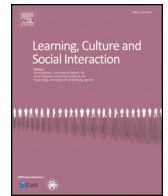


Contents lists available at [ScienceDirect](#)

Learning, Culture and Social Interaction

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/lcsi

Full length article

'Because I point to myself as the hog': Interactional achievement of moral decisions in a classroom

Kreeta Niemi

Department of Teacher Education, P.O. Box 35, 40014, University of Jyväskylä, Finland

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 26 August 2015

Received in revised form 3 February 2016

Accepted 11 February 2016

Available online xxxx

Keywords:

Classroom peer interaction

Children

Morality

Multisemiotic interaction

Conversation analysis

Sociocultural theory

Frame

Intersubjectivity

ABSTRACT

Drawing on the conversation analytic and sociocultural perspectives, this study investigates children's situated moral negotiations in classroom peer interaction in the absence of a teacher. The conversation analytic methodology is used to operationalise some of the key elements of the sociocultural perspective on moral development. In this way, this study enables readers to observe and study the semiotic, conversational and interactional mediations of moral functioning in real life, with the example of children's moral practices. The empirical analysis is based on video-recorded sequences in which primary school children work with the rules of a counting rhyme which is banned by their teacher. With the use of multisemiotic meaning-making resources the children constructed a subgroup of different counting rhyme rules to the overarching teacher-advised rules while reciting the rhyme. By doing this, the children showed a will to comply with their teacher's moral stance, but at the same time, they extended their moral autonomy and ownership over their actions and maximised the shared fun. Thus, children's capacity to be collaborative and playful highlights their competence for moral autonomy and responsibility.

© 2016 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

In recent years, in educational and social sciences, children's moral reasoning and sense of morality have been seen to be developed in the dynamic and multiple social contexts (e.g. [Goodwin & Kyratzis, 2007](#); [Tappan, 2010](#)). One of the crucial social contexts is classroom peer interaction, which allows children to actively engage in the creation of their own social, cultural and moral worlds and become agents of their own learning. It can also be assumed that membership in a peer classroom community requires recognition and negotiation of moral rules concerning what is appropriate and expected in particular situations, roles and relations ([Cekaite, 2013](#); [Cobb-Moore, Danby, & Farrell, 2009](#); [Packer & Scott, 1992](#); [Wenger, 1998](#)). Current education policy aims to reform learning practices to further foster a more active role for children moving away from teacher-led whole class teaching to collaborative work in peer groups (e.g. [Cromdal, Tholander, & Aronsson, 2007](#); [OPH, 2015](#)). It is, therefore, important to know how children interact when they are able to take more autonomy and agency for their own and others' socialisation into moral practices and sociocultural norms.

Children's everyday moral reasoning in classroom peer interaction is relatively uncharted territory. Although sociocultural research has highlighted daily complex acts and the notion that moral development relies on a set of everyday interaction practices, however, yet, few studies have paid close attention to the everyday communicative classroom peer practices in which moral negotiation and learning occur as an intersubjective action. As [Rogoff \(2003, 58\)](#) suggests: "children's interactions should be studied in context rather than investigating a child's actions independent of his environment as, together the interpersonal,

E-mail address: kreeta.niemi@jyu.fi.<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.lcsi.2016.02.002>

2210-6561/© 2016 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Please cite this article as: Niemi, K., 'Because I point to myself as the hog': Interactional achievement of moral decisions in a classroom, *Learning, Culture and Social Interaction* (2016), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.lcsi.2016.02.002>

personal, and cultural-institutional aspects of the event constitute the activity. No aspect exists or can be studied in isolation from the others.”

With the use of naturally occurring videotaped data, the aim of this study is to investigate how primary school children, in the absence of their teacher, collaboratively negotiate morally and socially appropriate rules for a counting rhyme. Taking a perspective on children as agentive participants and on morality as an interactional achievement, this means going beyond the idea of explaining moral actions in terms of individual participants' behaviour. By paying attention to the ways that children act and respond to one another's actions and creating the moral context they are in, this study provides a novel contribution to research on children's morality by using the conversation analytic (CA) approach to extend and operationalise some of the key elements of the sociocultural perspective (SCT) on moral development. These two approaches attempt to capture the ways in which children produce their understanding in interactions, as well as emphasise children's agentive use of language and other multisemiotic tools in collaborative meaning-making (e.g. Cekaite, 2013; Goodwin, 2006; Martin & Evaldsson, 2012; Rojas-Drummond, Albarrán, & Littleton, 2008).

