Chapter 1

Next turn and intersubjectivity in children's language acquisition

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Introduction

There is now a substantial research tradition within child language study which takes as its focus the language addressed to young children (e.g. Gallaway and Richards 1994). This research tradition has consolidated, developed and broadened in outlook since gathering momentum in response to nativist claims in the 1970s. Over the intervening period, one can chart a shift in emphasis from early concerns with the description of a child-directed register, to a more recent drive to understand the nature of the interactions between child and adult. Such a shift is documented by two review articles within that collection. Snow, charting changes between the late 1970s and early 1990s, writes, 'the analysis of input moved from being located in the study of registers to being located in the study of discourse analysis' (1994: 6); while Pine reports recognition of 'the need to consider the interactive context in which CDS [child-directed speech] occurs if we are to understand exactly how it operates' (1994: 18). Commentaries on the field, then, suggest that work in this research tradition can now lay claim to a sensitivity to the workings of the conversational interactions between adult and child which are the site of children's language development.

A particular impetus for research into the language addressed to children has come from learnability theory and the 'no negative evidence' debate (e.g. Brown and Hanlon 1970; Morgan *et al*. 1995), which concerns the sufficiency with which children learning language are supplied with indications that their ungrammatical productions are indeed ungrammatical. In itself, the point at issue here is quite specific, and applicable to a particular research enterprise. It amounts to a logical problem pertaining to the child's ability to recover from the overgeneralisation of grammatical rules in the deduction of an adult-like grammar – a debate that informs the extent to which innate capacities are built into theoretical models of language acquisition. These concerns have provided fuel for a long-running debate which has become much wider in scope. Following a catalyst article by Brown and Hanlon (1970), some have endorsed their finding that children do

not receive negative feedback following their ungrammatical productions (e.g. Morgan and Travis 1989; Marcus 1993; Morgan *et al.* 1995), while others have argued that they do (e.g. Bohannon and Stanowicz 1988; Moerk 1991; Farrar 1992; Furrow *et al.* 1993; Penner 1997). Following Hirsh-Pasek *et al.* (1984), some have widened the scope of what might constitute negative evidence and looked at more implicit forms of feedback (e.g. Demetras *et al.* 1986; Morgan and Travis 1989; Saxton 1993, 1997). Some studies have considered the role of feedback in relation to phonological and lexical development (Bohannon and Stanowicz 1988; Huttenlocher *et al.* 1991; Harris 1992), while others have considered similar issues in relation to atypical populations of learners, such as children with specific language impairment (Nelson *et al.* 1996) and deaf children (Harris 1992). It is striking, however, that in this broader arena the terms of the debate remain those pertaining to theoretical modelling. These studies make abundant use of terms like stimulus, input and feedback – terms which implicitly present language development as a computational mental process of grammar deduction.

What one finds, then, in the literature, is a debate which on the one hand claims to value an understanding of the nature of adult–child discourse and to locate language development within social interaction – while on the other claims to be steeped in terms and concepts which locate language development firmly within the individual child's head. What I want to do in this chapter is to take one of those terms – feedback – and consider some of the limitations of this concept for understanding both how adult–child interaction works and how the nature of that interaction may have a part to play in facilitating children's language development. By presenting an interactional analysis of some data, I hope to indicate how a greater understanding of the working of conversational interaction, as uncovered by those working in the tradition of ethnomethodological conversation analysis (see, for example, Levinson 1983; Heritage 1984a; Wootton 1989) might illuminate and advance this important area of child language research.

Feedback

Feedback is a term which has been imported into studies of adult–child discourse from theoretical models of learning and deduction. In terms of sensitivity to the dynamics of social interaction, it takes us a step further than input (still heavily used in these studies), which implies that an adult's contributions to an interactional adult–child exchange can be stripped away and summed as an entity, each contribution divorced from the local interactional context in which it was embedded. Input, in other words, represents a one-way phenomenon. Feedback, on the other hand, incorporates a recognition of the two-way nature of dyadic talk, since it describes a relationship between two (generally consecutive) turns – the relationship of an adult's response to a prior child production. But it is severely limited as an analytic concept applied to interactive talk, since its bounds are set at those two turns. The concept allows no consideration of the part played by later turns in the emergent relationships between earlier, adjacent ones.

Let me illustrate some of the problems caused by this limitation inherent in the concept of feedback by considering how the concept is employed in the work of Moerk (1991), whose work is more sequentially sensitive than that of many in the field. Moerk

sets out to refute the claim, often made in the literature, that 'negative evidence' is not a feature of adult–child talk. He does this by presenting numerous transcript examples of sequences in which adults correct children's linguistic errors. The wealth of examples presented is effective both in demonstrating the prevalence of these kinds of sequences, and in broadening out the rather constricted view of these issues as presented by learnability theorists. The analysis is nonetheless limited, however, by the fact that the 'feedback cycles' which Moerk illustrates consist principally of just two turns – an ungrammatical utterance of some kind from the child and a correction of some kind from the carer. There is (in most cases) no consideration of the child's response to this 'feedback' turn, and thus no attention is paid to how different kinds of 'corrective' carer responses are treated by the child. This limitation has at least two consequences. Firstly, it prevents us from gaining any understanding of how different carer responses may carry different implications for what the child does next. Consideration of such matters could in turn help us to understand just how certain adult utterances present usable information to the child. Secondly, omission from the analysis of the child's response to these adult turns also leaves Moerk with no warrant for categorising the adult utterances as corrections – since we cannot tell whether the child treated them as such. This categorisation, then, can be done only on an intuitive basis. Since a concern of this work is with establishing the extent of corrective information available to the child, this omission is a significant one.

