KIDS TALK

STRATEGIC LANGUAGE USE IN LATER CHILDHOOD

Edited by

Susan M. Hoyle

Carolyn Temple Adger

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Working through Language

SHIRLEY BRICE HEATH

> How is it I find you in difference, see you there
> In a moving contour, a change not quite completed?
> You are familiar yet an aberration.
>
> Wallace Stevens, "Notes toward a Supreme Fiction"

Poetry speaks rarely of older children. In contrast to their younger counterparts, youth attract little attention except when adults express frustration when they fail to understand the differences they see between the child that was and the preteen or teen that now is. The older child's gyrations between likes and dislikes, inaction and constant motion, noise and silence, silliness and wisdom strike adults as inexplicable. Overheard language and attempted conversations with youth leave adults at a loss as to how much of a mutual communication system they actually share with young people.

This chapter presents older children at voluntary work in collaborative tasks with adults in youth-based organizations (e.g., Boys and Girls Clubs, youth arts groups, and community sports leagues) and illustrates the extent to which their language use on these occasions depends intensely on active planning, doing, and evaluating with both their elders and peers. Such circumstances—those in which adults work side-by-side with youth to accomplish a joint task over time—have greatly diminished recently. Currently, aside from agricultural households, relatively few families spend time in cross-age tasks that require planning, practice, and productive work across a period of several weeks or months. Yet these are the very situations in which children are most likely to engage in work on tasks beneficial to them and others and to receive extensive authentic practice of linguistic structures that reflect planning ahead, linking current actions to future outcomes, and self-assessing and self-correcting their own behaviors and attitudes.

Just as nurturing, playing, and book reading shape in large part the talk of young children and adults, so joint work tasks shape the language of older children as they collaborate with adults. If young children lack opportunities for nurturing, playing, and imaginative talking with adults, their language development suffers; similarly, if older children have few if any opportunities to engage in joint work tasks with adults, their language development and uses will be affected.

This chapter argues that joint adult-youth work brings about particular kinds of language growth vital for young people to develop habits critical to their learning how to shape ideas and to hypothesize, critique, and plan activities that, in turn, generate more learning opportunities. Data used here are drawn from a decade of close study and participant observation within youth-based organizations—those that place youth at the center of their philosophy and involve youth in decision-making roles throughout the organization. A large portion of data collected in this study consists of audiotapes of young people and their adult leaders jointly carrying out the work of the organization—whether budget and publicity planning, improving practice of bunting and catching fly balls, perfecting performance of a scene for a community play, or preparing to host a Special Olympics for children with disabilities. First, I delineate the challenge that older children present to scholars who wish to study their daily interactions. The importance of *work* for talk is addressed in both current and historical terms, with consideration of what can be learned by attending to how older children talk when they are engaged in collaborative tasks of their own choosing.

Three assertions lie behind the language development claims of this chapter:

1. Changed parenting and household arrangements in the late twentieth century greatly increase the importance of youth organizations for the linguistic and sociocognitive development of older children.
2. Work that extends over time and receives evaluation by authentic outside assessors engages young people in fluid stances and asymmetric roles through which they practice planful behavior and ongoing appraisal of process and product relationships.
3. Young people extend their language development as they accomplish work tasks, play a range of roles, and learn different relations in the multiple voices they assume to maintain social balance among their peers while they also help the collective network achieve group goals.

The parenting and household structural arrangements that predominate in the late twentieth century mean that young people increasingly are left among only their peers, without incentive or direction to take up specific productive tasks that engage them over time. Hence, opportunities to use language structures and planful behavior with steps toward a culminating end or product occur relatively rarely. Except for the fortunate youngster with local grandparents or caring adults not engaged in full-time work outside the household, most of America's youth have only a few hours each month of committed time from adults who join with them in collaborative work.

This void has meant that an additional institution—beyond school and family—is needed in the socialization of young people: youth organizations and their adult leaders. Within some, though certainly not all, communities, organizations

committed to youth as resources for their families, communities, and the society at large make it possible for adults to engage with young people in complex ongoing tasks and projects that help advance the linguistic and sociocognitive development of older children.

Work achieved together within such a group requires certain communicative patterns tightly related to the range of roles played out at different points in time by members of the group. For example, at any moment in the work task, any individual may choose to step back from active participation to become a bystander who observes and listens for a while before stepping back in as critic, problem solver, assistant, cheerleader, or troubleshooter. Individuals may in any single session opt for silent or verbal roles and shift stance or perspective almost from minute to minute, with respect to both the task at hand and their involvement in that task. They may choose to take charge or observe, alter or deflect the course of the work, or reveal or keep silent about a crucial tool or resource. The resulting network of roles and stances embraces not only the group but also each member, who is always a potential model or apprentice, instructor or learner. Though by no means a stable "community of learners," the collective groups and networks within them merge to singly engage toward an outcome. This common engagement provides the crucial platform for both witnessing and taking up multiple ways to accomplish work.[1] Each role and stance chosen at any time within the learning network calls on distinct as well as overlapping language resources; the critic must shape utterances so as not to offend the workers but to improve the work; the problem solver must set up possible scenarios in order to convince others that a particular solution is likely to work. Speakers must thus know—or learn—how to reshape, redirect, and correct the work while they also persuade, humor, praise, and argue with the workers.

Older Children and Language Development Studies

Although psycholinguists have given considerable attention to the language development of younger children in play or simple tasks with adults, they have provided very little research on the language of older children. The bits of research we have come primarily from studies in school settings that center on testing the grammatical development of children and their understanding of certain complex syntactic structures. For example, Chomsky (1969) considers the understanding of children five to ten years old of verbs such as *promise*, on the one hand, and *tell*, *order*, *want*, and *expect*, on the other. A surprising development in this study was the late and individual patterns of acquisition among some children of the syntactic structures necessary to understand concepts such as the subject of *go* in sentences like this: "John promised Bill to go." Contrary to the general view that children have mastered their native tongue by the time they go to school, Chomsky found that structures commonly associated with the above verbs were still being acquired by children at nine years of age; in essence, older children are still acquiring what may be regarded as the "adult linguistic system" much later than educators and linguists have thought.

A second study (Loban 1963, 1976) includes a cross section of children between

the ages of five and eighteen and lays out both the stages and velocity of language development over these years. This work again shows the amount of individual variation among children in the acquisition of longer communication units and elaboration of subject and predicate, adjectival dependent clauses, variety and depth of vocabulary, and clause-embedding techniques. Particularly notable is the variability in expressions of conditionality and tentativeness; statements of supposition, hypothetical reasoning, and conjecture follow much later than the language of labeling and categorizing. Comparing, contrasting, and conjecturing, as well as clarifying and communicating feelings and emotions, come with considerable variability in depth of understanding and facility in production with no consistent relation to social class and occupation or educational level of parents.

By the 1970s, studies of the language of young people take slices of speech from particular settings and center on styles of speaking or the "logic" and "system" of their talk (e.g., Labov 1972a; Smitherman 1986). Summaries of studies of the language development of older children (Romaine 1984) indicate that psycholinguists and linguists have generally focused on one or more grammatical features, usually as acquired by their own children, and leave few answers to the many puzzles surrounding how the language of older children develops in a wide range of settings and circumstances of usage.

