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Roles of teachers and peers in conflicts between Korean kindergarteners

Heejin Kim*

Ewha Womans University, KOREA

Abstract

The nature and form of teacher and peer mediation in conflicts among 5-year-olds enrolled in kindergarten in Korea were systematically examined. Children were observed during free play on three consecutive days. A total of 278 cases of conflicts were observed and details about the conflict and intervention were coded. Results showed that teachers intervened in about half of the conflicts and that conflicts tended to last longer when there was third party intervention than in other cases. Teachers appeared to be more effective mediators than peers because they played a more active role in the conflict resolution process and utilized a wider range of strategies. When teachers intervened, conflicts were more likely to result in a "win-win" resolution for both parties involved in the conflict. Implications of the findings are discussed.

Keywords: *young children's conflict, teacher intervention, peer intervention*

Introduction

Conflict and conflict resolution have been considered one of the central issues in interpersonal relationships between adults, siblings, or children (Laursen, Hartup, & Koplas, 1996). Since emotional, verbal, or behavioral aggression is likely to be evoked during conflicts between young children, conflicts are usually regarded as undesirable. Nonetheless, during the past two decades, rich data on conflicts between young children have proved that conflicts did not necessarily have a negative effect

* heejin88@ewha.ac.kr

on children's development (Ladd, 2007). Through conflicts, children come to understand relational knowledge and differences in mutual expectations (Miller, 1993), to control their own negative feelings (Katz, Kramer, & Gottman, 1992), to gain convertsational skills (Garvey, 1984; Goodwin & Goodwin, 1987), and to understand personal boundaries (Raffaelli, 1992).

As of today, research efforts on conflicts between young children have been undertaken mainly with three aims: First, there was a cluster of studies that tried to explore the characteristics of conflicts between young peers such as frequencies, issues, strategies, and consequences of conflicts were (Caplan, Vespo, Pedersen, & Hay, 1991; Chung & Asher, 1996; Genishi & Di Paolo, 1982; Laursen, et al., 1996; Shantz, 1987; Shantz & Hobart, 1989). Second type of studies usually aimed at finding the relationships between the positive/negative features of peer conflicts and children's development (Garvey, 1984; Goodwin & Goodwin, 1987; Katz, et al., 1992). Third, there was a group of studies focusing on the associations between the features of peer conflicts and children's relationship with their significant others within children's social environment, such as parents (Crockenberg & Lourie, 1996), siblings (Lockwood, Kitzmann, & Cohen, 2001; Stormshak, Bellanti, & Bierman, 1996), or agemates (Chung & Asher, 1996).

Intervention of adults, especially teachers, in conflicts between young children is the area of research that has been least explored. While there have been extensive research interests in parental role in conflicts between siblings or between peer groups (Siddiqui & Ross, 1999; Ross, Tesla, Kenyon, & Lollis, 1990), there have been little research on the roles teacher played in resolving conflicts between peers (Ma, 2005; Park, 2009). Conflicts among young children in early childhood settings occur within the social context of the settings in which not only peers but teachers interact one another. Therefore, much research on intervention of teachers or peers into the episodes of conflicts between young children should be undertaken.

There may be some similarities between parental and teacher intervention since they are both adults. However, much difference may also be found in between the pattern of parent intervention in sibling conflict at home and that of teacher intervention in peer conflicts at kindergarten since they intervene in different contexts. Up

until now, however, there has been little research done on how teacher mediates conflicts between young children. For instance, in a study done by Malloy and McMurray (1996), teacher intervention was treated as part of the research that aimed at exploring conflicts between normally developing children and children with disabilities. Arcaro-McPhee, Doppler and Harkins (2002), conducting a case study with one 4-year-old child, described the role of teacher who mediated conflicts between young children briefly. In their study on observing how the young child defused conflicts with agemates, teacher was found to provide children with an opportunity to express their feelings, to understand other children's perspectives, and to respect conflict resolution strategies given by other children. The suggestions on teachers' role in resolving conflicts between children, made by DeVries and Zan (1995), were not derived from empirical studies.

It has been controversial whether or not it is desirable for either teacher or parent to engage in sibling or peer conflicts. Those who oppose adult intervention insist that young children tend to resolve conflicts by themselves without adult's help or mediation (Genish & Di Paolo, 1982; Shantz & Hobart, 1989), and only 7.8 % of young children voluntarily asked for help to adult (Chen, Fein, Killen, & Tam, 2001). Therefore, the opponents insist that adult intervention is not necessarily required to settle conflicts between young children. They also insist that adult mediation may take an opportunity of learning through conflictual experiences away from young children because it prevents young children from coming up with their own conflict resolution (Brody & Stoneman, 1987).

In contrast, proponents of adult mediation in peer conflicts stress the importance of adult's support and assistance. They argue that adult intervention provides opportunities to teach justice and fairness to young children (Ross, Filyer, Lollis, Perlman, & Martin, 1994), and because young children do not possess cognitive and social skills suitable for resolving conflicts, they can benefit from adult's help (Dunn, 1988).

When parents did not intervene sibling conflicts, fairness was not maintained and one party tried to control over the other in a socially unacceptable way (Laursen & Hartup, 1989; O'Keefe & Benoit, 1982; Ross et al., 1994). On the other hand, when mother stepped in sibling conflicts, the conflicts tended to be less intense and more

sophisticated strategies were used (Perlman & Ross, 1997). Furthermore, siblings tended to use more positive conflict resolution strategies (Dunn & Munn, 1986), and conflicts were terminated to a condition of 'compromise ending,' in which shared goals of siblings, at least part of it, was accomplished (Siddiqui & Ross, 1999). Conflicts between siblings were settled most effectively when their parents led their children to come up with the solution all by themselves (Siddiqui & Ross, 1999). This finding implied how and in what way sibling's parents engaged, rather than simply whether or not they engaged in conflicts, was more important. Therefore, it is important to search for adult intervention not in a way of having a clear cut of all-or-nothing notion, which indicated whether there is simply adult intervention existed or not, but in such a way of what influence adult intervention can be made on conflicts between young children.

