Development of Communicative Competence

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Topics

• Intro to communicative competence
• Emergence of communicative intents and functions
• Discourse-pragmatic development: conversations
• Sociolinguistic development & language socialization

Hoff, pp 241-287
Intro to Communicative Competence
Components of Communicative Competence

• Discourse-Pragmatic knowledge
  • Beyond the linguistic form: communicative intentions and functions
  • Beyond the sentence: broader context of the communicative interaction
  • Intentionality and Theory of Mind

• Sociolinguistic knowledge
  – Sociolects/Registers
  – Language socialization
What is the relationship between communication and language?

• Independence of language and communication
• Communication driving the development of language?
  – Motivation
  – Function before form
    • Pragmatic Bootstrapping: Children use the function of language – their desire to influence others – to break into the formal system of language.
Emergence of Communicative Intent and functions
Bates et al (1975)

- 3 children longitudinal every 2 weeks for 6 mos (1=2mos; 1=6mos; 1=12mos)
- Perlocutionary phase (birth - 10 mos)
  - Signals but no intent
- Illocutionary phase (10-12 mos)
  - Signals = vocal & gesture = intent
  - Protoimperatives
  - Protodeclaratives
- Locutionary phase (12 mos+)
  - Intents communicated with linguistic forms
### What kinds of communicative functions are children encoding in holophrases?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speech Act</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>labeling</td>
<td>Use word while attending to object or event</td>
<td>Child touches doll’s eyes &amp; says ‘eyes’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answering</td>
<td>Answers adult’s question, addresses adult</td>
<td>MOT: what’s that? CHI: bow wow</td>
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<tr>
<td>Requesting action</td>
<td>Word signaling demand, addresses adult and waits for response</td>
<td>Child, unable to push a peg through hole, utters ‘uh uh uh’ and looks at mother</td>
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<tr>
<td>Requesting</td>
<td>Asks question with a word, addresses adult and waits for response</td>
<td>Child picks up book and says ‘book?’</td>
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<tr>
<td>Calling</td>
<td>Calls adult’s name loudly, waits for response</td>
<td>Child shouts ‘Mama’ across room</td>
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</table>
Discourse-Pragmatic Development: Conversation

Piaget: Egocentrism?
Skills for Making Conversation

1. Turn-taking
2. Understanding the hearer’s perspective
3. Topic initiation
4. Repairs of miscommunication
5. Contingent responding: sustaining dialogue
6. Narrative abilities
Turn-Taking

• Early emerging: turn-taking with vocalizations by 6 mos
• Toddlers respond to speech directed at them, especially questions
• Bloom, Rocissano & Hood (1976): adjacency = first skill to develop
• Responding ≠ understanding
  *MOT: what colour is that? (points at a blue hat)
  *CHI: blue
  *MOT: that’s right! That’s a blue hat
  *MOT: now, what colour are those? (points at red shoes)
  *CHI: blue
Understanding the Hearer’s Perspective

• Shared information / old information
  – Definite articles and pronouns
  – Null subjects

• New information
  – Indefinite articles and lexical noun phrases
Understanding the Hearer’s Perspective

- Paradis & Navarro (2001): Subject use by 2 monolingual Spanish and 1 English-Spanish bilingual child
- When do children grasp the form and function of null subjects? Is bilingual = monolingual?
  - Adult Spanish: Form = 20-30% overt subjects in conversation; function = omission when old/shared information
- Results:
  - Monolinguals = both form and function by 2;0
  - Bilingual = higher % overt subjects; higher % pronouns; more subjects with old information
  - Bilingual: English interference or input?
Emilio’s overt subjects 1;8-2;7 (monolingual)
Manuela’s overt subjects 1;9-2;6 (bilingual)
Topic Initiation

• Enter a new topic into conversation
• Foster (1986): 5 children from 1-24 mos
  – Topic initiation increased
  – Switch from nonverbal to verbal initiation
  – Topic type expanded
    • First = about child
    • Second = child’s immediate environment
    • Third = things absent from environment
• Topic initiation dependent on language development?
Allison (1;8)/Mother dialogue

*MOT: what did you see? [topic 1: MOT initiate]
%sit: Mother and Allison sitting on chair; Allison wearing half-zippered jacket; fingers in her mouth
*MOT: what did you see over there?
%gpx: <aft> points to monitor
*ALI: Mommy.
*MOT: yeah.
*MOT: and who else?
*ALI: baby doll.
*MOT: baby doll?
*ALI: baby Allison.
*MOT: baby Allison.
*MOT: yes.
*MOT: are you ready to take your coat off? [topic 2: MOT initiate]
Allison (1;8)/Mother dialogue (cont’d)

