Contemporary Issues in
EARLY CHILDHOOD

# The Heteroglossic World
# of Preschoolers' Pretend Play

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ABSTRACT This inquiry applied Bakhtin's dialogic process to the pretend play of preschool children using an interpretive approach. It used vignettes from videotaped data and Bakhtin's theories of dialogism and heteroglossia to provide an understanding of how children appropriate social roles and rules in pretend play and use a variety of 'voices' in role enactment. The study also demonstrates how role enactment contributes to the development of children's ideological self; and how the relation between the self and social/cultural contexts, a perennial issue in the social sciences, is evident within preschool children's pretend play. When applying Bakhtin's dialogic theory to pretend play, three facets became evident. First, children appropriated and assimilated others' words in play. Second, children engaged in a heteroglossic world as they employed different ways of talking to enact play roles. Third, children engaged in a struggle between an authoritative voice and internally persuasive discourse.

### Introduction

In this research, a model of Bakhtin's (1981, 1986) dialogic process is presented to frame an interpretive qualitative analysis of pretend play with examples of how children engage in a heteroglossic play world. Pretend play requires the ability to transform objects and actions symbolically; it requires interactive social dialogue and negotiation; it involves role-taking, script knowledge, and improvisation (Bergen, 2002). Observe any group of three- to six-year-old children involved in pretend play and one thing that immediately becomes apparent is that talk, or voicing, is part of the activity. Children playing alone are not silent. They use dialogue to facilitate and enrich play for themselves. Sometimes children manipulate their voices as they play with objects, using the sounds and words to appropriate a car, animal, or toy figurine.

The connection between pretend play and language is not new to researchers. However, the research literature for the past several decades has been built on Piaget's and Vygotsky's theories. Piaget (1962) and Vygotsky (1976, 1978) both provide theoretical frameworks that have influenced the two realms of children's development: play and language. While Piaget (1962) has explained pretend play as interactions and representations with the physical environment as the catalyst for language and cognition, Vygotsky (1978) stressed the role the child's social environment plays in his or her development. According to Vygotsky (1978), the social dialogues children engage in during make-believe play contribute to the development of written language. These dialogues are important because they are internalized as self-regulatory inner speech.

Few researchers (Dyson, 1994, 1997; Sawyer, 1996, 1997; Gillen, 2002; Edmiston, 2008) have examined Bakhtin's framework emphasizing a dialogic view of language. This study illustrates how a Bakhtinian framework can be useful when examining the heteroglossic world of pretend play. To begin, the value of pretend play is discussed, which is followed by a description of the study. Next, a model of Bakhtin's dialogic process is presented with a focus on children developing their

ideological selves in participation in pretend play. The contentions and interpretations from Bakhtin's dialogic process which are important for this research are: (a) children dialogue to appropriate and assimilate another's words; (b) children's dialogue is in conflict between centripetal and a centrifugal force; and (c) children's dialogue is a struggle between authoritative discourse and internally persuasive discourse. These interpretations are used to analyze preschool children's discourse in pretend play.

### Pretend Play

Much has been written concerning the nature of curriculum appropriate to prepare preschool children for academic success. Research documents how pretend play, a natural feature of early childhood, peaking at the ages of three to five, is an intrinsically motivating modality for engaging preschoolers in activities to enhance a plethora of cognitive, linguistic, socio-emotional, and motor skills. Pretend play contributes to the imaginative thinking of children (Singer & Singer, 1990, 2005; Kane & Carpenter, 2003; Segal, 2004; Edmiston, 2008; Linn, 2008). In the Singers' (1990, 2005) view, make-believe play is essential to the development of the capacity for internal imagery and contributes to the development of creativity and language by opening children to experiences that stimulate cause-and-effect thinking, empathy, cooperation, civility, and self-regulation.

Children's social and cultural identities are formed in pretend play. In Edmiston's (2008) case study of adult–child play, he phrased play as a 'workshop for life' (p. 10), preparing children for adult social roles as they explore meaning-making possibilities in imaginative narrative worlds. In arguing for play, Linn (2008, p. 200) states: 'preventing children from playing, we are depriving them chances to know themselves in relation to the rest of the world'. Knowledge of values and rules of social life is acquired through conversations during imaginative play. According to Kane & Carpenter (2003, p. 131): 'Operational values and rules for social life are learned not by examining the behavior of others, but by extending themselves into the place of *the other* to explore how they might understand and respond to the world.' Through imaginative play with dress-up clothes and pretend food, children might play at being mothers and try out the social role of motherhood and social identity of motherhood. Scenarios and conversations are carried out that range from taking care of a sick child to going grocery shopping. Children play with different selves and values as the mother takes on a 'mean' or 'kind' voice. As such, the literature demonstrates a relationship between pretend play and opportunities for children to create and experiment with new ways of being.

