

Baby Talk in Six Languages

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BACKGROUND

OCCASIONALLY linguists have turned their attention to the description of marginal systems within languages, such as animal calls, hesitation forms, or baby talk. Such phenomena have sometimes been studied because of purely linguistic interest in synchronic description: they often have elements of sound or form which do not occur in the "normal" central system of the language or have unusual arrangements or frequencies of occurrence of elements which do occur in the central system. This kind of study is of particular relevance to the question of the monosystemic nature of languages versus polytypical analyses of "coexistent" systems. These marginal phenomena have also sometimes been studied from a psychological point of view, in relation to questions of language acquisition or language function.

The present paper approaches the analysis of baby talk from a rather general taxonomic, linguistic interest. The intention is to initiate cross-language studies of marginal phenomena of this kind which will lead to a general characterization of them and to a framework for the characterization of single-language marginal phenomena in such a way that synchronic classification and historical explanation become possible.

By the term *baby talk* is meant here any special form of a language which is regarded by a speech community as being primarily appropriate for talking to young children and which is generally regarded as not the normal adult use of language. English examples would include *choo-choo* for adult *train*, or *itty-bitty* for *little*. In most cases the baby-talk item can also be used in some other situation with special value; in some cases (e.g., *peek-a-boo*) the item has no counterpart in normal language since it refers to an activity or object appropriate chiefly for children.

The method used here will be the comparison of baby-talk phenomena in six languages, selected for variety of linguistic structure and sociolinguistic setting within the limits of available material: (Syria) Arabic, Marathi, Comanche, Gilyak, (American) English, Spanish. The first two are major languages of Asia with millions of speakers and strong literary traditions; the second two are of small nonliterate communities, one New World, one Old World; the last two are major European languages. The primary source materials for the first four languages are the articles of Ferguson (1956), Kelkar (1964), Casagrande (1948), and Austerlitz (1956); the material on English and Spanish was compiled from informants for this study.¹

ASSUMPTIONS

Before proceeding to examination of the material, certain assumptions of this study should be made explicit since they are not in agreement with general views of baby talk. Here it is assumed that baby talk is a relatively stable, conventionalized part of a language, transmitted by "natural" means of language transmission much like the rest of the language; it is, in general, not a universal, instinctive creation of children everywhere, nor an ephemeral form of speech arising out of adults' imitation of child speech. Like other marginal systems such as animal calls, however, baby talk tends to show somewhat different patterns of diffusion from the normal language: for example, particular baby-talk items are often present in contiguous but genetically unrelated languages.

The assumption of relative stability as opposed to *ad hoc* creation is suggested by such cases of historical documentation as in Arabic where there is a record of Arabic baby talk used at the beginning of the nineteenth century which is very much like Arabic baby talk today.² An even more impressive case is the persistence of baby talk words for food, drink, and sleep for some two thousand years in the Mediterranean area. The Roman grammarian Varro (116-27 B.C.)³ cites Latin *bua* and *pāpa* or *pāppa* as baby talk for 'drink' and 'food' respectively, and the use of Latin *naenia* 'dirge, lament' in the baby-talk meaning of 'lullaby' is attested.

At the present time the general Arabic baby talk for 'drink' is *mbu* or *mbuwa*. The baby-talk word for 'food' is *papa* throughout the Spanish-speaking world; this is regarded by some speakers of Spanish as a special use of the adult word for potatoes, but it is attested in Spanish before the introduction of potatoes. The modern Moroccan Arabic baby-talk word for 'bread' is *baḥḥa* (or *babba*, or *pāppa*). A common Arabic baby-talk word for 'sleep' or 'lullaby' is *ninnī* or *ninnē*, which occurs also in Italian. The details of diffusion are quite unclear, but there can be little doubt of a historical connection between the Latin words and the contemporary Arabic, Spanish, and Italian ones.

