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The use of the simple present in the speech of two three-year-olds: Normativity not subjectivity*

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ABSTRACT

In our research, we wish to illuminate different types of discursive intentions which are structured into discourse via the verb inflections and auxiliaries, together with their entailed social effects. In the present report, we examine the use of the simple present by two three-year-olds, and argue that analyses in terms of tense or aspect are not adequate to account for its use. One needs to recognize the way in which the form implicitly refers to norms and thereby entails a type of impersonal motivation – especially as it is just this feature of the use of this form that structures the ongoing activity into a nondialogic, normative activity. (Simple present, normativity, subjectivity, activity-types, nondialogic discourse, the constitutive role of language, American English)

The focus of pragmatic inquiry concerns the relation of language to context. As such, the concept of "meaning" is de-essentialized as the socially shared meaning of various linguistic constructions is shown to vary systematically with different parameters/occasions of use. Moreover, an attempt is typically made to show that the conditions of occurrence of some target construction consist of various kinds of contextual factors – such as the surrounding discourse context, the ongoing social activity context, etc. Furthermore, as if the difficulties in such a pursuit were not already sufficient, pragmatic approaches become even more internally complex when it is further claimed that certain target constructions not only require their context as a precondition for their interpretability, but also that certain constructions help to constitute certain parameters of the event of communication. This means that some facet of the context is actually brought about/made relevant as a consequence of using a particular construction. In such a situation where what counts as a relevant contextual parameter is actualized through its being indexed by a particular linguistic form, it would seem that the study of the relation of

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language to context approaches that of the study of "the social construction of reality" to borrow Berger and Luckman's (1967) felicitous phrase. Indeed, our aim in this paper is to show how a distributional analysis characterizing the use of a particular grammatical construction in the speech of two children, also counts as the description of a distinctly organized social practice – brought about, in part, through the use of this grammatical construction.

Thus, the focus of this paper is two-fold: to account for the systematic deployment of a particular grammatical construction and to provide an interpretation of the consequent mode of discursive activity this construction is claimed to help bring about. More generally, our interest in the development and use of the TAM (tense–aspect–modality) system in children has been based on an attempt to study how children use the verbal inflectional and auxiliary forms either to take particular perspectives on events or to express different types of intentions – plus the possible ensuing contextual effects of either (Gee & Savasir 1985; Gee 1985; Gerhardt 1983; 1986; Savasir & Gee 1982). Indeed, we have suggested that when it comes to explicating the use of certain members of the TAM system "use" itself needs to be understood in terms of the way in which such forms express particular types of discursive intentions which effectively structure the ongoing activity or discourse in distinct ways. In the current paper, we shall focus on the use of one verbal construction – the simple present. It will be argued that this form expresses a particular type of normative intention which gives the ongoing discourse/activity both a normative organization and a nondialogic skewing as the use of this form turns out to function in such a way that the interlocutor is not transformed into a full–fledged negotiating partner. Before this claim can be developed however, we must examine the problem–space presented by the empirical domain under investigation.

Actually, this paper focuses on a very small empirical problem – what from the perspective of the child language literature seemed to be a bit of recalcitrant data. However, since such irregularities often serve to disclose the inadequacies of certain assumptions, we decided to pursue the seemingly discrepant phenomenon. As such, the target of inquiry is a slightly odd use of the simple present in the speech of two three-year-olds. This usage is considered odd since by the time the child is three, the progressive inflection is typically used with action verbs to express the speaker's ongoing activity (Bloom, Lifter, & Hafitz 1980; Brown 1973). That is, normally a sentence such as "I make a castle" uttered while the child is in the midst of building would be considered "inappropriate" (Brown 1973) since MAKE, an action verb par excellence, should (and usually does in the corpus to be examined) take the progressive when describing ongoing activity: "I'm making a castle." Why then, does the child occasionally mark certain action verbs or ongoing activities with the simple present, especially given that: 1) the very same verbs occur more often with the progressive, and 2) slightly younger children are claimed not to mark the same verbs with different verbal endings (Bloom et al. 1980)?

This problem merits scrutiny as it provides some evidence for our general claim that the verbal morphology as used by children cannot be exhaustively described in temporal terms, neither tense nor aspect. Instead, particular sorts of quasi-modal meanings are also expressed. Although the ontogenetic relation between tense and aspect marking to explain children's nascent use of the verbal inflections has recently become controversial in the child language literature (Antinucci & Miller 1976; Bloom et al. 1980; Bronckart & Sinclair 1976; Weist, Wysocka, Witkowska-Stadnik, Buczowska, & Konieczna 1984), the possibility that different modal notions might also infect the child's use of these very same forms has not been investigated. To be sure, this possibility might seem unlikely, since in English, modal meanings are traditionally not ascribed to different bound tense forms; modal auxiliaries, catenatives, and other lexical items are the recognized bearers of modal distinctions (Palmer 1979; Perkins 1983). However, since other linguists have argued that tense, aspect, and modality are inextricably related linguistic subsystems (Fleischman 1982; Givon 1984; Lyons 1977), we shall try to demonstrate that the use of at least one verbal form (the ∅ form, or unmarked form) is based in part on a distinct sort of modal meaning – that the activity described is motivated by conformance to a norm. Moreover, it shall be argued that the modal meaning is just as basic as the temporal meaning of this verbal form. Although our data pertain to the use of the simple present only, we submit that the child's use of each of the verbal inflections needs to be similarly analyzed as harboring distinct modal meanings. However, before presenting the relevant data, we will theoretically motivate this claim and mention some of its consequences.

THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS

Various linguists have recently argued that above and beyond the temporal meanings associated with the verbal inflections, such forms are also expressive of *different speaker stances*, or what Lyons (1982) refers to as "the locutionary agent's expression of himself and of his own attitudes and beliefs." For example, according to Benveniste (1971), the aorist, used primarily for the narration of past events, presents events dispassionately with a minimum of subjective involvement. Lyons (1982) refers to this attempt to present events more or less objectively as the "historical" mode of event description, and contrasts it with the "experiential" mode – typically marked by the progressive – which expresses "the speaker's subjective involvement in his utterance." A similar analysis of the progressive is offered by Hatcher (1951) in explaining its less standard, but possible, co-occurrence with stative verbs in utterances such as "Imagine: at last I'm seeing the Mona Lisa!" According to Hatcher, in addition to having a temporal function, the progressive marks the speaker's "being affected" by the activity described. Note that the claim here is not just that the progressive is used for situations which are unexpected but that it is used to

describe some aspect of the speaker's internal experience. This goes some way toward explaining the classic yet rather bizarre use of the progressive in the utterance "I'm seeing pink elephants," cited by Comrie (1976) as a problematic case for an aspectual analysis. That is, if we accept the claim that human action consists of both an experiential/intentional component and an objective physical realization (Searle 1983; Wittgenstein 1953), it should not surprise us that the progressive can be used to describe the former even in the absence of the latter, if the progressive is the form used to express the speaker's internal subjective experiences (Hatcher 1951; Lyons 1982).

In contrast, according to Calver (1946), the unmarked simple present is used to express the "essential constitution of things." Something happens the way it happens, or is the way it is, because it has always happened or been that way. This is a mode of event description which downplays the subjective experiences and desires of the speaker, and instead, focuses on the speaker's perception of *regularities* which obtain in the world. A similar claim is made by Goldsmith and Woisetschlaeger (1982, pg. 80), who argue that the alternation of the progressive versus the simple present often "corresponds to two rather different types of knowledge about the world": in terms of its long-term structure (simple present) versus its phenomenal appearances (progressive). We read this as implying that in both cases the speaker adopts a *distinct stance* toward the world, and it is this which is grammaticized through the contrast in the verbal morphology. Moreover, this distinction in the "metaphysical" status of the speaker's knowledge is, according to the authors, a *modal* distinction, about which they say "it is precisely in modal notions that the key to an analysis of aspect lies" (Goldsmith & Woisetschlaeger 1982, pg. 83). And of course, the "tenses" of the Hopi verb (the reportive, expective, and nomic) turn out not to be distinguishable temporally, but instead refer to distinct "realms of validity" (Whorf 1956). That is, "three different kinds of information" are expressed by each mode of assertion which reflect different epistemic attitudes that the speaker can express. As such they only partially correspond to temporal distinctions. Lastly, Jakobson (1971), drawing in part on Whorf's observations, underscores the importance of such "logical qualities of events" in determining various facets of the verb morphology in different languages.

Although more examples could be adduced to corroborate the overall picture, the main point should be clear enough: It has been suggested for adult speech that different verbal forms may provide a kind of typological "slot" for the speaker, such that *the speaker expresses a particular type of intentional stance in using that particular verbal form.* This means that *different types of intentional stances are structured into the discourse* as a result of speaking in one way as opposed to another – determined in part by the verbal morphology. To be sure, this claim has been made with respect to the grammatical category of modality (cf. Feldman [1974] for a discussion on the expression of "speaker stance" through adverbs or epistemic modals). However, in this paper, we attempt to demonstrate

the appositeness of the above claims to the children's use of the simple present (especially in its co-occurrence with the other constituents it typically co-occurs with). Moreover, we shall try to take this point a step further by viewing the expression of such intentions, and therefore their grammatical embodiments in the verbal morphology, as "pragmatic operators" which in part structure the ongoing activity in particular ways. It is to this point that we now turn.

Attempts to mitigate the priority typically given to the descriptive use of language tend to stress its constitutive role in actually bringing about the phenomena it describes (Austin 1962; Ervin-Tripp 1977; Foucault 1972; Hymes 1974; Wittgenstein 1953). Accordingly, it has been suggested that language, even certain facets of the grammar, has a constitutive function such that the differential deployment of particular forms actually contributes to the ongoing construction of different facets of the event of communication – such as the different roles played by the participants in the speech event in terms of their participation in the ongoing activity. These different roles are based on the diverse ways that different sorts of intentions and their implied consequences structure the discourse. Thus, besides asking the question, "What does a particular grammatical form mean?" we must also ask, "*How does it work?*" How does it function to structure an activity-situation to produce certain social effects? In this paper, we will try to suggest that a particular set of intentions and effects are part and parcel of children's use of the simple present when it is used to describe their ongoing activity.

