

CHILDREN'S ATTITUDES TOWARD LANGUAGE¹

Richard R. Day
University of Hawaii

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Introduction

Since the early 1960's, research in various regions of the world has demonstrated that people have definite attitudes about their own languages and about other languages and dialects. The purpose of this chapter is to examine research into children's attitudes toward the languages or dialects used in their speech communities. In the first section we examine the relationship between language attitudes and communicative competence, and discuss the notion that language attitudes are part of communicative competence. We then focus our attention on the age at which children first become aware of language differences. We see that there are different claims about the age at which children first learn to distinguish between their language and the language spoken by others.

We next discuss the issue which forms the major portion of this chapter--attitudes of children toward minority and majority languages or dialects. We review research which indicates that minority children first acquire positive attitudes toward their home language, but later display attitudes which reflect those of the dominant culture.

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Of interest is whether this change means that they no longer value their first language--that they have switched from preferring the language of their culture to preferring the language of the dominant culture. We also see that majority children, from a very young age, acquire attitudes consistent with those held by their families.

These results are then compared to the findings from studies dealing with the development of racial and ethnic attitudes by young children in general. We learn that while there are a number of similarities, there is one conflicting area between studies of language attitudes and those of racial and ethnic attitudes. The chapter concludes with suggestions for future research and a summary of the findings.

It is important to note that while there have been a number of significant studies about the process of the socialization of children, there has been relatively little research on children's language attitudes, much less the acquisition of such attitudes. Perhaps one reason may be the general feeling about this subject as explained by Labov (1966), who claimed that he had evidence indicating that it was not until 19 or 20 years of age that full sensitivity to socially significant dialect features is acquired. Labov also claimed that children do not become aware of the social significance of their dialect characteristics until early adolescence (1965). However, as we discover in this chapter, children from an early age are able to discriminate linguistically. In addition, we find evidence that children as young as 3:6 are able to make language attitudinal judgments which reflect adult beliefs prevalent in their speech community.

Communicative Competence and Language Attitudes

We believe that language attitudes are an integral part of communicative competence, which is the knowledge required to use a language appropriately in a speech community (Hymes, 1972).² It includes, in addition to grammatical knowledge, social knowledge which acts to define the communicative process and to shape the way messages are realized in social situations. That language attitudes are a part of communicative competence is implicit in Hymes' formulation of this concept. We refer specifically to what Hymes calls norms of interaction--the specific behaviors and proprieties that attach to speaking--and norms of interpretation (1972, 63-64). Both of these norms involve the social relationships and the belief system of a community, of which language attitudes play a crucial and integral part.

If we view language attitudes as an integral part of communicative competence, of interest is when children first display an awareness of certain aspects of communicative competence. Halliday found that Nigel, at 10:5 months, had a general instrumental request form and a number of forms which regulated repetition or immediacy in people's actions (1975, 148). Bates (1976) also found that children in their first year displayed an ability to direct other people's behavior. Dore (1973), using videotapes of four children early in their second year, found they were able to use directives

²We accept Hymes' definition of a speech community. "Tentatively a speech community is defined as a community sharing rules for the conduct and interpretation of speech, and rules for the interpretation of at least one linguistic variety" (1972, 54).

also. In a later study, Dore (1976) reported that children aged 2:10 through 3:3 had developed competence in question-answer routines. Ervin-Tripp (1977), in a review of the acquisition of directives by children, discusses research which indicates that by the third year, children show variation in their use of directives (1977, 183). Keenan (1977) claims that children aged 2:9 are sensitive to the illocutionary force of prior utterances in discourse. Because of these and similar findings, we conclude that at least by the end of their second year, children have begun to acquire communicative competence in their first language.

This conclusion allows us to expect that children will acquire attitudes toward language at a very young age. As we see later in this chapter, this expectation is fulfilled. Before examining this research, it is necessary to discuss an issue which, developmentally, is prior, viz the age when children are able to distinguish their language or dialect from a second language or dialect.

Recognition of Language Differences

Aboud (1976, 15) claims that the ability of young children to distinguish between two languages/dialects--their own and another--is crucial for it shows that children realize that the way they speak is not the only way to communicate and that they speak a language as distinct from the only language. She claims this awareness of language differences enables children to help distinguish between themselves--those who speak their language--and others--those who don't speak their language. Aboud (1976) reviews the research others have done in this area and also reports the results of three of her own

Canadian investigations of the social categories children use in identifying themselves and others. She used picture books in one study with white kindergarten and first grade children to see if they identified with Canadians who were white, Indian, Eskimo, Chinese or black. In another study, Jewish-Canadian kindergarteners were asked if they could be English, Canadian, Canadian Indian, black Canadian, Jewish Canadian, French Canadian, or Canadian Eskimo. The third study had the subjects--Jewish Canadian children in kindergarten and first grade--place 12 stimulus persons on a board relative to a stimulus person representing MYSELF. The 12 stimulus persons varied in five major characteristics: ethnicity, language, nationality, behavior, and evaluation (Good People). In all three studies, the children, ages five and six, used language to help distinguish between themselves and others. Aboud concludes that "language becomes an important social factor around the age of five or six, that it is at least initially used as a basis for perceptions of similarity rather than differences, and that it is the more concrete aspects of language that are first recognized" (1976, 34).