Additionally, language, literacy, and symbolic play have become a topic of interest and investigation in the past 15 years. In a critical analysis of a set of 20 play–literacy studies published in the last decade (1992-2000), Roskos & Christie (2001) found the major claims of 12 of the 20 studies to be 'sound, complete, and of scientific value' (p. 70), but they had limitations and unresolved issues. One area of weakness was the dominance of Piagetian and Vygotskian theories in the play–literacy research agenda. They found play–literacy studies use these two theoretical frameworks as the 'drivers of research efforts to the near exclusion of other explanatory models' (p. 72). Another criticism of the play–literacy research was the lack of attention given to an integrative view of literacy and play. Roskos & Christie stated: 'authors fail to grapple with the dynamics of literacy embedded play as experienced through patterns of co-occurring gestural and talk interactions that constitute the play experience' (p. 75).

Given these proposed limitations by Roskos & Christie (2001), an examination of young children's discourse during pretend play from a Bakhtinian perspective would add depth to the field. Since Bakhtin's (1981, 1986) social-linguistic framework emphasizes a dialogic view of language involving multiple ways of communicating in a social world, it is puzzling why more researchers have not used his framework to ground their pretend play studies. Thus, this inquiry examines Bakhtin's dialogic process as it relates to pretend play conversations.

### The Context for the Study

This naturalistic inquiry is based on a three-month immersion into the environment of two preschool classrooms and employed an interpretivist methodology. An interpretivist approach

recognizes that we try to 'make sense' of circumstances 'within a cultural framework of socially constructed and shared meanings' and that we 'create and re-create our social world as a dynamic meaning system, that is, a system that changes over time' (Hughes, 2001, p. 35). Interpretivist methodology thus involves trying to 'understand socially constructed and shared meanings and re-present them as theories of human behavior' (Hughes, 2001, p. 36). Thus, in this article, the focus of inquiry is the relationship between pretend play (one aspect of human behavior) and Bakhtin's dialogic process.

The participants in this study were students in a preschool program located in a culturally diverse suburb in Long Island, New York. Two classes were used for the investigation, a 3-year-old class of 14 children (9 boys and 5 girls) and a 4-year-old class of 18 children (5 boys and 13 girls), with two teachers in each class. The participants attended a half-day session five days per week. The majority of the children came from middle- to upper-middle-income families. When the study began, the ages of the children ranged from 37 months (three years, one month) to 61 months (five years, one month).

Permissions to videotape from parents were obtained prior to beginning the study. Data were collected every day in the three- and four-year-old classrooms for two months, which resulted in 16 hours of videotaped pretend play experiences. The videotapes were transcribed by a graduate assistant. Multiple readings of transcriptions were completed in the initial stages of the analysis to examine voicing and the way participants used language to appropriate meaning while playing in the dramatic play center. A play episode was the unit of analysis (Corsaro, 1985; Van Hoorn et al, 2003; Löfdahl, 2006).

By using an interpretive approach on empirical examples from children's pretend play, the aim was to identify, describe, and develop an understanding of how Bakhtin's dialogic process relates to early childhood play. Play episodes representing communicative actions have been chosen that embrace Bakhtin's concepts. The examples show how children appropriate voices, adopting them as inner dialogue. Further, children's dialogue is used to develop a multi-voiced evolving world of continuously interacting viewpoints.

### Bakhtin's Dialogic Process

Bakhtin (1986) theorized the concept of heteroglossia, or the multiple ways of speaking in a social environment. Bakhtin is one of Sawyer's (1996, 1997) sources and a starting point for this present interest in Bakhtin and pretend play. Sawyer's (1996, 1997) account of play as an improvisational verbal interaction is similar in many ways to Bakhtin's account of the heteroglossia of play. Sawyer (1997, p. 174) compared the heteroglossia of play to the polyphonic voices of a musical performance: 'Both concepts suggest that one can view each child's voice as an ongoing parallel contribution to a polyphonic composition, an improvised collective performance.' According to Sawyer (1996), children take on roles in play and vary the role and discourse when communicating with one another based on their own unique experiences.

In Bakhtinian writings, *'ideological becoming* refers to how we develop our way of viewing the world, our system of ideas, what Bakhtin calls an ideological self' (Freedman & Ball, 2004, p. 5; original emphasis). In pretend play, children are developing an understanding of their social worlds, of self, as they re-enact social roles and voice pretend characters.