Only in the 1980s did researchers begin to locate their work in the day-to-day events of young people's lives across contexts (e.g., Shuman 1986, Goodwin 1990a; see Introduction, this volume). But what of situations in which the young use play and language centrally to forward specific *work* projects? Rarely do adults think of older children as working rather than playing, hanging out, or fooling around. Although adults often try to create playful work opportunities for their older children—through athletics, social clubs, and extracurricular activities—they rarely consider just how young people carry out long-term work in these situations. Parents and coaches frequently declare the numerous benefits for instilling character, discipline, and work habits offered by sports and other extracurricular activities (e.g., Thompson 1993). But just what happens over a baseball season with team members intent on a winning season or with a mural project or dramatic production planned and executed by a group of young people within a community youth organization? This chapter provides answers to this question and considers how language moves tasks along within the work of youth organizations and how that work provides language development opportunities.

Researching Youth: Problems with Ordinary Field Methods

At the outset, it is important to remind ourselves just why studying the language of older children is difficult. Beyond the age of five, children cannot be the captive audience of adults wishing to record their every utterance. Understandably, almost all psycholinguistic studies of language development of infants and toddlers have been based on either the children of psycholinguists or the offspring of mothers who do not work outside the home and can bring their children to laboratories for tests and tasks administered by researchers.

Beyond adult-controlled institutions, such as schools and laboratories, full participant observation of young people's peer groups by adult researchers becomes impossible. Watching, listening, and occasionally asking questions provide the most reasonable ways for adults to collect naturalistic data from peer interactions of older children (Goodwin 1990a), but it is not possible to capture every bit of language such children hear or produce. Thus, standard techniques, such as considering relation of input to output, as studies of younger speakers have tended to do, have to be abandoned in favor of linking language uses to particular social and instrumental (or task-focused) goals of the peer group.

So as children mature, the research enterprise becomes more difficult. Children's growth in vocabulary and adeptness with certain phrases they "pick up" from others may be obvious, but common sense tells us that they also simultaneously hear and produce anew creative utterances of syntactic complexity. Yet these pass without adult notice or respect because the grammar of young people, certainly after the age of nine, may not immediately seem markedly different from the adult version (Chomsky 1969). Asking older children about their understanding of complex grammatical structures brings with it the same difficulties any researcher faces in asking adults such questions: these understandings may be well beyond awareness. Moreover, young people sometimes seem to specialize in either sidestepping adult questioning or providing answers they believe adults want to hear, particularly about such matters as language and behavior.

Furthermore, as children grow older, separating their understanding of concept from their control of constructions for expressing the concept becomes almost impossible. They may, for example, understand that certain objects fall and that some force is "behind" that fall, but they may not have the constructions or vocabulary necessary to express the law of gravity. Thus, although they may well be able to respond correctly to interview queries (or short-answer questions on a science test about gravity), they may not grasp the concept sufficiently to explain, illustrate, or compare that law to any other related to the motion of physical objects. In essence, they sometimes "know" more than they can say. They may have the lexicon but not the syntax to express complex relationships or sequences among events, abstract notions, and causal or coincidental connections. Similarly, they may be adept at "mouthing" what they have heard or read but unable to translate this information into specific cases or "in other words" expressions. Distinguishing then between what children say and what they know continues to present pedagogical and developmental research dilemmas for work with older (as well as younger) children.

As children leave middle childhood (generally understood as ages five through twelve), they enter adolescence, a period almost universally viewed in terms of "storm and stress" because of biological impulses and hormonal turmoil. Marking this period, especially for young people in the United States, are expectations of breakdowns in parent-child discourse and heightened importance of peer-only talk (and secrecy surrounding such talk). In adult-child interactions, young people often adopt language that at best puzzles and at worst offends adults; obscene words and gestures, pretension of ignorance through shrugged shoulders and avoidance of eye contact, and "acting out" can effectively cut adults off from communication with teenagers.

Thus, to study the language of the young, particularly those beyond the age of twelve, scholars must find some way to enter their peer networks through mediated tools or by building trust with a group of teens (who may well be marginal to other youth groups and thus more available to researchers) in order to ask questions and test conjectures. Several studies (none focused on language) have managed to capture valuable information about youth communication through journals or time logs (Csikszentimihalyi & Larson 1984), youth-to-youth interviews (Goodwillie 1993), and adult-guided walks with minimal adult interference (Bryant 1985). Such information is highly valuable, for these studies amply illustrate that older children keenly observe their environments and spend considerable time thinking about the world about them. Writings by youth carried out independently or with minimal adult direction, as well as theater based on scripts that youth themselves create, indicate the extent to which their forms of expression move to the poetic, incisive, and reflective (cf. Shuman 1986). Youth writing about topics they themselves choose, as distinct from topics adults (generally teachers) assign them, remains neglected. The classic work by Anne Frank, *The Diary of a Young Girl* (1958), cannot be an altogether unique representation of the powers of adolescents to see through the world about them and to express their views in highly sophisticated ways without immediate adult direction.

The Work of Youth Organizations

Youth organizations that place young people at the center of activities and give them wide-ranging adult-like responsibilities offer ideal settings for studying just how young people perform self-selected work. Because many members may not know one another before they enter the organization, language becomes central to moving both tasks and social order along. For this study, data were collected in two primary ways. Interactions between the young members and the adults leading the organization were audio-recorded by a field-worker trained in anthropology and linguistics who was young enough to participate in social activities of the youth organization yet clearly an unlikely participant in the group's work. Additional linguistic data were collected by youth organization members who acted as "junior ethnographers" and audiotaped language during activities of members that took place when no adults were present (walks to and from the organization, team travel, and unsupervised adult-assigned tasks).[2] Junior ethnographers transcribed their own tapes, compared them to transcriptions made by a professional transcriber, and provided contextual information to supplement transcriptions as well as metalinguistic interpretations. These ethnographers also reviewed their own theories and beliefs about how and when they talked as they did, when they turned to written communication, and how they perceived settings and audience as critical to their choices. Adults and young people within the youth organizations periodically attended debriefings in which they responded to data samples and analyses with their perceptions of how language worked in the particular situations under discussion.

The youth organizations of this research value young people's potential contributions to their families, communities, and society. Moreover, because most groups

operate with minimal budgets, they seek to maximize every possible resource within the organization. Therefore, young people play a wide variety of roles, serving as everything from receptionist to travel planner to junior coach. Remaining within the organization for as long as one year ensures increasing responsibilities for any youth, and almost all such roles include high communication demands for explaining, comparing, persuading, and arguing before a variety of audiences, from local peers and organization members to publicists, funders, visiting consultants, and educators. Young people serve on the boards of their organizations, prepare publicity brochures for their group and community, and write news releases for local newspapers, as well as invitations to special events, such as fundraisers and end-of-year celebrations. An organization may call itself a *family* or *a place to be*, its members' lives there revolving around *working*, *being there*, *practicing*, and *getting better*.

Cycles of life within these organizations often culminate in a performance of some type: play-off games; annual shows performed before a variety of audiences; production of a brochure, newspaper, or video; or summer work within the organization's daycare program. The organizations generally follow a four-step pace: planning and preparation, practice, performance, and evaluation, with overlap and reiteration of some phases. For example, a theatrical team coalesces after auditions at the beginning of the summer, prepares one or more plays around topics of interest to teens and their parents, and takes the show "on the road" to local schools, juvenile detention centers, and parent groups during the full academic year. In such cases, the shows' original script and initial performances evolve throughout the year through further practice and in response to evaluations from both team members and audiences. The young people then have a "downtime" of inactivity before they resume another cycle of performance.