A further problem with the concept of feedback is one which has beset studies in this area. Adult response types have typically been categorised according to their structural relationship to preceding child turns. Categories such as 'recasts' – some instances of which function as corrections and others of which do not – are typically used. Some work (Marcus 1993; Morgan *et al.* 1995) has identified a problem with this – but the way in which the problem has been formulated fails, in my view, to address what is really the issue. In essence, the problem is conceived by these researchers as being a problem for the child, rather than a problem of approach. Morgan *et al.* (1995), for instance, argue that, since recasts are not easily discriminable as a class by children, who will also be unable to identify recasts as corrections (since some are not), recasts are unlikely to supply the child with any 'evidence' to make use of. The implication here is that, in looking for ways in which adult responses may provide useful information to the language learning child, we are simply looking for identifiable classes of response types which act as a signal for the child by routinely marking ungrammatical utterances. We are looking, in other words, for a signalling code which the child can crack.

What I hope to illustrate in this chapter is that we cannot afford to ignore the nature of adult utterances in the way that this line of research appears to do. It might very well matter whether an adult produces a clarification question or a correction, for instance, since these actions implicate different next actions on the part of the child, and in particular offer different kinds of opportunities for the child's rehearsal of target items. The problem is that the categories typically employed in feedback studies are formulated in terms of the kinds of grammatical information they contain. Instead of formulating categories in terms of the kind of grammatical information they contain I hope to illustrate the benefits of looking at adult turns as interactional objects, objects which are, on that basis, identifiable to the child.

Method

The analysis which follows makes use of the procedures of conversation analysis, and draws on some important insights uncovered by that tradition, pertaining to the relationship between a turn at talk and its prior. My intention is to illustrate how we might arrive at a clearer understanding of the relationship between adult turns and child turns in child–adult talk – and to suggest how we might bring such an understanding to bear on what is a fundamental debate in child language – the role of 'negative evidence'.

The data presented is taken from a study of naturally occurring dyadic interactions taking place between normally developing children aged between 1;7 and 2;3 and their carers (see Tarplee 1993). The recordings were made by the carers themselves in their own homes, and at the time of recording, the carers were unaware that their own part in the talk was to be an object of study. The data extracts presented have been transcribed according to the notation conventions generally adopted in conversation analytic work (see Atkinson and Heritage 1984; ix–xvi), with the additional use of symbols of the IPA enclosed within square brackets.

The analysis begins with data drawn from a particular setting – that of picture labelling from books. Since the interest here is to identify features of the social interactions in which a young child engages which might facilitate for the child the language-learning task, then an appropriate place to start looking is at an instructional activity. Picture labelling from books is clearly an activity which is often engaged in by carers and young children, and featured in all the recordings that were gathered for the study. Picture labelling is an activity where linguistic testing, instruction and rehearsal take place naturally.

Analysis

Picture labelling as an instructional routine

Picture labelling is clearly an activity in which a young child's linguistic skills can be directly addressed and worked on, and it is worth considering just how this 'instructional' work is achieved. Extracts 1.1 and 1.2 display picture-labelling talk.

Extract 1.1

1 Adult: wha:t:'s: that
(1.8)

2 Child: e:lephant =

3 Adult: = (hh)'a:t's ri:ght

Extract 1.2

1 Adult: a::nd what's that
(3.3)

2 Child: [ba·ɪdəneˈˀtʃəʊəsʲ]
(.)

3+1 Adult: n:o that's the rhi:noceros that's the-
(1.7)

2 Child: [ɪdɛpʰɔdːʊˈmː] [ə( )]

3 Adult: [(hh) hippopota(h)mus

3 °yes°=
Child: =what's this

In both cases we can see a basic three-part structure to the labelling sequence, which has been indicated by numbering in the left-hand margin: there is an elicitation from the carer, a label from the child, and in third position a receipt from the adult of the child's label. In Extract 1.2, the adult's *no that's the rhinoceros that's the-* is a turn which contains both a third part to one labelling sequence and a first part to a next. *No that's the rhinoceros* (with contrastive stress – by means of on-syllable pitch movement – on *that's*) receipts the child's erroneous first label, while in the same turn *that's the-* (on level pitch in mid-range) serves as a 'fill-the-blank' type elicitation, inviting the child to produce a repaired attempt at the label. We can see in these two examples that the third-position receipt can either affirm the child's label (*that's right* in Extract 1.1, *hippopotamus yes* in Extract 1.2), or it can reject it (*no that's the rhinoceros* in Extract 1.2). We can also see that a third-position receipt which affirms that a child's label can be designed in different ways. *That's right* in Extract 1.1 affirms without reproducing a version of the label, while *hippopotamus yes* in Extract 1.2 combines a version of the label with a confirmation marker. Extract 1.3 illustrates a third design for affirming receipts found in the corpus:

Extract 1.3

1 Adult: o [oh] who's that
Child: [ɛ̈h]
(1.0)

2 Child: li:on

3 Adult: l:i::on
(5.0)
Child: °norah°

Here affirmation is done without any confirmation marker of any kind, but simply with a version of the label.

