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Early childhood, breakfast, and related tools: analysis of adults' function as mediators

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Abstract

This study presents the results of a systematic, 3-month-long observation of the verbal and gestural interactions which took place between a preschool teacher and six children aged between 23 and 34 months during breakfast at Emmi Pikler preschool in Budapest. The aim was to analyze access to the conventional use of everyday tools during this activity. The complementary nature of the lag sequential analysis and polar coordinate analysis techniques enabled an in-depth exploration of how the adult–object–child triad evolved and varied in each case. The results revealed that the gradual introduction of tools and adaptation to each child's individual differences, in accordance with their specific level of autonomy, helped children regulate their conduct toward increasingly socialized mealtime behaviors.

Keywords Early childhood education · Mealtime · Uses of tools · Systematic observation · Lag sequential analysis · Polar coordinate analysis

During the first few years of their lives, children gradually acquire different behaviors and skills as a result of their interactions with caregivers. According to Rogoff (1990), by the second year of their lives, children and their caregivers will have negotiated a wide range of interactive routines which

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