

THE SPONTANEOUS VOCALISATIONS OF TWO- TO THREE-YEAR-OLDS IN DAYCARE SETTINGS

Susan Young

University of Surrey, Roehampton, London, UK

Background

There have been several prior studies of young children's spontaneous vocalisations in free-play and arising from these a broad similarity of findings. However, in the detail of the findings there are differences and ambiguities. Furthermore, most studies have focused on three- to five-year-olds attending kindergarten and nursery education; younger children are less represented. Methods of data collection and analysis have been determined, for the most part, by an interest in identifying the emergence of conventional song forms and young children's developing ability to sing. These foci have biased studies away from a concern to understand children's spontaneous singing as situated activity within the context of their general play in everyday settings.

Aims

This small-scale study aimed to provide information which would assist in the process of extending and clarifying the findings of earlier studies. In particular, it aimed to do this by collecting information from younger children (2-3 years old) and information which contextualises spontaneous singing within play.

Method

The regular occupants (six to eight children) of the playroom for two- to three-year-olds in a daycare in London UK were observed during a free play period of approximately one hour over a sequence of six weekly visits. Details of their spontaneous vocalising, together with details of their general play activity, were collected. Categories were generated from a process of comparing this information and cross-referring the emerging categories with those generated from prior research.

Results and Conclusions

The observational data was analysed into categories of vocal play which are similar to those which have emerged from prior studies. There were some variations which, it is proposed, are mostly attributable to the younger ages of the children observed and to the differences in the methods adopted by this study. The emphasis on studying spontaneous singing as a situated activity drew attention to its multi-modal connections with the child's body movement, the movement of toys and to its role within social interactions with others.