How one Turkish-speaking girl came to express her own voice in a Norwegian-speaking playgroup

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Recent studies suggest that peers are able to co-construct conversations in pretend play in a way that enhance the development of children's pragmatic and linguistic language skills (Aukrust, 2004; Blum-Kulka, 2005). Despite considerable research into monolingual children's use of pragmatic strategies to negotiate entry and participation in pretend play (Garvey, 1990; Putallaz & Sheppard, 1992; Sheldon, 1996), as yet little is known about the particular strategies young second-language learners' use to negotiate play participation, nor how peer interaction over time may support their pragmatic language development.

Furthermore, although many have highlighted the relational and collaborative processes underlying children’s negotiation strategies in play (Corsaro & Rizzo, 1990; Cromdal, 2001; Goodwin, 1982), few have researched how pragmatic development is tied to self-efficacy both in terms of language skills and vis-à-vis peers. There is, thus, a need for studies extending over...
longer periods of time that address how children position themselves within specific peer relationships.

Bakhtin (1981) talked about positioning as voice, referring to the speaking personality and the fact that an utterance has the individual’s authorship. As shown in Bakhtin’s (1986) focus on addressivity, voice should not be seen as mere reflections of the speaker’s own intentions. Instead, our utterances are always responses to the voices of others in that we both react to and foresee the perspectives of others when we speak. In a developmental perspective, then, children need to become the author of their own words and develop a voice, or position, in order to be able to influence the positions of others.

Simultaneously, the words children learn to use are always both borrowed from and directed at someone, thus revealing children’s awareness of and attitudes towards their interlocutors. In this way, discourse participation both mediated cultural identities and provides children with a way of making sense of themselves (Göncü, 1999; Shieffelin & Ochs, 1986).

This study focuses on one bilingual girl, Meral, and her second-language play interactions with her peers over a period of two years, from preschool to first grade. The same three girls were present in all the episodes selected for analysis in an attempt to describe the development of Meral’s pragmatic skills in the context of one peer relationship. By looking at how these girls attempted to direct and regulate each other along the dimensions of explicitness, addressivity and opposition, the analysis will examine processes of pretend-play negotiations as well as the changes these negotiation processes undergo over time. The term negotiation is used here to capture how the girls collaboratively communicated and regulated each other to reach a common ground of understanding.

In Cook-Gumperez, Corsaro and Streeck’s (1986) interpretive approach, children’s speech is seen as occurring within socially meaningful activities in which context is constantly negotiated among the interlocutors. Considered in this way, pretend-play negotiation can take the form of discussion and conflict as well as more harmonious exchanges of opinions and ideas in relation to play planning and storytelling. More specifically, the following three aspects will be focused upon in this attempt to describe how the bilingual girl, Meral, appropriated her own voice within one specific second-language peer relationship: (i) in-frame talk (being implicit about pretending) and out-of-frame talk (being explicit about pretending); (ii) addressing the roles of others as well as own role; and (iii) opposing peers’ pretend talk.

Why pretend play?

One of the earliest realms in which children demonstrate skills in decontextualization, talking about topics that are not directly connected to the immediate here-and-now context, is pretend play (Pellegrini, 1990). Moreover, social pretending and storytelling seem to be mutually supportive in children’s development (Nicolopoulou, 2002). Pretend play requires that children communicate and negotiate to jointly create an imagined play world in which play enactment (in-frame talk) and play planning (out-of-frame talk) are intertwined (Bretherton, 1989).

Studies have suggested that pragmatic negotiation and play directing may support children’s language learning, because these dialogues demand that children be explicit in defining their intentions (Pellegrini, Galda, Bartini & Charak, 1998). Furthermore, being able to participate in such play episodes, regulate peers and contribute to a coherent conversation appear to be important both in
establishing and maintaining children’s social status (Black & Hazan, 1990; Doyle & Connolly, 1989).

Although preschoolers seem to exert their most persuasive efforts to further pretend play (Putallaz & Sheppard, 1992), they will, to some degree, maintain their individual perspectives on what the play is (or should be) about, as their intersubjective skills are still developing (Göncü, 1993). Thus, it is interesting to consider how children collaborate to create, as Bruner (1990) puts it; intersubjective modes of meaning-making.

The educational importance of studying young second-language learners’ negotiation strategies in peer pretend play is based on three premises that will be dealt with below.

**Peer pretend play and language learning**

Children’s oral-language skills in preschool, such as vocabulary skills and decontextualization skills (narrative knowledge, use of explanations etc.) are believed to be related to subsequent acquisition of oral and written text comprehension and success in formal education (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001). Although many studies have demonstrated how children’s first language competencies may support acquisition of the second language (Carlisle, Beeman, Davis & Sphairim, 1999; Ordóñez, Carlo & Snow, 2002), bilingual preschool children also seem to learn the specific discourse conventions and narrative skills in each language separately to a great extent (Bialystok, 2002).

In relation to peer pretend play, Williamson and Silvern (1992) found that being able to take on a director’s voice in out-of-frame talk, through clarifying and explaining the story plot (explicitness) and telling peers what to do (addressing), seemed to enhance children’s general story comprehension. Thus, contributing to the collaborative planning and directing phases of play is believed to provide children with narrative skills that may be related to subsequent learning in school.

Phinney (1986) also found that the tendency to oppose peers’ attempts at directing with elaborate moves (reasons and justifications) was relatively rare among young children, but showed a steady increase with age. Indeed, on the one hand, the developing complexity in children’s peer conversations can be seen as a great opportunity for acquiring important skills in the second language. On the other hand, it may also represent a great challenge for bilingual children to express their voice in second-language interactions with peers.

