

CHAPTER 8

ARGUMENTATION AND REFLEXIVITY

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this chapter is to explore the way in which discursive and argumentative analyses may facilitate the emergence of participants' reflexive practices during social interactions. As we consider reflexivity embedded in the practices of argumentation, we intend to analyze how the participation framework and the argumentative practices of adults and children can elicit the emergence of the capacity to be active thinkers in different settings of interaction. In our perspective, participants constitute their model of rationality interactively, as inner logic emerging in the course of different interactions. In particular, we focus on argumentative discussions in which people are concerned with showing and clarifying the rationality of their conducts for themselves and for the others as well. This need for accountability is considered the core of the reflexive practices continuously accomplished by social actors during interactions.

ARGUMENTATION AND REFLEXIVITY

This chapter aims to explore the relevance of discursive and argumentative processes among children and adults as ways to elicit the emergence of reflexive practices during social interactions in different contexts. Within a sociocultural perspective, we assume that the participants' thought is developed through discourse during interactions: the analysis of the conversational and argumentative procedures by means of which people jointly construct and negotiate social relationships is considered a powerful way to understand how adults and children develop their spaces of active thinking in different settings. Daily family activities at home and quasi experimental situations at school are thus assumed as two analytic frameworks offering interactional opportunities through which children and adults can foster a critical attitude in the process of discussion carried out with others.

In the presentation of this chapter the rational processes used by participants during their interactions will be analyzed as inner logic emerging during verbal exchanges. In particular, the need for accountability will be assumed as the core of the reflexive practices that adults and children show as activities embedded in their argumentative discussions. Through a qualitative analysis of some excerpts of interaction in the two settings we will highlight the role of discursive and argumentative perspectives in facilitating the emergence of participants' reflexive practices during social interactions.

In our attempt to link argumentation and reflexivity, in the first part of the chapter we will present some basic aspects connected to these notions: in particular, the process of reflexivity will be considered as embedded in argumentative activities in which children and adults are able to present themselves as active thinkers within different participation frameworks. In fact, as participants of such contexts, children and adults continuously have to construct their moves, to test the acceptability of their actions for communication, understanding and success. These aspects will be considered as crucial for the development of a critical attitude in social activities and for learning processes in family and school settings. The perspective we assume in the chapter considers that conversation plays a central role in this endeavor: through discursive exchanges thoughts are implied within a set of rules that require and scaffold some kind of interpersonal coordination and joint activity. As thoughts are shaped within the unfolding of dialogue, the conversation is viewed not as a mere container of thoughts and learning, but as a powerful constituent of learning and socialization processes.

In the empirical part of the chapter we will assume a sociocultural perspective within which a special analytical attention will be devoted to the semiotic tools people use in accomplishing interactional activities.

According to Vygotskij (1934/1962), a fundamental role will be attributed to the language used by participants in order to understand mental states of others, different points of view and ideas. Through a specific attention to these aspects we intend to explore the way in which discursive and argumentative analyses may facilitate the emergence of participants' reflexive practices during social interactions in order to highlight how reflexivity is embedded in the argumentative activity.

HOW THE FORMS OF THOUGHT IN ARGUMENTATIVE PROCESSES ARE WORKING AS REFLEXIVE ELEMENTS?

Usually, at the core of the argumentative activity there is a need for rationality and at the same time for accountability: these needs are the core of the reflexive practices continuously accomplished by social actors during verbal exchanges. In order to understand how argumentative practices elicit the emergence of reflexive forms of thought, we will briefly discuss the notions of rationality and accountability within the argumentative frame.

Rationality of everyday actions is interactively generated while acting in a social setting. It is not an invariant part of such actions: participants are continuously concerned with showing and clarifying the rationality of their actions for themselves and for the others as well. For this purpose, people can use accounting practices as techniques and methods that help to demonstrate the rationality of their action. In the process of accomplishing actions, participants are already trying to make their actions accountable (Krummheuer, 2000). These rational activities have to be considered in terms of rhetorically shaped processes: participants make use of refined discursive strategies and moves for achieving agreement and consensus about an activity. In so doing, they are called to show a reflexive capacity connected to the processes of accountability, understanding, and meaning making. These actions are also contributing to produce a change in the contingency of the context as an output of intersubjective processes. In other words, the process of rational search for accounts and reflexive practice linked to it takes place both at the individual and social (interpersonal) level.

A first point related to the above-mentioned aspect concerns the difficulty to define in a unique way what reflexivity is. In fact, according to Lynch (2000)

reflexivity, or being reflexive, is often claimed as a methodological virtue and source of superior insight, perspicacity or awareness, but it can be difficult to establish just what is being claimed. Meaning and epistemic virtues ascribed to reflexivity are relative to particular conceptions of human nature and social reality. (p. 26)

In order to conceive an alternative view of reflexivity that does not privilege a theoretical or methodological standpoint by contrasting it to an unreflexive counterpart, we have to take into account the possibility to be faced to different and multiple reflexivities: for instance, a mechanical reflexivity as a kind of recursive process that involves feedbacks; a substantive reflexivity applied at the level of interpersonal interaction, as a fundamental property of human communicative action; and a reflexive objectification in which the conception of reflexivity depends upon the possibility of taking a detached position from which it is possible to objectify naïve practices (Bourdieu & Waquant, 1992). In this chapter we will refer to these different reflexivities in order to show the link between argumentative practices and accountable actions that participants play during different interactions in various frameworks.