Unlike the existing body of literature on conflicts between young children, this study attempted to identify the critical role not only teachers but also peers played in conflicts between young children. Piaget and Vygotsky have shown contradictory perspectives on the roles of adults and agemates and their theories can apply to child-child conflicts as a process of sociocognitive problem solving. Tudge and Rogoff (1999) summarized the different perspectives Piagetian and Vygotskian theories held on the mechanism of cognitive change through social interaction as well as the ideal role relations with partners with whom young children interacted. According to Piaget's perspective, cooperative relationship, or relationship with agemates, can serve as an ideal condition under which young child leads to cognitive change. In contrast, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory stressed that cognitive development of a child is socially mediated. Vygotsky's notion of the zone of proximal development (ZPD) stressed the role of more skillful or more knowledgeable partners. Thus, Vygotsky stressed that the ideal partner to interact with child is either adults or more competent peers.

As mentioned earlier, Vygotsky and Piaget have different perspectives on the roles of teacher and peer partner in cognitive problem solving process. As of today, there has been little research on the role of agemates in mediating conflicts between their peers. Therefore, it would be interesting to identify what roles teacher and age-

mate play in child-child conflicts having sociocognitive problems, and how each of these interveners has an impact on conflict resolution.

In summary, the purpose of this study was to find out what roles not only teachers but also peers played in resolving peer conflicts. As a result, it would provide a better understanding about the roles of teacher and peer interveners in conflict resolution, and the social contexts in which conflicts between young children occurred.

Method

Participants

The 10 kindergartens selected for this study were all located in Seoul, Korea. If the kindergarten has more than one class for the children of age 5, this study chose only one class randomly. The kindergartens were selected to have the following variables similar in all settings. First, the average age of children was five years and eight months olds (SD = 4.5 years old). Second, the range of the number of children per class was from 33 at maximum to 27 at minimum and the average number of children per class was 30.4 students (SD = 7.2 students). Third, the sex ratio between girls and boys are approximately equal in all the classes. Fourth, all the kindergartens had their children's families middle class in socioeconomic status. The average years of education for children's fathers were 16.8 years (SD = 2.4 years of education), whereas those of mothers were 15.2 years (SD = 2.8 years). Only 15.5 percent of mothers were currently working. Fifth, all the kindergartens implemented the 6th National Kindergarten Curriculum developed and distributed by the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development in Korea, aimed at providing comprehensive education to young children in Korea. Sixth, all the classrooms had one lead teacher who majored in Early Childhood Education and graduated from a four-year university. There were some teacher aids observed but seldom got involved in conflicts between children, therefore, they were not included in this study.

Measure

The data gathered on peer conflicts and on the third party intervention was analyzed as follows. Numbers in the parenthesis represented the percentage of the

intercoder reliability that was calculated after the two coders coded 30% of the total number of the observed conflicts, separately.

The Beginning and Ending of the Conflicts. (88%) The basic unit for observation was peer conflict. When there was teacher or peer intervention involved, it was also included. The starting point of conflict was operationally defined, as Eisenberg and Garvey (1981) pointed out, as "the moment when a child's opposition starts against another child's particular behavior, assertion, or request." The end of peer conflict was determined when both or one of the children in conflicts attained goal for conflict, neither of the two attained the goal, or conflict was over without clearly defined resolution, regardless of the third party intervention.

Interveners. Each conflict was coded as 'non-intervention' or 'intervention' depending on the existence of intervention (Existence of intervention: 100%). For intervention cases, they were also divided into 'teacher intervention', 'peer intervention', or 'both teacher and peer intervention' depending on the intervener (Types of interveners: 100%). Also, each conflict was coded as 'by children's request,' or 'voluntarily' according to the existence of request (Request for intervention: 100%). Furthermore, when intervention occurred with information related to the beginning and process of the conflicts, they were coded as intervention with information, while intervention occurred without information was coded as 'intervention without information' (Information about conflicts: 100%). The first persons to whom the interveners started talking as soon as their intervention began were coded into three categories as 'the conflict initiator,' 'the conflict recipient,' and 'both' (The first person to whom intervener approached to talk: 100%).

The Length of Conflicts. (96%) Although Shantz and Hobart (1989) categorized peer conflicts into either two-unit or more than three-unit exchanges, this categorization did not provide information on how long conflicts last when a conflict exchanges more than three units. In order to measure the length of conflicts between young children in detail, this study recorded the total number of 'moves' from the beginning to end of the conflicts, as it was done in Perlman and Ross (1997)'s measurement of the length of sibling interaction. A move refers to a turn of convertsation between children in conflicts, and a given move may contain more than one

strategies. During the whole process of conflicts, each move made by conflict recipient and conflict initiator was all counted. When teachers or other children were engaged into conflicts as interveners, the number of the moves to which they contributed were also counted. For instance, when a conflict event proceeded in such turns with the following moves as starting with the conflict recipient ? the conflict initiator ? the recipient ? the initiator ? the recipient ? the initiator ?the recipient, the total number of moves was counted as 7, the total number of the moves made by the conflict initiators was 3, and the conflict recipients, 4. In addition, the number of the moves made by teacher or peer interveners was counted separately.

Strategies Used by Children in Conflicts. (82%) Because the strategies used by children as well as teacher or peer interveners were included in this study, relevant literature was reviewed to identify strategies siblings used toward their parents, when having parental intervention. Nine categories of children's strategies were identified on the basis of prior research on conflicts between children (Caplan, et al, 1991; Crockenberg & Lourie, 1996; Hopmeyer & Asher, 1997) or siblings with parental interventions (Perlman & Ross, 1997; Ross, et al., 1990; Washo, 1992).

