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Sociolinguistic Competence in
The Five - Year - Old Child

Thesis presented to the School of
Graduate Studies of the University
of Ottawa in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts.

Ottawa, August, 1978

Virginia R. Vitale

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION.

The purpose of this study is to examine the five-year-old child's ability to adjust his speech according to listener. This ability to make appropriate modifications in one's speech in order to accomodate such variables as addressee, situation and topic is part of one's "communicative competence" (Hymes, 1972b); the knowledge and ability required to use the linguistic code appropriately.

Chomsky has stated that by age five the child has acquired the grammar of his native language (Chomsky, 1965). There is however evidence that the five-year-old's grammar differs to some extent from the adult grammar and that "active" acquisition of syntax continues until at least age nine, perhaps beyond (C. Chomsky, 1969). Even though the child may not have acquired the complete grammar by age five, he still has the ability to produce "a fairly wide range of syntactically varied responses" (Shatz and Gelman, 1973:2). Given this wide range, it is reasonable to assume that the child chooses his utterances in view of the variables cited above, listener variable being one of them. Ervin-Tripp (1969) suggests that some adjustments,

particularly in the form of intonational variation, appear much earlier than five, in fact, they are evident from the beginning of language development. It is not in the least difficult to conceive that the rules for language use are acquired simultaneously with the rules of grammar.

Several studies (Berko-Gleason, 1973, Shatz and Gelman, 1973, Sachs and Devin, 1976) have examined modifications made by children in view of the status of the addressee and have all given evidence to show that children definitely adjust their speech to a younger listener. Shatz and Gelman examine three measures of such adjustments; length of utterance, syntactic complexity, (see page 72) and the use of attention-getting devices. They conclude their study by stating that four-year-olds speech to two-year-olds is "down-shifted", but that very little difference was found between speech addressed to a peer and speech addressed to an adult. A large part of the research in fact, deals with adjustments made downwards, that is, to a younger listener. I propose to examine more closely the differences between the peer-directed and adult-directed speech of five-year-olds.

Data were collected for this study at the Ottawa Montessori School. I observed and taped eleven five-year-olds spontaneously interacting amongst themselves and with their teacher in a classroom setting on three occasions. The data were transcribed and analyzed for differences in peer directed and adult directed speech. The results will be discussed in Chapter III.

This study, then, is sociolinguistic. I am not interested in the linguistic competence of five-year-old children in itself, but how the social organisation of, in particular the classroom setting, interacts with this competence. At this point it is fitting to introduce the sociolinguist's treatment of language variation, in particular as it relates to social factors.

The social aspect of language has been the concern of many linguists (Ervin-Tripp, Fishman, Hymes, Labov), who view it as an integral part of the study of language. Truly language is a social phenomenon. Our linguistic behaviour is not haphazard or irregular. It is, besides being governed by rules of syntax, governed by the social rules of the community in which we find ourselves. As Fishman (1972) states, one part of the sociology of language concerns itself with the question:

4.
"who speaks (or writes) what language
(or what language variety), to whom,
when and to what end?"

(1972:3)

As sociolinguists attempt to deal with this question, it becomes evident that the answer takes the form of rules and this in itself is proof of some underlying regularity to the variation found in language use.

Labov (1970), in a study of language structure within the social context of the linguistic community, states that beneath the apparent heterogeneity of language is some very evident patterning. Such patternings are revealed in the data he presents on New York speech and take the form of variable rules. A variable rule, in contrast with an invariant rule, involves some type of constraint. Constraints, in turn, are dependent on some non-linguistic aspect of the social context - role relationships or setting. Thus, often the presence, modification or absence of a rule can be explained by social or stylistic factors. Labov's work results in a "stylistic and social stratification" of the speech community (Labov, 1970:66).

Perhaps what is the most interesting for the present study is that Labov's findings support the thesis that there are no single-style speakers. Clearly as he points out, such phenomena as style-shifting and "multi-layered communication systems" (Labov, 1970:42), are to be expected in that they serve a purpose in the speech community. In the same way that situational factors determine language use, the choice of a style helps to define role-relationships, setting, context and to demonstrate one's ability to adhere to the social constraints and norms of his community.

Other types of rules have been proposed to deal with changes in speech styles. Ervin-Tripp (1974), in her discussion of sociolinguistic rules, proposes "co-occurrence" rules:

"whenever there is predictability between two linguistic forms, we can speak of co-occurrence rules."

(1974:288)

These apply horizontally and vertically to explain both the relations between items of the same level of structure and the relations that hold between elements of each of the levels of grammar - phonology, syntax and the lexicon - in a particular speech style. Thus co-occurrence rules

often cut across the components of grammar. Selections that are made by these rules must apply globally to a text, otherwise a "mixing" of styles results.

These, then, are some of the types of rules or constraints one can expect in response to Fishman's question. It must also be emphasized that the choice of a particular style or the decision to style-shift involves a judgement of appropriateness. This ability to judge is part of one's communicative competence. Often a three-way distinction, formal, colloquial, intimate, -or even a two-way distinction - careful and casual (Labov, 1970) suffices when discussing appropriate speech styles. In this way, the situation is categorized according to its degree of formality. But one may want to take several factors, besides formality, into consideration, to allow for finer distinctions. Thus a more elaborate system is proposed whereby three major factors can be distinguished: situation, subject matter and participants. With these three, many contexts may be defined and the varieties of speech which are appropriate to them. That is to say a change in any one of the factors could result in a corresponding change in language variety.

Studies which investigate this phenomenon of changing one's language to fit the social context, or variation in language use come under several different headings, the broadest perhaps being "language variety" (Labov, 1966, Fishman, 1972, and Chiu, 1973), "social dialect" (Ervin-Tripp, 1971) or "functional variety" (Hymes, 1972a), this last one being particular in American linguistics to refer to the two-way distinction "careful - casual". "Style" and "register" also fall within this domain of sociolinguistic study, the former being in current use in America, the latter in England. Inevitably there are problems with terminology, as authors set up new definitions to correspond with the existing terminology. (See Gregory, 1967 pages 194-5 and Ellis and Uré, 1969 for a discussion of terminological equivalents). In general, the term "register" has become equated with a language variety particular to a specific situation (Hymes, 1972a:63) or variation according to use (as opposed to "dialect" which is variation according to user). Register is equated with systematic variation in relation to a social context (Lyons, 1977:584).

This brief discussion of language varieties and sociolinguistic rules has hopefully shown that the phenomenon I propose to analyze in this study could fall

under several different headings. Although the discussion may be somewhat simplistic, as I have avoided detail, it is evident that it is by no means easy to decide upon a framework to adopt for the present study.

In discussing modifications of speech in view of the listener, one considers a register analysis framework. "Baby talk", adult language modified to accomodate babies and young children, is sometimes regarded as a register, (Strevens, 1965). In a first consideration, register as defined by Davies (1969) - "how the language we speak changes in order to fit the situation we are in" - appears to be suitable for this study: Call it "register in child language" - situation one, child with peers and situation two, child with teacher. Yet problems do arise. Register analysis is a contrastive study of texts and valid comparisons of linguistic elements can only be made when factors, such as subject matter, situation and participant relationships are controlled. It seems that very little would be gained in comparing a sermon read at a church service and gossip heard at a morning coffee break. The resulting texts would not serve the same function, nor would they deal with the same subject matter. As well the roles of the participants in each text would not

coincide. This is not to say that the language would not be different in each situation, however there would be no functional basis of comparison. An example might help to clarify matters here. Consider the following three utterances:

- i) formal "Visitors should make their way at once to the upper floor by way of the staircase."
- ii) consultative "Would you mind going up the stairs, please?"
- iii) intimate "Up you go chaps : " (Chiu, 1973:54)

With these three utterances, we can carry out register analysis, we can correlate linguistic features with situational features, since there is a common denominator that ties together the three utterances - all three intend to produce the same effect in the hearer: getting him up the stairs. We can thus examine how this content or idea is linguistically realized in each of the three situations or in each of the three styles corresponding to three different situations. Often the most striking differences will be in lexical choices, but syntactic differences appear as well, as can be seen by our examples. Thus we can understand why a comparison of sermons and gossip is more difficult to carry out; the texts do not seek to achieve the same ends.

Often register is used in more general terms to refer to a language variety particular to a situation or to a group of people with a common social characteristic. Thus we speak

of the "register of advertisement", the "register of a newspaper reporter", the "register of a policeman" and the "register of a sport". The basis of comparison here is some kind of norm or "standard" variety. In these cases word frequencies of "everyday" English might be consulted, in order to see if certain lexical items are used more often in certain registers than in "everyday" English. Rather than speak of "register" for these varieties of language, it is perhaps more fitting to speak of general tendencies of these varieties or "markers" which may set apart these varieties from others. In some cases perhaps the most striking differences will be in vocabulary, a particular "jargon" associated with a situation or a profession. We can thus see some type of continuum in the use of the term register, the strictest being the examples given, where the speaker's intentions are held constant, and the widest equated with "jargon". I believe however that the most revealing cases in this study will be those in which speaker's intention is a common denominator in the utterances compared: how do children request an object from their teacher and how does this differ linguistically from the same type of request they will make of their peers ?

In this observational study, given that children do not always use their speech to the same ends with peer and with teacher, or even simpler, that they do not always discuss the

same topics with the teacher as they do amongst themselves, we often get a "sermon-gossip" situation. In these cases, it will be appropriate to speak of outright differences between peer-to-peer and child-to-teacher speech, that do not allow for comparisons of linguistic forms, but are interesting in themselves. I do not wish to call these differences "register", adhering to a strict definition of the term. These will be termed, rather, characteristics of "peer-to-peer and child-to-teacher "speech styles" (Sachs and Devin, 1976). "Register" will only be used when we compare utterances which intend to produce the same effects in the hearer.

In order to facilitate the register analysis, the speech act was chosen for the basic unit of study. This was done given that the term "speech act" (Searle, 1965) makes reference to the function of the utterance produced: was the utterance intended as a request, a warning, a greeting, a report or an offer? We see then that function is not used in its strictest scientific sense as the necessary and sufficient contribution of an element to a system, nor is it seen as a relation of interdependence between elements. When we refer to the function of a speech act, in the Searlian framework, we are speaking of their effects or consequences on the hearer or sometimes of their utility. The speaker intends to produce

an effect on the hearer by getting him to recognize his intentions. If he is successful, the hearer will understand his speech act as, for example, a promise, that is the effect or function the speaker has in mind.

As pointed out by the example on page 9, a speech act may have several different linguistic realizations. In this study, I would like to suggest that these realizations are chosen in terms of their appropriateness; some can be used only in particular situations and when particular role-relationships exist. This is where register comes in: a comparison of linguistic realizations of speech acts, that is how their use varies systematically as to the social context. The data in this study will be examined for two types of speech acts, directives and offers. How do children get their peers to perform certain acts and in what ways do these requests differ linguistically from those they make of their teachers? Similarly what differences do we find in offers directed to peer and offers directed to the teacher? Other areas of study will be the use of informal tags and of certain vocabulary items - how do their uses differ in the two situations.

The acquisition of "communicative competence" has become an important area of research as we approach an understanding of the importance of social context in language acquisition.

