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“What Does Curious even Mean Do You Know?”: Orientations to Word Meanings in Family Interactions

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Abstract

In family interactions, children's proper language use often becomes the focus of conversation. Drawing on a primary corpus of nearly 31 hours of video recordings of family interactions from 20 families with at least one child between 3 and 6 years of age, this article uses the methodology of conversation analysis to examine how parents and children orient to issues of word meanings. Findings indicate that family members display a K- epistemic stance towards word meanings through repair and candidate understandings, and accomplish other actions by displaying a K+ epistemic stance towards word meanings. This study shows how these orientations to word meanings are not always didactic in nature, but simply part of everyday family life.

Keywords: Conversation analysis; Family interactions; Word meanings; Repair;

Epistemics

1. Introduction

In this article, we examine the ways in which children and their family members orient to the meanings of words in everyday family interactions. As Takei and Burdelski (2018) write in their analysis of the negotiable roles of expert and novice in bilingual family interactions, “definitions minimally involve the introduction of a lexical item followed by an explication of its meaning, and they can be either proffered or requested from another” (p. 89). In this paper we examine monolingual English-speaking families’ orientations to word meanings through repair and candidate understandings, and also examine how repair related to word meanings can accomplish other actions.

Importantly, in examining explicit orientations to word meanings in family interactions with young children, our focus is not on the children’s change in mental states, such as their acquisition of language, but rather in their “...participation in the pre-existing orderly social life of the species” (Lerner et al., 2010, p. 45), or the ways in which children engage in conversations concerning word meanings. Sidnell (2016) explains the usefulness of conversation analysis for

understanding young children's social worlds with the following: "through detailed attention to the talk and conduct of children in interaction, it is possible to identify the particular social phenomena to which they are themselves oriented" (p. 257).

That is, conversation analysis is a useful method for understanding participants' orientations to the world around them. As our data consists of video recordings of families with young children going about their everyday activities, it gives a naturalistic sample of the different contexts in which family members orient to word meanings in their everyday interactions.

2. Literature Review

As this paper concerns interactants' orientations to word meanings through various repair practices, we review the relevant literature on metalinguistic practices (Section 2.1), repair (Section 2.2), and then epistemics (Section 2.3).

2.1 Metalinguistic Practices

Previous research on metalinguistic practices has examined intercultural (e.g. Bolden, 2012), multilingual (e.g. Takei and Burdelski, 2018), and classroom learning contexts (e.g. Huq et al., 2017, Mortsensen, 2011). Work on everyday

interactions has found that word meanings are situational and can be constituted in more granular ways in interaction (Rowen and Haugh, 2017) and orient to the situated identities of the interactants through the use of specialist or non-specialist terms (Kitzinger and Mandelbaum, 2013). As Rowen and Haugh (2017) write, "...when examined in their natural interactional habitats, word meanings can be observed to emerge as an interactional accomplishment on the part of the participants" (p. 328).

Prior research on metalinguistic practices in family interactions has focused primarily on gender and cultural implications. Mothers place more of an importance on reported speech events than fathers (Ely et al., 1996) and use reported speech more than fathers (Ely et al., 1995). Relatedly, mothers use more language-focused terms such as "say" and "talk" compared to fathers (Ely et al., 2001)¹.

¹ It is pertinent to note that Ely's studies examine white middle-class families in the United States.

In her work with Israeli bilingual families, Blum-Kulka (1997) notes that a “what’s X” type question about an unfamiliar word can be heard as possibly requiring a translation or explanation in bilingual families. She also analyzes the ways in which children work to confirm the equivalencies of words between different languages, and how adults work to clarify the meanings of words in American Israeli bilingual families (Blum-Kulka, 1997). Furthermore, in work on the Kaluli language, Schieffelin (1990) found the prevalence and importance of the term “elema”, which means “say like this,” in adults socializing children to speak. In building upon this literature, this study focuses specifically on the different metalinguistic practices, including repair, that are used to orient to the meanings of words in English-speaking family interactions.

2.2 Repair

Issues of speaking, hearing, and understanding have been extensively explored within the conversation analytic literature (see Hayashi et al., 2013; Robinson, 2014; Schegloff, 1987, 1997, 2000; Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks 1977). Early repair literature deals primarily with problems of hearing and understanding,

but more recent work has examined the additional actions that repair can accomplish (e.g. Bolden, Mandelbaum, & Wilkinson, 2012; Lerner, Bolden, Hepburn, & Mandelbaum, 2012), such as pursuing a missing response during a possible disagreement or emphasizing a component of a telling (Bolden, 2014). Prior research has also examined repair in the context of second language acquisition classrooms (e.g. Kelly, 2007; Park, 2015) and everyday multilingual interactions (e.g. Bolden, 2012; Lilja, 2014).

More recently, there has been increased interest in young children's use of repair. Various longitudinal studies have examined the development of repair in young children's language acquisition. For example, one study found that there are higher proportions of other-repair when children are younger, and increased use of self-repair later in childhood (Morgenstern et al., 2013). Other studies have focused explicitly on self-repair, and found a prevalence of other-repair over other types of repair (Forrester, 2008). Studies that examine children's use of other-initiated repair have found that over time children use more complex and varied other-initiated repair sequences (Forrester and Cherington, 2009). This study

contributes to the repair literature by analyzing other actions that repair of word meanings can accomplish in everyday family interactions.

