Children's Autonomous Initiatives and Their Orientation to the Rules of Conducts in Whole-Class Activities in Italian Third-Year Primary Schools: Doing "Being A Pupil"[*]

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Abstract

The article uses conversation analysis to investigate the first minutes of two lessons in a primary school, where pedagogic activities are organised as whole-class sessions. Drawing on previous works on IRE sequences characterising these structures as particularly restrictive environments for pupils' participation, the study focuses on the details of children's conduct. The analysis shows that, in the limited amount of time examined and in the restrictive context of the IRE structure, children frequently disengage from the rules underlying the canonical organization of the lesson and take the turn spontaneously. At the same time, they display their compliance with the institutional feature of talk, as well as presenting themselves as knowledgeable about the topic at hand. I examine various children's autonomous initiatives, focusing on design, distribution, and outcomes. Results indicate that children take the turn to implement two types of projects: contributing to the progression of the activity or pursuing their own individual project.

Keywords: *plenary lessons; children's initiatives; rules of conduct; IRE sequence; conversation analysis.*

1. Introduction

This article illustrates the results of a case study investigation of the ways in which children of 8-9 years of age produce spontaneous contributions in whole-class (i.e., plenary) activities, beyond responding to the teacher's initiating actions (questions, instructions, announcements). The examples analysed are largely from the first six minutes of a geometry lesson on angles, which are then compared with two further extracts from an Italian lesson in the same class; both lessons are organised as plenary sessions or whole-class interaction.

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Plenary instruction sequences have been described as very formal environments for children's participation: they are characteristically organised according to the three-part sequence or IRE/F (Initiation, Response, Evaluation/Feedback), with the teacher often selecting the next speaker who will have to provide the answer in a series of question-answer sequences (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975; McHoul, 1978; Mehan, 1979, 1985; Heath, 1983; Cazden, 2001). In these sequences, the teacher guides the answering activity of children in a very constrained way, deciding who speaks, when, and what to say.

After a brief literary review of some of the most recent works on the organisation of instruction sequences in plenary classes using the IRE model, before moving to the focus of the paper, I will illustrate and discuss one standard IRE sequence to show the main limitations on children's contributions. In these sequences, children typically follow the conduct rules operating in this setting that promote formal interaction and the teacher's institutional agenda.[1] Nevertheless, at the same time, children also display an inclination to breaking free from the inflexibility of the IRE structure, often adopting rules of conduct that are more typical of ordinary conversation, through which they manage to implement their individual agenda by gaining the right to talk while skipping the teacher's selection.

In the analytic section that follows the introduction and which is the core of this article, I review a range of these deviations from the IRE model. Using conversation analysis (Sidnell & Stivers, 2013; Robinson *et al.*, 2024), I will show that these practices are accountable in several ways, and all in terms of the children's twofold orientation: conforming to the main pedagogic activity, and/or implementing a personal and independent course of action. This article will show that, while pursuing both projects, children are very skilled in employing their interactional competence concerning turn design, sequential deployment, and their understanding ability.

The article then proposes a discussion of the findings before summing up the conclusions.

2. Literary review on IRE sequences and their organisation in plenary classes

Research on interaction in classes organised as plenary sessions began with the works by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975), McHoul 1978 and Mehan (1979a), which identified the IRE/F or the QAC (Question,

1 With the term "agenda", I am referring here to actions that are implemented in the class. I have distinguished between "institutional" and "individual" agendas. The former is the course of action that the teacher implements to achieve learning goals. Here it is represented by the series of question-answer sequences on angles. With the latter, I refer to some of the children's autonomous actions, which pursue other ends, external to the project on angles.

Answer and Comment) models, also known as the "triadic dialogue" (Lemke, 1990; Nassaji & Wells, 2000, Molinari *et al.*, 2013; Wells, 1993; Lee 2006). During the subsequent four decades, after the publications of these seminal works, this three-part sequential pattern has attracted the interest of researchers who highlighted its being accountable for pedagogic purposes, owing to the known-answer nature of the teacher questions (Mehan, 1979b; Drew 1991). Other works directed their attention to another feature that is quite common in whole-class interaction: that is, the selection sequence whereby the teacher addresses the question to a single student, after having solicited bids to answer from the class (Mazeland, 1983). These features have long been considered the two basic turn allocation possibilities (either the teacher addresses the whole class or selects the next student to speak) in whole-class sessions of talk that show the institutional character of classroom interaction, accounting for the restricted speaking rights of students and their passive participation. More recently, talk at school in plenary classes has been re-considered and examined through the lenses of conversation analysis, revealing other interactional and more dynamic patterns on the students' side, both in the language teaching classes, on which the majority of these studies focus upon (Lee, 2006; Garton, 2012; Ko, 2013; Waring, 2013), and in the teaching of other disciplines (Kapellidi, 2013; Margutti 2021, 2022). By paying attention to the minimal details of participants' conduct, these studies have highlighted a number of departures from the patterns above identified, providing a different picture of classroom interaction in general and of students' participation; that is, one in which students play a more active role, taking autonomous initiatives and initiating independent courses of actions, although respecting the constraints of the institutional nature of the setting.

3. How children meet the requirements of the IRE structure and its rules

But let us start with the illustration of one standard IRE sequence, with children displaying their compliance with the rules of formality (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974) characterised by other-allocation techniques, with the teacher selecting the next speaker. In whole-class instruction sequences, whether they are part of a reviewing activity of previous lectures, or of the teacher's attempt to elicit the children's own knowledge about a new topic, or of other pedagogic activities, teachers often ask questions in a series. They typically address children in turn with a question (I), then, after the response (R) of the selected speaker, they produce an evaluation (E) in third position, as exemplified by the IRE model. In settings with more recipients, the model includes the selection procedure of the child who has the right to answer (Mazeland, 1983). This organization has been described as ubiquitous, since it shapes pedagogic activities in quite different

settings, notwithstanding the differences in terms of learners' age, settings and aims of the activities that are designed in this way (for some examples, see Wells, 1993; Tarplee, 1996; Kapellidi, 2013; Hellermann 2003).

