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## CHAPTER 8

### **Variations in adult use of referring expressions**

#### **during storytelling in different interactional settings**

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During the language acquisition process children experience language in different interactional settings. In terms of child-directed speech, we argue that children are exposed to different models that vary according to different factors. This chapter aims at grasping some aspects of these models, with a focus on referring expressions. Data consists of narratives in three interactional settings: mother-child interactions (Mother-to-Child context), kindergarten sessions (School context), and adults telling a story to an experimenter (Adult-to-Experimenter context). Children were aged from 3 to 7. We compared the participants' uses of referring expressions in these three contexts and, in the Mother-to-Child context, mothers interacting with a language impaired child or not. Results show that adults' uses of nouns and clitic pronouns vary according to the interactional setting, and that the uses of mothers and teachers when interacting with children at home or in school do not correspond to those of adults in an experimental setting.

**Keywords:** Child-directed speech, interactional settings, joint storytelling, mothers, nouns, developmental language disorders, teachers, third-person pronouns.

## **1. Why study the uses of referring expressions among adults?**

This chapter looks at how different adults use referring expressions in spoken narratives in different interactional settings. The adults whose uses are analyzed have different statuses (mothers vs. teachers), different interlocutors (adults vs. children, children with or without developmental language disorder, DLD), and their language is observed across different social contexts (home vs. school). We argue that these interactional settings influence the uses of referring expressions in specific ways that we strive to explore.

Two general observations were the starting point of these studies. The first one concerns the discrepant results of studies on reference among children (Hickmann, Schimke & Colonna, 2015). The second is that the productions of young children are often compared to those of adults (or older children) when asked to tell a story to an experimenter (Hickmann, 2003; Jisa, 2000), in which case the adult (or older children) productions are considered as the target model of development that the child must attain.

Concerning the first observation, certain studies, including the original one by Karmiloff-Smith (1985), have shown that it is not until a later age (about 9 years) that children master the anaphoric value of pronouns and the proper use of definite and indefinite noun phrases (for a review, see Hickmann, 2003). Other studies (Allen, Hughes & Skarabela, 2015; Salazar Orvig, Marcos, Morgenstern, Hassan, Leber-Marin & Parès, 2010; Serratrice, 2005; Skarabela, 2007) have shown, on the contrary, that in dialogue, children under age four exhibit an early sensitivity to the presence of referents and their accessibility in discourse.

As de Weck and Salazar Orvig (2014) pointed out, these opposing results can be explained essentially in terms of both the authors' diverging theoretical views and conceptions of anaphora, and by the fact that the data analyzed are drawn from very different settings that have a definite impact on children's productions. In one case, the child is asked to produce a narrative in front of an experimenter; in the other, the child is interacting with a familiar person, during activities that are also familiar. The experimental contexts in the former case are thus quite different from what children encounter in their everyday life. This may account for why young children's use of referring expressions in this type of context differs from how they use them in dialogue, where they seem to have better skills.

Therefore, regarding the second finding, the productions of adults and older children in an experimental context must be seen as resulting from a lengthy

acculturation to different narrative forms, one of which is written narrative. Such acculturation is strongly linked to schooling. Hence, comparing the younger children productions to the latter's does not take into consideration the fact that this model is not grounded in the children's initial experience.

As to the diverging theoretical views, and in short, in one case, authors consider that children use referring expressions with a deictic value before mastering their anaphoric value towards the age of 9 (Hickmann, 2003; Karmiloff-Smith, 1985). In the other, authors pose that the acquisition of reference is grounded in dialogue and in the communicative experience of children tightly linked to "language games" (Salazar Orvig et al., 2010; Salazar Orvig, Marcos, Heurdier & da Silva, 2018).

It follows from these considerations that it is necessary to explore the diversity of usage children actually encounter in narratives, which constitute the models upon which they build their own uses. In order to address this issue and account for this diversity, we need to study how the use of referring expressions by adults differs according to whether they are telling a story to an experimenter or telling a story with a child. Based on the assumption that the models to which children are exposed affect their language productions, the study of adult usage in these two settings is indispensable for understanding the development of reference in children. As brought out by research on the links between a child's acquisition of reference and discursive patterns (Clancy, 1996) or on the types of questions asked by the

experimenter (Campbell, Brooks & Tomasello, 2000; Serratrice, 2008), analyzing adult usage provides insight into the way children acquire and use referring expressions.

Except for Bamberg (1986), and more recently de Weck and Salazar Orvig (2014), de Weck, Salazar Orvig, Rezzonico, Bernasconi & Vinel (2019), Vinel (2014), and Marcos, Salazar Orvig, da Silva & Heurdier, (Chapter 7, this volume), few researchers have looked into these fundamental questions from a dialogical and interactionist angle. In the research on child-directed speech (CDS), especially for French, there is indeed a gap that needs to be filled. Moreover, among the studies that have dealt with preschool children's conversational partners other than family members, such as teachers, few have focused on reference. Other than Vinel (2014), we know of no studies for French dealing specifically with the construction of reference in narratives by teachers.

Yet, school is an important arena for child socialization in our societies. In France, children go to school at an early age, sometimes attending preschools – which are full-fledged schools in France – at the young age of two and a half. Preschool prepares children for future learning in elementary school by placing priority on language via book reading and narratives. The substantial rise in preschool attendance has allowed the schools to offer new cultural and artistic awareness to children between the ages of two and six, and to develop activities revolving around books (Grossmann, 1996). Reading-based

activities in school are different from those at home, and this most certainly affects the referring expressions used both by adults (teachers in this case) and by children.

## **2. The diversity of models in child directed speech**

Children experience a range of discourse models, the variety of which depends on numerous factors: the activity being carried out (de Weck, Hassan, Heurdier, Klein & Salagnac, Chapter 9, this volume; Rezzonico, de Weck, Salazar Orvig, da Silva & Rahmati, 2014), the interlocutor (François, 1993; Gallaway & Richards, 1994; Khomsi, 1982; Rondal, 1983, 1978), parental styles of narrative elicitation (Peterson & McCabe, 1992), and sometimes also according to whether or not the child has a developmental language disorder (de Weck, 2010). The verbal scaffolding that mothers provide to their children with developmental language disorder is both similar and different from that given to typically developing children. The similarities mainly pertain to the structural characteristics of the child directed speech (CDS), at the phonological, lexical, and morphosyntactic levels. The differences concern interactionist aspects (Conti-Ramsden & Friel-Patti, 1983).

