15 Language Socialization and Hierarchy

KATHRYN M. HOWARD

Culture is not only what we live by. It is also, in great measure, what we live for. Affection, relationship, memory, kinship, place, community, emotional fulfillment, intellectual enjoyment, a sense of ultimate meaning: these are closer to most of us than charters of human rights or trade treaties.

(Eagleton 2000: 131)

Social relationships are fundamental facets of the human quest for belonging, connectedness, and affirmation in family, community, and society. For children and other novices, participation in their social worlds involves knowing how to deploy a range of communicative resources to inhabit these social relations in cultural activities. Many human relationships are organized by asymmetries of rights and responsibilities, even in societies or institutions that seemingly orient primarily to equality and autonomy: as Dumont pointed out, 'to adopt a value is to introduce hierarchy, and a certain consensus on values, a certain hierarchy of ideas, things and people, is indispensable to social life' (1969: 87). This chapter examines the discourses, processes, and practices by which children are socialized into hierarchical social relationships. An infinite range of status hierarchies fit within the rubric of 'social hierarchy,' which refers to any differential value that is assigned to people, their roles and identities, or even their linguistic resources. For this chapter, however, the focus is primarily on how children come to recognize and enact relative status asymmetries within social relationships. Learning about hierarchy and how it is marked is a critical aspect of both language acquisition and social development throughout life. Furthermore, the practices of hierarchy are central to the production and/or contestation of social inequality in social fields and institutions such as peer groups, families, schools, workplaces, professions, and even nations or societies.

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Linton (1936) and Parsons (1951) defined 'status' as the set of cultural rights and duties linked to particular social positions and 'roles' as referring to the expected or normative forms of conduct linked to a status. Within this structural-functionalist paradigm, social stratification was viewed as arising from relations of inequality among status roles within a unified social system. To capture the dynamic and heterogeneous roles that any individual may inhabit, however, ethnomethodologists treated status hierarchies as emergent within the interactional and semiotic processes that produce them (Cicourel 1972; Giddens 1979; Goffman 1967). Goffman, for example, conceptualized *face* – the positively valued self-image managed within social encounters – as 'diffusely located in the flow of events in the encounter [that] becomes manifest only when these events are read and interpreted for the appraisals expressed in them' (1967: 7). Status asymmetries within social relationships, however, may at times also precede and condition such encounters. Some roles inhabited by social actors are dynamic, socially constructed categories that are produced in 'discourses of identity [...] by particular actors' (Blommaert 2005: 210) and indexically presupposed or entailed through the semiotic activities of participants in an interaction (Silverstein 1985a). Because individuals may inhabit multiple roles and identities in any given interaction, speakers indicate which identities are relevant through contextualization cues (Gumperz 1982; Hymes 1972) that point to 'which "side" of the referent's social persona or which particular relationship is relevant in the ongoing interaction' (Duranti 1992: 88). As with any identity, such roles within social relationships are understood in contrast with and in relation to other available positions and identities (Harré 1993; Mühlhäusler and Harré 1990), contributing to an understanding of hierarchical relations.

Status asymmetries within social relationships are marked through innumerable semiotic resources across communities, especially those resources that are implicated in the display of respect. Whether expressed as deference toward a relatively higher-status interlocutor or as the more general recognition of others' value, respect entails the affirmation of fellow human beings' sacredness and dignity. Goffman pointed out that 'societies everywhere [...] must mobilize their members as self-regulating participants in social encounters' (1967: 44) who sustain a viable interaction order through the embodiment of highly conventionalized interaction rituals that 'celebrate and confirm (one's) relationship to a recipient' (Goffman 1967: 57). Displays of deferential respect include linguistic and extra-linguistic communicative resources, such as the performance of particular genres and interaction rituals, forms of participation, speech acts, linguistic repertoires (languages, spoken and written registers, styles of speaking, honorifics, person reference and address, and social and interactive particles), embodied comportment, dress, and hygiene. Within particular social domains or social groups, these semiotic resources become indexically associated, either directly or indirectly, with particular social relationships and identities through their regular and recurrent patterns of use and through metapragmatic discourses that tie language and conduct to social life (Agha 2003, 2004; Ochs 1992; Schieffelin 1990).

Given that asymmetrical relationships are often marked differently by speakers in subordinate versus higher-status positions, adults' child-directed speech would not seemingly model the status-linked forms that children are expected to use. It must be the case, therefore, that children come to master these communicative practices in a range of socializing practices other than modeling. After outlining a semiotic approach to social hierarchy and reviewing previous research on language socialization research into hierarchy, this chapter examines Northern Thai (Muang) children's socialization into the practices of person reference that index hierarchical versus egalitarian social relationships.

Social Hierarchy as Semiotic Practice

The scope of inquiry into social hierarchy should extend beyond static models of ideal role conduct to include socioculturally informed *understandings* of hierarchy that members develop over the life course, including their understandings of how conduct reflects and creates particular schemes of social evaluation. Individuals within any social grouping will have diverse perspectives on the hierarchies at play in a given situation, and these perspectives arise from their individual experiences, identifications, desires, aspirations, and commitments. Speakers' perspectives on social hierarchy, then, include their understandings of the social nature of conduct, their evaluations of persons and their relative status, and their understandings of the meanings, effects, and consequences of particular types of social conduct.

The continuity and transformation of social hierarchies across generations involves, then, not only socially distinctive understandings across social groups but also emergent qualities arising from human agency within a particular group. Most crucially, the structures themselves are 'never either total or exclusive' (Williams 1977: 113). Rather, the heterogeneous social understandings of practical social actors constitute perceived affordances and constraints upon their tactical action within a field of activity, and that action, in turn, transforms the field of activity itself (Bourdieu 1990; de Certeau 1984; Giddens 1979). In the case of language socialization, multiple, competing, and dynamic social structures are variably oriented to and made relevant within fields of activity by expert and novice social actors, who (re)create, resist, or transform them (Ahearn 2001; Kulick and Schieffelin 2004; Rogoff 1990). Through their tactical activity, actors align with or resist particular social roles, statuses, and identities. The process of language socialization into social hierarchies involves becoming able to recognize the social meanings of behavior and to conduct oneself in recognizably social ways, whether these ways are normative, innovative, or defiant.

