

MANEUVERING THROUGH THE THOUGHT STREAM: INVESTIGATING PRESCHOOLERS' THOUGHTS ABOUT THOUGHTS

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OBJECTIVES / PURPOSE

STUDY 1: EXPLORATORY STUDY

- What are preschoolers capable of in terms of metacognition and self-efficacy?
- How effectively can preschoolers communicate these skills?

STUDY 2: DEVELOPMENT STUDY

- What common factors can help children to communicate their metacognition and self-efficacy abilities in conversations with teachers?
- What specific inquiries can prompt children to express metacognition and self-efficacy abilities?
- What structures surrounding these inquiries can support the questioning and therefore successfully elicit child thought?

STUDY 3: IMPLEMENTATION STUDY

- How successful is the Elicitation Model in the classroom setting?
- What are the model's limits in the classroom setting?
- How understandable and applicable is the model for educators in the field?

METHODS

STUDY 1: EXPLORATORY STUDY

- Study 1 took place at the University of Delaware Laboratory Preschool in the 4-year-old classroom. In an in-depth case-study format, three children and their thoughts and abilities were investigated through conversations and picture-ordering tasks. Audio recordings, work samples, pictures of work, and field notes from classroom observations of the children were collected as documentation.

STUDY 2: DEVELOPMENT STUDY

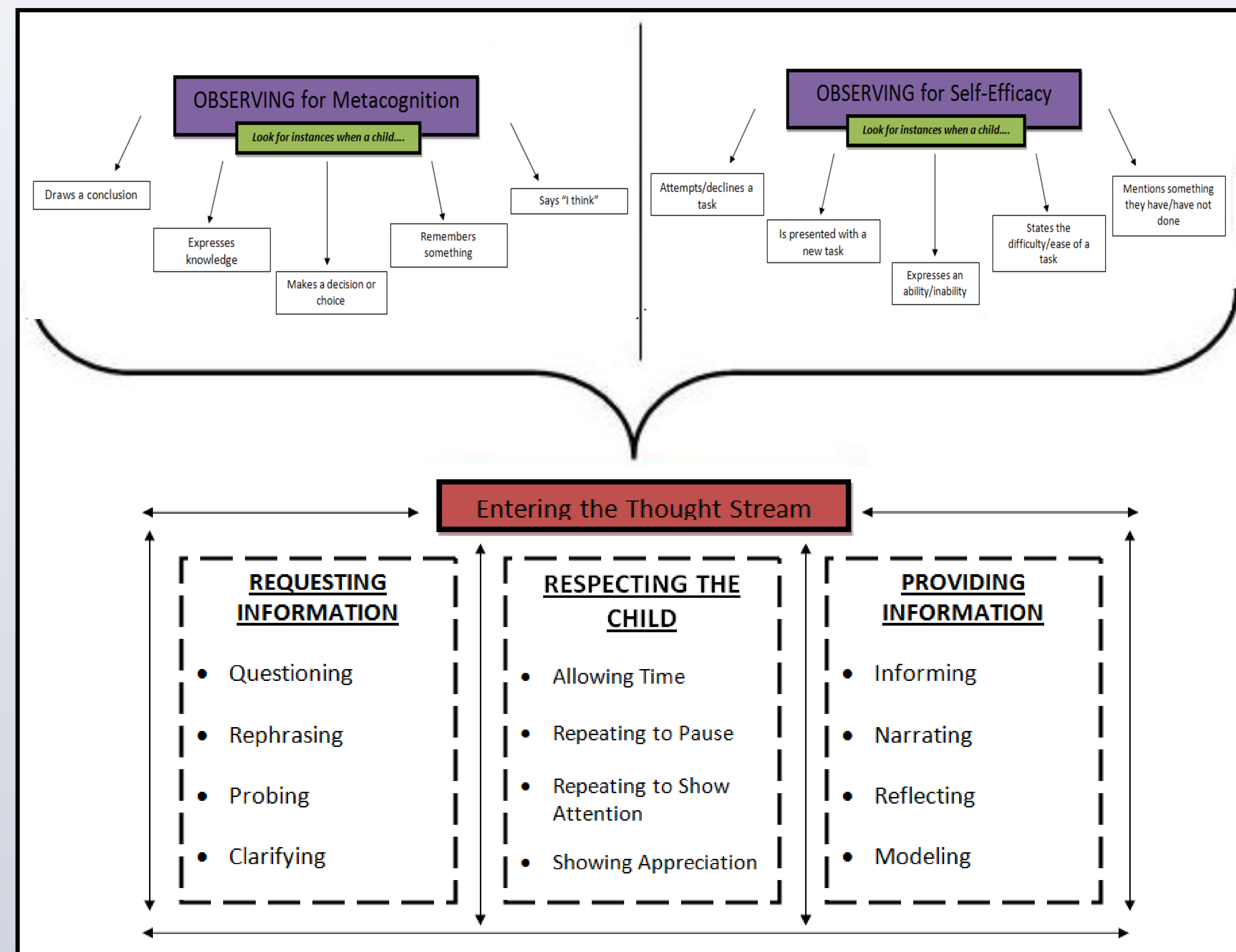
- Study 2 utilized coding of transcripts from Study 1's audio recordings. Inter-coder agreement was established through collaboration with Dr. Cynthia Paris. The coding process first focused on identifying questions presented to the children in Study 1 which were consistently followed by in-depth child-responses. The process then focused on identifying the common structures of conversation that supported these effective questions. 14 strategies were identified, in 5 over-arching categories.