Most of the CDS research has focused on children under three years of age (Gallaway & Richards, 1994; Geekie & Raban, 1994; Rondal, 1978). However, children's speaking skills continue to develop well beyond the age of three: with schooling, they acquire discursive skills related to literacy (Dickinson & Smith, 1994; Hoffman, 1993; Morrow, 1985; Sulzby & Teale, 1991). At this point, the child is confronted with other discursive formats. One can even assume that the fact of attending school will have an influence on parental CDS (see the older studies by Snow, 1972 and 1983, on mother-child interaction, the impact of context, and the development of literacy).

Very early in life children are exposed to narratives (Bruner, 1990). At first, it is during spontaneous interactions focused on narratives or exchanges revolving around books that children manipulate the linguistic units enabling them to refer to characters and construct reference. When children start attending preschool, and even before in daycare centers, they gradually begin to experience a greater diversity of meaningful verbal interactions, and become exposed to a diversity of storytelling, in a variety of discursive formats: personal experience narratives, narratives read aloud, picture-based storytelling, and so on. Experiencing these different types constitutes the source from which children learn to construct reference in a narrative framework.

Thus, for children in daycare or preschool, the polyadic context provides opportunities, especially for the older ones, that the dyadic context does not



supply, both in terms of the quantity of heard or overheard speech, and in terms of the monitoring the speech of others (Marcos, Salazar Orvig, Bernicot, Guidetti, Hudelot & Préneron, 2004). These contexts, which generally contain more question/answer sequences, more references to absent objects, and a wider variety of models and styles, have a positive impact on the productions of younger children.

Hence, it is important to document how adults address school children (after the age of three) regarding specifically the construction of reference in dialogue-based narratives. In this prospect, the questions addressed in this chapter are related to the uses of referring expressions by mothers and preschool teachers while telling a story with a child (or a group of children in the case of teachers), and in which ways these uses differ from those of an adult telling the same story (as the mothers) to an experimenter.

### **3. Uses of referring expressions by mothers and teachers during joint storytelling**

The literature supplies little data on this specific topic. Moreover, there are only a few studies that compare the uses of French referring expressions by mothers and teachers during a joint-storytelling activity. The most recent is

Vinel (2014). Regarding mothers, Bamberg (1986), de Weck and Salazar Orvig (2014), and de Weck et al. (2019) proposed a fine-grained description of how mothers introduce and maintain reference when telling stories to their child (with or without DLD). De Weck and collaborators raised the question of whether the mothers' referential strategies could be characterized not only as anaphoric, but also as deictic or thematic as described for children's narratives by Karmiloff-Smith (1985). If so, it would mean that these strategies are linked not only to cognitive development but also to discourse-pragmatic factors, and thus, to the child's exposure to narratives and how others tell stories with him/her. In fact, the authors found that the mothers used referring expressions in certain, somewhat unexpected ways in comparison to adults telling the same story to an experimenter. For instance, the mothers mentioned a referent for the first time using a third-person or demonstrative pronoun. They accounted for these uses in terms of pragmatic factors: joint manipulation of a book, which enhances the effect of focusing on a shared activity, but also in terms of interaction strategies: asking questions to involve the child in the narrative, making sure the characters are identified, pointing, enlisting the child, and stressing key moments by employing strong expressions. These results are in line with Bamberg's (1986) findings, which showed that more than 50% of the expressions used by adults when introducing referents were presupposing devices.

Regarding the strategies of mothers of children with DLD in storytelling situations, the research has revealed a variety of profiles (Justice & Kaderavek, 2003; Salazar Orvig & de Weck, 2013; Vander Woude & Barton, 2003). Some mothers play the role of principal narrator as they strive to elicit the child's participation via verbal appeals. However, these profiles do not appear to be radically different from those found in mothers of typical children. More generally, mothers seem to adapt to their child's needs, which in the end often improves the child's participation in the activity, whether or not he/she exhibits DLD (Skibbe, Moody, Justice & McGinty, 2010).

As far as teachers are concerned, there are many studies dealing with discourse in the classroom, as we have seen above, but few have looked at spoken narrative in school from the standpoint of managing reference in a linguistic perspective. Studies that looked at reading activities in school have focused on reading styles (De Temple & Tabors, 1994; Dickinson & Kleeber, 1989; Frier, Grossmann & Pons, 2005; Grossmann, 1996; Roser & Martinez, 1985), scaffolding in child-directed questions (Blewitt, Rump, Shealy & Cook, 2009; Dickinson & Smith, 1994; Florin, 1991; Makdissi, Boisclair & Sirois, 2010; Zucker, Justice, Piasta & Kaderavek, 2010), or the cognitive complexity of teacher talk (Aukrust, 2007; Massey, 2004).

These studies showed that the teachers' discourse has different effects on pupils' productions. With the exception of Vinel (2014), the scarce studies comparing adults with different statuses or in different contexts (Geekie &

Raban, 1994; Hudelot, 1999, 2007; Rondal, 1978) have pertained to discursive or structural aspects. In short, older studies comparing mothers and teachers (Granowsky & Krossner, 1970, cited by Rondal, 1978) have concluded that preschool teachers' speech differs from mothers' speech by its greater mean length of utterances and greater syntactic complexity, but also its clearly smaller range of vocabulary. In their study, Geekie and Raban (1994) noted that the speech addressed by teachers to small groups of four 5-year-old pupils had features similar to those found among mothers talking to their children during goal-oriented activities like looking for objects.

As far as reference is concerned, a recent exploratory study on reference during storytelling (Hassan, Salagnac & Vinel, 2012), compared the usage of a female teacher and four mothers. They found that the mothers produced more pronouns (all types pooled) than nouns, and conversely, that the teacher produced more nouns than pronouns. This result was coupled with another that may seem surprising: for the teacher, nouns very often served to maintain a thematic progression (a function generally fulfilled by pronouns) and were used less often to introduce the referents of the story.

