

From Observation to Transcription and Back: Theory, Practice, and Interpretation in the Analysis of Children’s Naturally Occurring Discourse

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In this article, we address issues of methodology in the study of peer talk in child discourse and argue for the need to develop an interdisciplinary approach to child discourse at large. The peer talk under study is part of a larger project following the development of children’s discursive skills, in method relying on ethnographic fieldwork, and conversation analysis methods of transcription and microanalysis. We use a case study to demonstrate the theoretical justification, benefits, and drawbacks of such integration. In the analysis, we demonstrate how microanalysis of detailed transcripts can serve to ground, provide warrants, and complexify the initial observation and its interpretation and how contextual knowledge can serve to enrich and complement the detailed analysis of the talk and the degree to which it is crucial for reaching a holistic understanding.

Methods of documenting social interaction are never transparent: That all of them involve a human, culturally biased, interpretive and selective process has been widely acknowledged—by sociolinguists and linguistic an-

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thropologists (Bucholtz, 2000; Ochs, 1979), conversation analysts (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998; Psathas & Anderson, 1990), and ethnographers (Poland, 1995). Being continuously aware of their limitations and maintaining an ongoing self-reflexive stance toward our work is hence essential to the research process (Ashmore & Reed, 2000; Bucholtz, 2000).

Our aim here is to employ such self-reflexivity in discussing the methodological process developed for a research project designed to explore children's use of genres of extended discourse in a variety of interactions. Our general approach to the study of child discourse is informed by ethnography, conversation analysis (henceforth CA), the ethnography of speaking, and discourse pragmatics. The way we envision it, this approach is humanistic in its basic disposition toward the study of children's worlds and language and hence relies on ethnographic fieldwork as a way to get close to the children's world as subjectively experienced. *Contextualism*, namely, a multidimensional, ethnographically informed notion of context, is taken seriously at the level of methodology because following this approach, we acknowledge and pursue the uniqueness of children's peer culture. Still on the methodological level, contextualism is further grounded in pragmatic theory notions of language as action and the coconstruction of meaning in context. It is also taken seriously at the level of method because as in all pragmatic theory oriented discourse analysis, reliance on different layers of context is considered essential for interpretation. Yet, such a method of "discourse-pragmatics" will be faulted if it is not attentive enough to the moment-by-moment unfolding of actual talk. This lacuna is filled for us by ethnomethodology and CA, calling attention to the seen but unnoticed ways in which child (or adult) participants coconstruct their social worlds and providing the documentation methods and analytic insights for following the process closely through systematic modes of transcription and sequential analysis. In the following, we focus specifically on the ways in which the combination of ethnographic observations with CA methods has informed our research process. We argue for the benefits of integrating CA and ethnography in the study of child discourse starting with a description of our project and a brief discussion of the basic theoretical assumptions that led us to such integration.

The research project discussed here, called "Gaining Autonomy in Genres of Extended Discourse," was set up originally to track the development of two extended genres—narratives and explanations—in two age groups (20 preschoolers and twenty 9-year-olds at the onset of the study) in three contexts of peer interaction, family talk, and semistructured inter-

views longitudinally over the period of 3 years for each group. The project was developed with time to include a holistic exploration of the full genre repertoire of children's peer talk and their ways of meaning making in different genres. The project thus tracks the conversational emergence, modes of collaboration in, and functions and development of a wide range of genres, with a special focus on genres of extended discourse, across all three different contexts of use under study. The analysis of narratives and explanations incorporates the use of systematic coding; the units of analysis for coding are relevant talk samples for each child in the sample across three contexts of use. The analysis of the genre repertoire of peer talk is discourse focused; the unit of analysis here is "discursive events" from child-child interaction. We focus on theoretical and methodological issues of documenting naturally occurring peer interaction among preschoolers.

Historically, young children's talk has been studied mainly from either psychological, developmental perspectives—mostly based on elicited rather than naturally occurring talk—or from anthropological, cultural perspectives observing ethnographically children in their natural environment but not necessarily with any focus on their talk. The theoretical stance we have developed argues for the need to adopt a double perspective in considering child-child discourse. Arguably, peer talk needs to be considered as a *double opportunity space*, as talk functioning simultaneously in two discursive planes or spaces. The first space is created within childhood culture; it is the sociocultural arena within which children negotiate meanings and relationships unique to their local age culture such as issues of the division between the real and the imaginary, notions of time and space, social norms, and gender identities. This arena is the foci of interest for the social anthropologists of childhood. As noted by James, Jenks, and Prout (1998) anthropologists are interested in the "tribal child"—their ethnographies of childhood, carried out from a social constructivist perspective, are geared to understanding the processes of cultural reproduction in childhood from the "native's," namely, the child's, point of view. Language becomes important for understanding this process for the complementary perspective provided by sociologists of childhood such as Corsaro (1985). For Corsaro, children are active social agents, busy constructing their peer culture through interactional displays thus creating a web of multiple realities unique to childhood.