Truly as Shipley and Shipley (1969) point out, the child does not learn in a vacuum, language cannot be divorced from social context. As Hymes (1972b:271) so blatantly puts it, a child who possessed only linguistic competence and who might produce any sentence whatever at any time would be likely to be institutionalized. A study of modifications made in the speech of young children will hopefully shed some light on the child's rules of language use.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In this chapter, I will present a review of the literature on the systematic use of language varieties by children. Studies of this nature come under the titles "modifications in speech as a function of some variable", style-shifting, code switching and register. This diversity of terminology was pointed out in the introduction. I will begin by a short general discussion of various aspects of the child's sociolinguistic competence and evidence for it (section 2.1), then focus upon registral competence and the ability to style-shift as an aspect of sociolinguistic competence (sections 2.2 to 2.4). The remaining sections will deal with: registral competence and psychological development (section 2.5), a short examination of the input and its importance (section 2.6), and a final section (2.7) in which other matters of concern will be discussed. A re-statement of the problem will conclude the chapter.

2.1 Sociolinguistic Competence.

If it is the case, as several authors have stated (Cook-Gumperz, 1975; Hollos, 1977, Mitchell-Kernan and Kernan, 1975), that the rules of grammar are acquired simultaneously with the rules for socially appropriate language use, then sociolinguistic competence should be evident from very early ages. This appears to be the case as Ervin-Tripp (1969) has pointed out. Although a considerable amount of evidence comes from style-shifting, there is also evidence from studies in other areas of sociolinguistic skills, whereby the uses of language are more restricted. In these areas the choices available are few and the language that corresponds to a context or situation is distinct and specific to it. An illustration of this is provided by languages in which there is both a familiar and a formal second person pronoun; the speaker must make a choice within a closed set of alternatives, the choice depending on a social factor of role relationships. Studies of the child's acquisition of second person pronoun were done by Shipley and Shipley, (1969) on the Quaker child's use of "thee" and by Hollos (1977) in a study investigating the selection of pronouns by Hungarian children. The comprehension and use of the second person pronouns demand a knowledge of the social relationships that exist between speaker and hearer.



In Quaker speech both the status and solidarity norm are significant factors as to the choice of "thee" or "thou". In Hungarian, familiarity and politeness determine the selection of a second person pronoun. Shipley and Shipley (1969) state that in most cases children exhibit "relative" acquisition of "thee-thou". In contrast to "absolute" whereby the child classifies people as to "thee" and "thou" and addresses them accordingly, in relative acquisition, the addressee is perceived as a member of a dyadic social relationship: parent-child, husband-wife. Thus when children are involved in a relationship they will use the appropriate form of the pronoun. This same acquisition pattern appeared in the Hungarian study. The authors of these studies were interested in the effect of the social environment on the comprehension and production of the pronouns and in both studies it was found to be significant. Shipley and Shipley (1969) found that the child is more apt to use "thee" in families where the parents' use of "thee" is broader. In Hollos' (1977) study, the town children performed better all round as they were exposed to a wider range of social relationships in contrast to the village children who lived in a more isolated community. These studies shed some light on the acquisition of a sociolinguistic skill - the use of an address system, in which the comprehension of role relationships underlies the child's ability to employ

the proper form of the second person pronoun.

Another "communicative" skill acquired by children which is of a completely different nature, yet hinges on the social and cultural values of the speech community, was done by Mitchell-Kernan and Kernan (1975). They examined the child's ability to insult in the American and Samoan cultures. This ability to verbally insult, which appears as early as age four, is dependent on the knowledge of a shared cultural value. For example, in Samoa, one insults a person by remarking on his uncleanness. One must know that cleanliness is highly valued in the culture. In addition there are stylistic correlates, such as a hostile and aggressive delivery. In their description of the acquisition of the skill, the authors point out that much is to be revealed by a type of "error analysis". By examining the mistakes the child makes in insulting, we can decide whether or not he has learned the parameters necessary to define the cultural value in hand. They also point out that in the initial stages of acquisition, the delivery features will inform the child that the utterance was meant as an insult. For production, the same development pattern is seen in "joke-telling", another "communicative" ability. The child may first exhibit a joke-telling style and laugh at himself at the end of a joke,

before he comes to realize that a joke has a specific content which above all characterizes it as a joke. Clearly, then prosodic and paralinguistic features play an important role in learning the rules for language use, as is the case in register as well, where it has been pointed out that the first distinctions made are prosodic (Weeks, 1971). Other types of sociolinguistic skills which depend on social and cultural knowledge are verbal duelling in Turkish (Dundes, Leach and Özkök, 1972) and "sounding" in Black English (Mitchell-Kernan and Kernan, 1975:307). Although these sociolinguistic skills may be viewed as very specialized and particular to a social activity, they serve to demonstrate that the child, on his way to being a competent speaker of his native language does not acquire linguistic and social knowledge separately, nor in a mutually exclusive way especially in the cases of the acquisition of an address system, insulting, "sounding" or verbal duelling. As well, the acquisition of verbal routines as examined by Berko-Gleason and Weintraub (1977) can also be regarded as the acquisition of a sociolinguistic skill. Such a skill depends on a knowledge of the time at which such utterances are produced (e.g. "Good-morning" from dawn to noon). Clearly the manner of acquisition is different. The adult tells the child when to say "bye-bye", prods him to say "thank-you" and informs him of what he must say to greet

strangers. This speech code or specialized input from adults about the social world and about the social rules for language use is termed the "language of socialization" (Berko-Gleason, 1973). Routines then are learned early in a rich social setting through this adult prompting. It is even suggested that they are acquired before any referential use of language (Berko-Gleason and Weintraub, 1977:135).

Bates (1974, 1975, 1977) and Bates and Silvern (1977) in several studies have investigated the young child's sensitivity to politeness in linguistic behaviour, both in production and comprehension. This ability to produce and comprehend "polite" forms is directly dependent on and related to social growth. As in routines, there is the adult factor, that is the child is often pressured to be polite and this is accomplished by the use of the language of socialization (e.g. "Say please, Johnny," "What do you say, Jenny?"). In addition and more important, the appropriate use of polite forms reflects an understanding of the social organization of the context and the status of the listeners. Bates and Silvern's findings give further evidence for the importance of social factors in the child's communicative development.

Sociolinguistic competence then, can be observed in many areas of child language, in specific verbal skills such as insulting or the use of verbal routines, the proper use of an address system and in the child's understanding and production of polite linguistic forms. The social aspect of language and its role in language acquisition cannot be underestimated as the research conducted so far suggests. However, we are far from a complete understanding of the interaction of social and linguistic competence.

2.2 The Ability to style-shift and registral competence

The ability to distinguish registers and speech-styles can be regarded as part of one's sociolinguistic competence. Whereas, the skills we have just discussed are truly "specialized" in that they demand a specific social context and in some cases have a particular vocabulary (in routines, the alternatives are highly restricted), register allows for a greater margin of freedom. This is due to a high level of tolerance for stylistic variation in our society (Ervin-Tripp, 1966:91). Consequently, there is much overlapping of features within registers and oftentimes only a small set of elements are proper to a particular register. Nevertheless the possibility for a wider scope of alternatives is not so wide as to exclude systematic variation determined by setting, role relationships and other social factors.

In this discussion of the communicative skill required to accommodate the variables of the social context, the following aspects will be dealt with: evidence for register and style-shifting in child language, the nature of these registers or speech-styles, the child's repertoire of registers and styles and the development of a repertoire. These will be discussed with reference to the literature.

2.3 Evidence for register and speech styles in the speech of children

Several articles give evidence for register and speech styles in child language (Berko-Gleason, 1973, Cazden, 1972, DeStefano, 1972, Ervin-Tripp, 1969, Hymes, 1972b, Sachs and Devin, 1976, Shatz and Gelman, 1973 and Weeks, 1971). The earliest distinction that children make is professed to be between silence and non-silence (Berko-Gleason, 1973). It is claimed that very small children will frequently jabber away to their parents and siblings, but in the presence of strangers they do not utter a sound. In some ways this might be an extreme position, but given the present state of research, we cannot deny the possibility that such a distinction is the very beginning of variation according to the listener. Other studies suggest age two

as the time when more interesting contrasts appear. The youngest subject in Weeks' (1971) study on register was age one year, nine months. It is perhaps important to call attention to the particular definition of register used in her study:

"a speech variety selected by speaker to convey additional information or emotion beyond that conveyed by his words."
(1971:1119)

This definition does not correspond with the definition previously discussed and thus one might be hesitant to consider such registers here. What is perhaps more germane to this study is that an attempt is made to correlate the extra information or emotion with appropriateness to social context. But this was somewhat unsuccessful since each of the three subjects used each register or cluster of registers in an idiosyncratic way. As well, it was not clear up to what point personality differences could explain the use of Weeks' ten registers. For example, the children were observed to use whisper (a "register") in a total of four situations: private speech, in lieu of silence, for secrets and when the child was timid. We may ask which uses are due to social factors and which may be explained by personality differences. We see that "whisper" then might be best termed, not a "register", but as a phonetic characteristic of the language used by a

particular child in a particular situation. Nonetheless it has been suggested that such variations in intensity (use of whisper, softness or loudness) and in enunciation (clarification, fuzzy speech) are the very beginnings of sociolinguistic rules or as the earliest features entering into sociolinguistic rules (Ervin-Tripp, 1969).

In the same way that adults have been seen to modify their speech to young children, children of two use a type of baby talk which has morphological and lexical features (Ervin-Tripp, 1974, Berko-Gleason, 1973). Lawson's study (cited in Ervin-Tripp, 1977) also gives support for linguistic means used to differentiate social status and age of the addressee. A two-year-old made distinctions between children of her own age and, three and four-year-olds for request forms. In addition she made distinctions in the language she addressed to her father as opposed to that which she addressed to her mother. To mother the form was "Mommy, I want milk.", but with her father "she beat around the bush". This may be a case of "stereotyping (i.e. the "father" figure favouring a certain timid behaviour), but still may be sociolinguistic: a linguistic behaviour that the child observes and induces from the mother's speech as appropriate to address to the father. The mother, when telling the child to address the father ensures

"indirectness" - "ask Daddy if he would like to come for supper" or "tell Daddy that supper is ready" not "tell Daddy to come here for supper". The child induces that she too must go about matters indirectly when addressing her father.¹ Needless to say it is difficult to pinpoint where the psychological phenomenon stops and the social takes over in cases such as this.

In Shatz and Gelman's (1973) study of speech adjustments, the subjects had a mean age of 4:4. Sixteen children were tested and personality differences had little opportunity to surface. Without a question, four-year-olds could use a simpler variety of language to a younger listener. This ability to differentiate linguistically according to social factors appears early.

What however is the nature and extent of these registers in children? A brief examination of registers in adult language will help to set our expectations. First as Cazden (1972) points out there is probably great individual variation in the adult's ability to use registers, much in contrast with grammatical competence which has more or less a uniform

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I am indebted to Professor Neufeld for this interpretation.

acquisition rate. As well, the member of a speech community is probably restricted to the range of registers displayed in that community. Secondly as Labov (1970) states, it is uncommon for adults to control a wide repertoire of stylistic variants, unless we are speaking of a "speech specialist". Those who succeed in being able to employ several varieties cannot usually continue to down-shift to their original vernacular. Clearly it is the case that a small percentage of linguistically competent adults have the ability to control a range of registers that goes from the most formal to the most casual. And if it is the case that we do acquire a new speech style or register, it is most likely to be a notch higher on the scale and not lower. Given this variation in adult registral competence, it is not surprising that several authors have remarked on the non-uniformity of the acquisition rate of this particular sociolinguistic skill in children.

2.4 The child's repertoire and its development

A limited repertoire can in part be explained by the child's limited range of experiences and his contact with only a certain type of social settings, a restricted set of domains that allow for only certain combinations of the

factors involved. In most cases the participants are known to and are in close contact with the very young child, while the setting is the home. Ervin-Tripp (1971) proposes that the first two features to be distinguished are major setting and addressee. As several studies have suggested, the young child is perhaps in control of three registers: "baby-talk" to a younger child, a peer-group colloquial style and something slightly different to parents.

