

Are Children Linguistically Creative or Conservative? / *Crianças são linguisticamente criativas ou conservadoras?*

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ABSTRACT

In our research on the emergence of grammar, we identified a property that receives less attention in acquisitional studies and that seems unknown to the general population that deals with and delights in children's utterances. This property concerns the conservative attitude observed in their production, which, in general, is characterized as creative. This excerpt from our research, in a sociocognitive (or use-based) perspective aligned with cognitive-functional linguistics, aims to reflect on conservatism and creativity, observed in the statements of the little ones. To this end, we mobilize studies that conceptualize and analyze them. In order to exemplify the phenomena under discussion in the language in use, we selected two scenes from our *corpus* of parental diary videos in Brazilian Portuguese, published on a social network. The evidence found in the literature and in the scenes analyzed indicate that there is a human tendency to conservatism that ends up highlighting creative occurrences in the use of language.

KEYWORDS: Conservatism; Creativity; Parental diary; Emergence of grammar; Sociocognitivism

RESUMO

Em nossa pesquisa sobre a emergência da gramática, identificamos uma propriedade que recebe menos atenção nos estudos aquisicionais e que parece desconhecida da população em geral que lida e se encanta com os enunciados das crianças. Essa propriedade diz respeito à atitude conservadora observada na produção delas, que, em geral, é caracterizada como criativa. Este recorte de nossa pesquisa, em perspectiva sociocognitiva (ou baseada no uso) alinhada à linguística cognitivo-funcional, visa refletir sobre o conservadorismo e a criatividade, observados nos enunciados dos pequenos. Para tanto, mobilizamos estudos que os conceituam e analisam. A fim de exemplificar na língua em uso os fenômenos em discussão, selecionamos duas cenas de nosso corpus de vídeos do tipo diário parental em português brasileiro, divulgado em rede social. As evidências encontradas na literatura e nas cenas analisadas indicam que há uma tendência humana ao conservadorismo que acaba salientando ocorrências criativas no uso da língua.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Conservadorismo; Criatividade; Diário parental; Emergência da gramática; Sociocognitivismo

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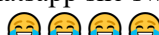
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Introduction

Children in the language acquisition phase arouse enchantment reactions in adults. The expression of the little ones is captivating by the gestures and the utterances: from the very short, but not without communicative intention, started around one-year-old, to the most extensive, when you can already observe a greater number of words that combine during family interactions.

Adult comments often highlight the child's cuteness, intelligence, and creativity, among other reasoning skills. The following selection of comments, collected on the social network Instagram, illustrate such properties involved in a child's speech during recorded interactions. These are statements that are presented with some predictability in relation to form and function, attested in interactions in social networks and that reflect customs, objectives and composition of a social group, as already foreseen in Bakhtin (2009).

- (1) *Tô encantada com tanta perfeição. Ela é muito inteligente e linda demais*
I am delighted with such perfection. She's too smart and too beautiful
- (2) *Ela é realmente muito inteligente, pensou rápido e respondeu em milésimos de segundos.*
She is actually very intelligent, she thought fast, and responded in milliseconds.
- (3) *Gabi tão baby pensa mais rápido que muito adulto!*
Gabi, so baby, thinks faster than many adults!
- (4) *Ela tem lógica, faz a relação das coisas qdo desconhece o correto*
She has logic, makes the relation of things when she doesn't know what is correct
- (5) *Gente, essa menina é muito inteligente... adoro ver os vídeos com as criações de histórias e ela c cria.*
Guys, this girl is very smart... I love watching the videos with the story creations she cr...eates.
- (6) *Que criatividade. É uma fofura.*
How creative. She is cute.
- (7) *Lindaaaa é muito criativa e esperta*
So beautiful she is very creative and smart
- (8) *Eu amo os vídeos dela!!! Uma criança muito criativa, quando mando os vídeos dela pra minha mãe no whatsapp ela jura que eu era comunicativa assim tbm, coisa de mãe né*

I love her videos!!! A very creative child, when I send her videos to my mother on whatsapp she swears that I was communicative like that, a mother's characteristic, isn't it?


