EECERA J SI on Creative Research Methodologies and Methods in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC).

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Title: Conversation analysis as a creative research methodology

Revised Abstract:

Conversation analysis (CA) has become increasingly prevalent in early childhood education research interested in exploring children's everyday interactions with others. Positioning CA as a creative methodology, this article demonstrates one practical and applied way of 'doing' CA research with early childhood teacher-practitioners that facilitates authentic ways of listening to children's voices and offers direct implications for practice. Aligning with a children's right philosophy, CA requires rigorous transcription of children's naturally occurring interactions to document their verbal and gestural participation in situ with a wide range of interlocutors, making visible children's participation. As such, this article outlines how the use of CA in ECEC research has significant capacity to influence knowledge and practice with children. Using a CA approach affords rigorous documentation of children's contributions and lived experiences, revealing their competencies and interests across a wide range of cultures, languages and abilities, offering inclusivity and unique insight. To explore these issues in detail, an example from a New Zealand project exploring pedagogy in natural outdoor spaces will be presented, where the affordances of CA as a rigorous, robust yet creative research approach with implications for enhancing situated practice will be discussed.

Conversation analysis in early childhood education and care

Contemporary perspectives of infants, toddlers and young children increasingly position them as agentive and rights-bearing participants in their everyday interactions with others (e.g., Tyre and Waters forthcoming), tasking early childhood researchers with developing creative methodologies that capture this perspective in authentic and reliable ways. This article aims to position multimodal conversation analysis (henceforth CA) as one such creative methodological approach that has gained increasing interest due to its potential to authentically demonstrate *how* infants, toddlers and young children actively contribute to the co-construction of interactions with others. As such, the CA approach aligns with contemporary children's rights perspectives regarding child participation, enabling researchers to document and 'hear' children's voices (Bateman, 2017).

Grounded in ethnomethodology (Garfinkel 1967) and founded by Harvey Sacks, Emanuel Schegloff and Gail Jefferson, conversation analysis offers a detailed investigation into the systematic turn-taking machinery of everyday conversations, revealing social order as co-produced by participants from within (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson 1974; Sacks 1992). Originally using audio recordings of telephone help lines, data collection devices for capturing everyday talk and interaction have developed significantly over recent years, providing innovative ways to collect digital recordings of interaction. Recognised as one of the creative methods in the Mosaic approach (Clark and Moss 2001), video recordings of real-life interactions capture gesture, facial expression and emotion – particularly important from research with infants, toddlers and young children. CA transcription of video recordings represent talk and gesture in as much detail as possible, using transcription conventions

developed by Gail Jefferson (the transcription process is explained in more detail later in this article).

Through the rigorous transcription of moments of interaction, social organisation practices, rules and values that are important to the participants - at that time and in that place – are made visible. CA research can then be aligned with contemporary early childhood education and care (henceforth ECEC) in a global context, where research is valued for informing practice – as CA can gain access to children's cultures (of which adults are not members) through their 'naturally occurring talk and play' (Mukherji and Albon 2018 332), CA is viewed as a creative method. To put it in ECEC terms:

> CA allows us to see the mechanisms of interaction, and to see the interactional details of pedagogy. These details are particularly useful when applying recommended systematic approaches to teaching and learning such as *notice, recognize, and respond* (Carr, Lee, and Jones 2004). Paying close attention to how we notice, recognize, and respond allows us to unpack teaching practices and offers insight into the practical achievement of concepts such as scaffolding (Wood, Bruner, and Ross 1976), guided participation (Rogoff 2003) and sustained, shared thinking (Siraj, Kingston, and Melhuish 2015).
> (Church, Bateman and Danby, 2022 21)