Other research, however, indicates that children become aware of language differences before the age of five. In particular, Mercer (1975) investigated the ability of monolingual English-Canadian children between the ages of 3:6 and 5:8 to discriminate between English and French, English and French-accented English, and French and Greek. In what may be considered a tiring task for the young subjects, Mercer asked them individually to listen to two voices (e.g., one speaking English; the other, French) and then listen to other voices, telling

the investigator if they sounded like either of the two voice samples (e.g., Judy or Michele). The youngest of the subjects--those between 3:6 and 4:0 years of age--were able to discriminate between French and English. The subjects older than 4:6 could also discriminate between English and French-accented English. However, none could tell any difference between the two foreign languages, French and Greek.

We may conclude that perhaps by the age of 3:6--and certainly by the age of 5:0--children are aware of language differences and can distinguish between the language they speak and languages other people speak. As we see in the following section, there is research to suggest that children as young as 3:0 are able to evaluate dialect differences.

The Acquisition of Language Attitudes by Members of Majority and Minority Groups

In this section, we review a representative sampling of investigations of children's attitudes towards the various languages or dialects used in their speech communities. The results of these studies provide evidence to support the claim that young children are not only aware of differences in language before elementary school, but that they are able to make judgments about such differences. We begin our discussion by first examining studies showing that from an early age minority children gradually acquire the attitudes of the majority about their speech and the majority's speech. Next, we look at those studies which indicate that minority children acquire such attitudes at an older age; finally, we look at research which indicates that perhaps minority children do not acquire the majority's language

attitudes at all.

Rosenthal (1974) investigated the development of attitudes in black and white children between the ages of 3:0 and 5:11 toward black English (BE) and standard English (SE). Her research design called for two identical cardboard boxes, spray-painted with ears, eyebrows and noses to appeal to her young subjects and avoid racial identity. Inside each box she placed cassette recorders with pre-recorded tapes of two 17-year old male speakers, one using SE and the other, BE.

The subjects, white children from what Rosenthal called the upper class, and lower class black children from a semi-rural area, had two tasks--to listen to both boxes "talk" and to answer a series of questions about the two boxes. Then the subjects were asked to either take a present from or give a present to the box of their choice. The questions they were asked were:

Taking

1. Which box has nicer presents?
2. Which box sounds nicer?
3. Which box talks better?
4. Which box do you like better?
5. Which box do you want to take your present from?

Giving

1. Which box wants it more?
2. Which box needs it more?
3. Which box sounds nicer?
4. Which box do you want to give it to? (Rosenthal, 1974, 58-59)

There are two drawbacks to Rosenthal's study. First, it suffers from a serious lack of statistical treatment of the results. The data are presented in tables which show only percentages. We do not know, for example, if there are any significant differences between the two populations. Second, as noted above, she used two different speakers, rather than one person proficient in the two varieties. Using two speakers leaves some doubt about what the subjects were responding to. For example, some of the subjects could have picked up some subtle voice qualities, and felt they were more important than the racial differences.

Nevertheless, the results demonstrate that the subjects had already formed attitudes toward the two varieties of English. They associated higher socioeconomic status with SE (has better presents) and lower socioeconomic status with BE (needs the present more). Rosenthal also points out that the two groups agreed that the SE speaker talked better. However, while the subjects were in agreement as to status and quality, they differed on preference. The upper class white children expressed more of a preference for the SE speakers than did the black children.

In a study which used a similar design but whose subjects were slightly older than Rosenthal's, Day (1980) investigated the attitudes and preferences of kindergarten and first grade children to SE and Hawaii Creole English (HCE). HCE is best considered a creole continuum in which decreolization is taking place (Bickerton & Odo, 1976). Varieties of HCE are spoken at many socioeconomic levels in the Hawaiian Islands, with the more creolized forms spoken by members of

the lower socioeconomic groups. HCE has little prestige and is often blamed for the poor academic achievements of its speakers.

As noted above, Day used the same technique as Rosenthal, and the subjects were asked the same questions. But the speech samples for his study were produced by only one person--a 27-year-old female, fluent in both HCE and SE. The subjects, who were between the ages of five and seven, attended two different schools in Honolulu. One school, labeled School A, was located in an industrial area of the city; the other, School B, in a more residential neighborhood. The parents of School A students were employed in less prestigious occupations, and many received some type of federal or state aid. While the two populations were similar in ethnic background--representing most if not all of the different cultural and ethnic groups of Hawaii--the children from School A are generally believed to be somewhat disadvantaged economically and academically compared to the children from School B. The former generally speak more creolized forms of HCE; the latter, while fluent in the acrolect of HCE (referred to as standard Hawaiian English in Tsuzaki, 1971) also have the ability to speak the more creolized forms of HCE.

