

Teasing as Language Socialization

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0. Introduction

I am interested in the analysis of first language acquisition from the point of view of children's socialization. Socialization is defined as follows by Kojima (1987:48):

社会化とは、「ある社会集団に属する個人が、その集団が共有している行動様式、知識、技能、思考、態度、動機、価値などを身につけることによって、集団の一員となるように導かれて行く過程」のことである。

That is to say, the process of children's total intellectual development may be assumed as the process of children's socialization. Furthermore, children exposed to different communities may be socialized through different value criteria. In other words, each child learns to assimilate to his/her society according to the environment surrounding him/her and his/her experiences in it. Such a view underlies the following remarks concerning individuality by Kashiwagi (1987:38-9):

パーソナリティについては、国民性とかモーダル・パーソナリティとして、特定の社会・文化ごとに特有の性格特性がある事実が指摘されています。これは、それぞれの社会ごとに「望ましい性格」として大きく期待されているものです。この望ましきの基準に合致するような方向に、性格が形づくられてゆくものとみなされています。

The environment facilitates children's socialization and is one of the important factors in their socialization. In this study, I will deal with children's socialization

through various languages and cultural environments. Particularly, I will focus my attention on teasing interactions in families among various languages environments and make a comparative study of teasing cross-culturally.

1. Language Socialization and Teasing

Schieffelin & Ochs(1986a) are the first scholars who use the word *language socialization*. They name the process by which children are socialized to the values and norms of their culture through acquiring specific linguistic practices: language socialization. This relevant research has been pursued by scholars like Miller(1986), Clancy(1986), Eisenberg(1986), Oldenburg(1990), and Berko(1988).

In particular, these researchers bring their focus into the mother-child interactions as caretakers' strategies for socialization. "For Vygotsky(1986:122), children's mastery of meaning is wholly dependent on conversations with adults in their speech community." (From Rudolph(1994:204)) From the point of view of Vygotskian theory, children's language socialization may be a process of internalization. Therefore, it is taken for granted that the researchers of language socialization direct their attentions to mother-child interactions. Mother-child interactions occupy the greater part of conversational activities for young children.

There is a variety of kinds of discourses in mother-child interactions, i.e. explicit directives and corrections as well as indirect instructions. Schieffelin(1986), Eisenberg(1986), and Miller(1986) deal with *teasing* which is very common in mother-child interactions. Teasing is not necessarily a direct instruction to children but it has the effect to change their bad behaviors to good ones. Furthermore, teasing in mother-child interactions is not as serious as the teasing occurring in adult interactions, but mothers teach their children something important that is, to become a member of his/her society. Teasing, therefore, may be considered as one of the most successful strategies to socialize young children. Teasing in mother-child interactions is defined as making fun of children playfully or coaxing with questions in order to teach them appropriate behaviors to their

society. Coping with these situations of being teased over and over again, they learn the values and norms of their society. That is to say, they can be socialized through teasing interactions.

2. Rhetorical Questions

Schieffelin(1986) investigates teasing and shaming in Kaluli mother-child interactions. In her study, she does not use the word shaming in mother-child interactions with the serious meaning usually common among adults, that is hurting someone's feeling, but uses this word with a playful connotation. Therefore, in this chapter, shaming will be used with a similar meaning as teasing.

The Kaluli people live in a rain forest on the Great Papuan Plateau in the Southern Highlands Province of Papua New Guinea. Their society is egalitarian. Most of them are monolingual speakers of Kaluli. Verbal interaction is used as a means of expression and manipulation, and in particular teasing and shaming can be important means of persuasion as well as crucial for social control and critical in the public management of others in this egalitarian society. Therefore, teasing and shaming are pervasive in Kaluli's everyday interactions, especially in domestic affairs which involve the sharing of food. They also figure in a variety of interactions, i.e. adult-adult, adult-child, and in some cases child-child verbal interactions.

Schieffelin finds that Kaluli adults often use rhetorical questions(RQs) in teasing and shaming their children rather than direct statements (e.g. negative directions) to control them. For instance:

Example 1 (Schieffelin, 1986:173)

[Seliwo: (9 months) has crawled to the woodpile and is pulling himself up.]

