

Pragmatic Profiling of 6-8 Years Old Typical Children Speaking Hindi

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Abstract

Early childhood communication success depends on the development of effective pragmatic skills making it vital for social interaction and language learning outcomes within this developmental stage. To enhance our understanding, we aim to explore and profile the pragmatic skill set among typical children speaking Hindi between the age group of 6-8 years through a qualitative approach that involves analysing results qualitatively enabled by contemporary methodologies and tools available today. A sample of 50 randomly selected children who fulfil our criteria in terms of age group, linguistic background, and lack of developmental or language-related disorders were studied to better understand the development of pragmatic skills amongst typical children speaking Hindi. Qualitative data was obtained by means of naturalistic observations along with audio/video recordings which helped us examine real-life communicative situations more closely. This research seeks answers regarding numerous pragmatic phenomena including communicative intent, stylistic variation, topic initiation, topic maintenance, etc. which are all unique in nature to typical children speaking Hindi.

Keywords: pragmatics, typical children, child-initiated skills, Hindi language

Introduction

Meaningful relationships require effective communication between individuals which entails sharing ideas and emotions through spoken or written words. The ability to communicate proficiently involves mastering various aspects of language development with pragmatic skills representing one essential attribute that makes people competent speakers. Pragmatic competence covers numerous skills like taking turns during conversations, understanding figurative language usage, adhering to suitable politeness norms while conversing with others and responding adequately according to social cues provided- verbal or otherwise. Research on pragmatic abilities has so far concentrated mainly on English-speaking populations; however, increasing evidence suggests exploring the pragmatics of other languages such as Hindi.

This study focuses on exploring pragmatic profiling among typical children who are proficient in conversing in Hindi. The purpose of this investigation is to gain a more comprehensive understanding of how language use influences communication styles and social interaction patterns within a given linguistic community. Specifically focusing on studying the pragmatic skills adopted by typical children speaking Hindi sheds light on previously unrecognized aspects of the developmental process that can bring out unique challenges faced by the children during their acquisition journey. In turn, such insight contributed towards enriching current knowledge on how pragmatic development occurs among this demographic group while emphasizing respectful ways towards promoting equal access for all towards communication and language interpretations.

The results obtained from this research initiative offer significant benefits to speech-language pathologists, educators and parents. Providing nuanced insight into typical pragmatic growth in typical children speaking Hindi will help in devising culturally sensitive assessment methods. Moreover, these outcomes are instrumental in crafting strategies that cater to effective communication for the Hindi-speaking population while developing appropriate educational resources.

In summary, our research aims at offering a comprehensive profile of the pragmatics capabilities exhibited by typical children speaking Hindi. Our focus is on examining intricate linguistic nuances and socio-cultural factors that potentially influence their ability to acquire and apply pragmatic skills effectively. As a consequence, thereof, results emanating from this study would significantly inform efforts directed towards strengthening communication channels particularly amongst young children encountering challenges assimilating key aspects essential for fluid conversation in native Hindi-speaking setups. Additionally, these findings could add valuable insight towards facilitating overall enhancement within areas related to language acquisition.

Shilpashri & Chengappa (2015) evaluated the performance of 2–5-year-old typical children speaking Kannada on five pragmatic skills. Results showed that pragmatic skills; answering questions, request of object and/or action, response for negation and response for joint attention used by typical children increased with age. Pragmatic skill like questioning was

high at the age of 2.1-3 years and decreased with age, indicates the interest/curiosity of young children in understanding new concepts compared to the higher age groups.

Xavier, Sunny & Rao (2015) did a study on pragmatic profiling in Malayalam speaking children with Down syndrome in the age range of 4-12 years. The statistical result showed that there exists a significant difference in the age group of 4-7.11 years and 8-11.11 years for clinician-initiated and self-initiated pragmatic skills and no significant difference across the age group for both the clinician initiated and self-initiated.

Children have an innate ability to detect nuanced power hierarchies within the family setting. They communicate in ways that reflect this awareness by altering their approach based on the person they are dealing with. Research shows that child's interactions vary depending on age groups as well as gender: younger siblings and mothers receive more direct commands whereas older siblings and fathers are addressed using respectful requests accompanied by mitigating explanations (Ervin-Tripp & Gordon 1986; Ervin-Tripp, Guo & Lambert 1990; Ryckebusch & Marcos 2004).