**Access to second-language interactions**

Opportunities for peer interaction may be critical for young children’s second-language learning (Wong Fillmore, 1991). Though many studies have accounted for the importance of the resources that children bring with them to contribute to play as well as the learning that takes place in play, there is a double bind that children learning a second language must deal with (Tabors, 1997). The double bind is that social inclusion is necessary for the development of oral-language skills and vice versa. Importantly, children’s language use is closely related to the context of specific peer relationships. For example, Pellegrini et al. (1998) have shown that friends, as opposed to non-friends, elicited more decontextualized language use, particularly within female peer conversations.
Developing second-language speaker identities

The third premise is related to the identity work that takes place in play negotiations when children learn the pragmatic skills of positioning themselves relative to their peers. As Linell, Gustavsson and Juvonen (1988, p. 416) have argued: «[T]he dominant party is the one who manages to direct and control the other party’s actions to the greatest extent and who also avoids being directed in his own interactive behavior.»

Williamson and Silvern (1991) also highlighted the connection between these two skills of attempting to direct peers and resisting being directed by others. They found that children who did not attempt to direct play rarely made attempts to oppose their peers. They simply did what other children told them to. Importantly, however, Sheldon (1996) has argued that young girls’ self-assertion strategies also require responsiveness to peers’ perspectives, a type of double voice discourse that shapes the agenda and style of their negotiations. Thus, acts of saving face, mitigation and indirectness seem to be more common in girls’ interactions than in those of boys.

Moreover, in a study comparing Korean-American children in all Korean preschools to European-American children in white middle-class preschools, Farver, Kim, and Lee (1995) found that the Korean-American children were more cooperative and displayed more neutral affect in peer play compared to European-American children who both contributed more negative and aggressive responses and displayed more shared positive affect in peer play. Importantly, these children were exposed to a culture at home and in preschool which shared specific child rearing-practices and styles of communication.

However, children of immigrants often attend preschools where both the common language and specific speech-styles employed in communication may differ from the ones used at home. Thus, we need to know more about how power relations are communicated among peers in more multicultural preschools, and how second-language learning children come to express their own position in collaborative negotiations. Studies of bilingual children in the Nordic context have focused on how code-switching strategies may be used effectively by children to position themselves vis-à-vis their peers and teachers (Cromdal, 2004; Evaldsson, 2003).

However, when a child is the only speaker of her first language within a second-language interaction, language alternation may not be an effective strategy to express her point of view, or scaffold own play participation. Indeed, also the way young children come to negotiate with peers in the second language appear to be tightly linked to identity processes in their preschool lives. Reporting from the Køge Project, a large-scale longitudinal study of Turkish-speaking children growing up in Denmark, Jørgensen (2003, p. 7; emphasis in original) pointed out that:

hierarchies may be already set before the children begin school, or they are established very early in their school career. (…) We may have to look for social structures among the children when they are very young, which may possibly be established very early.

Developing voice in play

Bakhtin’s concept of addressivity can be related to Silverstein’s (1993) term metapragmatics, which refers to the way people’s messages both denote something about the premises for a particular position and at the same time project force, or expectations, on the other’s position and behavior. Sawyer
(1997) transferred this line of reasoning to children’s pretend-play dialogues in order to analyze the different strategies children use to convey messages about the evolving play theme to each other in more or less explicit and direct ways.

He depicted how children, on the implicit and more ambiguous side of the continuum (here termed in-frame talk) can enact a pretend character role and simultaneously meta-communicate messages about that role (jeg skal gå med mamma # en tur / I gonna go with mommy # a trip)\(^3\), and at the explicit end of the continuum (here termed out-of-frame talk) be more directive, or what he talks about as projecting a strong entailing force\(^4\), related to role assignment and play planning (okay # nå er jeg lærer liksom / okay # pretend now I’m a teacher). In accordance with previous studies, Sawyer showed how peer negotiations in childhood increasingly demanded that children draw on skills of explicitness. The development of in-frame and out-of-frame talk as more or less explicit and directive ways to communicate messages about play is the first issue to be explored.

Closely related to issues of explicitness is whether children propose something in relation to themselves or their play partners. By proposing a role or play plan in relation to another child or the collective play group, the speaker must be prepared to defend her own position if opposed. In this way, directing others may reflect the child’s involvement and status in the play vis-à-vis other children, thus being strongly related to the more interpersonal level of interaction. The two dimensions of explicitness and addressing may shed light on children’s positioning from two different angles and addressing is, therefore, the second issue explored.

Apart from attempting to direct peers’ actions and their understanding of the story plot, an additional side of expressing own voice is how the child manages to resist peers’ play directing. Indeed, when it comes to the development of children’s intersubjective skills, Wertsch (1998) has warned against a one-sided focus on consensus-oriented interactions in the study of how children reach a unified situational definition. The importance of children’s conflict talk has also been highlighted within Piagetian play research (Garvey & Shantz, 1992). When children resist peers’ influence, conflict (or opposition) is most often negotiated explicitly (Garvey, 1990) through use of reason or attempts at compromise. These strategies have been considered unique because they imply sensitivity to subsequent pretend-play text and peer intentions.

Moreover, being able to oppose peers in pretend play may not only disclose power relations, but also pave the way for renegotiation of competencies, alignments, power relations and, thus, voices. Importantly, however, participation in mutual and high-intensity opposition episodes among peers does not allow much time to verbally formulate own perspectives in the second language. In this way, expressing own voice in peer opposition may be particularly challenging for second-language learners.\(^5\) Thus, how Meral opposed her peers’ attempts at directing the play (and herself) is the third and final issue that will be explored.

The collaborative aspect of peer-play negotiation will be focused on when looking at development through the lens of one girl’s participation in pretend play from preschool to first grade. More specifically, I ask how Meral and her peers negotiate in the pretend play through (i) in-frame and out-of-frame talk, (ii) addressing peers and own role, (iii) opposing peers’ pretend talk.

