3. Prompting routines in the language socialization of Basotho children

K ATHERINE D EMUTH

The learning of socially appropriate norms of behavior is a complex and multifaceted process. Prompting for the use of appropriate verbal behavior plays an active role in the social development of children in Basotho society. This chapter examines the prominent use of *ere . . .* 'say . . .' and other prompts by Sesotho-speaking caregivers during interaction with children. It identifies the forms these linguistic routines take and the functional contexts in which they occur. Finally, it examines how these prompts are used in the socialization of young children, providing them with a framework from which to recognize social situations and respond accordingly.

Background

Lesotho is a small, dry, mountainous country completely surrounded by the Republic of South Africa. Sesotho, or Southern Sotho, is a southern Bantu language used by approximately three million speakers, half of whom reside in Lesotho, the other half resident in South Africa. The people who live in Lesotho and speak Sesotho call themselves Basotho. Many Basotho men have been employed in the mines in South Africa since the mid 1800s. Fosterage, whereby children are sent to live with grandparents, aunts, or uncles, has long been practiced and is still common in both rural and urban areas. Rural women have traditionally worked in the fields, leaving children to entertain themselves, or, in the case of infants, leaving them with grandmother or neighbors. Women in rural areas are increasingly seeking a means of cash income, usually leaving children in the care of mother-in-law or another responsible relative for weeks or months at a time.

The children who provided the focus of this study included two preverbal infants, seven children between the ages of 25 months and 7 years, and five

older children between the ages of 7 and 12 who functioned as occasional caregivers. The four focus children for the study were girls Litlhare (25;2–37;2 months), 'Neuoe (28;0–40;0 months), and Tsebo (3;7–4;7 years) and boy Hlobohang (25;0–37;0 months). Audiotape recordings of children's spontaneous speech were made at five-week intervals over a duration of fourteen months, each session including between three and four hours of taped interaction.

These children and their families live in a large mountain village (approximately 550 persons) on the main road to the district headquarters, an hour's walk away. People generally live in small extended family units, each son and his family having one or two dwellings (one for cooking, the other for sleeping and entertaining visitors) in fairly close proximity to the parents' home. Young children sleep with their parents. As children become older the girls or the boys will sleep at the grandparents' house or in a separate dwelling. With the exception of herdboys who tend the cattle in the fields, most children attend a local primary school until three in the afternoon. At the time of the study a preschool was being initiated, and children between the ages of 2 and five also began attending "school."

As men in many families are rarely at home, they play a very minor role in the upbringing of their children. Mothers, grandmothers, and older siblings, both girls and boys, share the responsibility for the very young child, the grandmother taking over for the mother when the latter must work in the fields, the older brother or especially sister (or in some cases a live-in niece) taking over from mother or grandmother once school is out in the afternoon. Infants are usually secured on the back, are nursed when they cry, and accompany the mother or caregiver everywhere. Children are spaced about two and a half years apart (though children are usually weaned before this time – often by the age of 18 months), and it is at the time of the arrival of a new sibling that the child enters a new social stage. From this time on the mother is preoccupied with the new infant and the older child begins to spend more time with his or her peer group or in helping with household chores and care of the new infant. Verbal interaction between mother and the 2-year-old assumes a more directive and disciplinary, rather than an engaging and entertaining, function. This shift in the type of speech to children will be noted later in a discussion of the data. It is influenced by the fact that the mother's main preoccupation has become the infant and, except for morning, evening, and mealtimes, the loosely structured peer group now dominates the older child's social and linguistic interaction.

Interaction with infants begins while mother and newly born infant are in confinement for the first two to three months of the infant's life. During this time female relatives and older children care for the mother and child, cooking food for them, doing laundry and other household chores. Female visitors

come to bring food and to see, hold, talk with, and talk about the infant. The infant's older sibling spends much time in verbal interaction with the mother and infant, often imitating the mother's responses to the infant by telling it to be quiet, to nurse, or to go to sleep. The older child will often play with an "infant" (a rock, shoe, or empty lotion bottle) of his or her own, telling the mother, "My baby has gone to sleep, has yours?" Thus the infant quickly becomes the center of household and visitor attention, and the older child shifts roles from being the cared-for to helping care for the younger child, including occasionally telling the infant what to say.

Speech to infants and young children includes the use of a high-pitched register, the repetition of utterances, questions, and the use of terms of respectful address – ntate 'father' and 'me 'mother', terms of endearment such as ngoanes'o 'my sibling', clan names, and nicknames. In contrast, however, infants' and young children's attention is often secured through the use of abrupt physical movement and/or loud vocalizations. Indeed the mother of one of the children in the study used a loud shouting voice equally with adults, her 2-month-old infant and her 30-month-old daughter. Daily speech and threats both were delivered with the same volume. Normal pitch and syntactic constructions are used with infants and young children when they are being talked to seriously or reprimanded. High pitch and modified phonology and syntax appear to be used mostly in contexts where the intent is to amuse or pacify the child. Verbal interaction from infancy is both dyadic (between two people) and triadic (among three people – Schieffelin 1979). The use of assisting prompts by older children during question routines used with younger children and infants is one of the principle cases of child-to-child use of ere.

Threats are a common means of social control over children. The phrase Ke tla u shapa 'I will lash you' is used from infancy on through older childhood, though it is rarely, if ever, enacted. These threats normally take the first person form in Sesotho, though they are occasionally found in the agentless passive form U tla shapuoa 'You will be lashed'.

Basotho view of how children learn to talk

There is no single explanation of how children learn to talk. Some Basotho say that children learn to talk by listening to what adults and those of the household say and then repeating. Others say that children are taught to talk by example (Ere 'me 'Say "mother"') or by pointing to an object and asking Ke eng ntho eo? 'What is that thing?', and that the child will try to repeat/answer and will gradually learn. Some say speech to children should be slow so the child will understand. Still others maintain that children who are

frequently interacted with and encouraged to respond will begin to verbalize at an earlier age than their peers. (The woman who professed this philosophy had children who were extremely verbal at age 2.)

Regardless of the individual theories about how children learn how to talk, there is a general consensus that children are taught how to speak and act appropriately, and that, when they produce a new grammatical construction, someone must have taught it to them. Indeed, teaching one's child how to talk is seen as one of the major responsibilities of mothers, other caregivers, and the community at large. The Sesotho proverb *Ngoana ea sa lleng o shoela tharing* 'The child who doesn't cry will die in bed' or 'A quiet person (one who can't voice his/her feelings) will perish' seems to capture some of the importance placed on learning how to verbalize. Children need to know how to interact with others, and they must be taught the appropriate ways of doing so. As a result, frequent "practice sessions," or verbal routines, take place. These include prompting, question routines, and recitation of songs, numbers, names of family members, clan recitations (*thothokiso*), and church prayers. These routines often appear to be for the caregiver's entertainment as much as for the education of the child, there being frequent accompaniment by laughter, praise, and clapping of hands. The belief that children are taught how to speak is evidenced over and over again by comments of mothers and other caregivers concerning children's acquisition of new verbal behavior. This is illustrated in Ex. 1 (see appendix for transcription notations).

