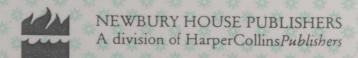# DEVELOPING
COMMUNICATIVE
COMPETENCE
IN A SECOND LANGUAGE

Edited by

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DEVELOPING
COMMUNICATIVE
COMPETENCE
IN A SECOND LANGUAGE

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ISSUES IN SECOND LANGUAGE RESEARCH

under the editorship of

Robin C. Scarcella and Michael H. Long

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Developing Communicative Competence in a Second Language

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INTRODUCTION

During the last two decades, major breakthroughs have been made in the fields of sociolinguistics, conversational analysis, and the ethnography of communication. Before the mid-1960s, linguistic competence was defined narrowly in terms of the grammatical knowledge of idealized speakers. In the 1960s, however, linguists and others became interested in extended notions of competence.

Hymes was among the first to use the term *communicative competence* (Hymes 1972, 1974). For Hymes, the ability to speak competently not only entails knowing the grammatical rules of a language, but also knowing what to say to whom in what circumstances and how to say it. In Hymes's view, "There are rules of use without which the rules of grammar would be useless" (1972: 45).

Hymes was also among the first to recognize the importance of communicative competence in language development. He states:

> The importance of concern with the child is partly that it offers a favorable vantage point for discovering the adult system, and that it poses neatly one way in which the ethnography of communication is a distinctive enterprise, i.e., an enterprise concerned with the abilities the child must acquire beyond those of producing and interpreting grammatical sentences, in order to be a competent member of its community, not only what may possibly be said, but also what should and should not be said. (Hymes 1972: 26.)

One of Hymes's major contributions to second language acquisition theory was his concept of *cultural interference*, which he defines as falling back on one's native culture when communicating in another. Reference to this concept is made

repeatedly throughout this volume. Hymes explains why cultural interference appears so frequently; as he points out, what is regarded as communicative competence in one speech community may be regarded as something else in another:

> Even the ethnographies that we have, though almost never focused on speaking, show us that communities differ significantly in ways of speaking, in patterns of repertoire and switching, in the roles and meanings of speech. They indicate differences with regard to beliefs, values, reference groups, norms and the like, as these enter into the ongoing system of language use and its acquisition by children. (Hymes 1972: 33.)

One area where the domain of communicative competence received direct attention from researchers in the 1960s and 1970s was the examination of *patterns of repertoire* within a given speech community. The term *register* was first used by Reid (1956) to describe systematic modifications in speech tied to *contexts of use*. This notion was later more fully developed by Ellis and Ure (1969) and by Halliday, McIntosh, and Strevens (1970). The latter researchers note that the notion of register is needed "when we want to account for what people do with their language" (1970: 87). In explaining this term, they state:

> When we observe language activity in the various contexts in which it takes place, we find differences in the type of language selected as appropriate to different types of situations. There is no need to labour the point that a sports commentary, a church service and a school lesson are linguistically quite distinct. One sentence from any of these and many more such situation types would enable us to identify it correctly. We know, for example, where "an early announcement is expected" and "apologies for absence were received" come from; these are not simply free variants of "we ought to hear soon" and "was sorry he couldn't make it." (1970: 87.)

It was Halliday, McIntosh, and Strevens who focused attention on "the users of language, and the uses they make of it" (1970: 73). Sociologists and ethnographers of communication also expanded earlier notions of linguistic competence through their discovery of the rules that govern conversation. For example, in a now classic paper, Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974) described the rules of the English "repair" system that enables speakers to fix or "repair" conversational difficulties. They also described the rules for opening and closing conversations and for keeping conversations going.

Along very different lines, Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) further enlarged earlier notions of linguistic competence by identifying the function of speech utterances (that is, what we do with language) and providing detailed analysis of such speech acts as the promise and the apology. Hatch and Wolfson were among the first to encourage investigations of the ways in which second language learners acquire the rules and norms governing the appropriate timing and realization of speech acts (see, for instance, Hatch 1983; Wolfson 1981, 1989). As Hatch (1983) points out:

A variety of forms can serve one speech act function. For example, a directive can be a question (can we have quiet?), an embedded imperative (would you please be quiet), an imperative (be quiet!), a hint (sure is noisy in here), etc., and the choice of syntactic form will be determined in part by a variety of sociolinguistic factors (e.g., sex, age, status of recipient). A statement such as "MacDonald's just opened" can serve as an invitation for an Egg McMuffin, an explanation for a traffic jam, or a counterassertion to "MacDonald's closed." The context in which the utterance is made determines the speech act function of the utterance and, along with other sociolinguistic variables, may determine its syntactic form. (Hatch: 1983: iv–x.)