A SPECIFIC WAY TO LOOK AT THE REFLEXIVITY IN ARGUMENTATION

Our perspective on argumentation is linked to the idea that an argumentative exchange is basically a form of conversation. The advances in argumentation theories (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 2004; Rigotti & Rocci, 2006; Muller Mirza & Perret-Clermont, 2009) propose an understanding of argumentation as a pragmatic process: arguments are constructed and considered not as isolated parties of a discourse, but as elements nested in communication processes. Within this perspective, argumentation is a collective construction constrained by the communicative context in which it is produced (Arcidiacono & Kohler, 2010; Jackson, 2002; Perret-Clermont, 2006).

Argumentation can be viewed as a kind of conversational expansion (Jackson & Jacobs, 1980), a discursive activity which supposes that what is wanted is for participants, at least in educational contexts, to be constantly engaged in reviewing each proposition advanced and considering whether it is to be believed or not. This attention to the use of words in conversation can be considered as a kind of constant vigilance and inspection of others' speech acts requiring a certain critical capacity. As argumentation refers to critical engagement in dialogue and to an interactive process, argumentation's interactional function demands discursive forms in which anything that might be contested can be externalized and addressed (van Eemeren, Grootendorst, Jackson, & Jacobs, 1993). In this sense, argumentation stimulates deeper treating and more critical thinking: it is an interpersonally complex process having not only intellectual dimensions but also highly-charged relational dimensions.

The attention to these interpersonal and contextual characters allow us to consider argumentation as a form of conversation that can be explored and understood also through the lenses of conversational and discursive analyses. Within an ethnomethodological approach, the social order produced during argumentative exchanges is generated by people in the process of their interactional activities in which it is possible to observe ways, actions and practices of conversation by which they reflexively constitute the activities as a local, praxeological achievement in an interactive context. The social order of the interaction is realized through language and, conversely, this dimension of indexicality contributes to sustain the reflexive constitution of the social order. According to Arcidiacono, Baucal, and Budjevac (2011):

language and its effects cannot be considered deterministically preordained by the exclusive properties of linguistic structures or by assumed constructs of individual competence and knowledge, but the opportunity to share the responsibility among interlocutors for the creation of sequential coherence, identities, and meaning is an important element of co-construction within interaction. (p. 20)

With respect to the link between verbal activity, rational argumentation and reflexive practice, different studies have investigated how people use language to combine intellectual resources in the pursuit of a common goal or interaction (Mercer, 2000; Pontecorvo & Sterponi, 2002; Schwarz, Perret-Clermont, Trognon, & Marro, 2008; Pontecorvo & Arcidiacono, 2010; Baucal, Arcidiacono, & Budjevac, 2011, 2013; Arcidiacono, 2013a). As an interaction is always located within a particular cultural context, the basis of common knowledge upon which shared understanding depends is constantly being developed by interactants. However, a problem in investigating this aspect concerns the possibility to understand how talk is used for the joint construction of knowledge and how speakers construct the contextual foundations of their talk (Arcidiacono & Gastaldi, 2011). For this reason, an attempt to define the reflexive practices in argumentative activities is presented in the next section.

TOWARD A DEFINITION OF REFLEXIVITY IN ARGUMENTATION

Within a sociocultural and ethnomethodological perspective, reflexivity refers to the ways in which participants constitute the activities to which they are oriented. This approach concerns the members' sense of reflexivity and

reminds us to what has been highlighted by Schön (1983): the reflexion in action is a cognitive process of perceptive rationality of a situation; the reflexion on the action is a subjective expression of this perception at an affective, cognitive and social level. In this sense, the second process constitutes a kind of premise for the reflexion in action (Vacher, 2011).

In this chapter we will take the process of accountability as an example of this reflexive way to constitute the orientation to an argumentative activity. Accountability is assumed as inner logic to demonstrate rationality in discourse and as an avenue for understanding how reflexivity is enacted and negotiated in everyday interpersonal interaction. According to Sterponi (2003, 2009), requesting and proffering accounts are practices that entail individual and interpersonal positioning within reflexive boundaries, which are concurrently being constructed in the discursive activity. The practice of accountability affords the enactment and reproduction of social order while contributing to the construction of participants' reflexivity. Accountability has an inherently dialectical character that is to be assumed accountable for one's own conduct implying a positioning of the individual as an autonomous and responsible agent.

