

Diversity of Responsive Moves in Adult-Child and Child-Child Dialogs / *Échanges entre adultes et enfants et entre enfants: figures d'une activité responsive / Trocas entre adultos e crianças e entre crianças: figuras de uma atividade responsiva*

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For Frédéric François who, this time, will not be able to read this paper and add his usual judicious and affectionate questioning.

ABSTRACT

The first part of this article relies on a number of well-known notions drawn directly from Bakhtin's work, while bringing to bear others inspired by the Bakhtinian perspective. The second part proposes a study dealing with the diverse kinds of verbal interactions rooted in Bakhtin's notion of responsive act. These include interdiscursivity, interlocution, and intralocution, elaborated by Jacques Brès among others, as well as moves and shifts, which we owe to Frédéric François. In the third part, this body of notions is tested on a corpus of verbal interactions between young children and adults, and between two or more children. The study stresses the diversity and early use of these different kinds of dialogical relations in children's language practices. It also shows how a Bakhtinian approach can contribute to research on language acquisition.

KEYWORDS: Bakhtin; Dialogism; Responsive act; Language acquisition; Verbal interactions

RÉSUMÉ

La première partie de cette contribution retient certaines notions connues des travaux de Bakhtine et en expose d'autres inspirées par la perspective bakhtinienne. Dans une deuxième partie, l'étude proposée se centre sur les diverses figures de l'interaction verbale que la notion d'activité responsive de Bakhtine a permis de développer. En particulier, celles travaillées, entre autres par Jacques Brès, d'interdiscursivité, d'interlocution et d'intralocution, ainsi que les celles de mouvement et de déplacement que l'on doit à Frédéric François. Dans une troisième partie, cet ensemble notionnel sera mis à l'épreuve d'un corpus d'interactions verbales entre de jeunes enfants et des adultes, ainsi qu'entre enfants. L'étude met l'accent sur la diversité et la précocité d'usage de ces figures dans la pratique langagière enfantine. Elle montre aussi ce qu'une approche bakhtinienne peut apporter aux travaux sur l'acquisition du langage.
MOTS-CLÉS: Bakhtine; Dialogisme; Activité responsive; Acquisition du langage; Interactions verbales

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RESUMO

A primeira parte deste artigo traz algumas noções conhecidas dos trabalhos de Bakhtin e expõe outras inspiradas pela perspectiva bakhtiniana. Na segunda parte, o estudo proposto se centra sobre as diversas figuras da interação verbal que a noção de atividade responsiva de Bakhtin permitiu desenvolver. Em particular, as trabalhadas, entre outras, por Jacques Brès, de interdiscursividade, de interlocução e de intralocução, assim como as de movimento e de deslocamento que devemos a Frédéric François. Na terceira parte, esse conjunto nocional será testado em um corpus de interações verbais entre crianças pequenas e adultos, bem como entre apenas crianças. O estudo enfatiza a diversidade e o uso precoce dessas figuras na prática linguageira infantil. Ele mostra também o que uma abordagem bakhtiniana pode trazer aos trabalhos sobre a aquisição da linguagem.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Dialogismo; Atividade responsiva; Aquisição da linguagem; Interações verbais

Introduction

Mikhaïl Bakhtin was a major source of inspiration in the thinking of Frédéric François (1992), who wrote an entire book about him (FRANÇOIS, 2012). In that book, François often comes back to the notion of dialogism, in speaking of which he recognizes “the misfortunes of a concept when it becomes too big.” However, he concludes “but dialogism nonetheless!” This concept lies at the heart of the present article.

The actual reality of language-speech is not the abstract system of linguistic forms, not the isolated monologic utterance, and not the psychophysiological act of its implementation, but the social event of verbal interaction implemented in an utterance or utterances. Thus, verbal interaction is the basic reality of language.

Dialogue, in the narrow sense of the word, is, of course, only one of the forms - a very important form, to be sure - of verbal interaction. But dialogue can also be understood in a broader sense, meaning not only direct, face-to-face, vocalized verbal communication between persons, but also verbal communication of any type whatsoever (VOLOŠINOV, 1986, pp.94-95).¹

Initially, Bakhtin was known for his work on the novel (Rabelais) and on popular culture (the carnival). A large part of his work falls into these domains. Later, he also distinguished himself as a sociolinguist and phenomenologist interested in

¹ VOLOŠINOV, V. N. *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. Translated by Ladislav Matejka and I.R. Titunik. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986. [1929]

discourse, with a particular focus on verbal exchange. I will not go into the difficulty for specialists of determining which publications were in fact written by the author and which were written by a circle of close intellectuals like Valentin Nikolaïevič Vološinov and Pavel Nikolaevič Medvedev.

