



Do mothers and fathers differ in their speech styles when speaking to their children? Are there speaker gender effects on parents' language behaviour?

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Introduction

The differences between male and female speech styles have been a popular topic of study throughout the twentieth century. In 1922, Jespersen claimed that women have a tendency for hyperbole, do not finish their sentences, use more adverbs of intensity and have a less extensive vocabulary than men. The opinion that 'women's language' is deficient was supported by the work of Lakoff (1975) as she claimed that women's speech style is weak, hesitant and unassertive because they use more hedges and tag questions than men. However, her work was criticised for its lack of empirical data as she used her own experiences as a speaker and her casual observations to make her arguments.

Other linguists took up Lakoff's ideas about women's language and tested them in the years that followed (West and Zimmerman, 1975; Fishman, 1980; Coates, 1989; Trudgill, 1972). Trudgill (1972) found that in most contexts women used fewer non-standard forms, such as multiple negation, than men. Litosseliti (2006) claimed that there are differences between men and women's speech styles in all areas, including intonation, pronunciation, vocabulary, syntax and conversational strategies.

As studies continued, many linguists began to appreciate women's language rather than see it as lacking. Tannen (1991) described how women's speech style can facilitate the collaborative floor and add to the conversation as a whole as women do not overtly seek individual turns, instead they use minimal responses and rarely interrupt their conversational partners. Similarly, Zimmerman and West's (1975) study on supports the view of women as facilitators as they found that 96% of interruptions between couples were by males. Fishman (1980) described women's conversational style as co-operative rather than competitive and Talbot and Atkinson (2003) believed that women's style is based on solidarity. In Leaper, Anderson and Sander's (1998) meta-analysis of linguistic studies, they also found that women are more likely than men to use language to form and maintain connections with others. If women demonstrate such a cooperative speech style, I expect it to be especially prevalent in mothers' Child-Directed Speech, in a situation where parents tend to encourage their child's interactions and seek a close relationship.

Gleason (1987) provided important evidence that women speak differently to men with their children. Generally, such studies indicate that women show more sensitivity and responsiveness with their children than men, whereas men are more directive. Leaper, Anderson and Sanders (1998) found that women are more talkative with their children but men use more directive language strategies, such as imperative verb forms.

To test these ideas, I have conducted an experiment examining gender effects on parents' language with their child. In my experiment, I observed two different situations of the child with his parents. As modelled in Leaper, Anderson and Sander's (1998) study, I

have compared the amount the mother and father talk, and the amount of negative, supportive and directive speech they use. I have also examined the use of features of a masculine speech style, such as non-standard pronunciation and interruptions, and use of features of Lakoff's 'woman's language' such as hedges, minimal responses, tag questions and fluctuating intonation. Based on the findings of other linguists, I hypothesize that there will be differences between the speech of the mother and the speech of the father. As Leaper, Anderson and Sanders (1998) found, I expect the mother will talk more than the father, but the father will use more negative and directive speech. Based on Zimmerman and West's research (1975), I hypothesize that the father will interrupt more than the mother and in light of Trudgill's study, I expect the father to use more slang than the mother. Based on past studies (Coates, 1989; Lakoff, 1975; Talbot and Atkinson, 2003), it is expected that the mother will use more supportive speech, hedges and tag questions than the father, as well as fluctuating intonation. As Gleason (1987) found, I expect the father to use more jocular or insulting language when talking to the child.

Methodology

I observed one child with his parents in two situations. Both observations were made in the child's home and I observed the participants for twelve minutes on both occasions. I was present at all times during the study and recorded the participants' speech whilst making notes of any gestures or movements that could not be captured on an audio recording. For the first recording, I asked the parents to do a construction activity of their choosing with the child, using the child's own toys; for this, the participants decided to do a jigsaw. I asked the participants to do a construction activity so that I could examine the directive speech the parents used with the child. For the second recording, I asked the parents to play with the child as they normally would and they decided to play with the child's soft toys and to make up stories. I asked the participants to play with the child as they normally would so that I could observe the speech they regularly use when playing with the child in the home. I later transcribed the data collected, including the intonation curves; the transcript is included in the appendix of this paper. I will refer to the transcript of the jigsaw activity as Transcript 1 and the transcript of the free play as Transcript 2.

The Participants

The child used in the study was a boy aged six years and two months who I will refer to as Robert. The other participants were the child's mother and stepfather. Although the child refers to his stepfather as 'Daddy', he is aware that he is not his biological father and has regular contact with his biological father.

Analysis

As explained in the introduction, previous studies have recognized various language factors associated with gender-effects among parents. These include the amount of: (1) talking, (2) negative speech, (3) supportive speech, (4) directive speech, (5) non-standard pronunciation, (6) interruptions, (7) hedges, (8) minimal responses, (9) questions, (10) intonation and (11) jocular or insulting language. I will analyse each of these factors below.

Talking

To analyse the amount of talking, I have calculated the number of utterances by each parent in each transcript and then calculated the mean number of words per utterance.