Although Day's study, like Rosenthal's, suffers from a lack of rigorous statistical treatment of the data, it does show that his subjects had indeed developed particular attitudes toward and preferences for the two speech codes. For example, the first graders from School B favored the SE speaker 77.8% of the time. This overwhelming preference for and positive attitude toward the SE speaker was also reflected in the children's judgements that she had nicer presents, sounded nicer,

talked better, had better presents, and so on. The first graders from School A also showed a definite preference for the SE speaker, but not to the degree that the first graders in the other school did. These children also indicated an awareness of the socioeconomic status of HCE when they said that the HCE box needed the present more, but that the SE box had better presents.

The results of the kindergarten children's responses in Day's study contain an interesting phenomenon. The children from School B, the one located in the middle-class neighborhood, favored the SE speaker only 54.2% of the time (compared to 77.8% for their first grade classmates). They actually favored the HCE speaker in response to question one (Which box has nicer presents?; 60% said the HCE speaker did) and question nine (Which box do you want to give it to?; 56% said they wanted to give it to the HCE speaker). The kindergarten children from the less-advantaged neighborhood are even more different; they favored the HCE speaker 62.3% of the time. In response to only one question (#2) did they favor the SE speaker; in response to question #6, their responses were equally divided between two speakers. These data support an interpretation that the kindergarten children in a speech community which uses both minority and majority codes, are less in favor of the majority code than children in first grade; and further, that the minority children are less in favor of the majority code than the majority children. Then, after both groups of children spend time in a school system in which the majority code is the language of instruction, both groups exhibit strong preferences for and favorable attitudes toward the majority

language. However, longitudinal research is necessary for documenting any posited changes during the first years of school.

Additional evidence that children who speak a nonstandard or minority dialect gradually acquire the language attitudes of the standard or majority culture comes from a study by Cremona and Bates (1977) in an investigation of the development of attitudes toward standard Italian and a southern Italian dialect, Valmontonese. Their subjects were in grades one through six (ages 6:0-10:0), living in a small town in a rural area in which Valmontonese is used almost exclusively at home. Each child listened through a set of headphones to eight pairs of sentences, spoken once in Italian and once in Valmontonese by one person, a male fluent in both dialects. The child was then asked which one spoke better and why. The youngest children--the six year olds--exhibited equal preference for both dialects. However, the seven year olds displayed a preference for Italian, and the eight year olds preferred Italian almost 100%. Although these subjects did not reflect the attitudes of the dominant culture at the same age as Day's subjects, the pattern is clear: children speaking a minority dialect, whether it is creolized or geographic, apparently enter school with a preference for or at least a neutral attitude towards their speech code, but as they grow older, tend to acquire the language attitudes of the dominant culture. They come to value more highly the dominant variety, and associate the socioeconomic stereotypes held by the dominant culture with their primary speech code.

This pattern is also apparent in children who speak a majority dialect. Giles, Harrison, Smith and Freeman (1981) in a study in

Bristol, England, found that younger children (seven years old) evaluated Welsh-accented English more positively than British Received Pronunciation (RP), while the older children (nine and ten years of age) apparently switched--evaluating RP more positively than the Welsh-accented English. They used a matched-guise technique with a male speaker reading a neutral passage lasting 30 seconds. Two female speakers were used as filler voices--one using Bristolian-accented English and the other, RP. The subjects rated each speaker on six 5-point scales, three relating to prestige (clever, successful and lazy) and three to pleasantness (likeable, funny and nasty). Giles et al. found that the older subjects rated the Welsh-accented speaker as funnier than the RP speaker, with the reverse being true for the seven year olds. The ten year olds considered the RP speaker as more successful, the middle group indicated there was little difference between the two guises, and the youngest subjects believed the Welsh-accented speaker to be more successful than the RP speaker. The other four traits were not affected. Thus we see that by the age of ten, the subjects were socialized into the perceived socioeconomic correlates of RP speech.

These results are similar to Day's and of Cremona and Bates' in that the younger subjects evaluated positively the regional variety. However, there is a difference in that children in the latter studies spoke the regional variant as their first language, while Giles' subjects did not speak the Welsh-accented variety.

We should also note that Giles and his colleagues also investigated whether the social context of evaluating the speakers affected their subject's ratings. After listening to the speakers, the subjects

evaluated the speakers according to three experimental treatments. One was the regular method, in which the subjects were asked to rate the speaker as soon as he or she had finished talking. The second treatment, the group condition, had the subjects relate their impressions of the speakers to members of a four-person group. This lasted about 90 seconds, and then the subjects made their individual ratings. In the control condition, the third treatment, the subjects were requested to think about their impressions silently for 90 seconds before making their ratings. They found that there were interaction effects between the regular or traditional condition and age for two scales, lazy and likeable. The older children rated the speakers more likeable and less lazy in the group discussion condition than in the other two conditions; however, the seven year old subjects found speakers as less likeable and more lazy in the group discussion condition than in the other two. Giles et al. concluded that the social context of evaluation could affect their subjects' ratings, a point to which we return later in this chapter.

