



Exploration of Pragmatic Strategies in a 3-Year-Old Child: A Psycholinguistic Perspective from Daily Interactions

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Abstract: This study employs a qualitative descriptive case-study approach grounded in participatory observation of daily interactions, taped dialogue transcripts, and semi-structured parent interviews to analyze the pragmatic techniques of Zalva, a three-year-old child, through the lenses of Dardjowidjojo and Dworetzsky. By systematically coding and thematically analyzing naturalistic data, the research reveals that Zalva demonstrates sophisticated strategies such as giving advice, shifting topics, and offering reflective responses to social conventions. For instance, she counsels her father to refrain from consuming cold drinks and adeptly counters indirect criticism by asserting, "Zalva is occupied, please do not interrupt me." These findings align with Dardjowidjojo's emphasis on social and cultural interaction and Dworetzsky's focus on cognitive adaptation in context. Practically, parents are encouraged to model directive and reflective speech acts during routine exchanges, while early-childhood educators can incorporate role-play and guided dialogue activities to foster children's pragmatic competence. Future research should extend this case-study framework to diverse cultural settings to deepen our understanding of early pragmatic development and its applications in educational and caregiving contexts.

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PENDAHULUAN

Language ability is a fundamental aspect of human development that reflects cognitive, social, and emotional maturity. Language serves not only as a communication tool but also as a means to understand and navigate the social world. Among various components of language development, pragmatic competence holds a central role during early childhood, as it enables children to use language appropriately based on context, adapt to conversational norms, and convey intentions effectively. Pragmatic competence allows young children to participate meaningfully in interactions, express themselves in socially acceptable ways, and respond to indirect speech or implied meanings with sensitivity. Thus, it is not only a linguistic skill but also a reflection of emerging social cognition and emotional intelligence.

The development of pragmatic abilities is closely tied to a child's environment, particularly the family setting, which serves as the primary source of verbal interaction in early life. In a family environment that encourages open dialogue and rich verbal

engagement, children acquire not only vocabulary and syntax but also an intuitive sense of how to participate in conversations appropriately. At the age of three, children typically experience rapid growth in this area, as they begin to demonstrate capabilities such as giving advice, issuing directives, handling sarcasm, and managing turn-taking. These skills indicate their growing awareness of the communicative needs of others and their ability to adjust language to suit social goals.

Within the field of psycholinguistics, the study of pragmatic development in children has received increasing attention. Dardjowidjojo (2000) emphasizes that children acquire language holistically—including phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics—through dynamic social interaction, shaped by cultural and familial norms. He highlights the idea that language is not only a formal system but also a sociocultural tool. Complementarily, Dworetzsky (1988) argues that as children reach the age of three, they transition from relying primarily on nonverbal communication to employing more refined verbal strategies that accommodate interpersonal goals. According to him, children in this stage develop adaptive communicative behaviors that reflect their growing understanding of context and audience.

Despite the growing body of research in child language development, there remains a noticeable gap in studies that examine pragmatic strategies among three-year-old children within localized cultural contexts, especially in Indonesia. Much of the existing literature has tended to focus on structural aspects of language such as grammar and phonology or has used quantitative designs that overlook the richness of context-specific behaviors. These approaches often neglect the depth and complexity of pragmatic behavior as it unfolds in natural settings. To address this gap, the present study adopts a qualitative case study framework that allows for an in-depth exploration of a single child's pragmatic strategies within her home environment, emphasizing the sociocultural and cognitive factors at play.

This study centers on Zalva, a three-year-old Indonesian girl who displays advanced pragmatic skills in daily conversations with her parents. Her responses in social exchanges—such as offering advice, diverting attention, and handling indirect criticisms—reflect a level of communicative competence that aligns with both social expectations and cognitive development theories. For instance, when her father makes a sarcastic comment about drinking cold beverages, Zalva avoids confrontation by saying, “Zalva is busy, please do not interrupt me,” demonstrating her ability to interpret implied meaning and manage discourse strategically. This capacity to interpret and act upon social nuances reflects her pragmatic maturity.

