

The Emergence of *Issues* in Everyday Discussions between Adults and Children

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ABSTRACT

This paper studies how discussion issues emerge and argumentative discussions are initiated. Studying how discussions are initiated enables us to understand who is a legitimate instigator of a discussion issue and to what extent the freedom rule of argumentation is granted in a given context. This is of particular importance in asymmetrical contexts, such as discussions between adults and children. In this paper, we consider the case of adult-child discussions taking place in an informal family setting and propose a typology of how issues emerge and discussions are initiated. This analysis shows that, in informal settings, children are able to introduce new issues for argumentation. It demonstrates that in collaborative argumentation, issues have precedence over standpoints. Finally, it indicates that the possibility of introducing new issues represents the ultimate application of the freedom rule of a critical discussion.

Keywords: Argumentation Theory, Argumentative discussion, Asymmetry, Critical discussion, Collaborative argumentation, Confrontation stage, Dialogical argumentation, Difference of opinion, Family discussion, Freedom rule, Legitimacy

INTRODUCTION

In the study of argumentation, it is generally accepted that argumentative discussions originate from some form of disagreement or incompatibility. According to the pragma-dialectical approach, a discussion originates when there is a *difference of opinion* between a protagonist and an antagonist (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 2004, p. 60): a protagonist puts forward a standpoint and an antagonist raises a doubt or advances an opposing standpoint (ibid.). Barth & Krabbe (1982) speak of *conflict of opinion* and Plantin (2005) sees argumentation as arising from an *incompatibility* of discourses. The difference of opinion which forms the starting point of the argumentation is often referred to as a discussion *issue*.

This paper sets out to analyse how differences of opinion emerge in the course of dialogue, using the setting of interpersonal interactions between adults and children. Accepting the premise that a difference of opinion is the origin of an argumentative discussion, we examine the question of *how differences of opinion emerge in dialogical contexts*; what steps are taken to raise the issues around which argumentative discussions revolve and, finally, who makes these dialogical moves. Theories of argumentation normally provide analyses of what happens once an argumentative discussion has started. Our intention is to rewind the process a step further and study how argumentation starts, i.e. how it

emerges within naturally occurring conversations. Based on empirical data collected in family conversations, this paper proposes a *typology* of how issues emerge in adult-children discussions. We assume a discursive analytical standpoint, because we are interested in a phenomenological description of how discussions start. This standpoint fits well with a dialogical view of argumentation, in the sense of Plantin (2005) and Jacquin (2014), because we place emphasis on how argumentation emerges and develops in a process of interaction.

The question of how argumentative discussions emerge is not insignificant, for at least two reasons. Firstly, in general, the analysis of specific contextualized communicative interactions allows us to understand the specificities of real-life argumentation in context. In a family context, not all conversations are argumentative; so how is it that argumentation starts? Secondly, and more specifically, to frame it in Plantin's (2005) terms, understanding who can raise issues for argumentative discussions sheds light on the question of *legitimacy*, i.e. considering how much space is given to children to raise issues to be debated.

This question is all the more important in contexts that are not too rigidly pre-structured from an institutional point of view, both in terms of their issue management and of who has the power and legitimacy to raise an issue for discussion. In some of these contexts, *collaborative* argumentation is expected, as different parties are required to contribute to a "reasoned collective handling of disagreement" (Schwarz & Baker, 2017, p. 134, footnote 1). Family conversation, which will be central to this paper, is one such context, because it is open to different goals (also depending on the specific family considered) and is often not an adversarial context.

Generally speaking, in family conversations there are likely to be no previously established constraints on who can raise an issue for discussion and what type of issue it should be. For this reason, it is particularly important to consider who is considered legitimate in introducing issues. In this kind of setting, we might say that the possibility of opening up a new discussion (i.e. of raising a new issue) is a manifestation of the application of the *freedom rule* of a critical discussion, which states that "Participants may not prevent each other from advancing standpoints or from calling standpoints into question" (van Eemeren and Grootendorst, 2004, p. 192). We interpret the possibility of raising discussion issues as the ultimate expression of the freedom rule. In fact, being able to put forward arguments (or even standpoints) concerning someone else's issues would be an incomplete freedom, if it were not complemented by the possibility of raising one's own issues, i.e. submitting open problems to other interlocutors. Notably, in order for an issue to emerge in adult-children discussions, the situation has to be perceived as a relatively free and safeguarded space by all the participants, in particular the children (Perret-Clermont & Iannaccone, 2005; Greco, Mehmeti & Perret-Clermont, 2017). This is not always a given in adult-children discussions, because of the existing asymmetry of authority and knowledge that often gives the adult the freedom to decide whether something will be discussed at all.

