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Emerging learning ecologies: Mayan children's initiative and correctional directives in their everyday enskilment practices[☆]

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ABSTRACT

Directives are a central resource for the organization of attention in everyday family activities. Studies in middle class families reveal that they are patterned and repeated in the everyday routines of children's lives, providing the basis for their learning of skills, accountability, and moral discernment (M. Goodwin, 2006; M. Goodwin & Cekaite, 2013, 2014).

Scholars studying indigenous children's learning from a cross-cultural perspective have underscored children's agency and self-motivation in learning through observation and participation in everyday activities (Gaskins & Paradise, 2010; Lancy, 2010, 2012; Paradise & Rogoff, 2009; Rogoff, 2003, 2014; Rogoff et al., 2007; Rogoff, Mejía-Arauz, & Correa-Chávez, 2015). Children's establishment of common orientational perspectives in such settings need not rely on high dosages of parental directives to frame activities and to structure and micromanage attention.

The ethnographic and talk-in-interaction analysis of two everyday goal-oriented activities of a Mayan family presented here illustrates how *enskilment* (Ingold, 2000) practices depend in important ways on the child's own initiative to explore new tasks independently of an expert's explicit guidance. The learning event emerges when experts occasionally monitor the novice's actions and identify problems that require correction. Expert and novice thus engage in a process of fine-tuning perception and attention through a correctional directive trajectory that leads to a "professional vision" (C. Goodwin, 1994) of particular fields of activities (e.g., knitting and gardening activity).

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1. Introduction

In the last decade, researchers across multiple fields have examined how families structure their attentional ecologies in the social organization of everyday life (Brown, 2012; Cekaite, 2010; Chavajay & Rogoff, 1999; Correa-Chávez & Barbara Rogoff, 2009; Goodwin & Cekaite, 2014; Goodwin, 2006:515; Rogoff, 2003; Shneidman & Goldin-Meadow, 2012; Tulbert & Goodwin, 2011). In studying how families achieve joint attention in shared activities, directives are a central resource. Directives—utterances “designed to get someone else to do something” (Goodwin, 2006:515)—constitute a very basic way in which tasks and activities get organized and undertaken in everyday life.

Unlike children in many industrialized societies where economic production has been removed from the home, children's daily lives in rural and peasant contexts are heavily oriented toward adult work activities within the household and the larger community (De León, 2011; Gaskins, 1999:33, 2000; Lancy, 2010, 2012; Lancy & Grove, 2010; Martínez Pérez, 2016; Ochs & Schieffelin, 1984; Rogoff, Paradise, Mejía-Arauz, Correa-Chávez, & Angelillo, 2003; Rogoff, 2014).

Scholars studying learning ecologies cross-culturally have discerned children's agency and self-motivation in learning through observation, which Gaskins and Paradise (2010) describe as “keen” or “open attention” (Lancy, 2010, 2012; Odden & RoCHAT, 2004), “pitching in” (Fung, 1999; Fung, Peggy, Miller, & Lin, 2004; Loyd, 2005; Paradise & Rogoff, 2009; Rogoff, 2003), overhearing (De León, 1998, De León, 2012a, 2012b; see Ochs, Solomon, & Sterponi, 2005), “intent community participation” (Rogoff et al., 2003, 2007), and more recently, “learning by observing and pitching in” (LOPI) (Correa-Chávez, Mejía-Arauz, & Rogoff, 2015; Rogoff, 2014; Rogoff et al., 2015). Children's frame attunement and establishment of common orientational perspectives in such settings (Kendon, 1985, 1990) need not rely on high dosages of parental directives to frame

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activities and to structure and micromanage attention. Instead, these processes rest, to a great extent, on children's active roles in taking initiative to experiment with new tasks and collaborate as novices.

Researchers studying family and community learning have reported that verbal guidance is not dominant and when it occurs it is embedded in ongoing activities related to specific aspects of tasks (Lancy & Grove, 2010; Rogoff et al., 2003; Paradise & Rogoff, 2009; Rogoff, 2014).

More attention, however, should be paid to how ecologies of attention and learning interactionally emerge and unfold in goal-oriented routine activities (Weisner, 1998) of everyday family life where novices participate, in many occasions, by their own initiative. These ecologies constitute "an ecosystem of mutual influence among participants" (Erickson, 2010: 254; see also 1996, 2004) and involve processes that link situated practice to many different kinds of semiotic phenomena (C. Goodwin, 2013:20). These phenomena include talk, sociospatial organization, embodied action, and objects (C. Goodwin, 2000, 2013; De León, 2015; Johnson, this issue; Kyratzis & Johnson, this issue).¹

The present study aims to document the emergence of ecologies of attention as related to processes of *enskilment* (Ingold, 1993, 2000) of Mayan children in activities initiated by them (De León, 2015). This notion refers to the process in which "learning is inseparable from doing in the context of a practical engagement in the world" (1995: 463). Enskilment processes occur in practices of situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff et al., 2003) or learning-in-doing (Streek, Goodwin, & LeBaron, 2012), but what is specific to them is the *education of attention*. In Ingold's words:

[Enskilment] involves "the fine-tuning of perception and action [...] For what is involved [...] is not a transmission of representations, as the enculturation model implies, but an education of attention" (Ingold, 2000: 37; see also C. Goodwin, 2007).

