

“What Would You Do About It?” : MOTHER AND DAUGHTER BEDTIME CONVERSATION ON DAUGHTER’S PREFERENCE

Oktifani Winarti ^{1,*}

¹ Universitas Pembangunan ‘Veteran’ Nasional Jatim
Email : oktifani.winarti.ilkom@upnjatim.ac.id

ABSTRACT

Article history

Received : May 17, 2024
Revised : June 28, 2024
Accepted : June 30, 2024

Keywords

Conversation Analysis
Mother Daughter
Relationship
Bedtime Story
Interpersonal
Communication

This study explores the dynamic interactions between mothers and daughters during bedtime conversations, focusing on how these exchanges contribute to emotional and behavioral development in children. By analyzing naturally occurring dialogues captured through social media, the research illustrates the pivotal role of bedtime storytelling and dialogue in fostering secure attachments and aiding in stress management and emotional regulation in young children. The conversations, characterized by responsive speech and turn-taking, not only strengthen familial bonds but also serve as a critical educational tool, enabling children to navigate complex emotional landscapes and articulate their needs effectively. These interactions are shown to be instrumental in promoting positive behavioral outcomes and enhancing a child's ability to handle stress, thus laying a foundational framework for healthy emotional development. The findings suggest that intentional, nurturing communication at bedtime can have profound long-term benefits for child development, advocating for its integration into daily parenting practices.

This is an open access article under the [CC-BY-SA](#) license.



1. Introduction

Troxel et al (2013) has discussed that sleep disturbances among toddlers can be a relation to the higher levels of negative emotionality and form less secure attachments with their caregivers. These sleep disturbances can also be linked to a higher likelihood of negative behaviour as the child grows. The study points to the potential benefits of early interventions that focus on enhancing attachment security and managing negative emotions to promote better sleep habits and mitigate future behavioral problems. Advanced in years research has shown that according to Bowlby (1980, cited in Erickson et al, 1985) individuals who have developed secure attachments generally have an internalized image of their attachment figures as available, responsive, and supportive, along with a self-perception of being worthy of love and value. Such securely attached children are likely to face the world confidently, effectively manage or seek assistance in distressing situations. In contrast, children whose emotional needs are consistently unmet often perceive the world as bleak and unpredictable, and may react by withdrawing from it or confronting it aggressively.

Previous research conducted in quantitative method has shown that sleep interventions can play a crucial role in developing a child's capabilities to handle stress and regulate emotions as they grow. By improving sleep quality, these interventions can reduce the risk of behavioral issues commonly linked to sleep deprivation and elevated stress.

Addressing sleep problems thus serves a dual purpose: it not only enhances immediate health but also lays the groundwork for better emotional and behavioral health in the future. This highlights the vital link between sleep quality, effective stress management, and the development of emotional resilience in children.

Previous studies on mother and daughter using conversation analysis have been conducted in the past. However, none of the previous study has look into story telling before bed time which according to Troxel and Bowlby give significant impact on positive behavioural for a child growing up. Previous study (Crese & Blackledge, 20217) on mother and daughter interaction were drawn on dinner table talk. The study describes this process of dinner table talk as "metapragmatic commentary," where parents instruct their children on appropriate language use according to social and cultural norms. The second research on conversation analysis between mother and daughter using Schiffrrin's study (Cited in Boyd, 1989) emphasizes the importance of narratives in shaping and sustaining social relationships within families. She points out that these narratives do more than just share stories; they also act as a means for family members, particularly mothers and daughters, to confirm and negotiate their identities. The research underlines that our values and beliefs are not standalone characteristics but are continuously developed and reinforced through our interactions with family, particularly between mothers and daughters. The ongoing dialogue between them plays a significant role in forming personal and collective identities.

Another previous research which is conducted more recent (Nguyen et al, 2021) around mother and daughter conversation has a more unique approach on neural synchrony in conversations between mothers and their children. The research indicates that during natural verbal conversations, the brain activities of mothers and children tend to synchronize, and this synchronization enhances as they engage more in conversational turn-taking. This correlation between turn-taking and neural synchronization introduces new avenues to explore the functional roles of this synchronization in verbal interactions. Their findings suggest that neural synchrony could serve as a neurobiological indicator of effective communication in mother-child interactions. Meanwhile their suggestion for future research is to look into how neural synchrony contributes to language development.