*MOT: are you ready to take your coat off? [topic 2 cont’d]
*ALI: no.
*MOT: no?
*MOT: let's unzip it, it (i)s very warm.
*ALI: no!
%act: resists
*ALI: on.
*MOT: oh, well, let's take it off.
*MOT: aren't you a little bit warm?
*MOT: besides, it (i)s not raining.
*ALI: children rain. [topic 3: ALI initiate]
*ALI: walk.
*ALI: rain.
*MOT: children rain, walk rain, yes.
Allison/Mother dialogue

- Allison3.cha (36 child utterances/3 pages)
  - Topics
    - Discussing what Allison sees/saw in the monitor
    - Taking off Allison’s coat
    - Story of children in the rain
  - Topics initiated by Allison
    - Story of children in the rain
Repairs of Miscommunication

• If breakdown in communication, must re-send the message - repair

• Golinkoff (1986): Children 1;0-1;8 - mostly nonverbal, but able to repeat or modify signals when message failed

• Parents request clarification more often from older children

• < 3;0, most repairs are repetition; > 3;0, children revise more often

• Bilingual children: identifying language as source of miscommunication?
Allison/Mother dialogue: miscommunication repair

*MOT: Let's take your coat off.
*ALI: up.
*MOT: what?
*ALI: neck. (repair: different word + gesture = revision)
%gpx: points to her neck
*MOT: neck?
*MOT: what do you want?
*ALI: neck. (repair: repetition)
*MOT: what's on your neck?
*ALI: zip. (repair: different word + gesture = revision)
*ALI: up.
%gpx: points to zipper and lifts chin
*MOT: zipper up?
*MOT: aren't you a little bit warm?
Contingent Responding: Sustaining Dialogue

• Conversations are build on contingent responses
• Bloom, Rocissano & Hood (1976): adult/child interaction; 21-36 mos; 3 stages according to MLU
• Coding system for children’s utterances:
  – Adjacent to adult’s
  – Adjacent and Noncontingent
  – Adjacent and Imitative
  – Adjacent and Contingent
• Results: MLU < 2.0 = nonadjacent & noncontingent proportionally more frequent than contingent and imitation; MLU 3.5-4.0 = contingent most frequent response type
Examples of contingent / noncontingent responses

• Adjacent, but noncontingent:
  *MOT: what do you want to eat?
  *CHI: pop goes the weasel!

• Adjacent and contingent:
  *MOT: so we can play now or have a snack or do anything you want now.
  *CHI: not now maybe later.

• Contextually contingent, linguistically unrelated:
  *MOT: where’s the other sock?
  *CHI: see my sitting on it.

• Contextually contingent, linguistically related:
  *MOT: pussycat is calling to wolf. Why?
  *CHI: because he’s up in this building too tall.
Narrative Abilities

• Narratives = recounting past events in conversation
• Children’s early narrative abilities depend on **scaffolding** (= adult question asking and providing information to sustain story)
• Children include “generic” information in their early narratives
• School-age children can engage in complex story-telling; unlike preschoolers
Narratives 2;0-4;0

• Narrative 1;8-2;0: Heavy scaffolding
  *CHI: bandaid.
  *EXP: bandaid?
  *EXP: do you need a bandaid?
  *EXP: did you hurt yourself?
  *CHI: bandaid.
  *MOT: yes, that’s right.
  %sit: enters the room
  *MOT: who gave you the bandaid?
  *MOT: was it the nurse at the clinic?
  *MOT: you were a brave girl.
  *CHI: bandaid.
  %gpx: turns toward EXP and points to her arm
Narratives 2;0-4;0

• Narrative 3;0: Minimal scaffolding
  *CHI: you know what I was doing?
  *FAT: what?
  *CHI: I was doing my work.
  *FAT: your work?
  *CHI: like I do at home.

• Narrative 4;0: No scaffolding
  *CHI: I have two sisters, one with blond hair like me and the other with long black hair.
  *CHI: And the one with black hair, when she was four like me, she cut her hair with scissors that aren’t for cutting hair.
  *CHI: and now she has short hair.
Adults’ Role in Children’s Development of Discourse-Pragmatic Skills

- Infant-directed communicative exchanges
  - Infants are conversation partners
  - Fostering development of intentionality in communication?
- Joint attention
  - Fosters awareness of mental states of others?
- Question asking
  - Children more likely to respond to questions
  - Mothers ask a lot of questions to children
  - Children’s ability to sustain dialogue is based on questions
Question-asking as Scaffolding: Allison/Mother Dialogue

*MOT: it isn’t raining.
*ALI: children rain.
*ALI: walk.
*ALI: rain.
*MOT: children rain, walk rain, yes.
*MOT: we saw the children walking in the rain, didn’t we? *(repetitive)*
*ALI: car.
*MOT: what?
*ALI: car.
*MOT: who was in the car? *(elaborative)*
*CHI: Mommy.
*MOT: what was Mommy doing? *(elaborative)*
*CHI: drive.
*MOT: and what were the children doing? *(elaborative)*
Peer Conversations among Children

