

Turn-allocation techniques and types of sequences in Spanish early age child-adults interactions

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M. Ángeles Cobelas

University of Santiago de Compostela

marian.cobelas@usc.es



1. Introduction

Discovering how the turn-taking system works in toddlers and adults interactions is of an utmost importance in the study of child language acquisition since conversational interactions play a key role in the process of socialization of children. With their participation in conversations, children are exposed to the general use of language and are thus able to acquire grammatical and socio-pragmatic knowledge by interacting. Furthermore, as Ota (2010) claims, communicative skills, which begin to emerge from our early childhood, are going to be useful competences for the successful development of the personal and professional life of the child.

2. Aims

The main aim of this work is to analyse the turn-taking system and its features in child language. For this purpose, our research focuses on the strong correlation between the three following elements: the turn-allocation techniques, the types of turns and the sorts of conversational sequences derived from the interaction between Spanish toddlers and adults.

4. Analysis and Results

Total of the participants' turns in the 23 conversations: 8,494 turns.

● 3,722 children's turns (corresponding to 11 children).

● 4,772 adults' turns (corresponding to 5 adults)

A) Turn-allocation techniques and their relationship with the types of turns

Turn-allocation techniques (Sack, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974):

Rule 1: Applied at the first transition-relevance place (TRP) of an initial turn-constructive unit:

- 1a: **Current speaker selects next speaker** (the party thus selected has the right and is forced to take the next turn to speak; no others have such rights or obligations, and transfer occurs at that place)
- 1b: If the rule is not applied in the TRP, then **Self-Selection** for next speakership may, but need not, be instituted.
- 1c: The current speaker may, but need not, continue when neither the current speaker selects next speaker technique (1a) nor the self-selection technique (1b) were applied.

Rule 2: This rule is applied in the subsequent TRP. It involves the reapplication of rule number 1 (a,b,c) when in the initial TRP, rules 1a and 1b have not operated, following the provision of rule 1c (current speaker has continued). This rule-set is recursively reapplied at each next TRP.

What have we found in our data?

Adults mostly select themselves applying the 1b rule option (self-selection). As a consequence, adults often emit first-pair parts of an adjacency pair (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973). By using first-pair parts of an adjacency pair, adults are applying the rule 1a (current speaker selects the next one). This fact automatically consigns children's turns to provide second-pair parts of an adjacency pair. Most of the children's utterances are second-pair parts of question-answer adjacency pairs.

Transcript Sus.4_10

Participants: PIL: (adult), TIT: (boy: 4;2.02), DRI: (boy: 4;2.10), SAN: (boy: 4;4.01), GUI (boy: 4;5.11)

*PIL: tú de qué lo querías ? 1º pair part of a question-answer adjacency pair started by the adult.
TIT: eeh@i (.) de fesa [].
*PIL: y tú ? 1º pair part of a question-answer adjacency pair started by the adult.
*DRI: <deee> [i] (.) de chocolate .
*PIL: y tú ? 1º pair part of a question-answer adjacency pair started by the adult.
*SAN: eeh@i (.) de chocolate tamén .
*PIL: y tú ? 1º pair part of a question-answer adjacency pair started by the adult.
GUI: eeh@i (.) <de> [i] (.) de cacola [].
*PIL: qué es eso ? 1º pair part of a question-answer adjacency pair started by the adult.
GUI: <de> [i] (.) de coacola [].
*PIL: ah (.) de coca cola (.) hmm

Distinctive feature: We have found some examples in our transcripts in which children select themselves in order to emit a first-pair part of 'question-answer' adjacency pairs.

Transcript Sus.4_14

Participants: GUI (boy:4;04.21), DAV: boy: 3;11.19) PIL (adult), TIT(boy: 4;01.12)

*GUI: pues entonces yo <no veo>
*DAV: <quién> [-] huele a menta ? (1º pair part of a question-answer adjacency pair started by the child.)
*PIL: aquí .
*DAV: quién huele a menta ? (Repetition of the 1º pair part of a question-answer adjacency pair) *PIL: cámbiaslle (.) o sitio (.) para que poida ver (.) si ? *ANC: claro (.) Tito (.) <ti (.) ti ves> [-] +/. *PIL: <séntaste ali> [-] ?
*DAV: quién huele a menta ? (Second repetition of the 1º pair part of a question-answer adjacency pair)
*PIL: yo . (2º pair part of a question-answer adjacency pair)
*DAV: para qué ? (1º pair part - question-answer adjacency pair started by the child.)
*PIL: para oler bien . (subsequent 2º pair part - question answer adjacency pair)

5. Conclusions

- Early age children are aware of how the turn taking system works in a conversational interaction. They are able to emit first-pair parts of question-answer adjacency pairs, as well as to start insert sequences from early childhood.
- Adults lead the overall distribution of turns in the interactions between Spanish toddlers and adults. However, children frequently select themselves in this type of conversation. Although the number of adult participants is smaller than that of young participants, the sum of utterances by adults is higher than the children's one in this type of interaction.
- The turn-allocation techniques used by the speakers trigger the different types of conversational turns and sequences produced in the interaction. Therefore, we can point out that exist a strong dependent relationship among these three conversational elements.

