instances of explanation and labelling in the jointly played board game (*labelling* 50, *explanations* 40). Firstly, the mother familiarised herself with the instructions for the game. She said, "Wait,

I'll see what it says." The mother read the instructions quietly and then explained to Neeme how to move on the game board. Thus, for example, "you skip once" or "from there you go onto rocks". Neeme already had a good knowledge of numbers and knew how to move the piece on the game board according to the number obtained. While explaining the mother also paid attention to the playful aspect of the board game. Thus, she said, "Yes, now I can see a shark. Look, you can see a shark's fin there as well. I don't dare to move at all." The mother also explained the idea of winning or losing a game. She drew her child's attention to the idea that one should be graceful in defeat. Neeme's mother used mostly *questions* (103) to promote his role play. These questions were connected with defining situations and roles. Thus, for example, she asked, "Who are you? What shall we do? Shall we go to the cinema?" There were also other questions in the joint play such as when (When will the present be ready? When is the birthday?), with what (What are you flying with?), where to (Where are all the men running to?), how (How does one box?), etc. During the games the mother asked her son several questions (e.g. where is the school? where is the kindergarten? what birthday gift should we buy? etc.) which Neeme gladly gave answers to. During the play Neeme himself asked his mother several questions that were not connected with the play.

There was a good deal of *mother's support* (73) in the form of recognition and praise during the games. For example, Neeme's mother praised him for repairing a car well, saying, "Well, now build something completely different!" She praised a beautiful cap which Neeme had bought. The support mostly took the form of short words such as "Yes", "Well", "Mmh", "I see," etc. *Directions* (32) were connected with drawing the child's attention to the arrangement and subject matter of the game. Thus, for example, Neeme's mother gave the direction, "Say quickly 'She sells seashells...'", or in the turf game she said "Don't drag the blanket along the floor!"

In addition to support and direction there were also *suggestions* (28) in the joint play. For example, the mother suggested that her son should build another kind of a trap for ninjas and jansus, which would not hurt anyone. She also suggested using a scorpion as a guard. There was one case of *demonstration* and two of *offering play materials* (2). During the joint games there were also *non-promotive reactions* (13), which consisted of questions and suggestions that were not connected with the games being played. For example, his mother said that he must not hurt his little sister in the game and that they had to take the board game back to their friends the next day.

## 5.5 Toomas

### 5.5.1 The two separate worlds of Toomas and his mother

#### *In the kindergarten*

According to the kindergarten teachers, Toomas was a child who played little in the kindergarten because he had difficulties in getting on with the other children. It was noted during the observation that Toomas either played alone or watched the others' games from the sidelines. If he wanted to join in their games then opposition arose. For example, when playing shop Toomas wanted to be the shop assistant. However, the other players did not like Toomas' shop and they did not visit it any more. When Toomas asked why they would not come to shop the children said that his shop was lousy and that was why they did not want to buy anything there. Unlike the other boys Toomas often played with dolls in the dolls' corner and also cooked food there. He offered ready cooked play food for the other children saying, "Look, the food is ready! Eat, eat!" Then he went over to the other players but they did not want to taste his food or play with him.

#### *At home*

According to his mother's interview Toomas and his mother had travelled a good deal together both in Estonia and abroad. At weekends they went to the cinema or the theatre, ate at McDonald's or visited acquaintances. Toomas was extremely keen on technical things. He liked working with all kinds of leads, wires, hoses, strings and other concrete objects. Toomas's greatest interest was music. He was in his third year at the children's singing and music club. He had his own cassette collection including classical music and a small electrical piano.

Toomas lived with his mother in a two-room apartment in a new part of the city. Toomas did not have a room of his own; his toys were in the toy cupboard and in a special box. Toomas had a lot of books, toys (cars, garage, radiophone, Lego bricks) both at home and at his grandmother's. The mother remarked that Toomas would often not play with a particular toy for a long time and that he found certain things boring. At home in the city his mother never allowed him out alone to the yard because of strangers and cars. They had a country house, which according to his mother Toomas liked a lot.

To my question about Toomas' relationships with other children the mother answered, "He isn't maybe so great at playing with other children." According to his mother Toomas' playmates were the children of her friends. He played more and got along better with some of these. The mother emphasised several times the idea that the child's social life must be taken care of. The mother thought that the child might be too small for socialising with friends.

As to play Toomas' mother said that this was important because in play children imitate things and events that actually exist and occur in real-life.

According to his mother, Toomas played mostly alone at home because he was big enough to manage by himself and did not need his mother anymore. However, when the child called the mother always went and watched. She never said to her son that she could not come.

An ordinary evening at home would see Toomas either in the bedroom or in the living room and the mother busy in the kitchen. Indeed, it is fair to say that home life consisted of Toomas being on his own and his mother on her own, i.e. each of them alone in their own rooms. Once in a while Toomas went to talk to his mother about what was on TV or to ask for some missing materials for his play. At home Toomas watched a lot of TV, listened to music, played or did his repair work. The mother and the child met mostly in the kitchen, where a great deal of the observation time was spent. The mother paid a lot of attention to feeding her child and was often concerned that he ate too little.

TABLE 26 Toomas' games at home

Games	Number of games	Duration
Solitary games	4	1 h 4 min
Joint games	1	4 min

During observation Toomas played fife which lasted one hour and eight minutes. Of these four games were played alone (one hour and four minutes) while the one joint game with his mother lasted four minutes (table 26).

TABLE 27 Themes, duration and play materials used in Toomas' solitary games

Theme	Duration	Initiator	Play materials
1. Toaster	18 min	Toomas	Plastic garage, large and small Lego bricks
2. Cooking of macaroni	17 min	Toomas	Three plates, a knife, a fork, small Lego bricks, bowl
3. Building of a machine	17 min	Toomas	Lego bucket, play shovel, Lego bricks
4. Wiring of a car	12 min	Toomas	Big Lego car, hoses

In the following table 27 Toomas' solitary play themes, their duration, initiation and material are presented. All the solitary games were initiated by Toomas himself. The themes of these games were connected with cooking and building.

The following is an example of Toomas' cookery play.

The macaroni cooking play begins after Toomas has eaten in the kitchen. He asks his mother for two plates and then takes a knife, fork and one more plate from the drawer of the kitchen cupboard. He takes all of these objects to the bedroom. After that he starts dismantling a Lego construction and puts the small Lego bricks into the bowl. The bowl is soon full and Toomas goes to ask for another bowl from his mother. At first he wants a big bowl from the bathroom but his mother does not allow that. Instead he receives a yellow plastic bowl from his mother. He then starts to put Lego bricks into that too. Toomas plays this way for quite a long time. He presses a lid on top of the bowl and says, "We must first repair it with Mummy. Then the food will be ready." Toomas uses the word 'repair' to mean the

construction of the toy. After that he goes to his mother but she is talking on the phone. The short play ends with that.

In this play Toomas himself acted out the play script in an object-role way using all kinds of toys such as Lego bricks, which had the substitution function of replacing macaroni, and some other real-life objects, i.e. a knife, a fork, bowls and plates. Toomas went to his mother several times to ask for materials for the play. The mother gave them to him without asking why he needed them and without showing any interest in what the child was doing.

Another example of Toomas' solitary play began with Toomas playing in his room with a car and attaching all kind of leads to it. Meanwhile his mother was busy in the kitchen. After 10 minutes she came to the door to see what Toomas was doing and also joined the play. The mother was interested in what was going on. Toomas showed her his car and gave additional explanations. After that he poured some imaginary water on his mother. The mother then entered into the child's play. She waved her arms, laughed, sputtered and pretended that she had become wet.

There were several play scripts, which Toomas first played alone and in an object-role way using various materials such as hoses for repairing the car. After that a new play script came into being which Toomas himself acted out together with his mother in an object-role way. Both his mother and Toomas used imagination (wet, cold and warm water), gestures, verbal communication and emotional expressions. Then the mother asked for warm water. Thus, she continued the play, taking it into a new play script. Toomas complied with his mother's wish. The mother continued now with a new play script saying that she did not understand how Toomas' car worked and that perhaps one particular hose was for cold water. However, she did not continue but interrupted the play by saying that Toomas had to go and eat.

This short playing episode was one of the few examples of involvement on the part of Toomas' mother (lasting only two minutes) to be seen during the observation. The mother happily joined her son's play world and the son talked to and played along with his mother with great pleasure. Afterwards when interviewing the mother again she commented, "It was the thing with the water hose again, where you could get warm and cold water and that you never knew beforehand what would be coming from there so you had to react somehow. The car was perhaps of minor importance. Those hoses and being able to control whether hot or cold water came out was more important".

According to the stimulated recall interview the mother could not tell in any greater detail what Toomas was doing in that play. She explained that Toomas did indeed play alone and that she always had to check everything over, to react and to give an opinion.

In another solitary game Toomas turned to his mother to show her his Lego construction.

At first Toomas goes to his mother in the kitchen to ask for help in taking apart two small Lego pieces. After that Toomas builds for a time on his own and then drives the Lego vehicle to his mother in the kitchen and shows what he has done.

Toomas says, "Look what I have done now!"  
 The mother with emotion and surprise, "Oh, how nice."  
 Toomas speaks and shows his construction.  
 Mother: "Mm-h." She comes towards Toomas for a moment but only briefly glances at Toomas' vehicle.  
 Toomas continues the explanation and his mother answers, "Ah-ha." "Yes, Mm-h."

In this play episode the mother initially reacted to her son's building but her further replies were monosyllabic acknowledgements. Toomas' explanations failed to arouse any greater interest or more detailed questions from his mother. Thus, the mother's reaction to her child's building was favourable but laconic. When Toomas played alone he addressed his mother repeatedly. Once he asked her to take apart a Lego-brick but several times he wanted to have materials for his play.

In Toomas' solitary games his mother reacted 38 times (table 28). Verbal promotion accounted for 33 of these instances and the offering of play materials a further three. In addition there were two non-promotive reactions.

TABLE 28 Promotion by Toomas' mother in solitary games

Type of promotion	Number of instances of promotion
<b>1. Verbal promotion</b>	<b>33</b>
Explanation	18
Support	7
Question	4
Direction	3
Suggestion	1
Labelling	--
<b>2. Demonstration</b>	<b>--</b>
<b>3. Offering play materials</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>36</b>

The promotion of Toomas' solitary games by his mother consisted mostly of *explanations* (18). She explained briefly why Toomas was allowed to take one or other things for his play. There was also an explanation when her son pretended to let out water out of the hose. The mother's explanatory reactions were playful: "I've become so wet now.... It was probably cold.... Lukewarm.... It's hot." The mother's *support* (7) consisted of her looking once at the building constructed by her son and remarking, "Oh, how nice! "Ah-ha", "Ahaa", "mmh!" There were also *questions* (4) during Toomas' solitary play as his mother became interested and playfully involved in what was going on in the play and what was the water like. Mother's *directions* (3) were connected with instructing the child's actions during the game. Toomas' mother also made a *suggestion* (1) that he let out some warm water as well. In response to Toomas' wishes his mother *offered him play materials* (3).

### 5.5.2 A word game played by Toomas and his mother

The observation revealed that Toomas and his mother did not perform any role play together at all. Regarding Toomas' own role play I noted only a brief participation by his mother in the solitary play-wiring of the car (see example above) as well as in a verbal name-changing game that was played in the kitchen when Toomas was eating cheese.

Toomas says, "Do you want me to change your name?"

Mother: "It's not possible."

Toomas: "So your name is 'It's not possible'"

Toomas says to his mother for a second time, "Do you want me to change your name?"

Mother: "Well, change it then!"

Toomas: "Your name is 'Change it then!'" After that Toomas continues eating his cheese. For some time it is quiet there. Then the mother turns to her son and says, "Do you want me to change your name?"

Toomas: "Ah-ha!"

Mother: "So your name is 'Ah-ha.' What do you think of that? You don't want a name like that, do you?"

Toomas himself initiated the game. At first the mother did not go along with it, but after Toomas' second suggestion she joined in the game. This game lasted for four minutes, during which time Toomas' mother promoted his game on 11 occasions (table 29).

TABLE 29 Promotion by Toomas' mother during joint games

Type of promotion	Number of instances of promotion
<b>1. Verbal promotion</b>	<b>11</b>
Question	5
Explanation	4
Support	1
Direction	1
Labelling	-
Suggestion	-
<b>2. Demonstration</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>3. Offering play materials</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>

During the joint game the mother asked *questions* (5) in order to find out if Toomas wished to play the game. The mother *explained* (4) how Toomas had to answer in the game. There was also one instance of *direction* and one of *support*.

When I asked the mother whether Toomas' activities at his grandmother's were similar she answered, "Well, they are the same, yes. There he maybe plays a little more on his own, but I'm not sure. The grandmother surely has to take care of all his playing." The video revealed that Toomas also played alone at his grandmother's place. The grandmother twice made suggestions to play. The first time she said to Toomas, "Put that together then as well!" The grandmother was referring to the assembly of the railway. However, Toomas did not react to the grandmother's words and that was that. The next time the

grandmother put a puzzle on the corner of the table, but Toomas did not want to play that either. Toomas also went to the grandmother's place to ask for several things from her. At his grandmother's Toomas was especially keen on getting various kinds of tools such as wires, scissors, pliers, etc.

## 5.6 The games of active and passive players and the roles of their mothers

In this chapter the play worlds of the children are summarized. At first the children's games both in the kindergarten and at home are described. Then the child's play settings at home are presented, including details about the toys available and with whom the child played with. After that the mothers' views on the importance of playing are given. Finally the child's solitary and joint games are reported along with how the mother participated in her child's play world at home. The following is a brief summary of each child's play in the kindergarten and at home, and his or her mother's involvement.

### ANNA

*In the kindergarten* Anna was the initiator of various games and play ideas. In these games she was a leader who the other children wanted to play with. Anna played a lot of games and these were of many different types. In these games she was able to act in compliance with the roles and she interacted with others accordingly.

*At home* Anna played role games alone, which she initiated herself. In these solitary games her mother's role was to supply materials for the play. Her favourite game was the 'café' role play, to which Anna brought considerable experience and knowledge. In the joint role games Anna's mother played a varied role. When Anna and her mother played together her mother adopted a certain role in the play. However, when Anna's brother played as well the mother tended to teach and direct the children's game. Other joint games were also connected with the teaching of the child. When playing alone Anna acted out role games in an object-role way. By contrast, during joint role play she acted out her roles in the social-role way.

### KALEV

*In the kindergarten* Kalev initiated games, offering interesting and resourceful play ideas. He could successfully play together with others. His games contained a great deal of imagination, richness of speech and mutual play interaction.

*At home* Kalev played one game alone in which the mother did not participate. Joint games involving Kalev and his mother were initiated mostly by his mother. The play theme of these games was connected with building and the lives of animals. In role games the mother's involvement varied. She assumed short-term roles and played together with her child or asked him

questions. They also played several games together which were connected with solving riddles or teaching. In these games it was the mother who continued and elaborated the child's play.

#### NELE

*In the kindergarten* Nele usually played alone or watched the others' games from the sidelines. When Nele offered a play idea the other children usually did not accept it.

*At home* Nele's solitary games were connected with cooking and she loved her new toy cooker. Nele's mother did not participate in these games but as an onlooker she was aware of what was going on in Nele's play. Nele played role games alone in the object-role way. When playing alone Nele found the number game uninteresting at first. However, her mother was able to arouse her interest in the play through giving support and praise. Nele and her mother played a lot of board games together. Joint games were often initiated by Nele while her mother had the role of coplayer. During these joint games Nele's mother explained and specified the game rules and elaborated the child's play.

#### NEEME

*In the kindergarten* Neeme played only a little. He invited others to play with him but they generally did not want to. When Neeme played together with the other children he only played minor roles in the games.

*At home* all the solitary games were initiated by Neeme. The themes of these solitary games were connected with building. Neeme's mother offered him various different play materials but he did not always accept what he was being offered. In the joint games involving Neeme and his mother there were certain defined play characters, for example, Marek and Johannes, as well as play themes. Both initiated play scripts in the games. The games featured a good deal of imaginary situations and speech. However, when Neeme's younger sister joined in the play the games became shorter and various conflicts emerged. Playing alone Neeme acted out play scripts in an object-role way using play materials, play actions and speech. In the joint games the play scripts were played according to the social-role way.

#### TOOMAS

*In the kindergarten* Toomas usually played alone and his wish to join in the other children's games was usually rebuffed. The other children considered his play ideas strange and uninteresting.

*At home* Toomas' solitary games were connected with cooking and building. Toomas acted out play scripts in the object-role way using a range of materials. His mother did not participate in his solitary games; she only supplied Toomas with toys. When she did briefly join in the play then numerous imaginary situations appeared. When Toomas went to his mother to show her a toy he had made, she praised her child in a rather laconic manner (i.e. with monosyllabic acknowledgements such as 'mm', 'ah-haa', 'yes', etc.).

Toomas and his mother played just one game together, this being initiated by Toomas. The joint play featured speech and humour.

In the table 30 the games played by the five children both in the kindergarten and at home are summarised. Below there is a summary of the games of the active and passive players both in the kindergarten and at home.

#### *In the kindergarten*

Active players (Anna and Kalev) initiated games themselves and displayed a diversity of interesting play ideas. They were also able to involve other children in their games. In their role games Kalev and Anna were able to play roles and to act according to their assumed roles. There were numerous substitutions, imaginary situations and interactions that complied with the roles.

Passive players (Nele, Neeme and Toomas) often played alone or watched the others' games from the sidelines. The other players did not like their play ideas or considered them uninteresting. These passive players acted out minor roles in games played together with the other children. When the teacher guided them to play together with the other children the resulting joint games were short in duration.

#### *Solitary and joint games at home*

Active players (Anna and Kalev): the content of solitary games consisted of children's actions with objects that relate to the role. The content of joint games was object actions with play materials and social relationships between the players. The roles were clearly differentiated and explicit. The play scripts involved considerable speech and many imaginary situations.

Of the passive players Nele played many games, most of which were board games, together with her mother. The passive player Neeme and his mother played role, board and word games together. These involved many differing play scripts and their contents were played in a social-role way. The passive player Toomas played alone both in the kindergarten and at home; he played only one game together with his mother.

#### *Mothers as play promoters*

In the solitary games of the active players (Anna and Kalev) the mothers' involvement included first of all the supplying of materials and asking of questions about the games. While playing together with their children they initiated various kinds joint games. In these joint games the mothers played various roles. They assumed roles in the games, elaborated the games and explained to their children how to play.

The passive players (Nele, Neeme and Toomas) often initiated joint games with their mothers. The mothers supported their children's games and also were shortly involved in them. At the same time they also explained how to play and specified the game rules. In Neeme's joint games his mother continuously completed and elaborated play scripts. She developed the imaginary situation with numerous substitutions and speech connected with the play.

TABLE 30 Children's games in the kindergarten and at home

Child's name	Games in the kindergarten	Games at home
ANNA	Anna was the initiator of various kinds of games, which she played with other children.	Alone Anna played role games. During solitary games her mother was the supplier of materials. Several games were initiated by the mother, their themes being connected with everyday life and with teaching. The mother's role in the joint games was varied.
KALEV	Kalev initiated various games characterised by a good deal of imagination, speech and interaction.	Kalev played one game alone. Joint games were initiated by his mother, their themes including building, the lives of animals, solving puzzles and learning to read. The mother's role in the joint games was varied.
NELE	Nele played alone or watched the games from aside.	Alone Nele played games connected with cooking and numbers. Her mother did not participate in these games but supported them indirectly. Nele and her mother often played board games together, most of which were initiated by Nele. In these joint games the mother was an equal coplayer, who specified the game rules and the content of the games.
NEEME	Neeme played little at the kindergarten. His joint games with the other children were of short duration and he tended to play unimportant roles.	Solitary games were initiated by Neeme and were connected with building. His mother offered Neeme play materials. Joint games were long in duration and were connected with defined themes and play characters. There was a good deal of imaginary situations, a wide range of materials and significant interaction in the role games.
TOOMAS	Toomas played alone as the others found his play ideas strange.	The themes of Toomas' solitary games were connected with cooking and building. Toomas asked his mother for the necessary materials for his play. Toomas and his mother played one verbal game together, the content of which was the humorous changing of names.

## **6 THE CHILD'S EVERYDAY LIFE AND PLAY**

### **6.1 The everyday life and activities of the child at home**

According to the interviews the mothers endeavoured to do a great deal together with their children. Joint activities mostly took place at weekends and during holidays. Parents and children visited relatives and friends. First and foremost they visited their grandparents. Kalev, Neeme and Anna went with their parents to see their grandparents every weekend. Kalev's mother explained the need to visit the grandparents primarily in terms of their cramped housing conditions in town and the wonderful opportunity at the grandparents' place for the children to enjoy the fresh air and space of the countryside. During their holidays they travelled extensively both in Estonia and abroad. Toomas' mother admitted that now that the international frontiers had been opened it is wonderful to be able to explore the world. These journeys of exploration were embarked upon together. For example, they had been to Muumiland and the Serena Water Park in Finland.

The children went with their mothers to the theatre, cinema, museums, shops and eating places. Four out of the five children went to children's clubs (music, singing or drawing clubs), which met either once or twice a week.

In the interviews the mothers said that family evenings at home were very short and full of work. The mothers went to the kindergarten to fetch their children and reached home at six or half past six. Nele and Toomas' mothers were single parents and fetched their children from their grandparents when they themselves were working late in the evening. It was typical for all of these families that after arriving home from the kindergarten the mothers usually started doing housework. Only two or three hours on the average remained until the children's bedtimes. The mothers started cooking dinner as soon as they reached home while the children started their own activities. The video observations revealed two distinct worlds at home: the world of the mother's activities in the kitchen and the play world of child in the living room or in his or her own room. Anna's mother described an average evening as follows, "Well, then I usually start cooking. And then I am so, well, a bit stressed. I am

tired and, well, I have to cook. And then the children have one hundred and five questions.”

### 6.1.1 The child's solitary activities

When I went to make observations at Toomas' home his mother told me, “This is real life, as it really is. I am in the kitchen and Toomas watches TV.” The mother then added, “Toomas can manage by himself.”

While the mothers were in their kitchens, the children watched TV, drew and made things, looked at books or played in some other way. According to the ludographs (see appendix 3) the children usually initiated their activities themselves. They often continued the activities or play that they had started earlier in the day or during the previous evening. When working in the kitchen and seeing that their children had nothing to do, several of the mothers set them tasks. These tasks were first and foremost connected with teaching, i.e. with the development of certain academic skills. The child either had to write certain words, add and subtract up to ten, read a text from a book or draw pictures, etc. Thus, for example, Anna's mother told Anna to take an arithmetic book and solve some addition and subtraction tasks. Anna solved the problems and went to show the results to her mother. Anna's mother gave her several other tasks in addition, such as drawing hearts and writing a St. Valentine's greeting for a friend's children. The mothers seldom came to look at what the children were doing. In fact, the mothers commented that they were more likely to go and check what their children were doing if it became very quiet for a while in the child's room as they would then become worried as to what the children might be getting up to. The children themselves also came to the kitchen to ask for certain objects they needed, to ask when their dinner would be ready or to show their mother something they had done or built.

According to the observations, all the children shared the following favourite activities: *drawing and painting, playing computer games and watching TV, and listening to music or stories on cassettes*. Drawing was usually initiated by the children themselves, taking out a drawing book or a colouring book and drawing pens (pencil or wax crayons or felt-tipped pens). Very often they put some object in front of them which they then drew around on the paper. For example, a small Lego man was put onto the drawing paper and the child traced its profile onto the paper. Sometimes they also went to their play corners to have a look at the Lego men. The children's drawings were also displayed on the walls of their homes and each child described these in terms of his or her own exhibition. Several exhibitions were arranged by Neeme, who went to a children's art club once a week, where a wide range of techniques were used in drawing (water colour, pastel, silk and glass painting etc.). The mothers commented that their children not only drew definite objects, people or animals but also strange, unconventional things. For example, a child might cut a drawing out, tear it into long thin strips and then paste these together to obtain a quite unique picture. On other occasions the children drew maps showing all

houses, trees and roads on the way to the kindergarten. When the children had completed their pictures they sometimes went to show them to their mothers.

In Toomas and Kalev's homes the TV was constantly switched on, irrespective of what programme was on or whether the child was watching it. Toomas watched a lot of TV but Kalev tended to watch TV only together with his mother. During the interviews the mothers spoke anxiously of their children's TV viewing habits and the violence contained in some of the programmes. The mothers reported that Estonian children's TV programmes and some cartoons were suitable for children and of good quality. However, the mothers felt that the majority of children's programmes were unsuitable for their children and they tried to control the amount of TV their children watched. TV viewing was also considered to be harmful for their children's eyesight.

