Exploring the intersection of Language Socialization Research and the Anthropology of Education

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Language socialization researchers and educational anthropologists employ ethnographic inquiry to study participation outcomes of learning processes in educational institutions. Language socialization researchers include linguistic/discursive analyses of video and audio recordings of face-to-face interactions in order to examine how those engaged in learning activity summon the assistance of others or engage semiotic means to mark their involvement with others in concerted social activity. They focus on two related components of the socialization process, socialization *through* and *to* the use of language (Schieffelin & Ochs 1986), to analyze how cultural and linguistic knowledge are taught, contested, or transformed in moment-to-moment interactions. These interactions are always contingent on expectations about class, ability, ethnicity, race, and gender. Language socialization researchers have also examined the home-school relationship with respect to discontinuities in communicative patterns; cognitive and learning styles; and the values and identities associated with particular ways of learning and knowing identified in classic studies of the anthropology of education (e.g., Au and Jordan 1981; Erickson and Mohatt 1982; Heath 1983; Philips 1983; Tharp and Gallimore 1988). These identified discontinuities offered explanations for the disproportionate school failure of ethnic and racial minority students and argued for improved learning conditions. More recently, language socialization researchers have further examined the processes and interactional modalities in which social structures and categories are discursively (re)constructed by agentive social actors—both children and adults—and the consequences of these discursive constructions on expectations of success and participation. We draw on our individual empirical research at the intersection of language socialization and the anthropology of education to discuss how ethnographic inquiry and discourse analysis make visible the agentive and innovative character of children's interactions in complex learning situations. Our goal is to explore the close relationship between language socialization researchers and educational anthropologists and the shared concern with equitable learning contexts.

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