Example 1

[Hlobohang (27; 3 months) and male cousin Mololo (5 years) are playing "cars" indoors. Grandmother MM approaches and tries to engage H in conversation. Female cousin Ntsoaki (8 years) reprimands Mol for prompting H unnecessarily.]

MM > H, Mol: Batla-ng bolo.   E   kae   bolo?
              look-for-pl ball   it's where ball
              Look for the ball. Where's the ball?

[H points under bed]

H: tse tseena.
   (ke eena)
   cop dem
   Here it is.

Mol > H: *Ere* e   teng ka mona,
            Say it's here in here,

            ere e teng.
            say it's here.

N > Mol: U   mo ruta ho-bua empa [o nts'a   tseba
            you him teach to talk but   he cont-he know
            You teach him how to talk, but he already knows

            ho-bua.]
            to talk
            how to talk.

MM > H: [E   kae   bolo?]
           it's where ball?
           Where's the ball?

                              H: E te-, e   teng
                                  It's-, it's there

                                  ka   mane.
                                  over there.

Here Ntsoaki accuses Mololo of "teaching" the younger Hlobohang how to respond to the question. Contrary to some Basotho adult beliefs, children *do* initiate speech on their own without being taught to do so. Prompts, then, are most commonly used when a child does not have a response, is slow in providing a response, or gives one that the prompter feels is inadequate or inappropriate.

The use of prompts

Sesotho prompts are used for various social and linguistic functions. *Ere* is the most frequently used, but others also occur, some of them in functionally restricted ways. *Ere* is used in both direct reported speech ("Say 'I'm going to hit you' ") and indirect reported speech ("Say you're going to hit him"); other prompts are usually used in either direct or indirect constructions, but rarely in both. Prompting also occurs between prompter and child (dyadic interaction) or among prompter, child, and a third party (triadic interaction). The large majority of Sesotho prompts were used in triadic speech contexts and in direct reporting form, as seen in Table 3.1. Dyadic use of *ere* is found in question routines, including the recitation of lineage, numbers, and songs, in some prompts for politeness and pronunciation, and in children's play with each other. These are contexts where the speaker tells the child to respond with a certain verbal form. Triadic prompts are used extensively in question routines, transmission of messages, or in getting a child to talk or perform for others in general conversation and in corrections for politeness. In these situations the speaker tells the child to respond to another person with a particular verbal construction. The individual kinds of prompts found in dyadic and triadic prompting situations with Basotho children will be identified below. Table 3.1 provides the number and percentage of dyadic versus triadic prompting situations, and the amount of direct versus indirect prompting. It should be noted that there is far less prompting used with older children 'Neuoe and Tsebo.

There were only three prompts used between adult and 'Neuoe and nine prompts used between adult and Tsebo. Data on 'Neuoe are much sparser than on the other three children, accounting for the small number of prompts

Table 3.1. *Prompting forms (number and percentage of prompts directed toward each child)*

	Dyadic vs. triadic		Indirect vs. direct		Total
Adult > child					
H	15 (14%)	93 (86%)	34 (31%)	74 (69%)	108
L	31 (32%)	66 (68%)	20 (21%)	77 (79%)	97
N	—	3 (100%)	3 (100%)	—	3
T	4 (44%)	5 (55%)	—	9 (100%)	9
Child > child					
H	4 (8%)	44 (92%)	13 (27%)	35 (73%)	48
L	25 (58%)	18 (42%)	10 (23%)	33 (77%)	43
N	—	16 (100%)	3 (19%)	13 (81%)	16
T	2 (100%)	—	—	2 (100%)	2

directed toward her. Note, however, that while she is still a young child and would be expected to receive several prompts from adults, she has actually received many more from other children. This reflects the fact that her primary orientation is already that of the older siblings and peers to which Tsebo belongs. The small number of prompts directed toward Tsebo by both adults and other children reflects the tendency to use more prompts with younger children and fewer prompts with older children as they exhibit more social and linguistic sophistication and spend more time with peers. Prompts directed toward older Tsebo show a tendency to use fewer question-routine prompts and more politeness or socialization prompts. Prompts to younger children included many triadic prompting routines; and over two-thirds were direct. The higher percentage of dyadic child–child prompts used with Litlhare is due to a large amount of one-to-one interaction with her older brother while looking at pictures from a schoolbook.

Adults and older children (7–12 years) accounted for approximately 70 percent of prompts to Hlobohang and Litlhare; young children (4–6 years) provided about 30 percent, primarily in the areas of prompting assistance in question routines and in correcting for politeness responses, and some in general play situations. In contrast, adults and older children spend much more time and effort in trying to get children to perform verbally, either through question routines and prompts therein or by telling a child to *bina* 'sing', *bala* 'count', *juetsa* 'tell', *botsa* 'ask', or *(tsamaea) u re* '(go) and tell', *echo* 'say so', *bitsa* 'call', *hoelehetsa* 'call out to', and *bolella* 'tell'. Occasionally prompts will also be given without any of these prompting words used, but rather directed toward the child as a response to a question or in correcting speech using a politeness form (see Ex. 8 at 1). *Ere* 'say', *juetsa* 'tell' and *bolella* 'tell' (in the sense of "tell me"), *bina* 'sing', and *bala*

'count' are used during interaction between two people where the prompter is trying to get the child to talk. These are also found in triadic interaction, where the prompter tries to get the child to perform for another person. *Tsamaea u re* 'go and tell', *botsa* 'ask', and the calling-out prompts are all used in triadic contexts. Only *echo* 'say so' is found exclusively in dyadic interactions.

Contexts in which prompts are used

Getting children to talk – ho buisa ngoana

Ho buisa ngoana 'to make a child talk' was one of the activities of caregivers with young children. Getting children to talk was not a problem for the researcher, as all children but one in the study were extremely verbal and usually responded enthusiastically to prompts. However, between a fourth and a third of prompts to 2- to 3-year-olds were specifically initiated in order to make children talk. In the case of Hlobohang, grandmother MM spent much time in getting him to talk, not only to the researcher, but in general. It is obvious that Hlobohang was well versed in various verbal routines, including some of the basic elements of lineage recitation, clan recitation, songs, and games by the age of 24 months, and that much time was spent with him in mastering these routines.[1] Hlobohang's family situation was somewhat different from that of most children. He was still an only child at the age of 3½ years and in many ways was still deferentially treated as the *ngoana* 'child' of the family when most of his peers had a year-old sibling who assumed that role. In addition to an older male and female cousin Hlobohang had a grandmother, mother, and maternal uncle sharing the same small house and providing him with much more one-to-one adult attention, both male and female, than most children received. This would account in part for the high instance of both dyadic and triadic prompts associated with getting Hlobohang to talk. In the following example Hlobohang's mother encourages him to talk to the researcher.

