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Variation and Error: A Sociolinguistic Approach to Language Acquisition in Samoa

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1. WHAT IS AN ERROR?

The isolation of errors in the language of young children has led to general and interesting statements concerning the acquisition process. In discovering differences between child and adult language use, the researcher has been able to present hypotheses concerning conceptual strategies young children implement. These strategies in turn can be related to particular features of languages that enhance or inhibit the process of acquisition. Such analyses have drawn the interests of linguists interested in foundations of certain language universals as well as those interested in cognitive constraints on language change.

The present paper is an attempt to further these goals and achievements by examining the notion of error itself from a sociolinguistic perspective. Specifically, it suggests that the notion of error should be understood in light of the range of variants in use for the feature under consideration. Types of error in the language of young children can be distinguished in terms of whether or not the "error" exists as a variant in the adult speech community and if so, the value attached to that variant by the community. I will demonstrate that the assessment of what counts as an error is affected by data collection methodology, in particular by the way in which adult linguistic norms are established. To establish these points, I will draw on a longitudinal study of Samoan child language carried out by Martha Platt, Alessandro Duranti, and myself. This study was carried out in the village of Falefā on the island of Upolu, Western Samoa, from July 1978 through July 1979.

If someone uses a sentence structure that is not generated by the grammar, there is nothing to prevent us from setting it aside as a mistake or a dialect difference (Labov, 1972, p. 200).

Pursuing an adequate definition of error is like chasing down a slippery eel. Just as its outline appears to emerge, it disappears into some other conceptual category. It is not an easy notion to assess, and it seems to me that, if only because of these definitional difficulties, those of us considering acquisition strategies ought to turn our collective attention to the ontological status of error. A comparison of errors children do/do not make across languages should be based on a clear and commonly accepted characterization of the nature and properties of an error.

The term *error* is related to the verb *to err*, which in Latin originally meant to wander from and subsequently to be deceived (Partridge, 1966). That which someone or something "wanders from" is an accepted standard or norm. (The term *norm* derives from the Latin *norma*, meaning a carpenter's square, hence a rule of conduct (Partridge, *ibid.*.) A current transformation of *wander from*, used within the social sciences, is *deviation from*. In this interpretation, an error is a type of deviation from an accepted standard. The reader should note the use of the terms *type of deviation*, because not all deviations count as errors. In Canberra, Australia, most people prefer that their cars have steering wheels on the right side. We can say that it is the norm. Some people, however, own and drive cars with lefthand steering. We would not want to say that these people have made an error, even if they have not conformed to the preferred mode of conduct. In contrast, there is an accepted standard (norm) of driving on the left in Australia and if someone does not conform to this standard, that person has committed an error.

What makes one behavior an error and the other solely a deviation? This is a crucial and difficult question to adequately resolve. One lead to its resolution is

to bring in the role of negative sanctions and/or correction. A deviation counts as an error if its occurrence is viewed as a VIOLATION of a norm and, as such, warranting negative sanctioning and/or correction. Driving on the right is an error, because its occurrence can provoke the application of negative sanctions by other members of the society (anything from horn-blowing to payment of fines). Note that an error is not defined by the actual implementation of negative sanctions. The status of a deviation as an error depends on members' judgments that the deviation could or should receive some form of negative feedback. In other words, we would want to count driving on the right as an error, even if the driver were unaware of the norm and even if no one saw the behavior or if others happened to ignore the behavior (in isolated cases, but not if the behavior were ignored regularly).

Moving to language, we want to maintain the same criteria. A particular speech phenomenon counts as an error if it (1) DEVIATES from a norm of speaking and (2) WARRANTS (i.e. could provoke) NEGATIVE SANCTIONING, as judged by members of the speech community. In terms of actual implementation of negative feedback, such a response could come from hearers, audiences, or from speakers themselves. Indeed, as demonstrated by Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks (1977), in English-speaking communities while others may draw attention to a trouble source, there is a preference for speakers to correct or repair their own errors (i.e. what they themselves or others conceive of as error). As in the earlier example, we do not want to tie the concept of error to invariable implementation of negative feedback. A particular feature of speech (or language use) counts as an error because it is usually or often followed by a negative response and/or it is evaluated as a violation in the consideration of members. Certain slips of the tongue may be good examples of language errors that may not always receive attention by the speaker or others but are nonetheless judged to warrant attention and correction.

The careful reader will have noticed that there is a problem looming in the inclusion of members' judgments in our definition of error. Members may judge a feature of speech to be an error because it is not part of the prestige register of the language. Modern linguistics distinguishes itself by its concern with what speakers CAN say rather than what speakers SHOULD say. That is, grammars should account for what is possible in a language rather than what is the preferred standard of a language (a pedagogical grammar). By implication, the "modern" investigation of ERRORS should be concerned with deviations that are outside the realm of what is linguistically possible in a language (violations of a grammatical rule) rather than with deviations from the formal register(s) of a language.

At this point, the discussion turns to more complex points, because we must consider both an ideal definition of error, and error as it has been treated in the literature. As noted above, the concept of error is closely tied to the concept of grammar. In the modern framework, an error should be OUTSIDE the grammar. Indeed, the research on children's errors assumes this thesis, spelling out the

ways in which rules are overgeneralized, undergeneralized, ignored, or otherwise treated by children at different stages in their language development. I do not take issue with such a definition of error (as outside the grammar of a language). The important issue to pursue concerns the KIND of grammar being used to assess errors.

The kind of grammar on which analyses of errors are based tends to be CATEGORICAL in nature (i.e. characterized by categorical rules). Errors are matched against rules that (are felt to) apply to all native speakers, and typically social context is not encoded in the formulation of the rule. However, as pointed out by Hymes (1974), Labov (1972), and others, categorical rules in a language are less frequent than one might suppose. They are far more reflective of the method of collecting linguistic data than they are reflective of the structure of the language itself. Categorical rules are intimately linked to the use of formal elicitation of speakers' judgments of language use. When one turns to naturalistic observation and recording, however, one finds systematic differences in language norms, sensitive to social definitions of speaker, hearer, setting, topic, genre, and the like. Grammatical rules based on grammaticality judgments must be thought of as capturing only a part of the language.

These rules may capture one or more formal registers, for example, structures characteristic of the written language, of formal interviews, or of talk to foreigners (cf. Duranti, 1981 for extended discussion of this point). The important point is that we cannot tell if a linguistic structure is categorical or variable until a sociolinguistic analysis of that structure is carried out. Examining that structure systematically across speakers and situations, we may find sociolinguistic variation or we may find the construction to be invariant across contexts.

In terms of an analysis of errors, it is important to establish soundly the nature of the rule being violated. Is the rule truly categorical and hence the deviation truly outside the scope of what is possible? It could well be that certain child language "errors" are in fact productive constructions for certain groups of adult speakers in particular social settings. If so, the child's speech would reflect a portion of the linguistic repertoire of the speech community in which he participates.

What is needed then, is a definition of error that incorporates sociolinguistic information. The previous definition of error specified that it was a deviation from a norm and that it counted as a violation, i.e. would be judged as warranting negative feedback. From the discussion above, we know that the treatment of norm in this definition is unrefined. We need to specify that A NORM MAY VARY ACROSS SOCIAL CONTEXTS (VARIABLE NORM) OR IT MAY BE INVARIABLE ACROSS SOCIAL CONTEXTS (CATEGORICAL NORM). For example, the norm for dressing in our society varies across social contexts (variable norm); on the other hand, the way we pick up a telephone receiver is minimally sensitive (if at all) to social context (categorical norm). Similarly, the pronunciation of consonant clusters in English varies across speakers and social settings (Labov, 1972) (variable norm),

but the placement of the definite article in English is invariable across social contexts (categorical norm). Our definition of error needs to address these two types of norm. The amended definition reads:

For some particular phenomenon to count as an error, it must

- a. be a deviation from either a socially variable or a categorical norm and
- b. warrant negative feedback.

From this definition, we can begin to discuss types of error in terms of types of norm violated. SOCIALLY VARIABLE ERRORS are context-sensitive. They are judged as unacceptable (cf. prior discussion of ways in which judgments may be realized) in some particular social context. But the appearance of the same phenomenon in some other context may not necessarily be so judged, i.e., may not count as an error. Thus, wearing a tuxedo to play baseball is an instance of a socially variable error; it is violation of the norm for that particular set of social circumstances. To wear a tuxedo at most formal balls would not count as an error. Similarly for certain speakers of English, to reduce the consonant cluster /st/ to /s/ (e.g. /faest/ to /faes/) or /nt/ to /n/ (e.g. /want/ to /wan/) may be judged as unacceptable in formal social situations, but in casual situations these reductions will go by unnoticed.

Socially variable errors contrast with CATEGORICAL ERRORS, socially insensitive deviations, whose occurrence is judged as warranting negative feedback across shifting social contexts. Someone who answers the telephone by turning it upsidedown, lifting the body and leaving the receiver to dangle has made a categorical error. Such behavior would be judged as warranting some form of negative feedback regardless of social situation. Similarly, someone who places the definite article after the noun it modifies in English, as in *Boy the cries a lot* has made a categorical error, because such a construction would be judged as unacceptable across settings, speakers, topics, genres, activities, etc.

To be able to assess linguistic features as errors and if so, their status as variable or categorical, the researcher must have a record of language use in different social contexts. It is NOT acceptable to rely on grammatical descriptions of languages, such as those characteristic of traditional grammars or typological surveys. Such descriptions are usually context-restricted, and many features of casual registers are not captured. In the case of children's speech errors, this is particularly significant, as young children are typically primarily exposed to the speech register(s) characteristic of casual family interaction.

The child language researcher may think that certain methodological difficulties associated with intuition grammars can be overcome by the recording of a caregiver's spontaneous speech to the child and to the researcher carrying out the recording. As will be demonstrated shortly, this method is not sufficient. It is likely that speech to the researcher and perhaps even speech to the child represents some formal variant of adult-adult and/or adult-child speech. The re-

searcher is typically not an intimate of the caregiver; therefore, the caregiver's speech to adult intimates must be captured, if possible to both same and different sex listeners. It may sound strange that the language to the child recorded may be formal, but particularly in middle class households, caregivers rarely display anger or annoyance or respond in a distracted manner to their children in the presence of the observer/recorder. Further, typically the caregiver is not carrying out one of the day's necessary tasks other than attending to the child. And, in the typical recording situation, the caregiver's attention is not divided among several charges. Usually the language of one caregiver to one child is captured. If formality of speech can be measured in terms of degree of attention to one's speech (Labov, 1966), then these circumstances of language use are relatively formal.

In the subsequent portions of this paper, I will relate these theoretical and methodological points to research carried out on Samoan language acquisition. As data collection was carried out relatively recently, the discussion will focus on selected features of children's language. Further, as a sociolinguistic grammar is not available and is in fact the object of ongoing research, the sociolinguistic description of adult Samoan will necessarily be rudimentary and not always quantitatively substantiated.

2. A SOCIOLINGUISTIC SKETCH OF SAMOAN

Samoan, a Polynesian language, belonging to the sub-group of Samoic-Outlier languages (Pawley, 1966, 1967; Chung, 1978) contains several sociolinguistic varieties.

2.1. Samoan View of Context

To introduce our sociolinguistic description, I first consider the place of social context in Samoan belief and value systems. This discussion draws on the analysis by Shore (1977, 1982) of contextual constraints on Samoan social behavior.

From a Samoan perspective, the idea that there is one set of norms for speaking makes little sense. As pointed out by Shore (1977, 1982), Samoans do not value consistency across social contexts. Members are expected to adapt themselves to the contingencies of different situations. Persons are not seen as having a particular personality or character, but rather all persons are seen as having many *itū* 'sides' which emerge in different settings. One's *itū* encompass both diverse social roles and diverse states of being. In this sense, one's identity is a consequence of particular social circumstances. The particular status one assumes and the mode of conduct and/or affect one displays are seen as generated by the social situation itself. To the outsider, one of the most outstanding impressions of Samoans is the quickness with which they are able to transform

their social posture. The arrival of a stranger in someone's home provokes an immediate shift in demeanor and spatial arrangement of participants. Someone who is quite drunk, when suddenly face-to-face with the local pastor, will conduct himself in a completely sober and appropriately respectful manner. Similarly emotional states rapidly shift. An injury of one party to another may receive an angry response but that response is typically quickly dissipated once compensation is provided. Similarly acts of generosity receive approval at the time they are performed but once the event is completed, they are no longer noted. In general, attitudes towards persons are not enduring—gratitude, grudges and the like rarely overstep the bounds of particular events.

The significance of context for the traditional Samoan is reflected in the range of settings to which behavior is sensitive. One's mode of conduct becomes more "proper" the more one is in the public eye (Shore, 1977, 1982): day more than nighttime, center of the village (especially the road) more than the edge of the village or the bush itself, outside one's house more than inside, center of a house more than the edge of a house, front of a house (usually closer to the road) more than back of a house. For example, a woman may leave her shoulders uncovered if inside her house, but on the road she must wear something covering her shoulders. Drinking and eating are to be done seated inside houses but certainly not on the public thoroughfares. Defecation should take place behind houses, as close to the bush as possible. Within one's house, the more dignified interactions take place in the central front area. Typically, interactions among lower status family members take place in the back and periphery of a house when persons of some importance are present.

