3 The Impact of Language Socialization on Grammatical Development

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1 An Offer

The architecture of grammatical development in the talk of young children is the central concern of language acquisition research. The critical task of language acquisition scholarship over the last several decades has been to account for when, how, and why children use and understand grammatical forms over the course of the early period of their lives. Language socialization – the process in which children are socialized both through language and to use language within a community (Ochs and Schieffelin, 1984) – has been largely examined without regard to the dynamics of grammatical development, focusing, rather, on culturally relevant communicative practices and activities. In this discussion, we reverse this orientation and focus directly on the role of language socialization in the acquisition of grammatical competence.

What can a language socialization perspective offer to scholarship on grammatical development? A language socialization perspective yields a more sophisticated model of grammatical development, that is, one tuned into certain cultural realities that influence when, how, and why young children use and understand grammatical forms. Such a model of grammatical development takes an informed look at ideology and social order as forces that organize children's use and comprehension of grammatical forms. A language socialization enriched model decries reductionistic visions that view the sociocultural context as "input" to be quantified and correlated with children's grammatical patterns. Rather than reducing the context of grammatical

development to frequencies of grammatical forms in the child's linguistic environment, our socialization enriched model accounts for children's grammatical development in terms of the *indexical* meanings of grammatical forms. This approach rests on the assumption that, in every community, grammatical forms are inextricably tied to, and hence index, culturally organized situations of use and that the indexical meanings of grammatical forms influence children's production and understanding of these forms.[1] In this approach, the frequency with which a grammatical form is used in the child's environment may or may not have very much to do with a child's handling of grammatical forms. As we will discuss later, a grammatical construction may be ubiquitous in the child's hearing environment and yet the child may not use the construction until quite late in his or her development. And conversely, a form may be used relatively rarely by adults and others in the child's surroundings and yet be ubiquitous in the child's speech.

In a language socialization enriched model of grammatical development, children are viewed as tuned into certain indexical meanings of grammatical forms that link those forms to, for example, social identities of interlocutors; they may not use a form they frequently hear because it is indexically inappropriate for them to do so, and they may use a form they don't often hear because it is indexically appropriate for them to do so. Children's nonuse of grammatical forms may be a reflection of their indexical sensitivities (Ochs, 1988; Peirce, 1931–58; Silverstein, 1993) and not a reflection of their lack of grammatical competence or awareness. Counting and correlations can't differentiate between nonuse that is socially and culturally competent and nonuse that is incompetent. Only an informed understanding of the indexical scope of grammatical forms can provide this information.

What makes a language socialization approach different from existing functionalist approaches to grammatical development? Functionalist approaches to grammatical development tend to end their inquiry at the level of the immediate informational or actional context of grammatical forms, relating children's use and understanding of grammatical forms to, for example, foregrounding and backgrounding of information on the one hand, and/or to speech acts on the other. A language socialization approach relates children's use and understanding of grammatical forms to complex yet orderly and recurrent dispositions, preferences, beliefs, and bodies of knowledge that organize how information is linguistically packaged and how speech acts are performed within and across socially recognized situations.

A language socialization approach promotes an updated version of linguistic relativity and asserts that children's use and understanding of grammatical forms is culturally reflexive – tied in manifold ways to local views of how to think, feel, know, (inter)act, or otherwise project a social persona or construct a relationship. At the same time, a language socialization approach promotes the notion that certain relations between grammatical forms and sociocultural order have universal scope (Ochs, 1990; 1993). Language socialization involves

children in language and cultural competencies that span the boundaries of local communities. That is, children are being socialized the world over to draw on similar grammatical resources to index thoughts, feelings, knowledge, identities, acts, and activities not only because of biological and cognitive patterning but also because of universal characteristics of culture as a common artefact of humankind.

In the remainder of this discussion, we articulate ways in which a language socialization approach can enrich existing accounts of the phenomena of child language acquisition. Although this approach is orthogonal to the controversies surrounding learnability and innateness mechanisms underlying grammatical competence (in the sense that it does not take sides), it is highly relevant to all theories relating grammatical development to mind, brain, and experience. Our discussion opens the discourse of grammatical development to a domain of orderliness that exists beyond the person, indeed, that exists *between* persons who interact on a regular basis and who belong to a community with a history and a future.

The language socialization approach advocated in this chapter integrates universal and local properties of language-in-culture. In particular, it provides a *culturally organized means–ends model* of grammatical development. Informally, this model provides for the possibility that across many cultures, members rely on certain similar linguistic means to accomplish certain similar social ends, such as the use of quantifiers to index affective intensity (e.g. "He spilled it all over the place," Labov, 1984; Ochs and Schieffelin, 1989). However, at the same time these ends are culturally organized in terms of their situational scope – who appropriately attempts to accomplish this end, when, where, how often, etc. – and their significance *vis-à-vis* local ideologies about emotion, person, language, and the like. Communities thus are both alike and different in the ways in which they rely on grammatical resources, and as such, children's understandings of grammatical forms are accordingly both alike and different as one traverses the boundaries of language communities. Similar linguistic realizations of social goals across communities enable communication within our species; different cultural organizations of social goals, however, throw a monkey wrench into crosscultural exchanges and make the task of acquiring second languages in different communities all the more difficult.[2]

This culturally organized means–ends perspective will be applied to three questions relevant to accounting for grammatical development in early childhood:

1 Does grammatical development depend upon children's participation in a simplified speech environment?
2 Can cultural systems of belief, knowledge, and social order partially account for young children's acquisition of particular grammatical constructions?

3   Can cultural systems of belief, knowledge, and social order partially account for young children's acquisition (and nonacquisition) of particular languages in linguistically heterogeneous communities?

We turn now to address each of these questions.

