

FRIENDS AND LITTLE BABIES:

CONFLICT AND ITS MANAGEMENT AT A CROATIAN PRESCHOOL

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1. INTRODUCTION

Conflicts between children frequently occur and contribute to their social and cognitive development. Nevertheless, they can also be disruptive when they occur in an institutional setting. It comes as no surprise then that they have been an object of study in various fields, many of which seek to statistically analyze different qualities of conflicts, or to find the best practices of managing it. In focusing on static descriptions of conflict and normative intervention strategies, however, these studies remove the conflicts from their context and erase the complexity and performativity of a conflict-in-progress. To fully understand these conflicts as discursive interactions with particular social consequentialities (Silverstein,?), it is important to look closely at the unfolding of the conflict and the possible interventions to inquire about the connections between the said progression of the conflict, the intervention, and the sets of beliefs and ideas the participants hold and are enacting.

In the current study, I look for these connections by considering child conflict through the lens of language socialization. Focusing on the use of language allows me not only to follow the development of individual instances of conflict, but to connect them to each other, as well as other practices at the preschool. I focus on a few lexical items that teachers frequently rely on during their interventions in conflict, and children frequently rely on during conflicts themselves. I trace the use of these terms by both teachers and children, during and outside of conflicts, to consider the interactional work they do, the broader ideas they are pointing to, and the dialectical relationship between the teacher's and the children's use of the terms and the meaning they construct.

2. STUDIES OF CHILD CONFLICT AND LANGUAGE SOCIALIZATION

Child conflict has been a subject of study for decades and researchers from different disciplines, predominantly from developmental psychology and education, have produced a rich literature on the topic. One avenue of inquiry has focused almost exclusively on descriptively characterizing and enumerating the conflict, and has provided us with a general image of child conflict—it is very short (on average between 14 and 24 seconds), fairly frequent (occurring once every 2.63-11 minutes), it involves a variety of strategies (from insisting, aggravating, simply saying “No,” reasoning/justifying, and ignoring to whining, tattling, appealing to adults for help and only sometimes physical violence), and its motivation follows particular trends during development. (Chen, 2003)

Another set of questions that has been asked addresses the developmental function of conflict among children. Piaget and Inhelder (1969) argue that around the age of three, through elaborations of symbolic play and its affective aspects, as well as through effective and non-playful behavior, children develop a growing realization of self, which leads them to oppose other people, while at the same time trying to win others' approval (p.115). And in this, children navigate two different social spaces—one the unidirectional transmission of various cultural elements and sentiments from the adult to the child, the other “a continuous and constructive process of reciprocal socialization” mostly among children. (p. 116) It is also important to note that the children's development of social skills in these environments is inseparable from, and parallel to, their cognitive and affective development (p.117). Many scholars then build on Piaget to argue that interpersonal conflict, by engendering intra-personal conflict, fosters general cognitive development and also point out the necessity of learning how to deal with conflict for proper development of social competence (e.g. Shantz, 1987; Licht, Simoni&Perrig-Chiello, 2008).

Various researchers have also asked questions about how conflict (negotiation) is learned, frequently with the goal of prescribing an appropriate caregiver response. The main debate seems to be between not intervening, and intervening. While there is evidence that children learn best when left to manage conflict on their own, and that outside intervention can misfire (Danby&Baker, 1998; Chen, 2003), a number of scholars argue, in a Vygotskian fashion, that adult intervention, if focused on understanding the conflict and facilitating mediation, provides very beneficial scaffolding for learning conflict management (Perlman&Ross, 1997; Da Ros&Kovach, 1998; Arcaro-McPhee, Doppler&Harkins, 2002). Research, however, shows that this type of intervention is quite rare, with restoration of order and pacifying upset children seemingly taking precedence over taking advantage of a pedagogical opportunity. (Bayer, Whaley&May, 1995).

Finally, there are few studies that focus closely on the progression and results of particular instances of conflict. For example, Maynard (1985), analyzing a few conflicts among first-graders, tracks the positions they take on as the conflict unfolds and argues that “[t]he manifest function of social conflict among children is to build their small-group society and its structure” and it “may also aid in the reproduction of authority, friendship and other social patterns that transcend single episodes of interaction.” Still, he says, it would be important to see how these functions fit within the larger context. A study by Danby and Baker (1998), conducted at an Australian preschool, is similarly interested in children's sociality, but considers a new variable—teacher's intervention. Danby and Baker indicate three problems that emerge with children's conflict—the problem of the crying child in an environment where harmony and cooperation is expected, the problem of one child having their feelings hurt, and the problem of the children's unsettled social order. While the teachers intervention,

encouraged by early child aims to resolve the first two, the third problem is located solely in the children's domain and is not resolved until the teacher leaves.

While they provide very interesting insights, the two studies above do not connect individual instances of conflict and interventions to each other, nor to their context. To investigate these connections, it would be very productive to think of conflicts and interventions as sites of "language socialization". Defined as "socialization to use language and socialization through language" (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986), the concept of language socialization implies transmission of ideas, beliefs, linguistic and social practices, as well as other aspects of culture, alongside the acquisition of language and through the use of language use in interactions. For example, in a Japanese preschool study, Burdelski (2010) shows how teachers frequently intervene in children's interactions attempting to teach an encourage politeness routines. The children, however, are not merely passive recipients in these interaction—they respond to their teachers in various ways and learn not only the desired routines but also the intervention practices in which they then engage with other children. Immediate adult presence is not even necessary for one to observe socialization at work—Corsaro and Rizzo (1988) look at two instances of *discussione*, a cultural routine involving debates or points of contention, among nursery children in Italy, with no active adult participants. They show how children are starting to produce the genre and how they, through *discussione*, build on and extend peer culture as well as appropriate elements of adult culture to deal with their immediate concerns. As Kulick and Schieffelin (2004) note, children are not only socialized, but they socialize others.

In this study, I wish to follow and further advance some of the above approaches. As Maynard (1985), Corsaro and Rizzo (1988) and Danby and Baker (1998) have shown, interactional approach to child conflict enables us to get insight into the social lives of children and complex work the conflict is doing in the moment, in addition to its role in child development. Furthermore, as Danby and Baker (1998) and Burdelski (2010) show, focus on interventions, as sites of contact between teachers' and children's agendas, can not only inform us about effectiveness of interventions but highlight different roles children take on and interests they have. And as Maynard (1985) and the paradigm of language socialization as a whole recognize, the context of beliefs and ideas in which interactions take place is very important. I will therefore closely focus on the unfolding of children's conflict and any teacher's interventions. I will do so by tracking the use of particular lexical tokens, during, between and outside of conflicts. By looking at the interactionally co-constructed meaning of these items, I will then be able to contextualize the strategies of both conflicts and interventions within sets of ideas about sociality.