#### **4. Aim of the studies**

In summary, the findings in the literature indicate a lack of knowledge of CDS for children on the topic of reference, especially for children over three years of age; but also, that teachers and mothers have their own specific usage. In our interactionist approach to language acquisition (Bakhtin, 1979/1986; Bruner, 1983; E. Clark, 2009; François, Hudelot & Sabeau-Jouannet, 1984; Nelson, 2007; Tomasello, 1999), where verbal interaction constitutes the place where children experience the language categories through the discourse addressed to them, we contend that it is essential to know the usage of the adults – with whom children interact – if we want to better understand how children construct (or rather co-construct reference<sup>1</sup>) and grasp the uses and values of referential linguistic units. Thus, to address the issue of variations in adult referential usage according to the interactional setting in a narrative activity, four different contexts were considered: mothers telling a story in interaction with their child, teachers telling a story in interaction with their pupils, and adults telling the same story as the mothers to another adult, the experimenter. When mothers were telling a story with their child we considered two cases: mothers telling a story with their typically developing children (TD) and mothers telling a story with their children with developmental language disorder (DLD).

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<sup>1</sup> See Marcos et al., Chapter 7, this volume, where the authors point out the impact of dialogue on the choice of referring expressions by a child based on the adult's discourse, which the child uses to construct his/her own discourse.

The study of de Weck et al. (2019) showed that the usage of the mothers when telling a story to their child differed from that of the adult participants when telling a story to an experimenter. The former were engaged in a dialogue with a child, whereas the latter were engaged in an individually managed narrative directed at another adult. Based on these results, we further developed three hypotheses. First, the usage of the mothers differ from that of the teachers. Notably, as mothers and teachers have different statuses, they do not view their role in the storytelling activity in the same way. Because they have different goals (teachers have didactic intentions, mothers primarily seek to make their child participate), they behave differently (Hassan et al., 2012). Second, teachers' usage is closer to that of the adults telling the story to an experimenter because they should tend more than the mothers to follow the model of monologically managed narratives, as this is the literate model for narratives promoted at school (Canut & Vertalier, 2012). Based on results from de Weck and Salazar Orvig (2014), the third hypothesis was that mothers' uses of referring expressions when telling a story to their children with DLD is similar to that of mothers telling the same story to their TD children.

## 5. Method

In order to confirm our hypotheses, we conducted three comparative studies. The first compared mothers telling a story with their child (Mother-to-Child context) and adults telling the same story to the experimenter (Adult-to-Experimenter context) (de Weck et al. 2019<sup>2</sup>). The second compared mothers and teachers in two social contexts, (home vs. school). The third compared mothers of TD children and mothers of children with DLD<sup>3</sup>. Thus, we made use of several corpora taken from different databases and studies, but with points in common and specificities we will describe below.

### 5.1 Corpora

The first corpus (Adults Narratives Corpus, see Appendix I) was used in de Weck & et al.'s study on the impact of interactional settings (2019): 20 women, all of whom were native speakers of French under the age of 40, telling a story to an experimenter. None of the women worked in a field

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<sup>2</sup> Here, we summarize the main results from de Weck et al. (2019). In that paper, the Mother-to-Child context was named the "CHILD condition" and the Adult-to-Experimenter context was named the "ADULT condition".

<sup>3</sup> The mothers are in Mother-to-Child context when they are compared to the participants in the Adult-to-Experimenter context and when the two groups of children interlocutors (with and without DLD) are considered. The mothers are in the Home context when they are compared to the teachers in the School context.

related to childhood but two of them were high-school teachers of French and literature.

The second corpus was compiled from the Mother-Child Interactions corpus, (see Appendix I, see also de Weck & Salazar Orvig, 2014): 43 mothers telling a story with their child (ages 4 to 7 years). Among the 43 mothers, 15 had a child with DLD.

These two corpora were used for comparing the productions of the 20 mothers of typical children (Mother-to-Child context) to the productions of the 20 participants in the Adult-to-Experimenter context (see de Weck et al., 2019), and for comparing the productions of the 15 mothers of children with DLD (ages 5 to 7 years) and the 15 mothers of the TD children, who were matched on age to the children with DLD (difference of no more than one month).

Finally, the third corpus was compiled from the Diaref-Lille Corpus (see Appendix I): 10 mother-child dyads, and four sessions at preschool conducted by four different teachers with the same children and a peer group (several children from the same class). One session was with children in the youngest preschool class (Year 1), two were with children from the intermediate preschool class (Year 2), and one was with children from the oldest preschool class (Year 3). The children were 3 to 6 years old and were attending preschool on a regular basis. This corpus was used to compare the uses of the mothers (Home context) to those of the teachers (School context).



## 5.2 Situations and Materials

Except for the School context, the materials used were the same: a picture book with no text entitled *Ah les belles vacances des petits cochons!*<sup>4</sup> The mothers were instructed to tell the story with their child as they usually do, and to take as much time as they needed. For the participants telling the story to the experimenter, this one handed them the book and asked them to tell the story.

In the School context, a different book without text was used in order to avoid a familiarity effect (since the children in the mother-child dyads also participated in the school sessions). The book chosen here was *Le voleur de poules*.<sup>5</sup> The teachers were instructed to conduct a reading session as they usually do but with a smaller group of 8 to 12 children, rather than the whole class. No time limit was set for telling the story in any of the situations.

There are only very few books without texts adapted for school. We chose the one that was appropriate for use in the different classes (with the younger and older pupils), and presented the strongest similarities with the book used with the mother-child interactions. Both books involve only animal characters. They both revolve around a main character that experiences some

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<sup>4</sup> Goodall, J.S. (1980). *Ah les belles vacances des petits cochons!* Paris: Gallimard. Original edition: *Paddy Pork's Holiday*. Macmillan Children's Books (1975). See Appendix III.A for a summary of the story.

<sup>5</sup> Rodriguez, B. (2005/2010). *Le voleur de poules* (The chicken thief) Paris: Autrement. See Appendix III.B for a summary of the story.

incidents involving other characters and who is wrongly attributed a number of intentions. All participants (children and adults) were unfamiliar with the books.