2   The Cultural Milieu of Language Acquirers

A critical question addressed in acquisition research is whether or not children's grammatical competence is an outcome of children's participation in simplified communicative exchanges designed to facilitate language use and comprehension. Our response to this question is a qualified "no." This conclusion is based on the observation that all normal children acquire a measured degree of competence in producing and understanding grammatical constructions in the early years of their lives, yet the ways in which cultures organize communicative exchanges with children varies widely from community to community (see especially Clancy, 1985, 1986; Crago, 1988; Heath, 1982; Miller, P., 1982; Ochs, 1985, 1988; Ochs and Schieffelin, 1984; Philips, 1983; Schieffelin and Ochs, 1986a, 1986b; Schieffelin, 1986, 1990; Scollon, 1982). To explore this phenomenon in a culturally illuminative fashion, we focus on how cultures organize communication directed *to* children (children as addressees) and *by* children (children as speakers).

2.1   *Cultural organizations of talk to children (addressees)*

In all societies, members want to get their intentions across to children. This is a universal propensity of human culture, a prerequisite for the transmission of cultural orientations from one generation to the next. Furthermore, when members set the goal of getting their intentions across to children, they tend to modify their language in similar ways across the world's communities. Adults, older siblings, and others wanting to communicate to infants and small children in many cultures tend to simplify the form and content of their talk to achieve that end. Common simplifications characteristic of speech addressed to children include consonant cluster reduction, reduplication, exaggerated prosodic contours, slowed pace, shorter sentences, syntactically less complex sentences, temporal and spatial orientation to the here-and-now, and repetition and paraphrasing of sentences (Ferguson, 1964, 1977, 1982).

If we are promoting the notion that communicating intentions to children as addressees is a universal end and that simplification is a widespread if not universal means to achieve that end, how do we justify the conclusion that

grammatical development does not depend on children's exposure to simplified speech? A culturally organized means–ends approach to the question of simplified speech urges us to examine further the goal of communicating intentions to children and the kinds of simplifications made once this goal is set in motion within particular communities. Ethnographic observations suggest that cultures differ widely in the *contextual pervasiveness of setting this goal and in the extensiveness of simplification processes* when speakers do set this goal, and that these differences are integrally linked to cultural views of children, social order, and the path to grammatical competence.

How, then, is the goal of communicating intentions to children realized across different communities? While in all communities, children participate as addressees in interactions with others, the developmental point at which they take on this role varies from community to community. In some communities, such as white middle class communities in the United States and Canada, children are given this role starting at birth, when mothers begin to greet and otherwise attempt to converse with their infants (Bates, Camaioni, and Volterra, 1979; Bloom, K., 1990; Ochs and Schieffelin, 1984; Stern, 1977). Once the goal of communicating intentions to small infants is put into effect, speakers have quite a job on their hands if they hope to be understood and responded to (see Brown, 1977). Indeed, in the case of communicating intentions to newly born infants, caregivers may not only go to great lengths to gain and sustain their attention (e.g. via high pitch, exaggerated intonation), they also may have to voice or do the child's response themselves (Lock, 1981; Stern, 1977; Trevarthen, 1979). In other communities, members do not generally set the goal of communicating intentions to children (i.e. wanting children to understand and respond) at quite such an early point in their lives. In a number of societies, infants are not engaged as addressees until they evidence that they can produce recognizable words in the language. For example, among the K'iche' Mayan, "vocal interaction between infants and parents is minimal, although there is some variation between parents in this regard, particularly among different economic classes . . . K'iche' parents treat their toddlers as conversational partners after they learn to speak" (Pye, 1992: 242–3). Similarly, African–American working class families in the town of "Trackton" in the Piedmont South Carolina region of the United States "do not see babies or young children as suitable partners for regular conversations. For an adult to choose a preverbal infant over an adult as a conversational partner would be considered an affront and a strange behavior as well" (Heath, 1983: 86). In rural and urban Javanese communities, adults also address babies infrequently. Smith-Hefner (1988: 172–3) notes:

> Javanese children are clearly the objects of great pride and affection, and yet what is striking to the western observer is that Javanese do not talk to babies very much. In response to my initial questions concerning talking to babies, Javanese caregivers frequently commented that little babies (and even young children for that matter) *durung ngerti* or "do not yet understand" . . . the most common way

of holding young babies is on the hip with the child naturally facing outwards or half hidden under the mother's arm. We never recorded in all of our observations a mother holding her young baby in the face to face position facilitating dialogue.

These descriptions are also paralleled in accounts of talking to infants in traditional Western Samoan communities (Ochs and Schieffelin 1984; Ochs, 1982, 1988) and among the Kaluli of Papua New Guinea (Ochs and Schieffelin, 1984; Schieffelin, 1990).

In societies such as these, infants are not singled out as preferred addressees. Rather, they tend to participate in communicative interactions in the role of *overhearers* of nonsimplified conversations between others. This assumes that small children are being socialized in the context of multiparty interactions, the unmarked condition in traditional and many other societies. In many upper middle class households of the United States and Europe, however, small children may pass the day primarily in the presence of a single adult (e.g. mother) and thus may not have the situational opportunity to take on the role of overhearers of nonsimplified conversations. Indeed, the communicative ecology of upper middle class households may be an important factor in organizing young children in the role of addressees. The sole adult in the household is not likely to talk to herself/himself all day long and thus may be situationally predisposed to attempt to recruit a child of whatever age as a communicative partner in meaningful, albeit highly simplified, exchanges.

In those communities where infants and small children are generally not recruited as conversational partners, they still become grammatically competent speakers–hearers, developing linguistic knowledge in a communicative environment full of grammatical complexity and oriented towards competent interlocutors. Some communities have an explicit ideology of language acquisition centered on precisely the idea that children need to hear linguistically *complex* and not simplified speech to become grammatically competent. Kaluli adults were surprised that American parents produced baby talk in the presence of young children and wondered how the children learned to speak proper language (Schieffelin, 1990).