Example 2
[Mother MH tries unsuccessfully to get her son Hlobohang (25;0 months) to talk. She is pointing toward the researcher's tape recorder and telling him to ask the researcher to give it to him.]

MH: (1) *Ere* m-phe   ntho eo.
         say "me-give thing that"
         Say "Give me that thing."

   (2) *Ere* ausi Mamello a   u   fe   ntho.
         say sister M   she you give thing
         Say that sister M should give you the thing.

(3) *Ere* a   u   fe   ntho.
     say she you give thing
     Say that she should give (it) to you.
(4) *Ere.*   (5) *Echo.*
     say   say so
     Say (it).   Say so.
(6) *Ere* m-phe   ntho ena,   *echo,*   *mo juetse.*
     say "me-give thing this,"   say so,   her tell
     Say "Give me this thing," say so, tell her.
(7) *Ere* a   u   lets-etse   kumba-kumba.
     say she you play-ben/prf tape recorder
     Say that she should play the tape recorder for you.

Here *ere* 'say' is used in both direct reporting (turns 1 and 6) as well as indirect reporting (turns 2, 3, and 7). In turns 4 and 5 the child is left to fill in what is to be said. *Echo* 'say so' is used in isolation, while *ere* 'say' is followed by either direct or indirect speech. Notice here the use of repetition, of the imperative message through various nonidentical forms, all relaying the same message. The child is thus presented with a variety of direct and indirect reporting forms from which to construct his or her response.

Ere 'say', *echo* 'say so', and *juetsa* 'tell' are not the only prompts used in getting children to talk. On occasion, several prompts are used in the same speech act, as seen in Ex. 2. *Juetsa* 'tell', *botsa* 'ask', and (*tsamaea*) *u re* are used as prompts of indirect reporting, necessitating a shift of pronoun usage on the part of the child. Almost half of the question-routine prompts to Hlobohang included instances of "tell" or "ask." Some of these were used by themselves, but many were used in full sentences, most in indirect reporting form. Young children do occasionally have problems with the shift from indirect reporting to direct reporting ("Say you want to go" versus "Say 'I want to go' "), but they usually produce the correct transpositions by the age of 30 months.[2] Such indirect triadic prompts are often used in the reporting or asking of information, as will be seen in Exx. 6 and 8.

Bina 'sing' and *bala* 'count', a somewhat different sort of prompt, were also used to get children to respond verbally. They were used especially in prompts to Litlhare, accounting for almost half of adult attempts to get her to talk. Older sibling caregivers (aged 7–12 years) frequently used this kind of prompt to encourage children to talk. In the process, children learned songs and learned how to count. These are skills that they would be called on to demonstrate once they started school.

The use of *ere* 'say' and other prompts for getting children to talk provides adults and other caregivers with ways in which to initiate and maintain verbal and social interaction with children. *Bitsa* 'call' and *hoelehetsa* 'call out to' are triadic prompts used to persons visible in the distance or not visibly present. This kind of prompt is often used to distract a child's attention or to change the course of interaction. Hlobohang's mother, in calming his crying,

prompted him at 25;0 months to call out to the neighbor girl: *Ere a tle le tl'o bapala. Mo hoelehetse. Mo juetse. Ere a tle le tl'o bapala* 'Say she should come and you can play. Call out to her. Tell her. Say she should come and you can play.' Calling out in rural Lesotho is a particularly important means of communication, as open expanses of mountain grassland enable persons to see each other and communicate for miles. Village meetings are frequently heralded by an early-morning caller who stands on the hill above the village and informs people when and where to meet. Thus calling out is a very functional means of communication, and children are prompted early on to communicate in this way.

Prompts used in question routines

Question routines are another means of engaging children in conversation (Demuth 1983). They are used for "practice" in talking, to see if the child understands and can respond intelligently or with a sense of humor, to engage the child in social interaction, and occasionally to find out specific information (Where is your mother? When did she leave? Where did she go?). Questions are often game-oriented with children of 2 years, but later in life such question sequences play an important role in a child's social interactions. At early ages prompts in question routines are used to help initiate or direct conversation toward the topic the prompter chooses. Prompts are used to maintain conversation when a child needs assistance with a response, or on the rare occasion when a child refuses to participate in the interaction. Prompts in question routines are used frequently by adults speaking to children and occasionally by older children speaking to younger children (Ex. 1). Topics include everything from name and lineage routines to clan recitations, questions concerning travel, the whereabouts of a family member, food, and the acquisition of a new article of clothing. In Ex. 3 mother S constructs a question routine by prompting Litlhare, who is interacting with her brother.

Example 3
[Brother Namane (5;5 years) is conversing indoors with sister Litlhare (30;2 months). Mother S is attending to her newborn infant and prompts L to ask N questions in a question-routine format.]

N > L: Ke tla   re   Elisha a   tle.
         I   will say E   he come
         I'll say that E should come.

S > L: *Ere* ke   ngoan'a   mang?
         say cop child-pos who
         Say "Whose child is he?"

L > N: ana mang?
         (ke ngoana (oa) mang?)
         cop child   pos who
         Whose child is he?

N > L: Ke ngoan'a   bo-Linpoetseng.
       cop child-pos pl-Lpts
       He's Lpts's family's child.

S > L: *Ere* o   kae?
       say he's where?
       Say "Where is he?"

                              L > N: o   kae?
                                     he's where
                                     Where is he?

N > L: Ke ngoana holima tsela– oa lisa.
       cop child on-top road   he herd
       He's the child above road– he herds.

S > L: *Ere* o   lisa-ng?
       say he herds-what?
       Say "What does he herd?"

                              L > N: isa-ng?
                                     (o lisa-ng)
                                     he herd-what
                                     What does he herd?

N > L: O lisa   likhomo.
       He herds cattle.

S > L: *Ere* o   moholo?
       say he's big
       Say "Is he big?"

                              L > N: o holo?
                                     (o moholo)
                                     he's big
                                     Is he big?

N > L: E-ea.
       Yes.

S > L: *Ere* oo.
       say oh
       Say "Oh."

                              L > N: Oo.
                                     Oh.

S > L: *Ere* kea utloa 'nake.
       say I   hear brother.
       Say "I hear (you), brother."

                              L > N Ke ukoe 'nake.
                                    (kea utloa)
                                    I hear (you), brother.

                              [L laughs.]

Litlhare laughs at the end of this prompting/question period, realizing it is a game or routine. Mother S has provided Litlhare with a framework for constructing her own question sequences, a skill that begins to develop during the third year of life.

It is not only adults who prompt in question routines, but also older siblings. Ex. 4 illustrates a prompting assist by an older child to a younger child

in a question routine initiated by an adult. The older child imposes her bias on how the question should be answered.

Example 4

[It is raining outside. 'Neuoe (30;1 months) and cousin Tsebo (46;1 months) are indoors with grandmother J and various other neighbor women. The girls are playing house together on the floor. Grandmother J asks N what she is doing and T prompts her.]

J > N: 'Neuoe uena le   etsa joang?
       N   you you-pl do   what
       N what are you doing?