STUDY 3: IMPLEMENTATION STUDY

- Study 3 took place in the same classroom as Study 1. Three educators of varying education level were trained in the model and provided supports for the use of the model within the classroom. The supports were altered and improved through a cyclical analysis process. The educators implemented the model with all 18 children in the classroom during Activity Centers. Written observations and written notes on conversations with the educators served as documentation of the effectiveness and ineffectiveness of the implementation process.

ELICITATION MODEL

VISUAL: FINAL ELICITATION MODEL



RESULTS

The product of the research project is the Elicitation Model, shown above. The model utilizes 14 strategies, under 5 categories, for structuring conversations which prompt child-expression of metacognition and self-efficacy ability.

- 1) **Observing** : The educator finds an appropriate time to start a conversation with a child about thinking or ability. This strategy requires watching and listening.
- 2) **Entering the Thought Stream**: The educator enters into the thoughts of a child without interrupting those thoughts. This strategy utilizes *observing*.
- 3) **Requesting Information**: The educator prompts conversation about metacognition or self-efficacy with inquiry.
 - **Questioning**: Asking a new question to a child, regarding a new topic
 - **Rephrasing**: Repeating a question, but asking it in a different way
 - **Probing**: Asking questions that relate to but extend beyond the content of the original question
 - **Clarifying**: Asking a child to repeat or explain a response of unclear meaning
- 4) **Respecting the Child**: The educator demonstrates respect for the child, forming an environment in which the child feels comfortable enough to respond to requests for information.
 - **Allowing Time**: Pausing after requesting information; letting the child think without pressure
 - **Repeating to Pause**: Saying a child's response back to them to focus on the response
 - **Repeating to Show Attention**: Saying a child's response back to them to show that the response was heard
 - **Showing Appreciation**: Showing excitement and admiration for a child's response
- 5) **Providing Information**: The educator gives the child information to support the context of the conversation.
 - **Informing**: Giving the child factual information about the topic at hand
 - **Narrating**: Verbally commenting on important, unspoken actions of the child
 - **Reflecting**: Bringing past ideas together and discussing them in the current situation
 - **Modeling**: Giving the child age-appropriate structures which can be used by the child in similar situations

CONCLUSIONS

LIMITATIONS IN CURRENT FORM:

- 1) In its current form, the model is dependent on spoken language skills, conversational ability, and English proficiency. Various populations of children may be unable to interact with the current model:
 - Non-verbal children
 - Children without English proficiency
 - Children with Hearing Impairments
 - Children with Social, Emotional, and/or Behavioral Disorders
 - Children with various Special Needs
- 2) The model currently requires that educators reach the goals of an activity while also reaching the goals of the model simultaneously. The required pedagogical skill and effort is not feasible for daily use in all settings. There is a need for formal integration of the model within classroom activities to reduce the skill level and effort required.

REMAINING QUESTIONS:

- Can the model apply to a broader population of children with a range of skills and needs?
- Can the model be embedded within the curriculum?
- Can the model give more children the opportunity to develop positive approaches to learning for use throughout their lives?

FUTURE STEPS

SUMMER 2012: CURRICULUM FOCUS

- During Summer Scholars at the University of Delaware, the project will continue under the guidance of Dr. Cynthia Paris with the purpose of embedding the Elicitation Model and strategies throughout the preschool classroom curriculum. The focus will be integration into the literacy curriculum within whole group settings, small group settings, transitions, and daily routines. Research will take place in a preschool classroom at the Newark Early Learning Center at the University of Delaware.
- Extending the model to a wider population of children in a wider range of classroom activities is the objective of this stage, with sub-objectives of promoting kindergarten readiness and promoting positive approaches to learning in young children.

FALL 2012: IMPLEMENTATION FOCUS

- During Fall 2012, the curriculum methodology developed in Summer 2012 will be implemented in an inclusive preschool classroom within my Student Teaching placement, required for the Early Childhood Education major. The implementation will span nine weeks, with two weeks of particularly intense focus on the model. All children, regardless of special needs or levels of language ability, will be involved in implementation. All areas of classroom activity will also be involved.
- Findings will be added to all prior findings and then analyzed, documented, and disseminated.