The carer's receipting turn in third position in a labelling sequence

When considering how 'instructional' work is accomplished in these labelling sequences, it is clear that the turn which regularly occupies third position in these three-part structures – the adult's evaluative receipt of a child's labelling turn – is of central importance. This kind of turn within a three-part sequence has often been identified in the literature as characteristic of classroom and other styles of pedagogic interaction.

This is because one accomplishment of an evaluative receipt in third turn position after a question is to specify that question as having held a particular status. Searle (1969:66) makes the distinction between what he terms 'real' and 'exam' questions in talk:

> In real questions the speaker wants to know (find out) the answer; in exam questions, the speaker wants to know if the hearer knows.

Heritage (1984a) nicely demonstrates the options available to a questioner to constitute a question as one or other of these alternative actions, by virtue of the action that the questioner takes directly after a co-participant's answer. Since, as Heritage (1984a: 286) points out,

> In a 'real' question, the questioner proposes to be ignorant about the substance of the question and . . . projects the intended answerer to be knowledgeable about the matter.

Then questioners of 'real' questions typically receipt their answers with the use of a particle like *oh* which, as Heritage elsewhere explicates (Heritage 1984b), marks its speaker as having undergone some change of state in knowledge or orientation. In mundane conversation one therefore finds three-part *question–answer–receipt* sequences of the following form:

(Frankel: TC:1:1:13–14:ST) (Heritage 1984b: 308)

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S :   .hh When d'ju get out. Christmas week or the week before Christmas
G :   Uh::m two or three days before [Ch    ] ristmas,
S :                                  [Oh :,]
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In such a sequential position, the use of *oh* marks its speaker as having undergone a change of state from ignorance to knowledge, through receipt of a co-participant's answer, and therefore as NOT having been in possession of this knowledge when the question was asked.

By contrast, a third-position receipt which evaluates an answer to a question, proposes instead that the questioner has undergone no such change of state of knowledge, but has been already in possession of the information elicited by the question. An evaluative receipt, then, types a question as having been of the 'exam' type – a question produced in order to test its recipient's knowledge.

There is nothing new in the association of this structure of talk with instructional activity: the recurrence of this kind of questioning sequence in classically pedagogic settings such as in the interaction between teacher and pupils in classroom lessons has often been noted by researchers working in different research traditions. This three-part structure has been described and associated with instructional modes of interaction (e.g. Sinclair and Coulthard 1975; McHoul 1978; Mehan 1979; Lerner 1995), however, few researchers have been concerned with a systematic explication of just how this kind of sequence accomplishes instructional work.

A third-position evaluative receipt after a question characterises the questioner not only as being already in possession of the information being solicited, but also, by virtue of having access to that information, as being in a position to measure the correctness of the elicited answer. This means that the child is being provided with a particularly important kind of 'feedback' here, over and above the message that *elephant* and *hippopotamus* are appropriate labels and *rhinoceros* is not. The adult is standing as arbiter over the linguistic appropriacy of the child's productions, and means that the

child's answer itself, framed in this way, becomes a particular kind of object. It is not an informing, as many answers to questions are, but a display. The child's turn in a picture book labelling sequence, since it implicates an evaluative response from the adult, takes on the status of a performance, a presentation of certain skills, offered to the adult for acceptance or rejection – offered, that is, to be worked on in some way. In the examples we have so far seen, it is lexical knowledge that is being tested. A child's labelling turns, then, present a display of certain of the child's linguistic abilities, and explicitly offer them to the adult to be worked on in those terms.

It was seen earlier that there are essentially two kinds of work which the adult's evaluative receipt may perform. It may explicitly accept and affirm the child's prior action, or it may indicate non-acceptance and instigate repair on it. By means of the regular occurrence of the adult's third-position evaluative receipt, one or other of these two courses of action is routinely taken. An important consequence of this is that the child is given reduced opportunities for a critical monitoring of her own turns, since responsibility for such monitoring is, by virtue of that third-position turn, conferred upon the adult. In the corpus, the children were very rarely seen to initiate repair on their own labelling utterances. As the adult's evaluative receipt regularly follows very swiftly from the child's labelling attempt, without delay, then actual opportunities for this kind of initiation are minimised – just as the expectation of its occurrence may inhibit the critical monitoring that would motivate it. One kind of 'feedback' available to the child in these sequences, then, is that the charge of monitoring the child's utterances for her linguistic 'correctness' is taken away from the child and laid at the door of the adult – a feature that would seem to be crucial to this talk's pedagogic nature.

There is also another kind of 'feedback' implicit in a carer's evaluative receipt which follows a child's labelling utterance. Consider Extract 1.4.

