Barbara Maroni* & Francesco Arcidiacono**

CONVERSATIONAL REPAIR IN ITALIAN FAMILIES
A CULTURAL PRACTICE OF SOCIALIZATION

This work deals with conversational repair in the natural context of family dinnertime. Assuming that conversational repair is an instrument of socialization and a vehicle of new learning in the discursive exchanges between parents and children, the goal of this study is to analyze from whom and towards whom several modalities of repair are used at dinnertime interactions. Further, we explore if there are preferences for specific repair sequences among participants. We think that studying the conversational repair will allow us to also understand how participants involve themselves (and their interactans) in the processes of socialization that are constantly developed in the family frameworks.

The methodology is based on videotaped recordings of 18 Italian family dinners. We used specific categories of analysis in order to detect the phenomenon of self-repair and other-repair and we analyzed the data quantitatively and by using Conversational Analysis. The results reveal different modalities of repair, and specific patterns between parents and children. Thus, we support the idea of the conversational repair as a cultural practice of socialization.

Keywords: family dinnertime, discursive exchanges, self-repair, other-repair, parents-children relationship, conversational analysis.

*   University of Salerno, barbara.maroni@gmail.com
** University of Neuchâtel, francesco.arcidiacono@unine.ch

1. Introduction: Issues in Conversational Studies

This article explores how various kinds of conversational repairs are used during the social interaction between parents and children at dinnertime. The general idea is that conversational repair is a cultural practice of socialization in the family, and participants prefer specific modalities of repair in order to construct a shared knowledge. The present study devotes specific attention to the social phenomena of everyday life as they occur spontaneously during family interactions. We consider the study of conversations a privileged modality for investigating how family members co-construct the meaning of their interactions and involve themselves into the processes of socialization. The present work is based on the study of infant socialization through Conversational Analysis (hereafter abbreviated as CA, see Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson 1974). Since the conversation is "one of the daily, most normal and diffuse activity that is known" (Galimberti 1994: 64), the study of conversation "represents a general approach to the analysis of the social action which can be applied to an extremely varied array of topics and problems" (Heritage 1984: 291). Based on the concept developed in ethno-methodology, social interactions and conversations are not considered as a given set of data, but as a continuous process of becoming. People continuously participate in interactive negotiations that define social life (Duranti 1992) and conversation analysts have applied the traditional methodology of ethnography to everyday life activities, studying "social life in situ, in the most ordinary of settings, examining the most routine, everyday, naturally occurring activities in their concrete details" (Psathas 1995: 1f.). CA proposes that the organization of daily life is supported by a series of assumptions shared and continuously confirmed through social exchanges. The main idea is that participants construct a mutual understanding through verbal interactions, because the aim of CA "is not to make light of 'what really happens' during an interaction [...] but to discover the systematic properties of the sequential organization of speech" (Levinson 1983: 292). Moreover, analysts recognize the existence of two levels of organization in conversation: the first acts on a local basis, turn by turn, in the alternation of speaking turns, because "the system deals with single transitions at a time in comprehensive, exclusive, and serial fashion" (Goodwin

1981: 21), and the second level considers the conversation as a whole, as a unit with a beginning and an end.

Sacks et al. (1974) proposed a system for the organization of turns wherein the turn-taking system consists of two components and two rules that operate on these components. The first component is the type of unit that can be used to construct a turn. The *turn-constructional unit* (TCU) can assume different modalities (a single word or a complete sentence) through prosodic features (French & Local 1983); the end of TCU (called *transition relevance place*, TRP) is a possible point for the transition to a new turn of talk. The second component specifies the rules of turn allocation: at TRP, participants can change their discursive roles; it is possible but not necessary to allocate a turn specifically. The two rules of turn allocation that operate on each TCU are the following (C = current speaker; N = next speaker):

Rule 1 is applied initially at first TRP of any turn.
   a. If C selects N in current turn, then C must stop speaking, and N must speak next, transition occurring at the first TRP after N-selection.
   b. If C does not select N, then any (other) participant may self-select, first speaker can take the next turn.
   c. If C has not selected N, and no other participant may self-select under option *(b)*, then C may continue, even if not necessarily (i.e. claim rights to a further TCU).

Rule 2 is applied at all subsequent TRPs.
   a. When Rule *1c* has been selected by C, then at next TRP, Rules *1 (a–c)* is applied, and recursively at next TRP, until the speakers change.

