

# Structured Observation of Children’s Play with Teacher Impression Scale a test among Swedish Preschool Teachers

Maria Gladh<sup>1</sup>, Eva Siljehag<sup>1</sup>, Mara Westling Allodi<sup>1</sup>, Samuel L Odom<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Special Education, Stockholm University, <sup>2</sup>University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

## Background

Children with special educational needs (SEN) could risk become less included in **play** with peers in inclusive early childhood education (ECE) without appropriate **support**. According to several research studies and official reports this also applies to the Swedish ECE context, where 85 % of all children aged 1-5 (2018) are enrolled in predominantly inclusive preschools.

For ECE professionals and researchers **to plan for** support and **interventions** for increased peer interaction in play between **children with SEN and without SEN, observations with a functional approach** could be viable, as also children without formal diagnosis, could have SEN. That is, observing social behaviours as these appears in different play situations in natural settings, rather than with starting-point in traditional disability categories. The Teacher Impression Scale (TIS) may serve this purpose.

## Teacher Impression Scale

- is an **informal rating scale** for structured observations of children ´s social behaviour in play situations.
- can be used to identify children needing interventions to participate in play with peers, and to plan for and evaluate such interventions.
- has 16 items, rated on five point Likert scale (1= never performs skill, to 5 = frequently performs skill).
- was originally developed for the intervention Play Time/Social Time, which aims to increase interaction in play for children with SEN aged 3-5. This intervention stimulates basic social skills such as sharing, persistence, requesting to share, play organizing, agreeing and helping, through peer-mediated learning.

## Aims

To test the reliability of the Swedish version of Teacher Impression Scale, TIS-S, to evaluate its use for identifying participants for interventions aiming at increasing interaction in play between children with and without SEN, and to explore its social validity for teachers in inclusive Swedish preschools.

## Method

### Participants and settings

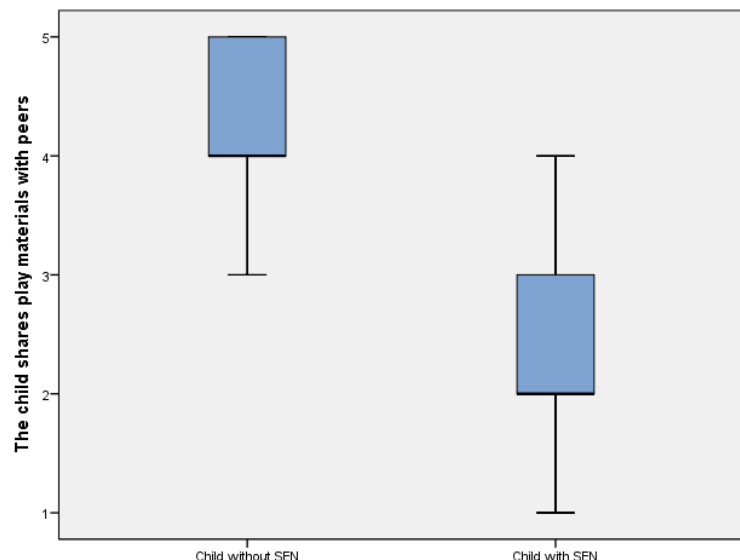
16 teachers at 12 preschools in four Swedish municipalities participated in the study. The teachers conducted observations with TIS-S of two children each aged 3-5, considered of the teachers as having SEN (N=16) and as not having SEN (N=16), and evaluated TIS-S by a Social Validity Survey which followed a three-component definition of social validity.