Mo → S: Aba fa:la:naya?! [S=Seliwo, Mo=Mother]

Where are you climbing?!

[Mother takes baby off the woodpile]

Example 2 (Schieffelin, 1986:174)

[When her son Seligiwo: (7 months) was crying, Mother speaks to her daughter Ma:li (24 months).]

Mo → Ma:li → > S: Wanga ya:laya:?! A:la:ma.

Why are you crying?! Say like that.

Ma:li → S: Wanga ya:laya?

Mo → Ma:li → > S: Ya:la:sabo! A:la:ma.

Don't cry!

Ma:li → S: Ya:la:sabo!

In Example 1, Mother uses a RQ to an infant who may not be able to understand a verbal message. After uttering a RQ Mother provides her child with a model of the desired outcome nonverbally. When using appropriate action following the RQ, even a preverbal child tends to understand the message implied in the RQ. In Example 2, Mother uses a RQ in a triadical situation. Kaluli caregivers often use A:la:ma, 'Say like that' after RQs in situations where a mother, an infant, and an older sibling are involved. Utterances used in this way not only make it easier for the infant to understand Mother's intention but also can be very instructive to the older child how to use language in interaction with others.

Kaluli mothers make their children know what are desirable habits and what are undesirable actions through teasing and shaming utterances. At the same time children are socialized by being shamed and confronted to these utterances. Why are RQs often used in Kaluli's teasing and shaming interactions? Schieffelin insists that Kaluli adults often use RQs for reasons that they provide an interactional context in which both speaker and addressee have some choice in what the outcome will be. She explains the difference between RQs and negative directives as follows (Schieffelin, 1986:180):

Unlike negative directives, RQs put the ball back in the addressee's court, providing him or her with the option to respond (in a limited number of ways) or to remain silent. RQs call for no answer, but they do keep

communication open and acknowledge the other. An RQ (with its *hego*: 'underneath') provides the addressee with some face-saving protection, a great deal more than one would have after negative directives, which increase status differentiation and change the speaker/addressee relationship. The message may be similar, but the metacommunication is not.

Moreover, Schieffelin offers one more reason concerning Kaluli's frequent use of RQs. She says that Kaluli also enjoy their tense feeling in teasing interactions which involves RQs and she describes that as follows (Schieffelin, 1986:180):

Yet another reason that teasing and RQs are so common in Kaluli interactions may have to do with the fact that Kaluli enjoy interactions that have some creative tension in them, where the outcome is potentially unpredictable and dependent on the individual's ability to be clever. The forms of talk used in teasing and shaming, especially RQs, can create a dramatic tension in an interaction, a tension that keeps the channels of communication open and the outcome unpredictable.

Schieffelin's analysis concludes that Kaluli children learn to understand the potential meaning of RQs by frequently exposing them from the nonverbal infant period. By the time they are 2 years old they can also use RQs spontaneously and appropriately in certain contexts. The ability to tease and shame through the use of RQs is considered as a sign of social competence in young children.

RQs are also used frequently in Japanese mother-child interactions. The following examples are seen in our family:

Example 3

Mother (Mo), Atsumi (A, 5 years: 0 months), and Makoto (1:0)
[Makoto is about to take a piece of bread that belongs to Atsumi.]

Mo → Makoto: おにいちゃんのじゃないの?!

Isn't it your brother's?!

A → Makoto: おにいちゃんのだめ!

It is mine! Don't eat it!

[Makoto starts crying.]

Example 4

[Atsumi (A,5:6) is climbing on the table.]

Mo → A: どこにのってるの?

Where are you climbing?

降りなさい!

Get down!

[Atsumi gets down from the table.]

Example 5

[Makoto (0:6) is crying in bed.]

Mo → Ma: どうして泣いてるの?

Why are you crying?

[Makoto keeps on crying.]

Mo → Ma: 男の子は泣いちゃだめよ。

A boy shouldn't cry so much.

