FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE AND SPEECH PLAY:
A STUDY OF FIRST GRADE CHILDREN

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CHAPTER ONE

This paper is a study of figurative language and speech play in first grade children. I will describe what types of figurative language the children use and comprehend and discuss the role of figurative language, and specifically metaphor, in speech play. I will emphasize the need to study children’s language using anthropological methods as a separate entity from adult language. In this chapter, I will present a survey of the literature concerning children’s speech play and figurative language, and then I will provide a brief introduction to my work.

The investigation of figurative language in children dates from the work of two psychologists, Asch and Nerlove (1960). They coined the expression "double-function" for terms which "refer jointly to physical and psychological data." (Asch and Nerlove: 47) These were considered an "elementary instance of metaphorical thinking." (Asch and Nerlove: 48) Using standard psychological testing techniques on three to twelve year old children, they explored the developmental sequence in acquiring understanding of these terms. They posited that 1) physical object reference is learned first, 2) psychological sense is learned after that, and 3) the dual relation can then be understood. They further suggested that this last stage is only found in the nine year olds and older, and that this age group still lacks understanding of the meaning of the double function.

These findings have set the stage for figurative language investigation over the past two decades. The idea that has had the greatest influence on more recent studies is the
developmental sequence of metaphoric competence. Asch and Nerlove did not assign metaphoric capabilities until adolescence. They conclude that nine to twelve year olds have the capacity for comprehension of double function terms; however, they claim that: "There was no evidence that they had been aware in the past of the double function." (Asch and Nerlove: 53) In other words, these children could identify the double function, but they did not do so on their own. Asch and Nerlove's conclusions have been re-examined; in fact, it has been through this process that their study has been most beneficial. Another aspect of particular note is that the Asch and Nerlove study only explored the comprehension of figurative language. It is necessary to distinguish between comprehension, production, and explication of figurative language.

In the mid-seventies the interest in children's figurative language was revived. In fact, children's language has just become a study in its own right; as psychologists have become more interested in child development, child language has also become an interest. From there came the realization that children's language is more than just the study of developmental stages of adult language.

Howard Gardner has been foremost of the psychologists and educators in the field of metaphoric development. Along with his colleagues of Project Zero at Harvard University, he has done a number of studies, focusing on child metaphor. Every testing situation is a forced, unnatural environment, as a test is not a part of everyday interaction. Using a test to discover the use
and comprehension of figurative language may not be entirely accurate: the subject is forced to adhere to the rules of the test which may alter or affect the responses, because the questions are interpreted (by the subject) to fit the test. Gardner recognized a bind in Asch and Nerlove's test as it required a "fixed choice", and thus Gardner provided a more open test with both multiple-choice questions and open blanks. However, even Gardner's studies were necessarily forced simply because they provided a formalized testing situation.

One of Gardner's earliest studies (1974) on three-and-a-half, seven, eleven-and-a-half, and nineteen year olds concerned projecting polar adjectives (e.g. light/dark, happy/sad) onto different domains in terms of various modalities (e.g. auditory and visual ones) by matching adjectives and domains. It was found that the capacity for matching exceeded the ability to rationalize those matches. This is an important distinction and indicates a progression that holds true for general metaphoric and figurative language ability. Gardner suggested that the basis for metaphoric thought develops by about four years, although this does not mean that children at that age are capable of using this ability in everyday conversation.

Gardner's study later that year (Gardner, Kircher, Winner, and Perkins 1974) did work out some of the methodological problems of the previous study. In this study, seven, eleven, fourteen, and nineteen year olds, and three-to-four year olds in a shortened version, were asked to complete similes and to choose appropriate ones from a set for a given context in order to determine production abilities and preferences. The section
concerning appropriate metaphor choice consisted of choosing from four different endings for each story: one literal (non-metaphoric), one conventional (appropriate but familiar and unoriginal), one metaphorically appropriate, and one metaphorically inappropriate. The two older groups performed similarly: conventional and appropriate responses were preferred about equally, and conventional endings were the most commonly produced. The results for the younger age groups are more interesting as they do show a scheme for metaphoric development. The pre-schoolers were simply probably made choices at random; the seven year olds tended to choose literal endings and produced conventional responses; the eleven year olds strongly preferred conventional endings. The eleven year olds were generally able to support these endings with rationales that showed metaphoric understanding; the seven year olds were not able to do this. Their productions, as is true of all of the groups, were also conventional. This was credited to time constraints and to the fact that it was a new and unusual task. Gardner here presented the term "blue-pencil ability", which is what the younger children lacked--the ability to distinguish fine lines of appropriateness.

Although this was an extensive and well-produced study, I still question some of the methodology. For one thing, Gardner still confined himself only to the terms used for adult metaphorical language. Also, the literalness or concreteness of the school age children cannot just be written off as following Piagetian stages of behavior but should be further explored.
Pollio and Pollio (1973) explained that the Asch and Nerlove study was not only too difficult and binding, as Gardner described, but also the double function terms that they used were "frozen or dead." (1973: 186) This common term from adult language studies refers to metaphors that have been so overused and become part of the regular lexicon that they are no longer considered real metaphors. Pollio and Pollio gave composition, multiple sentence, and comparison tasks to third, fourth, and fifth graders in their study. They distinguished between frozen metaphors and novel or original metaphors. They suggested that frozen and novel metaphor output was not necessarily related. This is an important point to keep in mind in children's language studies. Pollio and Pollio also emphasized the difference between production and comprehension, which was born out by the results: while the number of metaphors produced in the composition test declined over the grades, the number increased in the comparison task over grades; and there were far greater novel figures than frozen figures used in the comparison task. They concluded that "using frozen figures is probably irrelevant to whether or not a child can think metaphorically and, by extension, creatively." (1973: 199)

Yet, I would argue that one cannot assume that frozen figures are not relevant to metaphorical thinking. For one thing, the category of "frozen" is not clear cut. I do consider some frozen elements as standard lexical items and thus not important to metaphor competence or use studies. However, the children seem to call attention to frozen figures, to use them, in a sense as puns, and in that way they seem to highlight their
metaphoricity more than adults do. This is related to another important point, which is the problem with calling these figures "frozen" at all in terms of children's language. Again, these terms for adult metaphorical language, while they form a convenient classification structure to talk about children's figurative language, are not relevant or useful to children's figurative language studies.

Richard Billow, focusing on cognitive developmental aspects of metaphor, took a purely psychological approach in contrast to the above researchers who tried to move away from the standard psychological theories: Billow based his work on Inhelder and Piaget's (1962) categorization of cognitive development, including the concrete operational thought stage (about seven to eleven years) and the formal operations stage (about eleven years on). Gardner (1982) provided a good, concise introduction to this theory. He described the concrete stage as when a child can view objects from more than his own perspective and can change between his own and another's perspective (1982:8). This is in contrast to the later, more developed formal operations stage, when the early adolescent child (and then the adult) can not only switch perspectives, but can also "perform mental actions upon symbols as well as physical entities." (1982:9) The concrete stage is also associated with literalness and thus this Piagetian scheme is often used in explaining supposed figurative language use decline in early school years. But these stages are theoretical inventions, and the correlation of language use and acquisition to this behavioral and cognitive sequence is also open
Nevertheless, Billow associated these two developmental stages with two different "types" of metaphor which he viewed as classificatory behavior: the concrete stage with similarity classification and the formal operations stage with proportionality classification. His study of five to fourteen year old boys attempted to discover the comprehension level of these two types of metaphor. Although Billow credited the children with understanding earlier than had been previously assumed (i.e. less than seven years), he maintained that Inhelder and Piaget's explanation of developmental behavioral and language stages applied to metaphorical comprehension. For example, Billow suggested that proportional metaphorical performance was in some way related to formal operation acquisition.

In two studies of his other studies, Gardner explored metaphorical development in younger children, from eighteen months to five years. "The Development of Figurative Language" (Gardner, Winner, Bechofer, and Wolf 1978) contains the most comprehensive survey of this literature, which includes those mentioned above. Although this study is not directly relevant to this paper, it establishes metaphoric usage in the form of "metaphorical object substitution" as early as eighteen months. (1978: 15)

Though it relates to children younger than those I worked with, the study done by Winner, McCarthy, and Gardner (1980) revealed some interesting methodological problems in studying language in young children. A problem for the examiner or researcher is the difficulty in distinguishing between a real
metaphor and one that is simply the only (alternative) term that is known for an object. This has also been an important issue in ape language studies. Winner, McCarthy, and Gardner distinguish between action-based and perceptually-based metaphors, the former occurring among the youngest age group, the latter among the four and five year olds. Action-based metaphors are "resemblances perceived among objects in the child's environment constructed out of the pretend actions of symbolic play" and stress the importance of its occurrence on both the "verbal and gestural planes". (1980: 358) Later in the developmental process, children use non-action, perceptually-based metaphors for "renaming objects" without the need for action; these metaphors thus occur in "spontaneous speech" (1980: 358). Although these distinctions are aimed at speakers younger than my subjects, they may be more valid and useful than the adult categories that are so often used. The concept of categorizing the metaphor by situational context and use, rather than by the amount of use the metaphor has had (which adult metaphorical terms are based on) is preferable. In contrast to other studies (Loban 1963, Billow 1975, Gardner, Kircher, Winner, and Perkins 1975), which present a decline in metaphoric production in elementary school children, the Winner, McCarthy, and Gardner study does not find a "dramatic decline in metaphoric production under experimental conditions." (1980: 358)

I have presented, as have many of the researchers themselves, some of the difficulties in using the psychological approach to figurative language study in children. I have also
briefly presented the issue of children's language as a separate study from adult language, which most of the current studies take into consideration. Children's metaphor is in a different form than adult metaphor and is more closely related to figurative language and especially to speech play as a whole. As such, it is an important part of children's culture, and hence a prime subject for an anthropologist. Gardner especially tried to expand the boundaries of his studies beyond the psychological or educational testing situation, but he stopped short of an anthropological study. There have been anthropological studies done on various aspects of children's language even cross-culturally (Watson-Gegeo and Boggs 1977, Kernan 1977, Mitchell-Kernan and Kernan 1975, Edelsky 1977). But we must first explore the issue of play and speech play in general to understand the anthropological focus of children's figurative language study.

On the one hand, what adults call metaphors are less common and more special in children's language than an adult's common spouting of clichés and proverbs, but on the other hand speech play in general is also more common (and creative) among children, or at least a more intrinsic part of a child's interactions and activities.

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett rephrased (reframed) Todorov's statement about literature where "linguistic signs are not instruments of communication but important in their own right." (1979:223) This is speech play. Speech play is "carried on for its own sake" (1979: 221); it contrasts the instrumental and referential uses which are the most common uses of language. It is a metalinguistic activity, voluntary and rule-governed, with
an emphasis on the process as opposed to the goal (1979:221). One of the most important points that Kirshenblatt-Gimblett brings up that is not discussed in the "psychological" literature in this field is that play is culture specific. This notion was of course explored by the various anthropologists who did area studies on aspects of children’s speech play.

