

Questions in child-to child interactions. A study with children from diverse sociocultural groups in Argentina

Florencia Alam, Maia J. Migdalek, Alejandra Stein, & Celia R. Rosemberg

National Council of Scientific and Technical Research (CIIPME-CONICET)

Research on the linguistic surroundings of children below the age of 2 has predominantly centered around the verbal communication of mothers in one-on-one interactions (Rowe, 2012). Nonetheless, studies conducted in indigenous and rural communities have brought to light that older children often assume caregiving and socialization responsibilities for their younger counterparts (Maynard, 2002). In a recent study, we found that children from impoverished indigenous communities in semi-urban areas (IndSemU) are exposed to a greater quantity and diversity of words from their peers compared to children in urban middle-income residential (UrbResMidd) and urban marginalized (UrbMar) groups. This investigation aims to explore the quality of speech during interactions among children from diverse sociocultural backgrounds, with a particular focus on Wh-questions given their documented impact on language development (Hoff-Ginsberg, 1985). We examine the proportion of questions, particularly Wh-questions, that children (up to 12 years old) addressed to toddlers. The corpus comprises audio recordings of spontaneous speech from 43 children: 9 from IndSemU, 12 from UrbMar, and 22 from UrbResMidd. Three recordings of 4 hours of each child's linguistic environment were carried out over the course of one year starting at 14 months (mean). The middle 2 hours of the recordings were transcribed, and analysis of the proportion of questions and Wh-questions that toddlers hear from other children, over the total amount of questions addressed to them, were carried out with CLAN program (MacWhinney, 2000). Regressions consider the sociocultural group and longitudinal variation. Preliminary results show that children from IndSemU hear a greater proportion of questions in general and of Wh-questions from other children than their peers from other sociocultural groups, with an increase with toddlers age. Further analysis will explore the answers from toddlers to these questions. Findings contribute to the description of interactional patterns involving children from different groups.