Extract 1.4

1 Child: [tˈa̪dɪˈə̪θ]

2 → Adult: tee:th

3 → Child: [t̪iːjəʰ]

Here the carer follows the child's initial attempt at the label *teeth* with a repetition of the label – a turn design we have already seen accomplishing the work of evaluative receipt. However, compare this extract with Extract 1.3, in which, following the carer's repetition of the child's label, there is a five-second silence and the child moves on to label another picture. In other words, the repetition affirms the child's label and ends that particular labelling sequence. In Extract 1.4, on the other hand, the carer's version of the label prompts a second, repaired, attempt at *teeth* by the child. Examples such as Extract 1.4 show us that the picture-labelling activity presents opportunities, not only for working on the child's lexical skills, but for engaging with the child's developing articulatory skills as well. The carer's utterance of *teeth* serves as an affirmative receipt as far as the lexical choice made by the child is concerned, but it invites repair at a phonetic level. This example also shows us that the labelling activity is not just concerned with the testing of a child's linguistic skills: it offers opportunities for rehearsal of development skills on the part of the child. And in terms of 'feedback' made available

to the child, a consideration of Extracts 1.3 and 1.4 makes apparent that what looks to be a similar object – a carer's repetition of a child's prior labelling attempt – can do two very different kinds of work, and have very different implications for what follows it. In Extract 1.3, the repetition affirms the child's lexical choice, requires no further work from the child and effectively ends the labelling sequence. In Extract 1.4, by contrast, the repetition invites the child to have another go at articulating the label. As well as the 'feedback' inherent in these responses (that the child's production of *lion* in Extract 1.3 is lexically appropriate and articulatorily adequate, while the child's production of *teeth* in Extract 1.4 is lexically appropriate but articulatorily leaves room for improvement), it is also important to consider how the child is able to distinguish between instances of a carer's repetitions which make one rather than the other of these two courses of action (end of talk on a given picture versus phonetically repaired attempt at the label) relevant. (See Tarplee 1996, for an attempt to tease out some of the subtleties of this distinction in prosodic terms.)

Picture labelling: summary

In picture labelling, both lexical and articulatory skills are worked on, not only by being tested, but also by rehearsal. It can be seen that the carer's third-position receipt in a labelling sequence is crucial to this instructional work, and provides 'feedback' on at least three levels. Firstly, it can explicitly affirm or reject the appropriacy of the child's labelling attempt (both in lexical and articulatory terms). This is a similar kind of 'feedback' to that most often attended to in the literature (although there the concern is usually with syntactic appropriacy). Secondly, there is a level of 'feedback' which the literature usually misses. This is that the carer's response to the child's utterance has implications for what the child does next. Thirdly, the fact that there is this kind of evaluative response at all has implications for the whole tenor of the talk, since it casts carer and child into the roles of instructor and instructee, reducing opportunities for the child to engage in a critical self-monitoring of her own utterances.

The remainder of the analysis considers similar features in ordinary adult–child conversations.

The incidence of labelling sequences outside picture book settings

A first point to note about the conversational data is that labelling sequences taking the same three-part structure as in picture book settings are found prompted by play with jigsaw puzzles, crayons and toy animals. The adults and children in the corpus also regularly engage in similar testing and naming activities, centring on people and objects figuring in the child's recent experience (Extract 1.5).

Extract 1.5

1 Adult: can you remember who came yesterday ian
(1.2)
Child: m:a:mmy

1 Adult: who came t- who ca:me
(0.6)

1 Adult: who came round yesterday
(0.8)

2 Child: [dˈõ̞ˠẽ]
(0.9)

3 Adult: j:a:ne
(1.0)

2 Child: j[ane

3 Adult: [ja-

Labelling elicitations can even be built out of the child's preceding talk. In Extract 1.6, the completed utterance constructed from a fill-the-blank task itself becomes a further labelling elicitation.

Extract 1.6

((*the child has been engaged in sound play around the word dodie – this child's word for dummy*))

1 Adult: who has a:-
(0.6)

2 Child: do:die

3 Adult: who has a do:die
(1.0)

4 Child: lewis: [( )

5 Adult: [lewis does yes

The adult picks up on the child's prior sound play around the world *dodie*, and builds a fill-the-blank construction with *dodie* as its target. This construction, completed by the child with *dodie*, is itself an eliciting question, and the child's *dodie* is not evaluatively receipted by the adult. The adult then asks the child *who has a dodie* and it is the child's response to this WH-question (*Lewis*) that receives an affirmation from the adult (*Lewis does yes*). Finally, Extract 1.7 illustrates how the labelling activity performed in this greater range of settings goes beyond simple lexical testing and involves, like picture book labelling, rehearsal on the child's part.

Extract 1.7

1 Adult: know what that is
(0.8)

2 Child: u:h
(1.2)

3 Child: what's this

4 Adult: that's a t:ree
(1.0)

5 Adult: what is it
(0.9)

6 Child: tree:

7 Adult: mm shall we put some more leaves on

Here, the child responds to the adult's eliciting question by turning it back on the adult with *what's this*. The adult responds with an informing turn, *that's a tree*, which is not immediately met with a child version. That it invites a child version, however, is made apparent by the adult's following it up, after one second, with a prompting question, *what is it*. The child responds to this with a version of the target, *tree*, which the adult then receipts (*mm*). These sequences, then, are concerned not only with the retrieval of known labels, but also with the articulation and rehearsal of unknown ones. That is, they work on the child's linguistic abilities in just the same ways as picture book labelling sequences.