From an ethnomethodological point of view, the accomplishment of an action and the demonstration of its accountability are not separate activities: participants constitute their model of rationality interactively, as the inner logic emerging in various situations. In the work of Garfinkel (1967) this issue was particularly central in observing that "the activities whereby members produce and manage settings of organized everyday affairs are identical with members' procedures for making those settings accountable" (p. 1). Thus, in the process of social interaction participants make their actions understandable and accountable as well. According to Mehan and Wood (1975), this process can be termed as reflexivity that constantly emerges from the specific sequentiality of participants' solving steps which reflexively expresses the accountability of both the single calculation steps and their entire solving approach. In other words, participants constantly tend to make their actions understandable and accountable in a reflexive way.

Concerning argumentative activities, we consider that the interaction process is not to be divided into a phase of communicative acting and another phase of rational discourse during which an argumentation is accomplished: we assume that reflexivity is exactly at the core of the argumentative activity, as an incessant conjecture of doing something for some reason and intimating its accountability. This view on reflexivity will be sustained in the following sections of the chapter with respect to its application in two contexts of interaction.

REFLEXIVITY OF SOCIAL INTERACTIONS AND IDIOGRAPHIC PERSPECTIVE

During social exchanges, participants continuously try to coordinate their individual goals and intentions by adjusting their actions and by negotiating their definitions of the situation. They also try to demonstrate the accountability of their participation through the same actions: in this sense and according to Goffman (1974), reflexivity is a sometimes shocking exposure and realization of the conjurer's trick, props and boundary conditions of the experience. The reflexivity of account implies a process of interpretation but it alludes to the embodied practices through which people (singly and together, retrospectively and prospectively) produce accountable states of affairs. Reflexivity refers to the local practices of interaction through which signs and objects achieve their identity.

As previously underlined, there is no a single way to be reflexive: the ethnomethodological approach to the study of discourse and argumentation can help to dissolve the opposition between reflexive and objectivistic epistemologies. For this reason, we intend to analyze how the participation framework and the argumentative practices of adults and children can elicit the emergence of reflexive capacities in different settings of conversation in the family and school context. In order to highlight these aspects we will take an idiographic perspective. The notion of discourse is here treated as "a connected set of statements, concepts, terms and expressions which constitutes a way of talking ... about a particular issue, thus framing the way people understand and act with respect to that issue" (Watson, 1995, p. 816). Conversational and argumentative activities are assumed as psychological processes, constructions of the human minds and products of the social history of these minds. This perspective is related to the fact that "idiography does not mean no general knowledge but a different model of general knowledge" (Salvatore & Valsiner, 2010, p. 16). Idiography is assumed as a methodological approach that entails different elements: an ontological assumption concerning the object of knowledge as contingent upon the context; an epistemological constraint consequent to the ontological statement (any psychological object may not be assimilated to a general class according to its phenomenological similarities with the other exemplars of the class and consequently treated as being qualifying by the way of functioning of that general class of exemplars); and a methodological strategy fitting the epistemological constraint. In other words, idiography can be considered a way to pursue generalized knowledge and to give sense to intrinsically unique, singular, local, and embedded situations (Mininni, 2008; Rosa, 2008; Salvatore & Valsiner, 2009). As suggested

by Salvatore, Tebaldi, and Potí (2008), meaning is a social construction that happens within and by the social exchange. Hence, meaning is not given prior to the discourse; rather, it is the communication dynamic that depicts the situated semantic value of the symbolic devices, which the discourse unfolds (Bruner, 1990). Meaning-making is not an autonomous process, but it always evolves as a function of the social context: the sense of an action is thus a result of the orientation of the individual within his/her environment. Consequently, thinking is always a contextual act, embodied in a social activity and shaped and oriented for and by the requirements for regulation of such social activities (Venuleo, 2008).

In our perspective language forms can be considered as acts aimed at empowering one's own vision of the world in the dialectical space of a social exchange. Assuming this perspective inspired by the work of Wittgenstein (1958), we will analyze the argumentative interaction of people as more than a sign of cognitive functions: it will be treated as a conversational and social practice that can take place in different frameworks and within various forms of interaction. In particular, we will pay attention to two different but complementary educational settings, such as family and school, in which adults and children can foster critical attitudes through their participation in discursive activities (Pontecorvo & Arcidiacono, 2014). We assume that the continuity in the argumentative processes occurring in different contexts (for instance in peer-adult discussions in family and school) is based on the fact that the discourse of people is performed in a semantically contingent way: the possibility to cross the boundaries between the two contexts (Arcidiacono, 2013b) in order to highlight the participants' skill in building up accounts as an argumentative way of reasoning will be the core of our analytical work.