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and Sanches’ comprehensive paper on the subject of children’s speech play (1976) surveyed the ethnographic literature and the various approaches and presented a study based on rhymes collected from five to fourteen year olds. Their survey of children’s speech play outlines these three major anthropological approaches:

1) the traditional studies of nursery lore and rhymes (e.g. Opie and Opie: 1959)
2) the sociolinguistic approach focusing on speech play as organizing behavior and defining social relations (e.g. Weir 1962)
3) "from the perspective of child language structure", which distinguishes three aspects specific to children’s verbal art—the importance of phonological structure, a developing syntagmatic organization, and irregularities in rhyme/stanza structure (e.g. their own work) (1976)

From their study, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett presented a developmental scheme of rules manipulated in speech play: phonological—grammatical (syntax)—semantic—sociolinguistic (1976: 102). They posited that although a child is competent in syntax by about age four, playing with phonological rules remains prominent even after the child is semantically competent; not until about age 11 do children start playing with semantic relations.

Cazden’s work (1974) discussed children’s speech play in terms of metalinguistic awareness. Metalinguistics focuses on meaning and intention. Concerning children’s awareness, Cazden
presented the view that children's intention behind language play is, more often than adults', "for the very delight of self-expression and mastery." (Cazden:33) She, as Kirshenblatt-Gimblett did, discussed speech play as focusing on the "means" as opposed to the "end". Cazden noted that children over seven years increase their formalized game play. I believe that this is because children at that age are simply more exposed to these formalized games, rather than due to any behavioral development. Her final remarks concerned the implications of these studies for education, as well as the stifling effect that adults may have on children's play.

The core of the anthropological approach to the study of children's figurative language is not only conducting research in an ethnographic manner, but it is also studying figurative language in the context of speech play. Speech play is a cultural trait that should be examined in the process of learning the various facets of a particular culture. As Conklin noted: "Methods of modifying the normal patterns of speaking for purposes of entertainment or concealment are perhaps universal." (1964:295) Speech play, as a special variety of play, has been investigated using the concept of framing and considering the role of play in culture. As children's language has been recognized as a separate entity, so too has the idea of a separate children's culture within the adult culture been accepted.

Using Goffman's (1974) concept of "framing" as a way of analyzing behavior, Abrahams defined three "ideal states" framed
as play: performance, games, and festivities or celebrations (1978:120). These are all formalized versions of play, and it is important to be able to distinguish play, and in particular speech play, within a larger non-play frame. Abrahams does distinguish this well:

In everyday interactions, we assume that both seriousness and kidding can be carried on simultaneously--or at least we can switch back and forth without calling the nature of the occasion into question. However, the moment we enter into a play-frame, the "for-fun" element becomes our primary mode of interpretation. (1978:120)

This relates to the work of Bateson, "Theory of Play and Fantasy" (1972). Prominent in all three major works on this subject (Abrahams, Bateson, Goffman) is the notion of the necessity of the question "Is this serious? (or non-play)" in order for a play-frame to hold; and then there is the subsequent breaking of frames when this question becomes a reality. Speech play, like (regular) play, is subject to the these same conditions, and I will show how this concept of framing is useful in analyzing children's speech play.

Following Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and Sanches' (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and Sanches 1976, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1979) suggestion about the need for "natural setting" ethnographic research, I recorded the figurative language first graders use in a more "natural setting" situation than previous studies. This was done within the formal context of the school. This situation is certainly more "natural" than a testing situation, and it is also more conducive to the use of figurative language and speech play, especially as some of the work was even overtly framed as "play". I focused some of the work and conversation on
topics with questions that provoke more creative thinking or require the children to display their knowledge of double function terms, homonyms, and the like.

I think I had an advantage with these children which most other psychologists and anthropologists have not had: although I was certainly the "adult" to these children, my role was somewhat more ambiguous than other adults in the school. The children recognized me both as younger than and not as authoritative as their teachers. This was aided by the fact that I was addressed by my first name whereas most of the other teachers were called by formal titles. Because of my position and duties, I was able to talk and work more informally with the children and encourage longer interactions.

I worked as a teacher's aide in a traditional, first-grade classroom that was part of the Eastwood School (grades K-2) in Oberlin, Ohio. I was involved in different activities, but I usually worked with four or five children, outside of the regular classroom. These activities included vocabulary building with flashcards or educational board games, reading groups, arts and crafts projects, and helping with math and money skills. I also functioned as playground monitor, clean-up director, and disciplinarian. I spent between 5 and 8 hours per week in the classroom from February to May, 1984. After the first few sessions familiarizing myself with the classroom and the children, I started taping the work sessions using a portable tape recorder hidden in my knapsack. (The teacher and I both agreed that a visible tape recorder would disrupt the work session too much.) I transcribed from these tapes only the
material that seemed relevant; this amount varied greatly from session to session.

The class was composed of twenty-four pupils, six and seven years old. There were 13 boys and 11 girls in a racially mixed group (13 black, 11 white) that was drawn from both the surrounding rural area and the small, midwestern college-town of Oberlin, Ohio. Classroom grouping in the school was supposedly heterogeneous in terms of academic achievement and ability (after the parents make the choice to put their children in one of the traditional classrooms as opposed to the open classroom), but according to the teacher and testing results, this class overall had a low level of achievement. The children, both as individuals and as a group, were extraordinarily active and had behavioral problems; this was attested to by both their teacher and other teachers in the school.

In the following chapters I will present the data I have collected of children’s utterances, and I will analyze it in relation to the issues raised above. Chapters two contains a description of figurative language characteristics and utterances; chapter three contains the metaphorical utterances. Chapter four explains and applies the use of frame analysis to children’s speech play, and chapter five is the conclusions.
CHAPTER TWO

INTRODUCTION

The children employed several different kinds of figurative language, only part of which was metaphorical in nature. Some of this figurative language was performed within an explicit play frame; most of the examples are from overtly structured work sessions. Often, however, a play frame (or within that, a speech play frame) was in existence in the work session. I will provide more specifics concerning the context of each utterance in terms of the linguistic and sociolinguistic environment; these factors (context and frame) are vital to understanding the utterance (as will be shown in chapter four).
FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE ATTRIBUTES

Rhyme is often associated with children's play. One thinks of nursery rhymes, jump-rope games, counting-out games; these are all based on rhyme. These types of speech play, are generally termed traditional children's lore and games. The husband and wife team Opie and Opie studied these in the 1950s: this work was among the earliest studies done concerning children's play. It is important to look beyond this type of work-- which was basically folklore and story-collating-- into the broader questions of speech play use, speech play competence, and original speech play. But this traditional speech play cannot be ignored. I collected very little data that fell into this category of utterances; I was not working within the context of a situation and a frame that was suitable for the children to use traditional rhymes. Informally I did hear the children use these kinds of songs and games outside of the classroom and work sessions, but they did not often occur within the formal situation where I was collecting my data.

Once, when I was working with a group of four boys, a traditional counting-out game was employed. We were starting to play an educational board game where everyone needed a different colored playing piece. The boys were arguing among themselves who would get what piece, and two of them could not agree on a certain color. I told the children that we would not begin to play until everyone had a piece, and in this way I attempted to let them solve their own problems. One boy started:

F: Eeny, meeny,....
F and UN: miney, moe, catch a ...
F: piggy (simultaneous with below)
This example makes it clear that although there is a common knowledge of the culture of children's traditional speech play, there are variations and disagreements about what is "correct".

Rhyme was generally used by the children in a more subtle way than the obvious two-line or follow-word rhyme that is found in traditional lore. Some of these (and other types of utterances) examples that I present may seem subjectively chosen from my data as examples of rhyme; in many ways this was a subjective process. One consideration that I had in choosing what utterances I felt were important and reflected the various aspects of speech play is that I actually heard these utterances spoken. The performance of the utterance not only added a clue to the intent of the utterance, but it also gave the performance an entity in itself; even if the intent of an utterance was one idea, nonetheless the performance of the utterance might give it another idea, which by its performance becomes real. Much of this rhyme is expressed through emphasis. For instance, in trying to make up a sentence with the word "into" one girl began:

*Note: Excerpts from the transcripts of my data will be included in the text indented and single-spaced. Single or double initials at the beginning of a line identify the speakers; important speakers to note are: DW is myself, SB is the teacher, UN is an unidentified speaker, and ALL is all the children present. "Und" is used to refer to an undistinguishable utterance.
B: ... (und) went in the store 'cause he saw a man with a fruit stand.

(When I commented to the girl that she did not use her vocabulary word, but that one can go "into" a store, she made up similar, related sentence, without the rhyme.) Both because of the way the girl emphasized these words (as indicated by the underlining), and her use of rhythm, I felt that this was a good example of an intentional rhyme. In technical terms these words do not rhyme "exactly", but the rhyme that we are considering was a spoken, not a written, device, and it is the sounds that are important.

Another series of rhymes was produced by two different boys as we were playing another board game. This game involved reading (or sounding out) a word, and then adding "the silent 'e'" at the end of it and reading the new word. I then added the additional task that the children had to construct sentences with these new words.

**DW:** Can you make up a sentence with "kite"?
**D:** Kite flight. (the latter word might have been "fight")
**DW:** Kite fight? What does that mean?
**D:** O.k., deck beck.
**DW:** That's not a sentence with "kite".
**D:** Deck beck...kite...

It should be noted that this boy was a good reader and had previously exhibited his skill in constructing sentences. After another child finally produced a correct sentence, another boy worked on a sentence with the word "rate"; it here became obvious that the children were having difficulty constructing sentences because the children were sometimes unfamiliar with the meanings of the new words.

**JY:** Rate...wait.
(mumbling-- children talking about "right" instead of "rate")

DW: Do you know what a "rate" is? (silence) It's like how fast you're doing something.
D: Bigger, stronger, faster...(laugh)

Once one child had started the idea of giving a two-word rhyme instead of a sentence, another one continued it.

The other examples of rhyme fell within the category of name-calling. Throughout the playing of a board game (in which she was not doing too well), one girl cried, "You lucky duck," whenever someone else landed on a "good" space. The other example was at my unintentional instigation; the children were especially punchy while making puppets, so I said to one of them, "You silly!", to which one boy replied, "Silly-billy."

Rhythm is also used by the children as an intentional device. Words or sentences were recited with a very distinctive beat; this usually served to emphasize parts of the sentence by highlighting those words, but the rhythm also was used as an organizational device to set up a definite boundary within which the utterance occurred; this outlined the beginning and the end of the utterance. Often, as mentioned above, this rhythm was used in connection with rhyme to both emphasize the rhyme and state the end of an utterance; in the example above concerning the "man with a fruit stand," my added underlining points out not only the rhyme, but it also points out the emphasis that was present in the performance of the utterance. Rhythm is always present in a person's speech; that is, there is a natural beat that exists in words and a pattern is created when words are strung together. But in the children's speech this beat was very pronounced and generally regular and even. The children often
projected this rhythm by either heavily accenting words with volume or by clapping or banging on the table. This latter projection was especially common when the children performed traditional rhymes or games and music or television jingles.

