Conversational activity in natural interaction for children

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I propose to explain the reasons assuming that the precondition for understanding beliefs is children's participation in exchanges of information in conversation. I report that children are able to discuss past events more than three months old, giving selective information in depending on the presence or absence of the interlocutor as a spectator of these events; they seek information by asking questions with diverse formulations; they can respond appropriately to an information exchange in a dead end clarifying their words; finally, they use "no" not only to refuse but also to express disagreement in response to a question or opinion. So, children spontaneously use conversation as a means of research and exchange information, regardless of an action plan.

Studies have identified the first conversations between peers at the end of the first year: focus on the same theme and alternation of voice broadcasts. Alternating speaking turns between peers is mastered from the age of three, but it remains accompanied by an important gesture which it is necessary to transcribe in the corpora to understand them. The speaking turns become longer and more complex. Finally, the development of co-verbal gestures in conversation neither does it show any particularity at a given age.

Therefore, within situations spontaneous interactions, children are very early partners in conversation with peers or adults.

Children will have to go a long way before avoiding the conversational pitfalls posed by adults in artificial situations where they are asked about isolated tasks or meaningless. Questioning methods often underestimate children's competence interviewed. They seem to prefer the logical interpretations of connectors and modals rather than their pragmatic interpretations.

In some contexts where it is clear to them asked to assess the appropriateness of the sayings rather than their veracity, they become able to appreciate pragmatic interpretations or even make inferences appropriate pragmatics following violations of conversational maxims. Placing many tasks go against certain general pragmatic principles which confuse the children and introduce a distraction leading them to believe that the presence of objects in the experimental setting implies that they are used to interpret the adult request otherwise these objects would not be there. If the adult asks the same question after handling objects, the new answer expected is interpreted as being related to this manipulation; and the child modify his answer.

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