INTRODUCTION TO THE EMPIRICAL DATA: METHODOLOGICAL AND ANALYTICAL ISSUES

In this section we will clarify some methodological aspects that are common to the two studies presented in the chapter. In order to analyze how the participation framework and the argumentative practices of adults and children can elicit the emergence of the capacity to be active thinkers in family and school settings of interaction, we employ discursive analytic methods. In particular, we assume the prescriptions of conversation analysis (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974; Psathas, 1995) and discourse analysis (Antaki, 1994; Edwards, Potter, & Middleton, 1992). The presentation of the two studies will be based on some excerpts carried out by the video-recorded interactions among adults and children as examples of some specific phenomena. The selected excerpts, transcribed follow-

ing the system elaborated by Jefferson (2004),¹ are the fruit of a synoptic analysis implying a first identification of relevant passages that were further examined by going back to the original video data and then discussed by a research group. Then, a more detailed analysis of each excerpt has been realized for the purpose of this chapter. As criteria we foreground the participants' perspectives, trying to highlight what the participants themselves make relevant in the course of their interactions. In this sense, we refer to the concept of "participants' categories" (Sacks, 1992) as we avoid making predictive assumptions regarding interactants' motivational, psychological, and sociological characteristics. As suggested by Heritage (1995, p. 396), these factors can only be invoked if the participants themselves are "noticing, attending to, or orienting to" them in the course of their interaction.

STUDY 1: ARGUMENTATION AND REFLEXIVITY IN FAMILY INTERACTIONS

In this chapter, we are interested in a recent perspective on argumentation in family context (Arcidiacono & Bova, 2011a, 2011b, 2013; Arcidiacono, Pontecorvo, & Greco Morasso, 2009; Bova, 2011; Bova & Arcidiacono, 2013a, 2013b, 2014a, 2014b, in press) in which the focus is on the dynamics that may affect the argumentative moves of family members and may elicit their reflexive practices during everyday interactions. In particular we will focus on the analysis of ordinary conversational family interactions as valuable loci for investigating the emerging of reflexive practices during discussions.

The study presented here is part of an international collaborative project² based on an extensive ethnographic fieldwork in the domestic life of families. The main goal of the research project is to undertake qualitative analysis of the everyday lives of middle class families and to examine their everyday challenges. We have employed a range of data collection methodologies (Arcidiacono & Pontecorvo, 2004, 2010), including semistructured interviews and questionnaires, mapping and photographing the families' homes and belongings, tracking of family members' activities and uses of home-space, field-notes, and video-recording of daily activities. Three researchers were engaged in 4 days of videotaping and tracking of family members inside their homes over the course of a week for approximately a total of 20–25 hours per family.

Specifically, the study presented in this chapter draws exclusively on data concerning the video-recorded interactions of Italian participant families. Through some excerpts concerning daily exchanges among family members we will present different ways of reflexive practices that participants act during their interactions at home.

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Accounting for an Own (Un)Activity

The first excerpt concerns a couple's exchange during a discussion at home about a family household activity: the question is why the mother³ is always the one to wash the dishes. In the course of the conversation, the father assumes a reflexive position presenting himself in front of the researcher as a competent "dish washer." In his argumentation he opens a sequence in which the mother is called to defend her point of view on the opportunity to leave to the partner the task.

Excerpt 1: CILO family. Participants: mother (Mom),  (Dad), researcher

440. DAD: so Nicoletta ((the mother,  doesn't want me to wash the dishes because I make too much foam- ((addresses to the researcher))
441. MOM: no, it's not just the foam, you're bad at washing.
442. DAD: [no
443. MOM: [it's different
444. DAD: it's not that I wash it poorly- no I finish all-
445. MOM: you make too much foam. you know what he does? ((addresses to the researcher)) he takes the towel and puts the washing-powder on it after he washes the dish.
446. DAD: no, I'll show what I do ((walks toward the sink))
447. MOM: no (0.5) I'm nervous, I don't like it ((the father walks back)) it's better to wash the dishes with hot water. you know what he does?
448. DAD: the very hot water, it is already on when I wash.
449. MOM: and yes, sure you understand-
450. DAD: I use more water pressure, it's true.
451. MOM: he- the hot water is on and he washes a dish every half hour.
452. DAD: you know hot sterilizes more-
453. MOM: this is very hot, put your hands in, it is hot with the gloves. this is very hot.
454. DAD: can I show how I wash the dishes?
455. MOM: no::: no () 
456. DAD: AND it is not possible ((leaves the kitchen 
457. MOM: anyway I'm nervous he has washed dishes only once in his life.
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The argumentation of the participants starts from a possible perceived distance between individual representations and real possibilities to act within the domestic framework. In particular, while the father expresses