The assumption that baby-talk items are conventionalized and culturally transmitted, not universal, can be appreciated from a glance at Table I, below. There are similarities in the structure of these items, which will be commented on below, but any simple notion of universality is refuted by such contrasts as the Syrian Arabic and Spanish baby-talk items for 'father' (*bāba* : *tata*), 'baby' (*bubbu* : *nene*), 'food' (*maḥḥ* : *papa*), 'little' (*nūnu* : *tiquitito*).⁴

The assumption that most baby talk is taught as such by adults to children can be validated in an impressionistic way by simple observation. Adults inform the baby that a train is a *choo-choo* and a dog a *bow-wow* and in effect drill the child in such items until he produces his version of them. The alternative explanation, that millions of children independently create items like *choo-choo* and *bow-wow* instead of the hundreds of equally satisfactory onomatopoeias that could be imagined, is clearly unsatisfactory. It is, of course, true that adults sometimes do imitate an item of child speech and it gets accepted in a family; it is also true that there are resemblances between features of child

speech and features of baby talk and that adults often feel that baby-talk items are imitations of child speech, but the general assumption seems safe that adults usually initiate baby talk, using the material familiar to them as appropriate for this. There are instances of baby-talk words becoming incorporated in normal language, e.g. English *tummy*, several Gilyak items (Austerlitz 1956: 271-2), Spanish *pininos*.

MATERIAL

Baby talk includes at least three kinds of material: (1) intonational and paralinguistic phenomena which occur with normal language as well as with other baby-talk material; (2) morphemes, words, and constructions modified from the normal language; and (3) a set of lexical items peculiar to baby talk.

Intonational features have been noticed by many authors, and even casual observers may notice the higher overall pitch, preference for certain contours, and special features such as labialization which occur in baby talk in a number of languages. Much of this is subsumed under the term *Ammenton*. Very little systematic description of this kind of baby-talk material has as yet been attempted⁵ and it will not be discussed further here.

The baby-talk material derived from normal language shows considerable variability in the six languages, but a number of patterns of modification, phonological or grammatical, are sufficiently common to be of interest.

MODIFICATIONS OF NORMAL LANGUAGES

*Phonology*⁶

Simplification of consonant clusters (e.g., English *tummy* for *stomach*) is attested for all except Arabic and may well occur there too. There is an interesting variation in this: Gilyak has many final clusters and, even though it simplifies them, its final clusters in baby talk are more complex than those of baby talk in the other languages.

Replacement of *r* by another consonant (e.g. English *wabbit* for *rabbit*), either by a liquid *l*, *y* or *w* or by an apical stop *t* or *d*, occurs in all six languages. The replacement by *l* in several languages is surprising since some linguists feel that trills are more "basic" than laterals in that there are many languages with trills and no laterals but few the reverse.

Replacement of velars by apicals (e.g., English *tum on* for *come on*) is attested for all except Arabic and Gilyak, and considering the frequency of velars in the Arabic and Gilyak baby talk it seems likely that this replacement does not occur in these.

Some kind of interchange among sibilants, affricates, and stops (e.g., English *soos* for *shoes*) occurs in all but Comanche and Gilyak, but is of three different types: (a) hushing sibilants replaced by hissing sibilants (Arabic, Marathi, English); (b) sibilants replaced by [č] (Marathi, Spanish); (c) affricates replaced by stops (Marathi). The most interesting of these is probably the replacement of [s] by [č] (e.g., Spanish *becho* for *beso*) since the latter is felt by some linguists to be a less "basic" sound and this replacement seems very

unnatural for English speakers. In Spanish baby talk the use of [č] for [s] is widespread and in fact is an identifying feature of baby talk; of the languages discussed here it occurs also in Marathi, and it is attested for Japanese baby talk as well.

Distant nasal assimilation is attested for Marathi, Gilyak, and Spanish (e.g., Spanish *mamoch* for *vamos*), and may also occur in the others.

Examples of loss of unstressed syllables occur in English and Spanish (e.g., Spanish *tines* for *calcetines*).⁷

Grammar

At least one diminutive or hypocoristic affix is of frequent occurrence in each language. This may be a regular diminutive form (as Spanish *-ito*, *-ita* or Comanche *-ci*) or a form used chiefly in baby talk and only infrequently in normal language (e.g., Gilyak *k/q*, Marathi *-[k]ula/ -ukla*, Arabic *-o*, English *-ie*).

Greater use of nouns rather than pronouns and verbs is general: equational clauses without verbs replace normal construction with copula or verb (e.g., English *dollie pretty* for *the doll is pretty*), and third person constructions replace first and second person ones (e.g., English *daddy wants* for *I want*).