The second space is created by a focus on talk as an arena for development; it is peer talk considered as an opportunity for the development of discursive skills as a stepping stone for adult-like uses of language and for

gaining membership in adult cultures. This space is the foci of developmental child language and language socialization studies. In the study of narratives, for example, adopting a developmental stance means tracing how children approximate adult narrative models with age (e.g., Berman & Slobin, 1994). In language socialization studies of narratives, adopting this stance would mean asking questions about the discursive practices provided by adults to ease children's passage to adult cultural membership (e.g., Blum-Kulka, 1997; Miller, 1996; Ochs, 1990) and/or on cross-cultural variations (Aukrust & Snow, 1998).

It is our contention that developing the double perspective on child-child discourse advocated here requires developing an interdisciplinary approach crossing theoretical and methodological boundaries between different fields of inquiry. Such combinations require discussing the broader theoretical and philosophical frameworks that lend authority to each discipline and their respective methodologies—their specific philosophical assumptions with regard to social science as well as the procedural rules to which they give way, namely, their methods (Brewer, 2000).

Our claim is that an integration of these methods through the merging of the microperspective and macroperspective helped us achieve a richer, more profound understanding of the discursive world of preschool children. This integration was beneficial because the different methods counterbalance each other's risks and drawbacks. In the following, we focus on the actual integration of CA and ethnography in two dimensions of our research project: Data collection and documentation and analysis.¹

DILEMMAS OF REPRESENTATION: FIELD NOTES AND TRANSCRIPTS

In this section, we first present the actual methods and procedures employed in our project followed by a more general discussion of the implications of the integration of field notes and transcripts.

We recorded preschoolers during free-play periods.² Two types of recordings took place: (a) child-focused audio recordings of children wearing lapel microphones connected to a small tape recorder they wore in a pouch (in the 1st and 2nd year) or to a transmitter (with wireless microphones, 3rd year) and (b) setting-focused audio and video recordings of groups of children spotted as engaged in joint play in various areas of the preschool.

An observer was present for all interactions recorded and took field notes of two kinds: The first (not exemplified here) was partly a substitute for a video camera³ and included a detailed description of participants, situations, and actions that were later integrated into the transcripts of the audio data. Because the ethnography we engaged in was *language-centered* ethnography, the audio and video recordings of children's talk were our primary data. Our ethnographic understanding of the context of the children's interactions is meant to aid interpretation in two major ways. First, our observations showed that children's talk is highly context embedded. By recording as fully as possible the context of the situation, namely, what the children are doing while talking, we tried to provide the situational background, including nonverbal cues needed later for understanding the transcripts (specifically, for deciphering the deictic references). The contextual information from such field notes⁴ is especially important for the audio recordings and is also used to complement contextual information gained from video recordings.

The second type of field observations is of a more interpretative, theoretically motivated nature: a short summary of events and the impressions the observer formed regarding them, often taken down shortly after observation and used to locate interesting interactions and to better understand the life worlds of children. The field notes of the segment analyzed following are of the second kind. In White's (1980) terms, the first method is a chronological recording of events, whereas the second is a historical one. Selected segments chosen for further analysis were later fully transcribed using an amended version of the Jefferson notation system, henceforth the CA system (for a full description, see Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998; Psathas & Anderson, 1990).⁵

This combination is informed by general theoretical and methodological considerations. We discuss those by going back and forth from the benefits of CA to those of ethnography and vice versa.

The researchers who have championed the integration of CA and ethnography (Fitch & Philipsen, 1995; Hopper, 1990/1991a; Moerman, 1988; Poland, 1995) have regarded CA methods as a source of rigor and accuracy, as a way of grounding interpretations in concrete evidence and thus a way of ensuring their "correctness," "truth," and "validity" (Moerman, 1988). Although we too view CA transcription methods as a source of rigor and accuracy, it is important to note that this line of argumentation seems to play into the hands of those critics of CA who argue that CA represents a "betrayal of the principles of *verstehende* sociology in favour of a new be-

haviorism" (Heritage, 1984, p. 291), what others have labeled the "enriched positivism" of CA (Lynch & Bogen, 1994). Heritage dismissed such claims as "entirely groundless" because they attribute CA with a deterministic view of human action, whereas CA is firmly grounded in the ethnomethodological theorem of accountable action and is hence fundamentally nondeterministic. We take up this "behaviorist" argument from the methodological angle and claim that CA rhetoric of methodological rigor, presumably achievable through carefully transcribed segments of naturally occurring conversations and their grounded microanalysis, might create the impression (perhaps inadvertently) that we are in the realm of "objective" science, dealing with hard facts and hard data.

This view is also reflected in the ways conversation analysts have sometimes treated ethnography as inaccurate and less scientific than CA (Beach, 1990/1991; Mandelbaum, 1990/1991). However, "humanistic" (Brewer, 2000, p. 31) and "postmodern reflexive" (Brewer, 2000, p. 137) contemporary ethnographers, unlike most ethnographers who use CA, celebrate these "inaccuracies." In concert with the major fundamentally humanistic stance of anthropology at large, they are well aware of the selective, interpretative, and subjective nature of their work in theory and method (Clifford, 1986; Geertz, 1973). On the methodological plane, and especially among the postmodern reflexive ethnographers, such awareness leads to constant self-doubt and skepticism, and it might be tempting to see CA as a magical cure to these discontents. CA, it seems, might be taken to offer ethnographers the promise of gaining back an innocent positivistic stance (cf. Duneier, 1999).

