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Introduction

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Social interaction is an inevitable part of our everyday lives. Starting from the beginning of our life we are permanently immersed in the social world, thus our personal development is shaped by interaction with people around us. As the interaction infuses all aspects of our lives, it is not surprising that the field of social interaction studies is rich and very heterogeneous, with the long tradition.

Studying interaction in different contexts: A qualitative view is a result as well as a contribution to this diversity. Its project takes place at the crossroads of different lines of research, such as the neo-Piagetian and neo-Vygotskian approaches of collaborative interactions within goal-directed activities and the traditional and recent advances of discursive studies that call the researchers' attention to alternative modes of considering conversations as *processes* within everyday interactions. The rising interest for qualitative views in socio-cultural approaches is actually producing new analytical frameworks that can help psychologists and educational scientists to better understand how central conversation is at different levels of the social life and in various contexts.

The role of conversation and dialogues in social interaction has been the object of research during the last decades and it has produced a series of findings that are basic for the understanding of what, how and why happens during social interactions among people. However, we think that a stronger focus of qualitative

view within the field of studies traditionally labelled as “social interaction research” can contribute to understand better to what extent children’s capacity to interact and to (re)create meanings in collective learning contexts is also a product of their discursive co-construction of sense making within the interaction with partners. By proposing this book, we would like to contribute to the implementation of research designs that take into account the complexity and the richness of children’s and adults’ contributions during various types of interaction. The papers presented in this book are thus a way to create a promising space of theoretical and methodological debate around the relation between learning, discussing, debating, and confronting in educational contexts.

The book is a collection of studies with a focus on different aspects of social interaction, taking place in different contexts and analyzed from different theoretical and methodological perspectives. What assembles the presented studies is the aim to study in a deeper way the dynamics and trajectories of social interaction and their impact on learning and development through the analysis of their qualitative aspects. The book is conceived to be a useful tool for researchers that aim at analyzing different interactional situations under the lens of qualitative approaches and aiming at highlighting the relevance of conversational and discursive processes that shape the relationships among people. This is the major topic that convinced us to explore the possibility of reflecting around different studies developed within the field of developmental and education psychology. In particular, within this book, the relevance of qualitative studies in understanding the role of conversation within interaction follows two complementary positions: the possibility to consider the conversation as the focus of research and the idea that conversation can be assumed as an instrument for studying learning and development of children.

Structure of the book

Studying interaction in different contexts: A qualitative view presents five empirical studies of social interaction. Before that, in chapter 1 *Doing qualitative research: The analysis of talk-in-interaction* we introduce the topic of verbal interaction as an object of scientific research, presenting techniques and epistemological approaches aimed at understanding actions accomplished by participants within communication process. The focus is on research in which the role of talk-in-interaction appears prominent in the study of processes of con-construction of meanings and shared activities in the everyday contexts of interaction. Conversational and discursive approaches are thus presented as possible ways to account for the qualitative aspects of different types of interaction.

Following the line of research aimed at investigating the social interaction as a factor that can influence development of individual cognitive skills, in chapter 2 *Asymmetrical peer interaction and formal operational thinking: What happens in dialogues between peers in unsuccessful dyads?* Ivana Stepanović and Aleksandar Baucal examine the role of asymmetrical peer interaction in the children's development of formal operational thinking. Their special is directed toward understanding the factors leading to the regression of a partner with the lower competencies. The dynamics of unsuccessful dyads interacting in a problem solving activity is presented and analyzed under the lens of conversational characteristics related to the regression of students with lower competences.

Investigating also peer interaction, but focusing on symmetrical peer interaction, Nevena Buđevac explores in chapter 3 *"I'll accept, but next time you'll have to listen to me!" How seven-year-olds read together* the dynamic of the dialogue, trying to find and describe different trajectories of negotiation process

within which children's initially different ideas converge to the joint one. The relevance of conversational and discursive elements is discussed with respect to the specific activity of discussing about written texts among children.

Following a similar research line with the focus on the negotiation process among peers, Smiljana Jošić addresses in chapter 4 *How group decision making decreases risk taking in 10 years old children* the topic of decision making in ten years old children. Her interest is directed toward factors that can influence a group decision making, directing some children to accept group decision which is less risky than they have made by themselves.

In chapter 5 "*What do you mean by that?*" *How personal meanings are developed and constructed in literature classes at upper secondary level* Jelena Radišić focuses on conversational acts made by teachers in literature classes. She presents a research developed with the goal to understand in which ways teachers' acts can influence the process of building interpretations of literary works by students.

Finally, in chapter 6 *Turn-taking at the age of one: A longitudinal case study* Mirjana Mandić investigates the mother-child interaction at an early age, focusing on the turn-taking development. Her effort is directed toward studying child's various actions, interpreted by the mother as communicative, regardless of the child's communicative intents.

At the end, we close the book by discussing all the presented findings in the chapter 7 *Reflecting on different views of social interaction: Explanatory and analytic perspectives*. The aim of this final paper is the analysis of those findings according to the main research paradigms within the field of social interaction studies. The implications of the qualitative view adopted along the studies presented in the book and the perspectives of such type of approaches are discussed in the light of developmental and educational research fields.

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