In addition to the dimension of public versus private, the dimension of Western versus non-Western (i.e. traditional) setting strongly constrains social behavior. These institutions introduced by Western societies, such as churches, pastor's schools, and public schools, are associated with a particular code of dress and comportment. Children attending the pastor's school are expected to wear a shirt and those attending the public school wear uniforms. Outside these settings, it is common to find children barebreasted. Adults and children alike wear more clothing at a Sunday church service than at other times and settings in the village. This is the setting for women to wear broad-rimmed hats, and white, European-cut dresses or Samoan two-piece long suits. Men in this setting wear a European style shirt, a suit jacket. In other, non-Western settings within the village, men and women tend to wear brightly colored floral printed *lavalava*.

Finally, the importance of context is evident in the way in which actions of members are evaluated. An action is not viewed as right or wrong, good or bad, in isolation (i.e. as inherently of this quality). Rather, actions are talked about in terms of the particular social situation in which they are performed. A common way to evaluate an action is in terms of whether or not it *fekau* 'fits' with the situation. Disapproval is voiced as *E lē fekau* 'It doesn't fit'. Similarly, something is judged as good or bad with respect to some particular social circum-

stances. What is bad in some circumstances is good in other circumstances or what is good in some circumstances is bad in other circumstances. For example, it may be bad to throw stones under many circumstances, but it is good to throw stones when the honor of one's family is at stake. Another way of looking at this is to recognize that it would be bad to act "good" (i.e. properly) when aggressive behavior is required.

2.2. The Sociolinguistic Repertoire

2.2.1. *Tautala Lelei and Tautala Leaga*

The following description draws on a fuller study of Samoan language variation carried out by Duranti (1981) and the ethnographic descriptions of Samoan speech use by Kernan (1974) and Shore (1977, 1982).

It is common knowledge to any speaker of Samoan that there are two major ways of speaking their language. There is what is called *tautala lelei* 'good speech' and *tautala leaga* 'bad speech'. From our discussion above, the reader should realize that these descriptions must be understood as highly context-bound; they do not refer to invariably good or bad qualities of speech.

Tautala lelei and *tautala leaga* are distinguished on many levels of grammar. The most salient dimension is phonological. In *tautala lelei*, there exists a phonemic distinction between /t/ and /k/ and between /n/ and /ŋ/ (written 'g' in Samoan orthography). Thus, in *tautala lelei*, *tete* means 'shivering' but *keke* means 'cake'; *ana* means 'cave' but *aga* (/aŋa/) means 'conduct' (examples taken from Duranti, 1981, ch. 8). The bulk of the lexical items in which /k/ is used are borrowings from English, such as *ki* 'key', *kukama* 'cucumber', *kalone* 'gallon', *suka* 'sugar'.

In *tautala leaga*, the /t/ is not used and all lexical items that include /t/ in *tautala lelei* are pronounced with /k/. Thus, in *tautala leaga*, both borrowed and non-borrowed lexical items are pronounced with /k/. In *tautala leaga*, *keke* means either 'cake' or 'shivering'. Similarly the /n/ and /ŋ/ distinction is not made in *tautala leaga*, and lexical items that in *tautala lelei* include /n/ are pronounced with /ŋ/. The lexical item *ana* in *tautala lelei* becomes *aga* in *tautala leaga*.

Another phonological distinction between these varieties is that /r/ in *tautala lelei*, e.g. *Maria*, becomes /l/ in *tautala leaga*, e.g. *Malia*. These lexical items are, like the use of /k/ in *tautala lelei*, largely borrowings.

There is a folk belief, with some external historical evidence (Pratt, 1911), that *tautala lelei* was at one time the language used by high chiefs (*ali'i*), particularly on formal occasions. At the time the Bible was first translated into Samoan, it was the code used by high ranking Samoans to missionaries engaged in this project.

The link with high status and dignity continues in attitudes of many Samoans. Competence in *tautala lelei* is linked to high chiefs rather than to orators among titled persons, and to women rather than to men among untitled persons (Shore, 1977, 1982). Transvestites displaying the behavior of women will exaggerate this image, speaking not only with the /t/ and /n/ and /r/ but moving all sounds towards the front of their mouth. The perception of status and language use does not correspond to actual practice, however.

Currently, within most villages in Western Samoa, *tautala lelei* is primarily associated with Western dominated settings and institutions. It is the preferred variety in church services, church conferences, pastors' schools, village public schools, and any situation in which Samoan is addressed to a European. It is also the variety that villagers hear when they turn on their radios. Finally *tautala lelei* is the variety used not only for the Bible but for literacy materials in Samoan in general, e.g. newspapers, letters, government documents.

With respect to speakers of this variety, one finds that those trained in formal educational institutions beyond the primary school, those who have an important role in church organizations (e.g. deacons, pastors, priests, etc.) and those who have a steady job in the capital are the most frequent users of this variety.

While we have devoted considerable discussion to *tautala lelei*, it is *tautala leaga* that prevails in village social life. *Tautala leaga* is not restricted to particular statuses, but rather is universal to all members of the community. It is the variety used in all formal and informal traditional (i.e. non-Western) social situations in the village—casual interactions among family members and familiars as well as highly stylized deliberations among titled persons interacting in village council meetings. *Tautala leaga* cuts across several genres, ranging from personal narratives, tattletaling and teasing to oratory. In these contexts, *tautala leaga* is not *leaga* 'bad' but *lelei* 'good'.

As discussed by Duranti (1981), these two varieties of Samoan have methodological implications. As *tautala lelei* is linked to Western settings and to talk to a Westerner in particular, it is the medium in which a Samoan would talk to a linguist in a formal elicitation session. Thus far, what has been described of Samoan captures this variety of the language. As will be discussed below, while many features of syntax and morphology are shared, there are important structural distinctions between *tautala lelei* and *tautala leaga* (*kaukala leaga*). An analysis of errors that is based on data obtained through formal interview between native and non-native speakers runs the risk of counting as error a feature that is productive in everyday language use. That is, a verbal strategy that violates a norm in *tautala lelei* may not count as a violation in *tautala leaga*. (It may be a socially variable language error.) Further, such a procedure would lead the researcher to miss what counts as an error in *tautala leaga*, either in terms of using features of *tautala lelei* (socially variable error) or in terms of using features that do not exist in either register (categorical error).

short-

2.2.2. The Parameter of Social Distance

From the above discussion it is apparent that *tautala lelei* and *tautala leaga* are associated with different social relationships among interlocutors. Comparing the two registers, we may say that, relative to *tautala leaga*, *tautala lelei* is used in socially more distant relationships (Brown & Gilman, 1966).¹ *Tautala lelei* is generally used where relatively impersonal relationships obtain, particularly in cases in which one person addresses a large number. Most literacy materials fall into this category (one author to many readers). It is also used where speakers are not familiar with one another, as in many interactions between Samoans and non-Samoans. Thirdly, it is used where speakers, who in most contexts share an intimate relationship, wish to take distance from their addressees. For example, speakers may switch to *tautala lelei* (/t/ and /n/) to a family member to signal that they are angry with that person. The strategy of switching to the register of social distance prevails WITHIN as well as between two registers under discussion. Within the register of *tautala lelei*, relationships between language users may be more or less socially distant. For example, the relationship between author and reader or most literacy materials (e.g. newspapers, school books) is more impersonal than the relationship between Samoan and non-Samoan causally conversing with one another. Within the register of *tautala leaga*, the relationship assumed in the formal setting of ceremonial events or village councils are more distant (i.e. positional cf. Irvine, 1979) than those assumed among the same individuals engaged in causal activities (e.g. sharing a family meal or relaxing on mats after work).

The parameter of social distance is a very important contextual constraint on language use in traditional Samoan life. The move from less to more distant social relationships has linguistic reflexes in the lexicon and in the morphosyntactic structure of the language. The transition affects the organization of discourse as well, including procedures for participating in particular speech events. However, this dimension will not be considered here, and the reader is referred to Duranti (1980, 1981) for a detailed analysis of these features.

2.2.3. The Lexicon

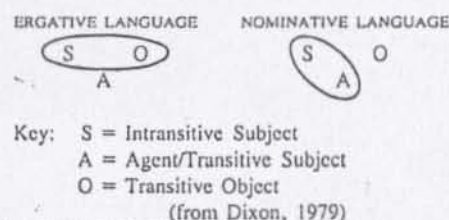
Samoan has a respect vocabulary (see Milner, 1961), used in *tautala lelei* and *tautala leaga* when referring to or speaking to persons of high status, particularly titled persons. It is also used to persons who do not have titles to whom the

¹For every generalization, there are exceptions and in this case, the exceptions are those who, because of strong church alignment, choose to use *tautala lelei* with intimates. Only one such person in the village met this description: the wife of a pastor, who is also the daughter of a pastor and who was educated in a church school in the capital. But even here, it is difficult to say that *tautala lelei* even in its fullest form is employed by this speaker. As in other sociolinguistic studies, a close examination of the speech of this speaker indicates that while /t/ is generally maintained, /n/ is variable and alternates with /ŋ/. Speakers are more self-conscious about the use of /t/ and are able to control its use more than the use of /n/, often producing /t/ and /ŋ/ pronunciation.

speaker wishes to convey deference and respect. For example, it may be used towards an untitled person to whom a particularly important request is being directed. This vocabulary, when used with titled persons, includes many items that are appropriate only to particular statuses of titled persons, e.g., only to orators, only to high chiefs. Other lexical items apply to any person who has a title. The use of these items is not characteristic of relaxed, informal interaction among familiars. A shift into the use of respect vocabulary brings into focus the political/social status of participants in an interaction. This is what occurs, for example, when a non-family member arrives for a visit or is passed on the road. The greeting will include respect vocabulary that implies the positional identity of the addressee. Once the greeting is completed, the social interaction may shift to a more intimate register, in which unmarked lexical items are used.

2.2.4. Morphology

2.2.4.1. *Ergative Casemarking*. Samoan has been described as an ergative language (Chung, 1978), that is, a language in which subjects of the transitive sentences are distinguished from subjects of intransitive sentences and in which subjects of intransitive sentences and direct objects of transitive sentences are treated (at least in some ways) as a single category (Comrie, 1978; Dixon, 1979). Such a language is fairly unusual and contrasts with the more common, nominative type of language, in which subjects of transitive and intransitive sentences are treated as one category and distinguished from the category of direct object. The difference between the two language types is represented below:



In Samoan, as in most ergative languages, the ergative distinctions are expressed through nominal casemarking. In Samoan, the transitive subject is preceded by the particle *e* when the transitive subject follows the verb (VSO, VOS, OVS). Intransitive subjects following the verb and all direct objects receive no casemarking. The difference in marking is presented in (1) and (2) below:

(1) TRANSITIVE SENTENCE:

VSO: 'ua fasi e le tama Sina
 PAST.PERF hit ERG ART boy Sina

VOS: 'ua fasi Sina e le tama
 PAST.PERF hit Sina ERG ART boy
 'The boy hit Sina.'

(2) INTRANSITIVE SENTENCE:

VS: 'olo'o moe le tama
 PRES.PROG sleep ART boy
 'The boy is sleeping.'

This case-marking system is sociolinguistically variable. Its variation is partly but not completely a function of the social distance between language users. Where social relationships are relatively impersonal and distant, there is a greater tendency for Samoans to use the ergative particle. Where intimacy prevails, language users tend not to express the ergative case marker. For example, in literacy materials and in radio broadcasts, the ergative particle is always present in the grammatically feasible environments (i.e. when transitive subject follows the verb). In face-to-face social interaction, the particle is not always expressed. The social distribution of the use of this particle in spoken Samoan is represented in Table 8.1, drawn from an earlier study of this case marker (Ochs, 1982). Table 8.1 indicates that the ergative particle *e* rarely appears in its grammatically feasible environments when the language users are members of one's own household and the setting is casual. Women in these settings use ergative case marking in only 20% of the grammatically feasible environments and men use it only 16.6%. When social distance is increased, the frequency of expressed ergative case marking is also increased. When speaking to non-family members, women more than double and men more than quadruple the frequency of use of this marker. The relation of greater social distance to increased use of the case marking ends at this point, however, given that those participating in highly formal chiefly council meetings do not use the marker more than when they are chatting to friends. It is in this sense that the use of the ergative case marker is partially sensitive to the pole of social distance.

While a statistical analysis has not been carried out for other case markers in Samoan, a first appraisal indicates that the following are also sensitive to the parameter of social distance:

2.2.4.2. *Possessive Case Marking.* Samoan has two ways to express possession. In the first, a possessive modifier is placed before the noun it modifies. The modifier is composed of a determiner (either the specific form *l(e)* or the nonspecific form *s(e)*) and a pronoun, that encodes one of two types of possession (roughly, inalienable/alienable):

short

TABLE 8.1
 Ergative Casemarking in Adult Samoan Speech
 (Canonical Transitive Declaratives, Y-N Interrogatives)

Context:	% ECM Total:	% Ergative Environmental Total:	% ECM Ergative Environments:	% Agents Expressed:
Informal language of women to female adults & to children (family members) (150 total)	4.0% (6)	20.0% (30)	20.0% (6)	40.0% (60)
Informal language of men to female/male adults & to children (family members) (60 total)	5.0% (3)	30.0% (18)	16.6% (3)	40.0% (24)
Informal language of women to female adults (non-family members) (120 total)	13.3% (16)	29.2% (35)	45.7% (16)	52.5% (63)
Informal language of men to male adults (non-family members) (50 total)	24.0% (12)	32.0% (16)	75.0% (12)	40.0% (20)
Formal language of male titled men to one another in discussion portion of village council meetings (56 total)	28.6% (16)	39.3% (22)	72.7% (16)	55.3% (31)

SPECIFIC FORMS:

<i>la'u masi</i>	'my biscuit'	<i>lo'u lima</i>	'my arm'
<i>lau masi</i>	'your biscuit'	<i>lou lima</i>	'your arm'
<i>lana masi</i>	'his/her biscuit'	<i>lona lima</i>	'his/her arm'
etc.			