2.3 Epistemics

As this paper deals with issues of understanding and meaning, it is also situated within the literature on epistemics. Epistemics, or the management of knowledge, has been examined in terms of how interlocutors locally manage territories of knowledge through interaction (e.g. Heritage, 2012a, b; 2013).

Heritage (2012b) differentiates between epistemic status (the relative positioning of interlocutors as more (K+) or less (K-) knowledgeable to each other) and epistemic stance (how speakers position themselves as K+ or K- in their design of turns). Heritage (2012b) writes, "...asserting something from a K+ position can be the basis for initiating or expanding a sequence, and that positioning oneself in a K- position can likewise motivate sequences or their expansion" (p. 49). This paper examines how issues of epistemic status and stance become relevant in the context of word definitions in everyday family interactions.

Research increasingly recognizes the multidirectional nature of such parent-child interactions, with children's active role in parent-child and peer interactions receiving more focus in both empirical research (e.g., Blum-Kulka, 1997; Goodwin, 2007; Kidwell, 2011; Pontecorvo et al., 2001; Pontecorvo and Fasulo, 1999) and theory (e.g., Corsaro, 2015; Rogoff, 1990, 2003). Additionally, greater attention has been paid to the role that mundane activities play in children's language learning (e.g., Goodwin, 2007; Rogoff, 1990), in contrast with the more traditional didactic parent-teaching-child moments that are often the focus of socialization research. The analysis presented here builds on this work by examining the different ways in which children and parents orient to and provide word meanings in a variety of everyday family interactions, focusing on the ways in which both children and parents are active contributors as word experts and novices.

3. Data and Methods

This study draws on a primary corpus of nearly 31 hours of video recordings of family interactions from 20 families with at least one child between 3

and 6 years of age. The findings are part of a larger investigation of the communication practices of families with young children. Approval for this study was obtained from the researchers' institutional review board, and participants were recruited through local childcare centers and personal networks. Families were eligible to participate if they had at least one child in the target age range and if all participating family members spoke English at home. Informed consent, assent, or parental consent was obtained for each family member as appropriate. Families were asked to record three 30-60 minute communication-rich family interactions that included the child in the target age range as well as at least one other family member. Families were provided with hand-held video cameras and tripods to complete the recordings, as well as a list of suggestions for capturing quality recordings.

Each family recorded at least two family interactions, with individual video recordings ranging in length from two minutes to one hour. An average of one and a half hours of recordings were collected from each family. The majority of the videos were recorded in the families' homes; one family recorded an

interaction in their vehicle and one family recorded multiple interactions in the playroom of their church. In four families, the child in the target age range was an only child; in three families, both children were in the target age range; in four families, the target child had a sibling under 2 years of age; and in nine families, the target child had one or more older siblings. Seventeen of the twenty families were two-parent families, and three families were single-parent households. Data are in American and Canadian English.

All video recordings were viewed in their entirety in order to identify instances of orientations to word meanings within the family interactions. We built a collection of orientations to word meanings, which included cases where there was an explicit display of word non-understanding by one of the interactants and cases where there was a presumed non-understanding on the part of one of the interactants concerning the word or phrase in question. The total collection of 62 orientations to word meanings consists of 39 instances of orientations to word meanings from the primary data corpus, and an additional 23 instances of

orientation to word meaning that were identified in a supplementary corpus². The recordings captured a variety of family interactions, and this variety is reflected in the activities in which the families were engaged during orientations to word meanings. The activities in which the families in the primary data corpus were engaged include play (13 extracts), preparing and eating meals (10 extracts), reading (7 extracts), creating crafts or drawings (5 extracts), completing homework or workbook activities (2 extracts), and making Valentine's cards (2 extracts). The activities in which the families in the supplementary corpus were engaged include mealtimes (17 extracts), video-mediated interactions over FaceTime (4 extracts), and play (2 extracts).

These 62 extracts were then transcribed using Jefferson transcription conventions (Jefferson, 2004) and analyzed inductively using the methods of conversation analysis (as outlined in Sidnell and Stivers, 2013). The ways in which

² The supplementary corpus contains video recordings of interactions of seven different families with older children and adults, as well as one family with children in the target age range

orientations to word meanings came about during the family interactions were examined in-depth and compared in order to determine the “generic, context-independent properties” (Sidnell and Stivers, 2013, p. 78) underlying these specific cases of orientations to word meanings. The cases where there was an explicit display of word non-understanding include repair initiations and candidate understandings. The cases where there was a presumed non-understanding include verifications of or challenges to another’s understanding. The clearest cases of orientations to word meanings are presented in this article.

4. Findings

The families in our data corpus primarily orient to the meanings of words by either presenting themselves in a K- position through candidate understandings (Section 4.1.1) or initiating “repair simpliciter” (cf. Schegloff, 1996; Lerner et al., 2012; Section 4.1.2). In these instances, repair is initiated simply to do repair, or fix a problem of understanding related to a word that has been used in the interactions. In our data corpus both children and adults initiate repair and produce candidate understandings. Interactants also present themselves in a K+

position relative to the meaning of words in these family interactions, and in these cases the initiation of repair does more than simply repair. Repair initiations can function to move away from a trouble in the interaction (Section 4.2.1) or challenge another interactants' epistemic stance (Section 4.2.2).