Ryan's study (1969) of white middle class children in the United States and their attitudes toward SE, low class-white English, and BE also provides evidence that majority children by the age of 10 and 11 are aware of the social significance of language variation. Her subjects, in the fifth and sixth grades, listened to a tape recording containing excerpts of conversations by six different speakers using the three varieties. Using a semantic differential scale, the subjects rated the speakers on 15 traits (e.g., wise, tall, religious, trustworthy, good-looking, kind) and in terms of occupation (janitor, gas station

attendant, fireman, teacher, and doctor). The children rated the SE speakers significantly higher than the other two speakers, and the lower-class white speakers significantly higher than the speakers of BE. In addition, the subjects assigned the speakers to occupations consistent with the 15 traits. For example, the SE speakers were ranked significantly more often as teachers or doctors than were the other dialect speakers. Thus in the studies by Giles et al. and Ryan, we see that majority children by the ages of 10 and 11 apparently have learned the attitudes of the majority toward both the majority language variety and the minority variety.

Since research indicates acceptance of the language attitudes of the majority by both majority and minority children, of interest is the attitudes of bilinguals toward their languages. Lewis (1975) investigated the attitudes of both monolinguals and bilinguals toward Welsh and English in Wales. His data were based on an extensive survey conducted between 1967 and 1971 among children in junior and secondary schools. Unfortunately, Lewis gives little information about the research design, except that Thurstone type tests were used to measure attitudes from the students; a semantic differential scale was administered to the secondary school students only. Lewis found that the "attitude to Welsh becomes increasingly less favourable in all areas and types of schools as the students grow older, and increasingly favourable to English" (1975, 109).

The next three studies have somewhat different results. They indicate that their subjects--children whose first language was not the majority code--did not display total acceptance of the language

attitudes of the majority. These findings should not be considered unusual or unexpected, for like the language attitudes displayed by the subjects in the studies discussed above, they reflect the subjects' involvement in their speech communities. To the extent that minority children accept the values of the majority speech community, they will display similar language attitudes as part of their overall communicative competence.

Ramirez, Arce-Torres, and Politzer (1978) investigated attitudes of Spanish-speaking fourth and fifth graders and their teachers in a number of California schools where English was the medium of instruction. A matched guise design was used to measure their subjects' attitudes towards SE, hispanized English, standard Spanish, and a style of speech which was characterized by code-switching between SE and Spanish. The guises were produced by four adult speakers (two men and two women). Their subjects were asked to rate each guise on three dimensions: correctness, appropriateness, and likelihood-of-achievement. As we might expect, the children and their teachers displayed similar attitudes toward English and Spanish, rating SE more highly than Spanish. However, in evaluating what Ramirez et al. called the children' primary speech style, Spanish-English code-switching, the children disagreed with their teachers. They evaluated the code-switching style more favorable than hispanized English; their teachers, on the other hand, viewed hispanized English more favorably than the code-switching style. In addition, pupil achievement scores were positively related to the degree to which the children downgraded the code-switching style compared to SE (i.e., the degree to which they displayed attitudes congruent with their teachers) (1978, 202).

It is important to note that there was agreement on what may be viewed as the most visible and legitimate of the languages--SE and Spanish--but disagreement on the relative merits of the mixing of these two languages. This could indicate that while the teachers and their students shared the beliefs and attitudes of a broad speech community, they each belonged to a more restricted group or immediate speech community--those individuals with whom a person has daily and intimate contact. This narrower group to which the teachers belong might not include the language mixing found in the students' immediate speech community. For the latter, code-switching plays a major role in intra-group communication, and is valued.

In a study in which teachers and students apparently belong to the same immediate speech community, Anisfeld and Lambert (1954) found that their monolingual French-Canadian 10 year olds, in a matched guise study, rated the personalities of the speakers who used French higher than the English guises. Anisfeld and Lambert speculate that at 10 years of age, perhaps these monolingual students were not yet cognizant of the attitudes of the majority toward the two languages. By way of contrast, in the same study, bilingual French-Canadians of the same age rated the guises as similar. We speculate that these language attitudes probably developed as a result of their bilingual school environment.

A study by Schneidermann (1976) with French-Canadian children in an English-dominant area also provides evidence that not all minority children exhibit favorable attitudes toward the majority language as they grow older. Even though this study suffers from a lack of statistical analysis, the results show that her subjects, who ranged in age from five to eleven, expressed more

favorable attitudes toward French than toward English, with the older subjects showing a higher degree of favorable attitudes toward French. The subjects, in grades kindergarten through sixth, attended public schools in which French was the medium of instruction. However, Schneidermann believed they used English exclusively by age 10, in peer group interactions away from the classroom. Given this use of English in situations which did not apparently require it, Schneidermann hypothesized that the older subjects would have more favorable attitudes toward English than the younger children.

