UC Riverside
Issues in Applied Linguistics

Title
Life with the alien: role casting and face-saving techniques in family conversation with young children

Permalink
https://escholarship.org/uc/item/44c4r570

Journal
Issues in Applied Linguistics, 9(2)

ISSN
1050-4273

Authors
Fatigante, Marilena
Fasulo, Alessandra
Pontecorvo, Clotilde

Publication Date
1998-12-30

DOI
10.5070/L492005274

Peer reviewed

eScholarship.org Powered by the California Digital Library
University of California

Life with the alien: role casting and face-saving techniques in family conversation with young children

Marilena Fatigante, Alessandra Fasulo, Clotilde Pontecorvo
Università di Roma La Sapienza

The present article focuses on the distribution of participation in family interaction involving young children (3-5 years old). Adopting a purely qualitative method of analysis, we show instances of family dinnertime conversations in which children appeared banned from participation, while they are the topic of the ongoing talk. We have called " backstage interaction," sequences adjacent to those in which the child is involved, and within her/his auditory range, so that the child projected participation role alternates between that of addressee and overhearer. We argue that the "backstage talk" in the child's presence has the main effect of casting the current interaction with the child as a representation, in Goffman's terms (1959). Though, the child is left the opportunity to enter again the conversation: the person involved is interested in layering the self s/he exposed, offering the child a "fictional self" to interact with, thus preserving their face from the incumbent threat of the child's impoliteness or embarrassing "spontaneity".

> For the Wishram, children's pre-speech babblings were considered sensible transmission in a language known only to babies, dogs and coyotes.[1]

Interactional routines with children show great variation across different cultures, which are not arbitrary but linked to the societal organization in general, and to the folk psychologies and theories of childhood that certain social groups may share. Different societies solve in different ways the common problem of socializing novices to the moral standards and the behavioral norms of the group. The ways social groups interpret and adapt to the newcomer is of interest for the social scientist not only for what child rearing practices do to the child, but also for what they reveal about the societies' own organization and assets.

In this paper we will be concerned with the organization of participation in talk when children are present, assuming that the different ways by which a child is addressed or, more generally, treated as a participant can play a meaningful role in socializing him/her to what it means to be a member of a given cultural environment. In the following we will briefly review the literature which guided our analysis of examples of participation framework[2] drawn by a corpus of Italian families' interactions.

1. THE SOCIALIZATION TO PARTICIPATION FRAMES: AN OVERVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Oral language has the issue of recipiency at its core: conversation analysis

Issues in Applied Linguistics
ISSN 1050-4273
© 1998, Regents of the University of California
Vol. 9 No. 2, 97-121

has stressed how talk is always recipient-designed (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, 1974 *inter alia*), and how recipiency is shaped by talk both at the level of the utterance (e.g., assessments: Goodwin and Goodwin, 1992) and the speech event (e.g., narratives). Learning to speak thus means learning to recognize and address different kinds of audiences, and understand the kinds of recipiency one is cast upon by the talk of others. Participation frameworks equal social organization within domains of activity, and are both instruments and objects of children's socialization.

In her study of childhood in western Samoa, Ochs (1988) has pointed out the relationship between the Samoan concept of respect in its dimensions of attentiveness, perspective-taking and adjustments to others and the ways these interactional attitudes affect interactions with children. She has also illustrated an element of socialization of basic import for our discussion, namely the way children are taught to distinguish among the degrees of seriousness of actions addressed to them. This point relates to the significance, in Samoan life, of the "sense of performance," namely the awareness of the different audiences possibly involved - or likely to be involved - in an interaction and the changes in the meaning and predictable consequences of the communicative act when a secondary audience is present. Thus,

> children come to understand the affective meanings of behavior with respect to this communicative relationships. Behavior that is meant to be witnessed or overheard will be interpreted differently from behavior that is meant only for a particular addressee. The first has a quality of performance and display in ways that the second does not (Ochs, 1988, p. 166).

Such a relationship between the seriousness of the speech and addressed audiences seems to be related to other aspects of the Samoan life style which cannot be assumed to be relevant for the Italian context as well. However, a sense of the thresholds between areas of social life is probably part of the socialization process in all social groups where a distinction exists between private and public domains of action.

In multiparty interactions with a majority of adults, children's participation can be restricted to a minimum. From North Europe come observations on the treatment of children in the presence of both familiar and unfamiliar adults, like physicians or psychologists. Here children are likely to be *talked about* as if they were not present or could not hear adults' words. Aronsson and Ründstrom (1989; see also Aronsson, 1991), in clinical consultations between doctors, patients from 5 to 15 years and their parent/caregiver, found that the two adults (but more typically the mother) frequently gave the child/youngster the status of a peripheral participant, an overhearer to the talk in progress; the child was denied the right to take turns even during discussions about his physical conditions, about which she/he could be the best available source. However, during such interactions, talk can be addressed to the child by either adult to gain her/his affiliation and sympathy

and to restrain the authority and/or control of the other adult as concerns the child. In the same setting, the child can also be used as an *intermediary* (Goffman 1959; Haviland, 1986; Levinson, 1988) for the mother to mitigate her threats to the doctor's *face* (Brown and Levinson, 1978, 1987), as when she does not agree with some of her/his suggestion and invokes her child's physical intolerance as a justification. Similarly, the doctor may use the child as an intermediary when s/he weakens her/his reproach to the mother's inattentiveness jokingly blaming the child for some "foolish" behavior (for which the mother is covertly held responsible). Thus, the degree to which the child is acknowledged as a legitimate participant has been shown to vary across different kinds of interactions and within the course of the same interactional episode, according to the respect generally attributed to their person.

In another clinical multiparty encounter - the family therapy setting (Cederborg, 1994) – variations can be even more marked. Whereas parents often try to keep children out of the conversational arena, to prevent themselves from the threat the child's interventions could represent to their face as good parents, the therapist is reported to select children as addressees, casting them as side participants, that is, informing them of what they, the practitioners, are going to do, and monitoring the child's reactions. What happens then is a sort of situated learning process similar to the *apprenticeship* (Lave and Wenger, 1991) in which the therapist, by alternating the participant status of the child from addressed to unaddressed recipient, draws the child from being a peripheral participant to being a more central/focal one, and eventually, to being recognized by the parents.

Up to now we have considered children's participation as totally in the hands of the adults' moves. A different perspective would look at their resources for actively selecting themselves as participants of an ongoing exchange. For instance, Goodwin and Goodwin (1990) have described how preadolescents and adolescents negotiate their role during conflict interaction between two primary agents: participation was accomplished by embedding contributions (i.e. actions) in the *interstices* of the ongoing talk (namely between adjacency pairs).