The turn-taking organization is also a relevant element in order to recognize the sequences of repair, and we will focus on this aspect in the following section. Starting from this socialization language perspective (Ochs 1988), there is a tradition of research in which adults and children are not only considered as independent sources of influence, but they depend on each other for enacting their roles (Fasulo & Pontecorvo 1994;

Sterponi & Pontecorvo, 1996; Pontecorvo & Sterponi 1997). This approach examines everyday verbal and non-verbal interactions with regard to the semantic content of discourse, and to various formal and functional dimensions, including the conversational repair. For this reason, we are interested in the specific aspect of conversational repair as a practice of language socialization in family interactions.

2. The Conversational Repair as Linguistic Feature

Over the last thirty years, the conversational repair and its mechanisms, the repair position, the perception of repair, the organization of repair across languages and cultures, the relationships between repair and syntax and the repair in the conversation of language-impaired children (specifically), has been the focus of several works in CA (Jefferson 1974, 1987; Moerman 1977; Schegloff 1979, 1987; Levelt 1983; Zahn 1984; Good 1990; Bredart 1991; Chui 1996; Fox, Hayashi & Jasperson 1996; Drew 1997; Tao, Fox & De Garcia 1999; Egbert 2004; Curl 2005; Robinson 2006). Within this fairly extensive literature, however, the conversational repair as cultural practice of socialization (especially to socialize children in terms of the norms of interaction and uses of language) has been studied only with respect to the parents' use of open-class repair forms (Drew 1981; Langford 1981).

The present work aims to analyze the parent-child repair as practice of socialization in natural contexts (Goffman 1973), and specifically within family interactions. From the perspective that holds social interaction as a place of acquisition and co-construction of shared knowledge, the conversational repair represents an instrument of socialization and a vehicle of new learning. As Schegloff, Jefferson & Sacks (1977: 125) stated, "an organization of repair operates in conversation, addressed to recurrent problems in speaking, hearing and understanding." This has been called *conversational repair*[1]. One can recognize the conversational repair both in the process of codification and de-codification of linguistic

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[1] The term *repair* is used in opposition to the term correction, usually referred to as substitution of mistakes by the correct version. In this paper, we consider both meanings in the definition of conversational repair.

signs, and in the inferential process that is constructed by the partici-
pant's interpretations of interactional events. As the variability of interac-
tions is not guaranteed to be a good resolution of the verbal exchange,
it is important to assume the presence of a *system of correction*, in order
to rectify the *distortions* of language. As suggested by previous studies
(Drew 1997), conversation analytic research reveals that the organization
of repair has certain independence or autonomy with respect to the source
of the trouble. However, conversation can itself be a solution for imper-
fections of oral communication. There is, in fact, a combined effort of
mutual *agreement* by interlocutors that helps them to manage and work
out situations of incomprehension and misunderstanding. In this sense
problematic reference and *problematic sequential implicativeness* are two
causes of incomprehension in conversation. By problematic reference we
refer to a situation in which the answer of the interlocutor extends an
adequate understanding of the clause, request or evaluation, but it is not
referred to the preceding turn (in this case, there is an error of interpreta-
tion of the clause). Therefore the speaker must reformulate the clause in
a correct way. Concerning the problematic sequential implications, there
is a distortion in the meaning of the clause, with misunderstanding of
the tone and non-serious conversation. Taking into account such situa-
tions of missed or faulty understanding between speakers, we can assert:
that conversational correction does not act only when an actual error is
made[2]; that in the following turn during the conversation, the speaker
can verify if the other participant has correctly interpreted his/her words
in order to correct him/herself if needed; and that there does not seem
to be a systematic relation between types of trouble sources and types of
repair used (Schegloff 1987). Previous research implies that understand-
ing in conversation goes beyond co-participants recognizing the literal
sense of one another's turns: an alternate condition for their contribution
to discourse is that they understand the sequential connection between
the prior turn and activities being managed in following turns (Clark &
Schaefer 1987), which is fundamental to discourse coherence (Schegloff
1990) and to intersubjectivity (Schegloff 1992).

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[2] We refer not only to the notion of *error*, but we consider also the *trouble* that
emerges during conversation.

In this theoretical perspective, conversational correction defines a wider concept than a grammatical correction; in fact, it concerns not only grammatical and syntactic aspects, but also the intensity by which a verbal production can be corrected. Moreover, a correction can be made because a lack of alignment between speakers is recognized and because "not only the material error is corrected [...], but generally also all that is not preferred can be repaired" (Zorzi Calò 1990: 27).