The nine categories of children's strategies were as follows: (1) ignoring issues (e.g., neither talking back nor taking a look at the conflict initiator, or saying something irrelevant to the conflictual issue); (2) verbal or physical aggression (e.g., using profanity, threatening, pushing, or hitting); (3) asking help (e.g., asking help to a teacher); (4) compliance (e.g., saying something like, "Okay, I see, you go ahead," or "Yeah, right, it's a dinosaur eating plants"); (5) simple opposition (e.g., saying something like, "No," or "Don't do that," or "No, I don't like it!"); (6) elaborating (e.g., saying something to disagree on the initiator's statements or on the incident already happened, like, "No, I didn't break it," or "No, it's a dinosaur that eats meat!"); (7) justifying one's standpoint with reason (e.g., making a justification to support their own viewpoints, like saying, "No, I was the first one to play with it," or "I came earlier, so you've got to go back in line," or "It's a dinosaur eating animals because it has sharp teeth."); (8) suggesting alternatives (e.g., offering some alternatives that could be applied to the shared goals of both children simultaneously, saying like, "Let's play it in turn," or "Let's play together," or "Let's look into the book."); and

apology (e.g., saying, “I’m sorry”).

Unlike other studies that explored only the most complex strategy within each move was coded when children used more than two strategies on a given move (Perlman & Ross, 1997), all the strategies used on each move were all counted and coded in order to find out diversity of strategies utilized by children in conflicts. However, when the child used the same strategy more than once, this strategy was coded as one. Therefore, the total number of the strategies used by the children was not equal to the number of their moves. For example, if child 1 used the strategy ABBC, and child 2 used BCDE, the child 1 was coded using 3 strategies, whereas child 2 used 4 strategies, and the total number of the strategies used by both children was coded to 5 with strategies ABCD and E.

The Conflict Resolution Strategies Used by Teacher or Peer Intervener. (87%) As many as 7 categories of teachers’ or peers’ intervention strategies were identified on the basis of prior research on maternal intervention on sibling conflicts (Perlman & Ross, 1997), teachers’ roles in peer conflicts (DeVries, & Zan, 1995; Kramer, Perozynski, & Chung, 1999; Ross, et al., 1990), and a pilot study. Since previous research has focused on adults’ intervention strategies, the conflict management strategies in our study were defined comprehensive enough to analyze peers’ strategies.

These strategies included as follows: (1) ignoring issues (e.g., ignoring call for help asked by children, saying something irrelevant to the conflicts, or distracting children’s attention to other activities); (2) utilizing inappropriate power (e.g., saying, “Stop it right now!” or teacher or peer took only one child’s side); (3) seeking information (e.g., collecting information about the beginning and progress of the conflicts); (4) justifying with reason (e.g., justifying their viewpoints based on the facts and rules, as saying, “If having sharp teeth and talon, they are dinosaur eating animals,” or “No hitting and beating are allowed in our classroom.”); (5) other-oriented reasoning (e.g., suggesting alternatives or encouraging children to suggest alternatives in such a way of promoting emotional and/or cognitive perspective taking); (6) calming down children (calming down the children who were crying or angry, or getting children to stop fighting); and (7) being there (just being there and watching carefully without giving the children much of help).

Coding the teacher's or peer's strategies was done with the same manner as coding the children's strategies. In order to identify diversity of the strategies used by the interveners, all the strategies used by them within one move were coded as long as they were different. Likewise, if the strategies within one move were more than one but repetition of the same strategies, then they were coded as one strategy. Therefore, the total number of the interveners' strategies was not always equal to that of their moves.

Consequences of Peer Conflicts. (94%) Five mutually exclusive and jointly exhaustive categories of peer conflict ending were distinguished based on the research of Malloy and McMurray (1996) and Siddiqui and Ross (1999), and a pilot study. Malloy and MaMurray (1996) classified conflict resolution between young children into three types such as win-win, win-lose, or lose-lose ending. In the conflict ending of win-lose, this study analyzed further to see whether the child who caused conflict or the recipient of the conflict was won. Furthermore, as Siddiqui and Ross (1999) suggested that conflicts that did not have a clear resolution should be included, this study also included a category of conflicts without resolution. Five categories of peer conflict endings were win-win ending, conflict initiator wins, conflict recipient wins, lose-lose ending and no resolution.

Procedure

Observation of Conflicts Between Children. Teachers were informed that the focus of this study was to investigate the characteristics of peer interactions and the roles of teachers. Data on peer conflicts were collected through nonparticipant classroom observation during free play. Each class was observed three times, each of which took 40 minutes. Observation of each classroom was scheduled to be done on consecutive 3 days. Before observation, observers volunteered to be a teacher aid for 2 days in order to build a rapport with children.

Six research assistants, all of whom were in graduate school, majoring in Early Childhood Education, collected data. They worked as a pair. During free playtime, one observer stood at the corner of the room facing the other exactly in a diagonally opposite direction, so that they could divide the classroom into halves in a triangular

shape. Then, each observer watched the children playing within the triangular area assigned to her. In particular, such play areas that created conflicts most frequently as block area and role play area were given a special attention to be observed. Since it was essential for collecting data on the cause, process, and outcome of conflicts, research assistants were trained to scan the free play activities of young children and when it came to the time conflicts could occur, they were ready to videotape the conflict-laden scenes.

The Training of the Coders. Two graduate student coders who did not participate in videotaping activities of peer conflicts and were blind to the purpose of this study coded videotapes of children's conflicts. Reviewing the videotapes recorded, the graduate student coders analyzed the conflictual episodes on the basis of the criteria in the Measure section. The training for coders was proceeded as follows: First, the definition of conflict as well as the definitions of major variables for this study were clearly presented and explained with a variety of examples. Next, they practiced coding conflicts between young children collected from the kindergarten which were not included in this study. The training of coding was continued up until the inter-coder reliability reached to 80%, then actual observation was started. The disagreement between the two coders were determined after having discussions with the author of this paper.

Results

Frequency of Peer Conflicts and the Third Party Interventions

The total number of conflicts observed in this study was 278. These 278 conflicts were the result of the observations which had been conducted for 30 times, each of which took 40 minutes. Therefore, the average number of conflicts per observation was 4.6 conflicts. Among them, 138 cases (49.6%) were conflicts without intervention, whereas the rest 140 cases (50.4%) were conflicts with intervention. More specifically, majority of the 140 conflicts indicated that teachers were the intervener (80.7%), followed by other peers (15.0%), and both teachers and peers (4.3%).