4.1 Displaying a K- Position

In these family interactions, interlocutors can orient to the meaning of words by displaying a K- position that makes relevant an explanation of the meaning of the word in question. These cases are similar to what Lerner et al. (2012) term "repair simpliciter" (p. 199). That is, in these cases, what transpires is simply a display of non-understanding. This can be accomplished through issuing a candidate understanding (Extract 1) or by initiating repair in formats such as "what's X" (Extract 2) or "what does X mean" (Extract 3). These cases are discussed next.

4.1.1 Displaying a K- Position: Candidate Understandings

One way in which words are oriented to in these family interactions is when interactants issue candidate understandings (Pomerantz, 1988) of a potentially

problematic word. In these cases interactants issue a possible definition of the word in question after their lack of understanding about what the word might mean has been exposed in the course of the ongoing interaction, putting themselves in a relative K- position. We find that both adults and children produce candidate understandings.

First, we present an adult candidate understanding. In Extract 1 a grandmother uses a candidate understanding to check her own understanding about what the phrase “Black Friday” means (lines 04-06). In this segment Grandma, Grandpa and their grandchildren Joe (in high school) and Emma (in college) are eating dinner together.

Extract 1

11_FCF14_KF_Black Friday_06.00

01	EMM:	I'm just <u>mad</u> because Lily and S(hh)ue	
02		c(h)an't come for like <u>Black Friday</u> eh	
03		heh heh heh	
04	GRA:	°Now° [<u>Black Friday</u>]	
05		[((points to EMM))]	
06		>is <u>Halloween</u> .<	
07		(0.2)/((Emma[shakes] head))	
08	GRA:	[<u>Uh</u> uh]	
09		(1.0)	
10	EMM:	For sho:pping,	
11		(0.5)	
12	GRA:	<u>Oh</u> (for) right (0.2) hm hm hm hm	
13		(0.4)/((GRA nods head vertically))	
14	GRA:	Y(h)eah I <u>hear</u> ya.	
15		(0.6)	
16	GRA:	<u>I</u> hear ya.	

17 GRP: Did you see Ophelia on the piano?

In lines 01 to 03 Emma announces that she is displeased with the circumstances of a future event with "I'm just mad because Lily and S(hh)ue c(h)an't come for like Black Friday eh heh heh heh". After this announcement Grandma issues a candidate understanding with "°Now° Black Friday >is Halloween.<" as she points towards Emma (lines 04-06 – see Figure 1 below).

Figure 1. "°Now° Black Friday >is Halloween.<"

This candidate understanding shows Emma what Grandma thinks Black Friday refers to: Halloween. In lines 07-09 Emma shakes her head to indicate that Grandma is wrong as Grandma says "uh uh", thus acknowledging Emma's rejection. Emma comes in at line 10 with a verbal correction with "for shoopping,"

(line 10), thus indicating what you do on Black Friday³. With this case we can see that adults may use a candidate understanding as a check to confirm what a word means after it has been used by someone else.

Children also produce candidate understandings of word meanings. In Extract 2, Vanessa (4.5) and her Dad are making pasta together. Mom and Angela (8 months) are out of view of the camera. There is a pot of water on the stove. Vanessa's candidate understanding of Dad's use of the word "boiling" occurs in lines 27-29 after she has mistakenly identified the water in the pot as "boiling" (line 21).

Extract 2

002_Making Pasta_Boil_14.55

```
09          (0.5)/((Dad spreads flour onto dough))
10    DAD:    So- ((brushes hands together))
11    DAD:    As soon as our water's ready to boil,
12          (0.3)/((points towards water))
13    DAD:    How's our water looking.
14          (3.5)/((Vanessa turns towards water))
15    DAD:    Don't fall off.
16          (0.7)
17    VAN:    Looks [good. ]
18          [((Vanessa turns back))]
19    DAD:    Okay wha- (is it) boiling yet?
20          (0.8)/((Vanessa turns towards water))
21    VAN:    It is.
```

³ Black Friday occurs the day after Thanksgiving in the United States and is a heavily advertised shopping day when many retailers offer steep discounts on pricing

22 (0.6)/((Dad leans towards water))
 23 DAD: No it's not.
 24 (0.4)
 25 DAD: But it's gettin' there, (0.5) looks
 26 [pretty hot.]
 27 VAN: [(You mean) it] has to
 28 like (.) [bubble?]
 29 [(moves fingers up in air)]
 30 DAD: Yeah they're bubbles but they aren't
 31 coming up to the top yet.
 32 (2.0)
 33 VAN: [(scrunches up face))]
 34 MOM: [() I put the salad] dressing out
 35 on the counter,
 36 DAD: Okay?

Dad points towards the pot (line 12) and then asks Vanessa to check it with "how's our water looking." (line 13). This request is general in that it leaves it open for Vanessa to indicate the status of the water. Vanessa turns towards the water (line 14) and then positively assesses it with "looks good." (line 17) in response to Dad's inquiry of how the water is "looking". As she finishes this utterance she starts to turn back, thus treating her assessment as fulfilling his request. Dad then inquires "okay wha- (is it) boiling yet?" (line 19), here referring to the specifics of the water he wants to know about, whether or not it is boiling and thus ready for the pasta. Vanessa turns back towards the water (line 20) and confirms "it is." (line 21). Dad leans towards the water (line 22) and then rejects Vanessa's previous turn with "no it's not." (line 23). With no uptake from Vanessa in line 24, Dad then

mitigates his previous rejection with “but it’s gettin’ there, (0.5) looks pretty hot.”

(lines 25-26).

