Language Socialization

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Introduction

Language socialization research investigates how children and other novices are socialized through language, and how they socialize others, as they learn to use language via interactions with more knowledgeable relatives and friends. This approach considers linguistic and cultural learning to be interrelated processes that extend from infancy throughout the lifespan. Employing longitudinal ethnographic research methods, language socialization researchers explore how novices actively gain communicative competence as they acquire linguistic form, discursive practices, embodied stances, and the ideologies that render them meaningful within their cultural contexts. The first wave of language socialization research examined such processes in monolingual societies. A second wave of research extended this approach to the study of multilingual speech practices and language contact phenomena (Garrett and Baquedano-López 2002). This essay reviews the development and central concerns of the language socialization paradigm. It then examines current work on language socialization in multilingual settings, situations of language shift and migration, and in peer contexts.

Historical Perspectives

The language socialization paradigm emerged as a sociocultural approach to language learning in the 1980s (Ochs and Schieffelin 2008). It is rooted in linguistic anthropology, but draws on and contributes to multiple disciplines, including linguistics, developmental psychology, sociology, philosophy, and education. This approach was established amidst debates over the roles of “nature” versus “nurture” in language learning, and in response to socialization studies that did not take language into account as a critical vehicle of cultural transmission (Ochs and Schieffelin 1984; Kulick and Schieffelin 2004). Grounded in anthropological theory and methods, language socialization research considers language acquisition to be embedded in and vital to the acquisition of culture, and situated within culturally salient patterns of social interaction and sociability. Language acquisition and language socialization are viewed as interdependent developmental processes that must be studied together and contextualized within local ideologies about children, learning, personhood, and language (for comprehensive reviews of language socialization,

Early language socialization research expanded the contextual scope of language acquisition study beyond the mother–child dyad that was the focus of psycholinguistics, and carefully considered the role of discursive practices in cultural and linguistic learning within their local contexts. Foundational studies by Ochs (1988) in Samoa and Schieffelin (1990) in Papua New Guinea exemplify the first wave of language socialization research. Ochs (1988) situated Samoan children’s grammatical development within their sociocultural environments and in relation to local understandings of rank and the status of children. With careful attention to linguistic structure and how it encodes sociocultural information, her ethnography demonstrates children’s socialization into culturally appropriate affective expression, respectful conduct, and a sense of performance. Schieffelin (1990) similarly contextualized language acquisition within cultural conceptions of child development with a focus on the socialization of assertion and appeal, two interactional strategies fundamental to the system of reciprocity in Kaluli social life. Kaluli caregivers concentrated on the socialization of assertive stances, largely through *εlεma “say like this”* routines, because they believed that children know how to appeal. In a classic volume edited by Schieffelin and Ochs (1986), leading scholars in this burgeoning field explored language socialization in Kwara’ae, Basotho, Kaluli, Samoan, Japanese, and North American communities, examining culturally relevant interactional routines such as teasing, shaming, prompting, and calling out, among others.

Also foundational to the development of language socialization study was Heath’s (1983) research on early socialization into narrative skills at home and its relation to literacy development and educational outcomes among children in three North American communities. Heath found that approaches toward literacy varied considerably across the white working class (Roadville), black working class (Trackton), and suburban middle class (Maintown) communities in the Piedmont Carolinas of the United States that she observed. These strategies cultivated different pathways of learning and demonstrating knowledge, which were compatible with each group’s norms of social interaction and understandings of children. However, while these socialized “ways of taking” meaning from the world around them fostered a relatively seamless transition into formal schooling for Maintown children, Roadville and Trackton children struggled as their skills mismatched expectations in mainstream educational institutions.