The case of Meral

Meral was recruited for this study when she was 5;4.0 years old and attended the penul-
timate year in preschool. She was visited on two more occasions when she was respectively 6;3.8 and 7;2.29 years old (below referred to as Year 1, Year 2 and Year 3 observation). Although the present study was focused upon Meral’s use of pragmatic strategies in peer play, an initial language assessment was conducted each year of observation to gain additional knowledge of her language skills in both Norwegian and Turkish. For this purpose, translated versions of the following instruments were used: vocabulary skills were measured with the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-III – Revised (Dunn & Dunn, 1981) and word-definition skills were measured by a subtask in Reynell Developmental Language Scales (Hagtvet & Lillestølen, 1985). In relation to both receptive vocabulary and definition skills, Meral performed better in her first language, Turkish, than in her second language, Norwegian, on all three occasions when she was assessed, although there was a gradual closing of this gap over the two years. Thus, throughout the study period, Meral seemed to be a more proficient speaker of her first language, Turkish.

Meral’s parents had been living in Norway for about 20 years and they were both working; her father as a salesman and her mother as a bilingual auxiliary teacher. Meral’s mother had attended primary school in Turkey and high school in Norway; Meral’s father had been educated in a middle school in Turkey and had attended courses in Norwegian as a second language. According to Meral’s mother, Meral spoke mostly Turkish at home and mainly played with Turkish-speaking peers in her spare time, although she sometimes spoke Norwegian with children who had a native language different from both Norwegian and Turkish. Along with her older brother, Meral had grandparents, uncles and aunts living nearby in Norway, as well as grandparents and relatives in Turkey, whom the family visited during the summer break.

Meral had attended the same preschool since she was 1½ year old. In the Year 1 observation, her multicultural preschool classroom consisted of 15 children in which 9 children had Turkish as their first language. The children were visited a few days a week by a Turkish-speaking teacher who interacted with the children in both Turkish and Norwegian. Apart from this, Norwegian was the common preschool language in teacher-led activities. Probably because of the large concentration of Turkish-speaking children in the preschool, as well as in the children’s community, most interactions initiated by the Turkish-speaking children were in their first language.

Meral would commonly spend most of her free play time with the other Turkish-speaking girls, and although the non-Turkish-speaking girls played nearby with the same toys, the two groups seldom interacted verbally with each other to reach a joint play theme. However, unlike many of the other Turkish-speaking girls in this classroom, Meral seemed eager to play with the two non-Turkish speaking girls, Eva and Amina. Also, Meral sometimes played with Eva and Amina in her last year in preschool, although she spent most of her time with the other Turkish-speaking girls in her class.

By the Year 3 observation, Meral had entered school. This school provided beginning reading and writing education in the mother tongue for about six hours a week in the early grades, but Meral did not receive this because the mother-tongue teacher in first grade suffered from long-term illness. Four other Turkish-speaking children attended Meral’s class. By coincidence, Meral was placed in the same class as Eva, Amina and another girl, Idris, from her preschool class. These four girls were characterized by the teacher, and by Meral herself, as good
friends. The fact that Meral chose to play with these girls who were more used to interact in Norwegian as well as with each other, obviously posed a big challenge for her to express herself vis-à-vis the others. However, it also provided an unique opportunity to look into how she developed as a second-language speaker over time.

**Data collection strategy**

During a one week visit conducted every year of observation in the multicultural preschool and first grade classrooms Meral attended, Meral was videotaped in her everyday peer interactions. During free play time, she was asked by her teacher to bring a few peers to the playroom, thus letting her decide who to play with. The videotaping in preschool took place in a spacious room equipped with toys, and the videotaping in school took place in a play corner in the classroom. Out of these video recording, episodes in which Meral (i) played with Eva and Amina, and (ii) engaged in continuous pretend play were selected for analysis. Eva was a monolingual speaker of Norwegian, whereas Amina was a fluent speaker of both Norwegian and Somali.

In the Year 1 observation, Meral, Eva and Amina were alone in the play room, but in the Year 2 observation, a fourth Turkish-speaking girl, Ferruh, passed by. Finally, in the Year 3 observation, Meral played with Eva, Amina and Idris. Idris was a fluent speaker of Norwegian and Hindi. Although both Amina and Idris had a first language different from Norwegian, there were not many speakers of, respectively, Somali and Hindi for them to play with in preschool or first grade. Thus, compared to Meral, Amina and Idris had more extensive practice at interacting by means of the second language.

From each of the first two observations, 20 minutes of continuous pretend play were sampled for transcription, and from the Year 3 observation 15 minutes of continuous pretend play was obtained. The videotaped peer-play conversations were transcribed into computer files using the transcription conventions of the Child Language Data Exchange System (MacWhinney, 1991). Contextual information needed to understand the interaction was included in the transcripts. Utterance boundaries were based primarily on intonation contour, and secondarily on pause duration.

**Analysis**

Analysis was conducted in relation both to the transcribed text and the video recordings. Categories were derived from the work of Eisenberg and Garvey (1981), Giffin (1984), Ninio and Snow (1996), Sawyer (1997), and Williamson and Silvern (1992). Although utterances were the unit of coding, all decisions were based on preceding and subsequent utterances and validated against the video recordings (body language, what children attended to, tone of voice etc.).

**Identifying pretend talk**

A first step in the analysis was to identify utterances that were pretend talk and distinguish them from other types of play talk not directly contributing to the pretend world. **Pretend talk** was defined as verbal communication about what to be, do and say, related to the story-line or action plan («this is a tunnel», «you are the sisters»), while utterances coded as other types of play talk were not directly contributing to a pretend world, for example: (i) simple negation and agreement response; (ii) talk about play objects, peers or other real world properties; and (ii) giggling. All utterances coded as either pretend talk or other types of play talk comprised the total coded utterances in which relative frequen-
cies are based (below referred to as total play talk). Only pretend talk was analyzed further.

First, pretend talk was coded in accordance with its level of explicitness. Modifying previous categories (Sawyer, 1997), two levels of in-frame talk and two levels of out-of-frame talk were identified based on the voices used and the directness of a turn.