Coaching the Show and the Season

Coaches, both athletic and dramatic, provide much of the adult leadership of youth organizations. They usually take major responsibility for planning the season and scheduling practices and facilitate early deliberations among group members about development of rules and standards of performance. Early in the season or in rehearsals, they usually dominate oral language interactions, and they also determine the written materials the group will use. But as practices begin and team members move into the season, adult leaders step back as directors of talk and action and let young people assume more and more responsibilities.

What characterizes young people who come to youth organizations that require complex strategy building, intense attention to group improvement, and strong communication skills? Those who enter the youth organizations of this study come from typical American families: two working parents or a single parent working at least one job outside the household. Like a substantial proportion of students, many older children in this study perform well only sporadically in school, hold heavy responsibilities within their households, and often carry substantial child care obligations for younger siblings. Their neighborhoods, whether inner-city, rural, or located in housing projects of midsized towns, rarely include well-kept parks, shopping

centers, or other gathering places for young people, and few offer a range of employment opportunities, either part- or full-time, for youth older than fourteen.

Most of the youth in the organizations described here participate of their own volition, though some enter through the encouragement of a parent or older friend, guidance counselor, or parole officer. Once inside the organization, the young people enter the seasonal or annual cycle described above. Each phase of the cycle is marked by particular features of language use by the coach or director. Usually both newcomers and seasoned members participate together, and the words of the coach receive supplemental interpretation by experienced members.

During the course of the cycle, new members take up certain ways of talking and strategizing that they have heard from the coach and older members. Therefore, it is possible to track over the season the uses of certain grammatical structures as well as the frequency and content of turns at talking by individual youth and by the youth group as a whole. This language development is particularly marked because, as youngsters begin to use certain forms more frequently, adult leaders move to other forms of language that work primarily as background support for the activities of the group. Talk by youth and adults, then, is somewhat "scripted" by the activity cycle, and respective roles and types of contributions by individual youth and the group as a whole shift over time. Moreover, youth pick up certain language features used by adults during phases of this cycle only in accordance with roles and stances they wish to assume. For example, youth know it is inappropriate for them to act as a "holier than thou" director and to speak to their peers about what the group could accomplish if only they would work harder or how the group as a whole could improve its performance if only a particular individual would stop joking. Youth never take on adult voices they hear from coaches who deliver "philosophical setups" or "pep talks" about how good the season, cast, or show will be this time around, the high hopes they all share, and the important responsibilities that rest on the shoulders of the youth.

Once the team moves into practice, coaches give "eventcasts," forward-looking narratives of what will happen in this phase of practice. During the actual practice, coaching swings between ongoing commentary ("Keep it up," "That's right," "Good job," "Not over there, more to the right," "Don't stop, keep going") and demonstrations of particular segmented skills (such as hitting fly balls, entering stage left). Directions generally take the form of hypotheticals or sociodramatic setups, in which youngsters are asked to hypothesize about what could happen under certain conditions ("If we take that entry after her line, how would that be?") or to imagine a particular situation and set of roles ("Okay, top of the seventh inning, 3–2, man on first, and Rodney, bunts—what's gonna happen?"). As the season moves forward, coaches talk less and less frequently, except in punctuated directives ("Speed it up," "Little higher," "Choke that bat"), and young people themselves are asked to take over direction of pieces of the show or certain groups of youngsters to practice particular skills. During evaluation, coaches again step back and generally ask questions that will prompt the young people to debate among themselves: "How did that work," "How do you think it went," and so on.

As the activity cycle moves forward, young people increase their turns at talk as the adult talk diminishes. Adults signal in multiple ways that the action belongs to the young. For example, adults rarely use the pronoun *we* in its inclusive sense; in-

stead, *we* almost always refers exclusively to the youth. Adults talk less frequently, except to ask questions that promote talk *among the youth and not back to the adult* (e.g., "Have you kids forgotten that stage is only twenty feet deep?"). The young focus repeatedly on creating and hypothesizing action through their talk. As they move deeper into their practice cycles, they throw out more hypothetical queries and sociodramatic bids. In a single practice session of several hours, they may ask hundreds of open-ended questions ("Is this gonna work?" "What do you think about switching this around?"). Key linguistic features marking intense phases of practice include the following:

Hypothetical constructions (*if-then*)
"If Roger is comin', runnin' in from third, then what's gonna happen, man, is that you sure don't wanna be in his way."

Modals (*can, should, could,* etc.)
"Can you speed up that scene? Or what can you guys on left stage be doing while you wait for her to enter right?"

Mental state verbs (*think, believe, wish, feel,* etc.)
"She thinks it's gonna go okay, but I believe she's not doin' what she says, I just, like, feel funny about it, you know."

Abbreviated directives
"Over here," "Higher, higher," "Keep it up," "Hey, not so fast," "Run that back to Elena's line."

Along with *if-then* constructions come sociodramatic bids ("Okay, let's just say that scene could be reversed, turned around in action, Tina, what would you do—think, girl, think!"). Adults and youth consider alternative approaches, outcomes, and relationships among particular courses of action and final results. Hypotheticals represent the most obvious ways by which adults and youth relate one set of conditions to one or more outcomes. Modals operate as auxiliary verbs, suggesting obligation, prediction, or permission. Mental state verbs introduce cognitive and affective reflections about the content of expressions that follow.

As adults' use of hypotheticals, modals, and mental state verbs decreases, youth increase their expressions of these forms. But the patterns of change occur in relation to stages of the season. During the days preceding play-offs or end-of-season performances, hypotheticals, modals, and mental state verbs become inefficient because there is now no time for rethinking and reshaping or for posing possibilities. Adults' abbreviated directives increase as the time of actual performance or play-offs approaches, whereas earlier in the season, during practice, there is sufficient time to consider possible outcomes or alternative routes to action.

All of these ways of using language engender actions through focusing the attention of group members on the co-construction of a common scene, task, or event and a shared meaning from the current moment's activities, always with emphasis on how the here-and-now will affect the desired performance or product. The young people's talk also gives a way to step back and reflect openly about whether the situation at hand meets the shared goals of the group. The question of "what is

it that we want" sits at the center of movement toward action as well as evaluations after the performance. This language portrays intense investment in the project or performance, as well as an enhanced sense of "we-ness" in the group, conjoined in their commitment to excellent outcomes and assessments by their outside judges—referees, coaches of other teams, and viewing audiences.

The Matter of Work

No one would suggest that older children between the ages of twelve and eighteen actually *learn* complex syntactic constructions such as the conditional or genres such as sociodramatic bids within these youth organizations. They have both receptive and productive knowledge of modals, mental state verbs, directives, and *if-then* constructions before they enter these groups. At school and at home, they have certainly heard conditionals that operate as directives ("If you open your books to page eleven, we'll look at that problem"), threats ("If you raise your voice to me once more, I'll tell your father"), and promises ("If you clean your room, we'll stop by the shopping center later and look for those boots"). In these settings, as well as among their peers, young people have used conditionals to strategize ("If we get six of those, we'll save three bucks"), plan future events ("If we pick him up by seven, that means we'll get to Evan's house before eight"), and state facts about the world ("If that's the homeroom bell, we're late").