The studies mentioned above are focused on degrees of participation, which are not dependent on formalized roles but are linguistically created in a turn-by-turn fashion. Issues of participation are to be detected in the grammatical features of the language (e.g. suffixes indexing genre in Japanese; see Ochs, 1992) and reflected in the set of *indexicals*, the linguistic devices which semantically and pragmatically anchor the utterance to its context. Deixis is the fundamental linguistic resource concerning the participant role, pronouns obviously playing a central part, though not exhaustive, for shaping participation frameworks (see also Schieffelin and Ochs, 1986). Shifts in voice pitch and loudness can contribute to audience lamination (Goffman, 1981). Non-verbal aspects can play also their role, postural aspects and eye-contact offering more specificity than voice, given his "broadcast quality", can provide for (Levinson, 1988).

We will be concerned with the participation shifts observable in the speech

of parents, and in the way children orient their verbal and non-verbal conduct to the available indexes, taking on or reshaping the participant roles reserved to them. We want to argue that families develop interactional devices to cope with their youngest members (in our corpus, ranging from 3 to 5 years) whose readiness and willingness to cooperate cannot be taken for granted. This poses a problem of *face* for the interactants both individually and as a social group. By acting upon participation frameworks, the exchanges with the young children can be lent a status of relative "non-seriousness", so that members are afforded a conversational space for addressing children without putting their face at stake. In turn, such discursive practices are constructive as concerns the children's understanding of their role, and ultimately in the definition of both childhood and family as socio-cultural realities.

2. BACKSTAGE TALK IN THE CHILD'S PRESENCE

In the following we will show instances of family conversations in which the child is spoken of in the third person during talk among two or more other members of the family. This has been observed to happen in sequences adjacent to those in which the child is involved, and within her/his auditory range, so that the child's projected participation role rapidly alternates between that of addressee and that of overhearer[3].

Given that in the side-interactions we have found the content of talk is the ongoing exchange with the child in the main interaction, whether in the form of comments to the immediately previous speech or of decisional strategies as to what to say next, they can be likened to the kind of interaction described by Goffman (1959) as taking place in the *backstage*. Here, members of an *equipe* (two or more people engaged together in a representation before an audience) can gather, dismiss the performance clothes and work at putting up the representation, or ironically producing comments, parodies of it or of some member of the public[4].

Goffman says that territories are characterized by obstacles to perception, so that the *backstage* area is separated by *frontstage* by sight and/or sound barriers. He thus seems to treat the notion of *backstage* and *frontstage* quite literally, making them correspond to respectively informal and formal interactions. However, he is also aware of their dynamic nature and asserts that backstage can be anywhere one "behaves backstage." Furthermore, in his discussion of alignments and re-alignments of *equipes*, he argues that ordinary conversation is an ideal context to study the partitioning of interactional territories, in that shifts of alignment are common, and tactics are visible. The interest of the cases at hand is for us that they show the autonomy of the discursive practice from the physical conditions of the setting, offering us an environment in which to observe what "doing backstage" can accomplish when practiced in different social conditions from those described in Goffman's examples. It should be noted that, given the conversational framework into which we have transposed Goffman's theoretical notions, the term *equipe*

will have a very local meaning, not indicating a stable group or dyad but only the interactants who at a given moment are speaking about someone present using the third person.

Let's begin to see what we mean by *backstage* side-interactions.
(arrows indicate backstage talk)

Excerpt 1. Quinto Family, dinner 1[5]
Participants. Mother, Father, Samuele (11 years) Adriana (4 years).

((The father sits in front of the camera view. At his left, in the order they are sitting, there are Samuele and Adriana, while the mother has the camera behind her shoulder))

1. Father: senti perché non [assa:ggi::
listen why not you [ta:ste::
look why don't you [ta:ste:: *((to Adriana))*
[*((he points to his plate with his chin))*

2. Father: un pochino di pasta questa qui (.) [poca=poca?
a little bit of pasta this one here (.) [little=little?
some of this pasta here (.)[just a=little?

3. Adriana: [perché gno] ↓gno
[because gno] ↓gno
[because no] ↓no
((in a whining tone of voice; she does not look at her father))

4. Mother: → già glie-l' ho [detto=
→ already to her that I have [told=
→ ***I already [asked her=*** *((to Father))*
(.) [((Father addresses a rapid glance to Mother))

5. Father: =[du:e (.) due piccolini?
=[two: (.) two small ones + *diminutive*?
=[two: (.) two small ones *((looking at Adriana))*?
[*((Adriana takes her spoon on her right))*

(2.5) *((Father is still looking at Adriana,*
who stirs a spoon in her glass; then he starts eating,
turning his gaze away from the child))

6. Adriana: è acqua?
is water?
((turning to mother)) ***is it water?*** *((what Adriana has in her glass))*

7. Mother: °si°
°yes°
°***yes***°

The father is here involved in an interaction with his young daughter, trying to make her eat a few pieces of the pasta she has on her plate. Immediately after the child's refusal the mother informs the father that she had previously tried to do what he is now doing, with a turn that refers to Adriana in the third person. The utterance is delivered rapidly but the voice volume is not particularly low. The father does not take up, at least verbally, the mother's utterance and does "continuation" (Jefferson, 1972), without repeating the entire offer but just proposing a new version of the object (two small ones) as an appendage to his previous question. Adriana does not reply to his second attempt.

Now, the mother's intervention, the topic of which is the father's verbal move, has the effect of casting on it the light of a "representation", namely the kind of interaction that Goffman (1959) defined as typical of frontstage, involving members of the equipe and outsiders. Whereas the father's utterance may be seen as a sudden and spontaneous initiative (line 1), the mother makes it part of a series - another try performed by a member of a dyad (so transformed in an equipe) sharing the goal of feeding the child. In so doing, she weakens strength and sincerity of the father's move. It could be argued, following this interpretive line, that the child's silence after her father's request is partly due to this delegitimation of his action.

Shifting attention to the role of the "public", or non-equipe persons, it remains to be seen what they do with themselves when talk is going on in which they are protagonists but not participants.