Halliday and Hasan (1976) contributed to extended notions of linguistic competence in still another way. In their analysis of written text, they investigated how writers achieve *cohesion* and *coherence*. Halliday and Hasan (1976) used the term *cohesion* to refer to the linguistic features that relate sentences to one another. Such features include reference items such as "he" and "she," and conjunctives such as "first," "second," and "third." *Coherence,* as employed by Halliday and Hasan, refers to text that appropriately fits its situational context. A coherent text is appropriate with respect to such situational features as the channel (written or oral), the genre (be it a poem, narrative, or an expository essay), the topic discussed, the interests and needs of the reader and writer, the purpose of the text, the relationship between the reader and the writer, and so forth. For Halliday and Hasan, when a text is consistent with itself, it is cohesive; when it is consistent with its context, it is coherent.

Building on the descriptive work on communicative competence outlined above, researchers in child language development began to examine the acquisition of various aspects of communicative competence (Dore 1975; Ervin-Tripp 1977, and Ochs 1977 are just a few). Grimshaw and Holden (1976) were among the first to discuss the acquisition of communicative competence by first language acquirers. They suggest that aspects of communicative competence are acquired as late as adolescence. Andersen (1978), on the other hand, proposes that many speech registers are actually acquired very early, even before young children reach kindergarten (refer to Andersen, Chapter 1, this volume).

Whenever these components are acquired, social competence either precedes their development or is acquired concurrently. Grimshaw states:

> Although some learning is clearly cumulative, we know little about what constraints there may be on delayed learning, or what, if anything, can only be learned *after* particular levels of physiological, psychological, or social maturation are reached. Similarly, the mastery of many sociolinguistic skills (e.g., things as different as the accomplishment of condolences or the "civilized" termination of relationships and more specific skills such as irony and euphemism) requires a prior understanding of subtleties of relationships as well as competence with linguistic forms. (Grimshaw 1976: 35.)

According to Grimshaw, once enough has been learned to permit speakers to communicate and to manage social relations, energies are then expended on other

activities. This notion has important implications for language transfer. It suggests that speakers will fall back on the social knowledge of their first language when they *believe* this allows them to communicate effectively. It also explains why learners transfer social knowledge; although social rules vary greatly across cultures, many adults believe that these rules still function effectively in the second language.

In addition to looking at these different aspects of communicative competence, researchers in first language acquisition have recently become concerned with the notion of context-specific competence. Work such as that by Hecht (1983) has shown that children will demonstrate very different linguistic competence in the area of morphology related to the context in which data is collected. Similarly, researchers like Clark (1976) and Peters (1983) have explored the importance of *scripts* (i.e., situations for which one has in memory a clear model of expectations of structures and events), of familiar play situations, and of routines in facilitating a maximal expression of competence. Peters (1985) has made the point that researchers who examine the development of competence need to look at the same context across time.

Among second language researchers, Tarone (1981) has also stressed the importance of observing the development of competence across time in the same discourse context. She suggests examining language in casual speech situations since it is in this context that speakers display their greatest competence. Our view, which is consistent with Tarone's, is that in order to get a *complete* picture of a speaker's communicative competence, it is important to look at language use—both in production and comprehension—across a wide variety of discourse contexts.

Selinker and Douglas (1985) have made initial attempts to study aspects of language variation tied to what they have called "discourse domains." They suggest, for example, that a given second language learner may use pronouns correctly in a "life-story" domain, but use them incorrectly in a "technical" domain. While these ideas need further refinement, it seems clear that they provide a framework for further investigation.

Despite the growing literature on theories concerning the development of communicative competence, there is still an unfortunate paucity of research on this topic. Only through increased understanding of the development of communicative competence will the "current disarray in the area of communicative language pedagogy" described by Canale (1985) disappear. This understanding might suggest which aspects of communicative competence are most amenable to classroom instruction, which are best acquired through interaction, which are late- or early-acquired, and which facilitate the acquisition of other linguistic components.

ABOUT THIS BOOK

This volume examines the development of communicative competence. The volume begins with general, theoretical approaches to the development of communicative competence as well as some initial studies of this phenomenon in a first language. It then turns to empirical reports of the acquisition of communicative competence in a second language, using a framework proposed in earlier work by Canale and Swain (1980).

