

## The Acquisition of Literacy:

## Ethnographic Perspectives

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## The Book as Narrative Prop in Language Acquisition

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Since the early 1970s, investigators from a variety of disciplines have undertaken research on children's stories. The majority of these researchers have focused either on the linguistic construction of children's tales (e.g., Umiker-Sebeok, 1979; Scollon & Scollon, 1981) or the cognitive aspects of producing and understanding narratives (e.g., Rumelhart, 1975; Mandler & Johnson, 1977; Stein, 1982; and Stein & Trabasso 1982). Anthropologists, however, have focused on the contexts as well as the structural and performance norms of stories across cultures. By re-evaluating the attention they have previously given cross-cultural forms of play and by attending increasingly to forms of discourse used during leisure time in different societies, anthropologists have turned their attention to the variety of narratives, of which stories may be only one form, which exists across societies (e.g., Schwartzman, 1979; Sutton-Smith & Heath, 1981; Ochs & Schieffelin, 1984; Bruner, 1984).

For most anthropologists, the question of "What is a story?" (Stein, 1982) can be answered only according to judgments of members of the social group performing, telling, and listening to narratives in context (Colby, 1966). For some groups, a "story" implies only a fictional narrative; the accounting of real events or the recounting of events known to all listeners is not considered a story (Heath, 1983, chap. 5). For other groups a story is not defined by its basic plot structure, but by the audience and purpose of the telling; a basic narrative becomes different story in some settings, but instruction in others (Rosaldo, 1983). For still other groups, a story is any connected discourse which presents state-event-state changes (e.g., Prince, 1982), even though no goal-directed behavior is contained in the story (for a full discussion of definitions of story, see Stein & Kilgore, forthcoming).

To enable us to discuss children's narratives cross-culturally, we use the term *narrative* here to include expression of experiences which have been stored in memory by the teller, are selected for attention in the telling, and are organized in knowledge struc-

ures which can be anticipated by the listener. Recent work on comprehension of narratives has indicated that listeners must, in order to store and recall narratives, be able to anticipate some order and some constituents of incoming extended discourse. Listeners must share a general knowledge of the world, specific sociocultural knowledge, and expectations of text structures. The extent to which listeners and readers will comprehend oral and written texts depends on the extent to which they share schemata and semantic networks, as well as a generalized acceptance of the genre and its appropriateness to a given context. Along the narrative continuum, a range of genres is possible, and each society or social group may accept only some combination of possibilities along this range.

For our purposes of comparing the narratives of children in mainstream and nonmainstream families, we distinguish among four types of narrative: recounts, accounts, eventcasts, and stories. *Recounts* are retellings—either voluntarily or in response to questions providing a scaffold for experiences or information known to both teller and listener; examples include children's retellings of events in which they and their listener have participated, well-known stories or stories familiar to their listeners, or school lessons in response to the teacher's request for recitation. Adults' recounts include familiar childhood tales or recounts of infamous events in their own or others' lives. Recounts depend upon a power differential; one party asks another to retell or perform for the sake of performance or to transmit to a third party information known to both the teller and the questioner.

*Accounts*, on the other hand, are narratives generated by either the teller or another party to provide new information or new interpretations of information which may already be known to both teller and listener. Examples include children telling parents about an afternoon spent at a friend's house or an incident at nursery school. Adults share news of a day at work, retell an item read in the newspaper, or describe a scene unknown to the listener. To give an account, the teller must insert his communication into either an existing silence or a stream of discourse; unlike recounts, accounts are not usually invited or scaffolded by listeners. Once the frame has been established and the teller is into the stream of discourse, control of the account usually rests primarily with the teller.

*Eventcasts* provide a running narrative on events currently in the attention of teller and listeners; this narrative may be simultaneous with the events or precede them. A child narrating his block-by-block construction of a castle or telling a friend what he plans to do when he gets to the carnival creates eventcasts. A sportscaster's account of a game during play, a preplay of a travel plan, and a mother's explanation to a preverbal infant of what she is doing as she prepares a baby's bottle represent eventcasts. Finally, according to our definition, *stories* are fictional narratives which include an animate being who moves through a series of events with goal-directed behavior. Most prose (and some poetic) literary forms are stories, as are exaggerated accounts of the behaviors of contemporaries if their movement through goal behavior to an outcome is the basis of the telling. A child's retelling of a story from a book or an adult's fanciful tale of a colleague's successful completion of a contract negotiation are familiar examples.

Psycholinguistic research on the production and comprehension of narratives by

mainstream school-oriented populations has, in recent years, focused almost entirely on stories (but see Goelman, 1982). Scholars in psychology and linguistics have found it difficult to identify the knowledge structures of expository or descriptive narratives (Brewer, 1984), and they have given much attention to testing the concept of *story* and refining this concept through experiments designed to determine judgments of "good" stories (e.g., Stein & Kilgore, forthcoming; Stein & Policastro, forthcoming). This research has shown that members of mainstream school-oriented institutions expect stories to contain goal-based actions on the part of an agent capable of reactions. For mainstreamers, the criterion of whether or not the events of the story actually occurred in just the way they are told is not critical to *definitions* of stories (though it may be pertinent to judgments of the "goodness" of a story).