In what follows we provide three extracts from a standard IRE-modelled sequence, in which a teacher engages the group class to review the major features of angles. Symbols in bold in the second column of the transcripts refer to the phases of the IRE structure.[2]

1. MO_SD_03.21_L1_C3_geom_ripasso angoli (27.18-33.34)

1	**I**	T:	RIPASSO DEGLI ANGOLI. chi è che mi dice le caratteristiche di
			REVISION OF ANGLES. who's going to tell me the features of
2			un angolo<che cos'è ^un angolo.
			an angle<what is ^an angle.
3		Mat:	^((*raises hand* [Fig.1]))
4			(0.6)/((*others raise hand*)) [Fig.2]
5	**SEL**	T:	Matteo partiamo
			Matteo let's start
6			(1.0)//((*non selected pupils lower hands*))
7	**R**	Mat:	l'angolo è:'a parte di ^piano: tra due semire[tte:
			an angle is the part of a^ plane: between two half-lines
8		T:	^((*words silently "plane included"*))
9	**E**	T:	[compresa
			included
10			tra due semirette. come si chiam-
			between two half-lines. what's the nam-
11			^(1.0)

Right from the first question-answer sequence, from the specific formulation of the question ("who's going to tell me X") it is soon clear that, before answering the question, children are requested to bid for the turn in order to be selected (Mazeland, 1983; Kapellidi, 2013). In line 3, slightly after the completion of the first question ("who's going to tell me the features of an angle?"), Matteo starts raising his hand [Fig.1]. However, contingently, Matteo's gesture happens to be in overlap with the teacher's talk also because the teacher produces an unexpected rush-through (Walker, 2003) between the two last questioning units of her turn. This evidences that, in both cases, he aims at starting at the turn-transition-relevance place (Drew, 2009; Jefferson, 1973, 1983, 1986, 2004; Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson 1974). In line with Sahlström (2002), the timing of Matteo's hand-raising shows that he is closely monitoring the ongoing activity and orienting to positioning his bid in the turn relevance position of the teachers' turn, according to the rule that governs the pupils' right of taking the turn after the teacher's selection and allows them to display to be respectful of the classroom turn-taking system (Mazeland, 1983; Kapellidi, 2013; Margutti, 2021)

2 Transcriptions are anonymised: the participants' original names are removed and substituted.



[Fig.1]

1 RIPASSO DEGLI ANGOLI. chi è che mi dice le caratteristiche di
REVISION OF ANGLES. who's going to tell me the characteristics of
2 un angolo<che cos'è ^ un angolo.
an angle<what is ^an angle.

By the end of the teacher's turn (l.4), other pupils join Matteo in raising hands (Fig.2). Thus, Matteo's gesture and that of his classmates demonstrate that (i) they have understood the meaning of the question, that (ii) they know the answer and (iii) that they comply with the selection rule before answering. The sequence then smoothly develops according to the IRE model, with the answer in line 7 and the teacher's feedback in lines 9-10.



[Fig. 2]

4 (0.6)/((*others raise hand*))

In the second extract (continuation of the previous one), we reproduce two turns from the prior sequence (Matteo's answer and the teacher's third evaluation turn), to show that one feature of these questions in a series often consists in the compound nature of the teacher's turn. In lines 9-10,

the teacher builds a multi-unit turn. First, she positively evaluates the prior answer, by repeating the last part of Matteo's answer ("between the two half lines"), to which she adds "included", silently worded; second, she delivers the subsequent question ("what's the nam-"), which technically initiates the next question-answer sequence.

2. MO_SD_03.21_L1_C3_geom_ripasso angoli (27.18-33.34)

7	**R**	Mat:	l'angolo è:'a parte di ^piano: tra due semire[tte:
			an angle is the part of a^ plane: between two half-lines
8		T:	^((*words silently "plane included"*))
9	**E**	T:	[compresa
			included
10	**I**		tra due semirette. come si chiam-
			between two half-lines. what's the nam-
11			^(1.0)
12		T:	^((*palm up towards Stefano*))/[Fig.3]
13		T:	[come si chiamano le semirette
			what's the name of the half-lines
14		St:	[( )/((*lowers arm*))
			((*turning to the other side of the room*))
15		T:	^per alzata [di mano
			^by show [of hands
16		STs:	^((*Stefano, Matteo and another girl raise hands*))
17		Mat:	[↑uh::: uh.
18		Ste:	↑lo so!
			↑I know it!
19	**SEL**	T:	Stefano
20	**R**	Ste:	lati?
			sides?
21	**E**	T:	la:ti. (0.2) un lato due lati. bene.
			si:des. (0.2) ***one side two sides. good.***

I have included in a box the lines where children bid for the turn, anticipating and in line with the selection procedure that the teacher accomplishes in line 19. As we will see, although these turns are still produced to comply with with the teacher's selection rule, there is a diffused orientation from both parties (the teacher and the children) to a highly competitive environment. It is worth recalling here the comparison which Sacks *et al.* (1974, section 7) drafted between the turn-taking systems that are locally managed (i.e., ordinary conversation) and those that are ruled out by pre-allocational rules (i.e, classrooms, public debates and other settings where turns are pre-allocated). Authors explain that while the free access to the turn in ordinary conversation permits a large set of potential speakers to take turn, without, by contrast, guaranteeing an equalisation of the right among all potential speakers, the pre-allocation rule restricts the set to potential speakers at each turn changing, but permits the equalisation of turns in settings with many potential next speakers (ibid.: 729-730).

The first sign of competition is the teacher's action to block Stefano in lines 10-12: she self-interrupts, freezing the question half-way, adds the stopping gesture (Fig.3) and evokes the rule of bidding for the answer (l.15). The second sign of increasing competition is in the ways in which children design their bid for the turn, as illustrated below.



[Fig.3]

10 T: tra due semirette. come si chiam-
between two half-lines. what's the nam-
11 ^(1.0)
12 T: ^((*palm up towards Stefano*))

Following the teacher's request to raise their hands, children do it soon after the teacher has completed the question "what are the half lines called?"). Quite significantly, Matteo and Stefano add further vocal and linguistic resources to the gesture, differentiating their bidding. Matteo uses the vocal production to perform a repeated compelling summons (an excited production of "uh"), while Stefano uses a complete utterance ("I know it"), to claim knowledge of the answer. A third competitor, the girl in the front row, quietly raises her hand. This time, Stefano gets the turn.

The sequence shows that the activity of selecting/being selected reflects the complexities of the classroom competitive setting, where often the rules of conduct for getting the floor and the preference for showing one's willingness to answer might be in conflict (Margutti 2021, 2022). These investigations into the details of the techniques pupils adopt to gain the turn, both when the question is addressed to one selected pupil or to the entire class, have evidenced that pupils are torn between two conflicting issues: to display their compliance with the teachers' right of selection or their knowledge of the answer. This latter goal involves being the first to answer, in line with the rule 1b (p. 704) in Sacks *et al.* (1974), whereby if speaker A (here, the teacher) has not selected any next speaker, then the first who starts gets the right to speak.

In the third and last example of this section we will see that, with the progression of the activity, children's conduct is affected even more by such competitive environment: for instance, they anticipate their bids with respect to the completion of the question, as shown in the third extract below. It is worth recalling that the teacher is revising all the notions related to angles, asking children to mention the technical names of the elements

of angles. Therefore, it is legitimate to consider that, with the progression of the series of questions, by process of elimination, it is more likely for children to be able to anticipate what the subsequent question is about with a certain amount of certainty.