**In-frame talk**

In-frame talk was related to voicing as a pretend character. Level 1 in-frame talk was the most implicit type in that it was role enacting, did not address peers, and conveyed unclear implications for the play partners. This could, for instance, be to talk about own ongoing actions without anticipating a response from peers (tar av meg sekken / take my backpack off). Level 2 in-frame talk was also implicit about pretending, but unlike Level 1, these utterances assigned to the responder a proposed role or action plan while talking from the viewpoint of a play character. For instance, addressing a peer by saying «våkn opp lillesøster» / «wake up little sister» implicitly assigns the role of little sister to another child.

**Out-of-frame talk**

In out-of-frame talk, children were talking on behalf of themselves, using their own voices. Compared to in-frame talk, which was often formulated in the present tense, out-of-frame talk regularly contained verb forms in the past tense. Level 3 out-of-frame talk did not explicitly mention pretend, but it was still less in-frame than Level 1 and Level 2 in that it was formulated more from a teller’s, or director’s, point of view than from a pretend character’s perspective. Moreover, the children extended the pretend talk in a way that projected a strong entailing force onto the responder by directing other children’s actions (også vekte dere meg / and then you woke me up) and communicating about the ongoing story plot (ja det er spøkelse som sover der / yes there are ghosts sleeping there) and upcoming story plot to peers (siden den snart skal de komme inn / because it soon they are gonna come inside). Also, explicit role assignments were coded as Level 3 (Eva du var Ann # du er Ann / Eva you were Ann # you are Ann).

Level 4 out-of-frame talk was explicit about play in that it typically had a lexical marker indicating make believe (jeg kom ny leker liksom okay? / pretend I came new teacher okay?). Furthermore, other types of pretend talk related to the play/reality distinction were categorized as Level 4, as seen in this example in which in Utterance 1 Amina mentioned her real mother while she was drawing on the blackboard. Idris corrected this in Utterance 2 and Utterance 3, presumably because Amina was breaking out of the girls’ collectively agreed upon play frame of being teachers.

1. Amina: mammaen min har lært meg å lage øre. my mommy has shown me how to make an ear.
2. Idris: men ikke # snakk om mammaen din okay. but don’t # talk about your mommy okay?
3. Idris: ja vi skal snakke om å skole. yes we are gonna talk about school.

After the coding of explicitness, a decision was made with reference to whom or what the children were addressing in their pretend talk.

**Addressing of pretend talk**

Children’s pretend talk could be communicated in relation to own person (I, mine) and something or someone (the doll, Eva’s mother), or other children (you, yours) and the group (we, us, ours). Addressing others (you) and the group (we) may indicate that the children attempted to influence others and take control over stage managing and direct-
ing, while addressing own role (I) and something/someone (s) may not reflect the same degree of taking control over the play group's activities. Thus, to propose pretend talk in relation to others (or the group), termed you&we, may be more interactionally challenging than addressing own role or play objects, termed I&s.

Oppositional pretend talk
In accordance with Maynard (1985), children can oppose the presupposition of a peer's action or statement, as well as its manifest content. Only opposition contributing to pretend talk was identified, thus leaving out simple «yes» and «no» responses. Opposing peers was subcategorized as initial opposition and responses to opposition. Whereas initial opposition protested or challenged another child, responses to opposition could be either conciliating or insisting. All oppositional pretend talk was analyzed for attempts at compromise, providing reasons and attempts at alignments. Finally, agreement responses and questions (suggesting instead of demanding, requesting clarification, tag questions etc.) of pretend talk were identified (Ninio & Snow, 1996). Talk excluded from coding were utterances that either: (i) did not contain meaningful entities because they were unintelligible, incomplete, or interrupted at an early stage; (ii) not related to play (jeg må på do / I have to go to the toilet; and (iii) regulation of behavior not related to the play (ikke stå på den / don’t stand on that). Excluded utterances totalled 281, leaving 1,257 utterances for analysis, called total play talk below.

Reliability
Nearly 25% of the transcripts (353 utterances) were sampled for inter-rater reliability checks of the main categories. First, two coders independently decided which utterances were to be coded as play talk, resulting in a Cohen's kappa of .84. Out of these, 265 agreed upon play utterances, a decision was made with reference to which were pretend utterances, achieving a Cohen's kappa of .82. Finally, based on 183 pretend utterances, the three dimensions of implicitness/explicitness, addressivity and opposition were coded, and a Cohen’s kappa of respectively .79, .88 and .85 was attained.

Data treatment
Due to variation in the length of episodes and the size of the play group, quantitative results are presented as relative frequencies. In the following presentation, two levels of relative frequencies were used to illuminate the findings. First, in order to capture how many pretend utterances each girl contributed to the total amount of play talk produced by the group in the episode, calculations for all the girls were based on a percentage of the total amount of coded utterances (total play talk) in the episode, consisting of both pretend talk and other types of play talk (see above). This was a question of who occupied most interactional space in the play (reported in the figures). Because calculations of pretend talk are based on the total play talk and not only on utterances coded as pretend talk, the total sum of participants’ contributions of pretend talk is less than 100%. Second, to individually characterize the girls' pretend talk more closely – for instance, to look at how much of Meral’s pretend talk was formulated as out-of-frame talk – calculations were based on each girl’s pretend talk respectively.

The results will be presented in the following order: 1) how Meral became more self-assertive through the verbal means of increased explicitness and addressing of peers; and 2) the challenges she met when attempt-
ing to oppose peer pretend talk in the second language.

Results

Increased degree of explicitness

Based on a percentage of the total play talk, pretend talk appeared most frequently in the Year 1 observation and least frequently in the Year 2 observation. However, Meral showed a slight increase in the amount of pretend talk she contributed over the two-year period. Along with this, there seemed to be a development in her use of out-of-frame talk. Within in-frame talk, both at the group level and in Meral’s talk, very few utterances were coded as Level 1 over the two years; thus, in-frame talk referred to below was largely at Level 2.