Source: [Gisele Balconi \(@giselebalconi\) • Instagram photos and videos](#)

Among adult comments, those that highlight the child's creativity (5-8) are linked to interactional scenes in which their utterances present items with an extended meaning (e.g. (a) '*jacaré de parede*' for '*lagartixa*' [wall alligator' for 'gecko]); or with some morphological change (e.g. (b) '*Eu sou a mamãe e você é a papaia*' [I am mommy and you are daddy], in which the child assumes the role of the doll's mother and the child's mother assumes the role of father, but with a female gender morpheme *-a* in the end of the male word; (c) '*... dezoito, dezenove, *dezedez*;' [... eighteen, nineteen, *twenty] in a sequence number reproduction scene). Would anyone say that children seem conservative in their utterances?

To discuss this issue, we sought, in the literature on the emergence of grammar (Tomasello, 1999;¹ 2003; 2015; Goldberg *et al.*, 2004; Goldberg, 2019; Bybee, 2016), explanations about children's utterances during their first years of life. The theoretical orientation of these use-based studies is based on the assumption that grammar emerges directly from experiences with statements in context. This means that data from language experience are organized in cognition, forming and reforming a network of constructions (the grammar), throughout life. In this sense, the linguistic productions of parents, for example, are not only the product of their network of constructions – or their grammar – but also provide data for their children, for themselves and for other speakers. In this theoretical framework, one does not start, therefore, from assumptions such as that of a pre-existing universal grammar, in which categories such as verbs, nouns and syntactic structures would be innate.

The constructions that make up the network are symbolic units that represent a relationship between information concerning form and meaning, that is, a holistic pattern (Goldberg, 2006). From lexemes to argumental structures (e.g. transitive and intransitive), the constructions present both fixed and open positions (e.g. *pra lá de _____{adj}*;² *Ele é pra lá de antipático*; [He is beyond unfriendly.]) and take part in the cognitive network of the speakers. In the dynamics of the grammar emergence process, the frequency of occurrence of constructions has a great impact (Bybee, 2016). Children demonstrate in

¹ TOMASELLO, Michael. *The Cultural Origins of Human Cognition*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1999.

² To learn more about the grade intensifier construction, used in Brazilian Portuguese, it is recommended to read Oliveira (2023).

their utterances types of constructions witnessed frequently in their parents' production, as we will see later. As Bybee (2016) and Diessel (2019) observe, frequency strengthens the representation of constructions in memory, which facilitates both their activation and their processing during language use. The strengthening of constructions has a conservative effect (entrenchment) that, according to Hilpert's (2021) investigations, causes speakers in general to prefer an already experienced form to others rarely or never witnessed.

From the perspective based on the use of language, we have studied the statements of the child and parents, based on videos of the parental diary type, found in social networks and allocated in our *corpus* (section 2). In this article, we aim to reflect on the phenomena of conservatism and creativity, reviewing these theoretical concepts in the next section, and presenting examples analyzed, more specifically, of two interactional scenes, in section 3. In the fourth section, we conclude the text with considerations on the two phenomena reviewed.

1 Linguistic Knowledge: Creative or Conservative Utterances?

Creativity, considered an important property that distinguishes humans from non-humans, takes a well-proclaimed position in the tension between human capacities to imitate conventions and to create new forms of expression from others. Both seem to be advantageous for beginning children in the process of building their linguistic repertoire. Therefore, it is worth mentioning the role of imitation, a not trivial property, as one might suppose.

The innatist tradition holds that the role of imitation during language acquisition is minimal. From this perspective, it is assumed that imitation (i) would be a lower level capacity, identified in non-humans and (ii) would be an impediment to triggering other cognitive mechanisms, as pointed out by Bybee (2016). If, however, non-humans are not as good and fast at simple or complex imitative tasks as humans, it is questioned whether in fact imitation would be a lower-level ability and whether it would block mechanisms of categorization, segmentation and combination of elements. Use-based research recognizes the non-trivial role of imitation combined with other cognitive mechanisms to

explain the emergence and functioning of language. Imitation is understood as a skill that triggers segmentation, perception of variation and coordination of elements, as indicated by the author.