In two of the languages, Arabic and Marathi, a shift in gender is used as a mark of endearment; i.e., a feminine noun, pronoun, adjective, or verb form is used in reference to a boy or vice versa. For example, in Arabic *wēn ruḥṭi yā*

Notes to Table I

1. Marathi and English have many baby-talk words for 'mother' and 'father.' Marathi *mai*, *ʒiʒi*, *ai* (regular adult word), *māmi* (English loan), 'mother'; *baba*, *əḥḥa*, *dada*, *tatya*, *tata*, *əppa*, *nana*, *aba*, *bhau*; *pəpa*, *dədi* (English loans), 'father.' English *mom*, *ma*, *momma*, *mommie*; *dad*, *daddy*, *dada*, *pop*. Casagrande says "There is no special baby word [for mother] in common use," the regular adult *piā* being used (1948: 12); *mamā*? is included in the alphabetized listing, however, identified as English. Spanish baby talk *mama* (also *mami*) is stressed on the first syllable; *mamā* with final stress is a somewhat informal adult word.
2. Comanche *ʔaʔi*? also means 'father's brother' and 'father's friend'; baby talk *wok*? *toiw*? 'grandfather' (adult counterpart 'mother's father') is sometimes used for 'father.' Spanish *tata* may also be used for 'grandfather.'
3. Arabic *bubbu* and Comanche *nini*? are also used for 'doll.' Marathi *baḷ* is also an adult word, but is usually in baby talk with a special intonation, and other adult words for 'baby' are not used in baby talk. The Gilyak *nena* is glossed only 'doll.' A feminine *nena* occurs in Spanish, although in Chile *nene* may be used for both sexes.
4. English apparently has no common baby-talk word for 'food'; *yum-yum* 'delicious' is sometimes used.
5. Marathi *pəpa* also means 'kiss.'
6. Arabic has variants such as *ʔaʔʔā ninnī* (-ē), *ʔoʔʔō ninnī* (-ē). Spanish *hacer tulo* is attested for Chile, *hacer meme* (or *mimi*) for Mexico.
7. Spanish *pichi*, *chichi* are not attested for Mexico.
8. Chile: *popō* is 'anus,' sometimes 'vagina,' never 'defecation' or 'feces'; *kakū* is not attested for Mexico.
9. Arabic *gullu gullu* is from McCarus.
10. Spanish *tener una yaya* (or *yayita*) is attested for Chile, *hacerse coco* for Mexico.
11. Gilyak *amqamq* is 'walk'; *yonk* (variants *yon*, *yonyon*, *yono*) is 'legs and feet.' Spanish *patita* 'foot' is attested for Mexico and Chile; in the sense of 'walking, taking steps' Chile has *andando patita*, Mexico *hacer pinitos*.

TABLE I

	Arabic	Marathi	Comanche	Gilyak	English	Spanish
KIN						
1. mother	māma	(m)ai	—	yma	mommy	mama
2. father	bāba	baba	ʔapíʔ	da(ɨ), dyj (nena)	daddy	tata
3. baby	bubbu	baɨ	niniʔ	mama, ñaña	ba-by	nene
BODY						
4. food	mamm	mammem	tatáʔ	qoq	—	papa
5. drink, water	mbū (wa)	papa	papá /	—	dink	(a)guita
6. sleep	ninni, ninnē	nini, ʕʕo gai (gai)	—	hisa, cisa	sleepy-bye night-night	tuto, meme
7. urination	ʔahh	mumu, šu	—	—	wee-wee, pee-pee	pipí; pichí, chichi
8. defecation	kaʕo	(i)ši	ʔaʔh, ʔasí	[aʔa]	poop(oo)	popó, kakú
9. bath	gullu gullu	toto	—	yypyp	—	—
10. hurt	wāwa	bau	ʔaná; nanáʔ	ykyk	ow, booboo	yaya, coco
11. walk, foot	dāde	calcal	—	ɨonk, amqamq	footsie	patita, pininos
12. breast, milk	zēze, zizz	pipi	cicíʔ	mynk, myny	—	—
13. penis	—	nuni, nunu	wʔasI	coc(k)	—	—
14. vagina	—	čimi	táʔeI	bew, pelpa	—	—