Canale and Swain's framework (see also Swain 1984) brings together various expanded notions of communicative competence. In their view, communicative competence minimally involves four areas of knowledge and skills. These include *grammatical competence*, which reflects knowledge of the linguistic code itself and includes knowledge of "vocabulary and rules of word formation, pronunciation, spelling, and sentence formation" (Swain 1984: 188); *sociolinguistic competence*, which "addresses the extent to which utterances are produced and understood appropriately" (Swain 1984: 189) and includes knowledge of speech acts; *discourse competence*, which involves mastery of how to combine grammatical forms and meanings to achieve a unified or written text in different genres such as narrative, argumentative essay, scientific report or business letter" (Swain: 188); and *strategic competence*, which "refers to the mastery of the communication strategies that may be called into action either to enhance the effectiveness of communication or to compensate for breakdowns in communication due to limiting factors in actual communication or to insufficient competence in one or more of the other components of communicative competence" (Swain: 189). Language appropriateness affects all four components of communicative competence (grammatical, sociolinguistic, discoursive, and strategic). For example, talking to university students about the importance of nutrition requires considerably different grammatical, sociolinguistic, discoursive, and strategic competences than lecturing to a group of three-year-olds on the same topic. There are a number of reasons why performance may vary from one situation to another. Each situation may entail a different cognitive load, and differences in task may also affect memory. In addition, different conversational partners and situations may cause varying degrees of anxiety and monitoring (Krashen 1982). Finally, different situations call for different linguistic proficiencies. For example, speakers can use routines and patterns in some situations, but must use complex linguistic structures in others.

The sections following the introduction are organized according to Canale and Swain's framework. Section One provides the reader with a historical perspective of the field as well as samples of methodological frameworks used in the analysis of communicative competence in a first language. Sections Two through Four discuss communicative competence in a second language, following the schema proposed by Canale and Swain (1980). Section Two includes reports of investigations of sociolinguistic competence, Section Three includes reports of discourse competence, and Section Four includes reports of strategic competence. To bridge gaps between theory and research, the final sections focus on applied approaches to communicative competence in the workplace (Section Five) and in the classroom (Section Six).

While we have used Canale and Swain's schema for organizing this book, it is certainly not the only possible one. We considered several other ways of arranging sections, and our reviewers suggested still other ways. In our view, this simply reflects the unsettled nature of the field of communicative competence, as well as the fact that several papers deal with more than one aspect of communicative

competence, and discuss both theory and application. Sato's chapter, for example, could be included in the section on sociolinguistic competence as well as communicative competence in the classroom since it provides data of interest to both theory and practice. Similarly, it has been suggested to us that Neu's chapter could be in the section on discourse competence or strategic competence since it discusses both discourse features and communication strategies.

We should also mention that while we did not include a section on grammatical competence, an important component of Canale and Swain's concept of communicative competence, this is only because there is already considerable research on grammatical development in a second language. Grammatical competence undoubtedly plays a critical role in the development of a learner's communicative competence. As has been pointed out repeatedly in the literature (see, for example, Larsen-Freeman 1980 and Wolfson and Judd 1983), learners who have acquired the rules and norms governing speech acts, discourse features, and communication strategies will fail to communicate competently without grammar in all but the most limited conversational situations.

Clearly, the empirical work presented here is still in its initial stages; we hope that this volume lays the groundwork for further investigation.

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Section One

COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE
IN A FIRST LANGUAGE

The chapters in this section provide readers with two examples of how issues related to the development of communicative competence have been explored in first language research. The opening chapter, "Acquiring Communicative Competence" by Elaine Andersen, provides an overview of some of the early research pertaining to the acquisition of sociolinguistic competence by child first language learners. In this chapter, Andersen focuses on the notion of *register,* which refers to systematic language patterning used in specific types of situations. In addition, she presents a brief summary of some findings from one of the first empirical studies of the acquisition of communicative competence by English-speaking children. Sharp cross-cultural contrasts to this work on white middle-class children are illustrated in Patricia Clancy's chapter, "Acquiring Communicative Style in Japanese." This study of the language socialization of children in Japan demonstrates how early mother-child interaction "trains" the child for "successful functioning" in what, from our perspective, is a highly "indirect intuitive mode of communication."

Andersen's opening chapter represents one of the first efforts to investigate the acquisition of sociolinguistic competence by child first language learners. This study (based on dissertation research, Andersen 1977) has important implications for second language research. Unfortunately, while second language researchers

have contributed much to our understanding of aspects of sociolinguistic competence such as speech acts, little research on register has been reported (see, however, Swain and Lapkin, Chapter 3, this volume). Moreover, much of the second language literature has focused on research methodologies and approaches rather than hypotheses and research questions. (The best discussion of these methodologies and approaches appears in Hatch 1983.)

Andersen's research has important methodological implications. For example, she suggests formal properties of registers that can be investigated (including speech acts; syntactic features, such as active vs. passive sentence forms and the differential frequency of sentence types; lexical features, such as colloquial or slang words vs. technical or scientific; and phonological markings, e.g., segmental, prosodic, and paralinguistic). In addition, she describes several types of registers (specifically, caretaker talk, foreigner talk, classroom language, and male-female language) and proposes that investigations are needed to determine *when* and *how* these registers are acquired.