Tomasello (1999)³ explains that the imitation of communicative symbols (cultural learning) occurs when the child understands that, in order to communicate, he must imitate adults, reversing roles in interlocution. Otherwise, she would reproduce utterances addressed to herself and not to her interlocutor. This process of imitation with reversal of roles, not verified in non-humans, guarantees to the child that he is acting in accordance with communicative conventions (pre-existing symbols) and, therefore, his interlocutor understands him and communication is effective. The ability to interact in society, initially imitating adults, suggests that, by pragmatic inference, children learn to link form and meaning of communicative symbols used in contexts in which they participate.

In general, from the age of 12 months, children begin to reproduce the formulas used by adults, although what they manage to articulate are fragments of statements with a conservative tendency. Tomasello (2000; 1999;⁴ 2015) explains that, although children's initial production is carried out with a word (or part of it), the so-called holophrases, or even a combination of two words, their intention is to produce utterances as they identify them in their parents' production (eg. 'acaco' to identify a '*macaco*, 'monkey, or 'a bóqui,' for '*o brócolis*, 'broccoli). Even in a fragmented and short production, the child has a communicative intention appropriate to the context already experienced, and an expectation that his/her utterance will be understood by the adult.

The author notes that children up to 3 years of age imitate more than they create. Imitation strengthens the constructions witnessed in context, increasing the frequency of use, a factor that shapes the child's network of constructions. This 'imitation-frequency' dynamic puts pressure on a conservative attitude. Conservatism consists of a blockage or a resistance to the variety of uses, strongly related to the frequency with which certain utterances are witnessed and reproduced by the child, affecting his repertoire, so that they seem to him the only way to say it. Hence the relationship of conservatism with cultural

³ See footnote 3.

⁴ See footnote 3.

imitation or learning that, from the beginning, shapes human cognition and expression as highly conservative.

From the results of several experiments, Tomasello (1999)⁵ identifies that the statements of the little ones can be conservative, but not in their entirety. In a stricter perspective, Snyder (2011, p. 2), refuting this view he called *superficial conservatism*, argues that “children do not make productive, spontaneous use of a new syntactic structure until they have both determined that the structure is permitted in the adult language, and identified the adults’ grammatical basis for it.”

In line with Tomasello’s perspective, Goldberg (2019) reviews evidence that children store utterances with associations between meanings and forms, at two levels of knowledge. At the first level, there is, for example, the acquisition of verb-by-verb syntactic patterns, to the extent that they adhere to such linguistic units as were witnessed in the speech of adults. Thus, they avoid deviating from what adults use in interactions, so they tend to produce conservative statements. While they do not feel confident for new uses or cannot recognize relevant parallels in the specimens used by adults, *they tend to* produce “safer” statements to express their communicative intentions.

The hypothesis of isolated verbs (Tomasello, 1999)⁶ consists of the idea that, initially, the inventory of the child’s linguistic constructions is presented with specific verbs that have positions in their surroundings for fitting participants with marked roles. The author highlights some representations of these constructions, observed in his research, from a very simple scheme with some verbs, such as ‘Cut __,’ to complex and varied schemes, such as ‘Draw __;’ ‘Draw __ on __;’ ‘I draw with __;’ ‘Draw __ for __,’ ‘__ draw on __.’ Thus, the formation of schemes such as these reveals that the child imitatively learns the concrete pieces recurring in the language, for concrete functions.

From the specific knowledge about the use of each verb and its arguments, the child goes on to the generalization of properties that configure the constructions of argument structure (in which the arguments correspond to the semantic roles of agent, patient, locative, container, theme, etc.), evidencing the emergence of the second level of knowledge. According to Goldberg (2019), before, however, reaching this level of

⁵ See footnote 3.

⁶ See footnote 3.

knowledge, the child can also overgeneralize or simplify, when he does not identify certain distinctions in the statements witnessed, as suggested by the following example: “*me põe*”⁷ [*me puts], in which the child extends a mask to the mother, in an attitude of request. If at 17 months of age she uses the verb ‘*pôr*,’[put]⁸ it is presumed that she witness it in patterns [Verb (Obj.) Locative]: ‘*põe aqui/ali/no chão*’ [put it here/there/on the ground], but don’t yet witness “*põe em mim*” [put on me]. If there is a conservative tendency, it seems that, in the input data, the position of the locative still does not offer sufficient evidence with filling by an item of the category with animated property.