6. References

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3. Methodology

- **Data**
23 transcripts of conversations between Spanish toddlers and adults included in Koiné Corpus.
- **Participants**
11 Spanish L1 children aged 3;0 to 4;5 years old.
5 adults (researchers).
- **Method**
Use of real data. We work with records of oral conversations in which researchers took an active part in the interactions.
Quantitative and qualitative analysis from an observational approach (ethnomethodological perspective).
- **Procedure**
semi-conducted child-adult conversations were recorded during approximately 20-25 minutes every 15 days during one and a half year in a nursery school.

B) Relationship between the kinds of turn-allocation techniques and the types of conversational sequences

- **Adult's self-selection:** When an adult selects himself or herself as a speaker, s/he emits a first-pair part of an adjacency pair, so children pronounce the expected subsequent second-pair part. This situation is labelled in Spanish "secuencia de concordancia" (cf. Gallardo (1996)) (i.e., conversational sequences made up of consecutive question-answer adjacency pairs).

Transcript: Sus3_4.

Participants: PIL (adult), DAV (boy, 3;0.16)

*PIL: tiene la boca pintada de color rojo ? (1º pair part -question-answer adjacency pair)
*DAV: no (.) de naranja ! (2º pair part -question-answer adjacency pair)
*PIL: ah (.) es rosa (.) mira .
DAV: <y nego []> [i] y nego [*].
*PIL: a ver (.) y sabéis por qué lleva la corona ? (1º pair part -question-answer adjacency pair)
DAV: por poque [] xxx rey de Calos [*] de Inlatera [*]. (2º pair part -question-answer adjacency pair)
*PIL: cómo ?
*PIL: ah (.) es el rey Carlos de Inglaterra .
*PIL: y entonces qué es (.) el rey de las ranas ?
*PIL: qué hace este de especial que no haga el resto de las ranas (.) a ver por qué es el rey ? (1º pair part -question-answer adjacency pair)
DAV: poque [] tiene los ojos [*] pintados de &a [i] de color amadillo [*]. (2º pair part -question-answer adjacency pair)

- **Child's self-selection:** When a child selects himself or herself as a speaker, we have observed two different situations in our data.

1) The most frequent situation. These are turns produced by children's self-selections that are not followed by other turn structurally or thematically related to the ongoing sequence. These turns do not trigger any new thematic conversational sequence. These cases are examples of what Gallardo (1996) labels in Spanish "turno suelto" (i.e., structurally and thematically isolated turns).

Transcript Sus.6_01

Participants: ANI: (adult), VIC: (boy: 3;2.27), MRT: (boy: 3;2.08)

*ANI: los padres de tu mamá?
VIC: sí [].
*ANI: cuáles?
*VIC: los pares de Vivo
*ANI: ah (.) <viven en Vigo los padres de tu mamá> [>] ?
*MRT: sí (.) yo tengo una escopeta. (structurally and thematically isolated turns)

2) In some occasions, we have observed that children's self-selections cause what is labelled by Schegloff (1968, 2007) "insert sequence". This kind of conversational sequence provides a "break" within an ongoing sequence. They are embedded within a base adjacency sequence and interrupt the contiguity between a first-pair part and a second-pair part (Filipi, 2009).

Transcript Sus .3_04

Participants: PIL: (adult), GUI: (boy: 3;5.18), DAV: (boy: 3;0.16)

*PIL: no quería ir un pajarito en la jaula ?
*GUI: por qué pintaste eso? (1º pair-part -question-answer adjacency pair)
*PIL: por qué pinté esto : ?
*PIL: para que así esté más bonito. (2º pair-part -question-answer adjacency pair) } **Insert Sequence**
*DAV: eh@i(mira.)de qué color es esto?
*PIL: eso es marrón (.) pero siéntate en tu sitio (.) David !

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<http://www.usc.es/koiné> | marian.cobelas@usc.es | +34 981563100 (ex.11907)