Here, I will rely on two principles drawn from Bakhtin's work since 1929. The first is the idea that human communication must be studied as a verbal interaction; the second, that research must analyze “spontaneous” interactions before going on to “formalized” exchanges. The present article takes this approach.

According to the bakhtinian perspective, discourse is always “constructed between two socially organized persons” (VOLOŠINOV, 1986, p.85).² This statement has a corollary whose analytic consequences have become quite clear to researchers: discourse is by nature dialogical in all aspects of verbal production. This is obviously the case for dialog, where every reply articulates what the preceding interlocutor just said or is going to say. But it is also true in monolog, whether spoken or written, for such a production also “responds to something, objects to something, affirms something, anticipates possible responses and objections, seeks support, and so on” (VOLOŠINOV, 1986, p.95).³ Let us recall some often-cited levels of verbal functioning, such as speech acts, which are veritable actions whose realization “is determined by the effect, upon a word, of its coming up against (...) the words of other people” (VOLOŠINOV, 1986, p.96)⁴. Another example lies at the level of the word itself, whose meaning is the “product of the reciprocal relationship between speaker and listener, addresser and addressee [...]” (VOLOŠINOV, 1986, p.86).⁵

For this article, I would like to return to some of Bakhtin's own notions and to other notions inspired by them. My goal is to use them here in an attempt to account for exchanges in which young children are interacting with each other or with adults. The idea is not to study children's uses of dialog at a given age, and even less so, to present a developmental study, but rather to simply exemplify the precociousness of young children's ability to take up and modify, via responsive moves, the language of another interlocutor.

² For the bibliographic reference, see footnote 1.

³ For the bibliographic reference, see footnote 1.

⁴ For the bibliographic reference, see footnote 1.

⁵ For the bibliographic reference, see footnote 1.

1 Bakhtinian Dialogism: Review of a Few Notions

The term “dialogism” in the Bakhtinian sense thus refers to the primacy of verbal interaction in language, and more generally in human nature. Taken up in the language sciences, it corresponds to the fact that there is no such thing as a discourse conceived and produced by a single uttered instance, isolated from the circulation of present, past, and future utterances. On the level of language exchanges, an utterance that is heard or read is not interpreted literally but in a “responsive” manner, in such a way that every time a speaker takes the floor, his/her utterance is positioned with respect to, and in reference to, other utterances, whether real or assumed.

The dialogic orientation of discourse is a phenomenon that is, of course, a property of any discourse. It is the natural orientation of any living discourse. On all its various routes toward the object, in all its directions, the word encounters an alien word and cannot help encountering it in a living, tension-filled interaction (BAKHTIN, 1982, p.279).⁶

The first and foremost criterion for the finalization of the utterance is the possibility of responding to it, or, more precisely and broadly, of assuming a responsive attitude toward it (BAKHTIN, 1986, p.76).⁷

Thus, every utterance is inhabited by different voices. The notions of dialogism and “polyphony,” then, are tightly linked to each other, and both, in their respective ways, have impacted the study of verbal interactions (NOWAKOWSKA, 2005), particularly studies in language acquisition. New descriptive tools have proven useful for analyzing adult-child and child-child exchanges. In addition to shedding new light on how dialogs function, these analyses have pointed out that which, in language appropriation, stems from the social realm (socialization), the cognitive realm (learning), and the affective realm (construction of the self).

The notion of dialogism is also linked to that of “genre,” which Bakhtin (1986)⁸

⁶ BAKHTIN, M. M. Discourse in the Novel. In: BAKHTIN, M.M. Discourse in the Novel. In: BAKHTIN, M.M. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Edited by Michael Holquist. Translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981. pp.259-422. [1975].

⁷ BAKHTIN, M. The Problem of Speech Genres. In: BAKHTIN, M. *Speech Genres & Other Late Essays*. Translated by Vern W. McGee and Edited by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986, pp.60-102. [1979].

⁸ For the bibliographic reference, see footnote 7.

brought from the domain of literature into that of everyday life. We know that the term “genre” is now widely used for categorizing ordinary discourse. Insofar as genres are linked to human activity within each society, new genres continue to appear while others tend to disappear. We have seen this occurring recently within a relatively short time period: the arrival of new technologies and their massive use has blurred the boundaries between spoken and written usage. Genres are thus shifting, evolving, and also creative, especially since they take on hybrid forms. Whether written, spoken, gestural, monologed, dialoged, or plurisemiotic, genres mix the prevailing generic organizers with other kinds of sequences, thereby generating multiple subgenres. Moreover, the subgenres themselves are heterogeneous, as we can see, for example, in clinical interviews (GROSSEN; SALAZAR ORVIG, 2006).