In addition to contributing to research methodology, Andersen's chapter also has implications for theory. First, she points out the importance of universals.

> Although rules for appropriate language use may vary from culture to culture, they are usually sensitive across languages to many of the same factors, including the context and topic of discourse, and the sex, age, and status of the people speaking.

Second, she suggests the possibility that speakers differ with respect to their production and comprehension of registers.

> Though registers are shared by different speakers, speakers differ in the registers they may control actively or only passively. Most of us recognize and respond to many registers we never use, for example, the language of sermons.

Third, Andersen suggests that "the range of registers controlled by a given individual presumably reflects that individual's language experience." This suggests why adult second language acquirers frequently have difficulty acquiring the various registers of English; they simply lack language experience or input in these registers.

The results of Andersen's study indicate that knowledge of register variation is a very basic part of a speaker's communicative competence. Using a method she calls "controlled improvisation," Andersen recorded the speech of young children aged 4 to 7 as they role-played with puppets that represented a variety of characters differing in age, sex, professional status, and so forth. The data were then analyzed to determine the types of systematic modifications made by the children to mark distinct registers such as caretaker talk, doctor talk, teacher talk, and foreigner talk. The findings show that from an early age (3 or 4 years) "children are aware of a broad range of social variation and are sensitive to the linguistic means of encoding this variation. They make subtle distinctions among types and forms of speech acts, and select topics, sentence structures, lexical items, and phonological features to fit

the different roles and their sociolinguistic repertoires" (p. 23). The striking pervasiveness of register markers in everyday situations has important implications for second language acquisition, especially if you believe, like Halliday, McIntosh, and Strevens (1970) that:

> the choice of items from the wrong register, and the mixing of items from different registers, are among the most frequent mistakes make by non-native speakers of a language. (1970: 150.)

Clancy's chapter explores a slightly different aspect of communicative competence that she refers to as communicative style and that includes "the topics people discuss, their favorite forms of interaction, the depth of involvement sought, the extent to which they rely on the same channels for conveying information, and the extent to which they are attuned to the same level of meaning as factual versus emotional content" (Clancy 1986). In particular, she is concerned with how Japanese children acquire a style of communication that, compared with Western languages, is typically intuitive and indirect, based on a set of cultural values that emphasize empathy. She states:

> My data . . . reveal patterns of verbal interaction with 2-year-old children that could foster acquisition of an intuitive, "mind-reading" style of communication. Japanese mothers teach their children to pay attention to the speech of others, to intuit and empathize with their feelings, to anticipate their needs, and to understand and comply with their requests, even when these are made indirectly.

One teaching device used frequently by Japanese mothers is role-play. For example, the naturalistic data collected by Clancy are full of mother-child role-playing host/ess-guest routines through which 2-year-olds receive practice and instruction in the use and interpretation of indirect speech.

The intent of this section is to direct second language researchers to some of the interesting areas of communicative competence first language investigators have explored. These investigators have found that while many aspects of communicative competence may be acquired quite early by young first language learners, many aspects may be late-acquired or never acquired at all. They have also identified some of the factors affecting the acquisition of specific aspects of communicative competence, including salience, simplicity, and nonambiguity. First language researchers continue to investigate the universality of certain aspects of communicative competence, but have also shown that many aspects of this competence appear to be culture-specific.

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1

ACQUIRING COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE: KNOWLEDGE OF REGISTER VARIATION

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INTRODUCTION

The more we study speech in natural settings, the more we find systematic variation within every speaker, reflecting who the speaker is addressing, where the speaker is, what the social event may be, the topic of discussion, and the social relations communicated by speaking. The regularities in these features of speech make them as amenable to analysis as the abstracted rules called grammars. Competence in speaking includes the ability to use appropriate speech for the circumstance and when deviating from the normal to convey what is intended. It would be an incompetent speaker who used baby talk with everyone or randomly interspersed sentences in baby talk or in a second language regardless of circumstance. It would be equally incompetent to use formal style in all situations and to all addressees in a society allowing for a broader range of variation (Ervin-Tripp 1973b: 268).

In acquiring full communicative competence, children must learn to speak not only grammatically, but also appropriately (Hymes 1972). At some time during acquisition, they must learn a variety of sociolinguistic and social interactional rules that govern appropriate language use. Though the language addressed to 2-year-olds may be highly specialized, by the time children reach age 4 or 5, they have experi-

enced diverse speech settings: they go to the doctor, to preschool, to birthday parties, to the grocery store. They participate in a variety of speech situations with people who differ in age, sex, status, and familiarity and whose speech will therefore vary in a number of systematic ways.