As a last point, the suggestion that the children's use of the simple present functions modally isn't meant to deny its temporal or aspectual function. On the contrary, the type of analysis that we are trying to develop is one in which the "essential unity" (Hopper 1979) of the various meaning components (temporal, modal, and others) are seen to be systemically interrelated – manifestations of a particular type of underlying discursive system. Thus, analogous to Hopper and Thompson's analysis of transitivity (1980) into diverse yet interrelated meaning components (agency, aspect, kinesis, affectedness of object, number of participants, etc.) which together coalesce to form different degrees of transitivity, we shall try to show how different properties coalesce to form a distinct sort of normative discourse-type that has little dialogic potential. It is this, we claim, which underlies the use of the simple present. However, before attempting to justify these claims, a brief review of the literature on the simple present will reveal the nature of the difficulties previous linguists have had in treating this form solely as a tense or aspect marker.

LINGUISTIC LITERATURE REVIEW ON THE SIMPLE PRESENT

Linguistic theorizing about what is often called the "simple present tense" has bequeathed the anomaly that by referring to this form as a "tense" form (Comrie 1976; Lawler 1972; Leech 1971) the implication is that it can be construed within

a deictic conception of temporal reference (Lyons 1977). However, given the proneness of this form to express "timeless truths" or "generic" facts, typically its referent is not a circumscribable event which can be deictically sequenced with respect to the moment of speech. As such, the simple present is singled out as unique in being a form which evades making a specific deictic temporal commitment, expressing instead truths or tendencies loosely associated with a kind of "psychological present" (Leech 1971).

Another troublesome characterization of this form is in terms of its putative "habitual" use, to make generalizations over past occurrences. According to Lawler (1972), while some simple present statements have nothing to do with repeated activity, even of those that do, some refer to activities which are frequently repeated ("Michael walks to school"), while others refer to activities which have a much lower frequency of occurrence ("Ann's dog chases cars"). This disparity, explained by Lawler as being due to the presence of different quantifiers (universal or existential) in the deep structure of such sentences, reflects the nonhomogeneity of the so-called class of "habitual generics." Moreover, according to Lawler, whereas only the habitual uses presuppose some kind of quantification over, and abstraction from, past events, "non-habitual generics" (e.g., "The President appoints Cabinet members") do not require the occurrence of any past activity for their interpretation, and thus are exempt from the characterization "habitual."

Yet another characterization of the simple present which presupposes another temporal framework is that which contrasts this form to the progressive, and claims that whereas the expanded form is used to express durative aspect, the simple form is used to express nondurative or punctate aspect (Comrie 1976). However, according to Hatcher (1951) the contrast between the progressive and simple form cannot be solely aspectual in nature since the difference between "Your slip shows" versus "Your slip is showing" is clearly not one of duration, while "My back aches" shows that even the simple form can refer to a durative situation.

Given the inadequacies of these various temporal schemata, it has been suggested that other significant dimensions of meaning underlie the use of this verbal form. For example, according to Hatcher (1951), when the simple present is used in the first and second person to describe the occurrence of a concomitant overt activity (for which the progressive is the usual form), the meaning rendered is that the activity is being performed according to *a standard or a norm*. Thus, the use of the simple present found in formulas such as the magician's patter, "I take the coin, I place it here on the table. . ." functions both to describe the ongoing activity as well as "to proclaim the eternal validity of the rule" (Hatcher 1951). Moreover, this normative conception of the activity does not necessarily derive from observations of past experiences; it has a regulative function sui generis. Thus, Hatcher maintains that the use of the simple present to describe ongoing activity conflates two meanings: 1) "this event is happening now" –

temporal, and 2) "such activity is characteristic of the subject" – Hatcher's alternate description for rule-governed, normative activity.

Similarly, Calver (1946) offers a nontemporal characterization of our target form in his dictum: The simple present is used to express "the essential constitution of things." This contrasts with his account of the progressive, which is said to express "the mere occurrence" of events. This dichotomy in epistemological orientations augurs Goldsmith and Woisetschlaeger's (1982) claim that, whereas the progressive functions "by describing what things happen in the world," the simple present functions "by describing how the world is made such that things may happen in it." The point to be gleaned is that there is a common thread which runs through these diverse formulations: The simple present is used to express "*structure*" (Goldsmith & Woisetschlaeger 1982). Whether the target of description is the speaker's activities (as normative) or aspects of the known world (its essential attributes), in either case what the simple present codes is not the mere fact that something has occurred, but the speaker's judgment that this occurrence is in line with how the phenomenon is known to be and supposed to be.

Thus, the above characterizations suggest that what is grammaticized by the simple present is a *judgment* about a way of acting or knowing about the world, which is in some sense the standard way – it is in conformance with a regularity or a practice of some sort. Such an assessment on the speaker's part can be viewed as a modal factor which conditions the description of the event, analogous to other modal judgments which function similarly. In other words, it would express a type of dynamic modality, which, according to Palmer (1979) is a modality of events, not conditioned deontically.

In fact, as we read these linguists, we were struck by the convergence of their ideas and the interpretation which had emerged from our analysis of two children's use of the simple present. Of course, this raises the hoary issue of causes – from whence does the children's use arise? If it is similar to adult usage as described by linguists, does this mean that children have mastered the adult system by age three? While to the latter question we would give a definitive "no," such issues will not be addressed head-on in this paper. We feel that before such causal/comparative questions can be productively asked, what is needed is a much fuller description of the wide range of use-phenomena associated with the form in question for both children and adults.

Now, before turning to the data, a comment on our interpretive method is in order. We will begin by noting some distributional co-occurrence phenomena in the initial example as a basis from which to suggest certain hypotheses about the use of the simple present. This will be followed by other examples which show similar, as well as novel, distributional regularities. These other examples function not only to develop and corroborate our hypotheses, but also to give us slightly different ways of framing and understanding these hypotheses-cum-interpretations. As such, our analytic space will be situated between very specif-

ic, local grammatical/actional detail and a very broad interpretation of a particular sort of intention and dialogic structure claimed to be associated with that detail, such that each will be used to illuminate the other.

It should also be mentioned that the data is not handled tabularly but is presented in a narrativelike format. This procedure is preferred for two reasons. First, it best serves our primary goal, which is to demonstrate how careful attention to different facets of the data can be richly exploited once a particular assumption is made: that speech itself is the realization of an underlying "discourse formation" (Foucault [1972] or see Firth [1957] in which he attempts to identify "types of language use" with "types of situations") such that regularities in speech behavior can be viewed as an attempt to express a particular type of discourse. Since the main purpose of this paper consists in uncovering just what these behavioral/linguistic regularities are, quantitative descriptions of the data per se are downplayed. Thus, although many percentages are indeed given, the particular focus of this report concerns the qualitative description of certain alleged "key" phenomena which are claimed to help express/determine the child's discursive intentions in using the simple present form.

The second reason for eschewing a tabular presentation of the data is that it would require, inter alia, a discussion about the importance of small numbers as long as the tendency they evince is in the right direction and occurs contrastively with something else (i.e., is a member of a contrast set; see Gerhardt [1983] and Karmiloff-Smith [1983]). For example, note the following finding: In using the simple present to describe an ongoing object-related activity, one of the children alternates in pointing to something she is in the midst of making versus pointing to something she has already made, as the referent of her speech. Although this occurs only once, we take this to be extremely important as it corroborates our developing interpretation of the way the simple present works: its tendency to make reference to "kinds" of things/situations, rather than to particulars. And, as we do mention, this never occurs with the progressive. Thus, for this finding, this is all the frequency information which is given. We believe, however, that it is extremely important to cite such phenomena (as long as there is such a contrast with another form) as they argue for an increased data base for linguistic inquiry. Furthermore, to be curtailed too quickly by quantitative considerations would not allow our main point expression: that the occurrence of the simple present is not based on an autonomous choice, but one which affects the choice of other linguistic/actional behaviors which are hypothesized as being systemically inherent to a normative system (cf. Whorf's [1956] description of a "cryptotype" in terms of configural coding). Indeed, what we try to explicitly show is that each time the simple present is used, at least one other behavior (usually more) co-occurs with it (which typically is not associated with the domain of the progressive) to help express the speaker's normative/nonnegotiatory intention. As such, we do not claim to have proven our case, merely to suggest a possible reading. However, it is one which we believe is likely given the data, and one

which is important as it ultimately suggests that the study of grammar must be viewed as the study of a semiotic system, the construal of which can begin to give us an account of the cultural distinctions through which we interpret experience.

THE DATA

The immediate data base for this report consists of eighty-three utterances of two female three-year-olds: E was 3;3–3;5 and A was 3;2–3;4 during the period of data collection.[1] Thus the data are drawn from peer speech. Of the eighty-three uses, fifty are A's, thirty-three are E's. The children were observed playing together in three different quasi-naturalistic play settings in the home: doll-play, tea-party-play, and block-play. Each play situation was presented twice, for an hour each, over a period of two months. This yields six hours of overall recording. Basically the children were told to "Have a tea-party with your dolls"; "Have a tea-party for yourselves"; and "Make something together with the blocks." Sessions were video-recorded and the analyses were developed on the basis of very richly detailed transcriptions. The overall coding method was a type of distributional analysis distilled from Harris (1951), Pike (1964), and Ricoeur (1976), such that linguistic and actional behaviors, those which *in the process of inquiry* were found to be relevant to the selective occurrence of the simple present, were coded for. The eighty-three target utterances span all three types of play situations.

In order to get into the problem space within which our inquiry resides, let's begin with a minimal pair: the contrast between PUT and PUTTING.

E has taken possession of A's Mom-doll, which A wants back. A grabs E's Baby-doll; E grabs it back very pre-emptorily and tucks it under her leg.

