

I would like to recruit ICCI readers to help me solve a mystery that has long puzzled me. I have met many linguists who know (or think they know) that: 1) There are cultures where children are not spoken to until they already talk fluently (1 or 2 years of age). 2) In some cultures, infants are spoken to in exactly the same way as adults are; that is, infant-directed speech = adult-directed speech. It follows from (1) and (2) that infant-directed speech is a superfluous occurrence, and children can develop language perfectly well even if they are never addressed, or if they are talked to in run-of-the-mill sentences. What are the sources of these firm linguistic beliefs? I've been able to trace some statements that could be interpreted as evidence for (2), but in each case there is some counterevidence or counterarguments to be found...

- The Kaluli, according to Bambi Schieffelin (1994), place their child facing away from the mother, who doesn't talk to them. However, other people may then address the child (it's unclear to me whether they speak in what we would describe as adult-directed-speech-like in this case) and the mother then responds for the child in a high-pitched, childish manner (so this could be described as infant-directed-speech-like) - Heath (1983) claims that low-socioeconomic status African-American families of the Piedmont Carolinas talk little to their children, and certainly not in an infant-directed-speech manner (Phillips 1994 says differently for African-Americans in Illinois). - Ratner & Pye (1984) analyzed 20 sentences from 3 Quiche Maya talkers and did not find an increase in pitch height when addressing babies; so they concluded that infant-directed speech is not universal (Fernald et al. 1989 note that the Qiche Mayan use higher pitch as a sign for deference, and the adult-directed speech samples in Ratner and Pye's study were from interactions of the locals with the linguists, who will almost certainly have commanded greater deference than a 2-year-old). In contrast, the sources of (1) have so far escaped me. The only thing that remotely resembles such a statement comes from Ochs (1982, p. 85) who reports that Samoan caregivers take a long time to respond to their children's requests or complaints. I couldn't even find a plausible linguistic reference that stated (1), although I assure you that every time I present at a conference that is not infant-centered, someone in the audience invariably claims (1). So is the evidence I cited above all there is to the opinion of IDS as a luxury? More specifically: a) What linguistics textbooks or fundamental references state (1)? b) What references do they give to support it? c) Do these references check out — that is, do other people who have studied these cultures agree? d) Is all the evidence for (2) those cases I cited above, or am I missing more substantial data?

References Fernald, Anne, Traute Taeschner, Judy Dunn, Mechthild Papousek, Bénédicte de Boysson-Bardies & Ikuko Fukui. 1989. A cross-language study of prosodic modifications in mothers' and fathers' speech to preverbal infants. *Journal of Child Language* 16. 477-501. Heath, Shirley Brice. 1983. *Ways with words: language, life, and work in communities and classrooms*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Ochs, Elinor. 1982. Talking to children in Western Samoa. *Language in Society*, 11. 77-104. Phillips, Ruby Sara Coachman. 1994. *Infant-directed speech in African American mothers*: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign dissertation. Ratner, Nan Bernstein & Clifton Pye. 1984. Higher pitch in BT is not universal: acoustic evidence from Quiche Mayan. *Journal of Child Language* 11. 515-522. Schieffelin, Bambi B. 1994. *How Kaluli children learn what to say, what to do, and how to feel*. New York: Cambridge University Press.