Toward a Socio-Cultural Framework
of The Mother-Child Interaction

Choi , SooHyang
University of Alberta Edmonton, ALTA, Canada

The essay attempts a critical review of the current studies of the mother-child interaction. A particular focus is placed on their lack of concern with the socio-cultural implications and significances of the subject. A guiding assumption is that the mother-child interaction is not only an educational ground for the child's learning of language or behavioral coordination, but also a socio-cultural event that is necessarily subject to specific contextual correlates. Psychoanalysis is picked up to represent the tradition concerned with the relational, but not the interactional aspect of the mother-child interaction. Bowlby's idea is dealt with to discuss the conventional understanding of the interactive nature. Vygotskian thesis is discussed to examine the social interactionist perspective. Finally, recent studies on the communicative aspects of the mother-child interaction are examined. An appeal for a socio-cultural approach to the mother-child interaction is made.

It goes without saying that a child does not grow by himself/herself. A child's developmental process involves a social interaction with adult members of the society. The end product of the development is the child's acquisition of meanings, values, and norms of the society. The child's development cannot be conceptualized other than as a socialization process, which is governed and maintained by the specific socio-cultural context in which the child is situated.

The argument of the present essay is that this sociogenetic thesis of child development has rarely been recognized in studies on child develop-

ment. For a long time, biological mechanisms have constituted the core of child development. For those who have been concerned with the socio-cultural environment, the focus has been to investigate its effects on the child's cognitive or linguistic development, but not on the general socialization process. The socio-cultural character of the developmental process itself has long gone unnoticed.

The present essay attempts to point out this conceptual bias of the current studies of child development, especially in the area of the mother-child interaction. Traditional as well as recent communicative approaches to the mother-child in-

teraction will be reviewed and efforts will be made to document the asocial nature of these approaches to this fundamentally social and cultural nature of child experience. The efforts are expected to bring attention to the predicament embedded in the current studies of child development and hasten our endeavors toward a formulation of a socio-cultural framework of child development.

Mother-Child Interaction I : Traditional approach

Psychoanalysis

It was Sigmund Freud(1964) who first noted the developmental significance of the child's relationship with a mother. he wrote that an infant was born with various libidous needs, and that successful gratifications of these needs were the crucial determinants of his/her personality in adulthood. Many other psychoanalysts(e.g., Benedek, 1938; Erikson, 1963) also noted that the constantly attained gratification of physiological needs led the child to develop a sense of trust in his/her environment. Current theorists of mother-child interaction (e.g., Lamb, 1981a, 1981b) also agree on the positive effect of the mother's responsive nursing behavior on the emergence of trust, security, confidence, predictability and reliability in the environment, and believe that it becomes the fundamental basis for a healthy development.

It is truism that a child, in his/her early period, is high on physiological demads, and a caregiver's main responsibility is to attend to these basic needs. It is not totaly inconceivable that there are some psychological buds growing out of the child's experiences of such physiological or biological satisfactions. As a focus is placed on the child's biological needs, however, the socially constructed interactional dynamic between the mother and child receives relatively little attention. According to the psychoanalytic view, it is basically the child's physiological needs that are assumed to trigger the maternal contact with the child. In principle, as long as the gratification of needs is attained, there is no more reason for the mother and child to interact, unless there occurs another session of need-arousal. The child's physiological needs unilaterally govern the whole procedure of the establishment of the relationship.

The lack of concern of the psychoanalysis with interactive aspect is not solely due to its adoption of tension - reduction princide. The psychoanalysts' heavy reliance on notions of affect as the central mechanism of the mother's behavior partially shares the responsibility. For example, in explaining the development of trust, Erikson(1963) noted that trust depended not only on the mother's predictable behavior but also on the mother's **confidence** in her behavior. But there is no specific explanation regarding how this confidence is enacted in an interactional situation. Similarly, Winnicott(1971) expressed that a mother played **a role of mirror**, but the empirical manifestations of this role of mirror are far from being clear.