an implicit availability to get involved in the activity of dishwashing, he is taking the role of arguer in front of the researcher. By his first intervention he is externalizing in a reflexive way an issue that concerns the relationships with the wife, including also the third part (the researcher) within the argumentative frame. In turn 440 the father is designating the mother as responsible for his inability to wash the dishes. In her turn the mother negatively evaluates the father's ability to wash the dishes in the manner she prefers and she initiates a humorous perspective, also responding to her husband's counterarguments. When Nicoletta replies (turn 441 "no, it's not just the foam, you're bad at washing") she offers a counterargument related to the presumed inappropriate explanation of the father rather than a prohibition to wash dishes. She points out that her husband poorly executes the dishwashing chore and lacks experience in this area. During the sequence, the two speakers are engaged in an activity of accountability for their arguments about the household activity they are discussing about. In turn 445, Nicoletta changes her position and she uses the third person to designate the father in order to address her turn to the researcher. The claim "you know what he does?" is a rhetorical device that the mother uses in order to anticipate the interlocutor to undermine the claim in the adversative situation (Pomerantz, 1986). The audience of the sequence includes the researcher even when the father tries to defend his position (turn 446 "no, I'll show what I do"). The mother immediately stops the request of the partner (turn 447 "no, I'm nervous"), confirming the previous claim and using again the third person to designate the husband ("you know what he does?"), as well as hyperbolic claims (turn 451 "he washes a dish every half hour"). The researcher is an active participant to whom parents address their interventions in order to speak each other. During the sequence, they seem to use this third presence not only in order to account for their arguments in front of a larger audience but also with the aim to externalize their own presumed competencies and expertise. In fact, in turn 453 the mother invites the father to test the water ("put your hands in"), but then, when the husband opens to the possibility to show his competence (turn 454 "can I show how I wash the dishes?"), she immediately does not consent him to draw near (turn 455 "no no"). Even at the end of the sequence, she is using again the third person to claim that the father "has washed dishes only once in his life" (turn 457).

The need for accountability of the own perspective and conduct about the household activity at stake is at the core of the reflexive practice embedded in this argumentative exchange of both parents in front of the researcher. The presence of an external person is an occasion that participants take in order to establish a conversation about a specific domestic topic that involves them as members of a family. They show themselves able

to use this possibility by invoking reasons and accounts that sustain their argumentative activity as a practice of reflexivity during the interaction.

Sharing the Experience: Adult-Child Reflexivity in Action

Household engagements are also characterized by the fact that family members can share the involvement during their different interactions at home. In particular, we have observed how parents share with children their experiences in everyday household work activities as a way to socialize them to family rules and accomplishments. In the next excerpt we will observe how a child asking the father what he is doing opens a possibility to establish a reflexive exchange about the activity at stake. In fact, the child's request is taken as an opportunity to share a previous personal experience also with the researcher.

Excerpt 2: GITI family. Participants: father (Dad), child (Elena, 7 years and 5 months), researcher (Res.)

48. Child: dad what are you doing?
49. Dad: I am trying to fix this thing here (.) just that now with you sleeping here. ((fixes some piece of the child's bed))
50. Child: I'll tell you something ((to the researcher))
51. Res.: mhm=mhm.
52. Child: once upon a time, up there, Leonardo's father ((a friend)) was doing=was doing- was re- renewing the room. and::: a piece of-of::=mhm: (.) floor from the top of this fell down and so we are now trying to fix it, because if it falls, I- as I sleep here, if it falls [I fall too.
53. Res.: [y  fall too.
54. Child: mhm=mhm.
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This excerpt is an example of the child's virtual self-inclusion in the father's activity. By asking the father about the contingent activity (turn 48 "dad what are you doing?"), Elena gets the possibility to account for the reasons behind her question. After the answer of the father, the participants' discursive positioning is mobilized by taking into account the presence of the researcher, within a reflexive perspective (Padiglione & Fatigante, 2009). The third part (the observer) is considered as a possibility to use the audience as a coauthor (Duranti, 1986) in order to construct in an intersubjective sense the discourse about the contingent activity. In fact, the "incipit" of the child (turn 50 "I'll tell you something") is a kind of expansion (Sacks, 1995), a presequence that aims at creating the conditions in order

to properly understand the following claim. In this way, Elena is able to complete her explicit attempt of self-inclusion in turn 52: the comment “we are now trying to fix it” (even though she is not a central coactor as in fact she neither works, nor contributes with advice on helpful questions) is a way to perceive herself as a coparticipant in the activity of fixing the bed. In a reflexive way, the child is able to project her intervention in a narrative way, trying to keep the attention of the audience and to mobilize the reciprocity (Schegloff, 2007), in particular the researcher. In fact, the observer, as a ratified participant, is called to take a listenership position (McCarthy, 2003) instead to remain in a role of hearer. In this sense, the reflexive practice played by participants can be viewed as a strategy of alignment and affiliation (Stivers, 2008): from one side Elena tries to obtain the support of the interlocutors in the elaboration of her discourse, and from the other side she aims at getting their approbation. The inclusion of the researcher in the exchange is managed by the child’s capacity to use the activity of the father as a premise to introduce some narrative element connected to the contingent action. In her reflexive attempt to assume a main role in the sequence and to account for her choice to tell something about the activity of fixing the bed, Elena manages to reorient the argumentative focus of the sequence. As result, the addressee of the child became the observer (from turn 50 to 54) while the father takes a subordinate position.

The two situations presented in study 1 are examples of how adults and children can position themselves as active participants in argumentative conversations, ascribing meanings to what they do and accounting for their actions. Family members seem to be aware of the possibilities to elicit their reflexive practices during everyday interactions at home. In the next section, we will present the analysis of argumentative sequences among adults and children in which the reflexivity emerges during problem solving interactions at school.