                              N > J: Re i-sa–
                                     (rea i-tlhatsoa)
                                     we rfl-wash
                                     We're washing.

J > N: E?
       What?

                              N > J: rea i-satsoa.
                                     (i-tlhatsoa)
                                     we rfl-wash
                                     We're washing.

J > N: Lea   i-tlhatsoa?
       you-pl rfl-wash
       You're washing yourselves?

                              N > J: E.
                                     Yes.

J > N: Le   i-tlhatsoa ho-kae?
       you-pl rfl-wash where
       Where are you washing?

T > N: *Ere* nokan-eng.
       say creek-loc
       Say "At the creek."

J > N: Le   i-tlhatsoa ho-kae?
       you-pl rfl-wash where
       Where are you washing?

                              N > J: Linokan-eng–eng.
                                     creeks-loc–loc
                                     At–at the creeks.

J > N: Linokan-eng?
       creeks-loc
       At the creeks?

                              N > J: E,   lukan-eng.
                                     (linokan-eng)
                                     yes, creek(s)-loc
                                     Yes, at the creek(s).

[J pauses, giving N a chance to
correct her pronunciation.]

J > N: Au, u   i-tlhatsoa kae?
       oh, you rfl-wash   where
       Oh, where are you washing?

T > N: *Ere* ke i–   i-tlhatsoa linokan-eng.
　　　　say "I rfl– rfl-wash creeks-loc"
　　　　Say "I w–wash at the creeks."

Children's use of prompting for question routines is usually of the isolated, one-turn type used by Tsebo above. Adults also use one-liner prompts, but during question routines they often use multiple prompts as in Ex. 3.

Prompts for politeness

Ere is the main prompt used for eliciting appropriate and/or politeness responses. These forms are always used in direct reporting form and are often triadic, though occasionally dyadic. In Sesotho, politeness routines take the form of thank you's, greetings, acknowledgements of being spoken to, acknowledgements of receipt of gifts, respect to elders, and proper terms of address. Appropriate responses to these social situations are taught from an early age, though lapses in the children's performance still occur at 5 and 6 years of age, as seen in Ex. 5.

Example 5

[Mother S gives son Namane (5;3 years) and daughter Litlhare (28;0 months) part of an apple. S prompts L to say "thank you," then reprimands N for not having said "thank you" on his own, without being told to do so.]

[S finishes cutting apple and N grabs for his share.]

S > N: Hei– motho oa khala enoa. Ache!
　　　　hey– person pos greedy that Hey!
　　　　Hey–that greedy person.

　　　　　　　　　　　　L:　　Apole (4×)
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　Apple

[S gives L her share of apple.]

S > L: E nke ke ena, ua e batla?
　　　　it take cop dem you it want
　　　　Take it, here it is, do you want it?

　　　　　　　　　　　[L starts to take apple with one hand.]

　　　　　　　　　　　L > S: Ena empe.
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　dem bad
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　This one is dirty.

S > L: E-e, nka ka   matsoho amabeli.
　　　　no, take with hands   two.
　　　　No, take with both hands.

　　　　　　　　　　　[L takes apple with two hands]

S > L: *Ere* danki[3] 'me.
　　　　Say "Thank you, mother."

　　　　　　　　　　　L > S: Danki 'me.
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　Thank you, mother.

[N quietly munching apple]

S > N: Helang, motho ena o   fapane   hloho ena.
　　　　hey,   person this he's mixed-up head this
　　　　Hey, this person is crazy.

　　　　Ere danki 'me.　　　　　　Pateriki, na ha u
　　　　Say "Thank you, mother." N,   ? neg you
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　N, don't you know how
　　　　nts'o   sa tsebe ho re　　　danki   'me?!
　　　　cont you still know to say　　thank-you mother
　　　　to say "Thank you, mother" yet?!

N > S: Danki   'me.
　　　　Thank-you mother.

S > N: He! Mehlolo he!
　　　　Hey! Miracles, really!

S > N: Haeba monna ea makalo ka uena o   ntsa sa tseba
　　　　if   man of size of you SC still neg know
　　　　If a man the size of you still doesn't know
　　　　ho-tankisa. Mm!
　　　　to thank   exlc
　　　　how to thank. Really!

Learning proper forms of politeness is an important kind of socialization for young children, accounting for 27 percent and 22 percent of adult prompts to Hlobohang and Litlhare respectively. Though Basotho society is not highly stratified, there is a definite organization toward the respect of elders, and children are taught to indicate this deference verbally. When Litlhare is 28;0 months her mother, after prompting her to use a term of address with an older person's proper name, asks her, *U motho a joang ea sa hlompeng batho ba baholo?* 'What kind of person are you who doesn't respect elders?'

Prompting for social instruction

Prompts also function in the general instruction of various socially important issues (giving and receiving of gifts and food, assertion, talking to infants) and the teaching of certain values that are not explicitly discussed but rather implicitly suggested or demonstrated. This kind of prompt is used more and more frequently as children mature. With Litlhare it was used hardly at all, whereas with Hlobohang it accounted for 8 percent of the prompts used by adults and was used once by an older child. Occasionally it is introduced into the creation of stories and indicates what the child should do in a hypothetical situation, as seen in the following example.

Example 6

[Father Rm is home from the mines, engaged in fabrication of a story with his son Hlobohang (34;3 months) and cousin Mololo (5;6 years). Rm is helping H to express what he is going to buy for whom when he goes to the city of the mines.]

Rm > H: U il'o   etsa-ng Khaute-ng?
        you going-to do-what mines-loc
        What are you going to do in Johannesburg?
                            H > Rm: Ke il'o   thonaka lieta.
                                    I going-to pick-up shoes
                                    I'm going to get some shoes.

Rm > H: U il'o   thonaka lieta?
        you going-to pick-up shoes
        You're going to get some shoes?

Rm > H: [Le eng hape?]   H > Rm: E-ea, [tse] nyanyane.
        And what else?   Yes, little ones.

                              H > Rm: Ha   keta, ke li
                                                 (ke qeta)
                                      when I   finish, I   them
                                      When I finish, I'll kick

                                      raha ka   bolo encha:.
                                      kick with ball new
                                      them with a *new* ball.

                              H > Rm: Le ea Bololo, k'il'o
                                                     (ke il'o)
                                      and of Mol,   I going-to
                                      And for Mol, I'm going to

                                      mo rek-ela   eona.
                                      him buy-ben it
                                      buy some for him too.

Rm > H: Ausi Mamello u   na   u   tla mo rek-ela eng?
        sister M   you   you will her buy-ben what
        Sister M, what would you you buy for her?
                    ⋮
Rm > H: *Mo juetse* hore u   tla mo rek-ela eng?
        her tell   that you will her buy-ben what
        Tell her what you will buy for her.

Mol > H, Rm: 'Na ke tla mo rek-ela   kompa-kompa.
             me I will her buy-ben tape recorder
             As for me, I'll buy her a tape recorder.