If on the one hand it deviates from the pattern with the verb ‘*pôr*’ [put] (*pôr* (x) y), witnessed in adult utterances with order/request function, on the other hand, it seems that it overgeneralizes, filling the pre-verbal position with the item ‘*me*,’ as in utterances of the type ‘*me dá a bola*,’ ‘give me the ball’ ([me V O]_{BITRANSITIVE}). This frequent pattern, however, is partially productive in Portuguese, that is, a pattern not so permissive that its experienced speakers incorporate into their grammatical network the sequence of beneficiary or locative preceding the verb ‘*pôr*.’

At 17-month-old, this child has not yet been able to observe the constraints of the two patterns, and, like other children, occasionally overgeneralizes (Goldberg *et al.*, 2004). The statement suggests that she is beginning to learn construction with locative. Until that moment, she partially learned a formula: she places herself as a beneficiary participant (a variable item) in an event materialized by a constant item – the verb. The object item (the mask) is not yet expressed in the post-verbal position of the formula, but materializes in the gesture directed at the mother. In a few months, participating in more interactions, she observes and uses more utterances with the verb ‘*pôr*’ (and with other verbs), as we identify in the *corpus*: ‘*põe na mão*’ [put it in her hand] (24-month-old); ‘*põe lá no alto*’ [put it up there] (30-month-old); ‘*põe a roupa aqui*’ [put the clothes here] (32-month-old). Her interactional experiences lead her to a conservatism centered on the verb (Goldberg *et al.*, 2004) – the island verbs (Tomasello, 1999).⁹

⁷ The utterance produced by the 17-month-old child is available in [G 17 me puts](#).

⁸ In the *corpus*, the first occurrence of the verb ‘*pôr*’ was identified at 17-month-old, in that statement.

⁹ See footnote 3.

If children most imitate what they have already witnessed, being conservative in their use of language, what is the place of creativity? To the extent that they learn to use¹⁰ utterances according to social conventions and in recurrent situations, they become able to deduce categorical and analogical relationships (second level of knowledge) on their own, what Tomasello calls a *creative leap*.

Putting together a creative utterance then involves use-based syntactic operations in which the child in some way integrates already mastered constructions and elements of various shapes, sizes, and degrees of abstraction in some way that is functionally appropriate for the use event at hand (Tomasello, 2000, p. 77).

The syntactic positions are filled by the child with more items that maintain some similarity, especially in meaning, with those previously used in their utterances. Bybee (2016) points out that the probability and acceptability of a new item in a given constructional pattern, such as ‘ __ pôr __ __ ’(SVOL), are gradual and are based on the extent of similarities identified in older uses. Therefore, children do not create totally new utterances.

Children are considered creative, therefore, when they generalize or extend patterns of use of the statements they witnessed in their parents’ speech. When they can perceive similarities between uses of linguistic expressions, they take advantage of them to extend them to more communicative situations. In a short time, depending on the quality of the interactions that the family can offer, the child is able to slip from his conservative linguistic attitude to a generalist and creative one. Conservatism, however, does not disappear. Children and adults continue to prefer conventional over creative utterances: “we consider creative uses ‘wrong’ when there is a conventional alternative way to express the same message, because we view language normatively: we consider there to be ‘right’ ways to use our language,” as Goldberg explains (2019, p. 61).

¹⁰ Tomasello (1999 [see footnote 3]) defines utterance as a linguistic act produced by a person in a single intonational outline and with a communicative intention consistent with the communicative context in which the interlocutors find themselves.

2 Methodology from Parent Diaries

In this study, we worked with a small sample of an unconventional *corpus* in the acquisitional studies. Parental diaries (PD), dedicated to reporting the use of the language by children, have been practiced for at least five centuries. In a study by Perini-Santos *et al.* (2019), the authors highlight the difference of these diaries without control of the time, time and place of the recorded observations, in addition to the lack of information on the social profile of the child and the representation of the samples, requirements of parental diaries with documentary value validated by voice recorder technology, from the 1960s.

Today, on social networks, it is possible to follow a vast amount of PD in audio and video, although publications are not always accompanied by details about the child's precise age and are edited by those responsible. If on the one hand they do not follow scientific protocols for recording the samples, on the other hand, the spontaneity of the interactions without the presence of the researcher is an advantage. Thus, PDs published on open profile social networks seem to be an interesting alternative for research involving children, observing due care.