Table I (Continued on next page)

TABLE I (Continued)

	Arabic	Marathi	Comanche	Gilyak	English	Spanish
QUALITIES						
15. nice	dahh	chan chan	ʔum-áʔ	ulak	p(r)it-tie	nino
16. bad, don't!	didde, (hu)mm	há(?)	ʔaʔháʔ	—	(ʔæʔæ)	<i>alveolar click</i>
17. dirty	kixx, kaʃʃ	yakk, isiʔ	ʔáx	alqalq	[yix]	fuchi, chocho
18. hot	ʔuhh	hay	ʔitiʔ	—	burnie	ssss
19. cold	hu	gar gar	ʔiciʔ	—	—	ffo
20. nothing left	bahh	koko	—	ap(k)a	a(l) gone	cabó
21. little	nūnu	piʔukla	—	—	teenie	tiquitito
ANIMALS & GAMES						
22. dog	ʃaw ʃaw	bhubbu	pʰ/ʔpóʔ	gyck, gycy	doggie, bow-wow	guau guáu, gua guá
23. cat	nawnaw, biss	mau, mini	waʔóʔ	—	pussy(-cat) kitty(-cat)	cuchito, michi, bicho
24. bird	kūku	čiu	kakáʔ	bic-(ŋ)aq	birdie	pipi
25. goblin	buʃbuʃ	bagul-bua	mukiʔ	humk	boogeyman	cuco, coco
26. going out	tišš	bhur	—	—	bye-bye	mamoch calle
27. peek-a-boo	naww, baʔʃəno	kukk, bua	—	—	peek-a-boo	onetá
28. carry on back	haʔhaʔ	kokru ho-	mamáʔ	aci, (b)apu	piggy-back	upa
29. noise, ear	kurr	kurr	—	—	—	—
30. goodies, candy	nahh	khau	kokóʔ	—	—	uches

binti? 'Where did you go (fem.), little girl?' said to a boy; *inta žu'ān?* 'Are you (m.) hungry (m.)?' said to a girl.⁸ In Marathi the examples are with the use of a feminine ending on a boy's name and vice versa.

LEXICON

The number of lexical items given in the references varies from about 25 to over 60. The commonest topics reported are: kin names, nicknames and the like; body parts and bodily functions; basic qualities like "good," "bad," "little," "dirty"; and the names of animals and nursery games. About 30 such items common to most of the six languages are listed below, classified under four headings; in several cases attested items modified from adult words are entered when there is no special word.

CHARACTERISTICS

Baby-talk words either as modifications of normal words or as special lexical items show certain general characteristics. In the first place, baby-talk items consist of simple, more basic kinds of consonant, stops and nasals in particular, and only a very small selection of vowels. One would expect that the rarer, more peculiar consonants or the consonants which tend to be learned later would not be found in baby talk, and generally this is true but there are some exceptions. Gilyak, for example, uses four phonemically distinct nasals in baby talk, and a variety of velars as mentioned above. Arabic has many baby-talk items with pharyngeal spirants although these are often assumed to be learned late in Arabic. The best example is the fact that labial emphatics exist in Arabic baby talk and may well be the first emphatics learned by Arabic children even though they are marginal in the adult language.

A second phonological characteristic is the predominance of reduplication, both of parts of words and of whole words, in the baby talk of all six languages. For several of these languages reduplication plays a grammatical role of some sort in the adult language, but the reduplication in baby talk is generally separate and unrelated to the use in the normal language. Reduplication can probably be regarded as a feature of baby talk throughout the world.

