

Socialization of Appropriate Classroom Behavior: A Micro-Longitudinal Conversation Analytic Account

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INTRODUCTION

According to Garfinkel and Sacks (1970), linguistic development is a fundamental tool by which children become competent members of society. While socialization in the home is key to children's acquisition of cultural norms, school is another important setting in which children are socialized into their cultural environment (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986). In this paper, I employ conversation analysis (CA) to examine how young children are socialized towards appropriate classroom behavior by a teacher's upgraded use of directives, embodied directives, and finally, metacommentary. Specifically, this study focuses on the strategy one teacher uses within the span of a single class to get a misbehaving student to physically move back to her partner during group work.

In his highly influential work, Searle (1975) outlines five basic speech acts, among which are directives. Directives serve as verbal utterances that attempt to make the addressee perform an action (Searle, 1979). This is often as simple as a command, such as the use of an imperative verb as in "sit down." Likewise, Ervin-Tripp (1976) and Brown and Levinson (1987) define directives as consisting mainly of verbal utterances. Others (see, e.g., Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Farnell, 1999; C. Goodwin, 2000; Linell, 2009) have explored how the use of both verbal and embodied resources coordinate to formulate directives. He (2000), for example, examines the use of grammatical and embodied directives in the language classroom in order to socialize cultural values in bilingual and bicultural students. Cekaite (2010, 2015) argues that an understanding of embodied actions is necessary to truly understand the use of directives. Further research (see, e.g., M. H. Goodwin, 2006; Goodwin & Cekaite, 2013; Klein & Goodwin, 2013; Paugh & Izquierdo, 2009) focuses on the frequent non-compliance of such directives in the household.

In addition to directives as a means of socializing behavior, Duranti (2010) argues that, by categorizing and providing assessment of current behavior, metacommentaries allow the recipient to reflect on the situation at hand. Goodwin and Cekaite (2018) take a step further by noting how metacommentaries can "sanction children's inappropriate conduct" (p. 105) after a child refuses to follow a parent's directive. The ultimate goal, as Keane (2016) states, is to produce a morally satisfactory adult in the future.

Historically, socialization research has focused on parent-child socialization practices in Western families (Maccoby, 1992). Other research (see, e.g., Schieffelin and Ochs, 1986) has explored the ways in which behavior is socialized in the home across multiple cultures. More recent studies have connected the process of socializing children in the home with academic performance. Dornbusch et al. (1987) and Onatsu-Arvilommi et al. (1998) examined the relationship between parenting styles and learning, arguing that emotional and behavioral

socialization in the household directly affects children's school performance. While further research (see, e.g., Birch and Ladd, 1997; Hamre and Pianta, 2001; Howes et al., 1994; Pianta et al., 2002; Pianta and Stuhlman, 2004) has examined how students' academic identity is socialized in the classroom by teachers' socio-emotional curricula and interventions, relatively little research has been done on teachers' use of behavior correction during lessons. This paper adds to the growing body of CA literature on socialization by examining the use of directives and metacommentaries to secure compliance of a misbehaving student in an elementary English as a second language (ESL) classroom.

DATA AND METHOD

Data were collected from an elementary school first grade classroom in a large city on the East Coast of the United States. Participants were one teacher and five students, aged six to seven years old. All students were identified as emergent bilinguals (García et al., 2008). One class (45 minutes) was video recorded and transcribed following Jefferson's (2004) and Mondada (2019) conventions. Conversation analysis was used as a framework for analysis.

ANALYSIS

Throughout the lesson, the teacher emphasizes the collaborative nature of learning that she expects. Several times during this class, the teacher gives directives to students to work together and not separately. Prior to a group assignment, the teacher says to students, "*you can't write anything unless you agree with it.*" This is one of several explicit examples of a directive given by the teacher to work collaboratively. At other times in the lesson, the teacher uses metacommentaries to praise students' collaboration, thereby emphasizing for the students what is appropriate. An example of this is when the teacher states, "*and I love the way that you all worked together.*" These are just two examples of how the teacher unequivocally sets the expectation of how students will work in groups and act collaboratively rather than individually.

In what follows, I show how a child (Leila) in an elementary ESL classroom is socialized through the use of verbal directives, embodied directives, and metacommentaries in succession across a single group assignment to physically move her body to work collaboratively with her partner. The extracts are presented in chronological order.

