



Mavrou, K. (2012) 'Examining peer acceptance in verbal and non-verbal interaction during computer supported collaborative learning: Implications for Inclusion'. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 16(2), 119-138

Abstract

This paper discusses the results of peer acceptance in a study investigating the interactions of pairs of disabled and non-disabled pupils working together on computer-based tasks in mainstream primary schools in Cyprus. Twenty dyads of pupils were observed and videotaped while working together at the computer. Data analyses were based on the collaborative nature of events for non-verbal interaction and the functional-structural approaches for verbal interaction. Findings gave an important insight into the interactions among disabled and non-disabled pupils working together at the computer, indicating that peer (non)acceptance came through:

1. response to the peer, articulated through verbal moves that included reply, feedback, evaluation, agree and justify, in both collaborative and non-collaborative events;
2. peer involvement, reflected in requesting involvement of the peer, mainly in collaborative and socio-emotional positive events;
3. individualistic behaviour, present through ignoring the peer in situations of on- and off-task non-collaboration; and
4. peer rejection, containing reaction and protest towards the peer in non-collaborative on- and off-task events as well as socio-emotional negative situations.

Main findings

While examining peer acceptance through response to the peer, peer involvement, individualistic behaviour and peer rejection, a number of relationships and interconnections among various verbal movements and actions were revealed. These relationships, which are discussed separately in each of the above sections, cumulatively gave a peer acceptance interaction protocol. Part of this leads to motivation, and indirectly to positive social interaction and affection. In cases of individualistic behaviour in the context of non-collaborative off-task events, peers act individually, ignoring each other's actions, mostly due to one's (usually the disabled child's) disruptive actions. This situation has a two-way relationship with peer rejection: being ignored may cause reaction and/or protest, while at the same time a reaction may cause an individualistic attitude. However, even if initially this interaction is socially and emotionally negative, it eventually prompts the more focused partner (usually the non-disabled child) to warn their teammate and bring their attention back to the task. Consequently, they invite and motivate their peer to get involved in the activity and in positive interaction.

The interaction styles identified with respect to peer acceptance reinforced the positive interaction model of motivation and self-confidence, also identified as interaction protocols in this study. Peer acceptance, as an interactional situation, derived from the core of inclusive education. The study's findings showed that in computer-supported collaborative learning, pupils motivated each other to participate in the activity and the whole interactional process. Children were very responsive and receptive to each other. Hence, response indicated that children 'accepted' each other's conversational contribution, which indirectly signals 'accepting' the presence of the other in the collaborative process. From the point of view of the emotional gains of this interaction, interpersonal were positive and indicated that the teammates 'matter' to each other. Individualistic and rejecting behaviour,



as part of the results for peer acceptance, was limited to particular cases. In other words, peer acceptance was distorted when one of the participants obstructed mutual goals and disrupted collaboration.

Given the very limited cases of such interaction in the area of peer acceptance, the relationships among the interactional processes investigated comprised a protocol that led to motivation and positive social interaction and affection. The computer, as a mediational scaffolding agent of the above areas of interaction, offered different possibilities for interaction and activity engagement, through the multimedia environment, the sensory-motor opportunities of participation and the motivational value of technology per se. As research supports, in collaborative learning the computer maintains interaction and releases language. The interaction patterns identified in the data analysis can provide a useful framework for the design of computer-based collaboration and interaction in inclusive education.

Web link for additional information

<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13603111003671657?journalCode=tied20#.UZoAdKJTApq>