In excerpt 1, we have seen that the father's first offer to the child was replied to in a consonant fashion. It was, in fact, delivered in the syntactic form of a request ("*why* don't you...") - a form which, not only in Italian, is a tactful kind of proposal treating the interlocutor as having the right to a motivated refusal. The move is sweetened and affectively marked (Ochs and Schieffelin, 1989; Ochs, Pontecorvo, Fasulo, 1997) by the use of diminutives and repetition of the quantity modifier (line 2: un poch*ino, poca poca:* literally *a little bit+diminutive, little little*), so it is in typical baby talk register. The child picks up the form for his rebuttal: "because no" (line 3) is a common children's answer which states a position but withholds justification. The child is whining, thus complying with (or exploiting) the baby identity she is offered (she had been in a good mood up to that moment). After the mother informs the father that she had previously invited the child to eat, he tries again (lines 5). The child does not answer but appears concentrated on her glass, stirring a spoon in it, and then shifts to a new topic asking the mother about the content of the glass (line 6). Is she attending to her? After all, she is complying with her exclusion from her parents' discourse, "unplugging" herself from the discourse circuit; her avoidance to plug in again, though, sequentially disconfirms the father's attempt to continue, while being consistent with the mother's implicit judgment of its uselessness. In this vein, Adriana would be displaying a sort of "impersonal hearing"[6].

In the next excerpt (that will be analyzed in two segments), we can see how

side-interactions are a common feature of conversations with children, a built-in procedure to sustain interaction with the family as a whole while keeping the child "logged on." A proper backstage exchange takes place only in the second segment of the excerpt, but in the first we see that the child is addressed in the opening of the new topic, and immediately talked about in the third person after his reply. It is the child's reaction to a turn in the side-interaction that triggers backstage talk later in the development of the conversation.

Just after the father has opened the new topic with a question to the child (line 1), the topic, of which he is still the protagonist, is continued among the father, the mother and the elder brother, who are making up a shopping list for Gabriele's new sports activity (lines 2-12). This kind of talk in the third person is similar to that observed by Aronsson and Ründstrom (1989) in the medical setting, namely with the grownups taking decisions and making choices regarding the young ones.

Excerpt 2a. Gennari Family, dinner 5
Participants. Mother, Father, Silverio, (8 years), Gabriele, (3 years).

((The father sits in front of the camera; at his right there is Gabriele, while Silverio sits at his left. The mother is out of the camera view))

1. Father:	domani inizi pure te allora? tomorrow begin also you then? *((to Gabriele))* ***so you will start tomorrow*** *((to play football))* ***isn't it?***
2. Gabriele:	sì ***yes*** *((quietly))*
	(1.0)
3. Father:	domani tocca anna-ie a comprà [i °scarpini°. tomorrow (it) ought go for him to buy [°shoes +*diminutive*°[7] *((to the mother))* ***tomorrow we should get him*** *((hinting with his head to Gabriele))* ***the soccer [°shoes°***
4. Mother:	[ah te l' ha detto? (0.5) [uh, to-you that (he) has told? (0.5) ***[uh, did he tell you? (0.5)***
5. Father:	( ) (something inaudible) *((looks at Gabriele and then turns to the mother))*
6. Mother:	ma sei sicuro? (0.5) but are (you) sure? (0.5) ***are you sure? (0.5)***

7. Mother:	comincerà co' le scarpe da ginnastica, [i scarpi::ni (he) will begin wi' the shoes for gymnastics [sho::es+*dim.* ***he'll begin with gymshoes,*** *((critical))* ***[the football shoe::s***
8. Father:	[no=no, (.) lu(i) inizia co(n) gli (.) coi scarpi:ni, [no=no, (.) he begins wi(th) the (.) with shoes+dim., ***no=no, (.) he'll begin with football sho:es,*** *((with list intonation, looking steadly at the mother))*
9. Mother:	mhm ***mhm*** *((going out the video field))*
10. Father:	co-l completo de'a Ro:ma, with the ga:rment of the Rome, ***with the Rome ga:rment,*** *((still listing; looking to Gabriele. Rome is here the soccer team))*
	(1.0)
11. Silverio:	[eh: ***[eh:*** *((nodding))*
12. Mother:	[sì:: [yes:: *[yeah:: ((ironic))*

The child is invited into the conversation as a focal participant with a simple yes/no question, to which he promptly responds with an affirmative answer (line 2). The father then switches to the mother announcing the plan of buying Gabriele (now referred to in third person) the specifically needed shoes (line 3). The mother displays her uncertainty regarding the necessity of the expense at this stage of the child soccer career (lines 6, 7). At this point, (going from 8 to 10) the father enlarges his audience to include Silverio, the elder brother. The mention of the team is in fact a way to select recipiency through informational means (Levinson, 1988). Silverio indead provides a reply (line 11). Note that in line 10, the father is continuing a sentence in which the young son was referred to in the third person, but he also transfers his look onto Gabriele. Different participation indexes are here used to encompass the three members of the family, the mother being the official addressee of the sequence, the eldest son called in by the evolution of the topic and the youngest one by means of eye-contact.

The father's turn in lines 8 and 10 marks also a transition toward a more playful tone of the discourse, so that, in the decision taking process, he figures as the children ally against the mother's exhibited detachment to soccer issues. Such discursive keying is another way by which children's participation is progressively resumed in the sequence. The multiple recipiency embedded in the father's turn

can be observed in the responses he gathers from each of the members, approval (that of the elder son in line 11), irony (that of the mother in line 12) and surprisingly challenge (that of Gabriele in the next segment).

Excerpt 2b.

13. Gabriele: [E NO:!
[AND NO:!
[NO:! *((shaking head, looking to the father))*

(0.5) *((father, first nodding at Gabriele, suddenly stops))*

14. Gabriele: col completo d'a Lazio
with the garment of the Lazio
((banging the knife on the table)) ***with the Lazio garment***
((the competing team of the city))

15. Gabriele: i- io se non me- se me- se me
I- I- if one not me- if me- if me
I- I- if one doesn't- if does- if does *((nods toward the father))*

16. Gabriele: mette quello d'a: Roma non ci vengo proprio a calcio (2.0)
puts on me that of the Rome I don't there come at all at soccer
if you get me to wear the Rome garment
[I don't even go to play soccer
[*((his look leaving Father to get back to his plate))*

(2.0) *((the father looks at the mother, she laughs silently))*

17. Father: COME SAREBBE A DI'?
how would (it) be to say?
((to Gabriele)) ***WHAT DO YOU MEAN?***
((he moves his hand in a questoning gesture))

(7.5) *((Gabriele looks at the father while weeping his mouth with a napkin, then lower his eyes and starts passing the towel on his knees to eliminate bread crumps; at this point the father addresses prolonged glances to the mother and Silverio))*

18. Father: → °e mo che ie rispondo°
°and now what to him I answer°
((he turns his head toward Silverio, softening his voice))
°what shall I tell him now?° *((laughs))*

((Gabriele still looks down stroking his legs with the napkin; Silverio addresses a glance to the mother and laughs))

(2.0)

19. Father: senti un pò. chi te l'ha su- chi te l'ha suggerito?
listen a bit. who to you has su- who to you it has suggested?
listen now. who was the one who told you this?