Ervin-Tripp, Guo & Lambert (1990) found that up to the age of three, children mark social relations mainly by using an aggravated tone of voice while speaking to their mothers and even more markedly with younger siblings. By the age of four, children make more subtle differences between family members and outsiders, by using more models and permission forms with outsiders compared to parents. At this age, children also learn to use their voice to act as a mitigator and use a soft voice to produce directives to their fathers much more often compared to their mothers, indicating again their perception of a different social status for both parents. Also, between the ages of two and three, children who request a toy belonging to a younger sibling use polite forms much more often than when formulating less costly requests. Throughout childhood development, most children do not fully grasp what sarcasm or irony means until around six to eight years old - although there are exceptions depending on certain factors. However, there are specific indicators children look for to help them better comprehend this kind of communication; such indicators include clear insight into echoing sources (Keenan & Quigley, 1999), blatant indications when someone intends criticism toward another person (Hancock, Hughes, Jagger, Paterson, Russell, Tulle-Winton & Tyler, 2000; Pexman & Glenwright, 2007), and prosody (Glenwright, Parackel, Cheung & Nilsen, 2014).

Zufferey (2016) studied pragmatic skill acquisition and concluded that requests are among the first speech acts acquired by children across languages and cultures and that sensitivity to the social status of the addressee is visible from a very early age in children's speech. The study also resulted that the system of social relationships that children have to learn varies across the world and such fine-grained aspects of social pragmatics do not lend themselves to cross-linguistic and cross-cultural comparisons.

A comprehensive overview of research expands our knowledge concerning the progress of pragmatism in typical children. This inclusive approach offers insights into cross-cultural variations and promotes evidence-based practices among professionals working with this

population. Primarily, grasping pragmatic profiles requires ongoing exploration in neglected domains to continue discovering uncharted horizons.

Methodology

Aim of the Study

The present study endeavoured towards achieving two distinct goals:

- a) Outlining all identified types of pragmatic skills in typical children speaking Hindi in the age group of 6-8 years.
- b) Analysing differences noted in the progress of acquiring pragmatic skills across different age groups.

Subjects

The subject group comprised 50 school-going children from Kanpur district, divided equally in the age groups of 6.0-6.11 years and 7.0-7.11 years with each category comprising a total of 25 children. All the subjects were intellectually good and had a good academic school record.

Inclusion & Exclusion Criteria

In order to receive precise outcomes during research certain criteria have been considered beforehand for participant eligibility requirements. This includes children between ages 6-8 who are Hindi native speakers but excludes anyone who has encountered speech/hearing/language problems or neurological deficits.

Stimulus Used

The study utilized various stimuli to elicit linguistic responses from the participants including materials like toys/books/pictures. For further clarity, a list of all these materials used is shown in the table below.

Table 1:

Toys and materials used for Language Data Collection

Category	Material
Toys and Play Materials	Doll house, Building blocks, Toy cars and toy train, Kitchen set, Paper-pencil
List of Pictures	Road traffic, Village scene, Birthday party, City scene
Topics for elicited Responses	Family, School life, TV programmes, Cartoon scenes, Favourite clothes/music

Procedure

The present study centred on capturing real-life conversations during playful interactions between clinician-child pairs or parent-child duos. In reclus of any interruptions that could hamper our observations, we set up a corner room within the school compound specifically for recording purposes. Throughout every session which spanned about 10 to 15

minutes every time, we focused on bringing out every child's unique style of expression in response to stimuli like toys and pictures. The objective was to let the children express themselves as naturally as possible, with therapists and parents serving as mere facilitators while providing minimal guidance. The modified developmental protocol for pragmatics (Shiplashri, 2010) was utilized for the present study which included 12 child- initiated pragmatic skills like refusal, communicative intent, request for an object and/or action, stylistic variation, questioning, initiation of turn-taking, narration, topic initiation, initiation of topic maintenance, topic change, initiation of joint attention and request for repair.

Data Analysis

Once the samples were collected, a thorough analysis was conducted that included the transcription of all conversation details. Through statistical evaluation of the recorded data, we summarized it by frequency and percentages. By utilizing the Z test for proportions, we compared pragmatic skills across various age groups.

Results

The primary objective of our study was to investigate the acquisition of pragmatic skills by scrutinizing natural conversation language samples. Furthermore, juxtaposing the varieties and rates of such markers in diverse age categories. The collected data had gone through statistical analysis and the results are delved below.