In addition to differences in goal setting, cultures also differ in the extent to which they simplify when they do address children. In some communities, such as among the Tamil (Williamson, 1979), Inuit (Crago, 1988), and working and middle class Americans and Europeans (Cross, 1977; Newport, Gleitman, and Gleitman, 1977), simplification involves phonological, morphosyntactic, and discourse modifications. In other communities, such as among Samoans (Ochs, 1988), working class African–Americans of Trackton (Heath, 1983) and Louisiana (Ward, 1971), Javanese (Smith-Hefner, 1988) and Kaluli (Schieffelin, 1990), simplification may be primarily *restricted* to the domain of discourse, and in particular, to self-repetition of an earlier utterance. An important difference between simplification through repetition and simplification through phonological and grammatical adjustments is that the former tends to preserve

the integrity of the adult form of the utterance whereas the latter does not. To understand this difference, think of setting the goal of getting a young child to participate in a traditional dance. One way of getting the child to understand what she or he is supposed to do is to let the child see repeated uninterrupted performances of the dance. In this way, the integrity of the dance is preserved, and the simplification primarily consists of showing it over and over again. Another way of achieving competence is to break down the dance into components and to repeatedly present one component at a time until the child evidences that she or he understands the steps. This simplification strategy deforms the conventional shape and execution of the dance in an effort to guide children's participation in the dance (Rogoff, 1990).[3]

An interesting possibility is that cultures that simplify at all levels of linguistic structure in talking to children may put children in the role of conversational partners, i.e. as addressees expected to actively and centrally participate in communicative exchanges, more often than in cultures that simplify primarily through repetition. A similar point was made by Brown (1977: 12) when he argued that baby talk is not used by caregivers to teach their children how to speak but rather to communicate with them: "What I think adults are chiefly trying to do, when they use BT with children, is to communicate, to understand and to be understood, to keep two minds focussed on the same topic." Brown's conclusion was influenced by the research of Cross (1977: 166–7), who captures the effects of 62 parameters of mothers' speech on children's language in the comment

> Few researchers in the area of mothers' speech would argue that the provision of language lessons to the language-learning child is the primary motivation for mothers' speech adjustments. Rather, they appear to be the incidental outcome of trying to converse with a listener capable of expressing and receiving meaning in verbal form, but with very undeveloped linguistic skills.

A corollary of the possibility that cultures with a highly simplified baby talk register may treat children as conversational partners relatively often is that cultures that rely on such widespread simplification may expect children to be active and central participants in conversational exchanges at an earlier age than children growing up in cultures where simplification is primarily through repetition. More empirical evidence is needed to substantiate these possibilities; however, in cultures where speakers addressing children simplify infrequently and primarily through repetition, there appears to be little interest in engaging young infants in extended conversational exchanges. For example, Heath (1983) and Ward (1971) describe working class African–American adult family members in rural South Carolina and Louisiana not only as dispreferring infants as conversational partners but also as hardly simplifying their speech to young children. And the same is true for traditional Samoan (Ochs, 1988), Kaluli (Schieffelin, 1990), and Javanese (Smith-Hefner, 1988) family members. From the perspective of the working class African–American, Samoans, Kaluli,

and Javanese communities studied, members of cultures that rely on wide-spread simplification are more eager (or perhaps even anxious) for children early in their lives to take on central communicative roles. In these African–American communities and among the Samoans, Javanese, and Kaluli, however, there seems to be less pressure for very young children to assume an active, central role in the social exchanges at hand, but rather a preference for children at this early stage to stay on the sidelines – on the backs of caregivers, or nestled on their laps or hips or alongside – as observers and overhearers.[4]

In summary, if we look across cultures, children who are expected to be active communicators early in life are often likely to be addressed with highly simplified speech and put in the position of conversational partner. On the other hand, children who are expected to actively participate in communicative exchanges somewhat later in their childhood hear predominantly unsimplified speech and are treated as conversational partners less frequently. The upshot of this discussion, however, is that while these children are socialized into different expectations concerning their social role *vis-à-vis* other participants in a social situation and perhaps as well into different cognitive skills (e.g. the role of overhearer may enhance observational skills), *the outcome in terms of the ultimate acquisition of grammatical competence is not substantially different across these two cultural strategies.* In both cases, most children growing up in these cultures are producing and understanding grammatical constructions before their second birthday. In Western Samoa, for example, a child of 19 months was not only producing multimorphemic utterances but using with some skill two phonological registers (Ochs, 1985). Kaluli children between 20 and 24 months use imperative and declarative verb forms, first and second person pronouns, locatives, possessives, several forms of negation, and discourse particles (Schieffelin, 1986).

2.2   Cultural organizations of talk by children (speakers)

An important focus in the controversy over effects of the communicative environment on language acquisition is the extent to which grammatical competence is facilitated by the practice of caregivers verbally reformulating a child's intended message in grammatically correct adult form. This practice is known as *expansion* (Brown et al., 1968). Typically expansions are caregivers' responses to a young child's relatively ambiguous message and function as requests for confirmation or repair initiations (Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks, 1977). The facilitating effect of expansions is posited on the assumption that children will match an intention that is currently in their consciousness with the adult formulation of the intended message (Brown et al., 1968; McNeill, 1970).

The effects of expansions on the acquisition of particular grammatical constructions have been widely discussed in the psycholinguistics literature, and

the results are at best mixed (see, for example, Cazden, 1965; Cross, 1977; Newport et al., 1977; Shatz, 1983). Our focus here is on the cultural organization and import of expansions, a discussion which situates expansions in cultural ideologies and systems of social order which organize how members of societies respond to ambiguous or partially unintelligible utterances of interlocutors, whether adult or child. Within a culturally organized means–ends approach, we explore the extent to which the goal of trying to formulate the ambiguous intentions of others is culturally viable. We also explore how cultures organize children of different ages as *speakers*, particularly as authors of utterances.

Infants and small children universally produce utterances whose sense is not transparent to those present, and universally those copresent respond using one or more of the following strategies: (1) ignore the utterance; (2) indicate to the child that the utterance is unclear (e.g. by claiming nonunderstanding, by directing the child to resay the utterance, by teasing the child for being unclear); (3) present to the child a candidate understanding or reformulation of the utterance (i.e. make a guess). However, while children's unintelligibility and responses to it are universal, the preference for strategy (1), (2), or (3) varies across communities for reasons of ideology and social order. Specifically, communities organize the goal of decoding the intentions of children in different ways. In some communities, members are keen to disambiguate aloud what infants and young children might be intending across a wide range of situations, and in other communities the situations in which members take on this goal are highly restricted.