3. SETTING

I conducted my research at a public childcare center/preschool (*gradski dječji vrtić*) in Zagreb, Croatia. In Zagreb, around 38% of children aged 0-2 years and 63% of children aged 3-5 years attends a childcare center (Croatian Bureau of Statistics, 2013), most of which are run by the City and are therefore heavily subsidized and easily affordable, though not always accessible, especially for families where both parents are not working. The daycare teachers (*odgajateljice*, from *odgojiti*—lit. to raise children), most often women, have at least a college degree in preschool teacher education and each teacher is generally looking after 10-30 children, depending on their age. Frequently, the teachers follow their group through multiple years.

The childcare center I studied, *Zvezdica*, has a capacity of around 400 children and consists of one large and multiple smaller facilities. However, during the summer months when I was conducting my research, many children are looked after by family members and attendance is fairly low. Therefore, all children and employees are consolidated at the largest facility. This means that groups are merged, and very often not all children know each other, nor are the teachers always familiar with their group or even the space they are in. This fact was highlighted to me numerous times during my research, and I was instructed to come during the school year “to see how things really work.” While the summer context I have encountered might be atypical, I believe it actually facilitated my research by placing both children and adults in more complex and demanding situations, where they could not necessarily rely on established practices and social connections.

The facility where I conducted my observation is a two story building, planned and built as a child care space with access to a large yard, surrounded by a low fence and a hedge, which features sandboxes, slides, swings, monkey bars, a toy shed etc. The building features office spaces, kitchen and ten rooms for children, with younger children (nursery) on the first floor, and older children on the second floor. Each room is prepared by its team of teachers at the beginning of the year, and features various educational materials, play spaces, books etc. Walls of the rooms and corridors feature children's artwork and various posters with instructions for parents. In most cases, all but the youngest children are allowed to spend time in other rooms on their floor and can similarly play throughout the yard. On a typical day during my fieldwork, parents would start bringing their children around 7 AM and most would get picked up by 5 PM. While at the day care, children would mostly play, weather permitting in the yard, and would occasionally engage in activities initiated by the teachers (e.g. shaping clay, learning a folk dance etc.). They would receive four meals—breakfast, mid-morning fruit, lunch and an afternoon snack, and the teachers would often partake in the meals at the same time. After

lunch, children would generally sleep for around two hours, though some older children were allowed to stay awake and play, draw or watch TV if there were enough teachers to supervise.

4. METHODS

In my research I employed three strategies of data collection, which allowed me to both gather naturally occurring discourse and to contextualize it within relevant ideological and cultural contexts. First, I conducted 150 hours of participant observation spread out from mid July to mid September 2014. I participated in all the regular activities as I played with the children, drew for them, supervised them, fed them etc. I also talked to the teachers I worked with throughout the day, and spent time with them as they engaged in informal conversations over coffee while the children were asleep. While I did my best to disclose my role as a researcher to the children as well, I believe most of them saw me as yet another teacher, and would regularly address me as ‘auntie’ (*teta*), a term children use for their teachers, as well as young and middle-aged women in general.

Secondly, I video recorded, and occasionally audio-recorded, various interactions between children and caretakers. In line with my interest in child conflict, I often tried to catch situations in which a conflict had already emerged, or I was anticipating one to emerge. However, I also recorded some everyday interactions, like eating lunch, or playing in the garden, in order to have access to transcripts of language use outside of conflict situations. In total, produced around five hours of video recordings and an hour of audio recording, most of which I’ve deemed relevant to my research and have transcribed.

Finally, I conducted and audio-recorded semi-structured interviews with nine teachers whom I have gotten to know the best during my time at the daycare. In the interviews, I asked about the women's motivation to become teachers, things they did or didn't like about the job, how they see their role—and the role of the daycare—in the life of the child, things they see as most important in working with the children as well as memorable instances of conflict between children. However, as a conversation, the interview often followed issues the teachers raised themselves and frequently drew on some of our shared experiences as well. I wrote broad summaries of the interviews and transcribed sections relevant to my research questions.

In my analysis, I approached my data on multiple levels. First, I considered my whole corpus of transcriptions and field notes and coded for use of tokens of interest, resulting in 41 occurrences of friend (*prijatelj*), 68 occurrences of ‘little baby’ (*mala beba*) and related forms, and 17 occurrences

of ‘big one’ (*‘veliki/a’*). Secondly, I looked at particular instances of discourse in which these tokens occur as individual interactional texts, paying close attention to the components and the progression of the event and its social consequentiality. Finally, I considered my findings in the context of broader ideas and beliefs that became evident to me through my participant observation as well as the interviews.

I will present my findings in a different order: first, in Section 4., I will lay out the general ideas about sociality at the preschool. Then, in Section 5., I will look at the lexical item ‘friend’, and in Section 6. at the pair ‘little baby’/‘big one’, at the same time analyzing different interactions in which these tokens appear. I bring the two together for analysis in Section 7.

The data I present below has been taken both from my field-notes and transcriptions. As I focus mostly on the lexical content, I have kept my transcription broad, indicating pause length in seconds in parentheses, e.g. ‘2.5’, overlaps using square brackets, and indicating voice quality only when very unusual. As sometimes I was not able to hear what was said, I have transcribed the unclear content with ‘xxx’, the number of ‘x’s approximately corresponding to the number of syllables. For the ease of reading, I have bolded all turns taken by teachers or myself, while the children’s turns remained not bolded.

4. THE CONTEXT: CHILDREN’S AND TEACHER’S IDEAS ABOUT SOCIALITY

By the entrance to the teacher’s room at the preschool *Zvezdica*, hang two large pieces of paper covered in bold-red barely punctuated sentences drawn out in clumsy child lettering:

Many years ago we came to preschool we were very little some even babies every day we came to school to play and spend time together so we became friends and how did we play? Together we played on the see-saw, the swing and we went down the slide and went around on the merry-go-around we dug we explored around the yard and we looked for bugs drew, sang, danced, played music and we talked about the most interesting things every day (...) In preschool there is a lot of friends and you’re never alone.¹

Written by what I guess to be kindergarten aged children during an end-of year activity, this passage is representative of what I have indicated to be some of the major institutional ideologies at my fieldsite. *Zvezdica*, like other public preschools, offers very affordable childcare to working parents, while teaching children various practical skills (e.g. tying shoes, using the slide), habits (e.g. hand washing)

¹ Prije puno godina došli smo u vrtić[sic]. Bili smo jako mali neki čak i bebe svaki dan smo dolazili u vrtić igrati se i družiti se pa smo tako postali prijatelji a kak smo se igrali? Klackali smo se, ljuljali i spuštali na tobogan i vrtili na vrtuljku kopali istraživali po dvorištu i tražili bube crtali, pjevali, plesali, svirali i ono najzanimljivije smo svaki dan pričali. (...) U vrtiću ima puno prijatelja i nikad nisi sam.

and knowledge (e.g. numbers, alphabet), and stressing holistic educational programming and preparation for school. However, in both my informal conversations and formal interviews with various teachers at the preschool, they frame it as primarily a place where children get to socialize and develop their social skills.

