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A Comparison of the Child Directed Speech of Traditional Dads With That of Stay-At-Home Dads

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ABSTRACT

An abstract of the thesis of Judith Nancarrow Barr for the Master of Arts in TESOL presented March 29, 2000.

Title: A comparison of the Child Directed Speech of Traditional Dads with that of Stay-at-home Dads.

The speech that mothers use when addressing adults has consistently been shown to exhibit modifications when the conversation partner is their language-learning child. Fathers adopt similar changes in the structural-linguistic aspects of their Child Directed Speech (CDS), but their patterns of discourse remain more of a challenge for the child. This contrast in parental language is thought to be beneficial to the language-learning child: a mother's language focuses on the child as a conversation partner, whilst a father's more demanding language is considered a "Bridge" between the mother's and that of adults in the outside world. With family roles changing in American society, more mothers are working, and an increasing number of men are primary caregivers. As these fathers assume the traditional "mother" role, do they also assume the relevant features of that speech?

This study looked at five stay-at-home and five traditional dad-child dyads, as they interacted in the naturalistic setting of their own homes. By

examining specific features of discourse that mothers and fathers use in addressing their language-learning children, it was hoped to discover whether the language of stay-at-home dads is the same as that of traditional dads, or whether it has assumed more of the well-documented conversation-supporting features of mothers' CDS.

The findings of this study suggest that the language of the stay-at-home dad is more sensitive to the child. It was found to include more instances of those characteristics of speech that are considered *conversation-supporting* (repetition, expansion, acknowledgement and restatement) and fewer of some of those thought to cause, or indicate, breakdown in parent-child conversation (directives, non-acknowledgement and corrections). Surprisingly, the stay-at-home dads also asked more non-specific questions, requested more confirmation and clarification, and asked fewer "wh" and yes/no questions. However, when the actual language was examined, it was found that the stay-at-home dads were using these features in ways not described in the literature, so that these supposedly *non-supportive features* were actually promoting father-child interaction.

A COMPARISON OF THE CHILD DIRECTED SPEECH OF TRADITIONAL DADS WITH THAT OF STAY-AT-HOME DADS

by

JUDITH NANCARROW BARR

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GLOSSARY

In this study, specific terms are interpreted as follows:

Primary caregiver The person who has the responsibility of raising the child, whether traditional mother, stay-at-home dad, single custodial mother or father, grandparent, older sibling or any other.

Traditional dad The father in a *traditional* family. The mother stays at home caring for the children whilst the father works a typical five-day, forty-hour week, spending time with his children *around* his work schedule, most commonly in the evenings and on weekends.

Stay-at-home-dad The father in a family whose roles are reversed. The father is the primary caregiver to his child whilst the wife works.

ADS Adult Directed Speech This term refers to the everyday language that adults speak one to another.

CDS Child Directed Speech This term is used in reference to all language spoken by adults to children, except in direct quotations from the literature in which a researcher's own terminology – for example *Motherese* – remains intact.

Register A unique form of speech, such as CDS, used in addressing a particular group of listeners, or in a particular social context. "[It] is defined by the uses for which it is appropriate, and by a set of structural features which differentiate it from other registers

in the total repertory of the community" (Snow and Ferguson (1977) p. 212).

Dyad A pair of speakers.

Triad A group of three speakers.

Utterance The voicing of a single thought, sometimes separated from another utterance by a pause.

Turn A string of one or more utterances spoken by one speaker. Upon their completion another speaker takes over with one or more of his/her own utterances. Sometimes these "turns" overlap, as both speakers make their utterances simultaneously. A turn also includes nonverbal communication, such as the shrugging of shoulders.

Morpheme The smallest unit of language that has meaning. Free morphemes are content and function words and can stand alone (horse, eat, the), but a bound morpheme is a grammatical inflection (s, -ing) and must be attached to a free morpheme (horse-*s*, eat-*ing*).

MLU Mean Length of Utterance The total number of morphemes divided by the total number of utterances in any given speech sample.

Brown's Stage III Roger Brown (1973) introduced the MLU as a means of measuring a child's early syntactic development. His Stage III denotes the speech of a child who has an MLU between 2.5 and 3.0.

Declarative/Statement An utterance requiring no response.

Question An utterance ending with a rising intonation, and the expectation of an answer. They include:

"Wh" questions, questions that include one of the following words: *what, where, when, why, which, how* or *whose*, not necessarily at the beginning of the utterance. These questions seek information: *"Put the farmer where?"*

"What is the farmer sitting on?"

Yes/no questions, which anticipate a response of *yes* or *no.* They are frequently used to test the respondent's knowledge.

Tag questions, whose structure is different, in that they are declaratives that tag a question such as *"isn't it?"* or *"don't they?"* onto the end: *"That's the farmer's horse, isn't it?"*

Non-specific questions, which can be puzzling to the listener, as their vagueness does not indicate what kind of response is expected: *"What's that?"*

Directive An utterance that requests someone to do something and includes a directing word such as *put, find, look, take, watch* or *touch.*

Expansion An utterance that adds information to a preceding utterance that is not one's own.

Repetition An utterance that repeats one's own, or another speaker's utterance exactly.

Correction An utterance that indicates an error, explicitly or implicitly.

Confirmation request A request by the listener for verification of his/her interpretation of an utterance.

Clarification request A request by the listener for clarification of the preceding utterance, without specifying what is required.

Recast A partial repetition of the another speaker's utterance with additional information of one's own.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

If a decade of bookstore shelves – filled with tomes offering advice and ideas on father-child relationships – tell a story, it is of a subtle change in American society. The proliferation of Internet chat groups, web sites, newsletters, and Dads-Only play groups illustrate its text, suggesting that the year 2000 is heralding a burgeoning cadre of men who are choosing to stay at home to care for their children. Offering fresh perspectives in many areas, this group is adding a new facet to the realm of Child Directed Speech (CDS) – that speech which is specifically directed by adults to children. Previously dominated by the traditional mother, gradually penetrated by the working father and the non-parental caregiver, the CDS domain must now expand to include the language of the stay-at-home father. Is it the same as that of the traditional father? Or is it unique unto itself?

This interest in the language of the stay-at-home father is relatively recent. The first micro-area of language to attract attention was that of women – as something distinct from the language of men; it has been, and continues to be, a drawn-out and inconclusive discussion. But when the *language of women who were mothers* aroused interest in the seventies, it was recognized as distinct, given the apt title "Motherese" (Newport, 1977)

and became an enduring focus of research, with many of the early studies, such as those of Cross (1977), Newport (1977) and Snow and Ferguson (1977), becoming classics in the literature. Keeping up with the research over the years, the label has metamorphosed into Child Directed Speech, suggesting that it is not only mothers who modify their language in speaking to children. The minutiae of CDS features have been scrutinized and detailed statistically as the basis for analyses. In one study alone, that of Cross (1977), sixty two parameters of CDS were examined.

There is much support in the literature to show that the CDS of mothers and fathers is very similar structurally and lexically: both groups shorten their utterances, use grammatically simple constructions, limit their vocabulary, focus on the here-and-now and tend to replace pronouns with nouns or names, for example. It is in the realm of *discourse* that significant differences emerge. Mothers typically choose those features that are intended to involve the child in conversation, encouraging and helping the child to maintain a share in the partnership (Cross, 1977; Mervis and Mervis, 1982; Snow, 1977). Their language becomes repetitive and alive with questions as they listen to their children and try to engage them in conversation. By so doing, they appear to *tune* their language more to that of the child's linguistic abilities than fathers do (Berko Gleason, 1975; McLaughlin, White, McDevitt and Raskin, 1983).

Studies have shown that in the traditional family situation, fathers spend less time than mothers do with their children and are therefore less

familiar with the routines of day-to-day life (Clarke-Stewart, 1978; Rebelsky and Hanks, 1971). Because of this lower degree of familiarity, fathers exhibit a lesser degree of sensitivity to their children than do mothers (Mannle and Tomasello, 1987). In support of these findings, Tomasello, Conti-Ramsden, and Ewert (1990) were "... the first to document reliably that fathers and children experience more communicative breakdowns than mothers and children" (p.126).

Berko Gleason (1975) suggested that the cause of this difference arises from a father's limited one-on-one contact with his child, which manifests itself in the lesser degree to which he is attuned to his child's behavior and language – and consequently to their dyadic conversational interaction. He is simply less able to understand and interpret the child's language.

Those *conversation-inducing* features that are commonly recognized as CDS are not produced in a static manner by any given parent during their infant's progression through the baby-toddler-preschool years. Although they continue to exist, the proportions of these features tend to change, adapting to the child's linguistic level in such a predictable manner that the age of the child can be assessed by analysis of the mother's speech (Bellinger, 1980), before eventually changing into everyday Adult Directed Speech (ADS). As the child ages, speech becomes faster and more subtle in its intonation, repetition diminishes and the mother expands her child's speech to a lesser degree. The types of questions change, too, from the simpler yes/no to the

more demanding "wh" type, reflecting an increasing complexity in sentence structure. The findings of Golinkoff and Ames (1979), Lipscomb and Coon (1983), Phillips (1973), and Snow (1977) all support these adjustments in parental CDS when addressing infants of different ages. McLaughlin, White, McDevitt and Raskin (1983) add that mothers tune their language to the child's linguistic abilities more finely than fathers do, as indicated by such details as a closer correlation of mother and child's Mean Length of Utterance (MLU).

While the language of fathers was being compared to that of mothers, the research of Snow (1977) indicated that women who are not mothers, and who have spent very little time with children, use the same speech modifications in addressing them as do mothers. Pelligrino and Scopesi (1990) sought to verify whether adults other than parents, specifically, day-care providers, made any language adjustments in addressing young children. Their findings supported those of Berko Gleason and Grief (1983) and Genishi and Dyson (1984) in concluding that male day-care teachers appeared to interact linguistically with the children in their classes in a manner very like that of the female teachers. Specifically, their MLU was similar and they averaged comparable frequencies of repetition while focusing on the present, particularly the needs of the children. They especially observed that no male teacher assumed the typical father role defined by Berko Gleason and Weintraub (1979) as reflecting "...threatening and imperative speech..."(p. 200).

Implicit in this conclusion is the idea that the greater the contact an adult has with the child, the greater the likelihood of that adult modifying his language for easier interaction with the child. Could it be that familiarity, born of time, is at the root of mother-father CDS differences? This raises the fascinating question of whether fathers, who are taking the opportunity to spend as much time with their children as traditional stay-at-home mothers, are likely to become more *attuned* to their children – which, in turn, will be reflected in their roles as conversation partners.

However, several studies (Bohannon and Marquis, 1977; Dalton-Hummel, 1982; Jacobsen, Boersma, Fields and Olsen, 1983) suggest that the amount of time that an adult has with children does not affect that adult's CDS. Instead, they argue, it is simply the presence of a listening child that seems necessary for its occurrence. Bohannon and Marquis (1977) for example, found that adults reduced the length of their utterances when the child being addressed signaled non-comprehension. Thus it is possible that no differences will be found in the CDS of the traditional and stay-at-home dads.

It is with these opinions in mind that the focus of the present study has been formulated. The literature has shown marked differences in the discourse features of mother and father CDS in traditional family situations. If these differences are related to the amount of time spent with their children, it could be expected that the CDS of stay-at-home fathers would tend to include some features of mothers' speech, rather than appearing indistinguishable from that of traditional fathers.

Statement of the Research Question

This study seeks to discover if the language of the stay-at-home dad is the same as that of the traditional dad, or if it has moved closer to that of the traditional mother figure whose role he is assuming in so many other ways. The specific research question being addressed by this study is, therefore:

> **Is the language of stay-at-home dads distinguishable from that of traditional dads by its higher level of conversational support, as evidenced by an increased production of features known to encourage and maintain conversation in language-learning children?**

If this were found to be true, language samples from the five stay-at-home-dads, as compared to the five traditional dads, would include:

a greater use of repetition and expansion.

the use of more questions and fewer directives.

fewer instances of non-specific queries such as "What's that?"

fewer requests for confirmation and clarification.

fewer instances of verbally ignoring the child's utterances.

fewer instances of correcting the child's speech.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Women's Language as a Distinct Register?

Differences in male-female discourse have long fascinated linguists and attracted researchers in such varying fields as anthropology, communication, psychology and sociology, even capturing the interest of the public in books such as Tannen's (1990) You just don't understand: Women and men in conversation. Nor is this interest in gender language-differences recent: as early as 1836 etiquette books such as that of Eliza Farrar (cited in Kramarae, 1981) prescribed the way ladies ought to speak and behave.

One of the first, and surely the best known, to list and discuss differences in male/female speech patterns was Lakoff (1975) in her book Language and Woman's Place. She described the nine specific features of women's language that she observed as being different from men's; these included exaggerated intonation patterns, specialized vocabulary and empty adjectives, and the use of tag questions. She noted, for instance, that women used precise vocabulary such as *mauve* and *plum*, *whipstich* and *baste* in areas of typically female domain, described things as *divine* and *adorable*, and made comments such as "*The way prices are rising is horrendous, isn't it?*" Along with women's avoidance of direct imperatives, Lakoff argued that these features rendered her speech less forceful, and harder to take seriously than that of men. The book created quite a stir, being strongly criticized

(Hill, 1986) for following stereotypical thinking – labeling women's speech euphemistic, unassertive and hesitant – and lacking empirical evidence, her conclusions having been drawn from the analysis of her own speech, that of acquaintances and of the media. Actual research into the sexism of language gained momentum following its publication, along with an interest in gender-related speech issues that still persists.

Warren-Leubecker and Bohannon (1984) found that "[f]emales consistently use more exaggerated intonation patterns when addressing adults, than do males" (p.1380). The research of Staley (1982) showed that sex-related differences even existed in the language of children aged as young as four, eight and twelve years; these differences, however, tapered off by the late teenage years, perhaps, Staley suggested, to avoid the " ...sex-role stereotyping ..." of which they were becoming aware (p.155).

Crawford (1995) examined more than 360 studies that tested Lakoff's original claims, concluding that " ... after a great deal of research using increasingly sophisticated quantitative methods, the "real" differences seem more elusive than ever" (p. 29). In comparing the language of men and women, one could, perhaps simply nod and agree with Thorne, Kramarae and Henley (1983) (as cited in Crawford) that "... there are variably occurring differences, and similarities ..." (p.46).

But even more recently, Leaper, Anderson and Sanders (1998) examined and discussed numerous studies – they cited 27 – whose focus was the role of language in forming and maintaining gender divisions. From this

literature they concluded that " ... women are more likely than men to use language to form and maintain connection with others, whereas men are more likely to use language to assert their independence and to achieve utilitarian goals" (p.3). Following up on a suggestion that children are aware of, and apply, their parents' gender-typed speech styles, they also looked at a variety of child studies, concluding that girls use co-operative communication strategies and boys use controlling speech.

The Language of Mothers

The speech of women *to their children* has been accepted as a unique register – without debate. An interdisciplinary conference, Language Input and Acquisition, September 1974, brought together linguists, anthropologists and psychologists whose focus was this special form of mothers' speech, *Motherese* as it became known – for the language of fathers, though mentioned in passing, was not yet a subject of study. Motherese became synonymous with a style whose purpose, it seemed, was to enhance a young child's comprehension and acquisition of language. Many research papers presented at this time, notably Berko-Gleason (1975), Cross (1977), Newport (1977), and Snow and Ferguson (1977), have become classics in their finely-detailed descriptions of the linguistic variations that distinguish Child Directed Speech (CDS) from any other register. Brown (1977) noted that "[m]any more than a hundred features have come together around the human infant" (p7).

These features can, fortunately, be summarized to offer a general, yet comprehensive, description of what distinguishes mothers' speech to language-learning children (Snow 1977; Stein, 1976).

The CDS of mothers:

- is higher pitched, spoken at a slower rate and has an exaggerated intonation pattern.
- is simplified and redundant.
- contains few co- or sub-ordinates.
- contains many questions and imperatives.
- contains few past tenses.
- contains few disfluencies.
- focuses on the *here and now*, using concrete vocabulary with little variable lexical content.
- uses single words as sentences.

The following excerpt of a mother's language as she interacts with her seven-month-old daughter exemplifies many of these features:

M *Where are you going?*
M *Where are you going?*
action: C picks up a crinkly squeeze toy.
C Oooooooha.
M *Oooooooha.*
M *Oh, is that a funny noise?*
M *Funny noise?*
M *That one too!*
M *This one.*
M *See this one!*
M *Look at that!*
M *It's got like a baby whale inside.*
M *Little fishie.*

M *Fishie, fishieee.*
M *Fishieeee.*
M *Yeah.*
M *That all blue?*
M *Blue.*
M *Crinkly.*
M *All crinkly.*

All of this speech was spoken at a higher pitch than was normal for the mother, and her intonation was very exaggerated, especially the sing-song of the questions. (The researcher was present at the taping of the interaction.) Her utterances were grammatically correct even when simplified: "*That all blue?*" Word choice was also simplified: "*baby whale*" was changed to the more basic "*little fishie*" for example. Even the longest clause "*It's got like a baby whale inside*" had neither a co-ordinate nor a sub-ordinate clause. Redundancies took the form of repetition in the same sentence, "*Fishie, fishieee*" and in consecutive utterances, "*Oh is that a funny noise*? " "*Funny noise*?" Of the utterances, 44% were questions such as " *Where are you going?*" or imperatives, "*Look at that!*" Everything was spoken in the present and focused on what was happening at that moment: " *Oh, is that a funny noise?*" There were one word sentences *such as "Blue" and "Crinkly"*, and very little variety of words – most were used twice, and *fishie* was used four times, evidence of the mother's constant repetition of her own speech. Even the child's sounds were repeated:

C *"Oooooha"*
M *"Oooooha"*.

Some of these features correspond to those of women's speech described in the literature, notably the exaggerated intonation pattern, choice of topic (the here and now, objects in the immediate environment), and the minimal use of imperatives. If differences are evident in the speech of women to their children, would there not also be differences in the speech of men to their children?