In Transcript 1, there are a total of 279 utterances (this does not include turns which consist solely of laughing or an action). Of the 279 utterances, 113 are said by the mother, which is 40.5%. 80 of the 279 utterances are said by the father, which is 28.7%. There are a

total of 817 words in the mother's utterances, which results in a mean of 7.23 words per utterance. There are a total of 350 words in the father's utterances, which results in a mean of 4.375 words per utterance.

In Transcript 2, there are 103 utterances. 41 are said by the mother, which is 39.8%. 29 are said by the father, which is 28.2%. There are a total of 218 words in the mother's utterances, which produces a mean of 5.32 words per utterance. There are a total of 388 words in the father's utterances, which produces a mean of 13.4 words per utterance. However, at the end of the transcript, the mother asks the father to tell Robert a story. The father's five story-telling utterances contain 254 words alone. If the five story-telling utterances are not included in the mean calculation, the father has a much-reduced mean of just 4.62 words per utterance.

Negative Speech

In their study, Leaper, Anderson and Sanders described negative speech as 'criticism, disapproval and disagreement' (1998; 3). In Transcript 1, the mother uses eight instances of negative speech where she disagrees with where Robert has put a piece in the jigsaw. Seven of the mother's uses of negative speech are indirect, and one is direct. For example, the speech act is indirect when the mother says 'Erm... not quite, is it?' in utterance 72; the question mark, rising intonation and syntax with the auxiliary and subject inverted suggest it is an interrogative although the illocutionary act is declarative, as the mother means to state that Robert is wrong. The father uses negative speech four times in Transcript 1 and all instances are direct. For example, in utterance 205 the father says 'No. No. Robert. No. No. That's not it'; in this example both the syntax and illocutionary act are declarative.

Supportive Speech

Similarly, Leaper, Anderson and Sanders' described supportive as including praise, collaboration and agreement (1998; 3). The mother uses a lot of supportive speech, using the first person plural pronoun to include Robert in utterances such as 'Shall we try to fit one onto there?'. She also collaborates with Robert, demonstrating full sentences for him, for example, when Robert says 'owl' and she illustrates how to use the word in a full sentence 'an owl's coming flying in the sky'. She also corrects and interprets Robert, for example, when he mispronounces 'pretend' she corrects him and interprets his speech for the father. The mother repeats Robert's answers to make sure the communication is complete, such as in utterance 17. The father also uses supportive speech in Transcript 2 as he cooperates, adjusting his speech to Robert's level of understanding when telling the story, using words such as 'mommy fox' and simple sentence structures.

Directive Speech

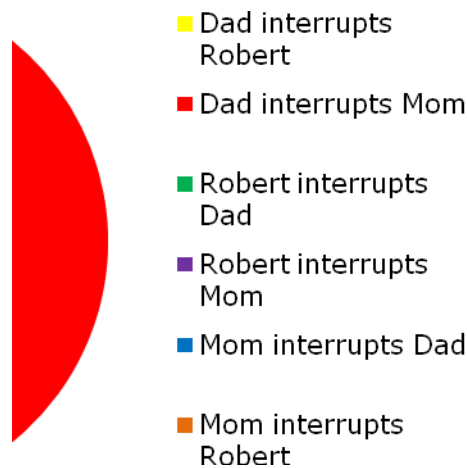
Directive speech includes speech where the speaker was telling or ordering someone to do something. In Transcript 1, the mother directs Robert 29 times; however, 21 of these acts are indirect. For example, in utterance 216, the mother asks Robert 'Are you doing this, or me?'. This is an indirect speech act as the syntax is interrogative and the mother asks Robert a question; however, the illocutionary force is directive as she is directing Robert to contribute towards the activity. In comparison, the father only makes five orders to Robert. Two of these are direct and the other three are indirect. The father makes two orders to the mother, both are direct, for example 'let him finish it' is a direct speech act with the imperative verb form and no subject. In Transcript 1, the mother does not order the father to do anything. In Transcript 2, she indirectly asks him to tell Robert a story by asking Robert 'Do you want Daddy to tell you the story?'

Non-standard Pronunciation

In Transcript 2, the father uses the non-standard form of the present progressive morpheme –ing as he repeatedly says “pinchin” instead of “pinching”. The word ‘pinching’ may also be considered a slang term for stealing in some dialects.

Interruptions

In Transcript 2, there are few interruptions; the father does not interrupt at all, the mother interrupts Robert once and Robert interrupts his mother once. In Transcript 1, however, there are 38 interruptions. The father is responsible for 55.3% of these whereas the mother only interrupts 31.6% of the time. The following pie-chart illustrates the interruptions in full:



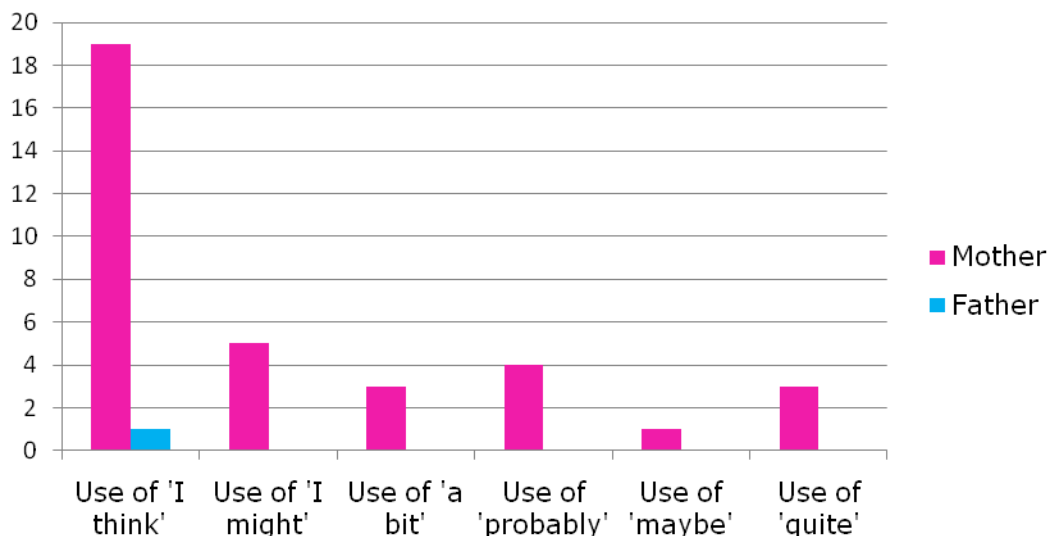
The table below shows the frequency of what I have termed ‘full interruptions’ and ‘partial interruptions’. A ‘full interruption’ meaning when a speaker interrupts another speaker and a ‘partial interruption’ being when a speaker interrupts another speaker in order to finish their utterance, after they have been previously interrupted. The number of ‘full interruptions’ is highlighted in red and the ‘partial interruptions’ in white.

		INTERRUPTED		
		Robert	Mother	Father
INTERRUPTOR	Robert	X	3	1
	Mother	3	X	1
	Father	3	13	X
		0	5	8

Hedges

Lakoff (1972) has claimed that hedges are characteristic of women’s language as women tend to mitigate or ‘hedge’ their bets with qualifiers such as ‘probably’. I have

recorded the amount of uncertain words and qualifiers used in the transcripts and who used them. This is illustrated by the graph below:



Minimal Responses

Coates (1996) observed that women make frequent use of minimal responses in conversation. In both observations, Robert's mother makes nine minimal responses in total and his father makes only two.

Tag Questions

Lakoff (1975) suggested that tag questions are an archetypal women's form. Coates (1996) described how a tag question can turn a statement into a question as the verb and subject of the main clause are repeated with inversion. In my observation, the mother asks nineteen tag questions and the father asks only two. For example, Robert's mother frequently asks questions such as 'It's best to look at what you want to do first, isn't it?' where the utterance is a statement that is turned into a question because of the last two words; the subject and auxiliary verb are inverted.

Intonation

In both transcripts, the mother uses greater variation in pitch than the father. Many of the mother's utterances have rising pitch even when they are not to be interpreted as questions. This can be seen on the intonation curves on the transcript.

Jocular or insulting language

In both transcripts, the mother calls her son affectionate names such as 'mate' and 'good boy', whereas the father calls him a 'doofus' twice. The father also plays jokes with Robert, deliberately putting pieces in the wrong place and blaming the mother saying 'Was that Mommy's fault?' when he makes a mistake.

Discussion and Conclusion

I found that in both transcripts the mother took substantially more conversational turns than the father. This supports my hypothesis and the claims of other linguists who found that women talk more than men, especially in domestic situations (Leaper, Anderson and Sanders, 1998; Conklin, 2009). In Transcript 1, the mother's mean number of words per utterance is almost double the father's, which reaffirms this view. Transcript 2 is more problematic to analyse. The father's mean number of words per utterance is almost three times greater than the mother's, which questions my previous claims. However, the mother initiates a story-telling sequence as she asks the father to tell Robert a story. In the father's five story-telling utterances that follow, he uses 254 words and this figure drastically increases his mean number of words per utterance. If I only include the free-play utterances before this in my analysis, the father's mean number of words per utterance is smaller than the mother's and much closer to what was hypothesized. Thus, it is impossible to reach a fair and true conclusion as to who has the greater average number of words per utterance in Transcript 2.

There are also external factors which affect these figures as well as gender of the parents. For example, the context of the two transcripts is different. In Transcript 1, a construction activity is established where the family work together and give direction to the child. However, in Transcript 2, there is a free-play situation where the parents take a reduced role and allow Robert to dictate the activity and make up stories. These contextual differences result in the parents taking fewer and shorter turns in Transcript 2. Furthermore, as I will discuss in more detail later, the father interrupts the mother frequently in Transcript 1. As a result, the mother's utterances may be shorter than they would have been without the interruptions. Or, on other occasions, the mother interrupts the father in return to complete her utterance, meaning she makes two shorter utterances where otherwise she may have made just one longer one. It is clear that such factors may influence my findings about the amount the participants talk in the transcripts.