Table 2:

Showing gender and age wise distribution of subjects in each group

		GENDER					
		F		M		Total	
		Count	Column N %	Count	Column N %	Count	Column N %
AGE GROUP	6.0-6.11 yrs	11	44.0%	14	56.0%	25	50.0%
	7.0-7.11 yrs	14	56.0%	11	44.0%	25	50.0%
	Total	25	100.0%	25	100.0%	50	100.0%

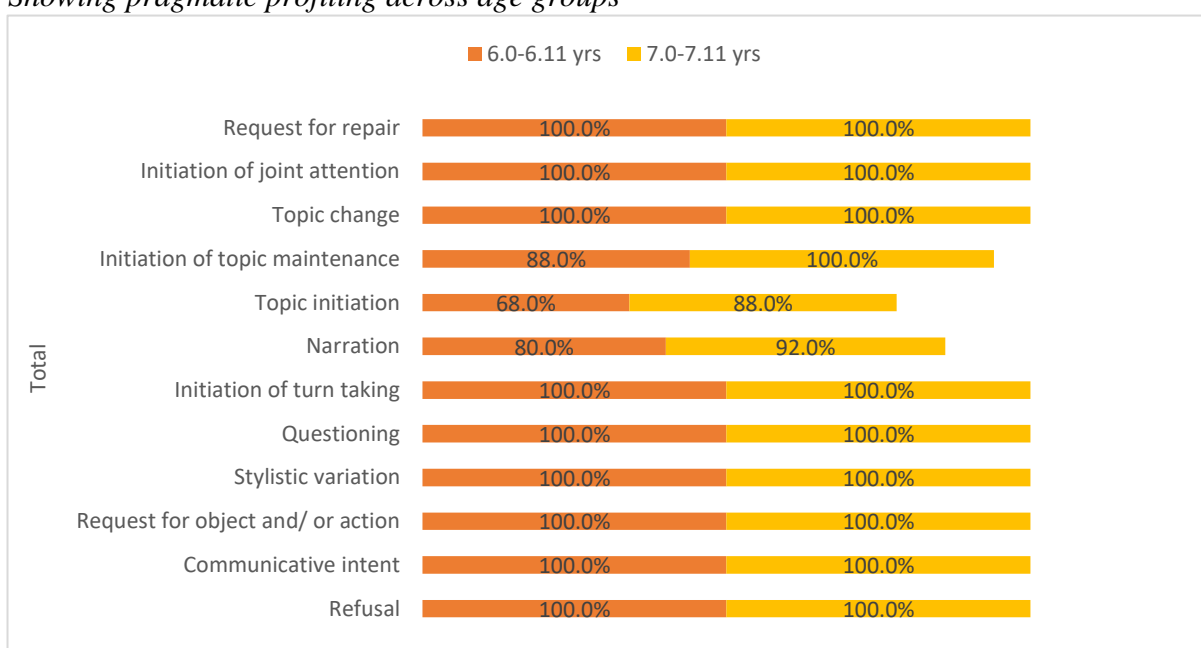
Table 3:

Showing age wise pragmatic profiling and their comparative values across age groups

Pragmatic skill	6.0-6.11 yrs		7.0-7.11 yrs		Testing equality of proportion	
	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	P value	
Refusal	25	100.0%	25	100.0%	1.000	NS
Communicative intent	25	100.0%	25	100.0%	1.000	NS
Request for object and/ or action	25	100.0%	25	100.0%	1.000	NS
Stylistic variation	25	100.0%	25	100.0%	1.000	NS
Questioning	25	100.0%	25	100.0%	1.000	NS

Initiation of turn taking	25	100.0%	25	100.0%	1.000	NS
Narration	20	80.0%	23	92.0%	0.227	NS
Topic initiation	17	68.0%	22	88.0%	0.094	NS
Initiation of topic maintenance	22	88.0%	25	100.0%	0.080	NS
Topic change	25	100.0%	25	100.0%	1.000	NS
Initiation of joint attention	25	100.0%	25	100.0%	1.000	NS
Request for repair	25	100.0%	25	100.0%	1.000	NS

Figure 1:
Showing pragmatic profiling across age groups



The results showed that topic initiation and narration were not fully acquired by the age of 7.11 years however, all other child-initiated pragmatic skills were acquired by this age. The comparative values showed no significant difference between pragmatic skills of the two age groups.

