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Children and Language: Readings in Early Language and Socialization by Sinclair Rogers
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Language in Society, Vol. 6, No. 1 (Apr., 1977), pp. 119-124
Published by: Cambridge University Press
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/4166914
Accessed: 04/02/2014 12:21

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SINCLAIR ROGERS (ed.), *Children and language: Readings in early language and socialization*. London: Oxford University Press, 1975. Pp. ix+346.

There has been a growing recognition in recent years of the limitations of syntactic models as descriptive and explanatory devices for child language. Recent research has, consequently, focused on other dimensions of language, for example cognitive bases of acquisition, semantic relations, and social factors. Acquisition of language has been viewed in sociocultural contexts, including socialization as a process interdependent on emergent skills. This broadening of the scope and interests of child language studies has been among the most pronounced trends during the 1970s.

It is appropriate that the first reader on early language and socialization is interdisciplinary in scope: 'The overall aim of this collection of readings is to bring together, from a wide spread of disciplines, articles which give body, social and personal context to the study of child language' (viii). Rogers also stresses the importance of social and cultural environments on the acquisition process and on what is acquired. He calls for a different approach to child language – 'an examination of the roles and functions of children's language in society; for with development in language ability goes increased language use which leads to an increased awareness of the world and the child's society and his place in it' (viii).

Those goals are commendable; a growing number of researchers in child language would applaud them. There is, however, a perplexing aspect to Rogers' historical treatment of the socialization approach to child language. A claim is made in the Introduction that actual context and language use have almost always been ignored in theories of language acquisition. The claim has some validity if the history of language acquisition studies is viewed essentially as a conflict between innatists and behaviorists (as is implied in the Introduction). But this is not to present an accurate history. In the late 1960s the neglect of social dimensions of child language was noted and discussed (cf. Ervin-Tripp 1969; Slobin *et al.* 1967), and as early as 1961 Dell Hymes sketched the need for a sociocultural approach to child language. He provided a sociolinguistic perspective for child language in 1971, and many researchers in the first half of the present decade have investigated language acquisition from sociolinguistic standpoints. There is a growing and significant body of literature, for instance, on parental speech and child language socialization (some of it addressed, incidentally, to the innatist–behaviorist dispute). Unfortunately, only two of these sociolinguistic studies (except M. A. K. Halliday's and Basil Bernstein's) is cited, much less discussed.

The overstatement of the newness of a sociolinguistic perspective and the failure to note recent and significant research are two shortcomings of the Introduction. There are others. The Introduction is brief, only three pages,

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and although Rogers does raise relevant questions and issues, they suffer from lack of context. The statements tend to be indexical, making it difficult to evaluate and assess what is intended and what is important. For instance, a claim is made that children have a greater range of uses of language than adults, 'who tend to think of language as primarily a medium for carrying messages; children on the other hand use it to learn and understand the world, society, about themselves, they use it to play with and so on' (viii). It is difficult to see what the claim means, and no elaboration is given except to refer to one of Halliday's articles in the collection that makes the claim 'abundantly clear'.

An Introduction providing a comprehensive overview of child language socialization would have added greatly to the value of the reader. The diversity of topics, disparate theoretical positions, and levels of technical complexity in the articles require a synthetic and integrated overview. A summary of the issues in child language socialization would have been helpful, as would a discussion of what is to be gained in acquisition studies from an examination of the social usages of language. And, to raise only one relevant question posed by the articles, what new insights are provided by a functional approach to child language?

Since the book lacks a comprehensive overview, a rationale for the selection of the individual articles would have been useful. Although no explicit information is given, Rogers does provide some useful background in brief (half-page) introductions to each of the five sections in the reader. Also, some articles are prefaced with a note explaining their relevance to child language socialization. The organization of the sections helps to reveal the overall plan of the book: Section One – The social contexts of language; Section Two – The functions of language in understanding the self, the world and society; Section Three – Language and the development of thinking; Section Four – Language and meaning: and Section Five – Language and the Environment.

The problem still remains as to why particular articles were chosen. What is the rationale, for instance, for including in Section Two an extract from Benjamin Lee Whorf's 'Science and linguistics'? Admittedly Whorf was an important historical figure, and he was concerned with the 'organization of reality' (the title of the excerpt), but it is not apparent except in a general way what that has to do with child language. To say that Whorf's 'linguistic relativity' shows that '...as a child acquires language he also acquires a "shaper of ideas"...' (100) is to take for granted what has long been controversial about Whorf's work. The relationship between cognitive content and emergent linguistic structure is one of the major research tasks in child-language studies, and although structural differences among languages may be a convenient place to begin a search for source of cultural variation (i.e. culture as learned precepts and cognition), it is certainly not a foregone conclusion that there will be a direct relationship.