Research by Casillas et al. (2016) highlights that turn-taking and language development are closely connected. The study suggests that patterns in conversation, such as how long a child takes to respond in a conversation, can reveal how quickly children are able to process a question while simultaneously preparing and beginning their response. Additionally, according to research by Goldstein et al. (2003) and Elmlinger et al. (2019), responsive parental speech, such as well-timed turn-taking, plays a critical role in simplifying the structure of speech and language for infants. This in turn accelerates their language production by making it easier for them to grasp and use language.

Subsequently, previous studies have demonstrate that these family dialogues serve not only for bonding but are also crucial for educating children on the subtleties of language in various social situations, which subsequently aim to build both relationship and identity of the children. Hence this research will try to explore more on a story tells before bed time between mother and daughter using a conversation analysis method thru a naturally occurring conversation from an instagram @dewipobo, a mother from Indonesia who lives in Spain and works as digital creator who has actively share her contents which some of them records her daily conversation with her daughter Mathilde. The second one is a conversation between a mom and her daughter @retnohening with her daughter Kirana who are now both living in Oman. This article aims to discuss the patterns that a mother use when talking to her daughter before bed time as according to previous research can promotes positive effect on her child in handling stress, regulate emotions and emotionally available.

2. Method

Online Participants

This study is having a participant from social media content of a naturally occurring conversation between mother and daughter of @dewipobo who is an Indonesian mom currently living in Spain and @retnohening an Indonesian mother living in Oman. Matilde, Dewi Pobo's daughter was around 8 years old in the video recording and Kirana, Retno Hening's daughter, was around 5 years old at the time.

As this study is a conversation analysis (CA) we are focusing only on an audio recording that is uploaded on Instagram even though the content is a video recording. The content being analysed are only a content before bed time. Both videos are around 1 minute each, the following is the content being analysed in this study :
<https://www.instagram.com/reel/CwzlQ7rNqXf/?igsh=MXZqeHBsdG5tMnI4ZQ==> &
<https://www.instagram.com/reel/C3tSl3dIWcg/?igsh=ZTN2bThrYnQwZmpr>

Analysis Plan Using Jeffersonian's Transcript Development

The analysis will be using Jeffersonian's transcript of conversation analysis using conversation analysis symbols. The conversation will be divided into different excerpts of different themes in the discussion. In the instances that come next, the majority of symbols have been employed, though not all. For a thorough explanation of the notation system, refer to Atkinson and Heritage (1999) as well as Psathas and Anderson (1990) (refer to Table 1 for details). The following are Jeffersonian's transcript symbols with examples of conversation (cited in Davidson, 2010) :

Table 1 Transcription Symbols

[]	<i>Overlap in speakers' talk</i>
	Teacher: and you can sit next to Melodie (0.2) [and you sit here]
	Peter: [Miss Anderson]
[[	<i>Utterances that begin at the same time</i>
	Teacher: [[no]
	Student: [[wha]t else can I do
=	<i>Talk between speakers that latches or follows without a break between</i>
	Teacher: okay=
	Jamie: =and is there only two
The sign is also used when talk within an utterance has been separated for convenience sake, such as where complex overlap occurs.	
	Cathlyn: I can [tell you] it's got a water=
	Mckiel: [Dominic]
	Cathlyn: =sl [ide]
	Dominic: [Dom]inic
(0.2)	<i>Used to indicate length of silences, pauses and gaps in tenths of seconds</i>
	Teacher: okay (0.6) now
Gaps may occur within an utterance or in talk between speakers.	
	Wayne : um (0.2) like
	(0.5)
	Teacher: I like
(.)	<i>Indicates micro intervals</i>
	Dion: Miss Anderson I (.) can't find mine

- ? *Rising inflection*
Teacher: how did you know how to write sandwich?
- ?, *Rising inflection that is less marked*
Cathlyn: Miss Anderson?,
- ↑ *Marked rising intonation*
Teacher: and ↑jam (0.6) sandwiches
- ↓ *Marked falling intonation*
Teacher: ↑now (0.8) ↓very (0.6)
- ! *An animated tone*
Teacher: what's got into you!
- un *Underline shows emphasis, with capitals indicating even greater emphasis*
Cathlyn: it was YUMMY
- SO *Upper case indicates loudness*
Teacher: CATHLYN
- °° *Indicates softness*
Cathlyn: I have to tell you something about °the overnight stay°
- ::: *Indicates that a prior sound is prolonged*
Mckielia: Domini::c
- The number of colons used indicates the length of the sound.
- (it) Indicates that the transcriber is uncertain about the word/words
Melodie: I gotta um (0.9) (brown berry)
- () Empty parentheses indicate that word/s could not be worked out
Peter: he doesn't want to ()
- (()) These are used to indicate transcriber's verbal descriptions of talk, talk that cannot easily be transcribed, or visual actions
Ivan: ((walks to teacher with book on his head in a roof shape))
- Lincoln it's keeping rain off me
- Indicates lines of transcript of relevance to analysis or discussion at hand
- 8 Teacher: well you finish that then (0.2) ↑okay
- 9→ Dominic: very ((looking at the teacher))
- NB lines are numbered for analysis purposes.