Conversation-Supporting Features of CDS

Quite early in the research it was observed that CDS had variations dependent upon the grouping of different combinations of features, even when the children being addressed were of the same age or linguistic ability. CDS was the term applied to a *range of variations* of a speech register whose unity focused simply on the fact that it was always child-directed. Its form, supposedly, was based on its purpose – for example, whether to control or direct behavior (Newport 1977), or to elicit conversation (Snow 1977). As early as 1969, Bee, Van Egeren, Streissguth, Nyman and Lucke researched stylistic differences in language, demonstrating the benefits of an interrogative style, as opposed to an imperative style, in fostering child language, noting that " ...questions provoke thought and verbal replies, while imperative statements generally demand only a specific action" (p. 733). Numerous studies have since sought to correlate specific features with language development. Furrow, Nelson and Benedict (1979) provided evidence of varying conversational behaviors that facilitate or inhibit a

child's linguistic development; they showed, for example, that the simpler and more redundant a mother's CDS, the more rapid the child's speech development.

Expanding upon this finding, McDonald and Pien (1982) and Olsen-Fulero (1980) concluded that there is a continuum, with a clear and incompatible polarization of speech characteristics, reflecting the *intention* of the parent. As they describe it, there are, at one end, *conversation-inducing* features – numerous questions, shorter turns, maintenance of salient topic, and overall encouragement to converse. It is these conversation-inducing features that are commonly described as being *typical CDS* in that they assist children in conversation, and are therefore likely to help children develop language skills more rapidly (Furrow, Nelson and Benedict, 1979).

In contrast, features of parent speech that have been shown (Kaye and Charney, 1981) to inhibit speech and its development include characteristics typified by those in the *directive* pole at the other end of the continuum. These include imperatives, long turns, frequent topic changes and a focus on physical actions, all commonly found in the speech of fathers to their children (Berko-Gleason, 1975). Kloth, Jansenn, Fraaimaat and Brutten (1998) added a third category, dividing the conversation-elicting features into two subgroups, one that encouraged with utterances, the other with timely pauses. In studying groups of both typical and autistic children, Rollins and Snow (1998) found that the conversation-inducing style, particularly its focus on establishing and maintaining joint attention, contributed significantly to the

development of the child's grammar. Kloth et al. (1998) did, however, comment that the precise roles of these features is still being investigated – and debated.

Adaptations of CDS to the Child's Linguistic Ability

It has been observed that the conversation-inducing features of CDS are not produced in a static manner by any given parent during the child's progression through baby-toddler-preschool years. Although they continue to exist, the ratios of these features tend to change with the child's age, so that CDS gradually metamorphoses into an adult form in such a predictable manner that the age of the child can be assessed by analysis of the mother's speech (Bellinger, 1980). The earliest of these modifications focus on intonation and pitch, then as the child shows evidence of understanding, at about ten months, simplification occurs at all levels – phonological, lexical, syntactic, and pragmatic (Berko Gleason and Weintraub, 1983). The research of Golinkoff and Ames (1979), Moerk (1974), Phillips (1973), Snow (1977), and Stein (1976), all showed differences in parental CDS when addressing children of different ages. Snow, for example, found that CDS to younger children had shorter utterances, less complex sentences, fewer pronouns and more repetition than that to the ten year old subjects. Phillip's results were similar, even though he was making comparisons of parents whose children were only 18 and 28 months old. Moerk had the same results from his study, in which the children were aged from two to five years. He neatly

summarized the situation: mothers are " ...very sensitive measuring instruments of the language capacities of their children, and they adapted their verbal utterances to these capacities" (p. 115).

Longhurst and Stepanich (1975) were the only ones to actually examine CDS adaptations in a real-life (as in birthday party) setting. They looked at three age groups – one, two and three year olds – seeking to discover if mothers' speech changed on the syntactic level as the age of their children increased. This was found to be so: MLU and "wh" (information-seeking) questions increased, while requests for clarification requests and yes/no questions decreased.

Expansions – those parental utterances that add information to the child's utterance – have been shown to encourage conversation. Hoff-Ginsberg (1982) cited in Pine (1994) suggests that this *encouragement* has two sources: the *referent* by the adult to the child's speech, useful in the current conversation, and the *added structural information* that can aid the developing linguistic system. Even imperatives, such as *"Put the block in the box!"* are useful in that they, too, contain nouns that the child can associate with visible objects; however, they do not foster immediate conversation, as they demand action, not words.

The CDS of Non-Parental Caregivers

Acknowledging that the CDS of fathers and mothers is modified according to a child's age, Genishi and Dyson (1984) sought to discover

whether adults other than parents, specifically, day-care providers, adjusted their language to young children. They found that male day-care teachers interacted linguistically with the children in their classes in a manner very similar to that of the female teachers: that is, they too used conversation-inducing features. They also observed that no male teacher assumed the typically authoritarian father role.

Pelligrino and Scopesi's (1990) results were similar. Focusing on caregiver speech (that of mothers, fathers and other care-takers) to two age groups, 0;10–1;2 years and 2;6–3;0 years, they found that the number of utterances, MLU, words per minute, total number of words and sentences, questions, and the degree of sentence complexity all increased with the child's age – and associated higher level of language. Simultaneously, repetition and expansion diminished, as did rhythmic onomatopaeic language, offering further support to the belief that care-providers also tend to " ... choose different linguistic strategies depending on the age of the interlocutor" (p. 107). Berko Gleason and Weintraub (1983) conclude that what was once known as Motherese is now " ... recognized as a register used in some form by all older speakers when interacting with young children" (p.213).

CDS – Time Correlation

As the current study is based on the premise that an increase in time spent with a child would be reflected in the language spoken to that child, it

was of interest to read several studies disputing that claim. Snow (1972) supported her argument by showing that adults use Baby Talk intonation when pretending that a doll is a baby. Bohannon and Marquis (1977) suggested that it is simply the presence of a listening child that seems necessary for the occurrence of CDS. In their study they found that when a child signaled non-comprehension of long, complex utterances, 19 of 20 adults reduced their MLU – but comprehension feedback did not cause them to produce longer utterances.

Dalton-Hummel (1982) asserted that everyone recognizes the need for speech modifications if children are to comprehend adult speech, arguing that formal, syntactic features of CDS are "... spontaneously produced ..." (p. 47), even with minimal child contact. In comparing High Time Investment and Low Time Investment parental speech to their two year-olds, she found no differences in rate of speech, MLU and noun phrase order. She considered High Time Investment fathers to be those who spent more than 50% of the child's waking hours with the child: average, 47.75 hours per week. Low Time Investment fathers were those who spent less than 45% of the child's waking hours with the child, averaging 29.78 hours per week.

Jacobsen, Boersma, Fields and Olsen (1983) showed that adults, regardless of sex or parental status, raised the pitch of their speech and increased the frequency range when speaking to an infant. However, they were uncertain whether this resulted from a " ...biologically based propensity in the adult speaker or attentional feedback ..." (p. 442).

Comparisons of Mothers' and Fathers' CDS

Although *the language of mothers* has attracted much interest, research into the language of the father is sparse. Even when it does occur, the focus is usually on a male-female comparison and not on the fathers alone. Nash (1965) attributed the paucity of father-data to men's lack of interest in the fathering role. Concerned that this was, perhaps, an unwarranted assumption, he personally sought documentation of fathers' involvement with their children. But, because observations of social phenomena by trained researchers were still a very recent development, he was able to find very little information. That which did exist had been obtained not from research, but from interviews and questionnaires, and had unearthed minimal father-child interaction. The earliest *actual observation* of men carrying out the role of father in a naturalistic setting was that of Pederson and Robson in 1969, perhaps reflecting the beginning of a slight cultural shift towards paternal participation in child care.

Lewis and Weintraub's (1975) study (reported in Lamb, 1976) was one of the earliest to actually compare father- and mother-infant interactions; it noted an important qualitative difference: mothers care-take, fathers play. Mothers were described as playing quietly with toys and monitoring the child's physical and mental state, while the dads were much more active, physically playing with the child. Lamb's (1976) own study, one of only

three naturalistic, in-home observations to date, also observed the role of father as active playmate.

Even in 1984 Hladik and Edwards noted the absence of research specifically designed to compare mother- and father-child interaction in *naturalistic settings*. Firmly believing that language samples taken at home are potentially more representative than those recorded in experimental settings, their own home-study found the only significant differences to be that fathers were more ungrammatical, and that mothers talked more, both in total turns and words. O'Brien and Nagle (1987) also compared parents' language in a naturalistic free-play context, seeking to characterize the style of each and to categorize sentence types. Although concluding that only *insignificant variations* were found between the parents' features of CDS, they did not present their actual findings for comparison.

Dalton-Hummel (1982), in a review of the literature, reconfirmed that very little effort had been devoted to the study of fathers. In looking at fathers' speech and how it differed from the mothers', she, too, concluded that there was *essentially no difference.* Both parents were found to exhibit such structural modifications as simplification in MLU and number of verbs per utterance, and to use the same sentence types as had been observed by numerous researchers including Berstein Ratner (1988), Golinkoff and Ames (1979), and Philips (1973). Kavanaugh and Jivorsky (1982) also found the parents' similarities to be a "striking feature" of their findings in the categories of semantic content, complexity and sentence type; Lipscomb and

Coon (1983) similarly described the uniformity of structural-linguistic adjustment of mother and father CDS as "quite striking". On this *structural basis* there seems to be a consensus – that fathers appear to be as sensitive as mothers to the linguistic needs of their children.

As regards the lexical content of parental speech, Mervis and Mervis (1982) observed that mothers provided basic level categories in naming objects for their young children which, these researchers believed, showed a heightened awareness of the child's cognitive and linguistic preference. This supported Giattano and Hogan's (1975) findings that mothers' speech was less diverse lexically and had a lower percentage of low frequency nouns than that of fathers (Berko-Gleason, 1975). Fathers offered more information, used a greater number of different lexical items, and described more functions. In comparison, mothers monitored the knowledge of the children, supplying information only when there seemed to be ignorance of appropriate labels (Masur and Berko-Gleason, 1980).

Later studies (Berko Gleason and Grief, 1983; Mannle, Barton and Tomasello, 1991) also found fathers using low frequency words to very young language-learners – such as *aggravating* to a two-year-old. Bernstein Ratner (1988) focused on vocabulary. She found, after analyzing and comparing the CDS of sixteen mother- father-child dyads, that fathers displayed a greater use of rare words, and a significantly lower use of common vocabulary.

Along with this emerging interest in the speech of fathers came the more in depth descriptions of CDS that Snow (1977) had anticipated, allowing a richer comparison of some of its features. Sensitive, high-tech equipment such as the spectograph made possible the minute analysis of prosody and intonation which is at the basis of research such as that of Fernald, Taeschner, Dunn, Papoushek, de Boysson-Bardies and Fukui (1989). The higher pitch and broad range of intonation give CDS a musical quality that, especially in mothers, is a highly apparent feature, one that can inform a listener, even when actual words cannot be heard, that an infant is being addressed.

In looking at seven parameters of common prosodic modifications, Fernald et al. (1989) found that males and females displayed similar modifications when addressing their infants – with two notable differences: the frequency range of mothers was much wider, and the production of this prosodically distinctive register was more constant. They suggested that these differences support the belief that the speech of females is more expressive than that of males; in speaking to their infants, these melodic, rhythmic qualities simply increase. Blount and Padgug (1978) found these musical features of mothers' CDS to be associated with *nurturant relationships*, typified by falsetto, high pitch and lengthened vowel; in contrast, the CDS of fathers is low in volume, and creaky of voice. Other studies have continued in this direction, finding that infants show a significant preference for the

unique musicality of mothers' CDS from the early age of one month on (Cooper, Abraham, Berman and Staska, 1997).

Rondal (1980) noted, as had Brown and Bellugi (1964) and Giattano and Hogan (1975), that father-child conversations were fewer and shorter than those of the mother-child dyads. This, he believed, was to be expected, given that fathers are less tuned-in to the behavior and language of their children, thus finding it more difficult than mothers to communicate, both on the basis of child-focused activities, and in the comprehension of the child's speech. Besides, Rondal suggested, fathers' conversation was more difficult to maintain because of its wider linguistic variation and more frequent requests for clarification. Giattano and Hogan (1975), in examining a father-son interaction found that the father expanded only 0.5% of his utterances; this compared to the 30% expansions of the mothers in Brown and Bellugi's (1964) study. As repetition and expansion are known to be integral in the CDS of mothers, Fash and Madison's (1981) observation of the lack of these two features in the speech of the fathers in their own research further substantiated the notion of the father as a more challenging conversation partner.

These differences in conversational style and lexical diversity present a challenge to the language-learning child. They suggest that the father is not well attuned to the child, and therefore less able to interpret this non-adult language. Instead of the father adapting to the child's needs with ample repetition, expansions and questions, the child is now forced to adapt his/her

speech to the needs of this more challenging conversation partner, to be more creative, and more verbal in responding (Fash and Madison,1981; Rondal,1980). These findings support those of Berko-Gleason (1975) in suggesting that the combination of the father's challenging language and his unfamiliarity with the child's everyday behavior and idiosyncrasies of communication, together create a "Bridge" that leads the child beyond his own little child-centered environment into the real world of less accommodating adult language.

Tomasello, Ramsden and Ewert (1990) found more evidence of this *challenge* in the marked differences between the conversations of primary care-giving mothers and secondary care-giving fathers with their children. Mothers were found to use specific queries such as *"Put it where?"* compared to the fathers' vague and often confusing *"What?"* In addition, it was found that fathers disrupted the flow of conversation by requesting confirmation and seeking clarification of their children's utterances (Conti-Ramsden and Tomasello, 1990; Mannle, Barton and Tomasello, 1991). These features required children to make adjustments in their speech so that this less-attuned conversation partner could understand them.

It was also found that fathers ignored their children's utterances more frequently (Hladek and Edwards, 1984; Conti-Ramsden and Tomasello, 1990) and children tended not to persist with them, for even if they did there would be no acknowledgement, so that the topic was rarely continued. In

contrast, children *did* persevere with their mothers – and the same topic of conversation would be resumed.

Mannle and Tomasello (1987) noted another difference: mothers do not correct their children explicitly; rather, they use subtle measures of correction, such as recasting, or suggesting alternatives. In contrast, fathers do not hesitate to make corrections – again breaking the flow of conversation, and emphasizing to the child the need to be more careful when talking to dad.

In comparing parental language in several situations, Berko Gleason and Greif (1983) observed that the fathers produced a much higher percentage of directives than the mothers. In examining them, three types were isolated: imperative, indirect and implied directives. That the fathers used only the most commanding (*imperatives*) and the most subtle (*implied*) forms strongly suggests that the they were putting a much greater strain on the conversation. Upon hearing one of these directives, the child was expected either to carry out the action, or to try to divine what the dad's implied directive actually meant. When mothers gave directions they were less authoritative, yet easy to understand, for they tended to be of the more polite and straightforward *indirect* variety, as typified by "*Would you please hand me the blue block?*"

Together, these challenging conversational aspects of the fathers' speech offer support to Berko Gleason's Bridge Hypothesis; the father's

less-attuned CDS is simply reflecting his unfamiliarity with his child' s language – which in turn reflects the smaller amounts of time he spends with the child.

Curious to discover just how much time fathers spent interacting with their infants, Rebelsky and Hanks (1971) monitored the fathers' vocalizing times in ten father-infant dyads. They recorded a mean of 37.7 seconds per interaction, with 2.7 interactions per day – a total of less than two minutes each day. This meager figure seemed to support Nash's (1965) assumption that men simply were not interested in spending time with their children.

Male and Female Roles in Child-Care

Power and Parke (1983) studied mother/father-interaction with their eight-month-old. Although the interactions were described as being very similar, these researchers noted differences in parental language and behavior when the child became disinterested. Whereas the mother sought to discover what would interest the child, talking more and offering a variety of options, the father intensified the physical play. A decade later, Parke (1996) described such a scene; a father " ...picks up his son, 7 month old Zachary, tosses him in the air...": a mother sits with her child in her lap, and "... moves the donkey in front of the child, making it bray..." (p.95).

Powere and Parke (1983) agreed with Lamb (1976) that mothers are sensitive to the child's condition, seeking ways of amusing the child and frequently offering a variety of toys, whereas fathers automatically

commence physical activity. In pursuing this line of investigation with the parents of very young children – three-month-olds – Papouchek (1987) found the only significant difference to be that "[f]athers tend to verbally encourage more motor ability in infants, while mothers express more interest in vocalizations" (p.512).

Using a very large sample, 32 father-child and 40 mother-child dyads, Kruper and Uzgiris (1987) studied parental language structure and content in play situations. They reported that mothers were concerned with internal states and feelings, trying to understand and interpret their infants' actions, whilst fathers concerned themselves with game-related statements. As for the differences in play-interaction styles, they supported previous research showing that fathers encourage and participate in more active play than do the mothers. Parke (1996) reviewed the research and summarized an emerging pattern of father-child/mother-child interaction in which " ...fathers are tactile, physical, and arousing, while mothers tend to be more verbal, didactic, and object-oriented in their play" (p.66). "Fathers engaged in significantly more physical games, such as bouncing and lifting than mothers. Mothers, in contrast, used a more distal, attention-getting approach and played more watching games" (p.65). It was found that both parents continually monitored the child's degree of attention, changing their conversation accordingly. These descriptions were all based on observation of traditional families – those in which dad was the secondary caregiver.

While observing mothers and fathers in a naturalistic setting, Berko Gleason and Weintraub (1983) noted their similar syntactic simplifications, but sensed a *different qualitative feel* in the fathers' language, emanating from their use of jocular names, threats and quantity of imperatives – all of which seemed to define the fathers' role. Also noted was the fathers' obvious designation of the wives to the child-care and housekeeping roles, specifically, diapering and meal preparation. Berko Gleason and Greif (1983) also found that the fathers' language " ...clearly demarked their role within the family" (p.143), again by the use of a large number of directives as well as threats and affectionately insulting nicknames. They give the example of one father who interrupted their game to send his little boy off to find his mother for a diaper change.