The Length of Conflicts

This study examined the length of the conflict in several ways in order to describe how the third party intervention affected the length of the conflict (see Table 1). First, this study compared the length of conflicts in non-intervention with intervention conflicts. In intervention conflicts, the average number of moves to which all the conflict initiators, recipients, and teacher and peer interveners contributed was 11.21 moves long, while in non-intervention conflicts, it was 3.66 moves long, which indicated that the intervention conflicts were 3.06 times as long in the length of conflicts as non-intervention conflicts ($t=-14.3$, $p< .001$).

Second, taking only the conflict initiators and recipients into account, the average number of moves in conflicts with intervention was 8.37 moves, whereas non-intervention conflicts was 3.66 moves, which indicated that conflicts with intervention lasted 2.28 times as long as those without intervention ($t=-11.5$, $p< .001$). In order to scrutinize whether the probability of third party intervention became higher as the conflicts became longer, it was necessary to compare the length of conflicts before intervention was started in intervention conflicts, which were 4.37 moves with that of conflicts in non-intervention conflicts, which were 3.66 moves. It was found that the moves made before the intervention started in intervention conflicts were 1.19 times as long as those made in non-intervention conflicts. This finding suggested that the probability of teachers' or other peers' intervention was increased as the conflicts lasted long.

Third, in conflicts with intervention, there was a difference found between the total length of conflicts to which conflict initiators contributed and that of conflicts to which conflict recipients contributed. Interestingly enough, before the intervention occurred, the conflict recipients contributed 1.34 times as long to the total number of the moves as the conflict initiators (2.50 vs. 1.87, respectively)($t= 4.34$, $p<. 01$), but the opposite was found to be true after the intervention occurred, which found that the conflict initiators contributed to the moves 1.21 times as long as the conflict recipients (1.81 vs. 2.19, respectively)($t= -3.52$, $p<. 05$).

Fourth, in conflicts with intervention, teachers' or other peers' contribution to the total number of the moves were 3.15 and 1.48 moves, respectively, which indicated

that teachers were more likely to contribute to the total number of moves more than peer interveners by 2.13 times. These findings were statistically significant (t= 5.21, p<. 01).

Table 1. *Means and Standard Deviations of Moves in Peer Conflicts*

		Non intervention[a]	Intervention		
			Moves before intervention	Moves after intervention	Total
Children in conflict	Initiators	1.74(.83)	1.87(.78)	2.19(1.1)	4.06(1.31)
	Recipients	1.92(.85)	2.50(.69)	1.81(.97)	4.31(1.23)
	Total	3.66(1.02)	4.37(1.45)	4.00(3.10)	8.37(3.5)
Interveners[e]	Teachers[c]	·	·	3.15(1.56)	·
	Peers[d]	·	·	1.48(1.09)	·
	Total	·	·	2.84(1.61)	

[a]The non-intervention cases were 138, [b]The intervention cases were 140,
[c]The teachers intervened in 119 cases of conflicts, [d]The peers intervened in 27 cases of conflict,
[e]Both teachers and peer intervened in 6 cases of peer conflicts.

The Number of Conflict Resolution Strategies

This study examined how the third party intervention affected the number of strategies used in conflicts (see Table 2). First, in non-intervention conflicts, both children used 2.84 strategies. Of them, the conflict initiators utilized a mean of 1.56 strategies, while the conflict recipients used 1.71 strategies (t=-3.12, p< .05). This revealed that the conflict recipients were likely to use more strategies. Considering the average number of moves was 3.66 moves long, children used 0.77 strategies on each move. The fact that children used the strategies less than the total number of moves implied that children showed a tendency to use the same strategies repeatedly.

Second, in conflicts with intervention, both children used 3.21 strategies. The conflict initiators used 1.84 strategies, on the average, while the conflict recipients used 2.04 strategies (t=-2.94, p< .05). This finding demonstrated that the conflict recipients used more various strategies. However, consistent with non-intervention conflicts, the two children in conflict were found to use the same strategies over and over again. The fact that, among the average total number of 8.37 moves made by the

both children, the conflict initiators contributed to a mean of 4.06 moves, and the conflict recipients, 4.31 moves, indicated that both children in conflicts were likely to use a mean of 0.38 strategies, conflict initiators, 0.45, and recipients, 0.47 strategies.

Third, interestingly, there was a difference in the number of the strategies used by both children in conflicts between before and after intervention. The conflict initiators used a mean of 0.84 strategies before intervention, but 1.11 strategies after intervention (t=-3.03, p<. 05). In contrast, the conflict recipients were found to use a mean of 1.39 strategies before the intervention and 0.76 after the intervention (t=4.38, p<. 01). The same tendency was found in the length of the conflicts.

Finally, teacher interveners were found to use a mean of 3.79 strategies, while peer interveners used a mean of 1.45 strategies (t=5.44 p<. 01). Considering that the average number of the moves made by the teachers was 3.15 and the third party children made 1.48 moves, teachers used a mean of 1.2 strategies per each move, whereas the peer interveners, 1.02 strategies on each move. This result indicated that teachers used more various strategies than the peer interveners.

Table 2. *Means and Standard Deviations of Strategies Used in Peer Conflicts*

No. of Strategies \ Intervention		Non intervention[a]	Intervention		
			Before	After	Total[b]
Children in conflict	Used by initiator	1.56(.68)	.84(.75)	1.11(.84)	1.84(.98)
	Used by recipient	1.71(.67)	1.39(.58)	.76(.94)	2.04(1.01)
	Total	2.84(.91)		3.21(1.36)	
Interveners	Used by teacher	·	·	3.79(.93)	·
	Used by peer	·	·	1.45(.45)	·

[a] In non-intervention conflicts, the total number of strategies did not match with the total sum of the strategies used both by the initiators and the recipients, because when the same strategies used within the same move, they were omitted to counting.

[b] In intervention conflicts, the total number of strategies used by children in conflict was not equal to the total sum of the strategies before and after intervention, because when the same strategies used both before and after intervention, they were omitted to counting.