Schneidermann used a video-taped puppet show to measure her subjects' language attitudes. The script for the show was recorded by four bilingual 10 year olds--two boys and two girls--from the speech community. They also helped write it. There were eight versions of the show, four in each language, lasting about five minutes.

Her subjects, in grades K-6, viewed a version of the show and were asked individually 10 questions in what their teachers had determined to be the child's stronger language. Five of the questions treated issues or events which took place (e.g., Which puppet threw the ball better? Which puppet cheated?), but some of these questions were designed to require inferences concerning what took place. For example, the puppets accuse each other of cheating, although neither one actually does cheat. Schneidermann claims that this procedure means "the subject's attitude towards the two puppets, rather than his perceptual skills or memory, is considered to be reflected in his response to the question" (1976, 63). Four of the remaining questions required the subjects to rate four character traits: stupidity, kindness, nastiness and destructiveness;

the final question measured social distance (Which puppet would you invite to your birthday party?) (1976, 63).

The results fail to provide support for Schneidermann's hypothesis that the older children would exhibit more favorable attitudes toward English than the younger children. All of her subjects, except the kindergarteners, exhibited more favorable attitudes toward the French puppet than toward the English puppet. The kindergarten children exhibited a slight preference for the English puppet. With the exception of the second graders, who were the most favorable to the French puppet, the older children expressed stronger French preference than the youngest.

Discussion

The general findings of the research into children's attitudes toward language show how children, both minority and majority, reflect the attitudes toward language variation which are consistent with those members of their immediate speech community. Up to the age of three, a child's immediate speech community generally is composed of parents and other caregivers, siblings, and relatives. However, it broadens as the child gets older, exposing him or her to a wider range of attitudes. Minority children with exposure to the majority culture tend to display attitudes which reflect their exposure.

It is important to point out that we do not mean to imply that a speech community is monolithic and homogeneous, and that the language attitudes of the majority are always acquired by all members of a given speech community. The last three studies presented in the preceding section should serve to illustrate these two points. For example, in the Anisfeld and Lambert study, the monolingual French-Canadian subjects

exhibited favorable attitudes toward the French guises presumably because of relatively little exposure to the broader speech community which includes both French and English speakers. The bilingual French-Canadian subjects did have different language attitudes--they rated the guises as similar--because of their exposure to English speakers in their school environment.

Schneidermann's results do not seem to fit the general pattern, however. Her subjects apparently learned English, although they went to a school in which French was the medium of instruction. Their learning English means that they must have had contact with English speakers which would broaden their exposure to the majority culture. Despite these experiences, presumably increasing with age, the findings showed a developmental pattern in favor of French. In attempting to account for this discrepancy, we should mention that her technique--puppets--might have enabled her to tap her subjects' attitudes more accurately than other techniques. This could be an important variable in some of the research but not in the Rosenthal and Day investigations, which used talking boxes. Moreover, eliciting ambiguous intergroup interactions may be an especially sensitive procedure. Whether Schneidermann's results are unique or can be generalized to other minority children must be determined by future research.

It is also important to note that while the studies presented in the preceding chapter provide valuable insights concerning the status which the majority language comes to occupy in the lives of both minority and majority children, we know relatively little about minority children's subsequent attitudes toward their first language or dialect. The forced-choice design of all of the investigations provides information about which code the subjects prefer, but it does not provide us with information about the subjects' attitudes toward the code not chosen. Attaching good

Given these results by Light and his colleagues and the results of Schneidermann's study, we must be cautious in interpreting the results of attitude studies which involve minority versus majority speech codes. We cannot infer from such studies that minority children dislike or do not value their primary speech codes. Perhaps the best we can do is to assume that they have come to recognize the value of the majority language, at least under the circumstances of the data-gathering situation and the dimensions of the research designs. The former issue is discussed in detail later in the chapter. We focus our attention at this point on the latter for, as Ryan (1979, 153) claims, the method used to gather the data is important since it can have a significant effect on the results.

The Giles et al. study and one conducted by Price, Fluck and Giles (1980) provide support for Ryan's claim. The investigators in the latter project were interested in determining the effect of the language used in administering the matched guise method--Welsh or English--affected their subjects' evaluations of three different language varieties--Welsh, RP, or West Welsh-accented English. The speaker read a prose passage on a neutral subject in the three guises. As in the study conducted by Giles et al., a filler voice was used so it would not be obvious to the subjects that only one person was speaking. The subjects, 10- and 12-year-old Welsh bilinguals, were instructed in either Welsh or RP to listen to the speakers and to rate each one on a nine 5-point rating scale. Whether the children received instructions in Welsh or English only affected two traits, selfishness and intelligence. Only the subjects receiving the instructions and questionnaire in Welsh differentiated evaluatively between the guises in terms of selfishness and not those receiving the English instructions and questionnaire. Only

those in the English condition made a distinction between the speakers' perceived intelligence.