Needless to say the most significant innovation comes when the child is sent off to school and becomes aware of a language variety associated with it (Ervin-Tripp, 1964).

The classroom context triggers a shift in register, among other changes in linguistic behaviour. Many interesting studies have been undertaken which investigate the results of the addition of a new context to the child's experiences. (Cazden, 1972, DeStéfano, 1972, Gumperz and Herasimchuk, 1975, Hahn, 1948, Houston, 1970 and Labov, 1964). The first set we might deal with are those which examine the use of two major registers within the Black English vernacular: one for the home and neighbourhood, and the other more appropriate to the school setting. The reason we examine Black English here is because it is an example of how speech changes with the school setting. Houston (1970) sets up two registers of child Black English in Florida, "school" and "non-school"

the latter sometimes referred to as "careful" speech. DeStefano (1972) states that registrational competence appears quite early in Black children who as they begin school are pressured to speak Standard English. Yet since the children are incapable of switching to a more socially accepted dialect, they instead extend the upper limit of their vernacular to include a register more appropriate to school. This use of a school register within a Black vernacular may be viewed as a transitional stage before acquiring Standard English.

Although Labov's (1964) study deals not with register but with dialects, he brings to attention some matters of interest for this discussion. While DeStefano concluded that acquisition of a school-appropriate register begins before adolescence, Labov asks why there are those who even after attending schools for ten or twelve years cannot speak Standard English, the dialect of instruction. He cites three reasons which would impede the acquisition of Standard English: isolation, which would be similar to a limited range of experiences which we noted in the child's acquisition of registers, structural interferences, (in cases where the vernacular differs from Standard) and a conflict of value systems which involves the affective domain. Labov sets up

six levels of English, the first three acquired by every speaker; the sixth is the full range of styles which as previously mentioned is attained by a relatively small percentage of speakers. Only as a result of wider contact will the repertoire grow or at least will the awareness of a larger repertoire appear, one of the most significant factors being the first year of high school when the adolescent is exposed to a group much larger than that of his neighbourhood. Thus the extent and nature of contact plays an important role in the acquisition of new registers and of new dialects.

E. Hahn (1948) analyzed both the content and form of the speech of first grade children in the classroom. In the spontaneous speech of children ages six to seven years, ten months, it was found that the length of the child's utterance and the completeness of his sentences were dependent on both the situation (e.g. "show and tell" vs. other types of interaction) and on the topic. In school the child is encouraged to present information, to enrich his vocabulary in order to talk about absent objects and to employ a variety of structures in order to make fine distinctions. In a study of classroom interaction of first and second graders, Gumperz and Hermaschuk (1975) found that in cases whereby a more advanced pupil was assisting a weaker pupil with a reading lesson, the child

acting as teacher used language appropriate to a "lesson" situation. The authors found that the child-as-teacher and the teacher do not use the same linguistic devices to indicate they are performing a particular task. One of the more important differences they point out is that peer-to-peer speech is more direct in such a context while the teacher often uses indirect speech acts. They cite a reason for this difference: the child-as-teacher must define his role whereas the teacher's role is quite clear to his pupils. Other reasons suggested are the shared cultural background which exists between the children and what Gumperz and Herasimchuk call "a shared code with the child-learner". In addition, the child-as-teacher's strategy is characterized by both a change in style and a change in delivery "in an escalating series" until he elicits the right response or in other words until the child who is his pupil understands that some type of teacher pupil relationship has been established. In the peer-to-peer situation the intonation is "musical" and "rhythmic". This contrasted to the teacher-child "monotonous" exchange. Gumperz and Herasimchuk underline the importance of the prosodic or paralinguistic features of the child-as-teacher interaction. Often these features alone provide the clue to understanding just what task the utterance is meant to accomplish:

"...Prosodic aspects of speech become part of an optional set of communicative strategies that can be used alternatively with syntactic, lexical or phonological variables. The teacher on the other hand tends to rely on lexical and rhetorical devices."

(1975:93)

Although the child-as-teacher's language did not mirror that used by the teacher herself in giving a lesson, the child still used a particular variety suited to subordinate-superior role relationship and learning-teacher exchange. This would suggest that the child can modify his speech in order to accomodate these two factors.

We have up to this point seen that the child has a limited range of registers and that as the child matures his range increases to include language appropriate to the new situations topics and role which he encounters, school being an important new context. Ervin-Tripp suggests an explanation to account for the development of a register:

"It may be possible to hypothesize that in acquiring registers a child learns through progressive differentiation of his speech community's social situations the linguistic features which accompany them and in a rule governed way modifies his speech to fit those situations."

(in DeStefano, 1972:37)

The end result - a register - is not acquired without passing through several transitional stages which one might want to call "inter-register". Often the child's registers lack consistency and internal coherence (i.e. not all the cooccurrence rules have been acquired). Sachs and Devin, (1976) conclude that four and five-year-olds used certain elements or features of a baby-talk style, but not all. Often the utterances addressed to a baby doll were a mixture of simple and complex, the complex ones said with prosody appropriate to a baby-talk style. If the child did not know how to simplify his syntax, at least he knew to modify his phonology and intonation. Berko-Gleason (1973) talks of a slightly inappropriate baby-talk style, somewhere in between no baby-talk and full baby-talk style, used by children. Bates and Silvern (1977) found that scores for the production of polite forms were higher than for comprehension. In production we see evidence for a concept of politeness that was only partly similar to the adult model: the child when asked to supply "polite" responses works in a more idiosyncratic way, in that he will resort to multiplying his "pretty please"s, whispering his requests or using affectionate gestures - elements not common in adult speech. Thus it is evident that children have their own notions about appropriateness which they manifest in ways

un-identical to adult models. Ervin-Tripp's (1977) research questions take into account this inconsistent and incomplete nature of the child's registers:

"Do children employ the full range of realizations we find in adults?"

"What evidence is there of systematic shifts in the realizations of the directives depending on the social context?"

(1977:171)

With age the child learns to expand his repertoire, to apply all the co-occurrence rules thus giving his discourse internal coherence.

2.5 Registral competence and psychological development

Registral competence may be viewed as a sociolinguistic knowledge, the way in which I have thus far presented it, in which case the child's repertoire of registers is in direct relation to the amount of contact he has had with different social contexts and his need to produce linguistically appropriate speech in these social contexts. However some psychological considerations, such as the need to conform, the ability to role-take as it is related to egocentrism and the child's rapid cognitive development are often cited when discussing the child's ability to take into account his listener.

As Shatz and Gelman (1973) point out, several psychological investigations present findings which are at odds with the sociolinguist's position on the child's capacity to adjust his speech to a listener. From the psychological viewpoint, it has been shown that young children communicate poorly (Piaget, 1967, Krauss and Glucksberg, 1969, Flavell, 1968). Piaget (1967) describes the child as egocentric, first because the child speaks about himself and secondly and more important because the child cannot consider the perspective of others. He found that in his two subjects of six and a half years, close to half their spontaneous speech could be called egocentric. Speech with peers was seen to consist mostly of "private" or "collective monologuing". Piaget also found that his subjects performed poorly on communicative tasks due in fact to both the "deficient" exposition of the child trying to communicate and to the poor understanding of the listener, a child as well. Krauss and Glucksberg (1969) found that children of 52 to 63 months (4:3 to 5:3 years) were unable to communicate - that is they performed poorly in a task whereby the speaker was to denote some referent (a novel graphic form) so that the listener could recognize the form being described. The youngest subjects, when given an opportunity to improve their performance had

equally poor results the second time. In a subsequent experiment the communicative adequacy of the speaker's description was measured separately from the listener's (a child) capacity to understand it. Again it was found that the subjects performed poorly and that their ability to communicate develops gradually over the ages of four to nine, the youngest failing to communicate. Flavell et al. (1968) study supported these findings.

Criticisms of these studies have uncovered a problem with the level of difficulty of the task. Shatz and Gelman (1973) point out that such tasks appear to demand a certain level of cognitive development that the children had not attained and that "overtaxing the children's adequacy in these processes may have hampered or masked their ability to take account of and adjust to their listeners." (1973:2). Similar criticisms have been stated with regard to the literature that deals with the child's linguistic performance as related to his social class (Cazden, 1970, Hazel, 1974, Van der Gust et al., 1973). It has been claimed that children of a lower social class have "less language" or use restricted codes as opposed to the elaborated codes used by the middle class. Cazden, (1970), Hazel, (1974) and Vander Gust et al. (1973) state that in order for more valid conclusions, the situation or

context must be controlled as to minimize or remove the differences found; that is one must design the task or select the contexts so the child, no matter what his social class, can demonstrate his verbal abilities to his fullest extent. Cazden (1970) points out in the case of Black children; conversation is more likely to be longer when the child is the initiator as opposed to being required to perform in laboratory tests. Van der Gust et al. (1973) state that language in the lower class has different purposes than language in the middle class, a reason to account for some of the differences found. Hazel's results (1974) show that the same child had significant differences in the uses of nouns and pronouns in three different types of speech - monologue, social monologue and dialogue. Clearly it is the case that often communicative ability and verbal skills are inaccessible for observation because of the task or context chosen for study.

Often the form and content of the child's speech was neglected. An examination of both form and content would show that the child has some communicative skills in his ability to modify his speech appropriately to the listener. There is further evidence which points to a much more developed skill of communication between young children than previous investigation claimed (Garvey and Hogan, 1973, Mueller, 1972, Mueller et al., 1977, Selman, 1971). Selman

in examining children of ages four and six states that the ability to role take shows definite beginnings by age four and suggests the possibility of an ontogenetic development of role-switching. In the first stage the child may have a notion of others but cannot make a distinction between himself and others as to thoughts and perceptions. The final stage is attained when the child is fully aware of the other's perspective.

There is also evidence that the four-year-old is capable of adjusting his responses in view of listener feedback (Shatz and Gelman, 1973) and that understanding is reached in a series of short exchanges. This would reinforce the thesis that young children are able to communicate effectively. The studies of Mueller (1972) and Mueller et al. (1977) provide even stronger support for this ability in children. In the first study, the spontaneous interaction of young children from three and a half to five years was examined and contrary to Piaget's findings, 62% of the utterances were successful in obtaining a definite response from the listener. Another 23% were borderline cases and only 12% were unclear or incomplete. Moreover, 94% of the utterances spoken manifested intent to socialize by at least one of three means: visual attention, a topic appropriate for listener or the use of attention-getting devices.

Mueller sets up a list of ten factors used to anticipate the success of the response - the two most powerful predictors were listener attention and the content. The discrepancy between Mueller's (1972) findings and the findings of others was explained by the nature of the study. Whereas Mueller investigated natural and spontaneous interaction, others depended on tasks, problems with which have been discussed. It may be concluded that children of this age group can communicate effectively and that perhaps the emergence of verbal socialization begins earlier than three and a half. Garvey and Hogan (1973) found similar results. They present evidence for the existence of verbal skills in $3\frac{1}{2}$ year olds in their ability to sustain conversational interaction.

Mueller et al. (1977) followed up the 1972 study. Since it was found that even the youngest subjects were capable of maintaining verbal exchanges amongst themselves and that the research to date had only dealt with children $3\frac{1}{2}$ and older, two-year-old boys were observed for eleven months. Once again, of the five factors established to predict successful utterances, listener attention was the strongest predictor. It was found that with age, content becomes more pertinent to the listener. The study revealed that spontaneous peer verbal interaction develops rapidly around age three and can be

attributed to both speaker and listener; the former makes his utterances more relevant and looks at the listener as he speaks, the latter tends to watch the speaker more often. This social interaction is described as "participation in a mutual system of engagement" which is initially non-verbal. As the child learns to communicate with words he must acquire a reply elicitation skill in order to ensure his utterances will be successful. Mueller et al. (1977) pinpoint three as the age when such development begins. In view of this recent literature then, it appears that the child by age five has attained a psychological level which allows him to perceive of differences between possible listeners in order that verbal interaction may be made appropriate to the listener, and thus maintained.

