

Abstract OFTI 2017

Exaggerative excitement as a way of engaging peers in play in a preschool setting

Although some recent studies have examined how children display emotions as something negotiated and co-constructed, and used as social acts (Goodwin & Goodwin, 2000), the focus has been on negative or problematic practices of social interactions (Fung & Smith, 2010) and positive and desirable behavior (such as 'happiness' and laughter) has received much less attention (but see for example Andrén & Cekaite, 2017). My paper addresses interactional features associated with children's displays of exaggerated excitement in peer group interactions and it discusses the social interactional uses of these displays of emotions. The data consists of video material collected in a Swedish preschool (2-6 of age). Using a multimodal interactional analysis (Goodwin, 2000), I explore how children's excitement is co-constructed turn-by-turn and will show the complexity in the use of emotional stances that are usually considered as positive. I argue that the way in which excitement is used as a social resource for engaging and inviting other peers to joint play is highly socializing and carries moral components. In conclusion, I suggest that whether an emotion display (when used as a communicative tool to address and engage in peer play) is 'positive' or not depends on the recipient response. By carefully researching the use of excitement as a communicative act, this complexity is visualized. The study argues that the examination of the embodied character of emotion displays excitement contributes to a broader understanding of interactional competence.