The ideas about how this socialization and development were salient in various practices, including not only teachers interactions with each other, myself, or the children, but the organization of space itself, and the production of artifacts such as the above cited posters. For example, the preschool itself, as well as individual groups, are divided according to chronological age of children², even though some teachers would much prefer grouping children by abilities. Different smaller facilities are specialized for different age groups, and the facility I was at draws a clear physical distinction between the nursery rooms on the first floor, and the rooms for older children on the second floor. Furthermore, the yard in which most children are allowed to go wherever they want, features an area sectioned off by a hedge designated as 'little yard' ('*malo dvorište*'). It is located by the two rooms where the youngest children are, and contains various toys and equipment designed for small children. While older children will be allowed to visit, the younger ones are generally not allowed to leave that area without supervision.

Despite these physical separations, most of the doors at the preschool are still left open because, as the principal explained to me, the preschool is concerned about space and want it to be as open as possible. They want to foster child's confidence and creativity and motivation. They want to offer them the best environment to thrive as individuals. This openness of space allows children to interact with all the other children there. At the same time, putting of these ideals into practice is constrained by the very high student-to-teacher ratio and teachers' desire to keep a relative calm and orderly environment. Proper socializing is therefore a practice that children are expected to learn as they grow older, so as to be able to benefit most from the open space, while not being too disruptive.

Children, of course, have their own ideas about sociality they get not only from teachers, from parents, and various media (e.g. cartoons and TV shows), and they ultimately form their own experience. Children of all ages do engage in the negotiation of their social environments continuously, through face-to-face interactions in which stakes are often different for children than they are for teachers. The children pick and chose whom they want to spend time with, when and how, and these choices depend on a variety of factors such as previous relationships (e.g. many children oriented

² At the beginning of the 2014/2015 academic year, the average group size at the main facility was reported to me as follows (1-2y):19, (2-3y)24, (3-4): 26, (3-5): 28, (>4):25-30. The Ministry also has group size guidelines depending on the age of children)

towards children from their original group) or ability at a particular activity (e.g. climbing a particular structure). In such a context, relationships and situations are continuously negotiated, and conflict might play a crucial role in these negotiations. (also see Maynard, 1985.)

5. FRIENDS

The first lexical item I will analyze is that of ‘friend’ (*prijatelj* (m.), *prijateljica* (f.)³). I chose this particular item because it often emerged both during conflict and during interventions, and through its meaning it is easily linked with ideas about sociality. In my notes and transcripts, there are 41 tokens I coded as ‘friend,’ though I have, of course, heard it many more times than that. Of those 41, 24 are produced by teachers and 17 by children. Two of the teacher’s and two of the children’s tokens (produced by older boys) were not the usual, standard form *prijatelj*, but rather the borrowing from English *frend*, very common among school children, youth and even young adults.

In the following sections, I will first look at the use of ‘friend’ by teachers (5.1), then the use by children (5.2) and will then offer the summary of the section and discussion (5.3).

5.1 TEACHERS TALKING TO CHILDREN: DON’T HARM YOUR FRIEND

Teachers, when talking to children, referred to children as ‘friends’ very frequently, using either the term ‘friend’ (*prijatelj/ica*) or a more colloquial ‘mate’ (*frend/ica*). In doing so, they point to a particular quality of social relationships within the preschool. These are sometimes the relationships between the teacher and the child, as when Lidija, a teacher, greets one of the children with a “Where are ya, friend. Hi.” (*“Ej di si, prijatelju. Bok”*). More frequently, the term is used to reference some child or children that the teacher is orienting their interlocutor child towards. Before lunch-time, for example, teacher Barbara makes a request of a five year old girl Maja by saying “We’re going to eat now, call your mates to wash their handsies.” (*“Idemo jest sad ajde pozovi frendove da idu prat rukice”*). Lidija similarly asks a four-year-old boy Andrija to help another child: “Come on, help you friend” (*“Adje pomogni svom prijatelju.”*) and teacher Ozana encourages a child to go and play: “Come on, go play with friends” (*“Ajde, odi se s frendovima igrati.”*). When used like this, ‘friend’ not only points to a referent (whether particular or abstract), but also presupposes a

³ Croatian codes for gender, as well as case. I will frequently collapse the masculine and feminine form, e.g. ‘prijatelj/ica’. I’ve coded tokens irrespectively of their case.

relationship of friendship between the addressee and the referent, and orients a child towards a particular sociality: that of helping, playing or working with other children.

The times when I heard the teachers use the term ‘friend’ most frequently, and also very predictably, are those in which children were not playing and being cooperative—rather it was when they were arguing or fighting. Consider the following:

(1) Lidija, a very experienced and highly educated teacher, is intervening in an argument between Dario (boy, 5) and Rajić (boy, 6) over what they will watch on TV:

L: *Sutra poslije ručka idete spavat jer se neznate dogovoriti,*
Tomorrow after lunch you are going to sleep because you don’t know how to get along,
svađate se i jedan drugog udarate.
You argue and hit one another.

Dodi.
Come.

(Lidija guides Dario back)

L: *Rajić, reci što ćeš Dariju reći?*
Rajić, what will you tell to Dario?

D: *Oprosti.*
I’m sorry.

L: *Izvoli kako ćeš ga zagrliti? (2.5) Dođi ga zagri.*
Here, how will you hug him? (2.5) Come hug him.

(Rajić approaches and Lidija lets go of Dario)

L: *Pruži mu ruku lijepo kao prijatelj.*
Give him your hand like a friend

(They shake hands)

L: *I to nije razlog da se svađate.*
And this isn’t a reason for you to argue.

Here, Lidija intervenes in an argument between the two boys, pointing out their inappropriate behavior and inability to get along which might lead to an undesirable consequence (not TV after lunch the next day). Then she scaffolds a repair for them, and getting them to come closer together and shake hands, and act that should be indicative of their friendship. The argument, however, does not end there—Dario and Rajić continue discussing what has happened and assigning blame, ignoring the teacher until she ends TV time. This starts another argument over whose fault that was, until the teacher separates them. Teachers attempted repair, not in line with the sociality the boys were attempting to perform, ultimately failed, similarly to what Danby and Baker (1998) found in their study.

Conflict, however, does not always continue beyond intervention and in some cases, especially if the intervention was sought by the child, commentary by the teacher seems to put an end to it:

(2) Mara (girl, 3) walks up to Suzana, an apprentice teacher, during the free-play time in the yard:

L: *Ona me tuče.*
She's hitting me

S: *Ma daj, Marica, igrajte se zajedno, nemoj tužakat.*
Oh come on, Marica, play together, don't tell on her.

(Suzana turns to the other girl)

S: *Nemoj je lupati, šta ti nije prijateljica? Adje se lijepo igrajte.*
Don't hit her, isn't she your friend? Come on, play nicely.

(3) As kids are waiting in line to get watermelon during snack time, Maja (girl, 5) complains about Toni (boy, 2.5) to Barbara, an experienced teacher, also involved with a special cultural heritage program:

M: Toni me ugrizao!
Toni bit me!