In overlap with Dad’s turn Vanessa issues a candidate understanding with “(you mean) it has to like (.) bubble?” as she moves her fingers up in the air to show what bubbling might mean (lines 28-29 – see Figure 1 below).

Figure 2. “You mean it has to like (.) bubble?”

With this candidate understanding Vanessa indicates her own understanding of what “boiling” might mean in the face of Dad rejecting her previous assertion that the pot of water was indeed boiling. This candidate understanding exposes how she might not have known what boiling meant before, and is thus now checking

her understanding. Dad responds to this candidate understanding with a correction, "yeah they're bubbles but they aren't coming up to the top yet." (lines 30-31), here giving Vanessa a much more specific description of what the state of "boiling" would look like in the pot of water.

As we have shown in this section, both adults and children can use candidate understandings to check the meanings of words. Candidate understandings can occur before a possible misunderstanding (Extract 1), or after a correction (Extract 2). These candidate understandings function to display a tentative K- position towards a word meaning, displaying interactants' current understanding of the meaning of the word.

4.1.2 Displaying a K- Position: Repair

Family members also orient to word meanings when they initiate repair formats such as "what's X?" and "what does X mean?". With these formats, they solicit more from another interlocutor about a specific word, treating the other interlocutor as K+ relative to their own K- position.

First, parents can respond to children's informings by initiating repair about a problematic word in that child's prior informing. In Extract 3, Mom and Nathan (10) are working on a project at the table while Amanda (6) has been playing by herself. Prior to the beginning of this segment Mom has summoned Amanda to come over to where she and Nathan are working. In line 12 Amanda informs Mom that she is playing a game called "bangaroo". Mom initiates repair of this term with "what" (line 15) and then "what's a bangaroo?" (line 17).

Extract 3

003_Playtime_Bangaroo_12.45

01	AMA:	Oka:y so what?
02	MOM:	What's happenin' hhhh
03	AMA:	Mmmm just pla:yin' a game.
04	MOM:	Do you [>wanna] help ɿ<
05	AMA:	[(eight)/((jumping))]
06	AMA:	°No::° (0.2) I don't want help.
07	MOM:	I mean do you wanna help us.
08	AMA:	No.
09	MOM:	Why not.
10		(0.2)
11	MOM:	Stop s-jumping
12	AMA:	W'l ((stops jumping)) it's called
13		bangaroo.
14		(0.2)
15	MOM:	What
16	AMA:	It's called bangaroo.
17	MOM:	What's a bangaroo?
18		(0.5)/((Amanda pushes rope into sofa))
19	AMA:	Hhh it's the ga:me.
20	MOM:	Is it cousin to a- kangaroo?
21	AMA:	Khhh (0.3) no it's a jumping ga:me.
22		(13.0)/((Amanda arranges string for game))
23	AMA:	((starts jumping over string, whispering))

In line 11 Mom directs Amanda to stop jumping "Stop s-jumping". Amanda responds to Mom's directive with, "W'l it's called bangaroo." (lines 12-13). This well-prefaced turn indicates a topic shift (Heritage, 2015). Amanda stops jumping and then continues by skip-connecting (Sacks, 1995) back to her initial turn by now providing a specific name for the game she was playing, thus quickly moving on from Mom's directive to stop jumping. After a gap (line 14), Mom initiates repair with "What" (line 15). Amanda treats Mom's repair solicitation as a hearing problem, repeating, "It's called bangaroo." (line 16). Mom then solicits a definition of 'bangaroo' in line 17 with, "What's a bangaroo?". This repair initiation indicates that Mom heard Amanda's previous turn, but poses an understanding problem and requires an explanation of what a "bangaroo" is. After a gap in line 18 where Amanda manipulates the rope she has been jumping over by pushing it into the sofa cushions, she provides a definition in line 19, saying "Hhh it's the ga:me.". In line 20 Mom inquires "Is it cousin to a- kangaroo?", perhaps joking by drawing on the rhyme between the two words and the jumping actions of Amanda's game. However Amanda orients to this utterance as a further indication that Mom does

not know what 'bangaroo' is, and elaborates on her earlier definition by rejecting Mom's comparison, saying "no it's a jumping ga:me." (line 21). Mom does not appear to acknowledge this second definition, but continues with her ongoing activity of taking out the sparkles in line 22.

Here, Mom's repair initiations occur after Amanda's informing that she is playing a specific game: "bangaroo". In order for Mom to provide uptake to that informing, she should have an intersubjective understanding of what that game means so she can assess it in some way (Pomerantz, 1984; Heritage and Raymond, 2005). By initiating repair at this moment, Mom indicates that she is in a K-position relative to Amanda, and makes relevant a subsequent word definition from her.

Another case where family members initiate repair of a specific word occurs in Extract 4. Here, Mom, Stacy (6) and Henry (3) are playing with playdough and other toys. Mom has been asking Stacy to make her various figures out of the playdough, and at the beginning of this segment she directs

Stacy to make her a three-dimensional whale (lines 01-09). Stacy then initiates repair on Mom's use of the word "three dimensional" (lines 07, 11).

