

## **Pets as Vehicles of Language Socialization: Encouraging Children's Emotional, Moral, and Relational Development in Japanese**

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Pets are common in many homes, schools, and other settings in societies across the globe, as they provide comfort, companionship, and a range of other functions to those in their care. As Melson has suggested, pets are beneficial for children's well-being by promoting their physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development. Although an increasing amount of research focuses on the role of pets and other animals in human lives, especially in the fields of medicine and psychology (McCardle et al.), there are relatively few studies examining human-pet interactions involving children from linguistic, anthropological, or sociological perspectives (Tannen). Research on human-pet interactions in settings with children can further contribute to our understanding of the ways in which pets play an integral part in children's development.

In this chapter, I examine the role of pets in children's development by focusing on a pet care activity in a Japanese household involving a mother, two children, and their pet hamster. As in Euro-American societies, many households in Japan either currently own a pet (35.1%) and/or have had a pet in the past (78.4%)<sup>1</sup>. Common pets include, in descending order, dogs, cats, fish, turtles, birds, hamsters/guinea pigs, rabbits, and various kinds of insects/bugs<sup>2</sup>. Small pets, such as miniaturized dogs not typically seen in the West, are more common than large pets due in part to more limited living space and a cultural preference for things that are small and *kawaii* 'cute' (Yomota). Pet ownership ostensibly entails pet care, such as playing, feeding, and cleaning. While much of this responsibility often falls on adults, children may participate in pet care in various ways, and in the process learn how to interact with and take

responsibility for pets in culturally specific ways. Here, in focusing on a pet care activity involving a hamster, I show how a Japanese mother uses verbal and non-verbal language in instructing the children how to care for the pet, including touching, holding, and feeding her, and to interpret the pet's embodied behavior in relation to her feelings, wants, and desires. As such, I discuss ways in which the mother's acts of instruction and socialization imbue the pet with subjectivity. I also show that although children often align with the mother's acts, they also at times ignore or resist them in ways that display their own agency and understanding of how to interact with and care for the pet. Finally, I will suggest that when children engage in pet care activities that involve attention to pets as subjective beings with wants, feelings, and desires, pets function as vehicles for promoting children's emotional, moral, and relational development.

### **Language socialization and human-pet interaction**

This analysis is informed by language socialization, a dynamic theory for examining children's acculturation into linguistic and cultural norms (Schiefflin and Ochs). Language socialization is concerned with the process of children's development of culturally specific subjectivities, or ways of being in the social world (Kulick and Schieffelin). According to Schieffelin and Ochs, this process entails both socialization on *how* to use language, and socialization *through* the use of language. That is, as children acquire language, they also acquire norms and values that undergird what it means to be a competent member of a social group. Language socialization occurs within relationships characterized by power and inequality. Specifically, more knowledgeable members, or "experts," teach and convey to less knowledgeable members, or "novices," various communicative and cultural norms in both explicit and implicit ways. As in other postmodern approaches to children (such as,

Kuczynski), language socialization theory considers children not simply as blank slates onto which language and cultural information are written, but as subjects with agency who actively take up and at times resist acts of instruction and socialization, and socialize others.

A number of studies have focused to varying degrees on human-animal interaction in naturally occurring settings, and have detailed how adults talk to, for, and through pets in constructing pets as subjective beings and conversational partners in interaction. For instance, in a study of veterinary clinics, Roberts found that in the context of administering shots and other routine medical procedures, veterinarians speak to and for animals in response to their signs of distress. In another study of veterinary clinics, MacMartin, Coe, and Adams found that in responding to the pet's crying, panting, clawing, trembling and other signs of distress, veterinarians often utter "I know" to the pet, usually together with other linguistic elements such as "buddy" when speaking to a pet dog, as a display of empathy (155). In a study of interaction in family households, Tannen shows how adults speak to and for pets in addressing other family members, such as spouses and children. For example, she describes how in one case a mother spoke for, or "ventriloquized," the pet dogs in criticizing her four-year-old son, Jason, for his inappropriate behavior of not putting away his toys: "We're naughty, but we're not as naughty as Jason; he's naughtiest" (408). Tannen argues that such ventriloquizing is a type of *constructed dialogue* used to mediate interaction with children and other family members, particularly in performing speech acts such as criticism and complaints that are better dealt with in less direct and forceful ways than, for instance, explicitly telling a child to put away his or her toys. Tannen's study suggests that, in ventriloquizing pets, adults not only mediate delicate interactions with family members but also in the process construct pets as family members who, similar to humans, have thoughts

and take emotional and moral positions. These studies suggest that adults in various institutional and household settings imbue pets with subjectivity and frame them as conversational partners and family members.

