

Filipino children's spontaneous use of *thank you*: influence of gender, interlocutor and socioeconomic status

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Abstract

This paper is about children's pragmatic competence as evidenced by their (non) use of the polite expression *thank you*. It presents the results of an empirical study on 90 (45 boys and 45 girls) Tagalog-English Filipino children's competence in using *thank you* or its Tagalog equivalent *salamat po* in the context of accepting a prize. Influence of gender, status of the interlocutor from whom the child receives the gift, and the children's socioeconomic status are considered in this study. Contrary to results in previous studies, findings here indicate that although overall use of *thank you* is quite low, girls and boys are equally pragmatically competent; age of interlocutor did not influence children's use of thank you; and socioeconomic status appears to have some influence on the children's pragmatic competence. Results of the study are discussed in relation to previous research and the socio-cultural experiences that provide the context and help shape Filipino children's pragmatic competence, among others.

Keywords

Filipino preschoolers
Pragmatic competence
Politeness formula
Sex differences
Socioeconomic influence
Interlocutor status

Biographical Note

Dr. Loy Lising is an Associate Lecturer with the Adult Migrant Education Program Research Centre (AMEP-RC) of the Department of Linguistic at Macquarie University. She is currently the project coordinator for a longitudinal study with migrants to Australia entitled *Language training and settlement success: are they related?* Her research interests include bilingualism as it pertains to the bilingual child looking at specific issues such as code-switching in a bilingual linguistic repertoire and bilingual children's metalinguistic ability; Philippine English, its status, features and relationship with other varieties in the context of migration, and adult second language learning and identity.