However, this is a dangerous false promise because CA methods are worthy of the same reflexive skeptic stance as those of ethnography. First, as has often been pointed out, transcriptions, as human-made products, are by nature partial and selective (Bucholtz, 2000; Ochs, 1979). Every transcription system involves a reduction of the social reality it seeks to capture (Bucholtz, 2000; Ochs, 1979; Psathas & Anderson, 1990), often turning the continuous stream of the interaction into discrete units (Schegloff, 1984) and transforming people from social actors with goals, identities, and motivations into "A"s and "B"s (Bucholtz, 2000; Moerman, 1988). This reduction can partly be explained by the theoretical drive of CA to explicate the organized, recurrent structural patterns of the interaction almost regardless of the particular persons in it (Schegloff, 1988).

Moreover, it is not unusual for two transcribers to transcribe the same segment in very different ways (O'Connell & Kowal, 2000; Roberts & Robinson, in press). This is why conversation analysts often warn against the

danger of perceiving transcripts as data and recommend always returning to the original tapes (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998; Psathas & Anderson, 1990).

Yet this warning—although worthy of constant reiteration—is in its turn problematic, as it suggests that the tapes are our data. A tape—both audio and video—can never record an interaction completely. It is limited by issues of technical quality, background noise, placement, point of view and zooming (see the analysis of turns 30 through 32, Excerpt 3, and C. Goodwin, 1994, for a discussion of these issues regarding video recordings).

Furthermore, taking the ethnographic stance, whereas even the most advanced equipment can only see (and hear), only observers can also smell, touch, and most important, *notice*—namely, bring in their human consciousness to tell (or at least guess), in Geertz's (1973) terms, if a rapid contraction of an eyelid is a twitch or a wink. Finally, if we assume with C. Goodwin (1981) that all talk is monitored for observers to some degree, then the difference between tapes and observers from this point of view is not one of essence but only in the type of "audiences" they represent. Hence, recording (compared to noting down) definitely improves the "thickness" of our descriptions, but as CA oriented researchers readily admit (Ashmore & Reed, 2000; C. Goodwin, 1994), it does not necessarily ensure their absolute "naturalness" and/or "representativeness."⁶

Combining ethnographic observations as the basis for locating segments for transcription and analysis and as a source of additional contextual information might help reduce the danger of "objective truth" fallacies. After spending time in the field learning about the participants as whole human beings and getting firsthand knowledge about their lives, the researcher is likely to find it impossible to treat them as merely "A"s and "B"s, lines of texts, or to forget that there is a complete social world outside his or her transcripts and tapes. Observing the field enables us to capture the delicacies and layers of human action more profoundly than any video or audio recording can, and this keeps us constantly aware of the reduction involved in our ways of documentation.

Ethnography, with its long tradition of awareness of its own subjectivity and more recent practices of self-reflexivity, can thus make a major contribution to discourse analysts and particularly to conversation analysts by promoting self-awareness to the inherently interpretative nature of the work and by preventing any false sense of objectivity that CA rhetoric might foster.

Critical self-awareness is also important as a precaution against yet another problem well known in the anthropological circles and obvious to any

observer. Researchers may become so immersed in the worlds of their participants that they are unable to distance themselves to convey an understanding of them. This might be called *the infatuation trap*.

The use of transcripts is one solution to this trap because transcripts distance the researcher from the field in two main ways: (a) Transcription produces physical distance because it is done in an office, and (b) Transcription produces emotional distance by transforming participants into text—broken, limited, and fragmented. In the field, the researcher does not notice all the hesitations, restarts, and cutoffs in the participants' talk, but transcripts make these phenomena overt.

However, infatuation with the field may reoccur in the transcription stage. We can attest that even in those of us for whom the children were strangers, the act of listening to the same segment over and over again created affection for both the segment and the children in it.

Such infatuation is risky in both stages. During observation, it might bias the observer to interpret actions in a favorable manner or to overlook critical details or underplay the importance of unpleasant occurrences. While transcribing, infatuation may cause researchers to “*overhear*”—to hear what they think is more plausible for their participants to say instead of relying on the data. This risk is there in any recording, but from our experience transcribing material from a variety of participation structures and ages, it is especially salient when children are concerned or when the data are difficult to transcribe. Applying the ethnographic tradition of self-awareness to the interpretative and subjective nature of our work may serve to counterbalance the infatuation trap.

Adopting an ethnographic stance also required rethinking the standard conventions of transcription. After a period of 6 months of initial preschool observation, we found that the transcription conventions we used (the CA system) were lacking with respect to prosody (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998), a major resource in child discourse.