NON-SPECIFIC FORMS:

<i>sa'u masi</i>	'one of my biscuits'	<i>so'u lima</i>	'one of my arms'
<i>sau masi</i>	'one of your biscuits'	<i>sou lima</i>	'one of your arms'
<i>sana masi</i>	'one of his/her biscuits'	<i>sona lima</i>	'one of his/her arms'
etc.			

The second way to express possession places a full pronoun or noun after the noun modified and marks the possessor with either the particle *a*, for alienable possession, or *o*, for inalienable possession:

<i>le</i>	<i>masi</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>a'u</i>	'my biscuit'
ART	biscuit	POSS	1.PERS	
<i>le</i>	<i>masi</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>oe</i>	'your biscuit'
ART	biscuit	POSS	2.PERS	
<i>le</i>	<i>masi</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>Sefo</i>	'Sefo's biscuit'
ART	biscuit	POSS	Sefo	
<i>le</i>	<i>lima</i>	<i>o</i>	<i>a'u</i>	'my arm'
ART	arm	POSS	1.PERS	
etc.				

The second way uses casemarking and is of interest in this discussion of morphological variation. The expression of the possessive markers *a* and *o* varies in terms of whether the social relationship among language users is relatively intimate or distant. THE MORE IMPERSONAL THE RELATIONSHIP THE GREATER THE USE OF THE POSSESSIVE MARKER. In the intimate surroundings of one's family, the marker is often dropped.

2.2.4.3. *Verbal Suffix*. In all social environments a suffix may be added to intransitive verbs, transitive verbs, and what Chung (1978) calls "middle verbs," e.g. verbs of perception, emotion, desire, cognition. This suffix has a number of forms (-*a*, -*ia*, -*ina*, -*lia*, -*fia*, etc.).

VERB	VERB + SUFFIX
<i>fai</i>	<i>faia</i>
<i>tu'u</i>	<i>tu'uina</i>
<i>alofa</i>	<i>alofugia</i>
<i>vala'au</i>	<i>vala'aulia</i>
<i>ia</i>	<i>iaia</i>

For transitive verbs, it tends to appear (Chung, 1978, p. 85) in clauses whose subjects are clitic pronouns, in relative clauses whose subjects have been removed, in clauses whose subjects appear in cleft constructions, and in clauses with deleted generic agents; it is "required" in negative imperatives and negative generic statements (Chung, 1978, p. 91).

Preliminary analysis by Duranti (1981) indicates that the CIA suffix appears both MORE FREQUENTLY and in a WIDER RANGE OF CONSTRUCTION TYPES in the highly formal meetings of chiefs (where positional identities are assumed) than in more casual interaction among men (where more personal identities are assumed). highly formal meetings of chiefs (where positional identities are assumed) than in more casual interaction among men (where more personal identities are assumed). In the formal setting, men use the suffix in the less as well as more predictable grammatical environments; in casual surroundings, the use of the suffix tends to appear only in the more predictable environments (specified above).

2.2.4.4. *Subject-Verb Agreement*. In formal, standard Samoan, many verbs 'agree with the subject in terms of number, i.e. whether the subject is singular or plural. The most common method of forming the plural consists of reduplicating the penultimate syllable of the singular form of the verb, e.g.

SINGULAR	PLURAL
<i>'ai</i>	<i>'a'ai</i>
<i>savali</i>	<i>savavali</i>
<i>moe</i>	<i>momoe</i>

Other means of forming the plural include reduplicating two or more syllables; adding the prefix *ta-* (as in *tafasi* (singular: *fasi*)) or *fe-* (as in *feinu* (singular: *inu*)); dropping a syllable; and lengthening the vowel in the first syllable of the singular form (Pratt, 1876). For certain verbs, two different lexical items are used to express the singular and plural forms of the verb. For example, the verb 'go' in the singular is *alu*; in the plural it is *o*. The verb 'come' in the singular is *sau*; in the plural it is *o mai*.

The use of subject-verb agreement is more restricted in language used among intimates than in the language of more socially distant interlocutors. As with the use of the CIA suffix, the restriction is in terms of frequency and range of constructions used. IN CASUAL SPEECH, ONE FINDS FEWER INSTANCES OF AGREEMENT AND A MORE RESTRICTED SET OF VERBS THAT ARE ALSO INFLECTED. The most common plural forms in casual speech are those of the verbs 'go', 'come', and 'eat'; outside these verbs, the use of the plural is uncommon in this context.

2.2.4.5. *Tense/Aspect Marking*. The discussion that follows will be quite preliminary, as the semantics of tense and aspect marking has not been fully analyzed.

Formal, standard Samoan is characterized by the use of seven tense/aspect markers. They include:

MARKER	TIME
<i>'e / te</i>	present (habitual), future (<i>te</i> restricted to 1st and 2nd person clitic subjects—singular, dual, plural)
<i>'o lo o</i>	present continuous
<i>'ua</i>	imperfect, action just initiated, present (with adjectives)
<i>'o le'a</i>	future
<i>na</i>	past perfect
<i>sa</i>	past imperfect

These markers appear as particles preceding the verb, e.g.

<i>'o</i>	<i>lo'o</i>	<i>moe</i>	<i>Sina</i>
PRES	PROG	sleep	Sina
'Sina is sleeping.'			

'ua alu Sina
IPFV go Sina
'Sina has gone.'

'e alu 'oe?
FUT go you
'Are you going?'

The most common social context for these tense/aspect markers is in literate Samoan, particularly books and newspapers, where language users are socially distant from one another. In spontaneous spoken Samoan, these forms (in *tautala leaga* pronunciation) are used much less frequently, particularly in the casual environment of one's own household. In these latter contexts, two alternatives are characteristic. Either the tense/aspect marker is completely omitted as in (1) below:

(1) P17-051

A: Ae vaai, ou alifo ā
But see I.CLITIC go:over PARTICLE (TAG)
Laku laku o le. (pause)
go:DEICTIC go:DEICTIC there
avaku le mea i le oki
give:DEICTIC (take) the thing to the dead
'But you see, I went over, you know?
I went—went there, (PAUSE)
took the thing to the dead one.'

or an alternative marker is used. The alternate may be a REDUCED FORM OF ONE OF THE MARKERS used in standard Samoan. Tuitele and Kneubuhl (1978) mention that the marker 'o lo 'o may be reduced to 'o and that 'o le 'ā may be reduced to 'ā. In our transcripts of casual conversation, 'a is not common; future time tends to be expressed through the particles *la'a*, *lā* and *la*, producing such utterances as:

la'a	}	alu
lā		
la		
FUT	}	go

I	}	will go.'
you		
he		

la'u alu
FUT.1.CL go
'I will go.'

la'e alu
FUT.2.CL go
'You will go.'

The tense/aspect particles *la'a*, *lā*, and *la* are very frequently used in conversation transcribed in our study. The underlying form of these particles is not clear. One possibility is that they are reduced forms of 'o le 'ā, i.e.,

- (i) 'o le 'ā
- (ii) ('o → ø) la'ā
- (iii) (' → ø) leā
- (iv) (e → ø) lā

A second possibility is that *lā* is to be understood as a distinct morpheme. *Lā* is a deictic adverb or pronoun, meaning 'there' or 'that', 'those' (in speaker's sight, not far away). In this case, *lā* may be combined with the particle 'ā to form *la'a*, *lā* (deleting glottal stop, which is also common in casual speech) or *la* (reducing vowel length, again a common process in casual speech).

Support for the second of these hypotheses comes from the use of *la* to mark other dimensions of time. The particle *la* may precede the tense/aspect marker 'e forming *lae* (again deleting the glottal stop). The particle *lae* is used only for third person subjects and denotes present tense. The sentence *lae moe* means roughly 'There (now) he sleeps'. *La* also may precede the marker 'ua to become *lāua*, *laua*, or *lauā*. These forms express action (of a third person) that has started but is not completed. Hence, the sentence *laua moe* means roughly 'He/She has just gone to (go to) sleep (but is not yet sleeping)'.

In addition to *la*, the deictic forms *lea* (meaning 'this' or 'that' or 'now') and *loa* ('now') are used before the verb in casual speech instead of the present future tense marker 'elte, e.g. *loa alu* can mean '(I) am about to go'. The semantics of these deictic forms has not been sufficiently researched to establish their scope and use as tense/aspect markers.

This brief discussion brings out two important points. First that IN DESCRIBING THE ACQUISITION OF TENSE/ASPECT MARKING, ONE MUST CONSIDER NOT ONLY THE SYSTEM DESCRIBED FOR STANDARD SAMOAN. THE CHILD'S USE OF DEICTIC FORMS FOR EXPRESSING TIME AS WELL AS OMISSION OF ANY MARKING OF TIME IS NOT A CATEGORICAL ERROR BUT PART OF THE LANGUAGE MODEL TO WHICH THE CHILD IS EXPOSED (AND PROBABLY TO WHICH THE CHILD IS MOST EXPOSED).

The second important point to note is that CASUAL SPEECH IS NOT TO BE THOUGHT OF AS A PALER OR LESS ELABORATE VERSION OF STANDARD SPEECH.

Our observations indicate that tense/aspect may receive more complex marking (e.g. deictic forms plus particles) in the speech of familiars than in the speech and writing) of socially more distant language users.

2.2.4.6. *The Particles 'i and i.* In standard Samoan, the particles 'i and i are used as case markers. The particle 'i marks directionality (goal), causality, instrumentality, and 'aboutness' (Tuitele & Kneubuhl, 1978, p. 61):

- (2) Examples of 'i
(from Tuitele + Kneubuhl, 1978, pp. 57-61)²

DIRECTIONALITY:

Tū 'i luga
stand DIR up
'Stand up.'

CAUSALITY:

Na 'ou sau 'i le fa'alevelave
PAST 1.CL come CAUS ART significant:event
'I came because of the significant event.'

INSTRUMENTALITY (in sense of material from which something is made or changed):

Na fau le fale 'i laupapa ma simā
PAST construct ART house INSTR timber CONJ cement
'They made the house with timber and cement.'

ABOUTNESS:

Na 'ou pese 'i le Atua
PAST 1.CL sing ABOUT ART God
'I sang about God.'

The particle *i* marks time; location (not in the sense of goal); the objects of a class of verbs (called semi-transitive (Churchward, 1926), middle verbs (Chung, 1978), and intransitive verbs (Tuitele & Kneubuhl, 1978)) that include verbs of perception, emotion, desire, and cognition, among others; instrumentality; and comparison:

- (3) Examples of *i*
(from Tuitele & Kneubuhl, 1978, pp. 59-60)³

² Only the Samoan examples are taken from Tuitele and Kneubuhl. Word-by-word and free glosses as well as certain sub-headings are not from this source.

TIME:

Na matou ō i le lu
PAST we:EXCL go TEMP ART two
'We went at two.'

LOCATION:

'Ou te nofo i Masefau
1.CL PRES live LOC Masefau
'I live in Masefau.'

OBJECT ASSOCIATED WITH SEMI-TRANSITIVE/MIDDLE/INTRANSITIVE VERB:

'Ou te alofa iā 'oe
1.CL PRES love OBJ you
'I love you.'

'Ou te fa'alogo iā 'oe
1.CL PRES hear OBJ you
'I hear you.'

INSTRUMENTALITY (in sense of item used or item that affects one):

Na 'ou lavea i le fao
PAST 1.CL cut:TRANS INSTR ART nail
'The nail cut/injured me.' or 'I was cut by the nail.'

COMPARISON:

'E sili Sina iā 'oe
PRES beyond Sina COMP you
'Sina is better than you'

While the two particles are distinguished phonologically in careful registers of Samoan, they are not in the more casual social environments of language use. Where interlocutors are familiar with one another and the situation is relatively informal, the glottal stop is deleted, removing the one feature that differentiates the two particles. The dropping of the glottal stop is related not only to relatively less attention paid to speaking but also to increased speed of speech characteristic of casual interactions. With the exception of certain formulaic genres (e.g. kava calling, greetings), formal speech is relatively slower than informal speech.

2.2.5. *Word Order*

Samoan has several possible orderings of full, major constituents. For all constructions, the preferred order is VERB-INITIAL, i.e. intransitives as VERB SUBJECT and transitives (with three full constituents) as either VERB SUBJECT OBJECT or VERB OBJECT SUBJECT. This preference cuts across social distance and

degrees of formality of settings (Duranti, 1980). The second major preference when all constituents are expressed is SUBJECT VERB and SUBJECT VERB OBJECT word orders. Other possible, but less frequently used word orders are OBJECT VERB SUBJECT and SUBJECT OBJECT VERB.

(4) Examples of word order

INTRANSITIVES:

VS: 'Ua sau Pesio
IPFV come Pesio

SV: 'O Pesio 'ua sau
TOPIC Pesio IPFV come
'Pesio has come.'