3. Methodology

The present study is part of a large project on the interactive conversational processes in the family, developed in the United States in 1989, and conducted in Italy in 1991. The aim of the general project is to observe and to analyze the processes of socialization that occur in family dinnertime conversations. Among various aspects of the family conversation, we consider that conversational repair could offer a specific feature to study the strategies that participants use in order to *change* verbal information, personal statements and their meanings. Previous analyses of the Italian family dinner conversations revealed the presence of complex argumentative and rhetorical devices in everyday family discourse (Pontecorvo 1996; Pontecorvo & Arcidiacono 2007). Indeed, at dinner table conversation, children can practice rhetorical and reasoning skills. In order to discourage the linguistic violations of children, parents prefer to regulate children's behavior through the use of counterfactual statements (Pontecorvo, Girardet & Zucchermaglio 1993). Furthermore, through the contribution on family narratives, children may learn to practice different forms of participation in this social activity, improving their argumentative and cognitive abilities.

3.1. Goals of the Research

The goals of this specific research on conversational repair are the following:
   – to analyze (descriptively) the several modalities of repair used by participants with respect to the different roles of family members

– to explore the main typologies of repair used by parents and children in order to analyze the discursive directions and the educational implications of this cultural practice.

3.2. Data Collection and Corpus

The data corpus we analyzed consists of 18 video-recorded dinners of six Italian families; the selected families include the presence of both parents and two children (at least one between three and six years old, considered the target of the study, and an older brother or sister). We selected middle class families living in various Italian cities. Each family was videotaped four times during dinnertime within a 15-day period. The first videotaped dinner was not used for the aims of the research, because we considered it as an occasion to familiarize the participants with the camera. Following a first contact with participants, the researcher left a camera with a family and he/she was not present during the recording process. All conversations at dinnertime were videotaped and then fully transcribed using the CHAT transcription method of the CHILDES system (MacWhinney 1989). All transcriptions take into consideration: 1) verbal activity (including interruptions and overlaps); 2) paralinguistic aspects (intonation, pauses, stresses); 3) non-verbal behaviors (such as movements, mimics, gazes). All transcriptions were revised by two judges, with high level of consent. For the presentation of conversational excerpts in this paper, we used the symbols of CA (see Appendix).

3.3. Definition of Repair and Categories of Analysis

We recognize different kinds of repair, according to Schegloff et al. (1977) and McHoul (1990)[3]: repairs contain a trouble source, an initiation of repair and a correction. The conversational repair is a phenomenon (involving a turn or more turns within a conversational sequence), in which it is possible to determine the corrections and the discursive roles of participants.

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[3] In McHoul's study the processes of repair are considered in classroom context. We assume that it is possible to use the same concept of repair in family context.

We consider *repair* to be any participation in a turn wherein it is possible to increase the intelligibility of the turn – in other words, the repair concerns a linguistic procedure aimed to modify, to correct or to reformulate a previous clause or a part of it, even during a speech in which previous mistakes have not been made. We will refer to that which the repair addresses as the *repairable* or the *trouble source*. Concerning the repair being initiated with no apparent error, it appears that nothing is, in principle, excludable from the class *repairable*.

We used the following categories of repair (all the examples are the same excerpts used by Schegloff et al. 1977):

– *self-initiated self-repair:* a speaker produces an error, during the talk, and he/she corrects him/herself spontaneously;

Excerpt 1: self-repair can issue from self-initiation

N:	She was givin me a:ll the people that → were go:ne this yea:r I mean this → quarter y' know
J:	Yeah

In this excerpt self-repair refers to the success of a repair procedure as outcome. N is self-repairing when he/she is saying *"quarter"* instead of year.

– *third position repair/third turn repair:* self-repair occurs in the third turn after the error, produced in the first turn by the same participant;

first turn   →   A (error)
second turn →   B
third turn   →   A (self-repair);

Excerpt 2: repair may be placed in the third turn to the trouble-source turn

L:	I read a very interesting story today,
M:	uhm, what's that.
L:	→ w'll not today, maybe yesterday, aw who knows when, huh, it's called Dragon Stew.

L is repairing his/her turn, by saying *"not today, maybe yesterday"* to refer the story he/she is telling.

– *self-initiated other-repair:* the speaker begins the repair in his/her turn, but it is completed by another speaker;

Excerpt 3: other-repair can issue from self-initiation

B:	→ He had dis uh Mistuh W- whatever k- I can't think of his first name, <u>Watts</u> on, the one thet wrote that piece,
A:	→ Dan Watts.

A is completing the turn of B, by a repair including the full name *(Dan Watts)* of the subject they are speaking about.