The Types of Strategies

As in presented in Table 3, the most frequently used strategy by the children in

conflict was found to be the strategy of justifying their viewpoints with reason, followed by compliance, simple opposition, and elaborating. On the other hand, children in conflict seldom used the strategies of apology, aggression, asking help, and suggesting alternatives.

However, there was a difference found in the use of conflict resolution strategies depending on whether they had intervention or not. When having no intervention, children in conflicts were more likely to use such strategies as ignoring issues, aggression, compliance, simple opposition, and suggesting alternatives, whereas in conflicts with intervention, they were more likely to use strategies of asking help, elaborating, and apology.

Table 3. *Frequencies and Percents of Children's Strategies by Intervention*

Intervention / Strategies	No intervention			Intervention		
	Total	Initiator	Recipient	Total	Initiator	Recipient
Ignoring issues	27(6.1)	15(7.1)	12(5.2)	21(4.0)	7(2.8)	14(5.0)
Aggression	47(10.6)	20(9.4)	27(11.6)	30(5.6)	15(6.0)	15(5.4)
Asking help	6(1.4)	2(0.9)	4(1.7)	52(9.8)	11(4.4)	41(14.6)
Compliance	103(23.2)	71(33.5)	32(13.8)	104(19.6)	73(29.1)	31(11.1)
Simple opposition	92(20.7)	37(17.5)	55(23.7)	81(15.3)	34(13.5)	47(16.8)
Elaborating	29(6.5)	13(6.1)	16(6.9)	87(16.4)	39(15.5)	48(17.2)
Justifying with reason	110(24.8)	32(15.1)	78(33.6)	129(24.3)	54(21.5)	75(26.8)
Suggesting alternatives	27(6.1)	19(8.9)	8(3.5)	16(3.0)	11(4.4)	5(1.8)
Apology	3(.7)	3(1.4)	0(0.0)	11(2.0)	7(2.8)	4(1.4)
Total	444(100.0)	212(100.0)	232(100.0)	531(100.0)	251(100.0)	280(100.0)

It needed to analyze further what impact the intervention had on children's conflicts (see Table 4). In the cases of the conflicts with intervention, the finding revealed that when comparing the total number of strategies used by the children in conflict before intervention with that of strategies after intervention, such strategies as ignoring issues, aggression, asking help, simple opposition, and justifying with reason

were shown to decline, while the strategies of compliance, elaborating, suggesting alternatives, and apology increased. This finding suggested that the third party intervention had a positive impact on the use of strategies for resolving the conflicts.

Furthermore, there were some cases found to show a difference in the strategies used by the conflict initiators and the recipients between before and after intervention. Before intervention, the conflict initiators were more likely to use the strategy of aggression, simple opposition, and elaborating than the recipients, whereas the recipients were more likely to use the strategy of asking help than the initiators. On the other hand, after intervention, the initiators were more likely to use the strategy of compliance than the recipients, while the recipients were more likely to use the strategy of elaborating than the initiators. Both children in conflicts used the rest of the strategies in the similar manner.

Table 4. *Frequencies and Percents of Children's Strategies Used Before and After Intervention*

Intervention / Strategies	Before intervention			After intervention		
	Initiator	Recipient	Total	Initiator	Recipient	Total
Ignoring issues	7(5.7)	13(5.9)	20(5.8)	0(0.0)	2(1.7)	2(0.7)
Aggression	14(11.4)	13(5.9)	27(7.9)	1(0.6)	3(2.6)	4(1.4)
Asking help	10(8.1)	41(18.7)	51(14.9)	0(0.0)	4(3.5)	4(1.4)
Compliance	0(0.0)	1(0.5)	1(0.3)	76(44.4)	31(27.0)	107(37.4)
Simple opposition	33(26.8)	51(23.3)	84(24.6)	6(3.5)	6(5.2)	12(4.2)
Elaborating	13(10.6)	18(8.2)	31(9.1)	42(24.5)	46(40.0)	88(30.8)
Justifying with reason	40(32.5)	80(36.5)	120(25.1)	32(18.7)	16(13.9)	48(16.8)
Suggesting alternatives	5(4.1)	1(0.5)	6(1.8)	8(6.8)	4(3.5)	12(4.2)
Apology	1(0.8)	1(0.5)	2(0.6)	6(3.5)	3(2.6)	9(3.1)
Total	123(100.0)	219(100.0)	342(100.0)	171(100.0)	115(100.0)	286(100.0)

Teachers' and Peers' Interventions in Conflicts Between Children

First, this study identified what led the third party to conflict intervention. The

results showed that in approximately three-fourths of the total cases of conflicts with intervention (102 cases, 72.8%), interveners decided to intervene voluntarily, and in the rest of the cases (38 cases, 27.2%), intervention was made by a request from children in conflicts. When intervening the conflicts, the number of cases that gained knowledge of the cause and progress of the conflicts between children (90 cases or 64.3%) was found to be far more than that of cases without any knowledge at all (50 cases, 35.7%). There was no difference between teacher intervention with information and that without information about conflicts, whereas almost all of the peer interveners (95.2%) had information about what was going on when intervening ($x^2_{(2)} = 11.97$, $p<.01$).

Second, the first person to whom the interveners approached after intervention began was as followed: 80 cases (57.1%) of conflicts with intervention showed that interveners tried to talk to the conflict initiators first than to the conflict recipients (42 cases, or 30.0%) or both the conflicting children (18 cases, or 12.9%).

Third, teacher and peer interveners contributed to a mean of 3.15(SD=1.56) and 1.48(SD=1.09) moves, respectively, which indicated that teachers were likely to involve in conflicts more actively than the peer interveners. In 113 cases of the teacher-only intervention and 6 cases of teacher-and-peer intervention, the teacher interveners used a mean of 2.27(SD=.63) strategies. In 21 cases of peer-only intervention and 6 cases of teacher-and-peer intervention, the peer interveners used a mean of 1.33(SD=.45) strategies, which indicated that the teachers used 1.71 times as many strategies as the peer interveners.