Neeme's family had a computer at home. Neeme's mother said that she allowed her child to play on the computer only for a certain time each day. Two of the children's fathers often brought laptop computers home and the children were allowed to play games on these.

### **6.1.2 Mother-child interactions and joint activities**

According to the ludographs (see appendix 3) there were various types of *interactions* between the mother and the child. They talked while eating, cooking and during children's various activities. These interactions were usually short (1-2 minutes) and were mostly initiated by the mother. They talked about a wide variety of themes, including the events of the day at the kindergarten, the meals at the kindergarten, food and its value, etc. The mothers and children also talked about theatre plays seen in the kindergarten, good and bad dogs, birds on the window ledge and about what to do at the weekend. In the homes of Kalev and Nele there was a good deal of mother-child interaction, most of which took place during eating, when the mother was cooking or when the child was drawing. For example, Nele and her mother talked about bewitching bears and a magic tree, a candy machine and games played with Nele's grandmother. During the interview Nele's mother explained, "We just talk. She is quite a good conversation partner, especially when she feels like talking."

Some interactions between the mothers and children were connected with teaching. The mothers explained how to write certain words and letters, how and with which colours to paint a picture, and how to count. For example, Kalev wanted to go to McDonald's together with his parents. While they were waiting for their father to come home the mother and son counted how much pocket money Kalev had. Kalev and his mother calculated a sum of 11 Estonian crowns, while the meal at McDonald's would cost 32 crowns. Kalev's mother asked him how much money was required. Kalev could not answer. The mother took 32 pencils and put them onto the table. Then she took 11 pencils away and asked her son how many were left. Kalev counted the remaining pencils and said, "21." The mother checked it by counting them again and confirmed Kalev's answer approvingly, "Yes, that's right."

In the joint activities the mothers directed their children's attention to the correct and punctual fulfilment of tasks. Thus, for example, letters had to be written exactly after the mother's model, words should have spaces in between and care had to be taken not to paint over the lines when painting a picture.

Nele and Kalev's mothers' also *explained* the content and nature of several phenomena and events to their children. Thus, for example, Kalev and his mother talked about Easter and how small babies were just after birth. The mother picked up a TV remote control to show Kalev just how small newly born babies actually are. After that she took a photograph album and showed Kalev pictures of him as a baby. Kalev's mother asked him whether he would like to draw a picture for their friend's newly born baby and Kalev willingly agreed.

Mothers *familiarised* their children with various daily practical activities, such as grating carrots, ironing clothes and making dough. The children usually willingly accepted the activities suggested by their mothers. However, they also initiated activities by themselves.

Several *amusing activities* were also evident from the video observations. For example, Kalev's mother taught her son to whistle and flick his thumbs. She demonstrated the flicking action but Kalev said he was not able to do it. His mother replied that she couldn't whistle either. Kalev tried to whistle but he did not manage very well although his elder brother could whistle with great skill. The mother tried to teach Kalev by demonstrating and explaining. She said, "Hands hard! With your thumb up and a slap! Well, this way. You already did it." Kalev replied, "I can't." The mother consoled her son with, "You can't do it yet with such small fingers. Perhaps you need to grow bigger..."

Only scant mother-child interaction was seen during observations at the homes of the passive players Toomas and Neeme. In her interviews, Toomas' mother spoke about numerous joint activities with her son. Together they went on visits, to office parties, travelling and to the theatre-cinema. The mother spoke little of joint interactions or games at home. There was little mother-son interaction in the video observations made at Toomas' home and that which did take place usually occurred during eating in the kitchen. The content of this interaction was generally connected with the theme of eating. In the observation only one joint activity of Toomas and his mother, i.e. the construction of an aeroplane, was recorded. This joint activity lasted two minutes altogether with the mother constructing her own aeroplane. The mother addressed her son with the suggestion to assemble the gadget. At first Toomas was sitting by his mother trying to teach her but she did not pay much attention. The mother invited the child to construct the plane together but the son was by then more interested in watching TV. The mother repeated the invitation several times and pointed out that if he did not watch what she was doing he would not learn to construct it by himself.

Neeme's mother said that joint activities with both of her children were difficult in practice because the children were of such different ages and their mutual interaction was rather complicated. The video observation revealed few

instances of interactions or joint activities involving Neeme and his mother although there was a good deal of joint play.

The mothers and children also *drew together*. Joint drawing usually involved the child sitting at the table and drawing while the mother sat beside him or her. Only Nele's mother actually drew together with her daughter so that they both drew pictures and afterwards they compared whose drawing was the more beautiful. On another occasion one of them began a drawing and then the other continued the same picture. Generally speaking it was usually the mothers who provided suggestions as to what the children should draw. Thus a mother might suggest, "Draw a picture for auntie! She's coming to visit us today." or "Draw a greeting card for the new baby's mummy!" During joint drawing it was also characteristic that the mothers would constantly direct their children's activity and on seeing that they had completed a certain drawing the mothers would often give them additional tasks. Thus, they would add, "Draw something extra or write some words under the picture!" The mothers also asked about the drawings the children had made, (e.g. "What colour are bears?" "What do bees eat?" etc.).

The mothers said that they *read bedtime stories* when the children got to bed in good time. According to the mothers, such time keeping disciplined children, taught them to manage their time and so developed a sense of time. I watched how Anna's mother read a book to her. Anna gave the book to her mother and the mother read it to Anna for one minute. After that Anna took the book from her mother and went with it into her room where she started reading it aloud to herself. Both Anna's narrative and intonation were very close to those of her mother.

## 6.2 The reflection of everyday life in play

In their interviews the mothers gave several examples of how everyday life was reflected in their children's games. Those things the children remembered and which attracted them most of all were reflected in their games. That which was mentioned in the mothers' interviews and the examples given regarding the connection between the child's everyday life and his or her play was confirmed in the video observation. The children played games which themes and contents were connected with their surrounding world and the social activities of adults.

All the children engaged in themes connected with *cooking*. Cooking in its dozens of variants had found its way into the children's games. In the mothers' opinions everyday cooking at home or in the grandparents' home was an essential feature in the emergence of games. The children's solitary games and joint games with their mothers included the cooking of meatball soup, witch's soup and macaroni as well as the preparing of coffee and drinking of juice. Other food-oriented activities included eating cake in a café, making pizzas,

baking cakes and toasting bread with the toaster. Thus, Nele's mother, for example, was cooking in the kitchen while Nele prepared food on her favourite toy, i.e. her toy cooker. Nele's favourite programmes on TV were cookery programmes and also during the Sunday pancake making she herself mixed the batter. According to her mother's interview, all these had influenced Nele's cookery games. There were also cases where cooking was not necessarily the main theme of the play but might become one of the play plots. During joint play involving Neeme and his mother, for example, the play characters Johannes (Neeme) and Marek (the mother) slid down the slide on their motorbikes, found the hidden treasure and then went home to have some pizza. For pizza they used a small Lego piece. Before recording the video Toomas' mother commented that her son loved cooking play food with the real food processor. Toomas put bricks into the processor, mixed them inside it and then poured them into the bowl and washed them later. The video film also captured Toomas boiling macaroni and cooking other items.

Themes connected with *buying and selling* also appeared in the children's games. In Anna's mother's opinion the café play had come into being because Anna had had a lot of experience and knowledge of going to cafés. They usually went to the café after the cinema. Anna and her mother had often been to McDonalds' and to cafés. Afterwards the daughter played 'café' in several different ways at home. In the café play one player offered biscuits, coffee, juice, various cakes and salad. In other games Anna and her mother went shopping for gifts or to look at new cars. In these games the mother and daughter played the roles of shop assistants and customers in turn. Goods were placed on display in an attractive way and the shop assistant interacted with due politeness to the customer. The goods consisted of Anna's pictures, toys and other items. When they had run out of paper money they started using a credit card (which at the time was a relatively new phenomenon in Estonia).

*TV programmes, theatre shows and books* all influenced the theme of the children's play. Neeme's mother, for example, noted that several play ideas came straight from TV. The Ninja play was inspired by the TV cartoon programme and would involve Neeme drawing Ninja castles and towns. Neeme's mother added that in her opinion Neeme did not watch the cartoons very much but still he drew on them for theme. She explained that at the time of watching she had not noticed the cartoon being of anything great significance for her son and that only later on had its influence on his activities become apparent. The idea of building a spaceship was linked to Neeme's great interest in the planets. Thus, he looked at books on astronomy together with his mother while the computer also had a planets game.

Available *play materials* supported the emergence of the children's play. These especially included toys that had been longed for and received as birthday or Christmas presents, such as Anna's dinnerware, Nele's cooker, Neeme's Lego and Toomas' wires and tubes. Neeme's mother explained that Lego bricks were very good play materials and that they had tried to buy a lot of them while relatives and friends had given Lego as presents.

Many of the themes used by the children in their games were also connected to *building*. They built cafés, caves, traps, spaceships, houses and cars. While Neeme's father was working on their house a large part in Neeme's solitary games was taken up with building. His mother said that he was always building in his games. A highly realistic play cave had been built for Neeme. The video film also recorded several instances of Neeme's construction work.

Also objects and activities connected with the *parents' work* were reflected in the games of their children. Several mothers mentioned that their children had sometimes been with them at their workplaces and that the parent's work was reflected in the child's games. Nele's mother said, "She sometimes plays at going to work and puts the file under her arm saying that she is off to a meeting. And then she has a sort of old TV remote control which she says is her old mobile phone." Fathers' jobs were also reflected in the children's games. Anna's mother said, "Now they're playing 'daddy's work' or 'office'. ... And then they call me to go and see their job or office." Anna was director or manager while her little brother was an employee. The manager's job involved writing, typing and interacting with other people.

### 6.3 The children's play according to their mothers

During the interviews the mothers reported that play was a natural activity of the child and that no one could consider play to be an unimportant or unnecessary activity. It was generally held that children should get plenty of opportunities to play and that the child's play should be respected.

In highlighting the importance of play the mothers suggested that in their games the children reproduced the surrounding world and imitated what they had seen, heard and experienced. Play was considered important because it revealed how the children changed their roles and placed themselves into the new roles. The mothers also brought up the idea of the creative nature of play. Anna's mother commented that as the child played new features constantly appeared in the play, while Neeme's mother commented that through play the child can put the world together for himself or herself and become the master of that world. Play is also important for the child's development for the reason that during the course of play all kinds of questions arise. Two of the mothers referred to the emotional significance of play for the child. They said that through play the child is able to express feelings, which could not otherwise be expressed. At the same time, without play the child's life would become too serious.

Play was seen as important because it is a means of learning and a way of preparing the child for school. The mothers considered certain types of play to be good because they helped children to learn quickly, easily and in a playful manner to count or learn the alphabet. Thus, one mother commented, "The letter game is good and important because letters can be learnt and practised in

it." Nele's mother thought that board games were especially good because they developed all sides of the child's logical and strategic thinking, as well as providing something concrete for the child to learn.

The mothers also brought up the complicated issue of winning and losing. They said that children disliked losing and sometimes took it very hard if they lost. Nele's mother said that it was a big problem for her to know how to teach her child to both win and lose in good humour, and that this applied not only to games but life in general.

The mothers had the following opinions regarding joint play. They considered that when the child was small it was necessary to play together because the child could not initiate games by himself or herself. However, now that the child was bigger he or she could manage by himself or herself. Nele's mother stated that when Nele acted out roles in her play she continuously explained what she was doing. That attracted the mother's attention and, consequently, she became very interested in her child's discussions and began to realise how quickly the child had developed and how quickly her world had changed. Several mothers said that they were always somewhere near to the playing child and that if the child asked the mother to go and see what he or she had done then the mother would always go. Toomas' mother noted, "I never say that I cannot come. I say, 'wait a little, I'll come soon'."

On the other hand all the mothers said that their children loved playing together with them. The mothers said that of late the children themselves had become more active and had started asking their mothers to watch their play or to join in the play with them. On other occasions the children came to the kitchen to talk. When the mothers happened to have time then they did play together. When the child beckoned to his or her mother then the mother had to go even when she did not really want to or had insufficient time. The mothers often were expected to give explanations or answers for their children's various questions during the games.

When there were several children in the family the mothers did not consider it essential to always join in their play. On the other hand, when the children played together questions often appeared and on occasions tensions arose as a result of, for example, differing play ideas or competition over various toys. Therefore, the mother was needed to solve various types of problems and to explain how to play together.

#### **6.4 The child's play environment**

On the basis of both the interviews and video recordings the children engaged in all kinds of activities at home and that they possessed a great number of *toys* and *play materials*. They had bicycles (one had a scooter), all kinds of drawing equipment, music and fairy tale cassettes and video films. The boys had plenty of Lego, as well as toy cars and other vehicles, puzzles and other construction

materials (both wooden and plastic). Neeme had a number of computer games of which his mother had a rather negative opinion. Toomas had all kinds of working objects and tools such as pipes, leads and batteries, although not so many toys. His mother allowed him to use various household utensils such as the food mixer for his play. She said that ordinary toys were usually too boring for Toomas and he constantly strove either to develop them or to create new toys of his own. Nele's mother too said that her daughter liked those objects, which could be used to do something or which could be used in guessing games. Kalev had less activity-oriented toys in comparison with the other children. This was also understandable as Kalev's living conditions were more cramped than those of the others. The mother explained that they did not have lots of toys and that she often threw away the old and broken ones. In her room Nele had one special play thing, namely a trampoline which she loved jumping on.

The children had earlier had their various cuddly animals which according to their mothers had often been quite ugly and old. However, for the children these cuddly animals had been very dear and they had played with them a great deal. The mothers always brought out their children's favourite toys, each of which usually had its own personal history, name and role in the child's world. Nele's favourite toy was a soft toy called Mister Mart, who had been named by Nele after a film character. Mister Mart lived his own peculiar life in that he went to a bears' kindergarten.

All the mothers said that relatives and friends brought toys as birthday or Christmas presents or on other occasions when coming to visit. When there were two children in the family then a great number of toys had accumulated over the years. The parents themselves bought relatively few toys. Neeme's mother spoke at length about which toys she had bought for her son. In the interview she said that when choosing toys she tried to take her son's wishes into account so that the toys would help him to develop. In her opinion it was not worth buying hairy ugly things for him. Neeme's mother had no wish to buy war toys such as guns although she added that it was impossible to escape them completely as the children could make gun-like weapons out of Lego or using pencils and other common items. Neeme's mother also emphasised that when buying toys she would bear in mind whether Neeme could play with it alone or whether it was intended for joint games.

Both of the girls' mothers remarked that the girls did not really like playing with dolls. Nele's mother said that her daughter actually preferred playing with cars as they moved and that Nele enjoyed the action of arranging car races. In spite of the fact that neither of the girls played much with them, they still had some dolls, prams, doll's clothes and dishes. Anna's mother said that she did not approve of Barbie dolls and would avoid any toy, doll or otherwise, on which the Barbie name appeared. The girls had also modern toys such as Tinky-Vinky from the Teletubbies and Furby.

According to Nele's mother Nele had plenty of toys and the only kind which might require supplementing were board games. As to the importance of

board games, Nele's mother pointed out that her daughter wanted to play together with her. Since there was no one else at home she had to play together with her child. At the same time Nele's mother said that she herself loved board games and that they helped the player to develop. Anna's mother noted that her daughter did not like playing board games so much as she did not like losing. In fact, losing made Anna feel hurt and annoyed.

Nele and Anna's mothers said that their daughters did not like tidying up their toys and so they had to think of other ways of dealing with the matter. According to the mothers tidying up was a difficult and unpleasant activity for the child. One of the fathers had found a clever way of enthusing his child to tidy up the toys. He would say, "Let's make the room beautiful now!" Toomas' mother also paid a great deal of attention to the orderliness of the toys. There were special cupboards and boxes for them and she regularly drew Toomas' attention towards tidying up.

The children usually *played at home* during the evenings, at weekends and during holidays both in the city and in the country. According to mothers, the playing conditions at their country houses or grandparents' homes were much more conducive to play and there always seemed to be plenty of time there.

Three out of five children had *sisters or brothers* with whom they played with to some extent. According to the mothers' interviews, joint playing with siblings often led to problems. All of the mothers spoke of the difficulties that occurred when children of different ages playing together. In the mothers' opinions, the children could sometimes play quietly together for long periods while on other occasions there were continuous conflicts concerning either toys or play roles. Anna's mother commented that sometimes Anna's two-years-younger brother played patiently with Anna but on other occasions fights developed between them. In the mother's opinion it was the little brother who did not let Anna get on with her games. Kalev's mother also remarked that it was Kalev's five-years-older brother who tended to disturb his little brother's activities and that great arguments arose as a result. Often arguments arose when Kalev won in computer or board games. In addition to their siblings the children played with the children of relatives, friends and neighbours, with whom they often were in contact both in the city and in the country. Nele and Toomas had no brothers or sisters and also had few playmates. Nele played mostly with younger children whom she saw while at her grandmother's place. Toomas played occasionally with friends' children. His mother admitted that she was somewhat concerned about Toomas' social relationships.

## 6.5 The everyday life of active and passive players

In the evenings at home there were two distinct worlds: the mother's world in the kitchen and the play-activities world of child. The children started their own activities themselves. While alone, the children mostly watched TV, drew, made constructions, looked at books or listened to music.

The mother-child interaction took place during meals and they talked about various everyday matters. Interaction was also related to teaching, explaining particular facts or events, or the formation of certain practical skills. Mother-child interaction was mostly initiated by the mothers, who acted as transmitters of knowledge and sharers of experience. The children often invited their mothers to have a look at the pictures they had drawn or to watch them perform 'tricks', such as positioning a pillow so that it would stay upright.

In their interviews the mothers said that everyday life was often reflected in their children's play. The children's knowledge, impressions and experiences formed the basis of their play. All of the mothers considered play to be essential for development and for preparing the child for school although its importance in other respects was also acknowledged. The mothers agreed that their children loved playing together with them, and that when their children called they would always go to them. Although the mothers said that the children were big enough to cope by themselves, they qualified this by adding that while playing the children often asked their mothers to come and watch or to actually join in the play. Each child has his or her own play corner. They all had plenty of toys, which had been given to them either by relatives or friends.

In the following (see table 31) the active and passive players' joint play with their mothers, playmates, play setting and the mother's view of the child play are presented.

The *active players* Kalev and Anna engaged in numerous joint activities and interactions with their mothers, which were often initiated by the mothers. The themes of these joint interactions were talks about friendship, computers, health and newly born babies. The joint activities were often of a practical nature (e.g. teaching how to iron clothes, baking cakes). Joint activities were also directed towards the formation of academic skills (learning the alphabet and how to read, learning to count).

The *passive player* Nele also engaged in several joint activities and interactions with her mother, which were often initiated by her mother. At Nele's home there were certain established family traditions, such as making pancakes on Sunday mornings. They talked a great deal on various topics, often in a humorous way. The *passive players* Neeme and Toomas engaged in few joint activities and interactions with their mothers. Neeme and Toomas mainly played alone at home. Toomas watched a considerable amount of TV alone. The sole recorded example of Toomas' joint activity with his mother did not progress smoothly as it proved to be of no interest to him. Neeme's joint activities with his mother were generally disturbed by the requirements of his little sister.

#### *Playmates*

The *active players* had lots of playmates including brothers and the children of neighbours and friends. Most of these had been playmates for some considerable time.

TABLE 31 Mother-child activities, playmates, play settings and mother's view of play

Player	Joint activities and interaction
Active players (Anna and Kalev)	Many joint activities and interactions which were often initiated by the mother. Joint activities were connected with explaining and teaching.
Passive player (Nele)	Many joint activities and interactions
Passive players (Neeme and Toomas)	Few joint activities and interaction

Player	Playmates
Active players (Anna and Kalev)	Numerous playmates: brothers and the children of neighbours and friends
Passive player (Neeme)	Sister and the children of relatives and friends
Passive player (Nele)	Few playmates: children of some friends and neighbours
Passive player (Toomas)	Few playmates: occasional play with the children of certain friends

Player	Play setting
Active players (Anna and Kalev)	They both shared play corners with their brothers. At home Anna had a considerable number and all kinds of toys and play materials, her favourites being hairy animals. Kalev's favourite play material was Lego. Kalev did not have a great number of toys at home.
Passive players (Neeme and Nele)	They both had considerable numbers and all kinds of toys and play materials. Neeme's favourite play material was Lego. Nele's favourite toys were kitchen toys and a hairy animal called Mister Mart.
Passive player (Toomas)	Toomas' favourite toys were vehicles, Lego pieces and various wires and hoses.

Player	Mother's view of the child's play
Active players (Anna and Kalev)	Play is important. Play has to be respected. New roles enter into games. Play is an important pedagogic means in teaching.
Passive player (Neeme)	In play the child is able to try all kinds of things and obtain answers.
Passive player (Nele)	In play the child creates his or her own world. Board games are very good.
Passive player (Toomas)	Play is important in the child's life.

Of the *passive players*, Neeme's playmates included his little sister and the children of relatives and friends. Nele's playmates consisted of the children of acquaintances and neighbours. These were mostly younger than Nele. Toomas had few playmates. Once in a while Toomas played with the children of family friends.

#### *Play setting*

The *active players* shared their play corner with their brothers. Anna had all kinds of toys and play materials at home. Her favourites were hairy toy animals and toy dishes. Kalev did not have many toys at home. His favourite toys were Lego building pieces.

The *passive players* Neeme and Nele had all kinds of toys at home. Neeme especially liked playing with Lego. Nele's favourite toys were kitchen toys, especially a toy cooker, and also a hairy animal called Mister Mart. Toomas enjoyed playing with model vehicles and Lego. A special feature of his toys was the use of hoses and wires.

*The mother's view of the child's play*

The mothers of the *active players* considered play to be important as in games the children act out those situations that they have experienced or seen. At the same time new situations that differ from those of everyday life come into focus and thus play provides the opportunity for the child to develop his or her creativity and relationships with other children.

*Passive player* Nele's mother thought that play was important because the child creates her own world there. The mother attached a high value to board games in the child's play world. She thought that through games the child constructs his or her own world together. Neeme's mother gave a longer justification of the importance of play. According to her its importance lies in its enabling children to try out all kinds actions and situations. Emotions, which the child can live out while playing are also of importance. Neeme's mother pointed out the idea that games provide a unique means for the child to find answers to many of his or her questions. Toomas' mother said that play was important as it enables to the child to imitate that which he or she has seen in reality.

## 7 SOLITARY PLAY OF THE CHILD AND MOTHER-CHILD JOINT PLAY

### 7.1 Amount and types of solitary games

Altogether the children played 16 solitary games, i.e. games that they played alone in their play corners or own rooms. When the child played alone the mother was usually either busy in the kitchen, reading a paper or mending clothes, etc. Fifteen of the 16 games were role games and one was a board game. The total time taken up by the games was six hours and 29 minutes. The following table 32 indicates the number of solitary games, their duration and the number of role games.

TABLE 32 Children's solitary games

No	Child	Number of games	Play time	Number of role games
1.	ANNA	4	2 hours 22 min	4
2.	KALEV	1	9 min	1
3.	NELE	3	53 min	2
4.	NEEME	4	2 hours	4
5.	TOOMAS	4	1 hour	4

When playing alone the children engaged mainly in role play. In these games they combined events from everyday life with imaginary situations. In addition to role play Nele also played one board game alone. This game had belonged to Nele's mother when she had been a child.

### 7.2 Creation of imaginary situations in play

The children themselves initiated the games in many ways. Some children went quietly to their play corners, found their toys and started playing. They played quietly for a long time, only sometimes going to ask their mothers for materials

or help. Some children announced in loud voices what they were going to do, saying, for example, "I'll start playing with the cooker," or "I am going to make some tickets." Anna brought paper gift bags from the cupboard and said to her brother, "What an enormous bag." Then she put the paper bags (representing a bed) onto the floor and put her toys, i.e. a hare, a bear, Tinki-Vinki, etc. on top of them. After that she brought pillows to put under the toys' heads and then covered them with blankets. Kalev played a director's game with two toy squirrels called Tiku and Taku. Kalev himself spoke and acted on behalf of both of the squirrels.

The *play theme* of the children's solitary games could be divided into two categories. The first category included themes that were connected with cooking and eating. Out of the fifteen role games about a half were connected with cooking. The children, both boys and girls, often played at cooking macaroni, meatballs and even witch's soup as well as making toast.

