



## PRAGMATIC DEVELOPMENT IN MONOLINGUAL (KANNADA) AND BILINGUAL (KANNADA-KODAVA) SPEAKING CHILDREN

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### ABSTRACT

Pragmatics is a branch of linguistics concerned with the use of language in social interaction. Pragmatic development in children is heavily influenced by the environment to which the child is exposed. Pragmatics develop over time, and they differ between monolinguals and bilinguals. The current study looked at pragmatic development in monolinguals and bilinguals between the ages of 2.5 and 4.5 years old, with the primary goal of comparing results within and across two groups. To elicit the response, a test of pragmatic skills (TOPS) was used, and tasks were provided. The findings revealed that bilingual children exhibited more pragmatic skills than monolingual speakers. This study shows that some pragmatic skills, such as labelling and greeting, emerge much earlier and are more significant in bilinguals than in monolinguals, demonstrating that multilinguals have better pragmatic skills than monolinguals. As a result, because some of the skills are prominent at that age, the obtained data can be used to evaluate both children with delayed pragmatic development and typically developing bilingual speaking children.

**KEYWORDS :** Pragmatic development, monolingual, bilingual, kodava language.

### INTRODUCTION

Humans are social creatures. Communication is essential for the survival of a social system. Language is a communication system used by humans. The process of sending and receiving messages that serve to transmit information between individuals or groups is known as communication. Nonverbal communication behaviours such as intonation, gestures, and facial expressions are examples of extra-linguistic aspects. Language is our primary means of making interpersonal contact, socialising, and regulating our interactions. Pragmatics is the study of the relationship between language and content. It primarily refers to conversational exchanges in which two or more participants take turns constructing a text. Communication intent and means of expressing that intent are the primary channels studied in pragmatics. In speech and language pathology, Elizabeth Bates coined the term pragmatics. Pragmatics, according to Bates (1976), are "rules governing the use of language in context." The pragmatic system consists of language use rules that are appropriate and communicatively effective.

Pragmatic development provides an integrated view of the acquisition of various pragmatic subsystems, such as communicative intent expression, conversation participation, and the production of extended discourse. Over the last three decades, the prominence of pragmatic language theories has contributed to a better understanding of language's social role. The emphasis is now shifting away from the study of syntactic-semantic features of child language and toward pragmatics and communication. This demonstrates that normal children use language quite easily in their daily lives, and that they use language as a social function for regulating themselves and being regulated by others. The study of pragmatic communication skills aids in the development of practical procedures to assist individuals who struggle with this aspect of language. Previous research has revealed a series of ideas and innovations labelled the pragmatic revolution. According to Halliday and Leslie (1986), language theories have evolved from a primary syntactic model to a more pragmatic approach.

Communicating intent and the means of expressing that intent, according to Smith and Leinonen (1992), are central to the study of pragmatics. Caroline Bowen (2001) defines pragmatics as the area of language function that encompasses the use of language in social context. All language functions were discovered to be mastered before the age of 3.5 years, with some functions being mastered earlier than others. According to Newcombe and Zaslow (1981), studies on the development of requests found that

children as young as 2.5 years old could express requests in indirect ways. Aker and Swank (1993) investigated individual language function and concluded that descriptions and affirmation remained constant beginning at the age of 3.1 years. Anjana (1999) compared the pragmatic abilities of children aged 3 to 6 years with autism spectrum disorders to those of typically developing children. The findings revealed that children with autism spectrum disorder used language primarily for non-social purposes and took more turns than the control group.

According to Kuhl (2004), bilingual individuals, particularly children, are beneficial to academic success. Nitta Mathew (2006) established norms for a pragmatic skills test for children aged 1.1 to 3 years. According to Elena Nicoladis and Fred Genesee's (2006) longitudinal study of pragmatic differentiation in young bilingual children, young bilingual children can use their languages differentially and appropriately in different language contexts by the age of two.

In India, many languages are spoken, and Kodava is one of them. Kodava is the mother tongue of a minority community living in the Kodagu district of Karnataka, India's Western Ghats. The Kodava language is thought to be a member of the South Dravidian language group. The total number of speakers is estimated to be in the millions. Despite its many deviations, the Kodava language borrows heavily from neighbouring languages Kannada, Malayalam, and Tamil. Philologists and linguists recognised it as an independent language in the early twentieth century.