Calfee (1981) and others have argued that the concept of story and knowledge of the rules of story grammar are learned through exposure to book-reading in the mainstream child's preschool years and reinforced by the repeated practices teachers use in school to frame reading activities. Studies of mainstream families interacting with their preschool children have shown that from an early age, children in these households hear stories from books, are asked questions about stories which enable them to build an internal story schema, and are prompted to tell and required to listen to imaginary or fantasy stories based on this schema (Ninio & Bruner, 1978; Heath, 1982; Cochran-Smith, 1984).

Most of these studies describe mother and child reading or telling stories during leisure time, when the adult's attention is focused on the infant or child. These modes of interaction include exchange of routines in which the child imitates the mother reading the story; central-person routines, in which either the child or the mother is the teller or reader, and the other is the listener or spectator; and questioning routines in which the mother questions the child about a book, an event they both shared, or about feelings or desires she infers from the child's actions or talk. On such occasions, actions surrounding these routines are either stopped or given backstage focus. The mother stages or frames these routines, inviting the child to participate; for example, "Can you tell daddy about the story you heard at the library today?" Some children go on to practice these routines in solitary play (Ferguson & Macken, 1980), transmuting their prior interactional play with parents. In the second or third year, youngsters begin to frame occasions for introducing story-like routines into play with their peers and with adults on those occasions when adults do not initiate these routines. They must build a context, a way into the stream of activities of others. Props are helpful, since if a child brings a book or an object connected with a story to an adult, the adult will often initiate the story-time. On other occasions the child may have to establish the frame verbally—"Book, mama," "Read book."

Scholars have given far less attention to nonstory forms of narrative than they have to stories in mainstream families. Though many studies include mention of the running narratives mothers model for children while dressing the child or verbalizing childcare or travel plans (e.g., "and then we'll have our bath, and then our bottle and . . ."), the structure and occasion of these throughout the preschool years have received rela-

atively little analysis. Children practice these running narratives during their solitary play, often talking to themselves about putting "this block on top of that block . . . ." Adults in the vicinity of children verbalizing their play will often ask, "And then what will you do?", leading the child to frame actions of the future as well as the present. In captive audience situations (e.g., in the waiting rooms of the doctor's office or on long car trips), parents surround their children with eventcasts which focus on current or pending actions and the immediate environment.

At any time after events have been jointly shared by a mainstream parent and child, the parent may ask the child to give a narrative recounting of shared actions to a third party, who questions portions of the recount which have not been understood or do not make a coherent narrative. Once mainstream children are old enough to go to playschool or engage in other experiences to which their parents are not parties, the mother or father may ask for an account of the child's actions. These accounts often cannot be checked against the facts, so the coherence of the child's narrative accounting is one way adults decide whether to accept or question the child's account. Mainstream families and preschool institutions place considerable emphasis on children's accounts of experiences which are testable only insofar as the narrative through which they are presented makes sense to listeners. The accounts told to children, the questions asked by adults, and the retellings elicited from children help them learn the schema for accounts.

However, the children's narrative recounts of shared experiences, their accounts of experiences not shared with the listener, and the questions they are asked regarding cohesion, the logical occurrence of events, and expected outcomes do more than help them learn a set of schemata for different types of eventcasts, recounts, and accounts; they also teach children to frame occasions for offering these types of narrative. The preschooler (unlike an adult) can carry on a running monologue during his actions, and adults will not consider his verbalizations inappropriate (cf. Goffman, 1981 on "self-talk"). The child may later be encouraged to do such eventcasting while watching an animal at a zoo or a guest wrapping a birthday present ("What's the giraffe doing? Where's he going?"; "What's Aunt Marge doing?") To make his own way into a conversation and to establish a frame through which he can share a recount, a child may ask of a third party in the presence of a person who shared the event: "You know what?" "You want me to tell you what mama and I did today?" To provide an account, children often ask, "You wanna hear about . . . ?" or announce what they hope will be a piece of information which will stop the ongoing conversation: "Jimmy's got a new bird," said as an opening to an accounting of an afternoon's play at a friend's house (cf. Dore, 1979). Either leisure time or a shift of focus from other actions or topics of conversation form a backdrop for this kind of talk from young children. Since in mainstream homes, social convention dictates that only one person talk at a time, children are usually granted the floor for at least a brief framing and ensuing narrative. At the very least, adults usually give some signal they are listening, even though they may continue with their activities; a common signal of listening is a question which is a probe or a request for clarification (Corsaro, 1977).

## CHARLENE AND DE

We examine here a very different context, one in which stories as defined by mainstreamers were introduced through children's books to a family which carried a different definition of story from that held by mainstreamers. The extended family household of eleven members observed conventions which sanctioned talk by more than one person at a time and the dominance of adult conversations over young children's talk. Stories told by adults fit the basic structural norms of those described by psycholinguists for mainstream children and adults; however, oral stories were based on real actions, the details of which were elaborated in the telling. Stories from television or written sources did not form the basis for adults' stories but might be used as elaboration of real events (cf. the Trackton community described in Heath, 1983). Reading in this household consisted of reading to meet daily practical needs (e.g., scanning the newspaper and sports magazines, and reading personal and business letters and forms from various local and state bureaucracies). Neither reading to preschoolers nor by adults as a solitary activity occurred in the daily routines.