Studies have shown that when traditional parents are together in a triadic situation with their child, the parental roles are modified. When the mothers entered into a previously dyadic situation, the fathers in Golinkoff and Ames's (1979) study spoke less. Supporting these findings, Stoneman and Brody (1981) found that with both parents present, mothers assumed the role of manager and teacher; fathers tended to be less involved, less active. In the triadic situation these fathers used a much higher percentage of imperatives than did the mothers – 38.3% as compared to 19% of their total utterances.

An interesting modification to male-role behavior emerged in the daycare situation. When the CDS of the male teachers was examined, the use

of directives was a low 11%. Berko Gleason and Greif (1983) point out that in the daycare center, the moment-to-moment care of the child is the responsibility of the child's teacher, whether male or female, so that the male must assume a more caring demeanor, in actions *and* in speech. At home, with the mother present, the dad is simply not expected to be sensitive to his child's needs. But even in the daycare situation, the male teachers' use of directives was not as low as their female counterparts': although the language was generally found to be very similar, the females produced a miniscule percentage of directives – a mere 2% of total utterances.

The male-role behavior modifications that occurred in the day-care situation were mirrored in the bilingual families of Goodz' (1989) study. In families where parents had decided upon a one parent-one language style of teaching the child two languages, the father's intention to teach his child necessitated that he become familiar with his child's language development. This resulted in a more *finely tuned sensitivity* to the child's linguistic ability. However, once the child passed beyond those early stages, it was found that the fathers became less supportive, reverting to a more directive style that followed the pattern of " ...less encouragement and greater challenge seen in fathers in monolingual families" (p. 41).

Berko Gleason and Greif (1983), in comparing the roles of men as fathers and as daycare teachers, believed that fathers fulfill the roles that are expected of them. At home the father was found to be "threatening and imperative" (p.144) speaking in a gruff and imperious way, whereas at

work as a daycare provider he was sensitive and nurturing – as that role demanded.

Fathering: the Stay-at-home Dad

The publication of two consecutive issues, December 1993 and March 1994, of the Journal of Family Issues devoted entirely to *Fathering*, reflected the growing interest in the father role. The numbers of single custodial fathers has risen steadily, quadrupling since the 1980 census (Pruett, 1993). Arendall (1995) suggested that the high divorce rate was prompting role identity changes and role ambiguity and Woodworth, Belsky and Crnc (1996) pointed out that " ...the gap between men's and women's participation in child-rearing appears to be shrinking" (p. 679). Supplementing this trend is the participation of married women in the labor force, which has shown an increase from 45% in 1977 to 55% in 1987 (Bryant and Zick, 1996), leaving someone other than the mother to care for the children. It has been acknowledged that both parents are important sources of socialization in that they are differentially involved with their children, providing complementary roles. But as more fathers become involved with mothering, discussion in the literature frequently concerns this *new role* of the father. "If the father is not a mother, what is his nurturing role to be?" (Pruett, 1983, p. 46)

Woodworth, Belsky and Crnc (1996) also found fathers to be more involved in child-rearing than they were a generation ago; men reported

feeling closer and more intimate with their children, and were being viewed as more than mere providers. It is therefore not surprising that store bookshelves and magazines are offering a broad and voluminous array of *father* literature.

At-Home Dad is a new quarterly newsletter that claims to provide connections and resources for the 2 million fathers who stay at home with their children. Curtis Cooper's recently self-published *At-Home Dad Handbook* is selling well, says the author, seemingly epitomizing the scene: fathers motivated to do a good job of parenting. In the words of the author in his book promotion literature, "[e]ven though being an at-home dad was not a childhood dream for most of us, those who have devoted their valuable time to this handbook are proud and happy we have assumed this role" (Cooper, 1999). Although conceding that most fathers are still less active in the parenting role than mothers, he perceives the gap to be shrinking.

As well as written materials, there is a deluge of other information awaiting the interested stay-at-home dad. There are currently (March 2000) three web sites: www.slowlane.com, www.daddyshome.com and www.athomedad.com, each one including a comprehensive array of information for SAHDs (the web acronym for **S**tay **A**t **H**ome **D**ads), along with an array of chat rooms. In November 1999, Des Plaines ILL hosted the Fifth Annual National At-Home Dads convention, attracting eighty-five men from twenty states.

Academic research into primary care-giving fathers remains limited and difficult to compare; Russell (1999) in reviewing studies worldwide from 1982–1996 includes definitions of what each study actually denoted as a *primary care father.* The criteria varied considerably – the average number of months per year alone with the child, the average number of hours per day, the percentage of total time spent in the father's care. It was into a fourth category – that of sole responsibility for a minimum of 25 hours per working week (Russell (1989) cited in Russell, 1999) – that the stay-at-home fathers of the current study fell. Four types of reasons for taking on the role of primary-care father have emerged from the research: inability of the father to gain employment, increase in family income, career factors and egalitarian beliefs about child-care responsibilities and sex roles. Underlying them all is one critical motivating factor: the belief that it is the family's responsibility to care for the child.

After reviewing the literature on primary care-giving fathers, Russell observed that " ...our understanding of this type of family pattern is still limited by a lack of research" (p. 57). It did emerge, however, that compared to traditional dads, the primary care dads were " ... more supportive, nurturant, sensitive, and warm" (p.73).

Stay-at-home Dad-Child Interaction

Russell (1999) found that in families where the father was the primary caregiver, fathers were more likely to have attended prenatal classes, been

present at the birth, and to have read widely on the subject of child-rearing. These dads also rated themselves more highly than traditional dads "... on feelings of competence as a parent, self-confidence in handling their children and their problems; and frequency with which they understood their children and their needs" (p. 67).

Field (1978) was one of the rare few to focus on the actual *interaction* between primary-care fathers and their children. She compared primary-care mothers, primary-care fathers, and secondary-care fathers interacting with their four-months-old infants during three 3-minute sessions. All fathers were observed to be more playful and less "containing" (that is, as she explained, holding the child's limbs less) than the mothers. A difference between the two groups of fathers appeared in the amounts of exaggerated smiling and grimacing, and raised pitch vocalizations that the primary-care fathers adopted – just as the mothers did. Field believes that they behaved thus because they were more attuned to the infants' behavior: a *conversation* emerged and was maintained when " ...each member reinforced the other by a contingent or imitative response" (p. 184). She attributes these similarities of mothers and fathers as primary-care givers to the amount of experience they have with their infants.

Geiger (1996) cited in Russell (1999) supported Field's findings of close primary-care dad – infant attachment. These dads were found to spend more time with the child, interact more frequently, and, although engaging in

the same rough and tumble games, "[p]rimary care-giving dads and their infants were also found to be more attuned to each other's play behavior" (p. 72) than either primary-care mothers or traditional dads.

Summary

Despite the ever-expanding size of this group in American society, negligible research into the CDS of the stay-at-home dad has been unearthed. This seems strange, as the CDS of other groups, specifically daycare providers and siblings, has been examined. These two non-parental groups have been shown to adapt their language to that of the child conversation partner. It is therefore not unreasonable to expect to find similar adaptations in the CDS of stay-at-home dads. Unfortunately, the scant research comparing traditional and stay-at-home dads has focused on interaction with *preverbal* infants, providing no basis for comparison with the findings of this study. It is the CDS of traditional and stay-at-home fathers as they interact with their *toddlers*, that is the focus of this study. Its purpose is to discover whether the CDS of the stay-at-home father is the same as that of the traditional father, or if it has modified to include more instances of those features that are recognized as being highly supportive of parent-child conversation.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLGY

Participants

This study sought to examine and compare the speech of five stay-at-home dad-child dyads with that of five traditional dad-child dyads as they interacted during a naturalistic play session in their own homes. Participants were recruited by a request in the Back Fence column of the local Portland newspaper, The Oregonian, and interest forms distributed to day-care centers, friends and neighbors. Following the initial contact, each father was screened by phone in order to verify relevant information. Variables such as fathers' age, education and income were not controlled for. The dyads were selected on the basis of:

1 child's age (range from 1;0 to 2;6 years)

2 monolingual (English) father

3 self-designation (for stay-at-home dads)

but as all fifteen of the respondents met the criteria, all were interviewed.

Numerous studies (Bellinger, 1980; Berko Gleason and Greif, 1975; Golinkoff and Ames, 1979; Phillips, 1973: Snow, 1977) have demonstrated modifications in the CDS of mothers and fathers as they adapt to the changing linguistic abilities of their language-learning children. It was decided that having equable age groupings would reduce this *age effect* and provide a sound basis for comparison. The final criterion for inclusion in this

study was, therefore, *the child's age.* This age pairing is shown in Table I; only one month separated the average age of the two groups.

It has been shown that the earliest modifications of parental speech to their infants begin with variations in pitch and intonation, and that actual simplification of structure and conversation in CDS follows at around ten months. These continue until the child's second or third year, when increasingly complex adaptations of CDS begin (Pfuderer,1969, cited in Berko Gleason and Weintraub, 1983; Phillips, 1973). By selecting children between these ages, the possibility of this variable was controlled for.

An equal number of boys and girls were chosen, there being five of each. All children were reported as healthy and developing within the range of *normal* physically and mentally, in the opinion of the fathers.

Table I
Age and Sex of the Children

Traditional dads	Child		Stay-at-home dads	Child	
Chris'	F	1;2	Rory's	F	1;4
Ben's	F	1;10	Bob's	M	1;8
Tom's	M	1;10	Henry's	M	1;10
David's	M	2;2	Ulrich's	M	1;10
Sam's	F	2;4	Scott's	F	2;4

F: Female; M: Male.
The average age of the traditional dads' children was 21 months - 1;9 years.
The average age of the stay-at-home dads' children was 22 months -1;10 years.

A thank you letter to the fathers who participated in the study was published in the Back Fence: as many had been discovered in that manner,

it was considered appropriate. Individual letters were also written to each father; these served a two-fold purpose – a personal thank you and a request that they complete a follow-up questionnaire specifying details of time spent with their child.

The Fathers

The two groups of fathers were very similar: their average ages varied by only six months, and all were professionals. The traditional dads' ages were 30, 34, 36, 37 and 38 – with an average age of 35 years; their occupations were attorney, finance manager, theatre and opera manager, hospital customer service manager, and emergency physician. The stay-at-home dads were 31, 32, 34, and two were 38 – average age 34½ years; their occupations were, or had been, systems consultant, internal medicine physician, medical interpreter and teachers.

As the stay-at-home dads were all self-proclaimed, it was considered important to delve into the meaning of that term as the fathers interpreted it, by seeking details of the time they spend with their children. Following their interviews, questionnaires (see Appendix A) were mailed to all ten of the fathers, asking that they provide analyses of the hours-per-week spent in the presence of the child in the study, with and without other adults present.

Setting and Materials

Pairs of researchers conducted the interviews, alternating between running the audio and video equipment, and directing the activity. Not surprisingly, all stay-at-home dad interviews were conducted during the day, whilst 90% of the traditional dads' were in the evenings and on weekends. Fathers were given no specifics of the study, beyond the simple statement that the parent-child interaction was of interest. They were told, however, that they would eventually receive information on the focus of the study, and of its findings.

The home setting was chosen as previous research that sought to examine *real* parent-child conversation has found a wide discrepancy in results from laboratory, as compared to home settings (Berko Gleason and Greif, 1983). The naturalistic environment has been shown to produce more representative language samples (Hladik and Edwards, 1984). Leaper, Anderson and Sanders (1998) who analyzed the findings of 114 parent-child discourse studies from 1969 to 1993, noted that the observational setting was " ... a significant moderator of gender effects ... [in that] [m]ost parent gender differences were more likely when the observation took place in the home than in the lab" (p. 23). It was, obviously, also convenient for the participants.

For consistency, the researchers provided appropriate playthings; these consisted of a Fisher Price Farm, a Playmobile Farmer set, a soft sorter whose objects produced noises when squeezed, a box of variously-shaped

wooden blocks in primary colors and a fish-in-water rolling ball. Also available were seven puppets – dinosaur, dragon, unicorn, penguin, turtle and a pair of butterflies.

At the end of each session, the child was presented with a Toddler Scientist Certificate from Portland State University, as well as printed materials concerning age-appropriate language development and reading to children.

Procedure

After hearing a description of the format of the proposed interview, the father was asked to complete a short form requesting personal demographic information, and to sign two copies of the PSU permission slip – one to be kept by the participant. Any questions were then answered.

A yellow blanket was spread on the floor, designating the play area, with the toys close by. The microphone of a highly-sensitive Audio Technica AT853R Tape Recorder Maranty PD201 was placed slightly above and about three feet in front of the participants. To enhance the accuracy of the eventual transcription (by enabling the researchers to fill in any audio gaps with the actual observation of activity) the interview was also filmed, using a Panasonic Video Recording Camera. Each father was asked to sit on the blanket and play with his child as naturally as possible; the ensuing free-play session was recorded for a total of 20 minutes.

Questionnaires

From the studies that he examined, Russell (1999) reported that it was not just the increased time that primary care-giving fathers spent with their children that gave them a greater understanding and sensitivity: more specifically, it was " ...spending time alone with their children taking sole responsibility for them on a continuing day-to-day basis" (p.74). With this finding in mind, the purpose of the questionnaire was two-fold: to verify how much time, one-on-one and shared, the dads spent with their children, and to discover how they spent it. As quality of time was considered an important factor affecting CDS, the survey provided for descriptions of the activities in which the dads participated with their children; a father watching a football game while his 2;0 year old builds a tower of blocks is probably not experiencing the same language interaction as the father who is helping with the construction.

Transcription Procedure

Copies of the audio tapes were transcribed using a Sony Dictator/Transcriber B1-85D, with tapes being rewound up to three times (standard procedure) as necessary to capture conversation. These were then transcribed according to an adaptation from Instructions for SALT, Systematic Analysis of Language Transcripts by Jon Miller & Robin Chapman, Language Analysis Lab, University of Wisconsin, Madison © 1989 – 1999. Twenty percent (Stoneman and Brody, 1981) of the tapes,

that is one from each set, were randomly chosen and transcribed by a second graduate student trained in the procedure. These duplicate protocols were then compared: correlation of the transcribed language was found to be 90.8%.

In listening to the tapes of the father-child interaction, there were instances in which, for various reasons, the speech was difficult, even impossible to understand. At times there was the crashing of a tower of wooden blocks, the simultaneous speaking of dad and child, or the soft whisperings of the dad; sometimes, simply a poor recording. Such occurrences made transcription difficult and frustrating; standard procedure was therefore applied: listen three times, and then proceed, marking each indecipherable syllable with an "x". Utterances analyzed in this study included some of these unintelligible "x" syllables or words whose meaning could be intimated by noting the intonation pattern that gave shape to the sentence form – especially when considered in relation to the response they generated.

In the example

Dad	*What x x doggie x?*	*qwh*
Child	Woof woof!	

the dad's utterance is sufficiently clear to permit categorization as a "wh" question. If too much of an utterance was unclear, or if an utterance was indecipherable, that utterance was excluded from analysis.

Analysis of Father-Child Transcripts

A coding system was established to designate two types of CDS utterances: those that are known to support parent-child conversation, and those that make conversation difficult. Within each utterance type, seven specific features, such as *expansion* and *child repetition* were coded.

Conversation-Supporting Utterances

Conversation-supporting utterances are those features of CDS that help the child play his/her role in everyday conversation. For this study, seven features have been chosen, and coded. They are described as follows:

sr - self repetition: an utterance that repeats one's own utterance exactly, within four utterances. It offers the child another chance to hear and to understand what was said, also allowing more time for response.

Dad New house.
Dad *New house.* *sr*

cr - child repetition: an utterance that repeats the child's utterance exactly. It allows the child to hear his/her own words spoken by the father, thus creating the opportunity for the child to hear adult pronunciation as a basis for comparison; it also provides the chance to restate or to expand that utterance.

Child There's ducks in there.
Dad *There's ducks in there.* *cr*

e - expansion: an utterance in which the father adds information to the child's preceding utterance. It can serve two purposes:

Syntactic expansion models a more grammatically complete, and therefore more correct, version of the child's utterance. Sometimes this is done simply by adding a bound morpheme or article:

Child Doggie run.
Dad *The doggie is running.* *e*

Semantic expansion includes words that add information to the child's utterance.

Child Doggie.
Dad *He's a little brown doggie.* *e*

r - restatement: an utterance in which the father changes an utterance he has previously made himself. This is the parental equivalent of expansion, its role being to help the child understand the dad's utterance. Sometimes it includes partial repetition; at other times the utterance is restated. It is thought that the alteration in wording is useful to the child in presenting the same information in a different way – one that may be easier to understand. It may also include new information to help the child relate the previous utterance to his own world of knowledge. Its structure can vary, which provides emphasis.

Examples:

Dad Where does it fit?
Dad *Where does the long gate fit?* *r*

and

Dad Flying pig?
Dad *Is your pig flying?* *r*

and

Dad Is it stuck?
Dad *The pig's stuck in the barn.* *r*

a - acknowledgement: verbal recognition of the child's utterance or action. It includes agreement and praise as well as simple acknowledgement.

Dad What noise does a cow make?
Child Moooo.
Dad {Laughs}
Dad *That's right!* *a*

qwh - "wh" question: this question type always includes one of the words *where, what, when, why, which* or *how*, not necessarily at the beginning of the utterance.

Examples: "*Put it where*?" "*What is he sitting on?*"

Such questions are considered important because they seek information, encouraging the child to express him/herself. They also give the turn back to the child.

Dad *What does the pig say?* *qwh*
Child Oink oink!

qyn - yes/no question: although this question form limits response in that it requires only a short answer, it does pass the turn back to the child, also modeling appropriate language for the child whose linguistic abilities are better developed, as exemplified by the following response options:

Dad *Is the pig sleeping in the barn?* *qyn*
Child Yes.