Each of the six languages has a typical ("canonical") form of baby-talk

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15. Marathi *ēhan ēhan* is a reduplicated form of adult *ēhan*. Spanish *nino* (adult *lindo*) is attested only for Chile.
 16. Arabic *didde* means 'don't or I'll slap you, spank you'; (*hu*)*mm* means 'don't touch.'
 17. Spanish *chucho* is a baby talk form of *sucio* 'dirty'; possibly *fuchi* is also related to this.
 18. Spanish *ssss* is accompanied by a gesture of shaking the fingers loosely as though just burnt.
 19. Marathi *gar gar* is a reduplicated form of adult *gar*.
 22. Chile *gwan gwan*, Mexico *gua gud*.
 24. Marathi *ēiu* is glossed 'house sparrow.' Comanche *kaka?* is also 'headlouse.'
 25. Comanche has several words for frightening children; the *muki?* is some kind of giant owl, the *mumū?* is darkness or thunder, the *?inī?* is a noxious insect or small animal like a snake or scorpion. Chilean Spanish sometimes has *cuca*, feminine of *cuco*.
 27. English *peek-a-boo* is chiefly American; the usual British form is *bo-peep*.
 28. Marathi *kokru ho-* means 'play lamb,' i.e., be carried piggy-back. Comanche *mamā?* is glossed "horse; said by a child when he wants to be carried on someone's back."

items. There is variation, dependent at least in part on the canonical forms of morphemes in the corresponding adult language, but the commonest form is CVC, i.e. a monosyllable beginning and ending with a consonant, with CVCV as next most common. Many items have CVCCV with a double consonant in the middle even if this is not common in the adult language. As an example of the variation conditioned by normal canonical forms we may cite Spanish: in adult Spanish, monosyllabic words of the shape CVC are extremely rare, and this form seems not to occur in Spanish baby talk, where CVCV is the commonest form.

On the grammatical side, apart from the reduplication and canonical forms already mentioned among phonological characteristics, the most striking features are the absence of any inflectional affixes, the presence of a special baby-talk affix and the use of words in different grammatical functions. The semantic fields showing a special baby-talk vocabulary most commonly represented include kin, food, body parts, and animals.

It must be noted that the features listed here as characteristic of baby-talk items are in general characteristic of the one-vocable utterances ("monoremes") used by children at the stage of linguistic development between the stage of call-sounds and other prerepresentational items and the stage of two-vocable utterances where words and sentences emerge.⁹ Common characteristics include reduplication; primitive affixes; food, animals, toys, etc., as referents.

In view of this similarity one is tempted to make the hypothesis that every language community provides a stock of baby-talk items which can serve as appropriate material for babies to imitate in creating their monoremes but which do not interfere with the normal words of the language and can gradually be discarded as real words emerge in the children's speech. The child may, and often does, create his monoremes from other sources such as sound imitation or fragments of adult utterances, but the baby-talk items tend to be one of the principal sources. The baby-talk lexicon of a language community may thus play a special role in the linguistic development of its children: the facilitation of each child's acquisition of a set of monoremes from which he can go on to the beginnings of real grammar. Experimental confirmation of this hypothesis would be difficult; perhaps the most relevant data would come from societies with radically different attitudes toward child language learning. (Cf. Voegelin and Robnett 1954.)

FUNCTION

Under what circumstances and with what intentions is baby talk used? The published material is very limited on this point. There are, however, several situations or purposes mentioned in the articles or by informants, and these may be considered.

Perhaps the primary purpose is felt to be teaching a child to talk; that is, people asked why or when they use baby talk will say that they use it when talking to young children to make it easier for them to learn to talk. If asked in more detail they may explain that what they are saying in baby talk is easier for the child to learn and that it is clearer, i.e., easier for the child to hear; also, espe-

cially in the Marathi material, whenever there is a choice between two ways of saying something, baby talk uses the more colorful, more "marked" in the linguistic sense. This feeling is obviously incorrect in details (is *pussy* so much easier than *cat*?) and too vague in formulation, but it seems to reflect in a folk-wisdom way the function hypothesized above. A moment's consideration, however, shows this is not the only time baby talk is used. It is used for one thing in talking to infants who are not yet learning to talk, and it is apparently used in talking to pets in every one of these six language communities. Obviously one is not teaching the infant or the pet to talk.

Secondary uses of baby talk generally seem to reflect a desire on the part of the user to evoke some aspect of the nurturant-baby situation in which the primary use of baby talk occurs. This evocation may be from the side of the baby. For example, a child who has just gotten past the use of baby talk by his parents may then revert to baby talk—in fact, even use baby talk that he has not used before—in order to get attention or to be treated in some way as a baby. Also, adults use baby talk in reporting children's speech; in several language communities (e.g. Marathi, Norwegian) baby talk is often used to represent child speech in written literature such as novels and stories.