The pervasiveness of labelling

It is apparent that labelling is an activity that is engaged in by adults and young children in a wide range of situational contexts. The fact that adults and young children label many different sorts of objects around them is important in highlighting the many opportunities that arise for a young child and adult to become involved in working on the child's linguistic skills. This observation alone is sufficient to undermine any characterisation of labelling talk as a specialised, context-specific style of interaction. What is much more important, however, is the fact that labelling does not rely on there being any physical objects or representations present to be labelled. Not only can the child's familiarity with objects, people and experiences from memory be called upon, at any time, for participation in bouts of labelling, but it has been seen that the adult can also pick up on the child's preceding talk to build labelling targets out of it. If a child's own spontaneous utterances can be built, by the adult, into fill-the-blank labelling constructions, then it would seem that any number of things can be characterised as 'labelable'. Labelling, then, becomes an activity which is constituted by the talk taking a particular three-part structural design, involving the display and evaluation of the child's linguistic knowledge. The analysis presented here has shown that talk between child and adult can take this structure in a potentially boundless range of contexts.

Beyond labelling sequences: carers' receipts of children's non-labelling utterances

Consideration of the conversational data suggests that this kind of evaluative receipting turn is widely prevalent in adult–child interaction, and in positions other than in third-turn position in a labelling sequence. If an evaluative receipt types its speaker as having been in possession of the information presented in a prior utterance before that

utterance was produced, it may do that work in sequential contexts other than in third turn after a question.

Consider Extracts 1.8–1.10.

Extract 1.8

((*This extract opens with the adult making a request for the child to pass her some keys*))

1 Adult: can I have them

2 Child: uhh n:o::=

3 Adult: =o(h)h y(h)ou t:ea:sing m(h)e ·hh y(h)ou
little mo:ns:ter
(0.6)

4 Child: [mʌ̃ᵊçˈtï]

5 → Adult: mo:nster yes

Extract 1.9

1 Adult: these are a pair of [wʌːïdfʊə̃nˈsː]

2 Child: [bˢ̺ɐːᵊ̺sˈe̤ʰ]

3 → Adult: w(h)i(h)de fr(h)o(h)nts y(h)e(h)s: ·hh

Extract 1.10

((*child playing with toy cow and fence*))

1 Adult: 's cow behind the fence isn' it
(4.2)

2 Adult: u:h (.) sitting on the fenc:e (.)
that's a good place to be
(.)

3 Child: [ïˀᵗs̺əïfɛ̰ᵊ̃nˀs̺ˈ]

4 Adult: m (h)y(h)e(he)s

5 Child: [nə̺s̺(l)i̤zanɛ̰̃fᵋɛˀᵗs̺]

6 → Adult: sitting on the fence yes

In each case, the arrowed adult turn carries a version of the child's prior utterance, and a confirmation marker, *yes*. The adult, then, appears to be confirming what the child is saying. But in every case, too, the child's prior utterance which the adult is confirming turns out to be a version of part of the adult's turn which preceded it; that is, it is a partial imitation of that turn. These child turns represent the picking up of part of that turn and an attempt at articulating it. What the adult is doing, then, by producing a confirmation in next turn, is confirming these child utterances AS appropriate imitations – as being an acceptable version of what she herself just said.

In Extract 1.8, the child's imitation, [mɑ̃ˢçˈtï], of the adult's *monster*, is phonetically quite close to the adult target. In Extract 1.9,[1] on the other hand, the child's [b˺ɐ̞ːᵊs̪ˈçʰ] looks, on the face of it, very unlike the adult's [wʌːïdfʊɔ̃nˈsː]. However, there are similarities. Both utterances open with labiality ([b˺] and [w]) and a vocalic portion with an open, backish and unrounded quality which moves to around mid height. The consonantal portion in both utterances has friction coinciding with voicelessness ([s̪ˈ] and [f]), and also alveolarity ([s̪ˈ] and [d]). In the latter part of both utterances there is a vocalic portion with a mid-high quality. In rhythm, too, the two utterances are closely matched, with a long first vocalic portion in both cases, which also carries an increase in loudness. There are, then, several shared features between the two versions, which seem to be enough for the adult to treat the child's version as a version of her own utterance, and, moreover, to confirm it as such. And in Extract 1.10, the child's first version, [ˈïʔtsəˈïfɛ̞ɔ̃nʔs̪ˈ], receives a confirmation marker alone (*yes*), while a second, phonetically improved version, [nəs̪(l)izanɛ̞fᵉɛʔts̪], receives a confirmation comprising, like those in Extracts 1.8 and 1.9, a repeat of the child's turn and *yes*.

In these examples, then, the adult is following a child turn with an explicitly evaluative response, and thereby is putting herself in a particular relationship to what is contained in the child's turn. To highlight the fact that it is the linguistic content of the child's turns which is being evaluated in these cases, compare Extracts 1.8 to 1.10 with Extract 1.11.

Extract 1.11

((*'telephone' has just been mentioned*))

1		Child:	jossy 'n a telepho:ne (0.6)
2		Child:	[dᶻɔ̃çiˈnɛ̞tɛt̪ʰ]
3	→	Adult:	i yea jossy was on the telephone wasn't
4	→		she

In this sequence, the child's opening turn is an observation, concerning a friend and a telephone, which he begins to repeat in face of no response from the adult (although his second version, for whatever reason, trails off in the middle of the word *telephone*). And what is being ratified here by the adult's evaluative receipt is the propositional content of that observation – the fact that Jossy was indeed on the telephone. This kind of sequence would appear to be part of the constitution of an adult–child relationship whereby the adult is credited with a greater degree of knowledge than the child, and is granted, moreover, a higher level of authority on the validity of the child's reported observations. A relationship (which is in part constructed by this very kind of talk) holds between the two participants, such that the adult is in a position to ratify the child's statements.