These findings by Price et al. are of considerable importance to future investigations of language attitudes, whether the subjects are children, adolescents, or adults. Generally investigations which employ a matched guise technique are loaded in a school-achievement-standard direction. However, when this bias is changed, as in the study by Price and her colleagues, different emphases may result.

One additional point should be raised about the matched guise technique and its possible influence on results. Although some of the investigators report that their young subjects seemed to have no difficulty handling the task, it could be that this method is inappropriate for measuring accurately language attitudes of minority children. Indeed, perhaps one of the reasons, aside from Labov's claim noted earlier, that little research has been conducted on children's attitudes toward language is the difficulty in finding appropriate measures. Would-be researchers might not want to tackle the difficult methodological problem of making sure that they have tapped what is inside the children's heads. The innovative research designs by Schneidermann and Rosenthal have provided considerable advances and should help future research break out of the mold of the matched guise technique and the semantic differential scale.

Racial and Ethnic Attitudes and Language Attitudes

It is helpful to put the findings of the research in the development of children's attitudes toward language in perspective by comparing them to the research done on the development of racial and ethnic attitudes.

In reviewing the literature, we discover that even very young children are aware of racial and ethnic differences (e.g., Goodman, 1952; Lasker, 1929; Milner, 1975). Both Milner (1981) and Katz (1976a, 1976b) provide excellent surveys of the psychological literature on how children acquire racial attitudes and of attempts to change or reduce negative racial attitudes.

Tajfel et al. (1972), in research on the attitudes of children toward ethnic and national groups, found that they are very sensitive to the evaluations of their own ethnic and national groups held by the older members of their community. Their data were obtained by using 20 standardized photographs of young men which were presented to the subjects individually. Each child was asked to place each photograph in one of four boxes with labels, "I like him very much," "I like him a little," "I dislike him a little," and "I dislike him very much" (1972, 235-236). A second part of the study called for the children to return two or three weeks later and place the photographs in one of two boxes labeled Scottish or English for the subjects from Glasgow and Oxford; British or not British for additional children from Glasgow; and Israeli or not Israeli for the children from Haifa, Israel. All of the subjects were aged from 6 to 11. The photographs used in the Haifa study were of young Israeli men with half being those of European background and half of the physical type representative of Mediterranean Europe (1972, 240).

The results show their subjects to be "highly sensitive to the socially prevailing evaluations of national and ethnic groups" (243) and that minority children tended to absorb the negative attitudes from members of socially or economically superior classes. For example, both

younger and older English children displayed significant preferences for photographs they classified as English compared to those classified as Scottish, but Scottish children did not display a preference for Scottish compared to English (238).

The significance of the findings of Tajfel and his colleagues on the social identity of young children may be seen by examining the work of Vaughan on interpersonal behavior and socialization of children. For example, Vaughan (1978) reports the results of an investigation into the development of social categories. His subjects, aged 7 and 11, were asked to allocate pennies. It was found that the minimal group categorization used--children were arbitrarily assigned to a red or a blue category--was just as important in determining who got the money as was the category "your best friend at school" (1978, 352).

Aboud and Skerry (1980) summarized and interpreted the development of children's thoughts, feelings and actions toward persons belonging to other ethnic groups. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to discuss fully their exciting review; we will, though, recognize their work as it touches specifically on issues which relate directly to language attitudes of children. In looking at the age when children first recognize what they term own-group members and other-group members, Aboud and Skerry concluded that research indicates that most children do so by the age of three or four.

They also examined research on children's perception of the similarities and dissimilarities of both own-group and other-group members. Aboud and Skerry found that perceived own-group similarity develops early, around four or five years of age, and seems to improve with age (1980, 9).

There is also evidence that it is at this same age that most children perceive themselves as dissimilar to other ethnic groups, and that this perceptual differentiation may increase for approximately five or six more years (1980, 12). In addition, Aboud and Skerry presented research to indicate that children acquire around the age of five the ability to categorize stimuli according to ethnicity and that this ability is fully developed by the age of seven (1980, 17). These findings are important for they are consistent with the findings of the development of children's language attitudes. Thus we could speculate that language attitudes are part of a larger group of feelings which children acquire and develop as they grow older and become socialized.

However, a major difference emerges when Aboud and Skerry discuss children's attitudes toward owngroup and othergroup members. Positive and negative othergroup attitudes appear around four years of age for black and white children and about one year later for such minority children as Amerindians, Chicanos, and Chinese. The initially positive owngroup and negative othergroup attitudes for white children exhibit change with age so that owngroup positive attitudes decrease and positive othergroup attitudes increase. With regard to minority children, the research Aboud and Skerry review is mixed, so definite statements are difficult to make. Yet, some research does indicate that minority groups such as the three mentioned earlier develop preferences for whites which are maintained as they grow older (1980, 26).