While playing with small toys, Kalev, for example, put a sweet into his mouth and then spoke the part of the squirrel, saying, "Give me a sweet!" Kalev asked, "What colour?" The squirrel answered, "Red." Kalev stuffed a sweet into the squirrel's mouth, or at least made to do so, and then began to make eating noises, "Mmm, mmm, mmm."

In addition to cooking and eating the children fed imaginary children in their games. They also washed up or cleaned the kitchen.

The second category included play themes connected with *building*. Construction tasks observed included the building of a house for astronauts, a space motorbike, ships for people and a robot. In addition to construction games various games involving repair work (e.g. car repairs and house repairs) were played.

According to the mothers, the children chose play themes and contents which were important and close to them. Nele's mother, for example, said that cooking was her daughter's favourite theme, that Nele had been dreaming of getting a toy cooker as a birthday present and that she loved watching cookery programmes on TV. Neeme's mother said that the house was full of Neeme's constructions. The observation confirmed that Neeme's solitary games were dominated by the building theme.

The *contents* of the children's solitary games varied greatly. In some games the content of the activity developed in a variety of ways while in others the content was one-sided and consisted of repeated actions. Examples of content include the cooking games of Nele and Toomas. Nele announced, "I will start playing with the cooker. What shall I do?" She was busy at the toy cooker, lifting dishes on the cooker, put imaginary water into the pot and turned the cooker's switches on and off. Nele put glass balls (representing meatballs) into the pot, stirred them with a ladle and added imaginary salt. She stirred cherry juice, salt and pepper into the soup. Then she crushed the meatballs and stirred them in the pot. Finally, she started feeding the Teletubbies. Nele's actions were accompanied by her commentary describing what she was doing. Nele's play

consisted of two sripts. In the first she cooked the soup and in the second she fed the Teletubbies.

In Toomas's play he first asked his mother for a bowl but soon returned to ask for a second bowl. Having received the bowls, he took a knife, fork and spoon from the drawer of the kitchen table and took them into his room. The content of this play consisted of taking to pieces previously built Lego constructions and putting the pieces into the bowl. This lasted quite a long time. After this he asked his mother for one more bowl. Toomas did not speak at all throughout the play. Finally he took the bowl to the kitchen. There was one script in Toomas' play, namely cooking macaroni. His play consisted of repeated stereotype actions, i.e. taking Lego constructions to pieces and piling the bricks to a bowl. After this the same actions were repeated as Toomas filled the second bowl with Lego pieces. Several of Toomas's games consisted of the piling of objects or toys from one place into another.

The main content of Toomas' play involves repeated actions with objects. The actions in Nele's play were varied, i.e. cooking and feeding the Teletubbies. Nele spoke aloud about what she was going to do and her speech had its own role in the play. Nele employed numerous substitutions (e.g. marbles as meatballs) and imaginary objects (imaginary water, spices, soup). In the middle of her cooking Nele cried out, "Oh, hot!" Nele's play consisted of two scripts that were logically associated together. The children's solitary games usually consisted of one or two *scripts*. The sript was not developed during the game. Instead, the same script was often repeated continuously.

At no stage during the solitary games did the children say aloud whose *roles* they had assumed. However, they did say what they were doing in their games. Sometimes the actions in their games were directed towards imaginary children. The evidence that the children were engaging in role play came from their *actions* and accompanying speech. The children described what they were doing although they did not designate roles for themselves (i.e. they did not say aloud, for example, "I am mother" or "I am a car mechanic"). Such games contained 'roles in actions' which were characterised by the highly emotional and expressive imitation of familiar people on the one hand and realistic and logically interconnected actions on the other. Materials were repeatedly used during such play although the actions did not yet have thematic character. Thus, the children's solitary games were predominantly role games containing playful objective actions (concrete and generalised) and also roles in actions. Roles in actions involved imitating the actions relating to various adult roles or professions (e.g. mother, builder, electrician). The nature of the imaginary situation was revealed through the player's speech, which marked the actions and objects contained within the play as well as the gestures, which accompanied the actions.

Most of the children played with *realistic objects*, such as a big plastic kitchen cooker together with kitchen utensils, dolls, toy animals and a toy piano. Especially in solitary play, numerous substitutions of objects with *replacement objects* were observed. Lego bricks were used a great deal as

replacement objects. Small Lego pieces were often used as food in plays involving eating. These were used to represent various types of food such as macaroni or toast. Other replacement objects included small glass balls as meatballs, paper gift bags as beds for animals, a plastic jar cap for a cake, and snail shells and cut out pieces of paper for food. A real hose was used as an electric cable in Toomas's play. According to the player's own words this "took electricity from here and sent it there." He checked his machine with a small wooden stick. The actions performed with the stick were accompanied by great emotionality and sputtering sounds on the part of the player. Several *imaginary objects* also appeared during solitary games. Nele, for example, poured imaginary water into a pot, added imaginary spices into the soup and stirred the imaginary soup with a ladle. She also started to make imaginary dough. Imaginary actions also occurred during solitary games. Thus, Anna made as if to read a book to her toys and gesticulated as if she was cutting a cake with a knife.

### 7.3 Amount and types of mother-child joint games

There were 31 mother-child joint games lasting a total of five hours and 27 minutes (table 33). The table indicates that Nele played the largest number (11) of joint games with her mother. Toomas played the least number (1) of joint games.

TABLE 33 Mother-child joint play

No	Child	Total number of games	Length of games
1.	ANNA	5	1 hour 12 min
2.	KALEV	6	49 min
3.	NELE	11	1 hour 49 min
4.	NEEME	8	1 hour 37 min
5.	TOOMAS	1	4 min

The mother-child joint games were highly varied. Table 34 presents the play types and number of games played by each mother-child dyad. Mothers and children mostly played board games together, i.e. 11 games, which account for almost one third of all the joint games.

Board games also accounted for the greatest amount of time of all play types, i.e. a total of two hours and 25 minutes. Of the 11 board games eight were played by Nele and her mother. Kalev, Anna and Neeme each played one board game together with their respective mothers. Toomas' joint play with his mother consisted of just one verbal game, which lasted for four minutes.

TABLE 34 Play types and number of games

Play types	Number of games
Board game	11
Role play	8
Didactic game	4
Verbal game	4
Physical game	2
Guessing game	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>

The second most common play type was role play. Role games were played on eight instances. The total time taken up by role games was two hours and 35 minutes. Toomas and Nele's mothers did not play role games together with their children at all. Four of the joint games were didactic games. Didactic games were those games with a clearly educational purpose. In these games the mothers directed their children in writing letters, counting numbers or finding sounds in words. There were also four verbal games and two physical games. In addition to the above-mentioned there were two guessing games. Of the total of 31 joint games the children initiated 18 and the mothers 13.

#### 7.4 Mother-child board games

The mothers and children played 11 board games together lasting a total of two hours. All of the children except Toomas played board games with their mothers. Nele and her mother were particularly fond of board games and played a total of eight games. The children initiated ten out of the 11 games by inviting their mothers to play with them. Nele's mother initiated one game. During their interviews the mothers also reported that board games played either with parents or other children were a part of their children's everyday play world. All of the children had had experience of playing board games. Board games generally involved one player rolling a dice, then either the mother or the child said aloud the score obtained and the player moved accordingly along the game board. When the child did not move correctly along the game board the mother corrected him or her.

The board games usually had lots of cheerful coloured pictures of animals, birds, sea adventures, circuses etc. Neeme's mother several times emphasised the *playfulness* and excitement of board games. For example, she said, "The shark's starting to frighten me and I'll have to pass it, won't I." The mother spoke of a treasure map, of the bombing of a ship and of a pirate ship. Neeme said to his mother at the end of the game, "It's such a nice game!"

Nele's mother pointed out that games could contain magic. She said, "Six, six. Did you see that I can perform magic?" Nele did not agree with her mother and argued, "But you have to say the magic words quietly!"  
 Mother: "But I can say them in a loud voice."

After a while she said to her daughter, who had just obtained the necessary number on rolling the dice, "You did say the magic word?"

Nele: "Yes!"

Mother: "You had such a magic expression on your face."

The mothers usually did not explain the course of the game or its *rules* to their children because they knew the games. Only occasionally did they refresh their children's memories regarding, for example, the rule stating that a player who scores a six can roll the dice again. From time to time the children needed confirmation from their mothers as to whether they had moved their game pieces correctly.

Problems of the ethical norms of play also often emerged in these games. Ethical problems arose when a child rolled the dice dishonestly or otherwise not in the correct place or in the correct manner. Problems also arose when the child moved his or her piece in the wrong way, for example, not according to the number obtained on throwing the dice. The mothers reminded their children then that they must not cheat.

Problems connected with winning and losing became evident when the child began to sense that he or she was going to lose. In these cases he or she often stopped playing the game immediately or knocked over the mother's game piece in anger. Neeme's mother said to her son twice during the game, "You said yourself that you know how to lose with dignity." Anna and Neeme's mothers said in their interviews that their children did not really like playing board games as they did not like losing. They often reacted very painfully to losing. Neeme also did not like his mother to lose. The son tried to do everything possible for both of them to win.

## 7.5 Mother-child role play

The mothers and children played a total of eight role games. On five occasions these games were initiated by the children and on three by the mothers. Neeme himself initiated all four of the joint role games with his mother. Neeme repeatedly beseeched his mother to come and play with him. Neeme and his mother discussed together and decided who should take which role in the play and what was going to happen. When the mothers suggested playing with smaller sisters or brothers the children generally protested with, "No, with you, with you! Come on then, come on then! Daddy or Mihkel don't suit me, only mummy." On those occasions when the mother initiated the play she also helped to organise it.

The children did not immediately accept all the play ideas offered by their mothers. The mothers had to explain more thoroughly why the child might want to play the particular game in question (e.g. building a house for eggs as the Easter holidays were approaching). If the play was interrupted for some reason or other it was always the child who wanted to resume play. Once when

Neeme asked his mother to come to play she admitted that she was too tired and did not have the energy to keep playing all the time.

As in the child's solitary games, the most common *themes* in mother-child joint games were those reflecting everyday life. Thus, the most common types of themes in joint games were connected with the themes of eating and cooking and of building (roof repairing, building a house and a trap) and using various vehicles (cars and motorcycles, sliding on motorcycles, flying in balloons, etc.).

The mothers and children played 'café' and 'shop', built houses and cars, and played out the meeting of a squirrel and a bird in the forest. Various everyday situations were acted out using small toys. These included watching TV, buying a birthday present, chasing criminals and going to the photographer's. The mother-child dyads also played at studying boxing, making birthday presents, flying balloons and making pizzas.

In their interviews the mothers gave several detailed descriptions of how the themes of the games came into being. Anna's mother, for example, mentioned later in her stimulated recall interview that the café play was one of Anna's favourites for long time. There was a long history of practical experience prior to the emergence of the theme of Anna's café play. This included the player's experience of visiting a real café and buying cake from the shop, of eating cake and drinking milk or juice at home and of receiving the set of beautiful dishes from her grandmother. Anna's mother added that the café play did not only involve drinking coffee and eating cake but also included 'small talk' such as, "Oh, that's delicious coffee! Would you like some more? Any cake?" "Yes, yes!" Kalev had got the idea of the animal play from a TV programme. His mother commented that Kalev had already played such games at a very early age because he had always been keen on animal games.

The *content* of the mother-child joint games was totally different from that of the children's solitary games. Neeme's solitary play consisted of building (constructing a ship for *Astrokoomiks*, constructing *Myriks* etc.). By contrast, in their joint play Neeme and his mother created numerous other situations. Thus, they rode a motorbike, searched for treasure, ate pizza, mended a roof, had a boxing match, bought a birthday present, etc. In his solitary play Kalev played nine minutes with the same toys with which he also played later together with his mother. In his solitary game Kalev took the small toys in his hand and moved them on his game board. At the same time he described what he was doing and also acted out a short dialogue between two animals. In the joint play of Kalev and his mother a squirrel and a bird met in the forest, they talked about their families and then they met some new friends, a parrot and a butterfly. The butterfly wanted to go to sleep on the flower but then the squirrel woke the butterfly because it wanted to go running together.

Analysis of the content of the joint games revealed that the children had often understood the external appearance of the world of adults on a deeper level, i.e. what adults actually do, which objects they use and what their attitude is towards their activities. Thus, for example, in the café play coffee and cake was ordered and eaten. In the shop play biscuits were sold and bought. In

two other games a birthday invitation was sent out and presents bought, and a house was built, insulated and equipped with an oven, after which a guard was found for the house. The content of the mother-child joint games consisted not only of actions with objects and toys that corresponded to the various roles but also of mutually co-ordinated mother-child actions and interaction according to these roles. Thus, the content of the joint games was not only object orientated but also social, in other words, involving the bringing out of the relationships between the roles.

Also characteristic was the appearance of between three and six *scripts* in each of the joint games. These scripts were developed and elaborated together by the mother and child. Thus, for example, the mother-child dyad first slid down the slide on motorcycles, then looked for treasure, ate pizza and finally went to the shop to buy a cap. In the joint games the mothers and children assumed a range of differing *roles*, for example, waitress, shop assistant, builder, police officer, etc. The children showed great interest in and knowledge concerning the acting out of their roles. Roles were also expressed in the actions of the games and in the role relationships. Before starting a game the mothers and children often discussed together who was going to play as well as what and how they would play. In contrast to solitary games, the players' *role relationships* formed an important component of joint games. The acting out of roles and *the actions* arising from these roles became a distinct feature of the mother-child joint games. Certain specific actions depicting the nature of the relationships between the players were vividly differentiated. There were a variety of actions contained within the play including, for example, the addressing of the play partner according to the play partner's role.

For example, in their café play, Anna the waitress asks Mihkel the customer, "What would you like?"

Anna poured 'coffee' from the coffee pot into a cup and asked, "Sugar too? Would you like some or not?"

Some time later Anna asked her mother, "Hello, what would you like?"

Thus, the roles in joint games were more explicit than in solitary games. The clearest and most precise roles were those occurring in the joint games of Neeme and his mother. Here, the specific roles of two Lego characters, Marek and Johannes, were assumed. Neeme's mother assumed the role of Marek on several occasions. Marek was an adult man, who worked either as a boxing coach or as a guard of the treasure chamber. Neeme assumed the role of Johannes, also an adult man who worked in a police station. Marek and Johannes each had their own family, wife and children. In addition to Johannes, Neeme also assumed many other roles in the play. Thus he also acted the parts of Johannes' wife Pille-Riina, as well as a boxing coach, a shop assistant, a roof repairer and a driver. In addition, the games contained characters who were referred to but who did not participate directly. A feature of these games was that the players would address each other according to their acquired roles. At the beginning of the play the assignment of roles was agreed upon. The players

also assumed the roles of builder, waitress, shop assistant and, with the help of small toys, various animals such as birds, squirrels and butterflies.

The mother-child joint game scripts were acted out both in the object and social-role way. The play scripts mostly consisted of the players' mutual actions and interaction. Assuming the roles of Johannes and Marek, Neeme and his mother acted out various play scripts involving social role-like interaction.

For example, in the roof repairer play script, Neeme's mother (as Marek) says, "I must go home. The roof repairer is coming."

Having hitherto played the role of Johannes, Neeme uses another small Lego man to become the roof-repairer and approaches Marek, saying, "What's the matter?"

The mother (Marek) says to the roof repairer, "Would you please go and see! We have a kind of a hole there, where the rain is coming through."

Neeme goes onto the roof of the house with his roof-repairer and says, "Some kind of... yes. Now it's fixed."

Mother (Marek): "Thanks! Can I take down the ladder?"

Neeme (roof repairer): "Push the ladder down."

Several problems arose during mother-child joint games. These were connected to *rules* and to how the child acting out a certain role should behave. For example, a waitress must put the cake on a plate and not give it straight to the customer with her fingers. In the trap play the mother explained what kind of a trap could be built. The mother explained that not all traps were acceptable and that only those, which did not hurt anyone should be built.

## 7.6 Play materials in mother-child joint play

All eight of the joint role games involved a variety of materials and toys. Several *real means* were employed during the joint games. Thus, for example, the boiling of real eggs formed the starting point for the creation of a house building play. Real porcelain cups, plastic plates, spoons, real apples, sweets and biscuits were also introduced into games.

*Realistic objects* were used extensively in joint games. The players played mainly with various Lego pieces, which they used for building houses, vehicles, Lego men, motorbikes, etc. There were numerous vehicles, including various cars, a trailer, ships, a motorbike and a plane. Small Lego blocks were often used as replacements. Thus, for example, a small Lego button represented a pizza while a small oblong Lego block was hung onto a cord and used as a boxing bag. A real blanket and a pillow were used as building materials for building a trap. A large cardboard box was turned upside down to serve as a café table onto which dishes were laid. Paper was used for several purposes in this café play. Thus, flowers, cakes and salad were all cut out from paper in the play. A piece of plastic was used as a tray while small bits and pieces served as café decorations. The materials of the mother-child joint games are presented in table 35.

TABLE 35 Play materials used in joint play

Real means	Realistic objects	Replacement objects	Imaginary objects
Porcelain cups Plastic plates Spoon Apples Sweets Biscuits	Lego Vehicles Motorbikes, Cars Ships Plane	Paper for salad Paper for cake Piece of plastic for tray Lego for boxing bag Cardboard for café table	Imaginary money Imaginary coffee, juice and sugar Imaginary letter Imaginary fire Imaginary advertisement

Playing with *replacement objects* was also connected with imaginary actions. Thus, for example, a teddy bear played the part of photographer and the sound made by pushing its belly was used in the play to represent the sound of a camera taking a photograph. After taking the photos Neeme said, "All these things have already been photographed." In the café play Anna washed spoons, cups and plates in imaginary water while saying to herself at the same time, "So I'll put it here and wash it!" and imitating the sound of water. After this she said, "Done the washing" and put the spoon on the table. Another example involving Neeme was a play in which he acted as if to wake up in the morning and then pretended to eat and drink by making smacking and gulping actions.

There were numerous *imaginary objects* in the joint games, i.e. objects that did not actually exist in reality. Thus, in the shop and café games the players paid by placing imaginary money onto the palm of the recipient, drunk imaginary coffee and juice from cups, poured imaginary milk from a jug, stirred imaginary sugar into the coffee and sent a birthday note in an imaginary letter. During the house building play, Kalev built an imaginary fire in the house which was heated from below and which heated the whole house. Often both the child and mother themselves described the imaginary objects in the games.

While playing together with their children, the mothers offered play materials in several different ways. They gave their children the materials necessary for the play in question or they helped their children to find suitable objects. Anna's mother directed her child in various ways to find play materials. She encouraged Anna to find the necessary materials by pretending that they existed (e.g. "pretend it's sugar!"). Also, when, for example, salad was required in one particular play, Anna's mother guided her to look for objects from among her toys that would be suitable for use as salad.

The children did not accept all the play materials offered. Thus, when Kalev's mother gave him a badge and said, "Let's use this as a flower," Kalev refused as it was his favourite sheriff's badge, which he often wore on his shirt. When Kalev's mother suggested a dinosaur as a guard for the house, Kalev disagreed, saying that the dinosaur might eat all the eggs. The mother agreed with her son and suggested somebody else to be the guard.

The mothers were also needed to support and confirm the choice of replacement objects. Thus, for example, Anna sought confirmation from her mother by showing her a teaspoon and saying, "It is a sugar spoon." On another occasion Anna pointed to the jug, saying, "Let's pretend it's milk."

## 7.7 Various types of mother-child joint games

There were 12 different mother-child joint games. These included four didactic games, four verbal games, two physical games and two guessing games. The *didactic games* were played by Anna and Kalev and their respective mothers. Each of these mother-child dyads played two games, which were initiated by the mothers. Anna's mother made several attempts at initiating the games but Anna did not accept her suggestions. Thus, the writing game began with the mother addressing Anna, saying, "Let's play that letter game. The one I played with daddy and you wanted to join in." However, Anna did not want to play. Five minutes later the mother suggested playing the reading game but Anna was still not interested in playing. However, twenty minutes later Anna said to her mother, "Come on, let's start that writing game! Come on, let's start playing!" The game did not interest Anna very much and she soon gave up.

In the didactic games the mothers wanted to teach their children something definite. Thus, the content of the counting game involved Anna shaking the dice and counting the numbers obtained. Her mother asked her what total she had calculated. The writing game involved one player writing a word and the other player reading it aloud. In the cheese-letter game played by Kalev and his mother names beginning with a certain letter had to be said out aloud. Thus, for example, for the letter T the names Tiina, Tiit, Tõnu etc. were valid responses. These didactic games were generally of brief duration, lasting between three to eleven minutes. The mothers played a substantial role in these games.

The children were not particularly enthusiastic about playing didactic games. Anna's wish to play became evident only some time after her mother's suggestion. However, the game itself did not interest Anna very much and she soon gave up. The second game also ended because Anna did not like one particular joke made by her mother (a word written several times in succession). She was offended by this and stopped playing the game. Kalev played the first game, 'Ten-out-of ten', with evident enthusiasm but he was not keen on the second game suggested by his mother.

In their stimulated interviews Kalev and Anna's mothers said that it was important to know the letters of the alphabet and numbers, and that it was possible to learn the art of studying through such games. Kalev's mother pointed out examples of how Kalev had asked her several times whether 'ball' began with a 'b'. The game continued with each of the two players asking the other which letter a particular word began with. Anna's mother remarked on the same point, claiming that Anna wasn't very interested in learning to read. The mother did not exactly force the child but the idea of the necessity of teaching through play was evident in her interview.

There were four *verbal games*. Three of these were initiated by children and one by a mother. The verbal games were also of short duration, usually one or two minutes. Nevertheless, the mothers used these games to try to teach their

children various skills such as pronouncing words containing particular sounds or inventing interesting questions. The verbal games were also characterised by humour and joking.

For example, when Neeme and his mother played 'Grandfather's Old Trousers', first his mother asked him various things (his name, what was drawn on his shirt, who was his best friend). Then she asked, "But when you become big, who will you marry?"

Neeme: "No."

Mother: "What, won't you marry then?"

Neeme: "No, yes."

Mother: "You will take Grandfather's Old Trousers, won't you?"

Neeme and his mother started laughing.

The content of the games also involved unconventional language and linguistic expressions. Thus, for example, when Nele did not want to eat tomato at lunch, she said to her mother, who had been saying how good tomatoes were, "Otherwise, I'll say trilla-trulla if you go on teaching me." Nele replied to her mother's every sentence with the words 'trilla-trulla' and explained that 'trilla-trulla' was skiing language. The mother ended the play quickly and suggested that Nele drank up her drink quickly too.

There were two *guessing games*. These were played by Nele and Kalev and their respective mothers. Nele herself initiated the joint play with her mother, which lasted 11 minutes, while Kalev's mother initiated the joint play with Kalev. This lasted five minutes.

At the beginning of the play the mother asked Nele not to use very small toys because it was difficult to guess them. The guessing and describing of toys and other objects with words involved both mother and daughter. Thus, for example, Nele explained one object in the following way. "It is a bit... a little bit yellow, a little bit red and a bit black too... with feet... That is ins..." (She did not finish her word). After some time the mother made the play more complicated by taking away two objects at a time. Before choosing two objects she asked her daughter's consent. Nele agreed to her mother's idea. The game was played for a couple of minutes more but soon the mother decided that the game was getting too simple and made the suggestion of cutting Nele's hair. During the game Nele's mother reminded her that she must play fairly, that her eyes have to be closed properly and she must not peep.

The *physical games* were of short duration and provided fun and variety for the child and mother. Neeme initiated the game by crawling inside a blanket cover. His mother said in fun, "You actually might stay there." He was inside the blanket for some minutes but then came out. Nele and her mother also played a game involving a mutual 'trial of strength'. The mother admitted that her daughter was as strong as Pipi. Nele added that Pipi could even lift a horse.

## 7.8 The solitary and joint games of active and passive players

The children played a total of 16 solitary games and these accounted for nearly 13% of the total video recording time. The children themselves initiated the role games and created for themselves the imaginary situation in games. The themes of the solitary games were connected with the eating-cooking theme on the one hand and on the other hand with the building of various constructions. The child acted according to some role or conferred a role to his or her toys. There was no direct labelling of roles but games contained 'role in actions'. Each role was implied in the corresponding actions and speech. The solitary games usually contained one, two or three play scripts, which were played in the object-role way.