As researchers increasingly find creative ways of gathering insights into children's unique worlds, CA offers a pragmatic approach to the documentation of verbal and gestural communication in everyday situations. The work of Corsaro has, for a long time, influenced ECEC research by demonstrating the social competencies of children in co-producing their own culture, where the value of CA is recognised in this endeavour (Evaldsson and Corsaro 1998; see also Corsaro and Everitt 2024 for a latest exploration). CA affords a creative approach to both data collection and analysis by providing evidence-based documentation that positions infants, toddlers and young children as competent and capable contributors in the co-production of interactions with others. Importantly, CA transcriptions depict minute details of interaction that might otherwise be overlooked, often recording children's *creativity-in-action*, such as in role-playing (Lee 2022), storytelling (Filipi 2022), free play (Pursi 2022) and drawing and telling sequences (Batemen and Mitchell 2023), to name but a few. Essentially, CA transcriptions include gestural as well as verbal communications as these are key resources used by infants, toddlers and young children to communicate and respond to ideas. Children's creative thinking involving asking and answering questions, hypothesising and wondering about the world in which they live have also received much attention in CA ECEC (for example, Church and Bateman 2022; Houen et al. 2016a; 2016b; 2019; Theobald 2019).

Later in this article, we will explore a brief question sequence to demonstrate the usefulness of CA in documenting, transcribing and analysing children's working theories about the world, as '[t]his transparency of [CA] method means the original data is accessible for teachers, making visible the practices that enable children to engage in creative thinking, problem solving, and conceptual understanding.' (Church and Bateman, 2022: 3). Exploring questions in interaction is particularly useful in adding weight to this argument, as questions are extremely common in everyday ECEC interactions where the sequential organisation of pedagogical moments can be seen. We will now explore CA as a 'creative method' through 1) the collection of video recordings as a means for gathering authentic examples of children's participation in situ, and inviting teacher and family participation in research, and 2) transcription conventions that represent accurately what participants say and how they say it. Although each of these issues

will be explored separately below, the intention is to allow a systematic discussion of the CA research process in ECEC rather than an indication '*that these aspects can be separated from each other. In reality, this is not the case*' (Kara 2020 7).

Doing conversation analysis with early childhood education and care settings

CA video recordings as a creative method

[for further reading see Mondada (2013) for an overview on CA data collection and Helen Kara (2020) for video as a creative research collection method]

Collecting video and audio footage for CA research is – in itself – a creative data collection method (Kara 2020). Essentially, CA research with infants, toddlers and young children would require collecting video recordings of their everyday lives in order to capture gesture as well as talk and/or vocalisations (often termed 'non-lexical items' in CA). Digital video footage allows capture of all participant engagement in the ongoing activity, where CA researchers will usually connect Bluetooth microphones to video recorders to ensure sound is as clear as possible for later analysis and transcription and allowing the researcher to stand well back out of the ongoing interaction.

The collection of video and audio footage requires detailed consent, where although it is the interactions of infants, toddlers and young children we require, the process usually involves securing consent from various 'gatekeepers', beginning with university ethics committees, governing bodies of ECEC settings, teacher-practitioners, family members, and finally the children themselves. The EECERA Ethical Code (Bertram et al. 2016) is important to use to guide this process – essential as the collection of video and audio footage in ECEC settings is viewed as particularly sensitive. To address this ethical issue, varying levels of consent are offered to family members regarding the recording of their children and subsequent sharing of this footage. For example, parents can be given an information sheet with varying levels of consent for their child, such as ticking a box to agree for their child to be video recorded, and another box for their child's face to be blurred/anonymised in any published photographs etc.

There are clear issues with intersubjectivity and so *informed* consent when explaining video collection, storage and intended subsequent use/dissemination of collected footage with children. To address these ethical issues, Rouse (2018) devised a 'matrix' of consent informed by the EECERA Ethical Code for Early Childhood Researchers (Bertram et al. 2015; 2025). Guided by Rouses' (2018) suggestion to recruit the support of carers and their knowledge of the child participants, the researcher worked closely with the early childhood practitioner participants in this project who were able to inform the researcher if they felt a child was showing signs of discomfort and demonstrating assent and dissent (Dockett, Einarsdóttir and Perry 2012; Flewitt 2006). Prior to filming, the children were shown the videoing equipment (camera and microphone) with the opportunity to handle the equipment and try out the filming function and replay buttons; children were asked again if they were happy for the researcher to record them before each filming episode. Several children asked to watch the video recording after collection, only watching the replay for a few minutes before moving on to another activity. Potentially, the children's initiation of this viewing could demonstrate an understanding of the process of video recording, where this playback could align with new EECERA ethical guidelines for providing regular and open feedback to all participants (Betram et al., 2025). Although, on several occasions during the filming a child would point to the camera, asking (with a smile) "what's that for", raising issues around the temporality of

consent in ongoing interaction. This latter issue is under current discussion in the Child Interaction Group based at Linköping University of which the researcher is a member, prompting the group to write an article on such ethical issues in video recording for conversation analysis research with children as an ongoing concern.