Children's socialization into hierarchy has profound implications for their learning, education, and participation in society. Children and other novices, through participation in social practices with more experienced members of their community, find themselves situated in asymmetrical social arrangements that allow them to imagine a life trajectory toward full membership in a social group

(Gee 2004). While entire societies may sometimes be characterized as collective or hierarchical, it is also the case that hierarchies may characterize certain institutions across societies with very different political and economic organizations. Schools, for example, may create hierarchies not only between teachers and students but also among children according to performance and abilities. These hierarchies, in turn, may be an effect of a more subtle and profound institutional validation of a certain socioculturally preferred habitus of communicating, thinking, and acting that may be more or less familiar to a child (Bernstein 1972; Bourdieu 1984). Finding one's way into institutional fields of power such as schools may involve an easy continuity or a painful distantiation from early childhood lifeworlds (see García-Sánchez, this volume).

Socialization into Hierarchy

To master ways of speaking and acting within hierarchical social relationships, children or novices must become acquainted with role-linked models of conduct and personhood (Agha 2003, 2004). Knowing how to speak to a superior at work, how to address one's teacher, or how to request a favor from a senior student all require knowledge of these models of conduct. Metapragmatic discourses (discourse about the social meanings of language) are produced in speakers' *uses*, *representations*, and *discourses about* language that link ways of speaking, feeling, and acting to hierarchical social positions and identities. Everyday talk is littered with such reflexive activity, both explicit and implicit, including powerful institutionalized practices in which models of respectful and hierarchically appropriate behavior are produced.

Crucially, such reflexive activity is often not about asymmetrical role behavior alone but simultaneously gestures toward additional parameters of social differentiation, such as situation, gender, age/generation, ethnicity, and social class. That is, speech styles and behaviors that mark hierarchy in a given society may be used differently by members of different social groups, leading distinctive styles of respectful conduct to become secondarily associated with other dimensions of identity and sociality (Silverstein 1985b). Furthermore, the social hierarchies operating in any given situation can be multiple (gender, age, education status, class status, role, expertise, etc.) and negotiated moment by moment as an interaction unfolds (Jacoby and Gonzalez 1991; Ochs 1988). As they are socialized into the practices for inhabiting asymmetrical social relationships, then, children are socialized into ways of speaking, feeling, and acting that index multiple and complex social identities.

The socialization of hierarchy involves making children aware of the meanings of social hierarchy in their communities as well as the communicative resources for inhabiting it. Language socialization research examines *which* particular semiotic resources are implicated in the enactment of social hierarchy, *how* socializing encounters target children's/novices' behavior (explicitly versus implicitly; creating versus presupposing hierarchy), *by/to whom* these socializing strategies are

carried out, and what *types of novice participation* (repetition, alignment, or uptake) are involved. To excavate the multiplicity and complexity of social hierarchy, language socialization research must also delineate the interactional, developmental, and historical moments in which socializing activities take place: *when* socializing practices and discourses occur sequentially within an interaction, developmentally within the child's or novice's trajectory of changing participation over time, and historically over longer durations, generations, and eras. Because the speech styles implicated in hierarchy often vary across multiple social dimensions, it is important to examine for whom – which social domains of speakers – the practices of social hierarchy are recognizable, and to what degree reflexive activities involving hierarchy are frequent, institutionalized, and/or authoritative. Widespread or institutionalized practices are likely to generate meanings related to social stereotypes, while other meanings may be emergent and ephemeral in the particulars of an interaction (Agha 2007). This section reviews a selection of research into the socializing practices and reflexive activities employed in the socialization of hierarchy before turning to a discussion of my own research on the socialization of hierarchy Northern Thailand.

Ochs' (1988) early work on language socialization in a Samoan village documented the variability in children's simultaneous socialization into the social hierarchies operating in their everyday social worlds and the linguistic means of inhabiting them. Samoan society was organized according to multiple hierarchies of rank, gender, and age that underlie expectations about how individuals attended to and noticed others, to what extent they took others' perspectives, and to what extent they served or accommodated to others. Respect of and deference to those of higher status were marked by lower-ranking individuals in culturally significant demeanors such as greater degrees of physical movement, greater involvement in caregiving tasks, the use of polite speech registers, fewer directives and requests for clarification, fewer deictic verbs, and calling out or greeting others by name. Ochs noted that respectful conduct, viewed as a learned quality rather than a natural characteristic of children, was socialized primarily through direct instruction in Samoan households. More subtle linguistic indicators of social hierarchy, such as the use of deictic verbs, the use of directives, and requests for clarification, were also learned through children's exposure to the speech of others in everyday interactions. Ochs' account emphasizes the fact that social hierarchies are complex and flexible depending on situational particulars, such as the configurations of participants that change from moment to moment: 'Samoan children are socialized from birth into the notion of "person" as having a number of social "sides" [...], which emerge and subside (from one moment to the next) in the flow of social activity at any one time and place' (1988: 71)

In earlier work, I argued that caregivers' explicit interventions in children's communicative practices address the situational contingencies informing language use, while representations of speech and discourses about language tend to typify both social life and speech behavior (Howard 2009b). Caregivers often guide children to mark hierarchy within the flow of social activities, such as when they prompt a child to produce a particular hierarchically organized

communicative practice (Burdelski 2009, this volume; Clancy 1986; Demuth 1986; Morita 2003; Song 2009; Watson-Gegeo and Gegeo 1986). The form and/or the social meanings of the form are not always made explicit for children in prompting routines (Garrett and Baquedano-López 2002), but may rather be hinted at or presupposed. For example, Clancy (1986) reported that, when Japanese mothers prompt children to repeat politeness formulas, either the sociocultural situation calling for these communicative practices was not made explicit or they 'did not specify clearly what the child was supposed to do' (Clancy 1986: 223). Still, such guidance draws children's attention to the communicative practices for marking and inhabiting social hierarchy.