– *other-initiated self-repair:* the speaker supplies an explanation demanded by another participant;

Excerpt 4: self-repair can issue from other-initiation

K:	Is Al here today?
D:	Yeah.
	(2.0)
R:	→ He <u>is</u>? hh eh heh
D:	→ Well he was.

The excerpt involves a multiple participation that produces the repair: D repairs his/her turn about the presence of Al, by the turn *"well he was"* that follows the intervention of R.

– *other-initiated other-repair:* the speaker is corrected from another participant in the following turn;

Excerpt 5: other-repair can issue from other-initiation

B:	Where didju play <u>ba:</u>sk-etbaw.
A:	(The) <u>gy</u>:m.
B:	In the gy<u>:m</u>?
A:	Yea:h. Like grou(h)p <u>the</u>rapy. Yuh know=
B:	=[Oh<u>:::</u>.

A:	=[half the group thet we had la:s' term wz there en we jus' playing arou:nd.
B:	→ Uh- fooling around.
A:	Eh- yeah…

The turn of A when he/she is saying *"playing around"* is repaired by B in his/her last turn, by the intervention *"fooling around."*

In order to point out all the sequences related to the conversational repair, we selected as the unit of analysis each turn in which a trouble source was present as well as the following turn(s) produced by the same participant or the other family members to repair the claim. Referring to the categories mentioned above, we found in our data corpus a total number of 1337 sequences of repair (agreement rate was 80 %).

4. Results

4.1. Descriptive and Quantitative Analysis

This section provides a descriptive analysis of conversational repair categories related to participants and a specific analysis of some interesting phenomena.

Table 1 presents frequencies and percentages of repair categories produced by all the participants during dinnertime conversations. Findings of Table 1 show that the other-initiated self-repair is the most frequent category in the total percentage of repair (49.5 %), followed by the category of self-initiated self-repair (28.8 %), and by the other-initiated other-repair category (18.9 %). It can also be seen that parents produce more repairs than children (respectively 37.2 % mother, 30.5 % father; 22.1 % brother, and 10.2 % target child): in particular, mothers produce many self-repairs, but at the same time they provide most contributions to the total of other-initiated other-repair and to other-initiated self-repair. Moreover, the discrepancy between other-initiated self-repair and other-repair is much lower for children than for parents.

The results show that different speakers produce different repair categories ($\chi 2 = 65.1$, df = 12, p < .001); Table 2 shows positive standardized and significant residuals that reveal relations between: a) the role

Table 1: Frequencies and Percentages of Repair Categories

		Speaker				
		Father	Mother	Target	Brother	Total
Repair	Self-Initiated Self-Repair	112 8.3%	123 9.2%	45 3.4%	105 7.9%	385 28.8%
	Third Position Repair/ Third Turn Repair	5 0.4%	8 0.6%	6 0.4%	15 1.1%	34 2.5%
	Self-Initiated Other-Repair	2 0.2%	0 0.0%	2 0.1%	0 0.0%	4 0.3%
	Other-Initiated Self-Repair	216 16.2%	289 21.6%	48 3.6%	108 8.1%	661 49.5%
	Other-Initiated Other Repair	73 5.4%	77 5.8%	36 2.7%	67 5.0%	253 18.9%
	Total	408 30.5%	497 37.2%	137 10.2%	295 22.1%	1337 100%

of mother and the category of other-initiated self-repair (2.76, $p < .001$); b) the role of brother and the category of third position repair-third turn repair (2.74, $p < .001$); c) the role of brother and the category of self-initiated self-repair (2.18, $p < .001$). There is also a significant relation between the role of target and the category of self-initiated other-repair (2.48, $p < .001$) and a n/s relation between the role of target and the category of other-initiated other-repair (1.98, $p < .001$).

In order to analyze just one of these results (the most frequent category of repair: other-initiated self-repairs), we first examine the frequencies and percentages occurring among speakers (see Table 3); we then turn to inferential analysis, especially to sequential log-linear analysis (Bakeman & Gottman 1986), and finally we observe the positive standardized and significant data residuals.