To pursue the cultural organization of decoding the intentions of children it is necessary to unpack some of the assumptions of this end. One assumption that underlies this end is that children are indeed acting intentionally, the children are the authors of their utterances. One variable of crosscultural import is the developmental point at which children are treated as intentional beings who not only vocalize and gesture but do so to make a communicative point. Another way of considering this aspect of crosscultural variation is to see cultures as varying in their view of children as *authors* of messages. In some communities, children are treated as if their gestures and vocalizations are meaningful and communicative from a very early point in their infancy (see especially Trevarthen's (1979) analysis of middle class British caregivers interpreting small infants in this manner). Caregivers in these communities will respond to the actions of tiny infants as if they were intentionally directed towards them, and in this way establish the child as an interlocutor (Lock, 1981). In middle class American and European communities, this practice of treating the infant as an author is the counterpart to treating the infant as addressee in that both roles combined constitute the infant as conversational partner.

Many of us may take for granted that caregivers and infants interact in this manner and may find it surprising that in many communities infants are not considered as authors. Their gestures and vocalizations are not considered by

others as intentional communicative acts. For example, among the Walpiri, before the age of two, " 'talk' by the child is not interpreted as language, and there are no expansions and recasts of the child's early words" (Bavin, 1992: 327). Similarly, among the Inuit, caregivers rarely responded to the vocal and nonvocal actions of very young children. Crago (1988: 210–11) describes Inuit interactions with two children under the age of two years:

> Suusi and Jini were the youngest of the four children at the outset the videotaping. In several of the tapes that were made of them, they frequently made unintelligible vocalizations. The majority of these vocalizations went unheeded. Many times their parents did not respond, not even by looking up at the children . . . Clarification of unintelligible vocalizations did not take place on any of the videotapes. Intentions, then, were not imputed to these early unintelligible utterances nor did they elicit a communicative response from the caregivers in most instances.

Even if, within a community, an infant's or young child's vocalizations are constructed as intentional by a copresent adult or older sibling, there may still be a strong dispreference for attempting to clarify intentions through candidate expansions of the child's intended message. In both Kaluli (Schieffelin, 1990) and Western Samoan (Ochs, 1988) communities, for example, caregivers rarely clarify children's utterances because there is a strong dispreference generally towards guessing at the unarticulated psychological states of others. Kaluli say that one cannot know what is in another's head. Samoans not only rarely expand an unclear utterance of a child, they also rarely conjecture about possible motivations for an action undertaken, or disambiguate riddles, or try to figure out test questions, where there is some notion in the mind of another that has to be discovered (Ochs, 1982).

In traditional Western Samoan communities, issues of social order also impact the dispreference for expanding children's ambiguous vocalizations and gestures. In particular, if we compare the three alternative responses to a child's unclear action – ignore, indicate unclarity, and provide candidate understanding of child's intended meaning (expansion/guess) – the responses differ in the extent to which they require an interlocutor to take the perspective of the child. Ignoring requires almost no perspective-taking whatsoever, and the various means of indicating unclarity (e.g. by requesting a repetition, teasing) also demand little decentering by others. Proferring a candidate understanding of the child's message through an expansion, on the other hand, involves other interlocutors in searching for clues as to what the child could be intending – looking at what the child is doing, where the child is gazing, what the child was just doing or saying, and other situational leads to arriving at intentionality. The extensiveness of this cognitive accommodation runs counter to Samoan notions of the caregiver–child relationship, which is grounded in social asymmetry. As in other societies, sibling and adult caregivers in traditional Samoan communities expect and socialize the children in their

charge to accommodate to them. Both siblings and adult family members are keen to socialize children at a very early age to decenter and take the perspective of more mature interlocutors in their presence. For these reasons and others, Samoan caregivers tend to respond to children's unclear messages in ways that force children to make a greater effort to meet the communicative needs of those around them. They are far more likely to ignore or say "What?" or tease than to attempt to formulate what the child could be intending and offer it up to the child to confirm or disconfirm.

Finally, in some communities, members allow for the possibility that children are speaking intentionally but rather than trying to establish what these intentions might be, members assign a socially normative meaning to the child's utterance. As noted earlier, a psycholinguistic argument is that expansions facilitate language acquisition because they build on a child's personal intentions, matching the child's meaning to adult message form. In contrast, there is evidence that, in certain communities, children's personal intentions sometimes take second place to the members' notions of what is socially appropriate to a situation at hand. For example, Scollon (1982) reports that Athapaskan adults provide a cultural "gloss" for the child's unclear utterance, that is, a socially appropriate rendering that is situationally sensitive, disregarding what the child might be intending to express.

The use of cultural glosses is far more widespread than might be assumed, in that adults may impose a cultural gloss on children's gestures and utterances without recognizing that they are doing so. First words, for example, may reflect and construct cultural expectations concerning what children want to communicate. In many communities, first words are highly conventionalized. For example, among the Kaluli, the words for "mother" and "breast" are recognized as everyone's first words. In traditional Samoan communities, the child's first word is part of the curse "Eat shit!" Among the Gapun people of Papua New Guinea,

> a child's very first word is generally held to be *ki* (go+IRREAL STATUS). This is a Taiap vernacular word meaning, approximately, "I'm getting out of here." Attributed to infants as young as two months, this word encapsulates the adult belief that babies will "do what they want" . . . and go where they will regardless of the wishes of others. (Kulick, 1992: 101–2)

It can also be argued that although caregivers in white middle class American, European, and Japanese households are acting on the belief that their expansions capture the intended meaning of the child's utterance, their expansions may similarly reflect their cultural understandings of what children want. Clancy (1986) and Cook, H. M. (1988), for example, argue that middle class Japanese mothers often reformulate children's utterances to be culturally acceptable.