Behavior that is explicitly prompted by adults often involves easily objectifiable communicative practices – greeting routines, politeness routines, person reference, and politeness markers – whereas more subtle linguistic resources and communicative resources for marking hierarchy may be only tacitly grasped by adults and children alike. To acquire these more subtle practices, children must infer cultural expectations, ideologies, and cultural values regarding social relations 'from performances of conventional, socially coordinated activities and interpretive practices' (Ochs 2002: 103), as has been reported for directives (Ochs 1988), honorific verb forms and pragmatic particles (Cook 1990, 1996a, 1996b, 1999, 2008), silence and listening (Meek 2007), and person reference and address (Morita 2003; Song 2009), among others. Both Cook (1990) and Morita (2005), for example, argue that first- and second language learners must acquire the nuanced social-interactional uses of Japanese pragmatic particles through participation in social interaction rather than direct instruction; that is, 'through experiencing the ways and procedures in which such social concerns are publicly displayed in interaction' (Morita 2005: 4; see also Cook 1996a, 1997, 2008). Furthermore, studies of children's acquisition of person reference practices marking complex social hierarchies in Japanese (Morita 2003) and Korean (Song 2009), for example, indicate that adults produced a specialized child-directed register in the presence of children in which they used the person reference terms that *children* would be expected to use with others (*allocentric reference*) in a practice termed 'empathetic identification' (Suzuki 1973 cited in Morita 2003), rather than the unmarked forms that they would use to refer to themselves and others in adult-directed speech. In both unmarked patterns of language use to which children are exposed and in specialized Baby-Talk registers, adults model for children the communicative practices for marking hierarchy in their community.

Patterns of language use by young children themselves provide evidence that children's developing sense of social hierarchy has a deep impact on their use and acquisition of language, including speech registers (Andersen 1986), deictic verbs (Ochs 1988; Platt 1986), communicative speech styles (Clancy 1986), and code choice (Garrett 2005, this volume; Paugh 2005, this volume). Children acquire language forms appropriate to their social position before acquiring forms they are not expected to use, even when the former are less frequent, more difficult, and more complex than the latter (Ochs 1988). Samoan children, for example, acquire the verb 'give' prior to the verb 'come' because the latter is an action that

can only be requested by a person of higher status (Platt 1986), and Japanese children consistently use the request form appropriate to their status (*-te*) rather than the form they hear their superiors use toward them (*-nasai*) (Clancy 1986).

Representations of language use, such as reporting or depicting others' speech, implicitly tie ways of speaking to particular social roles and relationships. Reported speech and literary or mass-mediated representations of respectful or deferential demeanors often embed characterizations, evaluations, and assessments of that conduct. In Japan, for example, mothers literally re-present others' respectful speech in a positive light by repeating, for the child, third parties' politely formulated utterances (Clancy 1986). Young children also represent and convey stances to each other about hierarchical speech in their play, such as when they parody the language use of teachers (Rampton 2002, 2006) or dramatize characters in pretend play, representing the speech registers of mothers, teachers, and children (Andersen 1986; Gordon 2002). These representations are often stylized – they idealize and implicitly evaluate status-linked language use by conveying a stance on the speech being reported (Volosinov 1973). Recasts and embedded corrections of children's status-inappropriate language use also represent and implicitly evaluate children's speech (Song 2009), opening a space for children to take up or ignore the models of social life they represent.

Suitable ways of speaking within hierarchical social relationships are highlighted for children in *discourses about* language use, such as when interlocutors provide explicit accounts for the display of respect. Accounts are statements that explain the reasons or justifications for behavior (Scott and Lyman 1968), and they frequently define problematic aspects of behavior and suggest remedies for breaches (Sterponi 2003). Morita (2003) and Song (2009) show that mothers engaging in 'empathetic identification' of third parties sometimes provided accounts for their formulation of reference to third parties that pointed to aspects of the child's social relationship with that person. For example, Song shows how a Korean American mother provided an explicit account to her child for calling the researcher *nwuna* ('elder sister') rather than *imo* ('aunt'): 'because she's not married yet' (2009: 219). Accounts may also invite children to notice the moral, social, or affective consequences of their conduct. For example, adults may highlight the negative feelings that children's disrespectful behavior caused in adults (Clancy 1986; Lo 2009; Lo and Fung, this volume). Chinese-born teachers in a Chinese heritage language school socialized their Chinese American students into the cultural significance of filial responsibility and gratitude by prefacing their disciplinary directives with an account of the moral and practical consequences of displaying disrespect to teachers (He 2000).

Representations of and discourses about hierarchical language use in many communities simultaneously tie such communicative styles to other aspects of identity, such as ethnicity (He 2000; Lo 2009), social class or caste (Errington 1998; Howard 2010; Irvine 1990), or gender (Burdelski and Mitsuhashi 2010). Furthermore, it is important to note that 'politeness' and 'respect' come to be recognized differently across social domains. Language socialization research in diasporic settings has shown how competing models of social hierarchy butt up against one

another in immigrant children's language socialization, resulting in children's minimal uptake or overt confrontation of the polite or respectful practices expected by adults (He 2003; Lo 2009; Morita 2009). He (2003), for example, explored tensions between cultural models of respect toward a teacher's authority that Chinese American students brought to heritage language classes in contrast to those of their Chinese teachers, and illustrated how children's responses varied as they took up, ignored, resisted, or rejected the teacher's model of respectful conduct. In the next section, I present my research on Northern Thai children's language socialization into person reference as they acquire two distinct varieties of Thai.

Socialization into Hierarchy in Northern Thailand

My ethnographic research on children's socialization into hierarchy has centered around the Muang (also known as Yuan, Lanna, and Northern Thai) community of Northern Thailand, located in the northwestern arm of the country. Although Thailand is characterized by great ethnolinguistic diversity (hosting approximately 74 distinct living languages), most of Thailand's people (93.5 percent) are Buddhist and speak one of 24 distinct Tai-Kadai (Daic) dialects and languages (Lewis 2009). Kam Muang (the Muang vernacular), Central Thai (Siamese), Isan (or Lao), and Southern Thai (or Paktay) are the major regional dialects of Tai-Kadai in Thailand. Of Thailand's population of 60 million, 11.5 million (18.8 percent) reside in the Northern Region, of which Muang people constitute the vast majority (probably about 75 to 80 percent of the region's residents).[1] Kam Muang and its written form, Lanna Thai, served as the official language of the Lanna Kingdom for centuries before the region was annexed by the Siamese-dominated Thai nation (Simpson 2007). While Kam Muang is still widely spoken across the region, Standard Thai (Thai) – a distinct variety based on the Siamese (Central Thai) vernacular – is the official language of government, education, and media across Thailand. While speakers of all Thailand's major regional languages perceive their vernacular as a mutually intelligible 'dialect' of Thai, the Muang vernacular constitutes a distinct code – including major differences in lexicon (~40 percent is non-shared), some grammatical morphemes, and phonology – that many Muang children encounter for the first time in school. The primary use for Standard Thai in rural villages was traditionally to communicate with Thai government officials, a task that was usually performed by a village headman (Moerman 1969). Villagers' need for this language has increased dramatically over past decades along with changes in the economy, increases in compulsory education, and increased state-internal migration (see Howard 2009b, 2010 for more detailed information). The varieties of language consequential to children's educational and social trajectories, then, are located in hierarchies of linguistic evaluation that extend beyond the village, the school, or the home: children's language use is the subject of metapragmatic discourses associating ways of speaking with multiple and complex hierarchies of identity, location, activity, and social relationship (Howard 2003, 2004, 2007, 2009a, 2009b, 2010). These schemes of evaluation are, in turn, socially