Table 3 shows that mothers most frequently begin this kind of repair (43.7%), followed by fathers (32.7%), brothers (16.3%) and target children (7.3%). We can see that target children and brothers most frequently end this kind of repair (36.3% and 32.3% respectively), followed by fathers and mothers (17.4% and 14.0% respectively). Mother's repair requests are directed to the target child (22.2%), and target child

Table 2: Residual Standard Repair Categories ($\chi2 = 65.1$, df = 12, p < .001)

		Speaker			
		Father	Mother	Target	Brother
Repair	Self-Initiated Self-Repair	- 0.51	-1.68	0.88	2.18
	Third Position Repair/ Third Turn Repair	-1.67	1.30	1.35	2.74
	Self-Initiated Other-Repair	0.71	-1.22	2.48	-0.94
	Other-Initiated Self-Repair	1.01	2.76	-2.40	-3.13
	Other-Initiated Other Repair	-0.48	-1.76	1.98	1.50

Table 3: Frequencies and Percentages of Other Initiated Self-repair Category per Participants

		Self-Repair				
		Father	Mother	Target	Brother	Total
Other-Initiated	Father	–	39 5.9%	68 10.3%	109 16.5%	216 32.7%
	Mother	43 6.5%	–	147 22.2%	99 15.0%	289 43.7%
	Target	19 2.9%	24 3.6%	–	5 0.8%	48 7.3%
	Brother	53 8.0%	30 4.5%	25 3.8%	–	108 16.3%
	Total	115 17.4%	93 14.0%	240 36.3%	213 32.3%	661 100%

addresses repairs in a preferred way to the mother (3.6 %). On the other hand, father's repair requests are directed to the brothers (16.5 %) and brothers address repairs to the father (8.0 %).

We can stress that in sequential log-linear analysis, "the investigators defines a set of hierarchical models [...] the simplest model – the null or equiprobable model – contains no terms at all and generates the same expected value for each cell in the contingency table. The most complex model – the saturated model – contains sufficient terms to generate expected values for each cell that are identical to the values actually observed. The idea is to find the least complex model that nonetheless generates expected values not too discrepant from the observed ones, as determined by a goodness-of-fit-test" (Bakeman & Gottman 1986: 194 f.).

The research design posits that the expected *and* observed frequencies in the main diagonal of the square table should equal 0. As is well known (e.g. Siegel & Castellan 1988), the approximation of the sample Chi square to the population distribution becomes faulty under such conditions. Henceforth, we used log-linear models and G^2 as the associated statistical test, which overcomes the aforementioned problem (e.g. Bakeman & Gottman 1986). When the more common Chi square test was applied to data, the same conclusions were drawn ($\chi^2 = 321.5$).

The data analysis based on a 4x4 table [Other-initiated x Self-repair] shows that the model offering the best adaptation is the saturated model [OS] ($G^2 = 404.6$, df = 9, p < .001). This model [OS] indicates the Other-initiated, Self-repair categories.

Concerning Table 4, it is interesting to observe that when children start the repair, the process is completed by the parents (target-fathers: 3.69; target-mother: 6.64; brother-father: 7.89; brother-mother: 3.80); when parents start the repair, we found two couples of preferred speakers: father-brother (4.72) and mother-target (4.11). The repair relationships among participants are synthesized in the Figure 1.

Observing Figure 1, it emerges an interesting result. There are not repair relationships between peers: adult does not repair adult and child does not repair child. In fact, child doesn't repair brother and vice-versa; father doesn't repair mother and vice-versa.

Descriptive results of the presented analyses could be considered an introduction to a more specific qualitative analysis of the relationships

Table 4: Residual Standard of the Other-initiated Self-repair Category per Participants

		Self-Repair			
		Father	Mother	Target	Brother
Other-Initiated	Father	-6.13	1.56	-1.18	4.72
	Mother	-1.03	-6.38	4.11	0.61
	Target	3.69	6.64	-4.17	-2.66
	Brother	7.89	3.80	-2.27	-5.90

Figure 1: Direction of Repair Relationships among Participants
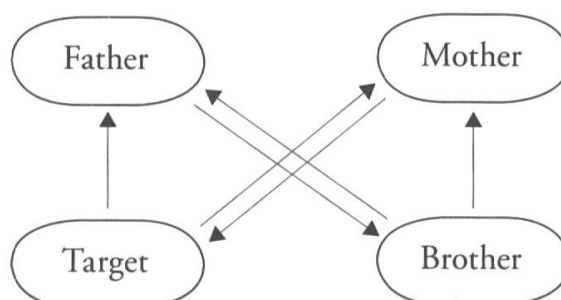
among speakers, investigating the content of the repair. For this reason we will pay attention to this qualitative discursive level of analysis in the following part of the paper.

4.2. Qualitative Analysis

In this section we selected aspects of family interactions at dinnertime intending to highlight the conversational repair as a cultural practice of socialization.