In Leaper, Anderson and Sander's study (1998), they found that fathers use more negative speech with their children than mothers. I hypothesized that the results of my experiment would reflect their findings. I have only analysed the negative speech in Transcript 1, where the participants were doing the construction activity as this context was better suited to parents criticising and disagreeing with the child. My results indicated, however, that the mother used double the amount of negative speech than the father. This counters the traditional argument suggested by linguists such as Lakoff that women are weak and passive in their speech style (Lakoff, 1975).

In spite of this, more of the mother's negative speech was indirect, whereas all of the father's was direct. Thus, this evidence supports claims by Lakoff (1975) and Christie (2000) that politeness strategies are associated with female speech. Indirect speech acts are considered more polite than direct speech acts as they allow the speaker to protect both their own 'face' and the listener's (Christie, 2000). In the context of Child-Directed Speech, indirect negative speech allows the mother to correct Robert, providing a learning experience whilst also protecting his 'face' as not to discourage him. Such protective behaviour has also long been associated with women's speech (Christie, 2000).

As the father uses negative speech much less frequently, my findings contradict Talbot and Atkinson's (2003) claim that in the home the father is an authority figure who regularly criticises his children. However, other variables may have influenced my findings, for example the father's position as stepfather rather than biological father. In this situation, the stepfather may have less power than the mother in the home and be weary of criticising Robert.

When analysing supportive speech, I found that both parents collaborate with the child, although the mother more so. She frequently uses the first person plural pronoun and verb forms to include Robert and helps him to complete his utterances by modelling full sentences and repeating his speech. This finding is supported by Christie (2000) and Fishman (1980) who claim women's speech style is supportive and encourages solidarity. Similarly, the father adjusts his speech to the level of the child, demonstrating sensitivity to Robert's vocabulary. This contradicts Gleason's (1987) findings that fathers often use a cognitively demanding speech style with complex vocabulary.

Other lexical evidence I analysed demonstrated that the father is less supportive than the mother however. The father uses more jocular and derogatory language than the mother who uses affectionate terms. This supports previous findings (Gleason, 1987).

I found that the mother makes many more orders than the father. This disproves my hypothesis that fathers are more instrumental with children and opposes Leaper, Anderson and Sander's (1998) findings that fathers use considerably more directive speech strategies than mothers. Again, my results may have been affected by the power imbalance, with the father in the study being Robert's stepfather. As before, I found that the mother uses more indirect speech acts; this supports Gleason's (1987) research that mothers are more polite to their children.

My results show that the father uses more non-standard pronunciation and slang terms than the mother. This phonological evidence supports my hypothesis and previous findings (Trudgill, 1972; Conklin, 2009).

I found that the majority of the interruptions observed involve the father interrupting the mother. Although the mother does interrupt the father nine times too, she only initiates one of the nine interruptions. These findings fulfilled my expectations and supported the work of Gleason (1987) who found that fathers interrupt more than mothers and are less polite in their turn-taking. My results were not as significant as Zimmerman and West's (1975), however, who found men were responsible for almost all interruptions.

My evidence demonstrates that the mother uses many more mitigating hedges than the father. The frequent use of hedges by women has been documented by many researchers (Lakoff, 1975; Coates, 1996) and my findings support my original hypothesis. Coates (1996) explains the multiple functions of hedges. Although often perceived as signs of uncertainty and weakness (Lakoff, 1975), they can also be utilised to avoid 'playing the expert' and invite discussion (Coates, 1996). This may be the case in my Child-Directed Speech context, where the mother wants to encourage Robert to contribute in the activity and play down her own knowledge so that he feels on an equal footing. I believe a similar intention may be behind the mother's use of tag questions in the study. She uses many more tag questions than the father, which are often interpreted as a sign of tentativeness and unassertiveness (Lakoff, 1975). In this context, however, I believe the tag questions function to draw Robert into the conversation rather than to express doubt.

I found that the mother makes more minimal responses than the father and this supports opinions that women are more supportive speakers than men. Minimal responses exhibit cooperative rather than competitive behaviour, as the speaker does not attempt to regain control of the floor, instead using their turn to agree with their conversational partner and encourage them to develop the topic (Coates, 1996; Fishman, 1980).

My results show that the mother's pitch is more varied than the father's. Women's variation in pitch has been documented and is often associated with emotionality and natural impulses in contrast to men's controlled style (Conklin, 2009). In the context of playing with a child, however, I believe the mother may consciously vary her pitch in a 'sing-song' way to help Robert to understand her speech and to make light of the activity, thus encouraging him to continue.

In conclusion, my findings demonstrate that the mother and father differ in their speech style when talking to their child. As other linguists have found, the mother plays the role of facilitator, using polite and encouraging behaviour. Unusually, my study shows that the mother makes more demands and criticisms of the child than the father. This abnormal finding can be accounted for by the man's domestic position as stepfather and thus illustrates how it is problematic to solely blame gender effects for linguistic variation between parents in a study. I do not believe that it is sufficient to interpret the differences in the mother's speech, such as the large amount of tag questions and hedges purely as signs of weakness or deficiency. Litosseliti (2006) describes how gendered speech styles are created and performed depending on the context of the conversation, and I believe that many of the features of the parent's speech seen in my results are influenced by the Child-Directed Speech context.