In the Year 1 observation, Meral mostly used in-frame talk, as seen in Example 1.1 (the first arabic numeral showing the continuous numbering of examples, and second roman number referring to the observation time I, II or III). Eva and Amina had been discussing the sleeping arrangements and where the baby doll was going to sleep when Meral (Utterance 3) signaled her participation in the play by making an in-frame comment relevant to the play topic. This subtle way of indicating that she wanted to be included in the play was responded to, and thus accepted, by Amina in Utterance 4.

Example 1.1

1. Amina:  *han skal ha puta versågod.*  he must have the pillow here you are.  [hands over a pillow to Eva]
2. Eva:  *la ha få pute.*  let him have pillow.  [puts the pillow under the doll’s head]
3. Meral:  *hun /fryser!*  she is /cold!  [looks at Amina and Eva who are putting the baby doll to sleep]
4. Amina:  *ja han får /teppe.*  yes he gets blanket.

Out of the total play talk in the group, Eva and Amina contributed respectively 27.3% and 31.0% pretend utterances, whereas Meral only contributed 11.2% pretend utterances in the Year 1 observation. Moreover, while Eva and Amina to a relatively large degree communicated about the pretend world out-of-frame, most of Meral’s pretend talk was communicated in-frame (77.4% of her pretend utterances were in-frame talk).

One year later, in the Year 2 observation, Meral still tended to negotiate by means of in-frame talk, even in situations in which the other girls were communicating more out-of-frame. The next excerpt (Example 2.II) was preceded by a long discussion in which none of the girls wanted to play the role of mother. In Utterance 1, however, Eva, contrary to what she said before, implicitly assigned the role of mother to herself and that of children to the others by voicing as the mother character in-frame. As the following negotiation shows, this in-frame talk was confusing for the other girls based on Eva’s previous stance (see Example 6.II) of not wanting to be the mother.

Example 2.II

1. Eva:  *hade unger # nå må jeg på +/. goodbye kids # now I have to go to +/. [motherly voice, stands in the door to the kitchen play corner with a blanket tied around her head]
2. Amina:  *er /du mamma? are /you mommy? [occupied with setting the table]*
3. Ferruh:  *nee.*  no.
4. Meral:  *hade storesøster # hade lillesøster.*  goodbye big sister # goodbye little sister.  [walks over to Eva and fumbles with the blanket on her head]
5. Eva:  *nei ## jeg er /mamma.*  /no ## I’m /mommy.  [explaining voice, corrects the blanket on her head]
6. Meral:  *hade mamma.*  goodbye mommy.  [childish voice, gently shoves Eva out of the kitchen]
The difficulties with interpreting Eva’s intention in Utterance 1, lead Amina to ask explicitly for clarification (Utterance 2), while Meral continued to address Eva through means of in-frame talk (Utterance 4 and Utterance 6). Importantly, compared to the Year 1 observation, Meral now appeared to be more involved in the negotiations about how the play frame itself was to be interpreted. Indeed, Meral contributed more pretend talk than the other girls and she almost contributed the same amount of out-of-frame talk as Eva and Amina. However, while about half of Meral’s pretend utterances were out-of-frame talk (52.4%), a larger proportion of Eva’s (62.5%) and Amina’s (65.8%) pretend utterances were out-of-frame talk.

In the Year 3 observation, when the girls had entered first grade, Meral seemed to participate even more explicitly in the negotiation of pretend play. Before the following excerpt (Example 3.III), the girls pretended to be their own teachers, giving themselves the names of their real teachers in school. Probably because of the potential confusion related to this, Meral initiated an out-of-frame explanation by using the past tense (were) and by explicitly mentioning pretend (Level 4) in Utterance 3, and the other girls responded by offering their perspective of the play frame.

**Example 3.III**

1. Amina: *jeg er # jeg er /Sonja!*
   I’m # I’m /Sonja. [jumps around in the classroom]

2. Amina: *nei jeg kan gjør /Greta!*
   no I can do /Greta!

3. Meral: *eh # m men liksom # vi ivar ikke # Sonja og # sånn og sånn. eh # b but pretend # we /weren’t # Sonja and # like this and like this. [sits at a desk]*

4. Amina: *jamen /Lisa og ja han andre er /vi de er ikke her nå.*
   yes but /Lisa and yes the other one are / we they aren’t here now.

5. Eva: *neimen det er # vi lek # jeg # det er bare sånn # vi ivar her. no but it is # we play # it’s only like # we /were here. [walks around with pen and paper]*

The Year 3 observation was different from the others in that Idris had now entered the group, taking on a leading role in the play. Interestingly, in this interaction, Meral still contributed more pretend talk than Eva and Amina, but less than Idris. As found in the observation one year earlier, half of the pretend talk Meral contributed was out-of-frame talk. This was similar to the proportion of out-of-frame talk contributed by Idris and Eva, and more than Amina. For the group as a whole, there was not a continuous increase of out-of-frame talk over the two years, which was probably due to the fact that there was less pretend talk in the Year 2 observation. There was, however, a slight increase in the contribution of out-of-frame talk between Year 1 and Year 3, from 28.8% to 32.3% out of the total play talk (Figure 1). This increase was also found when looking at the proportion of out-of-frame talk over the two years (40.8% of all pretend utterances were out-of-frame talk in the Year 1 observation, while 53.6% of all pretend utterances were out-of-frame talk in the Year 3 observation).

In line with this tendency, Meral showed a steady increase in her use of out-of-frame talk over the two-year period, from 2.5% to 7.3% out of the total play talk in the group between the Year 1 and the Year 3 observations (Figure 2). Moreover, when looking at the proportional division of Meral’s pretend utterances, 22.6% were out-of-frame talk in the Year 1 observation while 50% were out-of-frame talk in the Year 3 observation.
Figure 1. Group: In-frame and out-of-frame talk. Calculations based on a percentage of the total amount of coded utterances (total play talk) in the transcripts, consisting of both pretend talk and other types of play talk.