Our quantitative results showed that the preferred strategy of repair was the category of other corrections. We suggest that the use of other corrections in response to requests for repair characterised parents' inter-

actions as educators. In fact, parents usually help children to progressively build the correct expression: in this sense they can reformulate, extend, or enrich expressions. When an error is identified, parents use *local indicators* to facilitate a gradual solution for the problem by children. We will present some conversational excerpts in order to show the main aspects of the use of conversational repairs as cultural practices of socialization. In the following excerpt, we found this educational model of repair used by a father.

Excerpt 6: SEM family, dinner 3, participants: mother, father, target child (Sandro, 5 years), brother (Davide, 9 years)

The dinner is almost finished, the father is playing with an orange peel and he is shaping geometric and animal figures.

934. DAD:	come se fa la stella Davide. allora prendi, 'how does the star do, Davide. well take,'
935. Brother:	l'arancio 'the orange'
936. DAD:	prima fai un 'before you do'
937.	(4.0)
938. Brother:	un? 'a?'
939. Target:	un piCColo 'a smALl'
940. DAD:	un? 'a?'
941. Brother:	quadrato 'square'
942. DAD:	no (1.0) due tre quattro e cinque ((*contando i lati della buccia sagomata*)) cinque lati cos'è? è un, 'not (1.0) two three four and five ((*counting the side of shaped peel*)) what is five side? it's an,'
943. Target:	idea 'idea'
944. Brother:	una cosa che fa cinque lati è un, 'a thing with five side is a,'

945. DAD:	pen, 'pen,'
946. Brother:	→ pentagramma. 'pentagram.'
947. DAD:	→ pentagono. 'pentagon.'
948. Brother:	eh un pentagono 'eh a pentagon'
949. DAD:	no un pentagramma. 'not a pentagram.'
950. Brother:	che è il pentagono? 'what is the pentagon?'
951. DAD:	eh? è un poli/è una figura a cinque lati una figura: geometrica. 'eh? it's a poly/it's a figure with five side a geometrical: figure.'

In the excerpt above, dad asks a question to the brother, but Davide mistakes the answer (turn 946). Then, dad repairs with the correct answer (turn 947) and a new topic starts. Different kinds of repair are indicators that allow children to improve, through the inter-subjectivity that characterize the relation between parents and children (Fasulo & Pontecorvo 1999). Parents use all occasions during the conversations with children in order to socialize and to educate children about correct forms of verbal communication.

In this sense, this kind of repair could be considered in an instructional way: in parent-child interactions, the asymmetric character of the relation produces an intervention by the adult, usually more competent than the child, in order to correct the discursive difficulties of the child, even if the beginning of the repair is not automatically associated with a full repair (it is possible that parents encourage autonomous correction by children). As such, we can affirm that repair is an instructional strategy of socialization, used by parents in an educational way. This is a practice wherein it may be possible to realize new competencies for the children: different types of repair characterizing sequences of questions and answers are thus adequate modalities for orienting children to a representation of reality, producing greater competencies concerning values and knowledge.

In the following excerpt we can observe a relation between mother and target child concerning a discussion about the proper way to sit at the table. The mother explains to the child that it is not permitted to laugh when the family is eating; the target child introduces a discussion about a movie in order to change the topic. This is an occasion to generate collective misunderstanding.

Excerpt 7: FAN family, dinner 2, participants: mother; father; target child (Stefania, 5 years); brother (Sergio, 7.6 years)

The mother has just explained to children that it must not smile during the dinner because a morsel could go the wrong way and it is possible to choke

635. Target:	papà hai visto quel film che quello se voleva prende(re) de la cosa perché così moriva si voleva si metteva così come zia che è morta 'Dad, have you watched the film about the one who meant to take, of the thing because therefore he died, he meant, he put like the aunt that has died'
636. MUM:	[chi è zia? '[which aunt?'
637. DAD:	[chi è morta? '[who has died?'
638. Target:	questa qua guardate 'this one, look'
639. MUM:	quale zia è morta? 'which aunt has died?'
640. Brother:	ah:: la mamma chi è la nonna di zia Raffaella? 'ah:: the mother who is, the grandmother of the aunt Raffaella?'
641. Target:	si. 'yes.'
642. MUM:	ma quella è la nonna non è la zia è la nonna 'but she is the grandmother she is not the aunt she is the grandmother'
643. Target:	→ la nonna hai visto che gli hanno messo le catene? hai visto quel film che gli hanno messo le catene perché si voleva perdere 'the grandmother have you seen that they put her in chains? have you watched the movie in which they put her in chains, because she meant to lose'
(…)	