Extract 4

019_Kitchen Table Activities_3-Dimensional_12.00

01 MOM: No:w ma:ke me: a::: wha:le.
 02 STA: A wha:le.
 03 MOM: °Yup (0.2) a whale.°
 04 (0.4)
 05 MOM: And I want it to be three dimensional.
 06 (0.2)/((STA turns to look at MOM))
 07 STA: What?
 08 (3.5)/((MOM drinking from cup))
 09 MOM: I said I want it to be three dimensional.
 10 (0.2)
 11 **STA: What is- (0.2) that mean.**
 12 (5.0)/((MOM reaches for playdough))
 13 MOM: Instead- instead of (0.2)
 14 [putting it flat like this, (2.0)]
 15 [((pushes down playdoughh))]
 16 [you gotta have it- (.) be rou:nd
 17 [((molds playdough)) |
 18 (.) like tha:t. |
 19 (4.5)/((MOM lifts up playdough figure))
 20 MOM: Three dimensional.
 21 (3.0)/((STA molds playdough))
 22 STA: I can't do tha:t.
 23 (3.0)/((STA looks towards MOM))
 24 MOM: Okay fi:ne it can be two dimensional.

In line 01 Mom issues a directive to Stacy to make her a whale with the playdough (line 01). After Stacy initiates repair (line 02) and Mom confirms (line 03), Mom follows with a directive to Stacy indicating with more specificity "and I want it to be three dimensional." (line 05). Stacy initiates repair on this word (line 07) with "what?", which is considered an open-class repair initiator which can indicate problems of understanding or of hearing (Drew, 1997). Then Mom repeats

her line 05, thus treating Stacy's repair as indicating a hearing problem (line 09).

Stacy then initiates repair again, this time clarifying that she is inquiring about the meaning of the word with "What is- (0.2) that mean." (line 11). In line 12 Mom reaches for the playdough and then starts to explain what the word means by giving a contrastive example of something that is not three-dimensional (lines 13-18) as she starts to mold it flat on the table (line 15), thus providing a visual explanation as she verbally explains. Stacy then starts molding the playdough in her hands (line 21) before announcing that she is not able to make her shape three dimensional with "I can't do tha:t." (line 22).

Importantly, by saying that she is unable to make the shape, Stacy indicates that she is unable to produce a three-dimensional object, and thus comply with Mom's request. In this case, Mom's definition is necessary for the ongoing activity: Stacy needs to know what the word means in order to determine if she can fulfill Mom's request for that type of shape. Thus, once the word is defined (and the request is denied), both Mom and Stacy move on (Clark, 2007), and Stacy makes a two-dimensional shape with the playdough.

In the cases discussed in this section, the person who initiates the repair positions themselves in a K- position. Again, as with candidate understandings, both parents and children initiate repair in this way. This indicates first that an intersubjective understanding is necessary in these family interactions: you cannot respond to an informing or following instructions if you do not understand a word that is part of that informing or instruction. Additionally, both parents and children treat each other as more knowledgeable about certain words. Amanda teaches her Mom the meaning of the (perhaps made up) game "bangaroo", and in Extract 4 Mom teaches Stacy what "three-dimensional" means.

4.2 Other Actions Accomplished by Repair

Another way in which adults orient to word meanings in family interactions is through the use of the repair initiation formats such as "do you know what X is/means". Previous work has examined how in intercultural interactions this format orients to the possibility of a K- position of the addressee, in that "interlocutors suspend the conversational activity in progress in order to deal with a potential or actual non-understanding in ways that ascribe to their co-

conversationalist the identity of an outsider or novice, and thereby, expose and (re)-produce cultural and linguistic difference between them” (Bolden, 2014, p. 212). These findings indicate that these repair formats can do more than negotiate understanding. In our data, we find that these repair formats accomplish more than achieving intersubjectivity; they can also function to remove the sequential implicativeness of some sort of trouble in the interaction (Extract 5 and Extract 6) or challenge the epistemic stance of a co-interlocutor (Extract 7 and Extract 8)

4.2.1 Other Actions Accomplished By Repair: Moving on from a Trouble

First, parents can orient to word meanings in order to move away from a potential problem. For example, in Extract 5, Fern (3) and Dad are working on a foam shape craft together in their church’s playroom. Fern has been playing with one of the foam characters, which she has named “gingerbread boy”, who Dad asks about at the beginning of this segment (line 01). The focus of this segment starts in lines 13-14, where Dad questions if Fern knows the meaning of the phrase “buddy system” he has just used.

Extract 5

011_Craft Time 1.1_Buddy System_54.00

01 DAD: Where's gingerbread boy?
02 (0.4)
03 FER: Eh_{hh} (0.2) I don't know?=
04 DAD: =Did you lose 'im.
05 (0.6)
06 FER: Ye:pe
07 DAD: Uh oh, (0.2) what if he's still in
08 the water;
09 (0.4)
10 DAD: You're supposed to use the buddy
11 system.
12 (.)
13 DAD: What's the buddy system=do you
14 know?
15 FER: [Mm mm]
16 [(Shakes head)]
17 DAD: It means [you're] not-
18 FER: [Eh]
19 DAD: [not supposed to]
20 FER: [() the star] on;
21 (.)
22 FER: Uh.
23 DAD: >It means you're not
24 [supposed to go in the water< by your]self.
25 FER: [(looks) perfect]
26 (1.5)
27 FER: Ow.
28 (.)
29 FER: Gingerbread man, (1.6) gingerbread man.