Figure 1 is a schematic interpretation of Bakhtin's theory of the dialogic process. The model explains Bakhtin's (1981) ideas that every utterance, every word, stands in multiple dialogic relationships with other utterances or words. Words gain their true meaning through the interaction between a speaker, a listener/respondent, and a relation between the two. The true meaning of a word can be collectively negotiated, constructed, and discovered through dialogue, and a living word is always situated in contexts. Figure 1 further illustrates Bakhtin's (1981) notion that language is a struggle between centripetal and centrifugal forces. Monologic language – centripetal force – operates according to one unified language. In contrast, heteroglossia – centrifugal force – pushes language elements in many directions. These are the multiple ways of speaking in a social environment. An application of Bakhtin's perspectives on children's language and the concept of heteroglossia are fully described with vignettes of several pretend play episodes

with three- and four-year-old children. The interpretations of the dialogic process have implications for play research and for visions of early childhood education.
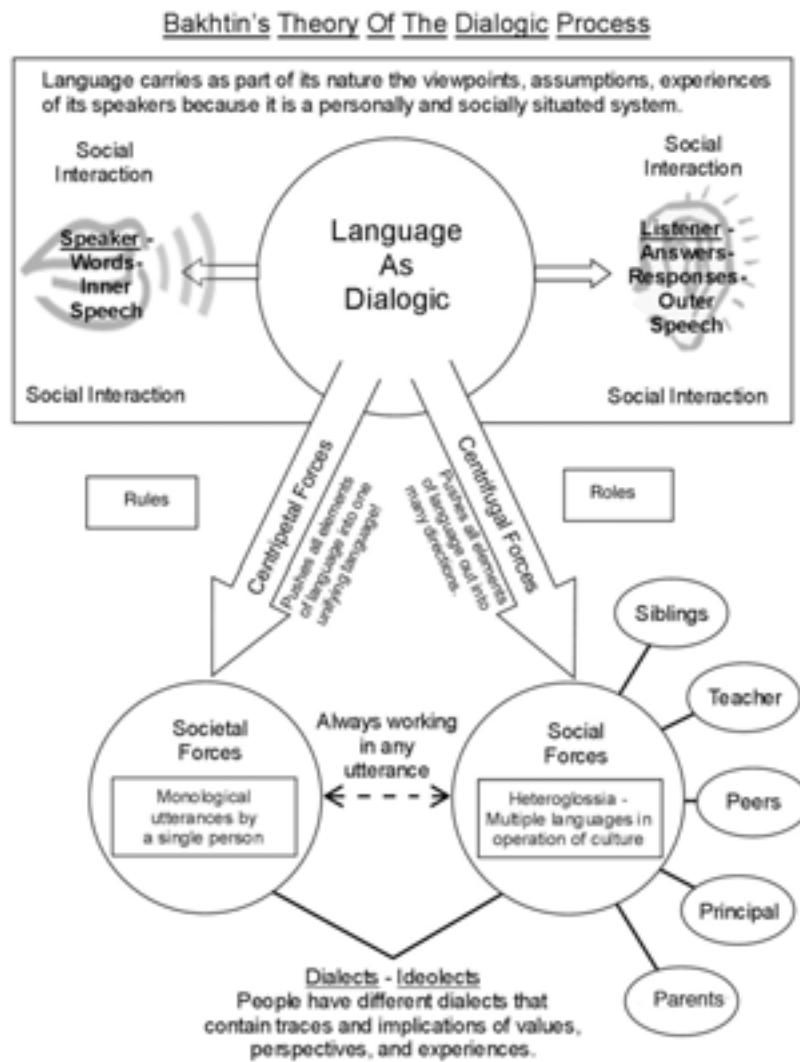
### Bakhtin's Theory Of The Dialogic Process

Language carries as part of its nature the viewpoints, assumptions, experiences of its speakers because it is a personally and socially situated system.

Social Interaction

Social Interaction

Speaker - Words - Inner Speech

Language As Dialogic

Listener - Answers - Responses - Outer Speech

Social Interaction

Social Interaction

Rules

Roles

Centripetal Forces
Pushes all elements of language into one unifying language

Centrifugal Forces
Pushes all elements of language out into many directions

Societal Forces
Monological utterances by a single person

Always working in any utterance

Social Forces
Heteroglossia - Multiple languages in operation of culture

Siblings

Teacher

Peers

Principal

Parents

Dialects - Ideolects
People have different dialects that contain traces and implications of values, perspectives, and experiences.

Figure 1. Bakhtin's theory of dialogism.