A more advanced language-learner might reply with one of the following:

Child *Yes he is.*
Child *Yes he is sleeping.*
Child *Yes he is sleeping in the barn.*

Responses that Impede Conversation

Just as there are features that support conversation with the child, so there are those that make it difficult for the child to respond, so that the conversation falters or breaks down. Of these non-supportive features, seven were coded for this study; each is described below:

qns - non-specific question: *"What's this?" Who's that?"*

This type of question does not encourage conversation because of its vagueness: the reference of *"What's that?"* can be confusing to a child. Even when the reference becomes obvious to the child (for example when the father holds up a small toy animal) the expected response is likely to be nothing more than the name of the object – and the end of that turn. The possible confusion is illustrated with this example:

Dad *What's that?* *qns*
Child Dat.
Dad What is that?
Dad Apple.

Child Apple.
Dad Apple, that's right.

co - confirmation request: the dad seeks verification of his interpretation of what the child has said. There are two variations; partial or exact repetition of the child's utterance in interrogative form, and vague questioning. The following dialogue illustrates both:

Child X x x me apple.
Dad *Those are apples?* *co*
Child Yeah.
Dad *Really?* *co*

cl - clarification request: the dad queries the child because he either did not hear or did not understand what was said. The vague *"Huh?"* does not indicate to the child what is required as a response, and thus does not foster more sophisticated repair by the child.

Dad What do you see?
Child X x xx.
Dad *Huh?* *cl*

directive: any utterance that requests someone to do something by the inclusion of a directing word such as *put, find, look, take, watch* or *touch*. Directives do not encourage conversation, as their purpose is to motivate action rather than elicit a spoken response, even when used in polite format. In this study, a distinction was made between two groups:

di – directive, imperative (command): this utterance is considered highly authoritarian and more controlling than other directives, as it has no subject, and puts the action word up front. It is highly likely to result in action but no words. A negative form is also included:

Dad *Give me that block!* *di*
Dad *Don't touch that!* *di*

Other forms tend to be more polite as they decrease in directness and increase in optionality (Leech, 1983).

These have been included in the second category:

dr -directive, request:

Request:
I want you to sit down. *dr*
Will hand me that block? *dr*
Hortative:
Let's put this one on top. *dr*
Indirect:
Can you hand me that block? *dr*
Would you hand me that block? *dr*
Could you hand me that block? *dr*
Implied:
I could really use that block. *dr*
That tower could do with another block. *dr*
Carefully! (manner) *dr*
On the hay! (place) *dr*

(Variations such as *"Why don't you put the red block on top?"* and *"Perhaps you could put that block on top"* were not included because they were interpreted as being closer to "suggestions" than "requests". Although other requests in the form of "*Can you* ...?" were included, those that asked the child if he or she could *say* something – such as "*Can you say neigh?"* –

were excluded, as they were interpreted as a form of testing and teaching, and were classed as yes/no questions.)

c - correction: an instance of correcting a child's speech, either implicitly:

Child X baby
Dad Is that a baby?
Dad *Think it's a grown man.* *c*

or explicitly:

Child More tractors.
Dad *They're sponges not tractors.* *c*

na - non-acknowledgement: an instance of verbally ignoring the child's utterance. When a child receives no response from the listener, he may subconsciously wonder if his/her speech is worth listening to. It has been shown that children, when addressing traditional fathers, do not repeat themselves when ignored (Tomasello, Conti-Ramsden and Ewart, 1989).

The frequencies of these fourteen features were tallied and then percentaged for each father, and for both groups of fathers, as a basis for comparison. These features were classified as being either supportive or non-supportive of CDS, there being seven specific features in each classification, as shown in Table 2, following.

Table 2

Supportive and Non-Supportive Features of CDS

Supportive	Non-Supportive
Self repetition	Non-specific questions
Child repetition	Directives, imperative
Expansion	Directives, requests
Restatement	Confirmation requests
Acknowledgement	Clarification requests
"wh" questions	Non-acknowledgement
yes/no questions	Correction

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This chapter will present the findings from the questionnaires and an analysis of the transcripts from the ten interviews of the fathers with their children. The results will be discussed in two sections; the first will be a description of the time the fathers spend with their children. The second will present the results from the data from the transcribed interviews; this will be subdivided into two sections: those features of CDS that do, and those that do not, support a child's conversation.

Time Fathers spend with their Children

As can be seen in Table 3, the traditional dads in this study reported themselves spending an average of 45¾ hours per week with their children, as compared to the stay-at-home dads' average of 77½ hours total. As for time spent *alone* with the child, these traditional dads averaged 10 hours as compared to the stay-at-home dads' 46¼ hours; that is, the stay-at-home dads spent *more than four times as long* alone with their children than the traditional dads did.

Table 3
Hours spent with Child per Week: all Dads

Traditional dads				Stay-at home dads			
Dad		**Total**	**Alone**	**Dad**		**Total**	**Alone**
Chris	1;02	40	10	Rory	1;04	75	32
Ben	1;10	45	5	Bob	1;08	55	45
Tom	1;10	44	10	Henry	1;10	62-88	48-60
David	2;02	57	12	Ulrich	1;10	100	50
Sam	2;04	43	13	Scott	2;04	85	46
Average		**45¾**	**10**	**Average**		**77½**	**46¼**

On the questionnaires, the dads checked all the child-care tasks in which they participated. While the stay-at-home dads took responsibility for the full spectrum of the daily routine – meal preparation, dressing, going to play-group, for example – the traditional dads were involved in the evenings with bed, bath and story times, and sporadically on weekends.

Of importance at least as equal as quantity, is that elusive descriptor *quality* of time. In an attempt to discover this, it was requested that the fathers analyze their time alone with the child: that is, time spent with or without other children present, but in the absence of another adult. Ten common daily activities were listed, and the dads ranked them in order of frequency of occurrence, 1 –10, or N/A, with #1 being the most commonly occurring. The average rankings for each group are given in Table 4, following.

Table 4
Distribution of Time Dads spent Alone with their Children
(Average ranking)

Traditional dads			Stay-at-home dads	
Activity	**Ranking**		**Activity**	**Ranking**
Household tasks	2.6		Play with child	1.6
Children's TV/videos	3.4		Go on excursions	2.6
Play with child	3.6		Read to child	3.4
Read to child	3.8		Household tasks	3.6
Adult TV	4.0		Children's TV/videos	6.0
Read paper or books	4.6		Occupational work	7.0
Go on excursions	5.2		Read paper/book	7.0
Talk on phone	7.6		Talk on phone	8.0
Surf the web	7.6		Adult TV	8.75
Occupational work	10.0		Surf the web	9.75

When looking at the rankings in Table 4, it is clear that playing with his child was the most important activity for the stay-at-home dad. In comparison, household tasks took precedence over any of the child-participatory activities for the traditional dads. In descending order of participation, the four most common activities of the traditional dads, when they were alone with their children, were:

1. Doing things around the home.
2. Watching children's TV and videos.
3. Playing with the child: puzzles, coloring, tag, hide and seek, puzzles, tea party-picnics, cars, rough-house games, running in the house, toys, dolls, playing basketball, toy kitchen, dolls, "playing what the child plays", imaginary play and exploring outside.
4. Reading to the child.

For the stay-at-home dads, the top four activities were described as:

1. Playing with the child: imaginary play, little people, throwing the ball to the dog, wrestling, chase, coloring, computer games, playing with the toy kitchen.
2. Going on excursions: park, playground, library, friends, OMSI, Zoo, swimming pool, bus ride, errands, store, book-store, Super Play, playgroup, McDonald's.
3. Reading to the child.
4. Doing things around the home.

From these descriptions it emerges that the two groups of dads in this study not only spend vastly different amounts of time with their children, but they also spend it differently. Stay-at-home dad-child activity is more child-centered, giving priority to those things that the child might enjoy, for surely it would be more fun for the child to have dad play hide-and-seek than to watch him mow the lawn. Probably because of his much briefer time at home, even when alone with his child, the traditional dad's number one priority is household maintenance and chores. That watching children's TV and videos is the second choice of activity seems to suggest that the dads really want to relax, so that sitting back in a comfortable chair, with the child being entertained without exertion from dad, offers the solution. Playing with, and reading to the child were the traditional dads' third and fourth most common activities. Interestingly, the dads in the two groups listed very

similar play activities – a mixture of the quiet and the boisterous, with both even mentioning imaginary play.

Along with the much lower amount of time spent, these findings reflect the fairly typical lifestyle of a secondary-care dad, for whom interaction with the child is not the prime focus. On this basis, together with the time reports, it seems reasonable to assume that the categorizing of the two groups was justified.

Analysis of the Fathers' Speech

Although each father-child dyad was recorded for 20 minutes, there was a wide range of total numbers of utterances. Some fathers spoke very quickly and almost non-stop, whilst one dyad was eliminated from the study because the father remained silent the entire time. His one succinct comment adds perspective to the procedure of eliciting data: finally, after a painful twenty minutes, he slipped a puppet onto his hand, and that little green dragon said to his daughter *"It's sure hard to play when you're being watched, isn't it kid?"*

As can be seen in Table 5, the traditional dads together had a total of 1, 271 utterances, with individual dads producing between 191 and 373, while the stay-at-home dads had 982 utterances with a 144 to 281 range.

Table 5
Utterances of All Dads

Traditional dads			Stay-at-home dads		
Dad	**Child's Age**	**Utterances**	**Dad**	**Child's Age**	**Utterances**
Chris	1;2	373	Rory	1;4	144
Ben	1;10	191	Bob	1;8	281
Tom	1;10	247	Henry	1;10	278
David	2;2	264	Ulrich	1;10	161
Sam	2;4	196	Scott	2;4	191
Total		**1,271**	**Total**		**982**

For each father, tokens in all of the categories were tallied then calculated as a percentage of his total utterances, but as a basis for comparison, only percentages were used so as to be able to equate across different sample sizes. The complete data of each dad's utterances – actual numbers and percentages – are presented in Appendices B and C.

Reflecting the speech patterns, individual styles of play also varied. Some dads tended to pick up the toys, inquiring about them and expecting the child to produce names; others gave numerous directions for the child to follow, while others took that middle road, playing with the toys and moving the animals around, occasionally describing or asking about their actions.

Conversation-Supporting Features

As described in Chapter II, it has been well-documented in the literature that certain features of CDS help children to play their role in the

back-and-forth interaction of conversation. The features analyzed here, each fully described in Chapter III, are: Repetition of self and child, Expansion, Restatement and Acknowledgement. "Wh" and yes/no questions are also included, as by giving the turn back to the child they also promote conversation.

Repetition

Repetition is mentioned in virtually every study of CDS as being one of its most basic characteristics. In this study, two basic types were considered: repetition of self and of the child, in their exact form only. *Inexact* and *partial* variations were included in the categories of expansion and restatement, which will be discussed later.

Example of **self repetition**:

Ulrich	That a tractor?	
Ulrich	*That a tractor?*	*sr*

Examples of **child repetition** varied, of course, according to the child's linguistic ability:

Child	Hmmm.	
Rory	*Hmmm.*	*cr*
Child	Duck.	
Ben	*Duck.*	*cr*
Child	There's ducks in there.	
Scott	*There's ducks in there.*	*cr*

In looking at total repetition as percentages of the ten dads' utterances in this study, it can be seen (in Tables 6 and 7 below) that there was a wide range of usage in both groups: from 2.5% to 14.0% for the traditional dads and 4.1% to 19.2% for the stay-at-home dads. Of particular interest is the stay-at-home dads' repetition of their children's utterances; not only did they repeat the child more frequently than the traditional dads did, but also more frequently than they repeated themselves. This suggests that they were listening to, and focusing on interacting with their children more than the traditional dads were.

Table 6
Repetition: Traditional Dads
(% of utterances)

Dad	**Child's Age**	Total	Self	Child
Chris	1;2	6.3%	6.1%	0.2%
Ben	1;10	8.3	1.5	6.8
Tom	1;10	2.8	1.6	1.2
David	2;4	14.0	6.8	7.6
Sam	2;4	2.5	1.5	2.0
Average		**7.0**	**4.0**	**3.0**

Table 7
Repetition: Stay-at-home Dads
(% of utterances)

Dad	**Child's Age**	Total	Self	Child
Rory	1;2	4.1%	2.7%	1.4 %
Bob	1;8	4.6	1.4	3.2
Henry	1;10	12.2	5.4	6.8
Ulrich	1;10	19.2	13.0	6.2
Scott	2;4	11.4	3.1	8.3
Average		**10.8**	**5.1**	**5.7**

It can be seen that stay-at-home dad Ulrich used many more self repetitions than any of the other dads – 13.0% as compared to the average of 5.1%. Part of the reason for this was the behavior of his son, who was *very* active and did not want to sit down and play with the toys. The dad used numerous directives, frequently repeated, in attempting to foster and maintain interest, thus increasing the totals in these two categories. For example:

Ulrich	Don't throw!		
Ulrich!	*Don't throw!*	*sr*	*di*

and

Ulrich	Be nice!		
Ulrich	*Be nice!*	*sr*	*di*

However, were his self repetitions to be omitted from the count, the basic findings would be the same. When all repetitions were tallied, there was a difference between the two groups – the quantity of repetition produced by the stay-at-home dads (10.8%) exceeded that of the traditional dads (7.0%). This reflected the frequencies of both *self and child* repetition: the stay-at-home dads repeated themselves 5.1% as compared to the traditional dads 4.0%, and exactly copied their children 5.3% to 3.0%. Redundant speech is considered central to CDS in that it presents the child with another chance to hear and respond to an utterance, or to hear his/her own utterance being produced by someone else. It therefore encourages a response. The higher frequencies of both kinds of repetition in the stay-at-home fathers' speech

seems to indicate that they were making a greater effort than the traditional dads to converse with their children.

One traditional dad, David, had a very high usage of repetition (14.0%) that resulted in fertile *strings* of repetition, a pattern that he repeated with *doggie, goat, sheep, pumpkin, duck, chicken* and *butterfly*, seemingly convinced that his son should be able to name everything correctly. Sometimes, as with the butterfly, the child's pronunciation was imperfect, so that the dad's behavior could be interpreted as modeling the correct form, combined with a determination that the child would get it right if he practiced enough. In other instances, repetition seemed more like an easy way for him to continue the conversation, especially as these strings were usually followed by another label request or simply "Uhhum".

The following are two examples of his unique pattern of repetition:

David	*What is it?*	
Child.	X.	
David	*Doggie.*	
Child	Doggie.	
David	*Doggie.*	*cr*
Child.	Doggie.	
David	*Doggie.*	*cr*
Child	Doggie.	
David	*What's that?*	
Child	Ducky.	
David	*Oh, not really a ducky.*	

and

David	What's that?
Child	Dat.
David	What is it?

Child	Dat.	
David	Butterfly.	
Child	Baxx.	
David	*Butterfly.*	*sr*
Child	Baxx.	
David	*Butterfly.*	*sr*
Child	Baxx.	
David	*Butterfly.*	*sr*

He repeated similar strings of repetition with most of the other creatures in the toy box. No other dad patterned his repetition in this way, the usual manner being a single utterance- repetition, thus:

Child	Big car	
Henry	*Big car.*	*cr*

and

Sam	Where'd the fence go?	
Sam	*Where'd the fence go?*	sr

For the three children who were not verbal, the two stay-at-home dads acknowledged or repeated most of the varied sounds that they made. The daughter of the traditional dad did not make many noises, so that he had less opportunity for child repetition.

Examples:

Child	Eeh!	
Ulrich	*Eeh!*	*cr*
Child	Mmm!	
Ulrich	*Mmm!*	*cr*
Child	Yee!	
Ulrich	*Yee!*	*cr*

and

Child	Hmmm.	
Rory	*Hmmm.*	*cr*

Expansion

The presence of expansion in CDS demonstrates the conversation partner's interest in maintaining the verbal interaction. By responding to the child's utterance with added information, and frequently including part of that utterance, expansions help the child relate his words to a larger context, offering reminders of past experiences, family members, friends or pets, and familiar objects in the child's environment. A parent's expansions could, therefore, be considered a reflection of sensitivity to the child's speech.

Because the very basis of expansion is the child's utterance, two fathers, Chris and Rory (one from each group) were excluded from this analysis as their children were not speaking in words, and a third, stay-at-home dad, Ulrich, was also excluded as his son was hyper-active and barely spoke. Pine (1994) believes that expansions have different functions: they are useful to the younger child in that they can provide context, and to the more advanced learner they provide structural information. In reiterating Snow (1977), Pine agreed that expansions clarify and upgrade a child's speech. Brown and Bellugi (1964) observed that adults particularly expand utterances that are grammatically incomplete. In this study, semantic and syntactic expansions were noted.

Examples:

Child Moon.
Bob *Yes, it's the moon.* *e*
and
Child Baby horsie.
Scott *A little baby horsie.* *e*
and
Child What's that?
Scott *It's a tie.* *a*
Child A tie?
Scott *It ties up the bag.* *e*

As can be seen in Tables 8 and 9, there was a very wide range in the frequencies in which individual dads used expansion, with the stay-at-home dads expanding their children's utterances four times more frequently than did the traditional dads, 5.6% to 1.3%.

Table 8
Expansion: Traditional Dads
(% of utterances)

Dad	**Child's Age**	
Ben	1;10	2.1%
Tom	1;10	0.8
David	2.4	0.3
Sam	2;4	2.0
Average		**1.3**

Table 9
Expansion: Stay-at-home Dads
(% of utterances)

Dad	**Child's Age**	
Bob	1;08	5.0%
Henry	1;10	1.4
Scott	2;04	10.0
Average		**5.6**

Together, **expansion and repetition** play major roles in encouraging and maintaining parent-child conversation, so that the two are often mentioned together in the literature. One might, therefore, conjecture that fathers using a high percentage of repetition in their CDS would have a correspondingly high usage of expansion. As seen in Tables 10 and 11, this was not found to be so, except for stay-at-home dad Scott, who used both freely.