APPENDIX

Transcript 1. A male child 6;2 is doing a jigsaw with his parents.

Line#	Speaker	Utterance
1	Dad:	Where are the pieces?
2	Robert:	Some are=
3	D:	=You need the corner pieces first.
4	Mom:	It would probably work well to get it on the flat and wouldn't it?= = You need four corners=
5	D:	= You need four corners=
6	M:	=And not on the rug.
7	D:	Four corners.
8	M:	Let's have a look. I think there is more than one, look. [Looks at the picture on the box].
9	D:	Yeah.
10	M:	Can you see, Robert?
11	R:	What?
12	M:	It's best to look at what you want to do first, isn't it? Look. [Points to the box].
13	R:	Yeah.
14	M:	There are a couple.
15	D:	Which one do you want?
16	M:	There's one with a red edge and one with a yellow edge, yeah?
17	R:	Yeah.
18	M:	If we sort them out first=
19	D:	=So, yellow edge, red edge [sorting the pieces into two piles].
20	M:	You find all the yellows, Robert.
21	R:	I'm finding loads of them. So that one=
22	M:	=And for those you're not going to know which they are =
23	D:	=Is that yellow?= =Can go in the middle=
24	M:	=Can go in the middle=
25	D:	=Is that yellow?
26	R:	It's yellow, it's yellow, it's yellow=
27	M:	=That's that one isn't it? Look. [Hands to Robert]. Which is?
28	R:	So that one's there. Yeah?
29	M:	Yeah.
30	R:	And then that one's there?
31	M:	I think you might be right=
32	D:	=Yellow yellow yellow=
33	M:	=well done=
34	D:	=yellow red red.
35	R:	Well done, that one there.
36	M:	And then you need, [takes piece] that goes over there=
37	D:	=Yellow yellow yellow.
38	R:	Yellow, look, look Mom. [Puts a piece in]. Police car, police car.

- 39 D: Yellow, yellow, Ugg boots.
 40 M: Ugg boots?
 41 D: [Laughs]
 42 R: Ugg boots?
 43 M: Has the farmer got his Ugg boots on?
 44 R: The farmer=
 45 M: =Hey?
 46 D: He's got Ugg boots. Now, which one do you want? The farmer=
 47 M: =We're doing the yellow.
 48 D: Yeah?
 49 M: Yeah.
 50 D: That's the other one.
 51 M: Oh! [Connects a piece].
 52 R: What? Oh!
 53 M: Where do you think that goes?
 54 R: There. [Puts it in].
 55 D: The red one's got the plants on it, hasn't it?
 56 M: It's got the sun and the sky and ours has got the dark.
 57 D: [Pause] Hmm.
 58 M: Hasn't it?
 59 R: Yeah.
 60 M: Right, what can you find=
 61 D: =That's red, that's red=
 62 M: =me Robert?=
 63 D: =that's red, this is red.
 64 M: That's the end one, isn't it? Look.
 65 R: Yeah, Mommy.
 66 M: Yeah. There's a crossing, look. It's there, isn't it? So, if that comes
 over here.
 67 R: To the end. Yeah.
 68 M: Right?=
 69 D: =That's a fireman=
 70 M: =So, can you find me another bit that fits into?=
 71 R: = Yeah. [Tries to make a wrong piece fit].
 72 M: Erm... not quite, is it? I think there's probably=
 73 R: =No, no, no. [Trying to make
 it fit]. Cos that bit's green.
 74 M: Well, I think there's another bit of zebra crossing there.
 75 D: So, is yours dark sky?
 76 M: Yeah. Where do you think that goes?
 77 R: Erm, there.
 78 M: Go on then.
 79 D: Tractor.
 80 R: Yeah, there.
 81 M: Right.
 82 R: Zebra crossing.
 83 M: So, where's that other piece that you found?=
 84 D: =You know, the front of the
 car?