Children use their voices as performative devices, playing with tone, pitch, volume, and intonation to create imitations, parody, subversion, and so on (Aronsson & Thorell, 2002; Sawyer, 1996). Child discourse involves constant and sudden shifts in roles, voices, and keys: The children change roles, speaking in one moment as themselves and in the next as a television character. They move freely between the real and the fictitious, the serious and the ironic, sometimes by using prosodic aspects as a sole keying device (Blum-Kulka & Huck-Taglicht, 2002; Ochs, 1979; Sawyer, 1997). As first steps in capturing these shifts, we added the “#” sign offered by prosody researchers

as a device for highlighting words, utterances, or segments and marking them as “different” and unusual in terms of speech production (Couper-Kuhlen & Selting, 1996a, 1996b). We complement the use of this sign by drawing on the option to add transcriber comments in double parenthesis available in the original CA system and expanding its use: An utterance can be marked as unique by using the “#” sign, and its specific nature—angry, amused, teacher’s voice—can be described in a comment. This combination prefers mundane, accessible description to seemingly objective, scientific documentation and suits the nature of prosodic features that are experienced at a functional holistic level by the participants themselves (Edwards, 2001). We also relied on the use of free verbal comments for describing nonverbal behavior and supplying contextual information.

A CASE STUDY: INTEGRATING CA AND ETHNOGRAPHY TRADITIONS OF ANALYSIS

We demonstrate the merits of combining ethnography and CA in analyzing children’s peer talk by focusing on a case study of an episode—the story of Dafna and Tarzan. This interaction was recorded by one of us in the preschool yard during free-play time. It involves five children who are playing inside a wooden construction, which functions in their pretend play as a “babies’ cage.” The children discuss different criteria for entering the cage, one of which is hating Tarzan. They move on to discuss who hates or loves Tarzan and specifically, whether girls hate Tarzan. One of the observers present overheard this conversation and jotted down a reference to it in her field notes; then, after reviewing the outline of the complete tape, this segment was fully transcribed (Appendix A). In the following, we focus first on the dialectics of interpretation between field notes and the transcript on the issue of identity construction raised in both and then discuss the way CA and ethnography complement each other in the understanding of one segment in the transcript.

The field notes offer a highly coherent interpretation of Dafna’s actions:

Excerpt 1: The observer’s field notes

ba-kaseta shel dafna – gil natan lanu
tarazan
“tarazan ze lo le-banot”

On Dafna’s tape – Gil gave us
Tarzan
“Tarzan is not for girls”

“atem yod'im ma asiti” (sipur al
hashxatat ha-xoveret ve-hafixata le-
xoveret barbiyot)
havnayat zehut
sipur to prove a point

“Do you know what I did” (a story
about corrupting the booklet and
turning it into a Barbies' booklet)
Identity construction
Story to prove a point

Although the field notes in our case anticipated the later interpretation provided through the analysis of the transcript, they are problematic because of their high degree of coherence. The field notes follow the classic structure of a closed, coherent narrative (Labov, 1972): Starting with a double orientation—external, noting the segment's location (“On Dafna's tape”) and internal (“Gil gave us Tarzan”)—then proceeding to a complication (“Tarzan is not for girls”) and a resolution (“Do you know what I did ...”), and it ends with an evaluation and a coda from the researcher's perspective (“Identity construction, story to prove a point”). This closed structure allows for only one simple understanding of the event without the acknowledgment of any complexities. It presents what might be called *the coherence trap*—our need to create coherence by narrativizing. The tendency to overcohere may tilt the balance in favor of the researcher's perspective, possibly causing her or him to underrepresent the perspective of those studied (Clifford, 1986).

The danger of overcoherence calls for microanalysis, which at times may alter the initial interpretations formed by the observer. In our case study (but of course not as a rule), the initial closed understanding is supported by the detailed analysis of turn 9, which provides a grounding of our interpretations in the actual microdetails of talk, thus providing an illustration of the convergence of macroperspectives and microperspectives on social interactions (Hopper, 1990/1991a; Streeck, 1990/1991). (DAF=Dafna; see Appendix B for transcription conventions additional to those commonly used in this journal.)

Excerpt 2: Turn 9 – transcript

- 9 DAF: ani l::o oevet (0.9) banot lo o↑avot et tarazan. tarazan lo oavot
I n::ot love (0.9) girls not l↑ove tarzan. Tarzan not love
I d::on't like (0.9) girls don't li↑ke Tarzan. Tarzan ((they))
- 9 cnt. a- banot=
the girls=
don't like the girls=

The details of Dafna's delivery of turn 9 strongly support the observation that we are dealing here with the issue of gendered identity construc-