There was not much mention of rhythm in the speech play literature. Like rhyme, it is taken for granted to be inherent in this type of play. However, rhyme has usually gotten a great deal more attention: it is a more obvious and intentionally used device, it is used by more sophisticated artists/poets, and it is recognized as a form of playing with phonetics. As phonetic play, rhyme is one of the earliest forms of speech play according to Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and Sanches. But rhythm, on the other hand, does not fit into their sequence of linguistic play [phonological-- grammatical-- semantic-- sociolinguistic] as it is not a linguistic (or sociolinguistic) device. However, as it is a mechanism by which the children play with speech, and it is a characteristic of several of the different forms of figurative language, it is relevant to this discussion.

Repetition was used by the children in various ways. Intentionality was the most difficult to determine in the use of this device; repetition was used simply to get my (or another student’s) attention when the child was not heard. For example, one child repeated three times: "Will you <ever> forget me when I get old?" This was the beginning of a knock-knock sequence, and the repetition of the line was not part of the playing sequence, but occurred merely because I was busy talking to two other children at the time and did not hear the speaker. Even
some of these utterances may be intentional uses of repetition for the purpose of emphasis. Keenan (1977) pointed out that repetition is not necessarily an imitative act as some researchers have described it. She suggested that it might be employed as a "communication check", to make sure that an utterance was understood correctly (1977: 129). I used repetition in this manner repeatedly, to make sure both the children and I had understood the sentences they had made up. Keenan presented a list, which she then claimed was infinite, of the possible uses of repetition; this included answering, commenting, affirming, self-informing, and matching a claim (1977: 129-133).

Several times, in response to questions that had one-word answers, the children would repeat the word over and over again, turning it into a chant. For example, when we were playing "The Money Game" with fake coins in order to learn the names of the coins and their worth, I held up a nickel and asked the children:

DW: What's this?
UN: Five!
DW: What's it also called?
UN: A nickel-- nickel-- nickel-- nickel--

This was the most common use of repetition. The children also expand on this play; instead of repeating single words within a line, they repeat words, sentences, or themes over the course of an interactive sequence. One popular theme, cookies and cookbooks, was even repeated over more than one work session. Both "cookies" and "cookbook" were vocabulary words, and during the session that they were on the flashcards which we worked
with, most of the sentences that the children constructed included at least one of the two words; in the next session with the same children, these words were still used repeatedly, even though they were not at that time part of the flashcard words set.

Another example of this thematic use of repetition was accomplished by one boy during the course of one session. We had read a story about a boy who was sick and sat looking out of the window; and I asked the children to complete the sentence, "He saw some..." Since in the story the boy had seen "some boys and girls", one of the children completed the sentence: "He saw some good-looking girls." This sentence was repeated several times, as well as some variations on this theme. This case was obviously an intentional use of repetition, which will be further discussed in chapter four with the use of frame analysis.

Homonymy was present in the children's utterances. More often, rather than being used intentionally by the children, it was a source of confusion in their comprehension of vocabulary words. The best example of this confusion occurred when we were playing "the silent 'e' game", and the children had just sounded out the word "spin", added the "silent 'e' " , and sounded out the word "spine". The children often acted out sentences which they had constructed from these vocabulary words. Two of the boys in this group immediately got out of their seats and hid behind the tables and the bookshelves in the room. I did not understand what the children were doing, and I thought they were just acting out; I also realized that this was a word ("spine") that the children might not know:
At this point I realized that there was a homonymic confusion and I explained that we were thinking of two different words.

It was often not as clear whether there was confusion as to the word being discussed, or whether the children were playing with the words. In one vocabulary work session the children were sounding out the word "into"; they kept repeating the word "to" (or possibly "two"): 

```
DW: It's more than just "to". . .
UN: Three!
C: Three!
DW: C, sit down, we've got to hear B's word. . .
B: In the. . .
Q: Three!
B: Not three, . . . (and then she made up her sentence with "to")
```

Here again we see the use of repetition with no clue as to its function except as pure play.

There were two examples where the children obviously used homonyms as speech play. Again, the children encountered a word ("pine") that they were unsure of while playing the "silent 'e' game", and in fact it was not clear to me how the word should be defined or used. One of the girls looked utterly confused:

```
DW: L, you know what a "pine" is?
D: I know what a pine is. . .<some other noises>. . . like an apple. <he laughs; I didn't follow what he said>
DW: It's a tree. . . a pine tree. O.K., D, it's your turn.
UN: Pineapple.
DW: Oh, a pineapple!
```

Perhaps "pine" as used in terms of a "pine tree" and "pineapple"
are not really homonyms, but this was playing with homonymy.

The other example of homonymic play took the unusual form of eliciting a non-linguistic response. If clarification is necessary, the word "shoot" has taken on a new meaning in the English language as an acceptable form of a vulgarity. One boy was having difficulties in his work on his puppet of Jack in the Beanstalk:

D: Then I'll have to make a whole new Jack. Shoot!
R: O.K., pyoo. (shooting him with his finger)

The children play with semantic rules; that is, they play with the meanings of words. This is the basis of metaphor, which I will discuss later. According to Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and Sanches' developmental sequence of playing with linguistic rules, semantic play should be a fairly late development, although they did not suggest at what age metaphoric competence begins. One example of semantic play without a metaphoric connection (but rather just for the sake of playing with the meaning and the sound of the word) was part of the initial "cookies" and "cookbook" sequence. One of the children was constructing a sentence with the word "cookbook":

DW: How can we use the word "cookbook"?
L: Make cookies. . . uh, make cookies. . .
C: (then joined by Q) Cookie-book. . . cookie-book. . .
    cookie-book. . .
C: Chocolate-chip book.

The children played with meaning often similarly to the way that people generally do even in their normal, conversational speech. Another other example of semantic play is in the form of an exaggeration. A boy was having trouble gluing the beard onto his puppet:
DW: Why'd you take the beard off?
JY: It fell off!
DW: Well, you should put some more glue on it.
JY: I will. . .I'll put a whole gallon!

Exaggeration such as this demonstrates a fairly sophisticated level of semantic competence.
I have classified four types of utterances used by the children: sing-song, jokes, nonsense and fantasy, and metaphor. These can be described with reference to the above attributes.

Sing-song is a term that I use to describe half-chant/half-song utterances. Sing-songs range from one sentence or line to five or six. They usually utilize rhyme and have a very definite, even rhythm, sometimes including an extra quick beat at the end of a line or stanza. It is these utterances which are most often accompanied by clapping, and sometimes they are also danced or acted out. There is both novel and traditional sing-song, the latter is a cultural trait that is passed on, and it includes much of the traditional nursery lore and counting-out rhymes. An example of this was given earlier in this chapter in discussing rhyme ("eeny, meeny, . . ."). There are also what I would term "new-traditional" sing-songs: "traditional" because they are a part of the corpus of general knowledge that is passed on (and they are not novel) and "new" because they are relatively recent additions usually taken from radio or television. The children are surprisingly knowledgeable concerning "pop" culture, and they often employ parts or all of songs or slogans from these sources. These utterances fit in well to this category of sing-song in the manner that they were performed, and because they often rhyme and have a distinctive beat. These utterances include the one-line "Where's the beef?" (often inserted into an irrelevant context) and various renditions of the popular song "Beat It" (including its parody, "Eat It"). The children even carry this play a step further in playing on the sing-song, as
shown when two children were working on their puppets:

JU: I need the glue. Where's the glue? (half singing)
AJ: I have it! I ain't putting it. . . . see what I mean, she's smallest. . . . Where's the glue? (in a funny voice)

There were several examples of novel or original sing-song. There were all performed by the same girl (B). Two novel sing-songs were performed consecutively; for some reason the children had started using the word "hippopotamus":

B: Mr. Hippopotamus, sitting in the toilet, plop, plop, plop. (acting it out and half-singing)

(then the children were settling down, and they sounded out the word "sign": B said she would tell a story with the word "sign")

B: Mr. Hippopotamus saw the sign. He stopped and said, "What a good ole sign." He turned around, he tried to do his business, he fart, fart, fart. . . .(breaks into laughter-- this was all acted out, danced, and clapped to)

Another example comes from a different work session. B was supposedly acting out the word "go", but the children were talking about and acting out different things, and she had been pretending to turn up the thermostat:

DW: What're you doing?
B: Cookies in the kitchen, ___(und) like this. Turned up the heater and you'll be dead! (laughs-- this was acted out half-sung)

It was not clear to me if this utterance (as well as some others in the sample) were a novel sing-song or a "new-traditional" or even "traditional" one. This is due to both my different geographical upbringing and my lack of recent exposure to children's culture.

Jokes have been studied as a separate genre throughout the anthropological and linguistic literature; here I treat it as
one of several categories of speech play and combine it with riddles and humor in general. There was not a great deal of joke usage; I think this was due to a work environment that was not conducive to standard joke usage. The children seem to be at a level of full understanding of jokes; they seem to understand not only the form of jokes but also their content, which is often incomplete in young children.

One riddle was told to me in conversation while we were doing an arts and crafts project:

Q: What’s the biggest pencil in the world?
DW: What?
Q: Pennsylvania! (laugh) I got that on the cartoons...

The influence of television is again apparent.

Another, more interesting sequence, is a knock-knock joke.

Knock-knock jokes generally have a standardized form:

1: Knock-knock!
2: Who’s there?
1: ________
2: ________ who?
1: (variable punch line)

In order for a knock-knock joke to work, both participants must be familiar with this standard form. Once the form is understood, the joke “works” if the content is also understood. Many people are familiar with the annoying habit of young children to repeat knock-knock jokes repeatedly that do not seem to make sense and lack a funny punch line; in this case the children have learned the form of the joke, but they do not understand that the content is also important— they know that such jokes are supposed to be funny and they really do find them funny in themselves. One of the children told me an unusual knock-knock joke that plays on the form of the knock-knock joke;
C had repeated "Will you ever forget me when I'm old?" a few times, but I had been busy with another student:

C: Will you ever forget me when I get old?
UN: Watch this. . .
Q: Knock-knock. . .(knowing the joke and trying to get in on it)
   (C gets up and taps me on the shoulder)
C: Knock-knock!
DW: Who's there?
C: See, you forgot me already! (all laugh)

There were several sequences that the children performed that did not fall into any of these formally-described categories but were clearly other than ordinary discourse. I have combined these all together under the heading of fantasy and nonsense. Some researchers (i.e. Holquist 1969) would be aghast at this combined heading, since "nonsense" is a field of formal study; however, I am using the term as I think that Holquist employed it:

Nonsense, like gibberish, is a violence practiced on semantics. But since it is systematic, the sense of nonsense can be learned. And that is the value of it: it calls attention to language. (1969: 161)

I must admit that I was not always sure that the "sense" of the children's nonsense could be deciphered. "Fantasy" has also been studied, although not with any one unifying idea-- Bateson (1972) used it in one sense in talking about play; Pitcher and Prelinger (1963) used it in another sense in analyzing children's stories. For lack of better terminology, I feel justified in calling these utterances fantasy/nonsense.