The significance of this study lies in its theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, it expands our understanding of how young children employ pragmatic strategies in real-life settings by integrating sociocultural and cognitive approaches. The use of Dardjowidjojo's framework provides insight into how language behavior is shaped by cultural norms and interactions, while Dworetzsky's model highlights the cognitive mechanisms that allow for flexible and adaptive communication. This dual-theory integration presents a more holistic understanding of how pragmatic competence emerges in early childhood. Practically, the study offers valuable implications for parents and educators, suggesting that consistent exposure to verbal interaction and social modeling can significantly enhance a child's ability to navigate conversations effectively. It also encourages the development of pedagogical approaches that support pragmatic awareness in early childhood education.

In line with these objectives, the present study seeks to explore how a three-year-old child utilizes pragmatic strategies to respond to different types of social situations within her immediate environment. It investigates the extent to which these strategies reflect her level of social understanding and align with the stages of language development proposed by Dardjowidjojo and Dworetzsky. Furthermore, the study examines how environmental and cultural influences—particularly the role of parental communication and cultural norms—contribute to the development of her pragmatic competence. These questions are explored not only to illuminate the case of Zalva but also to offer a foundation for future cross-cultural and developmental research in child language acquisition.

By focusing on a single, well-documented case embedded in a culturally rich environment, this study contributes to the development of more context-sensitive psycholinguistic research practices. It underscores the importance of integrating social interaction, cultural norms, and cognitive growth in understanding how children acquire and use language. In doing so, it encourages further research that acknowledges the diversity of children's communicative experiences and the socio-cultural systems in which they are embedded.

THEORETICAL APPROACH

Language is a symbolic system formed through social interaction and reflects the mental structure of individuals. Two main components, according to the psycholinguistic approach, influence a child's language ability: the child's cognitive development and the social environment in which they are raised. Dardjowidjojo (2000) is one of the important figures who thoroughly investigated children's language development. He says that children learn language simultaneously in the fields of phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. Dardjowidjojo emphasizes that in the pragmatic aspect, children learn how to use language in social and cultural contexts. According to this view, language is used as a tool to adapt to the customs and principles of society. Furthermore, according to Dardjowidjojo, the development of children's pragmatic abilities greatly depends on extensive verbal interactions within the family. Children learn to give advice, avoid conflicts, express requests, and act reflectively in interactions with their parents and caregivers. Thus, contextual everyday communication experiences become the primary place for children to understand pragmatic strategies. As shown in this study, Zalva can change the topic, respond to sarcasm, and demonstrate social awareness in discussions.

In addition, Dworetzsky (1988) investigated children's language development from a cognitive perspective. He stated that children enter an important transitional phase from non-verbal to more complex verbal communication at around three years of age. Children begin to form sentences with clear communication goals and demonstrate their ability to understand what others are saying. In this study, Zalva's response to implicit social situations, such as parental sarcasm, indicates that she has developed inferential and metapragmatic abilities, which is the understanding that utterances have meanings that depend on context and the social goals of the interlocutor. The inferential and metapragmatic abilities referred to by Dworetzsky are important indicators in children's language development because they show that children, at the age of three, who live in rich communication environments, begin to understand that a single utterance can have different meanings depending on tone, context, and the relationship between the speaker and the interlocutor. Zalva has shown that she is capable of recognizing her father's communicative intentions and strategically managing communication in a way that avoids

confrontation when she chooses not to directly respond to her father's sarcasm and diverts attention by saying that she is busy. This shows that cognitive pragmatic components, such as the ability to manage speech choices and predict appropriate social responses, are beginning to function actively within him.

Vygotsky's social-cognitive development theory (1978), along with the theories of Dardjowidjojo and Dworetzsky, is also very important for understanding how children develop and apply communication strategies. Vygotsky emphasized the importance of social interaction and language in aiding children's cognitive development. He explained through the concept of the zone of proximal development, or the zone of proximal development, that children will develop optimally when they interact with more competent individuals in a supportive social environment. In Zalva's case, her ability to use language pragmatically can be considered the result of intense and rich verbal interactions with her parents. This interaction provides a complex communication model as well as opportunities to experiment in real-life situations.