B: *Toni, pa nije Maja lubnica da je grizeš.*
Toni, Maja isn't a watermelon for you to bite.

(...)

(Barbara turns to Toni.)

B: *Ne grizi prijatelje. Zamisli da onda ona tebe ugrize?*
Do not bite friends. Imagine if she then bites you?

Nećemo gristi prijatelje. Vidiš kako je Maja tužna i kako je boli?
We won't bite friends. You see how Maja is sad and how she's hurting?

Ajmo joj reći oprost, ajmo joj reći "Draga Maja."
Let's tell her sorry, let's tell her "Dear Maja."

In the two examples above, teachers do not seem to be attempting to reestablish the friendship, as Lidija was trying to do in (2). Instead they are condemning the behavior such as hitting or biting, siding with a child that sought the intervention, and are invoking the relationship of friendship as a reason because of which the children should not be engaging in the said behavior.

Still, like in (2) they also embed the reference to friendship within instructions about alternative, more appropriate behaviour, such as playing nicely and apologizing. This linking of "friend" with a variety of other concepts and practices that make up the ideal sociality is frequent: no biting, hitting or telling on someone. Instead, consideration of other's feelings, apologizing, shaking hands, and hugging are highly encouraged, as well as the practice of 'dogovoriti se.' Roughly translated as 'work to reach

an agreement' or maybe 'work it out,' '*dogovoriti se*' makes an appearance on the posters mentioned in the previous section, and is frequently brought up as the preferred method of dealing with conflict.

It is important to point out, however, that children do not simply accept nor always agree with the referential meaning of 'friend' when teachers use it:

(4) As we're getting ready for bed, Ivan (boy, 4) and Andrija (boy, 4.5) are two beds apart and are continuing the argument they have started at the end of lunch. Teacher Lidija approaches.

L: *Pa nemoj se sa prijateljem svadati.*
Well don't argue with a friend.

A: Ja mu nisam prijatelj.
I'm not his friend.

L: *Zašto?*
Why?

A: Zato.
Because

L: *Pa to nije lijepo. Vi trebate svi biti prijatelji.*
Well that is not nice. You should all be friends.

Here, Andrija explicitly refused Lidija's reference to him as Ivan's friend. This Lidija does not accept as a fact, but rather questions it, indexing Andrija's response as deviant. On her next turn, she explicitly negative evaluates the denial of friendship, "That is not nice," and follows that with an explicit assertion of her beliefs about the appropriate sociality—"You should all be friends." She leaves, but the argument continues until I intervene and threaten to move Ivan away, at which point they settle down.

This, however, is not to say that assertion of friendship by adults never does any work in promoting a particular form of sociality, even when it does not directly help resolve conflict. In one of the longest conflicts I have witnessed, Maja (girl, 5.5) and Robert (Boy, 5.5) were playing on a set of tires half-buried upright in the ground, trying to jump from one tire to another. Daniel (boy, 5.5) and Oliver (boy, 6) wanted to place some tires horizontally between the upright tires to help them jump, but this bothered Maja. The four start arguing, with a few other kids joining in, and this culminates in Daniel pushing Robert. In response to this, Robert seeks out teacher Ozana:

(5) Robert (boy, 5.5) walks towards Ozana, a teacher, who is sitting with some younger children away from the argument.

R: *Teta (..) Onaj tamo me gurnuo (1.5) Ovaj*
Teacher (..) That one over there pushed me (1.5) This one (in a crying voice)

O: *Koj? (..) Kako se zove?*
Which one? (..) What is his name?

- R: *Ne znam.*
I don't know. (in a crying voice)
- O: ***!Neznaš ni 'kako ti se zovu <Q> prijatelji <Q>, You !don't even know 'what your <Q>friends are called <Q>,***
- R: *xxxx On me. On.*
xxxx He (pushed) me. He.

(points towards Daniel)
- O: ***Kako se zove? (..) Idi ga pitat kako se zove kao prvo i prvo. What's his name? (..) Go and ask him what' his name is, first and foremost.***

Da znam o kom pričaš. So I know whom you're talking about

Robert then runs off and asks Danijel's name, and after he comes back, Ozana keeps asking him for other children's names, while commenting to me that "He doesn't even know what they're called (...) because he's so focused on the teacher and not on the children" ("*On ne zna kako se oni zovu zato što je on fokusiran na odajatelja a ne na djecu*"). After these exchanges, Ozana listens to all the parties involved, and points out that they should be able to work it out (*dogovoriti se*) and that Maja cannot always have her way. The argument continues, with some interruptions by Ozana and myself until Daniel and Oliver move away. Some time later, the two boys decide to arrange their tires away from the ones Maja is jumping on and the matter is settled. Ultimately, it was the children who resolved the conflict, and not necessarily through verbal agreement but problem-solving action. And what Ozana's intervention focused on was not that particular conflict, but rather the problem of Robert's lack of proper engagement with other children. In guise of intervening in conflict, she actually oriented Robert towards his (to be) friends and scaffolded for him the first step of friend-making—asking for a name.

In all the above examples, we can see that the teachers are continually trying to orient children towards positive social relationships with others, more specifically other children. This is done not only through explicit encouragements to engage with other children, but also through mobilization of the term 'friend'. Outside of conflict situations, teachers use it instead of a referential such as 'other kid(s),' presupposing a friendly sociality among all the children referred to. When teachers use it during conflict intervention, they seem to attempt a repair of a social relationship and to encourage children to act more appropriately, to work it out instead of engage in disruptive conflicts, to be friends.

5.2 CHILDREN TALKING TO CHILDREN: I WON'T BE YOUR FRIEND ANYMORE

As was clear in example (4) above, the children's and teachers' use of 'friend' do not perfectly align—in fact, they might not align at all. Even though they likely have the shared understanding of the

meaning of ‘friend’ they are mobilizing the term in different ways. As I have showed above, teachers use ‘friend’ as a referential label indiscriminately, and use the relationship of friendship as a given onto which they build reasoning about behavior. In contrast, children seem to use friend in two distinct ways: 1) in the process of boundary making and indexing (momentary) status of a relationship, and 2) as currency in the social market.

In the instances of first use, children might explicitly assert or deny friendship. Paralleling teacher’s use, children might sometimes refer to, or call on, others as their ‘friend.’ For example, during a very low attendance week, Ivan (boy, 4) frequently complained to me about being bored because his friends were not around. Similarly, Kristina (girl, 3), while spending time with a girl of the same age she frequently interacts with, proposes a change in location by saying “Come, friend” (*Dodi, prijateljice*). Sometimes, this use of ‘friend’ seems to be especially performative—Marion, a seven year old girl who spent a lot of time around me, insisted on referring to me as “my friend Sanja” (“*moja prijateljica Sanja*”), pointing to how she viewed our relationships in her (ideal) social world.

As opposed to the teacher’s use, however, the affirmation of friendship was relatively rare among children and they much more frequently engaged in the denial of friendship. Sometimes, as in example (5) above, this denial might be brought on in the context of conflict between two children who often do spend a lot of time together, pointing to the sociality damaged at that particular moment. Other times, children point to a lack of any established relationship.