Are young children aware of these sociolinguistic and social interactional differences? What do they know about the appropriateness of linguistic forms used to indicate particular situations and particular roles and relationships?

Unfortunately, there has been very little investigation of these questions. Until the 1980s, most research on first language acquisition centered on one or more aspects of phonological, syntactic, or semantic development—most often on the child's ability to acquire control of rules for language structure. This focus was in large part due to the concept of linguistic competence proposed by Chomsky (1957, 1965), which gave new impetus to the study of children's language. In the last few years, however, a growing number of researchers in sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics have become dissatisfied with a monolithic, idealized notion of competence. When linguists such as Labov (1966) and Halliday (1970) began to pay greater attention to intralanguage variation, their proposals required a broadening of Chomsky's view of language acquisition. Campbell and Wales (1970), for example, proposed that competence should be extended to include the native speaker's capacity to produce or understand utterances appropriate to the verbal and situational context. The change of emphasis in linguistic theory has been paralleled by a shift in focus in studies of acquisition. Since children acquiring language must obviously learn more than grammatical rules and vocabulary alone, other aspects of their communicative competence are worthy of attention:

> We have then to account for the fact that a normal child acquires knowledge of sentences, not only as grammatical, but also as appropriate. He or she acquires competence as to when to speak, when not, and as to what to talk about with whom, when, where, in what manner. In short, a child becomes able to accomplish a repertoire of speech acts, to take part in speech events, and to evaluate their accomplishment by others. (Hymes 1972: 227.)

Although rules for appropriate language use may vary from culture to culture, they are usually sensitive across languages to many of the same factors, including the context and topic of discourse and the sex, age, and status of the people speaking. In most languages, for instance, adults speak in one way to young children, in another to older children, and in yet another to fellow adults (Ferguson 1977, Andersen 1975); doctors address their patients in one way and consult physicians or friends in another (Shuy 1976); students "change their style" when they leave a peer group in the corridor to join an academic discussion in the classroom (De Stefano 1972a, 1972b; Houston 1969, 1970); native speakers consistently modify their speech when addressing foreigners (Ferguson 1975); and men and women exhibit manners of speech that may differ to a greater or lesser degree, dependent in part on their roles in society (Thorne and Henley 1975, Keenan 1974, Lakoff 1973).

These stylistic differences are often very subtle. Indeed, when a foreigner has attained near-native ability in a second language, it is often along the dimension of appropriateness that his speech reveals his incomplete knowledge: "The choice of items from the wrong register, and the mixing of items from different registers, are among the most frequent mistakes made by nonnative speakers of a language" (Halliday 1970: 150).

For example, such a speaker may use a colloquial expression in too formal a situation or a female nonnative speaker may use a form considered especially "masculine" in a given culture. Thus, there are a large number of social skills in communication that children must acquire before they can be said to have mastered the use of their native language.

Lakoff (1973) and others (see Piaget 1970 on the egocentric nature of children's language) have suggested that children aged 4 or 5 are unaware of many rules of sociocultural appropriateness, but that by age 10 or so they can use differentiated "styles," or *registers,* of speech. But a number of recent studies have indicated that this is an underestimate of the child's abilities—that children learn to make *some* context-sensitive stylistic adjustments in their speech at a much earlier age (Sachs and Devin 1976, Sachs 1975, Weeks 1971, Andersen and Johnson 1973, Shatz and Gelman 1973). These studies, however, have either been quite limited in focus or have looked at only a few children. They leave unanswered many questions of exactly *how* and *when* during acquisition children learn to use their language appropriately.

The present study explores linguistic devices used by young children to make distinct registers from the point of view of both the function of different utterances and the syntactic, semantic, and phonological devices available to them. Specific aspects of children's repertoires at different ages are compared with certain socially determined modifications in language use that have been catalogued for adult speech. The findings contribute not only to a general theory of language acquisition but also to an understanding of some of the most basic aspects of sociolinguistic variation.

ACQUISITION OF SOCIOLINGUISTIC SKILLS

Register variation poses a language learning problem, both to native children and to foreigners. In both cases it is mainly a question of experience. Children have a limited experience of life and may simply not know a new situation and the variety of language associated with it (Ellis and Ure 1969: 255).

There are a great many social skills in communication that children must acquire before they are truly competent speakers. Are young children aware of the sociolinguistic rules that govern appropriate language use? And if so, how great is the repertoire (or range) of registers they possess and what linguistic devices (if any) do they use to make distinct registers?