### Measures

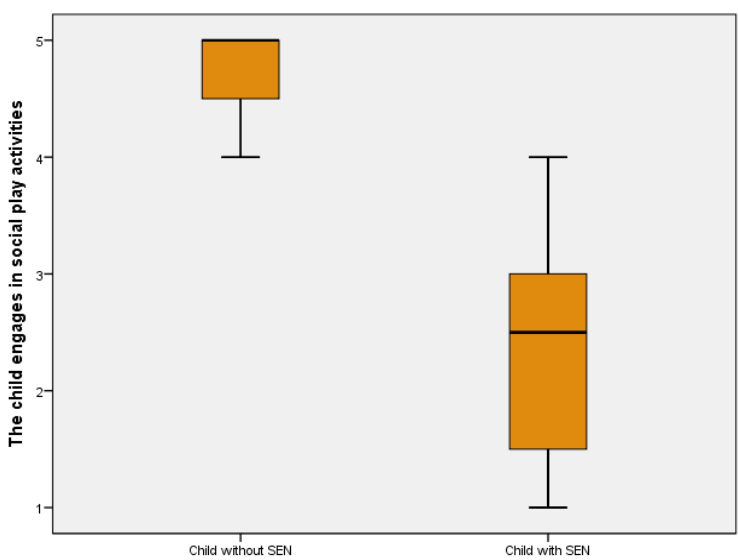
- Teacher Impression Scale the Swedish version (TIS-S)
- Social Validity Survey (fourteen closed and eight open-ended questions)

### Data Analysis

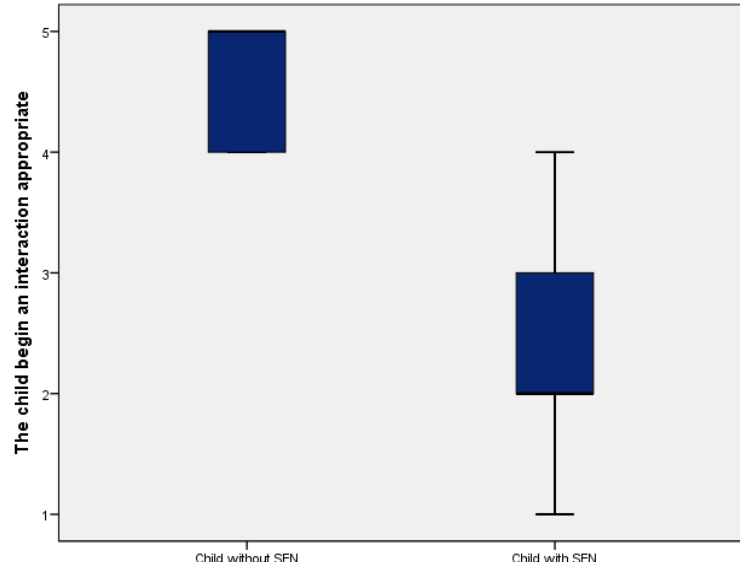
- Descriptive statistics
- Principal Components Analysis
- Thematic Analysis



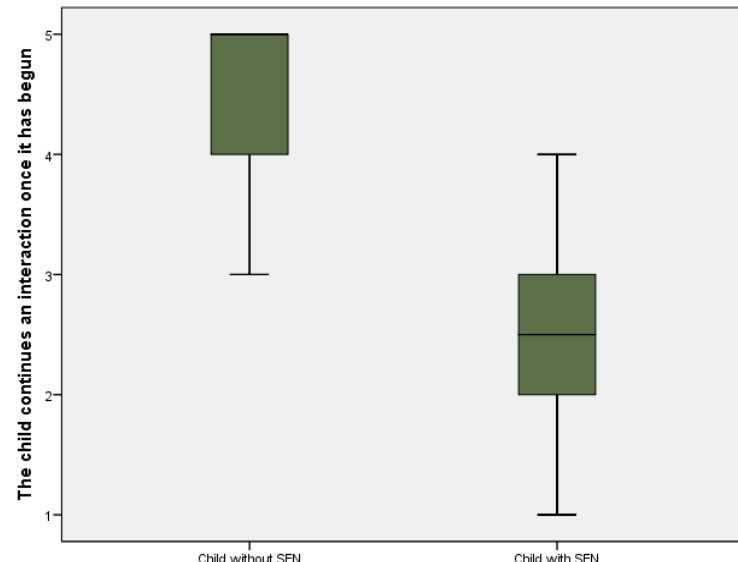
Figur 1. Sharing behaviour in play for children with and without SEN (N=32), 1= never, 5 = frequently



