

Test of Pragmatics

Priya K Sundaram

Student, A.I.I.S.H, Mysore

The present study was an attempt to develop a pragmatic test in Tamil. It is based on the pragmatic test given by Shulman (1986). It is expected that the test would detect any deficit in the abilities of children to carry on a social exchange, in realistic communicative contexts.

The test consists of four tasks with a total of 33 probes.

Task-1	: Playing with puppets	-	9 probes
Task-2	: Playing with pencil and sheet of paper	-	7 probes
Task-3	: Playing with telephone	-	8 probes
Task-4	: Playing with blocks	-	9 probes

The tasks were arranged in the order of difficulty. In order to elicit the appropriate response, the probes were given which served as a vehicle to get the responses. The test was administered to 25 Tamil speaking children in Madras city, all of whom belonged to middle socio economic status, with the age range from 3 years to 8 years (5 subjects in each group).

The data thus obtained was analysed to get the mean and standard deviation for each age group. The results indicate that there is an increase in the development of pragmatic abilities from age 3 years to 8 years. It can also be seen that there is a spurt in the development of communicative intent between 3 years to 5 years for all tasks after which the development is not very dramatic. It was observed that Task-1 (playing with puppets) is the easiest task (where the conversation is about a favorite game) for all age groups followed by Task-3 (ie. playing with telephone), Task-4 (playing with blocks), and Task-2 (playing with pencil and sheet of paper). Task-2 was found to be the most difficult one rendering minimum scores for all age groups.

It is expected that this present test would be helpful in assessing the acquisition of communicative intent and in the assessing the pragmatically disordered population, thereby helping to plan therapy and evaluate the prognosis of therapy for Tamil speaking children.

Limitations:

1. It is applicable to only those children whose mother tongue is Tamil and reside in a Tamil speaking environment.
2. Age range is limited.
3. Number of subjects under each age group is only 5 ie. small sample size.

Recommendations:

1. Modifications of Tasks II and III to make them socially and culturally more appropriate.
2. Validity of the present test should be checked by administering it to a large group of normal and some language disordered children.
3. Efficacy of the present test should be judged by its use in a speech and hearing clinic.