(6) Right after breakfast, Lana (girl, 5,5) leads me to her cubby to show me something special, Maja (girl, 5), her brother Jan (2), and Kristina (girl, 3) are following us.

L: *Zašto stalno buljite? Zašto idete s nama?*
Why do you keep staring? Why are you coming with us?

Me: ***Idu s nama jer su ti prijatelji.***
They're coming with us because they're your friends.

L: Nisu. Ona (Kristina) je, ali oni (Maja i Jan) nisu.
They're not. She (kristina) is, but they (Maja and Jan) are not.

Me: **Zašto ne?**
Why not?

L: Zato.
Because

Me: **A kako nam mogu postati prijatelji?**
And how can they become our friends?

L: Nikako.
No way./They can't.

Me: **Zašto?**
Why?

L: Zato.
Because.

Lana and Kristina were in one of the smaller facilities together the year before. However, they only recently met Maja and Jan. Here, Lana does not want to share whatever it is that she wants to show me with these new kids and like Andrija in (4), denies the assertion of friendship. Moreover, in doing so, she indexes what she believes would be their appropriate behavior in the current situation—they shouldn't follow us because they're not friends.

This kind of boundary work is even more explicit in the following example:

(7) After the afternoon snack, Lucija (3) and Mara (3) are at a table together with some other kids, playing with play-doh. Lucija does not want to let Mara have something she is using.

L: *Nemože, ti nisi moja prijateljica.*
No (lit. "it can't"), you are not my friend.

M: *Zakaj?*
Why?

L: *Jer ti nisi naša is vrtića.*
Because you're not ours from preschool.

M: *A ja bi samo ovo dala.*
But I just want to give this

L: *Dobro.*
Good./OK.

Here, Lucija forbids Mara from doing something on the grounds that they're not friends. When Mara asks why, she does get an answer (unlike the 'because' I received in the example above) —“you're not **ours** from preschool.” In this particular moment, Lucija draws the boundary between the familiar, indexed by indexed by the possessive pronoun “ours,” and the less familiar that Mara belongs to. Still, Mara is not completely excluded from the interaction, and Lucija finally does agree to her request. Even though they have not explicitly established themselves as friends, they are performing the ideal friendly sociality and are working it out.

The second use of the token 'friend,' as currency in the social market, further shows the fluidity of friend/not-friend boundary, which can be moved at will for particular political purposes. For example, as I am putting together a large jigsaw puzzle with many children, one boy hoards some pieces and another boy tells him “Give me, I'll be your best friend” (“*Daj mi, biti ću ti najbolji prijatelj*”). In contrast, as Andrija (4.5) and Tea (4) are having an disagreement over something. Andrija says “Then I won't be your friend forever!” (“*Onda ti zauvijek neću biti prijatelj!*”) The threat of revoking friendship is a common one, and even I have been on the receiving end—as I tell Lana

(girl, 5.5) that I will not draw for her and Marion (girl, 7) anymore that day, she exclaims “Then we won’t be your friends anymore” (“*Onda ti više nećemo biti prijateljice*”).

In an environment where children have few, if any resources of their own to command (all the toys and spaces, ultimately, belong to the preschool and therefore everyone, something that teachers will often remind the children of), their social relationships are sometimes the only things they can (albeit virtually) mobilize to negotiate. While I had not seen anyone really follow up on any of these claims, they did seem to function as good threats or incentives. Furthermore, in children’s use of ‘friend’ in such a way, they position friendship as privilege that can be lost, gained or earned, increasing the value, or desirability of being called a ‘friend.’

In the above examples, we can see that children also employ ‘friend’ strategically, but do so in a few different ways. They can mobilize it to verbally establish a presence or a lack of familiarity. However, in situations in which a particular relationship, often that of friendship, is presupposed, they can propose a change in that relationship in an attempt to achieve some desired outcome. In a situation in which friendship is presupposed, therefore, a child can threaten with refusal of that friendship, or appease by proposing its superlative.

5.3 FRIENDS: SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

While the teachers and children seem to share the understanding of what a child-friend is in a preschool context—someone you spend time and play with— they mobilize the term in different ways. Teachers employ the term indiscriminately, presupposing the relationship of friendship between all children, attempting to reestablish that relationship in instances of conflict, reasoning about appropriateness of behavior through it, and projecting onto the children a view of children’s social world as characterized by friendship. In contrast, children use it strategically to manage their own social environment—decreasing or increasing social distance between themselves or others, or exclaiming their intentions to do so in order to influence another child’s behavior. These could be simply differences in strategy, but they could also stem from differences in adults’ and children’s social worlds. As Maynard (1985) points out, children social organizations are fluid, characterized by conflict and transitoriness of friendship, as opposed to adults’ world of well-established relationships. In their use of ‘friend,’ teachers might therefore also be socializing children towards a more adult vision of friendship.

Even though sometimes the two uses of ‘friend’ work past each other (e.g. in case of denial of adult’s assertion of friendship in (4) and (6)), they both operate in the same environment and influence

each other. Firstly, they rely on a similar strategy—in both of these uses, the speakers are similarly deviating from positioning ‘friendship’ as an achieved characteristic and are using it as something that can be ascribed onto individuals. Secondly, the teachers might be only referencing the relationship of ‘friend’ in their discourse, but in doing so they unavoidably talk about its opposite, the “non-friend”, in a process or “dual-indexicality.” (Kulick & Schieffelin, 2004) And by linking the appropriate behaviors to relationships with friends, they implicitly license less desirable behaviors in relationships with not-friends, as I might have done with Lana in (6) when her refusal of friendship entailed her lack of acceptance of being followed. It is to no surprise then that both assertion and denial of friendship emerge in children’s discourse. Finally, circulation of “friend” among children and within their social world embeds it with value in a way teachers’ discourse cannot, though ultimately it is the value teachers might be relying on when mobilizing “friend” to modify children’s behavior. The two uses, though different, rely on each other.

6. LITTLE ONES AND BIG ONES

My second point of interest was the little/big contrast. Like ‘friend,’ tokens of this contrast figure prominently during both conflicts and interventions. At the same time, a mechanism of its use parallels that of the use of ‘friend’. In case of ‘friend’, a generally relational and achieved category is used as ascribed in order to achieve desired effects. In case of the ‘little/big’ contrast, as we will see, a similarly marked use arises—what is a presupposable absolute category of age, is in fact mobilized as a relative and achievable category of ‘little’ or ‘big’.

In my analysis, I coded for both tokens that referenced the category of ‘little’ and ‘big.’ I coded 64 tokens as ‘little’, including ‘little baby’ (*mala beba*), ‘little’ (*mali*), ‘baby’ (*beba*), and irregular diminutive of ‘baby’ (*bebača*) and ‘nursery’ (*jaslice*), when in an appropriate context. Of those, 19 segments were produced by teachers, only one of which was in reference to a particular child. As ‘big’ I coded 17 segments, either *veliki* or *velika*, the masculine and feminine versions of the definitive adjective ‘big.’ Of these, 12 were produced by teachers and 5 by children.