These findings are different from the language attitudes findings in that majority (or, in Aboud and Skerry's term, white) children do not seem to develop a greater tolerance for minority dialects (e.g., Ryan, 1969; Giles et al., 1981). Indeed, what little research has been done in this

area indicates that language attitudes of majority children tend to become more reflective of the speech community in that minority dialects or languages are associated with lower education, less prestigious occupations, and so on. We should note that Aboud and Skerry's findings for minority children developing preferences for the majority culture are consistent with the development of minority children's language attitudes.

Aboud and Skerry review the literature to try to account for the development of ethnic attitudes. In looking at social-demographic factors, they find that only ethnic status seems to be related; socioeconomic status, sex, and intelligence do not appear to be promising variables. Of three psychological factors--affective, perceptual and cognitive--only the first two seem important in the development of ethnic attitudes. Since our review of children's language attitudes indicates an almost complete lack of research into the causes of the development of such attitudes, Aboud and Skerry's work has important implications for future research in this area. There is an urgent need to examine ethnicity and affective and perceptual factors in relation to language attitude development.

Future Research

Language is much more than a means of communicating verbal messages. It serves as a powerful symbol of cultural identity, of ethnic identity, of personal identity. It conveys social class, education, occupation. The very choice of one particular variety in certain circumstances can signal specific attitudes and feelings of the speaker to the listener.

Yet with few exceptions, this complexity of language is not recognized in the research into language attitudes. The majority of research designs make use of the matched guise technique and the semantic differential scale. The setting for the research is the school. Perhaps we turn to the schools for subjects because school children are readily available, packaged, and labeled. They are sitting in their rooms, and all that is required is for the researcher to obtain permission and show up. It has been well established that different circumstances--including setting--call for different language varieties (e.g., Ros & Giles, 1979), even in apparently monolingual speech communities. The school setting demands the use of a standard code. It is not unreasonable to assume that our subjects, after sufficient socialization, might parrot their teachers' language attitudes in the school setting. Yet this awareness has been only minimally reflected in language attitude studies of minority children.³

One welcome exception to this is a study by Carranza and Ryan (1975). In investigating the reactions to Spanish and English speakers of bilingual Anglo- and Mexican-American adolescents, they assumed that their subjects' reactions would be affected by the context of the speech sample (home vs. school) and by the type of rating scale (status vs. solidarity) (1975, 98). They point out that "if context were to be ignored, the results would have indicated only an overall preference for English . . . this research

³In making this point we do not intend to disparage the work on children's attitudes toward language variation which has been conducted in the school setting. There is no question that these studies have yielded valuable insights and have demonstrated how extremely sensitive children are. That is, children were evaluated in the formal school contexts and generally displayed the formal attitudes appropriate for school contexts. It is our intent to point out that by restricting ourselves to the classroom we may be only obtaining information on attitudes appropriate to those settings.

established that listeners also react to the appropriateness of the language variety used by the speaker for a particular situation" (1975, 99). Similar importance of context was established in a subsequent study by Ryan and Carranza (1975) comparing reactions to standard and Spanish-accented English.

Not only is setting a crucial variable, but we should also be aware of the covert and overt feelings and attitudes of our subjects. Even if we do manage to examine children away from the school setting, we must ensure that we discover, in addition to what they believe they are supposed to feel, what they actually believe. Trudgill (1972), in an investigation of the speech of the working class of Norwich, England, found evidence that working class nonstandard speech was covertly highly valued and prestigious:

For example, many informants who initially stated that they did not speak properly, and would like to do so, admitted, if pressed, that they perhaps would not really like to, and that they would almost certainly be considered foolish, arrogant or disloyal by their friends and family if they did. (1972, 184) (Emphasis in the original.)

The importance of and the interaction between these two factors--setting and the distinction between covert and overt attitudes--may be seen in a study of attitudes of adult blacks toward standard BE and non-standard BE by Hoover (1978). The 64 subjects were parents of children in either first and sixth grades in East Palo Alto, California. Their attitudes were measured by administering a questionnaire in the format of an interview. This enabled the interviewer to assess each subject's proficiency in BE and to follow up answers which needed clarification. The results showed that the parents did not hate nonstandard (vernacular) BE; that there are rules for the use of the two codes, viz nonstandard BE is considered appropriate for speaking and listening, but not for

reading and writing, and for informal but not formal contexts; and that standard BE seemed to be acceptable for most occasions. Note the differences between Hoover's findings and those reported earlier by Light et al. The latter found that the subjects, black as well as white, attributed the positive qualities more often to the standard BE speaker than to the nonstandard BE speaker. Apparently Hoover's design enabled her to get beyond the overt attitudes and probe into her subjects' deeper attitudes. Future research studies into the language attitudes of minority children must take into account setting as well as covert attitudes.⁴

In addition to these two variables, we should take into account of the typical techniques used in assessing attitudes forcing a choice. It could be argued that presenting a subject--young or old--with a choice between two languages or dialects forces him or her to choose one over the other, when the subject may not normally make such a distinction.