In response to the intervention of being read to ten minutes per day from children's books, the preschooler in this household evolved basic schemata both for telling goal-based stories and for providing eventcasts and accounts which included physical descriptions and time-ordered accounts of events. With minimal prompting or focusing of his attention on the components of stories from books, the preschooler in this family became a narrative-maker and set up frames in which he could tell narratives of various types to his mother. Though she initially rejected these stories as "lies," she came to accept his accounts and to provide frames for him to tell his narratives. This chapter will summarize the language socialization of this preschooler from 18 to 24 months (reported in Heath & Thomas, 1984) and will describe the acquisition of varieties of narrative skills that took place in the year between his second and third birthdays. We identify the evolution of narrative structures and the frames which he provided and his mother gradually evolved to help organize and shape his expression of remembered experiences.

## THE ACHIEVEMENT OF PRESCHOOL LITERACY FOR MOTHER AND CHILD

Elsewhere we have detailed the development of preschool literacy for Charlene Thomas and De, her preschool son (Heath & Thomas, 1984). We provide here only a summary of the changes which took place in their uses of oral and written language in the 5 months between April and September 1982, the period just prior to the year in which data reported in this chapter were collected.

In September 1981, Charlene Thomas entered the ninth grade Basic English class Amanda Branscombe, a teacher who worked with Shirley Brice Heath during the ac

emic year 1981-82 in a teacher-researcher relationship.<sup>1</sup> Branscombe's class was in a high school in a town of 30,000 in the deep South of the United States. The school provided two academic tracks for grades nine through twelve: "general", for students who planned to attend college or technical school, and "basic", for those who had previously been in the special education lane or who scored below the fifth-grade level in reading and language arts skills. Heath wrote to the ninth graders, introducing them to methods of collecting language data and asking them to take fieldnotes and to audiotape some of the occasions for the use of oral and written language in their homes and communities, and in the workplaces of their parents. In November, when this ethnographic work of the students had barely begun, Charlene dropped out of school. She was the mother of a son, De, born the previous September, and she was expecting another child who would be born in mid-April, 1982. Heath continued to write to Charlene and asked her to record her reading with De for ten minutes a day, leaving the tape-recorder on for twenty minutes after the reading. Branscombe took children's books and a tape-recorder to Charlene; during these visits, Charlene went over the tape-recordings, filling in details of background actions which had taken place during the tapings. In addition, Charlene took fieldnotes on her son's language development and wrote brief histories of his growth and play patterns. Branscombe gave Charlene minimal instructions on the procedures she thought Charlene should follow as she read to De.

Prior to June of 1982, the tapes, Charlene's fieldnotes and oral commentary on the tapes, and her case histories indicated that the adults in her household surrounded De with talk, but they usually did not direct talk to him. When they did address him directly, they gave brief commands, usually repeated three times. They used no baby talk or other simplified language addressed to the preschooler (cf. the Trackton community in Heath, 1983). In April, Charlene began to read to De; until June, she used the book as a prompt for a string of requests that he name items in the environment around him, call members of the family by name, and give others commands. She transferred the previous command mode for addressing De to the bookreading interaction and issued commands such as "Say dog," "Say A, say B." Between April and June, Charlene made few efforts to focus De's attention on the book, its pictures, or its story. However, between June and September, Charlene increasingly focused on the text and read to De, who often repeated names of items pictured in the book, and, on several occasions, after hearing a story only twice, showed his anticipation of a story's text by repeating phrases before his mother read them. By September 1982, the month of his second birthday,

<sup>1</sup> The "subjects" of this research have been identified with the full written consent of Charlene Thomas and her father. Charlene has played a role similar to that of graduate students who compile data, provide summary reports, discuss and interpret their professors' write-up of the material they've contributed, and provide suggestions for revision and additions to drafts of the article. Heath made an agreement with the students of Branscombe's ninth-grade class that they were to be acknowledged as research associates to the fullest extent possible (see Heath & Branscombe, 1985).

De was completely toilet-trained; could give his baby brother, Tutti—born in April 1982—his bottle; went to bed upon direction; got his own water from the kitchen sink; and enjoyed playing with the electronic games of older children in the neighborhood. Charlene reported of his reading:

He calls hisself readin'—tryin' to read, but the only thing he's done is readin' the picture book. After a while, he can soon learn how. And now he gets where he had learned to count a little bit, but he can't put 'em in order. He will just say the numbers just out of order. But then you sit down and teach him how to say his ABCs, he'll mock you n' stuff like that.

By De's second birthday on September 21, 1982, the tapes of the readings and the talk that sometimes followed between mother and child had begun to include modified talk, with a high proportion of teaching questions directed to the child—a language interaction feature commonly reported from studies of mainstream mothers and children.

On a tape made two days before De's second birthday, Charlene had the first recorded conversation with a preschooler (De's 30-month-old cousin) in which she responded in a conversation initiated by the child, restated the child's utterances into well-formed sentences, and participated with the child as a conversational equal, building cooperative propositions about events which were not pictured in books. The introduction of books and regular occasions for mother and child to interact together when nurturing routines were not the focus of the interaction co-occurred with Charlene's simplified language input to her preschooler and other initial steps toward mainstream habits of talking with De and his preschool peers. She sought leisure time to read with him and ask him questions about the books.

