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**HOW TO DO ACTS WITH THOUGHTS  
SOME IMPLICATIONS OF MAKING PHILOSOPHY  
AVAILABLE TO CHILDREN**

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**Abstract:** For a child to say "I see, I understand now!" is an awareness event, a light that exposes him to both a new challenge and to the unknown. If these sorts of moments are obviously an important personal event, along with the feeling of being an agent of his life, we could say a lot about their value at school, in the society or on the world stage. In this paper, my aim is limited to exploring how children and teenagers, involved in philosophical dialogues at school, enter into a reflective and dialogical process, become awareness of what is happening to them and draw out rules of action. Using a theoretical model inspired by Peirce's conception of active thinking, this study is based on both a qualitative analysis of discursive activity performed in communities of philosophical inquiry, and interviews with students who have been practicing philosophy for children for two or three years, in a French middle-school. Some practical implications in conjunction with educational projections could thus be outlined.

**Keywords:** thought in action, philosophical dialogue, interactional context, understanding, awareness, beliefs, action rule, habit, valid interlocutors, practical implication.

## **CUM SĂ FACEM ACTE CU GÂNDURILE CÂTEVA IMPLICAȚII PRACTICE CÂND FILOSOFIA ESTE PUSĂ LA DISPOZIȚIA COPIILOR**

**Rezumat:** Atunci când un copil spune “M-am prins, acum înțeleg!”, este vorba de un eveniment de conștiință, o lumină care îl expune în același timp la o nouă provocare și la un alt necunoscut. Dacă astfel de momente reprezintă cu siguranță un eveniment personal important, însoțit de sentimentul de a fi agentul propriei sale vieți, am putea spune multe despre importanța lor la școală, în societate sau pe scena lumii. În acest articol, scopul meu se limitează la analiza modului în care copiii și adolescenții implicați în dialoguri filosofice la școală intră într-un proces reflexiv și dialogic, iau cunoștință de gândurile lor și identifică reguli de acțiune. Folosind un model teoretic inspirat de concepția peirciană a gândirii active, acest studiu se bazează atât pe o analiză calitativă a activității discursive realizate în comunități de investigare filosofice, cât și pe interviuri cu elevi care au practicat filosofia pentru copii timp de doi sau trei ani într-o școală gimnazială din Franța. În concluzie vor fi subliniate câteva implicații practice într-un scop educațional.

**Cuvinte-cheie:** gândire în acțiune, dialog filosofic, context de interacțiune, înțelegere, conștiință, opinie, regulă de acțiune, obișnuință, interlocutor valid, implicație practică.

## 1. Introduction: thought as action

There is nothing obvious about saying that we can act by simply thinking. On the contrary, thought and action are often perceived as time-shifted: action comes after thought or without thought, thought is not followed by action. In addition, in the philosophical reflection when stakes are too theoretical, there is no evidence in grasping practical implications. To investigate how it is possible to do acts with thoughts (as proposed in the title of this paper), what immediately occurred to me it was Austin's vision on language performativity<sup>1</sup>. Going further in the philosophy of language area, Wittgenstein made possible to connect dialogue activities – *language games* – more closely to human life and actions<sup>2</sup>. According to contemporary philosophy of language studies,<sup>3</sup> a paradigm shift occurred at the dawn of the 20th century: dialogue and interactions became the new model for thought and communication analysis. That leaves us to conceive thinking in dialogue as a way of acting (with or against the others) in order to solve a problem or a difficulty in a real life shared situation. Nevertheless, emphasizing the action dimension of thinking comes mainly from the pragmatist conception. By already underlining that human action is linked to thought through language, Peirce saw the action especially as a critical and logic principle of thought development. He claimed: "the whole function of thinking is to create habits of action"<sup>4</sup>. By habit he meant an action rule whose application triggers a research process based on: doubt, new reflection, (new) rules of action, etc.

Investigating how children think and understand is a major area of interest within the field of developmental psychology and philosophy of education, with a significant practical requirement that is to structure children's learning. Accessing knowledge and understanding is relevant to classroom practice but the desire to know and understand must be the key issue in empowering students to take ownership of their learning experience. If school aims increasingly at educating children to become active citizens, they should be more often encouraged to be questioners rather than respondents. Asking questions leads the children to experience their own thought: doubt, raising problem, enquire, challenge ideas. Despite the objective of knowledge, yet

ignorance and doubt remains useful in learning in order to stay curious and ask (more) questions - as the child did in early childhood. I suggest that in the school environment, student still has an interest in knowing (as a process) rather than in knowledge (as a result) simply as a child, regardless of his/her student social role.