What occurs within activities of the youth organizations, however, is extensive *role* and *stance self-assignment* whereby responsibility for planning, creating, and knowing rests within young people. To accomplish work, they enter roles in which they repeatedly hypothesize to check whether what they and others are doing is, in fact, "working." Their definition of themselves shifts from adolescent, teen, or son or daughter to junior coach, receptionist, board member, publicist. The concordance of the entire language base from which this chapter is drawn indicates that—aside from forms of *to be*, mental state verbs, and modals—various forms of *to do* and *to work* appear as the most frequent verbs within the practice phase of the activity cycle (for further detail, see note 1). In other words, young people talk about events, themselves, situations, and changes as *doing* or *working*—moving toward a goal or end. The future is *in* the present; one can never forget, in one's thinking or acting, consequences for the future. Deadlines are real: the show must go on, the play-offs will come; the group must be ready. Pressures from these inevitabilities that carry high risk keep young people's eyes on both the immediate process and the future product.

Vital in this push toward the future is the need to consider alternatives, to think out possible outcomes ahead of time through hypothetical reasoning. Young people acquire extensive practice manipulating several variables on either side of the *if-then* equation, most often on the *if* side, with the *then* side either acted out or interrupted by suggestion of another variable from someone else in the group. For example, one actor in a drama group will say perhaps, "If we, you know, like, get some place where there is no stage, and like, if we have to work right there flat on the floor in a gym or classroom, then we gotta be able to get those main speakers up higher, so why don't

we use those boxes—those gray boxes we built for that last show?" Several *if* conditions occur in the cases the speaker gives, and other actors may well join in to propose similar circumstances in which the two main characters might not be sufficiently visible to the audience. These possible circumstances call for a solution worked out ahead of time, and the handling of the several problematic variables or conditions have to be worked through by all members of the group.

Arts logs kept by the youth at random intervals when they are not working onsite at their youth organizations indicate that they also hypothesize mentally during other times of the day about what they will do later. Once in the actual execution of dramatic or visual arts, they continue this internal hypothesizing and self-correction. For example, for those who work in the visual arts, questions commonly occur in their journals as they write about what goes on in their heads as they work (e.g., "If I lay down this texture here, then will it detract from the intensity of color happening above it?"). Typically, youth organizations committed to the arts require youngsters to keep journals to record all the ways they think through or hypothesize outcomes within their current project—a mural, sculpture, or role within a drama. Especially evident in these logs is the revoicing of words or phrases they have heard from adults who monitor their work.

This internal monitoring that operates when young people work alone is openly voiced when the group is in collaboration. Thus, individuals problematize potentialities if certain variables come into play and question outcomes envisioned by other group members. In the example here, a youth group works together to complete a brochure promoting their neighborhood. Materials for the brochure have come from interviews carried out by the young people, who now sit before a computer trying to move from raw texts to the first draft of the actual brochure. Four young people and an adult leader are gathered around the computer, where one young member has been chosen to type the dictated text. (In transcription, / marks overlapped talk, where for a few seconds both parties continue talking.)

(1) Brochure completion

Ldr:	ok. so is there some way we can say that?
	[group talks all at once]
Sara:	how do you want to say that?
Ldr:	let me see (2.2) since we are/
Sara:	/now that doesn't make sense
Ldr:	I don't think so either
Sara:	since we are teens and we consider ourselves (1.2) and our friends experts in this area, comma, why don't we say, we asked them /(2.2) what?
Ldr:	/who is them?
Delia:	our /friends
Sara:	/we've already told, yeah/
Ldr:	/but we said ourselves and friends

Here the problem is how to begin the brochure—by telling what it is about or by introducing the process for getting the information in the brochure. But in this opening effort, the youth and their leader collaborate to look ahead to what the reading audience needs to know about both the writers and the process of gathering information for the product.

In some cases, what becomes problematic is the correctness of techniques demonstrated by certain members. Following the lead of adults, those demonstrating often accompany their physical demonstration with a script resembling that of a sports announcer (Ferguson 1983). In the next example, young people in a leadership training program of an urban YMCA prepare to help Special Olympics youngsters who have a variety of handicaps prepare for a field day. The young people will be teaching the participants how to take part in events such as the 100-yard dash and the high jump. They practice their coaching of the newcomer participants within the weeks before they actually take up their coaching jobs; some youngsters "play" coach, others, novice learners.

(2) Track and Field YMCA—Leadership training

Larry: like, my name is Larry, I'm gonna be teaching hurdles
David: hi, Larry
Larry: hi [points to hurdles] these are hurdles
Sonja: yeah?
Larry: like this is just for practice. Just in case, if you don't want to trip over it, you cannot over these because they're not ( ) for jumping, they're too deep, like a set. Who knows, what's their weakest leg, or their strongest? [turning to his peers who are looking on and pretending to be other new young recruits]
David: I do /I do
Jack: /oh, oh, oh [Larry laughs]
Larry: don't get hyper
Jack: [standing up] what are (1.2) you supposed to stretch with ( )?

Here the youth enter into an imaginary world where one of their members is *in* the situation of leading youngsters in training for the Special Olympics. The group must imagine both sides as learners: the young coach is learning how to communicate by words and demonstration; the young participants are learning how to take part in Special Olympics events. While encouraging individuals to enter the whole performance and spirit of the competition, the coach must segment pieces of knowledge that will need attention (such as determining which is one's weakest leg or how to position for the start of a race). In assuming these tasks of the coach, which they have learned by apprenticing to their own coach, these young people take up certain syntactic structures and genres, practice them repeatedly, and hone them while adapting them to their own personalities. Practicing these structures and thought processes *in-role* enables youngsters to transfer these same communicative and critical thinking strategies to other situations, as well as to their own internal monitoring of their planful behavior.

The Language of Alterity

As older children engage in roles of work, they mime and mimic their elders, but they also create a *difference* for themselves. Having a role within work allows this flexibility, for, unlike the case of job assignment ("Do this task in this way"), a work role allows for personality and individual style. The young thus create "stability from this instability . . . engaged in this habitually bracing activity in which the

issue is not so much staying the same, but maintaining sameness through alterity" (Taussig 1993:129). The issue for the young is that they are *not* their elders in spite of being able to take on roles like those of adults (coach, receptionist, board member). They must therefore bring to these roles their own perceptions and senses and shape the language of their work according to these differences by exaggerating and infusing humor. They are often helped by adults who sanction the "kids will be kids" reality by stepping into a kid-like role.

The following example is drawn from the Track YMCA Leadership group (referred to in example 2) preparing for their coaching jobs for the Special Olympics.

(3) Track and Field YMCA

Jaime: watch, watch. First you count your steps, ok? [he does the jump in slow motion and one of the pretending youngsters claps; turns to adult who is preparing to jump, since he is pretending also to be a young Special Olympic trainee] wait, wait, don't don't do it yet, don't do it yet, come here.