3. MO_SD_03.21_L1_C3_geom_ripasso angoli (27.18-33.34)

1	**I**	T:	^come si chiama il [^punto di ori^gine
			^what's the name of the shared endpoint
2		Ste:	^((*raises hand*))
3		St	[>uh<
4		Ste:	[↑lo so! ↑lo so!
			↑I know it↑I know it!
5		Sts:	^((*4 pupils raise hands*))
6		Sts:	^((*7 pupils with raised hands*))
7	**SEL**	T:	((*points to Caty*))
8			(0.8)
9	**R**	Cat:	vertice ((*most children who raised their hands now lower them*))
			vertex
10	**E**	T:	vertice. molto bene.
			vertex. very good.
11			(1.0)

In line 2, Stefano raises his hand at the very beginning of the new question; that is, in a position where the teacher has not yet worded any part of the question. Similarly, when children produce the bids in lines 3-5, the teacher has launched the question without saying any part of the element she wants them to name. Only the children who raise their hands in line 6, having heard the first part of the word "endpoint" might have some explicit clues about the required answer. The other premature bids to answer indicate the high competition for the floor. However, despite the pressure for selection, teacher and pupils display a common orientation to the two rules of conduct operating in this context (comply to the teacher-selection rule or "first starter acquires right to a turn", Sacks *et al.* 1974: 704, rule 1b), which might be explicitly formulated or only implied and emerging in the timing and shape of the participants' conducts.

Having described the general participation framework and the rules behind the turn-taking system in whole-class activities, we will move now to the analytic core of the article, where I will examine instances in which children *depart* from this three-part model in a more substantial way. They actually break free from the rule of the teacher's selection, self-select and perform a series of independent actions, other than bidding and answering. As the analysis will show, although departing from the rules of conduct I have described above, in designing their unsolicited and autonomous initiatives, children build them to be understood as strictly linked to the ongoing talk. Thus, the actions we will review show that children of this age are torn between respecting the other-selection rule of the classroom formal system and trying to overcome these constraints by self-selecting and taking the turn as early as possible. Another level of conflict, which

crosses these first alternative options for getting the turn, concerns whether the initiative thus accomplished aligns with the ongoing pedagogic activity or implement the children's individual projects.

In the analytic section below, I will present the most common among the initiatives that children produce in the first 6 minutes of the lessons here examined. I divided these actions in two groups, according to *where* they occur in the overarching organization of the pedagogic sequence. In the first group, we included children's actions which interject and expand the teachers' turns, being them the first initiating actions (I) or the third-turn receipts (E) of the children's answers. In the second group, I included children's actions produced around and related to the answers of their peers (R). The analysis will show that, in producing these actions, children display their orientation to the model by making evident that these unsolicited turns are, nevertheless, related to the main actions of the IRE structure. In so doing, children display a very sophisticated conversational competence: that is the ability to apply the fundamental principles governing interaction such as, for instance, conditional relevance (Schegloff, 1968; Heritage, 1984), preference for progression (Robinson & Stivers, 2006) and a more general sensibility for topical and lexical coherence. Furthermore, it is worth considering that this complex set of interactional skills is applied to a setting where the participation framework involves the presence of numerous speakers that are all competing for the turn, owing to the specific institutional implication of being a student in a numerous group class. On the other hand, findings show that pupils also succeed in employing a vast array of verbal and nonverbal resources, including time control; they bend these rules and principles to their own individual projects, according to the possibilities locally arising in talk.

4. Children's autonomous initiatives: their actions and their distribution

In this analytic section, I will review and analyse all the unsolicited turns that children produce during the first minutes of the lesson on angles. In the examples analysed here, children step in the interaction autonomously, without being selected, proposing a contribution to the ongoing action that is recognisably linked to the prior turn, whether these are one of the teachers' initiating actions and the third evaluative turn, or the responses from the selected students. We will discuss these contributions according to their turn design and their sequential deployment. In what follows, the initiatives are presented according to their distribution within the IRE sequence.

Type 1: Children's initiatives related to teacher's turns

One of the most frequent types of actions that children produce in whole-class sequences is the *completion of the teacher's turns*. In the litera-

ture on classroom interaction, this activity has been investigated in various educational settings, with classes on different disciplines and students of different ages. This practice is known under the label of "Designedly Incomplete Utterances" or DIU (Koshik, 2002; Lerner, 1995; Margutti 2006, 2010; Netz, 2016). One example of this phenomenon is illustrated in the extract below.

4. MO_SD_03.21_L1_C3_geom_ripasso angoli (27.18-33.34)

1		T:	°però devi (.) alzar la mano° novanta gra:di, noVANTA gra:di.
			°but you must (.) raise your hand ninety degree:s, niNETY degrees
			perché gli angoli si mi^surano con i:?
			because angles are measured with the:?
2		Mat:	^((*raises hand*))
3	→	St:	gra:[di
			degr[***ees***
4	→	Sts:	[grad[i:
			[***degr***[***ee:s***
5		T:	[con uno strumento particolare che si chiama?
			[***with a special instrument which is called?***
6			(1.2)

In line 1, in the first unit of the turn ("but you must raise your hand") the teacher reminds the child who answered previously to raise his hand before speaking again by evoking the rule of asking to be selected. After establishing the rule of conduct, two more steps follow. In these steps, the teacher first reiterates the measurement of a right angle (ninety degrees) provided earlier thus offering a positive assessment of prior answer within the repetition (Margutti & Drew 2014). She then concludes by discussing how angles are measured ("because angles are measured with the?"). The unit is designed as incomplete: the teacher leaves out the last word and produces the determinative masculine plural article ("*i*" / "the"), that precedes the noun "grades", by stretching the vowel sound a little and with raising intonation. These features, often accompanied by a stretch of silence, canonically indicate that teachers are soliciting completion, which here is produced in lines 3-4. Notably, the expected word ("gradi"/"grades") had been recently mentioned in the teacher's positive evaluation. Therefore, here the teacher is drawing attention on this technical term, asking children to re-use it in a different sentential context (Margutti, 2010).

Facing investigations on how teachers do DIUs, little effort has been made in literature to describe how children accomplish completion, especially when this is not explicitly requested. Thus, legitimate questions would be the following: What are children displaying when providing unsolicited completion? How these actions are accountable in this setting? The extract below shows one such case of these unexplored *unsolicited completions of the teacher's turn*.

Example 5 captures the moment when the teacher is drawing attention to how many right angles form a round angle. To do so, she uses a paper angle model, made of two hard-paper strips fastened together with

a paper fastener [Fig.4]. By adjusting the two strips, she demonstrates the varying sizes of angles. Here, while talking, she moves the two strips to make them overlap completely to form the round angle. Our focus is Claudio's turn in line 3.



