

## Conversation as a source of information: Who do children trust?

Who do children trust when evaluating information? Previous research suggests that conversation gives children important opportunities to learn. Chouinard (2007) found that children ask parents up to 2 information-seeking questions every 3 minutes, and parents answer approximately 85% of these informatively; this provides a large amount of potentially useful information to children. Further, parents provide evidence to children about their erroneous linguistic forms. Chouinard & Clark (2003) found that parents restate their children's erroneous utterances using the proper forms while maintaining the same meaning; this contrast between two linguistic forms that express the same intention contains information about which forms are acceptable and which are not. Children notice these reformulations and pick up the changed forms.

Are parents the only people that children trust for such information? Children interact with siblings, teachers, and even strangers; would they be willing to accept information from these addressees? Corriveau & Harris (2006) found that 3- and 4-year-olds are more likely to display trust in a familiar informant than an unfamiliar one in some situations. So, it's possible that the benefits we see of conversation with parents are not present with other individuals. To examine this, we ran two studies comparing conversations with parents to conversations with other individuals.

In study one, 80 3- and 4-year-old children free-played with a set of toys, with either their parent or an unfamiliar experimenter. We transcribed the conversations, coded the questions children asked, the responses given, and any reformulations of their grammatical errors. Preliminary findings suggest children ask more questions of parents, and parents are more likely to give answers to those questions; further, parents are more likely to reformulate their children's errors, and children are more likely to take up parents' reformulations.

In study two, 80 3- and 4-year-old children free-played with a set of toys, with either their parent or sibling. We transcribed the conversations, and coded the questions children asked, the responses given, and any reformulations of their grammatical errors. Preliminary findings again suggest that children ask more questions of parents, and parents are more likely to give answers to those questions; further, parents are more likely to reformulate their children's errors, and children are more likely to take up parent's reformulations.

These findings suggest that while input from other individuals is possibly useful, parental input is privileged in some ways. This has implications for how children learn most effectively about the world.

Word Count: 399

## References

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