STUDY 2: REASONING IN A QUASI-EXPERIMENTAL SITUATION

Different studies have demonstrated how a sociocognitive framework, attentive to communication processes, may contribute to the understanding of children’s performance in various problem-solving situations (Hundeide, 1992; Light & Perret-Clermont, 1989; Rommetveit, 1985). In our perspective the child’s reasoning and argumentation produced in quasi-experimental settings cannot be cognitively isolated but must be considered as a coconstruction between the child and the practices, objects, expectations and normative values of his/her interlocutors and social context.

In this section we aim to present some evidence drawn from a revisitation of the Piagetian task of liquid conservation (Arcidiacono & Perret-Clermont, 2009, 2010; Breux, Arcidiacono, & Perret-Clermont, 2014) in

order to increase the likelihood that children that enter into discussion during the clinical/critical interview are able to stimulate contrasting opinions and arguments as fruit of individual, collective and contextual factors. Throughout our study we return to the critical interview in order to focus not on the child's judgment of conservation but on the arguments, explanation and reasoning he/she provides to support or reinforce his/her judgment. In fact, in our conception of the interaction during Piagetian interviews, the individual "conduct" constructed through discussions and social interactions can be understood only in relation to the interlocutors and the framework in which it occurs.

For our study⁴ we have designed an experimental procedure to administer to children individually, in dyads and triads the test of liquid conservation via a conversation about the effects of pouring juice into glasses of different shapes. In four different primary schools in Switzerland and England, we have recruited 104 participants aged between 5 and 7 years. Interviews were conducted by one experimenter, each one lasting no more than 20 minutes and were held in a separate room adjacent to the classroom. The experimenter and the children were seated at the same table. At the beginning, two identical glasses A and A' (cf. Figure 8.1) were filled to the same level, and the children were asked whether they each contained the same amount. Once the children have established that this was the case (sometimes after having added a few additional drops), the content of one (glass A') was poured into another (taller and thinner) cup (glass B). The children were then asked whether the two glasses (A and B) still contained the same quantity of liquid. Then, the content of B was poured back into A' and the children were asked the same question concerning A and A'. When the children have again established the equality of the initial quantities of A and A', the content of A was poured into another (smaller and larger) cup (glass C), and the children were asked again to discuss the relative quantities in A' and C. All dialogues were video recorded and then transcribed as for the first study presented in this chapter.

In this section we present excerpts of interviews selected from our English sample in order to show how children display their thinking in connection to the context and the activity, showing their capacity to act reflexively within the framework of the Piagetian interview.

Reflexivity as In-Formed Thinking

During the task children can show their thinking as a sense of personal identity, distinctness and volition that is expressed during the interaction with the partner in solving a specific task. As observed in a previous study (Sinclair-Harding, Miserez, Arcidiacono, & Perret-Clermont, 2013),

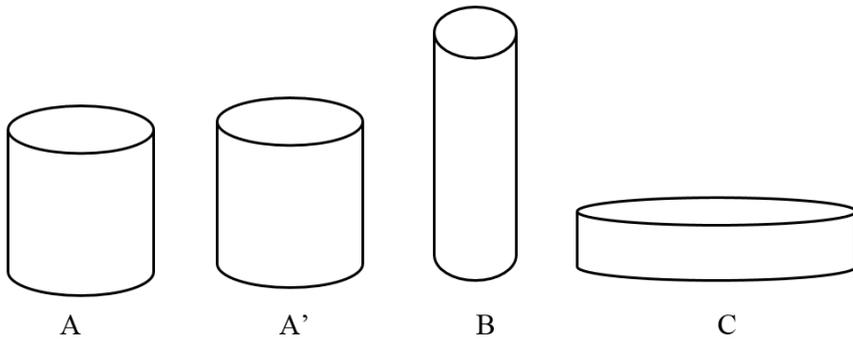


Figure 8.1. Set of glasses

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 QA: "in-formed"
 is actually
 one word in
 Webster's. Is
 the hyphenated
 spelling
 peculiar to
 the Sinclair-
 Harding study?
 If not, please
 correct.

this way of thinking can be defined as "in-formed" : the thinker is a self-as-knower, an author that demonstrates what he/she can do and wants to remember in response to reflections and emotions that subjectively guide what he/she cares to remember or take an interest in. This capacity of choice and sense of volition (Deci, 1995; Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 2001) allows children to behave in accordance with their own interests and values. In this sense, the in-formed thinking can be considered the fruit of a reflexive practice that children play during their conversation with the experimenter in the case of the liquid conservation task.

The following excerpt concerns a situation in which a child is asked to evaluate the amount of liquid in the glasses A, A' and C. At a certain point, the child spontaneously initiates a discussion in which he identifies a relationship between the containers used in the task and his experience of drinking from a flexible juice carton. The sequence is an example of the child's capacity to reflect and to express personal thoughts instead of complying with relational and contextual expectations and norms.