Altogether the children and their mothers played 31 games together, which accounted for nearly 11% of the total video recording time. All five children played joint games with their mothers. Sometimes the children did not accept the play ideas offered by the mothers. Four of the children played board games with their mothers. All of the children had had previous experience of playing board games and all children enjoyed these games. Neeme and Nele's mothers noticed an element of playfulness in board games. Several tensions in connection with the non-exact following of the game rules developed between mothers and children in playing board games. Anna and Neeme liked playing board games with their mothers but they did not like losing. The mother-child pairs played role games, which were initiated by the children mostly. The themes of the solitary games were similar to those of the joint role games and consisted of everyday events such as eating, cooking, building and using various vehicles. The main content of the joint games was not only the players' actions with toys and other materials but also mother-child joint actions and interaction according to the assumed roles. The children and their mothers assumed various roles and these roles were more defined and explicit than in the children's solitary play. The joint games involved role-specific actions and specific speech, which was played with emotional expressions (for example Kalev's mother changed her intonation. Once she called out in a loud voice, then again she sounded worried). In the joint games there were more play scripts and the quality of play scripts was different consisting of the players' mutual action and interaction. The content of the other joint games was often related to teaching. These games were of short duration and were generally unpopular with the children. On the other hand the children loved games that included humour, speech and guessing.

In the following the solitary and mother-child joint games of different players are presented.

### *Solitary games*

The themes of the games played by the *active players* (Anna and Kalev) related to cooking, the making of tickets and the lives of animals. The content of these

games consisted of playful objective actions with toys and other materials. Typically, the active players Anna and Kalev assumed certain roles or conferred roles onto the toys. The games consisted of several scripts and adhered to the logic of real life (e.g. putting children to sleep, reading bedtime stories, going for a walk). In these games the children behaved and spoke according to the assumed roles and imaginary situation. There were many types of play materials used in the games. The content of Kalev's solitary game was the mutual relationships and communication between the players. The play script was created by Kalev himself.

The themes of the solitary games played by the *passive players* (Nele, Neeme and Toomas) related to cooking and building. In these games the children assumed the roles of cook, builder and car mechanic. The content of role games was acted out in an object-role way using play materials (mostly Lego), actions and speech. While playing alone the players were interested in play materials and in playing with them. Actions in the games were one-sided and consisted of repeated operations. The games contained imaginary situations.

The solitary games of the active and passive players are summarised in the following table 36.

TABLE 36 Solitary games and play components

Player	Play components
Active players (Anna and Kalev)	The content consisted of playful objective actions with materials. The children behaved and spoke according to their assumed roles and the imaginary situation.
Passive players (Nele, Neeme and Toomas)	The content was often one-sided and consisted of repeated actions. The role games were played in an object-role way and consisted of one or two scripts each.

### *Joint games*

It was chiefly the mothers of the *active players* Anna and Kalev who initiated the joint games. Thus, the mothers initiated eight of these games and the children three. The children did not always accept the initiatives of their mothers. Role games, board games, guessing games and games connected with teaching were all played. The themes of mother-children joint role games were connected with building, cooking, the lives of animals and trading. The content of the joint games consisted of object actions with toys and also social relationships between the roles assumed by the players. Thus, the play scripts of the role games was played out in a social-role way. This involved the use of imaginary situations, speech that complied with the respective roles and various substitutions. The roles in the joint games were clearly expressed and the players acted according to their roles. The actions contained within the joint games were diverse in nature. Play scripts were initiated by both the children

and their mothers. Anna experienced difficulties when playing board games because she did not want to lose to her mother. While playing together with his mother Kalev rolled his dice in a dishonest way and the game ended. The joint games connected with teaching were of short duration and were not particularly popular with the children. The joint games involved various different play materials, i.e. realistic, replacement and imaginary objects.

The *passive player* Nele did not play any role games with her mother. Instead they mainly played a wide variety of board games together. In addition to that Nele and her mother played one guessing game, one verbal game and one motor game. Nele was proficient at playing the board games as she had had previous experience. In these games Nele followed and observed the rules closely. In the riddle-solving game Nele quickly guessed the hidden meanings. The *passive player* Neeme played four role games together with his mother. These consisted of two word games, one game of hide-and-seek and one board game. The themes of these games were connected with the roles involved, i.e. the world (work, family, free time, etc.) of the two Lego men Johannes and Marek. In addition to the main roles of Johannes and Marek there were numerous subsidiary roles (policemen, boxing coaches, roof repairers, etc.). Both Neeme and his mother interacted according to their assumed roles. Thus, the scripts of the role games was played out in a social-role way. There were all kinds of scripts and a wide variety of actions, extensive use of imagination and interaction. Neeme did not enjoy playing the board game very much as he did not like losing and did not want his mother to lose either. However, Neeme enjoyed playing word games with his mother, which included fun and questions-answers. The word game played by the *passive player* Toomas and his mother was initiated by Toomas. Its content involved the repetition of words and humour. In table 37 are summarized joint games and play components of active and passive players.

TABLE 37 Joint games and play components

Game pair	Play components
Mother-Anna, mother-Kalev (active players)	The content of the games was played out in both object and social-role way. The roles were clearly expressed and explicit. The children did not like didactic games.
Mother-Nele (passive player)	They played numerous board games. The mother noticed a playful aspect to board games. Nele closely observed the game rules.
Mother- Neeme (passive player)	The content of the role games was played out in both object and social-role way. The games included various scripts and roles.
Mother-Toomas (passive player)	The games involved repeating words and humour.

## 8 MOTHER-CHILD INTERACTION AND INVOLVEMENT IN PLAY

### 8.1 The mother as an erudite bearer of knowledge

As in everyday mother-child activities and interaction in general, the children themselves rarely initiated interaction with their mothers during games and seldom turned to their mothers with questions. The children mostly addressed their mothers in order to ask something (e.g. for help in dismantling Lego bricks) or in order to get the necessary materials for their games. In this latter case the mother explained to her child which materials could be taken for playing and which not. Thus, for example, the mother might say that one particular bowl cannot be used in the play as it could be easily broken or that 'witch's soup' must not be drunk as it is poisonous. During board games the children asked their mothers if they had moved in the correct way over the game board. They also asked for confirmation of the numbers they had obtained on rolling the dice. In role games involving Neeme and his mother, Neeme asked if his mother knew any real person named Marek (a Lego character featured in their joint games). On another occasion and without any obvious relation to the game being played Neeme suddenly developed an interest in the concept of paradise.

N: "What is paradise?"

M: "What is paradise? You already asked me once, whether...?"

N: "Where God lives?"

M: "Mmmh. There, where everything is very good."

N: "Why has God everything so very good?"

M: "Because everything is...very good."

The mother continued by asking what Neeme was going to do next in the play.

From the example given it was evident that Neeme had already previously been interested in the notion of paradise. From his mother's reply it can be deduced that no interesting cognitive interaction or further discussion of the question occurred.

The mothers themselves initiated interaction while playing together with their children. The content of this interaction consisted predominantly of explanations or specifications concerning how a particular game was to be played, what was to be done during the game, what kind of materials were to be used in the game. Didactic interaction in games was especially common and was aimed at instilling specific knowledge or skills in the child. Thus, the mothers taught their children how to write letters and words and how to read them, as well as how to count, add and subtract. At the same time the mothers corrected their children when they made mistakes during the play.

Mother-child interaction was often directed towards various ethical issues which arose during play. Thus, for example, when Neeme played together with his mother and little sister his mother explained to him Neeme what kind of trap he should build. When Neeme asked why the trap couldn't be built with cushions simply piled one on top of another, his mother replied that his little sister might get hurt. She added that those kinds of traps were no good and suggested that the others (jansus and ninjas) should build it instead.

All the mothers drew their children's attention to the principles of fair play. During the pre-observational interviews several of the mothers noted that their children had difficulties in meeting the exact requirements of rule games. At the same time they also noticed that it was difficult for the child to accept losing in such games. Neeme's mother said that while playing one particular board game with her son, Neeme himself had said that he was able to lose with dignity. In a board game played by Anna and her mother Anna rolled her dice and moved her game piece over the game board. Unfortunately for Anna, the number she obtained meant that her game piece had to go back to the starting point on the board. Anna pushed the game pieces off the table in indignation, threw the game piece bag onto the floor and went towards her mother brandishing the game board. Anna's mother appeared startled at her daughter's reaction. However, Anna then hugged her mother and went away.

In this example the mother did not explain anything to Anna. Anna's mother mentioned already before the observation that Anna was the kind of girl who hated losing. Whenever something went badly Anna felt insulted and became sulky. The mother added that she had tried to explain to her child that the others too have bad times during games. In the stimulated recall interview Anna's mother commented that Anna had since learned to play the game right to the end, irrespective of her score. The mother explained that together with her husband she had tried to explain to their daughter that games were played for fun and that winning was not always important. At the same time the mother was a bit indignant at the kindergarten teachers who always expected Anna to win at everything, whether it were a singing contest, running race or swimming competition. All that had created in Anna a sense that winning was of the utmost importance and that she must win all the time.

In the board game played by Kalev and his mother a problem arose when Kalev cheated. He rolled the dice incorrectly and said a number other than that shown on the dice. The mother said that unfair play was not allowed and that

the game had to be finished. Kalev agreed with what his mother had said and wanted to play a different game. Kalev's mother did not explain in any greater detail about fair or unfair play.

The mothers did not explain the principles of fair play to their children in any great detail. They merely made brief statements such as, "It is no fun at all to play like this when someone is cheating or does not play fair." With regard to winning and losing the mothers reminded their children that one should lose and win with dignity.

The content of mother-child interaction was also connected with explaining how to play together with siblings in a friendly way. Already during the pre-observational interviews those mothers with two children commented that their children's mutual interaction was a source of friction. They noted that the children could on occasions play together in a friendly and calm way for long periods of time, then suddenly a conflict would develop and the play would disintegrate. It was difficult for children of different ages to find a play theme of mutual interest. Conflicts often developed concerning toys and there was continuous competition between the children of the same gender regarding who was faster, cleverer or otherwise better.

In the following example Neeme and his mother started playing with their favourite toy models, Johannes and Marek. Neeme's sister Anne was nearby. When Neeme turned sideways towards his sister, she took secretly the toy that was of greatest importance to him, i.e. Johannes. Neeme screamed out and complained to his mother and she tried to mollify his anger. It can be seen from this example that when the three of them were playing, the mother had to divide her efforts between the two children and that the children's play ideas were quite different.

## **8.2 The mother as a supporter of the child's play**

The participation and interaction of the mothers varied according to the type of games played. In longer games, most of which were role games, the mothers usually took part and interacted with their children. In the games played by Kalev and Neeme the support and interaction of their mothers differed considerably.

Kalev's joint play with his mother began as follows. Kalev's mother came in from the kitchen, sat down on the sofa and suggested to Kalev that he should build something. Kalev started building on the floor using Lego bricks while his mother watched TV. Then she made the suggestion that he should build a house big enough for two eggs to fit inside. Kalev and his mother discussed whether the mother-egg, father-egg and child-egg would all fit into the house.

This joint play lasted for 22 minutes and consisted of one play script. Kalev's mother's concentration on the play was variable. At the beginning of the play she provided the play idea and also tried out herself how the eggs

would fit inside. Then the mother came nearer to the child and made some additional proposals concerning the house building. As time passed her interaction became increasingly less connected with the play. Instead she focused on watching TV, on telephoning, talking with Neeme's father and just occasionally watching her son's play. The mother reacted to her child's speech with brief glances and a spoken "mmh". Suddenly she offered a dinosaur as a guard for the house. The toy dinosaur just happened to be lying within the mother's reach on the table. Kalev did not accept the guard offered by his mother and justified this by saying that no dinosaur could not guard the eggs as dinosaurs eat eggs.

Although this case is an example of mother-child joint play the mother's interaction did not support all the time Kalev's play or the imaginary situation in the play. The mother scarcely focused her attention on Kalev's play and her interaction neither supported nor developed it.

In Neeme's joint play with his mother the mother came to play because Neeme had asked her to. The child turned to his mother right at the beginning of the play, calling her Marek and he himself Johannes. Then the mother suggested her son as Johannes should go and have a look at where the car had gone. She sat down next to Neeme on the floor with his various toys all around them. The play began with the boxing theme, which had remained unfinished from the previous time. There were 15 scripts in the play. Interaction related to the imaginary situations contained within the play scripts and role relations. The mother kept changing her tone of voice throughout the play. Thus, for example, she called anxiously, "Help, he is going to break my trailer." She scolded the children who watched TV for too long with, "Martin, what are you doing here? You are watching TV again! You must not watch TV so much!" Then she whispered that she would go and check how the roofer had done his work. The mother acted and spoke the whole time holding a Lego man in her hands. Neeme answered to his mother according to the play situation.

In their play scripts both Neeme and his mother shared the same play content and the interaction of the two players was also connected with the play theme and content. In this play the mother supported and elaborated the imaginative situation created during the play.

These examples demonstrate that the mothers interacted in very different ways with their children in the joint games. Kalev's mother played for 22 minutes with Kalev but actually participated for only five minutes. Kalev's mother actually sat next to him, asking questions which were little connected to the play, nodding to what the child was saying and answering with short acknowledgements ("mmh", "ahaa"). She also offered her child a toy, which did not suit the play idea. Neeme's mother was sitting near him and interacting all the time through the role of the Lego man. Her attitude towards her child's play was serious. It improved the quality of the play and supported the child's activity.

Mother-child interaction was also evident in the offering of evaluations for the child when he or she had created something in the play or needed his or her

mother's confirmation. Thus, for example, a Lego house was shown to one mother while in their café play Anna called a spoon a 'sugar spoon' and asked her mother whether it could be so in the play. The mothers usually supported their children's approaches with just few words of acknowledgement such as "yes", "it is", "yeah", "mmmh" and "ahaa". However, sometimes they answered in different ways and did not support their children's elaboration of the play. Toomas, for example, took a yellow plastic bowl containing 'macaroni' (Lego bricks) made by him to show his mother, saying, "Here you are. I have brought you some..." However, the mother refused, saying, "No, I don't want that brick food. Take it away!" Toomas went back to his room.

There were several short episodes of interaction connected with imaginary situations, which elaborated the children's play. Thus, for example, in Toomas' solitary play with cars, when his mother went to ask him to come and eat she first asked what he was playing. Toomas explained in great detail about the construction of his car and showed how 'water' could be let from the hose. His mother pretended to have got wet and made as if she did not quite realise what the water was like. She said that the water was first quite hot and then became ice cold. Toomas liked answering his mother's questions and explained what was going on in the play. The mother and son laughed during this brief interaction.

The mothers also interacted during their children's solitary play. Nele's mother suggested to Nele, who was cooking on her toy kitchen cooker, "When you are ready with your food, you can come and eat my food." Thus, there was support and favourable evaluation in both mother-children joint games and in the children's solitary games.

### **8.3 Promotion by the mother during the child's solitary games**

Of the five children only Kalev did not interact at all with his mother during his solitary play. During the nine minutes that Kalev played a director's play there was no communication with his mother. Only once did one of the children, Neeme, invite his mother to play. After having played alone for five minutes, Neeme addressed his mother and invited her to play. However, his mother was talking on the phone and did not go to play with him. In his second solitary play Neeme invited his mother to play again but she told him that she was tired and had not the strength to play.

All the other children went to their mothers with various problems, which had occurred during the play. The children mostly addressed their mothers for help. They wanted, for example, their mothers to help them disassemble Lego constructions or they asked for various materials such as pillows for dolls to lay their heads on or a hose for providing electricity for the car. The children also wanted to show objects they had made, to receive confirmation and support for their play ideas or sometimes just to see what their mothers were doing in the

kitchen. The mothers for their own part showed little interest in the children's solitary games or what was going on in the play. The children were more or less used to playing alone and the mothers were used to their children managing alone.

The mothers promoted solitary games on 181 occasions (table 38) while also making 14 non-promotive reactions. There were 162 instances of verbal promotion, one of demonstration and 18 of offering play materials.

TABLE 38 Promotion by the mother during the child's solitary games

Type of promotion	Number of instances of promotion
<b>1. Verbal promotion</b>	<b>162</b>
Question	70
Explanation	40
Support	29
Suggestion	12
Direction	11
Labelling	0
<b>2. Demonstration</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>3. Offering play materials</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>181</b>

These findings showed that the majority of verbal promotions were *questions* (70). The questions, which the mothers asked their children, can be divided into two categories. A relatively small amount related directly with the play while the majority of questions were connected more indirectly to the play. In this latter group the mothers showed general interest in their children's activities. For example, the mother asked what colour straw the child wished to have in her play, or she expressed her hope that her daughter would not start drinking the dangerous 'magic drink'.

In case of the questions, which related more directly with the play the mothers showed more specific interest in their children's games, i.e. in the theme and content of the play. They wanted to know what certain materials were being used for in the play and how to play-act using the selected materials. In one particular rule game, for example, Nele's mother asked how she had managed to get the right number.

The mothers asked various questions including not only those requiring a yes/no answer but also more demanding ones. Question forms included 'where to' ("Where can I go with those tickets?"), 'whom' ("Whom are you cooking for today?"), 'where' ("Where are those Myriks?"), 'what for' ("What are you constructing this ship for?"), 'what kind' ("What kind of rocket are you constructing?") and 'what' ("What is it?").

One common form of verbal stimulation used by the mothers was *explanation* (40). Through explanations the mothers justified why children could not take certain objects for their play or which toys could be used in the play. Thus, for example, Neeme's mother explained as she gave a toy to her son, "This is a Discomix food processor. Put it away, otherwise it won't play CDs

any more.” There were numerous explanations (18) in Nele’s number game (board game), through which her mother explained how the numbers should be put in increasing from one to 15. She explained it thoroughly and demonstrated it and, thereafter, the child started to play alone. The mother not only explained how to place the numbers in order but also that it would be cheating to shift the game piece. Thus, the mother also drew attention to ethical norms connected with playing the game.

There were instances of *support* (29) by mothers during the children’s solitary games. The children often approached their mothers in order to show and explain what they had done in their play or to invite their mothers to go and see their play corner or their game. The mothers praised the constructions built by their children with “Well done!”, “Fine!”, “Great!”, etc. Considerable support on the part of the mother was traced in Nele’s solitary number game. This helped to sustain the child’s interest while the mother’s various utterances (“You can try it”, “See, how good you are!”) provided the encouragement overcome the difficulties Nele encountered. At the beginning of the game the mother had said that she did not believe her daughter would be able to play the game as it was so difficult. Nevertheless, she encouraged Nele to have a try. She said, “You can, really! Have a try! You’re very good if you can.”

Another example of support was the reaction of Toomas’ mother to one of his addresses. She was busy in the kitchen. Toomas had built a machine and took it into the kitchen to show his mother. The mother looked at her son once then continued with her own jobs while acknowledging her son’s talk with monosyllabic utterances (Mmmh, Ah-ah, Ah! Yes). During this exchange Toomas asked his mother to look at him for a moment. She turned her glance towards her son for a moment and then continued her own activities. Toomas did not actually expect any other reaction from his mother and so went back into the room and continued his solitary play.

With the help of *suggestions* (12) the mothers tried to help their children when they had reached some kind of deadlock or otherwise could not continue with their games. They suggested activities such as building something extra or making some more ‘money’ for the ticket game. The children usually accepted their mothers’ suggestions. In Neeme’s games there were especially many suggestions made by his mother. Thus, on seeing that her son had not managed with his Lego construction or had admitted breaking it, Neeme’s mother suggested that Neeme should invent something new. The mothers also gave *directions* (11). Thus, they asked their children to show or do something. In general, the children accepted their mothers’ directions.

In solitary games there were also instances of *offering play materials* (18). The mothers offered a variety of materials (a straw, a cup, snail shells, pillows, Lego blocks). They often did not ask why the children wanted the particular materials in question or what the children intended to do with them. There were also cases where the child did not accept the objects offered by his or her mother. Thus, for example, Neeme asked his mother for the ‘Myriks’. The mother took one Lego structure and said, “Take this, it is a robot.” Neeme

replied, "No, it is a sword, a magic sword." *Non-promotive* (14) reactions on the part of the mothers were also traced. These were mostly connected with modifying the child's behaviour (e.g. "Don't shout in such a loud voice"), the correction of speech or encouraging the child to tidying his or her toys.

#### 8.4 Promotion by the mother during joint role play

Altogether, 523 instances of promotion by the mothers were observed during joint role play. As shown in table 39, most instances of promotion were verbal (511), while others included offering play materials (11) and demonstrating (1). There were also 10 non-promotive reactions.

TABLE 39 Promotion by the mother during joint play

Type of promotion	Number of instances of promotion
<b>1. Verbal promotion</b>	<b>511</b>
Questions	170
Explanations	141
Support	112
Suggestion	52
Direction	31
Labelling	5
<b>2. Demonstration</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>3. Offering play materials</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>523</b>

Analysis of the mother-child joint games revealed that the mothers' most common form of verbal promotion consisted of asking their children *questions* (170). Neeme's mother asked the greatest number of questions, no less than 116. The questions asked by the mothers during the joint games could be divided into two categories. The first was made up of questions connected to the organisation and creation of the play situation while the second category comprised questions related to the development of the imaginary situation within the play.

The questions connected with play organisation were directed towards finding out what game was to be played, which roles the child and the mother were to play, what materials were to be used and what was to happen during the play. Questions concerning the organisation of the play generally involved the words 'do/does', 'who' and 'what'.

As soon as the mother-child pairs had completed the creation of the joint play world a new play script would begin with the mothers asking several kinds of questions. These questions were closely connected to the imaginary situation contained within the play and the acting out of the play scripts. The mothers' questions served to elaborate the play scripts and to specify the

materials to be used in the games. The mothers asked 'if' ('whether') questions. For example, whether there were any cakes in the café play, whether they wanted sugar in their coffee, whether they had paid any money, whether the birdie had any young ones, etc. In the play involving the Lego characters Johannes and Marek the mother asked if she could also box a little bit.

In addition, there were numerous 'what' questions in the joint games. Through such questions the mothers discovered which materials were to be used in the play and what was to be done with them. Example of such questions include, "What present shall we buy for the birthday?" and "What are those in your game?" (The mother was referring to paper, which represented cakes in the play). 'What' questions were also used for introducing new play scripts. For example, in the café play the mother asked Anna, "What salad do you have?" Anna answered that there was no salad in the café. After that Anna began looking for materials from which they could make salad.

Promotion also involved 'where to', 'where' and 'when' questions. The mothers asked 'where to' questions to find out where the player was going in the play. The mother often addressed the child according to the child's role, for example, "Butterfly, where are you flying?" and "Johannes, where are you?" The mother's addressing often involved a great number of questions.

The mother comes with her Lego piece to Neeme and calls out, "Johannes!"

Neeme: "Yeah."

Mother: "Where are you?"

Neeme: "I am here near the park, I am doing..."

Mother: "What are you doing?"

Neeme: "I am seeing if my asphalt is all level?"

Mother: "Well, how is it then?"

Neeme looks at the asphalt and replies, "I thought, I looked, if there were any wrinkles there in my park."

In another games mothers asked 'when' questions to find out when the birthday party was going to take place and when the birthday present was going to be ready. The mothers asked 'why' questions when they wanted to know why the player was behaving in a certain way. Examples of 'how' questions include "How do you box?" and "How does a butterfly push apart the petals in the blossom?"

Questions were essential for the development of mother-child joint games. Through the mother's questions new play scripts came into being which were then acted out. One example of the role of questions in the appearance of new play scripts comes from the joint play of Neeme and his mother (Neeme's little sister did not participate). The mother kept asking new questions concerning situations, which the child then started to develop.

For example, the mother asks, "Is the treasure still there?"

Neeme: "I'll see." He goes to have a look (peeps behind the box) if the treasure chest is still there or not.

Later in the same play the mother asks, "Where is the kindergarten?"

Neeme: "The kindergarten is...there."

The mother: "Where?"

Neeme looks carefully all around, finds a truck and takes it to use as a kindergarten. Some moments later Neeme asks, "Where is the school then?" and immediately answers himself, "Next to the kindergarten, in the same house."

The mothers' questions also encouraged the children to change their roles. Thus, for example, after Neeme's mother asked, "Where is the shop assistant?" Neeme decided to assume the role of shop assistant in a car salesroom. In other play scripts Neeme assumed various new roles including roof repairer, car mechanic, boxing coach, policeman, and asphalt maker. Questions asked by Anna's mother in the café play formed the basis for acting out the play script more precisely and in greater depth. Thus, not only coffee was asked for but also coffee with sugar and milk; not only was cake ordered but also cheesecake, apple cake and strawberry cake. The café play was thus extended so that in addition to coffee and juice the participants also ate food. The questions asked by the mothers were connected both with the play content and the play plot. Questions also helped to maintain and develop the imaginary situation within the play.