3. Results and Discussion

Drawing upon Andrea and Angela's work (Creese & Blackledge, 2017) on discussing about conversations between women in families where they draw the argument that women in private conversation develop topics progressively where it sets mother-daughter relationship on how they explains narratives to another person. Regarding daughters and mothers, Tannen (2006) discusses the difficulty of achieving a level of closeness that is desired without it crossing into intrusiveness or jeopardizing one's freedom and sense of control over their life. Hence Creese and Blackledge argues that a neutral narrative from a mother can help the bond between a mother and daughter.

A study on mother and daughter relationship around security attachment and the impacts on toddler's sleep behaviour is drawn by Troxel et al (2013) where a stable parent-child connection play a role in children's self-management, such as their capacity to comfort themselves at bedtime. Furthermore, sleep might act as a bridge connecting secure attachment to later emotional and behavioral challenges in children. Toddlerhood marks a

stage where sleep patterns usually start to stabilize, with many children sleeping through the night independently (Dahl, 1996). Additionally, various socioemotional developments in toddlers, such as increased independence, mobility, and verbal communication, may directly impact parent-child interactions and sleep. During this phase, the attachment relationship evolves into a goal-oriented partnership (Bowlby, 1969, as cited in Troxel et al., 2017).

In a critical analysis of neurological study by Trapp et al (2018) found that increased neural synchrony was linked to more frequent turn-taking between mothers and children in later stages of their conversation. Research on individuals' synchronization to rhythmic auditory cues indicates that neural alignment is a gradual process and persists temporarily even after the stimulus ends. Thus, we propose that the synchronization of brain activity between individuals might follow a similar pattern, where the consistency of turn-taking in parent-child interactions might lead to alignment later in the conversation rather than immediately.

Additionally, it was demonstrated that turn-taking plays a role in increased neural language processing (Romeo et al., 2018). Research indicates that 4- to 6-year-old children engaging in more conversational turns with adults exhibit heightened activation in the left inferior frontal region (Broca's area) in individual neural assessments. Moreover, this neural activation was found to mediate the connection between children's exposure to contingent language and their verbal abilities during a free conversations. On the contrary, infants characterized by high levels of negative emotionality and insecure attachment may not only need increased external support and structure during bedtime and bedtime routines but could also elicit inconsistent or less sensitive parenting reactions (Troxel et al, 2017).

Mother - Daughter Relationship Before Bed Time

Secure relationships between parents and children can bolster a child's emotional well-being through several key aspects: experiencing a caring, affectionate bond with a parent; the parent's ability to respond adaptively and sensitively to emotional cues; and the establishment of a robust, supportive foundation in the early stages of the parent-child relationship (Troxel et al, 2013). This discussion section is trying to explore the natural conversation between a mother and daughter before bedtime.

Indeed, the unique relationship between this parent and child is marked by a lasting bond that, paradoxically, serves as the foundation for both the deepest love and the most intense resentment and anger that many women encounter (Tannen, 2006). Although the majority of mothers and daughters maintain a close and supportive relationship, the special bond they share can simultaneously be a source of both comfort and tension (Delprete & Difelice, 2020).

Excerpt 1 BED TIME 'TENSION' BETWEEN MOTHER AND DAUGHTER AGED 5

- 01 KIR : ibuk enggak boleh bilang orang fat ↓
 02 IBU : kenapa ↓?
 03 KIR : nanti orang nya sedih ↓
 04 IBU : oh ↓ kirana ↑ sometimes bilang ibuk (.) kayak gitu ↓
 05 KIR : tapi kan (.) kirana bilang juga cantik ↓
 06 IBU : oh jadi gimana bilang nya
 07 KIR : ibuk kan fat (.) ibuk (.) ibuk itu gendut tapi ibuk