Upgrading from Verbal to Embodied Directive

In the first two extracts, students are discussing the topic of weather. The teacher tasks each group with choosing a type of weather and making sentences about that weather on a bulletin board. She then hands out paper with words to each group and asks them to arrange the words into sentences. Next, she instructs the groups to place the arranged sentences onto the board at the front of the class. When the use of a verbal directive fails to accomplish the goal of getting Leila to move back to her partner and work, the teacher launches an upgraded embodied directive in order to affect the locomotion.

In this first extract, Leila (L), a female student, and Rodrigo (R), a male student, are paired. The students are at the board arranging their sentences as assigned by the teacher. The teacher (T) has given a time limit to the students and announced just prior to this extract that time is expiring. She instructs the students to return to their desks using a verbal directive in line 3, but Leila fails to comply (line 6; Figure 1), remaining at the board.

Extract 1: Verbal Directive

- 01 Ss: +(1.0)+
Ss: +>>place sentences on board, chat+
- 02 T: *(3.0)*
T: *stands, walks toward board*
- 03 → now have a seat cause we're gonna (.) come
04 together and we're gonna talk about what we
05 discovered.
- 06 Ss: +Δ(1.2)+
Ss: +return to desk+
L: Δremains at board-->>
Δ(Figure 1)



FIGURE 1

Leila (LEI) sits on the floor while the other four students return to the table

In the next extract, which occurs directly after the previous extract, we observe the teacher upgrading her verbal directive to an embodied one (Cekaite, 2010) in line 7.

Extract 2: Embodied Directive

- 07 T: ↑oh I like that. beautiful. okay come on over and

- 08 T: → *↑have a seat.* l:et's talk about what we,
lt hand ushers L, rt hand motions to desk
*(Figure 2)
- 09 T: Δ(1.8) did.Δ
L: Δslowly walks to deskΔ
- 10 T: okay what weather were we discussing.



FIGURE 1

Teacher motions with right hand toward desk and ushers Leila with left hand

In line 7, the teacher first praises the work of students, stating *↑oh I like that*. This is followed directly by the teacher assessing the work as *beautiful*. This evaluation signals to the students that the assignment is over, especially when paired with the earlier comments that the assigned time limit has passed. This provides an implicit account for why students, including Leila, need to return to the tables. The embodied directive comes in line 8, when the teacher motions with her right hand to Leila's desk and ushers Leila with her left hand near Leila's back and her right hand motioning toward the desk (figure 2) as she repeats her earlier verbal directive, "*↑have a seat.*" This directive enhances the earlier form with raised pitch on the imperative verb, emphasizing the command (Cekaite, 2015). Finally, in line 9, Leila complies with the directive and returns, albeit slowly and begrudgingly, to her desk. In the final line of the extract, the teacher shifts the lesson to a new topic, reviewing the groups' work.

As previous research has evidenced, a caregiver may first turn to verbal directives in order to have a child carry out a demand. Extract 1 shows that if that verbal directive fails, a subsequent embodied directive during the same sequence of interaction can lead to child compliance. This supports Cekaite's (2010) finding that, "speech, participants' tactile engagement, and spatial formations are all combined in the construction of directive sequences" in order to affect "the immediate situational context and necessitat[e] the child's locomotion from one place to another" (p. 2). While this strategic sequence of upgrading from verbal to embodied directive can secure uptake from the misbehaving child, another level of upgrade may be needed to accomplish the goal. In the next section, just such a strategy will be explored.

Upgrading from Embodied Directive to Metacommentary

The final three extracts come from the same ENL class. Once again, all three extracts occur across a single group learning assignment. This time, the teacher places the students into the same two groups and tasks them with agreeing on a type of weather and then dressing a bear with appropriate clothing on a bulletin board. She then hands out cards with the weather information as well as cards with clothing to each group. Next, the teacher instructs the groups to dress the bears and come back to the desks to complete a written assignment explaining their decisions to present to the entire class. Once again, we see the teacher begins with a verbal directive to return to a partner and follows up with an embodied directive. However, unlike the previous examples, here, the misbehaving child remains non-compliant. I show how the teacher further upgrades her directive to a metacommentary (Goodwin and Cekaite, 2018) in order to convince the child to return to her group.