(1) A: I *give* mommy back[2] //slightly harsh, announcementlike voice//
as A takes her Mom-doll back from E, grabbing it quickly from E's lap

(2) A: Here/I *put* her shoes back //announcementlike voice//
as A lays doll on her lap and begins to put her shoes on her, not visually directed to E, who pays no attention
E: Would you put this – her hat on?
as E goes to investigator for help, and then returns to play area

(3) A: I'm *puttin'* my shoes back on, mama //girlish register; voice solicitous//
as A puts doll's second shoe on, and as E sits back down; E watches A engagingly

(4) A: I'm *puttin'* them back to you //girlish register//
as A lifts Mom-doll; E, holding her Baby-doll toward A, watching A intensely, then A lifts Mom-doll and turns to E's Baby-doll
A: You – you could come to the Christmas Party
as A's Mom-doll talks to E's Baby-doll
E: OK //baby register; high pitch//
as E holds her Baby-doll up to A's Mom-doll

In this example, we were struck by the occurrence of the verb PUT in two different inflectional environments, especially since it has been claimed that slightly younger children tend not to mark the same verb with diverse inflections (Bloom et al. 1980). In fact, both PUT and GIVE occur *more often* in the overall

corpus in the progressive rather than in the simple form. Thus, we ask: What accounts for this rarer use of the simple form?

As third parties observing the videotape of this short exchange, a greater sense of intimacy is suggested when the progressive is used, as opposed to the *distancing effect* of the simple present utterances. Initially, such an observation might be discounted on the grounds that this differential emotional quality is engendered by other trappings of the utterances, such as their different intonational patterns or forms of address. To single out the alternation of tense appears as sleight of hand.

However, our claim is that these properties are relatively *nonautonomous* such that there is a reason why the simple present co-occurs with the features it co-occurs with (even intonation) – and likewise for the progressive (although this will not be analyzed in this paper). In other words, regularities in the distributional co-occurrences begin to represent the kind of structure that we have been referring to as the structuring of different discursive domains. To ascertain the nature of this structure, our first move is to note some of the distributional regularities of the simple present and to contrast them with the progressive, or other forms, when such a contrast is suggested by the data. Thus, even if intonation or form of address seems to be the factor most responsible for the presence of the alleged dialogic intimacy, if there appears to be some systematic co-occurrence of these features with a particular verb form, it is just this overall pattern that we are attempting to detect. A similar position is advanced by Zubin (1980, pg. 30) in his account of the systematic relation which obtains in some German narratives between the use of different case forms (accusative and dative) and the amount of control possessed by the referent so encased. Thus, instead of the standard explanation that certain verbs automatically select for certain cases, Zubin claims that depending on the author's intent to either exalt or debase a character, the author selects both the verb and the case together. "Particular verbs and particular cases co-occur because they are semantically coherent with each other. Neither determines the other as a purely syntactic selection process" (Zubin 1980). In short, what is critically important is the meaning expressed by the overall pattern. This claim is analogous to what Whorf (1956) was getting at in his discussion of "cryptotypes" in language: functionally significant, yet implicit, co-occurrences between different grammatical items which "enables them to work together" toward a coherent "semantic result."[3] Indeed, Whorf claims that in Hopi, "the use of the aspect and tense forms is often governed by cryptotypes" (1956). Similarly, in this paper we will try to demonstrate the presence of a cryptotypic functional domain, with respect to the intersection of the semantic parameters of tense, aspect, and modality, which both determines, and shows up in, the selectional restrictions to be described.

Now of course, the above suggestion that different verbal inflections might be associated with different intonational contours and emotional colorings may seem a rather minor issue. However, our earlier work suggests that such em-

pirically recalcitrant phenomena in part reflect different attitudes or modes of involvement on the part of the speaker (Gee & Savasir 1985). Since our claim is that the expression of these different modes of involvement actually helps to structure different discursive fields, the distancing effect of the simple present must be probed. Moreover, according to Andersen's (1977, 1984, in press) research on children's sociolinguistic knowledge of different speech registers, intonation is frequently employed to express an understanding of the different speech patterns appropriate for different social roles. Thus, intonation may be a feature of speech used to express different types of language use, where "type" is now defined in terms of the type of intention expressed and its consequences for structuring the discourse.[4]

So now let's try to unpack the above observation. In contrast to the simple present, notice that both instances of the progressive: 1) co-occur with a form of address, and 2) are delivered in register. Thus, the speaker appears to be role-playing with the doll, which requires that she devise means to turn the doll into a communicative partner. That is, whether A, the speaker, is talking for or to the doll, in both cases, a dialogic encounter is structured with the doll; in addition this has the effect of drawing E in either passively (3) or more actively (4). Such findings accord with Hatcher's (1951) claim that the progressive is used to mark the speaker's "experiential involvement" in an activity, over and above its more aspectual meaning. Analogous findings, where both a form of address and role-play register consistently co-occur with the progressive and *not* the simple form, are observed throughout the data.

Conversely, besides these nonoccurrences, the simple present can be distinguished in the following way. First of all, the voice quality is indeed striking. For both utterances, the intonation is what we have coded as being "announcementlike": a rather flat contour which falls at the end, with a slightly biting or pre-emptory tone. This gives the definite impression of not being solicitous of the play partner. This hortatory intonation, coupled with the absence of any other indicators that the simple present utterances are directed to the play partner (i.e., visual or postural indicators, so prevalent in the use of the progressive) suggests that the partner is *not meant to negotiate the content of the utterance*. The absence of gestures which serve to solicit the play partner is one of the most ubiquitous findings in the data with respect to the simple present. In short, this form seems not to be a truly dialogic one. Now, of course, the dialogic potential of the simple present is not categorical dialogic versus nondialogic. The simple present does occasionally occur in minimal dialoguelike sequences. However, as we will see, each time this occurs something else about the utterance undercuts its truly dialogic (in the sense of negotiatory) potential. Thus, the simple present is on the low end of a dialogic continuum.

Another point to note is that purely temporal accounts of the sort reviewed earlier are clearly inadequate for these data. For example, the characterization "habitual" won't work by itself, since both utterances describe a concurrent

event, and not a timeless truth or necessarily recurrent activity. Moreover, although PUT and GIVE might initially be categorized as aspectually punctate, such that A might be said to be merely marking punctate verbs by the simple present, such an hypothesis would not account for the more abundant occurrence of these verbs with the progressive. The most germane temporal description is clearly that of present tense, since A is describing an event concurrent with the moment of utterance. However, limiting ourselves to such a characterization would not enable us to distinguish this form from the progressive, which serves a similar temporal function. Moreover, it would tend to segregate this use from other uses where there is no relevant concomitant activity. Thus, what else can be said about the use of this form?

The last detail to note in this example is the differential manifestation of the particle BACK: It remains BACK with the simple present, whereas in the progressive, it appears as BACK ON or BACK TO YOU. Is this merely happenstance or is it motivated? For now, we would like to entertain the possibility that BACK, when it occurs with the simple present, means something like 'back where X belongs'. Central to this characterization is the suggestion of a *standard* that is thereby invoked; something belongs somewhere – it goes somewhere. This is our first piece of data which suggests that the use of the simple present to describe concurrent activity makes implicit reference to a standard/norm, as a way of doing things. Thus, it is because the simple present already contains the idea of a standard that BACK need not be followed by a locative/possessive specification; it is already presupposed that the location is the standard, or typical, location. However, in the progressive, where no implicit appeal to a standard location is made, and the reference is only to an ongoing activity, which is directed to an addressee, the particle BACK must be further specified.[5] Although at this point this suggestion may seem somewhat over-interpretive, other data presented below will hopefully reflect back and support this normative interpretation of the use of BACK with the simple present.

Now at this point, we would like to introduce a further hypothesis: *that the characterization of the simple present in terms of a standard has implications for the mode of involvement of the speaker that is expressed in the utterance.* Thus, what is being expressed by the use of the simple present is that the motivational basis, or justification for the activity described, is relatively more *impersonal.* That is, the motivation or reason for action is to do things in terms of how things belong – or tend to/should be and not merely due to personal predilection. This does not mean the speaker's own volitions are circumscribed as a motive for action; but rather that these volitions are of a certain form: to act in terms of a standard way of acting. For example, in (1), A is "rightly" taking back her doll, the doll which indeed has become hers in the play session; in (2), A is in a sense merely redressing her previous activity of taking the shoes off the doll – now she puts them back. These examples, we claim, substantively differ from (3) and (4) in the progressive in which the same activity of putting back is described, now

under the aspect of dressing up the doll as part of a role-play gambit. The primary purpose of the progressive utterances seems to be to set up a dialogue and get on with the ongoing activity, as opposed to maintaining or restoring things to the way they were/should be.

This claim gains support from another rather striking contrast between the simple present and progressive utterances which the corpus exhibits: *personal intentions for action are always and only questioned through the progressive.*

(5) A: Why are you *putting* that away?
(6) E: What's your doll *doing?* – A: Well, she's *sitting* down.
(7) E: Amy, why you *takin'* the mom's dress off?

In such cases (of which there are many), the questions solicit the addressee's *own* description of, and motives for, an apparently unclear event. In effect, this defines the event as counting as an expression of the conditions of satisfaction (i.e., the fulfillment) of some intentional state on the part of the addressee (see Searle [1983] for a more extensive explanation of conditions of satisfaction). In contrast, analogous questions – such as "Why do you do X?" – *are never found* with the simple present in this sample. We take the absence of such questions concerning the addressee's *personal* motives for action as buttressing our contention that the subject of a simple present utterance is not a subject characterized by personal desires, motives, and so forth. Indeed, we submit that the subjectivity of the speaker/addressee does not enter language through the domain associated with this verbal form.