In Example 5, I talk to my nonverbal baby in a RQ style. We, Japanese mothers, often use RQs rather than direct negatives as we scold our children. For instance, I frequently say to my sons, "そんなことして恥ずかしくないの? (Don't you feel ashamed doing that?)" and "どうしてそんなことしたの? (Why have you done that?)" By preferring RQs to directives we give our child the room for thinking by him/herself what is an appropriate behavior. Moreover, we can keep gentle relations between us on account of not scolding our child unsparingly. Clancy(1986) says that Japanese mothers' use of indirect speech is a manifestation of empathy and comformity which are deep-rooted in the Japanese spirit. We, Mothers, unconsciously socialize our children in a culturally acceptable way and the children are also unconsciously socialized through being treated in this way over and over again.

3. Teasing as Play and as Social Control

Eisenburg(1986) defines a teasing sequence as any conversational sequence that opened with a mock challenge, insult, or threat. She researches two Mexican immigrant families living in the United States, and focuses her observation on two

subjects, Nancy (from 21 to 32 months) and Marisa (24 to 38). Only Spanish is spoken at home.

Through a number of observations concerning the use of teasing, she concludes that teasing is primarily a means of playing with a child. In the Mexican society, teasing is very common when adults are taking a break from the routine chores of the day, and children who are unsophisticated speakers become easy victims. In the following example, Uncle Carlos amuses both himself and Aunt Amalia by teasing Marisa in a multiparticipant context.

Example 6 (Eisenberg, 1986:188)

[Marisa (M, 27 months) is having her hair braided by her Aunt Amalia (A) while her Uncle Carlos (C) looks on.]

C: [Wrinkling his nose and shaking his head]

¡Fea, fea!

(Ugly, ugly!)

A: "No es cierto," díle. "Soy bonita."

("That's not true," tell him. "I'm pretty.")

soy bonito/

(I'm pretty/)

C: [Imitates her speech] "No bonito."

¿No estás bonita?

(You're not pretty?)

A: "Sí," díle, "soy bonita."

("Yes," tell him. "I'm pretty.")

C: Estás fea.

("You're ugly.")

bonita/

(pretty/)

Through the above teasing episode, Aunt and Marisa create an additional close and special bond between them. Teasing also reinforces relationships in the alignments created between individuals.

Eisenberg next indicates that teasing can also be used as a means of social control. Adults often warn children not to behave in an inappropriate way by referring to the police, a witch, or the bogeyman. Adults sometimes manipulate the existence of a third person as a co-teaser. In the following sequence, Nancy's mother exploits the existence of a neighbor, Ceci, to tell Nancy how to show affection to others.

Example 7 (Eisenberg, 1986:189)

[Nancy (N, 24 months) and her mother (M) are sitting on the stoop with their neighbor, Ceci (C), an older woman. Nancy pulls away when Ceci tries to hug her.]

M: Oye, Nancy. Dale un besito a Ceci.

(Listen, Nancy. Give Ceci a kiss.)

[N whines and pulls away.]

C: Un besito. [Sighs heavily, shaking head] Ah, pues, Ya no te voy a querer.

(A kiss. Ah, then, I'm not going to love you any more.)

M: [To C, shaking her head, clicking tongue] No le de manzana ni nada lo que quiere.

(Don't give her an apple or anything she wants.)

C: [Shakes her head] Ya, no. Pues, porque ya no me quiere.

(Not any more. Because she doesn't love me any more.)

[To N] ¿Verdad que ya no me quieres?

(Isn't it true that you don't love me any more?)

In Example 7 Nancy is only expected to overhear, but is really the butt of teasing and told how to behave in an appropriate manner.

Eisenberg says that teasing is a linguistic skill that children may have to learn to manipulate to speak like the adult members of their particular cultural group. She thinks that learning to participate in teasing and to recognize that one is being teased requires a sensitivity to nonverbal cues and an ability to go beyond the surface meaning of a message to determine the intentions of the speaker. Children are learning complex social rules through participating in teasing either as an addressee

or an addresser.

Similarly, in Japan, we mothers, often refer to third persons in order to teach our children social rules. For example, I said to my son, Atsumi (5:3), in a subway, "よそのひとが見てるわよ。お行儀よくしなさい。(Others are looking at you. Sit properly.)" Moreover, we also use an RQ in situations when mothers intend to correct their children's behavior, for instance: "そんなお行儀がありますか?! (Where are your manners?!)" Through these utterances, we, Japanese mothers, teach our children that we have to care about what other people think. In Japan, it is the society or the public that judges one's behavior to be right or wrong. In the American society, however, it is a supreme authority, for instance God, that decides which behavior is right or wrong. Japanese mothers socialize their children in order that children learn to be sensitive to others. This type of socialization may be present in the Japanese mother-child teasing interactions.