The evocation of the nurturant-baby situation may also be from the side of the nurturant. For example, the use of baby talk to pets or small infants seems to show the kind of protectiveness and affection characteristic of the nurturant's relation with the baby. The Marathi author notes that the speaker gets a sense of pleasure from doing this.

In Marathi, English, and Spanish, lovers' use of baby talk is attested, and in this case it may not always be clear whether it is the protectiveness of the nurturant or the dependence of the baby that is evoked. It is worth noting that Kelkar reports, on the basis of observation in multilingual situations, that adults who are using baby talk with other adults do not use baby talk in anything but their own language. It seems very likely, however, that this varies depending on a number of factors; it is in any case related to the important general issue of relationship-signaling styles in a second language.

Finally, it is clearly documented for several languages that baby talk is used in certain kinds of songs, riddles, and word-play on the part of adults which bear little direct relationship to the uses with children (Austerlitz 1956:272-3).

VARIABILITY AND DIFFUSION

The fact of variability in baby talk was mentioned above; it requires further comment here. First, there is great family variation: an item gets used in a certain family and becomes well entrenched there but does not spread beyond that. There are also examples of items spreading from one family to another but not becoming general.

Second, there is the areal diffusion previously referred to. Baby-talk items often diffuse within an area rather than according to the lines of genetic relationship followed by the great mass of linguistic phenomena. A good example is the baby-talk word [kix] meaning 'dirty, don't touch' and the like. This word,

with slightly different forms depending on the phonological systems of the respective languages, occurs in almost every language of the Middle East. It is attested (McCarus 1963) for Arabic, Kurdish, Persian, and Syriac although these languages represent two different language families, Semitic and Indo-European (Iranian branch). The word [kix] is not attested for Turkish, which has no phoneme of the [x] type. Another good example is the use of a word like *wāwa*, *wawa*, or *vava* in the meaning 'hurt, sore, injury' throughout the Middle East (Arabic, Syriac, Turkish, Persian, Armenian, Greek), with a [v] in languages like Persian and Greek that have no regular phoneme of the [w] type.

The explanation for this kind of diffusion might lie in the fact that the baby-talk items are not well integrated into the grammatical system of the language even though they are fairly well integrated into the phonological system. Because of this lack of integration it is clearly easier to borrow these terms from one language to another, but presumably social factors in addition to this linguistic factor should be sought as explanation.

This kind of variability, being relatively independent of genetic relationship, offers a chance for the study of distribution of baby-talk items on a statistical basis throughout the world and the kind of analysis of statistical universals of one sort or another that Jakobson has tried (Jakobson 1962), at least with *mama* and *papa*, suggesting certain reasons for their occurrence with far more than chance frequency in languages of the world. It is a rare pleasure for the linguist to have a language phenomenon which can be studied all across the world without need for corrections from the genetic relationships that are involved.

Another way in which baby talk can vary from one language to another is the size of the lexicon or the range of variation of a particular part of the lexicon. Actually one of the surprising features of the present study is the similarity of baby-talk phenomena in the six languages considered, when one might have assumed that there would be serious cultural differences in the kinds of items that would appear in baby talk and the situations in which they would be used. Further study along this line, however, would be useful.

One other point of variability should be mentioned, the differences in attitude toward public use of baby talk. In our society baby talk is mentioned with an air of apology by adults talking seriously, and one feels a good bit of embarrassment in citing examples of baby talk. Also in our society it is quite widely believed that the use of baby talk inhibits learning of the language. That is, people feel that if they use too much baby talk at home, the child is not going to learn the normal language properly. This belief is presented explicitly in books on child development, although there seem to be no experimental data which would substantiate it.¹⁰ In the Arab world, however, there seem to be no such feelings. Adults may discuss baby talk perfectly easily, and they use it freely if it is appropriate. There seems to be no trace of the notion that use of baby talk may inhibit the acquisition of the adult language. Among both Americans and Arabs, however, it seems to be felt that baby talk is more appropriate for women to use than men.

SUMMARY

Baby talk is a linguistic subsystem regarded by a speech community as being primarily appropriate for talking to young children; it consists of intonational features, patterned modifications of normal language, and a special set of lexical items. The special lexical items typically number between 25 and 60 and cover kin names and appellations, bodily functions, certain simple qualities (e.g., dirty, pretty, hot, cold), and vocabulary concerning animals, nursery games, and related items. Baby-talk words typically contain stops, nasals, and a limited selection of vowels, have the structure CVC or CVC(C)V, are frequently reduplicated, and often have a diminutive suffix characteristic of baby talk in that language.