### Dialogue in Child Play: appropriation and assimilation

Inherent in Bakhtin's concept of dialogism is the idea that an utterance is a link in a chain of utterances. Bakhtin (1986) believed that all individual expression is ultimately the product of various voices that are linked to one another through the socially constituted fabric of language. We learn language by appropriating the voices of others, and we speak back to our community of peers through re-externalized modes of discourse. It is Bakhtin's (1986, p. 105) theory about the 'special dialogic relations' between the 'repeatable' and the 'individual, unique, and unrepeatable' poles of an utterance that framed this investigation of heteroglossic pretend play.

The dialogic process consists of three elements: a speaker, a listener/respondent, and a relation between the two. Language is acquired through appropriation and assimilation of another's words. In a dialogue, the listener appropriates the speaker's words, and in the process of understanding, the listener merges the words with his or her own conceptual system. According to Bakhtin's (1986, p. 68) conception of dialogism, the listener is an active respondent: 'When the

listener perceives and understands the meaning of speech, he simultaneously takes an active, responsive attitude toward it. He agrees or disagrees with it, augments it, applies it, prepares for its execution and so on.' The listener may be the next link in the chain, as the listener will eventually respond, either in words or in action. Bakhtin called this assimilation, and assimilation can alter the meaning. Below is an example of two 4-year-old girls appropriating the words of each other while engaging in an episode of pretend play.

*Example 1.* Ann and Irene appropriate each other's words as they pretend to decorate a chair for the arrival of Santa Claus. They place necklaces on the chair to symbolically represent the decorations.

> 1. *Ann > Irene*: This is a big chair for Santa Claus.
> 2. *Irene > Ann*: No, not for this. Which chair do you like?
> 3. *Ann > Irene*: I like this one.
> 4. *Irene > Ann*: Not you, not this. You get the longest one.
> 5. *Ann > Irene*: This is the longest one of the year.
> 6. *Ann > Irene*: This is the longest chair for decorations of the year.
> 7. *Ann > Irene*: *This is the longest light chair of the year, right?*
> 8. *Irene > Ann: We need all of the necklaces for this.*
> 9. *Ann > Irene*: This one's broken so I gonna put this one on the light.
> 10. *Ann > Irene*: This one's broken too.
> 11. *Ann > Irene*: All of the beads. That's all of the beads.
> 12. *Ann > Irene*: That one. So Santa knows that we love him.
> 13. *Ann > Irene*: What about the decoration for Mrs Claus?
> 14. *Irene > Ann*: … gotta have this big fat chair [*Irene laughs*].
> 15. *Ann > Irene*: But he can take them off if he wants.
> 16. *Irene > Ann*: I think it will hurt him. Let me try [*sits in chair*].
> 17. *Ann > Irene*: Let me try [*Irene gets up and Ann sits down*].
> 18. *Ann > Irene*: Santa Claus.
> [*Ann sweeps table*]
> 19. *Ann > Irene*: Santa Claus is coming soon.
> 20. *Ann > Irene*: We have to clean the house. We have to decorate the house.
> 21. *Ann > Irene*: Get that! [the beads]
> 22. *Irene > Ann*: This is the lights [*takes beads*].
> 23. *Ann > Irene*: I put some lights over here. In our room.
> [*Irene adds to the 'lights'*]

The social play in the form of dyads clearly demonstrates that the children listen and respond to each other. There appears to be rules about the size of the chair (lines 4-7, 14) and the need to decorate the house for a Christmas celebration. Ann makes several decisions regarding decorations for Santa's chair and arrival (lines 1, 9, 18, 19). Ann and Irene communicate with a back-and-forth dialogue (Bakhtin, 1986). This example can be understood in terms of Bakhtin's claim that language is a live communicative utterance which is inherently responsive and elicits a responsive understanding of what is heard. Ann makes a strong statement to Irene about decorating and cleaning the house (line 20). Ann imbued her words with expression and emotional intonation, expressing a strong point of view (Bakhtin, 1986). As a listener, Irene appropriates Ann's words and decorates a chair for Santa Claus without conflict.