4. Preparation for Life

What do American mothers teach their children through teasing interactions? As I mentioned above, we, Japanese mothers, often refer in speech to a third person. Japanese children learn to know that they have to behave themselves in order not to be shamed in the social world, while being exposed to our way of talking in which we frequently refer to others. Generally speaking, Americans value their individual opinion more than public opinion. Compared to Japanese mothers, American mothers will not to the same extent socialize their children not to hurt the feelings of others.

Miller(1986) investigates teasing interactions among three mother-child dyads of a white working-class in South Baltimore. In her study, she also recognizes teasing as a verbal play but discovers one more important aspect of teasing in a white-working class community. She finds that while teasing her child, each of the mothers intends to equip her daughter with the values and skills she would need when growing older: skills which are required in her society. The mothers provide

their children with not only conversational skills but also essential survival skills, that is, instilling strength, pride, independence, and so on. One of the mothers, Marlene, says, "teasing prepares the child to stand up for herself in real-life disputes.(Miller, 1986:204)" Her thought is expressed very well in the following example.

Example 8 (Miller,1986:202)

Amy II, 19 months

	<i>Amy</i>	<i>Marlene (mother)</i>
[A has been drinking M's soda]		
	gimme cup/	
[A reaches for cup in M's hand]		
[M gazes at A, pushes A away with fist against A's belly]		You're gonna get punched right in the gut [Provocative tone].
[A returns M's gaze]		
[A smiles]		
[A raises fist toward M, smiles]	mm/	
[A turns in circle]	look/	
		Ya wanna fight? [Loudly]
[A strikes fighter's pose, legs apart, arms at shoulder level, fist raised toward M]		
[M smiles at A]		Huh?
[A swats at M, kicks sofa next to M]		Do ya? [Laughs]
[A turns around and runs down hallway]	[Laughs]	

		Peggy: She knows how obviously [Laughs].
[A runs back into living room]		Amy.
		Do ya?
[A turns away]	[Laughs]	Lemme see your fist?
[A turns and faces M, raises chin defiantly]		
[A falls to floor]	oh uhp/	
[A jumps toward sofa]	[Shrieks]	

In this example, Marlene assumes the role of an older, bullying child. She not only enjoys pretending to play with her daughter but also imparts to her how to defend herself. Marlene believes that even a girl has to defend herself.

As Clancy(1986) mentions about Japanese mothers, we place a high value on empathy and conformity in rearing children. We tend to provide more empathy and conformity trainings than interpersonal skills of self-assertion and self-defence. Japanese mothers' emphasis on the importance of taking into account the feelings of others may be the manifestation of Japanese '甘え(dependency)' (Doi, 1981). In Japan the individual is always the member of a social group. We primarily attach importance to the opinion of others. Mother-child's teasing interaction is a preparation for real life which has a different value depending on the society.

5. Conclusion

Children are involved in teasing interactions from their preverbal period. Miller says, "Like other local varieties of social play, for example, pretend play with dolls (Miller & Garvey 1984) and rhymes and verbal games (Miller 1982), teasing occurs first at home in interaction with mother and other caregivers. (Miller, 1986:199)" Mother-child teasing interaction will be one of the initial language

socializations for children. Mothers tease their children not only as verbal plays but also as social skills. Children are socialized to be well adapted to their society while encountering such interactions.

In chapter 1, I mentioned that language socialization is an internalization process of children from the point of view of Vygotskian theory. There is, however, another point of view. As far as I have observed teasing interactions, children of about 2 years old can participate in such interactions not only as addressees but also as teasers. Both mothers and children play active roles in teasing. Therefore, language socialization has to be seen as a more dynamic display of real life. Schieffelin offers as follows (1986:166):

... socialization is seen as a demonstration or presentation to a novice of the rules whereby appropriate behavior might be constructed. In addition, it is a presentation of techniques, procedures, modes of interpretation, and information.

To research language socialization as an actual interactional display in the social environment and to investigate teasing from children's standpoints remain the object of further investigations.

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