The video and audio recordings were made in a quiet, convenient place for the participants in the Home, Mother-to-Child and Adult-to-Experimenter contexts, and in a classroom for the School context. The corpora were transcribed (in written French) and any expressions that corresponded to the referents we were analyzing were coded in terms of their grammatical and discursive characteristics (see below).

### 5.3 *Referents and Axes of Analysis*

To make our comparisons, we drew up a list of referents for each of the two books. Twenty-one referents for *Ah les belles vacances des petits cochons!* and 19 for *Le voleur de poules*. The referents included ones pertaining to the main and secondary characters, and some inanimate entities that were important to the unfolding of the plot.

We analyzed the productions of the different adult groups described above along two axes: the types of referring expressions used in the narrative, and their position in the referential chain. Depending on what groups were being

compared, other aspects were also analyzed. These aspects will be presented in the section specific to the comparison in question.

The referring expressions fell into one of six categories: (1) nouns (common nouns, proper nouns, and adjectives used as nouns), (2) third-person pronouns (clitic and strong), (3) right and left dislocations (noun dislocations and pronoun dislocations), (4) demonstrative pronouns, such as *ça* (this/that), (5) null forms, which correspond to omissions, zero anaphora, or prompts (e.g., when the adult verbalizes the determiner alone to allow the child to fill in with the noun), and (6) other pronouns (interrogative, possessive, relative, indefinite, numerical, adverbial).

The position in the referential chain fell into one of four categories: (1) first mentions, which correspond to the first mention of a referent, (2) subsequent mentions of a referent, which include all mentions of an already mentioned referent (except repetitions) located at less than four full speech turns away in a dyadic context, and eight turns away in a polyadic context, (3) reactivations, which occur when a referent is reintroduced at least four full speech turns away from the preceding mention of the same referent, and (4) repetitions, which are utterances repeated verbatim, reformulated with syntactic rephrasing, or phonological correction. Repetitions immediately follow the repeated utterance. This category was only taken into account in the mother-teacher comparison.

As reported in de Weck & al. (2019) for adults telling the story to the experimenter, 20% interrater agreement yielded 97.42% agreement (Cohen's kappa: 0.95) for the types of referring expressions and 92.07% (Cohen's kappa: 0.79) for the position in the referential chain.

With regard to the comparisons of mother of children with or without DLD and the comparisons between mothers and teachers, the interactions were coded by a first coder and 100% of the coding was reviewed by a second coder. To further ensure coding stability, 10% of each interaction was recoded blind from the original coding. Interrater agreement yielded, respectively, 94.53% (Cohen's kappa: 0.92) and 96.47% (Cohen's kappa: 0.95) for the types of referring expressions and 91.80% (Cohen's kappa: 0.85) and 86.8% (Cohen's kappa: 0.82) for the position in the referential chain.

#### *5.4 Statistical processing*

Statistical processing was done for the comparison of the Mother-to-Child and Adult-to-Experimenter contexts and for the comparison of the mothers with children with or without DLD. Mann-Whitney U tests were performed because the data did not satisfy the minimal assumptions for a parametric test (normal distribution, homoscedasticity, and variance equality). Methods for normalizing the variables (e.g., logarithmic transformation, arcsin<sub>2</sub> of the

square root, etc.) did not allow us to approach the normal distribution for many of the variables.

Given the relatively small number of participants in the mother-teacher comparison, no statistical tests were carried out.

## **6. Variations According to the Interactional setting and the Status of the Adult**

We noted above that the use of referring expressions among mothers in a joint-storytelling activity with their child is diversified. We think that, unlike the mothers (whether they are interacting with a typical child or one with DLD), the teachers use of referring expressions, due to their educational role, will be more prototypical, particularly when it comes to introducing referents. At the same time, insofar as the teachers are in a dialogue situation with their pupils, they may also exhibit behavior that is close to that of the mothers. By situating the teachers' behavior in the School context with respect to the participants in the Adult-to-Experimenter context on one side and in the Mother-to-Child context on the other side, we should be able to determine to which extent the interactional setting impacts the adults' referential strategies.

Let us now present the results of the comparisons between the interactional settings. We will begin by summarizing the results of a previous study (de Weck et al., 2019) reporting the usage in the Mother-to-Child context to that in the Adult-to-Experimenter context (5.1); next we will compare the Home context to the School context (5.2); finally, we will see how the mothers telling the story to their child compare with each other according to whether their child has or does not have a DLD (5.3).

### *6.1 Comparison of Mother-to-Child context to Adult-to-Experimenter context*

The main goal of this comparison was to apprehend the model of reference children are exposed to during joint-storytelling (de Weck et al., 2019). The stories generated narratives that exhibit a number of specificities (de Weck & Salazar Orvig, 2014) which were confirmed by the present study.

Even though we noted some shared aspects between both contexts related to the constraints of the narrative genre (Tables 1 and 2), two reference styles stood out. The first style was found in the discourse of participants in the Adult-to-Experimenter context, which presented some of the characteristics typical of narratives produced by adults in experimental setting (Hickmann, 2003; Jisa, 2000; Kern & Raffara, 2012; Fossard et al., 2018), namely, first

mentions of referents produced a a noun phrase (88.89%), most of which included an indefinite determiner (55.56% of the NPs); subsequent mentions, which were predominantly third-person pronouns (65.06%); and also some rare nouns (19.37%). The nouns were usually associated with inanimate referents or shifts between characters. Reactivations of referents were frequently realized using nouns (85.43%).