[1] It is apparent from the talk surrounding this extract that what is being talked about is a pair of Y-fronts. The adult, however, in both her utterances, can be clearly heard to articulate *wide fronts*.

In Extracts 1.8 to 1.10, too, the adult is casting herself as arbiter – but not, in these cases, as arbiter over the accuracy of the propositional content of the child's turns. Indeed, it would be difficult to identify the propositional content of the child's [mɑ̃ɐ̯ˢɕˈtï], [b¬ɐ̯ɪˢs̬ˈe̞ʰ] and [ˡïʔtsəˡfɕˢnʔs̬ˈ] in this sequential position. Instead, she appears to be evaluating their status as acceptable imitations of her own speech – that is, to be appraising their merit as linguistic productions. The child, by imitating the adult's utterances, treats those utterances as constituting some kind of target. The adult, by confirming those imitations, treats them as having hit that target. In other words, the child's contributions here are being attended to in their capacity as articulatory objects.

Next turn ratification of linguistic content in other sequential contexts

Occurrences of the child's picking up parts of the adult's talk in the way illustrated in Extracts 1.8 to 1.10 are common in the corpus. So, too, are instances of the adult opting to deal with such imitations by confirming them, as just illustrated. What is notable about those three examples, however, is that, in each case, the adult turn which forms the basis for imitation is relatively unconstrained with regard to the range of possible next utterances which it projects. That is to say that the three adult utterances – *you little monster*; *these are a pair of wide fronts*; and *uh sitting on the fence that's a good place to be* – occupying the sequential positions which they do, place few restrictions on what may follow them as a relevant next turn at talk. None, for example, is a question making an answer a relevant next action for the child to take. Instead, they are contributions to the talk which may be followed, unaccountably, by any of a wide range of next actions. For the child to follow them with an imitation, then, and for the adult to confirm that particular next action as an appropriate one to take – that is, for both participants to take 'time out' to deal with linguistic aspects of the ongoing talk – does not interfere in any significant way with the interactional business of the exchange. Indeed, one could build a case that adult–child talk at this age very readily allows such linguistic matters to become the main interactional business.

This focus on the performative aspects of the child's talk becomes more noticeable, however, in instances where such matters interrupt an ongoing interactional sequence which looks, at its outset, to be taking a more clearly specified direction. Consider Extract 1.12.

Extract 1.12

1		Adult:	(alright) do you want to get some du:plo out (0.7)
2		Child:	e ·hh hh slippers
3	→	Adult:	°y(h)e(he)s slippers° ·hh do you
4	→		want to get some du:plo out=
5		Child:	=no:
6		Adult:	no what do you want then

7 Child: I: (got) a slippers o : [n
(want)

8 Adult: _(h)[you w(h)an- you
wa(h)nt to pl(h)ay w(h)ith your slippers

The adult's first turn presents the child with a question, *do you want to get some duplo out?*, and is therefore a turn which carries quite specific implications for what is to follow: on its completion, an answer to that question is what is made relevant. However, the child's following turn, *slippers*, appears not to be, in any intelligible sense, an answer to the adult's question – nor, indeed, any kind of contingent response to it (as, for example, a response such as *I don't know*). Nor is it, unlike those child turns considered in the previous extracts, any kind of version of part of the adult's prior turn. But it, too, like the child turns in those extracts, receives an affirmative response from the adult – this time with a turn in which the ordering of the two elements, confirmation marker (*yes* produced with laughter) and a version of the child's utterance (*slippers*), are reversed (*yes slippers*).

Directly after her affirmative *yes slippers*, the adult draws breath and, within the same turn, presents again her opening question, *do you want to get some duplo out?*. This is an exact redoing of her question in the first line of the extract – not only in its syntactic construction, but also in its pitch configuration, rhythm and loudness. The earlier part of her turn, *yes slippers*, is marked out from this redoing by being quieter, and by a speeding up of tempo over *slippers*. This second version of the question is thus marked as a 'restart' (see Local 1992), a redoing of her opening question – but not as one which makes explicit an orientation to the question's not having been addressed the first time round. One way of displaying such an orientation would have been to reformulate the question in some way, and thereby to address the child's disattendance to it. An example is supplied in Extract 1.13 (an extract from a picture book labelling sequence).

Extract 1.13

1 Adult: ooh ((*points*)) what's that
(2.8) ((*child moves about in chair*))

2 → Adult: what is it

The adult's second question in this extract is presented, not as a redoing of his first one, but as a follow up to it. It credits the child with having registered the question, but not, for some reason, being disposed to address it. This is quite different from what happens in Extract 1.12. Nor, in Extract 1.12, is the redoing produced louder or on higher pitch than the original question, like the restarts (in adult–adult conversation) which Local (1992: 285ff) describes, which thereby seem to be presented as entirely new contributions to the exchange. In this case, both pitch and loudness between the two versions are closely matched, so that the second version comes off as a straightforward rerun of the first. The intervening talk – the child's *slippers* and the adult's response *yes slippers* – is thus framed as an 'insertion sequence', which takes a kind of side step out of the ongoing business of the talk.