When psycholinguistic, cognitive, and sociocultural theories are combined, a strong theoretical framework is provided to understand how pragmatic strategies are formed, developed, and conditioned by a child's interaction with their environment. This framework is used to explain how a three-year-old child can use language functionally in complex social contexts. Furthermore, this research demonstrates how the interaction between internal (cognitive) and external (sociocultural) elements shapes language skills from an early age.

METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive approach, which is suitable for exploring naturalistic and context-bound phenomena in depth. According to Moleong (2014), qualitative research aims to understand social phenomena from the perspectives of participants through direct interaction, natural observation, and rich description. This approach is particularly relevant for analyzing children's pragmatic strategies, as it captures authentic language behavior that emerges in everyday settings without experimental manipulation. In this context, the qualitative descriptive approach allows the researcher to examine not only what pragmatic strategies are used, but also how and why they occur within real-life social interactions.

To operationalize this approach, the study utilizes a case study design. Yin (2003) describes the case study as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clear. The case study design enables a focused exploration of Zalva, a three-year-old child, whose pragmatic behaviors are observed and analyzed in detail. This design is appropriate because it allows for a comprehensive understanding of a unique subject within a specific sociocultural environment, thus aligning with the goals of psycholinguistic and pragmatic inquiry.

The research design employed is a case study. Yin (2003) explains that case studies are ideal for investigating complex and context-dependent phenomena in depth. Yin (2003) asserts that case studies are ideal for exploring real-life situations where the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not clearly defined. This aligns with the present study's objective of examining pragmatic strategies in a young child as they naturally occur within her daily interactions. In the Indonesian context, Bungin (2017)

highlights that case studies provide a framework for deeply engaging with the cultural and social dimensions of a phenomenon. Accordingly, this study integrates cultural and contextual factors by situating Zalva's language behavior within the values, norms, and communicative practices of her family and broader cultural environment. For example, the study considers how politeness norms, indirect speech tendencies, and hierarchical family communication styles common in Indonesian culture influence Zalva's pragmatic choices. These cultural dimensions are not treated as background variables but are actively analyzed in relation to the child's utterances and responses.

Furthermore, parental roles and expectations, which often emphasize obedience, modesty, and subtle assertion in Indonesian families, are used as interpretive lenses in analyzing Zalva's reflective responses, advice-giving, and conversational shifts. This cultural framing adds depth to the case study, allowing the findings to be not only descriptively rich but also analytically grounded in the sociocultural realities that shape language use. By embedding cultural and contextual interpretations directly into the analysis, this research design enhances both the validity and relevance of its findings, offering insights that are meaningful not only in theory but also within the lived experiences of Indonesian children and their families.

The primary subject of this study is Zalva, a three-year-old girl selected using purposive sampling techniques. According to Sugiyono (2017), purposive sampling is employed to identify subjects who possess specific characteristics relevant to the research objectives. In this study, Zalva was selected based on preliminary observations and parental reports indicating that her verbal and pragmatic behaviors consistently exceeded typical developmental expectations for her age group. Her advanced language abilities were identified through several observable indicators. These included her frequent use of complete sentences with correct word order, the ability to give context-appropriate advice, and her skill in navigating conversations using reflective responses and topic shifting. For example, Zalva was able to recognize and respond to indirect or sarcastic remarks with nuanced replies, a pragmatic skill that children often acquire later in development. Additionally, her parents reported that she had begun speaking in full utterances before the age of two and regularly initiated conversations using socially appropriate expressions.

These observations were further supported by the researcher's participatory observation, which revealed a consistent use of pragmatic strategies such as offering counsel, interpreting implied meaning, and managing conversational turn-taking. The selection of Zalva was also reinforced by the communicative environment of her home, which is rich in verbal interaction and emotional responsiveness factors that are known to facilitate accelerated language development. Therefore, Zalva was not only selected due to her age alignment with the study's focus on early childhood, but also because she demonstrated distinctive communicative behaviors that made her an appropriate and credible case for examining advanced pragmatic strategies in naturalistic interactions.

Data for this study were collected through three primary methods: participatory observation, audio-recorded natural conversations, and semi-structured interviews with the subject's parents. These methods were selected to ensure that the data obtained would be rich, ecologically valid, and reflective of the child's natural language behavior in her daily environment. Prior to data collection, ethical clearance was obtained from the university's ethics review board, and informed consent was secured from both of Zalva's parents. The purpose, procedures, and potential risks of the study were clearly explained to the family. They were assured of the confidentiality of all personal information and the

voluntary nature of their participation, including the right to withdraw at any point without penalty.