Insight into the acquisition of these sociolinguistic skills has come from two general sources: (1) a small group of psycholinguistic studies that questioned

Piaget's notion of egocentrism and children's purported inability to take account of listener characteristics in planning their speech (e.g., Shatz and Gelman 1973, Garvey and Ben-Debba 1974, Sachs and Devin 1976), and (2) a second handful of more sociolinguistically motivated studies that examined children's emerging control of socially constrained language patterns (e.g., Berko-Gleason 1973; Andersen and Johnson 1973; De Stefano 1972a, 1979b; Houston 1969; Berko-Gleason and Weintraub 1976).

The Houston and the De Stefano studies looked at the speech of school-age (i.e., 8- to 11-year-old) black children and found that they had a formal, school classroom register that was distinct in many ways from their nonschool language. The former involved more "careful" speech with greater frequency of "standard" features. For example, by fifth grade "the multiple negative form [as in "I ain't got none"] had virtually disappeared in the children's responses in a formal situation, but certainly not in their vernacular" (De Stefano 1972a: 42–43).

Berko-Gleason (1973) observed natural conversations in five families with at least three children: a first- or second-grader (6–8 years old); a preschool child (4 or 5 years old); and a child under age 3. She noted that, among the children, "stylistic" variation was observed from the earliest ages, the first being a distinction between speech to family but silence to strangers. Although the preschool children code-switched between, for instance, mothers (whining) and peers (verbal play), only the 8-year-old children were seen to have fully acquired an accurate baby talk register, a register of socialization, and a formal adult register. In a more experimental framework, Andersen and Johnson (1973) looked at the speech of an 8-year-old to an adult, to a peer, and to children aged 5, 3, and 1½ in three different linguistic environments: telling a story, explaining a task, and free play. The child appropriately modified her speech to younger children in each context by making it slower, more fluent, with less complex surface structure, higher pitch, and exaggerated intonation contours; she also appeared to have a distinct storytelling register.

Other experimental studies have examined the speech of larger populations of younger children in similar contexts. They found that even 4-year-olds use shorter sentences and fewer complex constructions in speaking to younger children, and they use attention-getters to make sure their listeners are attending (Shatz and Gelman 1973, Garvey and Ben-Debba 1974). Sachs and Devin (1976) added a new dimension to this research by asking the four children (3 years 9 months to 5 years 5 months) in their study to speak to a baby doll and to role-play a "baby just learning to talk." In this way, they were able to demonstrate that the children's modifications of speech to a younger listener are not necessarily dependent on cues in the immediate situation, but represent some more abstract knowledge of appropriateness of speech to listener.

The findings of these studies indicate that children are aware of some of the sociolinguistic rules that govern appropriate language use quite early (by age 4). But they have focused on only one or two registers and, in the main, they have looked at a small number of children. They thus provide little information about the range of sociolinguistic skills children possess at different ages or how the features of any

given register are learned. The research reported in the rest of this chapter was designed to examine just these questions.

DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY

The Subjects

Twenty-four children aged between 4 and 7 years took part in this study. They were all native English speakers who lived in one of the predominantly white, suburban communities that surround Stanford University. They came from (upper-) middle-class families in which at least one parent (and, in approximately half the cases, both) was a professional. The children were familiar with the experimenter, who had previously spent time observing and playing with them in their classrooms.

The children were divided into three age groups: (1) the youngest, mainly composed of 4-year-olds (with a mean age of 4 years 7 months); (2) a middle group, consisting of 5-year-olds (with a mean age of 5 years 4 months); and (3) the oldest, made up of 6- and 7-year-olds (with a mean age of 6 years 10 months). The groups were equally divided by sex (half girls, half boys).

Procedure

When nursery school children role-play, they often adopt consistent speech patterns in accordance with the social categories involved, e.g., mothers, babies, doctors, and so forth (Ervin-Tripp 1973a). Role-play, therefore, is one setting where young children can experiment with registral differences in language (Grimshaw and Holden 1976). In order to elicit what children know about the speech appropriate to different roles, it is necessary to set up specific role-playing situations for them. Since the attention span of 4- and 5-year-olds proves to be very short under such conditions, however, I instead used a number of role-specific puppets for whom the children had to "do the voices." In this way I was able to obtain fairly fluent speech in several different settings, discourse that revealed the nature of the language styles, or registers, the children had in their repertoires. A further advantage of using puppets was that they helped to control the situation (e.g., a child with puppets representing a doctor and a nurse is unlikely to play "cowboys and Indians" with them), while at the same time allowing the child freedom to be imaginative and creative within the given limits. I have referred to this method elsewhere as "controlled improvisation" (Andersen 1979).

Each child took part in three sessions of playacting with puppets. In each of these sessions, the experimenter suggested a specific, distinct context to ensure that speech samples would be comparable across subjects and used a specific set of puppets. The puppets were all hand puppets with very large mouths and arms hanging at the sides in the form of "mittens" about 10 to 11 inches long. To operate

the puppets, four fingers were used to move the upper part of the mouth while the thumb operated the lower part. They were designed this way, with the mouth the only part that the children could easily manipulate, to encourage "talking" and discourage communication by gesture or other actions.