Following from this early work was a second wave of research extending the language socialization approach to the study of multilingual speech practices and language contact phenomena like language shift, an intergenerational process whereby a social group intentionally or unintentionally gives up one language for a usually more dominant one. Kulick (1992) and Zentella (1997) are exemplary models of early language socialization work on multilingualism, language shift, and code-switching practices (also Schieffelin 1994). These studies contextualized micro-level socializing interactions within both local social structures and institutions, and larger macro-level sociopolitical and economic processes such as globalization and modernization. Kulick (1992) elucidated the process of language shift in Gapun, Papua New Guinea, teasing out how local ideologies and interpretations of a changing world influence language vitality. As Gapuners experienced external contact, Christian influence, and cultural change, the lingua franca Tok Pisin came to represent the valued side of the self known as *save* (knowledge, social awareness), along with a host of other meanings including modernity, progress, and masculinity. The village vernacular, Taiap, which formerly expressed both sides of the self, became associated with *hed* (personal will, autonomy) and more negatively valenced meanings related to tradition, paganism, and femininity. This was contributing to a language shift from Taiap to Tok Pisin.
through child-rearing practices that heavily privileged Tok Pisin, despite adults blaming their children for refusing to speak Taiap.

Zentella (1997) reported on her detailed longitudinal language socialization study of children’s English/Spanish bilingualism and code-switching practices in a New York Puerto Rican (NYPR) immigrant community. She followed a network of five female friends from childhood through early motherhood, carefully documenting interactions between the girls and their families and later with their own children. These exchanges were contextualized within ethno-geographic study of the community as it changed over time, giving insights into how the girls both lost and maintained aspects of Spanish as they struggled through educational institutions, the labor market, and the urban environment. Spanish was ultimately rendered less necessary than English for child rearing, community membership and NYPR identity, and simply surviving. What remained significant regardless of language choice was acting with respeto (respect) and in age- and gender-appropriate ways; the fact that Spanish was not necessary to convey these contributed to language loss by the third generation.

**Critical Issues and Topics**

A central concern of language socialization research is elucidating how novices become culturally intelligible members, or not, of their social groups. This entails gaining understanding of the social organization and linguistic practices that support this process. There is a focus on how the novice–expert relationship is constructed through everyday interactions and routines, with attention to both social constraints and individual agency. Language socialization is viewed as an *interactional* process (Ochs and Schieffelin 2012: 5) that is collaborative, dynamic, and multi-directional. Novices may act in accordance with normative expectations or vary from them, leading to cultural reproduction as well as transformation over time. Researchers have examined such processes over the lifespan and across such settings as the home in infancy and early childhood, school and peer contexts in childhood and adolescence, and occupational or academic contexts in adulthood (see the broad scope of studies covered in Duranti et al. 2012). Language socialization attends to shifting roles from novice to expert over time, as in one’s professional field (e.g., novice African American hair stylists studied by Jacobs-Huey 2007, or jazz students examined by Duranti 2009; see also Mertz 2007; Roberts 2010).

Language socialization researchers have engaged productively with Bourdieu’s notion of *habitus*, which encompasses taken-for-granted assumptions about the world and learned dispositions to act in particular ways, including verbal and nonverbal communication, social practices, and ways of carrying oneself related to class, gender, ethnicity, and so on (Bourdieu 1977; Ochs and Schieffelin 2012). Such acquired ways of thinking and being engender the capacity to act routinely, but also allow for creativity in social life. Novices actively contribute to both reproduction and transformation of cultural and linguistic practices within the structural limitations imposed by their societies or social groups. Further, language socialization can result in unexpected or undesirable outcomes, so researchers must account for cultural reproduction but also “why socializing messages to behave and feel in particular ways may also produce their own inversion” (Kulick and Schieffelin 2004: 356).

A critical issue engaged by initial language socialization research was the extent to which the interactional patterns observed among middle-class Euro-American families with their children, which characterized research on language acquisition at the time, were representative of cultures worldwide. Ochs and Schieffelin (1984) explored variations among US, Samoan, and Kaluli patterns of caregiving and talking with infants and young children. They identified a continuum of approaches ranging from child centered to situation centered, and questioned
the universality of child-directed speech or baby talk. For example, Kaluli caregivers do not grammatically simplify language to children, as this simplification is thought to inhibit language acquisition (Schieffelin 1990). Caregivers studied by Ochs (1988) in stratified Samoan society did not employ a baby talk register either, but for different reasons. For Samoans, grammatical simplification and social accommodation is appropriate for high-ranking addressees and not for children. Researchers have continued examining how local theories of child rearing and expectations of children affect social interactions with them, including to what extent adults and other experts modify their language use with novices (Paugh 2012a; Solomon 2012). For example, recent scholarship suggests that use of certain baby talk features that are part of a group’s habitus and commonly assumed to be beneficial for young children could be problematic for autistic children’s linguistic and social development (Ochs et al. 2005; Solomon 2012).