Discursive genres, however, are nonetheless relatively stable types of discourse, from the standpoint of their composition (general linguistic patterns), their content (main topics), and their style (specific wording). They thus satisfy communication norms and are recognizable and recognized by users who, via the uses they make of them, perpetuate and transform them.

While dialogism is inherent in all language activity, we can reserve the term “dialog” for a particular discourse genre that refers to any verbal exchange between two or more interlocutors of any type (ordinary conversations, interviews, negotiations, confiding, interrogation, etc.). To stay within a Bakhtinian perspective, however, we must consider ordinary dialog to be the primary genre, the prototype of all verbal-production genres, and for our purposes here, to be the very first kind of discourse in the appropriation of language by children. Bakhtin speaks of secondary genres or modified forms of the primary genre, which will be found in all formalized linguistic productions.

2 Bakhtinian Dialogism, the Starting Point for Developing a Set of Descriptive Tools

2.1 Observed Diversity of Genres

It is necessary to recall a fact that cannot be overlooked: the diversity of genre is linked to the parameters of the context and to the status and roles of the interlocutors,

namely, whether the interactions are fortuitous or planned, formal or informal, goal-oriented or not, and so on. Dialogs can unfold in a symmetric way when all of the interlocutors are able to contribute to the exchange in the same way (they take turns asking questions, replying, telling things, etc.); they unfold in a complementary way when the roles are clearly distributed across the different participants (one asks questions, the other replies; one person presents things, the other makes comments). In all cases, a dialog may turn out to be competitive or cooperative, consensual or conflicting.

2.2 External and Internal Processes: the Terms “Dialogal” and “Dialogical”

The concept of dialogism implies that any given wording is fundamentally linked to the wording of others' utterances, not only in the immediate dialog (currently taking place) but also at a distance (already having taken place). The conversational history of the interlocutors makes reliance on both of these wordings easier to detect. An analysis of dialogs must therefore take into account the degree of familiarity of the persons involved in the exchange, whether spoken or written, for the familiarity level is a source of a larger or smaller body of implicits.

A few notions need to be reviewed here (BRÈS, 1999, 2005). The term “dialogal” applies to the dimension of the relationships between utterances in the immediate dialog; “dialogical” applies only to the dimension of remote dialogs. This distinction is useful in that it implies that while there is no dialogal dimension in remote dialog (*in absentia*), there is always a dialogical dimension in immediate dialog (*in praesentia*). The dialogical dimension is present everywhere, but unlike the dialogal dimension, it is not always visible unless it is explicitly marked (as in citations and reported speech).

Dialog, in fact, has materiality: we “see” the words being exchanged; when one says that a monolog takes up, at a distance, the words of another undetermined person, isn't this a case of the unverifiable? (FRANÇOIS, 1988, p.18; our translation).

Dialogal phenomena affect the external manifest structure of the surface of the utterance; dialogical phenomena, its internal, deep, concealed structure. (BRÈS, 2005, p.55; our translation).

The analyst can readily identify the dialogal dimension of the external processes by which the different discourses refer to each other. The task is more complex, on the other hand, in the case of internal processes. Granted, this doesn't mean that they are independent of what, from the dialogical standpoint, is at play in the current dialog. The internal and external facets of the relationships between the exchanges are intermingled, a testimony of responsive activity at different temporal levels.

2.3 Kinds of Responsive Acts: Interdiscursive, Interlocutional, and Intralocutional

One can develop the idea of internal and external processes by looking at how a given discourse is oriented toward other discourses (BRÈS, 1999, 2005). To begin, “interdiscursive dialogism,” the most generalized, refers to discourse produced earlier by other persons, usually concerning similar content. The notion of responsive act thus attempts to account for the circulation of discourses, of which the speaker is not necessarily aware. Next, “interlocutional dialogism” refers to the addressee's earlier speaking turns in the current dialog. In this case, the speaker's responsive act relies on the addressee's wording, but also on the representations the speaker forms of the addressee. The object of a responsive act may therefore be the potential responses the speaker assigns to his/her interlocutor, which can be called anticipatory interlocutional dialogism. Lastly, in “intralocutional dialogism” the discourse refers to itself, with the speaker him/herself as the first addressee. During the discourse-wording process, speakers interact with what they said earlier, what they are currently saying, and what they are going to say. Intralocutional dialogism brings out the reflexive dimension of discourse by focusing on the relationship between the speaking subject and his/her own speech.