positioned and only partially shared in a community undergoing rapid historical change, which involves increasing incorporation into the Thai nation and the global community, the spread of urban environments into surrounding countryside, and changing dynamics of class differentiation and political affiliation. In previous work, I have shown how the children's socialization into styles of respectful speech at Pong Noi village school simultaneously socialized them into a standardizing ideology that privileges Standard Thai over the children's vernacular (Howard 2009b). I have also examined how this socialization varied across social domains, as teachers in more privileged urban schools regimented children's use of the Standard much more tightly than at the village school, down to even the standardized pronunciation of certain consonant clusters (Howard 2010).

In this section, I report findings from two studies of young Muang children's language at school, at home, and in peer groups. In the first study, I examined language socialization in a village on the outskirts of Chiang Mai, among young Muang children whose families were of modest means and who attended the local village school. In the second study, I investigated the language socialization at school of middle-class Muang children from around the Chiang Mai region who were attending the more privileged municipal school in the city. In both settings, Muang children negotiated multiple and competing social relationships in ways that were both conventional and novel. Yet, this research also shows that children's socialization into hierarchy varied across age groups and class-based social domains. In this paper, I explore children's socialization into the use of person reference for marking degrees of hierarchy in social relationships. While kindergarten-aged children appropriately used person reference terms[2] to display deference and respect to adults at home and school, they also inhabited multiple identities with other children, including egalitarian friendships, age-based hierarchy within 'sibling' relationships, and gendered personae. Furthermore, social distinctions in peer language use emerged between village children, who primarily used Kam Muang with each other at home and school, and middle-class Muang children, who used Standard Thai almost exclusively. For village children, their socialization into respect at school motivated and led to their socialization into Standard Thai and the institutional discourses that marginalize their vernacular language practices.

The ethnographic research in Northern Thailand

Over a 10-month period in 2000 and 2001, I conducted fieldwork in a peri-urban community outside of Chiang Mai, Thailand. I shadowed four Muang five-to-six-year-olds and their elder (seven-to-nine-year-old) siblings at home and the village school, regularly observing and video-recording their interactions in these settings. While the Muang children in my study spoke Kam Muang at home, in their village, and with their peers, they were taught and academically evaluated through Standard Thai upon entering school. This sample of Pong Noi families included less privileged villagers (e.g. laborers and those employed in an informal urban economy) because middle-class Muang families in the village invariably sent their

children to more privileged schools (public and private). These families also frequently forbade their children's use of Kam Muang at home in favor of Standard Thai (Howard 2003, 2010) and restricted their children's social interactions with less privileged villagers. In the summer of 2004, I returned for a shorter-term study at the more privileged Municipal school in Chiang Mai City, conducting participant observations over six weeks and intensively videotaping the daily activities of one kindergarten and one second-grade class over two weeks. For both of these studies, ethnographic interviews were conducted with families, teachers, school administrators, and community members.

Registering social hierarchy in the Muang community

Status asymmetries associated with relative age and institutional roles of interlocutors are highly salient to Muang speakers. Like other Tai-Kadai groups, Muang social structure is deeply organized according to hierarchies of age, gender social status, rank, and role. Little social action is *not* guided by hierarchical relationships: 'The Thai have no way to interact except in hierarchical terms' (Kirsch 1973: 195). These hierarchies underlie the asymmetrical flow of authority and obedience between higher-ranking and lower-ranking individuals, but they also guide the provision of protection by the higher-ranking person and service from the lower ranking person. Hierarchies are systematically marked through a range of communicative practices, and some of these practices are the subject of explicit, widespread, and institutionalized metapragmatic discourses associating the appropriate display of respect with moral personhood and desirable social relations. From forming a baby's hands into a prayer gesture of greeting to commenting *maj suphaap* ('not polite') upon a child's breach of politeness norms, Muang adults routinely highlight for children what constitutes polite and respectful conduct, for example formulaic politeness rituals, deferential speech registers (lexical speech levels, honorific particles, and person reference terms), code choice (Standard Thai or Kam Muang), and embodied displays of respect (such as the prayer gesture).

In both Kam Muang and Standard Thai, reference to speech-event participants (speakers and hearers) is accomplished through a range of personal pronouns, titles, kin terms, occupational nouns, noun classifiers, and personal names or nicknames. Both languages boast sizable sets of first-person and second-person personal pronouns: the choice from among these alternatives indexes the relative status of the interlocutors and (sometimes) the gender of the speaker. That is, they mark differing qualities of formality, politeness, and relationship between the speaker and hearer.[3] An important distinction must be emphasized here about Thai person reference. In many languages, as in English, speakers may only use *pronouns* to refer to the speaker (I) and the addressee (you). That is, only classic pronoun 'shifters' (Jakobson 1957; Jespersen 1922) – pronouns that rely on the speech context to establish reference – are used for speech event participants in many languages. In fact, based on English, linguists such as van Valin even claim that 'first and second person pronouns' differ from third-person pronouns in that they 'refer to or index the speaker and addressee in a speech event and *do not*