Baby-talk works are not universal, but are transmitted much like other language phenomena in the community. Baby talk seems to serve in each language community as a special source for children's pregrammatical vocables, enabling them to create items at that stage which they can discard as they acquire true words and grammar. Baby talk in addition to this primary use is also used to talk to infants and pets and between adults in situations with "baby" aspects. Baby-talk items are fairly well integrated into the phonological system of the language, but are so unrelated grammatically to the normal that on the one hand they show considerable variability within a speech community and on the other hand tend to diffuse readily across language boundaries regardless of genetic relationships. A given baby-talk system may be characterized in terms of internal structure by the size of the special lexicon and the range of variability. Externally it may be characterized by the extent of its secondary uses and the attitude toward its public use.

NOTES

¹As an additional source for Syrian Arabic, McCarus' notes were used; they also provided information on baby-talk items in Iraqi Arabic, Turkish, Kurdish, Persian, Syriac, and Alexandrian Greek. Further checking of Arabic was done with Mr. and Mrs. Moukhtar Ani of Damascus. Kelkar provided some additional Marathi information in a personal communication. Chief informants for the Spanish were Mrs. Raquel Saporta of Chile and Miss Yolanda Lastra of Mexico; English items came from the author and his colleagues. Susan Ervin-Tripp read the manuscript and made valuable suggestions.

²Sabbagh's sketch (Sabbagh 1886) of colloquial Syrian and Egyptian Arabic, written in 1812, has five baby-talk words (voweling uncertain): *baħħ* 'all gone,' *daħħ* 'shiny, nice,' *'uħħ* 'hot,' *niġġ* 'goo,' said to elicit smile and first word, *mnaħħ* 'sweet, goodies.' All these are in use in Syrian Arabic today (modern form for the last two *nkiġġ*, *naħħ*).

³Varr. ap. Non. 81.2 cum cibum ac potionem buas ac pappas vocent et matrem mammam patrem tatam (Heraeus 1904, repr.: 170-172).

⁴This notion of universality is found even in such careful works as Lewis (1957: 80) "In fact, baby language is an international language. If we make a short list of the earliest words actually spoken by children, with their meanings, we have a vocabulary that every one will recognize."

⁵Kelkar pays considerable attention to intonation in his study 3.2.

⁶The careful account of the phonological characteristics of Norwegian baby talk in Haugen (1942: viii-x) includes most of the characteristics listed here.

⁷Surprisingly enough, Spanish baby talk shows distinctive use of stress, e.g. *pipi* 'bird':

pipi 'urination.' Also, several baby-talk items differ from other adult words only in stress; for example, baby talk *mama* 'mother' and *papa* 'food' differ from informal adult *mamá*, *papá* 'mother,' 'father,' and baby talk *gua guá* differs from adult Caribbean Spanish *guáguá* 'bus' and Bolivian *guá gua* 'child.' Spanish baby talk has both CVCV (= CVCV) and CVCV as canonical forms.

⁸ Arabic examples are from McCarus (1963).

⁹ Some monoremes persist as vocables in more complex utterances, but the notion of a monoreme stage in language development seems valid. A convenient recent account of the characteristics of monoremes is in Werner and Kaplan (1963: 134-137). Full recognition of the similarity between baby talk and actual items of child language is found in Jakobson (1962: 539): "Nursery coinages are accepted for wider circulation in the child-adult intercourse only if they meet the infant's linguistic requirements. . . ."

¹⁰ This notion appears even in careful reviews such as McCarthy (1954: 536): ". . . baby-talk used by adults in the child's environment often makes for preservation of infantile speech habits." A more balanced statement on this point appears in Lewis (1957: 89): "But a mother who, because of a theory that baby-language is too 'babyish'—not 'correct language'—refuses to speak it to her child may be doing him harm, retarding his language development. On the other hand, if baby language is spoken to a child for too long in his life he may be retarded in another way—his speech may remain childish at a time when he should have grown out of this."

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