(1.0)

20. Gabriele: [nessuno.
[***nobody***
[((The father takes the knife from Gabriele's hand))

Gabriele's turn (line 13) shows that he was following and understanding the preceding talk. He is able to occupy a locus of participation that was minimally provided to him by the father's glance. His turn displays a marked affective load directed against his father and, less directly, his brother. In a loud tone accompanied by the percussion of the knife on the table he threatens to quit soccer before even starting in case he is given the undesired garment. What comes next proves that this is not a conventional family joke, in that the members start inquiring about the origin of Gabriele's soccer preference. The reaction of the father presents two points which are relevant to our discussion: one is marking the non-seriousness of the turn addressed to the young child, and the other is the opening of a backstage interaction with the elder one. The father, the mother and Silverio treat Gabriele's turn as a *boutade*, by pausing, then laughing and looking at each other. After a remarkably long interval the father speaks to him, producing a little "performance" of dismay and disbelief (line 17). The correspondent facial expression is overplayed, both in intensity and length, and the voice raises considerably. Then he lowers his voice to a whisper and does "backstage" with his elder son (line 19). While this change in footing occurs, Gabriele retreats from interaction and is busy cleaning his legs of bread crumbs with a towel.

Here then, a "representation" character is lent again to the exchange with the young child, even before a backstage move is accomplished, through intonational and expressive devices. Then, the father addresses his elder son a turn focused on what to say next to Gabriele, who has betrayed the family loyalty for the team but has also shown a clear alternative preference which cannot be disregarded. This turn is of the backstage kind in that it treats the main interaction as problematic, and treats the present speaker's contributions to it as not spontaneous but produced strategically behind the curtains. Linguistically, the turn is similar to that in excerpt 1, pronominalized and focused on a problem of saying:

(from excerpt 1)
4. Mother: già glie-l' ho [detto=
already to her that I have [told=
I already [asked her=

(from excerpt 2b)

18. Father: °e mo che ie rispondo°?
°and now what to him I answer him°
°what shall I tell him now?°

temporal term + object of saying + pronoun-reference to child + verb of saying

An alternative *equipe* is also created, in which another participant is asked for advice. The elder brother, who has been given this role, takes up the teasing aspect of Father's backstage turn and laughs. As in excerpt 1, the child topicalized in the backstage retreats from the interaction and gets involved in a physical activity in which s/he averts her/his eyes as well. The father then does a "resumption" of the interaction with Gabriele: namely, he restarts it in a marked way (Jefferson, 1972) with a "listen now" (line 19), and inquires into the origin of the child's new team preference. The "representation" character of the former, problematic sequence is thus increased by a suspicion of the child as an actor and not an author of the incriminated statement, just repeating someone else's suggestion. The Italian verb "suggerire" is indeed the same one which is used in theater for whispering words to the actors on stage[8].

The consequence of splitting an interaction into a front- and a backstage are manifold. The most general one is that all the conversational moves taking place in the frontstage are made, prospectively or retrospectively, less serious and reliable. The result can be delegitimation, as in excerpt 1, or a comical effect, as in the latter. The diverse effects might derive from the fact that in the first instance it was a different speaker who cast a representational light on the others' exchange, whereas here we have the same speaker acting in both scenes. The comical effect arises from a mechanization of the action of the speakers, one of the basic devices of being comic for Bergson (1900).

But why do parents exhibit to the child pieces of talk that could, in principle, threaten the assumption of trust - the basic tenet of social interaction? (Garfinkel, 1963). We will argue that children of around four years of age are seen as problematic interactants, given the unpredictability of their commitment to the prosecution of the interaction and their disregard for the more elementary forms of conversational tact. Interacting with a four-year-old, particularly in the presence of others, is potentially threatening for one's face, since the child can withhold responses, act rudely or refuse to comply with requests and directives.

Former researchers have shown that children of this age are in fact more likely to produce dispreferred responses (Pomerantz, 1984; Sacks 1987) than preferred ones, and to deliver them in a dispreferred manner as well, omitting mitigation and even aggravating disagreements and refusals with emphasis, and repetition. (Pirchio & Pontecorvo, 1997). As shown in excerpt 1, children sometimes decide not to reply at all. Moreover, children show less deference than adults to conversational bounds, both of topic and genre, displaying an inclination for speech

play, sudden changes of footing, bursts into make believe play, sing song chants, and the like. All these actions require management by older participants, be it explicit reproach, disentanglement from interaction or compliance with the changed frame of discourse (Fasulo & Antonelli, 1996).

What we have discussed in the previous sections are possible ways of protecting one's face from the child's uncertain behavior. The status of children as interactants is diminished by the practice of backstage talk and the corresponding stage-like features of the talk addressed to them. Their conversational partners are defining their own involvement as fictional, "as if," while being allowed to a "truer" self by the backstage, "serious" interaction. The children in our observations do not seem to have such a resource available[9], so their identity is locally defined, in the sequences described, as exhausted by the role they are assigned in the interaction. Very often this role has a comic nature, and the children's actions are constructed by the surrounding conversation as odd, clumsy or having unpredictable motivations. A corollary hypothesis is that, if subtracting seriousness from adults' moves toward the child protects their own face (in the sense that they can cope with any interactive failure with the child pretending it is a joke), subtracting responsibility and full awareness from the child protects the face of the family as a whole, since the child does not appear to be a fully entitled member (an example relevant to this aspect is discussed in the next paragraph). Moreover, children themselves, by reentering the interaction, can adjust their participant role according to the one the family has cast on them and accomplish, as we will see, the task of repairing the family's face.

On the other hand, children who listen to backstage talk concerning themselves are exposed to a discursive genre that, as we have argued above, is a fundamental resource for the interpretation of social life, and they are also trained to distinguish voices and audience lamination. The socialization is likely to be more effective when the child her/himself is the protagonist of the backstage talk, since the talk could be too complicated to grasp if, as it usually happens, it concerned people external to the family or the social facts that are often matter of gossip. Finally, children may find being the object of common interest and amusement but also of serious debate to be rewarding.

3. CHILDREN AS COMIC ACTORS

In this section we explore one of the dimensions of previous discussion, namely the usefulness of the "stagification" of the children's action space. There is not backstage talk involved here, but there is a verbal activity with the child as a third person protagonist which is directed to give the child's action the status of a comic representation.