In this regard, several studies have noted stylistic similarities between adult-child and adult-animal interaction. For instance, in her study of the Kaluli of Papua New Guinea, Schieffelin (71) observes that in engaging infants in interaction with older children, Kaluli mothers hold infants outward and “speak in a special high-pitched, nasalized register (similar to one that Kaluli use when speaking to dogs).” Melson (47) refers to dialogue that humans engage in with pets as *petese*, adapted from the term *motherese*, which is a special register used by caregivers in many societies when talking to infants and young children that includes the use of high pitch and diminutives. In my research on Japanese caregiver-child interactions, I observed that Japanese parents use similar communicative strategies in interacting with pets and pre-verbal children. In particular, parents speak for pre-verbal children and animals at the park or zoo, using a quoted speech frame: ‘He/she/they say X.’ For instance, when a mother and two-year-old child were feeding some carp in a pond, the mother addressed the child by quoting the speech of the carp as, ‘They say, “It’s delicious”’ (*oishii tte*) (Burdelski: “*Early experiences with food*” 241). Such practices frame animals as subjective beings by attributing evaluative speech to them, thus constructing them as part of the child’s social world.

Although language socialization has traditionally been analyzed primarily in relation to caregiver-child interactions, more recently it has been used to examine apprenticeship in a wide range of settings and activities. Yet, as pointed out above, although several studies have examined naturally occurring human-animal interaction involving children, these studies are still fairly rare. My focus on a pet care activity will suggest that language socialization is a

fruitful framework for examining human-animal interaction involving adults, children, and pets, as it can help us uncover the verbal and non-verbal strategies used by adults in instructing children in pet care. These strategies, I argue, encourage children's responsibility, empathy, and perspective taking.

### **Pet care as situated activity: Speaking to, through, and for a pet**

The episode I will examine comes from a larger linguistic and ethnographic study involving 13 middle-class Japanese families with two-year-old children living in the *Kansai* (Western) region of Japan (Burdelski: *Language socialization of two-year old children*)<sup>3</sup>. All of the families lived in nuclear households, with fathers working full-time outside the home and mothers providing full-time childcare. The children were audio-visually recorded as they interacted with family members, peers, and strangers in and around the household. Three of the families had pets – a dog, hamster, and turtle, respectively – but interactions with animals occurred on a number of occasions in many of the other families as well, such as during visits to the park, zoo, or temple. Yet I observed that pet care is different from these often more fleeting interactions with animals in various ways. In particular, in pet care, children may learn to take a degree of responsibility for a pet that lives in their home and ultimately to treat the pet as a friend or family member, who like the children themselves eats, plays, sleeps, and develops over time. Thus, I propose that there is a deeper sense of learning that occurs through owning and caring for pets in comparison to observing, feeding, or petting other animals. This learning will depend in part, I contend, on how and to what degree caregivers encourage children's participation in pet care.

This analysis draws upon one representative episode from a family with a female child, Kana, 2 years and 8 months, and an older male sibling, Nobu, 5 years and 7 months. In

this episode, the mother and children are caring for their female pet hamster, named Nana, whom they often address and refer to as *Nana-chan*, using her name plus the diminutive –*chan*. While this diminutive gets attached to the names of both male and female infants and toddlers, and girls and young female adults, it is used for pets of any age and gender, aligning the position of pets and young children within the family. For instance, in one family with an adult male dog (a golden retriever), the parents and children addressed and referred to him as *Pooh-chan*. Thus, similar to the way it is used with infants/toddlers and young female adolescents and adults, –*chan* is used with household pets to display affective closeness and construct them as friends or family members. Notably, this use of –*chan* contrasts with the ways animals at the park and zoo were typically referred to in these data, in which the name of the animal and the honorific marker –*san*<sup>4</sup> were used, such as *kirin-san* ‘Mr./Ms. Giraffe’ and *hato-san* ‘Mr./Ms. Pigeon.’ Although the use of –*san* also anthropomorphizes these animals, it displays a degree of affective distance and respect, rather than affective closeness as with –*chan*. Thus, pets and other animals are constructed somewhat differently, and pets become more closely aligned with children as friends or family members.