Another 'problematic' article in Section Two is Kingsley Davis' 'Severe social isolation'. Comprising extracts from two articles of his in the 1940s, the

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excerpt contains a report on the communication retardation and disabilities of a girl who suffered from prolonged and severe isolation and malnutrition. Is the general point that language won't develop properly if there is not supportive social environment a sufficient basis for including the article in a 'new directions' book on language socialization?

Similar criticisms can be raised about other selections. An excerpt from Cathy Hayes' *An ape in our house* is meant to show how limited and how heavily dependent on context a chimpanzee's understanding of human speech is. No doubt context is critical, but more recent research (not cited) on chimpanzee communication with sign language is more illuminating for questions about context and language competence in non-human primates.

Several articles are more directly related to language and socialization, and two sections deal specifically with child language. Section One contains excerpts from Robin Campbell and Roger Wales ('The study of language acquisition'), David McNeill ('The contribution of experience'); and Lois Bloom ('Language in a context'). The editorial preface to this section indicates that the articles show, overall, that acquisition of language must be seen in terms of children's communicative environment and not merely in terms of language structure. Section Five contains excerpts from Harry Osser ('Biological and social factors in language development'), Ellis Olim ('Maternal language styles and language development'), and Basil Bernstein ('Language and socialization'). Since these articles address the same issues as those in Section One, it is not obvious why they constitute a separate section.

Osser's article, in fact, would have been an excellent lead article for the anthology. He gives a clear, succinct summary of child-language research to approximately 1970, and he presents a balanced discussion of biological and social factors in language acquisition. The nativist or innatist position is reviewed from a biological viewpoint (Lenneberg), a linguistic viewpoint (Chomsky), and a psycholinguistic viewpoint (McNeill). The environmentalist position is then discussed from two viewpoints, behaviorism (Braine, Jenkins and Palermo), and sociolinguistics (Hymes and Bernstein). A straightforward comparison of the various viewpoints is made, emphasizing points of convergence in their positions. One such point is that a broad spectrum of analytic procedures in relation to diverse situations is necessary to assess children's language capabilities. From a theoretical and methodological standpoint, Osser's article could have helped set the stage for the entire book.

Most of the articles in Sections Two, Three, and Four are designed to relate language to other concepts such as self, society, thought, and meaning. Section Two contains, in addition to the Whorf and Davis selections, articles by M. A. K. Halliday ('Relevant models of language'), C. F. Hockett ('Linguistic continuity'), D. L. Goyvaerts ('The acquisition of social roles'), A. W. Read ('Family language'), and I. and P. Opie ('Language in children's culture').

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Section Three contains articles by M. M. Lewis ('Language and exploration'), A. R. Luria ('The directive function of speech in development and dissolution'), J. B. Carroll and J. B. Casagrande ('Language structuring experience'), and H. G. Furth ('Thinking without language'). Section Four contains four articles: M. A. K. Halliday ('Learning to mean'), E. H. Lenneberg ('Understanding language without ability to speak'), H. Werner and E. Kaplan ('The contexts of meaning'), and C. Hayes ('Non-human language').

Rogers notes in the Introduction that Halliday's 'Relevant models of language' is the pivotal article in the reader. Halliday asks what a model of language would be like if we consider a child's image of language. He responds that children know what language is because they know what it does. Moreover, children are considered to use their language in ways other than do adults, and a language model for children is thus not congruent with one for adult speakers. The functions are considered to be different, and Halliday proposed several functional models for child language – the instrumental, regulatory, interactional, personal, heuristic, imaginative, and representational (later changed to informative). These derive from basic language functions in child usage, which Halliday identifies, respectively, as 'I want', 'do as I tell you', 'me and him (including "me and my mommy")', 'here I come', 'tell me why', 'let's pretend', and 'I've got something to tell you'. The latter – the informative model – is held to be the only one that many adults have and therefore the one toward which child language develops.

In 'Learning to mean', Halliday applies his models to interpret the language development of his son, Nigel. What he shows is that while there is no step-by-step progression in the appearance of the seven functions, they cluster to reflect a developmental pattern. Halliday identifies three phases of sociolinguistic development: *functional origins*, *transitional*, and *into language*. The first four functions were present in Phase I, but not in any developmental order. They did, however, clearly precede the other functions. The heuristic and imaginative appeared in Phase I, but not as frequently as the initial four, and the informative function did not appear at all.