At the beginning of this segment Dad and Fern cannot find "gingerbread boy", and Dad treats this as possibly problematic within their imaginary play (lines 01-08). Dad continues to build on the imaginary play, saying "You're supposed to use the buddy system." in lines 10-11, thus referencing a safety rule in the water within the context of play. After a micropause⁴, Dad questions Fern's

⁴ A micropause is a noticeable silence of no significant length. Here Fern would presumably not have enough time to respond.

understanding of his just previously used phrase 'buddy system' by inquiring "What's the buddy system=do you know?" (lines 13-14). Importantly, the two turn-constructional units of this turn are latched. Dad moves immediately from asking Fern to explain the buddy system to questioning whether or not she knows it, indicating that this is a question to which he already knows the answer (i.e. he is K+ here). Fern responds negatively, saying "mm mm" in line 15 and slightly shaking her head in line 16, although Dad does not look up to see her do this.

In this case, a parent moves on from a potential problem within the imaginary play (i.e. the "gingerbread boy" is missing) to focus on word meaning. Dad uses the phrase 'buddy system' within the context of imaginary play (lines 10-11), and then checks Fern's understanding of the phrase after only a brief gap (line 12). It is pertinent to note that here Dad reframes (Gordon, 2008) the current activity of play with the gingerbread figurines to a different activity: that of explaining the meaning of a word. He does not mask the activity of defining words as play, but rather pauses the activity of play in order to check Fern's understanding and subsequently provide a definition, thus effectively stopping the

play activity regarding the lost foam character. This could be why Fern only makes what Clark (2007) has termed a "relevant move-on" (p. 170) from the ongoing conversation; that is, she does not repeat the word in subsequent turns, or use it deictically, but instead simply returns to the play activity of searching for the gingerbread boy (line 29).

Parents also check their children's understanding of a word after their child has displayed an incorrect interpretation or understanding of it. In these cases, "do you know what X is/means" repair format indicates that the parent treats the child's previous turn as problematic in some way. In other words, parents can check their child's epistemic stance in relation to the meaning of a word after the child's action indicates that he or she may not understand the meaning of a word. This shows an ongoing orientation to maintaining intersubjectivity, and the performance of parents as language teachers in these family interactions.

In the following extract (Extract 6), Mom, Oscar (4), and Oscar's cousin Cameron (2) are sitting on Oscar's bed reading *My Little People School Bus: A Lift-the Flap Playbook*. The book contains prompts asking the reader to identify which

characters might be feeling different emotions, and various book flaps that Oscar and Cameron have been opening to reveal characters underneath. Mom asks Oscar to identify the character who is proud (lines 01-10), and then a character that is shy (line 12). After Oscar incorrectly identifies the character that is displaying the emotion “shy” (line 15), rather than treating Oscar as incorrectly interpreting the picture (or not complying with the instruction), Mom treats him as not understanding the word in that she questions his epistemic stance towards that word (line 16).

Extract 6

015_Storytime_Shhy_10.20

01 OSC: The ([big big]/((lifts flap))
 02 MOM: [Who: who:'s prou:d .hhh oh ((points to
 03 book)) I think it
 04 [might be this person let's see
 05 OSC: [The bi:g (be:d)
 06 (0.6)
 07 MOM: What does that one say
 08 (0.6)/((Oscar lifts the flap))
 09 MOM: Prou:d yeah she's very proud of her daughter up
 10 there yeah
 11 (0.2)
 12 MOM: .Hhh *can you s- find someone who's shy::*⁵
 13 (0.8)
 14 MOM: Which person is shy::
 15 OSC: ((points to book))/Dat one=
 16 **MOM: =No dat one's (.) no d'you know what shy means**
 17 OSC: °No°
 18 MOM: Um
 19 (0.8)
 20 OSC: Shy means if you're
 21 MOM: Oh it's that pers(hh)o::n

⁵ Text in italics indicates when Mom is reading from the book

22 (1.0)
 23 OSC: But=
 24 MOM: =It means⁶

After Oscar lifts the flap to identify the character that is proud (line 08), Mom continues reading the prompt that asks to find the character that is “shy” (line 12). After a gap in which Oscar does not respond (line 13), Mom partially repeats her previous turn with, “Which person is shy:” (line 14). Oscar then points to a character in line 15. Mom’s turn in line 16 is latched, and she starts to correct Oscar with “no dat one’s”, but then pauses and reformulates this correction as an inquiry with “no d’you know what shy means” (line 16). This turn treats Oscar’s pointing response to her previous inquiry as incorrect, but also tests Oscar by checking his understanding of the meaning of that word. Oscar responds with a quiet “No” in line 17, thus displaying to his Mom that he does not know what the word “shy” means. Oscar starts to define the word (line 18), Mom identifies the shy character (line 21), and then starts to explain what the word means (starting in line 24).

⁶ Mom starts to define the word in line 24, but as the definition is complex (and contested) it is too long to show for the purposes of this paper

In this case we find that following a child's incorrect identification, a parent will first check the child's understanding of that word. After Oscar does not correctly identify the character that is being "shy" in line 15, Mom starts to correct him, but then reformulates her turn and checks his understanding of the meaning of the word "shy" (line 16). She starts her search at the most basic level here, at the level of linguistic competence. She provides him the space to show what he knows, thus orienting to his wrong answer not as one of non-compliance or non-understanding of the task, but one of lack of understanding of the specific word in question. Additionally, in orienting to Oscar's understanding in this way, Mom asserts her epistemic stance as K+, thus constituting this moment as one of language expert and language novice.