		A-to-E context %	M-to-C context %	Total %	U	p
Total	Nouns	31.10	19.15	25.07	45.00	<.001
	Disl*	2.63	11.46	7.08	30.50	<.001
	3PP	54.81	58.44	56.64	147.00	.157
	NF	2.63	0.39	1.50	87.00	.002
	OtherP	8.82	10.56	9.70	159.00	.277
	N=	2505	2548	5053		
FM	Nouns	88.89	52.29	72.84	35.50	<.001
	Disl	0.72	16.97	7.85	57.00	<.001
	3PP	5.38	14.68	9.46	118.00	.026
	NF	0.00	1.38	0.60	180.00	.602
	OtherP	5.02	14.68	9.26	92.50	.003
	N=	279	218	497		
Rea	Nouns	85.43	41.42	58.46	29.50	<.001
	Disl	5.30	18.83	13.59	43.00	<.001
	3PP	5.30	25.94	17.95	76.50	.001
	NF	0.00	1.26	0.77	170.00	.429
	OtherP	3.97	12.55	9.23	123.00	.038
	N=	151	239	390		
SM	Nouns	19.37	13.15	16.25	105.00	.009
	Disl	2.70	10.04	6.39	48.50	<.001
	3PP	65.06	66.71	65.89	181.50	.62
	NF	3.18	0.19	1.68	68.00	<.001
	OtherP	9.69	9.90	9.79	199.50	.989
	N=	2075	2091	4166		

\* Disl: dislocations, 3PP: third-person pronouns, NF: null forms, OtherP: other pronouns, FM: first mentions, Rea: reactivations, SM: subsequent mentions

Table 1. Distribution (in percentage) of the referring expression categories in the Adult-to-Experimenter and Mother-to-Child contexts, by position in the referential chain<sup>6</sup>

	A-to-E context %	M-to-C context %	Total %	U	p
Indefinite	55.56	42.62	51.12	106.00	.018
Definite	22.65	35.25	26.97	100.50	.012

<sup>6</sup> This table presents the total distribution of referring expressions and gathers the main content of tables 1, 3 and 4 from de Weck et al. (2019: 304-307).

Possessive	16.67	13.11	15.45	160.00	.397
Other	5.13	9.02	6.46	167.00	.475
<b>N</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>356</b>		

Table 2. Overall distribution (in percentage) of NPs (simple and dislocated) in first mentions, in the Adult-to-Experimenter and Mother-to-Child contexts

The second style was found in the mothers' discourse. Compared to the participants in the Adult-to-Experimenter context, when telling the story with their children, mothers produced a wider range of referring expressions (Tables 1 and 2) at every position in the referential chain. So, for first mentions and reactivations, they used significantly fewer NPs (52.29% and 41.42%, respectively) and significantly more third-person pronouns (14.68% and 25.94%, respectively). To introduce a referent, the mothers used more presupposing devices (definite NPs: 35.25%, and even third-person pronouns, see Table 1) based on a common ground, which is something that the participants in the Adult-to-Experimenter context rarely did.

These expressions occurred in three different contexts: the new referent could be retrieved as part of a set of referents mentioned earlier (Example 1); it could also be retrieved through a bridging inference (H. Clark, 1977) based on previously mentioned referents (Example 2); or through its presence in a picture (Example 3). These NPs or pronouns were often accompanied by pointing.

(1) Mother (Elouan)<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Example captions indicate the status of the participants: in the Mother-to-Child context, the mothers (Mot are identified by the name of their child), in the School context the teachers (Tea are identified by the type of preschool class) and in the Adult-to-Experimenter context the participants are identified by their name. When the productions of a child is given, the first three letters of his/her first name are



*The main character arrives at the artists' exit of a theater*

- Mot83 i(l) rencontre des cochons qu'il a l'air de connaître 'he meets some pigs he seems to know'  
(...) (...)  
Mot90 mais *il* <l'un de ces cochons> le [personnage principal] présente comme le pianiste. ((pointe en direction d'un des cochons responsables du concert)) 'but *he* <one of these pigs> presents him [main character] as the pianist ((she points to one of the pigs responsible for the concert))'

(2) Mother (Emma)

*The main character falls on a moving train car*

- Mot23 où est-c(e) que ce train va s'arrêter? ((tourne la page)) / (...) à la gare? 'Where is this train going to stop? ((turns the page)) / (...) at the train station?'  
Emm30 ((hoche la tête et hausse les épaules)) '((shakes head and shrugs shoulders))'  
Mot24 mais ouais alors tu vois là le p(e)tit cochon ((pointe le cochon voyageur)) il est en train d'expliquer *au contrôleur* ((montre le contrôleur dans le train)) 'yeah so you see the little pig ((points to the traveling pig)) he is explaining to *the train inspector* ((points to the inspector in the train))'

(3) Mother (Julie2)

*The mother begins to tell the story*

- Mot5 j(e) pense que là tu vois ? i s(e) promène = ((revient en arrière dans le livre)) 'I think that there you see? *he* is wandering =((comes back to the beginning of the book))'

Participants in the Adult-to-Experimenter context mostly relied on these presupposing devices in the bridging context (Example 4), and without gestures.

(4) Adult (Audrey)

*The main character has been taken by a carriage.*

- Aud24 sur la route humhum comme par hasard ils croisèrent ou et même ils doublèrent la voiture ((tourne la page)) 'on the road hum hum as if by chance they crossed or even they passed the car ((turns the page))'  
Aud25 la voiture qui avait tant pollué le petit cochon 'the car that had so much polluted the little pig'

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given in lowercase (e.g., Emm for Emma). An approximate English translation is given between inverted commas. For more details on transcription conventions, see Appendix II.

Aud26 il **leur** fit des grands signes 'he waved **them** big signs'

For introductions (Example 5) and reactivations (Example 6), the mothers also used interrogative pronouns.

(5) Mother (Emma)

*The main character has lost his clothes*

Mot86 pis qu'est-ce **qu'**i(l) voit là ? = 'then **what** does he see there?' ((she points to the scarecrow))

(6) Mother (Sacha)

*A car passes with a rich person inside*

Mot34 il a t(ou)jours son cigare au bec 'He still has his cigar in his mouth.'  
 (...) (...)

*The main character is mistaken for the pianist expected at the concert*

Mot83 j(e) pense qu'il a jamais joué d(e) 'I think he's never played the piano  
 piano / c(e) pauvre monsieur / this poor Mister pig'  
 cochon

(...) (...) (...)

Mot87 oh regarde ; **qui** c'est qui arrive ? 'oh look ; **who**'s coming?'

Sac94 ((tourne la petite page)) ('(turns the little page))'

Mot88 on l(e) connaît c(el)ui là ? ((lève son bras pour aller pointer)) 'do we know him, that one there ? ((raises his arm to go and point))'

In addition, the mothers used dislocations quite frequently for first mentions (16.97%), reactivations (18.83%), and subsequent mentions too (10.04%). The dislocations are used to identify a referent (Example 7), reintroduce it after a topic change (Example 8), or highlight it during an immediate repetition.