[Fig.4]

5. MO_SD_03.21_L1_C3_geom_ripasso angoli (27.18-33.34)

1		T:	quanti, (3.0) angoli retti, (4.6) mi servono (2.0) attenzione
			how many, (3.0) straight angles, (4.6) do I need (2.0) careful
2			^<per formare> (2.0) un angolo?
			^<to form> (2.0) an angle? ((that is))
			^((*starts moving one side of the angle model*))
3	→	Clau:	^giro
			^round
4		T:	^((*she has rotated half of the width*))
5		T:	gi:::^ro:::
			^ro::^u::nd
			((*and now she does the other half*))
6		Sts:	^((*start raising hand and variously bid for the answer*))
7		T:	Clara
			((NAME))
8		Aur:	quattro
			four

In line 1-2, the teacher delivers the question with frequent and extended intra-turn pauses (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson 1974: ftn.26), while manipulating the angle model. The teacher's utterance is still ongoing and delivered with raising intonation when Claudio provides the word "round", naming the angle the teacher is showing, in line 3. It is worth observing that Claudio manages to say the word very timely: soon after the teacher has produced the word "angle" and, thus, aligning with the pace of the teacher's talk. It is not possible to be certain whether the teacher was soliciting completion or not. However, the teacher's way of speaking suggests an intention other than seeking completion. First, right from the beginning, with the interrogative adverb "*quanti*"/"how many", the question takes the form of a content question (Margutti, 2006; Rossano, 2010): it searches for the number of right angles that are in a round angle. Second, the teacher's slow pace in delivering the question is motivated by the fact that she is simultaneously engaged in the physical demonstration of the size of the round angle, by manipulating the angle model. Third, the raising intonation is ascribable to the fact that the completion of the questioning utterance is approaching. Finally, when Claudio provides the name of the angle in line 3, the teacher is half-way through her demonstration. All these

observations argue for the child's turn in line 3 as an unsolicited completion of the teacher's turn: it is one example of these self-selected initiatives, whereby children manage to break free from the IRE structure. By anticipating their incoming, they skip the teacher's selection and succeed in contributing to the progression of the teacher's talk and to the activity. In doing so, Claudio displays his interactional competence in monitoring the ongoing talk and in his understanding of the teacher's talk and its goal. The teacher completes her own turn, saying the name of the "*giro*" / "round" angle herself, with an emphatic pronunciation (l.5). Only after this completion, the teacher then selects Clara as the legitimate next speaker who can answer the question.

But children can exploit the contingencies of the moment to accomplish other actions than completions. In the extract below children clearly read ahead the turn of the teacher's utterance; but this time they did not aim at providing the completion for the question. Rather, they even *anticipate the answer* before the question is fully articulated. In the extract below, the teacher places the two stripes of the model consecutively along the same line (l. 5), to demonstrate the composition of a flat angle, as the equivalent of two right angles. Our target lines are line 4 and 17 (arrowed lines), where two children self-select to provide an unsolicited contribution.

6. MO_SD_03.21_L1_C3_geom_ripasso angoli (27.18-33.34

1	I	T:	facciamo qualche calcolo. angolo retto novanta gradi, (0.2) ***let's make some calculations. right angle ninety degrees,***
2			voglio sapere (.) quanti angoli? (.) retti. quindi quanti di ***I want to know (.) how many right (.) angles. so how many of***
3			questi angoletti, [(0.6) ^mi servono, per formare >un ^angolo= ***these angles (DIM.)*, [(0.6) ^ do I need, to form >a flat=***
4	→	St:	[°due° [***°two°***
5		T:	^----------->((*moves one side of the model to show a flat angle*))
6		Fede:	^((*raises hand*))
7		T:	=piatto< =***angle<***
8		Mat:	^((*raise hand*))
9		Sts:	((*others raise their hands*))
10		Sts:	(5.0)/ ((*all pupils have raised their hands and Stefano repeatedly shouts out his claim of knowledge "lo so"*))
11		T:	quanti di questi, ***how many of these,***
12		Sts	(3.0)/((*pupils bidding*))
13	SEL	T:	((*points to Anna*))
14	R	Anna:	due ***two***
15	E	T:	du::e. (0.2) due angoli retti novanta gradi più ***two::. (0.2) two straight angles ninety degrees plus***
16			nova]nta gradi, (0.8) centottanta gradi. ^angolo ***ninety degrees, (0.8) a hundred and eighty degrees. ^angle***
17	→	Clau:	[centottanta gradi! [***a hundred and eighty degrees!***
18		T:	^((*gestural completion: points to the extension of the angle model in flat angle position, fixing it and nods briefly*))
19			(1.0)

* The teacher uses a diminutive and plural form of the word "*angolo*" in Italian: "*angoletti*"

In the first occurrence (line 4) the child steps in while the teacher is delivering the question. By the time the child says "two", the question has not reached completion: the teacher has delivered the first part of the 'content' question "how many right angles so how many of these angles (in Italian the teacher uses the diminutive and plural form of the word 'angolo')". In this context, the question would projectably be one of the following: how many right angles are *in a flat angle* or *in a round angle*. Perhaps respecting the order in which the teacher introduced angles the first time, the child in line 4 chooses the first possibility and delivers the answer to this hypothetical projected question. Indeed, because it is produced so much earlier with regards to the completion of the question, the answer is hearable as misplaced, but not at all unrelated. As a matter of fact, it is the correct answer to the question that is finally delivered. It shows that the child has monitored the activity so far, is able to predict the completion of the teachers' question and to formulate the answer accordingly. But the child shows another type of interactional competence: by delivering the word very softly, she also shows her awareness of the fact that she has predicted, and possibly misplaced, and inappropriately produced a premature answer. Thus, the contribution serves the following two purposes: the first is the completion of the ongoing action by contributing to the teacher's turn and action, in line with the rules that underlie the turn-taking system in ordinary conversation and the preference for progression (Robinson & Stivers, 2006); the second is the mitigation of the possible disruption caused by not having respected the teacher's selection rule, implicit in classroom interaction. Indeed, the turn in line 4 goes unobserved: the teacher completes the question (l.7) and the demonstration (ll. 5-6), provides time for children to bid (l.10), reformulates the question (l.11), provides more time for bids (l.12), selects Anna (l.13) who answers in line 14, and finally provides evaluation in line 15.

The second occurrence is Claudio's turn in line 17. Here, the unsolicited turn is placed in overlap with the teacher's turn, while she is elaborating on Anna's correct answer. In line 15, the teacher first repeats Anna's correct answer ("two"); then she continues by elaborating on the size of a flat angle, which is the double of a right angle. While formulating the addition of the size of two right angles – that is, ninety plus ninety – Claudio provides the result in last-item onset overlap (Jefferson, 1983; Drew, 2009) with respect to the teacher's turns, completing it before the teacher does it herself, in line 16. This is another occurrence of the abovementioned unsolicited contributions from children. In both cases, these turns are produced to complete *in advance* what the teacher was aiming at and, thus, with the aim of fostering the progression of the pedagogic agenda implemented by the teacher. These unsolicited initiatives operate as insertions in both question and third-turn receipt in the IRE model. They are designed to match the teacher's pace and actions, completing and responding accordingly.

