Collectively, this set of chapters makes a significant contribution to research in the field of language and social interaction at home and school. The scholars contributing to this collection share a common interest in interaction and present data from a range of European countries. As noted by the editor Letizia Caronia, the chapters ‘feature a range of disciplinary approaches and theoretical frameworks which appear highly complementary and mutually enriching’ (p. 39). Many chapters have application beyond those interested in social interaction, particularly the chapters that pertain to school. For example, how classroom interaction is accomplished by classroom members has application for beginning teachers and perhaps those examining classroom management/organization.

Setting the scene for the book, the introductory chapter provides a comprehensive overview of research that has shaped contemporary understandings of children’s socio-cultural and cognitive development. As such, this chapter would be helpful for researchers interested in the role of talk and ‘social interaction in children becoming culturally competent members of communities’ (p. 1). The chapters in the first part of the book focus on talk-in-interaction in family life.

Chapter 1 and 2 build on research on social interaction during family mealtimes. In Chapter 1, Morgenstern, Caët, Deras, Beaupoil-Hourdel and
Le Mené present quantitative and qualitative analysis of video-recorded family mealtimes in Parisian families, coding interactions according to three features including who participates as speaker and listener; who participants refer to as they engage in the interaction and ‘whether talk is about the here and now of dinner or not’ (p. 45). This analysis highlighted that adults have a primary role in family mealtime and talk more than children, particularly as they monitored ‘children’s food and language practices’ (p. 79). Eliciting child self-talk, particularly from younger children was an important role adopted by both parents. Importantly, children’s competence in managing multiparty interaction is highlighted as children enacted interactional resources to join the mealtime talk.

Drawing on video-recorded family mealtime talk, the analysis presented by Caronia, Colla and Galatolo in Chapter 2 adopts a conversation analysis approach to show how moral values and cultural norms are accomplished through talk. The chapter begins with a nice overview of morality in family life. The analysts show how parents, through their talk, socialize children to particular stances about food and everyday social life. For example, parents talk into being (Heritage, 1984) how food is for the common good as they censure children about matters such as ‘manipulating food … without eating it’ (p. 113).

The focus of Chapter 3 (Fasulo) is the use of ‘are you going to’ questions by interlocutors directed to a child with Down syndrome. Drawing on video recorded interactions in the family home, conversation analysis was used to examine a collection of ‘are you going to’ (and variants) located in the data. Analysis showed that ‘are you going to’ questions predominately performed the action of requesting information or as an action solicit. The author posits that as an action solicit, children’s comprehension may be hampered, and their agency undermined.

Interest in the academic achievement of children of immigrant background was the impetuous for the study reported in Chapter 4 (Andorno & Sordella). Tutors (university students) sharing ‘similar migratory background and linguistic repertoire’ were recruited to support parent–child communication while engaged in homework activities in the family context of 13 first generation immigrant families live in Italy. Data from eight homework sessions were analysed showing the effectiveness of the tutor in supporting parents to participate and expanding the ‘linguistic repertoire’ (p.182) used by families.
Collectively, the second section of the book provides an ‘in-depth micro-qualitative analysis’ of the ways communication is enacted in education settings. To begin, in Chapter 5, Caronia and Nasi provide an overview of studies on ‘classroom language, interaction and culture’ (p. 193) including Mehan’s (1979) work on three-part sequences and McHoul’s (1978) detailing of the organizational structure of classroom interactions. As a teacher, several sections in the chapter were of particular interest to me (on doing ‘being the teacher’ using three resources for pursuing an answer and assessing and the ratification of knowledge in instructional sequences). The research highlighting ‘being the teacher’ has implications for being a student, particularly what they ‘need to know about language and social context in order to interpret questions and respond appropriately’ (Mehan, 1979, p. 13). Recognizing what children need to be able to do in educational settings points to their interactional competence. This chapter provides literature that would be helpful for initial teacher education students as it highlights the interactional complexity of classrooms and the competence of children.

Drawing on microanalysis of video recorded data, Chapter 6 (Pileri) identifies attunement and misattunement as ways in which adult–child interactions are accomplished during transitions times (welcoming-separation and reunion phase) in nursery school in Italy and France. Given the importance of transition times in early childhood settings, this chapter will be of interest to educators interested in exploring productive interactions during transition times.

The interactional work of students (ages 7–8) in an Italian primary school as they answer during class is the focus of Chapter 7 (Margutti). Conversation analysis of the data highlights that the turn following the question is an ‘action-loaded space and a competitive place for the floor’ (p. 287) where, for example, students can bid to answer the question, assess the answer provided by another student or complain because they were not selected as next speaker. Guiding pupils’ action is an orientation to two conflicting principles, one that focuses on students displaying themselves as knowledgeable, and the other that you need to abide by classroom rules. Reflecting on the findings in this chapter, one is reminded of the complexity of classrooms and the multiplicity of interactional tasks children need to enact in classrooms, but also of the obligations of the interaction itself in the chaining rule outlined by Harvey Sacks (1995).
Group discussion with a group of teachers representing Catholic and Protestant teachers participating in a Shared Education project in Northern Ireland is examined using discourse analysis in Chapter 8. Hughes and Loader provide a brief overview of the Northern Irish context to highlight the relevance of the shared education model, a model that includes social, economic and educational goals. This chapter focuses on the social aim of the shared education model, that is, to promote the ‘learning and interaction between pupils of different religious and cultural backgrounds’ to improved ‘intergroup relations’ (p. 297). Insightful analysis is provided highlighting the ‘contested cultural positions and world views’ (p. 295) of the teachers participating in the Shared Education project.

Chapter 9 (Baraldi) presents analysis of interactions in five Italian schools. Supported by an expert facilitator, photographs shared by the children were used to support the production of interlaced narratives. Analysis of the transcribed video recorded data using conversation analysis explicated that interlaced narratives are produced through ‘children’s elicitation of new narratives’ (p. 345) and via facilitator encouragement, question and their use of formulations.

In the final chapter, Fusari examined a corpus of email interactions between university teachers and their students to identify how rapport and meaning are co-constructed in face-to-face and computer mediated communication (CMC). When comparing CMC to face-to-face interactions, the authors suggest that they can be used in complementary ways to support interactions. Findings recommend that university academics consider using contemporary computer-mediated communication (CMC) tools such as ‘virtual office hours on Skype’ (p. 372) and perhaps a course Facebook site. While such recommendations may currently be used by academics, perhaps what teaching academics need to reflect on is how to capitalize on CMC to support student learning and build space where there is the potential to ‘challenge the status quo of teacher unapproachability’ (p. 372).

Together this collection of interesting and very accessible chapters extends our understanding of interactions in home and school settings.

References
