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Don't put your hand in!

Children's orientation to recipient epistemic access

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Introduction

In ongoing interaction, participants display an understanding of the epistemic status of each person, relative to others.

Some studies (Kidwell, 2011; Lerner & Zimmerman, 2003) consider when children display an orientation to epistemic rights – who can say what, when, and with whom.

How do children acquire the social practices for indicating what it is to 'know'?

Research questions

Do children show an orientation to epistemic status during conversation?

How do children produce sequences of talk that exhibit their understanding of what others know?

What role does the 'pursuit of a response' have in children's attempts in re-balancing epistemic asymmetry?

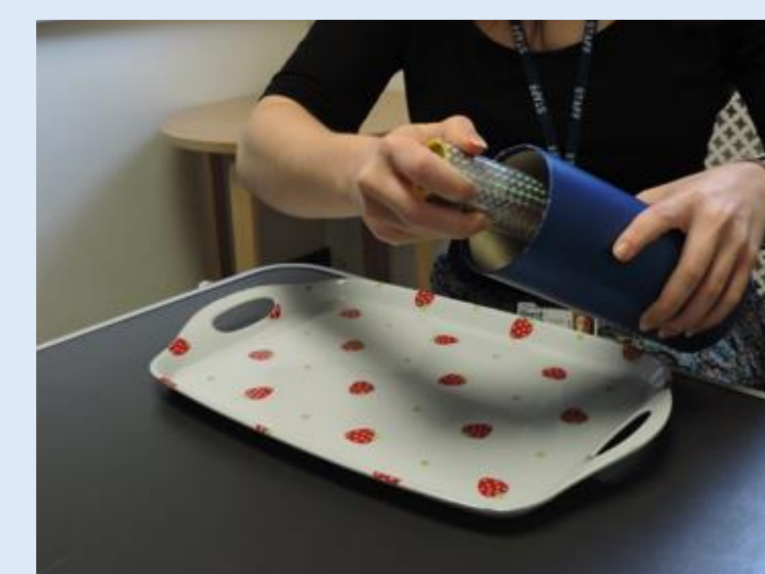
Method

Conversational analysis of 18 children aged 2, 3, and 5

1. Child taught how to use a novel toy with researcher alone



2. Parent enters, uses toy either correctly or incorrectly



Experimenter does not indicate whether parent acted correctly or incorrectly, leading to some unanswered questions from the participants

Sample

- 53 CH: *mum do you want to come round and (.) to (.) see:::*
- 54 (1.4)
- 55 RE: *(moves tray away from ch)*
- 56 (1.6) *(mum sits at table near ch)*
- 57 CH: *(reaches for TT as mum moves to pick up LT)*
- 58 (0.2)
- 59 CH: *can you ↑put this (.) in ↓there*
- 60 (1.1) *(ch tries to move TT into LT as showing/instruction)*
- 61 MU: *(puts her hand into LT while ch looks on)*
- 62 (0.2)
- 63 *(noise [begins:::])*
- 64 CH: *[you've not to put your ha::nd] in it*
- 65 *(noise begins again)*
- 66 CH: *(reaches for TT and looks at mum as she leaves table)*
- 67 (0.2)
- 68 RE: *Let you xxxx mum (.) could °just go back to your chair°*
- 69 (0.2)
- 70 CH: *(lifts TT – RE moves tray and ch moves to place TT in LT)*
- 71 (0.3)
- 72 RE: *now (.) it's your turn to play with the toy*
- 73 (0.3)
- 74 CH: *(places TT in LT and makes noise)*
- 75 (1.7)
- 76 CH: *what is this blue thing called (placing LT off tray and on table)*
- 77 (4.7) *(looks up directly at RE twice)*
- 78 CH: *what is this (.) blue thing °called°?*
- 79 (0.6)
- 80 RE: *now it's your turn to make it so::und*
- 81 (0.3) *(ch picks up LT)*
- 82 CH: *but what is the blue thing called? (shaking LT)*
- 83 (3.3) *(lifts LT up and looks inside)*
- 84 CH: *I can't really see through this*
- 85 (1.8) *(puts hand partly inside LT)*
- 86 CH: *what is?*
- 87 (1.2) *(puts hand and arm further inside LT)*
- 88 CH: *what (.) this [thing]*
- 89 RE: *[it's ↑your turn] Harry (.) [can you make it go]=*

Analysis

How does the child respond to:
(1) the parent's surprising action?
(2) questions going unanswered?

Results

There were many ways children displayed knowledge:

There were many instances where children were keen to display their knowledge of the toys to the researcher when asked to complete the action.

Children showed a considerable amount of surprise (and in some cases disgust) when parent performed incorrect action.

Children would ask questions about the toys, and when the experimenter would not answer, some children used self-repair techniques to make sure the researcher knew what was being asked.

Conclusion

Although this work is preliminary, we concur with Keel (2015) who points out that looking at what children actually do and how they do it when they engage in naturally occurring social interactions with others might provide empirically grounded evidence regarding children's embodied competences for dealing with each other's knowledge and understanding.

References

- Keel, S. (2015). *Socialization: Parent-child interaction in everyday life*
- Kidwell, M. (2011). Epistemics and embodiment in the interactions of very young children
- Lerner, G. H., & Zimmerman, D. (2003). Action and the appearance of action in the conduct of very young children

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