658. MUM:	→ ma che film era? un film per bambini? 'but what is the movie about? a children's movie?'
659. Target:	→ no un film per grandi perché io ti ricordi che me so messa in braccio e ho pianto perché dici dicevo [ho paura ho paura ho paura 'No, an adult movie, because I, you remember that you took me in your arms and I cried because you said, I said [I am scared I am scared I am scared'
660. MUM:	→ [si era un film si era un film per grandi però perché l'ha voluto vedere Sergio '[yes, it was a movie yes it was an adult movie, but because Sergio has decided to watch it'

Excerpt 7 begins with a mistake and we can observe a first problematization[4] (from turn 635 to turn 643) that requires a repair, namely the question about the identity of the dead person (the aunt or the grandmother). The intervention of Sergio (640) suggests a possible solution, even if there was a collective engagement in order to rebuild the real situation (concerning the movie) told by Stefania, and to explain the reference to the grandmother. Referring to Stefania's storytelling, the first argumentation is suspended: the sequence of repair is sustained by questions, reformulations and requests for explanation (turns 658–660), through which the mother tries to understand the storytelling of the child and to rectify the misunderstanding.

During the same dinner (a few minutes later), the family approaches this topic again. Excerpt 8 shows the final discussion among participants.

Excerpt 8: FAN family, dinner 2, participants: mother; father; target child (Stefania, 5 years); brother (Sergio, 7.6 years)

665. MUM:	va beh ma zia Raffaella che c'entra in tutto questo scusa? 'all right, but what aunt Raffaella got to do with this, sorry?'
666. Target:	no la nonna di zia Raffaella 'no, the grandmother of aunt Raffaella'

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[4] The term problematization refers to any situation in which a participant explicitly makes a verbal opposition to a claim of another participant (Pontecorvo 1996).

667. MUM:	Embé, ma la nonna che c'entra in tutto questo? la nonna é morta di- di morte naturale. non é morta perché é stata strangolata. 'well, but what the grandmother got in this? the grandmother has died a- a natural death. she has not died because she was strangled'
668. Target:	no perché gli voleva prendere quella che, che cosa gli tira le catene poi 'no, because he meant to take that the, why does he put the chains'
669. MUM:	beh ma cosa c'entra la nonna con le catene? 'well but what the grandmother got whit the chains?'
670. Target:	oh io vedi che aveva le catene 'oh I, you see that she has the chains'
671. MUM:	la nonna aveva le catene? 'the grandmother has the chains?'
672. Target:	dentro. 'inside.'
673. MUM:	ah cioè tu vuoi paragonare al fatto che la nonna non avendo avuto più l'ossigeno è morta. e così è successo a questa ragazza che essendo stata, 'ah, so you want compare to the fact that the grandmother, as she was without oxygen, she is dead. and the same has happened to this girl that has been'
674. Target:	no era un maschio. era un dottore hai visto? 'not, he was a male. he was a doctor, do you know?'
675. MUM:	ah un dottore. 'ah, a doctor.'
676. Target:	eh era un dottore che era cascato no 'eh, he was a doctor, right?'
677. MUM:	ah ma forse sai chi era? era il dottore quello il dottore che ha interpretato quella parte da drogato cioè da neurochirurgo che poi si drogava 'ah, but perhaps you know him? he was the doctor the doctor that played the drugs person role, the part of the neurosurgeon that was on drugs'
678. Target:	→ eh si grodava. perché [stava addosso 'eh he was on *gruds*. because [he breathes down'
679. MUM:	→ [si drogava '[he was on drugs'

As explained, Excerpt 8 concerns a discussion of the previous topic. The mother explains the comparison formulated by the child and she *expands* the claim of Stefania, in order to organize the sequence of the events and the pertinence of the interventions. Stefania replies to the mother, by the production of the anagram of the word *drugs:* she says *gruds* (a nonsense word) in place of *drugs*. This turn is considered repairable: in fact the mother makes a correction, by the use of the word *drugs*.

This excerpt suggests that the parents' intervention is not only a repair in a lexical sense: the mother's feedback permits the definition and the explanation of the child's capacities. The mother's repair shows a correct form of storytelling, and there is also a relevant parental capacity to understand the linguistic difficulties of children. This attention can produce a process of *scaffolding* children's activities. In fact, conversational repairs are often used to socialize children to the norms of language uses; in interactions with their parents, children can experiment with the cultural modalities of discursive representations of the world (Fasulo & Pontecorvo 1999), because parents may encourage, confirm, and solicit their interventions.