At a fundamental level, language socialization research gives insights into the construction of identities and social roles and relationships through detailed examination of moment-to-moment social interaction across settings and persons (Ochs 1996; Ochs and Schieffelin 2008). It is grounded in an understanding of the indexicality of language, whereby linguistic forms like grammatical and discourse features index or point to a multitude of contextually specific sociocultural information, including ethnicity, race, class, gender, religion, rank, status, age, child/adult, nationality, and regional origins, as well as culturally recognizable activities, social relationships, and affective stances. Learning to interpret and convey these social meanings is critical to the development of communicative competence, in other words, the knowledge of grammatical rules and how to use language varieties appropriately and pragmatically in social interaction. Across societies, experts apprentice novices into the inference and display of culturally intelligible emotional stances and actions, including when and how to be respectful, polite, deferent, bold, etc. (Ochs and Schieffelin 1989; Schieffelin and Ochs 1986). Researchers attend to both the direct and indirect socialization of affective expression and social comportment through varied linguistic possibilities, such as languages, dialects, registers, and styles.

The study of socializing activities and interactions illuminates how children and other novices come to understand the social order and (re)produce similarities and differences, group membership or lack thereof, and relations of power, inclusion, and exclusion. In other words, using language in social context plays a key role in enacting or bringing into being social identities and relations of subordination, dominance, and hierarchy. Howard (2007, 2009a, 2012), for instance, analyzed the socialization of Muang children in Northern Thailand into hierarchy through acquisition of person reference terms and other communicative practices. Burdelski (2012) demonstrated how Japanese caregivers model and provide verbal and embodied guidance in politeness forms, transmitting to children an understanding of how hierarchy organizes social relationships in Japanese society. Among Vietnamese children, Shohet (2013) illustrated how the concept of hy sinh (“sacrifice”) is socialized through routine linguistic and corporeal displays of respect, thus reinforcing the “asymmetrical reciprocity” that underlies the sociomoral order.

Shaming as a vehicle for normative moral socialization has been shown to have varying meanings and strategies across cultures (Lo and Fung 2012). Miller and colleagues’ long-term fieldwork has compared the construction of self and morality through narrative socialization among middle-class families in Taipei, Taiwan, and Chicago, United States, finding that Taiwanese families tend to tell stories about children’s misdeeds while American families are more likely to minimize them (Miller et al. 2012). Lo and Fung (2012) suggested that among urban Taiwanese families, South Koreans, and Korean Americans, a sense of shame is an essential part of individual morality, with caregivers held responsible for cultivating children’s moral development through direct negative assessments and embodied shaming practices.
Attention to the socialization of morality via language gives insights into social organization and local understandings of the self and subjectivity.

While language socialization research attends to routine practices, or what is repeated in social life (Moore 2012), it also addresses the novel. Studies of bi/multilingualism from a language socialization perspective offer insights into the complexities of micro- and macro-level processes that affect linguistic and cultural learning and broader societal change, as in contexts of colonialism, postcolonialism, or migration (Baquedano-López and Mangual Figueroa 2012; Garrett 2012; Garrett and Baquedano-López 2002; Kulick 1992; Paugh 2012b; Zentella 1997). Language ideologies, or the ideas that language users hold toward and assessments they make about their language(s) and the language(s) of others, impact linguistic practice with novices as users evaluate language according to cultural values and ideas about contextually appropriate expression (Riley 2012a). Attention to language ideologies and their links to socialization practices are critical, particularly when communicative codes are differentially valued and practiced. Unequal power relations, while ever present in novice–expert interactions, are particularly salient in social groups facing rapid change or socioeconomic and political subordination. What “counts” as a language can vary within and across populations, thus language socialization researchers attend to the complex language ideologies and heterogeneous, fluid language practices that they encounter.