Table 4:
Showing gender wise pragmatic profiling and their comparative values across age groups

Pragmatic Skill	Female		Male		Testing equality of proportion	
	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	P value	
Refusal	22	100.0%	28	100.0%	1.000	NS
Communicative intent	22	100.0%	28	100.0%	1.000	NS

Request for object and/or action	22	100.0%	28	100.0%	1.000	NS
Stylistic variation	22	100.0%	28	100.0%	1.000	NS
Questioning	22	100.0%	28	100.0%	1.000	NS
Initiation of turn taking	22	100.0%	28	100.0%	1.000	NS
Narration	18	81.8%	25	89.3%	0.454	NS
Topic initiation	18	81.8%	21	75.0%	0.566	NS
Initiation of topic maintenance	21	95.5%	26	92.9%	0.703	NS
Topic change	22	100.0%	28	100.0%	1.000	NS
Initiation of joint attention	22	100.0%	28	100.0%	1.000	NS
Request for repair	22	100.0%	28	100.0%	1.000	NS

The comparative values of pragmatic skills across genders showed no significant difference.

Discussion

The acquisition patterns of pragmatic skills in typical children speaking Hindi are illuminated in the current study providing an informative guide for both parents and therapists alike. This newfound comprehension can facilitate improved outcomes for children facing challenges in their communication skills. The results showed that topic initiation and narration were not fully acquired by the age of 7.11 years however, all other child-initiated pragmatic skills were acquired by this age. The comparative values of pragmatic skills across age groups and genders showed no significant difference.

The results of the present study align with the study done by Shilpashri & Chengappa (2015), who evaluated pragmatic skills in typical children speaking Kannada in the age range of 2-5 years and a study by Anjana (1999) who compared the pragmatic abilities of autistic and normal children. Dheepa & Shyamala (2008) prepared a developmental protocol for pragmatics and found that children acquire all the pragmatic skills by the age of 8 years. However, the present study showed that topic initiation and narration were not fully acquired by the age of 7.11 years. This might be due to the limitation that the data collection was done only in a school setup where children were aware of being observed and recorded resulting in them being shy often. Also, the data was taken from the Uttar Pradesh state board school where the medium of instruction was English, and the study required children to interact only in Hindi except names of toys or pictures.

Summary & Conclusion

Further exploration is needed in understanding how typical children speaking Hindi acquire pragmatic skills since there is a lack of information available on this subject area. To that end, our study seeks to provide useful insights into the existence and characteristics of these abilities among 6-8-year-old children speaking Hindi while contrasting differences in their profiles across different age groups during natural conversation and picture description

exercises. A sample population comprising 50 standard school-age children was evenly distributed between two separate cohorts based on their age demographics so that we could produce accurate interpretation outcomes. We gathered linguistic responses from these participants employing diverse equipment such as toys and books supplemented with visual aids like pictures while capturing all events via audio/video recording using Vivo V2029 smartphone. The collected evidence was analysed through transcription followed by rigorous statistical investigation revealing a pattern of acquisition for pragmatic skills that varies across age groups. The results showed that topic initiation and narration were not fully acquired by the age of 7.11 years however, all other child-initiated pragmatic skills were acquired by this age. The comparative values of pragmatic skills across genders showed no significant difference. The investigation revealed that individuals with higher ages demonstrated superior ability to effectively utilize accurate pragmatic skills. However, statistically significant difference was not found between both the age groups.

Clinical Implications

The study will aid in the pragmatic profiling of children speaking Hindi aged 6 to 8 years. The results of this research will impact the way teachers, speech-language pathologists and parents approach designing interventions and educational techniques that facilitate pragmatic skills for children speaking Hindi. Ultimately, this endeavour seeks to strengthen communication outcomes while promoting social inclusion for children in the designated population.

Limitations

It is important to recognize that this study has some limitations to consider such as a small participant pool of just 50 individuals and the fact that all experiment data was drawn solely from a school setting. This may not be entirely representative of the diverse population out there which may lead to issues with reliability in broader instances.

Future Recommendations

The enhancement of our understanding regarding language use and development depends on expanding the scope of our studies to include additional subjects. To attain a more holistic view researchers can conduct studies on other Indian languages or compare pragmatic profiling across different age groups or dialects while keeping social economic factors in mind during analysis. Considering these variables further enriches our comprehension about how people engage with language over time.

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