Conversations in Early Childhood: CAiEC Workshops

Early Childhood Education Conference
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1. Why CAiEC Workshops for Early Childhood Educators?

Amanda Bateman and Amelia Church are researchers who use conversation analysis (CA) to understand how learning-in-interaction is done in early childhood settings, both in peer interaction and talk between children and teachers. They demonstrate that using CA as a method for professional learning (ie. CARM) allows teachers to identify practices that create responsive engagement. They are hoping to learn from you how this approach to professional development can support your work with young children.

2. What is the Conversation Analytic Role-play Method (CARM)?

Developed by Professor Liz Stokoe and her colleagues at Loughborough University, CARM uses insights from conversation analysis to identify how successful communication practices are achieved in workplaces. Rather than make assumptions about what works, or use training based on role-play (which does not look like the real thing), CARM allows practitioners to explore talk, in real time, with colleagues, to see how – in our case – learning outcomes can be achieved.

For further information, visit https://www.carmtraining.org/about-carm

3. Why use real data for professional reflection?

CARM insists on using real data for training for a number of reasons. Firstly, hypothetical scenarios are not ideal for capturing children’s perspectives. Secondly, we cannot adequately recall the complexity of interactions, and often productive practices are found in the mundane details of talk (eg. pause length between turns). And thirdly, we want to pay attention to what the children and teacher are paying attention to (not always the same thing!) and a videorecording allows us to repeatedly see how each turn builds on the last, without making assumptions about what is going on. We are looking to see what is actually going on in what speakers say and do.

4. Why focus on sequential action?

A great deal of research focuses on teacher questions. The types of questions we ask do matter, because they set up a particular type of answer. But more important for ‘sustained shared thinking’ (Siraj, 2009) is what we do with the child’s response. Is it this notion of ‘teaching in the third turn’ that creates the opportunity for exploration of ideas, concept development and the collaborative building of knowledge (see Bateman & Church, 2017). So an important question to develop our practice is not solely to think about our first actions, but also give our attention to what might be the most useful response. What invites meaningful elaboration of children’s ideas? How does our next turn prompt hypothesis testing or problem solving?
5. What about children’s voice?

You’ll be familiar with different approaches to research in early childhood education that seek to elicit children’s experiences and expertise (eg Mac Naughton, 2004; James & Prout, 1997). The detailed transcription of conversation analysis allows us to pay attention to what all participants do. An analytic principle of “unmotivated looking” encourages us to understand the mechanisms of interaction, and how and by whom these mechanisms are managed. Importantly, interaction is understood to be a collaborative endeavor, in that speakers and listeners are engaged in simultaneous action of teaching and learning. So, for example, in considering children’s right to participation, with CA we look to see how participation is achieved in the most local sense, in the moment-by-moment, everyday activities of early learning environments.

6. What do CAiEC Workshops offer Early Childhood Educators?

ECEC curricula are necessarily adaptive to allow for programs to meet the needs of individual children, families and the communities where they live. This can mean, however, that the how of high quality interactions can be opaque. Rather than prescribing best practice, CAiEC Workshops for professional development allow teachers to explore the constitutive elements of attuned interactions with children. Access to video data provides practical evidence and an opportunity to share ideas about pedagogy, grounded in the practical achievement of talking with children.

Further information about workshops and access to research reviews and resources at https://www.caiecworkshops.com/conversationanalysisinearlychildhoodresearch

References & further reading