There is a way to keep ignorance and innocence and in the same time access knowing mind. Damasio<sup>5</sup>, who is interested in the nature of consciousness and the construction of the self, had described this passage as a critical transition. He used "stepping into the light" metaphor to illustrate it. For instance, an actor lives a moment just before performing on stage when he gets under the spotlight. I was wondering if a child could feel the same when he/she enriches his/her world view with a new understanding. Admittedly, getting to this feeling from outside seems to be impossible. Nevertheless, we (educators) should pay more attention to how the child feels cognitively and emotionally when it comes to understanding/learning. Two basic requirements conditions seem important in these circumstances to satisfy: to give children the floor and to listen to them. That is to acknowledge children as valid interlocutors, using Lévine's terms<sup>6</sup> in a psychoanalyst perspective of child development. According to this author, inviting children to reflect with us on the human condition, like the philosophers, leads them to become aware of being a thinking being, "a person of the world".

Consciousness employed in this sense does not refer to cognitive certainty, like in Descartes' *cogito*, but it is seen as a social experience. This is also what Lipman<sup>7</sup> claims when he implemented, in the 1970s, an educational program named *Philosophy for children* (P4C), from kindergarten to upper-secondary education. Lipman is less concerned with the rational use of our intellectual capacities than with a total commitment to the process of research and therefore to the action of thought. According to his socioconstructivist vision, thinking process is not just individual, it is "deeply social and communitarian".

## **2. Objective of the study**

Children's reasoning, in peers' dialogue or adult-child dialogical interaction in educational settings, has been examined in a wide range of fields: social psychology, educational sciences, argumentative studies, etc.<sup>8</sup> An interesting case study for dialogical interaction in the classroom deals with the philosophical discussions. Teacher uses this activity in the classroom to promote both critical, creative and attentive thinking development and learning by peers' dialogue. In recent years, there has been an increasing amount of literature on P4C's practices and several studies concentrate on thinking process or on practical effects<sup>9</sup>.

So far, there remain aspects of thought-action link in child and the emergence of action rules about which relatively very little is known. I argue that some of these implications in education can be studied from a pragmatist perspective that is considering action as related to thought.

The objective of this study is to highlight what children involved in philosophical dialogue express as tendencies to act, that is how action is conceived in their thoughts. Concerning the methodology, I adopt two perspectives: first, a dialogical approach, in order to understand how children design their action in the setting of the interaction, analyzing verbal productions in the context in which occurs; secondly, I present and comment on excerpts from interviews with students about what they have learned from practicing philosophical reflection. The study is based on a selection of data limited by the research I have already conducted as part of my thesis work<sup>10</sup>.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. The first part deals with the presentation of Peirce's pragmatist model on passive/active thought dynamic. The data on which our observations and proposals are based will then be presented. The last two sections contain an analysis of the two selected data types followed by a discussion of the main results. The conclusion will open the way to future research perspectives on the topic as well as to practical implications.

### 3. Theoretical framework: a grid to analyze thought process

Since my aim is to understand to which extent thinking developed in the philosophical dialogue context reveals action's principles, I need a theoretical framework to consider how thought may generate action rules. Due to practical constraints, this paper cannot provide a comprehensive review of various approaches which may be call on to deal with our issue. There are certainly other theoretical frameworks that can be used to analyze thinking and its action-oriented focus. In this paper I have chosen the pragmatist approach that has directly inspired P4C. I find useful to take as a starting point for my investigation the Peirce's model of "thought in action"<sup>11</sup>.

#### 3.1. Peirce's "*thought in action*" model

Peirce's theoretical model, which I consider as one of the models that can describe active thinking, is present in a short text published by the author: "How to Make Our Ideas Clear". The pragmatist philosopher wrote the following:

Thought in action has for its only possible motive the attainment of thought at rest; and whatever does not refer to belief is no part of the thought itself. And what, then, is belief? It is the demi-cadence which closes a musical phrase in the symphony of our intellectual life. We have seen that it has just three properties: first, it is something that we are aware of; second, it appeases the irritation of doubt; and, third, it involves the establishment in our nature of a rule of action, or, say for short, a *habit*. As it appeases the irritation of doubt, which is the motive for thinking, thought relaxes, and comes to rest for a moment when belief is reached. But, since belief is a rule for action, the application of which involves further doubt and further thought, at the same time that it is a stopping-place, it is also a new starting-place for thought. That is why I have

permitted myself to call it thought at rest, although thought is essentially an action. The *final* upshot of thinking is the exercise of volition and of this thought no longer forms a part; but belief is only a stadium of mental action, an effect upon our nature due to thought, which will influence future thinking.<sup>12</sup>

The model is shaped around the concept of “belief”: any thought must refer to a belief. The belief is either a state of belief, which allows the thought to be at rest, and a “habit” (becomes so) or a “rule of action” whose application can put the thought in movement. Thus, to describe thoughts movements in philosophical dialogue, we can imagine a model of active thinking in three movements: 1. awareness occurs about a state of belief (the emergence of a habit); 2. habits are applied as an action rules; 3. doubt’ arises can disrupt or suspend active belief.

The next step is to examine, as we do in the next section, whether these different movements can be identified (in whole or in part) in children’s verbal productions. With regard to children’s statements in interviews, we examined the extent to which they explain or spell out their rules of action when asked, for example: “what do you think you learned during the philosophical practice?”

### ***3.2. Adult’s perspective in dialogue***

Given the interactive context, contributions from other stakeholders in the discussion are taken into account. Report on this situation, the role of the teacher in the elaboration of children’s thoughts seems particularly meaningful in analyzing the possible limits of an educational dialogue, like the equality of participants in taking the floor; freedom rule to initiate new discussion issues. Sometimes the adult may ignore or even refuses issues, like it has been noted for example about “discussion issue” in analyzing argumentative discussions with young children.<sup>13</sup>

On the other hand, adults tend to idealize the child in almost all circumstances. Educators may be convinced from the start, without

needing proofs, of the usefulness of these practices in child's thought development. Their understanding could be then overstated or distorted. One may pay attention to what is expected from a theoretical point of view or from the point of view of a certain adult "ideal" and not to what happens effectively in interaction.

For these reasons, the analysis suggested thereafter is based on the accurate transcriptions of children's verbalizations, although the risk of interpretation still remains present.

## **4. Data and methods**

The data discussed in this article were collected as part of the *Philéduc*<sup>14</sup> project in two contexts: one involves children engaged in a philosophical discussion, the other the same children asked in interviews conducted at the end of the second or third year of philosophical practice, in a French middle school.

The first set of data comes from a corpus of philosophical discussions observed and recorded *in situ*, then transcribed. The corpus was collected during the course of my thesis<sup>15</sup>. The interaction situations are authentic insofar as they were not created by the researcher. The sessions are proposed and moderated by the teacher who invites students to discuss philosophical issues together. The teacher chooses a topic and invites children to question themselves proposing a stimulus (text or story, film, a sentence, etc.). A question is chosen to be the starting point for a collective resolutive process. In the present study, two short excerpts are put forward. The first, which I called "Sharing" is taken from a discussion recorded in 2015 with students aged 10-11 years. They are in the whole class and try to define together what sharing is. The second excerpt, "Normality", is pulled out from a "philo-club" discussion inspired by A. Rimbaud' sentence: "I am an another" ("je suis un autre"). The club device, compared to the class one, has some particularities: the students are voluntary, their number is limited, the adults are moderators but they also can be co-researchers. The students involved in this discussion are 11-12 years old.



The second set of data comes from interviews with students, conducted by teachers and researchers, at different times. I have selected two interviews whose full text does not appear in this study. Iacob's interview was carried out in 2016, after two years of practice, and Sam's interview, in 2018, at the end of the school curriculum, after three years of philosophical practice. Similarly to the discussions' excerpts, I select the sections that illustrate the active dimension of student's thought.

## **5. Analysis of thoughts' movements**

In this section, I will discuss the main results obtained regarding the analysis of children's thought movements as contributions to an active thinking deployment. I have chosen four excerpts; two from interactions and two from interviews, each having an illustrative function.

### ***5.1. The "Sharing" example***

In philosophical discussion, the children are encouraged to raise issues (questioning), provide stand points and justify them (argue, challenge), and also to explore different meanings of a notion and therefore conceptualize. It is with the last type of activity that the "Sharing" example is concerned. The students are searching what share means. The following excerpt is centered on an exchange involving two students, Maalik<sup>16</sup> and Soliman, and their teacher. Soliman proposes a criterion to define sharing – "to benefit others" - based on what Maalik had just proposed before: "not just for you". The teacher found this interesting and encourage Soliman to follow up his thinking. Soliman returns to his proposal and puts it into question.