The rest of the paper is organised as follows. In the next section, we will describe the theoretical and methodological starting points of our work. After this, we will propose a typology of the emergence of issues and illustrate it by means of examples taken from an empirical corpus. Finally, we will discuss our findings and propose paths for future research.

THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL STARTING POINTS FOR THE ANALYSIS

The notion of *issue*

In his *Topics*, Aristotle introduces the term *próblema*, (Gr. *πρόβλημα*) as the “subject of reasonings” (Tredennick & Forster, 1960, p. 279), i.e. a question that can be answered by yes or no¹ and that is subject to debate. This concept was later translated as the Latin *quaestio* (for a more detailed discussion on these concepts, see Rigotti & Greco, in preparation). The notion of issue as used in contemporary argumentation theory is close to the definition proposed by ancient scholars. Toulmin (1958) uses the term *problem* to refer to the starting point in an argumentative discussion and suggests that the best way to formulate a problem is “to ask a clear question” (Toulmin, 1958, p. 17). However, he is aware that “in one’s confused search for a question” (Toulmin, 1958, p. 17), problems are not always clearly expressed. In this passage, Toulmin seems to suggest that identifying an issue for argumentation is not always easy and sometimes, in particular circumstances, it might emerge only in a confused way as participants struggle to understand the problem they are trying to solve. This is of particular interest for adult-children discussions in informal settings, in which issues are not defined from the outset: Toulmin’s observation indirectly hints at the fact that an analyst needs to reconstruct how an issue emerges.

For Plantin, the issue (Fr. *question argumentative*) is located when discourse and counter-discourse meet: “Une question est aussi engendrée par la contradiction discours / contre-discours” (Plantin, 2005, p. 57). Similarly, Jean Goodwin defines the issue as “a more or less determinate object of contention that is, under the circumstances, worth arguing about” (Goodwin, 2002, p. 86). Goodwin’s definition is particularly interesting for the aim of this paper, since we will be dealing with situations in which it is not always clear to all the discussants whether something is an issue of discussion and what this issue is – or at least, the issue is not defined from the outset.

The pragma-dialectical approach to argumentation considers the issue as a “propositional question: a question which offers a choice between two contradictory propositions” (van Eemeren et al., 2014, p. 62). Given this definition, we suggest that the pragma-dialectical notion of “difference of opinion”, as a form of disagreement in which different standpoints can be advanced, may be seen as equivalent to the ancient idea of problem/*quaestio*. Therefore, in our view, it is possible to interpret the concept of difference of opinion, around which a confrontation stage of a critical discussion revolves, as a discussion issue. Pragma-dialecticians put more emphasis on the notion of standpoint (van Eemeren & Grootendorst 2004); however, for us the notion of issue (difference of opinion) is dominant, because we are analysing settings in which argumentation is not a polemical confrontation but a joint attempt to resolve a problem collaboratively. In these kinds of settings, the notion of *issue* has precedence over the notion of *standpoint*, as standpoints may emerge and evolve during the course of the discussion and in response to issues that are considered worth discussing (Greco Morasso, Miserez-Caperos & Perret-Clermont, 2015).

The pragma-dialectical analytic overview

In order to analyse the emergence of discussions between adults and children, we will introduce tools for the analysis of an argumentative discussion as theoretical starting points. We will use the pragma-dialectical model of a critical discussion (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1984, 2004) for the general reconstruction of the argumentative discussion and the visualisation of the difference of opinion and how it is resolved by means of the *analytic overview* (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1992, p. 93-95). Designing an analytic overview “involves examining exactly which points are at issue, which procedural and material points of departure are chosen, which explicit, implicit, indirect, and unexpressed arguments are advanced”, as well as examining the argumentation structures and the argument schemes underlying the arguments advanced (van Eemeren & Grootendorst 2004, p. 96). Given the aim of our paper, particular attention will be paid to reconstructing the *confrontation stage* of the critical discussion, in which the difference of opinion emerges (van Eemeren & Grootendorst 2004, p. 60).