**Current Contributions and Research**

While there are many current directions in language socialization research, this section highlights several areas that have received recent attention, particularly linguistic and cultural contact situations, peer socialization, and children’s agency. Many of these studies share similar concerns about multilingual practices, tensions between social groups and nation-states, and enduring themes in language socialization research like morality, respect and deference, and age- or generation-inflected expectations of child and adult linguistic practice. Recent studies offer insights into the mundane micro-level socializing practices, broader language ideologies, and macro-level sociopolitical contexts that shape the development of two or more languages from birth or in second or heritage language acquisition, as well as language shift (useful reviews include Duff 2012; Friedman 2012; Garrett 2012; Nonaka 2012).

Recent work on multilingual socialization attends to local conceptions of the status of children and how these views mediate linguistic practice, exploring the impact of age-graded language ideologies and codes on the longevity of local languages within their historical and current sociopolitical contexts (Garrett 2007, 2012; Paugh 2012b). Beliefs about respect, age-appropriate demonstration of knowledge, and child autonomy permeate adult expectations about when a child may begin producing a second language, with implications for its actual use. Garrett (2007, 2012), for example, found that in St Lucia, age and childhood expectations have intersected to facilitate a language shift toward English while also aiding in some maintenance of the Afro–French creole, Kwéyòl, through age-appropriate communicative practice. Code-specific genres like cursing may also play a role in language maintenance, as children are permitted in some circumstances to use Kwéyòl forms that index assertive stances (Garrett 2005).

Social interactions involving language-learning children can contribute to language shift in ways that are unexpected or not compatible with official efforts at preservation and revitalization. Paugh (2005b, 2012a, 2012b) explored language shift in Dominica in the Eastern Caribbean through children’s home, school, and peer interactions, contextualized within a national language revitalization movement. Rural adults discourage children from speaking Patwa, an Afro–French creole, in favor of English, the official national language, while urban
intellectuals promote Patwa’s preservation as a symbol of national identity. Through language socialization practices in the course of the shift, however, Patwa has become indexically linked to adult roles and status, creating a powerful resource for dominantly English-speaking children to use in navigating peer interactions and enacting adult roles in imaginative play. Through everyday socializing activities and peer play, emotionally charged aspects of Patwa are being maintained in a separate set of circumstances far removed from formal language revitalization efforts, which encourage formal spelling bees and an annual creole celebration.

Meek’s (2007, 2010) research in a northern Athapascan community in the Yukon Territory, Canada, similarly noted the transformative role played by children in a process of language shift from Kaska to English. Through the course of the language shift and related language revitalization efforts, children have come to re-conceptualize Kaska as the language of elders. Because of this, the children interact with elders passively rather than actively in order to display appropriate respect, so they do not take advantage of the opportunity to speak the language during traditional Kaska activities when elders could help them learn. In spite of widespread revalorization of Kaska, then, language revitalization efforts have reinforced the language shift by shoring up age-graded language ideologies linking differential language use to notions of respect, authority, and status asymmetries. At the same time, Meek (2007) found that children use Kaska to direct one another in peer contexts where its use does not challenge expectations of respect toward elders.

Multilingual language socialization studies illuminate what is altered or lost in situations of sociolinguistic contact and change, but also identify what is maintained, such as discourse structures and ways of using a threatened language even with diminished use of the code itself (Bunte 2009; Field 2001; Kulick 1992), or blended varieties and stylistic innovations (Fader 2009). Makihara (2005), for example, found that intergenerational language shift from Rapa Nui to Chilean Spanish on Easter Island was mediated by heritage tourism efforts. From this came a revival of Rapa Nui as an emblem of island identity, but also the emergence of new varieties of Rapa Nui Spanish and syncretic Rapa Nui speech styles among children. Riley’s (2007) analysis of language socialization, language shift, and cultural identity in the Marquesas in French Polynesia similarly showed how language socialization practices can lead to syncretic language varieties among youth. In this case, such co-mingling may help to preserve the indigenous code, Enana, even if it is not as “pure” as elite language activists would prefer.