The three settings consisted of (1) a family or home situation, (2) a doctor's office, and (3) a children's classroom. For each setting, there were three puppets differing on such dimensions as age, sex, status, capability, and so forth. In each session, the child was asked to play two roles at a time to elicit contrasting speech "styles" for his two puppets. The experimenter took the third role in each setting mainly to keep the session going. Occasionally, additional puppets were introduced into each setting by the children; this was tolerated for continuity of discourse in the session—and often contributed additional distinctions among speech styles. From time to time, if a child appeared to forget who he was playing, the experimenter would slip out of the "game" and ask: "Is that the daddy/mommy/baby speaking?" At an appropriate juncture in a session, the children would exchange one of their puppets for the one the experimenter had; in this way, every child got the opportunity to do the voices for all three roles.

Occasionally, the child would spontaneously suggest a setting very similar to the planned format. Some slight adjustments were thus tolerated for the sake of naturalness of play: for example, a child's suggestion in the family session that they discuss a vacation and in the doctor session that the scene take place in the hospital (rather than the doctor's office).

The order in which children were tested was randomized by age and sex. For any one child, the three sessions took place within a three-week span. The order in which the settings were presented was counterbalanced as was the order of roles (i.e., which two puppets they did first) within any given session.

The Three Settings

The three basic puppets in the family situation were a *mother*, identifiable as a female adult by a dress, long hair in a bun, and earrings; a *father*, identifiable as a male adult by a tie and a mustache; and a *young child*, identifiable as such by flannel pajamas and ribboned ponytails.

The experimenter introduced the setting for the family session in the following way:

"Now today, let's play family, and we have a daddy, a mommy, and a young child who's just learning how to talk. Why don't we pretend that it's the child's bedtime and the daddy/mommy is going to tuck her in and tell her a story. Then they can talk about what they're going to do tomorrow—like maybe the child is going to be 3 years old tomorrow and they'll have a birthday party. Now why don't you play the daddy/mommy and the child, and I'll be the (other *parent*). So you'll make that one talk like a daddy/mommy, right? And the other one talk like a young child, okay?"

In the "doctor's office," the experimenter again offered three puppets: a

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doctor, recognizable by a white uniform, a stethoscope, white hair on a balding head, and a mustache; a *nurse*, recognizable by a white uniform and a hat with a red cross on it; and a *patient*, recognizable by a bandaged forehead and an arm in a splint.

The setting for the doctor session was introduced in the following manner:

"This time, how about playing a doctor? We can use a doctor puppet, a nurse puppet, and this injured patient puppet. Let's pretend that the injured puppet had an accident and isn't feeling very well, okay? Now why don't you be the doctor and the nurse, and I'll be the patient. Pretend the patient comes to the doctor's office for care. So you make that one be a doctor and that one be a nurse, right?"

The three puppets in the classroom were: a *teacher*, who had gray hair and glasses; and two *children*. There were two parts to this session. In the first part, the experimenter suggested that she and the child play school; the child could be the teacher and a student, and the experimenter would be a different student. The setting was the beginning of a school day in the children's classroom.

Halfway through the session, a somewhat different situation was set up. This time, the experimenter proposed the following:

"Why don't I be the teacher now, and you can be the two children. Only this time, let's pretend that one of the children just came to this country from somewhere far away where they don't speak English. So she doesn't speak English very well. This is her first day at school, and she doesn't know what to do at school. So why don't you tell her what we do here, and maybe explain to her about a field trip we're going to go on. But remember, she only speaks a little bit of English."

The scene was set up this way to encourage the child to speak not only *to* a "foreigner," but also *as* a foreigner, to ensure elicitation of any aspects of foreigner talk in the child's repertoire.

> Foreigner talk is commonly regarded in a given speech community as an imitation of the way foreigners speak the language under certain conditions and it is usually elicited more readily by asking for this kind of information than by asking the informant how he would speak to a foreigner. (Ferguson 1975: 1.)

Data Collection

All the sessions took place in a soundproofed room at the children's school. The child and the experimenter sat directly across from each other at a low table (which served as a "stage" for the puppets) at one end of the room. The first five minutes or so of each session were spent setting up the situation. Then, the child and the experimenter "played puppets" for approximately 30 minutes or until the child wanted to return to the classroom. The entire session of playacting was recorded, including the introduction of context.

The tapes of the session were transcribed with a modified conventional orthography. In cases of deviant pronunciation, an IPA phonetic transcription was made.