- 85 R: That piece that I found?
 86 M: Is it over there?
 87 R: [Looks for it]. No, cos it's behind. Behind.
 88 M: Yeah, I think you're right. [Finds it]. Okay. Can you find a bit more of the road then?
 89 R: I'll find a bit more of the road.
 90 M: Can you find the next=
 91 D: =What's this one, Robert?=
 92 M: =piece?=
 93 D: =That one? [points]
 94 R: [Tries to put it in].
 95 D: Oh, no, no, it's not.
 96 R: Oh.
 97 M: [Laughs].
 98 D: That's not one. That's the daylight.
 99 R: Oh, look. What's that?
 100 M: I think that goes at the top somewhere, mate. Doesn't it?=
 101 D: =That's daylight, that one is, Jill.
 102 M: Oh.
 103 D: We're doing the midnight one.
 104 M: Yeah, I know.
 105 R: Look, look.
 106 M: I think that's from the other puzzle, mate.
 107 R: No, but look.
 108 M: I know, but that's got purple wheels=
 109 D: =Different=
 110 M: =and that's got purple wheels. Look, I think they're from different puzzles.
 111 D: Different.
 112 M: We've got two puzzles remember. I think that'll be the red one, over there. [Puts piece in red pile]. We'll do that one later. Oh. [Puts a piece in].
 113 R: What?
 114 M: Do you think that's right?
 115 R: One, two, three, four. No.
 116 M: No, it doesn't look quite right, does it?
 117 D: No, it's not.
 118 M: It's quite hard, this is, isn't it?
 119 R: Yeah. Yeah it is.
 120 M: Let's see if we can find any more bits of road.
 121 D: What's that one? Is that one as well? [Points].
 122 R: [Laughs]. No, silly.
 123 D: Doofus.
 124 M: Oh, this=
 125 R: =Goes here. [Takes piece].
 126 M: No. [Laughs].
 127 R: This, this, on the road. [Puts it in the puzzle].
 128 M: Oh, what do you think? Yeah?
 129 R: Yeah, and then that goes there.

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- 130 D: No.
- 131 M: No.
- 132 D: No.
- 133 R: No.
- 134 M: [Laughs]. We're rubbish at this, Robert, aren't we?
- 135 R: Yes, you are Robert. [Hands piece to D].
- 136 D: No, that's yours Robert, that one is.
- 137 M: We're not very good.
- 138 D: Try that one. [Tries it in puzzle]. No? No.
- 139 M: What age is this?
- 140 D: 28.
- 141 M: [Laughs]. No, it does say age 3. Come on, Robert.
- 142 R: This one, Mom. Look, they're all getting muddled up.
- 143 M: I know.
- 144 D: You tell her, Robert.
- 145 M: [Takes a piece]. It can't be that. It's got a bit of sky on. [Puts in other pile]. And that [takes new piece]... goes there, look. So that... [Takes another piece].
- 146 R: Yes, goes there. [Takes piece and puts it in puzzle].
- 147 M: I must be, it doesn't look as though it matches very well but it must. Try that one there [gives him a piece]. Over there, if we can get the bottom first Robert, across here=
- 148 D: =Come on, here, that goes here. Let him finish it. Here you are, Robert.
- 149 M: Try the piece that Daddy's got.
- 150 R: [Takes the piece]. And then that goes there and that goes there.
- 151 M: Yeah?
- 152 R: Yeah. And then that goes there.
- 153 D: No.
- 154 M: I don't think so, that's the sky. Look, that's going right up the top, that is, isn't it? How about that one? [Points to a piece].
- 155 R: You do the sky=
- 156 D: =That's a red one, isn't it?=
=you do the sky.
- 157 R: =you do the sky.
- 158 M: How about this one? [Points to piece again].
- 159 R: Oh yeah.[Picks up piece].
- 160 M: Try that one in there. [Points].
- 161 R: That one in there. [Puts it in puzzle].
- 162 D: That's a good one.
- 163 M: It's very long, isn't it?
- 164 R: Yeah.
- 165 D: Is it a long traffic jam, Robert?
- 166 M: It is, isn't it?
- 167 D: Big, big traffic jam. Must be the M25. Where's that go?
- 168 R: [Tries a piece in the wrong place].
- 169 D: Nah.
- 170 M: Nah.
- 171 R: [Puts it in right place].
- 172 M: Hooray. That's as long as it is, look.
- 173 R: No, no. [Waves piece in the air].

- 174 D: What about that one that Robert's got?
 175 M: Oh no.
 176 D: Good spot, Robert.
 177 M: [Laughs].
 178 D: Good spot, where does that one go?
 179 M: Uh oh.
 180 R: I think it goes with Daddy's.
 181 M: No, I think it might go=
 182 D: =That's right=
 183 M: =up the side=
 184 D: =Where's it gone?=
 185 M: =maybe.
 186 R: Up the side.
 187 M: It might be the side piece, hadn't it?
 188 D: Try the other side.
 189 M: [Puts piece somewhere else]. Oh, it's here. Look.
 190 D: Oh, well done Jill. Whose fault was that, Robert? Was that Mommy's fault?
 191 R: No. It was Daddy's.
 192 D&M: [Laugh].
 193 D: I should have known it'd be my fault.
 194 R: It was your fault.
 195 M: Right, so do we think it's probably three pieces up?
 196 D: There you go, Robert. [Hands him a piece].
 197 M: Right. Have you got the top piece for that corner?
 198 R: I've got that. [Waves a piece].
 199 M: Try that one.
 200 R: [Puts it in]. Look!
 201 M: Oh, I think you've got it.
 202 R: Three, and then that one. Yeah?
 203 M: Yeah. Oh, I think you're away now, aren't you?
 204 R: And that piece [puts on in] and then that [puts in another].
 205 D: No. No, Robert. No. No, that's not it.
 206 M: Shall we give you all the pieces and then you can decide which is the right one?
 207 R: Yeah.
 208 M&D: [Make a pile out of the remaining pieces].
 209 R: And that one there [trying pieces].
 210 M: Shall we try and fit one onto there? [Points] Yeah? Shall we do that?
 211 R: Yeah. [Laughs].
 212 M: [Tries pieces]. What do you think?
 213 R: That one! [Trying a piece in different places]. That won't, going, that won't stick anywhere will it?
 214 M: It could. It could be like... [tries piece]... that one?
 215 R: Oh yeah! Now the road has gone, look.
 216 M: Are you doing this, or me?
 217 R: Look, look at the road.
 218 D: But you're on a roll.
 219 R: Look at the road. We've got to fix the road.
 220 M: Oh no! It's all fallen apart. This is why we don't do many jigsaws,