These practices from diverse communities suggest that a primary goal of members is to socialize infants into culturally appropriate persons and this

goal may override any goal relating to drawing out and validating the child as an author of a unique personal message. In these situations, other members actively participate in the authorship of messages. Other-authorship of children's utterances is also manifest in prompting practices, wherein members author a culturally appropriate message for the child to repeat back to the author (dyadic interaction) or to a third party (triadic interactions). Extended prompting of this sort is practiced in a wide range of societies, including Kaluli (Schieffelin, 1990), Samoan (Ochs, 1988), Mexican–American (Eisenberg, 1986), white working class American (Miller, 1982), Basotho (Demuth, 1986), Javanese (Smith-Hefner, 1988), and Kwara'ae (Watson-Gegeo and Gegeo, 1986). A more extreme version of cultural prevoicing is found in the practice of ventriloquating for preverbal infants, wherein a member speaks as if the infant were speaking and others respond as if this were the case. Kaluli caregivers, for example, hold small infants facing a third party addressee and speak to that addressee in a high pitch nasalized register (without grammatically simplifying utterances). Here the infant is presented as a speaker without being presented as an author.

The many practices that are alternatives to expansions of personalized messages – either ignoring the utterance, indicating unclarity, providing a cultural gloss, prompting, or ventriloquating – socialize the child to accommodate to the social situation at hand. In contrast, attempts to expand the child's intended meaning evidence an accommodation by others to the child. That is, expansions of the sort discussed by psycholinguists reflect a child centered style of socialization (characteristic of the communities of the psycholinguists), whereas the alternative practices reflect a situation centered style of socialization (Ochs and Schieffelin, 1984; Schieffelin and Ochs, 1986a). Similarly, pervasive use of grammatically simplified speech directed to children as addressees reflects a child centered orientation, whereas more restricted use of simplification reflects a situation centered orientation. Because children living in communities falling along the continuum of child and situation centered communicative practices acquire grammar, grammatical development *per se* can not be accounted for in terms of any single set of speech practices involving children.

3   The Cultural Milieu of Children's Grammatical Forms

While the achievement of grammatical competence in itself cannnot be said to depend on any particular cultural circumstances, the acquisition of specific grammatical constructions can be profoundly impacted by the cultural organization of language. Children produce certain constructions and not others and come to an understanding of constructions in part because of their cultural

significance. As noted earlier, grammatical constructions are intricately linked to norms, preferences, and expectations that organize how members are to act, think, and feel in social situations. Children's acquisition of grammatical constructions in this sense is partly the acquisition of language competence and partly the acquisition of cultural competence. Further, because grammatical constructions are systematically and profoundly associated with social order and cultural beliefs, values, and knowledge, they carry sociocultural meanings, which are acquired along with their formal features. In the following discussion, we consider three circumstances in which sociocultural organization impacts the production and comprehension of particular grammatical forms:

1   Where a grammatical form is widely used in the child's verbal environment, but is not produced by the child in the early stages of language acquisition because it is socially inappropriate.
2   Where a grammatical form is infrequently used in the child's verbal environment, but none the less becomes part of the child's earliest linguistic repertoire because it is socially appropriate.
3   Where a grammatical form used to express specific stances and speech acts in the child's verbal environment is acquired early as part of the acquisition of those stances and speech acts.

3.1   Grammatical form as frequent but inappropriate for child use

While perceptual salience, frequency, and conceptual complexity of forms in the verbal environment of the child can affect when children acquire particular grammatical constructions, these variables need to be evaluated *vis-à-vis* the social and cultural matrix of each construction. It may well be the case, for example, that a form that is perceptually salient, highly frequent, and conceptually relatively simple may not appear in the child's linguistic repertoire until rather late. In these cases, children's nonproduction of a particular form may reflect their understanding of that form as a sociocultural resource for displaying social statuses, social relationships, stances, actions, and other situational dimensions, and in particular, reflect their understandings of that form as inappropriate for child use.

An example of a widely used, relatively simple grammatical form that is not produced by children early in their language development is the Samoan deictic verb *sau*, "come." Among the set of deictic verbs in a language, "come" is considered to be conceptually less complex than verbs such as "give" and "bring" (Clark and Garnica, 1974) and tends to be produced and understood by young children before these more complex forms. While Samoan children evidence understanding of the verb *sau*, "come," early in their development

(by 19 months), they tend to produce the deictic verb *'aumai* before they produce *sau*, and they produce *'aumai* far more frequently than *sau* (Platt, 1986). What can account for this acquisition order? Why don't Samoan children produce a form that they routinely hear and appropriately respond to?

In traditional Samoan communities, physical movement is associated with relatively lower status persons; higher status persons tend to position themselves and direct lower status persons to carry out actions that require movement. Young children, for example, are bombarded with imperative forms of *sau*. When these children begin to use language, they appear to be aware of the social indexicality of this verb. As they are usually the lowest status persons in the household, there are few opportunities to use the verb appropriately. When the children do use *sau*, they use it in imperative form to direct the movements of lower ranking entities, such as animals and younger infant siblings. In some cases, the children will use the form at the prompting of an older person to call out to an older child to come to that still older person (e.g. Mother: *Vala'au Iuliaga e sau*, "Call Iuliana to come" . . . Child: *Ana sau*, "Iuliana come!"). In contrast, children are widely encouraged to beg for food and other items. The verb *'aumai*, "give/bring," is the conventional grammatical structure (imperative form) for carrying out the act of begging. This imperative form of the verb appeared prevalently in children's speech from 19 months of age on (Platt, 1986; Ochs, 1988).

Another example of a construction that is widely used by adults in the child's verbal environment and is relatively simple is the Kaluli imperative verb of saying, *elema*, "say like that." While pervasive in the verbal environment of all children, this construction is produced only by a subset of young, language acquiring Kaluli children (Schieffelin, 1990). *Elema* is used in prompting sequences in which an older child caregiver or adult tells the young language learning child what to say to a third party, followed by the imperative *elema*. As noted earlier, all Kaluli children actively participate in extensive prompting sequences.