replace or stand for a noun' (2001: 6). When substantive nouns such as 'mommy' or 'daddy' are used by English-speaking adults to refer to themselves, this usage is interpreted as constituting a specialized register such as Baby Talk. The use of such nouns to refer to self and addressee in Thai, however, is emphatically *not* Baby Talk, but rather is quite ordinary. Unlike English, the actual use of pronouns in Thai speech is very limited for two reasons: (1) because overt reference to sentence subjects and objects is not grammatically obligatory (Iwasaki and Ingkaphirom 2005) and (2) speakers may (and often do) use proper and substantive nouns (personal names and nicknames, titles, kin terms, or occupational nouns) to refer to self and addressee.[4] So, while English-speakers normally associate substantive nouns only with third-person reference, nouns in Thai are also used to refer to speech event participants.[5] Furthermore, these terms carry differing social meanings and mark the relative social positions of interlocutors. Personal names are more formal and institutional than nicknames and are often used by teachers and officials to lower-status interlocutors; nicknames are usually reciprocated among peers or used to refer to a lower-status interlocutor. Titles (such as *khun* ('Mr./Mrs.')) and role terms (such as *ajarn* ('professor'), *khruu* ('teacher'), or *mɔɔ* ('doctor')) referentially describe the elevated social role of their referent, so they mark deference when used as address terms. Kin terms, too, are used for both self-reference and address to mark aspects of the relationship between interlocutors, including both actual and metaphorical kinship.

Like the person reference systems of other hierarchically organized societies, such as Vietnam (Luong 1990) and Laos (Enfield 2007), it is nearly impossible to avoid linguistically marking the social relationship between interlocutors in Muang speech events. Enfield notes that such 'ordinary' practices of person reference, however, 'do more than just refer. They instantiate and stabilize culture-specific views of the person' (2007: 97). Because any given pair of people may stand in multiple relationships to each other, the choice of person reference either marks some aspect of social hierarchy already in play or invokes a relevant hierarchy. Pronouns do this by indexing the relative status of speech participants, while the denotational semantics of nouns, kin terms, and occupational terms (e.g. 'teacher') literally describe their referent's social role vis-à-vis the other. Personal names carry social information through their paradigmatic contrast with these other terms and through the kinds of communicative practices in which they have come to be used. The choice of person reference may also convey something about the speaker's demeanor, personhood, or identity: social and personal distinctions are reflected in the demeanors that certain types of people adopt through their use of particular person referring registers within social relationships, as when the use of informal, intimate pronouns (such as Thai *kuu* ('I') and *mɯŋ* ('you')) are alternatively read as vulgar, low-class, or appropriately masculine. Muang children's linguistic repertoires include person reference terms from both Standard Thai and Kam Muang, so the choice of terms may also implicate broader sociolinguistic hierarchies and distinctions relevant to relations between the Muang and the Siamese. By focusing on children's use, acquisition, and socialization into the practices of person reference, my research contributes a unique perspective on

the ways in which 'doing being ordinary' vary across different social domains of speakers and the ways in which the social registers of language come to index broader identities and commitments. Language socialization research also provides a rich source of metapragmatic discourses about language use that inform the ways that speakers tie language to social life.

Socializing the practices of person reference

Through participation in everyday activities, children are exposed to routine language use, representations of language use, and discourses about language use that tie person reference to social relationships and identities, providing cultural models that children must come to flexibly deploy in everyday activities. In highly asymmetrical social situations, such as children's interactions with familiar adults at home and at school, person reference was highly regimented and reciprocal. In these situations, children were exposed to adults' ordinary language use that modeled the same terms that children were expected to use to refer to that person. For example, teachers referred to themselves as *khruu* ('teacher') and adults at home referred to themselves with the appropriate kin term (e.g. 'mother,' 'aunt,' 'elder sister'), explicitly marking their specific relationship and higher status vis-à-vis the child.[6]

Example 15.1: School: teacher self-reference

Teacher to students: *diaw* ***khun khruu*** *ca hâj sŏŋ nám phá ŋaj*
'Mrs. Teacher (=I) am going to have you anoint the Buddha.'

Example 15.2: Home: adult self-reference

Adult to child: *kɔ̀ɔn tîi nɔ́*-(.)*ńɔɔŋ cun cà pík bãan* (0.4) ***pîi*** *cà hɯ̃ɯ ʔan níi*
'before litt- (.) little sister June (=you) go home (0.4) **elder sister (=I)** will give (you) this.'

As mentioned above, this practice is not an unusual or 'marked' child-directed register: speakers of all ages in any situation self-refer with nouns that describe their role or relationship, a practice that explicitly invokes the well-defined roles and asymmetrical social relations between interlocutors.

Second-person reference terms used by adults to refer to children also frequently modeled the terms that children could use to refer to themselves. Teachers used children's nicknames, *nɔ́ɔŋ* ('junior sibling') plus their nicknames, or the diminutive noun *nŭu* ('mouse'), as in Example 15.3.

Example 15.3: School: teacher's reference to addressee

Teacher to a student:	*ʔa* ***nɔ́ŋ*** ***páam***
	'ah **little brother Palm**'
Teacher to a student:	*khɔ̌ŋ* ***nŭu*** *ʔàlaj lûuk tìt lɔɔŋtháaw ʔà*
	'What is **mouse's (=yours)**, kid? (That is) stuck on (your) shoes.'

Children sometimes mirrored this usage to self-refer when addressing adults (e.g. Example 15.4a–b), although they overwhelmingly used their bare nicknames (e.g. Example 15.4c).

Example 15.4: Child self-reference

Student to teacher:	*diaw* ***nɔ́ŋ*** *mâj hěn*
	'Wait. **Little brother (=I)** can't see'
Student to teacher:	*khruu kha krapɔ̌ŋ* ((unintelligible)) ***nŭu*** *cam dâj náa khá*
	'Teacher (honorific)? A container ((unintelligible)) **mouse (=I)** remembered it (honorific).'
Child to adult (home):	*ʔâaj ʔaam tŭa ñàj lŭa* ***nɔ́ɔm ʔà***
	'Big brother Arm (=he) is bigger than **Noam (=I)**.'

This use of nouns to refer to speech-act participants allows children to mirror the adult's person reference, in the sense that their nonreciprocal person reference constituted a mirror image of the adult's usage. Empathetic identification – child-directed speech that refers to a third person with the term that the child should use, rather than the one that the adult speaker should use – was another means by which adults modeled person reference for children. In Example 15.5, for example, the teacher's adult daughter has joined a class field trip for the day to assist her mother, and she identifies her mother as 'Mrs. Teacher' (rather than, for example, 'my mother') when addressing the students.

