

## Book Review

He-Said-She-Said. Goodwin, M. H. (1991). Bloomington: Indiana University Press

Language Shift and Cultural Reproduction. Kulick, D. (1997). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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Children's acquisition of communicative competence seems to be part of a more general acculturation process. We may see the child's language and culture as emerging from a core of deep assumptions that serve to structure the world. Goodwin and Kulick's books make it possible to illustrate some of the connections between language and the other aspects of culture in the development of the child.

Goodwin's book includes a detailed description of how complex children's communication can be. The author combines the analysis of conversation with ethnography to expose the way in which a group of urban black children from Maple Street (Philadelphia) build their social world through talk.

Kulick's book constitutes an anthropological study of how the people of Gapun (a small community in Papua New Guinea) seem to be abandoning their dialect in favor of Tok Pisin, the majority language in the country, a process that involves a cultural change.

Both in Goodwin and Kulick's works, the relation between language and culture is reflected in different ways. In Goodwin, we may find several representations of the different standards for men and women all cultures seem to establish. For example, boys in Maple Street seemed to spend more time away from home than girls did. While boys were out attending school, playing sports, or working, girls used to spend more time doing household chores and looking after younger children.

With the previous example, Goodwin clearly shows a gender division of roles, which is developed during the enculturation process and assimilated by children as natural. This social division of gender roles also affects the language or, more concretely, the communicative competence of children in Maple Street. The author offers a clear example of this by explaining the way boys and girls used directives. Girls showed a tendency to mitigate the abruptness effect of a direct directive using terms such as "maybe". In addition, they tended not to impose any time frame for the activity to be performed. On the other hand, a boy in a position of leadership not only did express clearly what he wanted, but he also made it explicit that he wanted it "right now".

Thanks to Goodwin's work, we may even go further and find a correlation between the different communicative use of the directives by boys and girls of Maple Street with their social organization; that is to say, we can find a direct relation between the communicative strategies of these children and their sociocultural environment. On the one hand, in the social organization of boys, participants were asymmetrically placed in a hierarchy. On the other hand, girls tended not to negotiate status so much, but rather to include all members of the group in their activities, participating as a whole in any decision making. This different social group view has to be explained in terms of the enculturation or socialization processes through which the children were going. The fact that these children showed different group organizations was the response to how they thought they were supposed to behave according to the standards and values of the culture to which they belonged.

We can find another example in Goodwin's work of the way communicative competence and cultural development are connected. Goodwin (1991, p.188) suggests that, in the case of Maple Street's kids, arguments and disputes were important because they gave "participants the opportunity to construct and display character, a process important in their social organization as well as social development". Here, we can clearly see how communicative and cultural developments are interrelated, since an apparently mere linguistic confrontation had in fact a great impact on the formation and socialization of the child.

We can also find different examples in Kulick of how children's language acquisition and socialization are interrelated. *Save* is an important concept of self in Gapun. Basically, it means knowledge acquired through experience. It also refers to the knowledge about which behaviors and speech are socially appropriate and to the awareness of the social obligations and roles, as well as to the recognition of the consequences of one's actions or words. In other words, a person who has *save* is a person who has successfully developed his or her communicative competence.

*Em ia* are the distraction routines mothers use to talk to their children when they are eight months of age, as Kulick explains. Mothers try to gain and keep the child's attention using these routines. *Em ia* routines will in fact help the child differentiate between what is said and what is actually meant; that is to say, between the literal message and the embedded meaning. This ability is crucial in order to be able to successfully function in Gapun society, since a fundamental characteristic of the Gapun notion of self is that people usually do not mean what they say, and that the listener must look for the hidden meaning. In this way, the responsibility of successful communication is left to the listener. In addition, this indirect style helps avoid conflict, since indirect statements do not force anyone to do anything, so provocation is not perceived. This is a very pragmatic strategy, which must be acquired by children as part of their communicative competence.

In Gapun, parents' cultural notions of self, namely *hed* (negative) and *save* (positive), also affect the language children acquire. Parents believe that children are born with no *save*, albeit full of *hed* instead. They believe *save* will develop naturally. Moreover, since the child is full of *hed*, he or she is believed to have very limited linguistic abilities. This is why parents use Tok Pisin to address their child, since it is easier than the vernacular Taiap. The result of these beliefs is that the children acquire Tok Pisin instead of Taiap, a fact that constitutes one more clear example of how cultural assumptions can affect the acquisition of a language by a child.

We can find one final example in Kulick of how language acquisition and enculturation are related. In the pre-Christian times of Gapun, both *hed* and *save* were manifested in Taiap. However, the present manifestation of *hed* and *save* is different. Taiap is the language connected to *hed*, while Tok Pisin is the language of *save*. There is a clear-cut distinction between the use of either language and the different notion of self expressed by each one. This linguistic marking of *hed* and *save* has affected language socialization practices. When adults interact with children, they follow and reconstruct what they believe a person is and how he or she should be treated. Parents expect that children will eventually understand that they must repress their *hed* and reveal their *save*. Contrary to the way children were supposed to do this in the past (pre-Christian period), children can now do this via language choice. Then, parents' cultural beliefs have a direct linguistic impact on their children, since the repression of *hed* means the elimination of Taiap and constitutes one of the causes of the language shift in Gapun.

As we have seen, there are many examples in both Goodwin and Kulick's works that support the connection between the child's linguistic development and the socialization process that he or she undergoes. These two books provide good evidence of the fact that cultures are composed of an important number of interrelated features. It is because of this interrelation that every cultural component in any society affects and is affected by the rest of the cultural components of that society.

In sum, two highly recommended readings for those interested in the consideration of language acquisition within a cultural framework.