In the following sections, I will first look at the use of the ‘little/big’ contrast by teachers (6.1), then its use by children (6.2), and will then offer the summary of the section and discussion (6.3).

6.1 TEACHERS TALKING TO CHILDREN: YOU’RE BIG, DON’T BE LIKE A BABY

As I have previously mentioned, one of the main lines of physical differentiation at *Zvezdica* is along the contrast between little ones (*mali*) and big ones (*veliki*). This differentiation is not only present in the physical space itself, but is frequently named in discourse by both teachers and children. For example, as the two groups of children, the big ones and the little ones, have lunch at different times, when I ask Tea about whether lunch is coming she tells me “Not for big ones but for little ones, only for little ones” (“*Ne za velke nego za male, samo za male.*”). On a different day, a teacher similarly employs this contrast over lunchtime:

(8) Barbara, a teacher, interrupts our conversation to call some girls over for lunch:

B: *Uuuh, cure! Ivana! Idemo na ručak. Ajmo!*
Umm, girls! Ivana! Let’s go for lunch. Come on!

Me: *Ovo su naši tam.*
Those over there are ours.

B: *Ne idete kod malih, idete kod velikih.*
You’re not going to the little ones’, you’re going to the big ones’.

(...)

Niste vi kod malih vi ste veliki
You’re not at the little ones’ you are big.

Zašto bi vi sa malima bili? Pa nećete valda (ko?) spavat-
Why would you be with the little ones? Well you wouldn’t sleep-

(The children at this point head over and Barbara continues talking to me as they get ready for lunch)

Here, Barbara is not only mapping the little/big contrast onto physical space and where the older children should go, but is also pointing to and evaluation what they should not do—be in a place not in line with their status as ‘big’ and potentially engaging in activities more appropriate for the little children (such as sleeping at an earlier time).

Mobilization of the little/big contrast was actually most common in evaluations of particular behaviours. Desirable behavior was associated with being ‘big,’ while undesirable behavior was criticized as being like that of a little baby. For example, as Suzana, the apprentice teacher, is putting away toys with some older boys she says “No, we nicely put this away. You are big, you can do it.” (“*Ne, to lijepo spremimo. Ti si veliki, ti to možeš*”). Similarly, when Lidija is feeding Damjan (boy, 2) who is, unlike most of the time, eating well, she comments ‘You are just like a big boy’ (“*Baš si kao veliki dečko*”). In contrast, When Ivan (boy, 4) starts screaming for no apparent reason, Lidija interrupts him by saying “Ivan, you’re screaming like a little baby. Babies scream like that, and you know how to talk” (“*Ivane, ti ko mala beba vrištiš. Tako bebe vrište, a ti znaš pričati*”).

While the attribute ‘big’ is applied to directly characterize a child in all cases, this is rarely done with ‘little.’ When teachers do this, they are referencing a relatively younger child, often to index their vulnerability or lack of ability. For example, Suzana scolds some older boys by saying (“Don’t hit or push Maks. He is little and you can only caress him” (“*Ne Maksa udarati ni gurati. On je mali i njega možete samo dragati*”). Similarly, when Alen (boy, 2) is pushing a swing, accidentally hitting Toni (boy, 2.5) who gets angry and moves to push Alen, Lidija scolds him “Don’t, Toni. He’s little so he doesn’t understand he is hitting you. You are right in his way. He has to estimate how not to hit you.” (“*Nemoj ga, Toni. On je mali pa ne razumije da te lupa. Baš si mu na putu. On mora sad procijeniti kak da te ne udari*”) In their attempts to modify older children’s behavior, teachers reference this characterization of little ones as vulnerable and lacking ability through comparison—“like a little baby.” This metaphor forces one to find similarity between the recipient and a little baby, implying a sort of developmental regression. This is sometimes worded quite explicitly:

(9) As we’re getting ready for bedtime, Ozana, a teacher, is trying to get Tihana (girl, 3), her daughter, to calm down:

O: *Pa dobro, prestanite cvockat, cvrckat mrckat. Ti isto Tihana.*
Well okay, stop making ‘tsvotck,’ ‘tsvrck,’ ‘mrtsk’ noises. You, too, Tihana.

(...) Tihana does not respond

O: *Ići ćeš kod bebača tamo kod Borne.*
You’ll go to the babies’ there to Borna. (her brother)

T: *Ne, ne bi.*
No, I don’t want to.

O: *Ići ćeš lijepo kod bebača spavat, pa se tamo glupari. Lezi dole brzo.*
You’ll go nicely to sleep with the babies, and you can fool around there. Lie down, quickly.

T: *Ne, neću.*
No, I wont.

O: *Tko ne zna kako se ponašati taj ide kod bebača da sve nauči iz početka.*
Who doesn’t know how to behave, they go to the babies’ to learn everything from beginning.

Tihana quiets down.

Here, the teacher clearly positions the babies as not knowing how to behave and frames her daughter’s inappropriate behavior as indexical of her lack of ability and knowledge, and therefore potentially in need of having to move in physical space to the little one’s and re-learning necessary skills.

When mobilizing the little/big contrast to explain and modify children’s behavior, teachers therefore both draw on and further engender, that is both presuppose and entail, the differences in ability and desirability of behavior implied in the contrast. Furthermore, they often link this contrast with explicit instruction about appropriate behavior:

(10) Jakov (boy, 6) and Mario (boy, 5) got into an argument and sought out Suzana, the apprentice teacher, who's talking to Lidija, the more experienced teacher.

S: *Jel imaš jezik? Pa se dogovorite.*

Do you have a tongue? So then work it out.

Ako nešto hoćeš onda reci molim te, posudi mi vratiti ću ti

If you want something then say please, lend it to me, I'll give it back.

Oni bebači u jaslicama nemaju jezik pa se nekada počvrkaju.

Those babies in the nursery don't have tongue/language so they sometimes squabble.

Ako te nešto smeta, onda trebaš reći kako se osjećaš.

If something bothers you, then you have to say how you feel

Kako si se osjećao kad te Mario ugrizao?

How did you feel when Mario bit you?

J: Bolilo me

It hurt.

L: **A što si ti njemu napravio sljedeći dan?**

And what did you do to him the next day?

J: *Vratio sam mu*

I bit him back. (lit. I returned it to him)

S: ***Onda vas je i jednog i drugog bolilo. Ali veliki imaju jezik i mogu se dogovoriti.***

Then both of you were hurting. But big ones have a tongue/language and they can work it out.

In this interaction, Suzana links physical squabbles/altercations to lack of linguistic ability characteristic of babies in the nursery. The implication is that the boy in question should not fight, but, because they are able to, they should work it out. The strategy for this is then explicitly taught “If you want something then say please, lend it to me, I'll give it back.” And is further tied, through facilitation of a particular sequence of thoughts into attributes of friendly sociality: consideration for others feelings and avoidance of behaviors such as biting. Similarly to how children should not fight because they are friends, they should not do it because they are big and they should know better.