2.4 The Dynamic of Responsive Acts: Discursive Moves and Shifts

The expression of an utterance always responds, to a greater or lesser degree, that is, it expresses the speaker's attitude toward others' utterances and not just his attitude toward the object of his utterance. The forms of responsive reactions that supplement the utterance are

extremely varied and have not yet undergone any special study at all (BAKHTIN, 1986, p.92).⁹

The question of dialogism addressed by François, based on Bakhtin's ideas, led him to work on the different forms of responsive reactions, and to propose, in view of furthering our reflection, the notion of “move” in general and “shift” in particular. The problem is to grasp how, in the dynamic of an exchange, every speaking turn is positioned as a response.

The idea is not to construct a system but to show what happens when we speak, or more specifically, what happens in a position subsequent to what was just said; thus, to describe a discursive move. (FRANÇOIS, 1990, p.93; our translation)

A given point of view opposes other points of view. It takes up and modifies the discourse of others, and in this respect, the way in which it manifests itself is not irrelevant, precisely because the utterance itself is not what will produce meaning, but the move it makes in relation to what precedes, whether in cases of a situated linking up to a real interlocutor or in cases of a move with respect to a cultural tradition and absent readers. (FRANÇOIS, 2005, p.65; our translation)

The notion of discursive shift further specifies the notion of discursive move insofar as it brings out the ways in which meaning is produced (FRANÇOIS, 1988, 1989). Note that meaning is not always produced in exchanges, as in ones containing a succession of speaking turns without shared content, or conversely, in ones with total complicity of content wherein the next speaker adds nothing to what the preceding speaker said. Meaning *is* produced, on the other hand, when the discourse takes up what was already said, whether immediately or at a later time, by modifying it in various ways via a discursive move. The resulting responsive act may constitute an uptake or a counter-utterance. Indeed, any move can be in continuity or in discontinuity with what precedes (locally or globally), in convergence or in divergence (depending on the points of view). Continuity pertains to what was taken up and more or less modified (as in a paraphrase); discontinuity pertains to what has been shifted (as when the speaker goes from a real to an imaginary world or from the world of a child to the world of an adult).

⁹ For the bibliographic reference, see footnote 7.

This being said, we can assume that there are not an infinite number of procedures enabling a discourse to hook up with another discourse to produce a meaning change, by means of uptake or shifting (additions, paraphrases, justifications, explanations, metadiscursive adjustments, utterance accountability, world shifts, etc.).

My next step will be to apply this perspective to the observation of dialogs in young children.

3 Dialogs with Children as Interlocutors

Let us return to dialog as a primary genre. The human face is the first thing that attracts a newborn's attention and causes it to look in that direction. It is the face of a being who speaks to the infant right from birth. The adult, as a mediator between the child and the world, is (among other things) an interlocutor. Dialog is thus found at the very onset of language experience; monolog comes later, as an internalization of experienced interactions.

3.1 Methodological Choices

In line with François, I would say that two pitfalls must be avoided in describing language development in children. The first is to disregard the diversity of the semiosis at play in child-adult exchanges (the various nonverbal means of referring to the world and to others). The second is to overlook the fact that interaction skills (especially pragmatic) come before linguistic skills *per se*, which one attempts to quantify all too soon. In short, a child who has not won the status of interlocutor and acquired some communicative resources will have a great deal of difficulty mastering his/her language or languages. In studying the very young child, François identified, for example, abilities for metalanguage and commentary in non-canonical forms, abilities that will show up all the more since they are rooted in another semiosis. I am thinking of a case (FRANÇOIS, 1994), one that any adult who has been around little children knows well, namely, the back-and-forth movement of a child's eyes between an object and an adult, and the child's provocative smile when extending his/her hand toward a forbidden object! This is how children enter into language, and then into their particular language

or languages, via exchanges within an evolving plurisemioticity, combining the visual, vocal, and verbal modalities in multiple fashions. They do this first with certain privileged interlocutors (parents, siblings, teachers, and caregivers), and then with mere acquaintances or even strangers, both adults and children.