The children accepted their mother's questions and suggestions and developed them further. If anything was missing in the play then, as Anna's mother explained to her child on a number of occasions, "it's just imaginary." The child did not find this strange or unacceptable.

Altogether there were 141 *explanations* given by the mothers. The mothers explained both how to play and why to play in that particular way. They explained what each role person does and how he or she acts and speaks. The mothers' actions in the games were often accompanied by explanations. These were usually short, i.e. one or two sentences, and once they had been given the play continued. Thus, for example, Marek (Neeme's mother) said to Johannes (Neeme), "I must go home. The roof repairer is coming today." It was often the case that the child immediately hooked onto the mother's explanation. For example, Marek (Neeme's mother) explained, "I'll go into the room today. It will probably start raining tonight." On hearing this Neeme immediately reacted with, "Oh, in that case I'll go into the room to sleep as well." The mothers also often explained general themes connected to the play. Such explanations were frequent when the child played together with a sibling. Thus, mothers explained how to play so that, for example, the little sister would not get hurt or not to feel insulted if the little sister wanted to take away a toy. In the joint games an original chain of explanations could be discerned. Thus, for example, Anna's mother first explained to her that the waitress brings coffee and cake to the customer's table. After a while Anna repeated what the mother had said to her little brother, who wanted to help himself to the cake. Thus, Anna said, "You can't take it like that in a café!"

The children often asked questions that were either related or unrelated to the play. The latter group consisted of issues, which nevertheless interested them. The mothers then gave their explanations or other answers in reply.

For example, Neeme asks his mother, "How old is that Martin?"  
 Mother: "Five, perhaps." After that Neeme and his mother discuss whether five-year-olds go to school or not.

When a conflict arose between Anna and Mihkel, Anna stated that she did not want to be friends with her brother any more. Then her mother started explaining the principles of friendship to her.

Thus, the mothers' explanations consisted on the one hand of those, which helped to create the imaginary situation for the child and on the other hand those, which were not directly connected to the play. This latter category often related to the principles of play in general and of how to play with siblings in particular.

The mothers offered various kinds of *support* (112) during the joint games. This often consisted of the mother's verbal confirmations of the child's queries as to whether he or she had spoken or acted in the correct way. This form of support usually consisted of a brief "mmm", "yeah", "right", "well, I see", etc. This brief verbal support was often accompanied by nodding or glancing. The mothers also supported their children through the assumed roles. Direct recognition was not so common. Thus, for example, when the child had constructed a car, his or her mother would say, "Look, what a terrific car!" Support also involved qualifying or correcting the child's speech. Thus, for example, one mother corrected her child, saying, "Blossoms of the flowers, not stalks of the flowers."

We have already seen how the mothers created a play world together with their children and also that the children did not always accept their mothers' *suggestions* (52). This was true with respect both to the creation of play scripts and also to the play materials offered by the mother. Only when the mothers' suggestions had been fully justified would the children accept them.

In the role games *directions* (31) were given concerning both to how to play and what to say or do during the play. For example, one mother said, "I've found more treasure. Take it here!" Only a few directions were connected directly with the play plot. Instead they mostly consisted of remarks about how to play (e.g. "don't shout", "don't take that", "don't tease the others" etc.). Joint play involving siblings contained a large number of directions. In these cases the mothers drew the children's attention to issues of how to play together without there being interruptions or arguments. Directions unrelated to the play were considered as non-promotive reactions. However, these did not generally interrupt the flow of the play, which usually resumed after a few moments pause.

*Non-promotive* (10) reactions have already been briefly analysed above. On a number of occasions the mothers asked questions which were not at all connected to the ongoing play (e.g. whether the child was hungry, whether he or she was cold, who had broken the toy, etc). One original situation arose during joint play involving Neeme and his mother. Neeme's mother noticed that Lego man's leg was broken. She suggested that Neeme should repair the

leg. Neeme took the man and said, "I'll put...new ones." After that the joint play continued as before.

## 8.5 Mother-child interaction in joint rule games

The most common forms of promotion during board games were *explanations* (199). (In the board game played by Anna and her mother the most numerous were directions.) Although the games were familiar to the children, their mothers explained and specified to their children how they were to be played. The explanations mostly involved reminding the children of the course of the game. Thus, for example, one mother reminded her child that if on rolling the dice a six was obtained then the dice could be rolled a second time. On another occasion the mother explained the direction in which the game piece had to be moved, "You have to go in another direction! You are going the wrong way!" The mothers spoke about passing and being allowed to move on twice in succession. The children often asked their mothers whether they had moved in the right way. The mothers generally answered their children's questions with relatively elaborate explanations and did not merely demonstrate or name. Nele, for example, was interested in the similarity and difference between various games.

Nele asked her mother, "Is this a similar game?" (referring to a circus game and checkers).

Her mother said, "It is actually a different game." and went on, explaining, "The circus game is a game of chance but here you have to think as well. It is a strategic game."

In the board game played by Neeme and his mother there were numerous playful explanations. Thus, for example, his mother said, "A goldfish will help me to get on. There's a treasure map hidden inside the bottle." Neeme's mother made the game exciting and mysterious, "Uh, the other pirates prepared a trap for me and I've got to move three steps backwards." Neeme asked, "What kind of a trap?" Mother explained, "Well, I don't know. They caught me and then something..." Explanations were also connected with the issues of winning, losing and drawing.

In one instance Nele's mother suggested a draw.

Nele asked, "What's a draw?"

Mother said, "It means that nobody wins and nobody loses."

Nele: "Mmh. Let's do that then."

There was also a good deal of *labelling* (130) in the mother-child board games. This mostly consisted of the mothers saying aloud the scores that the children obtained on rolling the dice. For example, the child rolled the dice and the mother said, "You got a five." Sometimes the child and mother together said the number obtained. Often, however, the mother was too hasty with her

labelling and didn't wait for the child to say the score. Explanations and labelling involved *demonstration* (23) on the part of the mother. This usually consisted of indicating with a finger where to move and how far to move the game piece on the game board. *Questions* (115) were the next most frequent group of verbal reactions by the mothers. They usually asked questions such as "What colour game pieces will you take?", "Where did you move?", "Whose turn is it?", etc. On one occasion Nele's mother, on seeing that she was about to lose, asked her daughter, "Listen, what shall I do now?" Nele replied, "I simply wanted to move the game piece like that." The many *directions* (92) occurring during joint games generally consisted of instructions. Thus, the mothers often said, "Go! Your turn!", "Well, one more time!", "Roll!", "Roll again!", etc. There were quite a lot of directions of this kind in the game played by Anna and her mother. The reason for this might have been that there were three of them playing, i.e. Anna, her mother and her little brother Mihkel. While instructing Anna and her little brother, the mother gave directions rather than explanations to Anna, whereas the little brother needed to be taught how to play in general.

There were a variety of instances of *support* (53) and this was generally connected with correcting and finishing off the child's speech. The mothers also reminded their children of how to play the games. When the child moved in the right way with his or her game piece or named the score correctly the mother's reaction was usually a short "Mmh" or a nod. Nele's mother was the only one who repeatedly praised her daughter. Thus, for example, when Nele had been doing very well at checkers her mother said, "You haven't played for a week yet but you've started winning already." *Suggestions* (16) made by the mothers during joint games were concerned with how to play the game or how to change some aspect of the game (e.g. altering one of the game rules). There were eight *non-promotive* reactions, five of which occurred during the game played by Neeme and his mother. They began discussing the fact that the board game they were playing had to be given back to its owner. Neeme was unhappy with the idea as he liked the game very much.

During joint rule games which were not board games the most common type of promotion by the mothers was verbal promotion. This group, in turn, consisted mostly of *questions* (56). Especially many questions occurred during didactic games in which the mothers tried to introduce the letters of the alphabet to their children or teach them to read and count. Thus, the mothers asked questions such as, "How much is it all together?", "What have I written?", "What letter does this word start with?", "How did you get the answer?", etc. In didactic games, in addition to the game itself, the mothers also gave directions or tasks for their children. Thus, they said, "Try to get two sixes and one three!", "Look what you got!", etc. In guessing games the mothers asked their children who or what had been drawn in a picture. Verbal games actually consisted of the mothers' questions and the children's answers. In the turf play one mother jokingly asked her son who had crawled into the sleeping bag, "Shall I tie you up too?"

*Explanations* (45) made up the mothers' next most common type of reaction in this group of games. In addition to asking questions in the didactic games, the mothers explained at length how to write a certain letter or word in the correct way or how to count numbers. In the guessing play the picture or object to be guessed had to be described (its size, colour, shape). In the verbal games the mothers introduced several new notions that were previously unknown to the children (e.g. that a chest of drawers is a type of cupboard). In addition to concrete explanations, play rules and play content were also revised. In several games the mothers had to explain the principles of fair play and of taking jokes in good humour.

*Suggestions* (15) usually consisted of the mothers' proposals to start to play or new ideas for developing the play. The children did not always accept their mothers' play suggestions. Through *support* (10) the mothers acknowledged their children's behaviour or the correctness of their answer. Such praise generally consisted of short utterances such as "right", "good", "well done", "mmm", "really?", "Is it true?", etc. These last examples demonstrated the mothers' surprise and pleasure concerning their children's achievements.

## 8.6 Promotion by the mother of active and passive players

When children played alone the mothers did not participate actively in the children's games. They were not involved in their children's solitary games and generally addressed the children only when some kind of hazardous play material was involved. All the children addressed their mothers when playing alone: wishing to have necessary materials, to show their games or to receive support for their play ideas.

In the joint games the mothers supported their children's games differently. In the joint role games the interaction was related to the imaginary situation created during the play. The mother helped interpreting the social meaning of the role action and behaviour for the children in the context of the relevant play script. Most of all the mothers asked questions, which helped the game to be carried on successfully. In terms of play promotion, the fact that the mother who knew well the situation of the given play, gave guidelines, which suited well with the child's play ideas, was essential. The children did not accept several play ideas and materials offered by their mothers in the joint play. In the board games the mothers paid great attention to fair play. The mother only briefly told the child that he or she must not cheat in play. While interacting with their children in games the mothers also paid attention to the joint play with siblings. In the following the mother's promotion of the different players in solitary and joint games are presented.

*Mother's promotion in solitary games*

*Active player* Anna's mother did not get involved in her daughter's solitary games. Anna's mother merely gave her the materials necessary for her play, which her daughter had asked from her in the kitchen. Anna's mother explained why certain things must not be done or where particular materials could be found. Thus, the mother's role was both *uninvolved* and a *stage manager*. By contrast, the *active player* Kalev while playing alone did not communicate with his mother. The mother was totally *uninvolved*.

The role of *passive player* Nele's mother in her daughter's solitary games was varied. In two solitary role games the mother was busy in the other room but still heard what Nele was saying in her game. The mother asked some questions which were connected with the imaginary situation contained within the game. Thus the mother was both *uninvolved* and a *minimal onlooker*. In another game concerned with numbers the mother first showed and explained how to play the game. Then she left her child to play alone. During this game the mother provided support, asked questions and gave explanations. Thus, she acted as an *instructor*. *Passive player* Neeme's mother did not play together with her child. She sometimes offered material for Neeme and asked questions or gave explanations about which toy to choose. She also suggested inventing new things. Neeme refused the materials offered by his mother on several occasions. The mother played the roles of *uninvolved* and *stage manager*. In solitary games of the *passive player* Toomas, his mother explained what kind of materials could be used in the games and why. When the mother involved herself for a short time in the game the interaction was of a playful nature. The mother supported her son by briefly praising the constructions he had made. Toomas' mother acted as a *stage manager* and *minimal coplayer*.

The following table 40 presents the promotion by the mother of active and passive players.

TABLE 40 Promotion by the mother during the solitary games of active and passive players

Player	Mother's promotion
Active player Anna	Uninvolved- stage manager
Active player Kalev	Uninvolved
Passive player Nele	Onlooker- instructor
Passive player Neeme	Uninvolved- stage manager
Passive player Toomas	Stage manager- minimal coplayer

*Promotion by the mother during joint games*

The participation of *active player* Anna's mother during joint games was varied and also changed during the course of a single game. In the first play script of the café game the mother acted as *stage manager*, helping the children to prepare for the play and to procure the necessary materials. In the second play script of the same play the mother assumed a dual role. Thus, she was both a *coplayer* with a particular play role and also the *play leader*, who actively strove to elaborate and develop the game. When there was something missing in the play

the mother supported the imaginary situation. When Anna and Mihkel had difficulties in playing together the mother assumed the role of *play instructor*. She played together with Anna's little brother Mihkel, constantly asking him questions and mediating his answers to Anna. In the other joint games the role of Anna's mother was of teaching and reminding the players of the game rules. The mother often took control of these games and thus fulfilled the role of *play instructor*. In role games *active player* Kalev's mother was the initiator and source of suggestions. She was thus a *play leader*, who assumed a particular role and who acted and spoke according to that role. While in the play role the mother asked questions aimed at completing and elaborating the imaginary situations contained within the play. In another role play Kalev's mother did not assume a role but instead sat by the playing child and made comments on his game. In this play the mother asked questions that were not directly connected with the game and made incidental suggestions. The mother offered material which her son did not accept. During Kalev's play his mother was busy watching TV, talking on the telephoning and occasionally going into the kitchen. Here the mother acted as *stage manager*. Kalev did not always accept his mother's suggestions or the materials she offered during these joint games. In some of the games the mother's activity was directed towards academic goals, often taking control and leading the game. These games were of short duration and Kalev did not enjoy them very much. In these cases his mother acted as an *instructor*.

*Passive player* Nele played predominantly board games with her mother. This mother-child pair did not play any role games. Nele's mother played board games as an equal partner, i.e. a *coplayer* with Nele, sometimes leading the games and reminding Nele of how they should be played. At other times Nele's mother let her decide and control the game independently. The mother adapted the play rules and added material, thus raising the level of excitement in the games. The mother expanded the games with the help of new questions, explanations and support. Nele's mother acted as *play leader*.

In their joint games *passive player* Neeme's mother played the part of an equal *coplayer*, who assumed play roles. These joint games featured permanent play characters, who were constantly involved in new events. The mother often assumed a minor role while the child acted out the more important part. At the same time the mother created several new opportunities for enhancing the imaginary situation contained within the play, in particular, supporting the emergence and development of new play scripts. Neeme's mother thus acted as a *play leader*. Neeme did not always accept the materials and suggestions offered by his mother. The involvement of *passive player* Toomas' mother was generally restricted to asking questions and providing support. Toomas would have liked to have played more with his mother. The mother was a *short-term coplayer* in their joint game. The following table 41 summarises the instances of promotion by the mother during joint games.

TABLE 41 Promotion by the mother during joint games

Player	Mother's promotion
Active player Anna	Coplayer - stage manager - play leader- instructor
Active player Kalev	Stage manager - play leader - instructor
Passive player Nele	Coplayer - play leader
Passive player Neeme	Coplayer - play leader
Passive player Toomas	Minimal coplayer

## **9 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

The aim of this study was to describe and analyse the play of preschool children within the family context. Children's play was studied holistically in the larger context as one part of the child's activities in everyday life. The study described the mother-child interactions and children's activities at home, the types of games the children played, how the mothers valued children's play and how they supported their children's play at home. The study was carried out in the children's own homes at times when the mothers were always present and available.

In this chapter the main findings of the study are discussed first on the basis of research questions. After this the trustworthiness of the study is discussed along with new areas of study arising.

### **9.1 The everyday life of the child and mother-child interaction**

At weekends and on holidays the mothers did a lot together with their children. They went to their grandparents for visits or on birthdays and also to their summer houses. The mothers and children also went to the cinema, theatre, museums and on trips abroad.

In the evenings when the children had come home from kindergarten the mothers generally started doing housework in the kitchen. The children started their own activities at the same time. There were two distinct worlds at home: that of the mother in the kitchen and that of the child in the living room or in his or her own room. The children usually initiated their activities themselves. When the child was not able to find an activity for himself or herself the mother directed him or her towards some activity or task. The activities or tasks set by the mother were often connected with the development of academic skills. When the child had completed a given activity he or she went to show it to his or her mother or called the mother into the room to see what he or she had done.

Mother-child interaction took place during eating, cooking and the children's various activities. The contents of the mother-child interactions were connected with everyday events, the explanation and introduction of certain phenomena and a range of activities. The children usually did not address their mothers with questions but rather the mother herself initiated interaction either by showing and briefly explaining something to the child or by asking the child something. Mother-child interactions were usually short in duration, lasting just one to two minutes, while mother-child joint activities lasted considerably longer. These joint activities were usually initiated by the mother and the content of joint activities involved teaching (drawing, introducing the letters of the alphabet, revising numbers) or the learning of various practical skills (e.g. making dough, grating vegetables, etc.). The interaction also involved fun, humour and magic.

Thus, in the present study the mothers themselves initiated interactions with their children and these interactions consisted of explanations of phenomena and events, introducing skills in writing letters of the alphabet and adding numbers, and the development of practical skills. The mother often used interaction and joint activities for developing and teaching the child. According to Lisina (1985, 1986), mother-child interaction between the ages of three and six years is extrasituational-cognitive. This form of interaction consists of intellectual interaction between the adult and the child. For the child the adult is a bearer of knowledge and provider of answers to his or her questions. Lisina (1986) emphasised that a sincere attitude on the part of the adult towards the child's questions reflects the adult's attitude towards the child in general. In this study mother-child interaction was more connected with the mother's explanations than with questions initiated by the child. There was no intellectual discussion about the themes which concerned the child's world of nature and objects. Thus, Lisina's (1986) standpoint that mother-child interaction is extrasituational-cognitive was not confirmed by the present study. However, Lisina's position concerning the child's need for constant support and appraisal from the mother was confirmed by the study. The children of the study wished continuously to show things to their mothers and to invite them, trying to attract their mothers' attention so that they would know what the children had done. The children also sought their mothers' approval and recognition.

The fact that the content of mother-child interaction was based on academic skills may be explained by the uncertainty of mothers concerning the child's studies and performance at school. It became clear from the interviews with the mothers that already with small children the mothers felt insecure with regard to the child's future academic studies. On the one hand the mothers worried about whether their children were ready for school. The mothers saw this readiness first and foremost in terms of the acquisition of reading, writing and counting skills. At the same time the mothers were insecure about which school to put their children into. The insecurity and agitation of mothers with respect to their children's future was also indicated in a study of Estonian and

Finnish parents (Hämäläinen, Kraav & Raudik 1991; Kraav 2000). These studies revealed that Estonian parents worry considerably more than Finnish parents about the life and future prospects of their children.

Mothers reported in the interviews that the activities and work engaged in by people in the surrounding world, along with the equipment they used, attracted their children's attention and found their way into the children's play activities. They gave examples of how the events of everyday life and new artefacts in society such as credit cards and mobile phones were often used by the children in their play. While observing the reflection of everyday life in play it turned out that the themes and content of the games played by the children were often connected with the everyday world and the social lives of adults. In the present study the children's play mostly reflected the events of the everyday life that surrounded them and the activities of adults which they found interesting and which were emotionally important for them. These findings are consistent with the cultural-historical conception, according to which the themes and content of games are the expression of the child's understanding of the social lives of adults. Vygotsky (1966, 1978b), Leontjev (1981) and Elkonin (1978) noted that children are especially sensitive to the surrounding world of adults and imitate this social world in their games. The themes, stories and roles enacted in play episodes express the child's understanding and appropriation of the socio-cultural materials of his or her society (Nicolopoulou 1993, 7).

Similar results have also been produced by other studies (Fein 1981; Garvey 1990; Singer & Singer 1990; Corsaro & Schwarz 1991). Göncü et al. (1999, 162) argued that 'pretend-world activities' derive from 'real-world activities'. Haight and Miller (1993) found that mother and child use imaginary play to express and regulate feelings, support arguments, enliven daily routines, and teach and influence each other's behaviour. Most of the imaginary episodes in the play observed were connected with the enlivening of daily routines and chores. Imagining with a caregiver also exposes children to a great deal of information concerning social roles, scripts and conventions. Haight and Miller (1993) suggested that imaginary play arises out of ongoing domestic activities and emotional concerns. In this study games involving chasing the enemy, the clash of good and evil, or the escape from some evil force were often played at home. The dynamics of the play theme and the presence of conflicts which make the play familiar to children has also been emphasised by Lindqvist (1995, 2003). Göncü (1993) argued that children engage in play in order to share emotionally significant experiences with their playmates.

## **9.2 The child's play setting and games at home**

All the children had plenty of play materials, which had been given to them either by relatives or friends. These included various kinds of toys such as

vehicles, dolls and associated paraphernalia (clothes, dishes, furniture, etc.), Lego and puzzles. Old furry toy animals were also very dear to them and remained amongst their favourite toys. Very often these toys came with stories related to them.

The mothers remarked that real toys were often boring for their children and that such toys are preferable which the child can add something to with his or her own hands or in his or her mind. This is consistent with the idea shared by Elkonin (1978), Novosyolova (1989) and Zvorygina (1989) which states that the preschool child needs a toy world which is developing and varied. These researchers emphasised that in addition to realistic toys the child's play materials should also include replacement and imaginative toys.

The mothers themselves considered that the instructive nature of toys should be taken into account when buying them. On the one hand the mothers reported that each toy should give something to the child. They justified this view with the claim that toys should develop the child or teach him or her something. On the other hand the mothers emphasised that a good toy is a tool which enables the child to become familiarised with some kind of work as well as to do something by himself or herself. It was revealed in the interviews that mothers while getting the toys did not take into account the fact whether the toy was meant for solitary play or joint play. As Sutton-Smith (1997) emphasised in the past 200 years one of the major implicit cultural function of toys has been to support solitary play. The mothers also tended to avoid military toys or any other kinds associated with violence. It must be admitted that while in western countries children generally have a great number of toys, very few of these have been made by the parents or by the children themselves (Retter 1998). At the same time, when buying toys the mothers were mindful of the potential of certain toys for developing and teaching the child (for example, puzzles or certain board games).

According to the findings of this study the children usually played at home in the evenings and at weekends while during holidays they played either in town or in the country. Each child had his or her own play corner. The playing conditions of the children were good but often there were no opportunities for playing in the yard. Three of the children had only limited opportunities for playing outside as the presence of an adult was required throughout. All the children had excellent opportunities to play in the country either at their grandparents' homes or at their parents' summer-houses.

All the children played solitary role games which they initiated themselves. The children went to their play corners, took their toys and created for themselves imaginative play situations. While alone the children played role games, precisely the games valued so highly by representatives of cultural-historical approach (Vygotsky 1966; Leontjev 1981; Elkonin 1978; Usova 1981; Zaporozhets & Markova 1983b; Novosyolova 1991). These researchers regarded role games as the basis of the child's development and the leading activity for preschool children. Investigators of the cultural-historical conception noted that role play is a unique relationship of the child to society and that the imaginary

situation, the role and the objects used by the players constitute the basic elements of role play.

The themes of the children's solitary games were connected with the depicting of the surrounding world, home (cooking and eating) and the building of various constructions or repairing of cars. In the solitary games the children did not label their roles explicitly; rather the roles were implicit in the children's actions and speech. Such games contained 'roles in actions', which were characterised by the existence of the role in the play without it being named. The 'role in action' (Elkonin 1978) is characterised by a highly emotional and expressive imitation of familiar people. The children imitated the actions of these people (parents, cooks, builders) using various types of materials (dolls, doll's dishes, cars, bricks). The child's speech marked his or her actions as well as objects in the play and also labelled imaginative situations. In the solitary role games the children played with a range of toys while at the same time they spoke and explained what they were doing.

There were usually between one and three play scripts in each of the children's solitary games. The content of solitary play was often one-sided and consisted of repeated stereotypic actions. There was no highlighting of interpersonal relationships during the solitary games. One child also played a director's play, which is an individual form of role play. The player himself created the play situation, assigned roles for his toys and at the same time created mutual actions and interaction between the toys.

Thus, the children played solitary role games at the first and the second levels as defined by Elkonin (1999). The main features of these games were the presence of a role and engagement in actions with objects connected with the role. The content of object-related role play was made up of the child's various actions with objects belonging to the role.

All five children played joint games with their mothers, most of which were board games. These were followed in terms of frequency by role, didactic, physical and guessing games. Board game playing was mostly initiated by the children themselves and the games in question were generally already familiar to them. Several of the children asked their mothers whether they had moved their game pieces accurately or otherwise in the proper way.