In the sequence Jack is asked to explain how it is possible or not to evaluate the (same) quantity of juice in different glasses. In turn 73 he is explaining his standpoint ("that cup's wider and those cups are smaller, there the juice gets squashed up"), also gesturing the presumed juice's movement in order to reinforce his account. The child takes the space of conversation with the adult as an opportunity to fund his point of view by offering an example from his experience of drinking from a flexible juice carton. In a reflexive way, he describes how in order to get the remaining juice he squashes the carton between his fingers and in response the liquid moves upwards and out of the container. This vertical motion he likens to that of the narrow glasses (A and A') and hence for him reinforces the reasons for why it appears that there is more juice in these thinner containers. Such a reflexive recollection of a prior experience demonstrates the

Excerpt 3: Primary school. Participants: child (Jack, 5 years and 10 months), experimenter (Exp.)

((Jack states that there is not the same amount of juice in glass A and C after pouring liquid from A' to C))

73. Jack: it's just because that cup's wider *((gestures C))* and those cups *((gestures A and A'))* are smaller, there *((A and A'))* the juice gets squashed up. when I squash things to actually drink, *((demonstrates a holding and squeezing action with his hands))* it goes up. *((motions his pointed finger in an upward direction))*
74. Exp.: when do you squash things to drink?
75. Jack: well, when I can't get them.
76. Exp.: what do you use? what are you squashing?
77. Jack. errr (.) a Lucozade Sport (.) it's quite hard.
78. Exp.: a Lucozade Sport. you squash it up and what happens?
79. Jack: it comes out. *((smiles))*
-

child's in-formed thinking through his volitional reinterpretation of his own lived experience into the present context. In this sense, the conversation between the child and the experimenter is not understandable as meant to display the mind and its reasoning: participants are coconstructing to prove the reasonableness of his discourse. In this case, argumentation cannot be considered just as a symptom of the logical structure of the child's thought, but as a product of the participants' conversations through the reflexive practices that are embedded in the interaction and that participants play during the exchange.

Reflexivity as Orientation to a Reasonable Argumentation

The aspects connected to the reflexive capacity activated during argumentation between adult and children have been observed also through the analysis of children's strategies to search a confirmation or a validation in the eyes of the partner. Often, children are aware of the difficult task they are invited to solve, and of the fact that their performances have to fit with the adult's expectations. In these situations they are able to show a relational sensitivity in front of a difficult topic through the use of discursive strategies (Arcidiacono & Diez del Corral Areta, 2013) that are signs of their reflexive practices during the interaction. The following excerpt is an example of how children manage to control the need to find a solution for the task and at the same time to engage themselves in activities of thinking that are reasonable and accountable.

Excerpt 4: Primary school. Participants: children: Dan (6 years and 11 months), Sean (6 years and 2 months), Daisy (6 years and 4 months), experimenter (Exp.)

((the experimenter is asking children to evaluate the amount of juice in glasses A and B))

131. Exp.: so Sean thinks it's the same, Dan thinks it's the same. Daisy? you're still not sure?
132. Dan: do you think it's the same? *((turns to Daisy))*
133. *((Daisy looks closely at the glasses))*
134. Sean: I think that one needs a little bit more *((points at B))*
135. Dan: yeah
136. Daisy: a bit in that one *((points at B))*
137. Dan: yeah
138. Sean: no one drop in each really
139. Daisy: yeah one drop in each
140. Dan: yeah, one drop in all of them
141. (2.0)
142. Dan: yeah but how we gonna get, how we gonna know how tall it is, because it's more rounder? *((indicates the greater width of B))* it's more fatter.
143. Exp.: it's a really good point that he's just made
144. Sean: yeah
145. Exp: how we gonna know?
146. Daisy: just a tiny little bit in that one *((B))*
147. Dan: yeah but how we gonna know?
148. Sean: just that much more in each one *((shows small amount with his finger))*
149. Dan: we need another one of them cups *((A))* and then pour them in there.
-

The sequence is opened by the experimenter asking children about their opinions on conservation. Immediately, participants engage themselves in an exchange (from turn 132 to 140) in which they express their opinions concerning the amount of liquid in the glasses. They choose to add a bit of juice in the glasses in order to reach the same quantity in each container. In turn 142 Dan, after a common pause, confirms the previous claims ("yeah"), although he is introducing a new element to be taken into account in the discussion ("but how we gonna know?"). The logical need to find a correct and reasonable answer to the initial question about the amount of juice in the glasses is leading Dan to formulate a possible way to ground the arguments. In turn 143 the adult ratifies the child's question involving, as effect, the other participants (Sean in turn 144 and Daisy in

turn 146). However, Dan is not satisfied by the solutions proposed by the partners. In his turn 147 he uses again mitigation (“yeah but...”) in order to repeat that they need to know how tall is the glass B.

The solution proposed by Dan in turn 149 is a possible way to solve the problem. In his active participation within the framework of the Piagetian task, children show a sensitivity to take seriously the activity, looking for arguments and accounts that aim at making reasonable and acceptable their standpoints.