Corpus

The empirical corpus considered in this paper is made up of discussions between children and adults which were collected for the purposes of the project (name omitted for anonymity) between January and March 2016 in different regions of Switzerland. It consists of everyday discussions between small children and adults or between children. The corpus contains discussions in different languages, with some discussions being carried out in more than one language. Data has been collected in the following languages (in order of frequency): Swiss German, Italian, French, Spanish and Urdu.

The researcher [name omitted for anonymity] visited each family at least twice for at least two hours on each occasion. The families were not given any specific task or instructions about what to do during this time; the recorded discussions occurred naturally. The family members who were present during these visits carried on with their daily activities such as housework, playing etc.; they were told to behave as if the researcher were not there and asked not to treat her as a guest. Although we recognise that the presence of the researcher will have had some impact on the interaction, we nevertheless consider that it is not unusual for children to play, eat or carry out other routine activities in front of an adult who is not a member of their family. This happens, for example, whenever friends of the parents visit the family and on other occasions. During the data collection process, the researcher noted that most children felt at ease when playing or talking in front of her (and, occasionally, with her).

In order to understand the situational context (family rules, habits etc.), the researcher held in-depth discussions with the parents while collecting the data. She practiced a sort of ethnography of argumentation, which is particularly important when collecting oral data. During the phase of data transcription and analysis, the researcher was able to refer back to the families in order to clarify contextual details of a specific situation.

TOWARDS A TYPOLOGY OF THE EMERGENCE OF ISSUES

So far, we have identified seven different categories that distinguish different ways in which issues emerge. These categories have been identified through both a careful analysis of the different situations which arose in the empirical data and through analytical reflection. Analytical reflection refers to the fact that in one case we have added a category (2B) that is justifiable as potential, even though we did not find concrete examples of it in our corpus. For the main categories in which the child has an active role in the discussion, we will provide examples from our corpus. Following this, (in the Discussion section), we will give an overview of the different categories. The questions that guided our analysis were as follows: “How do differences of opinion / discussions between adults and children arise in the course of discussion?”, “Who proposes the issue of discussion and how?” “What roles do the children assume in these discussions and what are the adults’ reactions to the children’s contributions during the remainder of the argumentative discussion?”.

Type 1A: A child problematizes something in an adult’s utterance

In the first category, we classify situations in which *a child problematizes an utterance by an adult* by putting forward an opposing standpoint or by casting doubt on the utterance. The child may also support his or her position with one or more arguments. In the observed interactions that correspond to type 1A, the adult does not necessarily intend to open an argumentative discussion; the adult’s intervention might simply consist of a statement that he or she did not feel required justification. By problematizing what the adult says, children *de facto* become the initiators of an argumentative discussion; their interventions, in fact, turn the adult’s utterance into a standpoint that he or she needs to defend. From a pragma-dialectical perspective, in this case, the child would be considered the antagonist within the discussion, whilst the

adult would be considered the protagonist, that is, the interlocutor who has advanced a standpoint. However, viewed in terms of how issues emerge, the active role of initiator of an argumentative discussion must be credited to the child: without the child's intervention, the adult's utterance would not be the subject of an argumentative discussion at all.

The ghost

The following example illustrates a situation of type 1A. This discussion took place in Western Switzerland in March 2016. The researcher was playing a labyrinth board game² with Robin³ (aged 5 years, 6 months). The board depicts a labyrinth made up of squares that link together to form a series of paths. Whilst some of the squares are fixed, others can be moved around. By moving the squares, players create paths in order to reach specific icons on the board. In the passage of play preceding excerpt 1, the researcher was required to make her way to an icon representing a ghost. However, she did not realise that there were two different types of ghost; so had made a path to the 'wrong' one, i.e. a different ghost to the one she was supposed to reach. The discussion in excerpt 1 (table 1), conducted in two different but mutually comprehensible varieties of Swiss German, starts immediately after this moment.