As Tutti grew older, he became a third party to the book readings, sitting on one side of Charlene, while she read to De from a book she held between the two children. By late August of 1982, De sat beside Tutti on the floor, "read" to him by pointing to items in the books, and watched his eyes to see if he followed De's deictic gestures. Charlene had begun to attend to De and his older cousin consistently as conversational initiators, to adapt conversational topics to the children's expressions of interests, to expand the children's propositions into well-formed sentences, and to build cooperative propositions with them (cf. cases included in Ochs & Schieffelin, 1984).

During the months between the time Charlene dropped out of school and De's second birthday, reinforcement for these changed ways of talking and for the maintenance of the taping and taking of field notes had been minimal: Heath had written six letters but had never met Charlene. Branscombe had visited approximately ten times, taking books, a tape-recorder and audiotapes, and spending time listening to the tapes with Charlene. Neither Heath nor Branscombe had given specific directions to Charlene about how to read with De or how to talk with the children; she had learned through trial and error and perseverance when and where to read with De, how to hold him and the book, and how to focus his attention on the reading. She had learned to call his name to direct his attention to items in the book, and she had begun to wait and let De make his contribution to the reading. She had moved away from simply trying to get

De to label items in the books to making topic comments about the books and their pictures. She had mastered the basic features of dialogues with De about a book's contents and the difference between different types of books. Charlene had also begun to provide him with crayons, pencils, and papers, and to encourage him to draw his name and to "write stories." She had begun to speak of De as "going to school," and De had begun to push for his early entry to "school" (Head Start). Charlene offered him frames for telling about his books ("What's that book?"), allowed him to negotiate frames for book reading to Tutti and with her ("Read book, Ma?"), and provided him with a model of a book reader as she read to him and questioned him about the books. De sometimes repeated her entire utterance, sometimes selected segments for repetition, and sometimes volunteered topic comments.

There were, however, no occasions on which Charlene modeled eventcasts for De or asked him questions which would have led him to talk aloud about his activities during play, verbalizing what he was doing. De had few opportunities for activities outside the home without his mother, so she did not have cause to ask him to give account of events or actions in which he had participated but in which she had not shared. There were numerous occasions on which she asked him to recount information known to both mother and child ("What color is your grandmother's car?" "Where does your daddy work?"), but only two of these (in eighteen hours of taping) included as many as three turns exchanged between mother and child on a single topic. In September 1982, when we summarized the achievement of literacy for Charlene and De, we could not predict whether Charlene would retain the language socialization patterns acquired in the first few months of the research project or whether she would extend her ways of talking with De and Tutti. We had as yet no evidence that she had engaged De in the common mainstream ways of extending the functions and uses of literacy—providing extended discourse about real-world events related to book-based knowledge, offering running explanatory narratives during activities, forecasting future events, or accounting for events and feelings not shared by the listeners.

### THE ACHIEVEMENT OF NARRATIVES

From September 1982 through August 1983, in De's third year, Charlene continued to read with De and Tutti as often as possible, recording the readings and leaving the tape recorder on for twenty minutes afterwards. However, Branscombe was no longer living near Charlene, and most communication was by letter and the mailings of audiotapes. Often Branscombe could not listen to the tapes with Charlene until several months had passed since the original taping. Thus the data and analysis presented here come only from the twenty-four audiotapes (twenty-six hours recorded between September 1982 and August 1983) and six general interviews with Charlene held between May and June 1983 and in August and September 1983. We note here to the extent possible the stages of De's production of accounts and stories, his mother's initial denial of these when they were not linked directly to book-reading routines, and her eventual acceptance and framing of occasions for his narratives.

In the tapes recorded in September and October 1982, Charlene continues to read to De, responding to his interjections with "yeah" or "look." De appears to focus intently on the order of events in the stories, remembering and anticipating what comes next. As Charlene reads the text aloud, De often anticipates segments before she says them, and he can be heard on the tape "preplaying" the actual words of the text. His favorite preplays are the sounds animals make of the names of animals.

In October, at age 25 months, De appears to begin to focus on the themes of books and to link these themes to real-world knowledge in which he has not participated directly, but about which he has heard talk. For example, as Charlene reads a book filled with pictures and labels about different kinds of workers and work, De extrapolates the book's theme and adds his own contribution to the text by breaking into Charlene's reading with an utterance about his father's work:

Sedrick, Sedrick work (10/82:218)

Charlene had not pulled him out of the text with comments about real-world events, but here De links information from the written text to knowledge gained, not from direct experience, but from hearing others talk about Sedrick going to work. In the following two weeks, he consistently interrupts Charlene's reading to make new texts modeled either on statements made in the book, or on statements he has heard which he links to the theme of the book.

In early November, as Charlene was reading a book about animals, De stops his mother, points to a wolf, and his mother responds by saying "wolk" [sic]. De repeats this term with questioning intonation, pauses 1.2 seconds, and then says "dog says woof, woof." He appears to try to make sense of the term "wolk" his mother has given him by interpreting the pictured wolf as a dog. He then restates her utterances into a well-formed sentence which enables him to make sense of the unknown term "wolf." Charlene does not respond to his statement, but resumes her reading of the names of the animals in the book. For the next few weeks, he appears on the tapes to tell himself a story based on the pictures, focusing most often on a book about a puppy. He "reads" as he creates a story about a puppy: "Pup, puppy, pup, woof, woof, puppy says woof, woof." He goes over the same text repeatedly, in a patterned practice routine offering little variation except in the order of his words. At several points, he asks his mother to help him find another of his books about puppies, or he tries to engage her in extended talk about puppies, but she replies that she doesn't have the book, and then shifts his attention to naming items in the room.