One example of "pure" nonsense occurred when we had sounded out the word "sign", and I asked the children what kinds of signs they could think of. Since they had been previously talking
about cookbooks, C replied: "Cookbook sign." This did actually make sense as the words were discussed within a small time scale. A more non sequitur response was given when I asked the children to complete a sentence:

DW: . . . if the sentence just said, "He saw some...", what?
D: -one. (right after "some")
DW: He saw someone. What else? Just if he were maybe looking out the window, what else could he do. . .? "He saw some...?"
D: He see the old lady getting run over by a big old rig and goes WHAP!

These are both examples of this "non sequitur" nonsense: the sentence (or phrase) is nonsensical, but it is somewhat comprehensible either because of the context or because the utterance is a complete sentence. One of the longest examples of nonsense was a sequence that involved plays on the words "cookies", "cookbook", and "ant"; to me this still reads like an absurdist play:

(they have just sounded out the word "good")
DW: "Good". Can you tell us a story or a sentence. . .
Q: Some cookies is good.
DW: Some cookies are good, right?
Q: Are.
L: Some cookies are nasty.
Q: Are.
DW: Some cookies are nasty?
C: Oooooo (laughs, then L joins him)
DW: What are nasty cookies?
L: Ant. . .
DW: What?
(C laughs)
L: Ants.
DW: Ants are nasty cookies?
L: Yeah?
C: Ants make cookies. (At this point in the session I wondered about there being a homonymic confusion between "ant" and "aunt")
DW: Your aunt, or a little insect ant? (saying them differently)
Q: I got me two.
UN: Ooooooooo
DW: You've got two ants? (pause, all laugh) Or have you got
two words? (as I see he's playing with his flashcards)
Q: Yup.
DW: What ants make cookies?
Q: Oh I know, I know...
L: Eat...
DW: They eat cookies? I thought you said they make cookies.
L: They make nasty cookies. They...hee, hee, ...
DW: They make nasty cookies?
(meanswhile, Q's been repeating "cookbook")
DW: Q, what did you say you knew?
L: They make nasty ones.
C: That's an uck-book. (laugh)

This sequence came to an end at this point; this was apparent not only because we started sounding out a new word, but also I was only able to get the children to settle down because we had come to the "natural" end of the sequence. This was sometimes more difficult to judge in nonsense sequences, but there always seemed to be a definite pause at the end of the sequence and then another subject would pick up.

There was only one example of original story-telling: that is, a story told that was not simply a recounting of actual events. This story falls under the category of fantasy/nonsense because of its content. It was a spontaneous utterance since I had not asked anyone to tell a story; two of the boys were repeating "hippopotamous" and "Mr. and Mrs. Hippopotamous", and then a girl told this story:

B: You know...my dad... (und) at the zoo they got a hippopotamous and it was a live one and they brought it into our yard and they took this thing...and they put it in the kitchen chair...and...
DW: You had a hippopotamous in your kitchen?
B: No, not in the kitchen, in the backyard...in the zoo backyard...and the hippopotamous broke the chair! (laugh)
DW: But it wasn't your backyard, was it?
B: No.
DW: It was the zoo!
B: That was funny!

Although I did want to encourage the child's creativity, I was
interested to know to what extent she would uphold the fantasy and to what extent she was aware that what was saying was nonsensical. It is also interesting that at the end the girl highlighted the fact that this was supposed to be a "funny" story; this was an appropriate closing of the story-telling frame.

This chapter has described the major attributes that distinguish children's figurative language: rhyme, rhythm, repetition, homonymic play, and semantic play. The utterance groups of sing-songs, jokes, and nonsense and fantasy were then outlined, summarizing the children's explorations into the use of figurative language in speech play with the exception of metaphor. Metaphorical utterances will be examined in the following chapter.
CHAPTER THREE

INTRODUCTION

When someone uses a metaphor in conversation, they do not usually say, "Here's a metaphor!". It is often difficult to distinguish a metaphorical utterance, especially when one realizes that most metaphors are not uttered in the form "X is Y", as we learned in grade school. There have been several tests and standards set up to determine metaphoricity of an utterance. Many of these were originally created for psychotherapy testing. Often a panel of three judges work together, voting on their own which ones they think are metaphorical and then consulting on disagreements. I simply read carefully over the transcripts of the sessions that I had taped of the children to determine metaphoricity.

First, I will introduce the three types of metaphor, using standard, adult language terminology. In each case I will raise some of the issues involved in using these terms for discussing children's figurative language, and then I will explain the broader issues and implications in using these terms. Second, I will present material from work sessions with the children that I feel exhibits metaphoric capabilities.
STANDARD METAPHOR TYPES

Conventional metaphor is the formal metaphor that is most commonly thought of as "metaphor". These are the metaphors which generally are in the form "X is Y". Conventional metaphors are part of the lexicon as a complete utterance; they can generally be understood by anyone who is sociolinguistically competent in the language. Even if the exact metaphor has not been heard before, the words that comprise the metaphor have a set of standard meanings such that a person would know which set of meanings to use for the comparison. Because of this, conventional metaphors or their comparison parts are often clichés. Some examples are: "George is a lion," "The moon is a block of Swiss cheese," and "She's as bright as the day."

There are several problems involved in the use of conventional metaphor as a category of children's metaphoric utterances. First, conventional metaphor use among the children was very rare. This in itself need not invalidate the category, although it displays its limited application. Second, if a child has never heard a conventional metaphor before, the metaphor lacks the familiarity that defines a conventional metaphor. Thus the conventional metaphor could be a novel utterance (and a novel metaphor) to a child listener. According to the definition of metaphor, there is no provision for this issue of cultural competence. An utterance is either a conventional, frozen, or novel metaphor, or it is not a metaphor at all. The problem with taking cultural competence into consideration is that it would be impossible to determine on an individual basis for every utterance; unless this were approached "scientifically" with
psychological-style testing methods which I think would also prove insufficient in other ways. Whether or not a child is competent in adult metaphor is irrelevant to a discussion of the metaphoric and figurative language capabilities of children.

Frozen metaphor is an utterance that at one point was metaphorical in nature (and still has some sense of metaphoricity), but it has become such a part of the standard lexicon that the comparison itself is no longer considered. Many researchers do not even consider these utterances metaphorical; Pollio and Pollio (1974) argued that it is irrelevant to (children’s) metaphor studies. Some examples of frozen metaphor are: "She’s a doll," "He’s an ass," as well as slang and synaesthetic comparisons such as "We got burned in that test," and "She’s sweet."

Frozen metaphors are relevant to child language studies because they require semantic understanding across domains; it is this type of understanding that is necessary for metaphor comprehension. The other, perhaps even more important reason why this type of utterances must be examined among children, is that the children themselves highlight frozen metaphors in their speech. Either by emphasizing the semantic incongruity or by simply calling attention to an otherwise innocuous statement, the children are labeling the use of frozen metaphor as “speech play”.

There are also novel or (original) metaphors. These are metaphors which are not a part of the standard lexicon, not even among the corpus of adult metaphors. Often metaphors are only
novel in part; that is, the performer may use a common comparison or metaphor in a new way. The difficulty that arises in analyzing novel metaphor, and specifically children's novel metaphor, is the determination of metaphoricity. Intention is generally considered a requirement for metaphor, but it is not always obvious when a child utters a metaphorical statement whether or not the metaphor was intentional or not. This is especially difficult to determine among young children; when a metaphorical name is given to an object there is the possibility that the metaphor is actually the only name that is known for the object. But if the child has created that metaphorical name, is that not a metaphorical act? I consider this true, and the issue of intentionality is a difficult one which I will further explore later.
METAPHORICAL UTTERANCES

I have tried to differentiate between metaphor usage (or production) and metaphor comprehension. As explained in the first chapter, this had been a problem with some of the early studies, that assumptions were drawn concerning comprehension from usage data. It was very difficult to determine comprehension because of the nature of my work. In a non-testing, natural discourse situation, a low level of metaphor usage makes metaphor comprehension levels difficult to determine since there is then no data to base the conclusions on. If I had utilized adult, standard metaphorical categories, I would have been unable to discuss metaphor comprehension. But as I viewed the children’s productions in a broader manner, I was able to draw some conclusions with regard to comprehension.

There was one clear instance in my work where I was able to probe the issue of metaphor comprehension. At the beginning of one group’s new reading book, there was a poem that the teacher was supposed to read aloud to introduce the children to the new book; the vocabulary of the poem was just above their current reading level, but it was supposed to be within their comprehension level. Here is the poem which I read:

Mile-long skyscrapers are my trees,
The subways’ whoosh my summer breeze;
The hydrant is my swimming pool,
Where all my friends keep real cool.
The city is the place to be,
The city is the place for me.

This is a metaphor packed poem. While I read it to the children, the two boys and one girl began acting out the poem: they moved their arms about for "whoosh"; they imitated swimming when I
read "swimming pool". These movements were done simultaneously with or immediately after I read the phrases, so the children's movements were often quick and jerky or indecisive as they were not certain of what would come next. When I read the fourth line, one of the boys and the girl hugged their arms in an imitation of "keeping cool", and the other boy held his thumb up with a clenched fist, signifying the slang term "cool":

D: Oh, cool. (making the gesture, and interrupting me)
DW: The city is the place to be, the city
D: That's my friends, cool...
DW: is the place for... what's that say?
ALL: Me... me... (which was the last word as I had asked)
DW: What'd you say about "cool"?
D: Yeah... (with "cool" gesture)
DW: You're cool, well... what else is cool? When you go swimming it keeps you cool so you're not too hot.
D: No, I'm (und) the real cool way. Cool (und-- possibly "it up") (with gesture)
(all laugh)

The children demonstrated their understanding of these metaphors by their reactions. D carried the process one step further by playing with these words, and by showing his knowledge of the double-meaning and the metaphorical nature of the term "cool". Slang terms are often metaphorical statements; how much they have retained their metaphoricity may be a matter of argument. However, the fact that D called attention to the meaning of the word signifies its importance in speech play. The children are not interested in explaining their understanding however. Possibly, as many studies concerning developmental processes suggest, this is a later development, and at this point the children were not able to explain or rationalize their responses (Winner, Rosensteil, and Gardner 1976: 296).

I wanted to check if the children understood not just the
metaphor using the word "skyscraper", but also the word "skyscraper" itself; the word itself is metaphorical, but more importantly I realized that children growing up in Oberlin, who might not have been exposed to many other sources, may not know what a skyscraper is:

DW: Mile-long skyscrapers. . . have you ever seen a skyscraper?
D: Everybody’s seen one of the them.
DW: Yes?
(mumbles)
DW: Is there a skyscraper in Oberlin?
D: No-o-o (laughing)
DW: So if you’ve never been outside of . . . have you ever seen. . . you know what a skyscraper is? (to R who looked lost)
R: (shakes head "no")
D: (und)
DW: It’s a really tall building. And it looks like it almost touches the sky, so they call it a “skyscraper” (which D says with me). Because what’s a “scraper”—something that like scrapes against it (showing with hands like claws). So it looks like it scrapes against the sky (no reaction). But is it really a mile long? (mumbling) No. . . ”mile-long" is just because it’s really big.