Such insertion sequences are not uncommon in question–answer structures in talk. Recurrently, however, these insertion sequences turn out to be contingent on the original question. The following example has been taken from Schegloff (1972: 78):

A: Are you coming tonight?
B: Can I bring a guest?
A: Sure.
B: I'll be there.

In this case, the insertion sequence (*Can I bring a guest? – Sure*) itself takes the form of a question–answer sequence, and can be seen to be contingent on A's original question – to be a step taken on the way to arriving at the answer to that question, which is produced in the fourth turn.

Now, in Extract 1.12, the child's turn *slippers* may indeed be, as far as he is concerned, a contingent response to the adult's opening question, *do you want to get some duplo out?*. As the sequence turns out, we may be able to suggest that what the child meant by uttering *slippers* here was something to the effect of 'No, I don't want to get some duplo out: I want to play with my slippers'. However, it is not treated in this way by the adult. In the extract cited above, A treats B's *Can I bring a guest?* as contingent on the original question, by providing a response (*Sure*), but in Extract 1.12 the adult, by running off her original question again, instead treats the insertion sequence which opens with the child's *slippers* as a non-contingent, parenthetical sequence of talk.

In Extract 1.12, then, the adult and child take time out from a question–answer sequence for the child to produce an utterance, *slippers*, and for the adult to produce an affirmative response to it. At least, this is what the adult's replay of her question constructs the participants to be doing. What remains to be considered is the order of work which is accomplished by this insertion sequence.

A first observation is that the adult could have replayed her question directly after the child's *slippers* – could, that is, have treated the child's *slippers* not only as non-contingent on her question but also as not inviting an adult response. Instead, she opts to respond affirmatively to the child's turn. Given that the child's turn is treated as one which invites acknowledgement of some kind, one possibility which could be argued for is that the adult is treating the child's *slippers* as a noticing on the child's part, which happens to have broken into an ongoing sequence of talk, and that she is affirming it on that basis. This possibility cannot be entirely refuted. However, it is notable that the adult, in selecting from a number of turn-type options which might have done this work, such as *yes*, or *yes there are your slippers*, or *yes aren't they nice*, for example, selects a turn-type which combines a confirmation marker with a repeat of the child's utterance – a turn-type which has been seen, throughout the analysis so far presented, to do the work of confirming a child's utterance on linguistic grounds. It is plausible, then, that what the adult's *yes slippers* in this sequence is doing, like the corresponding adult turns in Extracts 1.8 to 1.10, is ratifying the child's prior turn with reference to articulation rather than with regard to interactional significance.

The pervasiveness of affirmation as a locally relevant next action

It has been seen here that an adult's affirming receipts, in next turn position after a child's utterances, are not restricted to being a feature of a particular species of interactional activity which we might call 'labelling', but are a much more pervasive feature

of adult–child talk. By an adjacently placed affirming receipt, the adult can ratify both the propositional content of a child's turn, and also its adequacy as a linguistic production. The young child often picks up parts of an adult's utterances for articulation – that is, seems to treat the adult's talk as a resource from which to select bits of language to experiment with – and the adult, by the use of an affirming receipt, can approve these rehearsals and displays. In doing this, the adult is treating the child's utterances, not as sequentially located contributions to the interactional business of the talk, but as articulatory performances. Where such reference takes place in the midst of an ongoing sequence of talk and subsequently alters the ongoing sequence of the interaction, it becomes particularly apparent that the child's talk is being marked out from the interactional context in which it occurs, in order to draw attention to its linguistic merits.

A consideration raised by the analysis presented here is that, since the adult can take 'time out' from certain kinds of interactional sequence (like a question–answer structure) to affirm a child's utterance on linguistic grounds, it may be that there are few, or even no, restrictions on where, in sequential terms, this kind of affirmation may be produced. This raises the question of whether this kind of affirmation may occur in child–adult interaction in a rather similar way to the occurrence of its converse – repair – in talk generally. Repair is a phenomenon that is locally relevant throughout talk. While there are organisational principles governing the precise details of how and when repair is managed in various ways (see Schegloff *et al.* 1977), it is nonetheless a general principle of talk-in-interaction that participants may, at any point in the talk's progression, divert from the course of its immediate interactional business to deal in some way with problems which arise concerning the transmission or interpretation of that talk. In ordinary mundane conversation between adults, participants may, on occasion, be impelled to correct a co-participant's errors in the realm of pronunciation or word choice. They will rarely be moved to affirm such things, since, generally speaking, they are not attuned to the kind of linguistic monitoring of their co-participant's talk which would motivate such affirmation. Utterances which are linguistically unproblematic will simply be 'not repaired', and allowed to pass unhindered, affirmed, that is, by default. But in adult–child interaction – at least in interactions involving children of the age group under consideration here – it may be that adults are engaged in just this kind of linguistic monitoring of the child's talk, such that affirmation of a child's productions becomes, like repair, a locally relevant next action for the adult to take, throughout the progress of the talk.

