Non-present talk and narrative ability in young Dutch children

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BACKGROUND

Narratives in children

- **Definition of narrative:**
  - extended discourse form;
  - contains a description of at least 2 different but related events outside the here-and-now (*Ninio & Snow, 1996*)

- **Developmental pattern:**
  - later development (*Peterson & McCabe, 1983*)
  - scaffolding from adult necessary (*Roelofs, 1998; Minami 2001*)
  - elicited narratives focus of research (*Frog-story*)
BACKGROUND

Non-present talk

- *Non-present talk (NPT)*
  - talking outside-the-here-and-now
  - a prerequisite for narrative
  - is offered in input
  - predictor of narrative skills at age 5 on basis of elicited narratives  *(Uccelli et al. 1998)*

*BUT how does NPT develop in spontaneous interaction?*

*Development of NPT up to age 5 not yet well described.*
Research project: 
**Precursors of narrative ability**

- longitudinal study 0 – 7;0 years
- three children in two families
- at least 60 minutes recording
- every 3 months
- spontaneous interaction

- **What are the precursors?**
- **The role of parental strategies?**
- **Predictive relationship with narrative ability age 7;0?**
METHOD

Research questions today

1. Development of NPT in parent-child interaction (frequency)?
2. Roles of adult / child in NPT?
3. Role of Scaffolding?
METHOD

Data

• Recordings at 1;9 – 2;9 – 3;9
• 60-118 minutes spontaneous interaction
• Sequences containing NPT analysed
ANALYSIS

Categories of NPT

(1) Past based on distance in time
   a. minutes-hours
   b. days-week
   c. weeks –months
   d. > 6 months

(2) Future based on distance in time
   a. next few minutes- hours
   b. next days-week
   c. next weeks-months
   d. > 6 months

(3) Not past- not future, but elsewhere

(4) Fantasy: symbolic play, role playing, story (re)telling
RESULTS

1. Frequency of NPT (% of time)  
   (Adult and child together)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1;9</th>
<th>2;9</th>
<th>3;9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Past</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Future</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Elsewh.</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Fantasy</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>16.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. Development of NPT

- **Total**: general increase over time, but fantasy causes inversed U-curve
- **Category Past** increases steadily.
  - starts near-the-present (1.a) at 1;9
  - longer ago (> 6 months, 1.d) only at 3;9
- **Category Future** increases steadily.
  - near-the-present (2.a) at 1;9
  - further away (2.d) starts at 3;9
- **Elsewhere** declines – bridge form?
- **Fantasy Talk**: not present at 1;9, dominant at 2;9 but decreases at 3;9. Reason?
RESULTS

2. Roles child / adult  NPT

Analysis only at 1;9

Non-verbal utterances counted with verbal utterances

**Result:** adult produces twice as many utterances as child per category
3. Scaffolding

• At 1;9 parents offer NPT and start asking about past events, accepting minimal en non-verbal responses
• At 1;9 children already take some initiative: ask about non-present people and objects
• Children take more initiative in Fantasy with less scaffolding.
• At 3;9 children start to produce narratives with almost no scaffolding.
Stijn 1;9
non-present talk elsewhere
VIDEO-EXAMPLES

Stijn 3;9
scaffolded narrative
Willem van Oranje
Conclusions

- NPT increases over time.
- NPT is present at 1;9 but limited to the close past or future, or in the category Elsewhere.
- NPT develops to times further away from present by 3;9.
- Talking about the past or future is heavily scaffolded by parents.
- Fantasy talk (role playing) is less scaffolded and more child-initiated.
References


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