CANONICAL TRANSITIVES:

VSO: Na usu e Tala le pese
PAST sing ERG Tala ART song

VOS: Na usu le pese e Tala
PAST sing ART song ERG Tala

SVO: 'O Tala na usu le pese
TOP Tala PAST sing ART song

OVS: 'O le pese na usu e Tala
TOP ART song PAST sing ERG Tala
'Tala sang the song.'

SEMI-TRANSITIVES/MIDDLE VERB CONSTRUCTIONS:

VSX:⁴ 'E inoino le pālagi i le
PRES feel:disgust/despise ART white:man OBJ ART
falevao lale.
outhouse there

VXS: 'E inoino i le falevao lele
PRES feel:disgust/despise OBJ ART outhouse there
le pālagi
ART white:man

SVX: 'O le pālagi e inoino le
TOP ART white:man PRES feel:disgust/despise ART
falevao lale
outhouse there

XVS: 'O le falevao lale e inoino
TOP ART outhouse there PRES feel:disgust/despise

iai le pālagi.
COPY.PRO ART white:man

'The whiteman is disgusted at/despises the outhouse over there.'

In Samoan, both intransitive and transitive subjects may be represented by a clitic pronoun as well as by a full pronoun or noun. While full pronoun and noun subjects may appear in any of the above word orders, clitic pronoun subjects have only one possible position, that of before the verb.

(5) Examples of clitic subject word order

SV: 'Ou te alu
I.CL FUT go
'I will go.'

SVO: 'Ou te usu le pese
I.CL FUT sing ART song

OSV: 'O le pese 'ou te usu
TOP ART song I.CL FUT sing

*VSO: 'e usu 'ou le pese
FUT sing I.CL ART song

Comparing constructions with clitic vs. full subjects, we can see that the notion of error is easier to assess in the former than in the latter constructions. In the case of clitic subject constructions there is only one acceptable position for the clitic pronoun (i.e. before the verb) and the range of possible word orders is restricted. In the case of full subject constructions, the subject pronoun or noun may appear both before and after the verb, yielding a wider range of acceptable word orders.

2.2.5.1. *Word Order and Focus.* Word order has been widely discussed as responsive to the speaker's intentions and the speaker's perception of interlocutors' knowledge (cf. discussions of topic, new, old, given information in Li, 1976, and Givón, 1979, for example). Word order in Samoan is not the only means of differentiating what is the information focus (Chomsky, 1971) from old, background information. There are intonational means, a wide range of emphatic particles that apply to verbs, adverbs, adjectives, and nominal forms, suffixes that can be added to transitive and middle verbs, reduplication of verb, code switching of single lexical items from *tautala lelei* (t/n) to *tautala leuga* (k/ŋ) or vice versa. Indeed, as will be discussed below, THE EXPRESSION OF ALL THREE MAJOR CONSTITUENTS IS IN ITSELF A MARKED FORM OF LANGUAGE USE AND SIGNALS A TYPE OF EMPHASIS NOT CONVEYED WHEN ONLY THE VERB OR VERB AND ONE CONSTITUENT IS EXPRESSED.

The availability and frequent use of these alternate means of highlighting and backgrounding make it difficult to discuss the relation of word order in Samoan

⁴X represents either direct object or indirect object (depending upon whether these constructions are considered as transitives or not).

to these informational functions. Placing a full NP in sentence-initial position before the verb with the accompanying topic marker 'o is a means of focusing on the referent expressed in this position (e.g. SVO, OVS, IOVOS, LocVS etc.). This does not mean, however, that the speaker cannot focus on that referent using other word orders. Just as the topic marker 'o is used to indicate emphasis or focus for items appearing in sentence-initial position, so other markers are used to the same end on items appearing after the verb.

(6) Examples of emphatic particles in verb-initial constructions

(a) Particle *fo'i*: emphasis on verbs⁵
P17-099

A: *Fiu fo'i guku e ai mea pālāgi*
fed:up EMPH mouths COMPL eat things foreign
mea pālāgi mea pālāgi
things foreign things foreign

'Our mouths are FEDUP with eating foreign food, foreign food, foreign food.'

(b) Particle *a*: emphasis on verb
P8-272

I: *Sa'o a oe*
Right EMPH you
'You are RIGHT.'

(c) Particle *a*: emphasis on predicate adjective
lak 1-2-272

Iul: *E ulavale a Vaa*
is naughty EMPH Vaa
'Vaa is certainly naughty.'

(d) Particle *ia*: emphasis on adjective
lak 1-2-111

P: *Faikala vatea ia*
Say:stories bad EMPH
'She says BAD words.'

(e) Particle *ia*: emphasis on predicate adjective
lak 1-2-271

⁵Examples of spontaneous speech are marked by a transcript catalogue number, e.g. P59-062, PV, etc. The transcripts capture fairly closely what speakers actually expressed and will include variable and idiosyncratic ways of speaking. In examples of child language, speech of the child under study is placed to the left of the speech of others participating in the interaction. To represent the velar /ŋ/ in Samoan, I use the conventional orthographic symbol 'g' adopted by Samoans. Conventions for marking overlap and other conversational phenomena are drawn from conversation analysis (Schenkein, 1978).

Iul: *Au: Kankalaikiki ia Vaa*
? cheeky EMPH Vaa
'Vaa is really cheeky.'

2.2.5.2. *Word Order, Social Identity and Social Distance.* While word order has been discussed with respect to communicative intentions, it has not been discussed in terms of social identity of speakers and/or social relationship obtaining among language users. A preliminary analysis of adult use of word order by Duranti (1981) and Ochs (1980) indicates that there are significant differences in preferred word orders between male speakers and female speakers (social identity) as well as between more and less intimate interlocutors (social distance). These differences are displayed in Tables 8.2, 8.3, and 8.4 below: Table 8.2 presents word order preferences across a range of social contexts for CANONICAL TRANSITIVES with all three full constituents expressed. The data base is exactly that described earlier for the analysis of ergative case marking. Table 8.3 reorganizes these data in terms of sex of speaker and indicates that MEN AND WOMEN DIFFER IN THEIR PREFERENCE FOR VSO AND SVO WORD ORDERS. The most striking difference concerns the use of SVO; the percentage of use of SVO by women is nearly five times that by men (37.5% vs 7.89%). With respect to VSO ordering, on the other hand, the percentage of use by men is one and a half times that by women (44.7% vs 28.1%). Looking at the data in terms of whether or not the speaker is speaking to a family member (collapsing informal and

TABLE 8.2
Word-Order Preferences: Canonical Transitives
with Three Full Constituents

	VSO	VOS	SVO	OVS
Women				
Family				
(23)	.217 (5)	.348 (8)	.348 (8)	.087 (2)
Men				
Family				
(15)	.266 (4)	.666 (10)	—	.0666 (1)
Informal Women				
Non-family				
(14)	.286 (4)	.357 (5)	.286 (4)	.071 (1)
Informal Men				
Non-family				
(6)	.666 (4)	.166 (1)	.166 (1)	—
Men				
Formal				
Form				
(17)	.529 (9)	.176 (3)	.118 (2)	.176 (3)
TOTAL 75	.347 (26)	.36 (27)	.20 (15)	.093 (7)

TABLE 8.3
Word-Order Preferences
and Sex of Speaker

	VSO	VOS	SVO	OVS
Men (38)	.447 (17)	.368 (14)	.0789 (3)	.105 (4)
Women (32)	.281 (9)	.406 (13)	.375 (12)	.031 (1)

formal speaking-out situations, and men's and women's speech), we can see that VSO IS MORE PREFERRED (2:1) IN SPEAKING-OUT SOCIAL CONTEXTS AND VOS IS MORE PREFERRED IN SPEAKING-IN CONTEXTS (I.E. IN SPEECH TO OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS). THE DISPREFERENCE OF VSO BY WOMEN AND IN INTIMATE CONTEXTS IS AN IMPORTANT SOCIAL FACT AND WILL BE RETURNED TO LATER IN OUR DISCUSSION OF THE ACQUISITION OF WORD ORDER PREFERENCES BY YOUNG SAMOAN CHILDREN.

The reader should note here that these data counter previous typological accounts of Samoan (Greenberg, 1966; Chung, 1978) in which Samoan (as a Polynesian language) has been described as having a basic (and most frequent) word order of verb-subject-object. As can be seen here the idea of BASIC word order must be reassessed in terms of BASIC FOR PARTICULAR SOCIAL AND LINGUISTIC CONTEXTS. It doesn't appear to be basic in the sense of norm for speakers and for both men and women in intimate surroundings.

2.2.5.3. *Expression and Non-expression of Subjects and Objects.* While most studies of word order examine sentences in which all major constituents are expressed, there are certain languages, like Samoan, in which such sentences are not that frequent in spoken registers. We can get some idea of the relative presence of major constituents by examining again the data on transitive assertions across contexts.

TABLE 8.4
Word-Order Preferences:
Speech to Family vs. Non-Family

	VSO	VOS	SVO	OVS
SPEAKING IN (men & women) (38)	.237 (9)	.474 (18)	.211 (8)	.079 (3)
SPEAKING OUT (men & women) (37)	.459 (17)	.243 (9)	.189 (9)	.108 (4)

TABLE 8.5
Percentage of Canonical Transitives
(Declaratives & Yes-No Interrogatives
with Simple Subject, Verb and Object)

	FULL S+V+O	CLITIC S+V+O	TOTAL S+V+O
Women Family (150 total)	15.3% (23)	4.70% (7)	20% (30)
Men Family (60 total)	25% (15)	6.7% (4)	31.7% (19)
Informal Women to Non-Family (120 total)	11.7% (14)	2.5% (3)	14.2% (17)
Informal Men to Non-family (50 total)	12% (6)	6% (3)	18% (9)
Men to Men in Formal Village Council (56 total)	30.3% (17)	10.7% (6)	41% (23)
TOTAL AVERAGE: 436	17.2% (75)	5.3% (23)	22.5% (98)

Table 8.5 displays the relative presence of canonical transitive assertions with subject, verb, and object all expressed. Constructions with clitic and full subjects are represented and analyzed separately as well as together. Combining all contexts, we see that SENTENCES WITH ALL THREE CONSTITUENTS CONSTITUTE ONLY 22.5% OF THE TOTAL CORPUS OF CANONICAL TRANSITIVE DECLARATIVES AND YES-NO INTERROGATIVES. If we look at those constructions with a FULL subject (a full pronoun or noun phrase) and verb and object, we can see that the percentage drops even further to 17.2% of the corpus.⁶

These figures suggest that great care must be taken in comparing pragmatic aspects of word order across languages. IN A LANGUAGE LIKE SAMOAN, THE EXPRESSION OF A SUBJECT AND/OR OBJECT IS IN ITSELF A MARKED STRATEGY. Thus, to mention a referent in these syntactic roles is itself a means of drawing increased attention to that referent. The reader should keep in mind that absence of a subject is usually accompanied by absence of any agreement marking on the verb. Thus, in Samoan, when the subject is not expressed, it is not specified elsewhere through grammatical means. This means that we cannot make a direct comparison with the non-expression of subjects in languages where agreement functions across registers (e.g. Italian).

The relative markedness of expressing both subject and object is also of considerable import to understanding the acquisition of word order by Samoan children. WE CANNOT ASSESS THE INFREQUENT EXPRESSION OF THESE MAJOR

⁶For percentages of canonical transitive declaratives and yes-no interrogatives with subjects expressed (i.e. both ± objects expressed), see Table 8.1.

TABLE 8.6
Percentage of Canonical Transitives with Subject,
Verb + Object: Sex of Speaker

	FULL S+V+O	CLITIC S+V+O	TOTAL S+V+O
Women (270)	13.7% (37)	3.7% (10)	17.4% (47)
Men (166)	22.9% (38)	7.8% (13)	30.7% (51)

CONSTITUENTS IN CHILD LANGUAGE AS AN ERROR. We cannot bring to bear a notion such as "deletion transformation" (Bloom, 1970) to account for the nonoccurrence of the constituents under discussion here. Rather, we must look at what children are doing as acquiring the pertinent syntactic features of spoken Samoan. Indeed, if Samoan children were to express agents and patients in the majority of their utterances, we might want to say that then they would have violated a speech norm. In contrast to the many studies of acquisition of word order in English, the relative NON-EXPRESSION OF MAJOR CONSTITUENTS INDICATES COMPETENCE.

Tables 8.6 and 8.7 display the use of all three constituents in canonical transitive declaratives and yes-no interrogatives according to sex of speaker and according to social distance between speaker and addressee.

Glancing first at Table 8.7, we can see that THERE ARE NO SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES IN THE USE OF THESE CONSTRUCTIONS AS SOCIAL DISTANCE INCREASES OR DECREASES. This result has interest in that it indicates that an increase or decrease in the amount of shared information between interlocutors does NOT trigger non-expression/expression of subject and/or object. Future research will have to substantiate this point, but it appears as if the expression of all constituents has an emphatic or focusing function rather than a strictly referential function.

TABLE 8.7
Percentage of Canonical Transitives with Subject,
Verb + Object: Speech to Family vs. Non-Family

	FULL S+V+O	CLITIC S+V+O	TOTAL S+V+O
SPEAKING IN (to family) (210)	18.1% (38)	5.2% (11)	23.3% (49)
SPEAKING OUT (to non-family) (226)	16.4% (37)	5.3% (12)	21.7% (49)

Table 8.6 indicates that there are differences between male and female speakers in their use of three constituent transitives. Such constructions account for 17.4% of women's transitives and 30.7% of men's.