**Table 1: The “Sharing” example**

| <i>Turn</i> | <i>Speaker</i>      | <i>French Transcript</i> <sup>17</sup>                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | <i>Our translation</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|-------------|---------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 121         | Maalik              | et (il) y a beaucoup de verbe qui ne qualifient pas le mot partager / moi je voudrais dire que // partager déjà on sait que partager ça veut dire que c'est pas que pour toi // partager déjà c'est                                                       | and there are many verbs that do not qualify the word share / I would like to say that // sharing already we know that sharing means that it is not only for you // already sharing is                                 |
| 122         | Soliman             | faire profiter les autres                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | make others benefit                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 123<br>...  | Maalik              | c'est:: / c'est de / c'est:: // en fait on est sûr que c'est pas qu'une personne qui va / qui va (un enfant : profiter) qui va profiter de / de / de / de:: // point d'interrogation                                                                      | it's:: / it's from / it's:: // in fact we're sure it's not just a person who goes / who goes (a child: benefit) who's going to benefit / from / from / from:: // question mark<br>...                                  |
| 142         | Enseignant /Teacher | alors (il) y a un truc // (il) y avait profiter mais // toi tu avais quelque chose à dire sur le mot profiter // j'ai / j'ai entendu ta réflexion et je la trouve intéressante donc vas-y                                                                 | so there's something // there was to benefit from but // you had something to say about the word benefit // I heard your reflection and I find it interesting so go ahead                                              |
| 143         | Soliman             | euh en fait c'est plutôt faire profiter les autres mais je voulais euh : casser ce que j'ai dit parce que tu peux / tu peux partager aussi des dettes donc c'est aussi des fois pas sympa pour les autres donc ça / c'est pas toujours positif le partage | uh in fact it's more like sharing with others but I wanted to uh: break up what I said because you can / you can share debts too so it's also sometimes not nice for others so that / it's not always positive sharing |

Soliman transforms this exchange into an illustration of “thought in action” (model exposed in section 1.1.), at turn 143, when he changes his standpoint about sharing: sharing is not always positive and

recommended. I propose below a schematic representation of thoughts movements in this exchange.

*Sharing means... make others benefit* (T121-122)

**a state of belief**

*not only a person is going to benefit “?” question mark* (T123)

**habit as action rule**

*you can share debts too so it's also sometimes not nice for others so that / it's not always positive sharing* (T 43)

**active belief is broken**

The starting point of the discussion issue - “What is sharing” - was a real-life situation proposed to children: sharing a cake. If the criterion “allowing others to profit” matches with the cake, applying it to an undetermined objet involves a mismatch and lead child to doubt. As a result, Soliman broadens his active belief on sharing: sharing is not always positive, it can be negative too. We can add that in the “Sharing” example, the active thinking of Soliman was influenced by a peer’s intervention (Maalik) and encouraged by the teacher.

## ***5.2. The “Normality” example***

The second excerpt refers to a philosophical discussion in “philoclub”. Two students, Nourra and Léonie, are involved in a discussion about normality. Nourra does not understand the meaning of the word “normality” used by Léonie (in turn 347), and she doesn't hesitate to admit it (turns 376, 377). This intervention destabilizes Léonie who seems to be confused: she herself notes a contradiction in her standpoint (turns 381, 383).

