

ABSTRACT

How children talk is an intriguing field to study for there are many unknown areas to unravel although in the Malaysian context, such studies are far in between. This report provides data elicited from a case study which draws on the spoken data of a Malaysian Indian child raised in an urban location. Using one seven year old female Indian child as a subject, focus is given to how the child displays power through her conversation with three levels of authority. The study aims to show how overlapping and latching take place in her conversations with people in her surroundings. Three tiers of authority of interlocutors are given focus: parents and aunts as higher authority, peers as equal authority, maid and younger sibling as the lower authority. Data was manually tape recorded over a period of 10 weeks from natural home settings and casual interactions with friends. Data was then transcribed using Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson's (1974) model of transcription and they were then analysed by focusing on Watt's (1991) notion of power seen in overlapping and latching. It was found that the child uses these two strategies more often to interrupt the on-going conversation and by doing so, she also manages to take over the floor from other interlocutors. It has been noted in literature (Hutchby & Wooffitt 2002) that overlapping strategies were used by people of higher authority to people of lower authority while latching is frequently used among the peers (equal authority). The findings of this case study further indicate that power does exist in the child's conversations but there were differences too. It was found that when the child uses overlaps and latches in her conversation with higher authority, the power displayed was subtle and also polite and this is obvious because she was the one with less power. Nonetheless, she manages to convince her interlocutors adequately for her to take over some sessions of the floor. In some instances though, she may also need to succumb to the power of the higher authority. On the other hand, the power displayed by the child

while interacting with interlocutors of lower authority tend to be more overt probably because she was the one in power. Often times, her strategy of overlapping or latching on to others while interacting was due more to her desire to fulfill her needs/wants. As in the case of equal authority, data also show that the power displayed were back and forth among the peers. This study is derived from the data of one Malaysian child and in that respect is not sufficient to form generalizations. However, it does provide sufficient data for parents and caretakers to view how children are also able to participate as conversationalists who are capable of taking their appropriate turns in conversations as well as remain polite to a certain extent. In that regard, this case study may also be seen as one that can indicate to parents why it is necessary to understand how children talk and through what means young children develop their social skills.

ABSTRAK

Bahasa kanak-kanak merupakan satu bidang yang menarik untuk di kaji dan terdapat banyak bidang yang belum diterokai merangkumi konteks Malaysia. Kajian penyelidikan ini menyediakan data yang di ambil daripada satu kajian kes yang menggambarkan wacana perbualan seorang kanak-kanak berusia 7 tahun yang merupakan warganegara yang berbangsa India. Fokus diberikan pada wacana perbualan yang mempunyai kuasa. Tumpuan diberikan pada perbualan kuasa dengan orang – orang yang berada disekelilingnya yang juga terdiri daripada orang yang berautoriti lebih daripadanya, golongan yang sama autoriti dengannya dan juga orang yang rendah autoriti daripadanya. Kajian ini bertujuan menunjukkan bagaimana strategi bertindih (overlapping) dan strategi menyelak (latching) digunakan dalam perbualannya. Penutur yang terlibat terdiri daripada golongan hirerki yang berbeza iaitu ibubapa sebagai golongan yang berautoriti tinggi, rakan sebaya sebagai golongan yang berautoriti sama dan pembantu rumah dan adik lelaki yang terdiri daripada golongan yang berautoriti rendah. Data telah direkodkan selama 10 minggu dan ia merangkumi data yang direkodkan daripada keadaan semulajadi di rumah dan dalam keadaan casual berlatarbelakangkan sekolah. Data kemudian ditranskripsikan dengan menggunakan model transkripsi Sacks dan Jefferson (1974) dengan memfokuskan Watts (1991) notion of power yang menggunakan strategi bertindih dan menyelak. Analisis data menunjukkan bahawa kanak – kanak itu menggunakan dua strategi tersebut untuk mengganggu kelancaran perbualan. Dengan berbuat demikian kanak- kanak itu juga berjaya mengambil alih floor daripada penutur lain. Daripada analisis didapati teknik bertindih digunakan lebih kerap daripada teknik menyelak. Kuasa jelas wujud dalam pertuturan kanak – kanak ini dan didapati kuasa dipamarkan secara lembut dan halus pada golongan yang berkuasa tinggi. Ini berlainan pula terhadap golongan yang berkuasa rendah dimana pertuturannya mempamerkan

kuasa secara nyata dan terang apabila berbual dengan golongan yang berkuasa rendah. Tujuan menggunakan dua strategi ini dengan kerap adalah semata-mata untuk memenuhi hasrat dan tujuan sendiri. Dalam perbualan dengan golongan autoriti sama pula kedua-dua strategi digunakan sesama rakan sebaya. Kajian ini hanya berasaskan satu kanak-kanak warga Malaysia, oleh itu, kesimpulan menyeleruh tidak boleh dibuat bahawa kuasa sentiasa wujud dalam perbualan semua kanak-kanak. Walau bagaimanapun kajian ini memberi data yang memadai bagi golongan ibubapa dan pengasuh untuk mengawal giliran (turn) dan menilai kesopanan dalam pertuturan kanak-kanak seharian. Kajian ini juga boleh menjadi panduan bagi ibubapa untuk memahami dan menghayati pertuturan anak-anak mereka, cara mereka menutur dan strategi apakah yang digunakan oleh mereka dalam perbualan.

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