Although most researchers recognize the need to record “natural” interactions in various situations of verbal interaction, they rely on a number of different methods for analyzing the data. Briefly, to come back to the question of dialogism, one can oppose a deductive approach — which applies hypothesis-based models to data — to an inductive approach — which starts from the data, identifies processes on the basis of usage regularities, and constructs models from them. In their various versions, hierarchical models (segmentation into units of different levels, e.g., interaction, sequence, exchange, speaking turn, act) are opposed to dynamic models aimed at describing the functional dimension of utterance chaining. The essential difference between the two is that in one case, the analysis deals with what is already done, the “product” of the interaction; in the other, it deals with the “process” that underlies the unfolding of the exchange: on one side, what was said, on the other side, what is being said. The latter approach, which in the end attempts to capture how an utterance is linked to another, how it “responds” to another, fits better with the Bakhtinian approach.

3.2 The Diversity of Dialogism

The examples chosen for this article are drawn from data gathered under the most “natural” conditions possible.¹⁰ They are ordinary exchanges, anchored in the participants' shared experience, that capture language-based, everyday activities familiar to children. The children are interacting either with a parent or with each other, so the conversers know each other and have developed conversational habits. The

¹⁰ In France, the General Data Protection Regulation (RGPD) (<https://www.cnil.fr/fr/reglement-europeen-protection-donnees/chapitre1#Article4>) entered into force on May 25, 2018. The data presented in this article was collected and processed before the entry into force of this law. The corpus was recorded by myself in families from a circle of friends or in a nursery school to which I was given access for my research. The presentation of the data complies, moreover, with Article 4 of the GDPR insofar as they do not provide any information that directly or indirectly identifies the individuals whose discourse is presented.

position of each person in these interactions thus has a history, but as we know, these positions can be brought back into play in the dynamic of an interaction.

I chose a diversity of situations by placing priority on non-institutional contexts (DELAMOTTE, 2004), and thus by not disregarding exchanges between children (GARITTE, 1998) or excluding triadic interactions (DELAMOTTE, 2009, 2010), both of which have been studied less often than dyadic adult-child interactions. Given that my goal, within the confines of this article, is not to compare these different contexts to each other, but to describe some of the kinds of responsive acts at play among young children. The examples selected here have no particular link to each other, except for the presence of the discourse moves theorized above.

Let me begin with two examples¹¹ of “interlocutional dialogism” that will help explain my choice of methodology for the analysis.

Example 1: Clément is 4 years old. He is playing with his cars on a rug. His mother is sitting on the couch and reading a magazine. The interaction contains eight speaking turns, four for each interlocutor.¹²

1 —	Clément:	ma voiture elle est cassée	my car, it's broken
2 —	Mother:	faut demander à papa	have to ask papa
3 —	Clément:	mais je lui ai dit	but I told him
4 —	Mother:	et ben c'est bien	so that's good
5 —	Clément:	oui mais il a dit /on verra /	yes but he said / we'll see /
6 —	Mother:	et ben tu vois!	so you see!
7 —	Clément:	oui mais / quand il dit ça / c'est fait pas!	yes but / when he says that / he going to do it!
8 —	Mother:	donne / je vais la réparer!	give it to me / I'll fix it!

If we look solely at the entire finished product, we can clearly identify a negotiation sequence within an exchange: Clément shows his car and points out its state (in 1); his mother agrees to repair it (in 8). The side-sequence is made up of a series of three structurally similar exchanges), i.e., each of the mother's attempts is countered by Clément (*mais* “but,” *oui mais* “yes but”). An analysis of the speech acts

¹¹ The transcription method chosen for the corpus excerpts was aimed at readability. The pronunciation of the youngest child (23 months) and his frozen forms were retained *a minima* when it was not possible to do otherwise.

¹²3 The English translations of the dialogs are literal so as to retain the relationships between the utterances of the different dialog participants.

indicates that this is indeed a negotiation. Here, then, we have a balanced and perfectly structured exchange.

An analysis of the moves and shifts tells us something else. The mother interprets Clément's statement as a request (shift at the speech-act level), which she passes on to the father (shift at the actor level), it being understood that culturally, the object “car” is in the father's realm more than in the mother's. The “car”-“papa” sequence involves a strong social implicit, so the shift is twofold: discursive (statement/request) and relative to the different worlds (mother/father). Clément's response is connected to both of these aspects: the discourse (*dit* “told”) and the person (*lui* “him”). The conjunction *mais* (“but”), whose coordinating function is possible at the beginning of the speaking turn only in the “responsive position,” constitutes both an insistence (the child had clearly anticipated the social assumptions implicated by the mother) and an objection. The mother's next remark maintains the continuity (*et ben* “so”), while the prosody of *c'est bien* (“that's good”) is indicative of an attempt to close the interaction. Clément's responsive relaunch makes several moves: a continuity-maintaining one (*oui* “yes”), followed by an objection (*mais* “but”) and a tense shift from the past to the future (*il a dit* “he said,” *on verra* “we'll see”). This shift adds a stronger meaning to the remark: nothing is done yet. The mother replies using the same continuity-maintaining device, via the repetition of *et ben* (“so”), which specifically marks the fact that what was just said was taken into account. She doubles this with a second continuity marker (*tu vois* “you see”), which, once again, prompts a closing. Clément's next speaking turn, whose first two moves are the same as before, is then completed by two shifts: first an interdiscursive one that refers back to the father's reply, and then a world shift that goes from saying to doing. The mother's final response is in total discontinuity with the preceding sequence of moves, falling in continuity only with Clément's first remark. Although the analysis could go even further, I will simply add that the dynamic of the interaction also revolves around the fact that both interlocutors link up not only to the other's turns but also to their own, each one taking up the discursive process he or she employed earlier: other-continuity and self-continuity.

