

SYNTACTIC PROFILE OF MANDARIN AMONGST MANDARIN SPEAKING CHINESE CHILDREN WITHIN AGES 1;0-2;2

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ABSTRACT

Limited research has been conducted to investigate the development of Mandarin amongst Mandarin speaking children in our country. Thus this pioneer study was conducted to describe the syntactic development of Mandarin speaking Chinese children aged 1;0- 2;2. A total of 50 children from Klang Valley were selected and divided into five age groups (1;0-1;2, 1;3-1;5, 1;6-1;8, 1;9-1;11 and 2;0-2;2) Language samplings were carried out in two different contexts, which included the 30-minutes free interaction with the researcher or the production of 50 utterances during the free interaction and story re-telling. The transcriptions of the samples were analyzed in term of the mean length utterances, the meaningfulness and correctness of utterance structures, types of phrase structures and utterances structure. Result from this study revealed that the expression of MLU and the meaningfulness and correctness of utterances structures increased across the age groups. There is a strong correlation between the MLU expressed and the meaningfulness and correctness of utterances expressed, $r(50)=0.80$. Meanwhile, there is no significant difference regarding the expression of verb phrase and the expression of noun phrase across the age groups, although the type token ratio (TTR) of noun phrase is higher than the TTR of verb phrase. These children expressed increase type of noun phrase with lower repetition rate compared to the verb phrase. At the same time, expression of different simple sentence structures during the free interaction increased across the age groups. A total of 16 simple sentence structures have been expressed by these children when mapped onto LARSP chart. These children expressed more noun phrase compared to the verb phrase during the story re-telling task in addition to two simple sentences type, which are [VP + Object] and [Adj +NP]. The potential value of this study is to give some description of early language development in syntax which will be used in the development of Mandarin assessment battery for Malaysian children.

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