When we look at children's own use of *elema*, there is a marked gender difference: only young girls (two to four years) produce this form to direct even younger children to "say like that." When they do so, it is with the appropriate demeanor of an assertive voice, and an appropriate message form, followed by the imperative verb of saying. Furthermore, young girls will also engage their mothers in playful routines, getting them to respond (dyadically) to their requests to "say like that." Boys, who were also addressees and respondents repeatedly in such socializing interactions, never produced *elema*. They associated this form with the talk of women and older sisters, who were responsible for all of the caregiving. Indeed, fathers very rarely used *elema* with children. The absence of *elema* in boy's verbal repertoire in this sense is a reflection of their understanding of gender appropriate behavior, a form of social knowledge never made explicit. It should be noted that adult men do use *elema* in social activities in which young children are not participants. Hence, boys eventually come to use *elema* in these activity settings.

It should also be noted that young children's understandings of the relation between gender and *elema* is finely tuned, in the sense that it is only the imperative form of the verb "to say like that" that is gender associated. Other forms of this verb are used widely by both men and women in the verbal environment of the child, and both boys and girls use the verb in a variety of inflections and moods – for example, to report others' speech as well as their own. Children's understandings of gender and other social roles are clearly indexed in a language like Kaluli where each verb stem is morphologically differentiated for tense and mood and where specific morphological forms such as the imperative (*elema*) may carry social meanings, e.g. gender-marked language instruction.

The point that we are trying to make is that children are sensitized to the social and cultural indexicality of particular morphosyntactic encodings of verbal forms. The social and cultural contexts of imperative forms seem especially salient as they are exploited in a variety of speech acts, such as requesting, begging, and prompting. This may be because these acts involve issues of desire, control, and most importantly, require some type of action uptake on the part of another member of the community. These action uptakes provide immediate and salient social and cultural validation or sanctioning of the child's and other's use of that form.

This degree of finetuned sensitivity to how different forms of the same verb encode social information is also evident in Kaluli children's acquisition of the compound verb *omina*, "having chewed, give." Children hear this verb often and in a variety of inflected forms, such as first person present interrogative, "Having chewed it, do I give it to you?" (*ge omiyolo?*). The children themselves, however, use the compound verb only in its present imperative form (*ge)omina*, "You, having chewed, give," as a request to a parent or older sibling to chew food (for the child) and then give it to the child (Schieffelin, 1986). In so doing, young Kaluli children are acting in a role-appropriate manner. They are expected to ask for food to be chewed and given to them but are not expected to chew and give food to others.

3.2 Grammatical form as infrequent but appropriate for child use

A language socialization approach to grammatical development can also help to account for why young children produce forms that are relatively rare in their verbal environment. For example, as noted above, young Kaluli children produce the imperative form of the Kaluli compound verb "having chewed, give." What was not noted, however, is that this form of the verb is almost never used by others in the child's environment, as adults and older children have no need to request that someone else chew food for them. This phenomenon should sensitize us to the fact that children's linguistic repertoire is not

a simple reflection of what they do or do not hear in their surroundings,[5] but rather that children are taking an active role in constructing language that is most useful to their needs and appropriate to their social status.

Another interesting example of children's productive use of a grammatical form that appears relatively infrequently in their verbal environment is Samoan children's use of the first person affect-marked pronoun *ta ita*, "poor I/poor me." This form is morphologically productive and can appear in a variety of cases and be inflected for number and specific/nonspecific as well as for alienable/inalienable possession when used as a genitive constituent. That is to say, this form is not a frozen or idiomatic lexical form. It appears far less often in household interactions involving children (as overhearers, and perhaps in other roles) than the more neutral first person pronoun *a'u*, "I," yet young children produce the affective pronoun earlier (19 months) and more often than the neutral form (Ochs, 1988). In particular, young children use the affective pronoun as a benefactive (*ia te ita* "for poor me"). This form is the linguistic core of the speech act of begging, which, as noted in section 2, is expected of and appropriate for young children. Samoan children, thus, appear to pull from their linguistic environment and deploy strategically those linguistic structures that help them to satisfy their desire for food and other objects.

We have seen in sections 3.1 and 3.2 relatively marked circumstances in which children's grammatical repertoire cannot be easily predicted from either the rate of use or relative complexity of grammatical forms in the child's verbal environment. Rather, children's use of particular grammatical forms at particular moments of their language development is profoundly linked to social and cultural norms, expectations, and preferences which may not be explicit and are not easily detected or counted. Children acquire grammatical forms as part of becoming a person in society; they use grammatical forms as communicative resources to participate in social situations, express their ideas and feelings, and otherwise accomplish social and individual goals. Language socialization theory provides a framework for how children use such forms for sociocultural ends. One notion within language socialization research is that members of communities (including language acquiring children) use grammatical forms to build speech acts and express stances which, in turn, are part of more complex social identities and social activities (Ochs, 1993). Thus, in Kaluli a grammatical form such as *elema* is used to build the speech act of prompting and this act in turn is used to help establish the gender identity of girls; and *omina* is used to build the speech act of requesting and this act in turn is used to help establish the generational identity of young children. Similarly, in Samoan *sau* is used to build the directive to come and this act in turn helps to establish the identity of the speaker as relatively higher status than the addressee. Other examples of the interface of culture and the acquisition of particular grammatical forms remain to be described by other researchers.