In the following extract, the teacher gives a directive to the students to pick a card from the table (line 1). Rodrigo asks a clarification question in line 3, signaling that he is ready for the assignment at the table, where the writing will take place while Leila is still sitting on the floor playing with the cards.

Extract 3: Verbal Directive

01 T: *>so,<*(.) pick what you picked,
T: *places cards on table*
02 *(4.2)*
T: *shuffles cards on table*
03 R: %from ↑there?%
R: %points to whiteboard%
04 T: what would *you* wear.
T: *points to R*
05 *how* did you dress the bear
T: *points to bulletin board*
06 → today. *(0.2)* Leila come on ↑up,
 gz to L
 *(Figure 3)
07 *Δ(2.5)*
L: Δ -->>sits on floor and plays with cards--->Δ
T: *shuffles cards on table*
08 L: Δput the sunny, (.) put the bear there,Δ
L: Δin singsong voiceΔ
09 Δ(1.0)Δ
L: Δ---> places bear on bulletin boardΔ
10 remember you can't put anything up without (.)
11 both of you agreeing,
12 Δ(4.0)Δ
L: Δplaces bear on bulletin boardΔ



FIGURE 3
Teacher directs Leila to come to the table

In line 6, the teacher verbally directs Leila, Rodrigo’s partner, to *come on* ↑*up* to the table (Figure 3). The prosody in ↑*up* signals impatience from the teacher while also being what Brown and Levinson (1987) call the opening, “soft stage” of a verbal directive, a common feature of adult-child talk. As is made relevant by the mention of her name, his directive is clearly aimed at only Leila because the teacher has assigned the task as a group, thus Rodrigo cannot complete it on his own, despite his being ready at the table and oriented to the activity. However, Leila fails to comply (lines 7-9).

In this next extract, we see the same pair at a later stage of the same group writing assignment. Rodrigo and Leila have begun the written assignment. Once again, however, Leila returns to the bulletin board and continues to play with the cards. In lines 13-16, Rodrigo and Leila respectively ask and receive answers to their clarification questions. Then, the teacher directs Leila to >*come on*< *over*, in line 18 (figure 4), this time doing an embodied directive to upgrade her previous verbal directive (Cekaite, 2010).

Extract 4: Embodied Directive

- 13 R: can we put it like %that,%
R: %points to card on board%
- 14 T: *(2.4)*
T: *stands, walks to board*
- 15 R: upside down.
- 16 L: could I like (). Δ(1.0)Δ
L: Δadjusts the cards on board --->Δ
- 17 T: ↑yeah you can put it right there. ↑there you go.
- 18 → okay >come on< *over,*
T: *lt hand sweeps toward desk*
*(Figure 4)
- 19 L: *wait I’m trying to fix his,*
20 T: *walks toward desk*
- 21 R: %sandals.% %pa:nts,%
R: %walks to desk% %stands at desk%

22 L: $\Delta(0.2)\Delta$
L: $\Delta--->\Delta$



FIGURE 4
Teacher sweeps toward desk

Leila responds to the directive in line 18, albeit with a dispreferred response, demanding the teacher to *wait*, with stress on the verb, which is in the imperative form (line 19). Both Rodrigo and the teacher return to the desk to complete the assignment, while Leila remains at the board (line 22), playing with the cards and ignoring the teacher’s embodied directive.

In this final extract, which occurs immediately after Extract 4, we see Rodrigo standing at the desk performing the assignment with the teacher. Leila is still at the board, playing with the cards and not doing the assignment. The teacher, for a second time, upgrades her directive, this time issuing a metacommentary (Goodwin and Cekaite, 2018) in lines 27-29.

Extract 5: Metacommentary

23 T: \uparrow okay.
24 L: $\Delta(0.2)\Delta$
L: Δ stands at board and plays with cards---> Δ
25 R: %are% you putting pa:nts,
R: %gz to L%
26 R: $\Delta(2.0)\Delta$
R: %steps toward board, then walks back to desk and pulls out chair%
27 T: \rightarrow okay come on over cause * \uparrow look* they’re gonna
T: *points to other group*
*(Figure 5)
28 \rightarrow finish and you’re not gonna have time to finish
29 \rightarrow \uparrow yours so *come* on over *Leila,*
T: *sits* *gz to L*
30 $\Delta(0.2)\Delta$ $\Delta(2.2)\Delta$
L: $\Delta--->\Delta$ Δ turns to T, walks to table Δ