The children were relatively silent during this long-winded explanation— I felt uncomfortable as the children seemed rather bored and because I found it very hard to explain the word and its metaphorical nature. It was also difficult to confront the children’s lack of comprehension without causing undue embarrassment on their part.

Another example of a slang term carrying metaphorical meaning was demonstrated in a different way. This example, described in chapter two, involved one boy (R) responding to the swear of another child (D: "Shoot!). R played with the obvious double-meaning of the word, a sign of a metaphor. In this way, R turned D’s statement into a metaphor, which he then carried out literally in play.
Double-meaning does not necessarily imply metaphor. Double-meaning also should not be confused with Asch and Nerlove's term "double function"--the latter is a very specific term meaning only words which refer to both physical and psychological aspects. Double-meaning is often present in a metaphor, as the double meaning of a word often refers to different aspects of that same word; it is these different aspects that a metaphor, in its cross-semantic sense, refers to. The ability to apply different meanings to the same word seems to be a requisite for metaphor use and comprehension. Knowledge of double-meaning reflects metaphor comprehension, even if there is not a causal relationship. One must be careful not to confuse homonyms when deciphering double-meanings, as two words may be spelled exactly the same and be either homonyms (i.e. two different words) or be actually the same word with two different meanings:

A bank where you put money and the bank of a river are two different, homonymic words.

The verb guard, as in someone standing guard over something is the same word as the noun guard.

The sleeve of a coat and the sleeve (i.e. jacket) of a book are two different and metaphorical ways of using the same word.

These homonymic connections, as described in chapter two, are the basis for many puns and are important sources for speech play. The children seem to be aware of the possibility of double-meaning in words, and they do not call attention to the double-meaning unless they are specifically using it for speech play.

In one of my less successful attempts to test the children's sentence building abilities, I asked the children to construct
sentences using two vocabulary words at a time. One of the girls showed her knowledge of double-meaning terms as we were working with the words "Ben" and "sign":

B: Ben signs the application.
DW: That's good; can you think of another one with "sign"?
B: Ben saw the sign.

I want to return to the idea of the children "highlighting" a metaphorical situation, bringing out the metaphoricity in an utterance which renders it important (whereas most adults would ignore these utterances as frozen metaphors). One example took place in the classroom, where the teacher and I were trying to get the children ready to leave school; this includes cleaning up the room and putting the chairs on the tables. After these tasks had been done, F knocked over a chair and left it on the ground:

SB: Could you please fix the chair, F?
F: It ain't broken!
SB: Could you please put the chair back up where it belongs?!

Many people who have worked with children are familiar with these sometimes exasperating exchanges where one has to select one's words carefully in order to use only literal terms. Another example of a child recognizing the metaphorical possibilities of an everyday, frozen utterance, occurred when the children were settling down to work at a table in the art room. They argued about who should sit where; I, like the teacher in the above example, used a common, frozen metaphor:

S: No, you sit there!
DW: No, I'm sitting at the head. (i.e. of the table)
F: You have to sit over there!
S: No, I don't want to!
F: You're at the feet! (to the boy sitting opposite me)
There was one clear example of a child using a conventional metaphor. While the children were making puppets, the conversation drifted to talking about being small— who was the smallest in the class, whose siblings were bigger or smaller than they. One of the boys who hadn't been involved in the conversation previously joined in:

JA: When my mom was a girl she said she was as skinny as a rail.
DW: Really? (laughing a little; everyone else was quiet)
JA: Yeah.
UN: As a what?
JA: A rail.
UN: (different than above) What's a rail?
JA: Rail track. Railroad track... for a train.
UN: (above) Yeah.
AJ: I need some glue... .

The children were basically silent throughout this exchange (which is unusual), and in the last line it is apparent that the children went right back to work; the frame of that particular discussion was over. It is difficult to determine if the children understood the metaphor in the end; it is obvious that at least one and probably two children did not understand the metaphor initially (unless the first UN simply did not hear JA, although he spoke loudly and clearly). Although the children were quiet, from my observation and from the response of the second UN speaker, I would say that the children could understand the utterance once they were told the meaning (in context) of "rail".

I can positively state that at least some of the children were not familiar with the metaphor; here lies the basis of my argument that adult conventional metaphor must often be examined as novel metaphor to the child listener (which will be further discussed in chapter five).
There was another utterance that was rather difficult to analyze. This is because I thought that the words were vaguely familiar and they were possibly a jumbled-up version of a conventional metaphor, but I have not been able to find verification for this fact; the utterance could be novel. In any case, I have been unable to discern its meaning. One of the girls had gone back to the art supply room to get some more materials, and she brought back some white cotton balls, stuck together, that one of the boys had wanted to use but had left behind. As the girl put the cotton on the table, she said:

L: He left this sitting in the window like a bald chicken.

It is interesting to note that this, like the above conventional example, is in the standard metaphor and simile form of "X is like Y".

There was one clear novel metaphor uttered. I was working in the art supply room, finishing the clean-up with one of the boys. There was a very strange noise coming from the corner of the room, a sort of low, growling sound:

DW: Hear that?
C: What was it?
DW: It's the sink. It is the sink making that noise.
C: It's a good trumpet sink . . . a trumpet sink.

This was not only an appropriate metaphor, in that it fit what was being described and was also from a different semantic category, but it was also in the standard form of "X is Y", which is not common among children's metaphors. This was the most sophisticated utterance of my data; I might be biased in putting forth this supposition because I was impressed by the utterance, which came unsolicited after many attempts to encourage such
language.

One of the problems, which I mentioned briefly in the early discussion of novel metaphor, in determining the metaphoricity of novel utterances, is that it is not often clear what the intention of the statement was. If the intention was not metaphorical, but was simply a result of a limited vocabulary and limited knowledge, it is questionable whether or not the utterance should be considered metaphor. At one session where a group of children were working on puppet-making, we started talking about swimming and swimming lessons, as the children were currently all taking swimming lessons through the school. Apparently the children were familiar with the programs that teach very young children how to swim or at least how to be comfortable in the water:

L: You seen them babies swimming in the water. . .
C: They’re water babies-- they were born in water.
DW: They weren’t born there. . .
B: Their mommas learned them how to swim.

Here the question of intention is relevant in terms of whether or not C really thought the children were "born in water." This could only be answered with a direct question to C, which I did not consider at the time. The use of alternate names raises the question of whether the children realize that they are using alternate names. These names may be metaphorical; even if they are not, the use of alternative names is still relevant to the metaphor acquisition. It has been suggested that:

Although metaphoric competence includes far more than the ability to call one object by the name of another, there is good precedent for considering renaming as central to the operation in metaphor. (Gardner, Winner, Bechhofer, and Wolf 1978: 15)
In one work session, I was working with two, quiet girls, who were learning the names of coins. In this case, one of the girls created her own name for a coin, which then became an alternative term. She saw the Kennedy half-dollar for the first time, and she cried:

L: Ooo, his hair's flying.

Later in the same session, I asked the girls:

DW: Do you have any half-dollars? (pause-- they look uncertain) Yep, you know it.
L: It's the man flying with his hair in the air. (i.e. "with his flying hair")

We were working on exactly the issue in question-- knowing the "real" name of the object (and learning both the value name and the "real" name). L was familiar name of the coin-- she knew it was a half-dollar. Perhaps it seems she was just adding a description to the name, but this is in fact what a metaphor is; it is a description of an object using characteristics (or by comparison with another object) that does not usually apply directly to that object (i.e. they are not in the same semantic category). Hence L has created a metaphor which in standard form would be: "Kennedy is the man whose hair is flying."

The use of the words "kill" and "sick" in the English language carry slang, metaphorical meanings as well as their standard meanings referring to death and murder and health. These particular usages are good examples of frozen metaphors. Again, note that the use of these words among the children is important especially because the children call attention to these words and their usage in this manner, while they realize that they are not using the words literally. We were reading a story
about a boy who could not go outside because he was sick, and the children were arguing (through their actions) regarding who should read:

DW: Thank you, J. O.k., D, could you read the second half of this?
J: But you can’t go outside because...
DW: J, D’s going to read.
D: But you can’t go outside because
D & J: you are...
DW: Go ahead, D.
J: Sick.
DW: You are sick. (repeating the complete sentence to make sure that they understood it)
D: You are SICK! (with emphasis= "you’re disgusting")
(laughs)

This is an example of the metaphorical slang use of "sick" to mean disgusting. Another time "sick" was used in a different way, this time not to give "sick" itself a different meaning, but rather to apply it to an object to which it does not usually apply (i.e. an inanimate object). L, who gets discouraged easily, was having trouble gluing something to her puppet:

L: It don’t work!
DW: Wasn’t it just working a minute ago?
L: It don’t now...
Q: Maybe it’s sick!

The word "kill" is often used in a non-literal sense as an exaggeration when someone is angry with someone else or unhappy with a situation. Other words referring to being dead are also used in the same way; these have become slang terms without any real threatening connotations of actual death (unless a play frame is not present or is broken). It might be argued that children of this age, who might not understand death, do not understand the slang and metaphorical nature of the use of these words in this manner, but I think that the children are fully aware of the difference between this usage and reality. Even if
the children do not "understand" death, they are cognizant of a joking situation; if they were not, the frame would break and the joke or slang term would not work, as it clearly does:

   DW: No, what would you say, come on, what would you say if you were sick and you wanted to go out, and your mother said, "No, you can't go out, you're sick," what would you say?
   D: I'd kill my mom.
   (all laugh)
   DW: Would you really kill her?
   D: Yeah. . .(not seriously)

   (D was fooling around and being silly and then stopped)
   A: D's dead!
   S: I killed him!
   DW: Come on, D. . .

I have here presented many examples of the metaphorical utterances of the children. These, together with the examples in chapter two of non-metaphorical figurative language use, provide a clear picture of the type of speech play that the children performed.
CHAPTER FOUR

INTRODUCTION

I have introduced the concept of framing, as an analytical tool, in reference to the different aspects of figurative language and speech play mentioned so far. Here I will further integrate that discussion and will show how the notion of framing is central to the study of speech play. I will apply this analytical method to a speech play act from my data. I am working primarily from the definitions of framing and keying as put forth by Bateson (1972) and Goffman (1974).
As Bateson pointed out, the notions of "frame" and "context" are psychological concepts, and we must use analogy to discuss these concepts. A frame "is (or delimits) a class or set of messages (or meaningful actions)." (Bateson 1972:186) The word "frame" is used because it presents us with the useful analogy to a picture frame. The frame represents an organizational boundary enclosing this message set. Using the image of a frame, we can understand how behavior is organized within a delimited space defining a context, which itself is also contained within a larger frame. It is useful to use the term "frame" as distinct from "set" because what is contained within the frame is more than a collection of objects; there is a relationship between those objects (or behavior or linguistic activity) which defines the frame. A set is also defined by its members, but in the case of framing, the boundary (i.e. the frame itself) between the members of the set and the outside world is important. Goffman pointed out that there is a very complex relationship between the frame and its environment which creates a paradox in discussing the "frame rim" (Goffman 1974:248-9).