(7) Mother (Tom)

*The main character has lost his clothes*

Mot25 **ça** tu sais c(e) que c'est ? ((pointe l'épouvantail)) '**that** you know what **it** is? ((points to the scarecrow))'

(8) Mother (Sophie)

*Running away, the main character comes across a caravan*

Mot6	c'est pas ses petits amis <i>ça</i> ? il a pas retrouvé ses amis ? ((montre l'image du doigt))	'Isn't <i>that</i> his little friends? didn't he meet up with his friends again? ((points to the picture))'
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This comparison brought out a referential style specific to the Mother-to-Child context that differed both from that of the other women called upon to participate in this experimental context (Adult-to-Experimental context), and from that of written narratives. The interactional setting proved to have a significant impact in the participants' referential strategies. The use of referring expressions observed here is consistent with the fact that mothers were striving to engage their children in the activity (one of the dimensions of scaffolding: Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976) by asking them questions (see interrogative pronouns), attracting their attention to one of the entities in the story (presupposing devices accompanied by pointing), establishing and ensuring a shared understanding of the story (see dislocations serving to identify or emphasize a referent). The mothers' productions also served different purposes: (co)constructing a narrative and getting the child involved. This task, which we asked them to perform, is probably far closer to the ordinary activity of a mother than telling a story to another adult.

## 6.2 *Comparison of Home context to School context*

The purpose of second comparison was to determine the specificities of teachers' usage (School context) with respect to that of mothers (in Mother-to-Child context), in order to show how the experience that children have of reference in school dialogues (focused on storytelling) differs from that they are accustomed to at home, in particular with their mothers.

The preceding comparison showed that, beyond the common points linked to the constraints of the narrative genre, the referential strategies in the Adult-to-Experimenter context were prototypical (see 5.1), whereas that of the mothers in the Mother-to-Child context were more diversified, regardless of the position in the referential chain. In the light of this finding, we wondered whether the behavior of teachers would conform more to the expected usage for narrating to an experimenter or, on the contrary, whether it would share some features with that of the mothers in the Mother-to-Child context.

The group of mothers in the Home context were interacting with younger children than those in the preceding comparison. This could explain the differences in the percentages observed, although the tendencies were the same. Contrary to what we did in the preceding section, we took the interrogative pronouns out of the other-pronoun category because there were twice as many in the School context.

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Nouns	Disl*	3PP	Dem	Int	NF	OtherP	Total	N=
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	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
Home context	19.42	10.69	55.63	7.08	2.94	1.24	3.00		1936
FM	32.20	14.41	22.03	5.93	15.25	2.54	7.63	6.10	118
Rea	40.00	21.30	26.96	1.74	6.09	1.74	2.17	11.89	230
SM	15.34	8.96	62.54	7.63	1.61	1.19	2.73	73.80	1429
Rep	16.98	8.18	59.75	10.69	1.26	0.00	3.14	8.22	159
School context	38.51	11.53	38.51	2.86	6.62	0.98	0.98		1222
FM	36.36	9.09	0.00	0.00	45.45	9.09	0.00	0.90	11
Rea	48.54	16.50	10.68	0.97	21.36	1.94	0.00	8.43	103
SM	29.23	15.32	41.86	3.95	6.79	1.26	1.58	51.80	633
Rep	48.84	5.47	40.84	1.89	2.32	0.21	0.42	38.87	475

\* Disl: dislocations, 3PP: third-person pronouns, Dem: demonstrative pronouns, Int: interrogative pronouns, OtherP: other pronouns, FM: first mentions, Rea: reactivations, SM: subsequent mentions, Rep: repetitions

Table 3. Distribution (in percentage) of the referring expressions categories in Home and School contexts, by position in the referential chain

The distribution of the referring expressions shows (Table 3) that the participants in the Home context (mothers) and in the School context (teachers) had quite different styles. The mothers preferentially introduced new referents with nouns (32.2%), whereas the teachers hardly introduced any referents at all (only 11 introductions), and when they did, they mainly used interrogative pronouns (5) and nouns (4). On the other hand, they used many nouns for reactivations (48.54%), and repetitions (48.84%). They also used interrogative pronouns for reactivations, but to a lesser extent (21.36%). In one introduction, teachers used a dislocated presupposing expression with a third-person pronoun (Example 9).

#### (9) Teacher (Year 2)

*First picture in the book identifying the characters*

Tea71	mais vous m'avez toujours pas dit qu'est-ce qu'il se passait dans cette image.	'but, you didn't tell me what is happening in this picture?'
Vio11	moi ((lève la main))	'me ((raises her hand))'
Vio12	en fait y a un renard et il voit //et il les voit toutes les poules.	'there is a fox, and he sees // and he sees all the chickens'

Tea72	un renard qui voit les poules de loin (( pointe le renard avec la tête ))	'a fox that sees the chickens from far away ((points to the fox with her head))'
Jul6	et qui a mangé // et qui a pris les poules.	'and who ate // and who took the chickens'
Tea74	qui a pris les poules ?	'who took the chickens?'
Vio14	qui a pris une poule !	'who took a chicken!'
Tea75	ah il en a pris une.	'oh, he took one.'
<i>The teacher asks questions in order to identify which of the chickens was taken by the fox, then she asks:</i>		
Tea79	et qu'est-ce qu'ils font <b>les autres</b> ?	'and what are <b>they</b> doing <b>the others</b> ?'

As expected, in accordance with the constraints of the interlocation in the classroom (materials shared by several interlocutors but at a distance), and the necessity of explaining and verbalizing (which took precedence over pointing), the teachers employed very few demonstrative pronouns, which were never used to introduce a referent. The fact that the teachers produced far more nouns than the mothers did could be related to the importance at this age of acquiring the lexicon in school.

As expected once again, third-person pronouns predominated for subsequent mentions, but much more so among the mothers (62.54%) than among the teachers (41.86%). Indeed, we can see a large proportion of nouns in subsequent mentions by the teachers (29.23% vs. 15.34% for the mothers). Nouns are almost as frequent in subsequent mentions as in first mentions for the teachers. This usage seems to be teacher-specific in comparison to the mothers who used nouns the most to introduce and reactivate referents. Note (Table 3) the large number of repetitions in the teachers' discourse (38.87%

vs. 8.22% for the mothers) and the abundance of nouns in this position (48.84%).