In short videos of the PD type, it is possible to observe the child's linguistic development path and the type of utterances produced by the parents. Some of these publications demonstrate that children experience both socioemotional and linguistic developmentally sensitive parenting. The scenes presented in short videos reveal samples of the types of utterances of children and parents who share linguistic, affective and cultural knowledge with them. In these scenes, they observe and experiment with ways of saying, revealing the phenomena of creativity and conservatism.

Interactional scenes offer the child opportunities to perceive varieties of language word combinations in the utterances of their parents. Such combinations can be identified during everyday scenes, such as, for example, those around meals. During the first year, she observes parental actions associated with certain statements about food: naming combined with pointing (*Isso é batata*. [This is potato.]); offering more quantity with facial expression and with the intonation of inquiry (*Quer mais batata?* [Want more potato?]); taste evaluation with facial expression of pleasure (*Essa batatinha tá muito gostosa, huuuum!* [This potato is very tasty, Yummy!]); and satisfaction with pleasing

expression (*Comeu tudo! Tá satisfeita?* [You ate it all! Are you satisfied?]), among many others. In these statements, she finds formulas of saying and acting, derived from such a communicative situation and conventionalized in her sociocultural environment. In social networks, it is possible to find examples of everyday scenes that convey these types of statements, during the first three years of the child, subject not only to grammatical analysis, but also to discursive analysis, as argued by Del Ré *et al.* (2021).

Thus, in this study, to demonstrate the conservatism and creativity of the child, we selected two scenes allocated to a DP type *corpus*, with 219¹¹ transcribed videos, originally recorded by the child's mother and published on the social network [@giselebalconi](#). The interactions are from a Brazilian family residing in São Roque, a city in the interior of São Paulo, with a high HDI of [0.768](#), according to IBGE (2010).

3 Evidence of Creativity and Conservatism

Considering the indications of experiments reported by Tomasello (1999;¹² 2015), that up to 3 years of age children imitate more than they create, we selected for the analysis of the phenomena creativity and conservatism, interactional scenes from 24-month-old. In scene (1), Gabi is 2.3-year-old and in scene (2), Gabi is 2.9-year-old.

In (1), Gabi appears walking with an insole in her hand, towards a pair of sneakers that is on a chair, when her mother asks her a question.

Mãe: *Que que você fez?*
Gabi: *Peguei*
Mãe: *Que que você pegou?*
Gabi: *O lençol (.) do sapato*
Mãe: *Que que você pegou?!*
Gabi: *O lençol do sapato*
Mãe: *Huum, tá colocando de volta?*

Mother: What did you do?
Gabi: Got it
Mother: What did you get?

¹¹ The parents signed an Informed Consent Form which contains information on the type of study in which the videos can be used.

¹² See footnote 3.

Gabi: The sheet (.) of the shoes
Mother: What did you get?!
Gabi: The shoes sheet
Mom: Huuum, are you putting it back?

This scene reveals more than an unconventional vocabulary choice for naming an object whose linguistic form the child still does not know (*'palmilha,'* [insole]). In addition to the conservative and creative attitudes of the child, there is the important attitude of the mother, who motivates the child's linguistic production, based on questions. The mother requests the enunciative participation of the child, which activates the search for an item to complete the transitive pattern and provides the maintenance of the interaction. Let's look at the effect of questions.

The child's first utterance (*'Peguei,'* [I got]) does not materialize by the typical transitive combination [verb + object], already witnessed by the child during family interactions, judging by the videos that make up the *corpus*. This is an indication that she lacks a word for naming the object in her hands, appropriate to complete the construction centered on the verb: [pegar ____]. Gabi, initially in a conservative attitude, does not want to risk a statement not previously witnessed (*'Eu peguei a palmilha,'* [I got the insole]), in addition to assuming that her interlocutor deduces the unarticulated information from the context.

Returning to Tomasello, there are situations in which children have experienced, stored and retrieved linguistic units available for expression of their communicative intentions. However, when they still do not have a linguistic unit readily available, as observed in scene (1), they recover schemas and linguistic units already experienced and operate "cutting and pasting," as in a syntactic operation based on use, with a view to maintaining interaction.