It is not denied that the child has a keen sensibility to the emotional state of the caregiver (Campos, 1984; Klinnert, Campos, Sorce, Emde, & Svejda, 1983), nor that the mother-child relationship is colured by affective mood(Spitz, 1965). Rather, a point here is that the affective accounts of mother-could interaction is more metaphoric than empirically heuristic. They are unable to un-

ravel the actual ongoing processes beghind the affective psychological constructs. There affective terms lack in explanatory power. "Mirrored image", "empathy", love, or hatred does not provide precise information on what actually happens during the chil's interaction with his/her caregiver

The reciprocal exchange between the mother and child is largely missed in the psychoanalytic approach. The mother's role is reduced to a mere nursing activity, and its scaffolding function for the construction of dynamic patterns of social interaction with the child is not recognized. Interactive nature of the relationship is yet to be noticed.

Attachment theory

While the psychoanalytic model views the child's physiological needs as the basic element in framing a mother-child relationship, attachment theory sees the child's predisposed behavioral systems as the underpinnings of the child's tie to a mother. Bowlby(1969) noted that a child is born with many preprogrammed behavioral responses, such as suckling, clinging, crying, or smiling, and through the mother's responsive assistance, these behaviors become a basis of the mother-child interaction. The child seeks proximity by emitting his/her behavioral response, and the mother responds to the child's initial signals and fulfills his/her interactive attempt. The child is merely endowed with **potentials** to develop a certain kind of system, and their actualization is at the mercy of the child's interaction with the environment.

Bowlby's thesis on the responsive attitude of the mother and its effect on the child's behavior was purported in a well known study by Bell and Ainsworth(1972). The authors showed that consistency and promptness of maternal response

were associated with a decline in frequency and duration of infant crying. The study demonstrated that the child's behavior could be regulated by the mother's responses. Recent studies on a micro-level of analysis of mother-child interaction have also provided supportive data for the reciprocal nature of the relationship(Schaffer, 1977). In particular, the detailed descriptions of the mother's behavioral coordinations to the child's behavioral initiatives, such as gaze coordination(Stern, 1974), postural coorientation(Collins & Shaffer, 1975), clearly show the dyadic orgaization of the mother-child interaction.

These studies constitute a generally improved understanding of the nature of the mother-child interaction. They bring attention to the fact that an imporatant feature of the interaction is the **interplay** of the child's initial potentials and the mother's responsive attitudes. However, they have completely neglected one of the premises of this essay, namely, that the mother's responses are **socially and culturally** conducted behavior. Socio-cultural context it not an eiphenomenon. It is integral to the mother's lived experience. But in the current studies of mother-child interaction, the mother's behavior is viewed as an ahistorically sanitized response emitted to the stimulus released from the child. Variations in the mother's behaviors are thought to be only a function of the child's behavioral repertoire.

This S-R type of reciprocity between the mother and child represent's the ethologists viewpoint of human behavior. Ethologists(e. g., Lorenz, 1935 ; Tinbergen, 1951), who have been interested in unlearned or instinctive behaviors of animals, note that a great deal of the mother's behavioral repertoires in other species are instinctive responses that are automatically released by

specific external stimuli. Likewise, the reactions of the young to their parents are species-specific behaviors that are biologically preprogrammed. According to this view, the reciprocity between the mother and child is also a result of a series of S-R relations, of which bonds are innately determined by the specific properties of the stimulus from the other party. This ethological viewpoint underlies Bowlby's ideas and consolidated its basis as a major conceptual framework of the current mother-child interaction studies.

The consequence of this quasi-mechanical, quasi-ethological S-R perspective is immediately evident. Researchers become less concerned with ecological, socio-cultural variables of the mother's behavior. They tend to believe in the universality of the mother's behavior and depreciate the value of the mother-child interaction as a social learning ground. It is far from being clear to these researchers that the mother and child interaction is basically a **socialization process** through which the socio-cultural orders are transmitted to the new members of the community. The socio-culture-specific factors governing the daily interactions are largely unknown, and the social functions performed by an interaction are rarely discussed. The current literature of the mother-child interaction is in grave need for an orientation adjustment toward a socio-cultural view of child development.

Early social interactionism ;
The Vygotskian connection

A sociogenetic perspective puts forth the social interaction of the child as the very basis of child development. Vygotsky's idea most prominently represents this sociogenetic view. He noted that,

Any function in the child's cultural development

appears twice, or on two planes. First it appears on the social plane and then on the psychological plane. First it appears between people as an interpsychological category and then within the child as intrapsychological category(Wertsch,1981,p.103).