Both the mothers and the teachers used a non-negligible proportion of dislocations, as found in spoken French (Blanche-Benveniste, 2006). These dislocations served to reactivate a referent. However, as Table 4 shows, the teachers employed almost solely noun dislocations (Example 10), whereas the mothers' usage was more varied, exhibiting either demonstrative or strong third-person dislocated pronouns (respectively Example 7 and Example 11).

	DDisl* %	StDisl %	NDisl %	N=
Home context	19.32	26.09	54.59	207
School context	4.96	2.13	92.91	141

\* DDisl: demonstrative pronoun dislocations, StDisl: strong third-person pronoun dislocations, NDisl: noun dislocations

Table 4. Distribution (in percentage) of dislocations in Home and School contexts

(10) Teacher (Year 2)

*End of the story: the hen decides to stay with the fox*

Tea212 et qu'est-ce qu'**elle** a décidé de faire 'And what did **she** decide to do then  
alors **la poule** ? **the hen**?'

(11) Mother (Romain)

*One of the pigs jumps up on a ladder to pick apples*

Mot275 qu'est-ce qu'**il** fait **lui** là ((pointe le 'what's **he** doing, **him** there?  
cochon)) ? ((points to the pig))?)

In short, teachers differed from the mothers in terms of the linguistic units chosen to introduce and maintain reference, and in terms of the number of repetitions and nouns in subsequent mentions. These results corroborate Hassan, Salagnac & Vinel's (2012) preliminary results reported above, suggesting a certain consistency in teachers' use. Their study dealt with a

smaller number of subjects (four mothers and one teacher) but examined all of the story and dialogue referents.

Vinel, Salagnac & Hassan (2014) showed that the referring expressions in the utterances repeated by the mothers were mostly pronouns, a finding that was confirmed here by the large proportion of third-person pronouns in subsequent mentions and in repetitions. This is consistent with the fact that the mothers produced a larger proportion of pronouns than nouns, and relied especially on self-repetitions. By contrast, the referring expressions in the utterances repeated by the teachers consisted mainly of nouns. This is due to the fact that teachers frequently make other-repetitions and the referring expressions of children in school are mostly nouns (de Weck, Hassan, Heurdier, Klein & Salagnac, Chapter 9, this volume). Thus, the high proportion of nouns in the teachers' usage in subsequent mentions seems to be characteristic of teaching practices and the interactive dynamics of dialogue-based narratives in school. This aligns with our hypothesized impact of the interactional setting and namely the interlocutors' status on discursive productions. Moreover, some of our research has shown that the type of utterance (question vs. assertion or demands) plays a different role for teachers and mothers (Vinel, Salagnac, & Hassan, 2013). Accordingly, teachers use most often questions to introduce referents whereas mothers do so via assertions.



The nature of didactic interaction is such that it requires teachers to ratify the ideas proposed by their pupils, share them with the class (make sure that everyone hears and understands what each pupil says; Example 12), and validate them. These functions are fulfilled by repetitions (E. Clark & Bernicot, 2008), which also ensure discourse coherence. Often, the teacher also repeats a pupil's remark (Kil1, Example 13), which allows him/her to make an inference (Tea2, Example 13) focusing on the character (the “fox”) that incites the pupil to go on with the narrative.

(12) Teacher (Year 1)

Jul87	peut-être le renard il va rentrer dans le bateau	'maybe the fox he's going to go into the boat'
Tea282	<b>peut-être le renard il va monter dans le bateau</b>	<b>'maybe the fox he's going to go up onto the boat'</b>

(13) Teacher (Year 2)

*Beginning of the story: identification of the characters*

Tea1	ça va aussi parler d'un lapin ((montre le livre aux enfants))	'It's also going to talk about a rabbit ((shows the book to the children))'
Kil1	<b>(il) y a une tête de de du du renard</b>	'there's a head of of of the of the fox'
Tea2	<b>y a la tête du renard donc ça va parler d'un renard</b>	<b>'there's the head of the fox so it's going to talk about a fox'</b>

6.3 *Comparison of Mothers of Children With and Without Developmental Language Disorder*

As de Weck and Salazar Orvig (2014) already noted in a preliminary study with fewer participants, our two groups of mothers, as a whole, had very similar profiles. They mainly used third-person pronouns (both clitic and strong), nouns, and dislocations. Both groups of mothers also had relatively small proportions of other pronoun forms (demonstrative, interrogative, and other; see Table 5). Mann-Whitney tests were conducted to test for significant differences between the two groups. Likewise, no significant difference between the two mother groups was found when we analyzed the three reference-chain positions separately (Table 5).

		Mothers TD children	Mothers children with DLD	Total	U	P
		%	%	%		
Total	Nouns	17.46	18.35	17.94	102.00	.663
	Disl*	11.26	13.16	12.29	77.00	.141
	3PP	59.39	56.63	57.89	81.00	.191
	Dem	5.17	6.39	5.83	80.50	.184
	Int	2.13	1.78	1.94	101.00	.633
	NF	0.92	1.01	0.97	100.00	.584
	OtherP	3.68	2.69	3.14	85.00	.254
	N=	1741	2082	3823		
FM	Nouns	51.83	51.52	51.66	107.00	.819
	Disl	15.24	19.70	17.68	81.00	.187
	3PP	15.85	10.10	12.71	75.50	.124
	Dem	4.27	7.07	5.80	89.50	.314
	Int	8.54	8.08	8.29	104.50	.731
	NF	3.05	2.53	2.76	104.50	.654
	OtherP	1.22	1.01	1.10	110.50	.888
	N=	164	198	362		
Rea	Nouns	34.55	39.23	37.41	104.00	.724
	Disl	19.39	21.15	20.47	103.50	.708
	3PP	31.52	28.85	29.88	112	.983
	Dem	4.24	3.85	4.00	107.00	.797
	Int	6.67	4.62	5.41	109.50	.893
	NF	2.42	1.54	1.88	106.50	.701
	OtherP	1.21	0.77	0.94	112.50	1
	N=	165	260	425		
SM	Nouns	11.47	10.96	11.20	96.00	.494
	Disl	9.84	11.08	10.51	80.00	.178
	3PP	67.71	66.75	67.19	94.00	.443
	Dem	5.38	6.71	6.09	66.50	.056
	Int	0.85	0.55	0.69	100.00	.494
	NF	0.50	0.74	0.63	91.50	.313
	OtherP	4.25	3.20	3.69	92.00	.395