2.6 The Input

In this section the speech which is directed to children will be examined, that is the input. The input is of concern for several reasons: first, an inspection of the primary data will assist us in understanding the type of language upon which the child builds his grammar. We ask what variety of codes do parents, siblings, peers and others in contact with the child, direct to the child learning language? Which of these or which elements of

these does the child incorporate into his own speech? As well the input guides us as to what features to expect in the child's registers and how the child's registers depart from the adult's. For example, the manner in which the adult simplifies his speech to arrive at some form of baby talk can be compared to the ways in which a child has been shown to accomodate a younger listener. Finally cases of imitation may be disclosed.

McNeill (1970) in an extreme position stated that the child's LAD built the grammar on the basis of all the language to which he or she was exposed - oftentimes far from ideal, said to be full of hesitations, false starts and errors. This is not the case. The input is not random; the adult modifies his speech in both content and form in accordance with the child's age. Landes (1975) suggests that the adult, when addressing the child, makes use of input filters, both syntactic and stylistic which change in both their shape and their frequency as the child's intake gradually increases. However there is no reason to assume that the adult modifies and adjusts his speech appropriately only when conversing with a child. He will do so with any speaker with whom he sees fit. Hence he appeals to a subset of his competence arriving at a variety suitable to the status of his listener. It has been shown that

the adult continually modifies his speech as a function of the child's age (Fraser and Roberts, 1975). The speech of thirty-two mothers of middle class to children of ages 1 1/2, 2 1/2, 4 and 6 was examined. The findings revealed that, for the most part, as the child grew older, the mother's utterances were longer and syntactically more complex. As well the older the child, the greater the diversity of vocabulary in the mother's speech. The most significant differences observed in the speech directed to 1 1/2 year old and that directed to 2 1/2 year olds - hence the age somewhere around two as the turning point. As well it has been shown that the input is lacking in the hesitations, errors and false starts that McNeill claimed. (Ervin-Tripp, 1971).

The studies which have been undertaken in the area of the adults' speech to young children and babies reveal several elements as characteristic of it. The two that have been mentioned so far are shorter utterances and the lack of syntactic complexity. Ferguson (1966) establishes three sets of features which characterize baby talk.

- 1) intonational and paralinguistic phenomena, in particular a higher pitch and an exaggerated intonation.

- 2) modification of morphemes, words and constructions.

These may be phonological, exemplified by a simplification of consonant clusters, replacement of /r/ by /w/,

replacement of velars by apicals, interchange among sibilants, affricates and stops - or morphological - as the addition of the diminutives or reduplication

- 3) the third set is a series of lexical items peculiar to baby talk.

Other types of differences between baby talk and speech addressed to adult listeners are noted in the percentage of each of the three sentence types. The input to children often exhibits a greater percentage of interrogatives, a lower percentage of imperatives and an even lower percentage of declaratives. As well, it is noted that concrete nouns are more abundant than abstract nouns in the speech addressed to young children.

Several studies which examine the child's ability to tailor his speech to a younger listener tested for the existence of these same types of modifications (Berko-Gleason, 1973, Sachs and Devin, 1976, Shatz and Gelman, 1973). In many cases the child adjusted his speech in the same way the adult does - use of high pitch and exaggerated intonation and simpler and shorter utterances. In one particular instance, it was seen that the child unlike the adult did not use more questions with the younger listener (Sachs and Devin, 1976). But the investigators found that

although percentages were not comparable, the appropriateness of content was: the young child is asked the same types of questions by both older children and by the adult.

As well as making modifications in form, adults choose the appropriate content for the child as he acquires his native language. It is obvious that one does not carry on an abstract conversation with a three-year-old and researchers have found that language addressed to a younger listener often has very specific content. Frequently it is corrective feedback or prodding and repetition abounds. (Landes, 1975).¹ As well it is full of redundant clues as the adult comments on the child's activities and the objects around him. In Shatz's (1974) study it was found that close to 90% of the directives addressed to two year-olds by their mothers were heavily redundant. Ervin-Tripp notes that adults strategically ask a question at those times when the child would offer a reply in any case. Adults are continually eliciting speech redundant with the ongoings of the situation.

¹Here, I am speaking of redundancy with the surroundings - context redundancy, not linguistic.

The use of the language of socialization is a further way that the content of the adults' speech to a younger listener is set off from other varieties. It may be regarded as a special type of speech code designed to relate not only the rules for social behaviour, but also the rules for the social use of language, in particular verbal routines which depend on a knowledge of temporal appropriateness.

Given this fairly researched field of the adult's speech variety downshifted to young children and the findings presented, it is possible to explain in part the researcher's preoccupation with the child's ability to "downshift". Investigators selected the features to be tested on the basis of what was linguistically characteristic of the adult's baby talk. The MUL¹ and syntactic complexity tests revealed the child's tendency to shorten and simplify his utterances, like the adult. Weeks (1971) and Berko-Gleason (1973) found that high pitch was used by the child addressing a younger listener. Shatz and Gelman (1973) conclude in view of the modifications made by their subjects that "even four-year-olds help to provide a restricted and redundant linguistic environment for the early language learner." (1973:33). As they point out the four-year-olds speech to two-year-olds

¹ Mean utterance length

is by no means a reduction to the two-year-old production level. In this way, it is not imitation by the four-year-old of a two-year-old, but a concept of speech linguistically appropriate for a young child.

The analysis of child speech directed to a younger listener was not done without some guidance: the findings which resulted from an examination of the special variety that adults use with a younger listener, directed and facilitated the analysis of the manner in which a child downshifts. On the other hand, our fragmentary analyses of registers which lie between casual and consultative styles in Joos' scale and which are appropriate to informal everyday verbal exchanges makes it difficult to isolate the linguistic features which we might expect to, in part, differentiate peer-to-peer and child-to-adult speech in five-year-olds. Clearly as Shatz and Gelman (1973) discovered, tests of MUL and syntactic complexity performed on the whole speech sample tell us little about the differences. We must look elsewhere.

An examination of the input may reveal other interesting facts as in the studies which examine the child's acquisition of an address system (Hollos, 1977, Shipley and Shipley, 1969). The child's use of an address system does not reflect

the input precisely. One can only conclude that the input influences it. Of the sixteen families that Shipley and Shipley investigated only in seven of them did the children adopt the parents' use of "thee". In some families the children never used "thee", even though the parents did. The children who did not acquire "thee", came from homes in which the adults displayed a limited use of the pronouns, only in specific role-relationships. Hollos' findings were similar. Children of an isolated village were exposed to fewer types of role-relationships and thus did poorer on tests which investigated their use and comprehension of the full Hungarian address system.

The input, then cannot be ignored. By examining it we may establish whether the child models his speech on varieties he hears from adults, siblings, peers and others and if he does so, to what extent. As well the input serves to set our expectations as to which tendencies or even rules we may encounter in the child's systematic use of language varieties, and at the same time clue us in on possible imitation.

2.7 Some final considerations

Problems in the Literature

In the last section it was indicated that some of the differences between peer-to-peer and child-to-adult speech were not uncovered because only certain features were being measured, those which characterize the adults' downshifted speech. There are however some other problems with the experiments in the literature. Another possible reason for failure to uncover differences between adult-directed and peer-directed speech lies with the adult listeners selected to participate. In Shatz and Gelman's study, the experimentors assured that the children were both familiar and comfortable with the participants serving as the adult listeners in the tapings. As well the study took place in very familiar surroundings - either the subject's home or sometimes in the experimenter's home, but only if the child was comfortable there. Possibly such a degree of familiarity with the adults cancelled out certain social variables that would have allowed for a shift to a register less similar to that of peer-to-peer speech. Ervin-Tripp (1977:186) suggests familiarity as one of the first factors to which the child responds in request forms. In addition the adults were to "play" with the children as toys were provided ensuring a constant and identical topic for each session. The tapings of the subject with a younger

child were done while either the experimenter or the child's mother was present. Having two possible addressees in the room, might have triggered shifts that otherwise would not have occurred.

Shatz and Gelman were also interested in the relationship between egocentrism and the ability to communicate on simple tasks - telling the listener about a toy. It was found that subjects did poorly on the egocentrism tests, yet as the sociolinguist asserted, could modify his speech to listeners. The authors decided to omit all occurrences of what Piaget had classified summarily as egocentric speech: utterances which were self-directed or directed to a toy, those which were said with a sing-song intonation and all occurrences of "word-play". This lack of concern with especially the last category is perhaps unfortunate in view of Berko-Gleason's, (1973) observations. She notes that children amongst themselves constantly break into chants and rhymes and other types of word play. As well, peer-to-peer speech is characterized by the amount of expressive words ("yukk" and "blech") and sound effects. Also she noted a significant amount of copying. These features are typical of the language produced when children are interacting amongst themselves. Although they may not enter into a register analysis, these characteristics often help to set

apart a peer group colloquial variety from something slightly more formal to adults.

It was suggested earlier that differences between speech varieties were obscured when only mean utterance length and syntactic complexity were used as measures. In a later study, Sachs and Devin (1973) state:

"This analysis seems to show the value of going beyond the standard syntactic categories when addressing the appropriateness of speech for various situations." (1973:95)

When it was found that children did not ask more questions to the "baby" listener, than to his peer, contrary to the expectations of the experimentors, it was necessary to examine more closely the content appropriateness of the questions. This revealed that, like the adult's speech to very young children, children when speaking to babies use questions whose function it is to inquire about the internal state of the listener (e.g. "Want some milk?"). The child's questions to his mother, on the other hand, tended to seek information about the external world (e.g. "What's that Mommy?"). Thus, even though the percentage of questions in the child's speech to a younger listener did not correspond with the percentage in adult speech of the same variety, the appropriateness, in terms of the type of questions asked, did coincide. This is not unexpected

in consideration of the nature of the child's registers and speech codes, not fully developed, sometimes inconsistent. However the child is aware that his language content must change in some way to accomodate social factors, such as the age of the listener.

• Why a speech act analysis?

The more recent literature which investigated the child's sociolinguistic abilities focus in on one type of speech act and the way in which the child realizes it linguistically, rather than treating the whole speech sample of the child. This appears to be a valid approach as the results obtained are insightful. The three studies to be discussed are Bates and Silvern (1977), Garvey (1975); and Ervin-Tripp (1977).

In the first study the authors restrict themselves to polite request forms; does the child understand and produce polite forms when required to do so? In this experiment the children were anxious to ask as "nicely as possible" for a piece of candy from a handpuppet of an elderly woman "Mrs. Jones" manipulated by the experimentors. In choosing such a character, the investigators made certain that the puppet would be viewed as the type of listener who would elicit "polite" forms; - age unfamiliarity and formality - (i.e. "Mrs. Jones", not Grandma or Auntie) - being the important

variables. In the second part of the experiment, in which production was tested, two identical frog puppets were used; each asked for a piece of candy and the child was to grant it to the one who asked the "nicest". In this case, the choice of the puppet was perhaps not as important as the utterance was produced for the child, not the child producing in view of the listener. However as Ervin-Tripp points out, Bates technique tests the child's awareness of polite request forms, but does not tap the child's sensitivity to other factors, such as task, setting and audience, all of which are involved in determining appropriateness. In the comprehension test the children had no choice, the forms were deemed appropriate. Politeness was expected in the case of production, since the children were told beforehand to ask as "nicely as possible". Thus, we may ask, did the children know that informal requests are appropriate in some situations? Ervin-Tripp states that politeness is probably directly taught, but that appropriateness must be observed (1977:187). It may be suggested that specific polite vocabulary items such as "please", "thank-you", "may I" etc. are taught, but that the child must still observe for himself when and with whom these and other polite forms which are not explicitly taught are appropriate.