In mid-October, in the midst of a book-reading session which has focused exclusively on De's answering questions such as "What's that? Who's that?," Charlene shifts to try to create the first recorded eventcast with De.

Charlene: Who you gonna go trick or treating with?  
Who gonna take you trick or treating?

When De does not respond to this request to talk about the future, Charlene shifts to another type of narrative, asking for a recount of a recent expedition in which De was taken for ice cream and given a dollar by a family friend whose name is Mel. (Charlene

was not along on the trip, but she had been told about the outing by Mel.) Charlene does not give an orientation to her request for a recount of the outing (10/82:28-103).<sup>2</sup>

Charlene	De
Where your money?	money
How much money you got?	
W'har dat is? What dat is?	unintelligible utterance beginning with /d/ repeat of above
How much money?	repeat of above
How much money is dat?	above utterance elongated
Say a dollar.	Mel
Who gave you dat?	repeat of sound for dollar
Mel gave you dat dollar?	did
She did?	cream
You had some ice cream?	
'n drink	yeah
You did?	did
You had a good time?	yeah
Huh?	dollar
You got a dollar? Where Babe dollar? Where his dollar at? Mel didn't give babe no dollar?	no
Huh?	no
She didn't give babe no dollar?	no
Where Babe dollar at?	gone
Mel got it?	it gone
It gone? He spent it?	yeah
Babe spent dat dollar?	yeah
He did?	yeah
Uh hum	

Charlene then switches to asking De where various members of the family are; among those named is King, De's dog which had been killed by a car. The exchange shifts then to an eventcast of Christmas; she asks De what he wants for Christmas and what he thinks Santa Claus will bring the baby. De does not respond, and she shifts to a request that De tell how old he is and count, repeating each number after Charlene. The exchange continues for nine minutes before Charlene asks De to get her a book to read to him. In this lengthy exchange, Charlene tries for the first time in a recording of a single book-reading session to elicit an eventcast and a recount from De; when he does not respond to her invitation to talk about a future event, she switches to a past event familiar to both of them. However, she turns this recount away from actual events to questions which try to structure a fantasized event—Mel's giving the baby money and the

<sup>2</sup> Charlene is a speaker of Black English, who shifts toward some standard English features in some registers. No attempt is made to represent the exact sounds of her speech. The modified spellings are used here to represent the natural flow of her speech and in full awareness that all natural English speech differs from what the standard orthography seems to indicate.

alternative solutions which might solve the problem of where the baby's money is now. De, however, tries to stay in a reality mode—to stick to the known text—telling Charlene that Mel did not give the baby a dollar, first through three repetitions of "no" and then through the summative statement "it gone." Only when she insists on continuing the fantasy does he seem to join in by offering her "yeah," the same reinforcement she gives him when he creates texts different from that of the book while she is reading to him. In the final portion of this episode, mother and son switch the customary roles they play when she is reading to him; on those occasions he deviates from the known text—the book—and Charlene offers denial sometimes, silence occasionally, and at other times, a series of "yeah's" when De persists in creating his own text. Here Charlene creates her own text, which De initially denies and then weakly acknowledges with a series of "yeah's."

Tapes between October and January show a continuation of Charlene's requests for item or event labels and brief elaborations on these (e.g., "What dat?" "Duck in water, ain't it?") Between October 1982 and January 1983, Charlene did not make any tapes, but she said she had occasionally read to De. On the tapes made in January, De listens for longer stretches than he had previously done. Between April and October 1982, two minutes was the maximum time he listened without interrupting Charlene. In January, he listens as long as six minutes without breaking into the text with either questions or his own text additions. In late January, he asks the first "Why?" of the text recorded (Charlene is never recorded asking De a why- or how-question about the text of a book); previously, De (and Charlene) asked only what-questions or offered elaborating comments on the sounds animals made, the actions of characters, and the location of items in the pictures. In late January, Charlene reads a book on ducks, and she stops the reading to comment: "Duck crying." De asks "Why?" twice (1/83:234). Charlene responds "Yeah, duck cryin'" and asks "What dis?" pointing to an item and then naming it "Bird." She continues naming items in the book and asking De to give labels. Near the end of January, Charlene, after reading several books to De, asks him to read to her. He does so, telling her to "Look, look, look" and repeating names of items in the book for her (1-27/83:559). Charlene refers to this activity as "readin' the pictures."

In April, when Tutti was one year old, Branscombe and Heath sent books to Tutti as well as to De and asked Charlene to include Tutti in the talk surrounding her reading of books. On a tape recorded in early April, she gives De directions on how to read to Tutti: "Get down and read Tutei a story. Let him see one [book] and you read him one" (4/83:180). While De reads to Tutti, Charlene plays a color-and-counting game with Reka, De's three-year-old cousin. De eventually joins the game and a triadic conversation about the colors of the eggs pictured in the book takes place. Charlene asks Reka to "tell a story"—the first such request recorded. Reka begins: "That puppy . . . (pause 3 sec.) puppy run." Charlene asks: "What kinda puppy?" De asks something which is unintelligible, and Reka answers "Puppy." Charlene then begins to count the number of puppies in the pictures and asks: "What puppy doing?" Reka answers "Gone to bed." Charlene and Reka continue talking about the puppy for several minutes longer, but Charlene does not try to reinstate a story form.