Ldr: [in role as youngster] do I have to go as slow as you did? [laughter from other onlookers]

Jaime: no, see, I just showed it/

Stuart: /do it in full speed

Jaime: no [laughs] allri/

Ldr: [to Jaime, and now in "ordinary" role as coach] /hey, kids are gonna be doing that/

Jaime: /I'll do it

Jack: go on, full speed

Ldr: [to Jaime, continuing in "ordinary" role as coach] you don't have to—you don't [Jack gets up to explain straddle; Jaime doesn't jump] oh, go ahead

Jaime: [to group and looking at Jack] *he's* gonna explain the straddle now [the coach steps back in an exaggerated way while Jack, to whom Jaime has pointed, takes over]

Jack: [standing up] straddle. First you gotta ( ) a straight approach, and, like, you gotta see which leg is stronger, either your right—and if it's the right, you gotta come up with your right, if it's your left, you come up with your left. When you start runnin', you, your strong leg ( ) down and your weakest leg goes up, while your shoulder, um= [stops to think]

Stuart: =goes over

Jaime: goes over, ya

Ldr: that's it?

Jack: [to Jaime] want me to keep going?

Jaime: yeah

Following this sequence in which the boys *act* as coach and *act out* the actions they script verbally, they continue alternating roles, asking each other questions and trying different ways of coordinating the timing of the demonstrated action with the verbal running commentary. But humor and exaggeration occasionally break through their seriousness, even while the apprenticing of the boys to the adult coach is incorporated into the setting. At the same time, the adult coach is apprenticed as a young participant preparing for Special Olympics, yet he cannot resist stepping back into his adult role when he philosophically says to the young men, "hey, kids are gonna be doing that." Jaime soon steps in to announce Jack as the coach and explainer, and the adult takes the rebuff with humorous exaggerated movements

as he steps back from the action. Within this back-and-forth, both adult and youth gain the perspectives of insider and outsider, learner and instructor, as they practice for what will be a highly authentic test—the actual coaching of the newcomers.

The young people see themselves within adult roles, yet they carry out these roles in ways that both imitate and deviate from those of their adult models. Beyond omitting the philosophical setup that coaches use, the young take the cue from their coaches of letting the action script the language, but they work out for themselves the pacing and sequencing of action and talk. In example 3 Jaime and Jack, along with the leader, debate when the actual demonstration should come in relation to the talk and what the pace should be. The adult coach steps in to act like a young learner and to ask about the pace: is the slowness of the pace part of what the learner should also adopt? Here is an example of both young coach and young participant recognizing that miming *exactly* will not work and that being similar yet different creates the desired result. Furthermore, the youngsters do not go so far as to mimic the coach or carry their mockery to a humorous extreme. The roles are serious, the tasks challenging, and they must get down to practice for the "real" event.

The young coaches work through what their own coach has taken for granted—that they would absorb the pace and sequence of what it takes to do the high jump or start a race—and re-create this knowledge as they play out the role of coach for the Special Olympics participants. Being an actor in a speaking role within this group of young trainers means combining the skills and techniques of coaching with their own adeptness at the field and track events.

Connecting through Discourse

Youth illustrate their connectedness to one another—and not to adults in the organizations—in numerous linguistic habits. Some of these center around the work they must do together, whereas others allow stepping off task to negotiate and maintain interpersonal relationships. Some patterns of language use accomplish both task work and interpersonal gluing at the same time. Similarly, adults who want to bond with youth will take up certain aspects of the language of youth: particular expressions, pronunciations, and gestures. These adult moves to talk like the young must be marked sufficiently so that everyone knows they indicate a deliberate shift of "footing," a move that realigns participants across a strip of behavior (Goffman 1981).

Repetitions, Cooperative Simultaneous Talk, and Latching

All speakers repeat each other's words often; young people, in casual speech, seem to repeat more frequently than adults. For instance, in example 3 Stuart and Jaime repeat "goes over." Earlier in the transcript, Jaime picks up Stuart's suggestion that he actually move at "full speed," and Jack later repeats the phrase. During practice and evaluation sessions, transcripts show, up to one third of phrases comprising two or more words are repeats from previous speakers, incorporated creatively in utter-

ances with different grammatical structures, as direct quotation, or simply as echoes or background to urging on and agreeing with another speaker.

Speakers also often talk over one another, simultaneously saying the same thing, voicing the same idea in different words, or connecting new information to the basic idea in the air. These utterances cannot count as interruptions because the first speaker does not stop talking when others join in. Furthermore, at the end of the utterance or during simultaneous action, evidence mounts that all agree about what is to be said and done.

When this simultaneous talk reaches a peak of multiple overlapping voices "going in the same direction," the phenomenon resembles *swarming* (Tannock, chapter 13, this volume). Feverish action and what may sound like frantic talk come together as young people connect in rapidly overlapping words that simultaneously focus idea and action. "Yeah, I was thinkin' that too," "Hey, not like that, but like he says," "Over there, pick it up, yeah, like that." During such moments, the increased pace, volume, and overlap make it extremely difficult to sort out speakers on audio-recordings, and video-tapes reveal a high pitch of physical involvement: pointing, taking instruments out of the hands of others, gathering round, and waving arms. Although youth show high engagement and focus on task during such occasions, adults, particularly in institutions of formal learning, tend either to step out of the swarm momentarily or to move in to quiet such "noise." They may insist the young step back out of the swarm, refocus, and attribute individual credit for ideas. Young people, in groups without adults, rarely break up such swarmings. Young onlookers, not involved in a particular simultaneity, merely wait for the noise and feverish action to subside. They may then suggest another idea or accept what has transpired and take part later in another flurry.

Another verbal display of connection among young speakers is their habit of *latching*, connecting—with no perceptible interturn pause and with appropriate grammatical continuation—onto a complete or partial phrase uttered by another speaker. Below, the boys continue to prepare for their jobs as Special Olympics trainers by talking about how to instruct the youngsters to line up.

(4) Track and Field YMCA

David:	ya, your hands, your fingers, whatever, have 'em, line 'em up=
Stuart:	=to what?
	[later after discussion of another problem in instruction]
David:	well, there's a line over there, where they line 'em up on the line=
Stuart:	=a starting line

As one coach put it, young people in youth organizations are often "in each other's heads—and mouths" so much that they "all talk alike, you know, finish each other's thoughts, sentences, and sometimes all say—or yell—the same thing." These connections with language illustrate something more than shared knowledge: shared ways of "laying it out" or thinking about the current situation and its consequences. Leaders of youth organizations strive to "get across" the fine line of encouraging high-level individual performance—not for the competitive purpose of pitting one individual against another, but for improved group performance. They see shared connected talk as illustrative of group cohesion and agreement around the need for

individuals, while displaying their diverse talents at action, to agree verbally on the what and how of the group endeavor. Thus, within an athletic team or theatrical troupe, numerous techniques and skills, mastered at different levels of competence by various individuals, have to be available to mount a successful play-off or show. But the success of the show depends also on achieving a somewhat unified vision of process, outcome, and standards of performance. The same principle goes into creating a successful group-written product or group-mounted celebration, such as an end-of-season banquet and awards dinner.