tion. Dafna starts her utterance rather loudly with “I don’t,” but the last part of the word “like” is quieter,⁷ and then Dafna stops talking for 0.9 sec. This production resembles a closer cutoff (Jasperson, 2002), especially because the stop of talk is in the area of a “dental friction”—the “*ve*” in “*oevet*”—an area that is problematic to cutoff (Jasperson, 2002, pp. 268–269). As suggested by CA (Schegloff, Jefferson, & Sacks, 1977), cutoffs are one way to initiate self-repair. Moreover, as Schegloff (1979) argued, cutoffs initiate self-repairs on earlier talk. Thus, the cutoff initiates repair on something in the utterance Dafna has already produced because it stops the utterance before it is finished with the object of her dislike.⁸ After the cutoff, Dafna produces “girls don’t like Tarzan” in what seems to be a replacement of the word *I* with the word *girls*; both words function as a grammatical subject. Schegloff (1979) described this type of repair, which at times is called *replacement*: “Repair may replace one word with another of the same word class” (p. 263). Jefferson (1974), who referred to the same and similar repair phenomena as “error correction,” argued that the appearance of the second word makes clear what was the problem in the first word. In our case, the word *girls* makes clear that the word *I* was the problematic word in the utterance that Dafna stopped. This replacement or error correction shows that Dafna was unhappy with her use of the private voice *I* and replaced it with the collective-gendered voice *girls*. Such replacements can do a “performance of identity of self in situation” (Jefferson, 1974, p. 192) or in Jasperson’s (2002) formulation, “The practice of same-turn repair stands not only as a resource for changing (correcting, enhancing, abandoning) the content of an utterance but also as a resource for presenting speakers and recipients in interactionally significant ways” (p. 260). In our case, Dafna’s replacement makes her self-presentation as a gendered person, a female-*girl*, significant to the interaction and positions her as a representative of her gender. The analysis of turn 9 thus demonstrates the contributions of CA methods to ethnography, providing through the transcripts the warrants for the interpretation offered through observation. However, the transcript may also alter initial interpretations or at least problematize them in certain ways. Thus, for example, the initial observation focused on Dafna as the main player in this scene, whereas the transcript (see Appendix A) displays the participation of at least four children in the interaction. The field notes further assume that Dafna is the sole initiator and teller of the story on the destruction of the Tarzan booklet, whereas the transcript reveals a complex, multivoiced negotiation around the initiation of the topic (see turns 10–12) and story entry (turns 22–25, and Blum-Kulka, in

press-a). To demonstrate the contribution of ethnography in the wider sense, that of providing large background context to the understanding of actual discursive phenomena, we chose to focus on another action by Dafna: Her “return” to the story in turn 32 after almost 10 sec since she seemingly finished it in turn 29. We propose three complementary explanations to this phenomenon (CHI = unidentified child).

Excerpt 3: Turns 29–34 – transcript

- 29 DAF: =#zarakti ota la-pax. .h keilu ze aya:: (0.2) kufsa shel
 =#I threw it to the trash. .h like it wa::s (0.2) box of
 =#I threw it in the trash. Like it was (0.2) a box of the
- 29 cnt. a-ro [tev shum she-nig]mera.# ((amused tone))
 a- sa[uce garlic that en]ded.# ((amused tone))
 gar [lic sauce that en]ded.# ((amused tone))
- 30 CHI: [()]
 31 (9.2) ((unclear speech, whispers))
- 32 DAF: ve-ROTEV AGVANIYOT gam samti al ze. (0.9) gam samti AL ze rotev
 and SAUCE TOMATOS also I put on it. (0.9) also I put ON it sauce
 And TOMATO SAUCE I also put on it. (0.9) I also put ON it
- 32 cnt. ag°vaniyot° .h tiru. tiru.
 to°matos°. .h look. Look.
 to°mato° sauce. .h Look. .h Look.
- 33 CHI: (lo . she-ayiti ben yom)
 (No when I was old day)
 (No that I was a day old)
- 34 DAF: AN::I (0.2) az (0.6) tiru (0.2) ani lakaxti kol minei rotev,/
 I::: (0.2) so (0.6) look (0.2) I took all kinds sauce,/
 I::: (0.2) so (0.6) look (0.2) I took all kinds of sauce,/
- 34 cnt. (0.5) ve-gam e/ yerak::ot./ (0.3) ve-asiti mi-ze xoveret
 (0.5) and also e/ vegeta::bles./ (0.3) And I did from it booklet
 (0.5) and also e/ vegeta::bles./ (0.3) And I made of it a
- 34 cnt. ba:rb:yo:::t.
 Ba:rb:i:::es.
 Ba:rb:i:::es booklet.

Our first proposed explanation is based on detailed sequential analysis. Dafna reaches possible completion of her story when she tells what she did to the booklet (putting sauce on it and throwing it to the garbage—turn 29). Following this possible completion, however, there is no audible uptake by the interactants (lines 30–32) or at least no such uptake was recorded on tape. Keeping in mind that without support from field notes or a video recording of the event we cannot know whether there were other non-

verbal responses to the story, we will proceed with a tentative analysis based on the “no uptake” assumption. The lack of an uptake at this point goes back to turn 26: Answering Dafna’s story entrance question, an interactant suggested that Dafna threw the booklet to the garbage, which is the exact ending point of Dafna’s actual story. The interactants who earlier offered a candidate story outcome are not in a position to appreciate such a story as exciting. Once the interactional implication of a story, namely, a response, is missing, participants pursue a response to the story by amending or changing it (Jefferson, 1978)—in other words by repairing it. Therefore, to assure her interactants’ appreciation, Dafna must continue as well as “top” with more elaborate and exciting acts of destruction. As part of this “topping,” Dafna’s talk becomes more vivid and animated in turn 34, drawing on tempo and length to build a clearly hearable climax with the elongated vowels in “ba:rbiiii:es,” and it might well be those performative aspects that elicit interactants’ responses (turns 35–36 in Appendix A; Bauman, 1986; Briggs, 1988). Note also that Dafna finishes her story at the gendered level, with “Barbies” as the last word finishing the story in the same note as its beginning (turn 9), putting gender again at the center of the interaction. Indeed, after this performance, Rafael responds to the story with his own suggestion (turn 35) finally showing an uptake on the story. Thus, the continuation in turn 32 may be perceived as another type of self-repair, this time one that arises from problems with the sequential implicativeness of an utterance (Schegloff, 1987).