In conclusion, there is an interdependence between repairs of language distortions and repairs of behavior distortions. Therefore, when a parent repairs a turn of a child, he/she makes not only a linguistic repair but also a social one, producing, for example, an act of scaffolding (cf. Excerpt 6). In fact, as we observed in the quantitative results, the repair relationships are exclusively between parents and children, and not between peers.

5. Concluding Discussion

The focus of the present research is on familial patterns in conversational repair; we observed a relevant presence of repair at dinnertime conversations, as the way to socialize children into norms of interaction and as a model to permit strategies of linguistic correction among family members. Moving from the idea that participants prefer specific modalities of repair in order to construct a shared knowledge, we studied the relevance of conversational repair played out during everyday social interactions between parents and children. For this reason the present work is focused on the study of child socialization, and we used Conversational Analysis in order

to observe the presence and the organization of repair sequences during verbal interactions.

In our study, we considered a repair to be any participation in a turn in which it is possible to increase the intelligibility of the turn. In fact, we assumed that repairs concern linguistic procedures aimed to modify, to correct or to reformulate previous clauses or a part of it, even during a speech in which previous mistakes have not been made. First, we conducted a quantitative analysis of the repair, taking into consideration the family members and the repair categories recognized by the literature. At this level, we stated that there is a relevant presence of other-initiated self-repair as preferred modality used to correct the talk, in particular in instances where it is useful to rectify the discourse of the speaker in order to facilitate a self-repair (after a request for explanation or an explicit repair). Concerning the preference for self-correction, and in accordance with Schegloff et al. (1977), we stress that opportunities for self-initiation come before opportunities for other-initiation. Same-turn and transition-space opportunities for self-initiation are taken by speakers of the trouble source and the course of same-turn initiated repairs leads to successful self-repair in the same turn. Also in the case of other-initiation there is a preference for self-correction, independent of the preference for self-initiation. We can summarize that self-initiated repairs yield self-correction, and other-initiated repairs also yield self-correction. For this reason, this combination implies that self-correction and other-correction are not alternatives. There aren't relationships between mother and father; and between target and brother. Instead, there is a preference in the family relation between the mother and the target child and between the father and the brother regarding the direction of repair. Even if parents are both engaged in the education of their children, they act out roles differently, in agreement with the cultural traditions of Italian families. This preferential relation between mothers and target children and between fathers and brothers is also confirmed by data provided in other literature (see Pontecorvo, Tonucci & Amendola 1994, on the differentiation in the educational roles of parents, and, more recently, Pontecorvo, Fasulo & Sterponi 2001 on the same topic).

Next, we conducted a qualitative analysis that revealed the self-correcting mechanism in repairing for the organization of language use in

social interaction. As language is a basic vehicle for development in real life, it should be appreciated that language use and social organization require an organization of repair. Accordingly, this study suggests the analysis of different forms of repair that occur in the educational context of the family, such as syntax, misunderstandings in conversation and idiomatic expressions. Data indicates that repair is not simply an instrument to correct conversation, but a mechanism of socialization within the system of knowledge, values, and representations of culture shared with parents during interactions with their children. We also add that it may be used in different ways and with various functions. We refer to a study conducted by Tomasello, Conti-Ramsden & Ewert (1990) about a comparison between conversations of mothers and fathers with their young children, focusing on the breakdowns in repair sequences. The authors found differences between mothers and fathers in their rates of requested clarifications. It seems that communicating with fathers requires children to adapt their linguistic formulations to the needs of a less familiar listener, and for this reason fathers represent a more challenging communicative partner than do mothers.

The results of our exploratory study suggest that further research in the following fields would be of use. First, specific attention should be paid to different social constellations (we studied only families with the presence of elder brothers, target children). Second, the effect of children's age – as considered by Aviezer (2003) in the analysis of the three-year-olds' collaborative repair in spontaneous conversations – merits further attention. Moreover, it would be relevant to analyze the family conversations with different coding procedures. We pointed out the role of the speaker (with both parents and children), but to include several general features of conversation – such as requests for clarification, non-acknowledgements and topic shifts – would be of relevance.

In summary, we believe the values of specific aspects of the conversation (as the repair uses) are essential to obtaining a better understanding of the cultural practices of socialization in Italian families.

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Appendix: Transcription Symbols

.   falling intonation

?   rising intonation

,   continuing intonation

-    abrupt cut-off

:   prolonging of sounds

_   stressed syllable

° °   quiet speech

> <   quicker speech

hh.   aspiration

.hh   inhalation

[simultaneous or overlapping speech
=   contiguous utterances
(.)   pause (2/10 second or less)
( )   non-transcribing segment of talk
→   highlights segments of special analytical interest