### Dialogue in Child Play: hidden dialogicality

In pretend play, internalization (Wertsch, 1991) is closely related to Bakhtin's notion of hidden dialogicality. Bakhtin described hidden dialogicality as follows:

> Imagine a dialogue of two persons in which the statements of the second speaker are omitted, but in such a way that the general sense is not violated. The second speaker is present and invisibly, his words are not there, but deep traces left by these words have a determining influence on all present and visible words of the first speaker. (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 197)

Hidden dialogicality is characterized by an invisible speaker; it is a child's self-talk or inner speech. Previous research (Berk, 1992) found self-talk to account for 20% to 60% of preschoolers' utterances. Hidden dialogicality allows children to engage in a metacognitive perspective-taking that leads children to internalize the other speaker's words. In an examination of hidden dialogicality, Wertsch (1991, p. 91) concluded that 'the meaning of a child's utterances reflects the outside interference of another's voice'. Bakhtin would claim that the word is half our own and half someone else's. Bakhtin's notion of hidden dialogicality accounts for speech directed to self in pretend play. Below is an example of a three-year-old voicing to an invisible speaker as she pretends to shop for groceries. Joan's mother (the invisible speaker) is influencing Joan's non-verbal actions and thoughts.

*Example 2.* Joan separates and takes pretend food from a shopping cart and places it in a basket on the table. One food item at a time is selected and placed in the basket. When she picks up the pretend lettuce, she verbalizes, 'Ahh!' Joan continues to separate and place food in the basket until the shopping cart is empty.

Joan does not use language during this play episode, except for the paralinguistic cue of 'Ahh!' An invisible speaker is present as Joan uses unspoken voices to formulate a plan of action for setting food in the basket. Her social experiences of going to a supermarket with an adult, returning home and putting away the groceries are, in Bakhtin's (1984, p. 197) terms, 'statements of the second speaker [the adult] omitted' but 'present invisibly'. An adult is not present in the preschool classroom to dialogue with Joan, but traces of words spoken in the past have influenced Joan's pretend play. Bakhtin's account of hidden dialogicality leads one to conclude that both Joan and her mother are speaking.

In the context of pretend play, linguistic interactions can occur with self, self and another player, and self and many players. Children appropriate the words of friends and actively respond through external social speech as they engage in a dialogue or use private speech as they self-verbalize. The verbal interactions of appropriation and assimilation, characteristic in children's pretend play, often highlight the differences, diversity, and conflict children encounter in their day-to-day interaction, as illustrated below. Bakhtin (1981) describes these conflicts as centripetal and centrifugal forces.

### Dialogue in Child Play: conflict between centripetal and centrifugal forces

Bakhtin's (1981) writings challenge traditional cultural-historical notions about the unified, cooperative nature of societal life. From a Bakhtinian standpoint, social and linguistic communities are the sites of a struggle between centripetal and centrifugal forces. Centripetal forces strive to unify and establish one common language. The speaker is trying to push all elements of language into one single form or utterance coming from one central point. Monologic language operates according to centripetal force. Monologic language is a system of norms – one official language for everyone to speak.

Where centripetal forces operate to unify, centrifugal forces operate to problematize common understanding. Centrifugal forces are the products of social and linguistic diversity. These are the social languages we speak, or 'heteroglossia', Bakhtin's (1981) term for the linguistic diversity of social life. Heteroglossia describes the fact that cultures or societies are not unified. Heteroglossia is a variety of voices and their corresponding values and views of the world. Heteroglossia is the 'idea of a multiplicity of ways of speaking in a social environment' (Cohen & Uhry, 2007, p. 304). Heteroglossia tends to move language toward the multiplicity of meanings of individual words or phrases and includes a wide variety of different ways of speaking, as well as 'multivoicedness'.

Play provides children with an opportunity to appropriate a variety of adult roles that differentiate a given social order (Duncan & Tarulli, 2003). Play, like culture, is an arena for difference and conflict. The social world of children's play is characterized by a struggle among powerful social forces. Role knowledge and role enactment in pretend play is a form of social knowledge. The roles children enact in play are embodied with rules for prescriptions for social

behavior (Duncan & Tarulli, 2003). In Bakhtin's terms, rules for role enactment in pretend play can be considered as the centripetal forces of behavior for a role in society.

Bakhtin's ideas of heteroglossia can be adapted to the context of pretend play. In pretend play, children learn socially to enact the roles of mothers, babies, or animals. While enacting roles, children voice and dialogue a particular character. Voices tend to change with enactments of a play role, which reflects the centrifugal effects of a variety of voices and the social view of rules that govern the role (Duncan & Tarulli, 2003). For example, one child takes the role of a father and speaks with a deep voice. In a child's social world, children unconsciously create a rule for the way they will enact and voice the role of a father. Consider the following example, in which a group of four-year-old children are pretending to be a family preparing to take a vacation. The children have clearly defined roles and rules for the behavior of the family members.

*Example 3.* Each player has taken a family character role. Jessenia is a baby, Mae, a child, Elena and Sara, mothers, and Conrad, the father.