April 7, Charlene provides the first invitation to read with De which is longer single utterance: "Come on and let Mama read about the little elephant. Come here. Come sit right here. Say Little Elephant." (4-5/83:93). Charlene's intonation is invitational, as a teacher's might be, and she announces the topic to De by opening the storybook. Throughout the story, she asks De questions, but he interrupts, saying "Mama, dere cat [or other animals pictured in the book], mama." Throughout the story, De connects the text to his own experiences. In a portion of the story which shows animals playing cards, De comments: "Playing cards right dere. I had cards up at Jack's house" (4-7/83:144). In a story about a rabbit, he interrupts Charlene's reading to give the first recorded voluntary account of an event in which Charlene has not shared (4-7/83:198):

Look Ma, look Ma, look Ma, at that rabbit. I get another one. I get another one, rabbit. Get rabbit up Mel's house, Get rabbit up Mel's house. Get rabbit up Mel's house.

Over the next month, De consistently stops the reading to give an account of his own experience with events or items from the stories: a birthday cake, a cat in a tree, cars, and so on. In mid-April, when Charlene and De are reading a book about an elephant's birthday party to which a cat is invited, De notices a box of cornflakes pictured in one of the illustrations. De has recently been to his cousin's house, where he had cornflakes for the first time. He reads to his mother, and then breaks in with his account:

One el go

el go

el go walk

Two el right there

De and the el eat cornflakes. De eat cornflakes at Re's house. De eat cake at Re's house. Look Ma, happy birthday to you (He then sings "Happy Birthday") (4-18/83:423)

Tutti's birthday is to be in a few days, and De has been practicing the happy birthday song. In his mingling of the book's story and a real-life account, De fictionalizes himself and the elephant eat cornflakes), and he adds background information to which Charlene has no access (his eating of cornflakes at Re's house). De then returns to the book, however, repeating "birthday cat" several times and telling his mother to look at the cat eating birthday cake. Charlene asks, "Whose birthday is it?" De responds "cat," but Charlene says, "Tutti's birthday." De has, however, continued to focus on the book, ignores Charlene, and goes on to talk about the cat eating cornflakes and the elephant's birthday party.

Later in April, De and Charlene play a game of "Where's \_\_\_\_\_?", filling in names of various members of the family. Charlene suddenly breaks the pattern of routine questions by asking a question about the future: "You wanna go to school?" (4-18/83:332). De answers with the following eventcast, interrupted only by his mother's occasional "Yeah."

Me go to school. Go school bus. School bus come down house. School bus come down house. Ma [Mama] go school, Ma go school?

Charlene tells him that she will have to sign him up for school; he repeats "sign me up," and the eventcast and surrounding conversation end. The topic of school does not appear on the tapes again until mid-May, when Charlene and several adults are carrying on a conversation, and De is playing alone, while narrating an eventcast about himself as he plays:

I read. I play football. I got my foot. I got my schoolwork. I play football. I played basketball. I played baseball. I go school. I get my book. (5-18/83:30)

Charlene interrupts her conversation with other adults to say, "You don't go to school. When you go to school?" De answers "Today." Charlene says "No" and De tries "Tomorrow?" Charlene says "You have to wait for you to go to school."

In May of 1983, Branscombe began a series of regular visits with Charlene, going over tapes from the previous months and taking De in her car for short trips to visit a local farm and to see the animals at a small wild animal compound. When he returns from the trip, Charlene asks, "Where you and Miss Branscombe went?" This frame allows De to tell his mother about his visit to see the monkeys, how many monkeys he saw, and what they were doing. She interrupts with questions: "You see monkeys eat?" "Ya'll see birds?" urging him to fill in his story with more details. When Branscombe is not present and De gives an account of his trip to the monkeys, he includes elements Charlene does not think happened. She cuts him off, saying "You didn't see no fish" (implying she knows he saw monkeys and not fish on his outing with Branscombe). During May, De also creates fictionalized accounts of himself riding a motorcycle he says his daddy has given him, and he also tells about catching fish. When Charlene and Branscombe went over the tape, Charlene expressed her dismay at his "lies"; Branscombe assured Charlene that De was not being "bad," and that the going-to-zoo eventcast noted above was, for example, the kind of story he might be asked to tell at school. She described De as making up "stories" for himself, and said this activity may be good practice for talk about reading or for sharing time at school, so Charlene should not worry about his telling these narratives at home.

During subsequent trips in the car with Branscombe, De provides a running narrative on their whereabouts, names items and elaborates on their features, and often puts himself into an action he describes as taking place; for instance, while pointing to a ballfield, he says, "I play ball with my daddy there." Branscombe's check with Charlene indicated these events did not, in fact, take place.

From June until September, De fictionalized other members of the family in stories which drew from his car trips with Branscombe and his book reading, and, no doubt, from events he had seen on television. His favorite story motif was fishing, and during play he created stories about fishing trips with his daddy, his mother cooking the fish they caught, and the birds they saw on their fishing trips. Charlene did not ask him to tell these stories, and she did not try to "correct" his excursions into fantasy. When asking for accounts after his car trips with Branscombe, Charlene focused primarily on

questions, such as, "What did you [or the animals] do?" In late June, De saw the zookeeper feed an eagle a large rat. He returned home to tell his mother: "I see a bird." She asks "What did the bird do?" He answers: "The bird cried." Charlene asks the only recorded why-question about De's talk: "Why did the bird cry?" De answers: "Because he had to eat a rat for his supper," inferring the cause of the bird's reaction.