08 can[tik=
 09 IBU : [oh gitu
 10 KIR : =cantik ↑ kalo gendut ↓ kayak gitu kirana bilang ↓
 11 IBU : oh yang enggak boleh itu gimana
 12 KIR : ibu kamu itu fat kaya (.) kayak (.) kaya lucu gitu
 13 (hhhh) ((laughs)) enggak boleh kayak gitu
 14 IBU : oh (hhh) boleh nya gimana
 15 KIR : bolehnya kayak gini kamu fat tapi:: tapi kamu cantik
 15 kayak queen ↑ ting ((kedipan mata))
 16 IBU : oh gitu::: [(hhhh)
 17 KIR : [(hhhh)

Delprete and Difelice (2020) work shows that a tension between mother and daughter usually happens on the teenager stage. Tension means the conversation is filled with criticism and intensive demands meanwhile this conversation with daughter aged 5 years old is more into a nurturing role where conversation goes harmoniously. Which is explained on the excerpt one where KIR on the line 1 is mentioning that her mother @retnohening is not allowed to call people fat and the the upcoming conversations have a very smooth turn-taking where it does not really need a pausing time to response which can be seen from line 01 - 17. As this conversation is between mother and her very young children, the conversation may identified as innocent as the comments that KIR makes sounds very simple and funny which happens from the line 07 - 12 where KIR comments that her mother is not allowed to call people fat and funny as it is considered as rude which follows by a giggle by Kirana and her mother on line 11 - 13. Subsequently on the line 14 mother is providing a space to Kirana to ask '*how should we do about it*' if they are fat which is responded directly by Kirana on line 14 to 15 and responded by a simple "awakening moment" by saying '*oh gitu...*' which mean 'ah like that....' and then proceed with giggles by both of them on the line 16 - 17.

In this conversation mother is not trying to do any "metaphragmatic commentary" (Crese & Blackledge, 20217) to correct any inappropriate language used by Kirana and instead her mother is using the chance to nurture by asking questions such as '*ah so how should we do about it?*' on the line 06 and 13. The whole conversation also display a very calm conversation as most intonations are on the lower voice with some higher intonations when KIR is trying to make jokes such as on the line 14-15.

Excerpt 2 **BED TIME COMFORT BETWEEN MOTHER AND DAUGHTER AGED 10**

01 MAT : ibu ↓
 02 IBU : dalem sayangku ↓?
 03 MAT : kalo aku setiap hari disekolah=
 04 IBU : iya ↓
 05 MAT : =aku kangen sekali sama ibu (.) kalau aku makan
 06 disekolah makanannya enak tapi aku lebih suka yang
 ibu
 07 IBU : iya tapi kan disekolahnya enggak setiap hari cuma
 satu 08 kali seminggu
 08 MAT : °iya°

09 IBU : nanti kalau kelas 4 mau makan di rumah apa makan di
 10 sekolah
 11 MAT : makan (.) makan di rumah
 12 IBU : tapi di sekolah banyak teman-teman
 13 MAT : no no no [no no no
 14 IBU : [teman temannya makan diseko[lah
 15 MAT : [I prefer to
 stay 16 with my family
 17 IBU : gitu ya tapi enak kan makanannya disekolah
 18 MAT : no I prefer yours
 19 IBU : oh ya sama kan hari ini ibu juga makan kacang arab
 hari 20 ini
 20 MAT : ((kissing Ibu))
 21 IBU : sugeng dalu cah Ayu
 22 MAT : sugeng dalu see you tomorrow see you in seven hours ↑
 23 IBU : eight hours ↓
 24 MAT : well eight hours ↓
 25 IBU : sugeng dalu
 26 MAT : dalu
 27 (.)
 28 MAT : °ibu°
 29 IBU : dalem ↓
 30 MAT : Matilde sayang ibu sepenuh hati
 31 IBU : ibu juga (.) bobok

This conversation between mother @dewipobo and Mathilde shows a more structured conversation as Mathilde age is older than Kirana, thus Kirana conversation with her mother may sound more random. However, both excerpts 1 and 2 portray an example of secure attachment in a way daughter mention her preference. Mathilde shows a more firm response on how to communicate her preference as shown on the line 12 where she repeatedly says 'no no no no no' and and on the line 15 declaring her preference even though her mother is not yet finish speaking as seen on the line 14 - 15. And again firmly say her preference on the line 18. And on the 19 mother took a response of putting her place to be seen as in the same page as Mathilde preference even though mother is not directly saying 'I agree with you', but she mentions that she ate the same thing today like Mathilde. Because there is a bit of unsuccessful negotiation where mother seems to want to softly persuade Mathilde to socialise more by eating lunch at school as seen on line 10, 12, 14. However Mathilde rejects and line 19 is actually a really smooth transition of a disagreement conversation to make the conversation in alignment in order to create secure attachment between mother and daughter (Trapp et al, 2018). Subsequently both is saying good night in a sweet way from line 20- 31.