Table 10
Expansion and Repetition: Traditional Dads
(% of utterances)

Traditional dads		
	Expansion	Repetition
Ben 1;10	2.1%	7.7%
Tom 1;10	0.8	2.8
David 2;2	0.3	14.4
Sam 2:4	2.0	3.5

Table 11
Expansion and Repetition: Stay-at-home Dads
(% of utterances)

Stay-at-home dads		
	Expansion	Repetition
Bob 1;8	5.0%	3.2%
Henry 1;10	1.4	6.8
Scott 2;4	10.0	8.3

Restatement

Examination of the data had revealed the need for another category related to repetition and expansion, one that would encompass this vague but closely-related area of adult speech. Sequences such as following would otherwise have been ignored:

Scott	How many ducks are in there?	
Child	One, two, three, four!	
Scott	*Four!*	*a*
Scott	*There's four ducks in there?*	*r*

and

Child	Goat.	
Bob	*Goat, yeah.*	*a*
Bob	*He's a goat.*	*r*

and

Child	X flying!	
Henry	Flying pig?	
Henry	*Is your pig flying?*	*r*

and

Child	Another baby where it go?	
Scott	*With the mama horse.*	*a*
Child	Uh?	
Dad	*Put it with the mama horse.*	*r*

Self-expansion, self-repetition inexact, rewording..... ? The term **restatement** was decided upon. It captured the times a dad would simply acknowledge his child's utterance, and *then* expand upon that utterance in some way, sometimes using partial repetition, sometimes simply restating it. At other times different words were used, but the meaning was kept very close semantically. Without this category, this second utterance would not have been recognized for the role it plays in supporting the child's conversation – a useful measure of the dad's effort in conversing with his child.

In this study, **restatement** is to a dad's own utterance as **expansion** is to his child's, its purpose being to provide the child with additional information that may be useful in connecting the dad's previous utterance to the child's world of knowledge. Beyond this, Nelson, Carskaddon, and Bonvillian, 1973 (in Berko Gleason and Weintraub, 1983) suggest that such recasts offer the child " ...material for abstracting and constructing new rules"(p. 190). Their term *recast*, also used by Mannle and Tomasello (1987) and Tomasello and Conti-Ramsden (1990), was not used in this study, as its interpretation - *partial repetition with additional material* – was considered insufficiently broad, in that it disallowed restatement without repetition. It was thought that the fathers' choice to completely reframe an utterance could be very useful to the language-learning child.

The results, Tables 12 and 13, showed that although both groups restated quite prolifically, the stay-at-home dads did so slightly more frequently, averaging 8.6% as compared to 6.2%. This suggests that they were trying to help the child understand what they were saying by presenting other information to which the child could, perhaps, relate.

Table 12
Restatement: Traditional Dads
(% of utterances)

Traditional dads		
Chris	1;2	9.6%
Ben	1;10	7.9
Tom	1;10	5.5
David	2;2	9.0
Sam	2;4	0.5
Average		**6.2**

Table 13
Restatement: Stay-at-home Dads
(% of utterances)

Stay-at-home dads		
Rory	1;4	6.9%
Bob	1;8	12.8
Henry	1;10	4.3
Ulrich	1;10	6.2
Scott	2;4	8.9
Average		**8.6**

The findings in these four categories – self and child repetition, expansion and restatement - show that the stay-at-home dads in this study expand upon and repeat their own and their children's utterances more frequently than do the traditional dads.

Acknowledgement

Acknowledgements were included in this study because of the small but important role they play in maintaining conversation: by directly responding to the child's turn, they demonstrate to the child that the dad is sharing a joint focus. In that they offer supportive comments of praise, agreement or approval, they continue joint focus with the child – the basis of topic maintenance (Kloth, Jansenn, Kraaimaat and Brutten, 1998). As some of the children were preverbal, it was decided to also include responses to the child's actions, thus acknowledging a very basic form of interaction. Unlike expansion, acknowledgements do not provide any new information; they simply give the turn back to the child. The more numerous responses were to actions, with a variety of examples from all the dads, following no pattern: *"Hey that's a good place for it sweetie." "Thank you!" "Ok, why not?" "That works" "Perfect" "Good trick!" "One more!" "Ooooh!" "You bet!" "I don't think it opens" "Good for you, my boy" "Dropped it!" "Yeah!" "That's not a ball so we can't kick it." "Yeah, you found a gate."* Although minimal, each of these acknowledgements showed the child that what he/she was doing was of interest to dad.

In response to child utterances there were numerous examples of *"Yeah" "Good!" "True" "Sure" "Good job!" "Thank you*" and "*Okay"* with some *"I don't know" s.* Other, less generic responses included:

Child	Three blocks.
Henry	*Yeah, you could do that.* *a*

Child You open apple?
Scott *I don't know if it opens, but we'll see.* *a*
and
Child I put it in my x.
Sam *You're funny!* *a*
and
Child Woof woof woof woof!
Sam *Hi doggie!* *a*

This was an interesting category, with some of the dads being very prolific with their acknowledgement, the ranges being from 2.7% to 26% for the traditional dads, and 10.5% to 20.4% for the stay-at-home dads. As seen in Tables 14 and 15, the stay-at-home dads used considerably more on average.

Table 14
Acknowledgement: Traditional Dads
(% of utterances)

Traditional dads		
Chris	1;2	2.7%
Ben	1;10	11.0
Tom	1;10	6.4
David	2;2	7.2
Sam	2;4	26.0
Average		**9.2**

Table 15
Acknowledgement: Stay-at-home Dads
(% of utterances)

Stay-at-home dads		
Rory	1;4	13.3%
Bob	1;8	14.2
Henry	1;10	15.8
Ulrich	1;10	10.5
Scott	2;4	20.4
Average		**16.3**

It has been well documented in the literature that repetition and expansion are conversation-supporting features of CDS. Together with the similar categories, restatement and acknowledgement, they all facilitate conversation by giving more opportunity to the child to relate to his environment. The greater use of these four conversation-supporting features by the stay-at-home dads suggests a more fully developed sensitivity to their children's language than that of the traditional dads.

"Wh" and yes/no questions

Questions are generally recognized as being important in supporting conversation because they can maintain a topic (McDonald, Pien, 1982; Olsen-Fulero, 1980) by jointly focusing with a child on objects and activities (Kloth, Jansenn, Kraaimaat, and Brutten, 1998). In giving the turn back to the child – even to a beginning speaker – questions allow the child to fulfill his part in the conversation by producing even a minimal response. The "wh" question anticipates an answer containing information, the yes/no, a monosyllabic response.

However, not all questions are created equal. After examining almost sixty studies concerning gender effects of parental language to their children, Leaper, Anderson and Sanders (1998) observed that *the patterning of questions* in mothers and fathers differed, depending on the type of question. They found that fathers used more "wh" questions. Because of the listener's

expectancy of a more descriptive response to a "wh" than to a yes/no question, they cite specific studies that interpret this as illustrating the more *cognitively stimulating and challenging aspect* of the "wh" question. Berko Gleason and Weintraub (1983), McLaughlin, White, McDevitt and Raskin (1983), and Pine (1994) had similar findings.

The results from this study, shown in Tables 16 and 17, support this implication; the lower "wh" usage by the stay-at-home fathers (average usage 7.2%) as compared to the traditional dads' 11.3%, suggests that they were presenting less of a challenge than the traditional dads.

Table 16
"Wh" questions: Traditional Dads
(% of utterances)

Traditional dads		
Chris	1;2	13.6%
Ben	1;10	8.9
Tom	1;10	10.9
David	2;2	10.6
Sam	2;4	11.2
Average		**11.3**

Table 17
"Wh" questions: Stay-at-home Dads
(Percentage of utterances)

Stay-at-home dads		
Rory	1;4	4.8%
Bob	1;8	5.7
Henry	1;10	8.3
Ulrich	1;10	8.7
Scott	2;4	5.7
Average		**7.2**

However, results vary according to a researcher's decision as to what should, or should not be included in any given category. For example, while some studies (including this one) isolate non-specific questions (nsq) such as *"What?" "What's this?"* and *"Who's that?"* as one of the "non-supportive" features of conversation, others do not, choosing to simply include them as "wh" questions. As "wh" question frequency in this study will be compared with other studies in the following chapter, the enlarged "wh" category –"wh" plus nsq – is presented here in Table 18. As can be seen, the broadening of the category did not markedly effect the results: the traditional dads used more than the stay-at-home dads – 18.6% to 16.5%.

Table 18
Questions: Comparison of Traditional and Stay-at-home Dads
(% of utterances)

	Traditional	Stay-at-home
Total questions	32.6%	22.8%
"wh"	11.3	7.2
"wh" + nsq	18.6	16.5
yes/no	21.3	15.6

Questions play an interesting and didactic role in CDS: firstly, they are thought to aid in the acquisition of various grammatical features – the yes/no question, for example, models inversion: *"Does the farmer have a hat?"* However, for the younger child, such as those in this study, the role of the

the question in adult-child interaction is the one of importance: questions support conversation simply by handing the turn back to the child.

"Wh" questions *put more demands* on the child than do the straightforward yes/no variety, as they anticipate informational responses; mothers have been shown to rephrase "wh" into yes/no questions to make it easier for the child to reply. It does seem reasonable, therefore, to accept the well-documented findings (Berko Gleason and Weintraub,1983; Leaper, Anderson and Sanders,1998; McLaughlin, White, McDevitt and Raskin, 1983; Pine, 1994) that the more attuned conversation partner of a young child uses fewer "wh" questions – as did the stay-at-home dads with their young children in the current study.

In attempting to correlate child age with a more demanding form of CDS, Longhurst and Stepanich (1975) showed that mothers also *changed their emphasis* from yes/no to "wh" questions as the child's linguistic capabilities increased. Malone and Guy (1982) found that the fathers in their study used many more yes/no than "wh" questions. They supported Snow and Ferguson's (1977) assertion that questioning is a way of checking a child's comprehension so that mothers can adjust their language. A greater frequency of "wh" questions was interpreted as *involving the child* more (Malone and Guy, 1982; Stein, 1976). The frequency relationship between the two question types could therefore vary according to the children's ages.

Several of the same studies (Berko Gleason and Weintraub, 1983; Leaper et al., 1998; McLaughlin et al., 1983; Pine, 1990) also found that

mothers used more of the less-demanding yes/no questions with younger children. Based on this *less-demanding* interpretation, one might have expected the stay-at-home dads in this study to use more than the traditional dads: but no, as seen in Tables 19 and 20, the traditional dads used far more yes/no questions, 21.3% to 15.6%. However, according to Malone and Guy's (1982) interpretation, high frequencies are to be expected of traditional dads, whose prolific usage of yes/no questions is seen as *involving the child less.*

Table 19
Yes/no questions: Traditional Dads
(% of utterances)

Traditional dads		
Chris	1;2	19.1%
Ben	1;10	26.7
Tom	1;10	23.5
David	2;2	22.7
Sam	2;4	18.3
Average		**21.3**

Table 20
Yes/no questions: Stay-at-home Dads
(% of utterances)

Stay-at-home dads		
Rory	1;4	16.6%
Bob	1;8	12.8
Henry	1;10	11.5
Ulrich	1;10	18.0
Scott	2;4	16.7
Average		**15.6**

In light of the conflicting interpretations in the literature, besides comparing the actual frequencies of usage of the two groups, perhaps it is

beneficial to examine the *ratios* of these two question types within each group. The stay-at-home dads used 15.6% yes/no to 7.2% "wh", and the traditional dads used 21.3% yes/no to 11.3% "wh" questions. These ratios of question usage suggest that although both groups were involving their children by asking "wh" questions, they were using even more yes/no questions as a concession to the linguistic immaturity of their toddlers.

Table 21 summarizes the conversation-supporting features of CDS that have been examined in this study. It is clear that the stay-at-home dads have involved themselves more closely in interacting with their children by using higher frequencies of self and child repetition, expansion, acknowledgement and restatement. However, both groups adjusted the ratio of their "wh" and yes/no questioning to the limited linguistic ability of their children.

Table 21
Conversation-Supporting features:
Comparison of Traditional and Stay-at home Dads
(% of total utterances)

	Traditional dads	Stay-at-home dads
Repetition of self	4.0%	**5.1%**
Repetition of child	3.0	**5.7**
Expansion	1.3	**5.6**
Acknowledgement	9.2	**16.3**
Restatement	6.2	**8.6**
"wh" questions	**11.3**	7.2
yes/no questions	**21.3**	15.6

Non-Supporting Features of CDS

CDS can also include features that cause breakdown in the flow of parent-child conversation. This can occur in several ways: by a loss of joint focus (non-acknowledgement, correction), by challenging the child in a way that is difficult for him/her to respond (non-specific questions, confirmation and clarification requests) or by giving directives (whose purpose is to promote action rather than words).

Non-specific questions

The non-specific question "*What?*" is generally recognized as being one of these *non-supportive* features, symbolizing breakdown in comprehending the child's utterance, and presenting a challenge to the child in its vagueness. There were only two such questions by the dads in this study. There were, however, many of the *"What's this?"* and *"Who's that?"* variety. Such questions are frequently given a category of their own on the basis of their non-specificity. However, in this study, non-specific questions were found to have a dual function: to simply seek an answer, or to initiate conversation.

Masur and Berko Gleason (1980) believe that there is a tendency amongst fathers to "test, confirm and display ... [the knowledge of their children by using this type of question, in that it] ... maximizes their language performance" (p. 409). In this study, this generic questioning did not seem to

offer a challenge to the children, who responded as they did to other question formations. Even if their intent is generally presumed to test the child's knowledge, these *"What's this?"* questions seem to be equally as useful as the basic yes/no question – if not more so, in supporting conversation by soliciting a response.

Example:

Scott	*And what's that?*	*qns*
Child	That's a flower.	
Child	A flower.	
Scott	That a pretty flower?	
Child	Yeah.	
Scott	Does it smell pretty?	
Child	Yeah.	

and

Bob	*What is that?*	*qns*
Child	X x.	
Bob	Is he asleep?	
Bob	Is that where the pig sleeps?	
Child	Asleep.	
Bob	She's awake now, huh?	

Bob and Scott, both stay-at-home dads, were the *only* dads who used non-specific questions in this conversation-producing manner; for others it seemed to be a chance to teach, although the child was not always encouraged to repeat or to respond.

Example:

David	*What's that?*	*qns*
David	A cow?	
David	*What's that?*	*qns*
David	A horse?	
David	Ah, you know what that is.	
David	*What is that?*	*qns*
David	{whispering} Kitty cat.	
David	*What's that?*	*qns*

When the child did respond, David did not expand the utterance, but simply repeated the name of the object. When the child also repeated, the conversation became a string of names.

Example:

David	*What is it?*	*qns*
David	Sheep.	
Child	Sheep.	
David	*Sheep.*	*cr*
Child	Sheep.	

As seen in Tables 22 and 23, the stay-at-home dads used more non-specific questions than the traditional dads, an average of 9.3% as compared 7.3% by the traditional dads, with considerable variation between individuals, using them as conversational aids more than the traditional dads did. Some dads obviously delighted in the process of asking the question and hearing the response; if the child did not know the answer, or was too young to say it, the dad would provide it.

Table 22
Non-specific Questions: Traditional Dads
(% of utterances)

Traditional dads		
Chris	1;2	6.7%
Ben	1;10	6.8
Tom	1;10	6.8
David	2;2	13.2
Sam	2;4	3.5
Average		**7.3**

Table 23
Non-specific Questions: Stay-at-home Dads
(% of utterances)

Stay-at-home dads		
Rory	1;4	2.1%
Bob	1;8	11.4
Henry	1;10	5.7
Ulrich	1;10	11.2
Scott	2;4	12.1
Average		**9.3**

Both groups displayed very wide ranges of frequency: 2.1% to 12.1% for the stay-at-home dads compared to 3.5% to 13.2% for the traditional dads. As mentioned, this question came in the form of *"What's this?"* and *"What's that?"* which were used as conversation starters. It is possible that these parallel results were elicited from the dads because they were playing with toys provided by the experimenters. It may be interesting to compare the frequencies in a future study, with the dads and children playing with their own toys, so that everything wouldn't be new and exciting, and tempting the dads to check if the child could label all these quaint little animals and people.

Directives

Berko and Gleason and Grief's (1983) criterion for inclusion as a directive is any utterance whose intent is to cause the hearer to do something by including a directing word such as *put, find, look, take, watch* or *touch.* Directives cause conversation breakdown by motivating action rather than words, even when used in polite format. For this study, a distinction was made between two types; to avoid confusion, when referred to in general they are called **directives,** but for specific comparison they are classed as either a directive imperative (di), or a directive request (dr).

The **directive imperative,** or true command, has a category of its own, as this type of utterance, which invariably has no subject, is considered highly authoritarian and more controlling than all other forms. In the words of Malone and Guy (1982) "... the use of imperatives communicates the underlying assumption that the speaker has authority and control over the listener" (p. 605).

A typical example:

Ulrich *Leave those alone!* *di*

Negative forms are also included:

Ulrich *Don't throw!* *di*

The **directive request** includes various *less direct forms,* which are subtler, less authoritarian, and offer more optionality. As Leech (1983)

explained, " ... the more indirect an illocution is, the more diminished and tentative its force tends to be" (p.108). The directive forms listed below are in decreasing order of directness, with increasing implication and politeness; variations of them were included in this study:

Direct request:
I want you to sit down. *dr*
Will hand me that block? *dr*
Hortative request:
Let's put this one on top. *dr*
Indirect request:
Can you hand me that block? *dr*
Would you hand me that block? *dr*
Could you hand me that block? *dr*
Implied request:
I could really use that block. *dr*
That tower could do with another block. *dr*
Carefully! (manner) *dr*
On the hay! (place) *dr*

[Less direct forms such as *"Shall we paint the barn?"* were not included because they were interpreted as suggestions rather than imperatives – and a line had to be drawn somewhere.]