> [*Players examine pocketbooks to use as pretend suitcases*]
> 1. *Jessenia > Players*: Get the brown one, get the brown one, get the black one.
> 2. *Sara > Jessenia*: No!
> 3. *Jessenia > Players*: The shiny black one for you.
> [*Elena walks over to Jessenia*]
> 4. *Elena > Jessenia*: I don't like that.
> 5. *Jessenia > Elena*: Thaa! Da-Goo-Da-Da [*sticks tongue out, talks baby talk*].
> 6. *Sara > Players*: I want this one.
> 7. *Conrad > Jessenia*: [*brings over clipboard*] Here you go baby.
> 8. *Mae > Jessenia*: No, baby.
> 9. *Sara > Jessenia*: Baby, we're on vacation.
> 10. *Sara > Players*: We're going on vacation and we need to pack stuff.
> 11. *Jessenia > Sara*: Ahhhh! I want to stay home.
> 12. *Elena > Jessenia*: Here baby.
> 13. *Conrad > Players*: Let's take the cake here.
> 14. *Elena > Jessenia*: Do you want a drink?
> 15. *Elena > Players*: I found a special.
> 16. *Sara > Players*: We're going on vacation, right?
> 17. *Jessenia > Players*: I'm hungry. I will wait for the plane.
> 18. *Elena > Sara*: Is baby coming?
> 19. *Sara > Elena*: Yes!
> 20. *Elena > Sara*: It's a grown-up plane.
> [*Players begin to pack pretend food into pocketbooks; Conrad gives Sara a cake*]
> 21. *Sara > Players*: No, put them in a basket.
> 22. *Elena > Sara*: The baby's not coming on a grown-up plane, right?
> 23. *Elena > Sara*: Because it's only for grown-ups.
> 24. *Sara > Elena*: Yeah [*continues to pack food in pretend suitcases*].
> 25. *Elena > Sara*: She went on the baby plane, right? She sits in the back, right? And sit in the back of the grown-up plane, right?
> 26. *Sara > Elena*: Yeah.
> 27. *Elena > Jessenia*: Baby, you can come with us.
> 28. *Mae > Players*: Wait a second. When I go on the plane…
> 29. *Elena > Jessenia*: You're going on the grown-up plane and sit in the back.

In Bakhtin's (1981) terms, the example suggests the conflict between rules (centripetal forces) in society with a unitary language and roles (centrifugal forces) characteristic of a heteroglossic context with multiple voices and viewpoints. The players enact a family member role (centrifugal) and establish rules (centripetal) which govern the behavior of that role. The children know packing suitcases is a social requirement for traveling away from home (lines 1-3, 10). Conflict arises over the color and style of the suitcase selection, illustrating differences and multivoiced interactions among the players (lines 1-4). Rules and boundaries between adults and babies are clearly articulated when Elena and Sara decide Jessenia will sit in the back of the grown-up plane (line 29).

The use of directives (lines 1, 2, 8) implies a single authoritative voice. Bakhtin's ideas of diverse roles and heteroglossia are illustrated in this excerpt when Jessenia uses gestures and baby voices, and Conrad appropriates a deep masculine voice.

The rules (centripetal forces) governing the roles (centrifugal forces) can be a platform for difference and diversity. While enacting a role, children appropriate a variety of voices. The voices of children in pretend play dialogize the discourse of adults. In the next section, Bakhtin's account of authoritative and internally persuasive discourse is discussed as is the way children dialogize adult discourse.

### *Dialogue in Child Play: authoritative versus internally persuasive discourse*

In this section, Bakhtin's theories of dialogism are presented and followed by an interpretation of children's use of authoritative and internally persuasive discourse in pretend play. Bakhtin (1981) argues that when diverse voices interact, they struggle to assimilate two different categories of discourse: (a) authoritative discourse and (b) internally persuasive discourse. The authority of discourse and its internal persuasiveness are rarely united in a single word. Because of their different properties children struggle with them in different ways as they enact social roles and create different situations of power.

Authoritative dialogue is fused with authority and power. Discourse that is authoritative must be accepted without question. Bakhtin defines authoritative discourse thus:

> The authoritative word is located in a distanced zone, organically connected with a past that is felt to be hierarchically higher. It is, so to speak, the word of the fathers. Its authority was already *acknowledged* in the past. It is *prior* discourse. (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 342; original emphasis)

Bakhtin (1981, p. 345) explains that 'we struggle against various kinds and degrees of authority' and these struggles occur in what Bakhtin calls a 'contact zone'. Such is the case with the discourses of adults and children. The 'contact zone' is the social space where discourses of adults and children meet and often are in conflict with one another. From a Bakhtinian perspective, parents and adults in a young child's life use an authoritative discourse. Children struggle against the authority of adults and are drawn into a 'contact zone'. Children's ideologies clash with the authoritative word of adults, as the authoritative word must not be disputed; it must always be accepted without question.