Goffman provided a definition of frame with regard to its use: "Frame, however, organizes more than meaning; it also organizes involvement." (Goffman 1974:345) Bateson presented two paradoxical descriptions of frame and framing concepts which actually provide clearer insight into these issues:

We assume that the psychological frame has some degree of real existence. In many instances, the frame is consciously recognized and even represented in vocabulary ("play," "movie," "interview," "job," "language," etc.). . . [Yet,] the psychological concept which we are trying to define is
neither physical nor logical. . . (Bateson 1972:186-7)

Goffman’s concern that meaning and involvement are the principle aspects of the frame works with Bateson’s descriptions. These aspects are real; however, they are not concrete entities and their existence is probably only essential in frame recognition. This recognition is very important, particularly from the aspect of speech play. In speech play the frame is often explicit. I will later point out where the children explicitly recognized the existent frame, and the importance of this in regard to frame continuance or breakage.

One of the goals of frame analysis is to answer the question: "What is it that’s going on here?" The answer to this question is "an event or deed described within some primary framework." (Goffman 1974:5) Goffman defined this special type of framework, a primary framework, as

one that is seen as rendering what would otherwise be a meaningless aspect of the scene into something that is meaningful. (Goffman 1974:21)

Keying helps determine what the participants think is going on. Goffman defined a key as:

a set of conventions by which a given activity, one already meaningful in terms of some primary framework, is transformed into something patterned on this activity but seen by participants to be something quite else. (1974: 43-44)

A keying is the performance of a keyed action:

Actions framed entirely in terms of a primary framework are said to be real or actual, to be really or actually or literally occurring. A keying of these actions performed, say, onstage provides us with something that is not literal or real or actually occurring. Nonetheless, we would say that the staging of these actions was really or actually occurring. (1974: 47)

Goffman later expanded his definition to include rekeyings, which
are keyings that work on the keying of a primary framework. This process of transformations can be continued, and these transformations can be viewed as various "layers or laminations to the activity." (1974: 82)

Frames are both defined and manipulated by their frame limits. As Goffman explained:

In all cases, however, understood limits will be established, a definition concerning what is insufficient involvement and what is too much. (1974: 345)

When these frame limits are tested, the frames are subject to breakage. Breakage occurs when an event takes place that cannot be ignored but which cannot be contained within the frame (Goffman 1974: 347). Goffman called one manifestation of frame breakage "flooding"; a good example of flooding is when, in an uncomfortable situation, a person "cracks up" or "breaks up" with laughter. This flooding is a realization of the misframing of events. Another possible reaction to a frame break is when "the individual's behavior can retain role organization but in a shifted key." (1974: 359) In this case, the frame has been reframed.

Frames in general are variable, non-static structures. Frame breakage requires a drastic reorganization of the situation. There are two basic kinds of transformations that may occur--keyings and fabrications. (Goffman 1974: 247) Keying provides an underlying theme concerning what holds the frame together. Fabrication is, in a sense, a fraudulent keying; it is a transformation whereby there is intentional manipulation by at least one of the participants which give to another a false
answer to the question "What is it that's going on here?"

Frame analysis, and the organization it provides, can be applied to speech play. Speech play is not only an isolated linguistic activity, it is a form of play. The convergence of frame analysis and play occurred in Bateson's work. In studying play in animals, he provided this memorable analogy, which illuminates the concept of the play frame: "The playful nip denotes the bite, but it doesn't denote what the bite denotes." In this manner, Bateson answered Goffman's question "What is it that's going on here?" with "This is play." A general play frame can be described in this way:

. . . these actions in which we now engage do not denote what would be denoted by those actions which these actions denote. (Bateson 1972:180)

In the transition from play to speech play, this description can simply be applied using linguistic phenomena. This is not to suggest that speech play is purely linguistic; it is a sociolinguistic act. However, in speech play words are used as the primary means of manipulation to accomplish the playful act. A speech play act is usually part of a conversation; it does not take place in isolation. There appears to be one participant who is dominant or controlling the speech play frame; any participant can add to the frame, or even break it, but there is generally one dominant person who essentially creates and upholds the frame.
FRAME ANALYSIS: APPLICATION

I have chosen an excerpt from a work session with the children that provides a good example both of speech play and of framing. This will demonstrate why frame analysis is an extremely useful method of examining (children's) speech play. I will cite short passages of the conversation in the text; line numbers refer to the appendix which contains a complete transcription of this excerpt.

This conversation took place during a reading group session. This in itself provides a context for the conversation: it was school, it was in a small group outside of the regular classroom, and it was a reading group. As the teacher of the group, I established the frame within which we would work. Thus there were already several layers of framing in existence.

Within this frame, D created a speech play frame revolving around the line "good-looking girls". The children knew that this line is related to sex and is a subset of "dirty" subjects which are taboo to talk about both in school and in front of adults; hence the use of such words gives the children a certain power, both in creating humor and in breaking taboos. The story that the children read contained the sentence, "He [Teddy] saw some boys and girls."

17 DW: What did it say that he saw? What did Teddy see?
18 J & R: Boys and girls.
19 D: (und-- cackling)
20 DW: What else do you think, if the sentence just said,...
21 "He saw some...," ... what?

The children provided a few different answers to this question, mostly employing nouns that refer to people.

42 DW: (simultaneously with J) Is there something else he
Here, D began his speech play. When I changed the sentence and asked the children to complete "He heard some,...", D continued the speech play [line 50]. The new sentence did not make sense logically, but both given the social meaning that motivated it (i.e. an attitude that "good-looking" is a primary trait of females that is all-pervasive) and given the assertion of power by using this taboo language, it fit well into the speech play frame that D had set up. D repeated the sentence several times [lines 62, 65, 67]; he still laughed as did the others. As long as the children all thought the line was funny, they were operating under this same speech play frame. The laughing was a confirmation that they all still agreed that "this is play."

Finally, (after line 85), I tried to convince the children that the joke, and therefore the frame, was over. Then D started inserting his line wherever he could [lines 107, 114, 126]. As the conversation continued, his interest in the play seemed to drop, but then he would return to it. The other two children also began to lose interest, but as long as they did not produce a negative reaction, the frame of play and speech play remained. The conversation had turned to another subject; we began talking about being sick, which extended into talking about school. At this point D brought the line into the context of the conversation again:

142 DW: ...but you don't get to play if you're really sick.
143 D: Yeah, but (I insert a 'shhh' since he's screaming)
144 you miss school and I hate school.
145 DW: Why--I think it's fun--you get to play some games...
146 D: And anyways you can meet them good-looking girls.

At line 150 the frame broke. D, referring to the "good-looking girls", said, "But not you, J." This was no longer play. This is similar to Labov's (1972) finding concerning sounding rules and exchanges; when the "insults" get too close to home, they are no longer considered play, and the frame breaks. It is not clear in the transcription, but at this point there was an almost audible gulp, a silence. J was taken aback, and R mumbled something undecipherable which did not seem to support D's comment. There was definite tension in the air; it was strange how obvious the shift in conversation that had occurred was felt. I offered a condemnation for J's sake [line 153], as in my position I had to both demand fair and proper behavior from the children and uphold the general work frame under which we were working; if this were not done there could have been a total break (of the work frame), feelings would be terribly hurt, and the situation would disintegrate into a hostile situation.

I had an important position within this group. I was only partially involved in the framing that D set up, in part because of my ambiguous position of "authority" (and therefore responsibility for preventing too much "bad" talk), and in part because I was trying to steer the conversation away from the topic. Here we can see a power-play occurring. Within the work frame that I had set up, D had established a play frame which he was trying to uphold. Not only was there an expression of power in his establishing the play frame, but D had to exert power to maintain his play frame. This is a good example of how frames
within frames work. The play frame was maintained for a long while, until D pushed the limits of the frame too far, and the frame broke. The outer work frame that I had established still existed, and that frame was maintained. On the last line of the transcript [153] I mention that the children were settling back into work; the children returned to the work they were doing, reading and constructing sentences, and the line "good-looking girls" was never mentioned again. When the children were distracted from their work, they did not usually settle down as easily as they did in this instance; this was probably also a reaction to the tension of the situation and the frame break.

It is interesting to go further into the "whys" of speech play among children. It has often been said that children play with language "for the sake of it." (Cazden: 1974) This is probably somewhat true for simpler, or for more purely phonetic, speech play. In the above example, it is obvious that much more is going on. This is an extension from the first reason that I presented: these words are played with and uttered as they are concerning subjects that the children are not "supposed" to talk about. Since these words are not "supposed" to be said, the children are accomplishing an act (more than just play) in saying these things. This act is an expression of power. As there is intention in a speech act, so there is intention in a speech play act. There is still a playful side to the utterance, but there is always a reason why certain words or ideas are played with and not others. Many speech play acts are probably related to this exertion of some kind of power or authority in a situation where a person does not (in a "real", non-play situation) have that
kind of authority; here, the children as pupils in school do not have authority. Therefore, the children create a play frame wherein they do have control and can express that authority. However, D pushed that power to the limit of the play frame, and he broke the frame.

It must be noted that this kind of speech play act is different from the one-line metaphors and other utterances that were discussed in earlier chapters. Frame analysis is not useful for those types of utterances; they are a different use of figurative language as opposed to speech play per se. Speech play can involve figurative language, and figurative language is a kind of speech play, but not all speech play involves figurative language. This distinction is important in understanding the role of intention in both speech play and figurative language: there is intention in a (child’s) speech play act, even if it is not necessarily conscious or evident, whereas intention is often irrelevant in figurative language speech play (including metaphor).

Frame analysis has not been applied to the study of children’s speech play in published literature to my knowledge. I took the idea directly from Goffman’s and Bateson’s work on framing and play. The work of Labov on ritual insults ("sounding") among black American teenagers utilized the concepts of frame analysis; however much of Labov’s work was published before the seminal work on frame analysis. Kochman’s (1983) criticism of Labov’s work also made only limited use of frame analysis. That recent anthropologists have not applied frame
analysis to children's speech play is related to the general lack of analysis by anthropologists of the speech play ethnography. Most of the ethnographic analysis accomplished was equivalent to the work I presented in the early part of my paper; this involved the description and categorization of utterances, and it perhaps included a discussion of the work in relation to the "equivalent" adult linguistic production. This problematic method ignores the issue of a separate children's culture; more importantly, it does not consider the (sociolinguistic) context and the pragmatic aspects of the speech play act necessary to understand children's speech play.
CHAPTER FIVE

I have pointed out specific differences of methodology and results in studies, including my own, on children's figurative language. However, most of the recent psychologically-oriented literature (i.e. from the 1970s and 1980s) agrees on several basic issues regarding metaphor:

1) that young children possess a capacity for metaphoric thought, although they infrequently use it,

2) that metaphoric production and comprehension must be differentiated, and

3) that pre-school children seem to have a high output of metaphorical (though often nonsensical) language which declines in elementary school and then reemerges in junior high school.