Figure 2. Meral: In-frame and out-of-frame talk. Calculations are based on a percentage of the total amount of coded utterances (total play talk) in the transcripts, consisting of both pretend talk and other types of play talk.
It seems, then, that Meral increasingly participated in negotiations related to play planning by means of explicitness from preschool to first grade. Indeed, she contributed more of both Level 3 and Level 4 out-of-frame talk during this period.

**Increased addressing of others and the group**

Along with Meral’s increased participation in pretend talk over the two years, she more often attempted to address her peers. In the Year 1 observation, most of Meral’s pretend talk was related to her own role or the play objects, as illustrated in Example 1.I. Indeed, out of the total play talk in the group, Meral’s addressing of peers constituted only 2.2%, which was less than one-fifth of the pretend talk she produced. In comparison, about half of Eva’s and Amina’s pretend talk was related to the others.

In the Year 2 observation, however, Meral participated more actively in negotiations related to the roles and actions of her peers, as seen in this next excerpt (Example 4.II) where Eva pretended to visit the other girls in the play kitchen. Earlier in the play, Eva had been the mother, but in this excerpt she enacted the role of a guest. Thus, the issue of how to address Eva’s role character had to be clarified.

Example 4.II

1. Eva: *ding dong.*
   *ding dong.* [rings the pretend doorbell to the kitchen where the other girls are]

2. [•••]

3. Meral: *adrian # adrian ## hva heter du igjen?*  
   *adrian # adrian ## what’s your name again?*  
   [to Eva who is standing in the door]

4. Eva: *adriana.*  
   *adriana.*

5. Meral: *adria ## det er /mamman vår!*  
   *adria ## it’s our /mommy!* [childish voice to Amina who is preparing dinner on the stove]

This example demonstrates how Meral managed to solve the potential problem related to Eva’s confusing role behavior by means of questioning and indirectness. First, in Utterance 3, she addressed Eva out-of-frame through a clarification request related to the name of Eva’s role. Then, in Utterance 5, she implicitly assigned the role of mother to Eva by announcing to Amina that their mother was coming to visit while using her pretend character’s voice.

From looking at the percentage of the total play talk in the group, in the Year 2 observation it is clear that Meral contributed almost the same amount of pretend talk in relation to her peers as Eva and Amina, but her addressing of her peers differed from the other girls in that almost half (46.2%) of her addressing of others was posed as some type of question about the play (as seen in Utterance 3 in the previous example). This indicates that Meral may have been working more towards clarification of the play theme than attempting to direct the actions of her peers when addressing others.

In the Year 3 observation, Meral addressed peers even more than the year before. As shown earlier in Example 3.III, in Utterance 2 Meral initiated an explanation of the play frame related to the collective *we*. Compared to the Year 2 observation, Meral still tended to use questions when addressing peers, but not as often as in the year before. However, based on the knowledge that Eva and Idris exerted their influence quite forcefully over the collective play plan in this episode, the finding that the number of times that Meral addressed her peers increased is particularly interesting.

Concerning the whole group (Figure 3), addressing of peers (you&we) actually decreased between the Year 1 and Year 3 observation, whereas Meral showed a steady increase in attempts to address others from 2.2% to 4.6% out of the total play talk in the group between the Year 1 and Year 3 observation (Figure 4).
Figure 3. Group: Addressing in pretend talk. Calculations based on a percentage of the total amount of coded utterances (total play talk) in the transcripts, consisting of both pretend talk and other types of play talk.

Figure 4. Meral: Addressing of pretend talk. Calculations based on a percentage of the total amount of coded utterances (total play talk) in the transcripts, consisting of both pretend talk and other types of play talk.
When looking at the dimension of explicitness and the dimension of addressing together, the results indicate that Meral’s addressing of the other girls’ roles or action plans was relatively implicit. Indeed, while most addressing of peers was communicated out-of-frame at the group level (respectively 76.0% and 78.8% of all utterances addressing peers was communicated out-of-frame in the Year 1 and Year 3 observations), Meral predominantly addressed peers in-frame over the two years (33.3% of Meral’s addressing of peers was communicated out-of-frame both in the Year 1 and Year 3 observations).

**Opposing peers’ pretend talk**

Over all three observations, Meral opposed less compared to the other girls. However, changes in the nature of her opposition were seen over the two-year period. Preceding Example 5.1, an opposition between Eva and Amina, concerning who should be allowed to go to school in the pretend family, had aggravated the situation. In Utterance 1 Amina turned to Meral for alignment by giving her the purse that had originally belonged to Eva, indicating that the two of them were the ones going to school.

**Example 5.1**

1. Amina: *Meral du kan ta d +/-.
Meral you can have th +/- [takes a purse and hands it over to Meral]*
2. Eva: *det er veska /mi!
it’s /my purse! [tries to grab the purse]*
3. Meral: *nei +…
no +… [walks over to Eva and Amina]*
no it’s Meral’s. [snaps the purse back and tries to give it to Meral]*
5. Meral: *nei det er hun sin.
no that’s her’s. [points to Eva and finds another purse for herself]*

In Utterance 3 and Utterance 5, Meral opposed the suggestion that she was to have Eva’s purse, thus indicating that she did not approve of the alliance with Amina or the opposition against Eva. However, Amina, continued the opposition with her clever arguments (Utterance 6 and Utterance 8), which led Meral to try further attempts at resolution.