2.3. Concluding Remarks on Sociolinguistic Sketch

Considerations of time and space and current state of research have constrained the scope of this sketch. There are many areas of grammatical structure not considered here and the reader is referred to Pratt (1911), Milner (1961, 1966, 1973), Pawley (1966) Tuitele, Sāpolu and Kneubuhl (1978), Tuitele and Kneubuhl (1978), Chung (1978) and Duranti (1981) for fuller descriptions.

In summary, we see that many but not all aspects of the language are sensitive to social distance. Among the most affected features are the use of /t/ and /k/, /n/ and /ŋ/, the glottal stop; respect vocabulary; ergative casemarking; possessive casemarking; transitive suffix; subject-verb agreement; tense/aspect marking; and ordering of subject, verb, and object. Among the least affected by social distance are the case marker *i* (to mark directionality, causality, time, location, objects of middle verbs, etc.) and the extent of expression/non-expression of subjects and objects. We have seen as well that other parameters of social context affect grammatical structure, for example, formality/informality (which is closely related to social distance) and sex of speaker.

A responsible account of acquisition of Samoan has to consider the sociological patterning of language use. Any assessment of error must be based on knowledge of of variable and categorical features of the language. This knowledge is best captured by a sociolinguistic grammar. Such a grammar has not been provided here, simply the outlines of such an endeavour.

3. SOURCES OF DATA

3.1. Setting

As noted in the introduction, the research on which this analysis is based was carried out in the village of Falefā on the island of Upolu, Western Samoa. The village lies about 18 miles from the capital Apia and takes approximately 45 minutes to reach by private vehicle. The village is quite large by Samoan standards, approximately 1200 residents. Slightly over half of the population is under the age of 15, with the average number of children per family being six.

The village contains a number of extended family households. Each family elects certain individuals to hold titles (*matai*) and represent the family in inter-village, village, and domestic affairs. Typically member families of a larger household will live in close proximity of one another, either in a single cleared compound or in neighboring compounds. Each nuclear family usually has a separate dwelling in the compound, but as the traditional dwelling has no walls,

families have constant visual and auditory access to one another's homes throughout the day.

3.2. Subjects

In accordance with our disinclination to compare children's spontaneous speech behavior exclusively to accounts of Samoan based on grammaticality judgments, our research group collected and analyzed everyday speech behavior of BOTH adult and child members of this community. In this way, features of children's speech would be matched with the adult speech to which children were exposed. A broad range of adult speakers and settings was captured, representing casual and formal language use of both titled and untitled men and women within the village. A total of 50 hours of audio recording were collected. 26½ hours of which were transcribed and translated *in loco*, in cooperation with participants to the interactions recorded and/or other native speakers. This project was under the direction of A. Duranti.

The collection of children's speech was carried out by M. Platt and myself. We focused our recording on six children from six different households, ranging from 19 to 35 months at the onset of the study. All of these children had at least one other sibling and a large group of age-mates within their family compounds. These children closely interact with one another, those close in age forming play groups (which, in turn became peer groups on which one relies throughout life). A total of 17 other children under the age of 6 were intermittently present during recording sessions.

3.3. Recording Schedule

Five of the six focus children were recorded every five weeks. Three to four hours of audio and a half hour of video recording were made at each interval. The youngest child (19 months), at the late single word stage, was videotaped each month for 30 minutes. This child was a member of the family compound in which we lived, and our recording was supplemented by daily but casual observation. Three children were recorded over a period of 9 months, two over a period of 8 months and the youngest over a period of 7 months. A total of 128 hours of audio and 20 hours of video recording of these children were collected and transcribed in the field. As in the adult study, transcription and interpretation involved the cooperation of either participants to the interactions recorded or neighbors familiar with the families recorded.

4. OVERALL COURSE OF DEVELOPMENT

The acquisition study focuses on acquisition of two phonological registers (*tautala lelei* and *tautala leaga*), word-order strategies, and expression of ergativity. Young children begin using the phonological features of both registers at the

single-word stage, but do not use them in the appropriate social contexts until they are well into the multi-word stage (2-2½ years old).

With respect to word order, younger children display a preference for verb-initial sequences, and for preserving the verb and patient as a contiguous unit. In utterances containing three major constituents, verb-agent-patient order is dispreferred. These preferences and dispreferences match those of adults, particularly women, speaking in intimate contexts. The pattern found in both adult and child word order in this sample runs counter to typological accounts of Samoan, which characterize it as a verb-subject-object language (Greenberg, 1966). Such an account represents most closely careful Samoan (cf. Table 8.4), indicating that word order should be examined as a sociolinguistic variable and register-sensitive.

The very preliminary study of clitic pronouns indicates that children use them in the obligatory grammatical environment (i.e. before the verb) and evidence no errors with respect to their position. The preverbal position of clitic pronouns is a categorical (i.e. socially invariable) norm in adult Samoan speech.

With respect to presence/absence of major constituents, children display a dispreference for utterances containing agents with/without patients. This dispreference matches adult usage patterns as well. Children and adults differ only in the frequency of non-expression of these major constituents. As non-expression of major constituents is a frequent characteristic of spoken Samoan across different social contexts, children's utterances of this type should be seen as well-formed rather than as an expression of linguistic incompetence. In this sense, the correlation of language development with (increasing) expression of major constituents (applied to English) does not apply to Samoan.

The results of the ergativity study indicate that ergative case marking is acquired relatively late. The children in our sample evidenced little or no use of the marker. This could be partially accounted for on the basis of perceptually-distressful surface features of the particle, e.g. that it is preposed, unstressed. However, the most important factor appears to be that the particle is not a distinguishing characteristic of intimate, casual speech nor is it common in the speech of women. These social conditions match closely the environment of the language-acquiring child. Again, the pattern displayed in the speech of young children matches an adult norm for a particular social context. In the setting of the household where women and children are casually conversing, the child's nonexpression of the ergative particle is not an error but a sociolinguistic norm.

On the other hand, these results do not indicate that ergative distinctions are not expressed in the speech of young children. A study of intransitive and transitive word order patterns reveal that children express these distinctions through word order. Children reserve the position following the verb for major arguments of intransitive verbs and for patients (absolutive constituents) but exclude agents (ergative constituents) from this position.

The language errors of young Samoan children can be discussed in terms of two types of error: socially variable errors and categorical errors. Errors of the

first type, i.e. errors that are social context-bound, include using *tautala leiga* 'bad speech' where *tautala lelei* 'good speech' register is appropriate; overgeneralizing use of /t/ to lexical borrowings which should remain in the /k/ in standard *tautala lelei*. Categorical errors in the speech of young children include the overgeneralization of /t/ to morphemes that should in standard *tautala lelei* take /n/, or some other phonological form; overgeneralization of /ŋ/ to morphemes that in standard *tautala lelei* should take /n/. (For certain speakers of Samoan, overgeneralization of /t/ to lexical borrowings with /k/ counts as a categorical error rather than as a socially variable error.)

5. ACQUISITION OF TWO PHONOLOGICAL REGISTERS

5.1. Developmental Sequence

The reader will recall that Samoan has two major registers of speech, *tautala lelei*, in which /t/ and /k/, and /n/ and /ŋ/, are distinguished, and *tautala leiga*, in which only /k/ and /ŋ/ are used (in place of the above distinctions). *Tautala lelei* is associated with Western-introduced situations, although it probably was once associated with the competence of high chiefs. *Tautala leiga* is associated with local, traditional situations, including formal and informal social interactions (Shore, 1977, 1982).

Most children will hear predominantly *tautala leiga* in their waking hours. *Tautala leiga* is the norm in interactions within the village. However, every child is brought to church weekly (usually twice each Sunday) from infancy, where she/he hears sermons and hymns in *tautala lelei*. Further, as young children are cared for by older siblings, they will hear lexical items, routines, and songs in *tautala lelei* from the latter's school experience. Many households have radios and the children will hear *tautala lelei* through this medium. They will also hear family members switch into *tautala lelei* (as described in section 2.2.2 above), as an emphatic device. Finally, and perhaps, most importantly, children from a very young age are socialized into PERFORMANCE. They will be taught Bible verses, hymns, the alphabet, and a series of Biblical facts to be memorized and displayed around the age of 2 years. The transmission of this knowledge and its display are couched in *tautala lelei*.

The acquisition of these two registers was first examined by Kernan (1974) and subsequently considered by Shore (1977). Kernan carried out a longitudinal study of language acquisition on the island of Manu'a in American Samoa. His study of these two codes relied on spontaneous language use and an elicited imitation task involving lexical items with the relevant phonological features (/t/ /k/ /n/ /ŋ/). He concluded that children acquired competence in three stages. At Stage I (from 2;2 to 3;2 years), the children could comprehend both registers but

in their spontaneous production they used only one register and that register was usually *tautala lelei*. They tended to intimate all items in the register they produced spontaneously. At Stage II (from 3;6 to 4;2 years), children used *tautala leiga* in their spontaneous speech. They were generally accurate in imitating lexical items in both registers but there were errors due to overuse of the /k/ /ŋ/ register. At Stage III (from 3;10 to 5;1 years), children continued to use *tautala leiga* spontaneously. However, in the imitation task, the children made many errors due to overuse of features of *tautala lelei*. In particular, they overgeneralized the rule that shifts /ŋ/ to /n/ in *tautala lelei*. As noted earlier, *tautala lelei* contains both these phonemes, e.g. the word for 'person' in *tautala lelei* is /taŋata/; the word for 'touch/get' is /taŋo/. Hearing in a lexical item with the /t/ and /ŋ/, these children imitated it with /n/.

From the point of view of errors, these results indicate that COMPETENCE IN A REGISTER MAY BE DISPLAYED THEN LOST. Children in Kernan's Stage II displayed fewer errors than those in Stage III. Shore (1977, 1982) relates this phenomenon to the child's emerging understanding of the elicited imitation task as a type of situation that calls for *tautala lelei*, i.e., one of a school-like routine with an outsider present. Children at Stage II do not yet define the task in these terms and are not caught between the specific demands of the imitation task and the cultural demands associated with a social situation.

Many of Kernan's observations were matched in our longitudinal study in Western Samoa. Certain important differences, however, emerged from the data gathered in the latter study. Most importantly, every child in our study had some competence in *tautala lelei* and *tautala leiga* phonological systems. This competence was observed FROM THE SINGLE WORD STAGE ON. AT THE EARLIEST STAGE OBSERVED (LATE SINGLE WORD, 19 MONTHS), THE ALTERNATION BETWEEN /t/ AND /k/ APPEARED TO BE PHONOLOGICALLY RATHER THAN SOCIALLY CONDITIONED. The use of /k/ was overwhelmingly (91.9%) followed by the vowel /a/; the use of /t/ was followed by the vowel /i/ (40%) as well as the vowel /a/ (50.9%). The overriding constraint of the vocalic environment is seen in the child's repetitions of caregiver speech. For example, in (7) below, the caregiver uses the word *kiki*, a borrowing from the English 'kick'. As noted earlier, borrowings with /k/ should in standard Samoan (*tautala lelei*) remain in the /k/. As can be seen, however, the child repeats the item as /titi/.

(7) Kalavini, 19 months (/ki/ repeated as /ti/)

Mother: *Kiki Vini*
 Kick Kalavini
 'Kick it, Vini.'
Kiki
 Kick
 'Kick it.'

Child: *Ai titil*
See? Kick.

Similarly, items presented by a caregiver with /t/ followed by /a/ are often repeated by the child as /k/ with /a/. For example, in (8) below, the adult utters the name *Mareta* (the name of one researcher) and the child repeats it as /kukaka/:

(8) Kalavini, 19 months (/ta/ repeated as /ka/)

Mother: *Mareta*
Mareta

Child: *Kakaka*
Mareta

It should be noted here that the particular child observed at the single word stage was far more exposed to *tautala lelei* than any other child in the village. As specified in footnote 1, the child's mother is both the wife and daughter of a pastor and educated in a church school in which *tautala lelei* is the norm. This child spent much of the day with this mother, who used *tautala lelei* with some modification (see footnote 1). His father and younger caregivers in the household tended to use *tautala leaga*. I mention this background to indicate that even in this environment, the child used /k/ about as often as /t/ (and in non-borrowings). In a count of all syllables that contain either a /t/ or a /k/, this child at 19 months produced /k/ for 53% and /t/ for 47% of the corpus.

At 20 months, this child, Kalavini, continued to use both /k/ and /t/ but the conditions of use differ from the earlier data. Familiar, previously learned lexical items are uttered in both /t/ and /k/. New items, particularly those learned in the context of rote repetition from his mother, tend to be produced in the /t/, with only borrowings in the /k/. Unlike his earlier behavior, Kalavini is nearly always accurate in his repetitions of caregiver speech.

By 23 months, Kalavini's speech (now solidly into the multi-word stage) shifts to a much greater use of /k/, although /t/ is maintained as well to some extent. This shift corresponds to a move away from his mother towards greater alignment with peers and child caregivers. Such a shift was occasioned by the birth of a younger sister. Relying predominantly on /k/ pronunciation, Kalavini tends to make many more errors in rote repetition tasks and in formal instruction about Biblical facts (which should occasion use of /t/).

By 2½ years, all the children of this age in our study were able to use both *tautala lelei* and *tautala leaga* in socially appropriate contexts to a limited extent. The phonologically conditioned use of /t/ and /k/, /n/ and /ŋ/ was superseded by socially conditioned use of these phonological variants. This observation indicates a much earlier productive competence in the two registers than was reported in the Kernan study.