**Table 2: "Normality" example**

| Turn | Speaker | French Transcript                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Our translation                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|------|---------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 347  | Léonie  | euh :: ba ::h en fait c(e) que je voulais dire par normal c'est:: // j'ai dit ça comme ça mais j'ai pas vraiment réfléchi {rires} // parce qu'en fait euh sur ça j'avais déjà parlé euh : avec / euh :: mes parents de : / de la normalité et:: moi j'avais:: j'avais / j'avais dit que pour moi la normalité ça n'existait pas parce que tout le monde était différent<br>...                                                            | uh ::: actually what I meant by normal is::: // I said it like that but I didn't really think about it {laughter} // because actually uh on that I had already talked uh : with / uh ::: my parents about : normal and:: I had:: / I had: / I had / I said that for me normality was not possible because everyone was different<br>... |
| 376  | Nourra  | {en regardant Léonie} pour toi qu'est-ce que veut dire la normalité                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | {looking at Leonie} for you what does normality mean                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 377  | Léonie  | {rit}                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | {she laughs}                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| 378  | Nourra  | c'est un peu // j'ai un peu du mal à comprendre ce que tu disais                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | it's a little // I'm confused about what you were saying                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| 379  | Léonie  | bah:: en fait pour moi i(l) n'y a pas de normalité                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | well in fact for me there is no normality                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| 380  | Nourra  | ah (il) y a que bea/ beau ou laid ?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | ah there's only bea/ beautiful or ugly?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 381  | Léonie  | je me contredis en fait                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | I'm actually contradicting myself                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 382  | Teacher | non je crois pas                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | no, I don't think so                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 383  | Léonie  | si je me contredis puisque // j'ai dit que::/ah non je me suis pas contredis en fait // bah si je me suis contredis parce que j'ai dit tout à l'heure que// tout est normal en /en gros j'ai dit que // tout est normal que il n'est pas beau ni moche donc c'est un peu comme si tout le monde était normal mais en même temps moi je trouve qu'il n'y a pas d(e) normal i(l) n'y a pas de (en)fin ça n'existe pas la normalité pour moi | Yes I contradict myself because // I said that::/ ah no I didn't contradict myself in fact // wel yes I contradicted myself because I said earlier that// everything is normal in // basically I said that // everything is normal that it's neither beautiful nor ugly so it's a bit like everyone is normal but at the same           |

|     |        |                                                                                         |                                                                                         |
|-----|--------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|     |        |                                                                                         | time I find that there's no normal there's no // well // normality doesn't exist for me |
| 384 | Nourra | pour toi heu c'est soit tu es beau soit tu es laid i(l) n y a pas de ::                 | hor you uh it's either you're beautiful or you're ugly                                  |
| 385 | Léonie | <non justement>                                                                         | <not precisely>                                                                         |
| 386 | Nourra | <selon> l'avis de chaque personne en fait ?                                             | in fact <according> to each person's opinion?                                           |
| 387 | Léonie | oui c'est selon l'avis de chaque personne t'es beau t'es moche                          | yes it's according to everyone's opinion you're handsome you're ugly                    |
| 388 | Nourra | voilà                                                                                   | that's it                                                                               |
| 389 | Léonie | mais sinon s'i(l) y avait pas d'avis de chaque personne et bah tu serais aucun des deux | but if there was no opinion from each person then you wouldn't be either one of them    |
| 390 | Nourra | normal                                                                                  | normal                                                                                  |

As in the previous example, the student deploys her thoughts and expresses the awareness of her state of beliefs. In “Normality” example, Léonie is aware of two beliefs that contradict each other, like in a schematic representation below.

(Turn 383)

(1) *I said earlier that // everything is normal in // basically I said that // everything is normal that it's neither beautiful nor ugly so it's a bit like everyone is normal*

**awareness of a state of belief**

(2) *but at the same time I find that there's no normal there's no // well // normality doesn't exist for me*

**awareness of another state of belief**

Léonie is aware of the incompatibility between the two beliefs, (1) and (2), she is in state of doubt. This led to indecision and inaction because she has no action rule: Peirce called this situation “privation of a habit”. What results from this situation is that the absence of an action rule calls for justification and inquiry on normal or normality, in the absence of any human opinion or evaluation.

### 5.3. Child's speech 1: "awaken critical thinking"

The last two interview excerpts are answers developed by the students to the following question: what do you think you learned from the philosophical discussions? According to the analysis model above, I propose to examine how students spell out action rules when talking about practical implications of doing philosophy at school. In the Table 3, the transcript is presented directly divided into several parts containing specific movements in the student thinking deployment. These movements are identified and labelled on the right-hand side of the table, in accordance with the thought in action analysis model.