The whole conversation for both Kirana and Mathilde with their mothers are identified as a quick turn-taking in which based on Goldstein et al. (2003) and Elmlinger et al. (2019) previous studies show that both mothers are giving a responsive parental speech which can impact the structure of speech on infants. A quick turn-taking between mother and daughter is a reflection of alignment between them that is created from a secure attachment

since toddler age (Trapp et al, 2018) future study of conversation analysis may want to look deeper on toddler-mother conversation as previous research on toddler attachment was not using CA.

Both excerpts of conversation also proceed to show that a responsive parental speech give the space for their daughters to say what they want to say. On the excerpt 2, mother @dewipobo also doing the same thing like mother @retnohening by asking Mathilde *'how would you want to do about it?'* to give more space for their daughter of expressing their preference.

4. Conclusion

The research presented delves into the nuanced dynamics of bedtime conversations between mothers and daughters, emphasizing how these interactions can significantly influence the development of secure attachments and emotional resilience in children. This study, leveraging natural conversations captured from social media platforms, illuminates the profound impact that bedtime storytelling can have on a child's emotional and behavioral development. By examining specific instances of dialogue, the research highlights the dual role of these interactions: fostering deep emotional bonds and serving as a vital pedagogical tool.

These bedtime stories and discussions are not merely routine conversations; they are pivotal moments where children learn to process emotions, handle stress, and navigate social interactions through the subtle cues of language and turn-taking presented by their mothers. The study particularly notes the importance of responsiveness and reciprocal dialogue in promoting positive behavioral outcomes and emotional understanding, which are crucial during the early developmental stages of children.

Moreover, the research brings to light how these interactions contribute to building a child's identity and self-esteem. As children engage in these nightly rituals, they are not only comforted but are also taught how to articulate their thoughts and feelings in a supportive environment. This process is instrumental in helping them develop a strong sense of self and a secure base from which they can explore the world.

In terms of implications, the study suggests that such bedtime conversations could be strategically enhanced to further support child development. Educators and parents might consider structured storytelling and dialogue techniques that encourage more profound engagement and emotional exchange. Additionally, these findings advocate for the integration of such practices in parenting guides and educational programs to broaden their impact.

This comprehensive analysis contributes significantly to the existing literature by providing concrete examples of how everyday practices within the family setting can be optimized to foster better psychological outcomes for children. The insights from this study encourage ongoing dialogue and research into the functional roles of mother-daughter interactions, with a view toward enhancing the well-being and developmental trajectories of children.

References

- Boyd, C. J. (1989). Mothers and daughters: A discussion of theory and research. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 291-301.
- Creese, A., & Blackledge, A. (2017). The 'other woman' in a mother and daughter relationship: The case of Mami Ji. *Language in Society*, 46(2), 185-206.
- Davidson, C. (2010). Transcription matters: Transcribing talk and interaction to facilitate conversation analysis of the taken-for-granted in young children's interactions. *Journal of early childhood research*, 8(2), 115-131.
- DelPrete, D. L., & DiFelice Box, C. (2020). Navigating Mother-Adolescent Daughter (Dis) harmonious Interactions. *Language Research in Multilingual Settings: Doing Research Knowledge Dissemination at the Sites of Practice*, 125-155.
- Erickson, M. F., Sroufe, L. A., & Egeland, B. (1985). The relationship between quality of attachment and behavior problems in preschool in a high-risk sample. *Monographs of the society for research in child development*, 147-166.
- Gradisar, M., Jackson, K., Spurrier, N. J., Gibson, J., Whitham, J., Williams, A. S., ... & Kennaway, D. J. (2016). Behavioral interventions for infant sleep problems: a randomized controlled trial. *Pediatrics*, 137(6).
- Nguyen, T., Schleihau, H., Kayhan, E., Matthes, D., Vrtička, P., & Hoehl, S. (2021). Neural synchrony in mother-child conversation: Exploring the role of conversation patterns. *Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience*, 16(1-2), 93-102.
- Tannen, D. (2006). *You're wearing that?: Understanding mothers and daughters in conversation*. New York: Random House.
- Troxel, W. M., Trentacosta, C. J., Forbes, E. E., & Campbell, S. B. (2013). Negative emotionality moderates associations among attachment, toddler sleep, and later problem behaviors. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 27(1), 127.