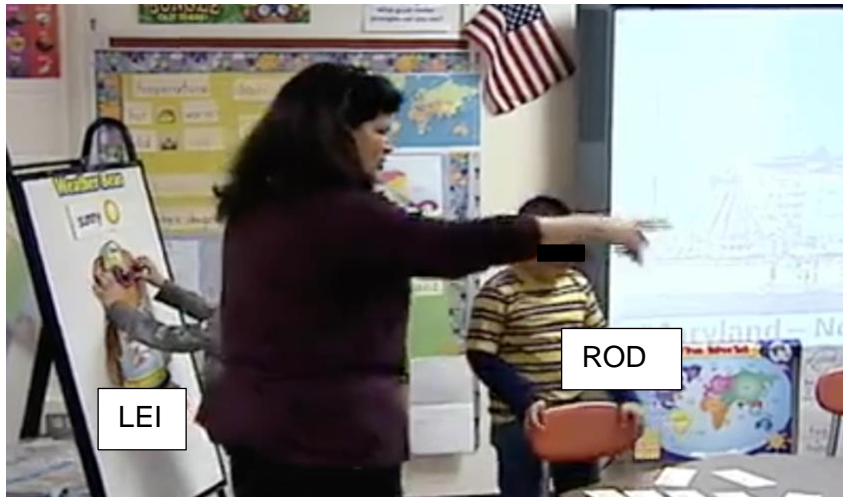


FIGURE 5
Teacher points to other groups

In the opening lines, the teacher uses a rising pitch in *↑okay*, presumably to get the attention of Leila. However, Leila is still standing at the board playing with the cards. Rodrigo is at the table with the teacher, but momentarily steps to the board to see what Leila is doing in line 26. He immediately returns to the table with the teacher and pulls out his chair. At this point, the teacher does a final, upgraded directive to persuade Leila to return to the table in lines 27-29. While pointing to the other group (figure 5), the teacher states that *cause they're gonna finish and you're not gonna have time to finish ↑yours so come on over*. Using the connective “so” in line 29 clearly communicates that Leila’s actions will have a negative effect, ultimately placing responsibility on Leila by making explicit undesirable future consequences of her negative actions. The teacher employs this metacommentary, which “categorizes and assesses current behavior, exposing the child to ways of reflecting on the current situation” (Duranti, 2010, p. 12), to get Leila to notice how her behavior is undesirable. By noting that the other group will finish and contrasting them with Leila’s group, the teacher implies that Leila will not be able to finish, which would possibly also harm Rodrigo. Finally, Leila complies by returning to the table in line 30.

Once again, we have seen a teacher employ the practices of verbal directives, embodied directives, and metacommentary to correct a child’s misbehavior. As the extracts have evidenced, teachers can employ a variety of strategies to correct inappropriate classroom behavior and redirect students to act in a socially acceptable manner. Resources for such socialization may include verbal directives, embodied directives, and metacommentary on unacceptable behaviors. Though verbal directives are the most common classroom management tool in this particular classroom, it is not always successful. In those cases, the teacher can enhance uptake by using an embodied action when the student fails to physically move as directed verbally. Finally, if the embodied action fails, as we see in Extract 5, the teacher can further upgrade her directive with a metacommentary, in this case, showing the child what effect her misbehavior has on herself as well as her partner. When this strategy is employed, the result is ultimate compliance by the problematic child.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Socialization of behavior is an important aspect of child development. While parental socialization of children has been clearly documented in the language socialization literature, this paper adds to the body of knowledge around teacher-student socialization interactions. In particular, while previous research has looked into the use of directives, embodied directives, and metacommentary to correct inappropriate behavior, the present study is the first to show how the three can be deployed in an orderly succession to secure compliance. As Extracts 1 and 2 here have clearly shown, the teacher upgrades her use of a verbal directive to an embodied one to achieve the correction of misbehavior. As well, when both the verbal and embodied directives fail, as in Extracts 3 and 4, a metacommentary that shows the errant student how her actions affect others in a negative way (Extract 5) can serve as an upgraded form to obtain compliance.

Due to a lack of examples outside of this one classroom, we cannot determine if this succession of strategies is more widely used by caregivers, especially teachers. Further research on this connection should be conducted to address this question empirically.

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