In particular this study analyzes how expert and novice engage in a process of fine-tuning perception and attention through a correctional directive trajectory that leads to a "professional vision" (C. Goodwin, 1994) of particular fields of activities (e.g., knitting and gardening activity). To this effect, it examines the holistic design of directive/response trajectories as experts correct, calibrate (De León, 2011; C. Goodwin, 2013; M. Goodwin & Cekaite, 2013), or fine-tune novices' actions in the goal-oriented routine activity of knitting and gardening in a Mayan family.

I begin my literature review by outlining studies of attention and of directive trajectories in family's goal oriented activities. I then explore Zinacantec Mayan ethnographies of attention, and present a talk-in-interaction analysis of two activities involving enskilment processes in the focal family of this study.

2. Directives and the organization of attention in everyday family activities

Directives are a central resource for the organization of attention and participation in everyday family activities (Goodwin, 1990: 64, 2006; Ervin-Tripp, 1976; Ervin-Tripp, O'Connor, & Rosenberg, 1984:116; Labov & Fanshel, 1977). Goodwin (2006: 515) has argued that they constitute a very basic way in which tasks and activities of everyday life get organized.

The largest number of studies of directives have been conducted in urban middle class families in the U.S. and Europe. These studies document complex multimodal directive strategies that parents

¹ Goodwin (2013) uses the notion of "epistemic ecology" to refer to situated cooperative practices and ways of knowing that are consequential for the distinctive activities of a community (2012:14).

use to capture and monitor children's attention. Caregivers rely upon directives not only to carry out target activities but also to shift children's attention from one activity to another. These embodied *directive choreographies* (Tulbert & M. Goodwin, 2011) are patterned and repeated each day in the everyday routines of children's lives, providing the basis for learning skills, accountability, and moral discernment (Aronsson, 1998; Aronsson & Cekaite, 2011; Aronsson & Thorell, 1999; Blum-Kulka, 1997; Cekaite, 2010; Craven & Potter, 2010; Curl & Drew, 2008; Ervin-Tripp, 1976; Ervin-Tripp et al., 1984; Fasulo, Loyd, & Padiglione, 2007; C. Goodwin, 2007; M. Goodwin, 2006; M. Goodwin & Cekaite, 2014; Klein, Izquierdo, & Bradbury, 2007; Klein, Graesch, & Izquierdo, 2009; Klein & M. Goodwin, 2013; Sterponi, 2009; Tulbert & M. Goodwin, 2011).

Studies of directives have conventionally focused on the vocal channel. However, directive trajectories constitute a form of *situated activity system*: "a somewhat closed, self-compensating, self-terminating circuit of interdependent actions" (Goffman, 1961: 96 see also M.H. Goodwin, 2006). In other words, a holistic examination of directives would account for attention to next actions of participants, socio-spatial organization, embodied forms of participation, and talk (Cekaite, 2010; C. Goodwin, 2007; C. Goodwin & M. Goodwin, 2004; M. Goodwin, 2006; M. Goodwin & Cekaite, 2013).

The few studies of directive sequences in non Euro-American communities (e.g., small-scale societies or in Japan (Burdelski, 2006, 2010; Clancy, 1986; Takada, 2013)) have suggested that directive sequences may present a different variety of configurations than those reported previously. The main differences documented seem to be related to directive design (e.g., indirection, directive rates), the extent and forms of negotiation, accounts, refusals, and, in general, the nature of ecologies of attention in contexts where children are expected to "pay attention" (De León, 2011; Martínez Pérez, 2016; Ochs & Izquierdo, 2009; Pool Balam, 2011).

Studies of families in small-scale societies reveal that learning ecologies depend in important ways on corporeal attunement to others, to multiparty orchestration of children's attention and to the child's own initiative to participate without being told. These ecologies by no means indicate that there are no directives addressed to children. We may find directives to frame new activities and, in many situations, where an expert's intervention is occasioned to *correct* or *re-direct* steps or aspects of a task initiated by the child.² In these kinds of goal-oriented activities, directive trajectories are central, functioning as multimodal "action packages."³ The specific multimodal directive-response sequences addressed in this study will be referred to as "correctional directive trajectories." This notion builds on previous ethnomethodological work on the interactional analysis of corrections in instructional activities (e.g., C. Goodwin, 1994; Jefferson, 1974; Johnson, this issue; Hall, 2007; Hindmarsh, Reynolds, & Dunne, 2011; Lindwall & Ekström, 2012; Macbeth, 2004; see also Schegloff, 1992).

The activities I will be analyzing in the present study illustrate the interactional processes in which participants engage as they achieve joint attention and coordinate their actions. In keeping with

² It should be clarified, however that I am not dealing with forms of "apprenticeship" in its strict definition (Lave, 1977, 1982; Lave & Wenger, 1991) where a knowledgeable expert leads a learner or novice in a relatively prescribed way. I am dealing with contexts of teaching and learning in family settings where roles are flexible and there is a fluid interactional organization. I will therefore be using the terms "novice" and "expert" in a loose way to refer to the learning child and the "expert" caregiver (adult or older sibling).

³ This notion has been defined by C. Goodwin as "the constellation of language, environment, body and action. . . the most basic semiotic fields that participants use to construct meaning and relevant action through situated interaction" (2007: 61) (see Kyratzis and Johnson, this issue).

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