The interpretation of turn 32 as a type of self-repair focuses solely on the textual sequence and ignores contextual aspects. These complementary aspects are provided by our two additional explanations to Dafna’s action. Our second explanation focuses on Dafna’s social personae and is based on our ongoing acquaintance with her as ethnographers. Dafna was one of the older children in the preschool, a very tall girl with broad shoulders. Both her age and her physical appearance gave her the status of a “senior” member in the children’s community, a status that she drew on in many of her interactions, often acting as the pretend-play coordinator (as in a previous interaction in the same day) and monitoring the actions of other children. Dafna’s social personae as a prominent, dominating community member serves as an additional explanation to her perceived need to dramatize and enhance her story and contextualizes this dramatization as part of Dafna’s ongoing pursuit of dominance (M. H. Goodwin, 2002).

Our third explanation is also based on ethnographically obtained knowledge, not of the specific participants but of the peer culture. Eth-

nographic observations of the children at play made us keenly aware of their ease of passage from fantasy to reality and back again, a passage supported by a host of verbal (discourse markers such as “lets say,” shifts in tense forms especially to a past tense form that marks irrealis) and prosodic and nonverbal cues. In the segment preceding the conversation transcribed in Appendix A, the “babies’ cage” and the criteria for being admitted to it are discussed by the children within the pretend “keying” (Goffman, 1974) as part of the symbolic play. Although at the onset of the segment presented in the transcript the talk shifts back to reality with the topic of who likes or dislikes Tarzan, Dafna’s story seems to shift it back again into the world of fantasy. The amused tone, exaggerated intonation patterns as well as the choice of substances used and the surprising outcome (the booklet not destroyed but instead transformed into a “Barbies booklet”) indicate that the story has no claim to factuality. It meshes fantasy and reality knowingly to tell a moral tale: Look what I did to prove that girls do not like Tarzan. Dafna’s overdramatization is a standard practice among children engaged in pretend play in which symbolic violence and exaggerations are commonplace. Thus, to fully understand Dafna’s actions, we have to identify her talk as preformed in the pretend keying—as produced and understood by the interlocutors as markedly nonreal.

We take this explanation to demonstrate the need for contextualism in the anthropological sense as part and parcel of our double perspective on children’s talk, a need that was highlighted through our experience with studying preschoolers’ peer talk. The issue of context stands at the heart of the methodological and theoretical debate on the relation between ethnography and CA. The definition of the term and its application in documenting and analyzing social interactions have been discussed by many of the researchers dealing with possible combinations of the two approaches. To sum up this long debate, ethnography—representing with anthropology at large the most “serious, detailed, and embracing contextualism” there is (Scharfstein, 1989, p. 7)—defines the term as widely as possible, emphasizing reliance on general cultural knowledge obtained through previous observations and interviews as essential in analyzing cultural phenomena. Conversation analysts, on the other hand, hold a different vision of the term, examining a speaker’s contribution in light of the preceding sequence of talk and as shaping the upcoming sequence (i.e., as context shaped and context renewing; Heritage, 1984) and refraining from drawing on any sources other than the interaction itself (Duranti & Goodwin, 1992; Hopper, 1990/1991a; Mandelbaum, 1990/1991; Moerman, 1988; Philipsen, 1990/1991).

We claim that in the analysis of child discourse, context should be taken seriously in at least three senses. The first sense, exemplified in the third explanation of Dafna's action, is respecting child culture as a potentially unique contextual interpretative frame for understanding (Blum-Kulka, in press-b; Corsaro, 1985). Coming to the field with this basic stance means acknowledging that as adults, we experience preschoolers' peer culture as foreign and exotic, that we may lack basic vocabulary and interactional rules for understanding what is going on. For instance, one of our team members was observing the preschool yard when a child came up to her and asked, "Are you good or bad?" Drawing on her adult notions, she took his question as referring to her personality traits and hesitantly started to formulate a candid answer ("sometimes ..."). But listening to a repeat followed by a brief exchange between the child who initially has posed the question and another child ("Are you good or bad?"—"I'm bad"—"Great, then I'm going to ...") made her realize that the question addressed to her actually required a local, momentary estimate of her "goodness or badness" needed to assign her role within the pretend play frame under way and not a moral estimate of her character. In this case, the cultural information needed had to do with the interactional norms governing the ease of shift from real to pretend keyings (Goffman, 1974) and the pretend frame specific norm of interpretation, both typifying peer culture at this age level.

In the second, narrower sense, context is more directly tied to the interaction at hand. On occasion, the contextual information needed for understanding might have to do with more local, indexical concerns, such as identifying the referent(s) for the deixis used in the talk, and filling in the information the children share about the topic of their talk, such as shared knowledge from popular culture.