As the above examples show, the teachers clearly align the categories of ‘little’ and ‘big’ with undesirable and desirable behavior, and draw on and reproduce these when evaluating particular children’s behaviours, including disruptive conflict. This use also indexes the teacher’s expectations for children at the preschool—that they, as they get older, do in fact develop more social skills, get better at working things out, and need less intervention.

6.2 CHILDREN TALKING TO CHILDREN: LITTLE BABY, LITTLE BABY!

Children sometimes employ the little/big contrast in a manner that indicates direct uptake of teacher’s use. For example, as Luka (boy, 2.5) puts his shoes on, he comes up to me, and proudly

proclaims “I’m big, teacher” (“*Ja sam veliki, teta*”). On another day, as Goran (boy, 4) is crying, Andrija (4) says “I don’t cry, I’m big” (“*Ja ne plačem, ja sam veliki*”). Children employ the category of ‘big’ to highlight their good behavior, and distance themselves from the (crying) babies. Furthermore, they have a sense of ‘little ones’ as a more vulnerable, and sometimes incompetent and blameworthy category. They might not associate with them, or will even resent them, but will occasionally help them, because they’re little. For example, after Lucija (girl, 3.5) helps one of the little ones who fell off his toy truck, and I commend her on it, she says “Because he’s a little baby. A baby who lives in the nursery” (“*Jer je on mali bebač, bebač koj živi u jaslicama*”). However, all of these instances are very rare in comparison to the major instantiation of the dichotomy in children’s interaction—the insult.

The first time I hear the words ‘little baby’ (*little baby*) at *Zvezdica*, it is the second day of my fieldwork and I’m having an early morning breakfast with a few younger kids, when a commotion breaks out:

(11) Lucija, (girl, 3.5), Ivan (boy, 4) and Andrija (boy, 4.5) are sitting at a table eating breakfast.

L: *Mala beba! Mala beba!* (mockingly)
Little baby! Little baby!

I: *Nisam!*
I’m not!

A: *Zašto mu se rugaš?*
Why are you calling him names?

L: *Zato jer me on prije zvao mala beba.*
Because he called me ‘little baby’ before.

A: *Onda ti njega tako zovi i kaži teti.*
Then you call him that, too, and tell the teacher.

Unlike the teacher’s occasional use of ‘little baby’ to reference the nursery children, or the use of comparison between a particular child and a little baby, children’s use of the term directly names the other a little baby and does so in an often loud and mocking tone. During my time at *Zvezdica*, ‘little baby’ was by far the most common insult used by children, and while it is sometimes used without much elaboration by either party, it can easily result in a lengthy exchange resulting in a teacher’s intervention:

(12) Pero (boy, 4), Andrija (boy, 4.5), and Mislav (4) are playing with large plastic building blocks. An argument ensues and Lidija, the teacher, intervenes. Branimir (boy, 5) and his brother Toni (boy, 2) join in.

P: *Ajd ti, glupane. Beba! Beba!*
Come on, stupid. Baby! Baby!

A: *Nisam beba.*
I'm not a baby.

P: *Jesi, ti si beba*
Yes, you're a baby.

M: *Beba u gaće!*
Baby in(to) pants! (likely short for "Baby pooped his/her pants")

(?): *<scream> Beba! <scream>*
<scream> Baby! <scream>

L: ***Ej, kakve su to ružne riječi?***
Oi, what kind of ugly words are these?

P: *On je mala beba!*
He's a little baby! (pointing at Andrija)

Lidija says something inaudible and approaches.

P: *Nja, nja! Mala beba!*
Nha, nha! Little baby!

L: ***To su ružne riječi.***
These are ugly words

A: *Nisam mala beba.*
I'm not a little baby

P: *Jesi.* (nodding)
You are!

(...)

L: ***Halo:, male bebe ne govore.***
Hello:, little babies do not speak.

P: *Mala beba,*
Little baby,

L: ***Molim te, Pero.***
Please, Pero

P: *Be be be be*
Beh beh beh beh

(...)

L: ***Jeste pokupili? Niste, jelda. A svađamo se, bez razloga.***
Did you pick up (the mess)? You didn't, right? And we're arguing for not reason.
I rugamo jedni drugima, što nije lijepo.
And we make fun of each other, which is not nice.

B: (to Pero, leaning forwards a bit aggressively)
Ti si beba!
You are a baby!

- P: *Ne rugaj se!*
Don't make fun (of me)!
- B: *Ti si beba.*
You are a baby.

(turns to his brother Toni)
On je mala beba.
He's a little baby.
- T: (running towards Pero)
Ti si! Ti si!
You are! You are!
- L: Branimir!**
- A(?): *Tko je beba?*
Who's a baby?
- L: xxx Toni!**

(1.5)
Pa jeste li vi prijatelji? xxxx Molim vas.
Well are you friends? Please.
- P: *Ja nisam (mala?) beba*
I'm not a (little?) baby.
- L: 'Nitko nije beba.**
'Nobody's a baby.
- A: (as he is cleaning up)
Ja nisam beba.
I'm not a baby.
- L: *Tako, Andrija, odlično. Svaka čast.***
That's right, Andrija, great. Good job.

Pogledajte, Andrija je najvrijedniji od svih. Bravo.
Look, Andrija is most diligent of all. Bravo.

Jako si dobar dječak.
You're a very good boy.

Soon Mislav joins Andrija in cleaning up, and some other boys follow. In the end Lidija gives a truck to Andrija praising him.

In this example, the boys, initiate in a verbal fight instigated by a disagreement over what and how they should build using their blocks. Pero is calling Andrija a little baby, Mislav joins in, and Andrija is trying to counter them by directly denying their claims. Lidija tries to interrupt this exchange multiple times, characterizing their words as ugly, denying the truth value of their claims—none of them are little babies, as little babies cannot speak, and identifying their relationship as that of friendship. Ultimately, what resolves the argument is the boys' orientation away from the conflict and

towards cleaning up, which Lidija then evaluates as very good and rewards with a truck given to the most helpful of boys.

What we can see here is also a conflict between two ways of considering the term “little baby”. For the boys, what matters is the pragmatic effect, the insult, which cannot be denied, while the teacher, although recognizing and evaluating the pragmatic use—“These are ugly words”—ultimately focuses on its referential, and absolute, value. In the end, this intervention is not successful, at least in case of Pero and Branimir, as the boys continue ignoring her until one of them, Andrija, starts cleaning up. Interestingly, reliance on the absolute, referential value is the approach Andrija takes as well, possibly mirroring previous interventions by teachers.

It is also important to note that the use of the token “little baby”, and its effect, varies according to the relationship between children. In the above example, the boys who usually play together achieve the insulting effect by producing the token in a vary particular way characteristic of insults, and accompanying it with confrontational movements and body language, leaning into the other child and flailing their arms around. Without these contextual cues, the words do not have the same meaning. For example, Lucija (3) on a few occasions calls over Kristina, a girl she spends most of her time around, by saying “Come, little baby” (“*Dodi, mala beba*”) and receives absolutely no complaints from Kristina, who likely interpreted it as an expression of endearment, if not a solidarity-building insult.