Table 1. *Excerpt 1: Participants: Robin (5 years, 6 months), researcher*

Turn	Speaker	Transcript ⁴	Our translation
(0:15:54.4)			
1	Researcher	lug i bi scho bim gschpängscht acho (1.0) iz chunnsch du=	look i have already reached the ghost (1.0)
2	Robin	da isch nöd ds richtige gspängscht (1.0)	that's not the right ghost (1.0)
3	Researcher	nid↑	no↑
4	Robin	nä:i	no::
5	Researcher	i bi da:s ((zeigt auf ihre spielfigur)) du bisch grünen iz chunn iz chunnt d flädermus wo isch d flädermus ufm spili↑	i am this one ((indicates her token)) the green token is yours now it's the bat the bat's turn where is the bat on the board↑
6	Robin	mhmhm (3.0) du muesch da: ((zeigt auf das gespenst, welches researcher eigentlich erreichen sollte)) da isch de gliche ((das gespenst ist auf dem spielfeld gleich wie auf dem kärtchen, das anzeigt welche figur gesucht werden muss)) (1.0)	mhmhm (3.0) you have to go there ((indicates the ghost that matches the ghost the researcher is required to reach)) this is the same ((compares the card indicating the item to be reached and the ghost he indicated on the board)) (1.0)
7	Researcher	ou ja du hesch rächt (1.0)	oh yeah you are right (1.0)
8	Robin	((lacht))	((laughs))
9	Researcher	h:ä: aus zurück	hah have to go all the way back
(0:16:20.7)			

The discussion starts with the researcher telling Robin that she already reached the ghost (turn 1). Robin replies that this is not the right ghost (turn 2) and confirms this in turn 4. At turn 6, Robin shows the researcher where she should have gone to reach the right ghost. The researcher realises that she was wrong (turn 7). Robin laughs and the researcher says that she has to put her token back to the beginning (turn 9).

Table 2 represents an analytical overview of excerpt 1; we have added the numeration of turns.

Table 2. Analytic overview of excerpt 1

Issue: <i>Did the researcher reach the ghost?</i> (Robin)			
<i>Researcher, Standpoint 1:</i> Turn 1	1 (yes,) I have already reached the ghost	<i>Robin, Standpoint 2:</i> Turn 2	2 (no) that's not the right ghost
<i>Argument:</i> Turn 5	1.1 I am this one ((shows her token))	<i>Argument:</i> Turn 6	2.1 You have to go there ((indicates the ghost that matches the ghost the researcher is required to reach)) this is the same ((compares the card indicating the item to be reached and the ghost he indicated on the board)).

In this situation, Robin problematizes the researcher's utterance that she has reached her ghost on the board. By going against the researcher at turn 2, Robin initiates an argumentative discussion, although the researcher's initial statement was not intended as argumentative. Therefore, the child is the active initiator of the argumentative discussion. At first, the researcher does not understand what Robin is saying. Only when Robin insists and argues by pointing out the different ghosts on the board (argument 2.1), does the researcher realise her mistake and accept the situation as an argumentative discussion⁵. Robin proves to be a persistent discussant, because he maintains his standpoint even though he finds himself in a situation that is characterised by asymmetry. The normal adult-child asymmetry is even increased by the fact that it is the first time Robin has played this game, whilst the adult has some experience of it.

Type 1B: A child opens up a sub-issue

Type 1B consists of discussions in which *a child opens up a sub-issue* by problematizing an adult's utterance. We distinguish this case from 1A because the sub-issue is opened within an already ongoing argumentative discussion: the child's intervention shifts the discussion from the main issue to a sub-issue, which can be connected to a greater or lesser extent to the main issue (see the examples discussed in Schär 2017). This situation belongs to the same overarching type as type 1A, because in both cases the child problematizes something that an adult has said. Whereas in type 1A this leads to establishing a new discussion, in type 1B it opens up a sub-discussion.

Type 2A: An adult problematizes something in a child's utterance

Under type 2A, we subsume situations in which *an adult problematizes something in a child's utterance*.

Type 2A is thus the inverse of type 1A. Since the adult problematizes a child's utterance, he or she initiates the discussion. From the point of view of adult-children argumentation, it is important to acknowledge here that, if an adult accepts entering into a discussion with a child (by problematizing his or her utterances and, possibly, giving counter-arguments), this means that the adult accepts the child as a rational interlocutor.

The memory game example

The following example was recorded in Central Switzerland in February 2016 and concerns, once again, a discussion about a board game⁶. Elina (aged 3 years, 8 months) was playing a memory game with her father. In this game, the players' goal is to locate two matching cards within a set of cards placed face down. Every player gets to turn over two cards per turn. The discussion starts when Elina has finished her turn: she has turned over two non-matching cards. Table 3 reports the discussion, which took place in a variety of Swiss German.