In the next example, a hierarchical structure is more difficult to detect, not only because the speaking turns are directly linked to the manipulation of objects but also

because the child is younger. Here again, the turns are equally distributed across the adult and the child. As in the preceding example, it is the child who initiates the interaction.

Example 2: Dorian is 23 months old. He is playing in his grandmother's room. She is putting clothes away.

1 —	Dorian:	tavu cube (tu as vu le cube (Dorian takes a box from off a buffet)	you saw the cube
2 —	GM:	fais attention c'est fragile	watch out it's fragile
3 —	Dorian:	equoiça? (c'est quoi ça?)	is what, this
4 —	GM:	une grosse boîte	a big box
5 —	GM:	je l'ouvre?	I open it?
6 —	Dorian :	vi (oui)	yes
7 —	GM:	c'est joli ça?	it's pretty, this?
8 —	Dorian:	vi (oui)	yes
		<i>Dorian moves his hand around above the box</i>	
9 —	Dorian:	e bo / toutça! (c'est beau, tout ça)	is beautiful, all this
10 —	GM:	oui / c'est des bijoux de mamie	yes / it's grandma's jewelry
11 —	Dorian:	donne a main (donne dans ma main)	put in hand (put in my hand)
13 —	GM:	non / toi prends en un / mais doucement	no / you take one / but carefully
14 —	Dorian:	ayé suila (ça y est celui-là)	there is that one
		<i>(Dorian takes a pin)</i>	
15 —	GM:	très bien	very good
16 —	GM:	maintenant remets dans le coffre	now put back in the box
17 —	Dorian:	apu (y'a plus)!	all gone
		<i>(Dorian carefully puts the pin back into the box)</i>	
18 —	Dorian:	anko (encore)?	more ?
19 —	GM:	encore quoi?	more what?
20 —	Dorian:	biyou pu ma (un bijou pour moi)	jewelry for me
21 —	GM:	je te donne un autre?	I give you another?
22 —	Dorian:	ma donne ot (donne-moi un autre)	give me another
23 —	GM:	celui-là alors / il est beau	this one then / it is beautiful
		<i>(GM puts a turquoise necklace in Dorian's hand)</i>	
24 —	GM:	tu vois la belle couleur?	you see the beautiful color ?

25	Dorian:	vi / e bleu (oui, il est bleu)	yes / is blue
—			
26	Dorian:	et voilà!	(puts the necklace back in the box) there!
—			
27	Dorian:	fini mainan (fini maintenant)	done now
—			
29	GM:	on ferme la boîte?	we close the box?
—			
30	Dorian:	non pas fem (non, on ne ferme pas)	no, not close
—			
31	Dorian:	mont a lili (on montre à Elise)	show to Elise (the older sister)
—			
32	GM:	d'accord	okay
—			

Generally in this dialog — as determined by the current activity — the shifts concern an action (see, do, give, take, open, close, put back, etc.). However, it is the number of uptakes and modified uptakes at all levels of the wording that ensures the close-knit dynamic of the interaction. I chose this corpus excerpt because of the way in which it differs from the preceding one. As far as moves are concerned, the notable difference from the first example is the number of self-continuity moves (13 out of 32 turns), distributed as follows: four for the grandmother (4/5, 15/16) and nine for Dorian (8/9, 17/18, 25/26/27, 30/31). In order not to clutter our analysis with too many details, let us look solely at Dorian's first self-continuity move. In 7, the grandmother asks the question *c'est joli ça?* (“it’s pretty, this?”) which, not surprisingly, leads to the response *vi* (“yes”). However, the child applies a semantic shift to his own utterance, in 9, via a modified uptake of *joli* (“pretty”) in *e bo /toutça* (“is beautiful/all this”) that amplifies the evaluation of the objects in the box. The grandmother will take up *beau* (“beautiful”) again in 23. The analysis at this level must take the intonation dimension into account — whereas the grandmother's *joli* (“pretty”) is said in a neutral way with the typical rising intonation of a question, Dorian's *e bo* (“is beautiful”) is an exclamation of admiration amplified by *toutça* (“all this”). One can ascribe to Dorian's shift, the grandmother's responsive shift from *ça* (“this”), used at the onset, to *bijoux* (“jewelry”), a word that Dorian will take up in 20.