As a result, the current study compares pragmatic development in monolingual (Kannada) and bilingual (Kannada and Kodava) speaking children. Need for the study: According to the research, the child's ability to use grammar, vocabulary, and phonology is impacted. In recent years, it has been observed that many children who are reasonably competent in these areas may have pragmatic problems, emphasising the importance of studying pragmatic development in young children. Few attempts have been made to report the development of pragmatics in monolingual speakers, and no such attempts have been made to study the pragmatic development in bilingual children. As children today use more than one language, it is important to develop a database on the development of pragmatics in multilingual children, which will help speech-language pathologists assess and carry out interventions more effectively. As a result, the current research compares the pragmatic development of monolingual (Kannada) and bilingual (Kannada and Kodava) speaking children.

**The Objective Of The Study**

The current study aimed to compare the pragmatic development of monolingual (Kannada) and bilingual (Kannada-Kodava) children aged 2.5-3.5 years and 3.5-4.5 years, with the following goals: 1. to investigate the development of pragmatic skills in monolingual (Kannada) and bilingual (Kannada-Kodava) speaking children. 2. Conduct a comparative study of the development of pragmatic skills within and across the specified study groups.

**METHODOLOGY**

**Test Subjects:**

Ten subjects were chosen from each sample group (Group A: 2.5 to 3.5 years, Group B: 3.5 to 4.5 years), totaling 20 normal children with no history of speech or hearing problems, normal overall development, and adequate exposure to Kannada (monolingual) and Kannada-Kodava (bilingual) language.

**Materials For Testing:**

A book, a door or window, chocolate, a picture chart of body parts or vehicles, and paper were used to elicit responses. Thankam J.'s The Test of Pragmatic Skills (TOPS) (2002) This test looks at the following aspects of pragmatic skills: greeting, labelling, requesting, negation, affirmation, repair or revision, stylistic variation, referential communication, turn-taking, closing conversations, eye contact, and proximity. The score was then calculated on a 4-point scale.

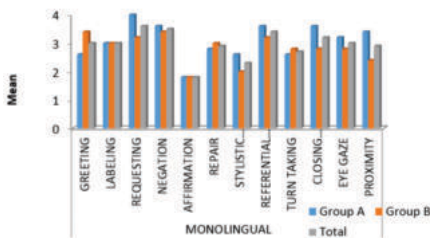
**Test Process:**

Twenty children, both monolingual and bilingual speaking, were divided into ten children aged 2.5-3.5 years and ten children aged 3.5-4.5 years.

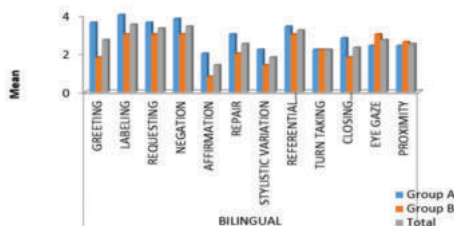
Each subject was brought into the testing room, seated opposite the examiner, and made to interact. The subjects were given various tasks to elicit responses from various language functions, which were video recorded. All recorded samples were transcribed following Thankam (2002). The analysed data was statistically analysed using the Mann-Whitney test.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The results of monolingual and bilingual children were compared within and across age groups A (2.5-3.5 years) and B (3.5-4.5 years). A Then, among the same, a comparison study was conducted

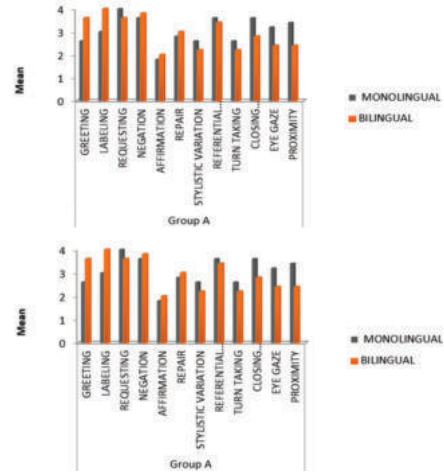


First, the obtained results were compared for bilingual speakers between the ages of 2.5-3.5 years and 3.5-4.5 years. The graph above demonstrates that there is no significant difference between monolingual (Kannada) speakers, as all of the mentioned pragmatic skills emerge at the same age (2.5-3.5 years and 3.5-4.5 years).