Additional care is required when researchers have to video record *only* consenting children when non-consenting children are also present in the same space, where video editing skills might be required such as creating small manageable clips from a larger video recording, blurring faces of children, using anonymising digital filters, and creating sketches of 'video stills' to mark out specific features of interaction, such as the example below (Fig 1 Bateman, 2022):

Fig 1

Crucially, creative methods highlight the importance of affording authentic participation with research participants (Kara 2020). In relation to video data collection in ECEC research, the footage can be collected by either the researcher or teacher-practitioners. In the case of researchers collecting footage, teacher-practitioner participation and autonomy in the research process is enabled by asking them to identify moments of interest at the time of recording. Teacher-practitioner voice is valuable here, as this offers opportunity for the identification of moments that are of key importance to the participants themselves and so worthy of further exploration (Bateman, 2016). Where teacher-practitioners collect video footage, the recordings will identify moments of importance to the participants already, providing further autonomy over selection of footage for further analysis, offering power-balance and authentic participation.

One way of conducting CA ECEC research is to share the raw (unedited) video footage of children's everyday interactions with parents as a way to include their participation and stimulate discussion about their children (Bateman and Mitchell 2022). The data can also be shared with teacher participants at subsequent workshops where they can reflect, in a safe environment, on their own practices. Such sharing of footage with the participants raises the important point that, often it is not so much about what data you collect, but the creative ways in which you use it that affords '*knowledge generation not extraction*' (Clark 2022 323).

Creative transcription symbols that represent participant's orderly contributions

In the early conception stages of CA, Gail Jefferson used typewriter symbols to devise a system for accurately transcribing audio telephone conversation in a way that not only document what was said, but *how* their sentences were presented (Hepburn and Bolden 2013). CA researchers now use an ever-evolving creative array of symbols to mark out the mechanics of talk and gesture in systematic ways. The images below offer examples of original Jeffersonian transcription conventions in foregrounding CA ECEC research (Fig 2) and more recent Mondada developed transcription of mother-infant interaction (Fig 3), demonstrating the development of CA transcription over time.

Fig 2 (Danby and Baker 2001 348) Jeffersonian conventions

39	Andrew	=YES I'M A VERY STRONG AREN'T WE ((*leaning towards Matt*))
40	Matt	I'll smash it ri:ght down no:o? ((*standing and looking down at the block building*))
41	David	Yep?
42	Alan	No you're [not* ((*has walked behind David and is now on David's right; he starts building with the blocks*))
43	David	[yep* he's going away [if he goes away* I won't smash it down
44	Andrew	[we're we're strong* ((*walking over to Matt; pointing his finger at him*))
45	David	If he doesn't go away [I won't smash it*
46	Alan	[( )* you are a ( ) bash you right down ((*pointing at David*))

Fig 3 (Nomikou 2023 36). Mondada conventions

01 M: £@(0.5s).hh #+machen wir den p↑opo mal hoch,
.hh we make the b↑ottom up,
@gazes at infant
£smile
+moves infant legs to the centre
+right arm under leg and grabs above knee
fig # fig 2.1

2.1

02 M: @+(0.2s)+(0.5)
@switches gaze at her hands
+with right hand lifts infant bottom
+ left hand pulls vest under the infant