As in the earlier studies on adjustments made by children the adult's speech was used as a means of measuring politeness:

Eight paired comparisons of polite forms, (conditional vs. indicative mood, presence and absence of "please", harsh vs. soft intonation, formal vs. informal address, "may I" vs. "can I" and direct vs. implied requests) which were classified as to politeness by adults formed the basis of the utterances used in the comprehension test. Thus as the authors point out, the comprehension scores of the subjects reflects the degree to which the child's perception of politeness agrees with adult's judgements. This might explain why comprehension scores correlated with social development.

Ervin-Tripp (1977) selected directives as the object of study in her research dealing with child discourse. This was done given that our knowledge of adult directives provides a framework for the discussion of the child's ability to use them appropriately. Other important reasons are their high frequency in the speech of young children and that "they display considerable sensitivity to social features" (Ervin-Tripp, 1977:165) this last reason being the most pertinent for the purposes of this paper. Garvey (1975) also considered the social factors in her study which dealt with the child's ability to request.

Why are directives sensitive to social features ? In order to answer this question comprehensively, it is necessary to expand slightly on the theory of speech acts, in particular Searle's definition of directives and his treatment of indirect speech acts. Hence a digression will be in order at this time.

Directives are described as "attempts by the speaker to get the hearer to do something" (Searle, 1972:355). Among the verbs listed as possible items used to realize the intent of the directive are "order", "command", "request", "ask", "question", "beg", "plead", "pray", and "entreat". The directive may be made with any one of these verbs, e.g. "I order you to shut the door" or with the imperative, e.g. "Shut the door". These two examples are classified as direct speech acts, given that there is some kind of 'formal' indication of the intention or illocutionary force of the utterance, be it the performative verb "I order" or the imperative form. In these direct cases the speaker "means exactly and literally what he says" (Searle, 1975:59).

There are times when the speaker utters a sentence and means not only what he says, but as well means something more. An example will help clarify matters. Consider:

"Can you reach the salt ?"

Given that this sentence was uttered at the dinner table, we

understand that the speaker meant it not only as a question, but primarily as a request to pass the salt. In other words, the speaker made a request by way of asking a question. Such speech acts whereby one illocutionary act is performed indirectly by way of performing another are called indirect speech acts.

In order to understand how a speaker can make an indirect request or any other type of indirect speech act, one must consider the felicity conditions of the particular speech act in question. Felicity conditions are necessary for the successful performance of a speech act. Those for directives are as follows:

Preparatory condition

H is able to perform A

Sincerity condition

S wants H to do A

Propositional Content condition

S predicates a future act A of H

Essential condition

Counts as an attempt by S to get H to do A

(where H stands for hearer, S for speaker and A for act).

(Searle, 1975:71)

One way to make an indirect request would be to follow the generalization set up by Searle:

"S can make an indirect request (or any other directive) by either asking whether or stating that a preparatory condition concerning H's ability to do A obtains."

(Searle, 1975:72)

From this generalization we get the following examples of indirect

directives:

- "Can you reach the salt ?"
- "Can you pass the salt ?"
- "Could you be a little more quiet ?"
- "You could be a little more quiet ?"

(Searle, 1975:65)

In fact, each one of the felicity conditions may serve as a basis for making indirect directives.

How does the hearer understand indirect speech acts, when the speaker does, in fact, intend additional information to be conveyed ? Searle proposes that three types of apparatus are involved:

- i) mutual background information (i.e. for "Can you pass the salt ?" hearer and speaker both know that at dinnertime people pass the salt and pepper back and forth.)
- ii) a theory of speech acts (a condition for a directive involves H's ability to perform A)
- iii) general principles of conversation (speaker and hearer co-operate in conversation, see page 55)

Searle, in "Indirect Speech Acts", for the most part concerned himself with "sentences 'conventionally used in the performance of indirect directives". By means of generalizations such as the one given, there is some kind of "systematic" relation between the indirect directive and the conditions required for its successful performance.

However there are other types of indirect speech acts which interest us for the purpose of this study. Ervin-Tripp (1977) refers to a class of directives called hints

which in most cases require inference on the part of the hearer. These do not seem to be based on any of the felicity conditions. Consider Searle's example (1975):

Student X: Let's go to the movies tonight
 Student Y: I have to study for an exam

Once again by mutual background information, a theory of speech acts and certain conversational principles, Student X understands Student Y's statement as a refusal to his proposal. Student X infers the primary illocutionary force of Y's statement: a refusal. Searle himself realizes that a case such as this is different from cases where 'conventional' utterances are used to perform indirect speech acts. Sentences conventionally used "all have a generality of form" (Searle, 1975) lacking in the example "I have to study for an exam."

Hints might correspond to what Grice has called "conversational implicatures" (Grice, 1975). Grice sets up the "Co-operative Principle" and four maxims which follow from it. Basically these state that in conversation we co-operate and do not say things which are not relevant, which we believe to be false or for which we lack evidence. We should also be "perspicuous" and we should restrain ourselves to stating only that information which is required. However these maxims are often broken, in fact, the speaker deliberately breaks them. The hearer, upon recognizing the violation of a maxim can react in one of two ways:

- i) he can decide that the speaker is a liar or that what he said is irrelevant, or usually
- ii) he realizes the co-operative principle is still being observed, but the speaker is "flouting" a maxim with the purpose of communicating extra information.

From here the addressee begins to deduce and arrives at understanding the "implicature", more correctly the "conversational implicatures", the speaker has intended. These "implicatures" are "assumptions over and above the meaning of a sentence used" (Kempson, 1975:143).

To give an example from Grice's work, consider the following:

Speaker A, at a social tea: "Mrs. Smith is an old bag."

Silence from all hearers involved in the conversation.

Finally Speaker B steps in: "The weather has been quite delightful this summer, hasn't it?"

Speaker B has violated the maxim "Be relevant" however the others implicate that his remark is intended as an attempt to change the topic. Speaker B implicates that A's remark is out of order and even that A "has committed a social gaffe." (Grice, 1975:53)

What concerns us here is the reason behind or the speaker's motives for using an indirect rather than a direct speech act. Searle (1975) suggests:

"In the field of indirect illocutionary acts, the area of directives is the most useful to study because ordinary conversational requirements of politeness normally make it awkward to issue flat imperative sentences or explicit performatives and we therefore seek to find indirect means to our illocutionary ends. In directives, politeness is the chief motivation for indirectness."

(1975:64)

Herein lies the answer to the question of sensitivity to social features.

Let us reconsider the three utterances discussed in Chapter I, page 9. They are realizations of a speech act with the illocutionary force of a directive and the propositional content - "that the hearers go upstairs".

Frozen: "Visitors should make their way at once to the upper floor by way of the staircase."

Consultative: "Would you mind going upstairs right away please?"

Intimate: "Up you go chaps!"

As well as varying in degrees of formality, these utterances may also vary in the same direction in degrees of politeness.

Let us replace the example used for Intimate with,

"Get on upstairs!" - definitely less polite than either the

frozen or the consultative examples. It is however a possible realization of that same proposition appropriate to that type of context where the participants are on very familiar terms or are in a subordinate- superior relation to each other, to name but two possibilities. Thus the status of the participants enters into consideration and probably to a large extent influence the degrees of formality and politeness in the choice of a realization. As well the status of the participants is one of the factors which enters into the choice of a register: not only with the form of the directive be socially appropriate, but the complete verbal exchange will be congruous with the status of the participant, among other contextual factors.

From the above, it appears that politeness and formality factors play a role in the choice of a register suitable for everyday English. We as speakers of English are well aware that an utterance like "Get on upstairs" is only appropriate when the correct collocation of factors obtain as is the same case with our decision to say "Visitors should make their way at once to the upper floor by way of the staircase". These two examples pose no problem, in that they definitely do not belong to the same register. Other differences are not so prominent. Attention has been drawn to this problem in several discussions

of register (Chiu, 1973, Ellis and Ure, 1969, Ervin-Tripp, 1966). Ellis and Ure state:

"English speakers talking about the same field of study make, it appears, relatively little difference in their language whether they are taking part in a friendly discussion or giving a lecture."

(1969:255)

Among other things, the role relationship between participants change in the two situations cited above. But as the authors point out, very little change in language can be observed. This relates back to Ervin-Tripp's remark on our culture's high level of tolerance for stylistic variation. It would seem that often a pronounced change or set of changes in the major social factors must take place before we will markedly shift registers. Ellis and Ure, (1969) discuss the problem of fixing transition points between registers. Frequently there will be no clear-cut point of transition and we must speak instead of a continuum or a cline. These observations on stylistic tolerance suggest that registral distinctions between adult-directed and the peer-directed speech of five year olds may not be as discernable as one would like to think. We will return to this problem shortly.

Before hypothesizing on possible registral differences in child speech, let us return to the speech act analysis

and the question of how it may be useful in register studies. It must be established that each realization of a speech act does not define a unique register. Rather, perhaps all three of the utterances based on hearer sincerity conditions ("Would you be willing to do X?", "Could you do X?", "Will you do X?") do not differ in register and in addition are appropriate when several sets of contextual factors obtain. I do not wish to place each linguistic realization of a speech act into one slot and say it is characteristic of a particular register. Instead, it is more accurate to say that certain realizations of speech acts including their prosodic features belong to some registers and not to others.

Both Garvey's and Ervin-Tripp's studies present evidence to show that children do exhibit systematic variation in the realization of directives depending on the social context. A series of studies involving nursery school children, cited in Ervin-Tripp (1977) revealed that children use more imperatives when verbally interacting amongst themselves, than they do with adults. Garvey's findings (1975) are supportive. First, out of all the data recorded with 36 dyads of children ages 3:6 - 5:7, 565 requests were classified as direct, versus 75 indirect, this indicating a strong tendency for peer-to-peer speech to consist mostly

of direct forms. Secondly, out of the eight polite request forms that were isolated in the spontaneous speech of the subjects, six occurred in role-playing situations and "were delivered in an exaggeratedly adult manner" (Garvey, 1974:58). Hence it may be suggested that the children did not find it appropriate to use a more formal style amongst themselves, but only in role-play where they pretended they were adults performing in adult situations. If, as the data suggest, children systematically vary their use of indirect vs. direct directives, and given Searle's observations on politeness; then one can hypothesize that the five year^a old child has concepts of at least two broad registers for use in everyday speech: one casual and the other slightly more formal, not excluding some overlapping of forms. The former is used with, among other addressees, peers and the latter with those participants characterized by some kind of status factor - age, rank or unfamiliarity.

Thus in this light, Ervin-Tripp's table (see Appendix One) on directive types and their corresponding social features could be more generally divided into two registers: casual vs. consultative to use Joos' terms. Need statements and imperatives with the former and embedded imperatives, permission directives and question directives belonging to

a more formal level. The difference between "Gimme a match" and "would you happen to have a match?" is not only a difference of formality, but helps to mark register distinctions.

Although the evidence may be "fragmentary and anecdotal", Ervin-Tripp suggests stages of development for a repertoire of directive forms. During the third year the child makes use of a number of forms, for different social contexts. It is not until the age four that children begin to use hints and it is suggested that hints are more likely to be produced in contexts where the addressee is an adult. This would be in keeping with the discussion so far given that hints are not direct forms. It is at this same age that the child employs more sophisticated verbal strategies.

