

Ochs, Elinor (1988) Culture and language development: Language socialization and language acquisition in a Samoan village. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

This book discusses the way that language is developed and learned among the Samoan people. Elinor Ochs conducts a thorough study on how children learn language, the settings in which the language is learned, and the way in which speech is handled in the culture.

The book begins by discussing the initial learning process of infants. Children from infancy are encouraged to speak. Parents use laughter, praise, and urges of repetition to encourage their children to speak. Play and attention are used to teach the children skills such as crawling, walking, and speech

Children begin to practice tasks before they are expected to be capable of doing them. Toddlers try to sweep up leaves, cut the grass with a machete, or peel vegetables and are usually allowed to handle the tools required for such tasks.

Children in the Samoan culture are taught to strictly keep from interrupting adult's conversation and from having outburst of speech. Responses, such as telling the child to stop being troublesome, yelling and physical punishments are used. Observation is acknowledged as an important means of acquiring the knowledge required to behave appropriately. There is an emphasis on children learning to pay attention. Physical punishment is also used to assure that children pay attention.

Children are expected to listen and not to question the words of their superiors. When children are present during adult conversations they are expected to remain silent. These restrictions on a child contribution to conversation indexing of the child's status and mark the child "as someone not fully in possession of her experience. Restrictions on a child's speech include editing children narratives, stating that she or he is not yet "a full-fledged person." Children of all ages are strongly discouraged from asking direct questions; adults either ignore them or treat them with impatience or anger.

The book gives a full coverage of Samoan rearing and language development techniques, and is interesting in that it shows the way that children around the world acquire speech in general.