In the second utterance, stimulated by another question from the mother, Gabi finds a linguistic unit already known, in order to complete the second item of the transitive scheme [V + O]: *'lençol'* [bed spread]. It seems that Gabi generalizes the covering function associated with household items named as *'lençol'* and fills the post-verbal slot with this already learned item in order to complete her utterance and answer her mother's question. Child is able to recognize relevant functional and grammatical parallels (analogical and categorical relationships) between *lençol* and *palmilha*.

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After a brief pause, it specifies the type of *lençol*, using ‘*lençol de sapato*’ that underlies a type of constructional scheme [x de y], in which nominal constructions of Portuguese are conformed. This attitude demonstrates the development of her generalization skill in which she “cuts and pastes” linguistic units, being interpreted as creative. Gabi was able to maintain the interaction with the repertoire that she managed to build up to 27-month-old, conservatively and creatively. We emphasize that creativity is manifested from already known constructions, otherwise it would not be possible to understand creative statements.

In (2), the father holds a rag doll while Gabi offers the rag doll a drink in a straw cup. The father’s utterances are pronounced in a high-pitched voice, with the intention of representing the doll as an interactional agent different from him.

Pai: Eu não quero mais não, obrigada! Já tô satisfeita
Gabi: Você não comeu. Você bebeu
Pai: Eu bebi. Eu bebi um monte. Eu já tô satisfeita
Gabi: Satisfeita é comer
Pai: Beber é o quê?
Gabi: É tomar água
Pai: Mas eu tô satisfeita de tomar água
Gabi: Satisfeita é de comida, né, mamãe?
Pai: Ah, tá.

Dad: I don’t want any more, thank you! I’m already satisfied
Gabi: You didn’t eat. You drank
Dad: I drank. I drank a lot. I’m already satisfied
Gabi: Satisfied is eating
Dad: Drinking is what?
Gabi: It’s drinking water
Dad: But I’m satisfied to drink water
Gabi: Satisfied is food, right, mom?
Dad: Oh, okay.

In the second scene, a situation is forged in which the child assumes the typical role of adults who, in general, are those who offer drink and food. This opportunity to exchange roles provides the child with the experimentation of varied linguistic acts and, thus, they are placed in situations that activate (i) both the imitation of statements that adults usually speak, showing a conservative attitude, (ii) and creativity with the management of language patterns, in order to maintain interaction, even with a still reduced repertoire of linguistic constructions.

In this interaction, simulating the speech of a doll, the father assumes the role often played by children who, in general, accept or refuse food offered to them by adults. When the doll refuses the drink offered by the child, the father uses a statement (*‘Já tô satisfeita,’* [I’m already satisfied]) that seems not to have been witnessed by Gabi, when what involves the refusal concerns drinks. The scene reveals an opportunity for the child to express themselves in relation to the statements of their interlocutors, demonstrating some reflection on language and its uses, as indicated by a study by Del Ré *et al.* (2021), in a dialogical-discursive approach.

By warning the father with a typical sequence of two utterances – one negative and one affirmative – *‘Você não comeu. Você bebeu’* [You did not eat. You drank], she reveals a conservative attitude toward his utterance. It seems that his previous experiences with other occurrences of the utterance linked to acts of refusal (*‘Já tô satisfeito(a)’* [I am already satisfied]) were probably associated only with food. The child’s reaction is in line with the findings of Tomasello (1999;¹³ 2000) who suggest not only that children say what they experience, but that the more they experience a given utterance (frequency of use), the more it seems to them to be the only way to say it. Or as Goldberg (2019) explains, they avoid deviating from what they have already witnessed because their still reduced ability to generalize stems from their also reduced ability to appreciate the relevant dimensions in the examples, necessary for them to take advantage of what is similar and what is distinct.

When Gabi says *‘Satisfeita é comer’* [Satisfied is eating] and *‘Satisfeita é de comida’* [Satisfied is about food], she evidences her knowledge of the construction with the verb *‘é’* [is], typically used to express a definition. Gabi triggers the equative construction whose pattern involves positions around the verb *‘é’* – [NP¹ é (de) NP²]_{DEFINITION}, already stored. It uses this construction with a definition function, filling the positions of nominal phrases with already known items, varying the filling of NP² with an infinitive form (*comer*) and a nominal one preceded by a preposition (*de comida*), as in a cut and paste operation. This demonstrates the development of his syntactic and creative ability around such a construction with an insulated verb.