Thus, children display their compliance with the role of the teacher and her speaking rights. In addition, the way in which they design their contributions shows that they aim at minimising any eventual disruption, while, at the same time, publicly displaying their own knowledge of the matter at hand. In this way, children show a double and subtly conflicting orientation to being "good pupils". The analysis of the details of their conduct evidences that being "good pupils" is realised through two different types of practices. On one side, it involves showing that they are knowledgeable about the subject. They do so by ingeniously placing their contribution to suit the ongoing talk and action, although breaking free from the teacher's selection rule. On the other side, being "good pupils" entails being aware and respectful of the rules that govern the more formal turn-taking system in whole-class instructional sequences.

Type 2: Children's initiatives operating on peers' answers

Children's unsolicited contributions do not operate only on teachers' turns, but also on their peers' responses. In this particular sequential position, children frequently engage in providing assessments or comments on the responses given by the selected pupils. These unsolicited actions operating in the answering slot can take two main trajectories, depending on whether their design contributes to the project of the ongoing pedagogic activity or diverges from it, implementing the child's individual project.

For instance, in the next example, we see Federico mocking his peer Matteo for a wrong answer about the width of the flat angle. Federico takes the turn after the teacher has evaluated the answer; but the initiative serves the speaker's personal agenda. The extract is from the lesson on angles. The teacher is now moving on to introduce the flat angle. Our focus turn is line 18, where Federico repeats Stefano's wrong answer (l.15); he does it in such a way as to make a joke of him (on the functions of repetitions and on mockery, see Couper-Kuhlen, 1996, 2020; Rossi, 2020). Thus, he develops an individual project, which does not contribute to the progression of the instruction activity on angles.

7. MO_SD_03.21_L1_C3_geom_ripasso angoli (27.18-33.34)

1	I	T:	posso avere ((cough)) un altro angolo
			I can also have ((coughs)) another angle
			partico[la:re ^che ha=
			pecu[lia:r ^which has=
			^((*turns to class to show the model*))
2		Mat:	[↑uh: ↑uh ((*stretching his hand that he has kept raised*))
3		St:	^((*raises hand and stands up*))
4		T:	=una [mi^sura particolare e=
			=a [peculiar measure and=
5		Mat:	[↑uh: ↑uh
6		Sts:	^((*others raise their hands*))
7		T:	=una ^forma partico^la-
			=a ^peculiar sha^pe-
8		Giu:	^↑mhm:: ↑mhm:: ((*raising and shaking hand*))
9	SEL	T:	^((*points to Giulia*))
10	R	Giu:	angolo piatto.
			straight angle.
11	E	T:	an:golo pia^tto.
			straight an^gle.
12		Sts:	^*((all pupils put their hands down))*
			(.)
13	I	T:	^che misura? >°adesso il mio non è pro[prio°<
			^which measures? >°now mine is not exa[ctly°<
			^((*T shows the angle width with her finger on the model*))
14		Mat:	[↑uh: ↑uh ((raising hand))
15	R_1	Ste:	cent[osessanta gradi
			a hu[ndred and sixty degrees
16	R_2	Mat:	[c e n t o t t a n t a [gradi
			[***a hundred and eighty*** [***degrees***
17	E	T:	[ce::ntottanta gra-
			[***a hundred and eighty degr-***
			cent[ottanta? ((*showing the width on the model*))
			a hundred and eighty?
18	→	Fed:	[£centosessanta gradi?£
			[***a hundred and sixty degrees?***
			((*turning to some peers and smiling*))

[T SHOWS THAT THE ANGLE MEASURES 180° ON BOTH SIDES]

From line 1 through to 4, with a statement-formatted turn, the teacher is soliciting the identification of the flat angle. During this session, multiple children eagerly volunteer to provide answers. In line 9, Giulia is selected to answer, and she replies in line 10. In the subsequent turn, the teacher confirms the answer and, elaborating on that, continues the utterance with a designedly unfinished relative sentence (DIU: Designedly Incomplete Utterances), in which she asks the measure of a flat angle. This request is followed by direct responses from Stefano and Matteo (ll. 15 and 16), proposing different measures. In line 17, the teacher confirms that Matteo's answer is the correct one, by repeating twice the measure of one hundred and eighty degrees, following which, and in overlap with the teacher's evaluative turn, in line 18, Federico repeats the wrong measure proposed by Stefano in line 15. He does so while turning to the classmates in his row and with a smiling voice, as indicated with the (£) sign. This contribution does not add anything to the progression of the activity but pursues Federico's personal project of *derision* of his companion.

Similarly, in terms of children's personal projects, in the extract below, in the arrowed line, Federico volunteers an *assessment* concerning his personal preference for the obtuse angle. Assessments and comments through which children manifest their liking, disliking or excitement about teachers' proposals, announcements and communications are quite frequent in my data. In line 11, by disclosing that the obtuse angle is the most beautiful, Federico initiates a line of talk concerning one of the angles the teacher is proposing for revision.

8. MO_SD_03.21_L1_C3_geom_ripasso angoli (27.18-33.34)

1		T:	ma posso avere un angolo più <gra^:::^nde [di novanta gradi?>
			but can I have an angle <grea^:::^ter [than ninety degrees?>
			^((*moving sides of model*))
2		Sts:	^((*pupils raise hands*))
3		Mat:	[uh:: ((*raising hand*))
4		Ste:	[↑lo so! °lo so°
			[↑I know it! °I know it°
			^↑lo so!= ↑lo so!/((*raising hand*))
			^**↑I know it!= ↑I know it!**
5		T:	^((*points to Daniele in the first row*))
6			(0.6)
7		Dan:	eh-
			eh-
8		T:	o:-
			o:-
9		Dan:	ottuso
			obtuse
10		T:	o::ttu:::so
			o::btu:::se
11	→	Fed:	ch'è'l più bello.
			which is the most beautiful.

The contribution is designed as an increment (Schegloff, 1996) following the teacher's positive evaluation of Daniele's prior answer, who identified the width of the obtuse angle correctly. As described by Schegloff, Federico's assessment starts "with something which is hearably *not* a beginning" (Schegloff, 1996: 75), and it is "constructed to be grammatically continuous with preceding talk" (ibidem: 119, ftn 26). Indeed, Federico begins his turn with the relative pronoun "*che*"/"that", which links his utterance back to the prior turn. However, Federico clearly pursues an individual project, not in line or relevant to the teacher's purpose of revising the notion and types of angles, although related to prior talk, in terms of its topical coherence and grammatical cohesion.