In contrast to authoritative discourse, internally persuasive discourse is 'backed by no authority at all and is frequently not recognized by society' (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 342). The discourses of others influence the ways we think and become internally persuasive for us. With internally persuasive discourse you appropriate the others' words, redefine the words, and establish your own voice. Similar to the authoritative word, the internally persuasive word also enters into a struggle for influence within an individual's consciousness. Bakhtin explains that the struggle occurs when

> Thought begins to work in an independent, experimenting and discriminating way, what first occurs is a separation between internally persuasive discourse and authoritarian enforced discourse, along with a rejection of those congeries of discourses that do not matter to us, that do not touch us. (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 345)

The child cannot challenge the adult words outwardly; rather adult discourse is internalized in pretend play. Duncan & Tarulli (2003) suggest that children can develop Bakhtin's (1981, p. 341) notion of the 'ideological becoming of a human being' in the context of pretend play. Duncan & Tarulli (2003, p. 283) argue that 'play affords children the necessary distance or otherness from which to objectify and comment on the adult spheres of life', and play can be structured so it challenges adult forms of discourse.

In pretend play, children will use internally persuasive discourse to appropriate, redefine, and make the adults' words their own. Bakhtin (1984, p. 185) calls this 'double-voiced speech', discourse that is 'directed both toward the referential object of speech, as in ordinary discourse, and toward another's discourse, toward someone else's speech'. Researchers (Sheldon, 1992, 1996; Barnes & Vangelisti, 1995) have used Bakhtin's term ('double-voiced speech') to investigate the way children enter into pretend play situations with different goals or agendas and use language to adopt make-believe roles (for example, 'mommy' or 'baby') and to jointly enact those roles (for example, decide

how the mommy will behave). These play researchers (Sheldon, 1992, 1996; Barnes & Vangelisti, 1995) have borrowed the term 'double-voiced discourse' but have not used Bakhtin's theories for analysis of child play. Using Bakhtin's theories, Duncan & Tarulli (2003) illustrate how double-voiced discourse facilitates children's efforts to bring adult discourses and practices (authoritative discourse) into a 'zone of contact'. It is in this 'zone of contact' in pretend play that children incorporate adult speech and actions, 'investing that discourse with a value that in some way is alien to them' (Duncan & Tarulli, 2003, p. 285). Bakhtin explains the process of experimenting with another's discourse as follows:

> This process – experimenting by turning persuasive discourse into speaking persons – becomes especially important in those cases where a struggle against all images has already begun, where someone is striving to liberate himself from the influence of such and an image and its discourse. (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 348)

In pretend play episodes, children use their own discourse to 'liberate themselves from the authority of the other's discourse' (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 348), specifically working to liberate themselves from an adult authoritative discourse. In other words, it is through pretend play that children begin to work through their struggle to integrate and develop the varying centrifugal forces into their own 'ideological self' (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 349). Morson (2004) explains that the authoritative word is not the same as the authoritarian word. The authoritative word may or may not be authoritarian. In play episodes, children internalize adult discourse by: (a) using directives or authoritative words and/or (b) parodying the authoritative discourse of adults. Both are ways in which children internalize the words of adults in a struggle of 'ideological becoming'. In the following example, a three-year-old child is using authoritative words as players take on the roles of mother and child.

*Example 4.* Sonia takes the role of mother and Ellen enacts a baby who does not verbalize.

> 1. *Sonia > Ellen*: No, baby.
> 2. *Sonia > Ellen*: No, let it be alone.
> 3. *Sonia > Ellen*: Baby, leave this alone.
> [*Sonia looks in pocketbook*]
> 4. *Sonia > Ellen*: Leave that alone [*self-talk; continues to look in pocketbook*].
> [*Ellen goes to table and picks up pretend food; Ellen does not speak*]

Sonia assumed the role of the authority figure (the mother) and Ellen assumed the role of the submissive baby who was unable to dialogize. Sonia used double-voiced discourse to merge others' (adults') voices with her own language. She used the authoritative word, 'no' (lines 1 and 2), as she simultaneously reinforced her authoritative role and acknowledged Ellen's ability to participate in her role of baby. In Bakhtinian terms, Sonia internalized the words of her parents (authoritative discourse). By taking on the role of mother, she transformed the authoritative talk of her parents into her own words and re-accented the words with her own intonations, reflecting her attitude toward the words (Bakhtin, 1990).