In the following excerpt, the child does not reply with talk to any of the member's turns, but non-verbally acts coherently with the ongoing family dis-

course about him. Leonardo, the young child, has shown disrespect for table manners. The inconvenience of his behavior is remarked on but not seriously reproached, and the spirited reaction of the whole family works in the sense of encouraging the child to make a parody of his own behavior, enacting the role of the uncultivated kid in an exaggerated manner. Again, we are reminded of the family control mode performed by family members in Samoa, when, through the activity Ochs (1988) has called *shaming*, a behavior is stigmatized as shameful but the individual child is not the object of serious punishment. Interestingly, Samoan shaming involves loud, choral comments about the child using the grammatical third person while physically stroking the child's cheeks during the shaming sound. In this way, the child's shameful conduct is publicly disregarded, while the social affect is transferred to her/him, *performed* literally on her/him as the transitory character of a social scene.

Similarly, in the following excerpt we see a choral reaction to a child's reproachful act involving loud comments, abundant laughter, and an explication of the face problem (by the father).

Excerpt 3. Tanucci Family, dinner 4
Participants. Mother, Father, Marco (10 years), Leonardo (Leo) (3 years)
((The mother is talking to Marco about the planning of a party, on one side of the table. Leonardo stands up on his seat, opposite, half out of the camera field))

1.Mother: tu hai invitato qualche [compagno tuo=
you have invited some [mate (of) yours?
did you invite any of [your friends?

2. Leonardo: [*((burps))*

3. Mother: =al-la faccia Leo. [eh!
at the face Leo. [uh!
look at you Leo. [uh!

[((Leonardo laughs loudly with hiccups))

((the mother, the father and elder brother laugh))

4. Mother: buona salute Mammì eh?
good health to your Mum eh?
you're a healthy boy uh? *((with accentuated nods))*

5. Father: meglio che staccamo eh?
better that (we) turn off uh?
((to mum)) ***[we'd better turn it off ((the videorecorder)) uh?***

6. Mother: [hahahahahahahahahahahaha

7. Father: comincia a essere [pericolosa (.) la serata. haha
(it) starts to be [dangerous (.) the evening haha
the evening is getting [dangerous ((laughing)) haha

8. Mother: [hahahahahahahahahahahahaha

9. Mother: Leo <la mano davanti> per piacere eh? (.) ogni tanto
Leo <the hand in front> please uh? (.) once in a while
Leo <hand on the mouth> please uh? (.) once in a while
((smiling, covering her mouth with her hand))

10. così (.) eh!
so (.) eh
this way (.) uh!

11. Leonardo: uh (.) uh uh *((laughing))*

Firstly the mother scolds the child act, her voice displaying both surprise and amusement. By the use of her own appellative (line 4) at the end of the sentence she involves her "mothering self" in the child's behavior, thus partially sharing responsibility for it. Her next move after the father's suggestion of switching off the recorder consists of reminding and modeling for the child the proper way of coping with socially undesirable bodily events (line 5). Both parents' acts reveal Leonardo's behavior to be a face threat (see the choice of the word "*dangerous*" in line 7), not to either personally, but to the collective face of the family, in front of the camera but not necessarily so.

While the mother's facework is addressed to the child in an explicit socialization episode, the father's talk is keyed as an adult joke, or better two jokes, the first hinting at the recorder and the second stressing the uncivilized nature of child behavior. The use of the first person pronoun by the father's first turn (line 5) may indexe two different subsets of participants: "we" that comprises himself and the mother, an ensemble preoccupied with family face and monitoring the events to preserve it (Goffman, 1967, p.12) and another set including Leonardo, whose face is at risk.

Excerpt 3b.

12. Father: perchè noi siamo quasi al tempo dei romani
because we are nearly at the time of the Romans
'cause we are close to the age of the Romans

13. Mother: *((laughs openly))*

14. Father: quando i rotti era segno di aver apprezzato la cena
when the burps (it) was sign of having appreciated the dinner

when burps were signs one had enjoyed his dinner

15. Mother: e lui ha apprezzato tantissimo!
and he has appreciated very much!
and he (Leonardo) really enjoyed it! *((High pitch, laughing))*

((out of the camera view, Leonardo can be heard to pretend a burp and then laugh with the other members))

16. Leonardo ho::! *((pretends a burp))*

17. Father: (per lui) era molto buona
(for him) it was very good
he really thought it was good

18. Leonardo: pfvv *((laughing))*

19. Marco: se vede che lui è un residuo degli [antichi Romani
it is seen that he is a residual of the [ancient Romani
((turning to the mother)) ***you can see he***
((he hints at Leonardo)) ***is a residual of the [ancient Romans***

20. Leonardo: [IUH:::
((leaning onwards on the chair he is standing on, grabbing a piece of banana))

21. Mother: (giusto) questa m'é piaciuta. da oggi in po- (1.0)
(exact) this I liked. from today to af-(ter) (1.0)
(right) *((to Marco))* ***I liked this one.*** *((smiling voice))*
from now on- (1.0)

((Leonardo brings the banana to the mouth but it drops on the floor))

22. Mother: basta: ↓basta:: *((to Leonardo))*
enough: ↓enough::
sto:p ↓sto:p *((smile fading in her voice))*

23. Mother: da oggi in poi ti chiamiamo residuo degli a- degli antichi=
from today to after we call you residual of the a- of the ancient
from now on we call you residuals of the a- of the ancient

24. =romani!
Romans!
Romans

25. *((both children laugh))*

While the father keeps the mother as his primary recipient in the sequence,

she acts as his audience (contingently laughing at his remarks) and elaborates on his joke about the Romans, but the distribution of her participation is still more complex. She is selected by her older son for further elaboration on the joke (line 43), with a formulation which she appreciates (line 47) and even proposes to adopt for the Leonardo as a nickname (temporary application of derogatory nicknames is described by Ochs, 1988, as also part of the shaming technique). Here the mother is *trait-d'union* among the two generations, addressee of both in the fabrication of the joke. She is also talking to the young child, first with the comment and the correction, then, later on, again giving a halt to his escalation of "savagery" (*stop, stop*). Thus, while all the other members are sharing the same discourse and thus acting as a group, the mother select her tutorial role when speaking with the child, thus partitioning the floor into two separate interactions (Fatigante, 1998). This is evident in that she inserts her warnings to Leonardo (line 22) in the middle of the sentence addressed to her elder son, which is still part of the teasing.