The next extract is from an Italian lesson with the same group of pupils. Here children pursue two divergent projects: one, which is in line with the ongoing activity and the institutional agenda, the other that pursues the speaker's personal project and agenda. Children perform a noticing and an informing action, both of which are triggered by the same topic.

The teacher is working on the grammatical category of 'names', soliciting children to tell similarities and differences between three names: "*mucca, elettricista, sedia*"/"cow, electrician and chair". In previous talk (transcript not shown), Luca has already announced that he will mention differences between the three words and that the word "cow" refers to an animal. In what follows he classifies the other two words (l. 2, 6), with regards to the class of referents (persons and objects). We will focus on the arrowed lines, where non-selected children step in, implementing their different projects.

9. MO_SD_03.18_L1_C1_NOMI

1	SEL	T:	vai.((*to Luca*)) ***go on.***
2	R	LU:	l'elettricista [è::: un uma::no. ***the electrician*** [***i:::s a huma::n.***
3	→	MAT:	[elettricista [è mio padre ((*turning to Luca*)) [***electrician*** [***is my father***
4	→	LET:	[anche- anche il mio [***als- also mine***
5			(5.0)//((*SS commenting*))
6	R	LU:	>è una persona?< e la sedia è un oggetto. >***it is a person?< and the chair is an object.***
7	→	LET:	anche il mio è elettricista ***also mine is an electrician***
8	→	CAR:	ma è un lavo:ro! ***but it's a jo:b!***
9			(2.4)
10		PAO:	Lucio::!/((*summoning the T and raising both hands*)) ***((NAME))***
11	E	T:	okey ***okay***
12	→	SIL:	ma è un lavo::ro:! ***but it's a jo::b:!***
13		T:	ho capito ho capito. ***I got it I got it.***
14			(0.2)

In line 2, after selection, Luca starts his classification of the two remaining words: "electrician" and "chair". During this turn and in overlap with it, Matteo and Letizia, triggered by the word "electrician", deviate from the classificatory project and announce that this is their fathers' job. First, Matteo turns to Luca to give this personal information about his fathers' job (l.3), which is part of his own personal territory of information (Kamio, 1997; Heritage, 2012). The turn occurs in an interjacent overlap onset (Jefferson 1983; Drew, 2010) with Luca's prior turn. This indicates that Matteo's informing has been prompted by the word 'electrician' and its association with his private family life. Matteo designs his turn as an independent unit and a full sentence. However, it is also worth observing the marked format of the sentence. Comparing the format of the unmarked sentence ("My father is an

electrician"), the left-dislocated format used by Matteo ("Electrician is my father") indicates that this announcement has been activated by the word "electrician" in Luca's prior response. In overlap with Luca's turn, and in the exact same position (that is, after the completion of the word "electrician"), Letizia steps in too (l.4). She displays her alignment with Matteo's project, which she pursues in line 4 and 7. Thus, clearly, Matteo and Letizia exploit the topical coherence between the word 'electrician', here proposed to grammatical ends and as a response to the teacher's question, and their own individual projects.

The other two autonomous initiatives occur in lines 8 and 12. Carlo and Silvia produce two identical turns, with some slightly prosodic variations, but both injected with some excitement. Both children claim that the name "electrician" refers to a job. The adversative conjunction "but" with which both turns begin might imply a critique to Luca's classification. It is worth observing that, due to the sequential position of the first utterance by Carlo – i.e., after Matteo's and Letizia's informing that their fathers are electricians – it is legitimate to suppose that Letizia's and Matteo's earlier turns could have activated this second line of talk. In comparison to the prior unsolicited incomings, these are more aligned to the classificatory activity proposed by the teacher: they contribute a new type of classification of the word and partially correct Luca's prior proposal.

In this regard, this instance of correction provides a different nuanced way of accomplishing correction, as compared to the one in extract 7, line 18, where Federico exploits the teachers' feedback to highlight the error made by his companion and mock him. However, children may address the action of correction with other features that characterise this type of action as more in line with the pedagogic nature of the ongoing activity. The occurrence in the extract below, from the Italian class on names, is a case in point.

The sequence contains a noticeably clear case of a child correcting his companion. The sequence is extraordinarily rich because it presents a variety of other unsolicited initiatives taken by children and all displaying their orientation to the progression of the pedagogic activity and, thus, to the institutional agenda. The extract is from the same Italian lesson that we have seen above in Extract n. 9. It is worth recalling that Lucio (the teacher) has solicited children to find differences and commonalities between the three words: "*mucca, elettricista, sedia*"/"cow, electrician, chair". In line 2, the teacher responds to Giovanni's summons and allows him to answer.

10. MO_SD_03.18_L1_C1_NOMI

1		GIO:	↑Lucio:, ((*standing up, with his hand raised*))
			((NAME))
2		SEL T:	[dimmi
			[***tell me***
3		LE:	[↑i::::: ((*jumping*))
			[↑***I:::::***
4		R_1 GIO:	^e finiscon tutti con la a.
			^***and they end all in a^{iii}***
5		CA:	^((*raises hand*))
6		LE:	[dà::i. ((*she sits down and lowers her hand*))
			[***come o::n.***
7		E T:	[finiscon tutti con la a::.
			[***they end all in a::.***
8			(.)
9		E T:	[°okey° ((*writing "finiscono…"*))
			[**°okay°**
10		CA:	[dài me l'hai rubata
			[***come on you stole it from me***
11			(1.8)/((*while T writes on the whiteboard, various children talk in overlap*))
12		R_2 CA:	perché son femminili.
			because they are feminine.
13		CLA:	e:::::: ((*with some excitement*))
			e:::::
14		E T:	finiscono in a:,
			they end in -a:,
15	→	LU:	no! l'elettricista [può essere anche maschio
			no! the electrician [***can also be male***
16		E T:	[<quindi sono femmini^li.>
			[***<so they are femini^ne.***
17		CA:	^((*nods*))
18		CA:	sì.
			yes.
19		T:	come facciamo- come facciamo a capire che sono femminili.
			how can w- how can we understand that they are feminine.
20		AL:	.h::: ((*raising hand*))

In line 4, Giovanni contributes the empirical observation that all three names end with the inflectional morpheme "-a". The teacher endorses the answer with the standard verbatim repetition in line 7 and 14 (Margutti & Drew, 2014). It is worth observing that the teacher is also engaged in writing the pupil's answer on the whiteboard (see glosses in lines 9 and 11). In addition, the sequence presents an extremely elevated level of competition. It is noticeable that both Letizia (l.3, in a hyperactive way) and Carlo (l.5) compete for the floor during both the selection process and the delivery of the answer by Giovanni. Then, in line 6 and 10 they complain about not having been selected and for the fact that Giovanni's answer was the same that Carlo meant to offer ("come on! you stole it from me"). Indeed, the Italian interjection "*dài*", which both Letizia and Carlo produce in lines 6 and 10, can be translated as "come on", in this context, it expresses a mild reproach, intolerance and annoyance.[3]

3 The discourse marker "dài" is the imperative form of the verb "dare" / "to give". It has different uses, according to its sequential context: ranging from encouragement, support and surprise to critique and annoyance (Ghezzi & Molinelli, 2014; Pauletto & Fatigante, 2015).