                              H > Mol, Rm: 'Na ke tla mo rek-ela
                                           me I will her buy-ben
                                           As for me, I'll buy her

                                           retuoe!
                                           radio
                                           a radio!

Here the prompt *juetsa* is used to have Hlobohang include the researcher (sister Mamello) in the hypothetical buying spree that would take place. Mololo has picked up on what kind of response the situation calls for and furthermore selects an appropriate item for the researcher to receive. Hlobohang then too responds, modifying his response, but staying within the general semantic domain of items that he knows the researcher would be happy to receive. The sharing of goods and giving of gifts after a trip are

essential to appropriate Basotho values and are often "taught" in question routines and with the aid of prompts, as illustrated here. Children must learn how to interpret situational contexts such as these so that they can respond in the appropriate manner. The learning of such skills requires of the child a certain ability to interpret social values, norms, and beliefs.

With household possessions, and food in particular, there are certain socially acceptable means of sharing and distribution. The learning of appropriate behavior in these socially delicate and potentially embarrassing situations involves careful observation on the part of the child as well as direct instruction by caregivers. The following example illustrates the subtle use of a prompt to an older child in a potentially face-threatening situation.

Example 7

[Tsebo (4;3 years) is putting the tea kettle on the stove when hard-of-hearing neighbor man Tbs wanders in. There is only enough tea for researcher Mamello. Mother M prompts her daughter Tsebo.]

Tbs > T: U   pheh-etse   Mamello tee?
         you cook-ben/prf M   tea
         Are you cooking tea for Mamello?
                        (1) T > Tbs: Aa.
                                     No.

Tbs > T: E?
         What?
(2) M > T: *Ere* tsoekere ha e-e'o.
           say sugar   neg any
           Say "There isn't any sugar."
                              T > Tbs: Ah– tsoekere ha e-e'o
                                       no– sugar   neg any
                                       No– there isn't any sugar.

Tbs > T: Ketlele ee u   nts'o
         kettle this you cont you
         This kettle, what are you

         [etsa-ng   ka eona?]
         doing-what with it?
         doing with it?   T > Tbs: [Tsoekere ha e-e'o.]
                                                sugar   neg any
                                                There isn't any sugar.
Tbs > T: E?
         What?
                              T > Tbs: Tsoekere ha e-e'o
                                       sugar   neg any
                                       There isn't any sugar.

Tbs > T: Tsoekere ha e-e'o?
         sugar   neg any?
         There isn't any sugar?
                              T > Tbs: E.
                                       Yes.

Tbs > T: Oo.
         Oh.
[Tbs takes the hint and exits.]

Food is a precious commodity, and, while it is to be shared with family, family visitors, and friends, it is a limited good and cannot always be shared with everyone. Here Tsebo realizes that there is not enough tea and responds negatively to the old man's question in (1). Her mother then prompts her in (2) with the socially appropriate response for saying that there is not enough tea to go around.

The example given above is an instance of adults talking through a child. Note that the old man does not ask the mother for tea, nor does the mother tell him there is none. Rather the entire transaction takes place with the child as the intermediary. This serves not only to socialize the child, but also to avoid possible embarrassment between the actual negotiating parties. As this example illustrates, prompts begin to assume a more serious and "real life" role as children become older. Less of an emphasis is placed on play or getting older children to talk, and prompting takes on a more instructional function.

Children are also prompted to talk to infants, as well as infants being "prompted" to talk to others. In Ex. 8 mother S prompts Litlhare in how to tell her infant sister to be quiet.

Example 8

[Mother S and daughter Litlhare (36;0 months) are talking about the fact that infant Kp (1;0 month) has woken on the bed and is crying. Notice in the fifth turn (1) the use of a direct prompt with no prompting word used.]

[Kp crying]

S > L: Ach, 'na ke utloa hore oa lla.
Oh, me, I hear that she's crying.

      L > S: a   hlo[l]iea!
      (oa hlolia)
      She's making-noise!

S > L > Kp: E, a   s'ka re hlolia,
yes, she/sb neg us make-noise
Yes, she shouldn't make noise for us,

mo juetse, mo juetse.
her tell, her tell
tell her, tell her.

      L > Kp: A   nhlolia   uena!
      (s'ka n-hlolia   uena)
      neg me-make-noise, you!
      Don't make noise for me, you!

(1) S > L > Kp: *S'ka n-hlolia uena!*
neg me-make-noise you
"Don't make noise for me, you!"

      L > Kp: A   nhlo[l]ia.
      (sk'a n-hlolia)
      neg me-make-noise
      Don't make noise for me.

S > L > Kp: E, *ere* s'ka n-hlolia moholoane.
yes, say neg me-make-noise
Yes, say "Don't make noise for me big sister."

      L > Kp: oshian
      (moholoane)
      big sister.

S > L > Kp: *Mo juetse.*
her tell
Tell her.

      L > Kp: A   nhloea   oholoane.
      (s'ka n-hlolia   moholoane)
      neg me-make-noise big sister
      Don't make noise for me big sister.

S > L > Kp: *Ere* s'ka hlolia   moholoane oa-hau.
say neg make-noise big-sister your
Say "Don't make noise (for) your big sister."

      L > Kp: A   kolia   oholo
      (s'ka hlolia   moholoane
      neg make-noise big-sister
      Don't make noise (for) your big

      a-hau.
      oa-hau)
      your
      sister.

Here Litlhare is provided with a model for the kind of behavior that is appropriate for interaction with infants. Social instruction also takes place in telling children how to act and react to interaction with one another. Some of this interaction takes the form of prompting for assertive behavior. In the following example, it is another member of the peer group who prompts the younger child.

Example 9

[Two boys are fighting. Hlobohang (31;0 months) hits Kh (6 years) with a stick. Lk (6 years) prompts H in how to defend himself verbally.]

[Kh threatening H with hand]

Kh > H: (Ka u   mula.
(ke tla)
I will you beat
I'll beat you.

      [H trying to avoid a blow]

      H > Kh: Hei, hei uena, hei uena.
      Hey, hey you, hey you.

Kh > H: Ka   u   shapa.
(ke tla)
I will you lash
I'll lash you.

Lk > H: *Ere* ua hana Hloboang.
Say you refuse H.

      H > Kh: Kea hana.
      I refuse.

[Kh shows fist]

Kh > H: Ke tla   ore.
      I   will like-this
      I'll do like this.

        [H shows fist back]

        H > Kh: Ke tla   ore.
               I   will like-this
               I'll do like this.

Assertion is an important part of the socialization of Basotho children, and it is not infrequent to find children having multiple-turn threatening, insulting, and challenging sessions, as seen in Ex. 9. Adults too participate in such sessions with children in a play type of routine, as well as in serious everyday interaction, thus helping children establish the kinds of verbal behavior that they will need to hold their own among their peers. The actual percentage of assertion prompts, however, is small in comparison with those used for getting children to talk, for politeness, and for question routines.