Howard (2009a) explored how children are socialized into expressing respectful speech in and through Standard Thai in the Muang community in Northern Thailand, with implications for the vitality of the local vernacular Kam Muang. In classroom interactions with teachers, children are expected to use Standard Thai politeness particles, which index respect but also appropriate Thai citizenship. At the same time, children at the village school appear to have access to more opportunities for use of their vernacular language than middle-class children sent to school in the city. Further, Howard (2010) demonstrated that perceptions of syncretic linguistic practice among youth are interpreted differently across class distinctions and in relation to local understandings of social relationships. Many younger Muang speakers employ syncretic language practices for language play and supporting culturally valued “fun” interactions with friends.

Through formal education and other institutions, multilingual practices often come to the fore as foci in the socialization of national identities and desired forms of citizenship (Friedman 2010, 2012; Howard 2009a; Minks 2013; Moore 2006; Paugh 2012b), many times at the expense of one code over another. Friedman (2010, 2012) documented the role of formal schooling in language revitalization efforts in Ukraine. With Ukrainian a focus of purism and nation-building efforts, in contrast to language revivalists’ views of Russian as having a perceived
“polluting” effect by language revivalists, schoolchildren in the language classroom are socialized into dominant language ideologies supporting state language revitalization efforts, such as through error correction routines and explicit socialization of linguistic pride by describing Ukrainian as a “pure and beautiful language” (Friedman 2012: 642). Often such corrections and a strict separation of codes contrast with everyday community language practices, and many children continue to use Russian outside of the classroom, leaving the fate of Ukrainian uncertain (Friedman 2010).

Language socialization research also examines links between multilingual practices and religious identities, with associated tensions between “tradition” and “modernity,” and relations with the nation-state. Moore (2006, 2012) examined how guided repetition was used in Cameroon to socialize Fulbe children, who spoke Fulfulde, into use of Arabic in Qur’anic schools and of French in public schools. In addition to linguistic form, children were socialized into the identities indexed by them: a devout religious “traditional” Muslim identity through Arabic, and the “modern” Francophone and Cameroonian identities indexed by French. As Moore (2006: 122) states, in both contexts “second-language socialization entailed two intertwined processes: the formation of linguistic habits and the transformation of heart and mind.” Fader (2007, 2009, 2012) considered religious and gender socialization, literacy practices, and language change through gendered use of Hebrew, Yiddish, and English in a Hasidic Jewish community in Brooklyn, New York. Socialization into appropriate gender roles was resulting in girls increasingly speaking Hasidic English over Yiddish as they mediated communication between the orthodox Hasidic community and the secular non-Hasidic world, while boys continued acquiring Yiddish and Hebrew through religious study in protective spaces within the community (Fader 2007).

The language socialization paradigm has been employed productively in situations of migration and diaspora for understanding identity negotiation, exclusionary practices, and the role of children in mediating interactions between the family and outside institutions (Baquedano-López and Mangual Figueroa 2012; Baquedano-López et al. 2010; Mangual Figueroa 2011, 2012; Orellana and Reynolds 2008; Zentella 1997). García-Sánchez (2010, 2012, 2014) employed a language socialization perspective to understand racialization and the politics of childhood in an immigrant community in Spain. Her research detailed how Moroccan immigrant children were being socialized into marginalized identities through exclusionary linguistic and nonverbal practices in peer and other contexts like school and medical encounters. Mangual Figueroa (2011, 2012) probed how mixed-status Mexican families in the New Latino Diaspora made sense of and socialized ideas about citizenship and their migratory status through routines regarding homework and planning for the future in the home.