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- 221 R: Robert. It's very hard, isn't it?
Yeah.
- 222 D: By next week, we'll be doing one of those double-sided thousand-piece Smarties ones. Here you are, Robert. [Hands him a piece].
Where's that one go?
- 223 R: There.
- 224 D: Where's that go? What colour is that?
- 225 R: Red.
- 226 D: Red, yeah.
- 227 R: [Laughs]. It's a tractor.
- 228 D: That's it.
- 229 M: I used to love doing jigsaws when I was little. Turn it round.
- 230 R: [Turns piece the other way].
- 231 M: Do you think that's right?
- 232 R: Yeah. No? Is it? Is it? Is it?
- 233 M: When James used to do jigsaws, if they wouldn't fit he just used to hammer them in.
- 234 D: [Laughs]. Or bite them.
- 235 R: [Starts hammering piece].
- 236 M: No, Robert!
- 237 D: It doesn't fit together very well.
- 238 M: Well, it's probably not ideal on carpet.
- 239 D: Where's this go, Robert? [Hands him a piece].
- 240 R: There, there we are [puts it in jigsaw].
- 241 M: What is it?
- 242 R: A car, already done=
- 243 D: =A taxi.
- 244 M: Is it? A yellow cab.
- 245 R: [To the cat] Maxi, why are you watching us? You know you're not allowed. [Back to puzzle] Oh, another zebra crossing. There's another one.
- 246 M: Yeah. What do you think goes in there? Is it that one or is it that one?
[Offers him two pieces].
- 247 R: That one [without looking].
- 248 M: Which do you think?
- 249 R: That one [points].
- 250 M: No, I think it might be the other one.
- 251 D: Only a few more now, Robert.
- 252 M: What do you think the last pictures going to be?
- 253 D: Ambience.
- 254 M: A what?
- 255 D: Ambulance. There's a couple of pieces missing.
- 256 R: That ambulance is holding the way up.
- 257 M: Is he? Is he causing the jam?
- 258 D: Is he at the front of the jam?
- 259 M: Looks like it, yeah. Should that fit there, do you think? [Trying a piece]. It looks like it should.
- 260 R: I'm wondering if they're going to drive into a lamppost.
- 261 M: Go on then, you finish it now. I think we're missing a piece=
- 262 D: =Or two.

263 R: Oh yeah.
264 M: [Laughs]. Oh, I can see one of them in yours.
265 D: Oh yes.
266 R: Look, that won't fit. [Trying a piece].
267 M: No, turn it around.
268 R: I have, but it won't fit that way.
269 M: It does. Look. [Moves piece]. That's right, isn't it? I don't know who bought him this actually. Do you know?
270 D: No. Are you alright, Robert?
271 M: I think, was it Auntie Jenny?
272 D: I don't know. This one's got a red cross on it. [Picks up piece].
273 M: Mm.
274 R: I think you've got some of our pieces.
275 D: I haven't.
276 R: What?
277 M: Well, it's got to have a bit of purple wheel.
278 R: Bit of purple wheel there? [Points to piece].
279 D: Nice one, Robert.
280 M: Hooray.
281 D: In you go. [Hands R piece].
282 R: In you go. [Puts piece in].
283 D: Doofus. [Claps].
284 M: Well done, Robert. [Claps]. That's really good.
285 R: Your turn now, Daddy.
286 M: [Laughs].
287 D: Next. Next.

Transcript 2. A male child 6;2 is playing with his parents telling stories.