Role games with their mothers were played by three of the five children. In these cases it was mostly the child who initiated the joint role game. Just as with solitary games, the themes of mother-child joint role games were connected with everyday events, especially cooking and building. Together with their mothers the children enacted those themes that were familiar and important to them. Thus one is led to Elkonin's opinion (1999) that the feeding and cooking theme is prevalent and, indeed, essential in children's games. In addition, themes that were connected to everyday life were acted out in both solitary and joint games. These included shopping, building, repairing cars and dressing dolls. The main content of joint games was the relationship with the other player or players and the roles were clearly differentiated and defined. The content of the joint games involved various actions relating to the assumed

roles, actions with objects and also actions and relationships between adults. Specific actions and dialogues corresponding to the various roles were in evidence. There were also all kinds of new actions, new roles and a good deal of speech (relating to role actions and mutual interaction between the roles). While in solitary games the child acted according to one particular role or conferred a role to a toy, in joint games the mother also assumed roles according to the play plot. Mother and child often assumed parallel roles. In joint games the roles were better defined and more explicit than in the child's solitary games. The child's speech in joint games was connected to the assumed role and role actions. This was evident from the fact that the players addressed one another according to the role the other player had adopted. According to Elkonin's (1999) division of play levels, the children played at the second and third levels with their mothers. At these levels the roles are clearly differentiated and defined. The logic and nature of the actions are determined by the assumed roles.

Competent social play requires more than an ability to perform increasingly complex symbolic transformations; it requires an ability to communicate appropriately with another person about those symbolic transformations (Haight 1999). In the joint games there were significantly more play scripts than in the solitary games and these were initiated both by the mothers and the children. The quality of play scripts in the joint games was different from solitary game scripts. The play scripts obeyed the logic of real life and were acted out more profoundly. Both language and imagination played an important role in mother-child joint play.

Elkonin (1999) wrote that the development of role play can also take place through director's play and that this is especially suitable for children who have little experience of social play. In director's play the child invokes joint actions and mutual interaction between toys. Director's play is an unconventional type of individual play which enables the child to acquire social experience in playing with toys and to look at events from different points of view. The role bearers in director's play are not other children or adults but the toys themselves, the actions and interaction of which are directed by the child as a stage director (Gasparova 1989). Director's play as one possible way of promoting the child's social play would certainly require more attention on the part of the adult later on.

Thus, the results of this study showed that the children played alone at a lower play level (object role play) than when playing together with their mothers (social role play). The content of solitary role play consisted of children's actions with objects that relate to the role. By contrast, the content of joint play consisted of the players' actions and the relationships between the players. The children demonstrated that they had often understood the salient features of the world of adults, i.e. the work and other activities practised by adults as well as the relationships between adults. While in solitary games the child acted according to one particular role or gave that role to his or her toy, in the case of joint games in addition to the role assumed by the child the mother

also assumed a role according to the play plot. In joint games there were significantly more play scripts than in solitary games and these were initiated both by the mothers and children.

These current study findings are consistent with those of previous studies, according to which children's games are more developed and varied when they are played together with the children's mothers (e.g. Slade 1987; Fiese 1990; Beizer & Howes 1992; Fein & Fryer 1995). The study by Haight and Miller (1993) suggested that mothers were children's primary play partners during the first years of life. The studies also indicated that children played longer together with their mothers (Dunn & Wooding 1977), the diversity of imaginary play increased (O'Connell & Bretherton 1984) and also the quantity of imagining increased (Fiese 1990). Haight and Miller (1993) suggested that as children became older they engaged in more imagining and produced longer episodes of imaginary play while the complexity and elaboration of the play episodes also increased.

Altogether there were 12 different joint games observed during the course of this study. The didactic games were connected with teaching. Through these games the mothers attempted to teach their children something (numbers and letters, differentiating sounds in words, animal-bird labelling, etc.). These games were mostly of short duration and were initiated by the mothers. The children did not accept their mothers' suggestions willingly and were not keen to play these games. Instead, the children preferred verbal, physical and guessing games, which involved playfulness, fun or humorous elements and unusual aspects. These often contained elements of verbal question-and-answer and were accompanied by humour. Such games were gladly played both by the mothers and the children with the children repeatedly asking their mothers to play with them.

On the basis of the kindergarten teachers' descriptions and observations of the children's play in the kindergarten the children were divided into active and passive players. Active players were those who initiated several games of various types and who played together with the others in the kindergarten. At home too they played both alone and also with their mothers. The mothers of the active players initiated various kinds of games (primarily role games) with their children. They also played other games together, which involved the teaching or guessing of something. The passive players played predominantly solitary games in the kindergarten. Other children rarely played with them and these passive players generally watched the games of the other children from the sidelines. The passive players played solitary role games at home while together with their mothers they played rule games (except for one child). It was characteristic of the joint games played by the passive players and their mothers that the children often initiated the games and wanted to play with their mothers. Of the passive players two were single children within their respective families. According to their mothers neither of these two children had many playmates with whom to play at home.

In the interviews all three mothers who had two children each remarked that there were difficulties in the relationships between the siblings and that the children did not get along well with one another. According to the observations when a sister-brother dyad of differing age played together a number of problems arose. Dunn (1985a, 1985b) made an extensive study of the indulgence and material support given to the individual children within the family. Dunn (1985b, 6) suggested that mothers who play a lot with their first child also tend to play a lot with their second child. Similarly, mothers who talk a lot to their first child also talk a lot to their second child. Important features of a mother's particular 'style' of interacting with her child carry over from the first child to the next. Youngblade and Dunn (1995) argued that in families in which the siblings interact intensively and frequently the children can be both more positive and more negative towards each other than the siblings in families who are not interested in interacting.

### **9.3 The mother's role within the play world of the child**

All the mothers considered play to be an important factor in their children's development and no one considered play to be an unimportant activity. Firstly the mothers pointed out that play was an opportunity to imitate real life through the use of a variety of imaginary situations. In the mothers' opinions children imitate what they have seen, heard or experienced in the surrounding world and experiment using various means and ideas. Play enables the child to engage in those activities which are not possible in everyday life either because of the danger involved or the inability of the child to act as an adult. The mothers expressed ideas which coincide with those of Vygotsky (1966), Elkonin (1999) and Zaporozhets (2000), according to which children imitate in their games the embedded social lives of adults. Davydov and Kudryavtsev (1997) emphasised that through their games child experimented with the imagination of adults, thereby trying to understand the hidden heart of the adults' world.

The mothers pointed out the importance of play primarily in terms of the child's cognitive development. They thought that play was important for the development of logical thought. They also stressed the importance of certain types of board games such as quiz games and checkers. Play was considered absolutely essential for teaching the child and for preparing him or her for school. According to the mothers, play was particularly valuable when it taught something definite which was connected with school studies. The creative nature of the games was also pointed out in the interviews. Games enable the child to assume new roles and so new traits enter the play. The play is therefore constantly changing and together with it so is the child. The parents did not tend to view children's games as opportunities for the children to play together with others (either with adults, other children or siblings).

Similar results were obtained in an earlier study (Haight, Parke & Black 1997), which indicated that parents regard play as being important for the child's cognitive and creative development. However, when asked to compare the value of play against that of reading books the parents indicated that they considered book reading to be more significant for their children's development than imaginary play (Haight, Parke & Black 1997). Although both reading books and imaginary play were viewed as being of importance for cognitive development, imaginary play was seen as being important for children's emerging understanding of social roles and relationships while book reading contributed to children's eventual success at school. Imaginary play was regarded as being important for children's creativity whereas book reading was considered to be essential for the language development. In general mothers and fathers thought that it was important for them to participate together with their children in imaginary play as well as in book reading. The study of Tamis-Le Monda, Chen and Bornstein (1998) indicated that mothers were more knowledgeable about the language development than they were about play.

The mothers in the current study did not consider there to be any importance in their playing together with their four-year-old children. On the contrary, they thought that their children were big enough to manage by themselves. Nevertheless, the mothers admitted that their children had become more active recently in terms of asking them to watch their play and to join in as well. The mothers said that joint playing provided an opportunity to answer the children's questions that emerged during play while at the same time enabling the children to express doubts and ask questions. The mothers also articulated the idea that the joint play also depended on the type of play. In play requiring talk, the mother is needed as the second player. This was shown to be the case during the observations. These findings lend support to the view that children wish to play with their mothers and are used to doing so. At the same time the mothers stated that when their children called them they would always respond and go to the child. However, all the mothers thought that their children loved playing together with them and that joint playing was a very nice activity. The results of the present study are not consistent with other investigations, such as the study by Haight, Parke and Black (1997). In that study the parents involved regarded their own participation in imaginary play to be of importance primarily because it encouraged their children to use imagination. Those parents also believed that parent-child imaginative activities enhanced the parent-child relationship and enabled the parents to observe their children's development.

During play the children themselves seldom initiated interaction with their mothers and rarely turned to them with questions. Most commonly they sought help in acquiring various materials or wished to show their mothers the games they had been playing. The mothers often initiated interaction while playing with their children. The content of this interaction usually consisted of explanations of how to play certain games. While interacting with their children the mothers paid great attention to the notion of fair play and to joint play

between siblings. Typically, the mothers merely noted that their children had not followed the rules of a particular game correctly. No deeper explanation was offered. It was clear that ethical questions concerning both fair play and the issue of winning or losing constituted a problem for mothers. They explained briefly during the games how each game was to be played together with the child's brother or sister. If the explanations did not suffice the mother herself would start playing alongside her children. Lisina's (1985) idea that the adult must play the role of play partner who is interesting to interact and act with found partial confirmation in the present study.

On the other hand the children needed their mothers as supporters and appraisers of their activities. The children often came to their mothers of their own volition in order to gain appraisal for the things they had completed in play or to invite them to go and look at what they had been constructing. Thus, Lisina's notion of the mother as a supporter of the child's play found support in this study.

The mothers did not participate in their children's solitary games but they were usually somewhere nearby. During the solitary games the mother generally wanted to know what the child was doing and also that there was not anything dangerous going on. The mothers showed general interest in the child's activity and asked what was going on in the play or briefly gave explanations about how to play. The children themselves approached their mothers with requests for materials or in order to show what they had done in their play. Thus, during the child's solitary games the mother mostly played the role of uninvolved party or stage manager, who supplied the child with the materials necessary for his or her games or provided support or asked questions and gave explanations. The mothers therefore assumed passive roles in the children's solitary games.

The involvement of the mothers in joint games with their children was of a different order and they supported the children's games in a number of ways. The mothers themselves participated actively as coplayers in the games involving certain play roles or helped to create and elaborate imaginative situations. Sometimes the mothers had to play the leader's role and therefore asked questions, made proposals and helped the children solve the problems that arose during the play. There were also joint games in which the mothers tried to promote the academic content of games, thus acting in part as play instructors. The instructor's roles played by the mothers were particularly characteristic of the didactic games. The mothers also paid great attention to issues of fair play. In the joint games the mothers displayed wide-ranging repertoires of play promotion. The mothers almost exclusively adopted the roles of coplayer, stage manager or play leader. These adult roles for promoting children's play were pointed out by Johnson, Christie and Yawkey (1999) as roles that have a positive impact and that enrich the play. The mothers who participated in the present study also commonly assumed facilitating roles in the play. Thus, they did not become too involved or take over control of the games.

Both the mothers' roles and their methods of promoting individual players varied. The participation of the mothers of the active players was varied and also changed during the course of a single play. These mothers assumed the roles that were connected with the play while at the same time promoting the child's play competence and his or her acting out of roles. At the same time these mothers also paid attention to joint play and to the issue of playing fair according to the rules. The game promoting role of the mothers of the passive players was by comparison relatively narrow. These mothers were usually joint coplayers who helped their children to remember the course and rules of the play.

The most common form of verbal promotion used by the mothers both during solitary games and joint games was the question. The mothers' questions in solitary games were only slightly connected with the ongoing play and the imaginary situation. Such questions could be characterised as a bystander's questions. In joint games questions formed one of the most important types of promotion. The mothers' questions helped to create imaginary situations and to elaborate them. The questions also helped to bring new roles into the play and improve the play scripts. This finding also matches the findings of other studies. The importance of questions in promoting children's activities was emphasised in other investigations as well. For example, Haight and Miller's (1993) study showed that the majority of mothers' prompts consisted of questions while direct instructions were relatively infrequent. In the kindergarten context the importance of questions in promoting play was also emphasised by Novosyolova (1989) and Zvorygina (1989).

It also became clear in the current study that the child does not always accept the play suggested to him or her by the mother. Sometimes the child will only accept a suggestion when the mother has explained the idea of the game. It was also evident that the mother might make several play suggestions, all of which the child would refuse. After some time it would be the child who initiated the play that the mother had already suggested. On several occasions the child rejected the play material suggested by the mother because it did not match the child's own play script. In line with the findings of Beizer and Howes (1992) as well as those of Fein and Fryer (1995), the present study indicates that children themselves choose those elements from their mothers' promotive efforts which best suit the play and which are 'play-friendly'.

#### **9.4 Trustworthiness of the study**

Views concerning the trustworthiness of qualitative research have been presented by various researchers (Guba & Lincoln 1981; Lincoln & Guba 1985; Kvale 1989; Bogdan & Biklen 1998; Patton 2002). Four main criteria for trustworthiness have been proposed: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

*Credibility*

In terms of credibility Patton (2002, 584) pointed out the following features: 1)rigorous methods for conducting fieldwork that yields high quality data which is systematically analysed with attention paid to issues of credibility, 2)the credibility of the researcher which is dependent on training, experience, track record, status, and self-presentation and 3)a philosophical belief in the value of qualitative inquiry.

In presenting the results of this study I have employed a strategy of triangulation, which constitutes one of the most relevant criteria in qualitative research (Patton 2002, 556). The triangulation of method, sources, analysis and theory/perspective are differentiated. This means that in the present study many sources of data were better than a single source because they led to a deeper understanding of the phenomena under study. (cf. Bogdan & Biklen 1998, 104). In this study a variety of data collection methods have been used in order to avoid unsystematic presentation of the material and also to obtain a true-to-life picture of the child's play world at home. The aim was to get as close as possible to the children's world at home and to give as complete and manifold a picture as possible of the children's activities at home.

Numerous studies on mother-child play have previously been undertaken in laboratory conditions where opportunities for playing were created. When choosing the research methods for the present study I decided to investigate children's play at home within the setting of their everyday lives. I also wanted the mothers to express their ideas about their children's everyday activities and games. In this study semi-structured interviews with the mothers were conducted and mother-child video recordings made at their homes. The interviews with the mothers before the play observation allowed me to get to know each family's customs and habits. The interviews also enabled me to establish whether the children played at home, what these games were like and how the mothers supported such games. The stimulated recall interviews following the observations provided feedback and explanations on the part of the mothers regarding the video footage played back to them. This enabled me to confirm the information about the events which had occurred as well as to decrease the likelihood of forming incorrect interpretations.

In order to study the child's play in his or her most immediate surroundings the non-participant observation method was chosen. Observation produces especially rigorous results when combined with other methods (Adler & Adler 1998, 89). Video recording enables the researcher to obtain a direct, accurate and natural picture of the subjects under study. Making video recordings was not always easy. One of the reasons was the crowded housing conditions in some of the homes. For example, the recording of the child's activities in the kitchen was complicated as kitchens in standard flats are very small. It was also difficult sometimes to understand the mothers' speech. Such places in the transcribed text were marked accordingly.

Interviews were carried out with kindergarten teachers to find children who played in a variety of different ways. After that the games of these children were observed once or twice.

### *Transferability*

Transferability is achieved by providing a detailed rich description of the setting studied so that readers are given sufficient information to be able to judge the applicability of the findings to other settings with which they are familiar (Seale 1999, 45). A good deal of time was spent on observation in the children's homes. During the course of these observations I attempted to record in writing as accurately as possible all that took place in the home, the child's and mother's respective activities, the use of material toys, speech, etc. I also attempted to perform a thorough and detailed analysis of the material. The material was described in general terms in order for the interpretations to be intelligible to the reader. In the present study an attempt was made to describe the respective worlds of the mother and child in a holistic manner. Similarly, the home settings were studied in as diverse a way as possible.

The purpose of the qualitative study was not to generate broad generalisations but to present a number of perspectives. An attempt has been made here to draw comparisons between the results and interpretations of this study with those of other researchers. The results obtained were largely consistent with theoretical standpoints and earlier scientific work. Various examples from the interviews and observations are presented along with a description of the principles of analysis.

In qualitative studies there is always a subjective component in the actions of the researcher. At the same time, as a researcher myself I am a participant within society, someone who lives in it and who has been involved in the context in question for a long period of time. I have attempted to present the research methods, their justification and the results of the study as exactly and in as great a detail as possible in order for the reader to understand the course of the research process and the interpretation of the results. At the same time, the theoretical standpoints, notions and approaches are presented as explicitly as possible to allow readers to follow the author's line of reasoning.

### *Dependability and confirmability*

In qualitative studies researchers are generally concerned with the accuracy and comprehensiveness of their data and with conducting the research as if there were someone perpetually looking over their shoulders (Yin 1994, 37). Researchers tend to view reliability in terms of a fit between what they record as data and what actually occurs in the setting under study, rather than as literal consistency across a range of observations (Bogdan & Biklen 1998, 36). A certain degree of subjectivity is characteristic of qualitative research. Objectivity is achievable by, for example, presenting the study to other researchers. In analysing my research materials the views of other researchers were sought and made use of. Thus my video films were shown to various Russian scientists (Novosyolova, Zvorygina, Antonova) and their comments on the video material were taken into account. Each of these scientists had spent decades studying children and, in particular, children's play. These researchers remarked that the video recording had been successfully carried out and that appropriate principles had been employed in analysing this material. They also suggested

that children's play should be observed more widely, with attention being paid, for example, to the child's everyday life and the mother's understanding of play. At the same time they suggested that in future I should also concentrate my efforts on the analysis of the child's emotions during play. On the basis of this empirical material children's emotional dimension in the play can not be studied thoroughly. Also the quantitative classification of the study findings was analysed with a colleague and after a thorough discussion consensus were reached.

The basis of qualitative research involves the researcher acting as an instrument for qualitative data collection and a centre for the analytical process (Patton 2002). A qualitative report should include some information about the researcher, i.e. what experience, training and perspective the researcher brings to the field (Patton 2002, 566). As a researcher I have a long and varied experience in working with children and their parents. I have worked as a kindergarten teacher and have been training kindergarten teachers at the University for years. At the same time as a parent I have direct personal experience of understanding the behaviour of both child and parent. My experiences also extend to corresponding studies of child-parent relationships in other countries (Russia, Germany, Finland).

After the video observation each mother was asked how she herself felt during the video recording and whether it had influenced her behaviour. The mothers answered that at first it had been a bit unusual to have a stranger with a camcorder in the home but in general the video observation had not affected her actions.

#### *Limitations of the study*

Each type and source of data has its own strengths and weaknesses (Patton 2002, 306). With regard to observation it has been pointed out that the people who are being observed do not behave the way they are but rather how they would wish to appear. In other words, they 'act'. This of course may be partly true. However, I doubt whether people (in the present case mothers) are able to deviate from their natural behaviour for hours at a time. At the same time, the idea has been put forward that interviews may be influenced by various emotional factors (fear, fatigue, etc.) as well as by the personality of the interviewer. I believe that in the present study the fact that the mothers were interviewed on a number of occasions and that they appeared keen to speak about the various topics contributed to the creation of trusting relationships between them and myself as interviewer. Patton's idea (2002, 306) that observations provide a check on what is reported in interviews is, no doubt, true. Interviews, on the other hand, permit the observer to go beyond external behaviour and so explore feelings and thoughts. The use of stimulated recall interviews during the study allowed a deeper insight into the mothers' thoughts and for more meaningful evaluation of their behaviour. Five mother-child pairs participated in the study. Owing to both financial and time restraints it was not possible to include a greater number of people in the study.

### *Ethical problems*

With regard to ethical considerations in qualitative research the concept of 'informed consent' applies. According to this principle the subjects of a study have a right to be informed firstly, that they are subjects of research and secondly, of the nature of the research (Punch 1998, 170). The mothers participated voluntarily in the study and were aware of the topics and procedure involved. Throughout the implementation of the study I attempted to take into account the mothers' wishes concerning the arrangement of the video recording and the interview times. Permission was sought from the mothers to video record in all the rooms of their homes and the mothers agreed to this. A written agreement was made with each mother, according to which the mother gave her consent for the material collected to be used for the study. The anonymity of the children and their mothers was preserved by the use of pseudonyms. Permission to make video recordings in their homes was also sought from the children as well. On occasions when the child was video recorded at close range separate permission was sought from the child for that too.

## **9.5 Further studies**

This study provided support to several theoretical standpoints of the representatives of cultural-historical approach of the meaning of role play as essential activity in the life of preschool child in the family context. Children themselves initiated role games at home and with their mothers they also preferred first of all role games. The study findings indicated the importance of the adult in creating the children's play world at home and of the different roles of the adult in assisting the children. In creating the four-year-old children's play world the mother's role is not only creating necessary conditions for the play, but her role is much wider and manifold. The mother's role is to enrich the children's everyday life with knowledge, experiences and impressions, thus creating play motives. The study findings showed that in playing together with her child the mother is not just a coplayer and - partner but first of all the supporter of the imaginary situation in the play and the creator of the meaning of social roles. Thus, mother's role at home in children's games was the promotion of meaningful way.

The findings of this study will enable the kindergarten teachers to receive some new information on the children's life and activities at home. This knowledge may thus enable the teachers better understand parents and become more sensitive supporters of the family. On the other hand the findings indicated that mothers have a lot of various opportunities in creating the children's play world and in supporting children in the activities necessary for the development.

On the basis of both theoretical standpoints and empirical research a number of ideas arose regarding the further studies. The representatives of the cultural-historical conception emphasise that the leading activity among preschool children is play and that role games play the most important part in the child's development. The aims of early childhood education consider play the principal factor in the development and education of the child. The present study indicates that mothers generally consider play to be an important and necessary activity for the development of their children. It became clear from the observations at home that not all mothers pay attention to play, particularly to role play which is essential for the child's development. The importance of play was often linked by the mothers to preparation for school or to the creation of playing conditions for the child at home. Several mothers played various games with their children which undoubtedly constituted an essential part of mother-child interaction. In future a longitudinal study of role play at home in the natural setting could be undertaken. This would also investigate the connection between solitary and joint games played by children. Research could also address the question as to whether and how mother-child joint role play (the shared imaginative world) influences the child's solitary play at home and in the kindergarten. At the same time knowledge of the child's play world at home would help teachers to assist and support parents in promoting children's play. Parents would need to pay special attention to the developmental importance of that most essential of children's activities - play.

The present study included children who played in different ways in the kindergarten. According to the study the active players played role games and other games in the kindergarten while at home they played alone and together with their mothers. Two of the passive players played little in the kindergarten while at home they played role games by themselves. One of these children played a great deal of board games together with her mother. The play world of the third passive player in the kindergarten was quite different to that at home. He played little in the kindergarten, but at home together with his mother he had a highly diverse play world. The paucity of his play in the kindergarten might be explained by something his mother commented on in the interview. According to her the boy did not like going to the kindergarten and would rather stay at home with his younger sister and mother. To the best knowledge of the author there is no existing empirical research in which the same children's behaviour and activities in the different contexts have been observed (e.g. in the kindergarten, at home, in the yard, together with friends). Hence this theme requires more attention in the future.

It became evident from both the observations and the interviews with the mothers that constant tensions arose between siblings. Thus, for instance, tensions emerged between one child under study and his older brother because of unfair play. In cases involving younger sisters and brothers tensions were caused because the younger children did not understand the imaginary situations involved in the games or the materials used. Future studies should focus on games played by siblings and their mothers (or fathers) at home.

Several problems arose during joint games with respect to fair play. These involved issues such as winning and losing. Thus, one important characteristic of mother-child interaction was the general moral principle of play norms or justice (Vygotsky 1982; Mihailenko & Korotkova 1999). Mothers assisted their children by explaining and specifying the rules to be followed and also the meaning and importance of fair play. Although all the children had previous board game experience, the mothers still reviewed the general features of each game as well as the principles of fair play. The mothers also remarked on these serious problems during their interviews. Thus one further study topic arising from the present work would be the investigation of the following of rules in children's rule games played together with mothers at home together with the issue of winning and losing.

## YHTEENVETO

Viimeksi kuluneiden 10–15 vuoden aikana on Viron varhaiskasvatuksessa tapahtunut suuria muutoksia: Vaihtoehtopedagogiikat ja lapsikeskeisyyden periaate ovat tulleet lastentarhanopettajille tutuiksi. Vuosi vuodelta yhä suurempi osa esikouluikäisistä ja useimmat alle kolmivuotiaista käyvät lastentarhaa.