Revoicing

Revoicing, sometimes referred to as ventriloquizing (Bahktin 1981), appears in the talk of older children when they take on the role of someone else and speak as that person. Three models appear most frequently for these revoicings: peers, adult authorities, and figures from the entertainment world. Young people revoice when they take on a character's identity within an account or to invite inclusion/exclusion attitudes within a stretch of discourse. For example, if peers recount an incident they observed or in which they took part, they often use direct discourse following expressions such as "like he's all" or "like she goes." Whereas in the 1970s, forms of *to go* came to substitute for forms of *to say*, by the 1990s, in most parts of the United States, older children, especially those in the late teens, use speaker name or pronoun plus contraction of *is* or *was* and *all* to introduce a reenactment and revoicing of someone else (e.g., "You know, she's all 'I'm gonna get me a summer job.' Yeah, well, we all know that's not gonna happen, right?"). Most commonly reserved for peers or adult authority and entertainment figures, these injections of direct discourse within an account resemble verbal caricatures of the original speakers.[3]

Mocking behaviors—including not only shifts in grammatical forms and levels of attention to enunciation but also gestures, body posture, and facial expressions—accompany these revoicings. In example 5, young people within a youth theater have been debating among themselves the skit they wish to practice. Members of the group begin to argue, and Amy, who has given Dennis, an African American male, a ride to practice, refers to him as "a monkey." He retorts that she has used a racial term, and she responds that she has not called him a *black* monkey, "just a monkey." He is clearly irritated and wants to "dog" on her or put her down verbally. A few minutes later, he tells a story about the drive to practice, in which Amy's poor driving skills become the butt of Dennis's story, taken by listeners as a grand joke and as an appropriate put-down of Amy in retaliation for her earlier insult to him.

(5) Youth Drama Group[4]

Ldr: she gave you a ride=

Amy: =yes, I think I did/

Dennis: /it was a uh, it was uh, it was uh ride of my life. First, we almost/

Amy: /DENNIS, you know/

Dennis: /first, first, we almost had a wreck coming off my street. "Get ready to die!"/ [said in an altered voice as a stage directive]

Amy: /I'm a good driver, I knew she was gonna wait=

Dennis: =this car was comin' [(3.0); Dennis looks around at his audience expectantly] down the street and was turnin' on my street. She had to pull out—and stop three or four times before you could, and laughin' the whole time. And then, the window (4.0) on the passenger side (2.0) goes down by itself you know. Now, it did this three or four times. And then, you know, you cannot take off in her car when the air conditioning is on. Once you, you come to a stop sign, have to turn the air conditioning off, take off, and then turn it back on. So I'm sittin/

Amy: /it had [laughing]

Ldr: it's possessed

Amy: 'cause I'll have it all the way down to the floor like [imitates a struggling car against background of group laughter]

Dennis: so I'm sittin' at this stop light, burnin' up, sweatin'. I see the devil sittin' next to me, it was so hot [stands up and uses wide-sweeping hand gestures]. She's sittin' up there [imitates Amy's laugh] he, he, heeeee. An then, we're comin' on our way to Youth Theatre, by Eddy's Chicken, she almost runs the light right into this other car. Her, her friend tells her "STOP." She wouldn't have stopped=

Amy: =I was about to stop=

Dennis: =then=

Amy: =she always just tells me/

Dennis: /we got to Hemphill [street]. I don't know where she was at, she was gonna get in the turn lane and try to go like that [acts like he is in a car and makes a super wide turn using all the lanes]

Amy: [laughter]

Dennis: She's lyin' and says she wasn't but she had her signal on= [said as an aside to the group in a "we-know-about-her" tone]

Amy: =I was not, I was changin' lanes to the middle lane, thank you/

Dennis: /when you drive, Amy, you do not take a big turn like this [again imitating her turn] to get to the next lane, Okay? it was the ride of my life. we got to the, we got to the stop sign up here at Lipscombe, little kid walk out, and she about run over him/

Amy: /I was not, MAN, you lyin'=

Dennis: =I'M lying? Did you or did you not [2.0] almost hit those little kids? [said slowly and with precise articulation]

Amy: I did not [with careful enunciation of the final *t*]

Dennis: it was a ride of a lifetime [shaking his head in disbelief] believe me

Amy: we'll see if I ever give you a ride again

The storyteller revoices four times within his account of events, once when he "becomes" a stage director or narrator, telling the audience to "get ready." He does so again when he steps into the role of driving instructor, telling a student how to turn a corner; he steps aside to be "with" the group against Amy when he builds his case that she is lying; finally, he assumes adult authority as a judicial official when he asks "did you or did you not . . . ?" Elsewhere he mocks her gestures and driving behaviors. This retelling and these revoicings of an incident in which they both participated allow him to attach his own enacted and retold interpretation to known information. He is thus *reenacting the known*, a behavior that takes place often among young interlocutors to create humor.

Such mocking—ridiculous and exaggerated imitation of the behaviors of an-

other—differs from a tease or brief mimic in that it marks a threatening invasion of another. Mocking, unlike teasing, can take place in either the presence or absence of the mocked individual. Within youth organizations, though, mocking takes place most often in the presence of the individual who is the subject of the mock. The invasive nature of mocks comes from the fact that their success depends on imitating minute segments of behavior recognizable immediately as belonging to the subject but not generally sufficiently distinctive to have received comment by others.[5]

Such reenactments, as well as revoicings, work as playful and therapeutic humor in that they offer ways of "getting back" at someone else for an aggrievance through words rather than direct physical attack. Youth organizations do not tolerate physical violence, but their leaders have a wide range of acceptance of verbal humor and even encourage and participate in it at times (as the leader in example 5 does when she says of Amy's car, "it's possessed"). Adults explain that they perceive teases, mimics, and "good stories" as reinforcement of group collegiality. In addition, leaders—especially of dramatic groups—strongly encourage close observation of other players and members for the success of the performance; a mimic or mock displays good observational skills, as well as a certain kind of intimacy.

Moreover, stories such as Dennis's illustrate another key feature of youth organizations: members replay for others to indicate information and skills known to all members of the group. During rehearsals, some player will inevitably go through the paces of another actor in accompaniment to queries such as "You know when, in the second act, you go over here . . . ?" Both actors, as well as other members of the company, are familiar with the action enacted, but the speaker establishes the base of old information shared by all before moving on to new information or a different interpretation. Adult coaches or directors tend not to reenact or revoice but instead to offer description that calls to mind the scene about to be discussed: "In that second act, before Wendy exits stage left. . . ."

Reenactments and revoicings can redraw lines of power as well as reassign roles. Example 3 illustrates a combined *reenacting* of the coach's ways of talking and demonstrating and *forecasting* of what the youngsters will themselves do as junior coaches. Jaime moves this power play to another level by stepping in and reminding the coach that in this instance, he is no longer the coach, and Jack is now taking over. Thereby, the young people become adult-like and the coach player-like. In example 5 Dennis, who has none of the power of Amy's family, resources, and car, temporarily becomes dominant and Amy-like, while she has to step back and experience his put-down. In both cases, multiple messages are conveyed, and the power base is temporarily shifted by a swing of roles.

In teasing, speakers' shifts of role, stance, and voice enable them to say what they cannot say directly. Teasing depends on intimacy and often embodies ritualistic behavior. It allows expression of sentiments taken for granted by experienced group members and may therefore be used to initiate novices. Teases are tests of the extent to which members can manage the impression of wide-ranging competence, as they respond *in the role they are assigned in the tease*. Accepting the challenge of a tease, such as that Amy experiences in example 5, indicates one is both *a part* of the group and also able to play *a part*. These parts make up the whole, sustaining the integrity of the group.