The researcher conducted naturalistic observation of Zalva's daily interactions in her home environment over a four-week period. Observation sessions were non-intrusive, allowing the child to interact freely while being observed. As Moleong (2014) explains, participatory observation helps researchers understand language behavior from the subject's perspective. Field notes were taken during and after each session, documenting both verbal (e.g., sentence structure, speech acts) and non-verbal (e.g., gestures, facial expressions) behaviors. These notes were later structured using thematic codes such as *advice-giving*, *topic diversion*, and *indirect response*, which facilitated consistency in the analysis phase.

Spontaneous verbal interactions between Zalva and her parents were audio-recorded using a digital voice recorder, with parental consent. These recordings captured everyday conversations during activities such as playtime, meals, and rest periods. According to Bungin (2017), such recordings serve as essential documentation in qualitative research, allowing for repeated review and deeper interpretation. After collection, the recordings were transcribed verbatim, and utterances relevant to pragmatic behavior were marked for further analysis. Transcription accuracy was double-checked to maintain fidelity to the original interaction context.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with Zalva's mother and father to supplement observational data and gain insight into the child's language environment. The interviews followed a protocol consisting of ten core questions, including topics such as: "In what types of situations does Zalva speak the most?", "How does she usually respond to correction or sarcasm?", and "What kinds of words or expressions does she frequently use in social settings?" Flexibility was allowed to explore emergent themes during the interviews. Patton (2002) suggests that semi-structured interviews provide a balance between structure and depth, allowing for the uncovering of unexpected yet meaningful data. The interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and analyzed thematically, with coding categories aligned with those used in observational and conversation data.

Data analysis in this study was conducted using a thematic analysis approach, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). This method was chosen for its flexibility in identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns of meaning within qualitative data, particularly in the context of natural child-parent interactions. The overall goal of the analysis was to explore how a young child pragmatically navigates real-life conversations in a way that reflects both her developmental stage and the cultural context in which she is embedded. The process began with data reduction, where transcripts of conversations, observation notes, and parent interview responses were carefully reviewed to extract information relevant to the study's focus. Redundant or unrelated data were set aside, allowing the researcher to concentrate on segments of speech that demonstrated interactional strategies, such as managing turn-taking, responding to implied meaning, or shifting attention during conversation. This step ensured that the analysis remained focused on the research objectives while preserving the integrity of naturally occurring language.

Following this, the relevant data were organized into thematic categories based on the observed functions of Zalva's utterances. These categories were developed inductively by grouping similar communicative behaviors together. For instance, statements in which Zalva aimed to guide or influence others' actions were grouped under the theme of *advice-*

giving, while utterances intended to redirect a potentially uncomfortable interaction were placed under *topic diversion*. Statements that demonstrated an awareness of others' expectations or emotional responses—such as her reflective remark about wanting to be a baby again—were included in the *reflective responses* category. Each theme was examined in close relation to the conversational context to ensure the functional interpretation of each utterance was both meaningful and valid. Interpretation of the categorized data was then carried out with reference to two key theoretical frameworks. Dardjowidjojo's sociocultural theory of language development provided insight into how cultural and social norms shape a child's linguistic behavior, while Dworetzsky's developmental perspective helped explain the cognitive readiness underlying Zalva's ability to interpret social cues and adapt her responses accordingly. Through this dual-theoretical lens, the analysis explored how Zalva's use of language reflected her growing awareness of context, intention, and social appropriateness.

To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, multiple validation techniques were employed. First, data triangulation was conducted by comparing findings across the three sources—naturalistic observation, audio recordings, and parental interviews—which allowed for cross-verification of patterns and meanings. Second, inter-rater agreement was applied to a portion of the data by involving an additional researcher to independently categorize a subset of interactions. The results showed a high degree of consistency in the interpretation of pragmatic functions, reinforcing the reliability of the findings. Lastly, member checking was conducted with the parents, who reviewed selected excerpts and interpretations, and confirmed that the child's speech was accurately represented in both content and context.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Presenting the result of the research will show how some situation from how Zalva interact and produce strategic and reflective response from her utterances. There are; *Zalva's Pragmatic Strategies*

Situation A: Advice-Giving and Social Role Awareness

Zalva advises her parents against drinking cold beverages (ice), but when she herself drinks a cold beverage, her parents do not directly prohibit it; they only suggest that there are children who advise against drinking cold beverages because it can lead to illness. In this instance, Zalva remains silent and responds differently.