In contrast, when there is no close relationship, even a regularly voiced use of ‘little baby,’ not accompanied by any confrontational body language can be seen as insulting. Consider the following exchange

(13) Lana (girl, 5.5), Marion (girl, 7), her brother Alen (boy, 2) and Lea (girl, 6) are swinging in the large round swing by the babies’ area. Alma (girl, 5) and Borna (boy, 5) approach.

L: *Nemožete vi, male bebe.*
You can't, little babies.

B: *Nemoj nam se rugati.*
Don't call us names/make fun of us.

(Lana and Marion continue making fun of Alma and Borna, calling them a couple, but Borna and Alma do not respond and instead start talking to me.)

Here, the group of children on the swing all have long established ties with each other (that of preschool group-mates, or family), while Borna and Alma, children from a different group at a different facility) are fairly new to them. In this situation, we can see the “little baby,” similarly to the denial of friendship, doing boundary-drawing work. In insulting Borna and Alma, Lana is strongly asserting her desire not to engage with them at that particular moment, and is implying that she feels that way because she sees Alma and Borna as little babies.

While “friends” and “little babies” are not positioned in direct contrast to each other, they can emerge as such interactionally:

(14) Ivan (boy, 4) is talking to me one slow morning as we’re walking towards the swings

I: *Meni je dosadno. Prijatelji i tete su na moru.*
I’m bored. Friends and teachers are on holiday (lit. by the sea)

Me: *A jel možeš naći nove prijatelje?*
And can you find new friends?

I: *Ne mogu s onima biti prijatelj jer su male bebe.*
I can’t be friends with those ones because they’re little babies.

As Ivan is complaining to me about not having friends to play with, even though there are a few children close to his age, though not ones he usually interacts with. Then, in answer to my encouragement to seek out new friends, he aligns the categories of ‘not-friend’ and ‘little baby.’ In both of the above examples, ‘little babies’ are positioned not only as something children do not wish to be (like), but also something they do not even want to spend time around, an antithesis of a friend.

As the above examples show, children when talking to children almost exclusively use only one side of the ‘little/big’ contrast—the ‘little baby.’ Enregistered as an insult, ‘little baby’ denies any desirable characteristics of the interlocutor, such as ability to participate in activities, to not cry etc. It is frequently mobilized during conflict, being one of the ways through which strong disagreement is verbalized. It is also salient as such to the children as its proper use is occasionally even explicitly taught by some children to others (e.g. see (11)). Still, the meaning of the message is very dependent on the setting and the current social relationships that the participants are enacting.

6.3 LITTLE BABIES: SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

Similarly to the case of friend, both teachers and children share the understanding of the stereotypical referent of ‘little baby’—the actually babies present at the nursery—as well its opposite, the ‘big one.’ Present both in physical space and everyday discourse, the contrast between the two is clear, and is evoked, through the process of dual-indexicality—as soon as one is mentioned, the other is implied as its opposite. The way this contrast is mobilized by teachers and students, however, greatly differs.

In context of responding to children’s behavior, including conflict, teachers map the little-big dichotomy onto their concepts of desirable and undesirable behavior. As being ‘little’ means being extra vulnerable, not knowing, or crying, being ‘like a little baby,’ is framed as undesirable of older children. Being ‘big,’ in contrast, is accomplishing something well and even praiseworthy, and is framed as desirable. The employment of this contrast in this way is likely a more general cultural

practice as I have observed it when parents came to drop off or pick up their children, as well as in my every-day interactions with my own and other families.

While children do show evidence of uptake of this use of the contrast in their interactions with teachers, they employ the token of ‘little baby’ with each other in ways that do very different interactional work. Most frequently, this work is that of insulting the other, and consequently distancing them socially in that particular moment.

The two types and contexts of use, teachers-to-children and children-to-children, do seem to rely on, or at least interact with one another. Through associating ‘little baby’ with vulnerability, lack of ability and undesirable behaviour, the adults make it easily available as an insult. At the same time, children’s frequent and very affective use of ‘little baby’ as an insult further imbues it with power that teachers can then draw upon when condoning particular behaviours or making threats.

7. FRIENDS AND LITTLE BABIES: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Both teachers and children use the categories of ‘friend’ and ‘little baby’/‘big’ to draw on and perform particular ideas about sociality. In doing so, they similarly rely on a marked meaning of these items—‘friend’ as a characteristic that can be externally or even absolutely ascribed, and the contrast ‘little’/‘big’ as relative and interactionally achievable. This shows that children are picking up on the pragmatically complex use of these tokens by teachers. However, they are also appropriating them for their purposes, and elaborating on them, so ultimately, the two uses tokens in question, teacher-to-children and children-to-children, do not align. On one hand, for teachers, what is at stake seems to be desirability of particular behavior, and the shaping of a desirable subject—a friendly child, a friend who acts appropriate for his/her age, which in terms of social interactions means using language as soon as one can, and using nice, good language. On the other hand, children seem to employ these words to express attitudes towards one another and orient themselves in respect to others, and interactionally negotiating boundaries of their social groups.

The miss-alignment of the two, especially in the context of conflict between children and teachers’ interventions, can lead to likely unintended effects, showing off the complexity of the socialization process. While teachers, in their interventions, mobilize the concepts to interrupt, resolve and discourage conflict, the same concepts are sometimes used by children to fuel conflict—insulting and excluding other children, instead of cooperating with and including them. While this effectively gives more force to the teachers’ words, it might be creating paradoxes in individual interactions. For

example, one child might not consider another child as their friend during an argument, but as a teacher intervenes, she will cite the children's assumed friendship as a reason because of which they should not argue. Furthermore, a teacher, while herself using 'little baby' to modify children's behavior, will condemn children's use of the same words for a very similar purpose. How the children interpret and respond to these discrepancies is up for discussion and further research, but it is possible that they are making particular interventions less effective than the teachers would want them to be.

What is clear, however, is that during instances of conflict, both the teachers and children are drawing on their larger ideas about appropriate and desirable sociality and are at the same times enacting these ideas. Some of this work is done through the circulation of particular tokens, such as "friend" and "little baby" both among children and between teachers and children. These lexical items are bringing these ideas into the here-and-now of conflict, while further interactionally constructing their meaning.

My analysis shows that focus on particular linguistic features, such as frequently mobilized lexical items, can very productively link instances of conflict to each other and back to the larger context. By employing this strategy, I was able to look at not only strategies children use in conflict and teachers in their interventions, but I was able to transcend and contextualize individual instances of conflict. Instances of conflict and intervention then emerge not only as zones in which children negotiate their social order (Maynard, 1985) or in which teachers attempt to evaluate the behavior of that particular moment, but as sites of contact and continual negotiation between different ideas about sociality and behavior.

9. REFERENCES

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