Again, *ere* 'say' features prominently, though not exclusively, in socialization prompts. The majority of the interaction is triadic, where the child is being directed in how to act with or react to others. The form of these prompts therefore almost always involves direct reporting. Adults provide the bulk of the socialization prompts to children, though older children will also occasionally direct younger children in assertive behavior, as was seen in Ex. 9.

Word games

Prompts such as *ere* and *echo* are usually employed with word games. Word games are primarily dyadic and always involve direct reporting, with emphasis being placed on the direct repetition or imitation of what the speaker has said. Prompts used in word games occured in 7 percent of Hlobohang's and 8 percent of Litlhare's corpus. Examples of word-game prompts include prompting for tongue twisters, story introductions, counting (in English and Sesotho), learning songs, mothers' grade-school approximations of English (Ex. 10), and the "test" word for determining when a child should be weaned, as in Ex. 11. These routines serve to amuse, distract, or entertain the child (and/or the adults), as seen in the following examples.

Example 10

[Litlhare (30;2 months) is jumping up and down and calling to mother S. S prompts with a bit of her grade-school English.]

        L: ko   vona.
          (tloo bona)
          Come see.

        [L jumping up and down]

S: a:yam jəmping.
  I am jumping.

S: *Choo* joalo–jəmping.
  Say likewise–jumping.

S: a:yam jəmping. (×3)

S: E,   bua   joale.
  Right, talk then.

                    L: E?
                    What?

S: *Ere* a:yam jəmping.
  Say "I am jumping."

Example 11

[Neighbor woman N and son Jobo (5 years) are visiting Hlobohang (25;0 months), cousin Mololo (4;8 years), mother MH and grandmother MM. The women are trying to get the boys to say difficult words, among them the "test" word for weaning, *Ha Makunyapane* 'at M's place'.[4]]

[MH trying to get H's attention]

MH > H: Hloboang.

                    H > MH: M?
                         What?

MH > H: *Ere* Ha Makunyapane.
        Say "Ha Makunyapane."

[Mol and MM talking]

MM > H: Ntate?
        Father?

                    H > MM: M?
                         What?

MM > H: Ha Makunyapane.

                    H > MM: a–ne.

MM > H: M? [Ha Makunyapane.]   H > MM: [a-nyu-ne.]
        What? Ha Makunyapane.

N > MM, MH: [Lea   mo khuisa ka poso] ha a e'so
            you-pl him wean by mistake neg he yet
            You wean him by mistake if he doesn't

            tsebe ho re   Ha Makunyapane.
            know to say Ha Makunyapane
            yet know how to say Ha Makunyapane.

(1) MM > N: O re   a-nyane.
          He says –.

[Women laugh.]

N > J: Jobo ak'o   u   re   Ha Makunyapane.
    Jobo please you say Ha Makunyapane
    Jobo, please say "Ha Makunyapane."

                    J > N: M?
                       What?

N > J: *Ere* Ha Makunyapane. (×2)
    Say "Ha Makunyapane."

                    J > N: a-kuenya-ane.

N > J: Ha mang?
     At whose place?

                    J > N: Ha makuenyatane.

(2) N > MM: Ha makuenyatane!

[All laugh.]

[Women proceed to ask Mololo to repeat, then go on to other
words that are equally difficult for the boys to pronounce.]

Such word games seem to be directed most commonly to children under 5
years of age such as those above, rather than to children above the age of 6.

Corrections and prompts

The correction of pronunciation and grammar is another area where the use of
prompts is occasionally found. Most corrections are dyadic and direct. Again,
as in the use of prompts with word games and politeness prompts, the direct
prompt from the speaker is what the child should repeat exactly. *Ere* again
features prominently in this kind of construction. Correction prompts ac-
counted for only 2 percent and 5 percent of Hlobohang's and Litlhare's corpus
respectively, but were found slightly more frequently in prompts directed to
older Tsebo.

Example 12

[Mother M and daughter Tsebo (46;1 months) are picking pebbles out of wheat so that
it can be sifted and then ground into flour. As usual, T uses a young child's version of
the future marker, *ta*, instead of the adult form *tla*. (The lateral affricate /tl/ is difficult
for young children to pronounce, but a child of Tsebo's age should have no problem.)
M tries unsuccessfully to correct T's pronunciation.]

M: Ha ke re rea li   sefa ka   sefa.
    neg I say we them sift with sieve
    Is is not so that we'll sift them (pebbles) out with the sieve?

                    T: E-ea 'me?
                       What, mother?

M: Re tla sefa!
   We will sift!

                    T: Re ta sefa?
                       (tla)
                       We'll sift?

M: M.
   Yes.

                    T: Ke 'na: ta sefa 'me?
                       ('na ea   tla)
                       cop me   who will sift mother
                       Is it me who will sift mother?

M: M.
   Yes.

                    T: M.
                       Oh.

M: *Ere* ke 'na ea   tla-
   say cop me who will
   Say "It's me who will"–

                    T: sefa.
                       Sift.

M: a tla sefa.
   "who will sift".

                    T: Ke 'na a   ta-
                       (ea   tla)
                       cop me who will
                       It's me who'll–

M: *Ere* a tla.
   Say "who *will*".

                    T: –sefa.
                       sift.

M: –a tla sefa.
   "who will sift".

                    T: E.
                       Yes.

M: *Ere* a tla.
   Say "who will".

                    T: a   tla.
                       who will.

M: M, a   tla sefa.
   Yes, "who will sift".

                    T: M.
                       Yes.

[M and T finish picking pebbles out of wheat and T goes on using *ta* instead of *tla*.]

Basotho children below the age of about 30 months are not usually corrected
for phonology, but their deviant phonological forms are often echoed, or
commented on, as in (1) and (2) in Ex. 11.

Prompts are also used in general conversation, primarily with children
under 3 years of age. Such prompts include asking people for things, accom-
plishing a task, or asking for assistance. These prompts differ from the above
in that they are less "routine" and more spontaneous than those discussed
above. The following section discusses the use of general prompts.

Prompts used in daily discourse

Many of the prompts discussed above have largely been used in play or
routine situations, where interaction had an entertaining function. Prompts are
also used in everyday conversational situations where young children are told
how to request, how to give instructions to others, and how to participate in
daily interactions that are not necessarily culturally defined, as were the
prompts for social instruction. These prompts are found in indirect form.

Thus, when Hlobohang (26.6 months) was having trouble tying his shoes, his grandmother finally told him to ask his older cousin for help: *Ere abuti Mololo a u roese* 'Say (that) brother Mololo should put (them) on for you.' And, when Litlhare (28.0 months) was hungry and her mother was occupied, she was told to ask her older sister for food: *Ere Sebina o tl'o u ngoatela* 'Say (that) Sebina should come to dish out (food) for you.' In this way, children continue to learn how to interact with others in everyday situations. General prompts such as these accounted for 27 percent of Litlhare's adult prompts and 8 percent of Hlobohang's, Hlobohang having a much higher percentage of prompts of a play and fantasy nature than Litlhare.