Here is Zalva advises her father not to drink cold beverages because it may lead to illness. Interestingly, she gives this advice while she herself is drinking a cold beverage. The dialogue unfolds as follows:

(Indonesian)

Zalva : 'Ayah jangan minum minuman dingin ya, nanti sakit' Ketika dia minum minuman dingin.

Ayah : 'Ok Zalva, Makasih ya'

(english)

Zalva: "Dad, don't drink cold beverages, or you'll get sick," while she is drinking a cold beverage.

Father: "Okay, Zalva, thank you."

This utterance reflects Zalva's emerging awareness of social norms and her ability to assume a directive role in communication characteristics aligned with Dardjowidjojo's theory that children acquire pragmatic functions such as advice-giving as they internalize culturally embedded interaction patterns. Furthermore, Dworetzsky's developmental perspective supports the idea that by age three, children begin using language to influence the behavior of others. In this context, Zalva's speech illustrates an understanding of both content (health warning) and function (directing others), a dual awareness that signifies pragmatic maturity.

Situation B: Topic Diversion and Face Management

In a different situation, but still on the same topic. In a subsequent interaction, Zalva's father uses sarcasm to refer to her earlier advice;

(Indonesian)

- Ayah : 'Zalva, ada anak kecil yang bilang kalau minum minuman dingin nanti sakit. siapa itu ya?'
 Zalva : 'Tunggu sebentar, Zalva lagi sibuk. Tolong jangan ribut'

(English)

- Father : "Zalva, there's a little child who said that drinking cold beverages will make you sick. Who is that?"
 Zalva : "Wait a moment, Zalva is busy. Please don't make noise."

Rather than responding defensively or with confusion, Zalva shifts the topic by stating that she is busy. This strategy indicates an ability to detect indirectness and manage interpersonal tension, which, according to Dworetzsky, reflects cognitive sophistication in interpreting implied meanings. From Dardjowidjojo's perspective, Zalva demonstrates sensitivity to contextual appropriateness by avoiding confrontation and maintaining harmony, a behavior strongly influenced by cultural norms of politeness and indirectness prevalent in Indonesian society.

Situation C: Reflective Response and Conceptual Flexibility

Zalva has a habit of sucking her thumb-sucking, and her parents have tried to remind her and explain that this habit is not good. When her parents attempt to talk and imply to Zalva that thumb-sucking is a behavior associated with babies, while Zalva is no longer a baby, as explained in the conversation, Zalva responds by asking her parents if she can become a baby again.

(Indonesian)

- Ayah : 'Ibu, Anak yang sudah besar itu, apakah masih bisa untuk isap jari-jari?'
 Ibu : 'oh, anak yang sudah besar itu sudah tidak isap jari-jari lagi, kecuali yang masih bayi'
 Zalva : 'Ibu, Zalva mau jadi anak bayi boleh'

(English)

- Father : "Mom, can a big child still nurse their fingers?"
 Mother : "Oh, a big child doesn't nurse their fingers anymore, only babies do."

Zalva : "Mom, can Zalva be a baby again?"

Zalva's response shows a reflective and strategic understanding of social labeling. Instead of rejecting the implied criticism, she reframes the situation humorously and empathetically, signaling conceptual flexibility and emotional awareness. This aligns with Dworetzsky's view that children at this age begin to demonstrate adaptive language use and the ability to engage in metapragmatic reasoning. Meanwhile, Dardjowidjojo's emphasis on social learning explains how Zalva mirrors the communicative style of her parents—responding indirectly, creatively, and without resistance.