Thus, based on the examples discussed thus far, a few important suggestions can already be offered: 1) perhaps the simple present is not a full-fledged dialogic form, even when deployed in two-party encounters; 2) perhaps some kind of standard gets invoked through its usage; and thus 3) perhaps the expressed motivation for action is relatively impersonal – the antithesis of the more personal source of desire Hatcher (1951) and Lyons (1982) claim is expressed by the progressive. Obviously, these suggestions require substantiation from other data.

Consider another set of utterances, again with A as the speaker.

A sits with the Mom-doll on her lap; E is near, playing with the Baby-doll, but pays no attention to A. A picks up a small doll's purse. A looks at doll, not E, throughout sequence.

(8) A: It's our bucket/We *sell* it //announcementlike, harsh voice//
as A holds purse in one hand; other hand holds doll on her lap
A: Her foot goes in here
as A puts doll's shoe on
A: And we *take* her shoes *off* //melodic, sing-song voice//
as A removes one doll shoe
A: In case we need them //melodic, sing-song voice, higher pitch//
as A removes the other doll shoe
A: And – and her goes in the water //melodic, sing-song voice, higher-pitch//
as A transports doll to edge of blanket – a suitable location for "water"
A: But her dress/I can't (find) her shoes //melodic, sing-song voice//
as A holds doll in "the water"; then brings her back to her lap

Once again, note the presence of the two action verbs – SELL and TAKE OFF – in the simple present. (See our later discussion of the few instances of third

person simple present -S forms such as in GOES.) One possible explanation for the occurrence of this verb form in this context might be the co-occurrence of the first person plural subject. However, the utterance, "We're taking their shoes off" also occurs, when at a later moment the investigator walks into the room, and A looks up to inform her what they are up to. Thus, the progressive is not excluded by a first person plural subject.

Nevertheless, the subject form is peculiar given the absence of communication or joint activity between A and E to serve as the referent of WE. Who does WE refer to in this sequence? Either it refers to A and the doll (which would render the utterances semantically anomalous) or it is not meant to individuate the particular children/dolls present, but instead serves to construct a communal yet impersonal referent – an intersubjective anonymity. The first option seems implausible as A does not address the doll. Thus, we must ask, is there any reason why the WE form might be used as a communal/impersonal form in these utterances?

Clearly, that WE does not refer to the joint agency of the situational participants coincides with the claim that what motivates an activity described by the simple present is not a personal desire, but rather a more anonymous social standard. Indeed we would like to suggest that the use of this impersonal WE form makes explicit the value of the subject slot of the simple present *which is there, in some respects, all along*. That is, the presence of the simple present serves as a *frame* which sets up a more impersonal subject slot. Thus, WE can be used to refer to 'we-whomever-we-may-be that is doing the activity', and not just to the individuals present. This suggestion conforms to Donnellan's (1966) claim that certain referring expressions refer in a more "attributive" way, asserting something about "whatever or whoever fits the desciption." In short, the occurrence of this impersonal WE with the simple present "makes sense," as both forms serve to make more explicit the nonpersonal/communal basis of the activity described. Now at first blush, this suggestion might seem belied by the presence of the personal pronoun "I" in the earlier examples. However, to anticipate our conclusions, the "I" which occurs in the subject slot of a simple present utterance does not refer to the speaker under the same aspect as the "I" of the progressive frame.[6] Only the latter presents the true "subjectivity of the speaker" that Benveniste (1971) claims inheres in first person uses.

In the corpus, of the twenty-four occurrences of WE with the simple present, 46 percent (N = 11) were of the same type: not making obvious reference to the participants in the situation. Instead, regarding the twenty occurrences of WE with the progressive (115 progressive utterances obtained overall), only .05 percent (N = 1) were of this type, while 90 percent (N = 18) were used to denote the particular children. Thus, when it occurs with the progressive, WE refers to the joint agency of the particular participants; whereas with the simple present, it can refer to them, but it need not. Instead, almost half the time, WE seems to denote a more anonymous referent.

The import of this empirical observation will become clearer later in this paper. Briefly, we take the possibility of an impersonal subject marker with the simple present (plus its absence with the progressive) as indicating an aspect of this form's latent meaning. Thus, even in the absence of any overt co-occurring impersonal subject form, which as we will suggest embodies the paradigmatic expression of the simple present's meaning, an underlying trace remains which infects the other overt subject markers positioned in this slot.

It might however, seem that an altogether different explanation for the occurrence of the simple present in these examples is that of discourse cohesion: the maintenance of the same form across several utterances (dictated by verbs which more typically occur in the simple present such as GOES and NEED) as a device to construct a cohesive stretch of connected discourse. Such an account, however, mistakes the effect for the cause. Why is the simple present the form selected for this chain of single-speaker/multipropositional discourse?

The relevance of this question emerges when the simple present is again contrasted with the progressive with respect to their occurrence in multipropositional sequences. Note that example (8) contains six occurrences, all but the last of which are in the simple present. Such a protracted sequence is not unusual: A full 71 percent of the simple present utterances occur in similar multipropositional sequences. However, there is only one pair of progressive utterances occurring in such an environment. Although 41 percent do occur in pairs, these clearly differ from the sequences given earlier in terms of their form and function. They consist of three types: 1) question/answer pairs across speakers; 2) repetition of an utterance by the same speaker, usually in order to solicit feedback from the play partner (e.g., A: "We're using all those things. We're using all those things, right?"); and 3) matching or contrastive utterances across speakers (e.g., A: "I'm making a house." E: "I'm making a trap.").

Instead, when the simple present occurs in sequences of multipropositional utterances, the sequence seems to be determined by an overall "configural act" (Mink 1972): It is either narrativelike or a set of instructions or a long description of something. In short, a *configural unit* obtains which groups together a sequence of propositions in terms of a common theme.

Two points need to be emphasized. First, in each case, there is a protracted telling on the part of the speaker which does not solicit the play partner to join in. That the simple present is the form deployed in such single-speaker sequences is further evidence that, typically, it is not used to structure a dialogic/negotiatory situation. Instead, as a form which eschews any bid for negotiation, it participates in the structuring of a situation into something like a pronouncement – a telling which is not meant to secure uptake, but proclaims the way things are.

Second, the high frequency of occurrence of the simple present in such multipropositional sequences suggests that this form is used more *to connect the representation of different events*, rather than to connect the intentions or desires of different speakers. That is, whereas the use of WILL, for example, is used to

negotiate, and therefore dovetail, the intentions of the conversational participants (Gee & Savasir 1985), the simple present is used when the speaker seeks a form to string together a sequence of events into a larger configural unit – events which are not "open" for negotiation. Moreover, what makes the simple present such an eminently good candidate for connecting such normative-sounding, multipropositional utterances is that the main concern behind this form is to regulate events in terms of the rules of their everyday constitution, rather than the speaker's own preferences.

Another example, also by A, illustrates some of the same points.

A and E have been playing a game in which they build a castle with the blocks while Izzy (one of the investigators) pretends to sleep on the stairs. Then they go and wake Izzy up and ask him to get up and look at their castle. This has happened twice already. A goes up to Izzy again, and says the following to him:

(9) A: You *sleep* on the stairs //slightly pre-emptory tone of voice throughout//
A: And we *build*
A: We – we *knock* it *down*
A: And then we *make* a other thing
A: And then we *do* something.
as A gesticulates as she talks to Izzy.

In (9), we again observe the simple present occurring in a single-speaker, multipropositional sequence which does not leave a slot for the interlocutor to respond. Nevertheless, this time A does directly address an interlocutor. It will be noted, however, that the form of addressee-directed speech is still *unilateral;* A talks *at* Izzy, *not with* him, and does not attempt to renegotiate anything with him, or get his consensus. He can either comply or not, but not alter the structure of the events presented.

Moreover, this example, when contrasted with the others, corroborates what was said earlier: Different types of minimal dialogic potentials need to be distinguished. Whereas the utterances of (8) are not addressed at all, but are used to regulate the speaker's own activities, those in (9) are, but in a specific way. They express what we call a "closed" text: While such utterances may be directed toward another party, their content is not open for negotiation. Therefore on the continuum mentioned above, they do not rank much higher than the utterances of (8).

Such findings bear on Vygotsky's (1962) characterization of early speech as "essentially social." That is, according to Vygotsky, "Speech is first a communicative function. It serves the goals of social contact, social interaction, and the social coordination of behavior" (Vygotsky [1960], as quoted in Wertsch [1980]). While we agree with Vygotsky's ontogenetic claim that language is learned in a socially structured, dialogic context, we submit that what is meant by "social" and/or "communicative" needs to be differentiated to distinguish those uses which are truly open for negotiation versus those uses which are not. Thus in (9), even though the language is communicative in that it is directed to an interlocutor, the utterances are unilateral and not meant to allow for addressee uptake. This contrasts with other modes of speech which are open for negotiation

and leave a slot for the addressee to respond (Gee & Savasir 1985). We conjecture that this distinction is made at a very early age.

This example, moreover, raises another issue as the simple present is being used to refer to activities which are to occur subsequent to the moment of speech. Although this is the only example of this form being used to make prospective temporal reference, given that these same children have two highly systematized ways of referring to future activities using WILL or GONNA, the fact that A now selects the simple present to perform this function appears odd. But not surprising, since what we find is a very particular framework in which this future reference occurs: Something will take place in the future as it has happened that way in the past. A ritual or scripted situation (Nelson & Gruendel 1979) has been set up among play partners which provides a basis from which to make projections about the future. Given our claim that the use of the simple present makes implicit appeal to a standard way of acting, its use to further a ritualized game context makes sense; future reference obtains by means of requesting a routine activity. Moreover, this use of the simple present is consonant with the French and Nelson (1982) finding that even when asked to talk about their routine activities out of context, children distinctly select the simple present form to do so. Thus, what unifies the future-referring, ongoing-present, and decontextualized uses of the simple present is the appeal to some kind of pattern to which the speaker seeks to conform.