It was realized, in coding these utterances, that the dad's purpose in using many of the imperatives was to maintain the child's focus of interest by very pointedly requesting him/her to *"Look!"* or *"Watch!"*. It was decided to appraise these as a sub-category percentage of the imperatives. It can be seen in Tables 24 and 25 that the bracketed number is the percentage of the "*look*" type of directive within the imperative total: traditional dad Chris, for example, used 10% imperatives, and 54% of those were of the "look" variety.

Table 24
Directives: Imperatives and Requests
Traditional Dads
(% of total utterances)

	Imperative (look)	Request	Total Directives
Chris 1;2	10.0 % (54%)	3.7%	13.7%
Ben 1;10	2.6 (100%)	0	2.6
Tom 1;10	10.9 (18.5%)	6.8	17.7
David 2;2	3.7 (42%)	2.2	5.9
Sam 2;4	3.5 (85%)	1.5	5.0
Average	**6.7 (45%)**	**2.8**	**9.0**

Table 25
Directives: Imperatives and Requests
Stay-at-home Dads
(% of utterances)

	Imperative(look)	Request	Total Directives
Rory 1;4	5.5% (62%)	2.7%	8.2%
Bob 1;8	7.1 (65%)	0.7	7.8
Henry 1;10	4.6 (23%)	3.2	7.8
Ulrich 1;10	21.7 (14%)	2.4	24.1
Scott 2;4	2.0 (50%)	0	0.2
Average	**8.1 (43%)**	**1.7**	**9.8**
Ave. without Ulrich	**4.8 (50%)**	**1.8**	**6.4**

These *figures,* 9.0% for the traditional dads, and 9.8% for the stay-at-home dads, seem to indicate that the two groups used almost identical amounts of directives in their CDS. However, the figures do not accurately represent the usage of the two groups. When separated into the two types of directives, the traditional dads had 2.8% requests as compared to 1.7% for the stay-at-home dads; but, the stay-at-home dads had a higher average of imperatives (8.1%) than the traditional dads 6.7% did. This resulted from the stay-at-home dads' average being increased by Ulrich's attempts to calm his

little boy who really wanted to go outside, to rough and tumble with his dad. Ulrich's speech was full of pleas to *"Come here!" "Stay here!" "Don't throw it!"* His resultant usage of imperatives was 21.7%; if this were to be excluded from the group, the stay-at-home dads' average use would drop to 4.8%.

The use of the **imperative,** typifying the *direct and control* role of the traditional father (Berko Gleason and Grief, 1983; Newport, 1977) has been shown to be an integral part of the CDS of secondary care fathers. It appears with much less frequency in that of mothers (Berko Gleason, 1975; Snow, 1977) – perhaps resulting from the documented avoidance of commanding as a feature of women's speech in general (Crawford, 1995; Lakoff, 1975). Even when couched with politeness, the **directive request** still simply *directs* the child's physical actions, and is not useful in maintaining conversation (Kaye and Chaney, 1981).

Berko Gleason and Greif (1983) found that fathers used the very direct form (imperative) such as "*Put the block on top!*" and the most subtle form (implied request) "*This tower could really use another block on top*". Mothers, by comparison, used more of the indirect request – "*Would you give me another block?*" However, in this study, *none of the dads* used the subtle, more challenging implied directive. Most of their directives were the true imperative: 6.7% for the traditional dads, and 4.8% for the stay-at-home dads, without Ulrich. Their request directives, 2.8% for the traditional dads and

1.8% for the stay-at-home dads, took varying forms, with no pattern of usage differences emerging between the two groups.

Examples:

Ulrich *"Let's see what's in here."* *dr*

and

Rory *"Can you get that out?"* *dr*

and

Henry *"Why don't you pick that up and see what's in there?"* *dr*

The customary interpretation of directives as conversation-stoppers and command-givers seems to be modified in this study. Although there were individuals who did give orders, most of the imperatives and directive requests for both groups were more like encouragement than commands, focusing on words like *"try"*, *"let's"* and *"look"*. They seemed to act as a means of joint focus for dad and child to *continue doing things together*, rather than simply ordering the child to do something, so that they were directive only in that the dads were directing attention to something.

Example:

Henry	Ah now that will work!	
Henry	*Let's set it upside down.*	*dr*
Henry	There you go.	

and Rory to his 1;4 year old daughter:

Rory	Wanna see what's in there?	
Rory	What is it?	
Rory	*Can you get that out?*	*dr*
Rory	Xx.	
Rory	One more.	
Rory	There you go!	

and

Child	Cupboard?	
Child	Oh.	
Child	Big.	
Henry	What's in there?	
Henry	*Look, we could put this in here like this.*	*dr*
Child	Look here.	
Henry	Yeah.	
Child	X.	
Henry	That works.	

As mentioned earlier, a sub-group of imperatives was comprised of those directives that seemed to appear frequently in the dads' speech. Included were the words *"look"* and "*watch*" and the phrase "*Check it out*!" They were found to be very numerous, comprising 45% of imperatives for the traditional dads, and 43% for the stay-at-home dads, as can be seen in Tables 24 and 25 above. Here again, the average figure of the stay-at-home dads was affected by Ulrich's 21.7%, which included a wide range of attention getting imperatives such as *Come here!*" and "*Wait!"* so that *"Look!"* was a relatively small percentage (14.2%).

These words seemed to serve one of two purposes: either a desire by the dad to maintain the focus with their child:

Child	It's all right.	
Henry	That's the boy!	
Henry	No, it'll work.	
Henry	*Look you've got round ones.*	*di*
Henry	Are there more like that?	
Child	Oh.	
Henry	Oh.	

or as an attention-getter:

Chris *Oh look, there's a cow!* *di*
Chris Moooo!
Chris Moooo!
Chris You know that sound.

"Watch!" and *"Check it out!"* functioned the same way. Although the stay-at-home dads used fewer directives than the traditional dads, they all seemed to use them in a similar variety of ways.

Confirmation requests

Closely allied to non-specific questions were the confirmation requests that followed if the child gave an incorrect answer. Their intention is to verify that what the listener thinks he heard is actually what the child said. Although there were other, longer ways of asking for confirmation, two basic forms were common in this study. Firstly, repetition of the child's utterance in interrogative form:

Child Flowers.
Henry *Flowers?* *co*

and

Child He's a doggie daddy.
Sam *Is he a doggie?*

Secondly, using questions such as *"Really?"* and *"Huh?"*

Scott What's that?
Child X x x me apple.
Scott *Those are apples?* *co*
Child Yeah.
Scott *Really?* *co*

The inferred meaning of both forms seemingly asks *"Do you really think so? Are you sure that's what you mean?"* They are a gentle alternative to explicit correction, offering the child a chance to change his/her mind and say something else. Another variation of the confirmation request was the vague *"Huh?"* used as a prod to check the child's knowledge, before the child had attempted to answer:

Tom	Do you know this color?	
Tom	*Huh?*	*co*

In this study, the stay-at-home dads used more confirmation requests than the traditional dads: 3.9% as compared to 2.4%.

Table 26
Confirmation Requests: Traditional Dads
(% of utterances)

Traditional dads		
Chris	1;2	0.2%
Ben	1;10	4.1
Tom	1;10	2.0
David	2;2	1.1
Sam	2;4	5.1
Average		**2.4**

Table 27
Confirmation Requests: Stay-at-home Dads
(% of utterances)

Stay-at-home dads		
Rory	1;4	0%
Bob	1;8	2.2
Henry	1;10	3.9
Ulrich	1;10	1.2
Scott	2;4	9.5
Average		**3.9**

The popular interpretation of confirmation requests is that they indicate conversation breakdown, so that in casually perusing the results of this study one might assume that the higher average frequency of the stay-at-home dads indicated some sort of anomaly in contrast to the previous findings. And rightly so: when used by the three stay-at-home dads, the majority of the confirmation requests had an entirely different intention. The one very prolific, and playful, stay-at-home dad user seemed to simply enjoyed the whole bantering process, a form of teasing his child, knowing that his child's answer was correct.

Example:

Scott	What's that?	
Child	X x x me apple.	
Scott	*Those are apples?*	*co*
Child	Yeah.	
Scott	*Really?*	*co*
Child	Yeah.	
Scott	*Really?*	*co*
Child	Hmmm.	
Scott	*Sure those aren't something else?*	*co*
Child	*Xx*	
Scott	laughs.	

Another stay-at-home dad, Henry, seemed to use this form as a type of support for the child, to acknowledge what he was doing.

Henry	Whatcha doing?	
Child	Horsie!	
Henry	*Yeah?*	*co*

Later, the son built a little tower and when he knocked it down there was laughter, and this dialogue:

Henry	Uhoh!	
Henry	is laughing.	
Henry	*Uhoh!*	*sr*
Child	Again!	
Henry	*Again?*	*co*
Child	Uhhuh!	
Henry	Okay.	

This scene was repeated later, again with the unnecessary confirmation request that seemed to delight the child. He had a similarly supportive use of this form with his *"Flying pig?"* seeming to say *"Wow, that's amazing!"* and not *"Oh, is he flying? That's nice"*.

Child	Pig	
Henry	Does a pig go on a farm?	
Child	X flying!	
Henry	*Flying pig?*	*co*
Henry	Is your pig flying?	
Henry	What do you see up there?	
Child	X.	
Henry	Flying pig.	

A third stay-at-home dad had a different pattern of use for the confirmation request; he cheerfully asked his son the names of various animals, then often *queried the correct answer*:

Bob	What's this?	
Child	Rabbit.	
Bob	*Rabbit?*	*co*

The traditional dads had interpretations that were different again. Ben seemed to be testing whether his daughter knew the reference and was able to say the word:

Ben	What's that?	
Ben	That a moon?	
Ben	*Moon?*	*co*
Child	Moon.	

Most commonly, though, the traditional dads used it simply for confirmation of understanding the child's intention:

Child	Xx.	
Ben	Bike.	
Ben	A bike for the baby?	
Ben	*Is that what you're saying?*	*co*
Ben	It's like your bike, isn't it?	

and

Child	That puppet daddy.	
Child	He's not puppet!	
Sam	*He's not a puppet?*	*co*
Child	It's a flower.	
Child	A flower puppet.	

These playful usages in the language of the stay-at-home dads, as compared to customary implications of confirmation requests, show that in analyzing language one must sometimes look beneath the numbers to discover the actual interaction.

Clarification requests

In the literature, clarification requests are considered indicative of breakdown in communication, examples of the parent not understanding the child's language, and presenting a greater challenge to the child (Rondal, 1980). There were very few in this study: only one stay-at-home dad and two

traditional dads used any, and it was obvious in all instances that neither the dad nor the transcriber could understand the child's utterance. Even in listening to the tapes numerous times, at various speeds, it was still impossible. These occurrences were infrequent, unremarkable, and of invariable form – an indistinct utterance followed by a question:

Bob	What's this?	
Child	X xx.	
Bob	*Huh?*	*cl*

Table 27
Clarification Requests: Traditional Dads
(% of utterances)

Traditional dads		
Chris	1;2	0%
Ben	1;10	1.0
Tom	1;10	0
David	2;2	0.3
Sam	2;4	0
Average		**0.2**

Table 28
Clarification Requests: Stay-at-home Dads
(% of utterances)

Stay-at-home dads		
Rory	1;4	0%
Bob	1;8	2.5
Henry	1;10	0
Ulrich	1;10	0
Scott	2;4	0
Average		**0.5**

But again the numbers do not necessarily describe what was actually happening in the interaction. Traditional dad Tom could have sought

clarification; instead he admitted that he could not understand his son. This then, was an acknowledged breakdown, the only one found in the language of the dads.

Child	Cock cock.
Tom	*Hmm.*
Tom	*I don't know what you're saying.*
Tom	I think it's a rabbit.
Tom	Is it a rattle?
Tom	It's gonna kiss you.

However, another breakdown was seen in an abrupt attempt to shift topic. From the conversation of the same traditional dad, Tom, came this snippet:

Child	X xs!
Tom	Thankyou.
Tom	Xx.
Tom	*Have you seen grandma paint?*
Tom	*Is there a farmer for the tractor?*

[It was decided not to include topic shifts and breakdowns in this study, as the new toys leant themselves as *cover-ups* for conversation breakdowns. Dads could simply pick up another toy and ask "*What's this*?"]

Non-acknowledgement

In this study, **non-acknowledgement** was any instance of the dad verbally ignoring his child's utterance – a sure sign that the dad was not focusing successfully on the child's area of interest. When a child receives no response from the listener, he may wonder if his/her speech is worth listening to; it has been shown that children, when addressing secondary-care fathers, do not repeat themselves when ignored. Tomasello, Conti Ramsden and Ewert

(1990). Although the percentages are miniscule (0.02% for the stay-at-home dads and 0.6% for the traditional dads), they are important! Three of the traditional dads had non-acknowledgements, for a total of seven, but the stay-at-home dads had only one instance of non-acknowledgement.

Table 30
Non-acknowledgement: Traditional Dads
(total numbers and % of utterances)

Traditional dads			
		#	%
Chris	1;2	0	0%
Ben	1;10	3	1.5
Tom	1;10	3	1.2
David	2;2	0	0
Sam	2;4	1	0.5
Average		7	**0.6**

Table 31
Non-acknowledgement: Stay-at-home Dads
(total numbers and % of utterances)

Stay-at-home dads			
		#	%
Rory	1;4	0	0%
Bob	1;8	0	0
Henry	1;10	0	0
Ulrich	1;10	0	0
Scott	2;4	1	0.1
Average		**1**	**0.02**

The one example of a stay-at-home dad ignoring his child arose from the dad's pleasure of seeing his daughter engrossed in playing with the fascinating new toys:

Child You open apple.
Child xxx
Child Where xx go?
Scott *Something tells me you'd dig a dollhouse or something.* *na*
(Everyone laughs)

However, on one occasion a stay-at-home dad was long in acknowledging his son – but the son *persisted*, demonstrating that he was accustomed to being acknowledged:

Bob Is he asleep?
Child Asleep.
Child Asleep!
Child Asleep.
Bob (I kind of like) he likes xs. [dad addressing researcher]
Bob I like <playing with them x x x x.>
Child <Asleep>
Child Asleep.
Child Asleep.
Bob *Is he sleeping?* *Acknowledgement at last!*
Child Yes

This *eventual acknowledgement* is important in that it indicates the child's confidence that his dad would respond, unlike the fathers in Tomasello, Conti Ramsden and Ewart's (1990) study. In comparison, three of the traditional dads had one or more instances of non-acknowledgement. There were two formats:

1) the dad was *not focusing on* the same topic as the child:

Tom What's this thing?
Child More tractors.
Tom *What is this?* *na*
Child More tractors.

and

Child	Duck	
Ben	Duck	
Ben	What noise does a duck make?	
Ben	Anna?	
(Ben is now holding up a heart)		
Child	Duck.	
(Child is playing with the duck)		
Ben	*Heart?*	*na*

2) the dad *ignored* the child's utterance:

Tom	Does that feel good?	
Tom	That's a sponge.	
Child	Car.	
Tom	*A sponge!*	*na*
Child	Car! (Very loudly)	
Child	Car! (Very loudly)	
Tom	*Sponge.*	
Tom	*That's right!*	
(Both were right: it was a car-shaped sponge.)		

and

Sam	What does that look like?	
Child	A race car, daddy.	
Sam	*What does it look like?*	*na*

That the one child would persevere with his dad, and that there were no other non-acknowledgements from the stay-at-home dads may suggest that they were exhibiting greater sensitivity to their children than the traditional dads.

Correction

Overt correction of a child's speech, either of the validity of an utterance or the actual production of the speech, is rare in CDS (Mannle and Tomasello, 1987). Although correction is not included in many CDS studies, it was considered an important aspect of the fathers' speech, one that would,

perhaps, correlate with other non-supportive conversation features, and offer another dimension to the differences between the two groups. It was found that the traditional dads corrected their children, or gave a negative response, more frequently than did their stay-at-home counterparts, the style depending on the individual; all examples in this study focused on the child's misnomers. As can be seen in Tables 32 and 33, the numbers were extremely small, 1.4% of the traditional dads' utterances, and 0.5% of the stay-at-home dads'. The traditional dads made at least one correction each, whilst only two of the five stay-at-home dads mad any.

Table 32
Corrections: Traditional Dads
(numbers and % of utterances)

		#Explicit	#Implicit	#Total	**% utts.**
Chris	1;2	1	0	1	**0.2**
Ben	1;10	0	2	2	**1.0**
Tom	1;10	5	3	8	**3.2**
David	2;2	2	1	3	**1.1**
Sam	2;4	0	3	3	**1.5**
Average		**8**	**9**	**17**	**1.4**

Table 33
Corrections: Stay-at-home Dads
(numbers and % of utterances)

		#Explicit	#Implicit	#Total	**% utts.**
Rory	1;4	0	0	0	**0**
Bob	1;8	1	3	4	**1.4**
Henry	1;10	4	0	4	**1.4**
Ulrich	1;10	0	0	0	**0**
Scott	2;4	0	0	0	**0**
Average		**5**	**3**	**8**	**0.5**

The correction styles of the two stay-at-home dads were different: Bob was supportive and somewhat amused in manner, whilst Henry was forthright, disallowing any incorrect statements, correcting explicitly – but then mellowing and continuing with the topic.

Examples of Henry's manner include:

Child	Boat.
Henry	*I don't think so.* c
Henry	I don't think so.
Child	Boat.
Henry	I think its more of a trailer.
Child	Trailer.
Henry	Maybe there's a boat somewhere else.

and

Henry	What's this?
Child	Cow
Henry	It's a cupboard?
Henry	*No, a cat.* *c*
Henry	Is that a little kittie cat?
Child	Kittie at.
Henry	How does the a little kittie cat go?
Child	Deow!