03 M: @+#°-ha° #
°-ha°
@gazes at infant body
+keeps bottom lifted;
clears vest under bottom
fig #fig 2.2#fig 2.3

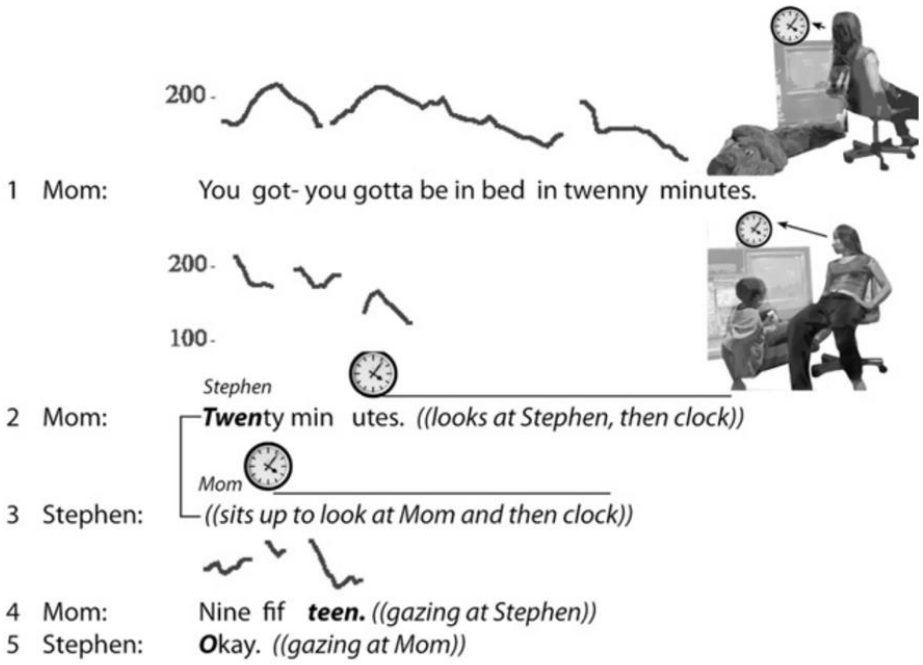
2.2

2.3

04 M: +°popo° ho:ch,
°bottom° u:p,
+lowers right hand and lets infant's bottom on the mat
05 I: ((voc))

Depending on the phenomena of interest, researchers create transcriptions with varying levels of detail to represent participants' contributions, increasingly through multimodal means, detailed in such a way as to demonstrate the sequential order of participant turn-taking in their co-production of interactions. As mentioned previously, capturing multimodal means of communication is essential when transcribing infant, toddler and young children's contributions, as these are often through gesture. Transcribing real-life interactions using CA transcription conventions is an iterative process that reveals participants' orientation to phenomena of interest through 'unmotivated looking' (Sacks 1984 27) where researchers see patterns in the turn-by-turn sequences. Layers of transcription developed by the Goodwins – now termed 'Goodwinian Transcription' also offer insight into visual characteristics of the interaction, using arrows to indicate gaze direction and pictures of prosody (pitch and tone of voice), specifically indicating where these multimodal features of interaction intertwine, as in the example below exploring parent-child interactions at home:

Fig 4 (Goodwin and Cekaite 2012 4)



The detailed transcriptions of video/audio provide a clear representation of *actual events* as co-constructed by the participants, transcribing *only* what is seen, so assumptions cannot be made about *why* people might be doing things. To support this process – especially when transcribing for the first time - it is helpful to have a list of transcription conventions to hand, such as the list provided under 'Step 5' below. Slowing down the video to around half speed is also helpful in deciphering what is being said and how it is articulated, as well as in identifying moments where gestures occur in parallel with the talk. The footage is watched many times to help transcription to be as accurate as possible.

This approach affords a reliable account of what is important to the participants in that space of time with those people, addressing the research concepts of reliability and validity. Peräkylä (2004 366) suggests that '*reliability and validity are the technical terms that refer to the objectivity and credibility of research*' where academics using CA are usually members of a CA group who hold weekly, fortnightly or monthly 'labs' where there is opportunity for members who are working at the transcription and analysis stage to show their video, accompanied with their transcripts and preliminary analysis to the group. Such rigorous in-depth analytic sessions provide opportunity to question the validity/credibility of the transcription and associated claims, albeit in a collegial and supportive environment. One 'lab' that has a long history of such rigorous collegial support is the UCLA Co-operative Action Lab, initiated by Charles and Marjory (Chuck and Candy) Goodwin (https://colab.anthro.ucla.edu). Specific child-interaction labs are also emerging, such as the Linköping University fortnightly labs run by Professor Asta Cekaite, and the Melbourne University monthly lab run by Dr Cynthia Hicban. Academic conferences are also, of course, a good sharing opportunity, although these are significantly more costly.