The findings of this study reveal that Zalva, a three-year-old child, demonstrates a variety of pragmatic strategies that include giving advice, shifting topics, and offering reflective responses. These strategies show that she is not only acquiring language for basic communication but is also developing an ability to navigate complex social situations using context-appropriate language. The fact that she can recognize implied meanings, adjust her speech to different communicative settings, and manage interactions in socially sensitive ways suggests that her pragmatic competence is advanced for her age group.

This development can be understood as a result of the interplay between cognitive growth and social interaction, consistent with psycholinguistic theories that emphasize both internal developmental stages and external environmental influence. Zalva's interactions take place in a supportive family environment that values verbal communication and social negotiation. Such an environment enables the child to observe, internalize, and replicate communicative strategies that align with social norms and relational goals. This observation is aligned with the Vygotskian notion of socially mediated learning, in which language and cognition co-develop through interaction with more capable communicators.

1. Integration with Dardjowidjojo's Sociocultural Perspective

Dardjowidjojo (2000) emphasizes that language acquisition is deeply rooted in cultural norms and social experiences, arguing that children learn not just words, but the social meanings and appropriateness of language within specific settings. Zalva's behavior illustrates this process clearly. Her advice to her father to avoid drinking cold beverages demonstrates not only her knowledge of health-related concepts but also her ability to apply this knowledge in a contextually sensitive and directive manner—a hallmark of developing social agency.

When responding to a sarcastic remark from her father with the statement, "*Zalva is busy, please don't make noise,*" she uses topic diversion to avoid direct confrontation. This is consistent with communication styles typical in many Asian and collectivist cultures, where indirectness, face-saving, and harmony maintenance are highly valued (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988). Thus, Zalva's use of indirect strategies reflects the influence of cultural norms, supporting Dardjowidjojo's assertion that children's pragmatic choices are contextually shaped and culturally situated.

Moreover, her reflective statement—"*Can Zalva be a baby again?*"—during the conversation about thumb-sucking indicates her understanding of social labeling and her capacity to respond with humor or empathy rather than defiance. This response illustrates the child's growing awareness of meta-pragmatic awareness, that is, the ability to comment on or play with the social meaning of language use, which is rare in children her age and further underscores the depth of her socialization process.

2. Alignment with Dworetzsky's Cognitive Developmental Theory

Dworetzsky (1988) offers a developmental framework that outlines how children progress from simple, literal communication to more adaptive and context-sensitive language use. According to this view, by the age of three, children begin to internalize not only the grammatical structure of language but also its pragmatic and interactive functions. Zalva's utterances consistently reflect such development. Her ability to interpret sarcasm, offer indirect responses, and reflect on her own behavior suggests that she is entering a stage where communicative goals and listener expectations are increasingly considered during speech production.

Her use of language to influence others' behavior, negotiate social roles, and mediate potential conflict are all indicators of developing pragmatic sophistication. These abilities align with Dworetzsky's argument that pragmatic growth involves the integration of cognitive maturity with emerging theory of mind—the child's capacity to understand that others have different thoughts, feelings, and communicative intentions. Zalva's verbal behavior illustrates this developmental integration clearly.

3. Cross-Cultural Implications

These findings also raise important questions about the role of culture in shaping pragmatic development. While certain pragmatic milestones—such as turn-taking, politeness, and advice-giving—may appear universally, the way these behaviors are realized can vary significantly across cultural settings. In Indonesian culture, where indirect communication and deference to authority are highly valued, children may acquire indirectness and sensitivity to implied meaning earlier or in more nuanced ways than children raised in more individualistic cultures (Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

For example, Zalva's indirect response to sarcasm is not only cognitively sophisticated, but culturally appropriate, as it avoids confrontation while preserving interpersonal harmony. Future research should consider comparative studies across cultures to understand how pragmatic strategies emerge differently depending on societal norms, language structure, and family communication styles. Such studies could also inform multilingual or multicultural educational practices, especially in early childhood settings.

While the results of this case study provide rich insights, several limitations must be acknowledged. First, as a single-subject study, the findings cannot be generalized to all children, even within the same age group or cultural setting. However, the purpose of qualitative case research is not generalization but deep contextual understanding, which this study achieves. To enhance trustworthiness, the study employed triangulation of data sources (observation, recordings, interviews), inter-rater review, and member checking with Zalva's parents, all of which support the internal validity of the findings.