Although I will disagree with the conclusions and assumptions of certain specifics within these studies, I do agree with the first two statements presented above. I find fault with the last statement, on which I only have the support of one other study (Winner, McCarthy, and Gardner 1980).

No broad conclusions about children's speech play and figurative language emerges from the anthropological literature. These studies are cross-cultural accounts and examples of various aspects of children's speech play. All studies concur that further ethnographic research is essential. This was a major motivation for the methodology of my study. The existent anthropological literature is useful for the ethnography which it provides; however, I feel its theoretical caution is unwarranted: if we wait until we have "enough" fieldwork done before drawing any conclusions, we will simply have a large collection of data without any real understanding of the field of children's speech play. Because of the lack of theoretical
analysis of the ethnographic data in general, I have articulated the theoretical issues on my own. I have worked from ideas that were sometimes mentioned in the literature as important issues for future study, although without much explication.

I used the literature which focused on the notions of play and frame analysis as a tool for analyzing my data. I have shown this to be a useful method of analyzing children's speech play conversations.

My conclusions fall into two categories. First, I will further discuss the existence and validity of early metaphor markers, the problems of adult categories of metaphor, and finally what system can be used in analyzing children's metaphorical utterances. Second, I will reexamine my data to draw conclusions concerning metaphor usage among the children, the role of creativity, and the social issues and implications involved in the children's speech play use.

The issue of whether or not there is a form of "early metaphor marker" that is important for study is directly related to what is defined as metaphor. Asch and Nerlove discussed double function terms, taking these as "an elementary instance of metaphorical thinking." (1960: 48) The question is not only whether these utterances themselves are metaphorical, but whether they are prerequisites for more developed, metaphorical thought. The terms which Asch and Nerlove used in their studies have been considered frozen by some recent critics (e.g. Pollio and Pollio 1974). Using adult metaphor categorizations, Asch and Nerlove's examples are frozen metaphors. Yet these frozen metaphors are
not only examples of metaphorical thinking, but they are probably necessary steps in metaphorical development. As I have stated previously: frozen metaphors are important in terms of children's language because the children themselves call attention to them in their conversations. This is primarily displayed with metalinguistic, pragmatic devices such as differences in intonation, volume, and emphasis. The children clearly understand this use of early metaphor in that they also play further on them—"fixing the chair" is a clear example of this.

This is one of the main reasons that adult metaphor terminology is not useful in analyzing children's utterances. Most researchers ignore frozen metaphor as irrelevant. If frozen metaphor was to be accepted as "elementary metaphor", there is still the problem of the other two categories of metaphor (i.e. conventional and novel metaphor). To reiterate again an obvious example first, what is a conventional metaphor to an adult listener is quite possibly a novel metaphor to the child listener. This was shown by the only example of a conventional metaphor used by a child, "skinny as a rail." Several of the children had not heard the metaphor before. Therefore, they had to analyze the metaphor as if it were a novel utterance; what makes a conventional metaphor conventional is that it is familiar to the listener and part of the standard vocabulary of the culture. In terms of children's usage of conventional metaphor, there is no way to be certain that a child understands the metaphor, or whether s/he is simply imitating an adult utterance. This could be the explanation for the confused "bald chicken"
utterance, although I would guess that it is possible that the child understood some other conventional metaphor and had difficulty incorporating it into a novel utterance; perhaps the conversational frame was also different.

Looking at this issue from the other side, from the children's utterances first instead of the adult categories, we can see even more clearly why these categories are invalid. Most of the children's utterances, as described in chapter three, do not fit into any of the three categories. I do not think that this is an issue of whether or not these utterances are metaphorical in nature; this has already been proven. Rather, it is that the adult metaphorical categories have fuzzy boundaries, which is quite obvious as there is often disagreement concerning not only what is metaphorical but what type of metaphor it is. (Thus the need for a judging and rating system in many metaphorical and psychological testing situations.) The children's utterances, in being particularly creative, evidence this fuzziness to such a degree that most of them fall somewhere between frozen and novel or frozen and conventional metaphor. On the other hand, the adult categories of metaphor are defined according to both the amount of their usage and their retention of metaphoricity: that is, novel metaphors, on one end of the scale, have not been used often and are very metaphorical; frozen metaphors, on the other end of the scale, have been used frequently and are no longer considered metaphorical. Thus if I were to chart out these standard categories of metaphor, I would order them: novel--conventional--frozen. So one might think
that the fuzziness would occur between conventional and frozen or between conventional and novel. But these differences are clear in the children's utterances. Frozen and conventional utterances are generally the most difficult to determine, especially in adult speech. It is the novel and frozen fuzziness that is the most difficult to interpret. This is not because the children's utterances are nonsensical--the nonsensical utterances were analyzed separately. It is simply because this category of frozen metaphor is irrelevant; it does not aid us in understanding the utterance or the metaphor involved.

It would be convenient if we did not need to categorize these utterances at all, and if we simply recognized their metaphoricity. However, especially when analyzing a large amount of data, some sort of organization is necessary. As I have shown, it is necessary to change the focus of the grounds for classification. I would suggest the following groupings according to the degree of sophistication of the metaphor in regard to the capacity for a double meaning: 1) elementary metaphors--that involve simple duplicate meaning terms (including synaesthetic adjectives), 2) secondary metaphors that involve playing on simple duplicate meaning terms, and 3) prime metaphors that create new duplicate meaning terms (i.e. novel).

These duplicate meaning terms are equivalent to the early metaphor markers which I have been discussing (e.g. 'sign'). The ability to understand that words can have different meanings is fundamental to metaphor, which is a play on this notion of dual meanings while crossing semantic boundaries.

Most of the children's metaphorical utterances were
elementary metaphors. These metaphors may still be used as speech play, but they require only the recognition of a duplicate meaning. This category would include many metaphors which are standardly termed frozen, although these terms are not interchangeable by any means.

Some of the children's utterances were secondary metaphors. These are somewhat more sophisticated utterances, as there are two levels of playing involved: the basic elementary metaphor, and then a play on that metaphor. The speech play, described in chapter three, in which a boy responded to my statement, "I'm sitting at the head," with "You're at the feet," is a good example of a secondary metaphor. This required not only the understanding of the double meaning which I had presented, but also a further playing on the meaning. Another example is the various uses of the word "sick"; we had been discussing the word in one context, and the children played on its use in relation to a second context.

Prime metaphors were rare among the children's utterances. These metaphors are not only novel utterances (as secondary metaphors could also be novel), but the duplicity which they involve is novel. C's "trumpet sink" metaphor is prime. The complex relationship between the sink and a trumpet which is involved in the invention (and comprehension) of this utterance is highly sophisticated; this is a relationship that does not usually exist. Thus, C created a prime metaphor.

My study has shown that first grade children (i.e. six and seven year olds) have metaphoric capabilities. They both use and
comprehend metaphors as outlined above. The children's metaphoric capabilities are not as sophisticated as an adults' in regard to adult, standard metaphor usage. I have only focused on one age group, so I cannot substantiate a developmental claim for younger or older children, except by referring to other studies. In this vein, we must admit that if first grade children are showing a fairly sophisticated level of children's metaphor, then there must be some metaphoric capabilities attributed to even younger children. I have argued for the importance of double function and double meaning terms and the existence of "early metaphor markers". Thus I would argue that there is probably an understanding of these types of early metaphor in pre-school children. In terms of older children, all language development studies have shown that metaphoric (and other figurative language) capabilities are indeed developmental processes, and thus older children can be expected to possess a more sophisticated level of metaphoric understanding and use. We can also expect older children, by their longer exposure to adult (language) culture, to develop adult metaphorical usage and thus begin to use conventional metaphors (and clichés) more frequently.

As I have been discussing the development of metaphor in first grade children and older, I must also address the question of metaphoric production decline in elementary school. Many of the leading researchers in the field have suggested this (e.g. Billow 1975, 1977; Gardner, Kircher, Winner, and Perkins 1975) and it has only been challenged by Winner, McCarthy, and Gardner (1980). I have shown that at least at the beginning of elementary
school, there is still an abundance of metaphor production.

There is a problem with educational practices today in terms of encouraging both creativity and the use of creative language (as will be discussed further below). However, the hypothetical decline in metaphor production probably does not exist. This decline in metaphoric production was posited using standard, adult metaphorical terms; these terms are not valid in analyzing children's speech production and comprehension, as this section began by demonstrating, and thus it is not valid to discuss how well children perform using these terms. Perhaps children's production of adult metaphor does decrease in elementary school. Until a study has proven that their metaphor production in terms of children's language culture has declined, I am inclined to believe that the tendencies shown in this present study will continue, and that children throughout elementary school make use of sophisticated metaphorical language.

Creativity necessarily plays a large role in speech play and figurative language output and understanding. It has generally been assumed that speech play and the use of figurative language are expressions of creativity, and that they are also necessities for creative language and thought development.

The role of individual variation in terms of creativity in figurative language and speech play is also raised in my work. In my study, I was working with twenty-four children, a relatively small sample. It is still possible to make generalizations and draw conclusions from such a study. However, I have been cautious because in this small sample I found a great
deal of individual variation. Most of this is more relevant to the discussion of social issues. But it is still important to point out that, although a fair number of the children produced examples of speech play and figurative language, a few individuals clearly stood out in this regard. This is necessarily true of any study of individual abilities, as not all children (or adults) have the same level of language capabilities. These individual differences were especially apparent in my study because its methodological reliance on a natural discourse setting as opposed to a psychological testing situation; in the latter every subject has an equal chance of displaying their metaphorical and figurative language knowledge, whereas in my study there are other (social) factors operating so that the children were essentially competing to display their knowledge and to involve themselves in the conversation. An example of this is that shy or quiet children do not participate in speech play exchanges as much as more outspoken, aggressive children.

The effect of standard educational practices on the creative language abilities of the young child must be examined. It first must be considered that this project was done within a traditional classroom, as opposed to an open classroom. The term "traditional", as applied to the classroom, has changed over the years. The children were required to do specific work at certain times, but they were also given some freedom and choice in terms of how to accomplish this work, both independently and in small groups; much of this is simply a result of one teacher's inability to teach twenty-four children at different levels at
the same time. My presence in the classroom was both very helpful to the teacher and a different experience for the children in their work situation. Suddenly they were receiving more individual attention than they usually did. I would not be surprised if the sheer quantity as well as quality of speech play that I discovered was higher than the same teacher would have encountered in the classroom had she been looking for it. This is not to suggest that individual attention alone will promote speech play. But speech play must be encouraged in order to be promoted; if speech play is discouraged, it will cease to exist. The individual attention that I provided did encourage speech play; many educational practices, exemplified and reinforced by having to work in large groups, discourage speech play.