Table 3. *Excerpt 2: Participants: Elina (3 years, 8 months), her father*

Turn	Speaker	Transcript	Our Translation
(0:11:52.5)			
1	Elina	aber weisch was↑=	but you know what↑=
2	Father	was↑=	what↑=
3	Elina	papi	daddy
4	Father	nei	no
5	Elina	done ((will ein kärtchen aufdecken))	here ((wants to turn over a card))
6	Father	ou achtung ich bi dra	oh hang on it's my turn
7	Elina	aber andoch papi=	but no daddy=
8	Father	nei wart schnäll Elina jetz darfsch du nid=	no hang on Elina it's not your turn=
9	Elina	aber done chan=	but here can=
10	Father	du muesch ⁷ nochethär=	your turn is after that=
11	Elina	nei ich mues mal ehm=	no i have to ehm=
12	Father	wart schnäl du darfsch [immer nume zwoi	wait a minute you can [always only turn over two per turn
13	Elina	[glichi sueche= ((steht auf))	[look for the same ones= ((gets up from her chair))
14	Father	ja ebe a ha:lt halt halt Elina iz muesch abhocke=	yeah but wai:t wait wait Elina now you have to sit down=
15	Elina	nei das hemr z chrabolino ((in der krippe)) mal so zwoi gmacht ⁸	no we did this in chrabolino ((in day care)) two times
16	Father	du hesch ja zwoi gno	but you did take two
17	Elina	aber ich z chrabolino het nomal zwoi mache nomal zwoi mache nomal zwoi mache und nomal zwoi mache=	but in chrabolino i took two again two again two again and two again=
18	Father	ja de bisch ja numeno du dra=	yeah but then it's only you playing=
19	Elina	und nomal zwoi mache	and took again two
(0:12:25.0)			

At the beginning of excerpt 2, Elina points to a third card that she would like to turn over (turns 1-5). Her father stops her, explaining that now it is his turn (turn 6). Elina does not agree (turn 7). Her father tells her to wait, since it is not her turn (turns 8 and 10), whilst Elina continues to indicate the card she would like to turn over (9-11). When the father explains that she can only turn over two cards per turn (turn 12), Elina gets up from her chair and tells him that they did take two at Chrabolino, her daycare nursery (turn 15). Her father then reminds her that she has already taken two (turn 16). Elina explains that she carried on taking two at the nursery (turn 17). The father counters that in this case, Elina would be the only person playing (turn 18). Elina goes on saying that she kept turning over two more cards at the nursery (turn 19). This discussion is represented in an analytic overview in table 4:

Table 4. Analytic overview of excerpt 3

Issue: Can Elina turn over more than two memory cards in one turn?			
<i>Father</i>		<i>Elina</i>	
<i>Father, Standpoint 1:</i>		<i>Elina, Standpoint 2:</i>	
Turn 12	1 (no)	Turns 11 + 13	2 (yes)
<i>Argument:</i>		<i>Argument:</i>	
Turn 18	1.1 then it's only you playing	Turn 17	2.1 in the nursery I took two and then two more and two more

Elina is aware of the rules of the memory game, namely that each player gets to turn over two cards per turn: before the beginning of the discussion presented in table 4, she has herself explained these rules to her father. However, Elina is trying to change the rules in this specific situation. When her father problematizes her behaviour, this raises an issue: “Can Elina turn over more than two memory cards in one turn?”, which would be non-debatable, if one followed the rules of the game strictly.

The discussion of this issue is interesting because it displays a “clash” in the arguments advanced by father and daughter in terms of the implicit understanding of what counts as an authority when it comes to defining the game’s rules. At turn 12, the father invokes the authority of the game’s rules. At turns 15, 17 and 19, Elina invokes the rules made at the daycare nursery she attends (Chrabolino) as an external authority. The difference of opinion between father and daughter ultimately boils down to this conflict over what can be considered an authority: this conflict of authorities makes the whole discussion over the issue presented in table 4 legitimate.

Board games are often played in Elina’s family, with her father also being a creator of children’s board games. However, Elina has also experienced a different authority at her nursery and she explores this difference through the discussion. Significantly, the father’s reaction at turn 18 shows that he acknowledges Elina’s argumentation, considering her a rational interlocutor. In fact, he stops insisting on the rules and puts forward a different argument as to why Elina should not turn over a third card (“yeah but then it’s only you playing”). In view of this, it can be said that this case portrays a situation in which the freedom rule exists sufficiently for a child to be able to set a discussion issue without being reprimanded. At least within this small extract, the father allows Elina’s behaviour; indeed he accepts a discussion of whether her behaviour is appropriate.