Second, the absence of a standardized developmental language assessment limits the ability to objectively compare Zalva's linguistic competence with peers. Future research may incorporate developmental scales or observational benchmarks to support claims of advanced pragmatic ability. Third, while this study considers cultural norms, it does so within a single-family context. Including more diverse family structures and language environments would enrich future analysis.

This study contributes theoretically by demonstrating how sociocultural and cognitive developmental frameworks can be integrated to explain the emergence of

pragmatic competence. Rather than viewing language development through a purely structural or psychological lens, it offers a holistic perspective that accounts for cultural values, familial communication practices, and cognitive readiness.

Practically, the findings suggest that early childhood educators and parents play a vital role in fostering pragmatic development by providing opportunities for reflective talk, allowing children to negotiate meaning, and modeling indirect strategies. Designing classroom activities such as story-based discussions, pretend-play, and open-ended questioning can mirror the natural learning environment that supports children like Zalva. In homes, encouraging children to articulate their opinions, respond to adult questions with reasoning, and observe how others handle social interaction can significantly strengthen pragmatic awareness from an early age.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study reveal that the pragmatic strategies employed by Zalva, a three-year-old child, align closely with the developmental stages proposed by Dardjowidjojo and Dworetzsky. Zalva demonstrates the ability to use context-sensitive language strategies such as giving advice, shifting topics, and offering reflective responses when navigating various social situations. These strategies indicate that pragmatic development in early childhood is shaped not only by cognitive maturity but also by continuous exposure to rich, meaningful social interactions, particularly within the family environment. Her verbal behavior reflects a developing awareness of social norms, conversational rules, and cultural expectations, and her ability to manage interpersonal communication with subtlety and intent.

From a theoretical standpoint, the study contributes to the understanding of how social and cognitive factors work in tandem to foster pragmatic competence. Dardjowidjojo's sociocultural perspective is exemplified in Zalva's capacity to adapt her language to family-taught values such as when she advises her father not to drink iced beverages, mirroring the caregiving roles she has observed. At the same time, Dworetzsky's cognitive theory is evident in her nuanced responses to sarcasm and social cues, suggesting an ability to comprehend implied meanings and adjust speech accordingly. By integrating both frameworks, the study offers a comprehensive explanation of the dynamic processes involved in pragmatic development at an early age.

Practically, this research underscores the critical role of parents and educators in facilitating children's pragmatic development. An environment rich in verbal interaction helps children internalize social norms, navigate emotional nuance, and engage in appropriate turn-taking and self-expression. Parents should provide children with frequent opportunities to speak freely while offering gentle guidance that models culturally appropriate communication. Likewise, early childhood educators can incorporate dialog-based activities—such as storytelling, dramatization, or structured group discussions—that create space for children to experiment with social language and develop conversational skills organically.

Looking forward, this study opens several directions for future research. First, there is a strong need to examine how children from diverse cultural backgrounds acquire and employ pragmatic strategies differently. While Zalva's language use reflects the collectivist and indirect communication styles commonly found in Indonesian families, children from individualistic or multilingual settings may display alternate patterns. Cross-cultural comparative studies could uncover how values, expectations, and family dynamics across

societies shape pragmatic development. Such research would not only enrich global theories of child language acquisition but also inform culturally responsive teaching practices in increasingly diverse classrooms.

Second, expanding the study to include children from varied socioeconomic backgrounds, linguistic environments, and educational settings would enhance the generalizability and applicability of findings. Future researchers may also explore inclusive approaches by examining children with language delays or neurodevelopmental differences, such as those on the autism spectrum, to better understand how pragmatic competence can be supported through differentiated intervention.

Finally, an exploration of non-verbal pragmatic cues including gestures, tone, gaze, and facial expressions would provide a more holistic understanding of how children communicate meaning beyond words. These non-verbal strategies are particularly important in cultures where implicit communication and body language carry significant weight in social interpretation.

In conclusion, this study provides evidence that pragmatic competence is a multidimensional construct, deeply embedded in both cultural context and cognitive development. By studying children's everyday interactions through a psycholinguistic lens, we gain valuable insights into the early foundations of effective and adaptive communication insights that are essential for shaping supportive learning environments, family interactions, and future linguistic research across cultures.

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