Much like other activities of daily life, such as eating a meal, telling a story, or talking on the phone, for many children pet care is an important dimension of being socialized into linguistic and socio-cultural norms of their community. My analysis reveals how a Japanese mother uses various verbal and non-verbal acts of instruction and socialization in guiding the children how to care for their pet hamster, which entails feeding, touching, petting, and handling her, and in the process encourages the children’s caring skills, perspective-taking, and recognition of other living beings as subjects with their own needs and desires. In this regard, I examine two acts of instruction and socialization that are

observed in interactions with both animals and pre-verbal children: prompting and quoting speech. I will suggest that human-pet interactions are similar in certain ways to human-infant/young child interactions. Although pets and pre-verbal children are often understood as ostensibly unable to speak on their own, Japanese caregivers construct them as addressees and speakers in various ways.

### ***Encouraging children to speak to a pet***

In encouraging children to speak to pets, Japanese caregivers often prompt children what to say to them. Prompting, such as telling a child to say “Thank you,” has been observed in many communities as a form of explicit instruction on how to use language (Demuth; Schieffelin). Japanese caregivers frequently prompt children what to say to others, including adults and children, animals, and spiritual and environmental objects, and this prompting begins well before children are even able to speak (Burdelski: “*Language socialization and politeness routines*”). In the present episode, the mother prompted the children six times on what to say to the hamster and in this way constructed the hamster as a conversational partner who can understand and respond to human language. Five of these prompts were directed to the older brother, Nobu, and one prompt was directed to the younger sister, Kana. The kind of speech acts prompted included invitations and requests for Nana to eat. For example, while the younger child was holding out some food (a sunflower seed) towards Nana, the mother prompted her to say, *Nanachan tabete ne* ‘Eat it, okay, Nana-chan.’ She also prompted Nobu to say *oide* ‘Come here,’ and to make other kinds of requests to Nana, such as *dakko shite ii?* ‘Is it okay to pick you up?’ and various kinds of announcements of what the child would do in relation to Nana or her space.

The first dialogue (1) illustrates how the mother prompts Nobu to make an announcement to Nana that he will “open up” her house, which is inside Nana’s cage and the place where she usually sleeps. Here, to “open up” the house refers to taking off its roof (as the house comes in two parts: roof and walls), which will ostensibly make it easier for Nobu to reach for Nana and take her out of her cage. Just prior to this exchange, Nobu had been attempting to coax Nana out of her house so that he could take her out of her cage in order to hold, feed, and play with her. Following these unsuccessful attempts, as shown in the first line of the dialogue, Nobu poses a question to Mom that seeks her permission to “flip over” (in this context meaning, “open up”) Nana’s house.

(1) Prompting child to speak to pet

1 Nobu: ‘Well, is it okay to flip the house over once?’

2 Mom: ‘After you say to Nana-*chan*, “I will open it up”.’

3 Nobu: ‘Nana-*chan*, I will open it up.’

4 Nobu: ((*reaching for hamster in cage*))

5 Mom: ‘Right, right gently, okay.’

Japanese:

1 Nobu: *jaa, ikkai hikkurikaeshite ii?*

2 Mom: *nanachan ni akeru yo tte yutte kara da yo.*

3 Nobu: *nanachan akeru yo.*

4 Nobu: ((*reaching for Nana in her cage*))

5 Mom: *so so sotto ne.*

In response to Nobu’s question, Mom prompts him what to say to Nana (‘After you say to Nana-*chan*, “I will open it”). In this prompt, Mom refers to Nana using her name plus the

diminutive suffix *-chan*, which, as mentioned above, is typically attached to the names of infants and toddlers (and girls of any age) to mark an affective closeness with the referent or addressee. In prompting Nobu what to say, Mom socializes him to treat Nana in a positively affective way and to construct a relationship with her. The mother's utterance, as a whole, grants Nobu permission to take away the roof of Nana's house. At the same time, it urges him to first speak to Nana in announcing his immediate next action in relation to Nana's space ("I will open it"). By prompting Nobu in this way, the mother positions Nana as a subjective being and as conversational partner, one who can understand what Nobu is saying and prepare for a sudden action that could otherwise be distressing to her. In these ways, caregivers socialize children to treat pets as conversational partners engaged in joint activity, and as a member of the social world, someone who can understand human words and actions and respond accordingly.