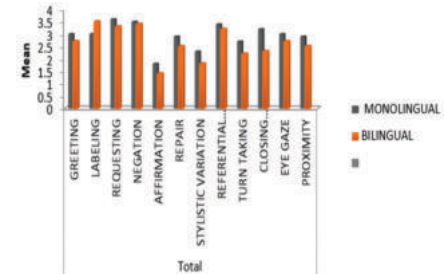
However, there was a significant difference in labelling (.003) and greeting (.037) in bilingual (Kannada and Kodava) speaking children aged 2.5-3.5 years and 3.5-4.5 years on pragmatic skill development. As a result of the foregoing, it is clear that pragmatic skills such as greeting and labelling emerge earlier than any other pragmatic skill in bilingual (Kannada-Kodava) speakers.

According to the current study findings, there are significant differences in pragmatic skills (labelling and greeting) only between bilingual (Kannada-Kodava) speakers and monolingual (Kannada) speakers when comparing the age ranges of 2.5-3.5 years and 3.5-4.5 years.



The figure above depicts a comparison study of pragmatic skill development conducted in both monolingual (Kannada) and bilingual (Kannada-Kodava) speakers between the ages of 2.5-3.5 years and 3.5-4.5 years. A comparison of pragmatic skills in bilingual children aged 3.5-4.5 years and 2.5-3.5 years revealed a significant age difference.

According to the current research, pragmatic skills such as greeting, labelling, eye gaze, proximity, requesting, negation, affirmation, and closing conversation emerge before the child reaches the age of 2.5, whereas skills such as turn-taking, referential communication, and stylistic variation emerge after the child reaches the age of 2.5. As a result, this finding is consistent with Nitta Mathew's (2006) report, which states the same thing. As a result of the above findings, it is clear that pragmatic skills were higher in multilingual (Kannada and Kodava) children than in monolingual (Kannada) children.



The graph above contrasts monolingual (Kannada) and bilingual (Kannada and Kodava) children. Thus proving the statement that bilingual speakers develop the pragmatic skills mentioned in the figure much earlier than monolingual speakers.

**SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

Pragmatics is the study of language use and communication in relation to language structure and utterance context. In comparison to the other areas of language (grammar, vocabulary, and phonology), pragmatics has gained popularity among many children who are reasonably

competent in it. To gain a better understanding of communication in relation to the social dimension, it is necessary to focus on pragmatics. The study was carried out with a sample drawn from the play school. The sample size was 20, with 10 children being monolingual and 10 being bilingual, ranging in age from 2.5 to 3.5 and 3.5 to 4.5 years. Thankam's pragmatic skills test was administered to the children in a formal setting (2002).

After that, the responses were recorded and compared within and across groups. The current study discovered that certain skills, such as greeting, are more important in bilingual (3.5-4.5 year olds) children than in monolingual children of the same age. The aforementioned skills are clearly more prevalent in bilingual children. Other abilities that emerged during the age range were insignificant. The information gathered on normal children forms the basis for examining children's language skills for potential language disorders.

As a result, this study on monolinguals and bilinguals in this age range (2.5-3.5 years and 3.5-4.5 years) provides us with a clear picture of the development of pragmatic skills in them. Because some of the skills are prominent at that age, the data obtained can be used to assess both children with delayed pragmatic development and children who are typically developing bilingual speakers.

#### **Limitation:**

1. Pragmatic skills should be examined in a natural set up but in the present study it was examined in a structured environment.
2. This study consists of only a few aspects of language functions.
3. Present study is done on limited age range, 2.5-3.5years and 3.5-4.5years.

#### **Future Directions:**

The further studies can be extended using these obtained results and should focus on testing children in natural set up. It can also include wider range of pragmatic aspects.

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