We argue that the child is taking an active part in the scene, exploiting the chance offered to him by this third person description. He does not participate in the comments *on* his behavior but persists *in* the behavior, transforming it into a performance. He feeds the common interaction with an online staging of the behavior that the others are talking about.

His active participation is detectable also through the organization of laughter. In the sequence there is a balancing of two types of laughing, what Glenn (1995) calls an affiliative laugh, that is, *laughing with*, and a disaffiliative one, that is, *laughing at*. Correspondingly, with these different ways of laughing a different alignment of each member toward the other is shaped and negotiated. In the flow of laughter practically accompanying the whole sequence, the line of division among subsets gets subtler and almost disappears, since the child laughs at the other's remarks and at his own performance. His participation is possible since he disaffiliates from his own behavior, becoming an audience to himself, thereby showing himself to be aware of the socially negative aspects of his act, here the burping.

The child turns out to be both the offender and the savior of the family face. While the three older members of the family are doing face work by treating the offensive act as something to laugh at, the child is able to save both the family and his own face, by a separation between two "roles of the self" (Goffman, 1981, p. 36) and by "stating that the self which seemed to be behind the act was projected as a joke too" (ibid, p. 24). Childish and clownish (even uncontrolled) as it may appear, the behavior enacted is actually sensitive to the family's embarrassment and reparative of the child own embarrassment too, which may be there from the very beginning or passed to the child through the shaming activity.

4. PERFORMING WITH THE CHILD

Up to now, we have been describing two partially overlapping practices to be found in the interaction with young children, both involving reference to them in the third person in their presence. The one we have called backstage side-interaction can have just the functional aim of managing parental care (as in excerpt 1) or can be directed to affect the status of the children's verbal moves (as in excerpt 2). In both cases, there are backward effects of backstage interactions changing the status of the preceding talk. The second practice we have described, which we can tentatively call "comic casting," consists of descriptions of the children's behavior or reactions to it as if it was a performance and not to be taken as fully intentional and/or serious. Comic casting is potentially afforded by backstage talk, in that the object of backstage talk is precisely the representational character of frontstage interactions, the "as if" quality of the exchanges therein.

The co-presence of backstage and frontstage determines interesting adjustments of the participation framework: children show themselves to be responsive to selected indexes of participation, their attention to the talk is paradoxically revealed by a display of non-attentiveness during backstage talk performed by other members. During comic casting, the children equally maintain themselves outside the speech arena, but can display participation through the repeated enactment of the behavior that the other members are making fun of. The degree to which these two practices have the young child as an ultimate target is ambiguous, and probably variable through diverse occasions. It could be argued that these practices are precisely means to resolve the uncertainty about the capacity of the young child as recipient by dropping comments and indications of which the child is not the primary and accountable addressee, but that can nonetheless offer the child cues concerning the adults' view of her/his action.

The last example is presented in support of our claims regarding a family view of the child as an unpredictable member and unreliable interactant, and of the backstage and comic casting practices triggered by such a view. At the beginning of the excerpt, the child is recruited in the discourse before comments and reports on him are directed to another member of the family.

Excerpt 4a. Gennari family,
Participants. Mother, Father, Silverio (8 years), Gabriele (Lele) (3 years).

((The father and the elder brother have been talking with Gabriele about his day at school; they have just asked him about his teachers and the subjects he has studied. Now the topic turns to the cook of his school))

1. Father:	come se chiama	a cuoca?
	how is (it) called	the cook?
	((leaning toward Gabriele))	***what's the name of the cook?***

2. Gabriele: DElia !
DElia *((firmly))*!

(1.0)

3. Father: quanto je piace que'a cuoca
how much to him likes that cook
((to the mother)) ***he really likes that cook a lot***
((shaking hands emphatically))

(1.0) *((the father looks at Gabriele sweetly, Silverio laughs))*

4. Father: <dice che prende> e se ne va in cucina da lei.
(one) <says he sets> off and goes in the kitchen to her
((to the mother)) ***<they say he*** *(Gabriele)* ***just takes off>***
and go to her in the kitchen
((he moves his hand to fancy Gabriele going to the cook))

5. Father è vero che vai sempre c'a o::- co' lei?
is it true you go always wi' th') wi(th) her?
((to Gabriele)) ***isn't true that you always go to her***

6. Gabriele: *((nods))*

(5.0)

7. Father: [Lele? *((family nickname for Gabriele))*

8. Silverio: [oggi] je chiedemo (.) a Akela
[today] to her (we) ask (.) to Akela
[today] we ask (.) *((gulps))* ***Akela***
((it's the nickname of the researcher, a friend of the children, who has brought the videocamera to the family))

9. Silverio: se c' ha 'na mini telecamera così 'a fissamo=
whether there (she) has a mini videocamera so we it stick
whether she has a mini videocamera so we stick it

10. =a Leletto
at Lele+*dim.*
to Leletto
((he rapidly points Gabriele with his finger))

11. Silverio: eh eh c: vedemo che fa
eh eh and we see what he does
eh eh *((laughs))* ***a:nd we see what he does*** *((to the father))*

((4.0))

The child is addressed by the father with a simple question about the name of the school cook he seems to be friends with. After the name is uttered the father turns to the mother commenting on the peculiarity of the child's behavior. First he provides an assessment (line 3); then he recalls someone else's report about the child going to visit the cook (line 4). The story item is then offered to the child for confirmation in a way that, while assuming the child was listening, nonetheless reproduces the elements of the question (line 5) as in doubt that the child was attending to the prior talk.

Gabriele nods, and here the elder brother fancies to ask the researcher for another videorecorder (line 9), a small one to be fixed onto his brother to inspect what he is doing at school, for the family entertainment. This idea well expresses the "child as funny character" role they are building around the youngest member of the family, begun in this sequence by the father, with the story-telling. In this way he has cast Gabriele as the protagonist of an amusing episode.

In the next segment Silverio asks Gabriele further details on the cook story, but a backstage side-interaction accompanies their exchange, between the elder brother and the father, focused on the question's linguistic formulation and its comprehensibility by the child.

Excerpt 4b.