CONCLUSIONS

The ordinary family interactions and the school activities in quasi experimental settings can be thought as spaces of potential social development, in which the capacity to account for the participants’ own standpoints and actions and their sense of responsibility can be improved through discursive, argumentative and reflexive practices.

Although these activities are always culturally and historically situated within specific frames of interaction, they reveal some general features of commonality that we can highlight as follows: during different sets of activities, people (family members and students of primary school) adopt and make visible practices of reflexivity in order to clarify the rationality of their conducts for themselves and for the others as well. Through the use of accounts as a strategy to make explicit a standpoint and/or a move during a verbal interaction, participants demonstrate their capacity to continuously accomplish reflexive practices connected to the argumentation at stake. In particular, we have observed how adults show to be able to use the presence of a third part (the observer, in our cases) in order to build some argumentative sequence about a topic connected to private family matters: it is the case of the first excerpt we have presented and discussed in the chapter. It is a situation in which parents apparently address their interventions to the researcher with the aim to account for their own conduct and expertise about the dishwashing activity. It is an exchange between parents in which different reflexivities are played at the same time: a mechanical, recursive process of feedback offered by participants in response to the interventions of the partner, and a substantive reflexivity at the level of the interpersonal interaction involving also the observer. The role of the researcher as an “active” presence in the observed family context is thus playing a main effect on the parents’ opportunity to show themselves as reflexive thinkers.

Children can also invoke the presence of an external person as a possibility to make explicit a reflexive practice. In the second excerpt we have examined how a 7 years old child can re-orient the argumentative focus of a discursive sequence through the assignment of different participative roles

to the other people engaged in the conversation. In particular, the father's and the observer's presences are used as a projection of an intervention in a productive recipient designed way, that is a modality to organize the coparticipation in the framework of the interaction. The child's strategy shows how the reflexivity in action can be considered through the lenses of idiography in which the object of knowledge is contingent upon the context, epistemologically unique, local and embedded in the situation.

Similar findings have been observed also in the context of the quasi experimental setting of the liquid conservation task in which children use reflexive strategies in their interactions about a problem-solving situation with peers. In particular, reflexivity seems to be a main element of the in-formed children's thinking as the capacity to account for a sense of personal identity and distinctness during the interaction. For example, in excerpt 3 the recollection of a prior personal experience demonstrates a volitional interpretation of a child's rational involvement into the actual context of activity. Thus, in the last excerpt the reflexive dimension of the objectification is also evident in terms of capacity to take a detached position with respect to the task: this can be a sign offered in order to account for the reasonable argument to be provided for the contingent problem-solving activity.

As people are thinking, reasoning and acting always within a cultural and social setting, our perspective to study the argumentation as a reflexive space allows us to underline the relevance of considering the interrelation of personal and collective elements of every social interactions. Only looking at the possibility to recognize a space of thinking as criterion of validity of educational contexts (as family and school) we can be able to properly understand the processes of discursive reflexivity among adults and children.

NOTES

1. See the Appendix for the transcription symbols. Two researchers reaching a high level of consent (agreement rate was 80%) have revised all transcripts. In all the excerpts selected for the studies presented in this chapter real names of participants have been replaced by fictitious names in order to ensure anonymity.
2. We are grateful to the A. P. Sloan Foundation (New York, United States) for supporting this research. The project has been developed by the UCLA Center on Everyday Lives of Families based in the United States (University of California, Los Angeles) and involves an Italian as well as a Swedish site (respectively located at the "Sapienza" University of Rome and at the University of Linköping). The three centers have similar goals and criteria for the selection of participants. In particular, the Italian Center on Everyday

Lives of Families has documented a week in the life of eight middle-class dual-income families in Rome. To be eligible to participate in this study, families were required to be homeowners with a monthly mortgage or with a monthly rent and they had to have at least two children living at home, with at least one child between 8–12 years of age. Families were recruited through fliers in schools, and on occasion through teachers who were personally acquainted with the research team. After an initial meeting with the researchers, both parents (and children over 8 years of age) signed the consent forms of participation and have received the instructions concerning the timing and procedures of the study in their own houses. We are very grateful to the participant families for opening to us their homes.

3. In the chapter we will use the terms “mother” and “father” to refer to the adult participants even though they assume different roles during their interactions (not only as “mother/father,” but also as “wife/husband,” “woman/man”).
4. We are referring to the research project “The development of argumentation in children’s interaction within ad hoc experimental and classroom contexts” funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation (contract n. PD-FMP1-123102/1).

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QA: English
translation?

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QA: Update?

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APPENDIX: TRANSCRIPTION SYMBOLS

.	falling intonation	[simultaneous or overlapping speech
?	rising intonation	ABC	high tone (capital)
=	contiguous utterances	(2.0)	pause (2 seconds)
,	continuing intonation	(.)	micropause (less than 0.2 seconds)
-	abrupt cut-off	()	nontranscribing segment of talk
:	prolonging of sounds	(())	segments added by the transcribers

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