Teachers were found to use all of the seven strategies suggested by this study. Amongst them, the strategy of other-oriented reasoning (38.1%) was most frequently used, followed by seeking information (29.6%). In addition, the strategies of employing inappropriate power (11.5%) and justifying reasoning (10.3%) were found to be used often. In contrast, the peer interveners used only 5 strategies, and the strategy of utilizing their own inappropriate power was used most frequently (38.9%), followed by that of seeking information (28.1%). Interestingly, although they were not used frequently, the strategies of ignoring the issues as well as just being there were used by the teachers but not by the peer interveners (see Table 5).

Table 5. *Frequencies and Percents of Strategies Used by Interveners*

Intervener / Strategies	Teachers (n=119)	Peers (n=27)	Total
Ignoring issues	5(1.9)	0(0.0)	5(1.6)
Inappropriate power	31(11.5)	14(38.9)	45(14.7)
Seeking information	80(29.6)	6(16.6)	86(28.1)
Justifying with reason	29(10.7)	6(16.6)	35(11.4)
Other-oriented reasoning	103(38.1)	6(16.7)	109(35.6)
Calming down children	14(5.2)	4(11.1)	18(5.9)
Being there	8(3.0)	0(0.0)	8(2.6)
Total	270(100.0)	36(100.0)	306(100.0)
Mean	2.27	1.33	2.08

The Outcomes of Conflicts

This study examined if the conflict outcomes were different by intervention (see Table 6). The conflicts with intervention were more likely to be ended with win-win outcome, whereas the conflicts without intervention were more likely to end with recipient wins outcome ($x^2_{(4)} = 30.36$, $p < .001$.).

Table 6. *Frequencies and Percents of Conflict Outcomes by Intervention*

Intervention / Outcome	No-intervention	Intervention	Total
Win-win	24(17.4)	66(47.1)	90(32.4)
Initiator wins	24(17.4)	15(10.7)	39(14.0)
Recipient wins	76(55.1)	52(37.1)	128(46.0)
Lose-lose	0(0.0)	1(0.7)	1(0.4)
No resolution	14(10.1)	6(4.4)	20(7.2)
Total	138(100.0)	140(100.0)	278(100.0)

Second, this study examined how conflicts between young children ended by interveners (see Table 7). Conflicts showed a tendency to end up with win-win (53.1%) or recipients wins (34.5%) resolution if only teachers intervened conflicts.

On the other hand, if only peers mediated conflicts, conflicts were ended up having the conflict recipients win the conflicts (47.6%) ($x^2_{(8)} = 21.7$, $p < .01$).

Table 7. *Frequencies and Means of the Outcomes of Conflicts by Intervener*

Outcome \ Intervener	teachers	peers	Teachers + peers	Total
Win-win	60(53.1)	3(14.3)	3(50.0)	66(47.1)
Initiators win	11(9.7)	4(19.0)	0(0.0)	15(10.7)
Recipients win	39(34.5)	10(47.6)	3(50.0)	52(37.1)
Lose-lose	1(0.9)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	1(0.7)
Unclear	2(1.8)	4(19.0)	0(0.0)	6(4.3)
Total	113(100.0)	21(100.0)	6(100.0)	140(100.0)

Discussion

Frequencies of Peer Conflicts, and the Third Party Intervention

The total number of conflicts observed in this study was 278 cases, which indicated that, the mean of 4.6 conflicts were occurred during each observation time of 40 minutes. Kramer, et al. (1999) reported the mean of 2.6 conflicts between young siblings during a period of 45 minutes. Hay (1984), analyzing 10 studies published, reported that the median number of conflicts between children per hour was about five which implied to be similar to this study.

About a half of 278 conflicts observed were settled without intervention, whereas the rest of the cases were resolved with the intervention. Bayer, Whaley, and May (1995)'s study, identifying the patterns of intervention teachers engaged in conflicts between toddlers, showed that teachers mediated approximately 49.5% of toddler conflicts. This result was similar to this study. In conflicts with intervention, most of intervention was done by the teachers, along with a few cases with other peers or with both teachers and peers. Unlike other studies with adults as interveners, this study included all the interveners to draw a whole picture of conflict resolution intervention. As a result, although a low frequency had it, children served as interveners for their agemates who were in conflicts.

In contrast to the previous studies focusing only on two-unit exchanges or more than three-unit exchanges of conflicts (Shantz & Hobart, 1989), this study tried to encompass each all the moves contributed by everyone. First, when conflicts included the third party intervention, the length of conflicts was about 3.06 times as long as that of conflicts without intervention. Putting aside the interveners' moves, when comparing between the number of moves made by both children in conflicts with intervention and that without intervention, the length of the conflicts with intervention was 2.28 times as long as that of conflicts without intervention. These results implied that the reason why the conflicts lasted longer with intervention was not just because the teacher or peer interveners added their moves to the total sum, but because children in conflicts made longer moves when intervention was made than in non-intervention conflicts, as well. Kramer et al. (1999) also found that sibling conflicts were likely to be shorter when their parents made no intervention than parents intervened.

Second, the number of the moves before intervention began in conflicts with intervention showed 1.19 times as long as that of conflicts without intervention. This findings implied that the longer the conflicts between the two children, the higher possibility either teachers or other peers intervened. Kramer et al. (1999)'s study also showed that parental intervention increased as the intensity of sibling conflicts increased. It may be that the length or intensity of conflicts influences the decision making activities of teachers or parents. Future investigations need to include what factors have an influence on teacher or parental decision making on intervention of conflicts between children or siblings.

Third, interestingly enough, in conflicts having intervention, conflict recipients made 1.34 times as much contribution to the length of conflicts before intervention began as the conflict recipients, whereas, after the intervention made, the conflict initiators contributed to the conflicts 1.21 times as long as the conflict recipients. This result can be accounted for by examining the way that interveners started to intervene. In this study, interveners started mediating with the conflict initiators (57.1%) more frequently, which indicated that interveners had a preoccupied idea that because the conflict initiator initiated something first in a wrong way, conflict happened.