Speaker, addressee, and developmental prompting trends

These, then, are the contexts in which prompts are used with young Basotho children. Table 3.2 provides a summary of these findings for each of the children in this study. Notice again here the very few prompts directed toward older Tsebo. In addition, the function of these prompts is quite different from that used with younger children. For Tsebo, prompts were mostly for politeness, or were corrections, while adults prompted the younger children for politeness, but also to get them to talk and in general daily interaction. The major focus of prompting by siblings and peers was that of assisting in adult-initiated question routines. Brother Namane used many prompts to Litlhare in general conversation (as did Litlhare's mother), whereas there was comparatively less general conversational prompting found in other sibling/peer-to-child interacting. Older siblings and peers (upwards of 8 years) tended to prompt much more like adults than did younger children.

Basotho adult modes of prompting to children change as the social and linguistic sophistication of the child increases. It has been noted that Hlobohang was in many ways still treated as a *ngoana* and that verbal interaction with his grandmother still included extensive prompting solely for the purpose of getting him to talk to her or to others. By this time his peers had younger siblings, and mothers and grandmothers were preoccupied with the younger child as well as several other children in the household. Interaction with these other 3-, 4-, and 5-year-olds is less social and more directive, and the peer group becomes the primary source of verbal interaction for the child. At this later stage adults still serve an important function in the teaching of appropriate social values and verbal usage. A large portion of her mother's speech to Tsebo (3;7–4;7 years) was of a specific socializing nature, as was seen in Ex. 8. Even at this age, she still had lapses of socially appropriate verbal responses, and had to be prompted occasionally for politeness, though in a different way from that in which a younger child would have been prompted.

Table 3.2. *Functions of prompts (number and percentage of different prompting functions)*

	Talk	Politeness	Question routines	General	Social instruction	Games	Correction	Total
Adult > children								
H	32 (30%)	29 (27%)	19 (18%)	9 (8%)	9 (8%)	8 (7%)	2 (2%)	108
L	23 (24%)	21 (22%)	14 (14%)	26 (27%)	—	8 (8%)	5 (5%)	97
N	1 (33%)	—	—	1 (33%)	1 (33%)	—	—	3
T		4 (44%)	—	—	1 (11%)	—	4 (44%)	9

	Talk	Politeness	Question routines	General	Assertion	Games	Correction	Total
Sibling/peer > children								
H	12 (27%)	—	34 (71%)	6 (12%)	1 (2%)	7 (15%)	—	48
L		5 (12%)	7 (16%)	13 (30%)	—	—	6 (14%)	43
N		—	13 (81%)	1 (6%)	2 (13%)	—	—	16
T		1 (50%)	—	—	—	1 (50%)	—	2

The different use of prompts with younger, as opposed to older, children was illustrated clearly in the politeness prompt in Ex. 5, where the older child was shamed into responding appropriately.

Prompting to children decreases as a child matures and is better able to converse without adult use of these interactional tools. It appears that the skills learned through routines then provide the groundwork for the kind of verbal and social interaction a child will face throughout life. An encounter with a stranger in Lesotho always includes a barrage of questioning, and one must be well versed in what to say and how to say it. Prompting serves an important function in socializing children toward the use of linguistically appropriate responses to these various types of social interaction.

Adults seem concerned with a child's social (and therefore verbal) performance and interaction with others. In contrast, the peer group is more preoccupied with a playmate's contribution to the maintenance of ongoing interactive situations. Adults use a larger number of the prompts, in a large variety of contexts. Older children begin to demonstrate this wider usage of prompts to younger children, while younger children rarely, though occasionally, use prompts to those older than themselves. When older children do use prompts to younger children (Exx. 1, 4, and 9), they tend to prompt primarily in question routines initiated by others, and occasionally for politeness, assertion, and in general play situations. *Ere* and other prompts are occasionally used between adults, especially when one is at a loss to know how to communicate with another. Such cases include that of a mother telling a visitor what to say to attract a child's attention, or a woman providing a friend with a witty line to avoid a potentially embarrassing situation. A similar use of prompts between adults is found with Kaluli, Kwara'ae, and Mexican-American adults. Foreigners too are occasionally told what to say, in terms of both actual linguistic form and social or humorous appropriateness. Further research is needed to determine the extent to which these and similar adult–adult uses of prompting will be found in other groups and societies.

Prompting across cultural/linguistic groups

Other ethnographically based studies of child language acquisition and socialization have considered the role of the "Say . . ." prompt in various cultural and linguistic groups. As has been illustrated in the foregoing discussion, there are several contexts in which children are told what to say. The case of *ere* 'say' and parallel constructions in Sesotho in some way resemble the use of *ɛlɛma* among the Kaluli (Schieffelin 1979), *dile* among Mexican-American families (Eisenberg 1982), *wax* among the Wolof of Senegal (Wills 1977), *uri* reporting in Kwara'ae (Watson-Gegeo & Gegeo this volume), and "say" among various English-speaking children (Iwamura 1980; Miller

1982). Many of these studies note the instructional function of such prompts. The use of prompts varies from one linguistic and cultural group to the next, as well as between families within one social group, as noted in various Kwara'ae households and among Baltimore English-speaking children studied. The findings reported above for Sesotho-speaking children seem most closely to resemble the use of prompts described for Mexican-American and Kwara'ae families. Some of these cross-cultural similarities and differences are briefly considered below. It was noted above that Sesotho prompts are used in both direct and indirect reporting form, though direct reporting is most common. Findings from other societies (Kaluli) indicate that only direct prompts are used. It was also found that both triadic and dyadic prompting forms are used in Sesotho, though triadic is most common. It is triadic prompts that are used most often with the Kaluli, Mexican-American, and Kwara'ae cases studied. Only among the three Baltimore children were interaction and prompting primarily dyadic. Thus, except for the South Baltimore children, where interaction was largely mother–child, cultural groups use prompts most frequently in situations of three or more persons, where the child is told to say something directly to a third party. It was only in cases of indirect reporting that Sesotho-speaking children had to change person (i.e. "Tell him you will . . ." versus "Tell him 'I will . . .'"), and they usually did so correctly by about 30 months.

Basotho prompt children not only to say certain things but also to sing, to count, and to call out to others. Various prompts are also found among the Kwara'ae (counting and calling out), Baltimore children (singing, rhymes, and verbal games), and Mexican-American children (calling out). It is suggested that the functions of prompting will differ from culture to culture.

Politeness prompts appear to be a type of socialization activity important to many cultures. As one might imagine, the kinds of behavior that are emphasized as being polite differ from one society to the next. Among Baltimore children "thank you," "excuse me," "please," and "I'm sorry" feature most prominently. Mexican-American children are told how to make polite requests, and to say "thank you" and "please." Kaluli children are taught to use appropriate terms of address, and Kwara'ae children are prompted for the polite use and answering of questions, greetings, and leave-takings, making requests, accepting food, and carrying on polite conversation.