Type 2B: An adult problematizes something in a child's utterance and opens up a sub-issue

In analogy with type 2A, one could add type 2B to this typology, in which an adult opens up a *sub-issue* within a discussion on a main issue, when problematizing a child's utterance. We do not have examples of this category in our corpus; however, at a theoretical level, this category is possible.

Type 3: A child problematizes something in a peer's utterance

Type 3 encompasses discussions that arise when a child problematizes something in a peer's utterance. Hence, a child is responsible for the emergence of the issue and thereby also for the initiation of the discussion. This type is needed to complete the picture of possible discussions in a family context between adults and children and between children themselves. Even though it is of limited importance for this paper because we are interested in adult-children discussions, examples of this category have been found in the collected data.

Type 4: A child raises an issue by putting forward a standpoint and an argument supporting that standpoint

Type 4 consists of situations in which a child raises an issue by putting forward a standpoint and directly adding an argument that supports that standpoint. In this case, the difference of opinion is not explicitly stated, but it can be reconstructed as implicit (van Eemeren & Grootendorst 2004, p. 21). Because in this case children advance a standpoint and justify it with arguments, arguably they are assuming that their adult interlocutors will not immediately agree with their standpoint. In type 4, the argumentative discussion is immediately opened by the child. In this regard, this is a situation in which the dialogical exchange is less prominent than in the cases seen above. However, it still counts as a case of dialogical argumentation in the sense that the child's argument is directed toward his or her adult interlocutor.

The pencil box

The following example took place in January 2016, when the uncle of Fatima (aged 3 years, 4 months), who lives in Switzerland, was on the phone to his brother, Fatima's father, who lives in India with the rest of the family⁹. This was one of the first times Fatima had wanted to speak to her uncle on the phone. Compared to other children in the family, Fatima started speaking rather late. Now that her speaking skills have improved, she enjoys talking to people. When giving her argument to her uncle she refers to her younger sister Aliya (turn 5), who was 23 months¹⁰ old at that time. This example (table 5) has been translated from Urdu.

Table 5. *Excerpt 3: Participants: Fatima (3 years, 4 months), her father, her uncle*

Turn	Speaker	Transliteration	Our Translation
1	Fatima	yeh kaun hai↑	who is it ((on the phone))↑
2	Father	Imran mamu hai	it's uncle Imran
3	Fatima	Mujhe isse baat karni hain	i have to talk to him
4	Father	((gives the phone to Fatima))	((father gives the phone to Fatima))
5	Fatima	Imran mamu mujhe (mujhe) pansal box lana hai mujhe (mujhe) pidhai (padhai) karni hai maine book reading ki na Aliya ne bhi ki pidhai (padhai)	uncle Imran bring me a pencil box I have to study (.) I finished with book reading ¹¹ Aliya also did the book reading

This interaction starts when Fatima asks her father whom he is speaking to (turn 1). When she is told that it is her uncle Imran (turn 2), she tells her father that she has to speak to him (turn 3). She tells her uncle that he needs to bring her a pencil box, since she has to study (turn 5). She also tells him that she and her sister Aliya have already finished reading a book.

The argumentative discussion can be represented in the following analytic overview (table 6). It is instigated when Fatima puts forward her standpoint, which she immediately supports with two arguments. In this discussion, possible objections by the antagonist are projected, because Fatima’s uncle does not talk.

Table 6. Analytic overview of excerpt 4

Issue: Should uncle Imran bring me a pencil box? (Fatima)		
<i>Fatima, Standpoint 1</i>		<i>Antagonist,</i>
Turn 5	1 (yes) uncle Imran should bring me a pencil box	projected doubt
<i>Argument</i>		
Turn 5	1.1 I have to study 1.2 I finished reading the book and so has Aliya	

Fatima’s argumentation can be interpreted as a request to her uncle: she asks her uncle to bring her a pencil box, implying that he needs to buy one. Moreover, Fatima, gives two arguments to support her standpoint, which signals that she is trying to persuade her interlocutor that her request is reasonable. In this case, therefore, the discussion issue is opened by a direct initiative by one of the participants (Fatima), who explicitly puts forward a standpoint that corresponds to the issue “Should uncle Imran bring me a pencil box?” and supports it with arguments.