12. Silverio:		ma che è di colore=Lele? (.) but what is (unspecified subject) of colour Lele? *((= "black"))* (.) ***is she coloured=Lele? (.)***
13. Gabriele:		mh? *((looking at Silverio))*
14. Silverio:		che è di colore? Is (unspecified subject) of colour? ***Is she coloured?***
15. Gabriele:		che? ***what?***
16. Silverio:		Delia.
17. Father:	→	se je dici di colore che ne sa lui?
	→	if to him you say coloured what does (he) know he?
	→	*((to Silverio))* ***if you tell him coloured he won't understand***
		((with a hand-gesture for 'disbelief' which ends in pointing to Gabriele))
18. Silverio:		ah↓ ah↓ *((acknowledging the father's suggestion))*

(2.0)

19. Gabriele: che di colo:re:?
what of co:lour?
what of co:lour? *((to Silverio))*

20. Father: → 'o vedi?
→ that (you) see?
→ *((turning to Silverio))* y'see?

21. Silverio: → *((laughs))*

(1.0)

22. Father: di che colore è Delia?
what colour is Delia?
((to Gabriele)) ***what's Delia's colour?***
((Gabriele is eating, looking blank toward the the father))

23. Silverio: *((to Gabriele))* Delia.

((Gabriele looks blankly again))

24. Father: la pe:lle (.) di che colore ce l' ha?
the skin (.) of what colour there it (she) has?
the skin (.)((passing his hand on his cheek)) what's its colour?

25. Gabriele: non ho capito
(I) not have understood
I don't understand
((the father looks at the eldest son saying something inaudible))

26. Silverio: >D:ELIA< no::?(.) noi ce l'abbiamo bianca
>D:ELIA< no::?(.) we there it have white
>D:ELIA< y'kno::w?(.) ours is white. *((touching his own face))*

27. Silverio lei come ce l'ha? <bianca o marrone>?
she how there it has? <white or brown>?
((leaning toward Gabriele, raising his voice and lengthening the spelling)) ***how's hers? <white or brown>?***

(1.0) *((the father and Silverio look attentively at Gabriele as to wait for the answer))*

28. Gabriele: hm. eh:: (2.0) bianca
hm. eh:: (2.0) white

29. Father: → *((nods))*

30. Silverio: → bianca?
((turns to Dad)) white?

31. Father: → *((nods))*

32. Silverio: *((nods to confirm))*

Here it is the elder brother who has a troubled interaction with the young child of the family. Silverio asks the same question in four different versions, obtaining four different requests for clarification (lines 12, 14, 26, 27). The father acts as a sort of supervisor of Silverio, assessing the likelihood for Gabriele to understand his brother's wording and treating the young child's responses as evidence for his lack of understanding. Silverio attends the father's talk and laughs at Gabriele's perfectly timed initiation of repair (19)[10]. The more we go into this extended repair sequence, the more we see it becoming less "natural," complicated by a backstage counselor, and by vocal effects like high volume, elongation of words and intraturn pausing, and mimicry. The lack of genuineness and seriousness in the interaction between Silverio and his brother is reinforced by the Silverio's closure (line 29), in which he seems to have been aware all along that his father knew the answer, but that he was interested in having it from Gabriele – engaging him in conversation.

Looking at what the child does, again we see that here Gabriele is not giving direct signs of attending to the backstage talk. He does not either disturb the other's speech or talk through it as would be the case if he really ignored it. Instead, as in the other examples, we see that his contributions nicely fit with the content of the backstage interaction. He has been all along the focal *object* and, at the same time, the *audience* of what is happening between the other participants. Thus, though he cannot understand *what* they say – the lexical item they use – he still understand *how* they say, that is, *how* they try to reformulate their wording *for his* (the child's) *own sake.*

DISCUSSION AND FINAL REMARKS

We have examined the distribution of participation during talk in family interactions involving young children. Our analysis has focused on those exchanges in which children appeared banned from participation, both linguistically and pragmatically, while they are the topic of the ongoing talk. We have called "backstage interaction" those side sequences opened by family members into an exchange with the child with the explicit aim of commenting it or designing its further steps, with a correspondent switch between second and third grammatical person. The socialization import of such a discourse activity is, at least, twofold: the elder

siblings which participate in it get part of the tutorial *equipe* and are informed about the socially adequate ways to interact with her/him; the young child has the chance to listen to the adults' interpretation of his behaviors, motives and traits. The last point would imply at least a partial comprehension on behalf of the young child: what is then the status of her/his participation when similar sequences occur? Does the child actually stand out of the floor as an overhearer or as a non-person?

We have tried to show that young children collaborate with the definition of the participation structure: when they are talked about, they can enact the behavior which is commented upon by the others, providing confirmation and new material to their talk, and even acting as an audience of their own performance. When the child is the object of serious discussion, s/he produces signs of a total absence of attention, looking into the middle distance or undertaking a course of action which diverts his body and eyes from the ongoing exchange among parents and/or older siblings. These cases of participation show that children are actively engaged in monitoring the talk of others, the contingency of their acts of disengagement being too well timed and functional to be ought to mere chance. Thus, they are exposed to precious opportunities for being socialized with backstage talk – a basic resource of human communities to display levels of intimacy and social competence. Peculiarly enough, they are offered the chance to hear how the others talk about themselves *when they are not present*: a chance almost never available to grownups outside psychiatric institutions and similar depersonalizing settings.

Observing how the changes of footing also implied a change in the keying of the talk, passing from the seriousness of the backstage talk to the "performance" style of the interaction with the child, we have argued that the person involved is interested in layering the self s/he exposes, offering the child a "fictional self" to interact with, thus preserving her/his face from the incumbent threat of the child's unpoliteness or embarrassing "spontaneity." The child is, in this way, temporarily kept aside from the conversation, just for the time it takes the adult members to *repair*. In this particular kind of discursive practice the child is left the opportunity to reenter the conversation: a key-point of our discussion, in fact, is that backstage talk *is not* incomprehensible to children, but rather it is probably in part performed for their benefit.

NOTES

This study is part of a research project directed by Clotilde Pontecorvo and financed with the Faculty grant "Interactive modes in meaningful social contexts" 1993-95.

Correspondence can be sent to: Alessandra Fasulo, Dipartimento di Psicologia dei processi di sviluppo e socializzazione, Via dei Marsi 78, 00185, Rome, Italy. Email: afasulo@dip38.psi.uniroma1.it

[1] Obervation of Sapir, recalled in Levinson, 1988, p. 177, who took it from Hymes 1974.

[2] Participation framework is used by Goffman (1981) particularly for the recipiency role; Levinson

(1988) extended it to the whole production-recipiency situation.

[3] Referees of the paper have suggested to use the notion of side-sequence as described by Jefferson (1972) to account for the occurrences we present; the instances she uses to illustrate the notion, on the other hand, do not mirror ours in terms of participation framework, in that they are always performed by the same participants of the main sequence, whereas ours involve a change in participation, with one speaker participating in two different streams of disourse. The sequences of interest will be referred to as *side interactions* not to change Jefferson's construct, but just to avoid misuse of it.

