



Doing participation in child talk and interactional synchronicity—introduction to the special section

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Participation and relevance for social education and socialisation

Participation is a fundamental concept on the macro level of society as well as for the micro level of interaction. This holds especially true for the current discussion lines on child discourse (Dobrick, 2016).

Following an interactional approach showing the many in situ socialisation practices which participants can rely on to sustain children’s development, cultural appraisal and learning (Saglietti & Zuccheromaglio, 2022, 56), this special issue contributes to different educational fields. The contributions show that the black box of socialisation can become more transparent if practices for interactive facilitation of participation are analysed.

The questions the papers address are as follows:

- How are context and forms of synchronicity coupled and what functions do they serve?
- In what way do the concepts of similarity, synchronization, mimesis, mirroring, etc. overlap and differ?
- How can similarities through synchronization to establish interactive participation be studied and analysed?
- What kind of link between the macro- and micro-notion of child participation can be described by analysing direct interactions?

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Children have to learn to manage and organise participation. Hence, learning to participate is a relevant aspect of social education and cultural socialisation (Vygotskij 1929), enabling children to become progressively more competent members of the communities they live in, through their participation and agency (Saglietti & Zucchermaglio, 2022). They become competent members by taking part in ongoing conversations and fulfilling genre-typical obligations (Quasthoff et al., 2017, Hannken-Illjes & Bose, 2019, Arendt, 2019). A mutual goal orientation among participants is in itself a target objective of socialisation practices, requiring a long sequence of efforts and negotiations from both parties (Saglietti & Zucchermaglio, 2022).

Microperspective on participation—interactional synchronicity

This special section focusses on the micro level that is on practices of participating and taking part in child-child and child–adult interactions. However, even with the focus on the micro level, the conceptual as well as analytical perspectives are heterogeneous (Forrester, 2017). Our entry point into the debate is that the multimodal negotiation and accomplishment of synchronicity constitutes a central method to allow for and demonstrate “taking part”. The non-linguistic interactional means include the synchronizing of prosodic parameters and bodily action. As Kim (2015, 27) points out: “[S]ynchrony, a state of symmetric or complementary nonverbal configurations and rhythms in face-to-face interactions, engenders a cohesive and cooperative communicative relationship between interactants”. Synchrony leads from an experience of similarity to the interconnection of minds.

To answer the global question of “How to accomplish participation?”, we define participation based on shared intentionality (Tomasello et al., 2005), which manifests itself in shared goal orientation. This is established in the interactional dimension of talk by specific methods. It can be established through the synchronicity and/or similarity of utterances, through thematic coherence and progression, and through typical patterns of reciprocal utterances. “Shared intentionality, sometimes called ‘we’ intentionality, refers to collaborative interactions in which participants share psychological states with one another [...]. For example, in problem solving activities, participants may have a shared goal and shared action plans for pursuing that goal, and in communication, they may simply share experience with one another linguistically.” (Tomasello & Carpenter 2007, 121). On the one hand, the interest in aiming for conformity among participants has been long-standing in developmental theory (Tomasello, 2009), as well as in research informed by conversation analysis, the latter studying rhythm (Breyer et al., 2017; Martinec, 2018), synchronicity (Kim, 2015), resonance and repetition (Tannen, 1987) in interaction. On the other hand, studies on these practices in child-child and child–adult interaction have been scarce (Keenan, 1977; Papoušek, 1994). However, the issue has not been entirely unstudied in recent years; some studies have looked into the establishment of synchronicity in child-child interaction (Arendt & Zadunaisky Ehrlich, 2020, Hannken-Illjes & Bose, 2019, Bose et al., 2016, Cekaite & Aronsson, 2004, Corsaro & Maynard, 1996) and child–adult interaction (Rohlfing & Nomikou, 2014) on different levels of interaction and language use. By bringing together the interests in synchronicity as related to the establishment of participation we focus on the interactional practices of children. This seems especially relevant, as peers function as crucial instances of socialisation (Cekaite et al., 2014).

The papers of this special section analyse the negotiation and achievement of participating through the construction of similarity and synchronicity in child discourse. The methodological backgrounds are foremost in interactional studies and interactional linguistics but are not confined to these streams of study.

Papers at hand

- (1) The paper *Participation practices in mother–child interactions: longitudinal case studies* by Stefan Pfaender, Elke Schumann, Philipp Freyburger, Heike Behrens and Anna Buchheim (University of Freiburg) presents a multimodal analysis of a longitudinal corpus (age 1 to 5) of child–mother interactions, with a focus on the child’s recruitment of the mother’s attention and support.
- (2) The paper *With me it is exactly the same: second stories and their argumentative function in child talk* by Joanna Wala (University Marburg), Kati Hannken-Illjes (University Marburg), Ines Bose (University Halle-Wittenberg), and Stephanie Kurtenbach (University Halle-Wittenberg) analyses the argumentative role second stories play as a form of thematic and experiential synchronicity in videographed conversation circles in a kindergarten.
- (3) The paper *Repetitions as a participation practice in children’s argumentative peer interactions* by Birte Arendt (University Greifswald) and Sara Zadunaisky Ehrlich (Haifa University) exams how children use repetition as a resource for negotiating and establishing participation. They assume that by repeating selected linguistic elements of previous utterances, equality among the participants and synchronicity in the structure of the conversation can be established.
- (4) The paper *Demonstrating consensus in argumentative settings: Co-constructions in children’s peer discussions* by Judith Kreuz (University of Teacher Education Zug) and Martin Luginbühl (University of Basel) investigates co-constructions in oral peer group discussions of elementary school children from grades 2 to 6 (7–12 years old) on data of a sub-corpus of 60 videotaped small-group discussions.
- (5) The paper *Multimodal repetitions in children’s co-construction of arguments* by Nora Schönfelder (University Wuppertal) starts from a conceptualization of the term *synchronization* as intrapersonal and interpersonal coordination of multimodal resources and examines the interactive functions of gesture repetitions as a specific form of interpersonal synchronization in argumentative decision-making processes of peers (1–6 graders).

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Declarations

Competing interests The authors declare no competing interests.

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Current themes of research

- Birte Arendt. Discourse acquisition in peer talk. Argumentation among children. Learning and teaching the regional language Low German. Online communication.
- Ines Bose. Enhancing communication skills in the kindergarten, Argumentation in preschool children. Development of conversation competence in children. Prosody and voice in childrens role-play.
- Kati Hannken-Iljes. Argumentation in preschool children. Development of conversation competence in children. Epistemic stance taking in conversations in the kindergarten

Most Relevant Publications

- Arendt, B. (2019). Discourse acquisition in peer talk – the case of argumentation among kindergartners. *Learning, Culture and Social Interaction*, 23, (100341).
- Arendt, B., & Zadunaisky Ehrlich, S. (2020). Literacy-related features in repetitions – using the example of argumentative events of German- and Hebrew-speaking preschoolers. *Research on Children and Social Interaction*, 4(1), 73–92.
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- Bose, Ines / Hannken-Illjes, Kati / Kurtenbach, Stephanie (2020): und was MACHen wir da jetzt um das problem zu LÖsen? || Argumentation im Kindergarten und ihre Förderung in einem Gesprächskreisprojekt einer Kindertagesstätte. *Gesprächsforschung - Online-Zeitschrift zur verbalen Interaktion*. Ausgabe 21 (2020), 1-29. (www.gespraechsforschung-ozs.de).
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