To him, a social interaction is not a mere transitional process through which a child's inborn psychological properties are organized and coordinated into a mature form, but a fundamental ingredient of the development. Social interaction is the very locus of all psychological function in that the social functions transacted at interpersonal level are, through internalization, reorganized into inner psychological functions.

Given that the social interaction is the primary focus of Vygotsky's writing, it seems ironic that Vygotsky said very little about the principle that deals with the social interation itself. Particularly, his methodological quest brings no match to his original idea of sociogenesis. Take an example of double stimulation. In this procedure, the subject is given a task of sorting wooden blocks and the clues to the solution are introduced stepwise, with each new turning of a block. The gradual introduction of the means of the solution enables a researcher to observe a mental process ocurring with an introduction of new aid. But such a method does not help researchers observe the social, historical vestiges embedded in the behavior under investigation.

This apparent inconsistency in his work has to do with his basic interest in the development of higher mental functions such as voluntary attention, memory or consciousness. As Wertsch(1985b) pointed out, Vygotsky's main concern was with the linkage between interpsychological and intrapsychological functioning(p.61). Social interaction was introduced as an indispensible instrument to assume the interpsychological origin

of the intrapsychological funtioning. But his ultimate interest was to see how these intersychological functions were processed and formulated into intrapsychological functions. Naturally, the formation of the intrapsychological functions bcame the primary focus of interest, and little attention was paid to the social level of the individual's interaction with one another.

His thesis of sociogenesis has contributed to the generation of a plethora of cognition studies in relation to social interaction(Wertsch, 1981a), but no like impetus is given to the socio-cultural nature of the process, albeit the due attention to the interactional process itself. Until recent time, his theory of social interaction has remained a hypothetical process that has not been brought to a rigorous empirical examination(cf. Wertsch, 1985a). The socio-cultural nature of child development has been discussed only in its internalized cognitive form, but not in their corresponding psycho-social representation. The interactional organization of specific socio-cultural correlates of the child's socialization process has gone unnoticed. At any rate, the child's social interaction and its socialization effect remained yet to be recognized.

Mother-Child Interaction Ⅱ : Communicative approach

Motherese

While the Chomskian linguisitc and Piagetian cognitive models of child language development have looked at the child's innate ability as a basis of language learning, motherese researchers(e.g., Newport, 1976; Snow & Ferguson, 1977) have been concerned with the effect of the linguistic environment. The motherese hypothesis is that language acquisition **does** depend, to some degree, upon the linguistic input from the environment. Researchers' tasks have been to determine the features of the mother's speech which are positively correlated to the child's language developement(cf. Banigan & Mervis, 1988; Bloom, 1988; Mervis & Mervis, 1988; Nelson, Hirsh-pasek, Jusczyk, & Cassidy, 1989).

It has been found that the mother's speech is restricted and concrete in its vocabulary(Hayes & Ahrens, 1988); short, simple and well-formed in its sentences(Brown & Bellugi, 1964); rarely complex or compund in grammatical structure(Snow, 1972). These features have been interpreted as facilitating language learning by quantitatively controlling the amount of linguistic input directed to the child. The mother's speech also assists the child with qualitative aspects of language learning by producing "recast" types of speech, wherein the child's utterances are reformulated in a more grammatically elaborated manner without changing the intended meaning(Cross, 1976; Hoff-ginsberg, 1985).

While the effects of motherese on the child's language development are still debatable, it is noted that no discussion has been made in regard to the socio-cultural variations or implications of the mother's speech. The reported characteristics of motherese are considered universal features found in any socio-cultural groups. The mother's speech is not recognized as a socio-culture-specific phenomenon. Its importance as a primary means of the child's socialization process is far from being recognized. A few rare studies that have observed socio-cultural variations and the different socialization effects of motherese in different cultures demonstrate that such a **linguistic**

approach to the subject is a seriously flawed conception.

Ochs(1982) made it clear that the functions of the mother's speech are not just limited to linguistic lessons to a child. Rather it is a way of responding to situations in a culturally appropriate manner and of transmitting cultural knowledge to the child. Ochs' argument is based on her observation of the Western Samoan mothers. Unlike Anglo mothers, the Western Samoan mothers did not produce expasions which were means of assessing the mothers' understanding of what a child was expressing. Observing this cultural difference, Ochs looked into the general cultural belief of the Western Samoan mothers.