Example 15.5: School: adult to student

Teacher's daughter to a student:	*ʔâa fàak* ***khun khruu wáj*** *kɔ̀ɔn*
	'Ah, submit it to **Mrs. Teacher** first.'

Nonreciprocal practices of person reference were modeled not only by adults but also by other children. At home, as at school, children were frequently in the presence of many other children (siblings, neighbors, cousins) who routinely marked adults' higher status through kin and role terms and self-referred with nicknames, *nɔ́ŋ* ('junior sibling') or *nŭu* ('I/you/mouse'), as seen in Example

15.4. Furthermore, children encountered mass-mediated representations of respectful and deferential person reference in television, movies, songs, radio programs, books, internet sites, video games, and curricular texts and materials: even gangsters and outlaws are represented as showing deference to teachers, kin, and officials through respectful person reference.

In situations where status and role hierarchies were less clear, such as in children's peer groups, person reference was more variable and complex. In this case, children flexibly inhabited and invoked multiple social relationships and identities, revealing the complexity of children's socialization into hierarchy, including their age, life stage, and membership in a range of social domains. Socialization practices, too, were differentiated by age: young children's displays of deference and respect were explicitly prompted, ventriloquated, and corrected by adults (Howard 2003), while the socialization of older children was often more subtle. In Example 15.6, a three-year-old girl, Mai, referred to an older male cousin, Art, with a disrespectful title (*ʔìi*) usually used by adults (especially parents) to refer to small girls (like herself) or to refer to animals.

Example 15.6: Correcting disrespectful person reference

Mai (three years old), Jen (six years old), and Pae (five years old).

1	Mai to Art:	*tɛ́ **ʔì iʔaam***
		'True, **little Art**.'
2		(1.5)
3	Jen:	*tɛ́ **ʔìiʔaam** wãa*
		'She said "True, **little Art**."'
4	Mai:	***ʔìiʔaam** paj lẽn*
		'**Little Art**, go play.'
5	Mai's aunt:	*hee heh heh heh heh*
		'hee heh heh heh heh'
6	Mai's mom:	***ʔìiʔaam***
		'**Little Art**'
7	?	*ʔúuj*
		'ouuu'
8		(1.0)
9	Pae:	***ʔìiʔaam** paj lẽn*
		'**Little Art** go play'
10	Jen:	*nɔ́ɔŋ màaj pàak bɔ̀ɔ dii wâa **ʔìiʔaam** wâa*:
		'Little sister Mai (your) mouth is not good, (you) said "**little Art**"!'
11		(1.5)
12	Pae:	*bɔ̀ɔ câj* (0.4) ***ʔìiʔaam** bɔ̀ɔ câj*
		'it's not (0.4) "**little Art**." it's not.'

In this interaction, Mai's (mis)use of a disrespectful term is greeted with parody (lines 3, 6, 9), laughter (line 5), and exclamations of shock (line 7), evaluating her words as laughable and shocking and implying a problem with the respect level of her language. Yet she is also explicitly told that *ʔìi ʔaam* is not good (line 10, 'your mouth is not good') and corrected (line 11, 'it's not "little Art."'). With older children, who were already expected to know socially appropriate behavior, adults' interventions, for example commenting on the child's conduct ('your mouth'), evaluating their speech in general ('your mouth is not good'), or displaying a stance toward it (laughter, parody, 'I don't want that'), were less likely to specify the problematic conduct. Certain person reference terms, such as low speech-level pronouns – Kam Muang *haa* ('I') and *khiŋ* ('you') or their Standard Thai equivalents *kuu* ('I') and *mɯŋ* ('you') – were subject to particularly negative evaluation, perhaps due to a widely circulating metapragmatic discourse that characterized them as 'improper,' 'vulgar,' and 'low class.' For example, the mother of two boys in the study called out 'hey, your mouth!' and 'your mouth is not good' from the next room when she heard one of them use *mɯŋ* ('you').

Example 15.7: Metapragmatic evaluation

1	Eck to younger brother:	*Hŭa phôɔ* ***mɯŋ*** *hnnh hnnh hnnh hnnh* '**your** father's head hnnh hnnh hnnh hnnh'
2	Mother to Eck (from next room):	*ʔèek* (.) *ʔèek* (.) *ʔèek* (.) *pàak nâə* 'Eck (.) Eck (.) Eck (.) (your) mouth, hunh!'

In addition to developmental stage, life stages also affected socialization across the life course, as children and adults inhabited different forms of social relationships within the social activities typical of their life stage, in which they modeled for each other complex, age- (or stage-) appropriate practices of person reference. Young Muang children in my study constructed primarily egalitarian social spaces in their multiage friendship groups, while adolescents and adults marked age-based hierarchies more systematically in their social relationships with friends. As reported in Howard (2007), young Muang children normally reciprocated status-neutral terms, such as mid-speech-level pronouns and nicknames, to refer to themselves (125 out of 157 tokens) and to their addressee (145 out of 200 tokens). When older adults in the village engaged in multiaged, intimate interactions with friends or family members, however, they systematically used nonreciprocal, asymmetrical person reference terms: the elders routinely addressed and referred to their juniors using the Kam Muang term *'ii* (intimate classifier) + nickname,' while the juniors used Kam Muang terms for 'elder sibling + nickname for the elder.' Simpson (1997) reported that Muang university students in Chiang Mai also used nonreciprocal, asymmetrical person reference (primarily in Standard Thai) in their peer groups: for both self-reference and address, the elder students were referred to as 'elder sibling + nickname,' while nicknames were used for their juniors.