Discussion

The analysis presented here represents an alternative approach to investigating ways in which the young child's linguistic environment may facilitate language development. It suggests that current conceptual frameworks within which these matters are typically studied are severely limited. Notions such as input and feedback underestimate the intricacy of the mechanics of social interaction, and thus present an oversimplified picture of the adult–child interactions which must form the site of such investigations. In attempting to overcome some of these limitations, the analysis presented above has kept sight of two fundamental characteristics of social interaction which have long been established

tenets within the tradition of conversation analysis. These are sequential implicature and the analytic importance of next turn. It is worth giving some further consideration here to the significance of these two notions, and to some of the ways in which they might usefully inform work in this area.

Sequential implicature

Sequential implicature or sequential implicativeness (Sacks 1995, winter 1970, Lecture 4; Schegloff and Sacks 1973) essentially amounts to the insight that contributions to an interaction are not randomly ordered with respect to one another, but certain actions in talk make relevant certain other actions that follow them. Within the conceptual framework of 'feedback', an adult feedback turn is regarded only with respect to its retrospective stance – its relationship with the prior turn. What is missed is the fact that this adult turn is itself a prior to a next action of some sort – and that it carries its own sequential implications, or set of expectations concerning what might properly occur next. By looking at a child response to such a turn, one can begin to uncover the sequential implications of particular utterance types (such as, say, clarification questions or corrections) – and start to build a picture of just what kinds of information (grammatical and otherwise) they are making available to the child. This notion of sequential implicature has informed the analysis presented above.

Analytic importance of next turn

A second important insight, uncovered by conversation analysis and lost in the restricted concept of feedback, is related to sequential implicature. Turns at talk are built to be understood as contingent upon one another, so that each next turn displays to its recipient how a prior turn has been received and understood. Hence, next position or next turn has a special status in the analysis and interpretation of talk (for both analysts and participants) as 'a basic structural position in conversation' (Drew 1990: 5) and 'an analytic object' (Sacks 1995, spring 1972, Lecture 4). This is because, as Heritage (1984a: 244) notes, considering pairs of utterances, 'however the recipient analyses the first utterance and whatever the conclusion of such an analysis, some analysis, understanding or appreciation of the prior turn will be displayed in the recipient's next turn at talk'. The way in which the concept of feedback misses this important insight is apparent in a question posed in a feedback study by Demetras *et al.* (1986: 277). They ask, 'If one considers both implicit and explicit feedback, and non-adjacent as well as adjacent feedback, how much feedback is available in speech to young children?' The answer must be that young children receive feedback on all of their utterances, just as adults in turn receive feedback on all of their utterances, which may indicate to the adult how that initial feedback has been received by the child, and so on, recursively. That is, talk is collaboratively constructed in such a way that participants display for one another, most fundamentally in next turn position, an understanding of how a prior turn has been received and what its import has been taken to be, and that by this continual process throughout the progress of talk, intersubjective understandings are reached. Analytically, this conceptualisation of next turn as a crucial site for the

display of intersubjective understandings takes us a considerable way further than the notion of feedback in our understanding of the relationship between adjacent utterances in interactive talk.

Conclusion

The analysis presented in this chapter indicates that, in considering the relationships which pertain between an adult's response and a preceding child turn, a number of levels of 'feedback' can be taken into account. Beyond the explicit linguistic feedback inherent in adult turns which present as affirmations or corrections, we must consider the ways in which such evaluations target different aspects of a child's turn (phonetic as opposed to lexical, for instance). Crucially, we need to attend to the various ways in which an adult's response can implicate particular next actions from the child. And finally, we need to consider the kind of 'feedback' conveyed to the child by the very occurrence of an adult's evaluative responses. The latter part of the analysis has indicated that these evaluative receipts are not limited to particular 'instructional' settings, but appear to occur pervasively in ordinary child–adult conversations. They demonstrate that a child's utterances can be treated by the adult, not as sequentially located contributions to an exchange, but as articulatory objects which are being dealt with on linguistic terms. A child's utterances are thus awarded the status of linguistic displays, and the role of monitor over their correctness is explicitly taken by the adult. One could argue that the most important kind of 'feedback' that children are getting here is the very fact that they are getting linguistic feedback at all. That is, the particular kind of adult–child relationship in which such linguistic pedagogy is relevant is constituted by the very structure of this talk, and built on the intersubjective understandings which the talk affords.

A number of directions for future research are suggested by the research presented here. First, the latter part of the analysis focussed on affirmatory adult responses rather than corrective ones. A similar investigation into instances of reparative adult responses of various kinds could make a direct contribution to the 'no negative evidence' debate discussed in the Introduction. Second, the terms of reference for the study reported here were set by an analysis of picture-labelling interactions which deal (for this age group, at least) predominantly with single word utterances on the part of the child. Hence, consideration was limited to lexical and phonetic matters, rather than syntactic ones. A very similar analytic approach, however, could be brought to bear on grammatical aspects of children's utterances. Again, the findings of such an investigation might directly inform the 'no negative evidence' debate. Third, it would be of interest to pursue this line of investigation with conversational data from older age groups, to get a sense of how far the phenomena reported here are characteristic of early stages of development. Finally, the kind of linguistic monitoring by adults of children's utterances evidenced here may have important implications for the development of self repair skills in young children – an important area which is as yet under-researched. In sum, we have a long way to go in understanding the various ways in which young children glean linguistic information from the conversations in which they engage, but it is clear that in order to do this we must refine our understanding of how conversational interaction works. It is hoped that the analytic procedures employed here offer a promising way forward on this path.

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