Nopeasti muuttuvat sosioekonomiset olosuhteet ovat vaikuttaneet vanhempien käsityksiin lapsista. Vanhemmilla on vain vähän tietoa lasten kasvatamisesta, eivätkä he useinkaan tiedä miten toimia lastensa kanssa. Varhaiskasvatuksen yksiköiden tehtävä on tukea vanhempia kasvatusongelmien ratkaisemisessa sekä edistää lapsen kasvua ja kehitystä perheessä. Lastentarhan henkilöstön tulisikin reagoida joustavasti lapsen ja vanhempien monenlaisiin tarpeisiin muuttuneessa yhteiskunnassa.

Tämän tutkimuksen tarkoituksena oli selvittää lapsen leikkimaailmaa kotona. Lapsen leikkimaailmaa tarkkailtiin holistisesti hänen jokapäiväisessä elämässään, toiminnoissaan ja vuorovaikutuksessaan äidin kanssa. Tutkimus kuvasi ja analysoi, millaisia lapsen toiminnot kotona olivat sekä miten ja minkä tyyppisiä leikkejä lapset leikkivät. Tutkimus analysoi myös äidin käsityksiä lapsen leikistä ja hänen antamastaan tuesta yhteisen leikin aikana.

Lasten leikkiä lastentarhassa on tutkittu paljon. Tutkimukset (Mendzeritskaija 1982; Novosyolova 1989; Hakkarainen 1990; Helenius 1993; Hännikäinen 1995; Lindqvist 1995; Johnson, Christie and Yawkey 1999) ovat osoittaneet, että aikuisten antama leikin tuki liittyy lapsen leikin seuraamiseen ja vuorovaikutuksen mukauttamiseen lapsen leikkitapoihin ja -motiiveihin. Tutkimukset (Elkonin 1978; Haight & Miller 1993; Göncü ym. 1999) korostavat myös, että sosiaalinen ympäristö on merkityksellinen lasten leikkejä rikastavien tietojen ja kokemusten antajana.

1–3-vuotiaiden lasten leikkejä äidin kanssa on selvitetty useissa tutkimuksissa (Dunn & Wooding 1977; O'Connell & Bretherton 1984; Slade 1987; Fiese 1990). Ne ovat osoittaneet, että lapsen leikki äidin kanssa on laadullisesti ja määrällisesti paljon kehittyneempää kuin leikki ilman äitiä. Tutkimuksissa on myös selvitetty, millaiset äidin leikille antamat virikkeet ovat lapselle edullisia. Tutkijat ovat kuitenkin paneutuneet vain harvoin yli kolmevuotiaiden lasten kotona tapahtuvaan leikkiin. Siksi onkin tarvetta tutkia, miten tämänikäiset lapset leikkivät perhepiirissä ja miten heidän äitinsä luovat lapsilleen leikkimaailmaa kotona.

Tämän tutkimuksen teoreettisina lähtökohtina olivat näkemykset, joiden mukaan mielikuvitukseen rakentuva roolileikki on lapsen yleisin leikkimuoto ja että sillä on ratkaiseva merkitys lapsen kognitiiviselle, sosiaaliselle ja fyysiselle kehitykselle (Vygotsky 1966, 1978b; Elkonin 1978; Leontjev 1981; Zaporozhets 1997). Leikki on toiminto, jonka kehitystä aikuiset edistävät auttaakseen lasta tutustumaan erilaisten esineiden käyttöön samoin kuin aikuisten vuorovaikutustapoihin ja -keinoihin. Leikki tapahtuu ensin äidin ja lapsen kesken ja sen

kehitys riippuu vanhempien, sisarusten ja leikkiverien tuesta sekä ympäristöstä.

Tutkimuksen kohteena olivat nelivuotiaat lapset, joiden leikit poikkesivat toisistaan lastentarhassa. Runsaasti ja kiinnostavia roolileikkejä harrastavia kutsuttiin *aktiivisiksi leikkijöiksi* ja vähemmän roolileikkejä leikkiviä nimitettiin *passiiviseksi leikkijöiksi*. Tutkimuksessa oli mukana kaksi aktiivista (tyttö ja poika) ja kolme passiivista (kaksi poikaa ja yksi tyttö) leikkijää. Tutkimus on kvalitatiivinen tapaustutkimus, jossa käytettiin jossakin määrin myös kvantitatiivista analyysia. Tutkimus toteutettiin lasten kotona ja lastentarhassa erilaisin aineistonkeruumenetelmin – käytettiin äitien haastattelua ja ei-osallistuvaa havainnointia. Lisinan (1985, 1986) kehittämää menetelmää käytettiin analysoitaessa äidin ja lapsen vuorovaikutusta arkielämässä ja leikeissä. Analysoitaessa lapsen yksinleikkiä ja äidin ja lapsen yhteisleikkiä kuvattiin useita leikkiin liittyviä tekijöitä (mm. leikin teemaa, sisältöjä, rooleja, leikkimateriaaleja). Äidin osallistuminen ja leikin tukeminen jaettiin kahteen osaan: leikin ylläpitämiseen liittyviin reaktioihin ja leikin katkaiseviin tai lopettaviin reaktioihin. Leikin edistämisessä erotettiin kolme aluetta: kielellinen ohjaaminen, näyttäminen ja leikkimateriaalien tarjoaminen.

Tutkimus osoitti, että samalla kun äidit aloittivat iltaisin kotiaskareet keittiössä lasten palattua lastentarhasta, lapset aloittivat omat puuhansa, tavallisesti oma-aloitteisesti. Kotona oli kaksi selkeää maailmaa: äidin keittiömaailma ja lapsen maailma olohuoneessa tai hänen omassa huoneessaan. Yksin ollessaan lapset tavallisesti katsoivat televisiota, piirsivät ja rakentelivat, katselivat kirjoja tai kuuntelivat musiikkia. Kun lapsi ei itse keksinyt mitään tekemistä, äiti opasti häntä tekemään jotakin. Ohjaus liittyi usein jonkin taidon kehittämiseen. Kun lapsi oli tehnyt mitä äiti ehdotti, hän meni näyttämään sitä äidilleen tai kutsui äidin katsomaan.

Äitien ja lasten vuorovaikutus tapahtui syödessä, ruokaa laitettaessa ja lasten erilaisissa toimissa. Vuorovaikutuksen sisällöt liittyivät arkitapahtumiin, eri ilmiöiden ja tapahtumien selittämiseen. Lapset eivät useinkaan esittäneet äidille kysymyksiä, vaan äiti teki aloitteen joko näyttämällä tai selittämällä lapselle lyhyesti jotakin tai pyytämällä häneltä jotakin. Äitien ja lasten vuorovaikutus oli usein lyhytkestoista, sen sijaan heidän yhteistoimintansa kesti pidempään. Yhteisen toiminnan sisällöt koskivat koulutaitojen opettamista tai käytännön taitojen harjoittelua. Vuorovaikutukseen liittyi myös hauskanpitoa ja huumoria, magiikkaakin.

Lisinan (1985, 1986) mukaan äidin ja lapsen vuorovaikutus 3–6 vuoden iässä on välittömästä kontekstista riippumatonta ja kognitiivista, mikä tarkoittaa älyllistä vuorovaikutusta aikuisen ja lapsen välillä. Lapselle aikuinen on tiedon välittäjä ja kysymyksiin vastaaja. Lisina korostaa, että aikuisen vakava suhtautuminen lapsen kysymyksiin luonnehtii hänen yleisempääkin suhtautumistaan lapseen. Tässä tutkimuksessa äidin ja lapsen vuorovaikutus liittyi enemmän äidin selityksiin kuin lapsen tekemiin kysymyksiin. Lapsen elinympäristöä koskevia aiheita ei käsitelty syvällisesti. Tutkimus ei tukenut näin ollen edellä mainittua Lisinan näkemystä. Sen sijaan Lisinan käsitys, että lapsi tarvitsee äi-

tinsä jatkuvaa tukea ja arviointia, sai tutkimuksessa vahvistusta. Lapsi halusi jatkuvasti näyttää äidille jotakin tai pyytää äitiä mukaan yrittäen kiinnittää äidin huomion itseensä, jotta äiti tietäisi mitä hän oli tehnyt. Lapsi haki myös äidin hyväksyntää ja tunnustusta. Äitien vuorovaikutuksessa korostunut opetussellisuus selittyi sillä, että he ovat epävarmoja lastensa tulevista opinnoista ja koulussa suoriutumisesta.

Kaikilla lapsilla oli paljon leikkikaluja, joita sukulaiset tai ystävät olivat antaneet. Vanhat ja hyvin rakkaat karvalelut olivat lasten suosikkeja. Usein näillä leluilla oli myös oma tarinansa. Äitien mukaan valmiit lelut olivat usein lapsista tylsiä, ja siksi hyvinä leluina pidettiin sellaisia, joihin lapsi voi lisätä jotakin omilla käsillään tai omassa mielikuvituksessaan. Äidit perustelivat käsitystään sanomalla, että lelun tulisi kehittää lasta tai opettaa hänelle jotakin. Äidit eivät myöskään halunneet hankkia sotaleluja tai väkivaltaa edistäviä leluja. – Jokaisella lapsella oli oma leikkinurkkauksensa, ja he leikkivät tavallisesti kotona iltaisin, viikonloppuisin ja ollessaan lomalla, sekä kaupungissa että maalla.

Yksin ollessaan lapset leikkivät roolileikkejä, jotka he myös käynnistivät oma-aloitteisesti. He menivät leikkinurkkaukseensa, ottivat lelunsa ja loivat kuvitellun leikitilanteen. Kulttuurihistoriallinen koulukunta (Vygotsky 1966; Elkonin 1978; Leontjev 1981; Zaporozhets 1986) arvostaa tällaisia roolileikkejä korkealle. Lasten yksinleikit liittyivät ympäröivään maailmaan, kotiin (ruoanlaittoon ja syömiseen), erilaiseen rakenteluun tai autojen korjaamiseen. Leikkiessään yksin lapset eivät ilmaisseet roolejaan eksplisiittisesti, vaan ne ilmenivät toiminnassa ja puheessa. Näissä leikeissä oli *toiminnassa ilmenevä rooli*, mikä käy ilmi leikistä ilman että lapsi sanoo, mitä roolia hän leikkii. Lapset matkivat tuttujen ihmisten toimia eri leluilla. Yksinleikkien sisältö oli usein yksipuolista ja luonteeltaan stereotyyppisistä. Lasten yksinleikkeihin kuului tavallisesti 1–3 erilaista leikkiskriptiä. Yksi lapsi leikki myös ohjaajaleikkiä, joka on eräs roolileikin muoto: leikkijä oli itse luonut leikitilanteen, antoi roolit leluilleen ja loi samalla lelujen väliset toiminnot. Yksinleikit olivat siis useimmiten esineiden kanssa tapahtuvia roolileikkejä. (Ks. Elkonin 1978.)

Kaikki viisi lasta leikkivät yhteisleikkejä äitiensä kanssa; lautapelit olivat yleisimpiä. Näiden lisäksi leikkeihin kuului roolileikkejä, opetusleikkejä, liikunnallisia pelejä, ja arvausleikkejä. Kolme lasta leikki roolileikkejä äitiensä kanssa, ja he yleensä käynnistivät leikin itse. Samoin kuin yksinleikit, liittyivät äitien ja lasten roolileikit arkielämään, kuten ruoanlaittoon, rakentamiseen ja eri kulkuvälineiden käyttöön. Niiden pääsisältönä olivat äidin ja lapsen yhteinen toiminta ja vuorovaikutus omaksuttujen roolien mukaisesti. Leikkiessään yhdessä äitiensä kanssa lapset eivät vain toimineet lelujensa kanssa, vaan myös puhuivat ja toimivat leikin aiheen ja sisällön mukaisesti.

Roolit olivat yhteisleikeissä selväpiirteisemmät ja eksplisiittisemmät kuin lasten yksinleikeissä. Lapset ja äidit omaksuivat useita rooleja. Kutakin leikkijää puhuteltiin ja kohdeltiin tämän omaksunan roolin mukaisesti. Näissä leikeissä leikittiin erilaisilla materiaaleilla ja leluilla. Yhteisleikeissä oli myös merkittävästi enemmän leikkiskriptejä kuin yksinleikeissä, koska ne aloitettiin yhdessä äidin kanssa. Täten äidin ja lapsen yhteisleikit olivat muodoltaan sosiaalisia rooli-

leikkejä (Elkonin 1978). Tulokset ovat samansuuntaisia aikaisempien tutkimusten kanssa: lasten leikit ovat kehittyneempiä ja vaihtelevampia silloin, kun leikitään yhdessä äidin kanssa (ks. esim. Dunn & Wooding 1977; O'Connell & Bretherton 1984; Slade 1987; Fiese 1990; Beizer & Howes 1992).

Oppimisleikeissä äidit halusivat opettaa lapsilleen jotakin (lukuja ja kirjaimia, äänteiden erottelua, eläinten ja lintujen nimiä). Nämä leikit olivat yleensä lyhytkestoisia ja äidin aloittamia. Lapset eivät ottaneet mieluusti vastaan äidin ehdotuksia eivätkä leikkineet tarkkaavaisesti. Lapset pitivät kieli-, liikunta- ja arvauspeleistä, joihin liittyi leikkimielisyyttä ja hauskoja osia ja jotka olivat tavallisuudesta poikkeavia. Näitä leikkejä molemmat leikkivät mielellään, ja lapset pyysivät toistuvasti äitejään leikkimään niitä. Leikit olivat usein huumorin sävyttämiä kysymys-vastausleikkejä.

Kaikki äidit pitivät leikkiä tärkeänä lapsen kehitykselle. Ensinnäkin äidit mainitsivat leikin olevan lapselle tilaisuus matkia todellista elämää ja käydä leikin avulla läpi näkemiään, kuulemiaan ja kokemiaan tilanteita. Leikin avulla lapsen oli mahdollista kokeilla toimia, jotka ovat yleensä vaarallisia tai kuuluvat aikuisten maailmaan. Toiseksi äidit totesivat leikin tärkeyden erityisesti lapsen tiedolliselle ja luovuuden kehitykselle. Leikkiä pidettiin ehdottoman tärkeänä lapsen opettamisessa ja kouluun valmistamisessa. Äidit eivät erityisemmin tuoneet esille lasten leikkejä tilaisuutena leikkiä muiden (joko aikuisten, sisarusten tai muiden lasten kanssa) kanssa.

Äidit eivät pitäneet tärkeänä yhdessä leikkimistä nelivuotiaiden lastensa kanssa. Heidän mielestään lapset olivat jo isoja ja osasivat leikkiä itsenäisestikin. Toisaalta äidit sanoivat, että lapset ovat tulleet viime aikoina aktiivisemmiksi ja alkaneet pyytää äitiä katsomaan leikkejään ja leikkimään heidän kanssaan. Äidit sanoivat, että yhteinen leikki antoi tilaisuuden vastata lasten kysymyksiin ja samalla salli lasten esittää epäilyjä ja kysymyksiä. Äidit huomauttivat myös, että yhteisen leikin toteuttaminen riippui leikistä. Äitiä tarvittiin leikissä, jossa täytyi keskustella. Toisaalta äidit kertoivat, että he menivät lapsen luo aina, kun tämä pyysi.

Äidit eivät osallistuneet lapsen yksinleikkeihin mutta olivat lähettyvillä. Äiti halusi usein tietää, mitä lapsi teki yksinleikeissään, ja varmistaa, ettei vaaratilanteita päässyt syntymään. Äidit osoittivat yleistä kiinnostusta lastensa toimintaan, he kysyivät mitä leikissä tapahtui ja selittivät lyhyesti miten leikkiä. Näin ollen äiti oli tavallisesti lapsen yksinleikeissä järjestäjän roolissa antaen tarvittavat leikkitarvikkeet ja tukea esittämällä kysymyksiä ja selityksiä.

Äitien osallistuminen yhteisleikkeihin oli toisenlaista, ja he tukivat lasten leikkejä monin tavoin. Joissakin leikeissä äidit olivat aktiivisina kanssaleikkijöinä tai auttoivat luomaan ja kehittämään kuvitteellisia tilanteita. Joskus äitien piti leikkiä johtavaa roolia, jossa hän esitti kysymyksiä, teki ehdotuksia ja auttoi lasta ratkaisemaan leikissä esille tulevia ongelmia. Äidillä oli yhteisleikeissä erilaisia leikin edistämisrooleja. Pääasiallisesti hän oli kanssaleikkijä, näyttämöestari ja leikin ohjaaja. Johnson, Christie ja Yawkey (1999) mainitsevat nämä aikuisen roolit lasten leikkejä rikastuttavina tekijöinä. Oli myös yhteisleikkijä, joissa äiti yritti johdatella leikkimistä opiskelun suuntaan, joten hän oli osit-

tain myös opettajan roolissa. Äidin opettajan rooli oli ensi sijassa tyypillistä opimisleikeille; äidit kiinnittivät huomiota myös pelaamisen rehellisyyteen.

Tutkimuksen aktiiviset leikkijät olivat aloitteellisia ja leikkivät lastentarhassa yhdessä muiden kanssa. Kotona he leikkivät sekä yksin että yhdessä äidin kanssa. Aktiivisten leikkijöiden äidit käynnistivät lastensa kanssa erilaisia leikkejä (pääasiassa roolileikkejä). He leikkivät lastensa kanssa myös muunlaisia leikkejä, joiden tavoitteena oli opettaa tai arvuutella jotakin. Passiiviset leikkijät leikkivät lastentarhassa yksin. Muut lapset leikkivät harvoin heidän kanssaan, ja he seurasivat usein muiden leikkejä sivusta. Passiiviset leikkijät leikkivät myös kotonaan yksin, ja silloin kun he leikkivät yhdessä äidin kanssa, leikkejä ohjasivat tietyt säännöt (paitsi yhden lapsen kohdalla). Yhteisleikeille äidin kanssa oli tyypillistä, että lapsi usein aloitti yhteisleikin ja halusi leikkiä yhdessä äidin kanssa. Passiivisista leikkijöistä kaksi oli ainoita lapsia ja molemmilla oli vain vähän leikkikavereita kotona.

Äidin rooli ja hänen tapansa tukea leikkijää vaihtelivat. Aktiivisten leikkijöiden äitien osallistuminen oli vaihtelevaa ja saattoi muuttua yhdenkin leikin aikana. Äidit omaksuivat leikkiin liittyviä rooleja ja tukivat kuvitteellista tilannetta samalla, kun he opastivat lasta leikkimisessä ja roolin esittämisessä luomalla mm. sosiaalisille rooleille merkityksiä. Samalla he kiinnittivät huomiota yhdessä leikkimiseen ja sääntöjen mukaiseen reiluun leikkimiseen. Äitien rooli passiivisten leikkijöiden tukemisessa oli suhteellisen kapea. Äiti oli yhteisleikeissä tavallisesti kanssaleikkijä, joka auttoi muistamaan leikin kulun ja säännöt.

Tutkimuksessa kävi ilmi, että äidit ohjasivat verbaalisesti lapsiaan yksin ja yhteisleikeissä pääasiassa kysymyksiin. Yksinleikeissä äidin kysymykset liittyivät vain etäisesti käynnissä olevaan leikkiin ja kuvitteelliseen tilanteeseen. Yhteisleikeissä kysymykset olivat äitien tuen olennainen muoto. Heidän kysymyksensä auttoivat luomaan kuvitteellisen tilanteen ja viemään sitä eteenpäin. Kysymykset auttoivat myös tuomaan uusia rooleja leikkiin ja parantamaan leikkiskriptejä. Tulokset osoittivat, että lapsi ei aina hyväksynyt äitinsä ehdottamaa leikkiä tai hyväksyi sen vain, kun äiti selitti leikin idean. Äiti saattoi tehdä useita ehdotuksia leikiksi, jotka lapsi aluksi torjui; jonkun ajan kuluttua lapsi aloitti kuitenkin äidin ehdottaman leikin. Äidit kiinnittivät niin ikään paljon huomiota reiluun leikkimiseen ja sisarusten yhteisleikkiin. Yleensä äiti vain mainitsi, ettei lapsi ollut noudattanut sääntöjä selittämättä asiaa sen tarkemmin.

Tulevaisuudessa olisi paikallaan selvittää seurantalutkimuksena, miten lapset leikkivät roolileikkejä eri ympäristöissä (kotona, lastentarhassa, pihalla) ja miten aikuiset tukevat lasten leikkimistä niissä. Tämä tutkimus osoitti, että sisarusten välillä on jatkuvaa kinaa leikkikalusta ja erimielisyyttä leikin aiheista. Tutkimuksin olisikin syytä selvittää, miten sisarukset leikkivät keskenään ja miten he leikkivät kotona vanhempiensa kanssa. Tulokset antoivat viitettä myös siitä, että olisi tarpeen tutkia eettisten normien toteutumista (mm. pelin sääntöjen ja "reilun pelin" periaatteiden noudattamista) lasten leikkiessä kotonaan.

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## APPENDIX 1

### Interview with mothers

#### 1. The child's daily activities at home.

- What are the activities in the evenings after kindergarten and at weekends?
- Who starts these activities?
- What does the family do together on holiday?

#### 2. The child's play setting.

- What toys and materials has your child got at home?
- What kind of toys does your child like playing with? (Where is it?)
- What toys does your child prefer?
- According to what principles do you chose toys for your child?
- Do you make toys yourself or together with your child?
- What are the child's opportunities to play inside (time and place for playing) and in the yard/outside?
- Who are the child's playmates?

#### 3. The child's games at home

- What games does your child play?
- What games does your child prefer?
- Does the child's everyday life influence his or her games?

#### 4. The role of the mother in the child's play

- Do you play together with your child?
- How do you participate in your child's play?
- Describe one typical child's play together with you (speak about the last play together with your child).

#### 5. The importance of play and toys in the life of the child

- Do you consider it necessary to play together with your child?
- Is the play an important activity for your child ? Why?

## APPENDIX 2

### The examples of children's solitary games, mother-child joint games and mothers' promotion.

#### Mother's - Neeme joint play

The play started so that Neeme (N) addressed his mother (M) several times calling her to play. The mother comes after four minutes and the little sister too participates in the play. Mother and Neeme find their men-Marek and Johannes (small Lego men).

N asks the mother: "Don't you have time to play with legos?"	
M says: " Wash your hands, then we'll see! "	Non-prom.
N washes his hands and addresses to the mother: "Let's play then with those legos:"	
M: "Play with your sister!"	Non-prom.
N: " No, with you, with you. Come then, come then!"	
N shows "one funny thing" on his sister's play table.	
N to the mother: "Let's go and play with legos then please!"	
M: "So, go and play with legos !" " I'll come at once!" " Go!"	Non-prom.
N: " Mummy, come here!" N is alone in his play corner. Calls four times in succession louder and louder, finally shouting.	
M: " I'll come."	Support
N: " Mummy, which is lovelier Keluksina or Kalatsiina?"	
M: " Kalatsiina. It has nicer bows."	Explanation
N: " Why?" " But that one has more beautiful earrings. I saw."	
M: " Isn't it? "	Question
N calls the mother: " Come here, come here! "Mother came together with the sister. All three are together in the playroom.	
M tells her daughter: "How is this dance going? "(Switches on the cassette player).	
N: " This way, let's go! " (Invites mother to play).	
M: " But I don't know again where my man is. "	Question
N: "Your man's name was Virkko."	
M: " No, it was not, it has never been Virkko."	Explanation
N: " It was John, it was John..."	
M: " It has never been John, no, it has not. One was Vello, then another was Heino, then there was..." She takes a new lego man. " I'll take a new one, I'll take this one, it has such a cheerful face."	Explanation Explanation
N: " What's his name? " "Take it! "	
M: " Marek."	Labelling
N: " Marek."	
M: " Marek. This is Marek's car." (Takes the car).	Labelling
N: "Are you looking for my black one? "	
M: " Johannes, yes. Where is Johannes? " Mother starts building a car from legos.	Support, question
N goes to look for toy box (lego box). His sister is pottering all the time near a big car.	

