

PRAGMATIC SKILLS AMONG CHINESE PRESCHOOL CHILDREN IN MALAYSIA

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This preliminary study aims to discuss the development of eight pragmatic language functions used by Chinese descent of Malaysian children who speak Mandarin. Subjects were 24 children between ages of two to five years old with six months interval (2 males and 2 females for each age group). This study aims to provide a description of the usage of pragmatic language functions with an increase in age. The use of pragmatic language functions was examined in a semi-structure setting. A series of questions was used by the examiner to elicit different language functions. Subjects' responses were transcribed and were classified based on a specially designed taxonomy. The responses of subjects had to be functionally appropriate and functionally accurate. Findings revealed 1) a general increase in the appropriate responses used by children with age; 2) appropriate responses were not confined to the same categories across age levels; 3) no significant differences in the frequency of appropriate responses between males and females; 4) generally, there was no differences between Chinese-speaking and English-speaking children in the acquisition and the development of pragmatic language functions, even though some variations were noted. The patterns of pragmatic language development as a function of age were also discussed.

Ang, S.T. 2002. Pragmatic Skills among Chinese Preschool Children in Malaysia. Bachelor of Speech Science Thesis. Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.