Such announcements and other speech acts directed to the hamster are not limited to interactions with pets, as they occur, and are encouraged, in interactions with infants and toddlers as well. For instance, in a Japanese blog on childcare for new caregivers<sup>5</sup>, pediatric physicians and more experienced caregivers suggest to new parents how to talk to their infants when doing routine activities for them, such as changing diapers: *jitto shitete ne, omutsu kaeru yo* 'Be still, I will change your diaper.' They suggest that such affective talk in the form of requests to the infant ('Be still') or descriptions of the caregiver's next action ('I will change your diaper') may help 'alleviate the infant's stress.' Thus, in speaking to pets and prompting children what to say to them, Japanese caregivers treat both pets and infants as conversational partners, imbuing them with subjectivity. Similar to Melson's observations for English-speaking children, learning how to care for a pet may be particularly important for

Japanese boys who typically have fewer opportunities than girls to engage in real and pretend care-giving activities. In prompting children what to say to pets when doing things to or for them, caregivers may furthermore socialize children into communicative norms of care-giving that apply more generally to both pets and infants.

In the exchange between Nobu and his mother, Nobu repeats his mother's prompted expression ('Nana-*chan*, I will open it') and thus complies with this act of instruction and socialization in verbal and embodied ways (lines 3 and 4). Following this, as Nobu reaches into Nana's cage again, Mom says to him, 'Right, right gently, okay' (line 5). This utterance functions as praise to Nobu for carrying out her instruction and, at the same time, emphasizes a recurring theme in this episode of pet care, namely being gentle with Nana when touching and holding her. This is especially important here because Nana is a very small animal, one who could be easily injured by being handled or petted in a rough way. As such, in prompting children to speak to pets, caregivers may encourage children to be gentle with them and, by extension, with other living beings, particularly those who are small and delicate. Moreover, caregivers socialize children into a relationship with the pet as a friend or family member.

### ***Quoting the speech of a pet***

Japanese caregivers often quote the imagined speech of others, including adults, pre-verbal children, animals at the zoo and park, and other living and inanimate objects (Burdelski: *Language socialization and politeness routines*; Clancy). In her study of Japanese mother-child interaction, Clancy has called this practice "attributed speech," which refers to directly or indirectly quoting the speech of another who has not (or could not have) spoken. Clancy argues that attributed speech is an important part of children's *empathy training* because the content of the speech, or the quoted words, is often the quoted speaker's desires

or feelings. Such speech can also be observed in relation to family pets. For instance, in the following dialogue, several minutes after the mother and children took turns holding, feeding, and petting her, Nana attempts to walk out of the mother's hands and climb onto the outside of her cage. In response, the mother quotes Nana's imagined speech.

(2) Speaking for the pet: desires

1 Nana: *((climbing from Mom's hands onto her cage))*

2 Mom: 'Ah, Nana says, "I want to go home," look.'

3 Mom: 'She says, "I want to go home".'

4 Nobu: 'Nana, look.' *((extending hands with piece of food towards Nana))*

Japanese:

1 Nana: *((climbing from Mom's hands onto her cage))*

2 Mom: *a Nana kaeritai tte hora.*

3 Mom: *ouchi kaeritai tte.*

4 Nobu: *Nana hora.* *((extending hands towards Nana))*

As Nana attempts to get out of the mother's hands and onto the outside of her cage, the mother quotes Nana's imagined speech to the children in conveying her desire to "go home" (lines 2 and 3). Clancy has observed that such quoted or attributed speech of co-present parties encourages children to anticipate their needs and wants and respond to them accordingly. For instance, Clancy (233) shows that when a child was eating a tangerine, the mother attributed speech to the researcher and her assistant by saying in Japanese, "The girls also say 'We want to eat'" in order to attune the child to the unstated desires or needs of the third parties. Here the mother quotes the pet hamster, Nana, and thus projects subjectivity and intentionality onto her. She does so, however, based on Nana's observable embodied

behavior, her climbing onto the cage. Hence, this quoted speech can be considered a kind of “translation” of the pet’s embodied behavior into verbal language that encourages the children how to interpret this behavior as an intentional and goal-oriented act, which is motivated by subjective desires. Thus, in attributing speech to pets, Japanese caregivers socialize children to be attuned to their pets’ non-verbal behaviors as an expression of their communicative intentions.