A significant development in Phase II was a shift in functional orientation. The appearance of a new function, the 'mathetic' or 'learning' function seemed to be a synthesis of two non-pragmatic Phase I functions, the personal (self-oriented) and the heuristic (other-oriented). Still another function appears in Nigel's speech, the pragmatic, which represents a generalization of the remaining functions and is used both to satisfy needs and interact with others. The distinction between mathetic and pragmatic is essentially between language as learning and language as doing. Significantly, Nigel's language structure reflected the distinction, since vocabulary and grammar to express the functions were *at first* kept separate, suggesting that the functions represent a powerful strategy in acquisition of language form.

In Phase III a major change concerns the notion of function; function is no

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longer synonymous with use. In adult language, 'use' is extended and generalized whereas functions remain more specific and finite. Halliday identifies two functions that are fundamental components of adult grammar. These are '...(i) ideational, embodying the speaker's experience and interpretation of the world that is around him and inside him, and (ii) interpersonal, embodying his own involvement in the speech situation – his roles, attitudes, wishes, judgments and the like' (252). Children in Phase III begin mapping the mathetic and pragmatic functions onto those components.

Halliday's models of child language socialization have several attractive features. The functional approach requires that children's utterances be viewed in context, i.e., related to events and activities and not treated solely in linguistic terms. Further, children's knowledge of the use of language must be considered, as the emergence of the strategic use of language represents an important development in communicative competence. Another noteworthy dimension of the models is the analysis of child language as relatively independent of adult models. Assessment of child language according to categories, dimensions, and standards of adult language is a methodological pitfall (especially true in the case of generative grammar), and Halliday's model attempts to avoid that problem.

Much of the richness of Halliday's model derives from the notions that 'Children know what language is because they know what language does' (54) and that what children do with language is not functionally equivalent with what adults do. This latter point, however, if interpreted too strictly, can create problems. As noted, a claim is made that the informative model is the only model that many adults have (60). While it may be the case that some adults have that as the predominant model in their speech, it seems unlikely that it would be the only model, even for those speakers. Functions are viewed, it should be stressed, not in isolation nor in individual occurrences, but as expressive of language usages that share similar roles *vis-à-vis* the speaker and the environment. Thus an adult speaker with a predominant model, say, of instrumental and regulatory functions would certainly be abnormal. But would a speaker with only an informative model not be anomalous?

Although questions can be raised about the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the child models, a more immediate question is whether the adult model is adequate, since an account of how the functions in child language develop into those of adult language is dependent on that model. Is the range of adult uses really less than for children? It would seem rather that the organization of the uses is different, that the configurations would not be equivalent. Children learn to reorganize their strategic uses of language, so that in time they begin to approximate the adult system. As they move toward the adult models, instrumental, regulatory, interactional, etc., would still be present, but not in the same manner as in the early stages of socialization, i.e. not in terms of self, intentions, context, and of linguistic resources. Terminology may cloud the issue here.

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To call dimensions of both child and adult speech by terms such as instrumental and regulatory may imply a continuous development, and that clearly is what Halliday wants to avoid. The functions in his models undergo transformations. Adults do, however, use 'instrumental' speech functions, and children must learn to use them too. If those functions do not emerge through the transformations of the children's 'regulatory' functions, where do they come from? When and how are they learned?

In summary, the goal of this anthology is an admirable one – to place child-language studies in the context of socialization. This requires a broad perspective of language as a social and cultural phenomenon and a functional view of children's sociolinguistic development. The articles chosen to illustrate those dimensions of language socialization are, however, considerably different in quality, levels of technical complexity, and direct relevance to language acquisition. Some articles are related to language socialization in only general ways, particularly those articles that make claims about the place of language in culture and society. They are best suited for a non-specialist audience, particularly since they reflect an earlier period of language and culture studies. The book could be used profitably for introductory courses in disciplines where the linguistic knowledge of students would be minimal. It would certainly be a worthwhile objective to encourage students to adopt a view of language development that included social and cultural factors. The book, on the other hand, contains little that is new for the specialist (except possibly Halliday's work), and its lack of organization and cohesiveness reduces its value.

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(Received 5 April 1976)

B. TH. M. TERVOORT, *Developmental features of visual communication*. Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1975.

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