Notably, “interdiscursive dialogism” is the predominant organizing principle of the interaction. Indeed, four out of eight speaking turns refer explicitly to previous utterances (i.e., “the said”), produced either by the group of children present or by their

absent teacher. And if we consider that the last turn *C'est la règle* ("it's the rule") also refers to an earlier discursive construction, then that leaves only three of the eight turns (1, 4, and 5) that do not follow that principle. We could also consider turn 4 (*je l'ai déjà fait* "I already did it") to be a reminder of a previous "do" ("did"), whose exact content is unknown. That leaves Oscar's first and fifth turns as the only ones pertaining to the here and now. In fact, Oscar is the sole participant whose discourse is about the present (*tu vas chercher* "you go get," *je saute mon tour* "I skip my turn," *Aline qui va* "Aline who goes").

Example 3: The children are 5 years old and are sitting around a table in a classroom.

1 —	Oscar:	toi / tu vas chercher les feutres et les ciseaux	you / you go get the markers and the scissors
2 —	Tom:	non / on a discuté / on a dit que c'était à tour de rôle	no / we discussed this / we said it was turn taking
3 —	Oscar:	oui mais / aujourd'hui c'est moi le responsable a dit la maîtresse	yes but / today it's me who's in charge the teacher said
4 —	Tom:	oui mais / moi je l'ai déjà fait	yes but / me I already did it
5 —	Oscar:	alors / je saute mon tour et c'est Aline qui va	so / I skip my turn and it's Aline who goes
6 —	Aline:	d'accord / mais on dit que demain tu reprends ton tour	okay / but we say that tomorrow you take your turn
7 —	Tom:	obligé / parce que c'est la maîtresse qui l'a dit	(you) have to / because it's the teacher who said so
8 —	Aline:	c'est la règle	it's the rule

In Example 4 below, it is the appearance of "intralocutional dialogism" that captures our attention. Intralocution is no doubt promoted by the fact that the two little girls (age 5) are drawing side by side and never look at each other. Their eyes never leave the sheets of paper but go back and forth between the two drawings.

1 —	Muriel:	regarde / la fille elle cueille des fleurs	look / the girl she is picking flowers
2 —	Sophie:	moi aussi elle cueille des fleurs	me too she is picking flowers
3 —	Muriel:	mais c'est pas les mêmes hein	but it's not the same ones, uh
4 —	Sophie:	ah non pas les mêmes / j'ai dit moi aussi mais moi c'est sur les arbres	ah no not the same / I said me too but me it's on the trees
5 —	Sophie:	elle a une belle robe ta tienne	she has a pretty dress, yours
6 —	Muriel:	non ça c'est une jupe	no that it's a skirt

7 —	Sophie:	moi c'est une robe	me it's a dress
8 —	Muriel:	ah oui une robe / je dirais une longue robe	ah yes a dress/ I'd say a long dress
9 —	Sophie:	je vais faire main(te)ant des p'tits oiseaux dans les arbres	I'm going to do now some little birds in the trees
10 —	Muriel:	moi aussi des gros / comment je vais faire y'a pas d'arbre	me too big ones / how am I going to do it there'r no trees
11 —	Sophie:	tu peux pas le faire	you can't do it
12 —	Muriel:	ben non / c'est dommage / ben si / un gros qui vole	uh no / that's too bad / uh yes / a big one that's flying
13 —	Sophie:	je peux faire aussi un gros qui vole	I can do a big one that's flying too

The interaction here deals with describing what is the same and what is different in the drawings being produced. The continuity is played out via moves that take up wordings of what is the same and shifts of wordings of what is different. The descriptive discourse of the activity Muriel and Sophie are carrying out together is distributed either in an interlocution (one child's discourse is linked up to the other child's) or in an intralocution (one child's discourse is linked up to her own discourse. This is the case in 4, where Sophie goes back to her own discourse to refute it: in one and the same move, she cites herself (*moi aussi* “me too”), refutes herself (*mais* “but”), and justifies herself (*c'est sur les arbres* “it's on the trees”). It is also the case in 10 and 12, where Muriel questions herself (*comment* “how”) and debates with herself about whether it is possible to draw birds (*ben non* “uh no,” *ben si* “uh yes”). This case is particularly interesting due to its reflexive nature: the speaker looks back at her utterance and establishes an internal enunciative distance with respect to her own discourse. A more complex instance of intralocution is found in turn 8, where — both for Sophie (turn 7) and for herself — Muriel reformulates “dress” as “long dress”. Given that Sophie's words come right before Muriel's, Muriel's modified uptake is immediately and doubly responsive.