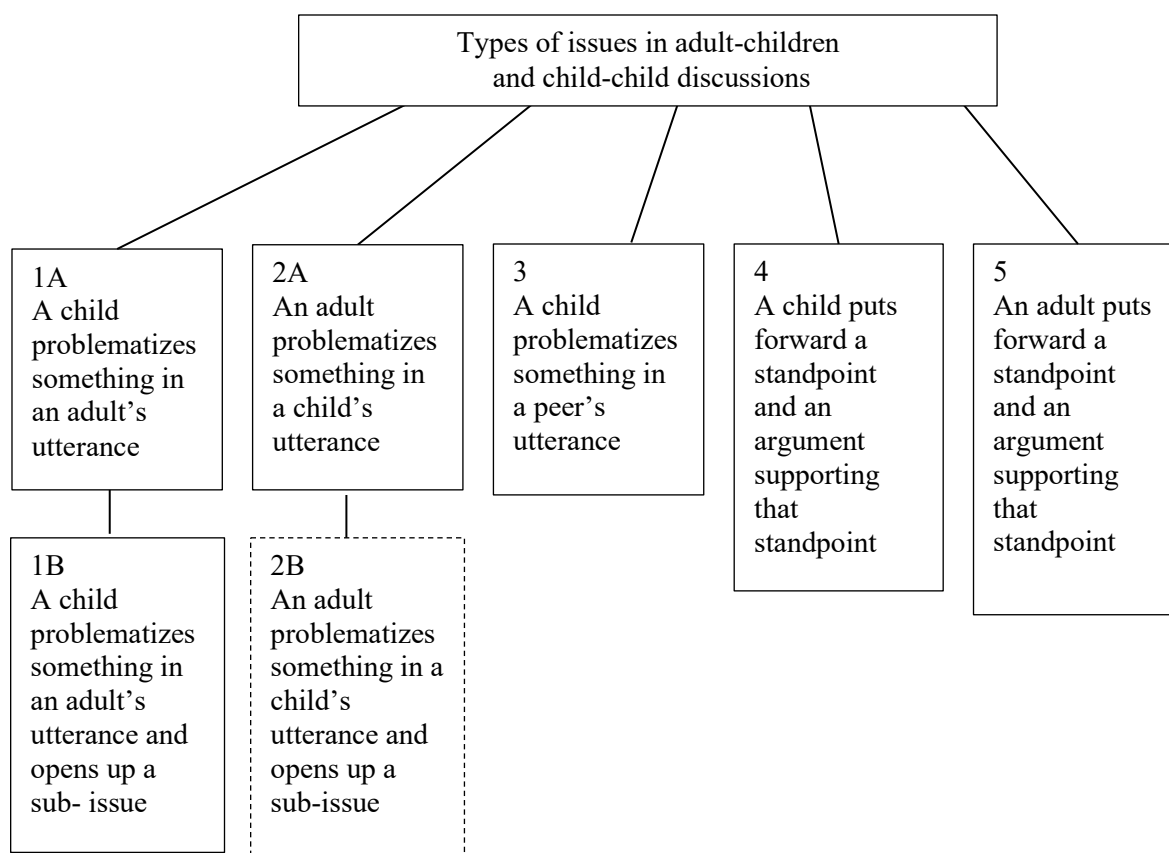
Type 5: An adult raises an issue by putting forward a standpoint and an argument supporting that standpoint

Type 5 is the inverse of type 4: it is the adult that raises an issue by putting forward a standpoint and at least one argument. We do not discuss this type further, because our main focus is on children’s initiatives.

DISCUSSION

The categories illustrated above concern types of dialogical interactions in which differences of opinion occur between adults and children in informal family discussions. Figure 1 represents a synoptic representation of the typology drawn in the previous section.

Figure 1: Typology of the emergence of issues. The dotted line around type 2B indicates that we did not find any empirical examples of this theoretically possible category in our data



A number of observations may be made about this typology. Firstly, there is an important distinction to be drawn between those types in which the difference of opinion emerges in conversation through the contribution of both the participants (types 1A, 1B, 2A, 2B and 3) and those types in which the difference of opinion is implicit (types 4 and 5). In cases 1A and 2A, we see the argumentative discussion emerging from a conversation that is not necessarily argumentative at the outset. These cases confirm our hypothesis that it is important to distinguish the notion of issue from the notion of standpoint, particularly in the case of collaborative argumentation in a relatively unstructured context such as family conversation. In fact, in collaborative argumentation an issue may emerge as a problem, something that does not fit the expectations of the conversation's participants, such as, for example, Elina's request to turn over more than two cards in one turn in excerpt 2. Participants' standpoints may be defined and negotiated later in the interaction.

