Young children's multimodal and collaborative tellings in family and preschool interaction

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This special issue of *Research on Children and Social Interaction* explores young children's tellings of real and imagined events carried out in a range of languages, settings and societies, jointly produced by children and others in the lifeworld. Tellings about personal and vicariously experienced events are a ubiquitous mode of interaction that work to give coherence to life experiences, construct memory, convey affect, portray identities and manage human relationships. Over the last couple of decades, there has been a great deal of scholarship examining storytelling from various perspectives, including conversation analysis, narrative analysis, sociolinguistics and language socialization (see Ochs & Capps, 2001 for an overview). In contrast to much of the early work from a Labovian (sociolinguistic) perspective that primarily examined the structure of stories, studies from conversation analysis (CA) and related discursive perspectives mainly focus

on the *telling*, including how a story gets launched and managed by tellers and recipients, how a sequence of events are ordered, and what kinds of social actions are performed within and through stories (e.g. Mandelbaum, 2012). While most of the CA research has examined storytelling among adults, recently there has been an increasing number of studies that analyse storytelling in adult–child (e.g. Filipi, 2017) and children’s peer interactions (e.g. Goodwin, 1990; Theobald & Reynolds, 2015). Some of this work examines storytelling as a multimodal activity, involving talk, embodied actions and objects. These studies have provided needed insights into how children initiate and contribute to tellings, and in the process construct their social worlds in sequentially and socially relevant ways. However, much more work is needed using the tools of CA to uncover the particulars of storytelling especially among young children.

Taking a multimodal CA perspective, the papers focus on young children’s (youngest: 1;7, i.e. one year and seven months; oldest: 4;5) tellings using verbal, embodied and material resources. As a whole, the special issue addresses how young children:

- 1 initiate, respond to and co-participate in tellings through their own novel contributions and their reuse and transformation of what others have said or enacted;
- 2 design their tellings for particular kinds of recipients;
- 3 use communicative resources to display affect and produce social actions in tellings; and
- 4 mobilize talk, their bodies and diverse material objects in tellings.

The papers are based on research on interaction in families and preschools within a number of different societies (Australia, Germany, Japan, Sweden, United States) involving a variety of languages (English, English/Italian, German, Japanese, Swedish/Russian). The papers utilize audio-visual recordings that highlight the multimodal features of children’s naturally occurring tellings with family members, teachers and peers.

The papers bring together researchers investigating children’s tellings, including personally and vicariously experienced and ‘imagined’ events often removed from the ‘here and now’. In focusing on children from the ages of 1;7 to 4;5 interacting with teachers, peers and family members, the papers demonstrate ways that children communicate experiences and portray imagined events, even when their linguistic repertoire may be quite limited and their tellings require a great deal of assistance and

mutual elaborations from others. The papers investigate tellings as a multimodal activity that draws upon a range of semiotic modalities including verbal, prosodic and embodied actions. By directing the analytical lens towards children's contributions to tellings, this issue highlights children as agents in constructing their social worlds with interlocutors. In offering a cross-linguistic and cross-cultural perspective to children's tellings, this special issue aims to contribute to research within conversation analysis and related perspectives on children's interaction and storytelling.

This special issue comprises nine papers. The first five papers focus on young children's tellings about everyday events with family members. Burdelski examines 1;10–2;5-year-old Japanese children's participation in dyadic and triadic participation frameworks as spotlighted speakers and recipients, detailing how children use talk and gesture to convey their views of events. Evaldsson and Abreu Fernandes examine a 2;6-year-old bilingual Russian and Swedish-speaking child's tellings with her mother, detailing how the child used talk and embodiment to produce animations, reenactments and affect displays in telling about past personal and shared experiences. Morita examines how Japanese children at the ages of 2;2, 2;3 and 2;8 initiate and participate in tellings of shared experience with family members, showing how children design and position their utterances and embodied actions in specific ways, and how adults often have to work to make sense of children's contributions through repair and other means. Takagi examines how Japanese children at the ages of 2;4, 2;10 and 3;7 utilize the specific grammatical format of (X) did (Y), often along with embodied means, to initiate and co-construct tellings of personal and shared experiences with family members. Filipi examines tellings among English-speaking children and a bilingual English/Italian-speaking child in Australia at the ages of 1;11, 3;0 and 3;6, showing how interactional issues arise and are dealt with by parents and children at various ages. Searles focuses on how 3- and 4;5-year-old English-speaking children initiate and convey 'updates' of newsworthy events about their day that occurred outside the home (e.g. at preschool), detailing how these verbal and embodied updates were occasioned in different kinds of sequential and material environments. The next two papers focus on young children's tellings within picture book reading activities. Heller examines how a German-speaking child at the age of 1;7 engaged in a reading activity with his mother by using talk and embodied actions to convey imaginary actions of characters in the picture book, and how the mother worked to jointly

construct the telling. Takada and Kawashima examine Japanese-speaking children's tellings (ages 2;8 and 3;11) in caregiver–child interaction, focusing on the strategies that caregivers use in encouraging children to launch, develop and end a story, and how the children responded using verbal, embodied, and material resources. The final paper, by Theobald, focuses on storytelling in preschool by examining how a 4-year-old child, who speaks English as a second language, used talk and gesture to produce an imaginary story for an audience of peers and the teachers, and how the teacher and peers contributed to scaffolding his telling.

About the guest editors

Matthew Burdelski is currently professor of applied Japanese linguistics at Osaka University (formerly a visiting assistant professor at Swarthmore College). His research focuses on Japanese and US classrooms and families, utilizing conversation analysis and language socialization to investigate adult–child and children's interactions in Japanese as a first, second and heritage language. His papers have appeared in *The Handbook of Language Socialization*, *Language in Society* (co-authored), *Linguistics and Education*, *Research on Language and Social Interaction* (co-authored), and *Journal of Pragmatics*.

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