The analysis of directives in the speech of children ~~revealed~~ that particular configurations of social factors determine the selection of a directive form. It has been suggested that the factors which children initially discern are familiarity and status of the participants. (Ervin-Tripp, 1977). As well, it should be mentioned that the nature of the directive itself, that is the difficulty encountered in performing the task and the question of whether the addressee is expected to carry out the ~~directive~~, determine

the appropriate form. For example, if the child feels he is treading on dangerous ground in requesting a toy from his peer, he may resort to a form which is less direct and avoid the imperative. Once again, nothing appears to be clear-cut or absolute. Nonetheless the finding from these studies contribute to the discovery of differences between the adult-directed and the peer-directed speech of children. In cases where function is constant, we may suggest register differences. Other differences help to define a language variety used among peers as compared to that used with adults.

The Present Study

As stated in the introduction, the purpose of the present study is to examine the differences between adult-directed and peer-directed speech of five-year-olds. The speech act was chosen for the object of study. This was done in view of the previous findings resulting from a speech act analysis as discussed above. As well it was shown that the speech act can be useful in register analysis, since the decision to use one realization over another rests on the social context. Whereas some researchers do not always distinguish the various types of adult addressee whom the child encounters, the current study will focus in on the teacher as the adult

addressee. This hopefully will eliminate some of the problems pointed out in section 2.6 with the adult listeners. Although the teacher may be familiar to the pupils, it is often the case that she or he still commands the children's respect and expects a certain degree of politeness and formality. This was the case in the situation I observed. Children, on the other hand, could interact freely and spontaneously amongst themselves in this particular classroom.

It may be indeed the case the very little difference can be found in the two speech varieties, given the problems discussed above, pertaining to stylistic tolerance. There tends to be much overlapping. Nevertheless, it appears that those differences that have been suggested - more direct forms with peers, indirect forms with adults, - point to the general direction which will be taken and serve as a starting point for this study.

There is then, a considerable amount of evidence for the systematic use of speech varieties in children. As has been shown, they display their sociolinguistic competence in many ways, the ability to adjust their speech to a variety of listeners, being one aspect of this competence. One does not anticipate finding the same kinds and amount of modifications, as in the fully competent adult, but the child does modify his speech according to his own developing concepts of social differences.

CHAPTER III

METHOD, RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In order to examine more closely the differences between the peer-directed and the adult-directed speech of five-year-olds, the present study was undertaken. The subjects were eleven children, eight boys and three girls ranging from ages 4:8 to 6:3, the mean being 5:6. The children were recorded and observed during their normal activities in the classroom, which included artwork, a music lesson, story-telling and clean-up time, all in the presence of the teacher. Data were collected during three afternoon sessions with a total of 186 minutes. The data were then transcribed and analyzed statistically to reveal significant differences.

3.1 The organization of the classroom

A brief section on the organization of the classroom observed will be helpful. The children are all in attendance at the Ottawa Montessori School and their teacher is Mrs. Kate Wells, the adult addressee used for this study. In the morning session there are two groups of children, the eleven who participated in the research and twelve others slightly younger in age. Given the observational nature

of this study, it was virtually impossible to collect any data in a classroom of twenty-three children. There were far too many exchanges taking place at once and the noise level was too high to allow successful taping. Hence I restricted myself to recording the afternoon session which allowed for a smaller group of children of a more homogenous age group and only two possible addressees: a classmate of the same age and the teacher.

It may be useful to clarify to some degree Mrs. Wells relationship with the children, given that we are interested in her status as a possible addressee. Mrs. Wells, even though quite familiar to the children, commands their respect. She is in complete control of her class and virtually never has to raise her voice. There seems to be a pupil-teacher relationship between Mrs. Wells and the children, although it is perhaps not as marked as in schools where the organization is more traditional. This relationship helps to keep the distance required for a certain amount of respect and formality on behalf of the children. These observations are confirmed by others, her colleagues and parents of her pupils. It may be useful to note that Mrs. Wells is of British origin, evident in both her mannerisms and her speech.

3.2 Results and Discussion of the Data

From the 186 minutes of taping, all occurrences of directives, offers and interrogative forms uttered by the eleven children were isolated from the data. These were subsequently divided into two groups: those which the children directed to Mrs. Wells and those addressed to fellow classmates. Since different features were tested for in each group of utterances, they will be discussed in the section dealing with that group. Directives will be dealt with first, in sections 3.2.1 to 3.2.6. Section 3.2.7 will treat offers and questions will be discussed in section 3.2.8.

In order to determine statistically significant differences, a Chi Square test, with Yates correction for low frequencies was performed.

3.2.1 Directives

For the purpose of this study, directives will be defined as those speech acts performed whereby the speaker wishes the hearer to perform X, some kind of act. No attempt will be made to distinguish amongst the various types of

directives, in particular between requests and commands.¹
 For an utterance to have the illocutionary force of a directive certain conditions must obtain. These were stated in section 2.7, page 53.

In addition to illocutionary force, the utterance consists of a proposition indicating the act which the hearer is to perform. For "Open the door", the illocutionary force is a directive and the proposition - "hearer will open the door".

As noted in Chapter Two, non-imperative utterances may convey the illocutionary force of a directive as well. While imperatives are said to be direct directive forms, those which hinge on the conditions stated on page are indirect. If for example, the speaker questions the preparatory condition, the hearer's ability to perform X, the resulting indirect form will be "Could you perform

1

Lyons (1977) has suggested that the difference between requests and commands is as follows: "The crucial difference between a command and a request seems to be rather that request leaves to the addressee the option of refusal to comply with the demand, whereas the command does not."

(1977:749)

X ?", understood not as a question, but as a request. The speaker may use a hint which does not refer in any way to the act he wants performed. An example would be "Boy, am I thirsty !", understood as a request for a drink, as the hearer conversationally implicates the intent of the speaker.

In this study three types of directives will be distinguished: i) direct ("Open the door" or "You open the door"), ii) indirect ("Could you open the door please ?") and iii), a sub-group of indirect, hints ("My but it's hot in here !"). The last two will sometimes be referred to as non-direct. Given that non-direct speech acts are often used when the speaker wishes to be more polite, or slightly more formal, it is hypothesized that more non-direct directives will be addressed to Mrs. Wells. Children will use direct forms for the most part amongst themselves.

First all directives will be analyzed for differences in those directed to peer and in those directed to the teacher. Then the set of directives will be grouped into three

according to their content or to the task they intend the hearer to perform. This is done given that the nature of the task will often affect the form of the directive (Ervin-Tripp, 1977:184). Moreover as established in the introduction, register analysis is a more appropriate concept when function is controlled. The three types of directives which will be focused upon are those which are used to - i) elicit goods ii) elicit services and iii) modify the behaviour of others, to employ Ervin-Tripp's distinctions (1977).

Eighty-six occurrences of directives uttered by the children were isolated. Of these, sixty-seven were directed towards peer and twenty-nine were addressed to Mrs. Wells. Several variables were tested, the first being directness. Five out of the twenty-nine directives to Mrs. Wells were in the direct form, while 49 of the 67 peer-to-peer were of direct form. This distinction proved significant, $\chi^2 (1) = 23.47, p < .01$.

Out of the five that were directed to Mrs. Wells, four consisted of "Look at....." in the imperative form (e.g. "Kate, look at my picture !") and it may be suggested that such direct utterances do not strike the addressee as

impolite or out of line when uttered by children in the classroom. The other imperative form, which was intended to "tell Mrs. Wells where to be" was the following:

"Hey....uh Justin's....Justin's uh
come and see something."

The child wanted the teacher to see that Justin was engaged in something he should not have been doing. He begins with an indirect attempt, a statement telling what Justin is actually doing - a situation that must be corrected and one can only suggest, that not being able to find the words and feeling that he is taking too long perhaps, he decides to get to the point and uses the flat imperative.

Within the non-direct forms, "hints" accounted for 16 of the 29 directives to Mrs. Wells, while only 5 were used with peer. This as well was a significant difference, $\chi^2 (1) = 27.16, p < .01$.

A third variable tested was the use of the addressee's name, either pre-posed or post-posed to the utterance, (e.g. "Gimme it, Justin", "Mrs. Wells could you help me with this?"). Here it was again significant that the children affixed the teacher's name more frequently than they affixed a child's name to a directive, $\chi^2 (1) = 6.98, p < .01$.

The use of the name may be a result of the child's attempt to make his speech more appropriate to the teacher. We would normally expect the use of the name to be more polite. However another possible explanation could be as follows: the children were more attentive to their peers' speech as for the most part they were directly involved with them, within each other's visual attention. Often Mrs. Wells attention had to be obtained as she was occupied elsewhere. This could explain the children's tendency to use her name more often. Unfortunately cases of attention-getting when the addressee was not attentive versus the cases when the addressee was attentive cannot be distinguished on the tape. Subsequent studies might consider this problem.

Shatz and Gelman (1973) measured syntactic complexity of the whole speech sample, they recorded and found no significant differences in the speech the four-year-old used when addressing i) peer and ii) adult. In the present study the syntactic complexity of individual speech acts was measured and this proved to be significant. In order to perform the analysis for this study, complex utterances were distinguished from simple ones. An utterance was considered complex if it contained more than one S mode,

either embedded or conjoined. Repetitions did not count.

Complex utterances

Embedded

"-ing" complementizer

"wh" complementizer

"to" complementizer

"Let" [NP VP]

Conjoined

"and" conjunction

no conjunction (e.g. "Go away, it's not yours")

Eighteen of the 29 utterances to Mrs. Wells were complex compared with 22 of the 67 directed to fellow classmates. This difference proved to be significant, $\chi^2 (1) = 5.96 p < .05$. Thus, when all directives were considered complexity distinguished peer-to-peer from child-to-teacher utterances, in contrast to Shatz and Gelman's, (1973) observations. Several possible explanations may be given to account for the discrepancy. First, as previously stated Shatz and Gelman looked at the whole speech sample, not just particular speech acts. Secondly, the adult listener was of different status and thirdly the children were of a slightly younger age group. Shatz and Gelman considered more types of constructions as complex. Eight measures were used: co-ordinate constructions, subordinate conjunctions, pronominal adjectives, relative clauses, predicate complements ("that"), predicate complements ("wh"), "to" constructions and "accessories". In the present study, six were considered,

all of these with the exception of pronominal adjectives and the accessories.¹

From this short analysis of the class of directives as a whole uttered by children in the classroom setting, some general tendencies emerge. Children appear to be more direct when they address their peers as they are more likely to use the imperative form amongst themselves. As well, they are apt to use more hints when they address their teacher. This may be interpreted as an attempt to adjust their speech appropriately to a listener who favours forms that are "moderated" in the way the children see fit, made more suitable to an addressee of teacher status. These results would be in keeping with both Ervin-Tripp's (1977) and Garvey's (1975) observations. The use of the addressee's name tells us little considering the possible explanations for its use. We may suggest that some utterance types of the speech variety that children address to a "teacher" listener are syntactically more complex than those addressed to a classmate.

¹ "Accessories" are defined as "words or phrases that are set off by a pause at the beginning or end of an utterance and that supplement the main part of the utterance rather than form an integral part of it." (Shatz and Gelman, 1973:17).

3.2.2 A Closer Look at Directives

The directives have been divided into three subgroups: i) those which intend to elicit goods

ii) those which elicit services and

iii) those which intend to regulate behaviour.

A decision to subdivide in order that function may be kept constant creates some problems. First, one limits himself to a small number of examples. Whereas in examining all directives together, the sample is considerably large, subgroups tend to consist of a dozen or so utterances. Secondly, it is evident that we do not request the same types of acts from all addressees. Ervin-Tripp (1977) states:

"The reason it is necessary to control task is that the kind of task tends to vary with addressee. Since adults have control over goods, such as juice and paints, requests for the goods are often directed to them when there is no issue of competition for the goods. Adults are also the targets of request for

permission or to have access to locations and privileges and the form for access to goods and privileges may be the same. Adults are also a recourse for help in aversive conditions and for protection when other children interfere."