Therefore, the child who caused the conflict should protest her/himself actively, which might result in lengthening the moves more than before intervention.

Finally, in conflicts with intervention, teachers contributed 2.13 times as long as peer interveners, which indicated that teachers were more likely to intervene actively than peer interveners. Although the peer interveners did not contributed as much as the teacher interveners, it appeared to be a substantially significant finding that peers could play an important role in resolving the conflicts between their agemates. Further study was required to identify the features and characteristics of the peer interveners' role in conflicts between their agemates.

The Number of Conflict Resolution Strategies

Unlike other studies identifying the first or the single most important strategy used by the conflicting children, this study recorded the types as well as the numbers of strategies used by the conflicting children and the interveners on each move. The study results were summarized and discussed as follows: First, the children showed a tendency in using the limited kinds of strategies repeatedly rather than utilizing a variety of them. This finding was supported by the results of Eisenberg and Garvey (1981)'s study that children used the strategies of rendering a 'reason or making justification for the opposition' and of 'simply saying, "No"', both of which estimated approximately 84% of the strategies they used.

Second, independent of intervention, the conflict recipients were likely to use more strategies than the conflict initiators, which assumed that the conflict recipients were willing to respond as aggressively as they could so that they might protect their rights from being hurt by others. This assumption was supported by the findings of this study that approximately 46% of conflicts ended up having the conflict recipients win, regardless of intervention, which implied that the conflict recipients responded to conflicts more aggressively than the initiators.

Third, in conflictual situation with intervention, the conflict recipients used more strategies than the initiators before intervention, but, after intervention, the opposite was true. This indicated that teachers were more likely to interact with the conflict initiators than with the recipients. As a result, the initiators prompted to use more

various strategies to protest themselves and to justify why they caused conflicts.

Finally, both teacher and peer interveners were likely to use more strategies than the children in conflict, and the teacher used more strategies than the peer interveners. This finding implied that both interveners utilized various strategies in order to settle the conflicts, and their intervention actually had a positive impact on conflict resolution.

The Types of Strategies

First, the strategies children in conflicts were seen to have different features by intervention. Without intervention, the conflicting children appeared to use such strategies as aggression, compliance, simple opposition, and suggesting alternatives more often, whereas they appeared to use such strategies as asking help, elaborating, and apology more often when there was intervention. This result suggested that the third party's intervention might affect children on using more positive strategies.

Second, in conflicts with intervention, there was a difference found in the use of strategies by children between before and after intervention. After intervention, they appeared to use such strategies less frequently as ignoring issues, aggression, asking help, simple opposition, and justifying their interests with reasons, while such strategies as compliance, elaborating, suggesting alternatives and apology were increased in use. This finding suggested that children appeared to use strategies that had a positive impact on resolving conflicts with help from interveners, or the intervention itself served as a helpful support to settle the conflicts. Perlman and Ross (1997) reported that before the parents engaged in the sibling conflicts, the siblings appeared to use physical and verbal power, and to oppose to each other more often. However, after the parents mediated their children's conflicts, siblings used the strategies of other-oriented reasoning, ignoring conflict issues, and complying with the rules more frequently.

As Vygotsky (1978) postulated, through interaction with adults, young children acquire cognitive skills to perform a task autonomously. Resolution of children's conflicts is not a totally cognitive process of performing a task, but it requires an integrated skills of social, emotional, and cognitive aspects to perform a task. In order for

peer conflicts to contribute to children's development positively, it was necessary to find out cognitive aspects of task performance, including the causes of conflicts, understanding of others' viewpoints and feelings, suggestions for conflict resolution strategies or alternatives, and evaluation. When considering developmental characteristics during the early childhood period, it is necessary for adults to provide young children with appropriate assistance or support. In this study, the fact that the use of positive strategies by children increased after adult intervention was made implied that teachers facilitated young children to use more positive strategies through understanding the children's present abilities and level of understanding, which in turn offered children an opportunity for growth and development through experience of conflictual events.

Teachers' and Peers' Interventions in Conflicts Between Children

The followings are a summary of the study results and discussion of the process and the outcomes of teacher intervention in peer conflicts. First, when the third party intervened conflicts between peers, approximately three-fourths of the total cases appeared to do it voluntarily, and the cases that intervened conflicts with some level of knowledge of the causes and progress of conflicts was 1.8 times as many as the cases of intervention without any knowledge at all. While teachers did not show any difference in the level of knowledge of what was going on between children in conflicts, the peer interveners involved with a full-fledged level of knowledge, which indicated that because the peer interveners were in the proximity of the situation, they could witnessed what was going on in conflicts.

Second, after the intervention was made, the mediators appeared to talk to the conflict initiators first more often than to the recipients or to both the conflicting pairs. Malloy and McMurray (1996)'s study revealed that teachers were more likely to intervene with the child who initiated conflicts first, and Ross et al. (1990)'s study also revealed that mothers tried to mediate conflicts with their children first rather than with their children's peers. As found in this study, along with research efforts made by Malloy and McMurray (1996) as well as Ross et al. (1990), an assumption could be made that the interveners' first attempt to mediate with the conflict initiators

was influenced by the preoccupied idea the mediators had that the conflict initiator acted out in a socially unacceptable way.

Third, teachers were more likely to utilize a range of strategies once they got involved in conflicts than peer interveners. Teachers used a total of 7 strategies. Amongst them, teachers used the strategy of 'other-oriented reasoning,' that is, the strategy that provided an alternative for conflict resolution by considering other child's feelings and standpoints, most often, followed by the strategy of 'seeking information'. Other strategies teacher interveners used included applying teacher's authoritative power to stop conflicts, or the strategy of 'inappropriate power,' and trying to explain the rules and regulations for the classroom order or 'justifying with reason'. The finding of this study was seen to be similar to other research evidence that investigated adults' role in conflicts between young children, sibling pairs, or peer children. In a study done by Perlman and Ross (1997), they identified 9 strategies parents used. Approximately 90 percent of the strategies parents used included other-oriented reasoning, elaborating, using verbal power, opposing, and justifying. On the other hand, parents barely used such strategies as crying, complying, ignoring issue, and applying physical power. Kramer et al. (1999) also identified 7 strategies parents used and they appeared to use passive non-intervention strategy most frequently.