5.2. Variation and Error in Use of *Tautala Lelei*

In this section, I discuss deviations from standard *tautala lelei*. I consider both adult and child language deviations. The discussion focuses on deviation as constituting an error or not, and if so, as variable or categorical error. Further, each deviation is described in terms of its relation to a standard norm, e.g. as an underapplication, overapplication, etc. of a norm.

Let us consider the registers *tautala lelei* and *tautala leaga* as sets and the phonological features that distinguish them as members of these sets. In standard *tautala lelei*, the features /t/, /k/, /n/, /ŋ/ all are members. The speaker of standard *tautala lelei* knows which lexical items are to be produced in the /k/ (e.g. borrowings) and /n/ (e.g. /tanata/) and which are to be produced in the /t/ and /n/.

In both adult and child speech, three major deviations from these cooccurring features are found: (1) underuse of /t/ and /n/; (2) overgeneralizations of /t/ and /n/ to exceptions; (3) overgeneralization of /t/ to /n/ and other environments.

5.2.1. Underuse of /t/ and /n/

In the first instance, we find adults and children producing utterances that mix features of *tautala leaga* with those of *tautala lelei*. The mixing may involve use of /t/ plus /k/ (in non-borrowing) or use of /t/ plus /ŋ/ (in inappropriate lexical item). The mixing may take place within a single lexical item or within a single utterance or larger unit such as genre (same song, recitation, etc.). Examples of register mixing are provided below:

(9) Example of /t/ plus /k/: Adult
P59-070

(A speaking to daughter):

A: *Se fai a oe mea!*
Please do EMPH you things

'Please do your things!'

→ *Tai ou vae ma (kusi) le api*
'Fold your legs and write the notebook

'Fold your legs and write (in) the notebook.'

(10) Example of /t/ plus /k/: Child
Pesio, 2;9

(Pesio and her classificatory sibling M., are looking at pictures with researcher E. E. speaks in the /t/, M. in the /k/ and P. in both registers.)

	<i>Pesio</i>		<i>Others</i>
→	<i>i</i>	<i>(Istou)</i>	<i>pusi, (h)</i>
	Here?	your?:PL	cat

→ *nu(e) ie ta'avale*
and the truck
'Here is your cut and the truck.'

E: *Tavale LAPO'A*
Truck big
'A BIG truck.'

→ *I Tavale e okou*
Truck of you:PL
'YOUR truck.'

M: *I Ku'avale laikiki*
Truck small
'A SMALL truck.'

→ *Tavale makou*
Truck our:EXCL.PL
'OUR truck.'

E: *Telē*
Big
'(It's) big.'

(11) Example of /t/ plus /n/
N57-055

(The mother (AK) of Sose first calls to her, then tells her sister (SA) jokingly how much the baby has grown in the time the researchers Alesaga and Elegoa have been recording the family.)

Context	Speech
AK kisses Sose and puts Sose on her lap.	((high)) AK: <i>Sosel</i> (Pause.) ((normal pitch))
→	AK: <i>Sa o mai Alesaga ma</i> PAST come:PL A. and
→	<i>Elegoa</i> (Pause) E. <i>O pēpē meamea</i> PRED baby tiny 'When Alesaga and Elegoa first came (she) (was) a tiny infant.'
	SA: <i>O pēpē</i> PRED baby '(She) (was) a baby.'
→	AK: <i>A'o legei ua ā legei</i> But now IPFV EMPH now

→ *ua lo'o matua!*
IPFV old lady
'But now, now (she) has become an old lady.'

(12) Example of /t/ plus /ŋ/: Child
Niulala, 3;3

(Fineaso (1 year, 9 months) had done something naughty. His mother (AK) and F's brother (Niulala) begin listing things that F. will not be given because of this.)

Niulala

Other

I Ma se -
And a

AK: *Ma se ā?*
And a what

ma - ma se
and and a

'And (not) what else?'

((whines))

ma se (pause)
and a

F: *I lol*
(?)
ia
(?)

→ *ma saga giul*
and INDEF.POSS coconut
'And not any - and - and not any, not any (pause) and not his coconut.'

AK: *Ma se ā?*
And a what
'And (not) what else?'

→ *Ma sag' ta'avale*
And INDEF.POSS truck
'And not his truck.'

AK: *Oka! Oka!*
INTERJ INTERJ
'Oh my! Oh my!'

At this point, the question of distinguishing errors from deviations from the standard arises. Not all cases of register mixing are errors. Indeed, the concept of

error here must be seen as sensitive to social context, i.e. variably counting as error. In social contexts that demand standard *tautala lelei* (e.g. hymns, songs, formal written Samoan, news broadcasts, etc.) deviations count as errors. To mix /t/ and /k/ counts as an error in reciting the Lord's Prayer, for example. Further, where a speaker wishes to define a social situation as highly formal and socially distant by using standard *tautala lelei* (e.g. in polite interactions with one of our research team, for example), deviations count as errors. On the other hand, there are many contexts in which register mixing is not an error. It is not an error, for example, where sudden switching signals a change in affect or is used to gain attention. It is not an error as well in a range of less formal interactions with outsiders (or insiders, see footnote 1). The transcripts in our corpus show many cases in which interactions with us (outsiders) begin in a formal modality but eventually evolve into more relaxed social encounters. The use of mixed registers in the same utterance or word expresses this decrease in social distance and formality. It indicates that speakers are paying less attention to their pronunciation. Similarly, for our one speaker of *tautala lelei* in informal contexts, the intrusion of "inappropriate" /ŋ/ is not an error. For this speaker, the increase in use of /ŋ/ corresponds to a particular social context (intimate, informal). Rather than calling these phenomena errors, we should consider them as instances of a third register, which might be called NON-STANDARD TAUTALA LELEI.

The category UNDERUSE OF /t/ AND /n/ includes as well cases in which none of the features of the t/n register are produced, i.e. undercrused in the sense of not used at all. While not strictly speaking a type of deviation from *tautala lelei*, this dimension is an important one to note as it accounts for a large proportion of the registral errors among young children. Examples are provided below of the social situations calling for *tautala lelei* (e.g. Bible instruction, school recitation, songs) in which young children produce instead *tautala leaga*. This type of error is rare among older children and adults.

(13) Example of Failure to Use *Tautala Lelei* (Where Required): Child KV11-389

(S. directs Bible question to her son Kalavini, 2:1.)

S: O ai na
TOP who PAST
faia oe.
make+CIA you.
'Who made you?'

→ K: (A)Kua
God

S: O ai na ta'a
TOP who PAST strike

le papa
the rock
'Who struck the rock?'

→ K: (Ka) (pause) (Oga)
Strike Jonah
'Jonah strikes (it).'

S: Mose.
Moses

→ K: (Ka) (pause) Mose.
Strike Moses.
'Moses strikes it.'

5.2.2. Overgeneralization of /t/ and /n/ to Exceptions

The second major type of deviation from standard *tautala lelei* involves the extremely common process (Shore, 1977, 1982) of overgeneralization. There are two major sub-types, one involving the extension of /t/ to those borrowed lexical items that should in the standard remain in the /k/ and one involving the extension of /n/ to lexical items that should remain in the /ŋ/. This process, characteristic of both adult and child speech behavior, is an instance of HYPERCORRECTION (Labov, 1966). The speaker uses a prestige variant in linguistic contexts in which in the standard that variant is inappropriate.

(14) Example of Overgeneralization: Adult P59-098

(A. to young daughter):

Overgeneralization of /n/: gutu → nutu
→ A: Ese peni ma le nutu
Away pen from the mouth
'Take away (the) pen from your mouth.'

(15) Example of overgeneralization: P67-125

(Ameto, 4 years, while drawing, tells researchers (E.) that he is doing school. The term for school is *aoga* /aoga/ in standard *tautala lelei* but A. pronounces it with /n/.)

Ameto Other
→ Fai la (ana) school
Do the school

E: /Oli/ (to Ameto)
Oh
MK: /Uma/ (to baby)
Finished

As in the case of underuse of features, cases of overuse do not count categorically as errors. Rather, there are social and linguistic conditions that enter into consideration. As in the earlier case, where the standard is required, such as in written Samoan, overuse of /t/ and /n/ counts as an error. On the other hand, in spontaneous interactions with foreigners, these hypercorrections are not considered always as errors. One important social variable is that speakers differ in their judgments concerning this practice. When brought to their attention (as we did, from time to time), certain Samoans will insist that borrowings in the /t/ are correct when speaking (spontaneously) *tautala lelei*. Others will insist the borrowing should remain in the /k/. Further, speakers differ in their judgments concerning different lexical items; for certain speakers all borrowings should go to the /t/; for others a subset (and not the same subset). Future research will examine this phenomenon more carefully, but it appears as if the boundaries of the category of "borrowed word" vary from speaker to speaker and that certain borrowings are treated as Samoan (versus recently introduced).

We have as a consequence a rather complicated sociolinguistic situation, in which the assessment of a construction as an error is not a simple matter. For a certain group of Samoans (as yet undefined), the overgeneralization (from the perspective of the standard) of /t/ and /n/ is a categorical error. For others, it is a variable error but the linguistic conditions under which it counts as error are not universally agreed upon.

5.2.3. Overgeneralization of /t/ to /n/ and Other Environments

In the third type of deviation from standard *tautala lelei*, the feature /t/ is extended to environments in which /n/ or some other phonological variant should be used.

Unlike (1) and (2) above, THIS PHENOMENON IS NOT CHARACTERISTIC OF ADULT SPEECH USAGE. This is not to say that it never occurs, but that it is not common. It appears to be ASSOCIATED WITH THE SPEECH OF YOUNG CHILDREN. Further, this deviation is a CATEGORICAL ERROR, cutting across a range of social contexts.

This type of extension differs from (2) above, where /t/ is extended to environments in which /k/ should be used (in the standard). In the current case, the speaker has switched to the appropriate register set but has selected the wrong feature. For example, instead of switching from /ŋ/ to /n/, the speaker switches from /ŋ/ to /t/. For example, my name in *tautala lelei* is /eleŋoa/ (Elegoa); in *tautala lelei*, it is /elenoa/ (Elenoa). One 4-year-old child whom I had just met

addressed me as /toa/ (instead of /nou/, a shortened version of my name). Another child just under three years pronounced my name in the very first session of recording as /eto/.

In other examples, /t/ is used where some other phonological element should be used or where none should be used. For example, in one session, I commented on the drawing by a child of 2;8, saying *fale lapo'a* 'big house'. The child took my utterance as a directive to repeat it (as a school drill task) and said immediately *fale tapoa*. Here the child replaced the feature /l/ with /t/. (In other situations, the child showed productive competence in use of /l/.)

These examples illustrate a quality that distinguishes /t/ from other features that distinguish *tautala lelei* register. Speakers are more conscious of the use of /t/ than they are of the use of /n/ and /r/. *Tautala lelei* is commonly called "Samoan in the T." As demonstrated by Shore's ethnography (1977), speakers are able to talk about errors involving the overuse (hypercorrection) or underuse (e.g., inappropriate /k/) of /t/ to a far greater extent than the over/underuse of /n/ or /r/. Further, speakers associate /t/ (and /k/) with a range of affective and social states (which is much less true of other phonological features).

Given the special salience of /t/ as a feature of *tautala lelei*, it is not surprising that it would be overgeneralized to other phonological environments in attempts to switch into that register. Thus far, I have not found cases in which /n/ is extended to environments which take the /t/ or to other environments.

6. ACQUISITION OF WORD ORDER

With respect to the acquisition of word order, there are two major interests. The first concerns the strategies used by children for the ORDERING OF MAJOR CONSTITUENTS IN TRANSITIVE AND INTRANSITIVE CONSTRUCTIONS (e.g. agent, action, and patient; state and object to which state relates). This concern matches the interest in ordering strategies of subject, verb, and object among adult Samoan speakers. The second interest focuses on the EXPRESSION AND NON-EXPRESSION OF major constituents (such as agent and patient) in Samoan child language.

6.1. Word Order of Major Constituents

As discussed in Section 2.2.3, Samoan has a wide range of possible word orders, with verb-initial orders preferred. With respect to the order of full constituents (not clitics), there is little chance of error. Errors would involve other variables, such as the casemarking appropriate to constituents appearing in particular orders (e.g. the topic marker, the ergative marker).

With such a range of word orders, it is interesting to examine preferences exhibited by language-acquiring children. Is one ordering preferred over others?

TABLE 8.8
Percentage of Verb-Initial Canonical Transitives
(Declaratives & Yes-No Interrogatives)

Child	Age at Onset of Study	Session I	Session III	Session V	Session VII	Average
Matu'u	(2;1)	91.7% (11)	76.2% (16)	95.6% (22)	87.5% (14)	92.7% (76)
Pesio	(2;3)	100% (15)	54.5% (5)	68.9% (20)	91.4% (53)	83.2% (94)
Naomi	(2;10)	90.3% (28)	94.1% (16)	92.3% (24)	97.1% (34)	93.6% (102)
Niulala	(2;11)	80.9% (17)	82.8% (24)	85.5% (53)	94.3% (33)	86.4% (127)

Do the word order preferences of young children match those of adults? Do they match the preferences associated with causal speech among intimates?

Tables 8.8 and 8.9 provide information concerning word order strategies of young Samoan children. As can be seen from these tables, CHILDREN, LIKE ADULT SAMOANS, OVERWHELMINGLY PREFER VERB-INITIAL CONSTRUCTIONS.