By speaking *for* pets, caregivers also speak *through* pets in implicitly conveying to children what to do. This may help lessen the caregiver’s outright display of power and authority over the children. Here, in quoting Nana’s speech, the mother encourages the children to put Nana back into her cage and thus close down the activity. The closing down of the activity, moreover, is implied as for Nana’s benefit—because it is what *she* wants—rather than because that is what the mother may want. The conceptualization of the pet in this dialogue is thus as someone who has her own set of needs and desires, and communicates them through her visible embodied behaviors in the environment.

In response to the mother’s quoted speech, the children do not, however, begin to put Nana back in her cage and close down the activity. Rather, they express their own agency towards Mom and a degree of dominance and control over the pet. In particular, Nobu attempts to direct Nana’s attention to his hands (‘Nana, look.’) in order to feed her some more food. Although Mom does not attempt to stop him, and actually tries to facilitate this attempt by arranging her hand in a way that allows Nana to go into Nobu’s hands, Mom’s previous utterance (‘She says, “I want to go home”’) turns out to be prescient. Less than a minute after the end of the second dialogue, while Nobu continues to hold and play with Nana, she bites him on the finger, perhaps as an expression of *her* own agency in refusing

Nobu's persistence. In response, Mom recognizes Nana's bite as an urgent call to immediately put Nana back into her cage and close down the activity, to which Nobu obliges.

In the continuation of this scene, as shown in dialogue (3), the younger child, Kana, attempts to reopen the activity that has ostensibly already been closed down by Mom. This leads to the mother again quoting Nana's speech, this time conveying her feelings of fatigue.

(3) Speaking for the pet: feelings

1 Kana: 'Nana-chan.' ((reaching into Nana's cage))

2 Mom: 'Kana, Kana, Nana, y'know, is already a bit tired.'

3 Mom: ((begins closing top of Nana's cage))

4 Mom: 'She says, "I'm already tired".'

5 Kana: 'Mm?'

6 Kana: 'This.'

7 Mom: 'She says, "I'm already tired of playing".'

8 Kana: 'This.'

Japanese:

1 Kana: *Nanachan.* ((reaching into Nana's cage))

2 Mom: *moo Kana Kana, Nana ne chotto shindoi.*

3 Mom: ((begins closing top of Nana's cage))

4 Mom: *moo shindoi tte.*

5 Kana: *ee?*

6 Kana: *kore.*

7 Mom: *moo moo asobu no tsu:kareta tte.*

8 Kana: *kore.*

In response to Kana's attempt to reopen the pet care activity, Mom refers to Nana's feelings (line 2) and then quotes her speech twice in relation to fatigue ('She says, "I'm already tired"'; 'She says, "I'm already tired of playing"'), which conveys Nana's physical response to the child's activity of feeding and play. Similar to dialogue (2), in quoting Nana's speech Mom speaks both for and through Nana, which functions as an implicit directive to Kana to end the activity. Mom's embodied action, however, is quite direct, as she closes the top of the Nana's cage and does not give Kana much room to resist. Kana, however, does manage to resist to a degree, as she repeats the deictic word *kore* 'this' (lines 6 and 8) in an apparent attempt to draw Mom's attention to what she seems to be trying to do, namely to give Nana some more food. Kana thus resists Mom's instructional action in both verbal and embodied ways, by saying 'this' while orienting her body towards the cage as she holds out a piece of food towards Nana. But, Kana eventually gives in to Mom in response to Mom's increased embodied display of power and authority. Similar to dialogue (2), these displays of power and authority remain less verbally forceful through the use of quoted or attributed speech. That is, Mom does not issue an explicit verbal directive to Kana on what to do next.

In relation to the observation of children's resistance to caregiver directives, the final analytical section turns to examine children's more explicit verbal resistance to caregiver acts of instruction and socialization.

### **Resisting acts of socialization**

Similar to what research in other communities has found (Corsaro; Kuczynski and Kochanska), in the dialogues discussed here children often resist caregiver acts of instruction and socialization to pet care and in the process display their own agency as well as power and dominance over the pet. As mentioned earlier, one central concern displayed by this mother

in the pet care activity is encouraging the children to be gentle when touching, handling, or doing things for and to the hamster. Below, the older brother, Nobu, violates these expectations by suddenly reaching into Nana's cage and taking away the roof of her small house, which leads to the following sanction from Mom. Sequentially, this exchange takes place immediately before dialogue (2) above.