The following offers one specific way to conduct CA ECEC research that the author has found useful on multiple research projects (for example, Bateman 2016), where 6 steps are identified as an aim to make this approach accessible for researchers. It is important to note here that not all researchers using CA use this structure. CA is a diverse multidisciplinary approach where a

growing number of disciplines are using CA for applied means to inform practices (see Sidnell and Stivers 2013) - the following guidance suggests just one way of conducting CA research, specific to ECEC interests. The author's prior collaborative work with Dr Amelia Church demonstrates the Conversation Analysis Role-play Method (CARM) (Stokoe 2014) specific to ECEC using a similar approach (Church and Bateman, 2019; 2020).

1) Teacher-practitioners and researchers agree on a phenomenon of joint interest
2) Ethical consent for video and audio recordings approached
3) Video and audio recordings of teacher-practitioner and child interactions are taken in situ, gathering examples of everyday routine interactions.
4) Upon conclusion of each recording, teacher-practitioners identify 'significant moments' they would like the researcher to explore in more detail.
5) Researcher transcribes and analyses 'significant moments' in CA detail whilst also scanning data more broadly to align with CA's 'unmotivated looking'
6) A meeting is held where the video recordings of 'significant moments' are played, teacher-practitioners are invited to talk about why they thought these moments were 'significant', and the researcher shares CA transcription and preliminary analysis insights to extend the discussion.

This process affords the co-construction of meaning making between researcher and teacher-practitioner, supported through visual, participatory methods – here, video - that provide opportunity for reflection of real-life encounters and mapping of impactful ways forward (Clark 2011). The CA transcriptions and analysis offer much potential in recruiting parent and teacher-practitioner participation in research, where teacher-practitioners value the time to 'stop' and reflect on their own practices – a luxury that is rarely afforded in the business of everyday ECEC.

An example: The case of question-answer sequences

The following transcription and analysis offer an example of the above process. The footage was collected in Hamilton, New Zealand with kaiako (terminology for ECEC teacher/practitioner in NZ) from one early childhood centre. The researcher had an established relationship with the ECEC centre, as it offered training placement for ECE students from the researchers' university, and so the researcher often visited the centre to assess student's practical work. During several visits, kaiako had raised an interest with the researcher regarding learning in the outdoor environment, as the centre had regular visits to a nearby rural reserve. Kaiako wondered about the types of learning afforded by this natural environment, and so the researcher and Kaiako planned the 'Bush Walking' project together - '**Step 1**' of the process.

'**Step 2**' involved gaining ethical permission from all participating kaiako to have their images and voices recorded on video, from parents and children to have images and voice captured on video with the varying levels of consent discussed above. Good relationships between researcher and kaiako were essential at this point. The EECERA Ethical Code (Bertram et al. 2016; 2025) offers excellent guidance on these issues including child consent.

Following ethical approval, '**Steps 3 and 4**' requiring the video recording of kaiako-child interactions began. In this instance, seven kaiako across three different age groups participated, each wearing a Bluetooth microphone when being video recorded. As pedagogical interactions in the outdoor space were of primary interest, interactions where knowledge exchange were thought to have occurred were chosen for transcription.

'**Step 5**' then involved the researcher transcribing footage and making analytical notes. Examples of transcription conventions adapted from Jefferson's conventions (Jefferson, 2004; Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson 1974) include**:**

→	points to phenomena of interest
=	latching from one utterance to a subsequent
::	lengthened syllable
.	falling intonation
Bold	emphasis on utterance
Underscore	additional emphasis placed on underscored sound
((*italics*))	description of accompanying behaviour
↑	sharp rise in pitch
↓	sharp fall in pitch
> <	increase in tempo, rushed stretch of talk
¿	intonation rises more than a comma but less than a question mark utterance
( )	utterance could not be deciphered
[	the beginning of an overlap of talk
-	Utterance abandoned
(0.5)	length of silence in tenths of a second
$dollar$	talk in a smile voice
° °	talk that is quieter than the surrounding talk
± or |	actions that accompany talk
?	rising intonation

The following transcription is one example of how question-answer sequences were present in the research footage, demonstrating both kaiako and child questions that were tied to features within the environment. Moments where gestures occurred in parallel with the talk were noted on the transcription with ± and § symbols on each relevant line of transcription. For the purposes of this article, 'analytical notes' are placed under the transcription so that the reader can see what these might look like prior to 'writing these up' into a more comprehensive analysis. Kaiako reflections on this transcript, preliminary analysis and associated video can be found in '**Step 6**' below.