4   The Cultural Milieu of Children's Code Choice

Thus far we have focused on the impact of culture on the acquisition of one particular language and have not attended to acquisition of more than one language in linguistically heterogeneous communities. A language socialization perspective can account for code acquisition in such communities by examining the social distribution and social meanings of code choice within communities and households and constructing a model of language ideology that informs patterns of code selection and acquisition. Just as children's acquisition of a particular grammatical form cannot be accounted for simply in terms of rate of that form in the child's verbal environment, so children's acquisition of a particular code cannot be accounted for simply in terms of the presence of that code in the child's intimate environment. A language socialization perspective can account for why and how children may not be acquiring the languages in their multilingual environment in spite of the fact that their parents say that they want their children to speak these languages. What is missing from the majority of psycholinguistic studies of simultaneous bilingual acquisition is in-depth ethnographic analysis of the complex language ideologies, i.e. the values attached to the different codes, that are characteristic of multilingual communities and their relation to language practices in those communities (Kulick, 1992; Schieffelin, 1994).

Psycholinguistic studies of the simultaneous acquisition of two languages (i.e. bilingualism under the age of five years) have focused on the question of whether young children develop a unitary, undifferentiated language system (integrating features of both languages) or whether they develop two differentiated systems used in contextually sensitive ways (see reviews in Genesee, 1989; Romaine, 1989; De Houwer, 1990). In pursuing this question, many psycholinguists have assumed a notion of bilingualism similar to that articulated by Weinrich (1953: 73): "The ideal bilingual switches from one language to the other, according to appropriate changes in the speech situation, but not in unchanged speech situations and certainly not in a single sentence." It is widely assumed that the "ideal" bilingual situation (wherein the speaker associates particular codes with particular situations) facilitates bilingual acquisition, whereas code mixing in a single situation, especially by a single speaker, inhibits bilingual acquisition (McLaughlin, 1984a).

Two types of studies address the issue of code differentiation in the course of bilingual acquisition. The first set of studies examine bilingual acquisition among children from bilingual Spanish–English-speaking communities in the United States (e.g. the Southwest). Most used an experimental design where child speakers were told that an investigator only understood one language, thus inhibiting the use of the other language. The second set of studies

examine bilingual acquisition among children who have at least one bilingual parent but who reside otherwise in a monolingual community (e.g. children with a German–Italian bilingual parent residing in Italy (Volterra and Taeschner, 1978). Investigators taperecorded adult–child speech in the home.

To ascertain the norms of bilingual code use in particular households, most researchers rely exclusively on parental reports of their speech practices with young children.[6] In parental reports from both sets of studies, parents insisted that they followed the one person–one language rule ("rule of Grammont" (Ronjat, 1913)), that is, they did not mix languages when speaking to the child. From a language socialization perspective, this response reflects a widespread belief across many societies that mixing two languages lexically and/or grammatically is indicative of confusion and lack of education, and is generally stigmatized as impure language. When researchers employed more ethnographic methods of investigating bilingualism by looking at naturalistic speech to and in the hearing environment of the child, they found that, despite parental reports of "one person–one language," their language practices showed a significant amount of code switching (Goodz, 1989; De Houwer, 1990). Because these naturalistic studies do not anlayze the effects of code mixing on bilingual acquisition and because other psycholinguistic studies do not examine bilingual practices in the home, the question of what type of bilingual language practices (one person–one language versus language mixing) facilitates the acquisition of separate codes cannot be adequately answered at this time.

One consequence of pursuing the question of unitary or differentiated bilingual acquisition is that researchers have neglected a very important acquisition phenomenon, namely the acquisition of code switching itself in early childhood. While there are numerous sociolinguistic studies of school-age children code switching behavior (Auer, 1988; Genishi, 1981; McClure, 1977; Zentella, 1990), there are no studies of the acquisition processes that lead to this competence in later life. Questions that might illuminate grammatical development include: how does code switching change over developmental time? Do young children's code switching practicing follow the same lexical and grammatical constraints as that of the adults in their speech communities? How do young children use code switching to achieve pragmatic ends?

Another neglected but crucial question in understanding the processes and outcomes of bilingual acquisition is how local language ideologies underlying the languages in particular communities affects young children's acquisition of these languages. Not all languages are valued equally; some may be viewed as prestige forms whereas others may be disvalued or even stigmatized by the community and/or by members of a child's family. The prestige forms are often associated with educational achievement and social and economic mobility, while the nonprestigious forms are often associated with traditional values. These ideologies surrounding particular languages are socialized along with the codes themselves, sometimes in extremely subtle ways. Where there is high value placed on a particular code over another, the highly valued code

has a better chance of survival as part of a young child's individual linguistic repertoire as well as part of the community's repertoire over historical time.

A dramatic example of the role of ideology in causing a shift from multilingual to monolingual acquisition is found in Kulick's language socialization study of the Gapun community of Papua New Guinea, where Taiap and the lingual franca Tok Pisin as well as the vernaculars of other villages are actively used (Kulick, 1992). In this community, the local vernacular Taiap is rapidly disappearing from the linguistic repertoire of language acquiring children, not because of an explicit devaluation of Taiap but because of implicit devaluation through language socialization practices. Taiap adults insist that they want children to acquire the local vernacular, and place the blame for its loss on the will of the children to reject Taiap in favor of Tok Pisin. However, their language socialization practices indicate that caregivers code switch into Tok Pisin far more than they realize and that they socialize young children into associating Tok Pisin with modernity, Christianity, and education and Taiap with backwardness and paganism. The result is that "although no village child under 10 actively commands the vernacular language, most children between 5 and 10 possess a good passive understanding of Taiap" (Kulick, 1992: 217).

Another example of how ideology affects bilingual acquisition come from Schieffelin's language socialization study of Haitian families in New York City (Schieffelin, 1994). Young children in these families participate in Haitian Creole, English, and sometimes French conversational exchanges, but for the most part are using English. Adults assume that all Haitian children learn to speak Creole; it is integral with their Haitian identity. English, on the other hand, is seen as essential for success in school and for successful participation in American society. In contrast to Creole, English is viewed as requiring attention and explicit instruction. This ideology can be seen in the language socialization practices with children, wherein adults will themselves use Creole to praise children when the children speak in English. In addition, adults convey this ideology through recurrent code switching in which they paraphrase their own and children's Creole utterances in English.[7]

5 Steps to a Cultural Ecology of Grammatical Development

A consistent message throughout this chapter is that grammatical development cannot be adequately accounted for without serious analysis of the social and cultural milieu of the language acquiring child. We have seen that grammatical development is an outcome of two primary sociocultural contexts: (1) where children participate regularly in socially and culturally organized activities, and (2) where the language(s) being acquired is/are highly valued and children are encouraged to learn it/them.