Heritage language socialization practices in diasporic settings shape children’s transnational identity formation, as illustrated in several studies of diverse groups in the United States. Baquedano-López (2000) documented the socialization of Spanish and cultural links to Mexico through doctrina (Catholic catechism) classes among Mexican-American children. Kattan (2009) demonstrated how Israeli children temporarily living in the United States were socialized through metalinguistic commentary in home and school settings both to recognize differences between Israeli and American pronunciations of Hebrew and to understand how those phonological differences indexed (in)authenticity. He (2012) outlined a multifaceted view of heritage language development and provided an illustrative case study of one Chinese heritage language learner and his complex and varied trajectory of socialization over time, including how his own socialization transformed others involved in the process. Finally, language and moral personhood intertwined in Sikh education classes in an American diasporic community studied by Klein (2013). Here, religious classes using archaic Punjabi and Sikh youth discussion classes
employing modern Punjabi both constructed “a view of heritage language as moral action that represents and socializes transnational and generational continuity and ethno-religious identification” (Klein 2013: 36).

Learners of second languages often face particular social challenges, as they may find restricted access to the target language if they are not accepted, or are even opposed, by the dominant community, or conversely they may not embrace a new language and culture for various reasons, such as when trying to maintain their heritage language and identity (Duff 2012; Duff and Talmy 2011: 97–98). Talmy (2008, 2009) explored ideologies and classroom practices impacting the socialization of high school English-as-a-second-language (ESL) students, and their teachers, in Hawai‘i. Through teacher–student interaction concerning respect, students were socialized into classroom control as well as mainstream ideologies stigmatizing ESL identities vis-à-vis “regular” students (Talmy 2009). At the same time, “oldtimer” students socialized new ESL teachers into reproducing ineffective classroom practices through their oppositional behavior and alternative identity construction. Similarly, Cekaite (2013) documented the creation of a “bad subject” (Kulick and Schieffelin 2004) in a Swedish school as a Somali girl learning Swedish as a second language was deemed to exhibit noncompliance with teachers’ directives, thus creating over time a “problematic” and “unwilling” student identity through student–teacher as well as peer interactions in the classroom. Studying adult foreign language learners, Cook (2008) examined the socialization of Japanese and related social identities through style shifts using the masu honorific form, versus plain verb endings.

As demonstrated by many of the studies described above, language socialization researchers have turned a more focused lens to children’s agency and impact on cultural and linguistic practices and ideologies, especially in peer-controlled contexts (Goodwin and Kyratzis 2012). Documentation and analysis of children’s social interactions and play offer insights into identity construction, multilingual practices, verbal play and improvisation, and linguistic and cultural transmission, loss, and revitalization (Aronsson 2012; García-Sánchez 2010; Garrett 2007; Howard 2007, 2009b; Kyratzis et al. 2010; Minks 2013; Paugh 2005a, 2012b). Goodwin’s (1990, 2006) extensive research on children exploring peer inclusion and exclusion and children’s understandings of social class and ethnicity serves as a model for research on peer socialization. Children’s language play is viewed as a forum for exploring and often challenging dominant ideologies and social structures, including age-graded hierarchies and family roles (De León 2007; Reynolds 2008, 2010). Paugh (2005a, 2012b) documented how children in Dominica were covertly contributing to Patwa maintenance through their unsupervised peer play, challenging the formal and informal English-only policies of their teachers and caregivers (also see Garrett 2007 on St Lucia). Similarly, Minks (2010, 2013) illustrated how indigenous Miskitu children on Corn Island, Nicaragua, exploited their heteroglossic repertoires and developed intercultural voices by mixing Spanish and Kriol English with the Miskitu language during expressive activities like vocal play and song. Children can also influence their own literacy socialization, as Sterponi (2007) demonstrated among children in two California classrooms who engaged in clandestine reading practices, both acquiring and transforming school-sanctioned literacy forms. Children’s communicative practices when not in the presence of adults, the presumed experts, demonstrate their interpretations of local ideologies and may considerably impact sociolinguistic reproduction and change.