Laughter, joking around, creating humor, and "mellowing out" sustain the interactional life of work within youth organizations. Moving from inception to completion in a group task necessarily involves disputes, misunderstandings, and rises and falls in the smoothness of paired or small-group relations within the larger group. Flirtation, serious romantic relationships, distress within small groups, and carryovers of misunderstanding and mistrust engendered in another setting can sometimes derail group action. Because youth organizations operate by rules that emphasize acceptance and equanimity within the group as a whole, rips and tears and small-group or clique competitions have to be mended, or the group as a whole is jeopardized. If, as in example 5, members sense that dissent is brewing between two or more individuals, they will stand by and wait for the tease, story, or joke that will clear the air and restore balance. On these occasions, planning, preparing, or practicing for the "real" play go on hold while playful verbal interactions doing the work of social relationships hold the floor.

No Place to Talk

The open floor for talk and the wide range of types of talk allowed in youth organizations stand in contrast to those in many other spaces where young people spend time. Their frequent complaint about schools, families, and jobs is that there is "no place to talk" or "no way I could say anything." Young people carry the perception that few listen to them and many deprecate and misunderstand their communication. Almost no one acknowledges their need to be "in communication" or to "be connected." Beepers or pagers, for example, offer young people both the image and the reality of being always in, or ready for, talk. Even in rural areas, where actual beepers are not available, some young people carry around beeper look-alikes to give them what they see as an urban image of being "in touch."

When adults attend to the communication of the young, they rarely praise their ways of talking. Even when young people's language forms and uses measure up to those that adults perceive to be "standard" or "academic" norms, the young may experience rejection for "not being themselves" and for showing that they have been well-coached in their ideas and voices by adults. The absence of research on the actual language uses of the young when they are in the midst of accomplishing a task or making plans offers only one indication of the low value of their informal verbal interactions, even for researchers. From the public media to their own families, young people hear adults deprecate the music they listen to and their propensity to "hang out" in groups filled with loud talk, giggles, and easily parodied expressions such as "you know," "like," and "really."

In situations both malicious and benevolent, young people hear themselves spoken for. Just as medical or mental health personnel "speak for" their patients or clients, young people find their actions and very being "given away" into the possession of adults who usurp their voice. School authorities, juvenile justice officials, and family members take over the voice of the young and "give" the story, whether in situations of praise or, on other occasions, in negative terms within confrontational settings. The ownership of one's own intentions, actions, and perceptions is

grabbed by those who believe that young people either cannot or will not speak adequately or accurately for themselves.[6]

On occasion, the young avoid the silencing routines or put-downs of others by shifting into language unavailable to adults. Teenagers within the United States have long been noted for their ability to give words special meanings and to reverse the meanings of words or create new ones, so that their fast-paced talk among themselves effectively cuts out their elders. Hand signs, particular ways of wearing clothes, as well as choices of clothes, hair styles, body marking, and ornamentations bear secret, rapidly changing meanings that shift before adults can catch on to their uses. For example, in the 1990s adults fail to understand how young people obsessed with body image can use "phat" (pronounced as "fat" and written as *phat* in tagging and graffiti) as a marker of positive assessment. Ignorance of the meanings of such language, adults often make negative inferences.[7]

Chores, Jobs, and Work

Essayist Donald Hall (1993) has pointed out the vast differences among chores, jobs, and work. *Chores* are redundant bits and pieces critical to completion of any *job*, the larger assignment directly given and often supervised by powers beyond the self—whether institution, specific relationship, or accident. When one goes to work at a fast-food chain or in an office, the *job* is assigned and limited. When an automobile owner takes the family car to the repair shop, the *job* to repair comes through the customer-mechanic relationship. When a child spills a glass of milk on the kitchen floor or a tornado wipes out a trailer park, individuals have the *job* of cleaning and clearing.

In contrast, young people within youth organizations often speak of what they do there as "real jobs"—as "actress," "junior coach," "receptionist," or "board member." These jobs give them *roles* that involve them in *work*. Here, *work* is distinguished from *chores* and *jobs*, for with work comes some kind of planning and decision-making assignment, as well as pleasure, self-direction, creativity, and enthusiasm. Hall tells us that often when we have finished chores and our job, we can "*then*—as a reward—. . . get to work" (1993:4). For the fortunate, this *work* is *life*. Early memories of chores, jobs, and work repeatedly mark autobiographies as individuals remember times they spent in their youth immersed in either a work project with an older person or self-assigned work.[8] Many of today's youth have no counterpart to these occasions, coming from families in which both parents hold jobs outside the household or a single adult who works full-time outside the household maintains a family. Shared tasks and times for adult and older child to work jointly either do not exist or they take place in highly structured settings, such as fee-for-service programs (karate, ballet) and specialized camps devoted to sports or music. In these settings, adult instructors have the goal of improving youngsters' specific skills so that they may return a better player or artist.

Work within a role encompasses planning, preparing, practicing, performing, and assessing. The language used to plan how to play the role, as well as the language spoken within the role, offers vital practice for planning, thinking ahead, see-

ing the future, and understanding the consequences of current actions and thoughts for the next step and often for a distant end. In all societies, such events include observation, demonstration, trial and error, reflection, and display. Some groups add oral language forms that script the action by laying out ahead of time procedures and alternatives and considering products and performances. Legitimate peripheral participation whereby an individual watches, takes part, and chooses to move into particular phases and roles of the activity pushes learning along. It is the "practice as a whole, with its multiplicity of relations—both within the community and with the world at large" (Lave & Wenger 1991:14) that enables verbal expression of consequences, conditions, and process. Both continuity, carrying on what the adult does and says, and displacement, creatively reshaping the work and its meaning, come about through the work of the adult and young learner. In many societies, the young must learn not only how to *do* the work, but also how to *say* work, or talk through work in the language necessary to display verbally to others what it is about and how it proceeds. Formal education, generally intent on removing learning from work and placing it within chores and jobs through discrete bit-by-bit information and skill buildup as well as assignment of tasks, values highly the *saying* that surrounds chores and jobs. Students are asked individually to solve word problems made up around the imaginary construction of a playhouse; they rarely have the opportunity to plan and build a playhouse with cross-age peers who could serve as models and "voices of the mind" as they scaffold tasks for their younger counterparts (Vygotsky 1978, Wertsch 1991). Educators expect that the practice of doing and saying within chores and jobs will enable performance in work. But because work embodies role assumption and the revoicing of the action through one's role perspective, the skills and habits of mind that come from chores and jobs often do not carry over into work.

Conclusion

A consistent message throughout this chapter is that older children who engage regularly in ongoing work with adults learn how to make things happen and how to sustain social order while developing the language critical for thinking ahead to shape future outcomes. This learning is just the kind of work that youth, more often than not, are accused of *not* being able to achieve: complex group tasks involving planning, preparation, practice, performance, and evaluation. Older children's behaviors and language while engaged in productive tasks—other than those under direct adult supervision—have received almost no attention. This neglect surely derives in part from the general view that older children are not capable of work without adult direction and prefer to spend their time playing, troublemaking, and being with their friends. More serious than this negative public image of youth, however, is young people's actual lack of experience in working under the facilitation of adults toward a group project. Necessary to successful completion of such work are all the communication, planning, and responsibility-building skills that American employers maintain will be needed in the future workforce.

The language of older children in youth organizations that value them as re-

sources develops in coordination with the practice of taking on a range of roles in the seasonal cycle of the group's work. While playing many of the "adult" roles necessary to maintain the organization—fundraiser, receptionist, promoter—young people also maintain social relations with their peers and negotiate verbally the disagreements and tensions that arise from the shifting pace and demands of the group's work.

