

ACQUISITION OF TEMPORAL TERMS IN MANDARIN-SPEAKING CHILDREN IN MALAYSIA

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This preliminary study aimed to give an explanation on the acquisition of temporal terms in Mandarin-speaking children in Malaysia. A test on comprehension of temporal terms was used to investigate the pattern of acquisition. 36 subjects aged from three to eight year old were involved in the test. Temporal terms chosen for the test were of different categories, i.e., the sequential terms (*first, later, before, and after*); simultaneity term (*simultaneous*), time unit (*yesterday, today, tomorrow, morning, afternoon, night, eight o'clock in the morning, 12 o'clock in the afternoon, seven o'clock at night, last year, this year, and next year*) and temporal adverb (*still, already, and going*). The study looked at a) the age of emergence and the age of stabilization for temporal terms, and b) the negative responses used to interpret the unacquired temporal terms. The results showed that the acquisition pattern for sequential term and temporal adverb were different from the past studies. Nevertheless, time unit had similar acquisition pattern but delay age of stabilization as compared to the past studies. The present study also indicated the influence of cognition, semantic, syntax, sentence complexity and comprehension strategy on the comprehension of temporal terms.

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