**Table 3: "Awaken critical thinking" in Sam speech**

|                            | <i>French Transcript</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | <i>Our translation</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <i>Analysis</i>                    |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1<br>2<br>3<br>4<br>5      | bah à mon avis (il) y a personne qui apprend forcément quelque chose on réveille juste forcément quelque chose qui est en nous qui est le sens critique le sens critique le fait de défendre quelque chose un avis une opinion                               | um in my opinion there is nobody who necessarily learns something // we just necessarily awaken something that is in us that is the critical sense // the critical sense the fact of defending something an opinion/an opinion  | <b>awareness of a belief state</b> |
| 6<br>7<br>8<br>9<br>10     | et du coup c'est possible que c'est révéler chez certains personnes des / des automatismes des arguments et une façon de de défendre un avis bien précise en argumentant posément et bien distinctement par rapport à ce qu'il ne faisait pas avant la philo | and therefore it is possible that it reveals in some people // automatisms arguments and a way to defend a very precise opinion by arguing calmly and clearly distinctly compared to what it did not do before philosophy and:: | <b>action rule</b>                 |
| 11<br>12<br>13<br>14       | et :: euh bah ça apprend aussi /ça apprend la communication entre les élèves parce que elle n'est pas encore on n'est pas encore amené à / on est toujours amenés à débattre dans la vie                                                                     | uh well it also teaches it / teaches communication between students because it is not yet we are not yet brought to / we are always brought to debate in life                                                                   | <b>awareness of a belief state</b> |
| 15<br>16<br>17<br>18<br>19 | du coup c'est intéressant de de faire quelques entraînements avant avant de bah avant d'avoir un débat commun par exemple défende une équipe de football ou quelque chose comme ça on peut avoir des automatismes qu'on a gagné en philo // ...              | so it is interesting to do some training before um/ before having a common debate for example defend a football team or something like that we can have automatisms that we have gained in philosophy //                        | <b>action rule</b>                 |

In this excerpt, the dynamics of thought is punctuated by belief states/rules of action succession (lines 1-5/6-10; 11-14/15-19). Sam says (line: 2-4) that we don't learn things but we awaken in us a critical thinking. The habit of action that develops in connection with this belief would be an automatism of a precise argumentation (6-9). Another belief spell out by Sam is the need to debate in everyday life (13-14). That is why, as action rule, we have "to do some training before having a common debate".

### 5.4. Child's speech 2: "being friend with words"

The last example is Iacob's one (11 years old) who, after two practice years, delivers some essential outlines of practicing philosophical discussion. He summarizes what practical implications of doing philosophy at school are: having a free thinking, asking himself more questions and understanding. He understands the reasons of his actions: "I now understand why I do things" (line 8-9).

**Table 4: "Being friend with words" in Iacob speech**

| Line | French Transcript                                             | Our translation                                               |
|------|---------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1    | bah :: ouais ça m'apprend à être ami avec les mots ami avec   | um :: yeah it teaches me to be friends with words             |
| 2    | les phrases euh :: à avoir une pensée plus libre une pensée   | friend with sentences uh :: to have a freer thought a         |
| 3    | plus ouverte et me poser beaucoup plus de questions que si    | more open thought and to ask myself many more                 |
| 4    | je n'avais pas fait cet atelier en fait je serais moins // je | questions than if I had not done this workshop in fact        |
| 5    | trouve pas moins intelligent mais plus un pti peu pas         | I would be less // I find not less intelligent but more a     |
| 6    | superficiel mais comment le dire // c'est comme les gens      | little bit // not superficial but how to say it // it is like |
| 7    | qui font un truc mais ils ne comprennent pas pourquoi ils     | people who do a thing but they don't understand why           |
| 8    | font le truc // la chose et :: je comprends maintenant        | they do the thing // the thing and : I now understand         |
| 9    | pourquoi je fais des choses et :: je comprends plein de truc  | why I do things and:: I understand a lot of things I          |
| 10   | que j'avais pas compris et grâce à ça bah je comprends        | didn't understand and thanks to that well I understand        |

Understanding why we do things/acts is finally emerging as a meta-rule for a practical thinking.

## 6. Discussion and conclusion

The main aspect emerged from the preceding analysis is that children's thinking is not purely theoretical but it underlies principles or rules of action. The application of Peirce's pragmatic model of active thinking has helped us to carry out some types of action rules thus to contribute to a better understanding of how children perceive action when they think in a community of philosophical inquiry.

Our findings invite extending our analysis proposal to other data and other methodological perspective in order to explore further action rules as well as the dialogical thinking dynamic being generate in philosophical dialogues. The question that arises subsequently is

whether thinking action rules could be sufficient for children to then easily deploy their power to act (*potentia agendi*) beyond peer dialogues, for instance in their present and future social life. This seems more complex to observe, and therefore an extracurricular and longitudinal monitoring should be considered.