The first point implies that no special form of language, such as simplified grammar, is necessary for children's grammatical development; the only requirement is that children are involved routinely in a community's social network and in the everyday activities that hold that community together. We have suggested that certain linguistic accommodations may be an outcome of cultural conceptions of the child, including expectations about the communicative roles of young children from birth onward. In communities where infants and young children are frequently expected to take on *central* communicative roles such as addressee or speaker, members provide a great deal of social, cognitive, and linguistic support. For example, in selecting an infant or young child as addressee, members may simplify their grammar, as a means of getting the child to respond. Or, in selecting a child as speaker, members may simplify the child's task by, for example, ventriloquating, prompting, or expanding the message. On the other hand, in communities where infants and young children are often assigned the more *peripheral* role (Lave and Wenger, 1991) of overhearers, they are participants in linguistically complex activities. In all communities, children take on a range of communicative roles but *when* in their development, in *which* social situations, and *how often* they do so varies from community to community. A culturally organized means–ends model accounts for this pattern in that it allows for crosscultural similarity in the linguistic means employed to accomplish social ends (such as talking to a child), but allows for the possibility that there will be cultural variation in the situational manifestation of a particular social end (e.g. the developmental point at which members start treating children as addressees who are to respond in culturally appropriate ways.)

The second point implies that mere exposure to a language is not sufficient to account for its acquisition. Analyses of grammatical development in linguistically heterogeneous communities need to be culturally contextualized by including the language ideologies prevalent in those communities. Further, as noted earlier, analysts can not rely exclusively on members' reports of their own and others' speech behavior to assess these ideologies; ideologies are often below the level of awareness and must be investigated through the systematic analysis of speech practices. For example, in multilingual communities, the practice of code switching reveals values attached to each code that members do not articulate through structured interviews. Depending on historical and cultural contexts, codes may be differently valued, and members may display ambivalent feelings towards one or more of these codes in their everyday speech practices. Our point is that language acquiring children acquire values associated with each code through participation in social activities involving code selection and this cultural knowledge impacts their acquisition of codes. With the increasing number of diaspora communities worldwide and the spread of international languages and literacies, the acquisition and maintenance of minority and indigenous languages is becoming increasingly problematic (Dorian, 1989). Psycholinguistic studies of children's bilingual acquisition need to attend to the fact that grammatical development

takes place in a world market of languages, where different languages, like other cultural commodities, carry different economic and political values.

In summary, while grammatical development does not depend upon a simplified speech environment, cultural values attached to particular codes do impact the acquisition (or nonacquisition) of those codes. Furthermore, cultural systems of belief, knowledge, and social order profoundly affect the acquisition of particular grammatical constructions. In section 3, we suggested that even very young children appear to be sensitive to the ways in which grammatical constructions within a code index social identity, in that they select forms that appropriately constitute their identity as "child" or as "male" or "female," or as one who is carrying out an appropriate role, such as "one who begs for food or things." A language socialization approach provides an analytic framework for assessing the social activities and identities that grammar indexes as well as the cultural norms, preferences, and expectations that define those activities and identities.

In this analysis, we have drawn primarily on ethnographic studies to make the point that culture affects grammatical development in surprising and subtle yet systematic ways. Culture is still missing from most accounts of grammatical development, and until more culturally sensitive accounts are available, we will only be guessing about the extent to which culture organizes the linguistic forms and practices of young children as speakers, addressees, and audiences over developmental time.[8] Until the cultural ecology of grammar is better understood, grammatical development will continue to be viewed predominantly as an acultural process. Since language is a universal resource for constituting social life and cultural knowledge, and since members are deeply concerned with children's able participation in social life and command of cultural knowledge, then it makes good sense that analyses of children's production and comprehension of grammar seriously take these sociocultural universals into account and incorporate ethnographic methodology to capture the complexities of the social life of language (Sankoff, 1980).

NOTES

1 Research on children's understanding of word meanings in terms of event structures (Nelson, 1986; Sell, 1992) indicates that early in their lives, young children develop conceptual structures that link language systematically to situational contexts.

2 The work of John Gumperz (1982a, 1982b) and his collaborators investigating interethnic communication, or "cross-talk," amply demonstrates many of these difficulties.

3 We are not suggesting that these are the only strategies for simplifying the dance to novices. As the work of Lave and Wenger (1991) and Rogoff (1990) suggest, the child could, for

example, be assigned a limited role in the dance and not have to master the entire routine. In language, this might correspond to expecting the child to understand and respond to/display only a portion of a message.

4   Rogoff (1990) presents the interesting hypothesis that children and caregivers who are in body contact with one another for most of the day have the opportunity to communicate nonvocally through body movements. Infants can signal discomfort and caregivers can manipulate the infant entirely through somatic means.

5   This point was emphatically made by Bloom (1970) regarding the absence of the instrumental and dative in children's early utterances in spite of their pervasiveness in adult speech.

6   Two exceptions are De Houwer (1990) and Goodz (1989), both of whom relied not on parental report but also examined speech practices in the home.

7   Focusing on young adults and children, Schmidt (1985) and Bavin (1989) have related language ideology to language shift among the Djirbal and Walpiri peoples of Australia respectively. For studies of language shift more generally, see Dorian (1989), Gal (1979), and Hill and Hill (1986).

8   Slobin (1992: 6) comments in his crosslinguistic study of language acquisition: "This may be time to remember – as Ochs and Schieffelin (1984) have incisively argued – that language acquisition ALWAYS takes place in cultural and interpersonal contexts. The ethnographic content of chapters on 'exotic' languages shows how much ethnography is MISSING from our accounts of the acquisition of languages in more familiar settings."