Indeed, Muang adults' widely held stereotypes about children's language use reflected these common patterns. Adults would typify children's play groups as highly egalitarian, especially in their pervasive use of Kam Muang mid-formality pronouns *pɔ̀n* ('I') and *tua* ('you'). Muang speakers often commented that 'Muang kids always use *pɔ̀n* and *tua* when they play together.' The patterns of usage observed among children in my study, however, diverged from this adult stereotype. First, while children self-referred most frequently with *pɔ̀n* ('I') in their play groups, their use of *tua* ('you') was relatively rare; instead, they most commonly used nicknames to address their friends. Second, children not infrequently used a wide range of other person-referring terms. When out of adults' earshot, they sometimes used the informal, intimate pronouns *haa* ('I') and *khiŋ* ('you'), mentioned above, which are considered by adults to be 'vulgar.' These pronouns had a somewhat gendered patterning, as they occurred more frequently (though not exclusively) in all-boy play groups than in mixed or all-girl play groups. For example, during a small group task in the village school's second-grade classroom, one male student, James, was observed using *pɔ̀n* ('I,' mid-level) when speaking to the girls or the whole group but *haa* ('I,' low-level) when addressing his talk to other boys:

Example 15.8: Gendered pronoun use; language: Kam Muang

James to whole group:	*khǐan cûu* ***pɔ̀n*** *kɔ̀ phɔ́wâa* ***pɔ̀n*** *cà pík paj lɛ́ɛw* 'Write **my** (*pɔ̀n*) name? Because **I** (*pɔ̀n*) am going home now.'
James to one boy:	*diaw* ***haa*** *khǐan hũ̂u* 'Here, I'll (*haa*) write it for you.'

In contrast to the adult stereotype of children's egalitarian pronoun usage, children occasionally marked age-based hierarchies with peers when they sought beneficence or compliance from each other by using sibling terms ('elder brother/sister' or 'younger sibling') in offers, requests, and directives (Howard 2007). This pattern implicitly forged indexical ties to the types of acts (directives and offers) and stances (generosity and compliance) commensurate with cultural models of hierarchical sibling relationships. In Example 15.9 (which also appears in Howard 2007), five-and-a-half-year-old Pae is attempting to force her younger cousin Mai out of her place in a coveted chair. Mai whines loudly, provoking her mother's intervention from the next room. Pae then switches to a more generous and inviting stance to coax the younger child out of the chair, and marks their relationship with sibling terms.

Example 15.9: Inhabiting the generous elder sibling role

1	Mai:	((loudly whining)) *enh enh*
2	Mai's mom: ((from outside))	*khǎj ñá* ***nɔ̃ɔŋ*** 'Who is bugging **little sister**?' ((after some intervening talk))

3	Pae to Mai: ((inviting))	***nɔ́ɔŋ*** *nâŋ tãk* ***pîi*** *bɔ̌ɔ* 'Would **little sister (=you)** like to sit on **big sister's (=my)** lap?' ((after more intervening talk))
4	Pae to Mai: ((offering))	*ʔɔɔ* ***nɔ́ɔŋ*** ***maj*** *lo:ŋ mâa nâŋ tãk* ***pîi*** 'Here! **little sister Mai (=you)** come do:wn and sit on **big sister's (=my)** lap.'

In lines 3 and 4 of this excerpt, Pae uses the Kam Muang terms for elder sibling (*pii*) and junior sibling (*nɔ́ɔŋ*) to refer to herself and her younger cousin as she pursues Mai's compliance. Her directive is designed as an invitation in line 3 (marked by the invitation particle *bɔ̌ɔ*) and as a generous offer in line 4 (marked by the offer particle *ʔɔɔ*). She invokes the younger child's role as compliant younger sibling and her own role as an elder sibling who has the right to direct Mai's behavior, but also instantiates a model of generosity by superiors that is significant in Thai models of superior–junior relations. This example also illustrates how adults' interventions into children's activities, though infrequent, sometimes highlighted the social expectations surrounding these hierarchical relationships. In this example, the aunt's intervention in response to Mai's whining (line 2, 'who is bugging little sister?'), explicitly invokes Pae's hierarchical sibling relationship with Mai through her empathetic identification of the younger child (her daughter) as 'little sister,' suggesting that some inappropriate conduct is being directed toward the younger child. Within this life stage, young children practiced the linguistic means of inhabiting egalitarian friendships, hierarchical 'sibling' relationships, and gender-differentiated friendships through their use of person reference. In adolescent and adult usage, though, multiage friendships were more explicitly and systematically marked as being hierarchically ranked by age and, to a lesser extent, gender.

Children's socialization into and through the multilingual repertoires of person reference in the Muang community were also differentiated by social class: the registers used by children at the village school, and the means of socializing these registers, were distinct from the more privileged children at the municipal school. Middle-class children attending the municipal school in the city spoke primarily Standard Thai at home, at school, and with each other. At home and school, many of these children were forbidden to use Kam Muang, and teachers systematically corrected their Kam Muang speech (Howard 2003, 2010). Commensurate with this prescriptivist language ideology oriented to the national language, at school these children referred to each other with either the Standard Thai mid-formality pronouns *chan* (first person, mid-level, intimate) and *thɔ̂ɔ* (second person, mid-level, intimate) or with nicknames.

In institutionalized discourses such as curricular materials, textbooks, and mass-mediated discourses across Thailand, school students were frequently *represented* as using these Thai mid-speech-level pronouns with each other. Thus,

while stereotypes about Muang children's use of the Kam Muang pronouns *pɔ̀n* ('I') and *tua* ('you') circulate in local and regional metapragmatic discourses about children's language use, the Standard Thai equivalent circulates more widely in authoritative, institutionalized, and mass-mediated texts and discourses. Even among Thai speakers, however, these Standard Thai pronouns are highly marked: they are typically used only with one's same-age schoolmates or with intimate romantic partners, as in the popular rock love song titled ***chan rak thɔ̀ɔ*** ('I love you!').

At the village school, where most students had learned Kam Muang at home, students were expected to use the Standard Thai registers of person reference for the first time. In fact, children were explicitly instructed to use *chan* ('I') and *thɔ̀ɔ* ('you') with each other at school. Early in the school year, for example, kindergarten children regularly sang a song that instructed them to greet each other in Standard Thai. The song's words, ***thɔ̀ɔ kap chan***, *sawat dii* ('you and me, hello'), were accompanied by a well-executed *waj* (the prayer gesture used to greet others). Recorded on an instructional audiotape for teachers' use, this song promoted a particular model of classroom comportment between peers with Standard Thai as its medium. As she sang along with the students, the teacher prosodically highlighted these Thai pronouns and corrected children's performance of the *waj* when it was not perceived as 'beautiful.' Outside of these teacher-fronted instructional contexts, children rarely used use *chan* and *thɔ̀ɔ* – for the most part, they continued to use Muang pronouns that indexed solidarity and friendship (as seen, for instance, in Example 15.8).