This example also reveals why we find the traditional description "habitual" inadequate. Granted in (9), since a routine gets established on the basis of recurrent activity, there is a habitual aspect to these utterances. However, more is being expressed than mere recurrence. These utterances are meant to regulate what should be done and not merely to describe what has been done. Perhaps one reason why the simple present has given linguists so much trouble is an inadequate recognition of the possibility of a dual "direction-of-fit" (Searle 1979) for a single utterance: that is, that the *same* utterance can be used both to describe how something is, as well as to regulate how something should be – to make it come about. We would like to suggest that one of the essential features of the simple present used to describe concurrent activity is that it harbors just this equivocation between description and prescription. Thus, in example (2), "I put her shoes back," is A describing her activity or regulating it – in terms of restoring a standard mode of being for the doll? In (8), is A describing the sequence of actions of the doll, or legislating them for the doll? To be sure, this normative component is made more or less explicit depending on other properties of the utterance. In (9), it is most explicit due to the initial use of the second person plus its future referring status; as such the utterances have a directive flavor. However, our claim is that in each case, when the simple present is used to express concurrent activity, the speaker is regulating as well as describing the activity specified.

This suggestion is compatible with Von Wright's (1963) characterization of

"social customs." According to Von Wright, "customs" viewed as "social habits" resemble descriptive laws of nature in that they are based on regularities. However, they differ from such laws since customs, being normative, also "influence conduct; they exert a 'normative pressure' on the individual members of the community whose customs they are." Thus, we would like to suggest that what we have so far described as the simple present's implicit reference to a standard can be viewed as the representation of customary activity – a sort of regulative norm – and not merely as a description of a behavioral regularity.

Another example of A's is revealing in this regard.

As A builds with the blocks, she says the following. The utterances are not directed to E. E pays no attention, as E builds on her own.

(10) A: I *should do* this
as A grasps a triangle and an arch block
A: And *make* a city
as A puts the triangle on the arch
A: And *do* something
as A adjusts them together
A: And I *make* a city like it //falling intonation and harsh voice quality throughout//
as A continues to adjust them standing upright on the table

We interpret the occurrence of SHOULD in this sequence of utterances, otherwise in the simple present, as making more explicit the regulative status of the simple present. By way of contrast, this injunctive SHOULD (or its equivalent catenatives) never sequentially co-occurs with the progressive. Furthermore, the deletion of the subject also contributes to the imperativelike nature of these utterances – all be they self-imperatives. This again accords with the interpretation that the simple present has a directive-regulative value, as well as a descriptive value.[7]

Moreover, the absence of the subject form is interesting in another regard. Recall the prior claim that the subject slot of the simple present utterance is not necessarily meant to designate a particular individual/s. If this is true, the elimination of the overt subject marker should present less of an information recoverability problem, and therefore should be more permissible. And in fact, whereas 10 percent of the simple present utterances co-occur with a deleted subject (these cases are not the obvious ones of the imperatives), this obtains for only .01 percent of the progressives. Although the disparity between these figures is not vast, the trend accords with the idea that the subject referent of the simple present, being more impersonal, can be retrieved more easily, and therefore can undergo deletion. Moreover, that this sequence has a narrativelike flavor is relevant to the topic of subject deletion, since in many narratives, when the subject is recoverable (highly topicalized), its deletion is often permitted (Hopper 1979b).

Now let's look at an example of E's use of this verb form.

E walks over to A, who is already playing with the blocks.

(11) A: Make – make it a castle! //excited, friendly tone//
as A builds with blocks, glances at E as E walks over

E: No!/ That's-that's not how you *make* a castle //biting tone of voice//
as E begins to build something with blocks, not visually directed to A
A: But-but – OK/This is the way we *do* this/And a triangle //half solicitous, half-announcementlike//
as A continues to build as she was building before; not vis. dir. to E
E: This is not you how-/You don't *make* a triangle that way/You *can't make* a triangle that way //very pre-emptory tone of voice//
as E builds, not vis. dir. to A
A: This way?
as A lifts a new block and places it, not vis. dir. to E
E: No!/You *can't*/You *can't!* //very pre-emptory tone of voice//
as E builds, not vis. dir. to A
A: I – I *put* one here //announcementlike voice; not solicitous//
as A rotates block and places it
E: No!/That's not you how-/You don't *make* a triangle this way/You *can't!* //very pre-emptory voice, almost bitchy//
as E digs into block bucket, seizes a new block and places it; not vis. dir. to A
A: But!/You're my friend! //whiney//
as A looks plaintively at E, and finally stops building in her own way
E: But you *can't make* a triangle this way/You *can't* //voice a little more solicitous//
as E continues to build
E: I'll show you how to make a triangle/You *hafta* get a red – red triangle – and that's enough! //pedagogic voice//
as E continues to build, taking a red triangle from bucket and placing it; not vis. dir. to A
E: Now this is how you *make* a triangle //announcementlike voice//
places the triangle in a new position on the floor; not vis. dir. to A
E: What is this?
as E lifts a large block and places it on table
E: Now watch!
as E places a smaller block on it not vis. dir. to A, who pays no attention
E: This is how you *make* windows //announcementlike voice//
as E places the third block, thereby completing window
A: I know/I'm not – I'm not gonna *make* –
as A glances at E's structure – then recommences building on her own
E: See!/This is how you *make* windows!
as E points to the window she has just completed
A: OK/I'll *make* ('em) //friendly, solicitous voice//
as A sticks her hand in block bucket then desists and rotates body away, paying no attention to E
E: You *get* a red short //announcementlike voice, pedagogic tone throughout//
as E grabs short block out of bucket
E: And you *get* a red thing
as E searches in bucket
E: And you *put* them together
as E continues to search in bucket
E: And you *put* them like that
as E puts two blocks together to form base of window
E: And then that's how you *make* a window
as E points to previous window already made, then returns to searching in bucket
E: Here we go
as E finds a third block
E: Now you *get* one of these
as E transports it to two blocks already put together
E: And you *put* it like that
as E transports third block to window she is making

E: And then that's how you *make* a window
as E places her final block on window, then gestures to it; E doesn't look at A or in any way address A, nor does A pay attention to E throughout

We are all familiar with this quasi-instructional use of the simple present. That E at 3;3 should adopt this form for this use is not surprising given our prior characterization of A's use of this form. In fact, we would like to propose that example (11) is simply *the most explicit rendering of the use-potential which always inheres in this form,* albeit expressed less explicitly by A. This claim is supported by the following argument.

First of all, note the co-occurrence of the simple present in this example with the second person. Taken literally, this form would be odd as most of the time it coincides with the speaker's own activities ("You get a red short") while even when it is used in reference to the activities of the interlocutor ("That's not how you make a castle"), it still must refer more generically (e.g., "one"), otherwise it loses its truth value (since A has already made a castle in this way). Thus, analogous to A's use of WE, E's use of YOU seems to be the form selected to convey most explicitly the impersonal subject slot of the simple present verb form: Anyone who does this activity does/should do it a certain way. Whereas this impersonal second person occurs with 28 percent of the total simple present utterances (N = 22; 4 for A; 18 for E), by contrast, it *never* co-occurs with the progressive. Instead, of the 9 percent (N = 11) of the progressive utterances that occur in the second person, they all denote the interlocutor quite specifically. That E tends to use the second person while A uses the first person plural is to be noted, although for our purposes the difference is irrelevant, since in either case the children have alighted on pronominal forms which most explicitly refer to the impersonal motivation of this verbal construction.[8]

Another telling observation about this sequence is the way in which E *alternates* between pointing to, and thus referring to, a window she has already made, and then to one she is in the midst of making. That is, the first time E declares "And then that's how you make a window," she points to the window she has previously made, while the last time E proudly intones this phrase, she points to the window she simultaneously completes. We take such alternation in reference between something completed and something ongoing as being a behavioral consequence of the fact that the simple present allows a nonspecific interpretation of not only its subject, but also its object. Just as the subject noun phrase tends to pick out the particular referent in the situation insofar as it conforms to a more generic sense of 'anyone-performing-the-activity,' so can the object noun phrase pick out the particular referent insofar as the referent conforms to a standard object. Ultimately, we would like to argue that the simple present tends to make implicit reference to "kinds" rather than to particulars. Therefore, any object in the immediate situation which conforms to/instantiates the standard can be denoted by the object of a verb in the simple present, since this form conflates

reference to a particular object or event with reference to a standard one (also see Hatcher [1951] for a similar interpretation).

Furthermore, the ample occurrence of explicit locutions of manner (e.g., "how," "like this," "this is the way") provide other indices of this sensitivity to norms in these simple present utterances implying that there is a right way to make a castle above and beyond the personal tastes and desires of the participants. By way of contrast, the progressive *never* co-occurs with such manner adverbials. A related observation consists in E's use of CAN'T. Since A has indeed already built what E says A can't, E cannot mean the CAN'T of ability or possibility, but must mean the CAN'T of permission. E refuses A permission to do what she is doing/has already done. Since permission is a normative concept it fits right in to this sequence. And, A's retort, "But you're my friend" yet again raises a normative issue, one about the nature of friendship. These various phenomena combine with the simple present to heighten the normative nature of this interaction.

Furthermore, note E's negative retort "No!" to A's statement "I – I put one here." If we understand A's statement as a mere assertion – a speech act which entails a belief on the speaker's part that what she asserts is true (Searle 1979) – then E's negative response must be read as an accusation in terms of the truth of A's statement. However, if we assume that A is invoking a norm about how something should be done, we can better comprehend E's negative response. E negates the normative component of the utterance and not its descriptive truth-value. Thus, although the other trappings of normativity are absent in this particular utterance of A's (except intonation), as we have already argued, *the simple present is sufficient* to invoke a normative meaning. It is precisely this that provokes E's heated reply. This observation is an important one for our purposes precisely due to the absence of other co-occurring grammatical indices of normativity. That E retorts the way she does strongly suggests that she herself recognizes the more than descriptive nature of A's utterance.