In contrast, peer interveners used only 5 strategies, and amongst them, they used the strategy of using 'inappropriate power' to judge who was wrong most frequently. However, the total number of strategies the peer interveners used was only 36, which did not lead to a meaningful explanation with frequency values identified. Although it was found that peers were not as effective interveners as teachers, it has a meaningful implication that peer interveners also had an impact on resolving conflicts between their agemates. Further study should be conducted to clarify what roles the peer interveners would play in resolving conflicts between their agemates.

Comparing between the teachers' and the peers' strategies, this study proved that the strategies teachers used were likely to be more effective than those used by the peer interveners. Teachers appeared to contribute to the moves more, used more strategies, used them in more various ways, and used more effective strategies than

peer interveners. Especially, although it did not happen frequently, teachers mentioned the rules and regulations for classroom order or code of ethics. These rules and regulations seemed to be appropriate for settling conflicts, because both teachers and children had a good sense of awareness of these rules and behaved accordingly. Jordan, Cowan, and Roberts (1995) reported that under the educational settings in which physical attacks were prohibited, such rules were voluntarily mentioned in order to protect one's rights from being hurt or to execute one's own power over other children.

The Outcomes of Conflicts

The followings were the summary of the influences of intervention and the interveners' roles in the outcomes of conflicts and discussion of the study findings. First, either teacher or peer engaged in conflicts as mediators, conflicts appeared to be ended up with win-win resolution. When intervention was not made, the conflict recipients ended up with winning the conflict or the conflicts were terminated without any clear resolution. This finding was consistent with the research results revealing that when parents mediated conflicts between siblings or peers and ended conflicts, there was a larger proportion of compromise ending, which meant that both of the children in conflicts attained their goals partially (Siddiqui & Ross, 1999).

However, this study showed that the percentage of conflicts ended up with win-win resolution when either teachers or peers intervened was higher than that of conflicts when parents intervened the conflicts between peers (Ross et al., 1990) or siblings (Siddiqui & Ross, 1999). In these studies, about two-thirds of the conflicts were terminated with no resolution or standoff.

The outcomes of conflicts when parents mediated conflicts between siblings or peers were different from those of conflicts when teachers intervened the conflicts between peers, because the purpose of intervention teacher had might be different from that of intervention parent had. For instance, parents may be more invested in making conflicts end than in actually resolving the issues in contention (Siddiqui & Ross, 1999), or letting them go back to play as soon as possible (Ross et al., 1990), whereas teachers may have a goal of treating both children with fair manners and

leading them to have an opportunity of learning (DeVries & Zan, 1995). In other words, teachers are likely to place a higher value on fairness than parents, therefore, the conflicts mediated by teachers tend to be ended up with both children satisfied with the result of conflicts.

Second, the finding in this study revealed how the outcomes of conflicts were different by interveners. When only teachers engaged in mediation, conflicts were more likely to be ended with win-win resolution, while with only peer interveners, conflicts were more likely to be terminated with the conflict recipients won or with no clear resolution. Because of the insufficient number of cases in conflicts with only peer interveners, the study results did not provide a reliable interpretation. Still this study demonstrated that teachers were far more effective interveners than peers. Tudge and Rogoff (1999) reviewed the Piagetian point of view on that in order for peer interaction to foster child's growth and development positively, the child should cooperate with each other and coordinate others' point of view. Piaget specified it to concrete operational stage of 7 to 11, or 12 years old. Even though Piaget under-estimated child's ability, the subjects in this study, who were comprised of the 5-year-olds, did not play an effective role in intervening conflicts between their agemates. Conflicts between young children required cognitive components to find causes of conflicts, understand others' standpoints and perspectives, or find resolution strategies with which everyone could be satisfied. Therefore, as Vygotsky pointed out, children on this developmental stage need assistance from expert adults in order to resolve conflicts between agemates rather than peer interveners.

The limitation of this study is that the observed cases were not good enough to conduct a range of statistical analyses for children conflicts, resulted in mostly frequencies and percentages as the major statistical analyses. For instance, correlational analyses were done to see the association between the conflict initiators' and the recipients' strategies, the relationship of the strategies used by the two children between before and after the intervention, and the association between the strategies used by the interveners and the children in conflicts. However, this study couldn't analyze the data due to the small number of cases in each cell.

The suggestions for further studies based on this study, therefore, were made as

follows: First, this study showed that the children appeared to use a range of strategies when they have trouble with their peers. Further studies need to identify the relationship between the strategies they use and peer competence. Hopmeyer and Asher (1997)'s study with the 4th to 6th graders showed that children who were well-accepted by their peers were not particularly aggressive or prosocial, but prompted to use a variety of assertive strategies, whereas those who were low-accepted by peers were more likely to depend upon help from adults. If there is a relationship between the strategies used by children and the acceptance of those children by other peers found to be statistically significant in future research, it will provide a firm ground of a framework for developing a training program of social skills for those who are low-accepted by peers. By teaching them proper strategies and techniques when facing conflicts with peers, it will help them out to be better-accepted ones. Second, it has been believed that how parents respond to their children's positive or negative behaviors depends on parents' feelings, attributions, or parenting goals (Miller, 1995). It has been also believed that when adults, like parents or teachers, intervene the sibling or peer conflicts, their particular belief system lead them to their intervention. For instance, in this study, teachers made their first move for intervention onto the conflict initiators rather than the recipients, whereas Ross et al. (1990)'s study showed that parents appeared to make their first move onto their children rather than their children's peers. Teachers have to make a great number of decisions on intervention, such as whether or not they have to make any moves in the entire process of conflicts, if so, whom they have to approach first, what strategies they should use, or what values teachers want their children to learn through the conflictual experiences, like a value of fairness, justice, or possessive rights. Further study should be conducted to identify teachers' belief system and its impact on the decision making process on intervention.

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