**Example 5.1 continued**

ok # then then /you have to be mommy.
[to Eva, with glee in her voice]*
7. Eva: *nei! no! [despairing voice]*
8. Amina: *jo fordi veske har mamma # har mamma.
yes because purse is what mommy has # has mommy.*

Meral contributed very few verbal moves in this exchange. However, by proposing a compromise with the help of mostly nonverbal means (Utterance 12), she managed to solve the conflict between Eva and Amina. This act of mitigation illustrates Meral’s receptive understanding of what the conflict was about as well as her narrative understanding of the play. Moreover, the other girls verbally extended Meral’s pretend talk by offering an explanation in relation to the play frame (Utterance 13–15).
In the Year 1 observation, Meral opposed peers less (1.1% out of total play talk in the group) compared to Eva (6.5%) and Amina (6.5%). The reason for this may be that she had some difficulties with articulating persuasive arguments in the second language. On the occasions that Meral initiated opposition in the Year 1 observation, her initiatives were either simple denials or repetitions of others’ utterances.

In the Year 2 observation, however, the three girls opposed their peers equally frequently but, as illustrated in Example 6.II, Meral still seemed to have problems with expressing an argument.

Example 6.II

1. Eva: jeg skal være # /storesøster.
   I’m gonna be # /big sister. [starts organizing plates in the play kitchen room]
2. Amina: det skal jeg og
   me too. [dissatisfied voice] [all the girls shout that they want to be the big sister]
3. Eva: /alle hera etter meg først # jeg so det.
   /everybody copied after me first # I said it! [decisive voice]
4. Amina: sammen jeg +/-.
   yes but +/-.
   I don’t want to be /mommy. [interrupts Amina, shakes her head]
6. Amina: joo! yes!
7. Eva: /alle hera etter meg først # jeg so det.
   /everybody copied after me first # I said it! [decisive voice]
6. Amina: joo! yes!
7. Eva: jeg vil aldri # jeg har /vært mamma og dere har bare vært /hele tiden # /storesøster.
   I never want # I have /been mommy and you have only /all the time been # big sister.

Example 7.III

1. Eva: vi jobba på barnehagen en sånn ### /babybarnehage.
   we worked in kindergarten like ### /baby-kindergarten. [writes on a piece of paper]
2. Meral: nei ikke så +/-.
   no not so +/-.[walks over to Eva]
   /yes [decisive voice] # yes ### worked in babykindergarten. [looks at Idris who is shaking her head]
4. Idris: hvem er baby her a?
   who’s the baby here? [stands right in front of Eva, challenging voice]
5. Eva: vi later som at babysene var ute å leka +/-.
   we’ll pretend the babies were outside playing +/-.[eager voice to Idris]
6. Meral: /neei
   no! [looks down]
7. Idris: ja # babyen +/-.
   yes the baby +/-.
   the teacher looks after them. [writes on the blackboard]
In Utterance 4, Idris revealed her doubt about whether to accept Eva’s idea by posing a request for explanation, while Eva responded to this request by providing an explanation to support her position (Utterance 5). Moreover, Meral once again attempted to articulate her opposition in Utterance 6, but by that time Eva had attained both Amina’s and Idris’s agreement (Utterance 7–9). As seen in Utterance 10, Meral attempted one more time to get the other girls’ attention, but by then they were eagerly occupied with planning the new direction of the play.

In the Year 3 observation, Meral was still the one who opposed peers’ pretend talk the least out of the four girls (1.6% of the total play talking of the group) and she was seldom the one who initiated opposition. Idris was the one who most often opposed peers’ pretend talk (4.3%). Overall, as Meral seemed to have problems with verbally formulating her arguments in the fast track of mutual opposition, she tended to give in or be overruled by the others.

When looking at the entire data set (Figure 5), there was not an increase in oppositional pretend talk over the two years (14.2% of the total play talk was oppositional in the Year 1 observation, while 9.2% was oppositional in the Year 3 observation). Meral, however, opposed peers more in the Year 2 and Year 3 observations (respectively 2.7% and 1.6%) compared to the Year 1 observation (1.1%). Although this was not a large increase, it indicates a trend (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Group and Meral: Oppositional pretend talk. Calculations based on a percentage of the total amount of coded utterances (total play talk) in the transcripts, consisting of both pretend talk and other types of play talk.

9. Idris: også en annen lærer passer på dem. and another teacher looks after them. [walks toward Amina]

10. Meral: jeg var f eh men +/. I was f eh but +/. [raises her arm in what seems to be an attempt to get attention from the other girls]
These are the main findings that have emerged from this study of expressing own voice:

- Meral mostly communicated pretend-play features by means of in-frame talk, but she also gradually contributed more out-of-frame talk over the two years, resulting in a balance of in-frame and out-of-frame talk in the Year 3 observation. This increased explicitness in Meral’s play communication appeared to go along with her involvement in negotiations related to play planning.
- Meral attempted increasingly to address the other girls in her pretend talk over the two years. This addressing, however, was often more information seeking than directive. Furthermore, quite contrary to the tendency at the group level, Meral continued to mostly address others by means of in-frame talk.
- Meral slightly increased her opposition to peers’ attempts to direct the play over the two years, although she seemed to have difficulties in contributing verbal arguments and getting her voice through in the fast track of mutual opposition among the girls.

**Discussion**

Because of the relatively small sample of material at hand, the results presented here can in no way be said to provide a full picture of the different language experiences Meral was exposed to in her second language over this two-year period. Moreover, the numerical increases (or lack of increases) which is described in Meral’s pretend talk point to a tendency and do, of course, not provide information about the significance of these changes in broader terms. However, with the knowledge that Meral mostly interacted with other children in her first language, it seems reasonable to assume that her relationship with Eva and Amina played a role in Meral’s self-construction as a second-language speaker.

Meral’s increased explicitness and incidents of addressing others probably indicate that she both felt more at home in the developing friendship and got more involved in negotiations related to the collaborative creation of a story plot. Piagetian-based research has contended that it is the negotiation that takes place when children step out of role to coordinate points of view that contributes to children’s cognitive and social development (Garvey, 1990). Questioning this line of reasoning, Sawyer (1997) argued that although in-frame talk may be more ambiguous for other children to interpret, it may also be a more effective way to communicate about the pretend world without interrupting the flow of talk. The increased balance between in-frame and out-of-frame talk in Meral’s pretend-play participation is interesting in relation to both these viewpoints, along with Doyle and Connolly’s (1989) claim that an important developmental achievement in the preschool years is the skill to shift easily between in-frame and out-of-frame talk.