Some following practical implications can be drawn from the present study. These would be suggestions to be discussed in conjunction with educational projections. First, practicing active thinking or dynamic thinking process provides room for doubt and beliefs' changes so as not to freeze them once and for all, in education and in real life. Second, active thinking makes children to get used to think about consequences or practical implications of their thoughts. This can help them developing ethical judgments and linking thought to life. At last, thinking in dialogue with peers is a joint action. Children learn how to cooperate and develop complementary strategies in order to address a discussion issue. It can also be called a rule of action.

This paper intended finally to show that a careful consideration of either what children verbalize in philosophical practices and what they say about their own experience as participants helps us to understand the interest in bringing philosophy within the reach of the children.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> John Langshaw Austin, *How to do Things with Words*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962).

<sup>2</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *De la certitude*, (G. H. von Wright G. E. M. Anscombe, Éd.s., J. Fauve & G. Durand, Trad.) (Paris, France: Gallimard. 1987).

<sup>3</sup> Denis Vernant, *Introduction à la philosophie contemporaine du langage* (Paris, France: Armand Colin, 2011).

<sup>4</sup> Charles Sanders Peirce, "How to Make Our Ideas Clear," *Popular Science Monthly* 12 (January), (1878): 286-302.

<sup>5</sup> Antonio R. Damasio, *The Feeling of what Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness*, (Harcourt Incorporated, 1999).

<sup>6</sup> Lévine, Jacques, Geneviève Chambard, Michèle Sillam, Daniel Gostain, *L'enfant philosophe, avenir de l'humanité ?* (Issy-les-Moulineaux: ESF Editeur, 2014).



<sup>7</sup> Matthew Lipman, *Thinking in Education* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

<sup>8</sup> Greco Morasso, Sara, Céline Miserez-Caperos, Anne-Nelly Perret-Clermont, "L'argumentation à visée cognitive chez les enfants," In Nathalie Muller Mirza, Christian Buty (eds), *Argumentation dans les contextes de l'éducation*, (Peter Lang AG, 2015), 39-82; Molly Moshman, David Geil, "Collaborative Reasoning: Evidence for Collective Rationality," *Educational Psychology Papers and Publications* vol. 4, issue 3 (1998): 231-248.

<sup>9</sup> Marie-France Daniel, "Learning to philosophize: Positive Impacts and Conditions for Implementations," *Thinking: The Journal of Philosophy for children*, vol. 18, issue 4 (2008): 36-48; Trickey, Steve, Keith J. Topping, "Philosophy for children: a systematic review," *Research Papers in Education*, 19(3), (2004): 365-380.

<sup>10</sup> Fournel, Anda, *Analyse pragmatique et actionnelle de l'acte de questionner. Le questionnement chez des élèves de primaire et de collège pratiquant la philosophie à l'école* (PhD thesis) (Grenoble: Université Grenoble Alpes, 2018) <https://tel.archives-ouvertes.fr/tel-01841459/document>

<sup>11</sup> I call it a "model" for the use of this study.

<sup>12</sup> Charles Sanders Peirce, "How to Make Our Ideas Clear," *Popular Science Monthly* 12 (January), (1878): 286-302.

<sup>13</sup> Sara Greco, Anne-Nelly Perret-Clermont, Antonio Iannaccone, Andrea Rocci, Josephine Convertini, Rebecca Schär, "The analysis of implicit premises within children's argumentative inferences," *Informal Logic* vol. 38, issue 4 (2018): 438-470.

<sup>14</sup> *Philéduc* is a research group within the LiDiLEM Laboratory at the University Grenoble Alpes, in France. In addition to linguistic researches on philosophical dialogues, the group proposes teachers' trainings in conducting these practices.

<sup>15</sup> Fournel, Anda, *Analyse pragmatique et actionnelle de l'acte de questionner. Le questionnement chez des élèves de primaire et de collège pratiquant la philosophie à l'école* (PhD thesis) (Grenoble: Université Grenoble Alpes, 2018) <https://tel.archives-ouvertes.fr/tel-01841459/document> For a detailed description of the corpus, v. chapter 3.3.

<sup>16</sup> In order to protect the privacy of the participants, the names mentioned in this paper have been changed.

<sup>17</sup> The discussions were completely transcribed on the basis of the spelling transcription conventions (v. Fournel, 2018, 3.3.3.5). This work requires some principles: stay as close as possible to what has really been said, preserve all the particularities of oral productions (repetitions, hesitations); do not use punctuation.

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