A basic premise of this study is that although humans have inner thoughts of morality, interaction is an ultimate context within which the morality is displayed and understood (e.g. Bergmann, 1998; Goffman, 1959; Packer & Scott, 1992; Tappan, 2010; Tholander, 2002). Moral reasoning has a cognitive basis, but is shaped and constrained by cultural and situational norms, values and beliefs. The use of language and other semiotic tools to bridge that which is inner with that which is outer is a key premise of SCT and a seemingly fundamental characteristic of intersubjectivity. CA has an empirically grounded theory of intersubjectivity, and approaches it as something locally oriented by participants in a particular context. According to Edwards (1997, p. 100), the sequential organization of interaction (how participants display meaningfulness of prior actions) is the key for the possibility of intersubjectivity, in the sense of “publicly realized shared understandings”. The key premises of intersubjectivity are addressed in more details below.

The study is based on a particular extended episode selected from 26 h of video-recorded observations combined with ethnographic memos in early primary school settings in Finland. The moment-by-moment analysis uncovers how primary school children have counting rhyme that is prohibited by their teacher, but the children still want to play the rhyme. They resolve this contradiction by constructing subgroups of play rules and sociocultural norms. The findings illustrate how children are capable not only of understanding why some issues might be prohibited, but also of solving these issues by using multisemiotic meaning-making resources that embody moral meanings. The children showed a will to comply with their teacher's moral stance, but at the same time, they extended their moral autonomy and ownership over their actions and maximised shared fun. The ways in which children construct their own morality demonstrate that children's morality is based on much more than exposure to teacher's orders, but through the active reconstruction and reinterpretation of moral knowledge in a particular situation. The power of this extended sequence of talk is that it shows what happens in peer culture and, even when the teacher is not present, the adult presence cannot be discounted as the environment and is used as a resource by one or more of the children.

2. Theoretical background: Peer talk, morality as interaction and intersubjectivity

To understand how children enact their morality in interactions, this study builds on and contributes to the work of previous studies (1) that address the importance of capturing the situated character of (children's) moral work (e.g. Cobb-Moore et al., 2009;) and (2) that focus on children's socialisation of one another (see recent reviews by Goodwin & Kyratzis, 2007, 2012), including the moral socialisation of one another (e.g., Cekaite, 2013; Evaldsson, 2005). These studies have uncovered, for instance, how children interact and co-produce games through their rule making during daily play, providing an awareness of the governance of social activities on the playground (Bateman, 2011; Butler, 2008) and of children's ways of including and excluding other children in local peer groups (Evaldsson, 2005; Goodwin, 2006). In an Australian study of classroom management practices, Powell, Danby and Farrell (2006) showed how the girls and boys in this particular classroom co-constructed gendered activities to reconstruct moral rules in the classroom.

What is common to these studies is that they offer an approach that uncovers how moral processes occur in mediated interaction between individuals, and in this way, they offer a complementary method of constructing morality that underscores that moral development is always intertwined with the social, cultural and historical context. The assumption that moral functioning is necessarily mediated by language is central to the SCT (e.g. Tappan, 2010) and CA perspectives (e.g. Bergmann, 1998).

The sociocultural view of morality seeks to understand the temporal development of locally constructed meanings in particular settings with reference to the participants' perspectives. This view draws on the Vygotskian notion that higher mental functions, such as moral reasoning and thinking, are derived from social interactions and participation. According to Vygotsky, language and interaction are central tools in children's cognitive development as they internalise skilled approaches from their participation in joint problem solving (Scweder, Mahapatra, & Miller, 1987; Vygotsky, 1980; Wertsch, 1991). Furthermore, recent SCT research has demonstrated how participation in joint activities creates and is dependent on the intersubjectivity of the participants (e.g. Rojas-Drummond et al., 2008; Vass & Littleton, 2010). Intersubjectivity requires sensitivity to others (e.g. Mercer, 2000), the ability to look from, judge between and reconcile different perspectives (e.g. Wegerif, 2010). Thus, moral development as an intersubjective phenomenon is shaped by the particular social and cultural contexts in which a child engages (e.g. Packer & Scott, 1992; Tappan, 2010).

In accordance with SCT, in the CA approach, children's conversations and interactions are not investigated in terms of mental representations or conceptual understandings, but rather in relation to the practical activities and discursive practices in which children are involved (e.g. Sterponi, 2009; Tetreault, 2009; Tholander, 2002). In contrast to most other theories of moral

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/6844220>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/6844220>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)