

**EARLY DETECTION OF LANGUAGE DIFFICULTIES IN  
YOUNG MALAY CHILDREN:  
IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOOL PREPARATION**

By

THERESA LOUISE FAUST

Thesis submitted in fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Master of Education

August 2002

## **PENGESANAN AWAL MASALAH BAHASA KANAK-KANAK MELAYU:**

### **IMPLIKASI TERHADAP PERSEDIAAN PERSEKOLAHAN**

#### **ABSTRAK**

Perolehan bahasa mungkin satu-satunya perkembangan paling asas diperoleh oleh kanak-kanak bagi menyediakan diri untuk pendidikan formal. Biasanya, kanak-kanak memperoleh bahasa dengan mudah. Walaubagaimanapun, kadang-kadang sesuatu kesilapan berlaku, sistem sokongan sangat penting untuk menolong individu dan keluarga apabila masalah itu dijangka. Apabila diketahui adanya risiko kebantutan atau masalah dalam perkembangan bahasa (contohnya, bayi yang dilahirkan Sindrom Down) keluarga akan diberi panduan dalam interaksi dengan bayi mereka, jadi potensi optimum bayi boleh disedari.

Kesinambungan untuk perkembangan bahasa pragmatik bayi berkembang maju dari perkongsian perhatian dengan orang dewasa (contohnya, kedua-dua melihat pada permainan bergerak yang sama), mengikut apa yang orang dewasa perhatikan, (contohnya, orang dewasa menunjuk gambar dalam buku) dan mengarahkan perhatian orang dewasa (contohnya, kanak-kanak menunjuk ke arah pejalan kaki).

Oleh itu, kajian ini bertumpu kepada kepentingan kemahiran pra-verbal yang mempengaruhi perkembangan kemahiran verbal kemudian hari. Kajian ini berfokus kepada: Bilakah penggunaan bahasa pra-verbal yang awal muncul pada bayi normal? Adakah terdapat sebarang perbezaan pencapaian antara kanak-kanak normal dengan kanak-kanak yang bermasalah dalam bidang pragmatik?

Kajian perintis ini bertumpu kepada pra-verbal tahap tinggi, kemahiran pragmatik untuk menuding, memberi dan menunjuk. ESCS (Early Social Communication Scales) telah dipilih sebagai alat ujian utama untuk diperhatikan, dalam tiga tempoh, interaksi antara pengkaji dengan setiap satu daripada tujuh kanak-kanak yang normal, tujuh kanak-kanak Sindrom Down dan tujuh kanak-kanak Autisme.

Kemahiran-kemahiran yang disebut sebelum ini wujud antara umur 10 – 16 bulan. Manakala perbezaan dan kebantuan dicatat antara kanak-kanak normal dengan kanak-kanak istimewa.

Cadangan-cadangan diberi untuk membantu mengesan kebantuan awal pragmatik pada kanak-kanak dengan keperluan khas dan mereka yang berisiko bagi menyediakan mereka satu permulaan komunikasi yang lebih baik dan menyediakan mereka peluang untuk alam persekolahan yang lebih baik.

## ABSTRACT

Language acquisition perhaps is the single, most fundamental development acquired by a child to prepare him for formal education. A child apparently and *usually* acquires his language(s) with ease. However, when sometimes something goes wrong it is imperative that a support system is in place to provide help to the individual and family as soon as the problem is suspected. When there are known at risks for delays or disorders in language development (e.g., a baby born with Down syndrome) then from birth onwards the family can be guided in their interaction with their infant so that his optimal potential can be realized.

The continuum for pragmatic language development is naturally infants progressed from sharing attention with the adult (e.g., both looking at the same activated toy) to following what the adult was attending to (e.g., adult points to pictures in the book) and finally to directing the adults' attention (e.g., child points to person walking by).

This research thus aimed to detail the emergence of essential pre-verbal skills purported to effect the development of later verbal skills. The research foci were; when did these crucial and early non-verbal usages of language emerge in typically developing infants? And then were there any differences between the performances of typically developing children with the performances of children who have disabilities in the area of pragmatics?

This pioneer research concentrated on the higher-level non-verbal, pragmatic skills of pointing, giving and showing. The Early Social Communication Scales (ESCS) was chosen as the main testing instrument to observe, on three occasions, interactions

between the researcher and each population of seven typically developing children; seven children with Down syndrome and seven children with Autism spectrum disorder. The aforementioned skills were documented as emerging between 10 – 16 months of age while differences and delays were noted amongst and between the typically developing children and the older-aged special needs children.

Recommendations were given to help in the early detection of pragmatic delays in special needs children along with those who may be at risk for pragmatic delays thus providing for them the necessary head start towards better communication and enhancing their chances of better school transition.