(1977:184)

Thus we see that often comparison of forms cannot be made, since children do not request the same type of acts from adults as they do from peers. As pointed out in the introduction, they do not always talk about the same things with the adult as they do amongst themselves. In spite of these problems my data were subgrouped into the three types of directives, as some interesting differences were noted.

3.2.3 Eliciting Goods

In this class of directives, the speaker wishes the hearer to perform an act which involves the transfer of goods. Once again, it may be noted that the children have access to most of the objects they require. Rarely must they obtain goods from Mrs. Wells. In any case, seven requests for goods from the teacher were isolated and compared with the seven found directed to peer. As in the analysis of the total number of directives, it was significant that 6 of the 7 forms directed to peer were

(77)

of the direct form and none of those directed to Mrs. Wells were; $X^2 (1) = 7.29, p < .01$. Moreover, 6 of the 7 imperatives contained the verb "give" in either the form / giv / or / gimiy /, (e.g. "Leif, gimme"). "Give" was never used with the teacher. This also proved to fall well beyond the level of chance, $X^2 (1) = 7.29, p < .01$. Although these differences were significant, they must be viewed with caution, since we are dealing with such a small number of occurrences. The differences in the use of the addressee's name were not significant at the .05 level.

With this type of speech act, it seems reasonable to speak of register differences. Forms used to elicit goods from those addressees who are of equal status are much more direct and the speaker does not hesitate to use the verb "give" in the imperative form, certainly characteristic of a more intimate style. These features help to define the register used by children amongst themselves. To the teacher who represents a familiar listener, yet of higher rank, the speech must be modified and less direct. These data tend to indicate that children exhibit systematic variation according to the status of the listener and that they control two broad registers, (not excluding a third - downshifted register) distinct in their realizations for directive forms used to elicit goods.

3.2.4. Eliciting services

In this type of directive, the speaker expects the hearer to perform some service. Once again, in view of the different role-relationships that exist between the two possible classes of interlocutors, it is not surprising that there are considerably more utterances which elicit services directed to Mrs. Wells than to a fellow classmate. As in the last section, directness is a significant feature, $\chi^2(1) = 4.49, p < .05$. All of the 17 utterances directed to Mrs. Wells were non-direct as compared to only half those the child directed to his peer. Other features tested did not reveal any significant differences. A large majority of those non-direct forms addressed to Mrs. Wells were hints and it appears that the child was displaying his ability to use verbal strategies, that is concealing his purposes. In one case, two children approached Mrs. Wells with a large kit in their hands. They addressed her:

Child 1 "I don't know how to put this away."

Child 2 "Ya, we don't know how to put this away."

Obviously, the illocutionary force intended was that of a request to either put the object away for them, or to help them put the object away, realized through the use of a

statement referring to their inability to perform the task. It is interesting to note the change to the first person plural in Child 2's response.

Other cases equally indirect include:

"Dominic was copying whatever I say."

intended as a request for the teacher to intervene and tell Dominic not to "copy".

"Kate, look what happened!"

By way of an imperative form intended to control Kate's attention, the child conveys a request for service, which is the primary illocutionary force of the utterance. Something was wrong; one of the toys was broken and Mrs. Wells services were needed to remedy the situation. The primary illocutionary force seemed to be "Kate, fix it!".

A third example:

"Kate, I have to go to the toilet and I don't want no one to take it."

This was the opening sentence of an exchange in which the child's purpose was to get Mrs. Wells to watch over his work. The child went about it in an indirect manner.

The last case I wish to discuss is quite interesting and supports the hypothesis that children have the ability to switch registers. In this case, the children were involved

in cleaning up their afternoon "work". Mrs. Wells proceeds in the following way. She notifies the children that it is clean-up time and then sits on her stool, closes her eyes and counts backwards from thirty, giving them until zero to finish. Before she begins she reminds the children that they must go about their "tidying" as quietly as possible. Often she will tell them that they are making too much noise and that she can hear people running, and walking heavily. Thus the children are aware that she is listening to them, in fact quite attentive to them. The example I am considering was uttered at this time, a child to her fellow classmate.

"Thomas, could you help me put this away?"

Such an utterance is formal by native - speakers standards given the use of 1) the interrogative form (an indirect speech-act) and 2) the conditional form of the verb. While we have seen that children tend to use the direct forms amongst themselves, this appears to be a case of register-switching caused by some other factor - be it the child's awareness of Mrs. Wells attentiveness or the nature of the activity; during clean-up time the children co-operate in a manner they feel will meet with the teacher's approval.

Since utterances directed to the present investigator were not analyzed, we can draw no definite conclusions.

They will be considered here only briefly. There were four

utterances which had the function of eliciting services directed to me. It would appear from these few instances that the children regarded me as someone who could perform tasks which they could not do themselves - an adult. Exactly what status I held for them is not certain. I was not introduced to the children, but sat off in a corner as inconspicuous as possible, observing them, never interacting amongst them.¹ These directives for services then, were not elicited but spontaneous. Those addressed to me were as follows:

Child 1 "Could you take this elastic off?"

Child 2 "Um madam, um madam, will you help me write 'hare'?"

"Will you help me write 'celebration'?"

upon requesting that he repeat -

"Will you help me write 'celebration', please?"

Since only two children addressed me, we cannot draw any definite conclusions. The use of 'madam' as an address title, might have been directly taught as a polite form, rather than observed as appropriate. This relates back to Ervin-Tripp's observations, (1977) on Bates' politeness experiments. Can

¹ These children are very accustomed to having visitors and observers in the school, so much so that they are, for the most part, oblivious to strangers in the classroom.

we truly say the child has some type of sociolinguistic rule which allows for the appropriate choice of a polite or formal address form, or has he been "pressured" by his parents to use such a form to any female stranger of a "certain age"? Such a question is difficult to answer. In spite of the fact that nothing definite can be confirmed by these utterances, perhaps a familiarity factor comes into play in these cases. While with Mrs. Wells, the children use "hints" and need statements (e.g. "I need some staples."); with an unknown addressee interrogative forms are required.

Ervin-Tripp (1977) suggests that embedded imperatives such as "Could you give me a match", which for the purpose of this study have been labelled "indirect", correlate with the social feature of unfamiliarity or different rank, she found that "hints" were used with addressees familiar to the speaker. Certainly these features enter into the choice of appropriate directive form, yet it is likely that several other factors or constellation of factors enter into play.

3.2.5. Comparison of forms used to elicit services and those used to elicit goods directed to the teacher.

In section 3.2.1, it was stated that the difference in the use of complex utterances was significant. Directives to the teacher tended to be of a more complex nature. However, upon examining the sub-group of eliciting services, it was found that the directives addressed to the teacher did not vary significantly which those addressed to peer on this feature. Hence a comparison of the teacher-directed directives used to elicit goods with those which intended to elicit services was made. Statistical tests indicated that the difference in the complexity of the two types was significant, $\chi^2 (1) = 5.54, p < .05$. Those utterances whose function it was to elicit services tended to be more complex. These results indicate that some adjustments occur according to the type of task requested and that perhaps a few speech styles are used with the same addressee for different purposes. It has been suggested that factors such as compliance - does the speaker expect that the hearer will comply with his request or refuse to carry it out - and whether the task is a normally assumed duty of the addressee will influence the choice of a form (Ervin-Tripp, 1977). Registerally competent speakers probably oscillate between registers in interaction with the same address in some cases. This may happen even when there is no change in topic or setting.

3.2.6 Regulating Behaviour

This discussion will involve exclusively those directives the children addressed to their peers. The reasons for this were explained in section 3.2.3, where it was stated that the children observed rarely attempted to control Mrs. Wells actions. Those examples directed to her have been discussed. Hence this may be one area where outright differences between the function of the speech children use amongst themselves and the function of the speech directed to the teacher are revealed. It was significant that of the twenty-nine directives addressed to Mrs. Wells, 24 conveyed either a request for a service or for an object as compared with only eleven such requests to fellow classmates, $\chi^2 (1) = 35.64, p < .01$.

Within the directives used to regulate behaviour, there are two types - those whereby the speaker wants the hearer to stop violating one of the rules of the classroom, and all others that do not refer to any specific rule. To facilitate the discussion these will be referred to as types A and B respectively.

The rules of the classroom are made clear by the teacher

and every child is well acquainted with them. Some children (if not all at times) feel it is their duty to inform others that they are transgressing these rules. As will be presently seen, often this information is communicated by the sequence "not allowed to". From the evidence provided by the data, this item is not passed to the child by the teacher, it appears to be an item acquired elsewhere, either through peers or older siblings. In order to confirm this, Mrs. Wells' speech was examined when she brought up the subject of rules. "Allowed to" did not occur in her speech. Often she went about such matters indirectly, much in the manner Gumperz and Herasimchuk (1975) described, so that the child himself could induce the rules. Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) found as well that teachers incessantly employed non-direct directives. An example of Mrs. Wells speech appears below:

- i) "Excuse me please, everybody's in the classroom. Alison wants to go to the toilet but the sign isn't turned around. Somebody went to the toilet, I think."
- ii) "Now if we want to change our instruments in the middle, can we?"
- iii) "Now the people to do the washing today are....."
- iv) "Dominic your hand was up."

- v) "Excuse me please, can I see your eyes. It's time to tidy up. Could you put the hundred board away. I hear people shouting."

Input appears to be very different from the type of language children use amongst themselves when they want the rules to be obeyed. Samples from the children's speech are:

"You're not allowed doing that, that's for Kate to do."
 "Get off the red line."
 "Not allowed 3 people." (at art table)
 "Don't fool around with the stool."

Once again their speech is very direct.

The item "allowed to" is very interesting. I would like to suggest that it belongs to the variety of language children use when interacting amongst themselves and appears when they ask their classmates to stop violating the rules of the classroom. "Allowed to" along with "gimme" and a few other items "yucky", "way" and "tellin" might help to set apart a register of colloquial peer speech. The last two items, "way" and "tellin" are used in the following manner:

"I'm tellin' on you"
 "Mine's 'way better, right?"

Although these items were only noted in passing, further research may reveal that these vocabulary items vary systematically with others that are only used with the teacher, i.e. "a lot" for "'way", "awful" for "yucky". They seem to suggest a more

casual or intimate style characteristic of that used by children amongst themselves. May it be understood that no attempt is being made here to definitely state that they are not present in other registers. I mention them as vocabulary items which may be examined in subsequent research.

The behaviour regulating directives which do not make mention of the rules, type B, were the most numerous types of directives isolated. These included utterances such as:

"Bug off." (probably restricted to peers)
 "Seth come here."
 "No, you can't give any Savannah."
 "Now let me do my fish, all right."
 "Hey Max, look at me."

When type B was compared to type A, some significant differences were found. First the fact that 10 of the fourteen type A behaviour regulating directives as compared with 5 of the 29 type B were in the negative form, was significant, $\chi^2 (1) = 11.38, p < .01$. Secondly, it was significant that all occurrences of "allowed" occurred in the type A utterances, $\chi^2 (1) = 12.22, p < .01$. Thus directives used by the speaker to get the hearer to stop breaking the rules tend to be in the negative and the speaker would be more likely to use "allow" in this type than in type B.

From the above it can be seen that this class of speech acts, which serves to direct the conduct of others, contributes to the overall "direct" nature of the speech variety used by children to each other, for the most part by the abundance of imperative verbs.