By late June, on occasions when De used crayons to draw, he referred to his activities as "writing." When asked by Branscombe or Charlene, he refused to label separate items in his drawings. In response to adults' pointing to portions of his writing and asking "What's that?", he was silent. Usually only after he had finished his writing would he announce "a story," and he would then tell about what had occurred in the writing by giving a script: "A bear. A bear comes and eats the fish" (6/83:210). His drawings exemplify the representation of motion described by E. Ferreiro and Teberosky (1979) for preschoolers who embellish their drawing with long upward strokes to denote forward movement of vehicles, and repeated strokes for the sounds of trucks or motorcycles. (This self-generation of a stylized device parallels the internalization of literary style by preschoolers described by Green, 1982. In both cases adults gave children no explicit instruction on how to represent motion in art or to distinguish among authors' styles; yet children learned these abstract characteristics about books.)

#### CHILD AS NARRATIVE-MAKER: THE NECESSARY CONDITIONS

During the year between September 1982 and September 1983, Charlene and De grew together in several ways around stories, eventcasts, recounts, and accounts. Independent of repeated, redundant, or multiple scaffolds of various types by Charlene, De learned to produce narratives ranging from eventcasts to stories of fantasy. Charlene's questions about the books they read together focused primarily throughout the third year on "What's that?" and "What's that doing?" questions. Only twice on the tapes made during the twelve months (a total of twenty-six hours) did she ask questions which would have led De to focus on the motives or causes of events. On four occasions, she asked De to relate the book's events to real-life events (such as Tutti's birthday). On no occasion did she offer an evaluation of characters or events in the books' stories (e.g., "He a bad duck, isn't he?").

Snow and Goldfield (1982), in describing the book reading of Nathaniel, a mainstream child (from 2;5 to 4;21), and his mother, suggest seven functions which describe the "information categories" (illustrated below in the questions given) and "information content" (illustrated below in the answers to questions) that mother and child use in reading a picture book (p. 133). These include:

*item labels* (e.g. "What's that?" "That's a Dingo.")

*item elaborations* ("What kind of car?" "How many?" "Red." "Two")

*event labels* ("What's happening?" "He's climbing a tree.")

*event elaborations* ("Duck's in the water." "Duck can swim in the water.")

*motive/cause* ("Why?" "His mother's gone.")

*evaluation/reaction* ("What do you think?" "He's sad.")

*relation to the real world* ("What's that like?" "My bike.")

Snow and Goldfield point out that as Nathaniel grew older, his mother increased her requests for motive/cause, evaluation/reaction, and real world comments. Increasingly Nathaniel took responsibility for providing information content through his answers to questions asking for item labels and elaborations and event labels and elaborations; his mother carried major responsibility for motive/cause, evaluation/reaction, and real world categories and information—questions and answers.

In contrast, Charlene's conversations about books and subsequent talk around the narratives De created do not show movement away from her earlier focus on labels and elaborations. De, however, begins to create fictional stories of a state-event-state order, to fictionalize himself and others in events for which he provides comments on motive/cause, evaluation/reaction, and real-world links, and to add comments on the motivations and evaluations of actors included in his accounts of real events. In his drawings, he does not focus on discrete pieces or items, but talks of the picture as a whole story and of portions of the drawing as representing actions. By the time he was three years old, with the minimal modeling he received, De had acquired the following behaviors related to reading and talking about reading:

1. Producing spontaneous frames for opening conversations about books or real-world events ("This a book about trains." "Did you see it's raining out there?").
2. Voluntarily counting objects in books and naming their colors.
3. Voluntarily "reading" books to himself and Tutti.
4. Sustaining the topic of narratives he created, even when adults tried to divert him from the telling by asking questions.
5. Inferring causal links and internal states of both book characters and real-world animates about whom he created narratives.
6. Fictionalizing himself as a reader and writer in a future scene; explaining his current actions as "reading" and "writing."
7. Issuing imperatives to other preschoolers about "taking care of books."
8. Engaging in forecasting events to come, based on limited experiences with those events; laying out steps to be followed in a car trip, preparation of cards for a game, and so on.

In September 1983, at the age of three, De began attending the local Head Start program. Within a few weeks, the teachers told Charlene he was "too fast" and wanted to "talk too much." A shift of teachers several months into the year brought De more acceptance, and by January 1984, he was seen as the star performer of the class. He was able to count to ten, label colors, recognize his name in print, and answer questions such as "What does your Aunt Mimi's name start with?" He voluntarily gave Charlene accounts of his day at school, and he read to Tutti as well as with both his mother and father.