Main Research Methods

Language socialization research is ethnographic in orientation. It investigates social interactions in naturalistic home, community, and institutional contexts, such as classrooms and professional spheres. Often caregivers and other experts comment on cultural rules and linguistic ideologies
for novices through explicit corrections, directives, accounts, and running commentary on novices’ behavior, comportment, practices, and skills. However, ways of interacting, feeling, and behaving are implicitly socialized as well, occurring over time through participation in mundane social interaction and activities. As Ochs and Schieffelin (2012: 12) state:

Language socialization studies tend to layer levels of analysis, looking at children and other novices’ involvement in social life from the top down, looking into the organization of involvement itself for the socializing potentialities of semiotic forms and communicative arrangements, and looking up from micro-movements of bodies, gestures, and verbal acts to longer-term sociocultural and political implications.

In addition to examining caregiver–child interaction, which is often the focus of language acquisition studies, language socialization researchers investigate the impact on linguistic and sociocultural learning of multiple family members (such as sibling caregivers), as well as members of novices’ social networks outside the family (such as peers and teachers).

Garrett (2008: 192–194) and Ochs and Schieffelin (2012: 11–12) highlight several key features of language socialization methodology: it uses field-based data collection, employing such tools as audio/video recordings and other ethnographic techniques; it takes a holistic ethnographic perspective; and it attends to both micro- and macro-levels of analysis (see also Duff and Talmy 2011; Garrett and Baquedano-López 2002; Kulick and Schieffelin 2004). Language socialization studies exhibit a longitudinal design with observation and recordings across multiple contexts of daily life; this permits analysis over time of the incremental, co-constructed transmission and modification of language varieties, cultural and linguistic ideologies, and social identities. However, cross-sectional and brief case studies have also employed the language socialization approach (Ochs and Schieffelin 2012: 12).

Any locus of novice–expert interaction is open to language socialization study. For example, communicative events involving food and eating have emerged as fruitful sites of study, both in terms of language socialization generally and as explicit foci of analytic attention. For instance, Ochs and colleagues probed American family dinnertime interactions for, among other issues, how family identities and gendered family roles are enacted and socialized through personal storytelling (e.g., Ochs and Taylor 1995). Blum-Kulka (1997) examined the socialization of sociability through dinner talk among Native Israeli, American Israeli, and Jewish American families. Paugh (2005b, 2012c) analyzed how ideologies, moralities, and ways of talking about paid work were socialized through children’s overhearing of and participation in parents’ work narratives at the dinner table in the United States. Examination of food-related interactions themselves gives insights into socialization of food preferences, eating practices, and human sociality (Cavanaugh et al. 2014). Ochs, Pontecorvo, and Fasulo (1996) offered a foundational comparative analysis of American and Italian ways of “socializing taste,” regarding both foods and culturally specific habitus (also see Ochs and Shohet 2006). Paugh and Izquierdo (2009) explored dinnertime interactions in Los Angeles, studying how middle-class American families managed food-related conflicts and socialized strategies of negotiation over eating practices and individual autonomy. Riley (2012b) considered food socialization of both the children that she studied as well as herself in the Marquesas. Karrebæk (2012, 2013) examined language socialization and the stigmatization of immigrant identities in teacher–student interactions about food choices (especially what non-Danish children carried to school in their lunch boxes) in an ethnically diverse primary classroom in Copenhagen, Denmark. Interactions involving food and eating are just one site of language socialization, but a rich one due to the importance of food and how it is distributed and consumed across cultures.
Documentation of discursive practice is critical, as expectations and ideologies expressed in conversation and interviews do not always match actual language use (Kulick 1992; Schieffelin 1990). Transcription of video/audio recordings is ideally done in consultation with participants or other local experts in order to elicit valuable commentary on verbal and nonverbal practices. Data collected through ethnographic observation and recordings across contexts are deepened and expanded through use of interviews, questionnaires, life histories, and other tools. Through such a longitudinal ethnographic approach, language socialization research develops “a processual account of how individuals come to be particular kinds of culturally intelligible subjects” (Kulick and Schieffelin 2004: 351). Its theoretical and methodological tools provide for socially grounded investigation of the transmission as well as the disruption of linguistic and cultural practices across generations and lifetimes.