Secondly, our findings demonstrate the different roles of adults and children. In cases 1A, 1B, 3 and 4, the child takes an active role, by problematizing an interlocutor's utterance or by proposing a new argumentative discussion *ex novo*. These categories are interesting in terms of understanding children's spontaneous engagement in argumentation, and what types of issues they raise, i.e. what they consider worthy of discussion. This kind of analysis might open up a new perspective on children's argumentative skills by focusing on their capacity to initiate argumentative discussions. In 2A and 5 (and potentially 2B), it is the adult who originates the argumentative discussion. Although these latter cases might seem less relevant to someone who is interested in children's argumentation, by opening argumentative discussions with children, the adults show that they take what the children say very seriously and consider them to be rational interlocutors.

As stated in the introduction to this paper, we interpret the capacity to propose issues for discussion as an expression of the freedom rule of a critical discussion: in ideal terms, no interlocutor should be prevented from proposing standpoints and arguments; but they should also be free to propose discussion issues, provided they respect the general constraints of specific institutional contexts. The opening of discussion issues may depend on the extent to which children feel at ease in engaging in argumentation and how they interpret the boundaries of what is acceptable in terms of argumentatively challenging an adult. In the findings presented in this paper, we have shown examples of children who initiate argumentative discussions. In these cases, we found that the adults involved seem to allow space for the children to advance standpoints and arguments and also to open up new issues. However, it might be that the same situation is not found in other contexts. For this reason, having a typology of how issues might emerge also helps define how the freedom rule is interpreted in different contexts and how adults react, for example, to the introduction of issues by children.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, we have proposed a typology of how argumentative discussions emerge in conversations between young children (aged 2-6) and adults in informal family settings. This typology is meant to complement existing research in Argumentation Theory by describing different discursive possibilities concerning how issues emerge dialogically. This paves the way for further research on how argumentation starts in conversations that are not entirely argumentative. Our findings show that, in the informal settings we considered, both adults and young children open discussion issues. Most notably, discussions can be opened by a person, because he or she holds a viewpoint that he or she wants to support; or they can arise because something is said (or something happens) that creates a problem which one of the parties thinks is worth discussing. This typology has been drawn up on the basis of adult-children discussions in a family environment, but, as an analytical tool, it could well serve as a model to describe other types of conversation.

Moreover, although the research conducted for this paper did not involve a formal educational setting, it might be interpreted as contributing to a study of children's argumentative skills at a very young age. Specifically, the capacity to raise discussion issues that children demonstrate, means that, on some occasions at least, they are not only able but are also eager to open argumentative discussions. Studying how adults react to children's willingness to open a new issue or sub-issue might provide analysts with a measure of the freedom rule in educational contexts.

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APPENDIX

Sign	Description
↑	rising intonation
(.)	micro pause
(())	nonverbal component
(1.0)	pause of 1 second
xxx	incomprehensible utterance
[overlapping segments
=	immediately following turn

ENDNOTES

¹ In Aristotle's Greek, the issue was introduced by the particle *πότερον* (Lat. *utrum*), which indicates a choice between two alternatives.

² This board game is produced by the Ravensburger Spielverlag; it is called "Das verrückte Labyrinth".

³ All names (of persons and institutions) have been changed for reasons of privacy.

⁴ The transcription is based on a slightly modified version of Traverso (1999).

⁵ The researcher is one of the authors of this paper. We are therefore able to state the adult's perception of the situation clearly.

⁶ In our data, we recorded different interactions around family board games that were rich in terms of argumentation.

⁷ Elina's father uses several modal verbs in Swiss German. He uses 'can' (*dürfen*) when he refers to the rules of the game (turns 8 and 12) and 'have to' (*müssen*) in turns 10 and 14. In the English translation their sense was respected.

⁸ Elina uses a sentence structure that does not correspond to the one normally used in this variety of Swiss German. This may be due to the fact that Elina speaks Armenian with her mother.

⁹ In this example the geographical disposition is different with respect to the examples presented before. The children live in India with their family, whereas a part of their extended family, their uncle, lives in Switzerland. The communication took place on the telephone.

¹⁰ In the region of India where this family lives, the children learn the alphabets in a playful way from the age of 2 in daycare. This is due to the fact that they have to learn three alphabets simultaneously (Urdu, English and Hindi).

¹¹ The dialogue takes place in Urdu, but Fatima makes a code-switch and uses the English term here.