And once again, this example reflects the tendency noted previously: The simple present is employed to string together a series of thematically related events. However, what now must be commented upon is the *switch* into the use of alternate verbal forms as part of a shift into an alternate mode of discursive activity. Thus, as E dons a more coercive attitude toward A, in order to directly affect the way A builds, E switches from the negative manner statement in the simple present, "That's not how you make a castle," to a denial of permission (or a prohibition) with CAN'T, "You can't make a triangle that way," or to a coercion with HAFTA: "You hafta get a red – red triangle – and that's enough." This suggests that although the simple present is deployed to structure the immediate situation into a normative mode of activity, since the simple present is not first and foremost a dialogic form, it cannot easily transcend its noninterpersonal role, even to function coercively. Coercion, like any sort of

argumentation (see Eisenberg & Garvey 1981), requires some type of dialogic set up – albeit affectively negative – with the perlocutionary goal that the addressee be affected by the speaker's utterance. Since the simple present is not very capable of sustaining dialogue, positive or negative, it won't easily work to *impact upon* the interlocutor. It seems to leave her with too many degrees of freedom regarding her subsequent moves. Thus, in order to depart from a mere pronouncement of the way something is or is not done (which indeed has some minimal coercive potential) to a genuine attempt to coerce the play partner, ultimately, E must choose an explicit modal operator through which to structure the interaction: either CAN'T or HAFTA, two forms which, according to preliminary analyses, function to create and sustain coercive or other dialogic encounters.[9]

When E more or less ignores A (the latter half of (11)) and sets up her activity as a demonstration of how to make a window (but a type of demonstration in which A is not only not being coerced to follow suit, but neither is her attention even demanded!), the simple present is employed at length. This is what motivates our calling the activity-contexts only "quasi-instructional"; a demonstration is performed on the part of the speaker, but the addressee seems to be basically free to do what she likes.

Therefore we submit that even the negative manner statements in the second person have an *open-ended, and therefore weak, perlocutionary potential.* So when E says, "That's not how you make a castle," although A seems to comply ("OK"), in fact *A merely redescribes the very same activity normatively* ("This is the way we do this"). Instead of being successfully persuaded by E to desist from her own way of building, A goes along with E in structuring the block-play into a normative sort of play-site. This is achieved through A's discourse features (i.e., an explicit manner term – "the way"; the simple present; the nonparticularized use of "we"; and intonation). The point is that behaviorally A does not stop doing what she is doing. We take this to suggest that although E's negative manner statement may be mildly intended to govern A's ongoing building, the form that this governing takes cannot be equated with a full-fledged prohibition. That is, it is not really meant to alter the addressee's activity (as it is used as a self-regulative form), and thus it does not. A merely redescribes her activity in a different way. It is only when E switches forms ("Can't") that A seems to feel coerced such that her activity finally breaks down.

Now clearly, this discussion is based on the assumption that the perlocutionary effect of an utterance is determined in part by the nature of the utterance itself. Indeed, this is one aspect of what we are trying to capture by the term "discursive activity-type": that an utterance functions to constrain (viewed negatively) and/or structure (viewed positively) the interlocutor's uptake. That aspect of the utterance most responsible for such discursive structuration is the modal component: the different ways the speaker expresses herself regarding what it is she is describing and therefore constructing. Since the simple present is used to express

one sort of quasi-modal meaning (that the expressed activity is being conditioned by some kind of standard way of acting), we can ask: How is the addressee's behavior meant to be governed through this use of such second person simple present utterances? The finding – that the addressee's behavior seems to be structured open-endedly – is not, we claim happenstance. Rather, it is built into the use of this form. The open-endedness with regard to perlocutionary uptake is part of the way the simple present works. This means that in the second person, the use of the simple present can be said to function as a directive, but *only* with the caveat that the perlocutionary impact that the utterance is meant to have is recognized as being nonimplicational with respect to a response. The speaker is not really trying to impose upon the play partner, but at the most, is being suggestive, providing an example which may or may not be heeded. If the speaker wants to have a greater impact on the activity of the play partner, she will choose another form.[10]

In fact, this absence of partner uptake even in the acerbic, negative utterances is analogous to the same uptake-absence in certain second person affirmative utterances – those that get deployed in the peculiar context of a demonstration which turns out not even to require the attention of the supposed recipient. In a sense then, both second person cases resemble the first person cases in which it is really only the speaker's behavior which is the primary target of the normative regulation. In short, in such simple present utterances, *the play partner never fully becomes an addressee.*

At this point, let's now complete the analysis of the use of the simple present by trying to flesh out more fully the particular type of discursive activity which is created by these children through its use. A short discussion of temporal reference will follow.

HOW THE DIFFERENT PROPERTIES INTERRELATE WITH THE NORMATIVITY EXPRESSED BY THE SIMPLE PRESENT

It must be noted that we have not been trying to discover which activities are governed by norms, in order to claim that such activities (allegedly prior to discourse) determine the form of their discursive description. Although in (9), the activity itself had become ritualized, the occurrence of a correspondence between the ritualized activity and the form of the discursive description-regulation (normative) was, we claim, a unique case. In the other examples already presented, what lends the activities a normative flavor emerges through the discourse: in this case, the discursive field engendered by the use of the simple present, plus some of the other properties which regularly co-occur with it.

However, since we take our problem space to be discourse-as-event (Foucault 1972; Ricoeur 1971) or, in other words, the social effects of language use, it is not enough to note the normative meaning component of this form. We must also show how it *interrelates* with the other meaning components, and how they

together constitute a unified practice. Only by doing so can we ascertain the type of experiential activity-context which is effected through the use of this verbal form. Thus, the issue to be emphasized at this point is that the different features of the use of the simple present *are not independent of one another* but together form a particular discursive system.

The claim that the simple present is used to structure a normative mode of discourse has been found to have *two important discursive consequences.* The first is that this form is not used to structure an activity where the speaker has a real impact on, or negotiates with, the addressee. This is evinced behaviorally by 1) the rather pre-emptory intonation with which these utterances are expressed (or unilateral manner of expression), with no attempt to be solicitous of the play partner; 2) the embeddedness of the majority of utterances in rather long-winded, narrativelike sequences with no apparent slot for a rejoinder; and 3) the marked absence of surface markers of dialogue, such as forms of address, role-play register, negotiation markers, questions concerning the addressee's intentions, and so on. And corresponding to this is the finding that indeed there is *no consistent uptake* to these simple present utterances. This queer use of the simple present leaves the play partner with almost total conversational freedom to attend, or disattend, at will. Reciprocally, the speaker may begin to evaluate not only her own, but her play partner's activity in terms of a standard ("That's not how you make a castle"), but if she wants to keep this other-directedness up, the use of the simple present is not (we would say cannot be) maintained. Now although this absence of a well-structured communicative procedure would seem to cause distress, it does not. Instead, the simple present functions like a code such that the discursive activity it creates *is* open-ended dialogically.

The second consequence of the use of the simple present to invoke a norm is the distinct type of motivation structured into the ongoing discourse: The speaker "recognizes" that there are conventional ways to do things which can govern her own activities. Thus, it is no wonder that the addressee's personal intentions are not solicited by questions in the simple present (as they often are with the progressive) as this form isn't in the ball park of expressing even the speaker's personal reasons for action. What we want to stress here is that this impersonal motivation is not adventitious, but is inherent to the meaning of a norm. This claim is supported most directly by the children's oft-occurring impersonal YOU or WE forms, forms which do not co-occur with the progressive. But what about the first person cases?

Although a longer discussion than is possible here would be required to substantiate this claim, we believe that certain inflectional and modal forms have a core use-meaning which is associated with a particular grammatical person which most expresses that core meaning. This would constitute the paradigmatic mode of expression of that verbal form (i.e., as the literature cited earlier would suggest, the progressive is most basically a first person form; simple present a generic second person form). These person forms can be regarded as special

instances of these inflections in that they best instantiate the mode of speaker involvement associated with the meaning of that particular verbal inflection. However, even when other person markers occur in the subject slot of these verbal forms, they retain a trace of the meaning expressed by the person marker associated with the paradigmatic use.

This claim is based on examples of the kind in which the presence of a particular form counts as a contextual parameter which affects the meaning of a co-occurring form. And more specifically, our claim runs parallel to Schlesinger's (1974) that when nominal arguments other than agents appear as sentence subject, they get semantically assimilated to the meaning of agency. For example, according to Schlesinger, when an experiencer is marked as sentence subject, "it is in some sense viewed as having the character of an agent" (1974:132), since agent is the primary instantiation of the syntactic category subject. Similarly, we submit that different inflections have different pronouns associated with them which express the basic mode of speaker involvement tied up with their use. Thus, when the I-form co-occurs with the simple present, we claim it means something like "I-just-like-anyone" (i.e., it gets assimilated to the impersonal YOU), as the speaker's stance is to act in terms of the conventional way of acting.

We find Heidegger's (1962) description of 'the anyone' (*Das Mann*) helpful in illuminating this impersonal meaning. In his discussion of 'the anyone', Heidegger hones in on the idea that each of us has been created by, and maintains him/herself in terms of, socially articulated, public modes of conduct which constitute the intelligibility of our shared world. These are "average" modes of conduct such that the self which enters into them "plays a decidedly secondary role" (Dreyfus 1977). This means that these forms of conduct have *their own meaning* independent of whoever in particular enacts them. With this in mind, we have been trying to propose that, through their use of the simple present, E and A are trying to enact activity formats which have their own organization, independent of the children's particular needs or desires at a particular point in time.

Furthermore, we maintain that children extract a certain self-understanding through engaging in such everyday, fixed activities. The type of self-concept implied by these typical modes of conduct is similar to that implied by the findings of Nelson's script research (1981). Nelson finds that children have a way of talking about their everyday activities in terms of the way things tend to be/should be (i.e., as "scripts") and not in terms of how the children themselves determine those events or want them to be. This way of conceiving the child's self-understanding – as a participant in preestablished social customs – differs from the more Piagetian-based conception of the child who, as instrumental agent, progressively gains control of various facets of her physical world. It has been argued (Slobin 1981) that this instrumental conception of the self-as-causal-agent plays a role in organizing a facet of the child's early grammar: the semantic

underpinnings of transitivity which gets grammaticized in English, in part through the past tense inflection. Instead, our claim is that a full-fledged agent acting on the world causally to effect certain outcomes is not as relevant to the sort of personhood expressed through the simple present. Rather, the type of intersubjective experience the child has when she submits to/participates in customary social routines (such as those described by Bruner [1983] and Nelson & Gruendel [1979]) serves as the experiential basis for the more impersonal sense of self as expressed through the use of the simple present.