Conclusion

While hierarchy is a central aspect of human relationships in many communities, social relations are marked in more or less explicit ways, and there are a variety of means by which children are socialized to display an orientation to hierarchy. Children in Northern Thailand encountered unwavering commentary on and evaluation of their conduct within hierarchical social relationships. When I first arrived in Thailand, a local linguist asserted that Muang children acquire the practices of respect and politeness with very little intervention from adults. For him, the asymmetrical positioning of social actors in relation to each other was experienced not only as vital to human relations but also as perfectly natural to them – that is, he understood respect to be a natural stance toward superiors and the means of displaying it to be acquired implicitly. Yet, all around me I observed persistent prompting and guidance of children's practices of respect, and I noticed that social life in Northern Thailand was imbued with commentary on (dis) respectful, (im)polite, or status-(in)appropriate comportment. The routine use of the languages of respect in children's everyday lives also exposes them to multiple models of social relationships and the linguistic means of inhabiting them. Given that deference flows upward to higher-status parties, it would seem that children would rarely be exposed, in the child-directed speech of adults, to the forms of respectful practice expected of them. There are many alternative ways, however,

in which the practices for inhabiting their positions within social hierarchies are modeled for children. Muang adults' use of role and kin terms rather than first- or second-person pronouns, for example, explicitly refers to their social relationships with children and simultaneously models, in a mirror-like fashion, how particular individuals, including themselves, should be referred to. Such 'ordinary' usage may not be possible in other languages, so one might expect the practice of empathetic identification in Baby Talk to play a more central role in modeling person reference for children in those languages. Furthermore, the social meanings of these practices are conveyed not only in child-directed speech but also through representations of language use in conversation, play, curricular materials, the media, and various kinds of talk about language use that children see and hear in their everyday lives.

Of the many types of communicative practices indexing social hierarchy, the practices of person reference sketch a particularly detailed social landscape within culturally significant activities, position children within it, and invite them to take up, ignore, or resist those positions. By kindergarten, children in my studies had learned to inhabit multiple social hierarchies across settings and institutions, but they had yet to become aware of more nuanced social distinctions occurring on broader scales such as age-differentiated, gendered, and class-inflected ways of inhabiting hierarchical social relations. The social domain across which a given practice is (at least partially) shared and recognizable cannot be overlooked in the study of language socialization, for children are apprenticed into multiple, competing, and sometimes overlapping communities of practice to which they are accountable for inhabiting recognizable social identities. The nuanced, gendered use of *haa* ('I,' low-formality, intimate pronoun) in James' speech to his groupmates, for example, is not grasped by the adults, who scold or negatively evaluate such usage and characterize it as simply inappropriate for *children* to use. Nor is the model of identity presented in James' use of these pronouns encountered in explicit discourses *about* these person reference forms. In flexibly deploying the communicative practices of (dis)respect to inhabit their social relationships with others, children likely draw upon both kinds of model: the idealized and bounded categories such as 'vulgar' and 'low-class' embodied in explicit discourses, and the shadowy figure of masculinity embodied in actual use. As children expand their activities and social networks, the shadowy figures of class status evoked by standard versus vernacular linguistic repertoires may also begin to take shape for this new generation of Muang children. These ways of engaging in social relationships, these shadowy (and not so shadowy) figures that we embody in our symbolic practices, are centrally implicated in our understandings of who we are and what we aspire to become.

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NOTES

1 The 2000 Thai Census Bureau does not report this directly. Rather, it reports that approximately 15 percent of the population of the North Region migrated there from other regions and that 6 percent of the region's population 'speak hill tribe languages.' The largest non-Daic (Tai Kadai, or 'Thai') ethnic groups in this region are the Karen (approximately 250,000) and the Hmong (approximately 100,000).

2 Throughout this chapter I use the term 'person reference' to encompass reference to self, addressee, and third parties.

3 In general, high-speech-level pronouns mark politeness, formality, and self-lowering/ other-raising; mid-speech-level pronouns mark symmetrical but polite relations; and low-speech-level pronouns mark intimacy, informality, and other-lowering (see Howard 2007 for a detailed description). As Enfield (2007) notes for another Tai-Kadai language, Lao, the etymology of pronouns reveals the provenance of their function in self-lowering and other-raising: for example, the other-raising Lao second-person pronoun *caw* was derived from the substantive noun 'lord' and the self-lowering first-person pronoun *khooj* was derived from the substantive noun 'slave.'

4 This characteristic of Thai 'person' leads linguists to assert that some nouns (kinship terms, role terms) may be used 'pronominally' or that they function 'as' or 'instead of' pronouns (e.g. Smyth 2002), for example when a speaker uses her nickname to refer to herself or to her addressee.

5 Varenne (1984), in fact, reminds us that Jespersen's (1922: 222) original formulation of 'shifters' included

> a large set of nominal forms [...] kinship terms, words like enemy or friend, and probably all words and linguistic forms that map social relations. With some exceptions, a word like 'mother' – particularly when used in address and in direct speech – does not refer to the substantive quality of the addressee, it refers to the (social) relationship of the speaker to the addressee.

For this reason, one might wish to claim that substantive nouns that are used to refer to speech event participants by indicating that the relations between them are also shift-

ers of a sort: their reference is established by mapping the social relations they denote onto speaker and addressee.

It should also be noted that the category of 'person' (first-, second-, or third-person reference) operates only weakly, if at all, in Thai language: there is no grammatical marking of person agreement, and certain pronouns are used for both first- and second-person reference or both second- and third-person reference.

6 Phonetic transcription of Thai speech roughly follows Haas (1955). Tone is marked as a diacritic over the first vowel of the relevant syllable. Chiang Mai Kam Muang's additional tone 'high with glottal closure' is marked with a ˉ. Transcription conventions and notations for segments include **bold**: analyst's emphasis; single parentheses in both Thai and translation lines: uncertain hearings; single parentheses occurring only in translation line: constituents required in English – usually noun constituents – that are not realized in the Thai utterance; double parentheses: extralinguistic information; square brackets: overlapping speech; =: latched talk; bracketed numbers: pause length to tenths of a second.

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