- 3;0-5;0 could sustain conversations for 4-12 exchanges
- 4;0: 75% shorter than 12 per topic
- Dialogue = small component of young children’s “conversations”.
  - Children talk to themselves, to toys
Sociolinguistic Development

Learning to modify language according to context
Children’s Ability to Make Direct and Indirect Requests

• Request formulations at 2;0
  Book read direct (imperative)
  More juice direct (goal statement)
  Carol hungry indirect (problem statement)

• Request formulations at 3;0
  Would you push this? direct (ques)
  Can you give me one car, please? direct (ques)
  You could give one to me. indirect (hint)
  You can make a crown. indirect (hint)
Children’s Ability to be Polite

- Bates (1976): Children 2;10-6;0 told to ask a grey-haired puppet for candy. Then told to ask again ‘very nicely’.
- All children could reformulate their requests when asked
- > 3;5 used more indirect requests, and more variety in request forms
Children’s Child Directed Speech

- Older children use CDS with younger children
- Children’s CDS:
  - Shorter MLU and fewer questions than children’s ADS
  - Contains many directives and attention-getting statements: ‘hey look’, ‘watch me’
  - Fewer questions and scaffolding than adults’ CDS
- Peer group versus parent-child socialization patterns
Gender Differences in Children’s Language use

• Gender differences in adults’ language use:
  – Women ask more questions, utterances that encourage responses, positive minimal responses
  – Men more likely to interrupt, ignore comments, control topic, make direct declarations

• When do these differences emerge?
Gender Differences in Children’s Language use

• Observational research in preschools:
  – Boys= more imperatives, more assertive in requests, interrupt more, solve conflicts with threats
  – Girls = ask for help more, more polite, more indirect requests, solve conflicts by negotiation

• What are little girls and boys made of…..?
  – Sugar & spice & everything nice vs. snakes & snails & puppy dog tails?

• Gender-specific communication styles more prominent in all boy or all girl play groups

• Are girls really ‘nicer’?

• Gender differences in language use part of socialization to male and female roles
The study of language socialization has as its goal understanding how persons become members of their social groups and the role language has in this process. Language socialization, therefore, concerns two major areas of socialization: socialization through the use of language and socialization to use language. (Schieffelin, 1990)
Ethnographic Approaches to Language Development

- Many theories of language acquisition based on observations in middle-class western culture

- Ethnographic approach: language acquisition = culture acquisition
Cultural Determinants of Variability in Conversations with Children
### Status and Role of Children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children = conversation partners</th>
<th>Children ≠ conversation partners</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Children = high status</td>
<td>Children = low status</td>
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$\Rightarrow$
Social Organization of Caregiving

• Who talks to children? What topics?
  – Western society (modern) vs. non-Western

• What kind of input from older children?
Folk Beliefs about How Children Learn Language

• Children taught to speak directly by adults?

• Children learn more indirectly? Listen and practice?
## Typology of Language Socialization Patterns

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<tr>
<th>Adapt Situation to Child</th>
<th>Adapt Child to Situation</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Simplified register</td>
<td>Modeling of un-simplified language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Negotiation of meaning</strong></td>
<td>Clarification requests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cooperative proposition building</strong></td>
<td>Child directed to notice others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Respond to child-initiated verbal</strong></td>
<td>Topics arise from situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>and non-verbal topics</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td><strong>Dyadic interactions are typical</strong></td>
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Contrasting Language Socialization Patterns

Anglo-American culture
Kaluli culture (Ochs & Schieffelin, 1984)
Papua New Guinea
Anglo-American: Context

- Families:
- Middle-upper/middle class - basis of observation
- Primary caregiver:
Anglo-American: Patterns

• Children = appropriate conversation partners
• Frequent dyadic interactions
• Belief: children learn language through use not teaching
• Families uncomfortable with competence differentials:
Kaluli: Context (1970s)

• Traditional living situation:
• Non-literate, egalitarian society
• Primary caregivers:
Kaluli: Patterns (1970s)

- Babies are “helpless”, “soft”, “no understanding”
- Cultural dispreference for talking about what another might think or feel
- Language begins when child says “mother” and “breast”
- Behaviours toward infants:
- When children begin to talk:
  - Teaching strategies
  - When speaking directly to children
Language Socialization: Conclusions

• When children learn language, learn more than grammatical code

• Impact of different socialization patterns on rate of language development?
  – Middle class western vs. poor third world
  – Pye (1983): Kiche Maya culture: slower start, but similar levels by age 5;0

• Practical implications for professionals in multicultural context