Line#	Speaker	Utterance
1	Mom:	What do you remember about foxes from what I taught you earlier? Can you remember?
2	Robert:	I don't know. They wake up in the middle of the night.
3	M:	Good boy.
4	R:	They go... do they go to sleep in the day?
5	M:	They do, yeah.
6	Dad:	And then they make lots of noise at night and keep us awake.
7	M:	Yeah.
8	R:	Yeah but=
9	M:	=What do they eat? Do you know?
10	R:	I always keep awake at night cos I hear them.
11	M:	Do you? What do they eat? Do you remember what foxes eat?
12	R:	All sorts of food.
13	M:	Hmm, all sorts. But especially...? Rabbits? Do you remember that?
14	R:	Yeah. Yeah.
15	M:	And they look a bit like? What do they look a bit like?
16	R:	Cats and dogs.
17	M:	Cats and dogs.
18	D:	What colour is it, Robert? [Pointing to toy fox]. What colour is its fur? It's a lovely colour, isn't it?
19	R:	Brown.
20	D:	That's it.
21	M:	Orangey brown, yeah. Good. And he looks a bit like Maxi, doesn't he?
22	R:	Maxi.
23	D:	Max the cat?
24	M:	What happens next in our game, then?
25	R:	They all go to sleep and then they hear a noise which is a fox coming in the middle of the night.
26	M:	Okay.
27	R:	Night, night!
28	M:	Night, night!
29	R:	Night, night! [Pause] You'll have to be the fox too.
30	M:	Okay. [Makes barking noises].
31	D:	Who can I be? Can I be the tiger?
32	R:	No, no. You can be Jess, the cat.
33	M:	Jess the cat?
34	R:	Yes, there's a Jess the cat up there, I can see.
35	M:	Is there?
36	D:	Like the one Postman Pat's got? [Reaches for the cat]. This one?
37	M:	Do you know who that belongs to?
38	D:	Richard's.
39	M:	It's Richard's from when he was a baby.
40	R:	Yeah and it's Pat's cat, isn't it?
41	D:	Look. [Pretending to be the cat] Hello Robert, hello.
42	M:	[Laughs].
43	D:	What colour's Jess?

- 44 R: Black and white.
 45 M: Black and white.
 46 D: What colour eyes has she got?
 47 R: Green.
 48 D: That's it.
 49 M: Good boy. Is Jess a girl or a boy?
 50 R: Boy.
 51 M: You think he's a boy?
 52 D: And what's our fox called? Fred?
 53 R: Yeah.
 54 D: Fred the fox.
 55 M: And what about the tiger, Robert?
 56 R: I don't know.
 57 D: Timmy?
 58 R: Yeah.
 59 D: Timmy tiger. Timmy, Fred, Jess and... Doris?
 60 R: Doris?
 61 M&D: [Laughs].
 62 M: Doris the duck. And the frog's called Ribbit=
 63 R: =No, the frog's called Goggins.
 [Laughs].
 64 M: Goggins?
 65 D: Oh, I know where you've got Goggins from.
 66 R: Pretend everyone went to cat. Pretend everyone went to sleep.
 67 M&D: Okay.
 68 R: But the fox ran away.
 69 D: I'm asleep.
 70 R: [Barks].
 71 D: What's that noise? Oh look. It's Fred the fox.
 72 R: Pretend they're fighting.
 73 D: No, no. Isn't Fred the fox going to chase Jess the cat?
 74 R: [Laughs].
 75 D: Oh no!
 76 M: What animal's this? [Picks up owl].
 77 D: It flies.
 78 R: Owl.
 79 M: Good boy. An owl. An owl's coming flying in the sky.
 80 R: Come on, let's play. Here's the frog.
 81 M: Do you know what frogs eat?
 82 R: No.
 83 M: Me neither.
 84 D: They eat plankton.
 85 M: Plankton? Do we know what plankton is, Robert?
 86 R: I don't know.
 87 M: Me neither. Can Daddy tell us what plankton is?
 88 D: It's stuff at the bottom of ponds and seas. Whales eat that as well.
 89 R: I'll be the big bad fox. It's night-time now. [r□t□nd]
 they have a big fight.
 90 M: Pretend?
 91 R: Yeah.

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- 92 M: Do you want Daddy to tell you the story about Fantastic Mister Fox?
93 R: Yeah.
94 M: Because this is a nice fox.
95 D: Fantastic Mister Fox is a fox and he's the daddy. And he has to go out everyday and he has to find food for all the baby foxes and mommy fox. So he goes out everyday and he finds food. But they're starting to run out of food. So he has to steal food from these naughty three farmers. And he pinches, what does he pinch? What's Fantastic Mister Fox pinchin'?
- 96 M: Oh, I don't know.
97 D: Is it rabbits or chickens or something?
98 R: Yeah, yeah, yeah.
99 M: It might be chickens.
100 D: He's going round the farms and pinching all their chickens to take back as food. But the farmers don't like the fox coming to their farm and pinching all their chickens. Cos they're running out of business and money. So they start to set traps for Fantastic Mister Fox. And they try to get him caught. And then they follow him home one day, and they go into his tree where he lives and they burn it all down. So his family has to run underground and hide.
- 101 R: Oh.
102 M: That's a sad story, isn't it?
103 D: And then they realise the only way they're gonna beat the farmers is to steal... what do they do at the end?
105 M: I don't remember.
106 D: I think they just go and steal all the chickens. And that's what they do. They all go. All of the foxes and the animals and they go to the farmers and steal all their chickens and come all the way back. And the farmers get caught by the police for something, which I don't remember. And they get arrested. And Fantastic Mister Fox and his family live happily ever after. The end.
- 107 M: That's a nice story, isn't it?
108 R: Now you have to tell us a story about a different fox.

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