(4) Resisting acts of socialization

1 Mom: 'If you suddenly take away Nana-*chan*'s house like that, it's no good.'

2 Nobu: 'Nana-*chan*.' *((calling out to Nana))*

3 Mom: 'Nobu-*kun*<sup>6</sup>, hey hey, Nobu-*kun*,

4 *((pointing towards ceiling))*

5 Mom: 'Nobu-*kun*, if the roof [of our house] was to suddenly disappear what would you do?'

6 Nobu: 'It's fine.'

7 Mom: 'When you're sleeping or eating, if this roof was suddenly taken away, what would you do?'

8 Nobu: 'It's fine, it's fine.'

9 Mom: 'It's not fine.'

10 Nobu: 'If they/we make another one it's fine, isn't it.'

11 *((looking into hamster's cage))*

12 Nobu: 'Nana.' *((calling out to hamster))*

13 Mom: 'If you don't properly keep your/our promise,'

14 'you won't be able to raise Nana-*chan*, Nobu-*kun*.' *((sad voice))*

15 Nobu: 'We've already raised her, so we can't return her.'

16 Mom: 'No.'

17 'I'll search for someone who will take better care of her.'

18 Nobu: ((reaching into hamster's cage again))

Japanese:

1 Mom: *sa totsuzen nanachan no ie o sonna kyuuni aketara dame da yo.*

2 Nobu: *nanachan.* ((calling out to Nana))

3 Mom: *nobu]kun sa, ne ne nobukun*

4 Mom: ((pointing towards ceiling))

5 Mom: *nobukun kyuuni kono oyane nakunacchattara doo suru?*

6 Nobu: *ii no.* ((looking up towards ceiling))

7 Mom: *neteru toki ya, tabeteru toki ni, kyuuni kono oyane toraretara doo suru?*

8 Nobu: *ii ii no.*

9 Mom: *yokunai.*

10 Nobu: *chugi chukureba mata ii jan.*

11 Nobu: ((looking into hamster's cage))

12 Nobu: *nana.* ((calling out to hamster))

13 Mom: *chanto yakusoku mamorahen yattara,*

14 Mom: *nanachan .h kaenai yo, nobukun.* ((sad voice))

15 Nobu: *moo kacchatta kara, kaesenai yo.*

16 Mom: *un.*

17 Mom: *motto daiji ni shite kureru hito, mama sagasu mon.*

18 Nobu: ((reaching into hamster's cage again))

In sanctioning Nobu for taking away Nana's house (line 1), the mother uses an explicit directive ('If you suddenly take away Nana-*chan*'s house like that, it's no good'). In her study of Japanese mother-child interaction, Clancy (2002) categorizes various types of directives in mothers' speech ranging, which reside on a "scale of directness," from very direct, such as an imperative, to more indirect, such as hints using quoted or attributed speech as exemplified here in dialogues (2) and (3). Here, the mother's directive is linguistically forceful, utilizing a *deontic conditional* (Clancy, Akatsuka, and Strauss) in which a conditional clause (*-tara...* 'If...') is followed by a negative assessment term, *dame* 'it's no good.' In using this assessment term, the mother frames Nobu's action towards Nana and her space as a negative moral act ('it's no good'). Despite this strong sanction, Nobu ignores his mother by calling out to Nana in her cage, while orienting his body towards her and thus away from Mom (line 2). In response, Mom pursues the directive further by creating a hypothetical situation that encourages Nobu to take Nana's perspective (lines 5 and 7). However, once again Nobu resists his mother's acts, and in increasingly explicit ways. In particular, in response to Mom's hypothetical inquiry into what Nobu would do if the roof of his house 'was to suddenly disappear' (line 5) or 'was suddenly taken away' while he was 'sleeping' or 'eating' (line 7), Nobu provides two minimal responses of resistance ('It's fine'; 'It's fine, it's fine'). In the second of these responses (line 11), he uses repetition and prosodic resources such as vowel elongation and emphatic stress, which index a heightened affective stance and increased display of resistance. When Mom negates this response ('It's not fine'), Nobu produces another response of resistance, but one that aligns with Mom's hypothetical situation ('If they/we make another one [=roof], it's fine right'). That is, Nobu resists Mom's instruction in a way that aligns with her creation of the hypothetical situation

in which the roof of the family's house was to suddenly disappear or be taken away. As such, Nobu resists not only his mother's directive but also the empathy training and attempt at perspective-taking that underlies it.