In the 'zone of contact', children use double-voiced discourse in pretend play to parody adult styles and characteristics. Bakhtin (1984, p. 194) states that 'one can parody another's socially typical or individually characterological manner of seeing, thinking, and speaking', and describes parodistic discourses as 'diverse voices'.

*Example 5.* In this example, the children are organizing a surprise party. Maria uses a parodistic discourse, directing Chris and Ellen to set the table. Ellen is standing by the oven, preparing food for the party.

> 1. *Chris > Maria*: I'm going to make the pan muffins [*Ellen is cooking food by the oven*].
> 2. *Maria > Chris*: For the party!
> 3. *Chris > Maria*: Yeah.
> 4. *Maria > Chris*: For our party!
> 5. *Chris > Maria*: Yeah.
> 6. *Maria > Chris*: I need that in the middle.
> 7. *Chris > Maria*: This?

> 8. *Maria > Chris*: Yes, put it right here. *In the middle*. I need the cheese. *I need the cheese*. Put it here
> [*Maria taps table to direct*].
> 9. *Chris > Maria*: I need the pear [*Maria gives Chris the pear*].
> 10. *Maria > Ellen*: *We better hide before he gets here!*
> 11. *Maria > Ellen*: *Put it on the table* [*the girls put a blanket on the table to represent a tablecloth*].
> 12. *Maria > Ellen*: *We need a bigger one* [*Maria takes blanket away to get a bigger one*].
> 13. *Ellen > Maria*: Leave it alone!
> 14. *Ellen > Maria*: We going to cover the table?
> 15. *Maria > Ellen*: Yeah, so it looks pretty for the party!
> 16. *Ellen > Maria*: Yeah, pretty for the party.
> 17. *Maria > Ellen*: He's here!
> [*Chris joins Maria and Ellen with other children*]

Maria characterizes the role of someone hosting a surprise party. Maria wants a tablecloth (blanket) on the table (lines 11-16) and the other players hide before the surprise guest arrives (line 10). The laughter or parody of which Bakhtin (1984) spoke requires a certain level of knowledge. Maria has observed someone prepare a surprise party and has transmitted that voice with a 'shift in accent' (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 199). Through the parodic re-accenting of adult discourse, Maria is able to discern a difference between her voice (the party hostess) and the voices of others. Maria's expression and intonations are parodistically represented in two discourses (self and other).

These examples describe young children's 'ideological becoming', or the way they view and make sense of an adult world. Through pretend play, children gain knowledge about the rules of social life 'by extending themselves into the place of *the other*' (Kane & Carpenter, 2003, p. 131). Children establish their own authority over the words of adults, and achieve an individual voice by redefining and re-accenting the discourses of others. A double-voice is used to overcome challenges by integrating the authoritative and internally persuasive discourses as they begin to develop their 'ideological self'.

## Conclusion

Bakhtin's concepts of 'multivoicedness', characteristic of dialogic interaction in children's play, have been described. The preschool classroom provides real-life examples of how children facilitate a heteroglossic play world. Role play provides children with learning strategies for finding voices in constantly shifting situations. Players are learning to manage the tensions of creating the play world and storylines, sustain multiple identities, and strive to find a voice and make it heard. Such experiences may be useful for children in other areas of the language curriculum, particularly in the creation of texts and constructing meaning from text. Applying Bakhtin's theory to play, children learn perspective-taking as they shift from monologic positions to dialogic positions (Edmiston, 2008). The 'pedagogy of listening and radical dialogue' (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005, p. 98) resonates with Bakhtin's theories of self.

I argue for a new direction in play research, one that focuses more directly on the role communication plays in the play–literacy agenda and the role such communication plays in a child's social world. In Morson's (2004, p. 331) words, 'we must keep the conversation going', and look to Bakhtin for a view of learning as a perpetual dialogue with others and ourselves. It is appropriate to end this discussion of Bakhtin's contribution to our understanding of the heteroglossic pretense in childhood with a quote from Fred Rogers:

> Children's dramatic or fantasy play may be as simple as their dressing up and pretending to be
> other people or as complicated as their construction of a whole little world inhabited by animal
> and doll figures who go through elaborate rituals and adventures. For many children, dramatic
> play is one of their most important tools for dealing with everyday problems. (Rogers, 1994,
> p. 54)

By engaging in dialogue with other players as they re-enact social roles and voice pretend characters, children develop an understanding of their social worlds and an understanding of self. Bakhtin (1981) viewed the whole process of 'ideological' (p. 348) development as an endless

dialogue. Following Bakhtin's view, the dialogical communication in pretend play represents children's 'ideological world' (p. 348).

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