The fact that most of Meral’s addressing of peers was done by means of in-frame talk may be interpreted both within Sawyer’s argument of in-frame talk as effective communication and Sheldon’s finding of how being implicit about pretending was used as a strategy to save face in girls’ play discourse. Indeed, being implicit and ambiguous, and leaving the choice of response to the interlocutors, may decrease the risk of peers rejecting the suggestion. In a similar vein, Meral’s tendency to ask questions when addressing others may indicate that she perceived her peers to be the owners of the play theme. This interpretation is supported by the fact that she was, more often than the others, overruled when attempting to oppose peers.
Both explicit directing of peers in out-of-frame talk as well as opposing peers’ attempts at directing draw on the verbal skills and self-confidence to argue for own viewpoints. Probably various factors – such as personal characteristics, culture-specific styles of communication, gendered expectations concerning boys’ and girls’ conduct, vocabulary skills and narrative knowledge – will lead children to adopt certain strategies in peer interactions. The present study does not, for instance, shed light on the competencies demonstrated in Meral’s play with Turkish-speaking peers or the styles of communication promoted in her home community outside the preschool.

However, as argued by Göncü (1999, p. 11):

Children’s collaboration with competent members of the society help children decide what meanings are worth engaging in as well as how to engage in those meanings. Children’s play, on the other hand, enables children to internalize the meanings that children consider on their own as worth engaging in.

Thus, the particular culture of peer talk that arises within specific peer relationships may be even more important in determining how children come to express themselves in play (Corsaro & Rizzo, 1990). Shieffelin and Ochs (1986), for instance, emphasize that children’s interactions are influenced by their conceptions of their own and others’ social status, and by the role behaviors associated with such status. For children who are in the process of acquiring a second language, this issue is very important, as access to language-learning opportunities needs to be negotiated, often by means of a language in which these children tend to be among the least proficient speakers attempting to occupy the floor.

While Meral increasingly participated in the pretend-play conversations in Norwegian, contributed to the out-of-frame planning and negotiating phases of play, and addressed others to a larger extent over the two years, she did not become a very self-assertive participant in terms of directing peers and arguing for her position. Thus, what has been shown in Meral’s case, and what Williamson and Silvern also pointed out concerning a few participants in their study, is that the pragmatic skill of resisting peers’ attempts at directing is not easily attained by children. In particular, for second-language learners who have only limited opportunities to interact with second-language speakers, certain pragmatic skills may take time and practice to acquire.

In this study one specific peer relationship has been examined in order to describe how one bilingual girl came to express her own voice within one second-language peer relationship. Bakhtin’s term voice was used to show how Meral’s participation in these pretend-play episodes was related to her construction of self (or own words) in relation to others (or the words of others) in her second language; or to put it another way, to find out how she located herself in relation to the other girls by taking authorship of her own viewpoints while at the same time considering her peers’ perspectives. This perspective is related to an aspect of voice which emphasizes the active individual who leaves its trace in others. Furthermore, I attempted to describe how perception of others’ and own status and competency was related to Meral’s language use and, thus, the types of speech genres in which she participated.

For second-language learning children with limited opportunities to interact by means of the second language, knowledge of the types of oral texts children are exposed to in preschool is needed. Particularly, we need to find out more about how language develops within peer relationships, as social positioning and pragmatic development seem to be closely knit and interdependent.
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Notes

1 The terms second-language learner(s) and first language are used in the present study. As discussed by Block (2003), these terms may be problematic because they tend to ascribe essentialist characteristics to people’s first and second language, looking at a person’s first language as complete and second language as incomplete in relation to a pre-specified norm. Importantly, such views fail to acknowledge that second-language learners are in the process of acquiring both their first and second language, and that an individual’s two (or more) languages are not independent commodities, but part of the same system.

2 Meral and two other girls were present in all the episodes analyzed. In addition, a forth girl participated in the play episode selected from the final year of observation.

3 Transcription conventions employed is based on a simplified version of the Child Language Data Exchange System (MacWhinney, 1991):

   # small pause within an utterance
   ## longer pause within an utterance
   /text/ stressed word
   xxx inaudible word
   ? rising intonation
   ! demanding utterance
   +… demarcates unfinished utterance
   +/- demarcates abrupt cut-off from others
   [text] descriptions of the transcriber

4 The term entailment force was originally Silverstein’s concept.

5 E.g. Wiberg’s (2003) exploration of adult non-native speakers’ participation in difficult communicative tasks.

6 As the present study is focused upon how language is part of the communicative practices of actors-in-context, the use of language assessments to measure language competency may seem contradictory. On one hand, language assessments may be discharged from a pragmatic perspective because the test situation is so detached from ordinary communicative situations and conducted in totally asymmetric situations. On the other hand, in many ways a test situation resembles the demands of the educational setting in which teachers question children, expecting them to participate in various more or less decontextualized conversations. In the present study, the language assessments were only employed as one source of information (in addition to the information provided by Meral’s teachers and parents, as well as the impression from my own observations) concerning Meral’s competency in her two languages. Importantly, the test scores obtained were not compared to
the Norwegian norm, but deployed to attain information about Meral’s relative competency in the Turkish and Norwegian languages. Too often, this issue is not attended to in research concerning second language learners.

This description of Eva’s and Amina’s language skills is based on information provided by their teachers.

Ferruh participated in Example 2.II. Besides this, she was not involved in establishing and maintaining a joint pretend play theme, and she is, thus, not mentioned in the analysis.

The description of Idris’ language skills is based on information provided by her teacher.

Implicit addressing of peers refers to Level 2 implicitness, as addressing of peers could not be coded as Level 1 implicitness.

**Literature**


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