

Babies know a lot

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Workshop outline

- How do children communicate in the first years of life?
- Joint attention & reading intentions
- Interactions with adult caregivers.
- Peer interactions with the caregivers.

Paying attention to language in infancy

- Prefer speech over non-speech sound.
- At 5 months: American-English speaking monolingual children can differentiate
 - American English from British English
 - British English from Dutch
 - But NOT Dutch from German
- Dyadic interactions
 - “Protoconversations”

Dyadic Interactions – imitations

- 3 month-olds imitate or mimic facial expressions
- No understanding of others' intentions

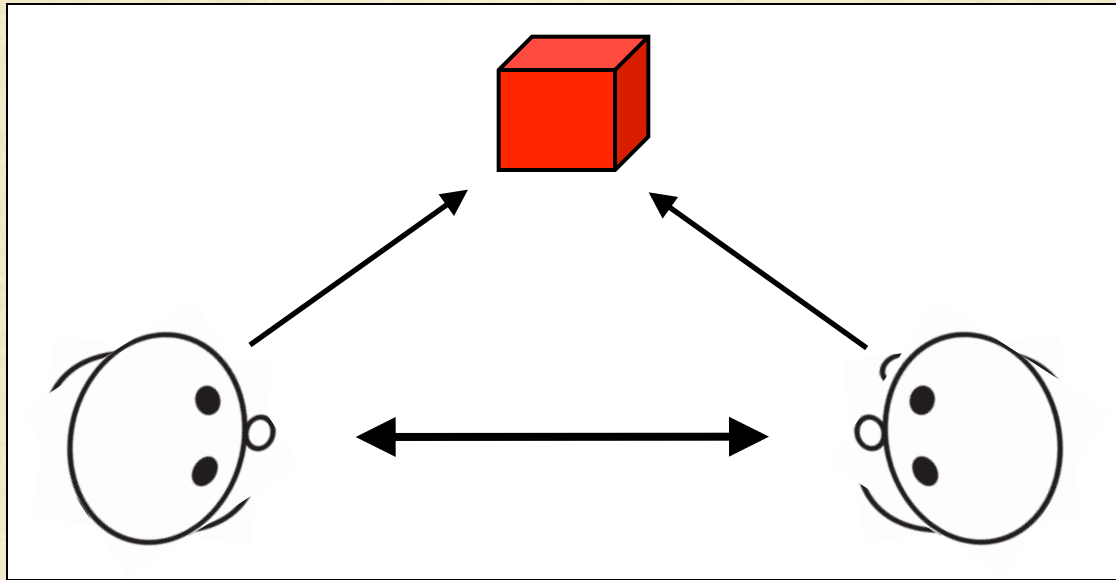
But shows that infants **motivated** to engage with others

At 9 months Triadic Interactions: **Joint Attention**

- Triadic interactions: include the child, the caregiver and an object in the environment. Children:
 - **follow** their partner's attention on an object.
 - **direct** their partner's attention to an object
 - **share** a focus of attention.
- A milestone: “**9-month revolution**”
- Important for language development, such as **word learning**.

What is joint attention?

- What joint attention is:



- For true joint attention you need some form of mutual knowledge - to **know together** that you are attending to the same thing (Tomasello, 1995).

Gaze following in joint attention

- Social referencing → “Trust”
- Around 9-10 months infants start using the non-verbal (e.g. facial expressions) and verbal cues (e.g. vocal affect) of a trusted caregiver to gain information about a new object/situation.

Understanding others' intentions

- Why do people do what they do?
 - People act in accordance with their intentions and goals.
- What would provide evidence for intention reading?
 - Understanding the goal of unsuccessful actions
 - An accidental outcome
 - Trying (without succeeding)
 - Children need to infer the goal of the actor.

Communication is cooperative

- By 14 months children can use **shared experience/ knowledge** and intention reading to interpret ambiguous referential expressions.
- “Can you give **it** to me?” when there are two objects.

Communication is cooperative

- What does she want me to say?
- What does she think would be known to both of us?
- What does she think that I think would be known to both of us?

- People draw inferences about the intentions of their partners during conversation.
- To correctly interpret the intentions or the meaning of the communicative acts, people often rely on shared experiences.

Reference disambiguation:

15- month old children

What is shared with whom?

The child and the experimenter searched for telephone together.

(The experimenter)



Can you give it to me?



(A new adult)



Can you give it to me?



Joint attention with peers

- Adults are accommodating but peers ...
- More and more children spend considerable time with their peers at daycares and nurseries.
- Peer interactions at young ages are usually accompanied by the adult.
 - Multi-party conversations
- Joint attention with peers usually involves conflict over objects/toys.

Institutional Ideology: Curriculum

- The Institutional Ideology: RIE Curriculum (“Resource for Infant Educators”) → caregivers use it to resolve toddlers’ peer conflicts.
- “Use your words”
 - Expressing one’s needs, desires, feelings.
 - Listen to other’s needs, desires, feeling.
 - “Are you saying you do not like that?”
 - “Did you hear what she is saying? She is saying she does not like that”.

Peer conflicts and the role of the caregiver

- What do you do when you see young children having conflicts?
- What do you think is the role of the adults in mediating peer conflicts?
- Are there similar curricula in the UK?

Conclusion

- Babies can do a lot!
 - They can communicate!
- Around the age of 9-12 months crucial socio- cognitive skills that pave the way to language and communicative development.
- Joint attention and shared experiences with others are very important for successful human communication and children's communicative development.