## CONCLUSIONS

This is the second report of a longitudinal study of a child in a family in which book reading and simplified language routines with preschoolers developed in connection with the introduction of brief periods of mother-child interaction over books. With minimal modeling and scaffolding from adults, the child "lessoned" and practiced in self-talk and in solitary activities of reading and writing many key behaviors which educators judge important for school success. Just as in the period between 18 and 24 months, book reading was the primary occasion in which De learned labeling (Heath & Thomas, 1984), so in his third year, book reading was the primary occasion in which he had a frame to interact with others to give recounts, to interject his knowledge in accounts about the real world, to combine factual and fictional elements to create stories, and to ask and answer questions about written texts. Near the end of the year, as De had more experiences outside the home, requests for accounts of these events began to occur with more frequency during periods when mother and child sat down to read books. According to his mother, the book-reading episodes were her only leisure times ("rests") to "be with De" and to "teach him." In periods in which the tape-recorder was left on after the book reading, family members—including Charlene—often seemed to forget about the audio-recording; these conversational interactions outside the book-reading occasions do not contain frames for De's narratives or efforts to include De and Tutti as conversational partners.

What cannot now be known is whether Charlene will maintain the book-reading, retain her present style of questioning, or extend her requests from item and event labels and elaborations to queries about motives, causes, reactions, evaluations, and real events in the next year. If Charlene does not extend her questioning, we do not know whether De will, in the absence of help from his mother, develop more complex narratives which will move him closer to the kinds of narratives needed for successful school performance. We also cannot know whether or not Charlene will encourage or model fantasy in her talk about books or in fictionalized narratives about De; she has not yet done so on more than three occasions (cf. Kavanaugh, Whittington, & Cerbone, 1983 on the use and importance of fantasy in speech with mainstream preschoolers). Studies of mainstream children indicate that adult-child interactions around books and through told and retold stories help prepare preschoolers for behaviors valued in school reading: finding the main or most important idea in a narrative; reordering narrative events in "correct" temporal sequence; making inferences from text information and subsequent judgments about the texts; and summarizing the events of a narrative (cf. Stein & Trabasso, 1982, p. 213).

We have shown, from the data presented here, that from the relatively minimal scaffolding he received in episodes centered around books, De learned numerous language forms and specific behaviors associated with mainstream literate behaviors. He used items, events, causes, reactions, and comparisons of events to organize factual and fantasized narratives about past, current, and future events. During the period from 24

to 36 months, he and his mother continued a sociocultural event which began as an intervention in their daily routines. With this book reading intervention, De developed a perception of himself as reader and writer; and his mother developed a consciousness of her child's roles as a coparticipant in talk, a fictionalized character in his created tales, a fiction-maker, an elaborator of meaning, and a possible source of new information.

This study underscores the importance of considering the sociocultural contexts which support the development of certain types of narratives. The systematic structures which story-grammar theorists have found in their studies of mainstream children have been strongly influenced both by the literate organization of past experience used in families which have language habits similar to those used in formal schooling, and by assumptions that language development proceeds through an invariant series of stages. Researchers have thus been strongly inclined to infer that these patterns are—or should be—common to all children learning all languages in all types of sociocultural settings.

However, the way a child learns of different genres, organizational schemata for different types of narratives, and questioning routines to extract meaning from narratives depends very much on the language to which he is exposed and the frames and occasions open to him in his early language socialization. The basic order of acquisition and the set of narrative features used and heard in mainstream homes and expected in school are not universal. Neither a single model of a story grammar nor a single set of schemata for organizing certain genres of narrative is likely to be ecologically valid across cultures. Children do not have psychological proclivities toward some narrative schemata and not others. In the words of Rosen:

However universal our human bent for narrativizing experience, we encounter our own society's modes for doing this. There is no one way of telling stories; we learn the story grammars of our society, our culture. Since there are irreconcilable divisions in our society of sex, class, ethnicity, we should expect very diverse, but not mutually exclusive, ways of telling stories. The composer of a story is not a completely free agent (1982, pp. 11-12).

Children learn to "play the game of free choice according to the rules" of their own cultural community.

We need, however, to know more about the environmental factors which condition these rules. We provide here further evidence to support the suggestions of Goody (1977), Bruner (1984), Olson (1984), and others, that the focused activity of book reading—even in relatively limited amounts and without the development of complex interactional scaffolding—provides a "playful setting" in which children learn to use language in "daring" and "advanced" (Bruner, 1984, p. 196) ways. The book as prop allows numerous frames through which children learn to create narratives of various genres on both information in books and knowledge beyond books. The book, unlike comics, television, or routine conversation, forces adult and child to focus on saying what things are and what they mean—critical skills for meeting the demands of school.

As researchers collect more detailed accounts of the different patterns by which children learn to produce and comprehend narratives, we will learn more about varieties of genres and features as they co-occur with certain structural and functional aspects of

sociocultural environments. We speculate that after numerous cross-cultural comparisons, researchers will be able to posit a human bioprogram which carries the potential for enabling an individual to play, monitor, and evaluate incoming information presented in narrative form. Researchers should then also be able to demonstrate that particular orderings and stages of these processes are dependent on contexts of learning which have specifiable features (cf. Sternberg, 1984). The particular sociocultural environments of children will vary depending on whether or not the adults around them respond, consciously and unconsciously, to children as information-givers and perceive adults as the agents responsible for teaching, modeling, and reinforcing a particular set of skills and a body of knowledge for the child. Thus our models of the order in which children acquire narratives will have to include key features of the social structures and belief systems which surround the child and determine the sequence and types of information offered to the child. In short, our models will have to account for the types of narrative structures that result from different contexts for narrative building which co-occur with certain sociocultural environments.

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