To Conclude Without Concluding

Frédéric François (1991) used the term “game space” to refer to the dual relationship between maintaining the thematic field and the effects of multiple discursive shifts. He stressed the importance of those games that constitute genuine

“language games” and pervade our interactions with children and among children. Indeed — and to our great delight — they make use of the vast dialogism of the metalinguistic dimension, which places the language in a dialog with itself. The “words of children” stem from their precocious ability to shift the meaning of words, a true “art of replying” in dialog (DELAMOTTE, 2007, 2008).

Example 5: Margot, age 3 1/2, is playing “I’m thinking of an animal” with her parents.

1 —	Margot:	papa, il a un animal dans la tête / maman, tu peux lui parler une question?	papa, he's thinking of an animal /mama, you can say him a question?
2 —	Mother:	je cherche / mais on dit poser une question / alors, voyons, est-ce qu’il a des cornes?	I'm searching / but we say to ask a question / so, let's see, does it have horns?
3 —	Margot:	à toi papa de poser ta réponse!	your turn papa to ask your answer!
4 —	Father:	oui, il a des cornes / mais, tu vois, là, on dit donner une réponse	yes, it has horns / but, you see, there we say to give an answer
5 —	Margot:	zut alors / c’est trop difficile ce jeu avec papa, maman !	bah then / it’s too difficult this game with papa, mama!

The important thing for this short dialog is not to count the number of speech acts within each speaking turn nor to categorize the nature of the transition from one exchange to the next, but to find out how the two “worlds” interact linguistically, the world of the game and the world of language, with the shift from one to the other concentrated on Margot’s surprising last turn (unexpected for an adult).

The last example focuses more specifically on the language, via a chain of linguistic forms that set off a sort of escalating oratorical joust and produce a sequence experienced as comical by all three interlocutors.

Example 6: Camille and Pierre, 5-year-old twins, are at home making puppets for school.

1 —	Father:	y’a pas de marionnettes à l’école	there're no puppets at school?
2 —	Camille:	non / y’en a pas / c’est nous qui les font!	no / there aren't any / it's us who make ¹³ (3rd person

¹³ The English translation does not make it possible to grasp the plays on words that emerge step by step, not only from the children’s morphological errors — *font* (3rd person plural) for *faisons* (1st person plural) in 2 and for *fait* (3rd person singular) in 4 — but also from the use of the pronoun “on,” which

3 —	Father:	qui les faisons	plural) them! who make them
4 —	Pierre:	(un ton plus haut) non, qu'on les font!	(speaking louder / no, that we make (3rd person plural) them!
5 —	Father:	(criant et riant) qu'on les fait!	(yelling and laughing) that we make!
6 —	Camille:	(hurlant et chantant) ainsi font font font les petites marionnettes!	(screaming and singing) this is how they make make make (do do do) the little puppets! 14

By now, the reader will have understood that the main idea behind this article was to show — from the angle of responsive acts — what a Bakhtinian approach can contribute to studies on language acquisition by children. My last example reminds us that Bakhtin presented language-based interaction as a fascinating “dialogical combat” in which the voice of each speaker collides and mingles with the voices of the others. He also wrote, in broadening this idea:

I live in a world of others’ words. And my entire life is an orientation in this world, a reaction to others’ words [...], beginning with my assimilation of them [...] and ending with the assimilation of the wealth of human culture (BAKHTIN, 1986, p.143).¹⁵

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stands for “we,” the fact that “faire” in French has two distinct meanings in this dialog (“to make” and “to do”), and the rhyme.

¹⁴ A well-known French nursery rhyme: “Ainsi font font font les petites marionnettes” (roughly: This is what they do, do, do, the little puppets).

¹⁵ BAKHTIN, M. From Notes Made in 1970. In: BAKHTIN, M. *Speech Genres & Other Late Essays*. Translated by Vern W. McGee and Edited by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986. pp.132-158.

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