In Western Samoan culture, people are not conceived on the central control mechanisms that organize and direct their actions. Naturally the intention behind one's behavior is not an issue at all, and the clarification of exact intentions behind a child's utterance is hardly a prime concern of the mother's. Besides, the Western Samoan mothers tended to consider the child's egocentric articulation as not a part of the language, and their tradition did not expect a high status person to adjut their prspectives to those of a lower status. The combination of these cultural beliefs and value systems, ochs argued, functions as a deterrent to the Western Samoan mothers production of expansion.

Ochs(1988) further noted that even the simplification of the mother's speech, which has been known as the most distinctive feature of motherese, was also subject to socio-cultural belief. She said,

> In certain societies more than others, caregivers are expected to make rather dramatic accommodation to young children's cognitive immaturity ······ In societies where this expectation prevails, such as American white middle-class society, caregivers simplify their speech in addressing small children. In societies where this expectation does not prevail, such as traditional Western Samoan society and Kalue(Papua New Guinea) society, caregivers do not simplify their speech to the extent characteristic of the American middle class(Ochs, 1988, p. 23).

In fact, Ochs' argument advances so far as to propose that most of the motherese features that have been discussed in the current literature of motherese are subject to socio-cultural variations. She noted that,

> It is important to note there that all societies do not rely on the very same set of language-socializing procedures. Indeed, although prompting a child what to say appears wide spread, expanding children's utterances, using leading questions, announcing activities events for a child, and using a simplified lexicon and grammar to do so are cross-culturally varivable(Ochs, 1986. p. 6).

An implication of all these arguments is that the mother's speech is greatly constrained by the systems of beliefs ad values underlying the mother's social life. It is a mere linguistic product of cultural expectation concerning appropriate manners of human activities. In other words, the mother-child interaction is basically a socialization process through which the child comes to acquire tacit knowledge of the social orders. Language, which is the single most important medium of the mother-child communicative interaction, does not retain its neutrality when in use. Socio-cultural information is generally encoded in the organization of conversational discourse, as well as in the formal features, such as phonological and morphosyntactic constructions, the lexicon ······ etc.(Ochs, 1986 ; Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986).

The mother's speech cannot be viewed simply in terms of its instrumental function for the child's language learning only; It is a means of transmit-

ting culturally significant knowledge to the child. Its functional and formal features all succumb to the socio-cultural influences, and carry within themselves these socio-cultureal conditions, which are transmitted to the child through daily interaction. Presumably the current trend of motherese studies which have been heavily geared to the interest of linguistic aspects and impacts of motherese is in a grave need of being re-illuminated from a socio-cultural stance.

Child communication

Traditionally, the child's language devlopment has been studied in its lexicogrammatical aspects. Language development has been seen as a gradual process of getting the appropriate items into the linguistic repertoire according to the rules of grammar. Recently, the interest has been extended to communicative functions of language, and researchers have come to believe that the acquisition of capacity to refer to and to mean lies at the very heart of language learning. Bruner(1983), for instance, noted that,

> When we say that a child is acquiring language, we must account for another aspect of what is being acquired ·that is, its function or communicative intent or "how to get things done with words" ······ Here the criterion for judging progress in acquisition is not so much well-formedness or sense and reference, but something more like effectivenss(p.18).

Many theorists see the locus of this communicative function as lying in the child's early social interaction with a mother. The early dyadic relationship is viewed as creating a predicatble format of interaction that serves as a microcosm for communication. Description of the the emerging process of the child's communicative functions through his/her early interaction with mother thus

becomes the main task of researchers of child language development(Bullowa, 1979 ; Golinkoff, 1983).

Their research has shown that contrary to Piaget's notion of egocentrism, the children, from a very early age, have basic functions of communication. They employ various forms of of attention-getting devices to initiate a conversation(Keenan & Schieffelin, 1976 ; McTear, 1979) ; they are capable of maintaining a coherent dialogue by managing appropriate feedback systems (Golinkoff, 1986 ; Wilcox & Webster, 1980) ; They maximize the communication by utilizing situation-specific query systems(Anselmi, Tomasello, & Acunzo, 1986 ; Perner & Leekam, 1986). The studies have provided strong empirical data showing that the child's communicative competence is far more sophisticated in the early period than Piaget said.