Basotho adults use prompting as a means to talk "through" children in potentially embarrassing situations. This type of prompting is also noted with Kwara'ae in talking through children. Eisenberg (1982) too notes that the information conveyed in triadic prompts is often directed toward the third person as much as it is used for the instructional benefit of the child.

It was noted that prompting in Sesotho is used to provide children with models for how to interact with infants as well as how to assert themselves in play situations with peers. Socialization for appropriate speech to dolls, or

potential infants, made up a large proportion of the prompts used in the study of English-speaking children in Miller (1982) and are also found directed toward infants with Mexican-American children. In contrast, prompting for assertion is one of the major functions of prompting among the Kaluli (Schieffelin 1979b).

Very few of the Sesotho prompts are used for corrections. Again, we find that with the Baltimore, Kwara'ae, Kaluli, and Mexican-American children studied, correction prompts play a minor if existent role in relation to prompting for appropriate social response.

The present study indicates that the nature of prompting changes as children mature socially and linguistically, and that old routines evolve into actual speech patterns. Watson-Gegeo & Gegeo (this volume) note similarly that calling-out routines used by Kwara'ae adults have been replaced by real calling out by the time children reach the age of 3 years and that other instructional routines have also tapered off by the time the child is 5 years old. Prompts are occasionally used between Basotho adults to each other in embarrassing situations or to provide a witty response. A similar use of prompts between adults is found with Kaluli, Kwara'ae, and Mexican-American adults.

From this brief overview of prompting in other cultures, we find that many of the aspects of prompting found in Basotho culture are also found elsewhere. What is most interesting is that prompting in other languages and cultures appears to be more limited in both form and application than the use of prompts by Basotho. Further research with larger sample populations and from a larger variety of cultures will someday provide us with a better understanding of the social and linguistic roles that prompting can play.

Discussion

Basotho adults say that the use of prompts is one of the ways in which they teach their children how to speak. As Brown (1971) notes, many cultures place emphasis on the social appropriateness of speech rather than on its correct grammatical representation. The teaching of appropriate social speech is one of the goals of prompting in Sesotho. It also serves to initiate, maintain, direct, and control behavior (Exx. 1, 2, 4, and 5). Prompting is used to bring a child into social interaction with others (Exx. 6–9), to learn the use of verbal routines (Ex. 3), for play and amusement (Exx. 10–11), and only occasionally for the correction of phonological or grammatical errors (Ex. 12). But perhaps the major, and increasingly important, function of prompts as a child matures is the imparting of social norms and values, providing the child with a framework for recognizing social cues and for responding accordingly.

The importance and predominance of these same prompting functions in

other societies has been mentioned above. It is suggested here that the frequency of one function over another will necessarily depend on the importance placed on the values of a given society (i.e. Kaluli emphasis on assertion rather than appeal and the lack of naming objects; South Baltimore English-speakers' emphasis on naming and caregiving). It is also suggested that, just as interactional styles differ from one society to the next, some interacting physically and verbally much more with young children (Basotho) than others (Maya Quiche – Pye 1980), each society will also reflect some family variation in what is most important for their children to learn. Such family diversity is amply illustrated by Watson-Gegeo & Gegeo (this volume) in discussion of the Kwara'ae.

Ashton (1967) in his description of the Basotho makes the observation that caregivers do not educate their children until early adolescence, when they are finally taught rules, behaviors, virtues, self-respect, and respect for others. Ashton's concept of "educate" must have been limited to formal means of instruction, for he notes that language and other training does take place in the form of "unobtrusive help and encouragement, rather than direct instruction" (1967:43). It is true that children are not specifically told, "When you are given something you are supposed to say 'Thank you'." Rather, from repeated prompting of the kind demonstrated in Ex. 5, the child learns that it is in these contexts of receiving that the response "Thank you" is appropriate and, in fact, required. Other deductions, such as when and how to give or refuse food, require a greater awareness of cultural norms and integration of contextual cues. Prompting does play a "formal" role in that it provides a model for the child to imitate (in the case of direct reporting prompts), and gives practice with linguistic forms when they occur repeatedly in the same kind of context. But a behaviorist explanation for how children learn to respond appropriately in some contexts will hardly account for the learning of more subtle and complex situations such as when and how to share food. Though Basotho adults say that they use prompts in teaching their children to talk, prompting is also simply part of how one interacts with young children, and the two activities cannot necessarily be specified as distinct. Prompting helps to identify the contexts for which certain verbal responses are appropriate. In this way linguistic forms gradually acquire specific meanings appropriate to given contexts.

Prompts are only one of the many means used in the socialization of Basotho children. Question routines also play a large part in this process, as do games, naming, and peer-group interaction. Prompting has been discussed here in isolation, but it is the integration of all of these forms of social and linguistic interaction that enables a child to become a competent social being.

Prompting thus functions in two ways. It provides a child with a model of appropriate responses to different social situations. In addition, it supplies practice with the linguistic forms by which these appropriate responses should

be realized. Prompting promotes the learning of social competence, and part of this social competence is realized as verbal competence.

Appendix: Transcription conventions

In general, adult and other child speech is found on the left side of the page, while the younger and/or focus child's speech is on the right. The following transcription conventions are used in the examples:

Ages of the children are given at the head of each example in months and weeks (30;2 months) or in years and months (4;5 years).

X > Y or X > Y, Z indicates that X is speaking to person Y or persons Y and Z respectively.

In contrast, X > Y > Z indicates that X is prompting Y to say something to Z.

Sesotho words contained in parentheses () indicate the adult form of the child's utterance.

English words contained in brackets [], but separate from other speech, provide contextual information.

Sesotho utterances which are enclosed by brackets indicate overlapping speech.

(×4) indicates that an utterance was exactly repeated four times.

A colon (a:) indicates nonphonemic vowel lengthening.

Vertical dots .

.

. indicate the passage of time or a pause or break in the discourse.

Brackets around the letter *l* indicate that the sound was rendered as an /l/ rather than its expected allophone /d/ before high vowels.

Glosses include (1) a morpheme-by-morpheme translation and (2) a running translation.

Notes

1 Miller (1982), Eisenberg (1982), and Wills (1977) have similarly noted that, although children might have been prompted to perform for the researcher, in fact

prompting was frequently engaged in both with visitors and with other family members.

2 Eisenberg (1982) also notes that Mexican-American children did not change person marking on indirect verb forms until 26 months and 33 months, though they did change pronouns before that age. Such indirect triadic prompts are often used in the reporting or asking of information, as will be seen in Exx. 6 and 8.

3 *Danki* is a loan word from Dutch/Afrikaans meaning "thank you." The equivalent Sesotho word is *kea leboha*.

4 In the past, when men spent years at the mines before returning home, children were nursed till the age of 5 or so, being finally weaned when they were old enough to say something difficult like *Ha Makunyapane*, the choice of word varying with the region (personal communication, 'Mamolete Mohapi). Here, the women prompt the boys to say difficult words, and the neighbor woman protests when Hlobohang, who was weaned at 18 months, has problems saying *Ha Makunyapane*.

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