Table 8.10 displays word order preferences for canonical transitive declaratives and yes-no interrogatives. The totals for each child are represented because of the low frequency (see below) of constructions with major constituents expressed. As can be seen from this table, THERE IS ONLY ONE CHILD, THE OLDEST, FOR WHOM THE WORD ORDER VERB-AGENT-OBJECT IS PREFERRED. FOR THE OTHERS, THIS WORD ORDER IS DISPREFERRED IN FAVOR OF EITHER AGENT-VERB-PATIENT OR VERB-PATIENT-AGENT WORD ORDERS.

Comparing these results to the adult word-order data, we can see that THEY MATCH MOST CLOSELY THE WORD-ORDER PATTERNS OF WOMEN'S SPEECH (TABLES 8.2 AND 8.3) AND SPEECH TO INTIMATES (TABLES 8.2 AND 8.4). In both of these contexts, verb-subject-object word order is not preferred over others. In the

TABLE 8.9
Intransitives (with Major Argument Expressed)
(Declaratives & Yes-No Interrogatives)
% of Verb-Major Argument Word Orders
Compared to Major Argument-Verb

Child	Age at Onset of Study	Session I	Session III	Session V	Session VII	Average
Matu'u	(2;1)	100.0% (9)	70.0% (7)	84.6% (21)	71.4% (20)	81.5%
Iakopo	(2;1)	100.0% (1)	85.7% (6)	85.7% (18)	85.2% (23)	85.7%
Pesio	(2;3)	96.1% (25)	80.0% (4)	78.9% (30)	86.5% (45)	85.4%
Naomi	(2;10)	100.0% (16)	70.6% (12)	91.3% (22)	75.8% (25)	84.4%
Niulala	(2;11)	90.9% (30)	77.3% (34)	88.9% (64)	65.8% (25)	80.7%

TABLE 8.10
Canonical Transitives (Declaratives & Yes-No Interrogatives)
Word Order Preferences (Where Verb, Patient (O), and Agent (A) Are Expressed)

Child:	Total UTTS.	VOA	VAO	AVO	-AVO CLITIC	OVA	O (VA) RCLAUSE	OAV
Matu'u	16	50.0% (8)	6.3% (1)	25.0% (4)	0	6.3% (1)	12.5% (2)	—
Iakopo	13	38.5% (5)	—	53.8% (7)	—	—	—	7.7% (1)
Pesio	8	37.5% (3)	12.5% (1)	12.5% (1)	37.5% (3)	—	—	—
Naomi	5	—	20.0% (1)	40.0% (2)	40.0% (2)	—	—	—
Niulala	20	25.0% (5)	30.0% (6)	5.0% (1)	25.0% (6)	10.0% (2)	—	—
AVERAGE:	62	33.9% (21)	14.5% (9)	24.2% (15)	17.7% (11)	4.8% (3)	3.2% (2)	1.6% (1)

speech of women, verb-object-subject and subject-verb-object orders are roughly equally preferred.

For children as well as adults, then, verb-agent-patient is not the norm for ordering major constituents. For both adults in intimate contexts and children, THE NORM IS TO PRESERVE THE VERB AND PATIENT AS A CONTIGUOUS UNIT (AVO, VOA, ETC.). This finding supports Slobin's hypothesis that a word order that interrupts the predicate is cognitively distressful and would be acquired relatively late (Slobin, 1977). It indicates that factors of "cognitive ease" are at play in the more relaxed speech of adults as well as in Samoan children's speech. This parallel indicates once again the need to examine a range of adult speech in assessing processes guiding acquisition.

6.1.1. A Note on Order of Subject Clitic Pronouns

As noted in the sociolinguistic sketch of Samoan, the placement of subject clitic pronouns is fixed rather than variable (as in the case of full subjects). These pronouns must appear pre-verbally. EXAMINING ONLY THE USE OF CLITICS IN OUR TRANSITIVE DATA BASE, I FIND NO ERRORS WITH RESPECT TO THEIR POSITION BEFORE THE VERB. The subject clitics in declaratives and yes-no interrogatives are relatively slow to be acquired, however, and only the oldest child uses them with any significant frequency. These observations are displayed in Table 8.11 below.

6.2. Expression and Non-Expression of Agent and Patient

One of the earliest observations of child language research is that children's utterances are reduced or telegraphic versions of adult constructions (Brown, 1973; Bloom, 1970; Braine, 1963; for example). This observation has established as a direction of research the investigation of how and when children's utterances get filled in and ultimately match the explicitness of adult sentences. This process is associated with increasing competence. But, as I have shown in

TABLE 8.11
Use of Subject Clitics
in Canonical Transitives
(Agent Clitic-Verb-(Patient))
(Declaratives & Yes-No Interrogatives)

Child	Session I	Session III	Session V	Session VII
Matu'u	—	—	—	—
Pesio	—	—	3	4
Naomi	3	—	—	1
Niulala	1	2	5	2

TABLE 8.12
Canonical Transitives
(Declaratives & Yes-No Interrogatives)
Percentage of Utterances with Agent Expressed
as Major Constituent

Child	Session I	Session III	Session V	Session VII	Average
Matu'u	16.7% (2)	42.9% (9)	30.4% (7)	18.7% (3)	25.6% (21)
Pesio	6.7% (1)	36.4% (4)	20.7% (6)	12.1% (7)	15.9% (18)
Naomi	12.9% (4)	41.2% (7)	3.8% (1)	17.5% (6)	16.5% (18)
Niulala	19.1% (4)	13.8% (4)	25.8% (16)	22.9% (8)	21.8% (32)

the sociolinguistic sketch, this process, at least with respect to major constituents, is not a measure of increasing competence in Samoan. Competence in the adult Samoan model does not demand full expression of major constituents. Sentences very often appear without a subject (see Table 8.1). Constructions with both subject and object expressed are quite infrequent (Table 8.5). Further, this phenomenon does not appear to be conditioned by increased intimacy among interlocutors (Table 8.7). It is a pattern of language that cuts across parameters of social distances.

Tables 8.12 and 8.13 provide information concerning the extent to which young Samoan children express major constituents in utterances containing transitive verbs (declaratives and yes-no interrogatives). Table 8.12 displays the extent to which agents appear as major constituents; Table 8.13 displays the extent to which children produce transitives with both patient and agent expressed as major arguments of the transitive verb.

These Tables show two important patterns. First, they indicate that YOUNG CHILDREN INFREQUENTLY PRODUCE UTTERANCES WITH AGENTS AND EVEN MORE INFREQUENTLY PRODUCE UTTERANCES WITH AGENTS AND PATIENTS BOTH EXPRESSED AS MAJOR ARGUMENTS.

TABLE 8.13
Canonical Transitives
(Declaratives & Yes-No Interrogatives)
Percentage of Utterances with Agent & Patient
Expressed as Major Constituents

Child	Session I	Session III	Session V	Session VII	Average
Matu'u	16.7% (2)	38.1% (8)	30.4% (7)	18.7% (3)	24.4% (20)
Pesio	6.7% (1)	18.2% (2)	13.8% (4)	5.2% (3)	8.8% (10)
Naomi	9.7% (3)	5.9% (1)	3.8% (1)	—	4.6% (55)
Niulala	19.1% (4)	10.3% (3)	17.7% (11)	5.7% (2)	13.6% (20)

Second, these Tables show that EARLY DEVELOPMENTAL MATURITY IS NOT MATCHED BY INCREASED USE OF AGENTS AND PATIENTS. Looking at each child, we can see that the use of these constituents fluctuates from the first session to the last. In Table 8.13, we can see that in the final session (session VII), three of the four children actually display fewer three-constituent utterances than in the first session. Further, in both Tables, the youngest child in the Table, Matu'u (2;1 at onset of study), shows the greatest percentage of utterances with agents and patients expressed.

What is the relation of these results to adult language use? Children match the speech behavior of adults in that the expression of all three major constituents (agent, verb, patient) is dispreferred. However, on the average, the expression of agents and agents with patients is less frequent in the speech of young children than in adult speech (see Tables 8.1 and 8.5). In this sense, children's language use does not match adult usage. This difference resembles descriptions of children's speech behavior in English-speaking communities (see above references). As discussed earlier, for English-speaking children the non-expression of these constituents reflects relative competence and counts as an error. With respect to Samoan-speaking children, the meaning of this pattern is not the same. In the case of English, young children are (described as) producing utterances that deviate from adult speech patterns. In the case of Samoan, the children are conforming to adult speech patterns. Differences between adult and child language use are quantitative rather than qualitative. The quantitative difference IN ITSELF can not be interpreted as incompetence or error. Future research is necessary to ascertain if other pragmatic conditions enhance the expression/non-expression of major constituents and the sensitivity of children to these conditions.

7. ACQUISITION OF ERGATIVE CASE MARKING

Having examined the acquisition of *tautala lelei* and *tautala leaga* phonological features and word-order strategies, let us now consider the acquisition of one morphological feature of the language, ergative case-marking. Definitional and formal dimensions of ergativity in Samoan have been discussed in Section 2.2.4.1, along with variation in adult use of the case marker. The analysis of adult and children's use of ergative case marking is drawn from a larger study (Ochs, 1982), to which the reader is referred.

The sociolinguistic sketch of ergative case marking in adult speech indicated that it is sensitive to the parameters of social distance and sex of speaker. As displayed in Table 8.1, the case marker is far more common in speech to nonintimates than in speech to intimates and more common in the speech of men than in the speech of women.

The most outstanding result of our acquisition study is that Samoan children between the ages of 2 and 4 rarely use the ergative marker *e* in their spontaneous

TABLE 8.14
Agency & Ergative Case Marking
in Spontaneous Novel Canonical Transitives (Assertions & Y-N Qs)^a

Child	Age at Onset of Study	Total UTTS.	UTTS. w/Agents	Post-Verbal Agents (Erg. Case Mark. Environment)	Erg. Case Marking
Matu'u	(2;0)	76	22.4% (17)	14.5% (11)	0
Iakopo	(2;1)	50	30.0% (15)	12.0% (6)	0
Pesio	(2;3)	113	13.25% (15)	4.42% (5)	0
Naomi	(2;10)	109	15.6% (17)	10.1% (11)	.9% (1) [*]
Niulala	(2;11)	148	21.6% (32)	13.5% (20)	.7% (1)
Maselino	(3;3)	86	36.0% (31)	33.7% (29)	4.6% (4)

^{*}Partial repetition.
^{**}(from Ochs, 1980)

speech. The frequency with which the ergative marker appears in canonical transitives of five children in our sample is displayed in Table 8.14.

We can see from this Table that the three youngest children, Matu'u, Iakopo, and Pesio, used absolutely no ergative case marking whatsoever. The next oldest children, Naomi and Niulala, used the marker in one utterance (each) only, representing .9% and .7% respectively of the total canonical transitives and 10.1% and 13.5% respectively of the transitives with post-verbal agents in their corpora. These extremely low percentages led me to examine the speech of an older sibling, Maselino, who was not one of the "focal" children in the study and present only intermittently throughout the recording sessions. The percentage of ergative case-marking was higher in the speech of this child—4.6% of the total canonical transitives and 33.7% of these with post-verbal agents. However, these figures are still extremely low and do not evidence that ergative case-marking is part of the productive competence of the child.

Instances of the children's use of ergative case-marking are presented in examples (16) through (18) below:

(16) Naomi, 2;11

(Naomi hits mother, asks where her mango is:)

<i>Naomi</i>	<i>Mother</i>
<i>ikae uma magol</i>	
<i>shit finish mango</i>	
'Shit, the mango is finished.'	
<i>uma mago a'ul</i>	
<i>finish mungo my</i>	
'My mango is finished.'	

tae tae uma magol
shit shit finish mango

'Shit, shit, the mango is finished.'

uma mago a'ul
finish mango my

'My mango is finished.'

uma ail
finish eat

'The eating is finished.'

ai e ail
eat ERG who

'Who ate it?'

(?)

fea
where

'Where?'

umal
finish

'Finished.'

→ *ai e oe*
eat ERG you

'You ate it.'

(17) Maselino, 3;8

(Pesio, 2;7 is crying, looking at her father. Another child, Kala, has hit her, though this has not been mentioned. Her father wants her to stop crying:)

Pesio: (Crying)

Father: ((soft))

(alu loa)
go now

Paula (female caregiver):

Pesio

Maselino:

→ *fasi l(a) Kalal*

hit ERG Kala

'Kala hit her.'

Elenoa:

l Kalal

short

Maselino:

→ *fasi e Kalal*
hit ERG Kala

'Kala hit her.'

(18) Maselino, 3;6

(Maselino decides to scare another child by using a common scare expression about mother absence. He turns to this child, Gike:)

Maselino:

→ *Gike! Gike! le ua ai e lel l pu'a*
DEICT PERF eat ERG ART pig

Koe!

Koe* (*Gike's mother)

'Gike! Gike! Now the pig ate Koe.'

Maselino:

fii e suel
tired COMPL search

'They are tired of searching.'

fii e kue akal* *error
tired COMPL search DEICT

'They are tired of searching around.'

→ *le ua ai e le pu'al*
DEICT PERF eat ERG ART pig

'Now the pig ate her.'

→ *le ua ai e le povi Gikel*
DEICT PERF eat ERG ART cow Gike

'Now the cow ate her, Gike'

→ *l lua ai e le povi a Koe*
PERF eat ERG ART cow PARTICLE Koe

'The COW ate Koe.'