[4] Typical instances are waiters and waitresses in the kitchen of a restaurant in the backroom of a shop and the like.

[5] The corpus of data from which the sample has been taken is composed of a total of 54 family dinner videorecordings collected from 16 middle-class families, 14 living in Rome and 2 living in Naples, selected according to the following criteria: presence of both parents, presence of a child aged between 3 and 5 years old and of at least an elder brother or sister. For the present article, we have selected excerpts from the transcriptions of 3 families, all composed by four members, the parents and the two children, two boys in the Gennari and Tanucci families, and a boy and a girl in the Quinto family.

[6] Evidence is too scarce to pursue this issue further, but note that, should this be correct, a different equipe would be created, composed by mother and child, the nurturer-nurtured dyad *par excellance*.

[7] Shoes + diminutive (scarpini) with a masculine desinence does not belittle the shoes but is the proper name for soccer shoes.

[8] This is not just speculation: in the remainder the family investigates the child's visit to a neighbour, a known fan of the Lazio team.

[9] A technique children might use to satisfy a similar need could be the often noted, though not analyzed, occasions when s/he says to a family member "I have to tell you something" and then whispers in the ear of the targeted addressee.

[10] For different initiations of repair see Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks, 1977.

REFERENCES

Aronsson, K. (1991). Facework and control in multi-party talk: a pediatric case study. In I. Markovà and K. Foppa (Eds.), *Asymmetries in dialogue* (pp.49-74). New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Aronsson, K. & Ründstrom, B. (1989). Child discourse and parental control in pediatric consultations. *Text 8*, 159-189.

Bergson, H. (1900). *Il riso. Saggio sul significato del comico* [Laughter. Essay on the meaning of comic]. Roma-Bari, Laterza

Brown, P. & Levinson, S. (1978). Universals in language usage: politeness phenomena. In E. N. Goody (Ed.), *Questions and Politeness* (pp. 56-289). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Brown, P. & Levinson, S. (1987). *Politeness: Some universals in language usage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cederborg, A.C. (1994). *Young children's participation in family therapy*. Doctoral dissertation. Linkoping: Linkoping Studies in Arts and Science

Fasulo, A. & Antonelli, T. (1996). Buon senso o non senso? Aspetti normativi e ludici nel discorso familiare sul cibo. *Età Evolutiva 55*, 91-102.

Fatigante, M. (1998). *Strategie di formazione delle alleanze nelle conversazioni familiari a tavola*. Graduation thesis, Università di Roma La Sapienza

Garfinkel, H. (1963). A conception of, and experiments with, "trust" as a condition of stable concerted actions. In O. J. Harvey (Ed.), *Motivation and Social Interaction*. The Ronald Press Company, New York.

Glenn, P. H. (1995). Laughing at and laughing with: Negotiations of participant alignments through conversational laughter. In P. Ten Have & G. Psathas (Eds.), *Situated order: studies in the social organization of talk and embodied activities* (pp.43-56). Washington: International Institute for Ethnomethodology and Conversation Analysis

Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. New York: Doubleday

Goffman, E. (1967). *Interaction Ritual*. Garden city: Doubleday

Goffman, E. (1981). *Forms of Talk*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Goodwin, C. and Goodwin, M. H. (1990). Interstitial Argument. In A. Grimshaw (Ed.), *Conflict Talk* (pp. 85-117). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Goodwin, C. & Goodwin, M.H. (1992). Assessments and the construction of context. In S. Duranti & C. Goodwin (Eds.), *Rethinking context. Language as an interactive phenomenon* (pp.147-189). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Haviland, J.B. (1986). 'Con Buenos Chiles': Talk, targets and teasing in Zinacantàn. *Text, 6*(3), 249-282.

Hymes, D. (1974). *Foundations in sociolinguistics*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Jefferson, G. (1972). Side-sequences. In D. Sudnow (Ed.), *Studies in social interaction* (pp. 295-338). New York: Free Press.

Lave, J., Wenger E. (1991). *Situated Learning, Legitimate Peripheral Participation*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Levinson, S. (1988). Putting linguistics on a proper footing: Explorations in Erving Goffman concepts of participation. In P. Drew & A. Wootton (Eds.), *Erving Goffman: Exploring the interaction order* (pp. 161-227) Cambridge: Polity Press.

Ochs, E. (1988). *Culture and language development*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ochs, E. (1992) Indexing gender. In A. Duranti A. & C. Goodwin (Eds.), *Rethinking context. Language as an interactive phenomenon* (pp. 335-358). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ochs, E., Pontecorvo, C., & Fasulo, A. (1997). Socializing taste. *Ethnos, 60*(3), 7-46.

Ochs, E. & Schieffelin, B. (1989). Language has a heart. *Text 9*(1), 7-25.

Pirchio. S. & Pontecorvo, C. (1997). Strategie discorsive infantili nelle dispute in famiglia [Children's discursive strategies in family disputes]. *Rassegna di Psicologia 14*(1), 83-106.

Pomerantz, A. (1984). Agreeing and disagreeing with assessments: Some features of preferred-dispreferred discourse. In J.M. Atkinson & J. Heritage (Eds.), *Structures of Social Action* (pp.57-101). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sacks, H. (1987). On the preference for agreement and contiguity in sequences in conversation. In G. Button & J. Lee (Eds.), *Talk and Social Organization* (pp. 54-69). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Sacks, H, Schegloff, E.A. & Jefferson, G. (1974). A symplest systematics for the organization of turn-taking in conversation. *Language, 50*, 696-735

Schegloff, E.A., Jefferson, G. & Sacks, H. (1977). The preference for self-correction in the organization of repair in conversation. *Language, 53*(2), 123-144.

Schieffelin, B. & Ochs, E. (1986). *Language Socialization across Cultures*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Marilena Fatigante has graduated in Psychology on February 1998. She has been working at the research project coordinated by Clotilde Pontecorvo on family interaction, and she

has done a thesis on "Strategies of alliance and coalition within family members during dinnertime conversations."

Alessandra Fasulo is post-doctoral researcher in Psychology of Development and Socialization. She has been working on family interactions and she has especially dealt with the development of autobiographical narrations in young children.

Clotilde Pontecorvo is chair professor of Psychopedagogy of Language and Communication. She wrote, among many others, the following books: P*sicologia dell'Educazione. Conoscere a scuola* (Ed.); *Il Mulino*, Bologna, 1986; *La condivisione della conoscenza* (Ed.) La Nuova Italia, Firenze, 1986.