A third sense of context, is context as the cotext preceding and following the contribution under study as well as the sequential organization of the full segment (Blum-Kulka, in press-b; Schegloff, 1988).⁹

Finally, the combination of all three senses of context informs the identification of the segment as a *discursive event* with its context-specific thematic frame, keyings, and genres of talk (Blum-Kulka, in press-b; Blum-Kulka & Huck-Taglicht, 2002).

The "good or bad" example is one of many experiences while observing, transcribing, and analyzing, which demonstrated how deeply children's talk is embedded in peer culture and how much we needed to complete our lack of communicative competence by relying on contextual information in all senses mentioned so far. This need, which is salient when

working with children as with the exotic (Beach, 1990/1991; Streeck, 1990/1991), is also present, although taken for granted, in every social study.

CONCLUSION

This article is identified explicitly with the view that a broad, interdisciplinary approach is needed for the study of child discourse. In the article, we have presented a few of the issues that inform the kinds of theoretical and methodological integration sought for achieving this goal. The issues discussed—such as the dilemmas of representation or the risks of overinterpretation in field notes—are not necessarily new, but we have tried to show that they take on a different relevance in the context of the study of child language. We used two examples to demonstrate the mutual benefits that can be gained from combining ethnographic fieldwork with CA methods of transcription and sequential analysis. Both examples showed the differential contribution of ethnography and CA to the analysis: in the first case, highlighting the way in which specific details of the talk noticeable only through careful transcription can provide warrants for earlier observation and in the second case, demonstrating how ethnographic knowledge on various levels may provide features essential for interpretation.

From a broader perspective, the notion of a double opportunity space introduced seeks to place child discourse into a framework that incorporates an emic view of the local cultural context of childhood with a developmental view on the learning of discursive skills. The marriage of ethnography with CA we argued for in the article can be beneficial for achieving such a double perspective due to the potentially different contribution of each of these approaches. In our case, ethnographic fieldwork is crucial for gaining interpretative access to the children's life worlds as well as for situating their peer conversations within the larger context of children's talk on other occasions. On the other hand, careful documentation of their talk following CA methods is just as essential because it allows for following moment by moment the unique ways in which children accomplish coordinated action and display their understanding of the events they are engaged in. The findings from such analyses, in turn, inform both the cultural and the developmental perspectives on child discourse.

NOTES

- 1 Such integration has been at the center of several influential works (e.g., Bilmes, 1992; M. H. Goodwin, 1990; Moerman, 1988), each presenting its own solution to the dilemmas of balancing between the two methodologies, as well as the focus of much debate throughout the last 15 years (Fitch & Philipsen, 1995; Hopper, 1990/1991b; Moerman, 1988; Sanders, Fitch, & Pomerantz, in press; Wieder, 1999).
- 2 Observations and recordings took place during free-play sessions in three Israeli preschools, each with a child population of socially mixed parental backgrounds. Two of the authors observed in the preschool regularly. The particular interaction analyzed in this article was observed by the second author.
- 3 We used video recordings sparingly during the 1st year of observation because the type of equipment we had then was too intrusive to be moved around too much. Hence, we preferred to video only in cases in which the camera could be left static near a group of children. The introduction of small digital cameras and wireless microphones in the 3rd year of the project allowed for extensive videotaping. The data in this article come from the 1st year of observations.
- 4 See Sanjek (1990) for a classification of various types of field notes. Our notes would be roughly equivalent to his category of "scratch notes."
- 5 Moving from field notes to transcripts, we used an interim stage: a partial transliteration of the tapes combining field notes with the audio data in a general outline and designed to serve as a basis for segment selection and for transcription.
- 6 See Speer and Hutchby (2003) for a discussion of related issues.
- 7 This is evident not only from listening to the tape but also from the graphic waveform of Dafna's speech.
- 8 We base our discussion of repair initiation on English because as far as we know, there is no research discussing Hebrew initiations of repairs.
- 9 This sense of context poses a major problem for researchers, as it requires identifying the boundaries of the interaction and limiting the scope of relevant context. For example, in our case study, later readings of the material revealed that earlier that day the children used the "babies' cage" as a prison. The relevance of this previous pretend play remains an open question for further analysis.

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APPENDIX A

The Transcription

Participants: DAF—Dafna, female, 6;1 RAF—Rafael, male, 5;11; RAV—Ravit, female, 4;11; additional unidentified children.

Date: January 3, 2000

Place: “Eynit” kindergarden, Jerusalem

The situation: The children are playing inside a construction in the yard. They have turned it into a “babies’ cage.” Earlier on, two issues are discussed: (a) How old are the babies and what is the permitted age range for participation in the game?, and (b) who likes Tarzan and who doesn’t, again as criteria for participation in the game. Dafna is very dominant throughout these discussions.