We can see from Table 1 that these results are linked to the low frequency of agents expressed in transitive declarations and yes-no interrogatives (average percentage of agents expressed: 21% (112)). That is, one explanation is that children simply do not often mention agents in their spontaneous speech. This explanation would not account, however, for why marking is not used when agents ARE expressed and appear in the grammatical environment that should host the ergative marker (after the verb). Young children do use constructions in which ergative case marking is required (according to speakers' judgments of "good Samoan"), yet they do not use the casemarking.

It is proposed here that THE RELATIVELY LATE ACQUISITION OF ERGATIVE CASEMARKING IS TIED TO THE SOCIOLINGUISTIC DISTRIBUTION OF THIS MARKING AMONG ADULT SAMOANS and to certain features of the marker in Samoan that may affect its perception. Features that enhance or constrain acquisition have been discussed by Slobin (1973, 1977, 1982). These features and their status with respect to the Samoan ergative case marker are displayed in Table 8.15. Presence of these features, represented by the + sign, facilitates the acquisition of the morphological marker.

As can be seen from this Table, the Samoan ergative particle has six features that could delay acquisition. In particular, it is not postposed, stressed, obligatory, tied to the noun it modifies, or applied to all pro-forms. Further, it has pragmatic functions, such as highlighting a noun and its phrase. It is difficult to weigh the importance of these features, as the ergative particle in another language, Kaluli (Schieffelin, 1979, 1985), has five features that could delay ac-

TABLE 8.15
Samoan and Kaluli Ergative Case Marking Features

Feature:	Samoan	Kaluli
± postposed	-	+
± syllabic	+	+
± stressed	-	(uses tonal contrast, prosodic system not worked out)
± obligatory	-	-
± tied to noun	-	+
± rationally ordered	n.a.	n.a.
± consistent with word order pattern	+	+
± non-synthetic	n.a.	n.a.
± only grammatical functions	-	-
± regular	+	-
± applied to all pro-forms	-	-
± no homonymous functors*	+	-

*"Functor" is here taken to mean "case marker."

quisition, yet Kaluli children acquire the particle relatively EARLY. Four out of five perceptually distressful features of the Kaluli marker match those of the Samoan marker. Kaluli is distinguished by the fact that the particle is postposed and tied to the noun. These features could account for why Kaluli children acquire the ergative marker before Samoan children.

However, there are major differences in the social norms for using the ergative case marker in Kaluli and Samoan. In Kaluli, the case marker is used across speakers and role relationships among interlocutors. It does not vary according to social distance and sex of speakers, as in Samoan communities. The Kaluli child is exposed to the marker in his primary acquisition environment to a much greater extent than is the Samoan child.

The difference in social norms for using the ergative case marker in Samoan and Kaluli has, then, a profound effect on acquisition of these two languages. Further, the difference affects the way in which deletion or low incidence of the marker in children's speech should be interpreted. When a Samoan child does not use the ergative particle in the grammatically feasible environment, that behavior is not necessarily, indeed not usually, an error. If the child is speaking to an intimate under relatively casual conditions, the absence of the ergative case marker is perfectly appropriate. The child has not deviated from adult norms in a qualitative sense (as would be the case, for example, for a Kaluli child in similar social context). Once again, the data indicate that assessment of errors must rely on a sociologically responsible description of the language. To contrast children's speech behavior with typological accounts of languages runs a heavy risk of misunderstanding the nature of the linguistic phenomenon under consideration and the dynamics of its acquisition.

8. ACQUISITION OF ERGATIVITY THROUGH WORD ORDER

The results of the ergative casemarking study should not be taken as evidence that young Samoan children do not express ergative distinctions in their speech. On the contrary, ERGATIVE DISTINCTIONS ARE EXPRESSED QUITE EARLY IN SAMOAN CHILD LANGUAGE. Rather than marked through morphological means, however, THE DISTINCTIONS EMERGE IN EARLY WORD-ORDER STRATEGIES. IN PARTICULAR, YOUNG CHILDREN RESERVE THE LOCATION IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE VERB FOR ABSOLUTE CONSTITUENTS—TRANSITIVE PATIENTS AND INTRANSITIVE MAJOR ARGUMENTS—BUT EXCLUDE ERGATIVE CONSTITUENTS—AGENTS—FROM THIS POSITION. (In this way, they treat patients and intransitive arguments as a single category, distinct from agents.)

This pattern can be seen by comparing Table 8.9 (cf. Section 6) and Table 8.16.

Chart

TABLE 8.16
Spontaneous Novel Canonical Transitives
(Declaratives & Yes-No Interrogatives)
Percentage of (X)-Verb-Patient-(X) Word Orders
(Compared to (X)-Verb-Agent-(X))

Child	Session I	Session III	Session V	Session VII	Average
Matu'u	100.0% (12)	94.4% (17)	94.7% (18)	83.3% (10)	92.9%
Iakopo	—	100.0% (2)	93.8% (15)	100.0% (22)	97.5%
Pesio	100.0% (8)	100.0% (3)	91.7% (11)	97.4% (38)	97.3%
Naomi	95.8% (23)	64.3% (9)	100.0% (15)	83.9% (26)	86.0%
Niulala	87.5% (14)	88.9% (16)	88.9% (40)	72.7% (16)	84.5%

The use of post-verbal position for absolutive constituents is most striking in the speech of the youngest children in this sample. In the earliest sessions in which V-NP transitive constructions appear, the NP is a patient 100% of the time. That is, an agent is never expressed in this position. At the same time, for these children, between 96 and 100% of the intransitive major arguments appeared in post-verbal position. For all the children in our sample, the percentage of transitive verb-patient and intransitive verb-major argument orders is extremely high, providing strong evidence for the systematic use of word order to distinguish absolutive from ergative constituents.

The preference to exclude the agent NP from the position immediately following the verb is evident as well in children's constructions that express BOTH patient and agent constituents. The reader is referred to Table 10, which displays the percentages and frequencies of different word order patterns of three constituent utterances present in the corpus. THE FIGURES IN TABLE 10 INDICATE THAT VERB-AGENT-PATIENT AND PATIENT-VERB-AGENT ORDERS ARE HIGHLY DIS-PREFERRED AMONG THE YOUNGEST CHILDREN IN THE STUDY. If agent and patient are both to be expressed, these children tend to place the agent before the verb or after the patient (e.g. agent-verb-patient, verb-patient-agent). The preference for verb-agent-patient ordering increases with age of speaker, but never accounts for more than a third of the transitive assertions and yes-no questions in which the two major constituents appear.

To summarize, ergative relations are expressed in the early stages of Samoan language acquisition. They are expressed through word order rather than through casemarking. These results are paralleled in the work of Goldin-Meadow (1975), who found that the deaf children she observed used word order to distinguish causative agents from both patients and intransitive entities. These results are also consistent with a number of findings in the child language literature that show children relying on word order as an initial strategy for expressing semantic relations (Bever, 1970; Bloom, 1970; Radulovic, 1975; but cf. Slobin, 1982).

9. RELATING SOCIOLINGUISTICS TO LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

This paper has addressed the issue of what constitutes a norm, and hence, an error, in adult and child language. To reach an understanding of how children attain linguistic competence, it is necessary to understand what constitutes competence itself. That is, it is necessary to know the range and structure of adult language. This involves an awareness of language in terms of regional dialects, social dialects, and registers. Typically, child language subjects are drawn from the regional and social dialect that is (best) captured in traditional and typological grammars. But even in such a sample, there are norms of adult language not captured in such grammars. The norms not captured tend to be those characteristic of registers appropriate to intimate and informal social situations, the very situations in which young children are most exposed. How can we capture the relation of child to adult language without knowledge of these registers?

The best grammar for understanding language acquisition is a sociolinguistically responsive one. By this I mean a grammar that captures the range of linguistic structures systematically in use and relates those structures to the social and linguistic contexts in which they are in use. Such a grammar ideally would rank the linguistic and social conditions associated with a particular variant (see Labov, 1972; and Cedergren & Sankoff, 1974, for a detailed discussion of this technique). The grammar would tell us, for example, which social factor most affects the probability of a particular variant being used (e.g. sex of speaker, social distance between speaker and hearer, relative rank of speaker vis-à-vis hearer, social event at hand, genre in use, etc.). An ideal sociolinguistic grammar would provide us with sets of linguistic structures that carry out similar communicative functions under different social conditions. It would also specify for a particular socially significant context, those linguistic structures that regularly cooccur (Ervin-Tripp, 1972). That is, a sociolinguistic grammar should ideally specify the features that characterize and distinguish one register from another, one social dialect from another (Andersen, 1977). The latter goal is the most consuming in that it demands examining phonological, morphosyntactic, and discourse features as they are used in different socially significant contexts.

Such a grammar has a number of advantages for the child language researcher:

1. IT ALLOWS FOR A SOCIAL CONTEXT-SENSITIVE COMPARISON OF ADULT AND CHILD LANGUAGE.

With such a grammar, we are able to compare the language behavior of adults in a particular social context with child language in that (or a comparable) context. We can see, for example, the way in which adults speak to family

members in informal situations and compare that speech to children's speech under the same conditions. Similarly, we can compare the way in which adults speak in a range of more formal situations to the speech of children in those settings. This methodology has obvious advantages over one in which children's speech is compared to only the careful speech elicited through linguistic interviews or to the speech of a parent addressing only the child or the researcher/outsider.

2. *IT SPECIFIES THE SOCIAL STATUS OF THE LINGUISTIC STRUCTURE BEING ACQUIRED BY THE CHILD.*

A sociolinguistic description would state whether or not a structure under consideration is socially variable or invariable in the adult linguistic repertoire. As noted by Slobin (1982), whether or not a structure is optional affects when that structure will be acquired. A sociolinguistic description says more than this, however, in that it displays the conditions under which the structure is used and the extent to which it is used. This information provides a crucial source for predicting the point at which a young child will acquire competence in the use (or non-use) of a structure. For example, a structure may be socially variable, but it is a distinguishing characteristic of household vernacular; therefore, its "optionality" is less likely to inhibit its acquisition than if it were restricted to formal or public arenas outside the household.

3. *IT SPECIFIES FOR BOTH ADULT AND CHILD THE FREQUENCY OF USE OF A PARTICULAR STRUCTURE IN AND ACROSS SOCIAL CONTEXTS.*

In matching child and adult language, it is important to compare frequencies of appearance of a particular structure in these two sets of data. A traditional or typological grammar provides information concerning linguistic rules but does not specify the extent to which that rule is applied in actual adult language use. Matching children's frequencies against such a description runs the risk of overestimating adult behavior (and underestimating children's behavior). For example, while a grammar may specify word-order patterns of verb, subject, and object, it may not reveal the extent to which all three constituents are expressed in adult language use. The examination of transitive utterances in adult Samoan, for instance, indicated that three-constituent utterances were relatively infrequent across several social contexts. The low frequency of three-constituent utterances in Samoan child language must be evaluated in this light, i.e. as reflecting an adult language norm (rather than violating an adult norm). Differences between children's speech and adult speech (with respect to this phenomenon) are quantitative, with the children's speech showing lower frequencies. This in turn leads

to another arena of discussion concerning the implications of quantitative differences.

4. *IT EVALUATES CAREGIVER SPEECH IN TERMS OF REGISTRAL VARIATION WITHIN THE SPEECH COMMUNITY.*

A sociolinguistic knowledge of the language would refine substantially our understanding of what constitutes input in general and caregiver speech register in particular. For example, the results of the ergativity study in Samoa indicate that the way in which adults speak to young children is part of a larger register of speech used among family members. It also indicates that the features of caregiver speech are characteristic of informal women's speech in and out of the family. This means that adults do not speak to a young child in a certain manner because he/she is a child (immature) but because he/she is an intimate or because the speaker is a woman speaking in an informal setting.

5. *IT PROVIDES SOCIAL SOURCES FOR ACQUISITION STRATEGIES.*

A sociological account of language specifies not only the repertoire of speakers but VALUES attached to particular codes (dialects, registers, etc.) within the repertoire. A good deal of sociolinguistic research has addressed the effects of such values on speech use (see Ferguson, 1959; Blom & Gumperz, 1972; Hymes, 1974; Labov, 1963; for example).

Of particular interest to acquisition research is the fact that social values may lead speakers to overgeneralize (or undergeneralize) particular grammatical rules. Labov's research on hypercorrection (Labov, 1966, 1972), for example, demonstrates that lower-middle-class speakers in New York City will use, in their careful speech, phonological features of the prestige dialect in environments beyond those characteristic of upper-middle-class speech. Similarly, certain speakers of Samoan will overextend the use of the prestigious phonological feature /ʌ/ in their use of "good speech" (*tautala lelei*).

These processes are not limited to adult speech behavior. I have demonstrated that Samoan children are sensitive to the features associated with highly valued *tautala lelei* register such that they use them in phonological contexts not characteristic of standard *tautala lelei*. Like adults, the children are sensitive to the particular importance given to the feature /ʌ/ as a distinctive marker of *tautala lelei* in that the bulk of their overextensions concerns overuse of /ʌ/.

Information concerning the SOCIAL characteristics of linguistic structures needs to be integrated with what we already know about the PHYSICAL characteristics of these structures and their grammatical environment, to assess constraints on acquisition and strategies that children implement over developmental

Struct

time. Children pay attention to the ends of words and to the order of words. At the same time they acquire language in a social world and will pay attention to the social significance of words and the social conditions for using them.

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