The other stay-at-home dad, Bob, *softened* all except one of his corrections. In this example he seemed frustrated when the child was not answering as expected, so that he eventually made an explicit correction and moved on:

Bob	What's the other animals up there?
Bob	What are the other ones up there in the barn?
Child	X.
Bob	What are those other ones?
Child	Ducks.

Child	Ducks.
Bob	What's that other one up in the barn?
Child	Ducks.
Bob	*It's not a duck.* *correction*
Bob	What's that?
Child	Ducks.
Bob	*A cat* *correction.*
Bob	Where's our cats at?

His other corrections were implicit:

Bob	What's that?
Child	A rabbit.
Bob, laughing	A rabbit!
Bob	*It's a goat!* *correction*
Bob	Maybe it's a rabbit!
Child	Goat
Bob	Goat, yeah.
Bob	He's a goat.
Bob	See, he's got a beard.

and again, as the beard discussion continued, he remained supportive of his child.

Bob	Where's your beard?
Bob	laughs.
Child	X x.
Bob	Yeah that's his beard.
Child	X x beard.
Bob	*That's his tail.* *cc*
Bob	Looks like a beard but it's a tail.

Both types of correction were evident amongst the traditional dads, who made between one and eight corrections each, with more of them making explicit corrections thus:

Chris	Where's the kittie?
Chris	Where'd you put him?
Chris	*Noooo, that's not the kitten.* *c*
Chris	That's the man.

and

Child	More tractors?
Tom	*They're sponges not tractors.* *c*

as compared to the implicit:

Sam	What is it?
Child	A horsie!
Sam	A horsie?
Child	Yeah!
Sam	*Funny looking kind of horsie.* *c*

Of the non-supportive features, the miniscule distribution of corrections and non-acknowledgements in the CDS of the stay-at-home dads suggested that they were, perhaps more sensitive to their children than the traditional dads. In the other areas, the frequencies of distribution between the two groups were very close.

It emerged from the analysis of the dads' language that the stay-at-home dads used fewer of both imperative and request directives, ignored their children less and corrected less. They also asked more non-specific questions, and had higher frequencies of clarification and confirmation requests. The frequencies of distribution of these seven features in the CDS of both groups of dads are summarized in Table 34, following:

Table 34

Non-Supportive Features:
Comparison of Traditional and Stay-at-home Dads

Feature	Traditional dads	Stay-at-home dads
Non-specific questions	7.3%	9.3%
Directives, total	9.0	9.8
Directives, imperatives	6.7	8.1
Directives, requests	2.8	1.7
Clarification requests	0.2	0.5
Confirmation requests	2.4	3.9
Corrections	1.4	0.5
Non-acknowledgements	0.6	0.02

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Time Dads spend with their Children

Field (1978), Pruett (1993) and Russell (1991) all reported a strong, nurturing attachment, or finely-tuned awareness, of primary-care dads when interacting with their infants. It was, therefore, anticipated that if the primary care dads in this study were spending large amounts of time with their children, they too would develop a heightened sensitivity that they would be reflected in their CDS.

From the responses on the questionnaires, presented in Table 35, it is apparent that the stay-at-home dads spent more than four times the amount of time alone with their children than the traditional dads, and far more than the dads in any of the studies reported in the literature.

Table 35
Time Dads spend with their Children Each Week

Source of data	Ave. total hours	Ave.hours alone
This study – traditional dads	45.75 hours	10.0 hours
This study – stay-at-home dads	77.5	46.4
Russell(1983)[1] stay-at-home dads	N/A	26.0
Russell (1980) stay-at-home dads	N/A	26.2
Russell (1983) traditional dads	N/A	1.0
Russell (1980) traditional dads	N/A	5.2
Rebelsky & Hanks (1971)	11½ minutes	N/A
Mannle &Tomasello (1987) dads	N/A	8.0
Mannle & Tomasello mothers	N/A	23.0
Clarke-Stewart's(1978)own study	21.0	N/A
Clarke-Stewart's (1978) 5 studies	21.0	N/A

[1] Russell 1980, 1983, cited in Russell (1999)

The stay-at-home dads were with their children *77.5 hours* per week as compared to the traditional dads' *45.75 hours.* These numbers strangely overwhelm those of Clarke-Stewart (1978) who estimated a total of *21 hours* per week and often " ...considerably less ..." (p. 466) for the fathers in her own study, and also as the average in the five parental-observation studies that she examined. Rebelsky and Hanks' (1971) fathers, who were recorded all day every two weeks for three months, were found to have 2.7 interactions per day, each 37.7 seconds long. Converting those figures to obtain a basis for comparison, the result is *11½ minutes per week.* The children in that study were very much younger (2 –12 weeks) than those in the current study, and Mannle and Tomasello (1987) observed that dads actually *talk more to their children in these very early weeks* than when they are a little older – perhaps because of the initial novelty? They did not speculate further, nor specifically consider father-child interaction at the toddler age.

Mannle and Tomasello (1987) did, however, observe that in the traditional family situation, in which fathers spend much less time with their children (Clarke-Stewart, 1978; Rebelsky and Hanks, 1971) it is " ...reasonable to assume that they might be less tuned in to their child's early language than primary caregiver mothers" (p. 25). Although it could, similarly, be assumed that the traditional dads might be less tuned in than the primary care-giving stay-at-home fathers in *this* study, it is apparent that they spend *much more time* with their children than the traditional fathers in other studies. Not only do they spend an average of 40 plus hours a week with their

children, *ten of those hours are actually spent one-on-one;* these figures exceed the recorded times of other reported traditional dads.

The basis of the stay-at-home dads' time with their children was essential child-care; they each performed the full range of routine tasks, if not every day, at least for a majority of the time: meals, bathing, dressing, stories, and putting the child to bed. Beyond that, many hours were spent participating in child-focused activities, especially playing together, going on excursions, and reading stories. In essence, they were filling the role of the traditional mother figure, presumably becoming well aware of the child's needs, preferences and idiosyncrasies in all facets of life, including speech.

It was anticipated that this heightened sensitivity of the fathers would be reflected in their CDS, so that it would exhibit higher percentages of conversation- supporting features than that of the traditional dads.

The Research Question

If this sensitivity were to be mirrored in the fathers' languages, it could be asked:

> **Is the language of stay-at-home dads distinguishable from that of traditional dads by its higher level of conversational support, as evidenced by an increased production of features known to encourage and maintain conversation in language-learning children?**

Specifically, it was anticipated that the language of the stay-at-home dads would be more supportive of conversation, and therefore include:

a greater use of repetition and expansion

the use of more questions and fewer directives

fewer instances of non-specific queries such as "What's that?"

fewer requests for confirmation and clarification

fewer instances of verbally ignoring the child's utterances

fewer instances of correcting the child's speech

The findings of this study suggest that the stay-at-home dads showed greater sensitivity than the traditional fathers in talking to their children in a naturalistic play setting during a 20 minute period. They used higher frequencies of five of the seven CDS features analyzed as supporting conversation: repetition, expansion, acknowledgements and restatements, and although using fewer "wh" and yes/no questions than the traditional dads, they used more questions than directives. As regards the seven non-supportive features, the stay-at-home dads used fewer directives (both imperatives and requests), made fewer corrections and had fewer instances of acknowledgement. However, they used more non-specific questions and had more requests for clarification and confirmation.

In looking beyond the actual frequencies of distribution of the various features, it was often very useful to examine the manner in which the individual dads used them in their speech. In the area of **repetition**, the

stay-at-home dads repeated themselves and their children more than the traditional dads did. This was despite the extremely high usage by one traditional dad who produced repetitive strings of animals' names. In comparing these findings with the literature, Table 36, the averages of both groups indicate frequencies of self repetition that are higher than the mothers in Snow's (1977) study.

Kaye (1980) gave results from two age groups, based on her own observations that mothers self-repeat more as the child ages. The criteria were different in that Kaye included repetition within two utterances as compared to three for the other studies; if and how that would have affected the frequencies is subject to conjecture.

Table 36
Comparison of Self Repetition in This and Other Studies
(% of utterances)

Source of data	Self Repetition
Traditional dads, average to (ave) 22 month ol	**4.0 %**
Stay-at-home dads, average to 22 month olds.	**5.1**
Snow (1977)'s mothers to 24 month olds	2.9
Kaye (1979)'s mothers to 26 month olds	2.6
Kaye (1979)'s mothers to 30 month olds	3.0

Expansion appeared four times more frequently in the CDS of the stay-at-home dads (4.3%) than in that of the traditional dads (1.1%). Although this usage by the stay-at-home dads was insignificant as compared to the mothers in Giattano and Hogan's (1975) study (30%) it was higher than the 0.5% of the fathers in Brown and Bellugi's (1964). These comparisons seem to suggest that

the stay-at-home dads had attuned themselves to their children's language to a greater extent than had their traditional counterparts.

That the frequency of expansion by the mothers in Giattano and Hogan's study was almost seven times higher than that of the seemingly well-attuned stay-at-home dads of the current study – which was, in turn, four times higher than that of the traditional dads – seems to suggest an underlying difference in style. Earlier studies have observed basic stylistic differences beyond those that have been addressed in this study. As compared to mothers, fathers have been shown to talk less (Stein, 1978) yet have longer utterances (Rondal, 1980), have a greater lexical diversity (Giattano and Hogan, 1985; Rondal, 1980; McLaughlin White, McDevitt and Raskin, 1983) and different patterns of lexical usage (Mervis and Mervis, 1982), and to use more rare and fewer common words (Bernstein Ratner, 1988). Thus the much lower frequency of expansion in the CDS of all fathers could perhaps simply be reflecting another mother-father stylistic variation.

Although **acknowledgements** are given minimal attention in the literature, their presence demonstrates the father's focus on the child as he directly responds to the child's utterance. In that they comprise supportive comments of praise, agreement or approval, they continue joint focus with the child – the basis of topic maintenance (Kloth, Jansenn, Kraamaat, and Brutten, 1998).

Restatements expand upon the dads' utterances, sometimes with repetition, and sometimes by recasting and/or adding to the semantic content. It was found, in this study, that they frequently followed an acknowledgement, so that together the acknowledgement-restatement team was performing the same function as an expansion of the child's utterance. For this reason, the fact that the stay-at-home dads used considerably more of both is indicative of the degree to which they are attuned to their children's linguistic needs, as compared to the traditional dads. The stay-at-home dads had 15.9% acknowledgements to the traditional dads' 9.1%, and 8.1% restatements to their 6.3%.

Questions play an interesting and didactic role in CDS in that they are thought to aid in the acquisition of various grammatical features (yes/no questions model inversion, for example), and, more importantly for the younger language-learner, they hand the turn back to the child. On this basis they are considered important features of CDS. It was found that traditional fathers in this study used more of both "wh" and yes/no questions.

As can be seen in Table 37 the low frequencies of "wh" questions, as defined and counted in this study, are quite disparate with the literature. However, when combined with "non-specific" questions, the new "wh" category more closely aligns with the distribution frequencies of other studies.

Table 37
Comparison of "wh" Questions with the Literature
(% of utterances)

	traditional dads	stay-at-home dads	mothers	parents
This study, "wh" excluding "non-specific" questions	11.3%	7.2%	N/A	N/A
This study, "wh" including "non-specific" questions	18.6%	16.5%	N/A	N/A
Malone & Guy 1982	13.0%	N/A	20.0%	N/A
Hladik & Edwards 1984	N/A	N/A	N/A	21%
Kavanaugh & Jivorsky 1982	13.1%	N/A	14.5%	N/A
Newport 1977	N/A	N/A	N/A	15%

Table 38
Comparison of yes/no Questions with the Literature
(% of utterances)

	traditional dads	stay-at-home dads	mothers	parents
This study	21.3%	15.6%	N/A	N/A
Malone & Guy 1982	70.4	N/A	59.3%	N/A
Hladik & Edwards 1984	N/A	N/A	N/A	23%
Kavanaugh &Jivorsky 1982	18.6%	N/A	21.4%	N/A
Newport 1977	N/A	N/A	N/A	29%

Whereas true "wh" questions create a challenge to the child by anticipating informational responses (Pine, 1983; McLaughlin, White, McDevitt and Raskin, 1983; Gleason and Weintraub, 1983; Longhurst and Stepanich, 1975), "non-specific" questions such as "What?" and "What's that?" can bewilder the listener as to what is expected as an answer. The one type, therefore, is considered "conversation-supportive", the other, "non-supportive"; for this reason, the two types were separated in this study.

The straight-forward yes/no is the least demanding question format. Mothers have been shown to use lower "wh" frequencies with younger children and to rephrase "wh" questions into yes/no to make it easier for the child to reply (Longhurst, 1975). However, as discussed in the previous chapter, the roles of the various question types are still being debated. Malone and Guy (1982) stated that "[f]athers ... demonstrated a decidedly greater preference for the yes/no question format than did the mothers" (p.607). They interpreted this higher use, along with the mothers' more frequent use of "wh" questions, as an indication of fathers' speech seeming to "... involve the child less than did mothers' speech" (p. 607).

The same findings are, therefore, given different interpretations according to the researcher's viewpoint; as seen above, the fathers' lower "wh" usage represents their *less involving* speech style, whereas the mothers' lower "wh" usage represents their *well-attuned* adaptation to the child's linguistic ability.

In light of these conflicting interpretations of the significance of "wh" and yes/no questions it should, perhaps, simply be recognized that questions play an important role in CDS in that they give the turn back to the child. What is important is that *both groups of dads* in the current study used more questions than they did directives, thus showing greater sensitivity to their children than the traditional dads in the literature.

The fact that the stay-at-home dads had noticeably higher percentages of usage in five of the conversation-supporting categories shows that by spending large amounts of time with their children they had become more attuned to their children's language than their counterparts. While interacting with their children they did not simply relate information: they attempted to engage their children in conversation.

Table 39
Conversation-Supporting features:
Comparison of Traditional and Stay-at home Dads
(percentages of total utterances)

	Traditional dads	Stay-at-home dads
Repetition of self	4.0%	5.1%
Repetition of child	3.0	5.7
Expansion	1.1	4.3
Acknowledgement	9.1	15.9
Restatement	6.3	8.1
"wh" questions	11.0	7.1
yes/no questions	22.0	15.3

It was anticipated that the stay-at-home fathers' more child-centered communication would also be evident in other features of their conversation, specifically, those that interrupt joint focus. Of these, the use of the

imperative, typifying the direct and control role of the traditional father (Berko Gleason and Grief, 1983; Newport, 1977), has been shown to cause conversation breakdown. By simply directing the child's physical actions, imperatives are not thought to be useful in maintaining conversation (Kaye and Chaney, 1981). Berko Gleason (1975) and Snow (1977) found them to be an integral part of the CDS of secondary care fathers, appearing with much less frequency in that of mothers.

In comparing the average frequencies of imperatives between the stay-at-home and traditional dads in this study, one could be misled into accepting that the almost identical figure indicates parallel usage. However, that figure was inflated by the excessive use of imperatives by one of the stay-at-home dads, as he attempted to gain and keep his child's attention throughout the play session. When his usage was excluded from the findings, the average of the stay-at-home dads dropped further below that of the traditional dads.

Malone and Guy (1982), Kavanaugh and Jivorsky (1982) and (1983) all looked at directives, with quite dissimilar findings; the fathers in Malone and Guy's study used 7.9% and the mothers 2.4%, compared to 19.5% and 17.4% in Kavanaugh and Jivorsky's, and 38% and 19% in Berko Gleason and Greif's. The usage of directives by the traditional fathers in the current study (6.7%) was very close to that of the fathers (7.9%) in Malone and Guys's, while the stay-at-home dads' 3.4% (without Ulrich) was much closer to that of their mothers (2.4%). None of the fathers in the current study used

imperatives in the controlling, authoritarian manner they described. Their dads "...typically began conversations with their sons by directing the child to build or draw something (e.g., "Build me a garage")" (pp.605, 6). Perhaps the differences in ages of the children and the fact that they were all sons could have affected Malone and Guy's dads' language, resulting from higher expectations. (Their children were 3;0 years old, compared to the lower 1;10 years of those in the current study)

The customary interpretation of directives as conversation-stoppers and command-givers did not seem to apply in this study. Although there were individuals who did give orders, most of the directives for both groups were more like encouragements than commands, focusing on words like *"look"* *"try"* and *"let's"*. They seemed to act as a means of joint focus for dad and child to do things together, rather than simply ordering the child to do something. They were directive in that the dads were drawing attention to something they wanted to focus on together with the child.

In the literature, **non-specific questions** are thought to be non-supportive of parent-child conversation; Masur and Berko Gleason (1980) for example, believe that fathers use them simply to "...test, confirm and display..." (p. 409) their children's knowledge. In this study, however, this was not so, with the exception of one traditional dad. In general, non-specific questions were used to introduce an animal as a focus around which the ensuing conversation would be constructed. For these fathers, the simple *"What's this?"* became a very useful conversation-initiating tool that both

groups took advantage of, with the stay-at-home dads doing so to a slightly greater extent.

Although both groups used **confirmation requests**, the stay-at-home dads had a slightly greater frequency, although very much lower than the 6.0% used by the fathers in Mannle and Tomasello's (1987) study. Confirmation requests are generally included in the non-supportive-of-conversation groupings, which was indeed appropriate as the traditional dads used them. However, when used by the stay-at-home dads, interpretation as a confirmation-seeking utterance was inadequate, for they were given a more complex and interesting role. The simple confirmation request became the catalyst for a pleasant bantering process, or for a teasing form of acknowledgement of what the child was doing. The stay-at-home dads' playful usage of the language as compared to the traditional implications of confirmation requests demonstrated the understanding that these dads had developed with their children.

Of the ten dads in this study, only three dads requested **clarification** and on each occasion the child's utterance was inaudible on the tape. That Mannle and Tomasello (1987) found that fathers had 6% requests for clarification as compared to the mothers' 1%, seems to suggest that *all of the dads* were doing a good job of understanding their children. Mannle and Tomasello also found that the mothers in their study made no **explicit correction.** Although two of the stay-at-home dads did correct explicitly, they promptly softened the negativity. Not so with the three traditional dads –

the explicit correction remained undiluted, suggesting that the traditional dads may not have been as sensitive to their children's feelings.