- | | | | |
|----|------|--|---|
| 1 | DAF: | (3.3) rafa [↑] l, ata oev et:taraza [↑] n? | (3.3) Rafe [↑] l, do you like:Taraza [↑] n? |
| 2 | CH1: | (0.3) u amar li kcat.= | (0.3) he told me a little= |
| 3 | CH2: | =u lo oev.= | =He doesn’t like= |
| 4 | CH1: | =u amar li= | =He told me. |
| 5 | DAF: | u amar lexa [she-u::o::ev]? | He told you [that he::li::kes]? |
| 6 | CH2: | [(.....)] (...) ata
[oev] et tarazan? | [(.....)] (...) you
[like] Tarzan? |
| 7 | RAF: | [lo] >ani kvar lo o°ev< (et tarazan). | [No] >I don’t anymore li°ke< (Tarzan). |
| 8 | CH2: | ani lo oev (...) | I don’t like (...) |
| 9 | DAF: | ani l::o oevet (0.9) banot lo o [↑] avot et tarazan. tarazan lo oavot a-banot= | I d::on’t like (0.9) girls don’t li [↑] ke Tarzan. Tarzan ((they)) don’t like the girls= |
| 10 | RAF: | =oi. #kshe-gil xilek lanu (0.2) xovrot tarzan, .h az ex .h dikla (0.3) ve-kama banot .h (0.8) e xip-# ((amused)) | =O _i . #when Gil gave us (0.2) Tarzan booklets, .h so how .h Dikla (0.3) and few girls .h (0.8) e cov-# ((amused)) |
| 11 | CHI: | [#ex iskamti le-ka-#] ((upset)) | [#How I agreed to ta-#] ((upset)) |
| 12 | RAF: | [#xisu et a-] a-xoveret .h shel tarazan be-xol, (0.4) nican ve-r::on# ve-od .h .h bat. | [#Covered the-] the booklet .h of Tarzan with sand, (0.4) Nican and R::on# and another .h .h girl. |
| 13 | CH2: | (0.6) ve-mi od? | (0.6) And who else? |
| 14 | DAF: | (...) ve-[eden.] | (...) And [Eden.] |
| 15 | CHI: | [gal] >gal. gal.< | [Gal] >Gal. Gal.< |
| 16 | DAF: | (0.3) ve-eden. | (0.3) And Eden. |
| 17 | RAV: | °si °gal ba’a. | °Si °gal comes. |
| 18 | DAF: | (0.4) fde’eden= ((ve-eden)) | (0.4) fde’eden= ((and Eden)) |

- 19 RAF: =gal. °gal.° =Gal. °Gal.°
 20 DAF: lo. ze lo gil xi::lek, ze rafi. No. It's not Gil ((that)) ga::ve, it's Rafi.
 (1.1) ra↓fi xilek. (1.1) Ra↓fi gave.
 21 CH2: (0.4) °naxon.° (0.4) ° Right.°
 22 RAF: (1.9) naxon. #ve-lama iskamti (1.9) Right. #And why did I agree
 lekabel xoveret tarzan?# to take a booklet of Tarzan?#
 23 DAF: (1.5) ve-LAMA ani eskamti .h (1.5) And WHY I agreed .h
 lekabel x- = to take b- =
 24 RAF: =ANI KISITI OTA BE-XO:L. =I COVERED IT WITH SAN:D.
 25 DAF: lama ani eskamti lexa- lekabel Why did I agree to gi- to take this
 xoveret kazot. .h >aval atem yodim kind of a booklet. .h >but you know
 ma asiti ita she-egati abayta?< what I did with it when I got home?<
 26 CHI: ma, zarakt ota la-pax ve- = What, threw it in the trash and- =
 27 DAF: =#ke:h:n# (1.5) ke::n. (0.6) samti =#Ye:h:s# (1.5) ye::s. (0.6) I put on
 alea rotev shu::m, = ((laughing it garlic sau::ce, = ((laughing
 tone)) tone))
 28 RAF: ((laughs))
 29 DAF: =#zarakti ota la-pax. .h keilu ze =#I threw it in the trash. .h like it
 aya:: (0.2) kufsa shel wa::s (0.2) a box of the
 a-ro[teν shum she-nig]mera.# gar[lic sauce that en]ded.#
 ((amused tone)) ((amused tone))
 30 CHI: [(.....)] [(.....)]
 31 (9.2) ((unclear speech, whispers))
 32 DAF: ve-ROTEV AGVANIYOT gam And TOMATO SAUCE too I put on
 samti al ze.(0.9) gam samti AL ze it. (0.9) Also I put ON it
 roteν ag °vaniyot ° .h tiru. tiru. tomato sau°ce ° .h look. look.
 33 CHI: (loshe-ayiti ben yom) (no that I was a day old)
 34 DAF: AN::I (0.2) az (0.6) tiru (0.2) ani I:: (0.2) so (0.6) look (0.2) I took all
 lakaxti kol minei roteν, / (0.5) kinds of sauce, / (0.5)
 ve-gam e / yerak::ot. / (0.3) and also e / vegtab::les. / (0.3)
 ve-asiti mi-ze xoveret barbi:yo:::t. and made of it a Ba:rbi:i:::es booklet.
 35 RAF: (0.5) #xaval she-lo asit mi-ze (0.5) #Too bad you didn't made of it
 xoveret marak.# ((amused tone)) a soup booklet.# ((amused tone))
 36 ((All the children laugh together))

APPENDIX B

Additional Transcription Conventions

#words#—Unusual tone, indicated in a comment.

word/word/word—Rhythmic pronunciation.