Mother calls out: "Johannes, where are you, Johannes where are you?"	Question
N: "Over here. I wonder where you himself are ? "	
M: " Who are you? "	Question
N: " I am Johannes's wife."	
M: " Show me! Aah, welcome! My name is Marek."	Direction Explanation
N: " My name is Pille-Riina."	
M: " Ah-ahaa. What shall we do, whether we'll go to the cinema or?"	Support suggestion
N: " I would like to go with Johannes, so... Where is he?"	
M: " I don't know, maybe he is really in the cinema."	Explanation
N: "He probably is. Let's see whether he is? "(Looks into the lego house)." No, he isn't in the cinema. Johannes is not there?"	
M: in a thin voice : " Hello! I want to slide here. Hello! " (Slides down the slide).	Explanation
N: "It is actually for motorbikes. Motorbikes slide here down."	
M: " I see. I'll see whether I can get one motorbike."	Support Explanation
N: "Yes, slide down there! Oh, it's Johannes's!" (Screaming).	
N: "I'll take another one. Aah, I know. "	
M: " A new friend came here to us. Who is it?"	Explanation Question
N takes lego bricks from his sister away.	
M: " Why are you taking them away? "	Non-prom.
N: "These are mine."	
M tells the sister, giving toys-legos: "See...put it onto the motorbike as well!"	
N: "Oh, I found Johannes. Marek! "(shouts in a very loud voice)	
M: "Don't shout!"	Non- prom.
N: " Marek, Marek, where are you? "	
M: " Hello! To-whit to whoo!"	Support
N: " I start sliding by the motorbike. Where is that red-bodied motorbike? Ah, I've found it already. This... Johannes himself is red too."	
M deals with the sister meanwhile.	
N: " Mummy, do you know your Marek?"	
M: " Me? Do I actually know anyone called Marek or ..."	Non- prom.
N: " Yes."	
M: " No, I don't."	
N: " I have heard about Marek somewhere."	
M to the sister: " What thing is it? It probably comes here. I don't know."	
N: " Meanwhile I trr-trr-trr. Who wants to slide here by the motorbike? "	
M: "I'll slide without the motorbike."	Explanation
N: " Who wants? I'll also ride a motorbike." Makes sounds. " Trr-trr-trr! " Slides down with motorbike.	
M: "Listen! Is the treasure still there?"	Direction, question
N: "I'll see." (Makes sounds, looks behind the toy box).	
M: "Go and check! "	Direction

N: "Yes, it is. Mm-mm-mm."(Makes sounds).	Explanation
M: " I have found some more treasure."	
N: " Show !"	Direction
M: "Take it there too!"	
N: " It's not treasure."	Explanation
M: " Yes. It is...then I have found a crystal vase."	
N: "Give it to me! "	Question
M: " What will you do with it? "	
N: "I'll drink from it."	Support Question
M: "Ahaa. What is it?"	
N: " A bath."	Support Question
M: "Ahaa. Where are the feet washed?"	
N: "Oh, I've found a treasure, I found a treasure." N has found something behind the toys box. The sister goes to the bathroom with her mother. N plays alone, utters sounds, looks at lego bricks, bites them open with his teeth. Puts the pipe (toy trumpet) into his mouth. Hums. The play continues. The mother is with the children. They put the music tape on again.	
M shouts loudly: " Johannes, where are you?"	Question
N (shouting): "Yes. Here, on top of the motorbike."	
M: " You have got lost again somewhere?. "	Question
N: " Let's go home. "	Labelling Question
M: " Home. Are we going home? What shall we do there at home?"	
N: " Let's go to the balcony."	Support
M: " Well? "	
N: "No, it's not your balcony."	Question
M: " Aren't you coming home? "	
N: "See, this is your house !"	Suggestion Question
M: " Could we eat one pizza? Have you got a pizza at home? Don't you have anything ready in the oven? "	
N and M look for pizza made from lego brick.	
N: " I'm afraid not."	Explanation
M: "Ahaa, see I found. "(finds a small button). "Let's eat!"	Suggestion
N: " I'll fry it ready."	Direction
M: "Make it ready, yes!"	
N: "Yes, I'll fry it ready."	Labelling
N: "Ready."	Explanation
M eats: " Yummy-yummy-yummy "(pretends eating). " Listen, I have bought red trousers for me. "(Puts the trousers on to her man).	
N: "Show me! Aach, those red ones! "	Direction
M: "Give me, I'll put them on!"	Explanation
(Mother gives a kind of small thing to Neeme). I bought ones for you as well.	Offering play material
N: "I need grey ones."	
M: "Well, come, come! Give me, I'll put some on."	Direction
N: "I'll take then feets for me. I'll buy green trousers for me."	

M: "Buy, you don't take them away from anyone!"	Direction
N: " He gave me."	
M: "Who he? "	Question
N: "He is a shop assistant."	
M: "What shall we do now? Shall we go riding? What shall we do now? Look, there is that bomb explosion! Maybe suddenly it will explode. Pick it up!"	Question Suggestion Explanation
N: "What comb? "	
M: "Bomb."	Labelling
N: "Help, it soon will start exploding. It 10 minutes, 5 minutes, still, then it will explode..."	
M: "Let's go and hide quickly."	Suggestion
N: " Ah yes. SS-ss-ss." Turns around, potters at the crane lorry.	
N: "Bang!"	
M: " Bang."	Labelling
N. "Explosion?"	
M: "Explosion already."	Explanation
N: "Come out of the wall. Let's go to the balcony! Did you see, mummy, what ...Oh, mother see, what kind of a home you have built. Did you see, mummy home?"	
M: " Where my home is? What shall we offer him? What is that rear house?"	Question Question
N: "It is a treasure chamber."	
M: "Ciao - I'll go home."	Explanation
N: " I'll go as well. Come too! "(As if going away).	
Mother has got a doll in her hand: " Hello! I have found one more pizza!"	Explanation
N: "Yes, we also have a pizza at home. We have similar pea pizza. "	
M: " Maybe you would like to taste it too?"	Question
N: " No." N does not want to eat pizza.	
M: "Then I'll go and eat myself."	Explanation
N: " I'll go home and eat too. I eat with children too. (Has put his toys behind the box, can't be seen with a camera).	
Mother asks whether N would like to watch TV. N does not want.	Non-prom.
N shouts: " Mummy, let's play a little more that game. (emphasized)	
N calls out: " Marek, where are you?"	
M: "Oh, I am sleeping."	Explanation
N: "I bought for you a new cap."	
M: " Oh, how lovely. Show me! "	Support Suggestion
N: "Don't look at it! "	
M: "Oh dear! What shall I do with such a cap? "	Question
N: " Why? I'll try."	
M: " Wait, I'll try. Buy me a better cap! With some kind of peak."	Suggestion
N: Looks for among his toys. Speaks: " Oh, I am looking for."	
M: "Oh, I..."	Support
N: "I have got everything in red. Look how red I am!"	
M: " Listen, let's go and make soap bubbles!"	Non-prom.
They start blowing soap bubbles.	

### Anna's solitary play – tickets making play

The solitary play started so that Anna (A) began to look for something in the living-room cupboard. Mother (M) was sitting in the living room together with guests.

M from A: "What are you looking for there?"	Question
A: "I start making tickets."	
M: "What for? What are the tickets for? Where can I get with Those tickets?"	Question Question
A: " Who wants to join the play, the one gets the ticket as well. I'll Make."	
A.: "I am making tickets. I am making a game, there you'll I have to take tickets. One, two, three..."	
M called from another room: "Anna, where can one get with Those tickets?"	Question
A: " Into one game."	
M: "But what game is it?"	Question
A: " It is a raffle game."	
M: " Ahhaa, raffle. Lottery ticket."	Support
A: "No."	
M: "It is not a lottery ticket?"	Question
A.: "No, its name is also a raffle, but a different kind. One, two..."	
M: "Ahhaa."	Support
A cuts "tickets" out of colored paper. While she is talking: " Now there'll be four, the third one has been done, the fourth... "	
The grown-ups are watching TV at the same time. A is cutting numbers while speaking what she is doing: "Five, six, seven. I made a seven."	
A: "Nine, ten, ten is a large number. Eleven, twelve.... Now come fourteen..."	
M called from another room: "Don't you want larger scissors? Where are your scissors? "	Question Question
A:"I don't know."	
A: " Tickets are ready." Goes to her mother into another room and says: "I thought of making a play." Takes a dice game and game pieces from the cupboard. But changes her mind and starts drawing.	
A: "Here into the circle there will be number ones, here twos. You have to write your name in the back of the paper. I'll colour the circles. One, two,.... If you get a six, you can move two places forward. It is such a game "	
A draws alone for a long time.	
A called: " Who wants to come and buy tickets of the play?"	
A to the M: " Mother, I'll also make you some money."	
M: " Money as well? But make the money in another colour otherwise it will be confusing. Make it from the yellow; there is some yellow paper still left! But what is it for? " But what is it for? "	Support Suggestion Question

<p>A repeated again: " It is, it is a play."</p> <p>M: " A play? "</p> <p>A: " Why are you asking all the time? "</p> <p>M: "I want to know too."</p> <p>A : " It is possible to get the money from there when you don't want to play any more, then you will get money as well. I thought the play out this way. "</p> <p>A: " Number are not necessary to be made on here. "</p> <p>M: " How do you know then where your money is? "</p> <p>A: "I want such a play ."</p> <p>M: "Mh."</p> <p>A: " threes are to be cut immediately. It takes place with a three. You can get more from here. "</p> <p>A. goes on with the cutting; mother goes to the kitchen.</p> <p>A calls out to the mother in the kitchen: " A roll, one roll, paper roll!"</p> <p>M brings paper for her child and goes back to the kitchen.</p> <p>A continued that games with her brother.</p>	<p>Question</p> <p>Explanation</p> <p>Question</p> <p>Support</p> <p>Offering play material</p>
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### Mother-Kalev joint play with small toys

The game was played in the living room around the table. Kalev (K) had taken a toy-bird and the mother (M) had taken a toy-squirrel.

<p>The mother addresses her son and says "Let's make a theatre. We have got audience as well. What shall we do?" The mother put big plastic glasses on and asked from Kalev: "Do the glasses suit me?" K answered that they did. After that they discussed together, who takes what toy into the play. The mother told the son not to start playing with some awful toy. K said: "Let's play."</p>	<p>Suggestion Question Question</p>
<p>That was followed by a play between the mother and the son so that K held the bird in his hand and the mother played-moved with the squirrel on the table. The mother said: "Hello!" K: "Hello!"</p>	<p>Support</p>
<p>M: "Where is your birdie flying? Ah, where is your birdie flying? Ah, where is that nest? Ah, where is the nest?"</p>	<p>Question Question</p>
<p>K: "In the tree". M: "In the tree. Do you have any young birds?"</p>	<p>Support Question</p>
<p>K: "Yes, I do." M: "How many?"</p>	<p>Question</p>
<p>K: "Four". M: "Four young birds."</p>	<p>Support</p>
<p>K: "Yes." M: "How old are the young birds? Are they girls or boys?"</p>	<p>Question</p>
<p>K: "Boys." M: "Boys. The young birds. Are they all boys?"</p>	<p>Support Question</p>
<p>K: "No, they are not". M: "Well, how many girls are there?" K: " Three."</p>	<p>Question</p>
<p>The mother corrected: "Then the majority of them are girls and one boy?" K: "Yes"</p>	<p>Explanation</p>
<p>M: "Three girls and one boy (laughing). Where are you going to fly now?" K: "Into the nest."</p>	<p>Explanation Question</p>
<p>M: "Who you would like to be in the play? Shall I give you some more animals?"</p>	<p>Question Suggestion</p>
<p>K. "Yes.". He came to mother and started choosing the toys. M offers animals for her son. She finds a toy for herself. K picked a butterfly as the next animal for himself, as it was his friend. The mother had two toys in her hands: a prrot and a squirrel.</p>	<p>Offering play material</p>
<p>The play continued. M: " Sing a butterfly song! M demonstrated singing. I am a butterfly la-la-laa.).</p>	<p>Direction Explanation</p>

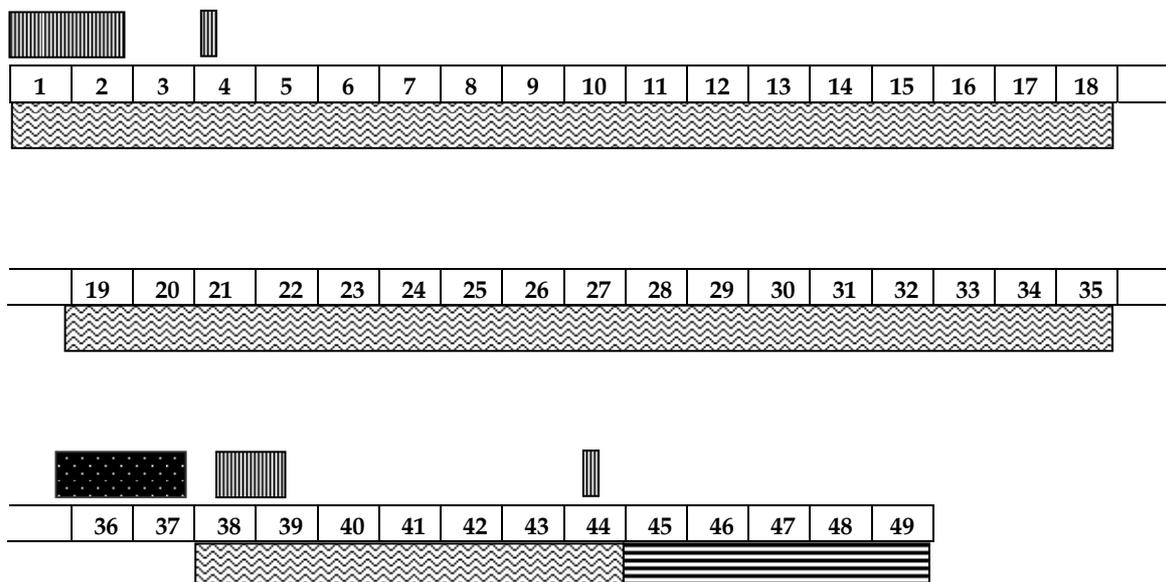
K laughed. There was a slight pause after which K said to his mother: " Well, tell me!"	
M. in a loud voice: "Butterfly, hold on!"	Direction
K: "What is it?"	
M: "Where are you going to? Butterfly, where are you going to?"	Question
K: "To find flowers."	
M: "What are you going to do with flowers?"	Question
K: "I want to go to sleep onto the flower."	
M: "To sleep onto the flower. (She looks towards the toy box). Aren't there any flowers there?"	Support Question
K: "No."	
The mother took a small toy from the toy box, handed it to her son and said: "Let's make pretend that it is a flower."	Suggestion Offering play material
But K says: " No and gave that thing back to his mother and went to another room. K told the mother that he had to start cutting the flowers out. He asked for scissors from his mother and brought paper and a pencil.	
After that the M draw a blossom and K cut and painted a blossom. In five minutes K's flower is ready. The mother says: "Very beautiful".	Support
K: "Let's play on, let's play on, let's play now on!"	
M: "Let's play, let's play."	Suggestion
K: "Let's do again, so that you'll speak!"	
M: "Then I'll speak that, butterfly, butterfly, where are you flying?"	Explanation
The mother has got a squirrel, the son a butterfly, he puts the flower onto the table.	
K: "To look for flowers."	
M: "What are you going to do with the flower?"	Question
K: "I want to sleep on the flower."	
M: "Why?"	Question
K: "I am sleepy."	
M: "But if the flower closes. What will happen then? Then you can't get out any more."	Question Question
K: "I can."	
M: "How?"	Question
K: "I'll pull the flower stalks open."(Meanwhile holds the butterfly with two hands).	
The mother corrects: "Blossoms."	Explanation
K: "Yes."	
M: "Ahaa, well, then go! Good bye!"	Support
K: "Good bye!"	
K put the butterfly onto the blossom. The mother called out in a loud voice: "Butterfly, butterfly, wake up!"	Suggestion
K in a sleepy voice: "What is it?"	
M in a motherly voice: "Are you very sleepy?"	Question
K: "Yeah."	
M: "Better come to play with us! Come to run with us! (Takes a parrot n addition to the squirrel) Let's run. Uhuu...(in a loud voice)	Suggestion
K comes to the mother's animals with his butterfly.	
M: "You say that you can't run, you can only fly?"	Question

<p>K repeated: "I can't run, I can only fly."  M: "Fly then! Well!"  K is making sounds: "Uhui, uhuu" (depicts the flying of the butterfly) and the mother chases him with the squirrel and parrot.  M: "Aren't you sleepy any more?"  K: "Yes, I am."  M: "What is it then?"  K: "I am still sleepy."  M: "Those are not stalks, those are blossoms."  M: "Then go and sleep a little! We will also go into our nests."  K put the butterfly onto the flower and said: "The stalks will shut up."</p> <p>The mother made a suggestion to start drawing a picture for the aunt.</p>	<p>Suggestion</p> <p>Question</p> <p>Question</p> <p>Explanation</p> <p>Suggestion</p>
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## APPENDIX 3

### Ludograph examples of children's solitary games and joint games with mother

#### Neeme's solitary play with legos



- 1- 35 min. Neeme solitary play with legos
- 38- 44 min. Neeme's solitary play with legos



- 36-37 min. Mother, Neeme and the little sister's joint activity- Neeme looks for his little sister in the wardrobe

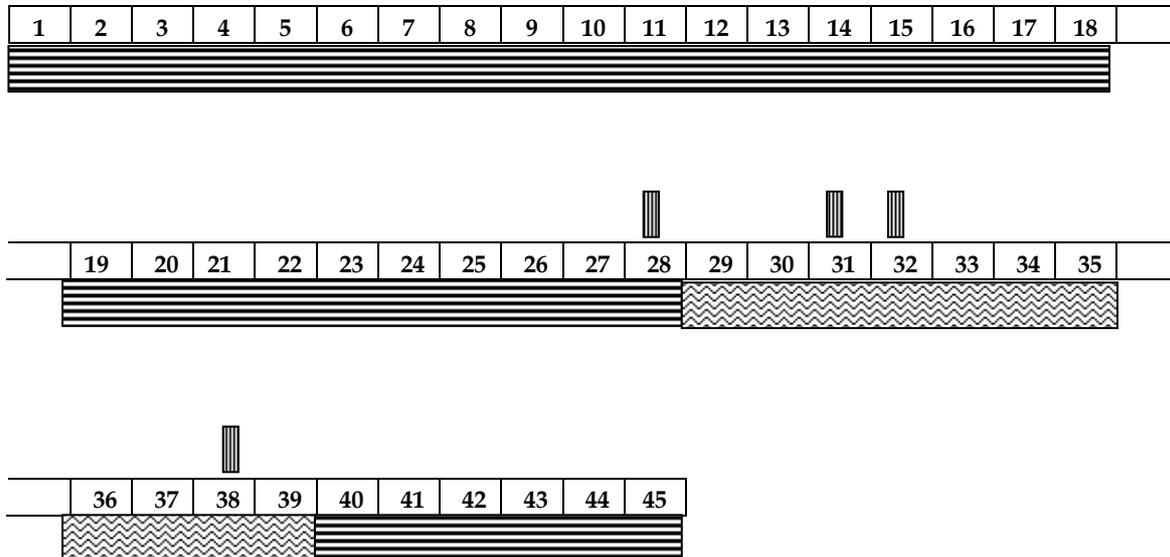


- 45- 49 min. Neeme's solitary activity (on the computer, looks for toys from the toy box)



- 1-2 min. Neeme-mother conversation about space ship and rocket.
- 4 min. Mother makes a proposal to build something more to Kalaksiina
- 38-39 min. Mother helps Neeme to look for lost toys, they speak about toys
- 44 min. Neeme asks for help from his mother in disassembling Lego bricks.

### Toomas' solitary play



- 1-28 min. Toomas solitary activity - watching TV, eating in the kitchen
- 40-45 min. Toomas solitary activity - looks for toys, shooting target with a toy-gun

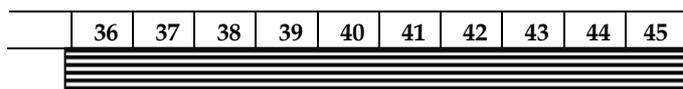
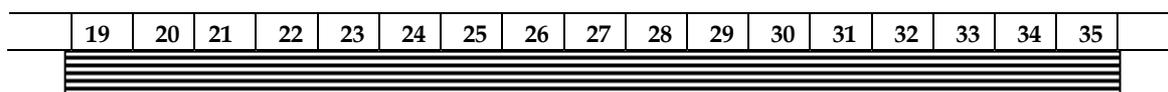
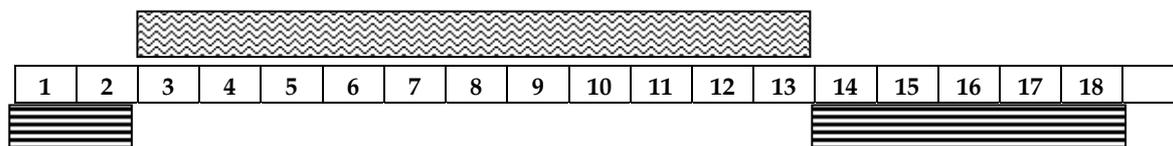


- 29-40 min solitary play



- 28 min. Toomas addressing his mother asks for an electric lead
- 31 min. Toomas asks for plate
- 32 min. Toomas asks for bowl
- 38 min. Toomas asks for big plastic bowl from the mother

## Nele - mother joint domino game

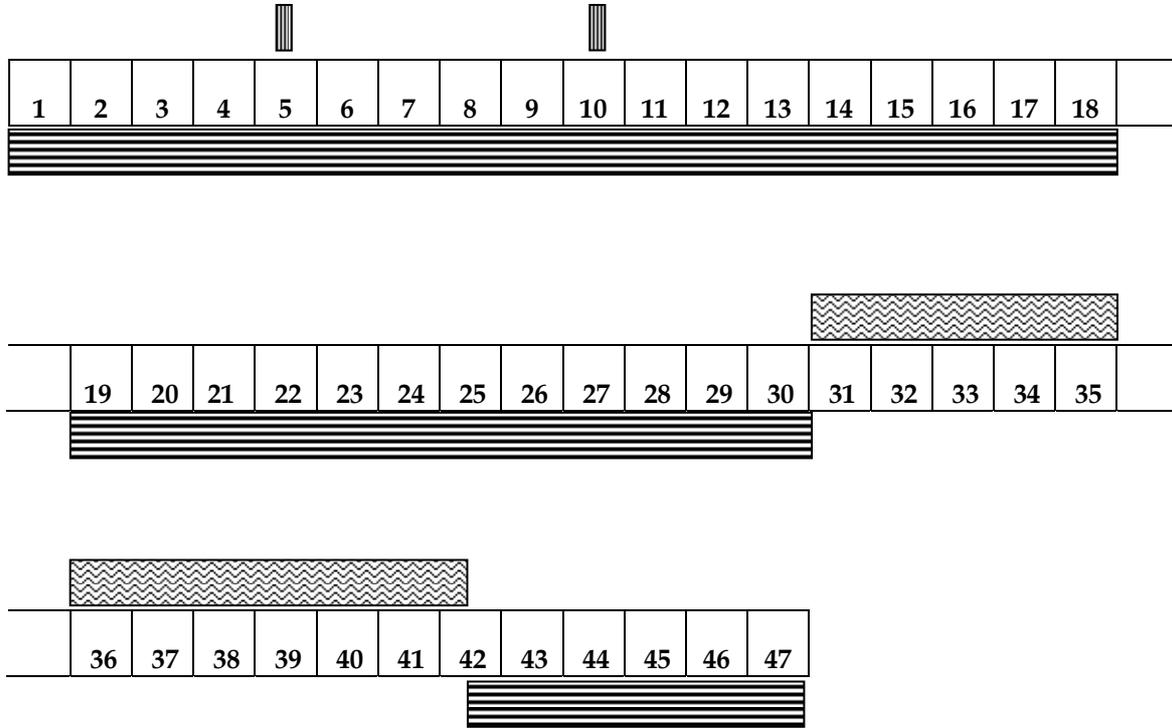


- 1-2 min. Nele solitary activity - eating alone.
- 14- 45 min. Nele eating together with the mother (communications, where to go to walk, about the favourite toy-cub of a bear, bewitching)



- 3-13 min. Nele-mother joint game (initiated by mother)-picture domino

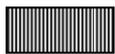
**Mother-Anna joint writing game**



- 1 - 30 min. Anna's solitary activity -cuts paper, looks for toys among the toys box. Looks at the book, has a meal in the kitchen, has a meal in the kitchen.
- 42 - 47 min. Solitary activity- looks for drawing paper, puts sticker into the sticker album



- 31-42 min. Anna-mother joint play (initiated by mother) - Writing play



- 5 min. Mother invites to play once
- 10 min. Mother invites to play twice

**APPENDIX 4**

**Examples of meaning maps about Toomas mother's view of play and activities**





**Toomas' mother view of play setting**