The interaction takes place approximately 10 minutes after arriving at the bush reserve where kaiako and children have gathered around a large pond, crouched down observing the wildlife (Sacks 5). KKO = Kaiako; Ch1 = 1st child; Ch2 = 2nd child

Fig 5

Transcription:

```
01 Ch1:    ±↑look at tha:t *bi:g* du:ck.=
02         ±points to swan
03 Ch2:                                  =yeah and ±look at that
04         bug=in=there::.
05                                                 ±points to pond
06 KKO:    what bug I §can't see¿ the bug.
07 Ch2:               §points to pond
08         the bug next to there::.
09 TCH:    <aa::::ww>. Do you think that's a bug? It ±could be a
10         stick¿
11 Ch1:                                                ±points to pond
12         ↑look look↑ tha:t . big . duck.
13 KKO:    it could be a eel¿
14 Ch1:    look
15 KKO:    do you know what the duck's called?
16 Ch1:    °huh°
17 KKO:    it's called a ↓s:wa::n.↓
18 Ch1:    I think-
19 KKO:    so it's a di:fferent type of bird¿ just a bit bi↑gger.

Later:

20 Ch1:    §wh- wh- wh- why are ee::ls:.- wh- . why are there eels
21         §points to pond
22         right there:.
23 KKO:    well the ↑ee:ls right there cos he likes to li:ve¿ in
24         this wa:ter=and he likes ±to live all underneath the
25                                  ±points to pond moving index
26         gra::ss too::¿
27         finger from side to side
28         (10.3) ((Teacher speaks to video camera operator.
29         Children look across the pond))
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30 KKO:    There's lots of good things for him to eat in he:re¿
31 Ch1:    wh- wh- why?- why him ±not <sw↑i::mm:ing:::::>.
32                              ±points to swan
33 KKO:    That swan is swi:mming¿ but she's also looking in the
34         wa::↑ter to see if there's anything good to e:at:¿
```

Analytic notes:

- Lines 1-2: Ch1 makes a noticing, both verbally (line 1) and with gesture (line 2) to maximise communication for recipients – emphasis on the size of the duck and using a name/label that helps to establish an accurate object of joint attention to others as he points across a vast pond
- Lines 3-5: Ch2 links on to 'notice' a subsequent living thing (bug), aligning with the type of interaction that is occurring in this space, with these people, at this time – 'noticing environmental features associated with the pond' also both verbally and through pointing gestures
- Line 6: Kaiako initiates other repair as she asks for clarification.
- Lines 7-8: As she asserts the first words 'what bug I' Ch2 lifts his arm to point again in the direction of the 'bug' demonstrating his social competence in providing the called for clarification immediately – through multimodal means by pointing and also location identification demonstrating spatial awareness 'next to there'
- Line 9-10: Kaiako offers opportunity for working theories – 'do you think…' 'it could be x' this is not taken up by Ch2 though
- Line 11-12: As kaiako is responding to Ch2, Ch1 uses multimodal means (pointing) and staccato speech prefaced with a call for attention with high prosody 'look look' - returning to his prior noticing of the duck,
- Line 13: Kaiako utterance ambiguous – could be directed to either Ch1 or Ch2
- Line 14: Ch1 further call for joint attention on the 'duck'
- Line 15: Kaiako launches a question-answer sequence by searching for knowledge – not tied to a specific child
- Line 16-19: no answer given so Kaiako offers an informing using the correct name of the creature with large emphasis – identifies the collection 'bird' and differentiates between duck and swan. Significant learning content here
- Lines 20-22: Ch1 again initiates an interest multimodally
- Lines 23-30: Kaiako gives an extended informing that includes information about habitat and diet again offering significant content knowledge
- Line 31-32: Ch1 returns interest to swan launching question-answer sequence
- Line 33-34: Kaiako answers offering a hypothesis