In these cases, where an interactant checks the addressee's knowledge of a specific word in question, we find that there is a recurrent orientation to words and word meaning in these family interactions. By checking their children's understanding of relevant words, parents orient to word learning as a relevant

next activity, thus removing the sequential implicativeness of any current trouble (e.g. a possible problem within imaginary play or not getting a question right).

4.2.2 Other Actions Accomplished By Repair. Challenges

Another way in which both adults and children orient to word meanings in these family interactions is by inquiring about what something “even” means. In these cases, the “even” functions to challenge the other’s understanding of the word in question, and specifically works to put the inquirer into a K+ position. That is, with these cases the orientation towards the problem as one of linguistic (in)competence is displayed in an even stronger way than the previously discussed cases. Next we analyze a case where an adult uses this format (Extract 7), and then a child (Extract 8).

In Extract 7, Amanda (6) is working on a craft at the living room table. Mom questions if Amanda knows (line 11) what the word Amanda has just used (line 07) means with “What does curious even mean do you know”.

Extract 7

003_Craft Time 2_Curious_22.30

01 AMA: ((looks up to Mom))
02 (3.0)

03 AMA: Hm: ((holds pencil up in hand))
 04 (1.5)
 05 MOM: .Slpt hm what're you hming about.
 06 (1.5)/((Mom turns away))
 07 AMA: Just curious.=
 08 MOM: =What's curious.
 09 AMA: I don't know.
 10 (0.4)
 11 **MOM: What does curious even mean do you know?**
 12 AMA: Yeah.
 13 MOM: What.
 14 (0.3)
 15 AMA: It mea:ns something that
 16 you're curious about?
 17 MOM: >I know< but can you explain it
 18 without using- the wo:rd?
 19 AMA: No:..
 20 (2.7)
 21 AMA: We:ll it actually means (0.2) that
 22 that you're wondering what
 23 that thing's about.
 24 MOM: You're pretty much dead o:n,

At the beginning of this segment Amanda is working independently on crafts. Mom requests information (line 05) about Amanda's noticing (line 03). Amanda replies "just curious" (line 07), thereby accounting for her noticing in line 03. By formulating her turn with the minimizer "just", Amanda treats her activity of being curious as not out of the ordinary. Mom then asks Amanda to explain further in line 08, inquiring, "What's curious". Amanda responds with "I don't know." (line 09), marking uncertainty about what is to come next (Beach and Metzger, 1997). After a gap in line 10, Mom questions Amanda's understanding of

the word 'curious' with "What does curious even mean do you know?" (line 11).

With this turn, Mom treats Amanda as possibly ignorant of the meaning of the word "curious" (and herself as K+), even though Amanda had used it previously in this same interaction. However, in line 12 Amanda claims to know what curious means by confirming with "Yeah."

In this extract an adult tests Amanda's understanding of a specific word that Amanda has used. By formulating her initial challenge as "What does curious even mean do you know?" (line 11), Mom places herself in a K+ position (i.e. she knows what curious means) and indicates that Amanda must be in a K- position (i.e. Amanda must not know what it means if she is unable to respond to Mom's prior questioning about the word).

Children can also assert their epistemic stance as K+ in relation to their family members; indicating that language talk is not only a parent to child directed process, but that the identities of expert and novice are constituted within interaction. In Extract 8, Timmy (5), Eddie (7) and Pete (10) are getting their

Valentine's Day cards ready for school with their Mom. Pete inquires, "Do you even know what that means." in line 18.

Extract 8

014_Valentines_FTW_32.45

01 TIM: Po[op.
 02 PET: [Poop on a cactus [poop on a cactus
 03 TIM: [Ew a sharpie.
 04 (2.0)
 05 MOM: °°°What's wrong with a sharpie.°°°
 06 (1.4)
 07 TIM: I hate the- smell of it.
 08 EDD: (Just killing ca:ctuses.)
 09 (4.0)
 10 PET: [Cactuses] ef tee double you:..
 11 EDD: [I: don't care.]
 12 (1.2)
 13 EDD: Ef what?
 14 PET: Cactuses ef tee double you:..
 15 (1.5)
 16 EDD: O::h (ah)
 17 (0.6)
 18 **PET: Do you even know what that means.**
 19 TIM: [Uah ((gets up on table))]
 20 EDD: [<Uh Huh.>]
 21 MOM: [I do]not.
 22 PET: What?
 23 TIM: I do not?=
 24 MOM: =What's tee double you.
 25 PET: Ef tee double you.
 26 MOM: <Ef tee> >double you what's that¿<=

In lines 01-11, the interactants are talking about poop and permanent markers while putting together Valentine's Day cards. After a gap (line 09), Pete says "Cactuses ef tee double you:" (line 10). After a gap in line 12, Eddie initiates repair with, "Ef what?" in line 13. Pete treats this as a hearing problem, repeating his previous utterance in line 14 "Cactuses ef tee double you:." After a gap in line

15, Eddie indicates receipt of Pete's repetition, saying "O::h (ah)" in line 16, thus treating it as informative (Heritage, 1984). Perhaps because of the gap in line 15, after a gap in line 17 Pete challenges Eddie's understanding of the phrase by asking, "Do you even know what that means." in line 18. Eddie claims to know with "<Uh Huh.>" (line 20) in overlap with Mom, who claims not to know with "I do not." (line 21). In 22 Pete displays a hearing problem and initiates repair with, "What?". Timmy claims to not know with "I do not?=" (line 23) and Mom repeats her previous claim of non-knowledge in the form of a question with "=What's tee double you." (line 24), notably not repeating the acronym in question correctly, further displaying her K- position. Then, in line 25 Pete corrects Mom's incorrect repetition of the acronym in line 24 with "Ef tee double you." In line 26 Mom repeats the acronym correctly and again initiates repair with "what's that", indicating that she does not know the meaning of the acronym either. Talk continues about the meaning of FTW.