N=	1412	1624	3036
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\* Disl: dislocations, 3PP: third-person pronouns, Dem: demonstrative pronouns, Int: interrogative pronouns, NF: null forms, OtherP: other pronouns, FM: first mentions, Rea: reactivations, SM: subsequent mentions

Table 5. Distribution (in percentage) of the referring expressions categories for mothers of typically developing children and mothers of children with DLD, by position in the referential chain

The 15 mothers of children with DLD confirmed the tendencies reported in Section 5.1. Contrary to the comparison of the Adult-to-Experimenter and the Mother-to-Child contexts, in this study, we separated the interrogative pronouns from the category of other pronouns in order to find out how often the mothers used this type of pronoun. This category turned out to be rather marginal, however (1.94% of the total).

As noted above, dislocation in French is an important element of child-directed speech (see De Cat, 2007 and Klein, Jullien & Fox, Chapter 6, this volume). Among the functions of dislocations reported above (see Examples 7 and 8), another function is that they can act as a referential clarification or afterthought (see Example 14) in contexts where the speaker judges a pronoun to be insufficiently informative.

(14) Mother (Eva TD)

Mot34	il a beaucoup marché	'he walked a lot'
Eva23	m // le pauvre ((regarde brièvement la page précédente)) le p(e)tit lapin qui le surveille. tu le vois le lapin ? ((soulève la page suivante))	'm // the poor one ((looks briefly to the previous page)) the little rabbit is watching him. you see the rabbit? ((starts turning the next page))'
Mot35	((regarde la page suivante))	'((looks at the next page))'
Eva24	ouais. il est là ((pointe le lapin))	'yeah. he is here ((points to the rabbit))'
Mot36	ouais. ((regarde ce que sa fille lui montre)) alors après qu'est-c(e) qu' <i>i</i> va faire ? ((tourne la page)) / <i>monsieur cochon</i>	'yeah ((looks at what her daughter is showing her)) so what is <i>he</i> going to do next? ((turns the page)) / <i>Mr Pig</i> '

For this reason, although the two groups of mothers did not differ significantly as to the proportion of dislocations employed in the activity examined here, it is nevertheless interesting to relate the mothers' use of dislocations to the children's comprehension level. To do this, we calculated the correlation between the dislocation rate of each mother with the raw score of her children on the lexical comprehension test, taken from the N-EEL (Chevrie-Muller & Plaza, 2001). This measure was selected in the light of the fact that the older children and the younger children took different morphosyntactic comprehension tests. The two measures yielded a significant negative correlation (Spearman's  $\rho$ :  $-.396$ ,  $p=.030$ ), but one that is weak (Grosjean & Dommergues, 2011). This correlation indicates that the higher the child's raw score was on the comprehension test, the less the mother used dislocations. It is important to note here that all of the children with DLD who participated in this study had an expressive disorder, whereas their comprehension level varied in a way similar to that of typical children. This could mean that the mothers adapted to the comprehension level of their child by using dislocations when they thought that the child had trouble following the progression of the story.

## 7. Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to describe how adults use referring expressions in storytelling activity in different interactional settings, in other words to account for the various uses of referring expressions experienced by children. This was made necessary by the assumption that in order to be able to better account for the children's use, we need to better know the adults'.

We did this by examining the usage of adults with different statuses in different settings. The observed uses in Home and Mother-to-Child contexts were found to differ from those of monological narratives in experimental contexts. The results of our comparisons of the forms produced and their distributions, as a function of the position of the referring expression in the referential chain, indicated substantial differences in the way the expressions were used. The factors of variation that entered into the choice of the referring expression depended not only upon the general contrast between dialogue or monologue, but also on the implications of the social context (home vs. school) and on the way in which the adult led the activity. In the case of mothers telling the story with their child with or without DLD – as no significant differences were found – as de Weck and Salazar Orvig (2014) showed, mothers and their children share a discursive and situational space. Definite determiners as well as clitic pronouns for first mentions or reactivations are a manifestation of this shared intersubjective representation.

At home, the experience a child has of spoken narratives is one in which reference is anchored in dialogue, with attention getters and interlocutors that rely on a common ground. One can therefore assume that the characteristics often deemed typical of young children – (e.g., introduction of referents by presupposing devices, dislocations, gestures and reliance on shared knowledge; Hickmann, 2003; Karmiloff-Smith, 1985; Jisa, 2000) – could reflect their picking up on the adult model rather than only their difficulty managing reference. As Peterson and McCabe (1992) showed, taking a Vygotskian standpoint, children internalize the interactional patterns of narrative elicitation and structure their own narratives in a way that reflects these patterns.

Granted, at the age of four or older, children's experience of spoken and written narratives and book-based discourse is probably quite varied. And yet, despite this acculturation, their mothers do not adopt the decontextualized model of narratives when interacting with them. This is a clear indication of the strong impact of dialogue and the joint construction of a common ground in the acquisition of reference.

We also observed this impact in the School context, even though didactic interaction imposes its own usage constraints and requirements on teachers, ones that differ not only from those of mothers but also from those observed in decontextualized narratives. As we have seen, the teachers introduced few referents (introductions were mainly done by the children). When they

introduced referents, teachers employed mostly interrogative pronouns. Thus, the usage of adults in a situation where they are telling a story to another adult (an experimenter) does not appear to be comparable to what children hear in exchanges at home or in school.

In conclusion, these results suggest that throughout childhood, children are confronted with interactive-discursive models of narratives that vary according to the social context. The purpose of this chapter was to improve our knowledge of these models. It seemed essential in our dialogical perspective, firstly, to describe the different usage styles of adults interacting with a child, in order to better account for the diversity of children's communicative and discursive experiences, and secondly, to show that these styles differ from those observed when an adult tells a story to another adult. These specific aims should further our general knowledge of child usage, in view of gaining insight into developmental processes.

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