After a couple of seconds, while the teacher is busy writing and other children talk to each other (l.11), Carlo self-selects again in line 12 with another observation on this group of names, claiming that they are all feminine names. Please note that in Italian the names ending with the morpheme "a" can belong to different grammatical genders, although the vast majority are feminine names. Therefore, there is a general tendency to associate words with this ending to the feminine gender. It should be noted that, for instance, the term "cow" is feminine, "electrician" can refer to any gender, and "chair" is feminine. Indeed, there is a large group of names ending in "-a" that are masculine or invariable; that is, do not change their ending sound according to the masculine or feminine gender. One group of names of this latter type are names of jobs, called "agent nouns",[4] of which "*elettricista*"/"electrician" is one canonical item. In their singular version, they are invariable for masculine and feminine. In terms of turn design, Carlo builds his turn in line 12 as strictly deriving from Giovanni's prior answer, making clear that his contribution is due to the fact that all the names end with "-a". This linkage is evident in the causal conjunction "because", with which Carlo's turn begins, to convey the reason why they all end in "-a". In fact he explains that this is so because they are all feminine. In this way, Carlo displays his access to specific grammatical knowledge.

However, this explanation is in turn corrected by Luca (l.15). While the teacher is busy writing Giovanni's answer (l. 14) and offering feedback to Carlo (l. 16), in line 15 Luca corrects Carlo in a very direct way, offering evidence that Carlo's explanation was wrong. Luca's turn is composed of two units: first the overt rejection ("no"), followed by an assertion that counters Carlo's explanation: he claims that the word 'electrician' can refer to a male person. In this, they both display a clear orientation to the pedagogic nature of the activity and, at the same time, to their being knowledgeable about grammar.

The extracts of this section have shown that, in the answering slot, the non-selected children are very actively involved in monitoring the interaction at all levels, and in pursuing different projects, with the aim of contributing to the pedagogic goal of the activity or implementing some individual projects. Furthermore, the way in which children design and position their unsolicited turns argue for a general orientation of children to be pertinent and collaborative, often and despite breaking free from the formality of the turn-taking system and of the selection rule, towards a more conversation-type system (Drew & Heritage, 1992). While in the formal type of setting

4 "Agent nouns" derive from another noun denoting an activity or an object, which identify persons whose job consists in working with that object or doing that action. These "agent nouns" are formed by adding specific suffixes. One of these is "*-ista*". For example, "*elettricista*" is formed by adding "-ista" to the root "*elettric-*" of the noun "*elettricità*"/electricity. Other agent nouns that are formed through the same derivation process are, for example, the following: "*fiorista, ciclista, dentista, musicista*, etc."/florist, cyclist, dentist, musician, etc." In Italian, these nouns are invariable for the feminine and masculine gender, but only in the singular.

the teacher selection is the only way to access the turn, in the more flexible and conversation-type system which I have documented here, children can self-select and step in interaction exploiting the relevance of their contribution with prior talk at many levels: from the topical and lexical level to the pragmatic and interactional ones. To do so, they implement their initiatives, building them in such a way as to make them attuned to the ongoing course of action at many levels: speed of delivery, unit completion, building links with prior talk, goal of the course of action, recognition, and anticipation of the ongoing activity. In this way, children display their mastery over a sophisticated interactional competence, together with awareness of the institutional inferences that characterise the classroom setting and the social rule that govern the interaction in this context.

5. Discussion

In the classroom interaction literature on whole-class instruction sequences, learners' conducts are often described as limited to answering the teacher's questions according to the term established by the question, with regard to the content and the timing of the answer, as well as restricted to the compliance with the other-selection rule (McHoul, 1978; Mehan, 1979; Mazeland, 1983; Garton, 2012; Kapellidi, 2013; Waring 2013; Ingram & Elliot 2014; Willemsen *et al.*, 2020; Breukelman *et al.*, 2023). The structure of these sequences as series of question-answer pairs organised around the IRE model, and particularly those initiated by the teacher's known-answer questions (Mehan, 1979) has been generally described as constraining students' autonomous initiatives and fostering answers at a low cognitive level (Nassaij & Wells, 2000; Nystrand *et al.*, 2003; Lee, 2006).

These constraints on the learners' answering activity have been evidenced and discussed in Section 3 (extracts 1-3), where the interaction is organised rather strictly according to the IRE structure, through which the teacher and pupils collaborate in making the activity progress, in line with the teacher's agenda and the pedagogic activity proposed. Nonetheless, also in these examples, the microanalysis of children's vocal and visual conducts has shown that the highly competitive nature of interaction, due to the multiparty setting, put the IRE's sequentiality at stake. In this environment, it has been shown that children employ a range of specific techniques whereby they manage to anticipate, variate and emphasise their bids to answer, displaying their ability to closely monitor the activity so as to anticipate the subsequent question in the sequence and, often, providing the answer before the selection procedure. By using different resources (vocal, linguistic, and visual) and intensifying their bidding with repeated productions, not only do they differentiate themselves, but also display their urgency to provide a relevant contribution. The finely grained composition of these conducts argues for the children's competence about the principles

and rules that govern the turn-taking in whole-class interaction, and their awareness of how these rules can vary in relation to the contingencies of interaction on a moment-by-moment basis.

As the data in Section 4 indicate, during the same type of interaction, children can also provide contributions that go beyond merely bidding for the floor and responding when chosen. In each of the cases examined, they manage to self-select and accomplish various autonomous actions in all the positions of the IRE structure. They also manage to legitimate their actions by linking their turns to the teacher's and to their peers' turns. It is only by looking at the details of these spontaneous initiatives that we can see children breaking free from the IRE structure and contributing to the progression of talk in at least two main directions: contributing to the development of the pedagogic activity while aligning with the institutional agenda, or pursuing their own individual project. In the table below (Fig. 5), I have listed all the actions that have emerged in the extracts; I classified them in terms of their distribution in the different stages of the IRE model and with regard to their orientation: whether they aligned to the instructional agenda and the ongoing pedagogic activity or to the individual agenda of the speaker. As the table shows, the analysis indicates that these autonomous initiatives are frequent, apply to all the stages of the IRE structure and implement a range of different actions, both in the institutional and in the individual direction.