3.2.7 Commissives

In the research done by Ervin-Tripp (1977) and Garvey (1975), the directive and the request (a type of directive) were used as the object of study in order to examine the child's communicative ability. Reasons were given for the choice, the possibility of correlating different social factors with linguistic means as one of the most pertinent for the present study. As well, Searle (1975) pointed out that the indirectness of directives could be explained by the speaker's desire to be more polite in his attempts to make requests of and issue commands to others.

Commissives are those types of speech acts whereby the speaker commits himself to some future course of action - promises and offers being two types of commissives e.g. "I promise to pay you back." and "Let me take you home." This class of speech acts, like directives, may be of direct or indirect form. "I offer to do X." or "I'll do X." will be

considered direct. Forms which hinge on any three of the conditions for offers will be classified as indirect as well as hints.

Preparatory Condition

S is able to perform A
H wants S to perform A.

Sincerity Condition

S intends to do A

Propositional Content Condition

S predicates a future act
A of S

(Searle, 1975:71)

Here, as was the case with directives, children exhibited a variety of forms of both the direct and indirect type.

To peer: "Want me to count 'em ?"

"I'll help you guys."

"It'll be hard for you." (understood as an offer to help)

To teacher: "I'll get you some scissors."

"You know what Kate, I can do that."

"Jackie (the school secretary) has a pair of pliers." (understood as an offer to go and get them)

Statistical tests were conducted to uncover any significant differences between the forms of offers directed to the teacher and those directed to peers. Variables were directness, occurrences of the pronoun "I" and within indirect forms, the condition upon which the utterance was formed was examined (speaker's ability, hearer's desire for speaker to do A, speaker's willingness to do A). None of the variables proved to be significant. Given that the sample was fairly small -

only 23 occurrences of offers isolated - little can be concluded. However I would like to suggest that if further research did indicate that children generally make offers to peers in the same way they do to teachers, this similarity might be explained by the nature of the speech act and the role relationships that exist between the participants for it. The eleven children tended to issue directives freely in most cases. They also modify their directives to the addressee, direct forms for the most part restricted to peers. With directives, the children were inclined to view themselves as of equal status with the listener. With offers, perhaps this changes; the child views his peer somewhat as he views his teacher, so that the differences in status of the addressees are no longer significant. With both classes of listeners, he treads carefully, wanting to intervene and commit his services, but cautiously, so that his offer will not be refused. This might help to account for the similarity of forms.

The commissives isolated in this study tell us little about the difference between the peer-directed and the teacher-directed speech of the five-year-old. No cases of a more formal register when addressing Mrs. Wells were observed.

A more formal type is as follows:

"If I can be of assistance, I would be most glad to help."

(Searle, 1975:81)

If the children controlled such a form, it would perhaps be too formal for a classroom situation and inappropriate to address to a hearer as familiar as Mrs. Wells. Offers then might be one area where the same register is used to both classes of listener at least by children of age five.

3.2.8 Questions: a sentence type.

Up to this point, it has been suggested that some of the differences in children's speech to peer and speech directed to the teacher shows an inclination for peer-to-peer speech to be of a more informal style. This last section, which examines the children's questions, helps to support this hypothesis.

Interrogatives are not a type of speech act, but instead a type of sentence form. However given that an examination of the use of informal tags was the objective, it appeared that the most practical way to proceed was to establish the interrogative form as the basis of comparison. Any utterance that had a question-like intonation and expected some kind of response by the hearer, was considered a question. In all, 71 questions were isolated, 53 directed to peer and 18 directed to Mrs. Wells. Within these, all occurrences of informal tags "Ok?", "right?", "all right!", and "eh?" were

counted. Chi square tests indicated the higher frequency of informal tags amongst children was significant, $\chi^2(1) = 4.18, p < .05$. In fact only once was an informal tag used with Mrs. Wells.

Informal tags are used by children amongst themselves to get confirmation from the addressee:

"We have to colour ours, right?"
 "You hate mine, right?"
 "That's a silly thing, eh?"
 "And if we don't have enough eggs, right Seth?",
 we're gonna make some more right?"

As well children tack tags onto directives addressed to children. Since this type of speech act was addressed to both Mrs. Wells and to a classmate, a comparison may be made: no tags were post-fixed to directives addressed to Mrs. Wells. Those addressed to peer were as follows:

"Put them in piles and we'll take them, ok?"
 "Just, just give me that much, ok?"
 "Now let me do my fish all right?"
 "You pass them to me, ok Savannah?"

Garvey (1975) offers an explanation for these informal tags, which she calls "adjuncts to the request". They are used to query the hearer's willingness to perform the act requested. Perhaps in the protocols cited above, a possibility of non-compliance is felt by the speaker. It is interesting to note that these tags are never tacked onto

those directives whereby the speaker wants the hearer to stop violating the rules of the classroom. It may be suggested that the speaker expects compliance in those cases.

The use of informal tags - "eh?", "ok?", "right?" - tend to be characteristic of a more casual speech style. They probably do not appear in formal English and hence their use by children amongst themselves would help to set apart their speech styles from the variety used with the teacher.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

4.1. The purpose of this study was to examine the differences between the peer-directed and the teacher-directed speech of the five-year-old child. Even before the child has completed the acquisition of syntax, there is evidence that the five-year-old is sociolinguistically competent to a certain degree. This competence allows him to use language in accordance with the social rules of his surroundings, that is, to produce language which is appropriate to the social context and to the factors which define it. One of the major factors is the social role or status of the participants. The most obvious linguistic correlate of status can be seen in the use of an address term. As well as additional choices - phonological, grammatical and lexical - are determined by the status of the participants (Lyons, 1977:577). One may ask then, to what extent does the child display systematic variation in his use of language as determined by the status of the listener.

Both from a linguistic and from a psychological standpoint, the child of five is capable of such systematic variation. First, he can produce a number of syntactically

varied forms, and thus has the potential to alter his utterances linguistically. Secondly, recent research has shown that the child is able to take into account his listener and maintain verbal interaction from a very early age (Mueller et al., 1977), at a much more sophisticated level than Piaget had suggested. Hence the child is not just "egocentric", but also "social", capable of considering others, in particular the person to whom he directs his speech.

Before beginning school, the child comes in contact with three classes of listeners: younger children, peers and adults, the last consisting for the most part of parents and those familiar to the child's family. Children of four and five have been shown to tailor their speech to a younger listener much in the same manner the adult does. Somewhere along the way, the child develops an intuition about what his younger listener can handle both as far as content and form are concerned, and accordingly creates an appropriate variety.

As for differences in the other two classes of listeners, the earlier literature reveals little. For the most part researchers found that peer-to-peer speech was very similar to the variety directed towards the adults (Shatz and Gelman, 1973, Sachs and Devin, 1975). Some differences were noted,

but only in the frequency of expressive words ("yuch" and "blech"), chants, rhymes and word play in peer-to-peer speech. These were absent, it seemed, in the variety children used with adults. The more recent research on the child's ability to perform speech acts (directives and requests) points to additional differences which suggest that children use a more intimate style when interacting amongst themselves. This is evident by the number of direct forms addressed to peer (Ervin-Tripp, 1977, Garvey, 1976). Children use the imperative forms freely with each other, but tend to use indirect forms with adults.

When children begin school, (even as early as age four), they become familiar with a new social context - the classroom setting, the adult with teacher status and peers as fellow classmates. Not only do they learn social rules that govern their conduct, but they also seem to be aware of a speech variety appropriate to the new context, in particular suitable to address to their teacher or to use with their peers when the teacher is listening. The present study focuses upon this new social context, and its linguistic manifestations in order to identify differences between the speech directed to peers and that directed to the teacher (as a particular class of adult addressee).

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4.2 Results

The following factors were found to be statistically significant:

In the total sample of directives, more direct forms were used with peer than with teacher. As well, children used more hints with the teacher. When directives as a whole were examined, those addressed to Mrs. Wells were found to be syntactically more complex. An analysis of various sub-groups of directives revealed that this greater complexity is related to those directives used to elicit services. The use of "give" in the imperative forms amongst peers proved to be significant as well. Finally, children used informal tags significantly more often with peers, normally absent in their speech with their teacher.

The following factors were not found to be statistically significant:

In the class of speech acts, offers, none of the factors varied significantly (directness, occurrences of "I", condition on which the indirect speech acts are based). Nor did the use of the addressee's name, as an attention-getting device, prove to be significant in each of the sub-groups of directives, nor in the offers. However, in the group of directives as a whole, this factor was significant; the children pre-fixed or

post-fixed the addressee's name to an utterance. Nonetheless it was pointed out that such an adjustment might not be made to accomodate social status factors, but as a means of getting the listener's visual attention.

Some of the differences uncovered by the analysis may be called registral. These are as follows: the child's tendency to use the imperative form in both requests for goods and requests for services made of his peer, and the occurrence of the verb "give", either as "gimmie" or "give me" only in peer-to-peer requests, never in those addressed to Kate. The global impression which can be attributed to both registral differences and differences between the speech varieties which the children employ is that the speech style children use amongst themselves is of an informal style, whereas speech addressed to the teacher is slightly more polite. Along with the registral differences mentioned, this impression can be explained by differences in the use of informal tags exclusively with peers, and the child's tendency to use direct forms freely with his fellow classmate.

4.3 Concluding Remarks

Although this study is clearly a pilot study, the results obtained justify further research in this area with more subjects and more diversified speech samples. In addition to the factors that proved significant there are several questions that merit attention. First, to what extent can we attribute to register the vocabulary items noted, ("way", "allowed", "yucky" and "gimme")? We may ask if these items are used by children amongst themselves in order to indicate that they "belong" to some kind of group, to set them apart from others or do they refrain from using them with Mrs. Wells because they have received negative feedback before for those items or for others? This question is by no means easy to answer. Another suggestion for further research concerns the investigation of other types of speech acts whose various manifestations may have social correlates. Again one may find that children exhibit systematic variation in the realizations of other types of speech acts. Finally one might consider seriously the concept of register, not only as it relates to child speech, but other speech samples as well. Register is a slippery concept, by no means clear-cut. This is particularly evident when we are treating registers

suitable for everyday conversational exchanges in the English language. There seems to be a great deal of overlapping and some of the distinctions are difficult to pinpoint. Hence the speech directed to peer and that directed to a teacher by the five-year-old child does not appear strikingly different if the whole speech sample is considered. Only when we restrict our attention to particular speech acts which have social correlates and which vary in their degree of politeness and formality can we uncover distinctions. Perhaps not all types of speech acts display a range of realizations which can be correlated with social factors. Furthermore as suggested in, Chapter Three, possibly we oscillate between registers depending not only on the type of speech act, but also on the setting and other contextual factors. Subsequent research might consider these aspects as well.

Appendix 1

Table 1

Summary of Directive Type

Directive type	Neutralized form	Discourse Comply	^a Constraints		Obvious	Social features
			Comply	Noncomply		
Need statements	yes	none		excuse	yes	subordinates
Imperatives	no	none		excuse	yes	subordinates or familiar equals
Imbedded	no	agree		excuse	yes	unfamiliar or diff. rank; task outside role or territory; expect compliance
Permission directives	yes	agree		excuse	yes	superiors(?) or unfamiliar
Question directives	yes	answer + inference		answer	no ^b	noncompliance possible
Hint	yes	reply + inference		reply	no ^c	noncompliance possible or familiarity or routine roles

^a Normal expected verbal response which would always be appropriate in these social conditions to an adult, accompanied by compliance or noncompliance.

^b Obvious directives are those which are routinely understood as directives when conditions permit.

^c Some questions and hints have become routine directives though they retain the neutralized form.

(Ervin-Tripp, 1977:170)

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