What is not recognized in those studies, however, is that these specific communicative skills are not a verbal expression of semantic or syntactic categories. In other words, it is not within the purview of current studies of child communication that the subject is basically a socio-cultural learning process, where the verbal means of expression are adopted to realize the child's social interaction with others. Child communication is not a pure linguisitic occasion where only the linguistic knowledge is counted. It is a cultural event that is initated and maintained according to specific socio-cultural rules.

In a landmark study, Ervin-Tripp(1977), for example, showed that children's executing of specific communicative attempts, was necessarily based on their certain socail knowledge of their partner. She observed the children were able to differentiate the age and rank of the interactant, and

changed the type of their request to meet the demands of the situation. For instance, one child differentiated whithin her nursery school group between other 2-year-olds and 3 and 4-year-olds. She gave no command to the later group and instead employed only questions. When commands were made to the older children, such polite forms of requests as please did not fail to show up. On the whole, there were more imperatives spoken to children than to adults, and practically no negative imperatives to adults. Ervin-Tripp (1977) noted that,

> The evidence suggests that the social basis already exists in early years of rthe devlopment of more subtle forms of deviousness than children actually use, in that they differentiate in speech between imperatives, modified imperatives, imbedded imperatives using questions, and need statements. They are sensitive to certain socail variables, in particular the age of addressee, and familiarity, task and the probability of compliance(p.188).

Ochs' statement lucidly sums up the observation:

> Language has constructions at all levels of grammar and discourse that signal information concerning how interactants see their own and others' social positions and roles. As children acquire language, they are acquiring knowledge of this vital aspect o social order. Another way of putting this is to say that part of acquiring language is the acquisition of the social meaning of linguistic structures(Ochs, 1986, p.7).

It is this social meaning of child communication that has been largely missed in the current studies of child communication. The child's comunication has been represented as a linguistic performance actualizing linguistic competence at a practical level. Such conception misses the essence of communication, namely the types of socilal needs which trigger a communicative exchange, and the socio-cultural norms which will determine the type of specific communicative act. A communicative interaction is necessarily guided and maintained by certain socio-cultural goals, Neglecting this underlying force is to disregard the very reason for which the communication is attempted. To grasp the full significance of child communication necessitates seeing its genesis in a socio-cultural context.

CONCLUSION

Above all, a great need is felt for an integration of the various areas of child development studies. Until the present time, is has been a common practice to deal with language, cognition, personality and socialization in separation from one another. Each domain of child development has been distinguished by its own concerns, issues and methodologial procedures. The present essay shows how absurd such a fragmented view is. Neglecting the socialization process underlying every domain of child deveopment is like sanitizing the developmental process in its contextual vacuum.

The socio-cultural background is not an epiphenomenon of which importance can be optionally considered. It is an absolute necessity in understanding the varrious domains of child development. It is this contextual beckground that shapes the developmental process in a particular way, and with which the child comes to acquire specific meanings of environment. No adequate accounts of child development can afford a denial of its significance.

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모·자녀 상호작용에 관한 사회·문화적 준거를 향하여

최수향

캐나다 알버타 에드먼튼 대

이 논문은 모—자녀 상호작용에 관한 최근 연구들을 비판적으로 검토하고자 한다. 이 논문은 이 주제의 사회문화적 함축성과 의의에 대해 관심이 결여되어 있다는 데 특별히 초점을 맞추고 있다. 모—자녀간의 상호작용은 자녀의 언어학습이나 혹은 행동조절학습을 위한 교육적 배경뿐만 아니라 반드시 구체적인 관련상황을 따져봐야 하는 사회문화적 사건이라는 것이 이 논문의 기본가정이다. 정신분석은 모—자녀간의 상호작용에 대한 상호작용의 측면이 아니라 혈연관계적 측면에 관심을 두고 있는 전통을 대표하고자 뽑혔다. Bowlby의 아이디어는 상호작용의 본질에 대한 전통적 이해를 논의하는 데 있다. Vygotsky의 논제는 사회적 상호작용론의 관점을 검토하는 데 있다. 끝으로 모—자녀간의 상호작용에 대한 커뮤니케이션 측면에 관한 최근 연구들이 검토되고 있다. 이 논문은 모—자녀간의 상호작용에 대한 사회적 접근법을 호소하고 있다.