The finding that the stay-at-home dads had but one instance of **non-acknowledgement** – and that, resulting from the dad's distraction when he commented on his daughter's pleasure at playing with the researchers' fascinating new toys – seems to suggest a sensitivity to their children's feelings. This was further supported by the occasion when another stay-at-home dad was long in acknowledging his son: but the child *persisted*, demonstrating that he was accustomed to being acknowledged. Studies have shown that traditional fathers fail to acknowledge almost twice as frequently as mothers (Tomasello, Conti-Ramsden and Ewert, 1990). When the traditional dads did not respond, it was clear that they had their own focus and had not followed the new interest of the child – or were choosing to ignore it.

Although the frequency of distribution of some these non-supportive features might suggest that there is very little difference between the two groups, it becomes apparent when examining the language, that the stay-at-home dads have developed an increased sensitivity to their children' feelings – a sensitivity that expresses itself in an unwillingness to let an explicit correction remain unsoftened, or an utterance be ignored. It shows through in a playfulness of language, turning confirmation requests into games, and non-specific questions into conversational jump-starts. When combined with the frequency of distribution of those conversation-supporting features labeled

repetition, expansion, acknowledgement and restatement, there emerges a conversationalist who has become better attuned to the language of his child than the traditional father.

However, it also emerged that the CDS of the traditional dads was *less non-supportive* than had been anticipated, and could not be described as the " ...threatening and imperative speech ..." (p.200) of the dads in Berko Gleason and Weintraub's (1979) study. Malone and Guy (1982) emphasized the lack of involvement of the father with the child in conversation; although the traditional dads did have lower frequencies in five of the seven conversation-supporting categories, they asked many questions in attempting to involve the child – and used many more questions than directives. This was further supported by their low frequencies of requests for confirmation and clarification, and minimal use of non-acknowledgement and correction, as compared to the literature. This suggests that these fathers are more involved with their children than those in the studies described above, all of which took place between eighteen and twenty-one years ago.

The correlation between CDS and Time

Lipscomb and Coon (1983), finding very few *syntactic* differences between mothers' and fathers' CDS, stated that the similarities were "striking", *considering the differences in time spent with the child.* They apparently *assumed* that differences in the amounts of time the parents spent would be reflected in the parental speech. This study showed just such a

correlation between time and *conversational characteristics* of CDS. However, there are studies that deny this correlation, specifically, Bohannon and Marquis (1977), Dalton-Hummel (1982) and Jacobsen, Boersma, Fields and Olsen (1983). How can these two opposing findings be explained? *Those studies* examined different features – only prosody, rate of speech and MLU – and looked at a much younger age range. *This study* focused on conversational features as they existed in the CDS of fathers of older children.

In contrast, Field (1978), whose study was the *only* one known to compare stay-at-home and traditional dads, (she included stay-at-home mothers as well) found similarities in the way in which the primary care-giving mothers and fathers had "conversations" with their infants. She suggests that mother and father differences observed in the traditional primary-care mother/secondary-care father home are "... not necessarily intrinsic to being a father or a mother. Instead they might derive from the differential amount of experience they have with their infant as primary or secondary caretaker" (p.184).

The current study examined the speech of ten fathers to their 1;2 –2;4 year old language-learning children. Many features of CDS have been considered, including those traditionally designated as being conversation-supporting, and some that represent breakdown in conversation. It has become apparent that there *are* some differences between the CDS of the traditional and the stay-at-home dads in this study. I attribute them to the

increased familiarity that these dads have with their children's language as a result of spending *large amounts of time* caring for them.

No study has actually pinpointed any factors that result in differences in CDS, although Fernauld, Taeschner, Dunn, Papoushek, de Boysson-Bardies and Fukui (1989) believed that the results of their study "emphasize biological predisposition" in the use of at least one feature – prosody. Field (1978) suggested that they resulted from "differential amount of experience". Findings from this study do suggest that time spent with the child does influence the CDS of the parent.

The Findings

It has emerged from this study that time spent by this group of stay-at-home fathers with their children has influenced their CDS to the extent that it has been modified to include more instances of the conversation-supporting features expansion, repetition, acknowledgement and restatement than that of the traditional dads. Although both groups did use more questions than directives, the traditional dads used many more questions. The stay-at-home dads also exhibited less of some of those features that have been shown to cause conversation breakdown, specifically, directives, corrections and non-acknowledgement. Although they did ask numerous non-specific questions, these, like the few requests for confirmation became playful conversation-inducing tools in the CDS of the stay-at-home dads.

That imperatives found in the CDS of the stay-at-home dads were perhaps,

a residual from the traditional authoritarian male underpinning, a "controlling" style having been observed even in the speech of very young boys (Leaper, Anderson and Sanders, 1998). However, they did not use any of the subtle form – such as "*That tower could really use another block*" – that present the greatest challenge to the young language learner. Also, that their frequency was lower than that of the fathers in any other study suggests that this trait diminished as they became more attuned to their children.

It did emerge from the study that the traditional dads were, in many instances exhibiting features that showed that they, too, were well attuned to their children, a finding that had not been anticipated. Quantities of imperatives were not high (one traditional dad, Bob, used none) and they used none of the implied type. Questions were very plentiful, and they used fewer non-specific questions than the stay-at-home dads. This could be seen as reflecting the changing role of dads in society. Even though time with their children was limited, each and every one of these traditional 9 –5 fathers indicated that they bathed the child, then read stories and put the child to bed on a regular basis, with or without the mother present. Beyond the stay-at-home dads' obviously more prolific usage of the well-documented conversation-supporting features, the difference between the two groups was a subtle, and endearingly amused pleasure in relating closely with their children.

The overall findings seem to suggest that time spent by a father in nurturing his child results in an increased sensitivity to that child, which is, in turn, reflected in his CDS. That the traditional dads were spending more time

with their children than those reported in other, earlier, studies was reflected in their less challenging, less authoritative language; they were using fewer of the non-supportive features than had been anticipated. Such adaptations reflect social changes in society based on evolving patterns of family structure.

Although in a different milieu, these findings resemble those of Genishi and Dyson (1984) who concluded that male day-care teachers appeared to interact linguistically with the children in their classes in a manner very similar to that of the female teachers. Berko Gleason and Greif (1983) suggest, as the result of their findings of the transition of imperious fathers to nurturant care-givers, that it is possible by extension that in those families where fathers share child-care duties, this same adaptation occurs, even though they are not home full-time with their children.

The Bridge Hypothesis suggests that fathers play a very important role in requiring children to adapt their language to the needs of a listener who is less attuned than their mothers, but more familiar than that of the adults beyond their own little environment. This study shows that the fathers in both groups were presenting less of a challenge than the fathers described in the literature. Although the traditional dads were not using large frequencies of the conversation-supporting features such as repetition and expansion, they were also not requiring their children to respond to many requests for clarification or subtle directives, nor were they correcting or even seeking confirmation very often. Besides, their numerous questions were giving the children the opportunity to participate in the conversation.

The CDS of the stay-at-home dads resembled mothers' speech more closely than it did that of the traditional dad. By diminishing the challenge of their speech – a challenge that is widely accepted as aiding the development of the child's conversational abilities – the fathers' language would no longer complement that of the mothers. If traditional speaking roles blur, when dads stay at home, who will be The Bridge?

Limitations of the Study

In that this study investigated a volunteer sample of the population, it was not a random sample. Perhaps those thousands of Portland traditional fathers who were not part of this study would have given a different complexion to the results. As for the stay-at-home dads, all were recruited via the newspaper, indicating that they were, to some degree, relatively well-informed, and perhaps not "average". Russell (1999) cites several studies that have found that " ...fathers who are more highly participant in child care report enhanced self-esteem, self-confidence, or satisfaction personally and in their parental role..." (p.75). This, then, would apply to the stay-at-home dads in *any* future study. Although not a cross-section of society, it was fortunate as a basis for comparison, that all dads in this study were similar in economic background and age.

The two groups of five dads and their children produced rich data for comparison. However, it was unfortunate that the child of one stay-at-home dad was somewhat hyperactive, so that the dad's language was necessarily

affected by the constant attempt to contain his energy. Also, in retrospect, the lowest age, 1;2 years, was too young: the limited linguistic ability restricted the occurrence of expansion and child-repetition, thereby also limiting the possible data.

The naturalistic setting was "naturalistic" only by fact of being in the home of the family being interviewed. Sitting on the floor playing with one's child while studiously ignoring the focus of a camera, a leering microphone and two observers who were obviously trying not to observe, must have felt a little awkward. As one dad, after remaining silent for 15 minutes, finally said to his daughter via the glove-puppet on his hand *" It's sure hard to play when you're being watched, isn't it honey?"*

How the presence of an observer affects and modifies the interaction depends on the individuals involved. Patterson and Reid, 1969 (reported in Lytton, 1971) investigated this presumption. Following an "official" observation, a mother observed her family unawares. The data were then compared, and it was discovered that the father "... more than doubled his positive reactions when the observer was present!" (p. 674) For this reason, Lytton believes that "... most researchers would claim that the irreducible amount of distortion must be allowed for, but that it is not sufficient to invalidate the data" (pp. 474,5). Perhaps the taping could be accomplished with the observers in another room.

The lack of comparable data in the literature was frustrating. For example, when the same features were being compared, the ages of the child

participants would not be sufficiently close for their parents' CDS to be equable. At other times the definition of a feature would be broader or narrower than that used here. For example, one study that looked at imperatives chose to include in that category every utterance that was not a question or a declarative, rather than specifically defining the term. Frequently, categories would be combined, as yes/no with tag questions, "wh" with non-specific questions, or "self" with "child" repetition. At times a researcher would present an enticing snippet such as " ... categories of repetition described by Kobashigawa (1969) in a mother's speech to her 26-month-old son included changes in word order, addition, deletion, or substitution of words, changes in intonation, and morphological changes." (Berko Gleason and Weintraub, 1979, p.189) – but the primary source would be a frustratingly unattainable paper or poster.

Directions for Further Research

Russell (1999) stated that " ... the issue of fathers as primary caregivers receives little serious analysis. There are still very few research studies and those that do exist have continued to be on restricted and small samples. ...research into fathers is still underrepresented in both the academic literature (Russell & Radojevic, 1992) and in dissertation studies (Silverstein & Phares, 1996)". (p.57)

The consensus of researched opinion is that CDS results from one's *tuning in* to a child. Although every child is unique, this learned behavior is

carried over to other children. It would be of great interest to carry out a longitudinal study, tracing the development of a new dad's nascent CDS through stay-at-home fatherhood of more than one child. Even to interview these same stay-at-home dads again, in twelve months, to assess the adaptations they may have made as their children advanced linguistically, and then to do a comparative study with the present findings, would be enlightening.

Ideally, this study could be duplicated with a sample of randomly selected families with tightly matched linguistic abilities of the children - speaking at the level of Brown's Stage III, for example. This would offer the possibility of equal opportunities for occurrence of ability-correlated features such as child repetition and expansion, and question type. It would also control for the changes in CDS that begin when the child is about eighteen months, as mothers adapt to the developmental level of the child (Phillips, 1973).

This study has shown that the CDS of fathers who have assumed the role of primary caregiver has adapted to the linguistic needs of the child. If changes are taking place in their language, what, is happening to the CDS of secondary care mothers?

Conclusions

The stay-at-home dads in this study spend, on a weekly basis, between thirty-two and sixty hours caring for their child with no other adult present.

They carry out all the everyday tasks of child-care, ranging from bathing and dressing to feeding and entertaining. Although they perform routine home and garden chores, they all manage to spend a great deal of time playing with their children in wide-ranging activities, active and sedentary: make-believe, wrestling, playing with the ball or the dog, little people, coloring .... They go on all kinds of excursions- OMSI, the Zoo, the park, the pool, the library, the bookstore, bus rides, play group and visiting friends, as well as running errands.

These stay-at-home dads had all previously – and some presently – pursued professional careers in the fields of teaching, medicine, medical interpreting, and systems consulting. Their ages ranged from thirty-one to thirty-eight. From observing their interaction, each obviously enjoyed being with his child – and eagerly admitted it. In comparing the CDS of men at home where they were secondary care-giving fathers and in day-care centers where they were the primary-care providers, Berko Gleason and Greif (1983) observed speech modifications that reflected these contrasting roles. In the traditional role of authority figure in the home in which the mother is the primary caregiver, men are not required to be sensitive to the needs and attentions of the child. Pine (1994) suggested that fathers in the traditional family are either not competent, or are simply not motivated, to adapt their speech to the language-learning child. However, the CDS of the traditional fathers in this study seems to suggest that the working dads of this generation *are motivated* to communicate more easily with their children.

This motivation was quite apparent in the CDS of the stay-at-home dads; not only did they use more of each of these features than the literature has described as being supportive of parent-child conversation, they also used fewer of most of those that are considered non-supportive. Even when some of these latter features were used, it was not in the manner described in the literature; confirmation requests, for example, became the basis for a playful teasing, and non-specific questions began many dad-child conversations. This study, then, has shown that it is possible for men to step into the role of primary caregiver, and by spending time with their children, to become so attuned to the child that this increased sensitivity is reflected in modifications of their speech.

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APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE

A In a **typical 7-day week,** approximately

- How many hours do you spend caring for your child **alone**? (That is, when no other adult is present). _____ hours.
- How many hours do you spend **sharing** in your child's care? (That is, when another adult is present). _____ hours.
- How many hours do **family members** spend caring for your child when you are not present? _____ hours.
- How many hours do **other people** (day-care providers, sitters) spend caring for your child when you are not present? _____ hours.

B Please give further details of your weekly participation in caring for your child by checking the boxes that are relevant.

Child's Activity	We are alone	Another adult* is present with me.	I am not present: other adult*
Breakfast			
Dressing			
AM play-time			
Lunch			
PM play-time			
Dinner			
Bath-time			
Story-time			
Bed-time			

* Please specify whether the adult is your spouse, other relative, friend, sitter or day-care provider.

C When you and your child are alone, and he/she is awake, and not eating or bathing, which of the following activities do you do? Please rank them from 1 –10, with #1 being the most frequent and #10 the least frequent; mark those that are not applicable, "N/A".

___ Watch adult TV programs.
___ Watch children's TV programs or videos.
___ Do housework, meal preparation, gardening, home repair.
___ Work at my occupation.
___ Talk on the phone.
___ Read the paper, journal, magazine, or book.
___ Read to him/her.
___ Surf the web.
___ Play (please describe favorite activities, games, toys etc)
___ Go on excursions (please mention typical destinations.

APPENDIX B

FEATURES OF CONVERSATION

Total Numbers of Occurrences

TRADITIONAL DADS

	Chris	Ben	Tom	David	Sam
Total # of utterances	373	191	247	264	196
self repetition	23	3	4	18	3
child repetition	1	12	3	20	4
expansion	0	4	2	1	4
restatement	36	15	13	24	1
acknowledgement	10	21	16	19	52
"wh" question	51	17	27	26	23
yes/no question	71	52	58	55	36
confirmation request	1	7	5	3	9
clarification request	0	2	0	1	0
non-specific question	25	12	17	31	8
directive request	14	0	17	6	3
directive imperative	37	5	27	10	7
correction	1	2	8	3	3
non-acknowledgement	0	3	3	0	1

STAY-AT-HOME DADS

	Rory	Bob	Henry	Ulrich	Scott
Total # of utterances	144	281	278	161	191
self repetition	4	4	15	21	6
child repetition	2	9	19	10	16
expansion	0	14	4	0	19
restatement	10	36	12	10	17
"wh" question	7	16	23	14	11
yes/no question	24	36	32	29	32
acknowledgement	19	40	44	20	40
confirmation request	0	8	11	2	18
clarification request	0	7	0	1	0
non-specific question	3	32	16	18	23
directive request	4	2	9	4	0
directive imperative	8	20	13	35	4
correction	0	1	1	1	0
non-acknowledgement	0	1	0	1	0

APPENDIX C

FEATURES OF CONVERSATION

Percentages of Occurrence

TRADITIONAL DADS

	Chris	Ben	Tom	David	Sam
% of utterances	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
self repetition	6.1	1.5	1.6	6.8	1.5
child repetition	0.2	6.2	1.2	7.6	2.0
expansion	0	2.1	0.8	0.3	2.0
restatement	9.6	7.9	5.3	9.0	0.5
acknowledgement	2.7	11.0	6.4	7.2	26.0
"wh" question	13.6	8.9	10.9	10.6	11.2
yes/no question	19.1	26.7	23.5	22.7	18.3
confirmation request	0.2	3.6	2.0	1.1	5.1
clarification request	0	1.0	0	0.3	0
non-specific question	6.7	6.8	6.8	13.2	3.5
directive request	3.7	0	6.8	2.2	1.5
directive imperative	10.0	2.6	10.9	3.7	3.5
correction	0.2	1.0	3.2	1.1	1.5
non-acknowledgement	0	1.0	1.2	0	0.5

STAY-AT-HOME DADS

	Rory	Bob	Henry	Ulrich	Scott
% of utterances	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
self repetition	2.7	1.4	5.4	13.0	3.1
child repetition	1.4	3.2	6.8	6.2	8.3
expansion	0	5.0	1.4	0	9.9
restatement	6.9	12.8	4.3	6.2	8.9
"wh" question	4.8	5.7	8.3	8.7	5.7
yes/no question	16.6	12.8	11.5	18.0	16.7
acknowledgement	13.3	14.2	15.8	10.5	20.9
confirmation request	0	2.2	3.9	1.2	9.5
clarification request	0	2.5	0	0.6	0
non-specific question	2.1	11.4	5.7	11.2	12.1
directive request	2.7	0.7	3.2	2.4	0
directive imperative	5.5	7.1	4.6	21.7	2.0
correction	0	1.4	1.4	0	0
non-acknowledgement	0	0	0	0	0.5