¹³ See footnote 3.

Not just conservative, not just creative. In any case, the scenes between the child and the parents were an opportunity for Gabi to perceive another use for the same utterance, as is the case with so many others in the language.

Final Considerations

As exemplified in the two parental scenes in Brazilian Portuguese, there is a tendency towards conservatism in the child's speech, but not in its entirety. Children associate meanings with linguistic constructions and keep them as the only form of expression until they can witness new uses to replace forms and/or meanings or expand them in their repertoire. Their creativity becomes salient after they master a grammatical pattern and in them combine items to express meanings, however, they do not create totally new utterances, or they would be unintelligible to their interlocutors.

In addition to the discussion about creativity and conservatism, the interaction between parents and children plays a powerful role in the child's linguistic development. Studies with children indicate that parents, when talking to their children, stimulate linguistic production, so that the effects are perceived in terms of the breadth of the linguistic repertoire and the development of verbal fluency. Adults ask questions; provoke imitations; ask for clarification; reformulate and expand the child's utterances, building a consistent foundation for their linguistic, cognitive, and socio-emotional development.

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The authors declare below their contributions to the production of the article: the article was conceived by Lia Abrantes Antunes Soares and, in partnership with Ana Letícia Oliveira Noronha, was planned and discussed. The writing was done by the first author and reviewed and commented by the second one. Data analysis was carried out by the two authors.

Research Data and Other Materials Availability

The contents underlying the research text are included in the manuscript.

Reviews

Due to the commitment assumed by *Bakhtiniana*. Revista de Estudos do Discurso [*Bakhtiniana*. Journal of Discourse Studies] to Open Science, this journal only publishes reviews that have been authorized by all involved.

Review I

The article deals with a current and relevant theme. From a formal point of view, the text is objective and well written, according to spelling and textual norms, with some small flaws highlighted in red in the original text itself. From the perspective of content, the work would gain in quality if the theoretical framework that underlies the research were better developed, as pointed out in the original text. Apart from these considerations, the article must be published. The bibliographic references are current and pertinent to the subject addressed. APPROVED WITH SUGGESTIONS [Revised]

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Reviewed on June 20, 2024.

Review II

The article titled “Are Children Creative or Conservative?” presents originality and has the potential to contribute to the area of linguistic studies, in particular, to sociocognitive studies. The objective of the work is explained in the introduction and is consistent with its development in the text. In addition, the text shows knowledge about the proposed topic, updated and relevant bibliography with the proposal. The text is clear, has correction and the language is suitable for the scientific field.

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Regarding the aspects that need to be observed, I will list them below:

- 1) the title is appropriate, but it lacks specification of the type of conservatism and the type of creativity it purports to speak of. Adding the adverb “linguistically” can solve the problem: “Are children linguistically creative or conservative?”;
- 2) In the abstract, the results are not explicitly stated as results. It is suggested to do this;
- 3) The article breaks with the traditional model of scientific articles. Instead of an introduction, the section “Impressions on the child’s speech” is presented. There is no separate methodological section from the rest of the sections. Methodological information is diluted in introduction and development. As a methodology in scientific studies in general and in linguistic studies in particular is of fundamental importance, it is suggested that a methodological section be built to typify the study that was carried out, describe how the data were generated, the selection and exclusion criteria, the analysis parameters;
- 4) In theoretical development, the concepts of conservatism and creativity are more or less inferred by the reader. The explanation of the two concepts by scholars from the sociocognitive perspective is suggested;
- 5) In the methodological information, there is information that the research corpus is 219 videos of the parental dialogue type. In the article, two situations described in the videos were analyzed. It is suggested that the conclusion/s reached from the analysis of the 219 videos be presented more explicitly. Or, it is suggested to simply say that conclusions will be presented only from the two scenes presented, and not from the 219 videos analyzed, so that the information from the 219 videos is not innocuous in the text.

In light of these considerations, I am for the publication of the article, provided that the notes are observed. MANDATORY CORRECTIONS [Revised]

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Reviewed on June 14, 2024.

Review III

The article has theoretical and methodological depth and is suitable for publication.

APPROVED

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