Pursuing this issue a bit longer, the claim that grammar embodies different ways of structuring or viewing the self should not be too surprising. A wide range of linguistic citations could be adduced to suggest that the domain of the self is a linguistically crucial one. Besides the literature cited on the different types of speaker involvement which underlies the alternation between the simple present and the progressive, we mention the following: 1) Comrie's (1981) claim that the dimension of "agentive control" is a universal structuring parameter across all languages; 2) Benveniste's (1971) claim that concepts such as "personhood" and "subjectivity" structure (and are ultimately structured by) different grammatical categories, especially those of the person system and verb system; and 3) even Foucault's (1978) more abstract historical claim that the Western discursive practice of confession (either in church or on the doctor's couch) construed as an injunction to tell all of one's alleged deep secrets, the truth of which has to be known, has constrained us to see ourselves in certain ways. Each of these claims, in its own way, suggests that the issue of the self vis-à-vis language (how it is represented and how it is symbolically constituted) is a crucial linguistic/discursive structuring principle.

However, besides Slobin's (1981) work on the centrality of the category self-as-causal-agent, the problem of whether or not the child feels the need to make grammatical distinctions based on different perceptions of the self has not yet been sufficiently investigated. Recently, however, findings by Deutsch and Budwig (1983) and Budwig (1984) suggest that this is so. For example, Budwig (1984) finds that the variation between MY and I in subject position, in the speech of a child between 29–32 months, is determined by his attempt to grammaticize different types of stances: MY is typically used in contexts of higher transitivity in which the child sees herself as a volitional agent effecting certain changes on objects or people; I is used in eventive sorts of contexts in which the child sees herself more as an experiencer of external and internal events. Whereas such distinctions will ultimately be absorbed by other grammatical markers (such as the modals), initially, the child forges her own system of marking these different ways of experiencing and viewing the self by this slightly deviant alternation of pronominal forms. Similarly, data available on a 22–24 month old child suggests that early on she uses the simple present plus a distinct form of self-reference ("Emmy" or "my") in subject position to refer to events where she is not the causal agent of the represented activity, whereas she uses the "I"

form to express her own agentive involvement in events (Gerhardt, 1986). We take such findings as strengthening our claim that indeed, children are linguistically marking different intentional stances.

Lastly, it might just be mentioned that something similar to our findings on the children holds for adults as well. Consider the following scenario: Mike, observing Izzy coming through the door of the cafe, invites him over. Izzy retorts, "I can't. I smoke." Notice that since Izzy is not reporting his own reasons for declining Mike's invitation, but is capitulating to the status quo (the contemporary practice of segregating smokers from nonsmokers) the simple present is used – and we would say is "required."

Now in order to begin to understand how children by age three have learned something about this particular distinction, clearly child-directed adult speech needs to be examined. This is especially necessary since, according to Bloom et al. (1980), even younger children use the simple present (the -S inflection in the third person) to mark similar sorts of "belongingness" relations. That is, the -S inflection is used on verbs such as GO and FIT ("It goes here") to name "the place to or at which some object (the patient) logically 'belongs', and appeared to be used by the children in the sense of an assignment of that object to a place" (Bloom et al. 1980 pg. 398). This strikes a resonant chord with our own analysis in that the notion of something "belonging" somewhere helps to define one of the essential characteristics of that thing. As such, something essential about the object (as sentential subject) determines where it goes or what it does, and again, not the speaker's own personal desires.

TEMPORAL REFERENCE

The last aspect of this normative mode of speech, constituted in part through the deployment of the simple present, is its potential for temporal reference. Is the simple present a deictic (tense) form? And what about its status vis-à-vis the classical descriptions such as "habitual aspect" or "timeless reference"? Regarding habitual aspect at least two reasons exist which force us to question its pertinence to the above examples. First, distinct forms are employed by both E and A in order to convey the meaning of pure recurrence: 1) KEEP + Progressive, 2) ALWAYS, 3) USED TO, and 4) AGAIN.

(12) A: *Keeps* falling down
(13) E: *Keeps* coming on
(14) E: Why she *always* going away like that?
(15) E: It *always* falls off
(16) A: I don't wanna be the baby. I *used to* be the baby
(17) A: *Again? Again?* Why you did it *again?*

Given that such forms which distinctly mark repetition of past events are both available and abundant, it seems plausible to doubt that the simple present would also be harnassed solely for this purpose. Second, even when the characterization "habitual" might be relevant to specify certain simple present utterances, basi-

cally we think it is profoundly misleading as it tends to suggest that "events or occurrences" are "more basic than generalizations . . . in the sense that the very meaning of a generalization is defined in terms of occurrence meanings" (Goldsmith & Woisetschlaeger 1982). Instead, these authors challenge this quantitative construal of general statements (or norms), as expressed by simple present utterances, by describing occasions of use which express a generic yet not recurrent meaning. Similarly, we submit that barring example (9), each of the above examples might have occurred without any prior experience in that domain which the speaker is allegedly abstracting and generalizing from. What subtends the first and second person use of the simple present is a generic orientation – that there is a standard way to do things – which does not necessarily rely on the accumulation of specific past occurrences.

However, what hasn't yet been mentioned are the *third person uses* – exactly those cases for which the description "habitual" is typically given (e.g., "The sun rises in the east"). Rather surprisingly, third person cases are extremely rare in this corpus. Only four instances occur with full-fledged verbs, plus three cases of third person GOES (see (8) for an example).

(18) A: You can't play with it. It's a big girl's toy. But little children *don't play* with it.
E: Little girls *don't play* with it. Only big girls.
(19) A: We can go to the movies. But not with the babies. They *cry*.

Even if these examples were to represent generalizations based on the child's past experiences (instead of the more likely possibility of mere hearsay), notice how they are used: namely, to regulate the children's ongoing activity. The simple present in (18) functions as part of a prohibition or denial of permission (even a self-denial), while in (19) it functions to rationalize the speaker's denial of permission to the dolls. In short, both utterances function prescriptively to regulate ongoing activity – something which is not captured by "habitual."[11]

Furthermore, both examples exhibit impersonal legitimacy claims; the reasons adduced for both negative directives are not the speaker's own reasons, but conventional bits of wisdom ultimately meant to govern more than the behavior of just those children at just that time. This in fact is the basis for the claim that the simple present expresses "timeless truths" (Calver 1946) – the idea being, in this example, that in saying "They cry," A is not intending to refer to a discrete event sequentially ordered with respect to other events (what tense marks), but to a truism which holds for some unspecified amount of time including the present. Now even granting this noneventive, "timeless" interpretation for these third person truisms (which we do), what obtains is some kind of temporal correspondence such that the utterances serve to regulate the ongoing discourse by providing generic reasons for acting in particular ways. The point is that the limited specification "timeless" fails to capture this, as well as the more important point that *the reason why* the simple present can make this timeless reference is due to its tendency to advert to normative ways of doing things and/or the essential

characteristics of things. In short, the aspectual meaning of an enduring event relies on the modal meaning of a norm for these three-year-olds.

Thus, extrapolating from the findings, it seems that the simple present can be used in three different temporal contexts: 1) to describe ongoing activity, 2) to refer to immediately subsequent activity, and 3) to refer to a seemingly more timeless/enduring state of affairs about a third person referent. However, there is a caveat; the latter two contexts are restricted. Future reference seems to be confined to ritualized, very predictable situation-types which are immediately relevant to the present activity; timeless or noneventive reference seems to require that the generic description be used to regulate ongoing activity. However, before addressing how these three temporal contexts might be related, we need to discuss the first in more detail.

In that the majority of the simple present utterances are used in the first and second person to describe the children's ongoing activity, it might be said that the simple present functions as a tense marker, deictically relating the activity described to the moment of speech (with the meaning 'this activity is happening now'). Our answer to this is both yes and no. Yes, in that the simple present can indeed be used to denote activity which is more or less simultaneous with the moment of speech. But no, in that this relation is not "pure." It does not transcend its rootedness in particular modal/aspectual meanings. Thus, if tense relations are thought of as not harboring any modal colorings (Joos 1964; Palmer 1979), the simple present does not qualify as a tense form; when it is used to refer to concomitant activity, reference to a normative or essential way of doing things (a modal meaning) and therefore to a more or less enduring state-of-affairs (an aspectual meaning) is also expressed. Such norms or essences are not punctate, discrete events. Hence the extent to which the simple present expresses such phenomena, it will necessarily fail to achieve the requirements of tense. The same point was made by Hatcher (1951: 277) with regard to adult speech: When the simple present is used to refer to concomitant overt activity, "two ideas are being telescoped" – both temporal reference and rule-governed activity, the latter being Hatcher's way of referring to norms. Consequently, the simple present does not merit a pure tense description.

Thus in summary, what *unifies* the three temporal contexts of the simple present mentioned above is its implicit reference to a norm. Whether the simple present is extended to make future reference or to refer to a generic state of affairs, it remains tethered to this core meaning of the way things are/the way things go. Similarly, the simple present can be used to mark present tense only if the ongoing activity is construed as an instance of a larger pattern. Hence, the problem with the descriptions "timeless," "present tense," or "habitual" is that they fail to capture the *systemic inherence* of these temporal notions with the idea of normativity or essences. By isolating these temporal functions toute courte, nothing more can be said about them. Instead, from the point of view of

our more functionally based analysis in which we want to understand what is pragmatically implied by talking in this way (What kind of speaker motivation is expressed? – What kind of activity-context is thereby set up?), the temporal dimension must be viewed *in terms of its unity or coherence* with the other meaning components revealed by this analysis. This is what we have tried to do in this section. Moreover, only once the interconnectedness of these meanings is acknowledged does the nondialogic nature of this form make sense: If the speaker is not (or is not only) describing events, but in addition, is expressing something like an impersonal maxim to regulate her own activity, the three-year-old recipient of such information just does not know how to treat it: as information, as news, as coercion, or as monologue.