More research is needed on the attitudes toward language of two different groups of minority children: those speaking what may be termed as low prestige dialects or creolized codes (e.g., BE, HCE) and those who speak languages which have only low status in a particular speech community but have higher status elsewhere (e.g., French). Further, we know little about how children who speak lower status varieties acquire their attitudes toward their first language. The evidence presented in this chapter points to the family as being the primary source, but we need an examination of how children absorb these attitudes from their families.

⁴There is a danger, however, in this type of investigation. Probing might induce the subjects to produce the type of feelings or attitudes which they think the interviewer has or wants them to exhibit.

Also needed are longitudinal studies. That our review of the literature did not uncover any such studies is an indication of the dearth of information about this important research. If such studies are undertaken, we should be aware of possible sex differences in attitude change. Do boys come to prize their vernacular, feeling it is more masculine? Are girls more likely to maintain their favorable attitudes toward the higher status code? (See Kramarae, Chapter 6, this volume.) Some research has been done by Labov (1966) and Trudgill (1972) on adolescents and adults which indicates that indeed speech with overt lower prestige is felt to be more masculine. We should also look at the period between childhood and adolescence to see what happens to the language attitudes of minority children. Do such children maintain the pattern of favorable attitudes toward the majority code? Or is there a switch in favor of the minority code. Schneidermann (1976) suggests there is, but she offers no evidence for her position.

It might be insightful for future research in minority-majority speech communities to use Lambert's distinction between subtractive and additive bilingualism (1978). If we think in terms of subtractive and additive bidialectalism, we could attempt to determine if minority children were acquiring new language attitudes while losing their original ones (subtractive) or were acquiring new and maintaining their old (additive). Gardner (Chapter 1, this volume) discusses subtractive and additive bilingualism in detail.

Other areas which should be studied include the age at which children become aware of language. At what age do they become aware of the differences in their speech and their parents? Their siblings? Their friends?

Ferguson (1959) believes that most speech communities value their first language. He notes that the positive attributes held by speakers may vary from speech community to speech community. This is a rich mine for researchers of language attitudes who could investigate such issues as: (1) the age when children first become aware of such positive features; (2) how children become aware of these features; and (3) differences within the speech community toward these features based on class, region, and so on.

Gleason and Weintraub (1978) review research on children's acquisition of communicative competence and the sources and types of linguistic input. They claim that the linguistic input apparently is directed at helping the child acquire linguistic competence before the more referential and social aspects of language are conveyed:

Speech to the child, from whatever source, appears to follow a typical developmental pattern: speech to infants is affect-laden and may have as its primary purpose the establishment of a warm bond between infant and caretaker; speech to young children just learning language is characterized by the lexical and grammatical simplification we noted earlier and appears to be a language-teaching language, speech to school age children becomes grammatically complex and is no longer concerned with teaching the rules of language, but, instead, concentrates on the rules and beliefs of the culture. (1978, 206).

As we discussed earlier in this chapter, there is support for a claim that the acquisition of communicative competence begins some time during a child's first year. If Gleason and Weintraub are correct in their assessment of the nature of the linguistic input, then we must investigate other possible sources of input to the child. Or, research might be done to substantiate their claim.

We also know relatively little about the attitudes which children have toward language in a monolingual speech community. Such studies are

needed to serve as benchmarks in studies of language attitudes in multi-lingual speech communities. We should investigate the acquisition of language attitudes and the choice of appropriate registers and styles (e.g., baby talk, teacher talk, foreigner talk).

Conclusion

In this chapter we reviewed research into children's attitudes toward language. We made explicit a claim that language attitudes are a vital factor in communicative competence and that the acquisition of language attitudes is part of the general development of communicative competence in a child's speech community. We presented research which reveals that by the age of three, minority and majority group children are aware of language differences and that they hold attitudes about these differences. We also learned that as minority children grow up, their attitudes toward language reflect stereotypes of the majority culture toward their speech and themselves. Whether we can interpret these attitudes and preferences to mean that minority children reject their first language or hold it in an unfavorable light is open to question. We have also seen that in general the results of the development of language attitudes are consistent with research findings on the development of racial and ethnic attitudes. There is, however, a difference--attitudes of majority children--which investigators should seek to resolve. Finally, we discovered that relatively little work has been done on the factors which either influence or cause the acquisition of language attitudes.

We believe that this review has shown that some excellent work has been done. However, a great deal more is needed. If additional progress and insights are to be accomplished, we must not limit ourselves to

conducting similar studies using similar research designs and techniques. When we move in new directions, we should be able to answer some of the questions raised in this chapter.

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