	INITIATION / EVALUATION	RESPONSES
ACTIONS	**PURSUING THE INSTITUTIONAL AGENDA** • Completion of teachers' turns (ex.5) • Premature answers (ex.6)	**PURSUING THE INSTITUTIONAL AGENDA** • Noticing (ex.9) • Corrections (ex.10)
	PURSUING INDIVIDUAL PROJECTS • Mockery (ex.8)	**PURSUING INDIVIDUAL PROJECTS** • Assessments (ex.8) • Informing (ex.9) • Complaints: (ex.10)

[Fig.5] The distribution of children's unsolicited contributions and of their actions

Beginning with the initiatives that children design as related to the teacher's actions (Initiation and Evaluation), children in extracts 4 and 5 show their mastery over the time contingencies, succeeding in inserting their contributions *before* the selection procedure. For instance, the child in extract 5 exploits the slow pace of the teacher's demonstration of the flat angle, which is due to the simultaneous manipulation of the model, entering at the first possible place to complete the turn with the name of the flat angle in due time. In this, following the rule according to which, in a competitive multiparty participation framework, the first who starts gets

the turn (Sacks *et al.* 1974). In a more sophisticated way, the two children in extract 6 use time as a resource to *skip the selection procedure* and prematurely deliver the answer before the question is fully asked. The child in line 4 exploits the intra-turn pauses, while Claudio, in line 17, enters in overlap with the teacher, offering the result of the addition the teacher is formulating. Both examples show the ability to find the right position to step in to provide their contributions without disrupting the progression of the activity.

During the answering phase, non-selected children participate in various activities, some of which align with their personal goals rather than with the institution's objectives. Nevertheless, also in this latter case, children work to construct their turns as relevant to the matter at hand, although sometimes relying only on a general lexical coherence, to implement their projects. Starting with the contributions that are produced to be attuned to the institutional goals, Carlo's and Silvia's turns in extract 9 accomplish a noticing that partially corrects the answer provided by the selected respondent. In doing so, they use prosodic features to express excitement and surprise, and lexical and syntactic choices to connect their turn to the correct answer and revise it. However, correction can be accomplished in more elaborated ways, as in extract 10. Not only does Luca reject the explanation provided by his classmate about the grammatical gender of names ending in "-a", but he also gives an alternative explanation. In all these cases, children contribute to the institutional agenda, offering their own knowledge of the matter at hand and fostering the progression for the activity. It is also worth mentioning another action, which is hard to categorise as pursuing institutional or individual goals. In extract 10, once the selected speaker has produced the answer, two children in line 6 and in line 10 complain about the fact that their classmate has already provided the answer they also wanted to offer. Despite not being chosen and constrained by the IRE structure, they still present themselves as knowledgeable without violating the other-selection rule.

Finally, children often show their intent to follow their own agenda, especially during the answering phase. Examples of these initiatives are for instance when Federico shares his preference for obtuse angles in extract 8, or when Matteo and Letizia inform the class about their fathers' jobs as electricians in extract 9, or when children complain about not being selected in extract 10.

6. Conclusions

From the observations outlined above and drawing form the analysis of the extracts, I have tried to illustrate some recurrent ways in which children's conducts in the class can be shaped according to two types of orders and their relative rules of conduct. The first is the more formal order in which classroom interaction is organised as based on the other-selection

rule and on the pupils' bidding for the floor; the second is the more informal or "quasi-conversational" rule of conduct of the everyday interaction order, where the first who starts talking gets the floor. This coexistence is not specific or limited to the classroom setting (Drew & Heritage, 1992).

The extracts we analysed here are all organised according to the IRE model, which provides an overall organisation of talk, which is canonical for pedagogical goals. Similarly, to other overarching interactional frameworks that shape interaction in other institutional contexts, the model itself cannot account alone for all the complexities and the contingencies that can be encountered over longer stretches of interaction (Jefferson 1988, Drew *et al.*, 2018). For instance, as I hope I have demonstrated here, in plenary classes at primary schools the three-part or IRE structure alone does not explain all that happens or in which participants are engaged in their everyday work. As shown in the data here presented, in classroom interaction children frequently[5] and easily switch from the formal to the informal interactional and inferential order, according to the specific project they aim to implement.

These findings suggest caution in the mechanical and superficial interpretation of IRE-modelled whole-class instruction sequences merely in terms of their potential for constraining children's interactional participation, or to account for their passive participation in the class. Quite on the contrary, it is precisely the effort to break free from this structured model that pushes children to exploit a vast array of resources and competences to implement the projects in their agenda, whether they are orienting to institutional or individual goals. Therefore, additional caution is suggested in evaluating the interaction competence of children without considering the contexts in which they interact and the rules to which they orient to.

Finally, findings suggest that children at this age and in the classroom are particularly competent in accomplishing a wide range of actions such as responding to questions and initiating new discursive sequences through assessments, explanations, noticing, corrections, complaints, announcements. Consequently, and in consideration of the fact that interactional studies on children of this age in the classroom settings are rare (see the introductory section of the article), the study argues for further investigation in the educational and in other settings, where the interactional order underlying the participants' rights, goals and orientations might reveal quite surprisingly scenarios.

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5 It is worth recalling that the initiatives here described take place in the first 6 minutes of the lesson on angles.

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Appendix: Transcription conventions

A. Some aspects of the relative timing of utterances	
[ ] square brackets	Overlapping talk
= equals sign	No discernible interval between turns
(0.5) time in parentheses	Intervals within or between talk (measured in tenths of a second)
(.) period in parentheses	Discernable interval within or between talk but too short to measure (less than 2 tenths of a second)
<	'jump' started talk
B. Some characteristics of speech delivery	
Punctuation symbols are designed to capture intonation, not grammar and are used to describe intonation at the end of a word/sound, at the end of a sentence or some other shorter unit:	
. period	Closing intonation
, comma	Slightly rising intonation (a little hitch up on the end of the word)
? question mark	Fully rising intonation
- dash	Abrupt cut off of sound
: colon	Extension of preceding sound – the more colons the greater the extension
here underlining	Emphasised relative to surrounding talk
CAPS	Increased amplitude (loudness)
.tch or .t	Tongue click
hhh.	Audible outbreath (number of h's indicates length)
.hhh	Audible inbreath (number of h's indicates length)
>Talk<	Speeded up talk
<Talk>	Slowed down talk
#	Croaky or creaky voice
£ or $	Smiley voice
Hah hah or huh huh etc.	Beats of laughter
( ) empty single brackets or words enclosed in single brackets	Transcriber unable to hear words or uncertain of hearing
((word)) words enclosed in double brackets	Transcribers' comments
↑↓	Marked change in pitch
^	Beginning of visual or vocal behaviour in relation to talk

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