There are definitely instances of routine exercises which stifle creativity, even if they are unintentional. One example is obvious: when a teacher is testing a child's understanding of reading material, s/he will often ask the student questions which are designed for the student to simply regurgitate the material. If that is not done, the answer is incorrect. Therefore, this exercise reinforces non-creative thinking and is perhaps unwittingly giving the student the message "This should be answered just in this way; you should think just in this way." This issue has often been raised by teachers and educators specifically concerned that creative writing is not encouraging creativity. In this process students learn very early in their educational experience not only what is required of them, but they also learn to only fulfill those requirements in a set, safe

An example from my data also supports these complaints. The children were constructing sentences, using vocabulary words from a story which they had recently read; one of the vocabulary words was the name 'Dan'. The children had been constructing varied, creative sentences, including the boy (Q) in this exchange:

DW: O.k., Q, it's your turn.
Q: (he picks a card) Dan.
DW: Can you tell me a sentence or a story with 'Dan' in it?
Q: (with no hesitation) Dan can play a game.

The sentence that Q told the group was not a sentence that he had thought of on his own; it was a sentence from the story which they had read.

There seemed to be very distinctive sexual differentiation in terms of which kinds of figurative language and speech play different speakers used. One girl (B) produced all of the sing-song utterances. This relation of sing-song utterances with girls might be because sing-songs are probably related to jump-rope rhymes, which are traditionally a female form of play. The sing-songs in my study did appear to be original utterances, but this does not rule out the influence of traditional games.

All of the examples of rhyme and homonym usage were produced by boys except for two examples from the same girl mentioned above (B), and these rhymes were part of her sing-songs.

Except for one work group composed of all boys, and one group composed of only two girls, most of the groups were fairly balanced, including perhaps two boys and one girl one time and an extra girl at another time. Yet metaphor production was
dominated by males: of the fourteen overt metaphors (those described in the body of this paper), eleven were uttered by six different boys and three were uttered by one girl (L). Not only did the boys dominate the figurative language domain, but in general they dominated the conversations; since in almost all cases the boys spoke more often than the girls, on a quantitative basis it is not surprising that the boys also used more figurative language. It is interesting to note that in the only group that was entirely female, one of the two metaphorical utterances by a girl occurred in that work session.

There is also individual variation to take into account: there were certain individuals who were more dominant speakers, who both spoke more often and tended to use figurative language more often. For the most part these two were correlated; one boy in particular (D) both spoke the most and used the most figurative language. (He also was the dominant speech play frame setter for the one clear example of a speech play interaction described in chapter four.) One girl (B) spoke the most and was also one of the most aggressive children. She also performed the sing-songs and the rhymes. However, the only girl who used metaphorical language (L) is a shy, sensitive girl; she is often fairly quiet, but when she does talk she is usually very sharp.

Basically, boys dominate the field of figurative language and speech play. It seems that since it is an unusual event for a girl in these situations to engage in speech play and figurative language, it also takes an unusual, perhaps adaptive personality for a girl to accomplish this act. L's unusual combination of passivity and yet boldness exemplifies this well.
In terms of power and authority assertions being a part of speech play, it is not surprising that boys are dominant in this area. Yet one of the ways that the children assert themselves in speech play is in the usage of "dirty", taboo language, and this is best exemplified in both the sing-songs and other utterances by B. I think she (B) is another example of an unusual person who in this case found it possible to get involved in speech play in an aggressive manner.

There did not seem to be any racial differentiation in speech play and figurative language use among the boys. The most prominent male speaker was white (D), and quantitative analysis of the number of productions would provide a false impression that speech play and figurative language usage was much more common among whites. However, there was an even split of usage among black and white speakers (as reflects the composition of the class), and aside from the one boy mentioned above, each boy produced one or two utterances.

As mentioned above, only two girls engaged in the use of obvious speech play or figurative language. These two were both black. However, because of the evident sexual differentiation and the lack of racial differentiation among the boys, I consider this fact irrelevant. I am particularly concerned here with the size of my sample; with more data to work with, I would consider expanding the notion of why certain girls would engage in speech play to why certain black girls would engage in speech play. Following my earlier explanation, it would be interesting to see if the requirements for female assertion in a male-dominated
situation were more prevalent among blacks than among whites.

Speech play and figurative language involve bending and breaking rules. On the one hand, this refers to linguistic rules that are manipulated through the actual execution of these acts. On the other hand, this refers to social rules that are manipulated because the speech act has been accomplished. Speech play is a means of breaking social rules in a socially acceptable manner. It is an expression of power, or perhaps lack thereof, as it is a means of asserting domination in a sphere where that power can not usually be expressed (or does not exist).

Again, it may be questioned whether a speech play act is an intentional act. It is an intentional act, although the intent may vary. In terms of speech play involving committing a socially unacceptable act in a socially acceptable way, intention is irrelevant. It exists, but it may be so socially ingrained that it is unconscious-- is that then intentional? In a more general context, I do think that play for the sake of play (cf. Cazden 1974) exists in the use of figurative language. This is not an explanation in itself, however. Even "play for the sake of play" exists at some times and in some certain situations and not in others, and exactly when and why this happens is important. Although the intent itself may be unconscious, the use of speech play and figurative language is a very conscious, intentional act.

Why study children's speech play and figurative language? For one thing, the many unanswered questions which I have presented are important to understanding children's speech play and figurative language, and to understanding these activities in
adults. The real question is, why is it important to understand these activities better, particularly among children? Childhood speech play and figurative language may be essential to fully developed and creative thought and language. If it is not essential, use of this kind of language would still indicate a higher level of creativity and more elaborate thought processes. It has also been suggested that speech play capabilities in a child would later affect, as an adult, his/her capacity to understand the social and natural world and the place of oneself and others within it. (Dunn 1980: 211)

It is important, then, both to evaluate how current teaching processes affect speech play and figurative language, and to construct new methods that would better stimulate creative thinking. Lastly, by recognizing the social implications both of the use of speech play and figurative language and how it is currently being used, we can take action within the educational system to change the socialization which occurs in our society.
This is an excerpt from a reading group with two boys and a girl. It was the beginning of a story about a boy who was sick and could only sit inside and look out the window. From this I tried to encourage the children to make up sentences (as I was always doing) from various beginnings such as "He saw some. . . ." <The excerpts that are readings from the book are in boldface>

1  D: He saw some.....
2  J: Things.
3  DW: Shh....
4  D: Some boys and girls.
5  DW: Next line, R?
6  R: And they couldn't come in.
7  DW: Right, you skipped a line: But he couldn't go out and
8  they couldn't come in. Why couldn't he go out? Who knows?
9  D: He's sick!
10 DW: He's sick. What do you have to do when you're sick?
11 J: (und)
12 R: You have to lay down and eat something icky.
13 UN: (und)
14 D: Well, I go for the candybars when I'm sick.
15 (laughter)
16 UN: (und)
17 DW: What did it say that he saw? What did Teddy see?
18 J & R: Boys and girls.
19 D: (und--cackling)
20 DW: What else do you think, if the sentence just said, 'He
21 saw some...'. . . what?
22 D: -one. (simultaneously after 'some')
23 DW: He saw someone. What else? Just if he were maybe
24 looking out the window, what else could he do...'He saw
25 some....'
26 D: He see the old lady getting run over by a big old rig and
27 goes WHAPI!
28 R: (laughs)
29 J: He didn't have to say that.
30 DW: You can make up sentences, but you can also stay in your
31 seat and be a little quieter. R, can you think of
32 something else? 'He saw some...'
33 R: Games
34 D: Big one. (simultaneously with R)
35 DW: He saw some games.
36 UN: He saw up.
37 DW: 'He saw some....'
38 D: Girls.
39 UN: (und)
40 J & D: (und) I know something he seen. I know... Oh I
41 know...
42 DW: (simultaneously with J) Is there something else he could
43 have seen? Just think....shhhh
44 J: People.
45 DW: He saw some people. D?
46 D: He saw some good-looking girls. (laughs as do others)
47 DW: Ah, did he? (all still laughing)
What if, instead of it saying, 'He saw some...', it said 'He heard some...'? Can you think of something we could fill it with? (immediately) He heard some good-looking girls. (all laugh)

He heard them? How could he hear that they were good-looking? (laughing) Does that make sense?

Yeah... (und)

You can tell. (laughs)... You can tell they're good-looking.

Let's try to think, what could it say... 'He heard some...'? R, can you think of some way to end that sentence?

He heard some voices. What else could he hear some...

He heard some good-looking girls! (laughs)

Now D, let's have a new sentence; that doesn't make much sense...

He heard some voices. What else could he hear some...

He heard some good-looking girls! (laughs)

He heard some good-looking girls...

He heard somebody crying. What about he heard some...dogs? Did he hear some dogs?

(All say 'yeah!')

Stupid dogs! (laughs... und)

You really like that, don't you? (I guess I understood it at the time--maybe he was still saying 'good-looking girls')

He heard somebody crying.

He heard somebody crying. What about he heard some...dogs? Did he hear some dogs?

(All say 'yeah!')

Stupid dogs! (laughs...und)

You really like that, don't you? (I guess I understood it at the time--maybe he was still saying 'good-looking girls')

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(All say 'yeah!')

Stupid dogs! (laughs...und)

You really like that, don't you? (I guess I understood it at the time--maybe he was still saying 'good-looking girls')

He heard somebody crying.
103 DW: Shhh...
104 (D sounding out word)
105 D: But not Teddy.
106 J: But not Teddy.
107 D: (und) some good-looking girls!
108 DW: Can you read the first line?
109 D: Some people went out
110 DW: No...went...
111 D: in-to the store.
112 DW: Ok, can you read the next line R, we’re on the second line.
113 D: But good-looking girls...
114 DW: Shh, but what?
115 (laughter)
116 R: But not Teddy.
118 J: Teddy, w...a...
119 D: (und)...he’s going to run over that old lady...here’s that old lady...go...
120 DW: Shhh. Teddy was what...? I want to hear from J.
121 D: Teddy was...
122 D(R?): He was too fat! (R & D laugh; mumbling)
123 DW: No....
124 D: He was happy ’cause the good-looking girls...
125 DW: D, let’s stick to what we’re doing here. R...
126 R: He was sick. (starts coughing/miming sick)
127 DW: Right. And what’s the last line, D?
128 J: And he didn’t...
129 D: And he didn’t (then with J:) like it.
130 DW: Do you like being sick?
131 D: Yeah!
132 J & R: (und--yelling--a ‘no’ somewhere in there)
133 D: I miss school and I hate school. I hate to go...(noise)
134 UN: I know...
135 DW: Shhhh
136 D: I hate school, it’s the worst thing in the world.
137 R: I like school.
138 DW: I don’t like being sick...
139 UN: I hate...
140 DW: ...but you don’t get to play if you’re really sick.
141 D: Yeah, but (I insert a ‘shhh’ since he’s screaming) you miss school and I hate school.
142 DW: Why--I think it’s fun--you get to play some games...
143 D: And anyways you can meet them good-looking girls.
144 DW: Ah, you can meet some good-looking girls. Ahuh, come on...
145 (mumbles)
146 D: But not you J.
147 DW: Shhh
148 R: (und)
149 D: That’s not nice, D...(settling them back into work)
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