Figur 2. Engaged social play behaviour for children with and without SEN (N=32), 1= never, 5 = frequently



Figur 3. Begin interaction behaviour for children with and without SEN (N=32), 1= never, 5 = frequently



Figur 4. Social endurance behaviour for children with and without SEN (N=32), 1= never, 5 = frequently

## Results

The scale provided satisfactory values of internal consistency, with a Cronbach’s Alpha reliability coefficient of .97.

The scale mean total scores on TIS-S were calculated for all children (N=32; M=56.8; SD=17.1; CI= 50.67-63.01) and for the two groups: children with SEN (N=16; M=43.3; SD=11.46; CI=37.20-49.42) and children without SEN (N=16; M=70.3; SD= 9; CI=65.53-75.21).

The difference between groups was significant (ANOVA child with SEN, child without SEN, F= 54.73, p-value < 0.000).

For the teachers TIS-S was social valid in terms of suitability of observation goals, acceptability of observation procedures and satisfaction with the observations’ results.

Table 1.  
Factor loadings for the items in Teacher Impression Scale with a Principal Component Analysis (N= 32)

Items	Factor loading
1. The child converses appropriately.	.85
2. The child takes turns when playing.	.89
3. The child plays cooperatively.	.91
4. The child varies social behaviour appropriately.	.89
5. The child is persistent at social attempts.	.94
6. The child spontaneously responds to peers.	.90
7. The child appears to have fun.	.81
8. Peers interacting with the child appear to have fun.	.75
9. The child continues an interaction once it has begun.	.91
10. Peers seek out the child for social play.	.83
11. The child uses appropriate social behaviour to begin an interaction.	.93
12. The child enters play activities without disrupting the group.	.83
13. The child suggests new play ideas for a playgroup.	.84
14. The child smiles appropriately at peers during play.	.77
15. The child shares play materials with peers.	.90
16. The child engages in play activities where social interaction might occur.	.89

Note. Teacher Impression Scale (Odom & McConnell, 1997).



Photo: Britannica Image Quest



Photo: Björn Dalin

## Conclusions

The results demonstrates that TIS-S has high internal reliability and indicates that it supported identification of participants for play interventions.

The teachers in Swedish ECE settings perceived TIS-S suitable to clarify children’s needs of support in interactions with peers, to plan for adaptations for all children in the social learning environment and to reflect upon the complexity of children’s social behaviour in play. The study indicates that TIS-S was considered acceptable for the teachers when related to the objectives of socially accessible learning environments.

Further tests of TIS-S in a larger sample are planned with the aim to verify its test-retest reliability, and to evaluate trials of peer-mediated interventions for increased interaction in play for children with SEN.

## Key References

- Luttrupp, A., & Granlund, M. (2010). Interaction - it depends -a comparative study of interaction in preschools between children with intellectual disability and children with typical development. *Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research*, (3), 151.
- Odom, S. L., & McConnell, S. R. (1997). *Play time/social time: Organizing your classroom to build interaction skills* Minneapolis, MN: Institute on Community Integration (UIAP), University of Minnesota, the College of Education & Human Development; Washington, DC]: U.S. Dept. of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, Educational Resources.
- Smogorzewska, J., & Szumski, G. (2018). Developing Preschoolers’ Social Skills: The Effectiveness of Two Educational Methods. *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education*, 65(3), 318–340.

Poster to the International Society of Early Intervention Conference 2019, 25 – 28 June, International Convention Centre Sydney, Australia  
Department of Special Education Stockholm University www@su.se Contact: maria.gladh@specped.su.se



Stockholm  
University