Future Directions and Recommendations for Practice

Language socialization research continues to expand as indicated by the range of topics and approaches considered in the Handbook of Language Socialization (Duranti et al. 2012). While normative ideologies and practices remain a focus, researchers have begun attending more to the creative and unexpected in language socialization (Kulick and Schieffelin 2004). As Duranti, Ochs, and Schieffelin (2012: 421) question: “there remains a challenge for the language socialization paradigm: how are creativity and conformity integrated into the lives of children and novices as well as into our theory of their development?” (see also Aronsson 2012; Duranti and Black 2012; Kulick and Schieffelin 2004). A prime way to accomplish this is to increase attention to the multiple contexts of children’s lives, especially children’s cultures and play frames in which they creatively employ and test out the linguistic boundaries and cultural rules of their societies. Children and other novices can redefine dominant ideologies, languages, and forms of interaction, even reconstituting “heritage” or other vernacular codes in the process of learning aspects of them and how to use them.

Children’s participation in the research process may be augmented through use of participatory methods, such as giving children the tools to document and explain their own experiences through photography and audio-recording (see Montgomery 2009: 43–48). For example, García-Sánchez (2014) sought to avoid the pitfalls of either romanticizing or abnormalizing Muslim immigrant children’s childhoods in Spain in part by attending to children’s own perspectives through interviews, pictorial narrations (termed lifemaps), and by observation and recording of their everyday interactions. As she describes: “Listening to children’s ongoing reflections on their lives has been the main compass I have used when I felt I was being pulled too far in one of those two directions [as described above]” (García-Sánchez 2014: 10). Situated within the multifaceted contexts and interactions of everyday life, attention to children’s voices broadens and deepens our understandings of language socialization processes on the ground.

Recent work suggests a growing focus on teasing out language socialization processes across contexts, modalities, and temporal scales ranging from immediate interactional moments to intermediate time periods (days, months, years) to much broader and longer sociohistorical processes (Howard 2012; Reyes 2013; Wortham 2005). As Howard (2012: 345, emphasis added) states regarding social hierarchy in particular, the language socialization approach can explicate “when socializing practices and discourses occur sequentially within an interaction, developmentally within the child’s or novice’s trajectory of changing participation over time, and historically over longer durations, generations, and eras.” Follow-up research tracing longer time scales and trajectories of language socialization, though possibly challenging for individual researchers to accomplish and thus suggesting the value of team-based projects, would aid in understanding
sociolinguistic transformation and processes of intergenerational change over time. This is particularly needed in studies of language shift and revitalization given that language loss is a dynamic process, the outcome of which cannot be well predicted given shifting political and social climates, the unevenness at which it takes place across communities and societies, and the ebbs and flows of bi/multilingualism over the life course of individual language users.

Ultimately, language socialization studies have much to offer in understanding the minute socializing practices and longer trajectories involved in becoming a culturally recognizable subject, even when such a subject is deemed undesirable or incomplete. Following in the anthropological tradition, this approach offers deep insights into processes of inclusion, exclusion, and the reproduction of social inequality, as well as challenges to it through the discursive practices of everyday life. Perhaps in the future language socialization researchers will find increasing ways to make their findings accessible and applicable to those involved in structuring children’s and other novices’ daily lives.

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Related Topics

7 Language Ideologies (Kroskrity); 13 Language, Gender and Identity (Pichler); 14 Discursive Practices, Linguistic Repertoire, and Racial Identities (Baugh); 15 Language and Racialization (Chun, Lo); 23 The Emergence of Creoles and Language Change (Mufwene); 28 Language Maintenance and Revitalization (Cowell); 29 Language Endangerment and Revitalization Strategies (Brittain, MacKenzie); 30 The Politics of Language Endangerment (Meek).

References


**Further Reading**


This state-of-the-art volume brings together a collection of 27 chapters by prominent scholars in language socialization research. Each chapter reviews a topic or approach and original research by the author(s). The chapters explore current language socialization research and theory with case studies from home, community, and institutional contexts, across multiple cultures, and across the lifespan. It is an indispensable collection for language socialization researchers.