As families and communities change, older children spend more and more time with their peers. Without the structure of work on a sustained group project, young people can create a limited range of types of "work" for themselves. From highly positive efforts (such as launching cleanup campaigns for city parks) to harmless mischief to high-risk behaviors, older children, left to their own devices, establish rules, hierarchical rankings, and challenges of achievement. Anyone who has observed a group of skateboarding fourteen-year-olds cannot doubt the group work involved in their finely tuned maneuvers, determined practice, and increasingly elevated levels of risk taking. From organizing garage bands who find ways to cut compact discs of their music to coloring one another's hair to planning tagging forays, young people succeed at planning and carrying out work they devise in the absence of other available activities.[9]

In summary, the talk of youth at work carries many features that indicate adeptness in planful and collaborative behaviors. In addition, their playful talk within work occasions helps them negotiate social relations peacefully and with the drama and humor that sustain social order so that the work can go forward. The idea that young people engage in "productive" language centered in work tasks (particularly outside classrooms) rarely enters accounts of the lives of older children or adolescents. It is thus the job of ethnographers and linguists to make as explicit as possible the lives of youth outside adult-dominated institutions, such as schools and families. We need much more knowledge of peer interactions around tasks and young people's grammatical and discourse structures. We need to understand the social organizational processes that sustain a sense of communal commitment to a process of work, which older children need to broaden their range of grammatical structures and uses of language.

Until settings for work projects with adults who view youngsters as legitimate resources greatly expand within U.S. society, youth organizations, as primary institutions that enable the young to work (and play) through language, will grow increasingly critical to the preparation of youth for entry into the world of work as adults. In the study of the language of older children, these sites deserve support and attention comparable to that previously given to families and schools as sites of language learning and socialization into habits and values essential in adult life. Linguists and other social scientists have a responsibility to distribute their attention more equitably to language development across the age span. They must resist the seductiveness of romanticized childhood or first-time utterances and actions to take up the rapid-fire action of seasonal rounds of maturation of children beyond the earliest years. It is this work that will help us turn back to the poet's words and alter them as we find the "familiar" not the "aberrant" in the young, recognizing and understanding them as moving contours of difference.

NOTES

The research on which this chapter is based was funded by the Spencer Foundation in two grants awarded to Heath and Milbrey W. McLaughlin between 1987 and 1997 for the study of youth in their out-of-school lives. The study took place in three major metropolitan areas and more than a dozen midsized towns (population between 25,000 and 100,000) and rural counties. The language corpus collected in situ includes approximately a million and a half words and has been analyzed with the help of a concordance program and several programs that aid in discourse analysis. The organizations chosen for study were only those judged by youth in the local community as effective. Oversubscribed seasons, waiting lists, and established reputations among alumni and community adults further substantiated youth judgments of "effectiveness." For further detail on selection methods and characteristics of the youth organizations, see Heath and McLaughlin (1993) and McLaughlin, Irby, and Langman (1994).

1. Terms such as "community of learners" often take *community* as given and stable without considering that many collectives accomplish work jointly without sharing features usually assigned to residential or institutional communal groups. Ludwig Fleck's (1935) term *denk colectiv* or "thought collective," used to describe a group of professionals working together on a common task (such as a cure for syphilis), more closely reflects what occurs within the youth organizations from which data are drawn for this chapter. Here joint work is directed toward task achievement, and the thinking of those involved reflects the shifting stances, roles, and activity shaping contributed by individual members. The outcome itself, as well as the ongoing representation of the joint achievement, carries the stamp of the thought collective. Other work that also closely relates to concepts such as community of learners draws heavily on the work of scholars, such as Vygotsky (1978), Tharp and Gallimore (1988), Wertsch (1991), and Rogoff (1994), who have contributed theories of learning that stress the social nature of working together within a task and the varieties of platforms for learning (e.g., apprenticeship) that collaborative tasks provide.

2. These young field-workers volunteered to become members of the Stanford University research team. They were paid for submission of audiotapes, transcripts of these, and sessions of analysis of these transcripts with senior field-workers.

3. The most extensive discussion of a major type of revoicing may be found in Rampton (1995), an extended treatment of the ways in which multiracial urban youth in Great Britain take up one another's languages upon occasion in order to cement relationships, display particular arenas of competence, and illustrate their ways of managing to "live with difference."

4. Within this project, it is our practice to avoid using the same piece of data several times. However, the scarcity of narratives within the corpus of over a million and a half words, as well as the infrequency of the kinds of occasions most likely to generate stories—tense disagreement among youth members—has meant that we have used the story of Dennis and Amy for different purposes in several publications. For more detail on the role of stories within youth talk, see Heath (1994). An additional account of the role of narratives, particularly among adolescent males, may be found in Tobin (1996), who argues that certain kinds of narratives may serve particular functions for them.

5. The threatening features of a mock are illustrated by the mock fights that take place in Thailand before boxing matches. Before entering the ring, opponents come out and face each other with mocking behaviors. But they must not include exaggerated gestures of attack and retreat; instead, the success of their mocking of the opponent depends on capturing very small, seemingly insignificant but instantly recognizable features of the other's ges-

tures, movement, or posture. The audience applauds each mocking partner separately, thus giving the loser of the prelude to the "real" fight a substantial psychological blow (Mark Worland, martial arts trainer, Palo Alto, CA, personal communication). For further discussion of the work of certain types of humorous play among older children, see Heath and Soep in progress.

6. Accounts of authorities speaking for those with less power occur frequently in the literature on interaction between medical authority and patient, attorney and client, or job applicant and employment office bureaucrat. Those in power often tell those without power not only when to speak but also what they can say. In addition, they often silence the others and take on their voices. See Sansom (1982) for description of such word theft within an Australian Aborigine group.

7. In societies around the world, ways of separating the language of the young from that of adults appear frequently, but often only as additional or oppositional layers of meaning to the language shared by all members of the society. In some societies, however, the young develop their own language, using local languages of adults as the matrix or base language and mixing in other languages as well as creating new meanings. Both tsotsitaal and iscamtho, spoken primarily among young males in townships of South Africa, have developed as separate and "secret" language varieties (Ntshangase 1995).

8. Hall, who has written extensively about work (1993), provides numerous illustrations of the ways in which work of the old and the young, side by side, has characterized descriptions of America from the time of de Crèvecoeur imagining his American farmer to Hall remembering his own parents with their children working alongside them in gender-segregated tasks divided between the kitchen and the barn. Children's literature and autobiographies still abound in accounts of children and adults working side by side to accomplish a shared goal; see, for example, Rushdie (1990), Mead (1972), and her daughter's account of her own life and that of four other professionals (Bateson 1989). Mead captures ways to instill the work of learning by recounting how her grandmother taught her to observe: "On some days she gave me a set of plants to analyze; on others, she gave me a description and sent me out to the woods and meadows to collect examples, say, of the 'mint family.' . . . I learned to observe the world around me and to note what I saw—to observe flowers and children and baby chicks. She taught me to read for the sense of what I read and to enjoy learning" (1972:47).

9. This extraordinarily detailed work, as well as its dependence on a strict hierarchical organization with division of labor, has been documented well in accounts of gang life. See, for example, Los Solidos Nation (1995).