This resistance leads to a further exchange in which Mom makes an indirect verbal threat ('If you don't properly keep your promise, you won't be able to raise Nana-*chan*'), which Nobu resists again with a retort ('We have already raised her, so we can't return her'). In this way, Nobu suggests that having raised Nana is a reason for not returning her, which implies that Nana is part of their family. Although Mom eventually gets in the last word in this exchange in threatening to give Nana to another family ('I'll search for someone who will take better care of her'), Nobu ignores her again as he reaches into Nana's cage. These responses suggest that children may use various verbal and embodied strategies in increasingly explicit ways in resisting caregiver acts of instruction and socialization in pet care, and in the process display their own understanding, power, and agency in relation to the pet and/or caregiver. In particular, here Nobu displays knowledge of how to get Nana out of her cage (i.e., by taking away the roof of her house), while also displaying power and dominance over her. Thus in contrast to his mother's concern with treating Nana as a subjective being with feelings and one who can understand and react to human words, Nobu treats Nana as a different kind of subjective being, one who can be outsmarted and captured. Also, by resisting his mother's sanction, Nobu displays agency in refusing to carry out her directive. Nobu's responses need not, however, be understood as an impending sign that he will grow up to treat pets and other animals poorly, but can instead be considered as part of what it means to be a child raising a family pet, a process in which the child's desires to do things his own way bump up against the caregiver's attempts at control.

## **Conclusion**

In examining a pet care activity in a Japanese family home, this paper has illuminated ways that pets are vehicles for children's emotional, moral and relational development, including their learning of empathy, perspective taking, responsibility, and care-giving skills. In particular, children are socialized to empathy, including how to interpret the pet's needs, feelings, and wants based on his or her embodied behavior, and to take and share the pet's perspective. They are also socialized to treat the pet with affective closeness, as a friend or family member, and more generally as a member of the social world. In this process, children learn to take on a degree of responsibility in caring for another living being in culturally specific ways, which is not as easily achieved with other animals outside the home, such as in the zoo or park.

In relation to these points, my analysis has shown ways in which a caregiver uses verbal and non-verbal resources in acts of instruction and socialization in pet care, and how children respond in ways that either align with or resist these acts. As such, caregivers construct both pets and infants/toddlers as conversational partners and subjective beings, while treating pets similarly to young children in constructing them as part of children's social world. Thus, such acts of instruction and socialization in the Japanese case are not specific to pets but linked to broader patterns of instruction and socialization, particularly surrounding interactions with and caring for those who cannot ostensibly speak and care for themselves. Children are not passive recipients of this socialization but active agents who take up, or do not take up, acts of instruction and socialization in verbal and non-verbal ways, displaying their own agency and understanding of their pets and how to care for them, alongside power, dominance, and control over their pets. My analysis also points to some

differences between the construction of pets and other animals, such as the use of the diminutive *-chan* with pets as a display of affective closeness and the use of *-san* with animals at the zoo and park as a display of affective distance, while both of these suffixes function to anthropomorphize animals.

These findings suggest that our understanding of human-animal interaction can benefit from bringing together various perspectives and analytical tools within linguistics, sociology, and anthropology. As we can see, human-pet interaction is a potentially rich site for exploring processes of instruction and socialization. Pet care activities in families and other settings may be an important site through which children learn to build connection and bond with others, as well as how to take care of and be responsible for other living beings. That is, children are developing empathy and subjectivity, and at the same time learning that other living beings such as pets have *their own* subjectivity. By analyzing pet care and other activities involving adults, children, and animals in various societies, we may be better able to more fully understand the role of animals in children's development in culturally specific ways.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Data retrieved on January 1, 2015 from <http://www.dims.ne.jp/timelyresearch/2009/090623/>.

These data are based on a survey conducted in 2009.

<sup>2</sup> Same as note 1.

<sup>3</sup> The families were recruited through contacts in Japan, and provided written verbal and written consent for their data to be used for academic purposes.

<sup>4</sup> The honorific marker *-san* is attached to people's last names, for instance, Tanaka-san 'Mr./Ms. Tanaka, and in some cases first names.

<sup>5</sup> Data retrieved on January 1, 2015 from <http://baby.goo.ne.jp/member/ikuji/nayami/tsurai3/>

<sup>6</sup> The prefix *-kun* is a diminutive attached to boys' names, typically over two or three years of age (under this age, the use of *-chan* is more typical).

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