'Step 6': Teacher reflections on the video footage

On the follow-up meeting with Kaiako, edited video clips of the identified and now transcribed 'significant moments' were prepared and shared with Kaiako, including the example above. Each small clip was identified with the teacher's name and the phenomena of interest for easy access during the meeting. All seven participating teachers were present, and refreshments provided to thank kaiako for participating and to emphasise the supportive nature of the gathering. On watching the video clip transcribed above, Kaiako offered the following reflection points that impacted on future practice:

1) **The natural environment afforded space and time to follow children's interests**

The clip prompted discussion, where kaiako reflected on how the natural space gave them time to slow down and stop to explore the environment that they were in – notably in contrast to the more rushed indoor environment. The centre owner noted how the video and transcript showed '*such lovely interactions with the children*' and explicitly how '*most of these interactions have been taken because the children have asked questions…that information hasn't just been imparted on them…it's because they've been curious which is a disposition we really want to encourage*'. The NZ ECEC curriculum, *Te Whāriki*, identifies dispositions as key learning outcomes, and also identifies the concept of 'unhurried' practices (MoE 1996 49; 55; 63). More recently, this concept has been embraced in UK research (Clark 2023).

2) Content knowledge in ECEC

Reflecting specifically on lines 0-19 - kaiako reference term 'swan' - the centre owner began a discussion regarding the importance of using 'correct' terminology for wildlife when encountering it, to extend children's knowledge in situ. The often-raised issue of holistic pedagogy as encouraged by *Te Whāriki* compared with the more 'formal' content knowledge was then discussed, with suggestions that '*both are of equal importance*.' One kaiako suggested that children embrace complex concepts and terminology, and that if these are '*dumbed down it just teaches children that they don't understand things. But if you teach them complex concepts from the start then they can build their knowledge around that*'. This discussion explicitly demonstrated how the CA transcripts demonstrates how language can position children as either competent, or 'less than'.

Outcome:

This discussion resulted in a plan to arrange further professional development for kaiako regarding knowledge of the outdoor environment: this had been planned successfully before and Kaiako were keen for further engagement with outdoor learning, as they felt it would be '*important for future teaching*'. One kaiako developed this idea further, by suggesting it could be useful to 'pair up' kaiako, with one kaiako who is less knowledgeable about the outdoor environment with a more experienced kaiako. This suggestion was embraced by all, and so plans to arrange dates for professional development were recorded as a 'meeting action'.

Conclusion/Discussion:

The aim of this article was to introduce multimodal conversation analysis as a rigorous yet creative method that invites authentic participation with parents and teacher-practitioners. Guidance on how to conduct CA research in ECEC has been offered, including one approach that uses '6 steps' to support researchers, as well as 'An example' of what these steps look like in reality. As such, the article has demonstrated the usefulness of CA in ECEC as a creative method, with associated explicit implications for practice. CA as a creative method in ECEC affords a detailed examination of children's creative thinking, and how teacher-practitioners can support this processes, making the orderly and sequential nature of pedagogy visible and better understood.

CA is most visible as a creative method, as such a rigorous and deep analysis of children's naturally occurring talk and everyday activities, through time spent with them, are crucial for offering insight into their lived experiences (Mukherji and Albon 2018; Lahman 2008). Such an inductive approach to research with children offers opportunities for 'being with' (Albon and Rosen 2014) in order to understand more accurately their worlds, as opposed to task-centric participation that requires children to engage in adult-designed tasks. CA transcripts

demonstrate *how* interactions occur and so enlighten adults who are not members of children's cultures. As such, CA as a creative method offers opportunities for children's real-life voices to be heard to inform adults about what really matters to them. Opportunities for authentic professional development can then follow, where practice can involve valuable reflection and be shaped around children's interests and learning trajectories that might otherwise be overlooked. Future practice can then be enhanced in ways that position infants, toddlers and young children as competent in their co-construction of pedagogical moments with teacher-practitioners.

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