In this case a child challenges his siblings' understanding of the meaning of FTW. Pete's challenge comes across as asserting a K+ position and assuming that

Eddie has a relatively K- position. Importantly, Pete's challenge occurs after Eddie has just displayed a receipt of the term (line 16), treating his receipt as not enough to claim epistemic rights (Heritage and Raymond, 2005) to that word. Additionally, in this segment we can also see how a parent (Mom) inquires about the meaning of a word (line 26). This indicates that inquiries about word definitions can also be directed from parents to their children, furthering the view of socialization as a multidirectional process.

When family members challenge each other's understanding of the meanings of words in these family interactions, there is an orientation to ensuring that there is congruence between epistemic status and epistemic stance (Heritage, 2012b). In both of these cases we see an interactant either uses a word (Extract 6) or claims to know a word (Extract 7), thus embodying a certain epistemic stance: if you use a word, or say that you know what a word means, then you should presumably know what it means. However, this appears to be something that is challengeable in family interactions. Thus, simply using a word, or claiming to know what it means is not enough.

5. Implications & Conclusions

This study offers an understanding of the interactional environment in which word meanings are oriented to within family interactions. Importantly, this study does not focus on whether or not children learn new words in these interactions. Rather, we examine the process through which orientations to word meanings occur in these family interactions (Sidnell, 2016). Specifically, in this paper, we describe where and how families with young children orient to issues of word meanings in their everyday interactions. By placing our analytical focus on the ways in which family members orient to word meanings, rather than on word learning, this paper makes important contributions to the literature on metalinguistic practices, including the use of repair, and epistemics, most notably the multidirectional and everyday nature of language socialization.

As shown in our analysis, orientations to word meanings in family interactions are not inherently didactic in nature, with instruction as the primary motivation for interaction, but instead are simply part of everyday family life (Goodwin, 2007). Within these mundane interactions, orientations to word

meanings come about in two ways. First, family members can orient to word meanings by initiating repair simpliciter or issuing a candidate understanding, displaying a K- position in relation to the word in question. Second, family members can orient to word meanings via a K+ position relative to other interactant(s), asking others to demonstrate their knowledge of a word.

The findings of this paper contribute to the literature on repair by demonstrating the different functions that repair can accomplish. The cases in Section 4.1 are straightforward examples of repair and candidate understandings, with repair only concerning the meaning of the word in question. However, in the cases in Section 4.2, the repair initiation accomplishes more than just repair (e.g. Bolden, Mandelbaum, & Wilkinson, 2012; Lerner, Bolden, Hepburn, & Mandelbaum, 2012). It can work to move the interaction away from a trouble or challenge another's epistemic stance. In these cases, there is an orientation to challenging what an individual claims to know. That is, even if a person uses a word, or claims to know what it means, at times that is not sufficient. The challenges posed in these cases are "on the record" (Heritage, 2012b, p. 48) in that

there is an outright challenge of the other person's knowledge of the word in question.

This paper also contributes to the literature on epistemics, highlighting both the ways in which interactants enact their epistemic stance (Heritage, 2013) in relation to a specific word, and the dynamic nature of parent and child in taking on a K+ or K- position. Importantly, in the orientations to word meanings analyzed in this paper, both parents and children display K- positions relative to each other, depending on the word in question. These findings demonstrate that language learning is a multidirectional process, an idea put forward by Pontecorvo et al. (2001). However, Pontecorvo and colleagues discuss such multidirectionality in terms of family members influencing the ways in which they enact their familial roles, with parents helping children learn how to be children and children helping parents learn how to be parents. They note that, while parents are apprentices in parenthood, children are "apprentices in all" (Pontecorvo and Fasulo, 1999, p. 315), and their active role in the socialization process is described in terms of soliciting information or explanations about the world around them (Pontecorvo et al.,

2001). However, in our data, we note that children are not always the novice in family interactions. Adult family members, siblings, and children all orient to teachable moments in their everyday family interactions by monitoring each other's language use and checking each other's understanding of possibly unknown words. Thus, children also take on the role of expert or novice as the situation, or word, warrants.

This study begins to explore how word meanings are managed in everyday family interactions, focusing specifically on the ways in which orientations to word meanings occur. However, the scope of this study is limited as it is based on a collection of 62 cases. Future data collection with more families could enrich the findings presented here.

Our future analyses concerned with orientations to and provision of word meanings in interaction will examine how word definitions are interactionally constructed between interlocutors. Although the focus of this paper is not on the definitions per se, initial analysis indicates that the definitions provided in the context of everyday family interactions are not formal, dictionary-based

definitions, but rather are more informal and based on the local context of the interaction. Contested definitions will also be explored as a phenomenon, as in this study we do not thoroughly explore how interactants work to “prove” their definition over another’s definition, and how this may have connections to issues of rights and responsibilities associated with word meanings. Other areas of future research include more nonverbal analysis of orientations to word meanings (e.g. Extract 2), and more focused explorations of the ways in which children take on the role of expert in their family interactions.

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