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis presented above has hopefully provided a provisional demonstration that children have a way of structuring their ongoing activities in terms of an impersonal motivation or a conformance to a normative way of acting. Ultimately, the type of social theory implied by our research is one in which the individual-qua-speaker is viewed as being in part shaped through the reproduction of the particular discursive practices s/he gets socialized into (Vygotsky 1962). By discursive practices, we mean those social practices which define the particular sets of distinctions relevant to what is grammaticized in the language. Thus, grammar itself can be considered to be a more or less opaque sedimentation of basic distinctions relevant to our ways of understanding what we make of ourselves and our world (Whorf 1956). Although we have not yet addressed just how the children learn the particular distinctions we have attributed to them, or how their use differs from adult use, we view this research as a preamble to such questions. Instead, our immediate concern has been twofold. First, we have tried to argue for and characterize the modal meaning contained in children's use of this allegedly temporal construction. Second, we have tried to show how the study of the use of such modallike forms can be a powerful investigatory technique for probing the different sorts of discursive intentions expressed and understood by the child. In short, insofar as a careful scrutiny of language use discloses important distinctions the child is implicitly making in the recalcitrant domain of intentionality, to quote Austin (1962), "there's gold in them thar hills!" – so let's mine it.

NOTES

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1. The exiguous amount of simple present utterances used to describe ongoing activity is not, we think, due to any obvious sampling error. Rather, it reflects the unusualness of the type of language use described for most ordinary conversations in the relevant age group. Nevertheless, our reason for choosing to focus on this slightly odd usage is that an understanding of it seems to be prerequisite to an understanding of the children's use of certain catenatives (HAFTA, NEEDTA, WANNA) which occur more prolifically, since all of these forms of speech (both the catenatives and the simple present) involve some kind of observance/nonobservance of a norm. Therefore, this paper should be viewed as a preliminary to an investigation of the way norms are created and/or referred to through language.

2. In this example, GIVE seems to mean "take" – a sensible "error" as both predicates involve object transfer.

3. The first author would like to thank Dell Hymes (pers. comm.) for pointing out the relevance of Whorf's work to our own, especially Whorf's advocacy of the use of co-occurrences between seemingly heterogeneous grammatical elements to reveal covert semantic organizations which themselves can be taken to indicate different "fashions of speaking" (Whorf 1941; in Hymes 1974). In fact, Hymes (1974) suggests that had Whorf lived longer, he might have eventually gone beyond his semantic analyses of grammar for a more stylistic approach viewing grammatical regularities as embodiments of different socially constituted "ways of speaking" (Hymes 1974). Indeed, such an approach, and the assumptions on which it is based, is spelled out in detail in Hymes (1974) (especially chapter 8).

4. It might be noted that Andersen's (1977, 1984, in press) research on the acquisition of register differences shares certain affinities with our work in that well-structured linguistic patterns are found to co-occur with distinct situations of use. As such, the simple present could be considered a register feature of an impersonal, nonnegotiatory, even authoritative use of language to announce norms. While this may indeed be half the story, our work has a different orientation and thus tries to make a different point. Whereas register differences mark speech variation as "appropriate" to different role relations (such that "appropriateness" can be used as a criterion equivalent to "grammaticality" to indicate the well-functioning of speech and not just its well-formedness), differences in the speaker's intentional stance reflect differences in "the speaking subject's position vis-a-vis the utterance" (Kristeva 1984:23). Thus in the tradition of Benveniste (1971), Lyons (1982), and Kristeva (1984), we are trying to describe the distinct *kind* of intention the speaker structures her discourse around, and its implication for the ensuing activity-structure. If at times this coincides with a particular register/social role (e.g., impersonal intention coincides with role of authority) so much the better, but we believe these are two orthogonal functional dimensions (see Gee [1985] for a fuller description of what is meant by different intentional domains).

5. Given that the situational context is the same in both cases, this interpretation may seem a bit farfetched. However, our main contention is that even when no objective situational differences obtain, this doesn't mean that the context-qua-"experiential context" doesn't shift. If language itself is viewed as playing an ongoing part in structuring context, then the use of different forms (especially those which express different modes of speaker involvement) across the same objective situation can be taken as a potential clue that perhaps different contextual structuring processes are going on. (See Gee & Savasir [1985] for the claim that the deployment of WILL helps to create an activity-context which is negotiatory and immediate, whereas GONNA functions to create an activity-context which is rather more imaginary, individually motivated and dissevers the expression of intention from its usual consequences.) Of course, in the example with BACK where no independent objective contextual parameters are seen to vary with its use, the problem of circularity might seem inescapable. Two precautions, however, are taken against this: 1) mention is made of other properties of the utterances which shift along with the shift into the unspecified use of BACK, and it is this configural synchronic pattern that we are trying to describe, and 2) other related utterances are described which have some of the same properties as the BACK utterances which suggest a normative interpretation. These utterances are claimed to shed light on the BACK utterances in virtue of having overlapping properties and thus forming an overlapping semantic field.

6. According to Searle (1979), "all reference occurs under an aspect." A clear example would be the reference to Venus which must be made through a linguistic descriptor (e.g., "morning star," "evening star," or even "Venus"). The point is that some propositional content is required through which an object is picked out and referred to. Analogously, we argue that the "I" designator to refer to the speaker is potentially ambiguous between two readings depending on the context as established through the modality, expressed in part through the verbal morphology: "I-in-terms-of-what-I-personally-experience-and-desire" (the progressive) vs. "I-in-terms-of-my-conformance-to-an-external-standard" (the simple present). A similar claim was implicitly made in Gee and Savasir (1985): The "I" which occurs under the scope of WILL refers to a cooperative, purposeful "I", while the "I" which occurs under the scope of GONNA refers to a more solipsistic, noncommital "I".

7. For readers familiar with Vygotsky's (1962) claim about the developmental trajectory of speech, this self-regulative use of the simple present through the invocation of norms would seem to exemplify his description of "egocentric speech": speech which is used to regulate the speaker's ongoing activity. Such egocentric speech is ontogenetically preceeded by participation in social speech, its alleged precursor. While we consider this claim crucial for backing up Vygotsky's more general theoretical position that "the true direction" of development is from "the social to the individual" (a position we fully endorse), we have resisted describing our findings in his terms for the following reason.

If by deriving egocentric, self-regulative speech from social dialogue the implication is that the former is dialogic (see Wertsch [1980], who proposes to substitute "egocentric dialogue" for "egocentric speech") and therefore that all speech is dialogic, we believe that this proposal fails to capture significant differences in the uses of language. For example, we argue that children grammaticize the distinction between regulating their activities in terms of the norms of their everyday constitution versus their own immediate preferences. How does this bear on the description "dialogic"? – as we think it should. To be sure, developmentally speaking, the child might *get the idea* of regulating her own effortful activities through the deployment of speech from either: 1) her own social speech to regulate her interactions with others, or 2) from her caretakers' regulation of her activities through their speech (see the example in Wertsch [1980] for a beautiful illustration of how a mother initially regulates her child's activity through her speech which then becomes internalized for self-regulation by the child). However, this does not mean that the self-regulative speech itself is thereby dialogic. (i.e., proceeds by an internal process of question and answer as Wertsch implies – or another dialogic process). Some is, some is not. That is, we believe that the term "dialogic" needs to be more precisely defined, especially in terms of different types of speech constructions which are differentially structured around being addressed or not (Benveniste 1971). Thus while we appreciate the immense developmental importance of the claim that the child comes to guide her own behavior through language as it was once guided by her caretakers' language, it is not clear, without more precise research on this issue, how exactly to take this claim from a *linguistic* perspective: For example, are the linguistic forms used by the child supposed to be based on an internalization of the forms used in the dialogue by or with the caretaker? Unless there is a somewhat rigorous way to distinguish what is and what is not dialogic in self-regulative speech, the claim, although of immense theoretical significance, is empirically too difficult to apply.

8. To be sure, E and A's use of these different forms to achieve this sort of impersonal reference might reflect significant individual differences. E is the bossier of the two children, hence she might work with a slightly more coercive sounding form; the second person YOU form renders the directivelike quality of her utterances more pronounced. A is the more compliant child, which might be reflected in her choice of the seemingly more cooperative term.

9. This interpretation is supported by Eisenberg and Garvey's (1981) data on the language used in arguments: The simple present with action verbs is notably absent from their reported data. Thus in peer speech, it seems that the simple present does not seem to be a form which is meant to have much impact upon the interlocutor.

10. At this point without more research on this topic, it is not clear whether mother–child speech and/or third person uses of the simple present would consistently function in the same basically nondialogic way. Indeed, a standard mother–child routine consists in the mother asking "Where does X go?" and the child pointing, or the child asking, "Where does X go?" and the mother responding (see example in Wertsch 1980). Note that, commensurate with our analysis, in such third person uses, the object in question "goes" (in the sense of "belongs") somewhere independent of

the desires of the participants. As such, the placement of the object is not open for negotiation, but it is meant to conform to some implicit standard.

11. At first blush these third person examples seem to significantly differ from the first and second person uses in that they are clearly in the domain of interpersonal maneuvers: giving reasons for the prior negative injunctions. As mentioned in the previous footnote, perhaps third person uses are found in a different activity-context which pulls for a more dialogic use. However, what is similar about these third person uses is that their content is not open for negotiation; the voice quality of these utterances is especially nonsolicitous and pre-emptory. Thus, once again we feel that this serves to qualify the type of dialogic participation.

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