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The data were coded independently by two researchers whose intercoder reliability on randomly selected tapes ranged from 88 to 97%. (Coding of speech quantity and of lexical markers involved no subjective judgments, and therefore agreement was 100%). The analysis of the speech samples coded (1) speech quantity for each "speaker" to each "addressee," (2) the function of different utterance-types used in each role (i.e., a speech act analysis), and (3) the syntactic, semantic, and phonological devices used to mark particular registers.

THE RANGE OF KNOWLEDGE

Most generally, the findings demonstrate that there are a wide range of social relationships that children aged 4 to 7 are able to discriminate and express in their language. The children in this study displayed their knowledge through choices of content, conversational or discourse strategies, and situationally appropriate grammatical patterns/usage. Over developmental time, they showed increasing awareness of the topics appropriate for different contexts and different speaker roles, the linguistic means available for initiating and maintaining a discourse turn, and the phonological, lexical, and morphosyntactic markers used to differentiate registers. In the section that follows, I will first give a brief overview of the kinds of devices the children used in their role-play speech and the order of acquisition. I will then focus on a more detailed speech act analysis to provide a sense of the level of verbal skills and social knowledge demonstrated.

LEARNING FEATURES OF REGISTER

Across the different registers examined in this study, some features appear to be used earlier than others to mark differences in language use. In particular, children seem to first mark roles phonologically, with specific prosodic distinctions. Every child in every context regularly used appropriate prosodic markings to distinguish roles, most frequently pitch differences, but also intonation, volume, rate, and voice quality. Thus, in the family setting, for example, pretend fathers all used deep voices, frequently spoke louder than any other family member (sometimes yelling), and showed a marked tendency to produce shifted vowels. They backed and lowered vowels in a manner which produces an almost sinister "accent"; e.g., *bad* /bad/. Mothers, on the other hand, spoke with a higher pitch than fathers and often used exaggerated intonation, but rarely approached the volume that marked the fathers' utterances.

Speech as the young child was probably the easiest of the three roles in the family setting to distinguish apart from context, largely because of a number of phonological, prosodic, and lexical characteristics that systematically mark the register and are unique to it. Most of the children in the study began the baby role by marking it with a *goo-goo*, *gaga*, or *a,a*, until told that "this child is a little older than that." They then adjusted to more "normal" English in a high pitch with (1) a

baby talk overtone that might be called palatalized speech (i.e., the tongue seems to be kept higher in the mouth and the vocal cavity made smaller, (2) some nasalization, and (3) some whining utterances in which vowels are lengthened, often on heavily stressed syllables as in the utterance, "I [wḁ:nΔ] go to pàrk an [plèi:]."

The main age difference in use was that the older children maintained these distinctions through role-play, whereas the younger children used them only to contrast voices at role junctures. Other phonological markings were also quite common, especially in baby talk and in foreigner talk. In the role of baby, for example, there were a number of phonological substitutions that occurred frequently, including:

/θ/ /ð/	→	[f] [d] [ʒ]	e.g.,	". . .birfday at fwee-firty" (birthday at three-thirty) ". . . wid de flowers" (with the flowers) "[ʒ] one" (this one)
/d/	→	[g]	e.g.,	"googie googie" (goody-goody)
/s/	→	[θ] [ʒ]	e.g.,	"Yeth" (yes) "[ges]" (I guess)
/l/ /r/	→	[w]	e.g.,	"aw weady" (all ready) "jump wope" (jump rope)
C	→	[ɸ] / ——	e.g.,	"bwekfis" (breakfast) "pwoduc" 19 (Product 19)

When children attempted to use foreigner talk, the most common modifications were slower tempo and syllable-timed or syncopated speech (often sounding like a robot); but there were also a number of phonological substitutions, including the use of glottal stops for medial consonants (e.g., *Okay* [O?a] and *pretty* [pr ?i]), and the use of neutral vowels for some glides (*okay* [oka] and *a,b,c* [ˆ, bˆ, sˆ]). This last phenomenon was particularly interesting since it occurred in a good portion of the children's foreigner role-play, and its use was explicitly insisted upon by a few of the children, including one little girl who corrected the experimenter's use of "okay" by saying "No, [oka]. I just mean for her to say it that way; it sounds more like him" (i.e., the foreigner).

After phonological modifications, the next aspect of appropriate language use that children seemed to acquire involved the context of the interaction in each setting, i.e., choices of both topic and lexicon. All the children, for example, had a general notion of family interaction, and almost all of them knew topics appropriate for the doctor-patient interaction.

In the family setting, just as Berko-Gleason (1975) found for real fathers, the language of fathers portrayed by these children clearly demarcated the father's role within the family. In this corpus, fathers talk mainly about going to work, "firing