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CHILDREN'S FORMAL DIVISION OF LABOR IN REQUESTS

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Abstract

This study aims to shed a light on children's pragmatic development by examining Mandarin-speaking children's requests in interactions with their parents. It is found that children between 24 and 36 months old appear to use various request forms, primarily with simple imperatives and WANT statements. A closer examination reveals that children prefer to use simple imperatives in activity-based interactions while both primary forms are found in unstructured daily conversations. The findings suggest that children's preference for simple imperatives may be driven by their awareness of parents' cooperativeness in interactional situations. It is thus speculated that simple imperatives and WANT statements may be children's two primal request forms, but they may pivot on one request form when the situation is right.

Keywords: Request; Context; Child pragmatic development.

1. Introduction

Children were born to be social animals. Ever since children were born, they have been exposed to an interactional environment and endowed with the basic need to interact with people in all sorts of social or interpersonal situations (Tomasello 1992). To become a capable and competent language user who is able to use language appropriately in social situations, it is indispensible for children to develop their pragmatic ability, in addition to the acquisition of linguistic competence. Children are required not only to learn the fact that "[l]anguage is social behavior (Tomasello 1992: 67)", but also to develop the ability to convey their communicative intents clearly and appropriately (Ninio & Snow 1996), in particular, the appropriate ways to issue speech acts or control acts (Ervin-Tripp et al. 1990).

Among all speech acts, requests or directives have been well documented and extensively explored by researchers in various disciplines, including sociologists, psychologists, anthropologists, educators, and linguists (e.g. Axia 1996; Babelot & Marcos 1999; Ervin-Tripp 1977; Ervin-Tripp 1980; Garton & Pratt 1990; Gordon & Ervin-Tripp 1984; Leonard 1993; Wood & Gardner 1980). It is generally agreed that children's requests are an early-developed communicative ability. Even in the pre-linguistic stage, children have already been able to demonstrate their request intents with gestures, sometimes accompanied with vocatives (Bates et al. 1975; Bates 1967; Bruner 1981, 1983; Kelly 2007).

Bates et al. (1975) argued that in the pre-linguistic stage, children have been able to produce requests with nonverbal communicative means. As they grow older, children learn gradually to replace these nonverbal means with appropriate linguistic forms. In addition, Bruner's (1981; 1983) longitudinal observation on two children also indicated a parallel development to Bates et al.'s findings. Bruner pointed out that children begin requesting with reaching gestures with/out vocative sounds, and then they gradually transition to linguistic forms. Moreover, Ninio and Snow (1996) reported that between the age of 14 to 18 months children's ability to request has already developed. During this period, children tend to restrict their request forms to a small set of verb forms, usually imperatives or infinitive forms. Later on, between 18 and 32 months, children's request forms expand to include more linguistic forms. According to Ninio and Snow, even though children are unable to request with linguistic forms that adults may generally use, they have been able to map utterances directly onto appropriate intentions with respect to particular interpersonal situations.

With regard to Mandarin-speaking children, Hsu (1996) observed that early at the one-word stage, children already have had command of different speech acts, requests included, even though at this stage they may not yet master a variety of syntactic devices to encode their speech acts. Hsu further commented that not until the age of three have children acquired all speech acts and complex linguistic forms to encode their speech acts. In addition, Zhou (2002) observed that Mandarin-speaking children, as young as 14 months old, have been able to perform requests. Apparently, children's ability to convey requests develops early.

In addition to the early emergence of children's request intent, researchers have also been concerned with the linguistic repertoire, or a set of linguistic forms, which children used to encode a request intent (e.g., Bates 1976; Carter 1974; Dore 1973; Garvey 1974; Halliday 1975; cited in Ervin-Tripp 1977). Ervin-Tripp (1976; 1977) amassed the linguistic devices children use to issue requests. These linguistic devices, a repertoire of request of English-speaking children, include: "NEED STATEMENTS (or Statements of Personal Desire) [e.g.] *I WANT a green milk shake….* IMPERATIVES [e.g.] *Be back here at three o'clock…*. EMBEDDED IMPERATIVES [e.g.] *John, would you please tell that lady to quit? ...* PERMISSION DIRECTIVES [e.g.] *May I have the police? …* QUESTION DIRECTIVES [e.g.] *Hey, you got a quarter, Mac? …* HINTS [e.g.] *I'm the sergeant around here* (as cited in Mitchell-Kernan & Kernan 1977: 192)."

In addition, Ervin-Tripp (1977) also reported a general trend of children's development of request forms. According to her report, in their first three years of life, children first use gestures, names of objects, and linguistic forms such as *WANT* and *more* and then they elaborate on vocabulary, inflections, and syntax by specifying problems, goals, imperative acts, possessives, routines, and structural modifications, such as *Would you like to play the train, Will you give me a hand, Can you give me a block,* and *You could give it to me*. Before they turn four years old, children will be able to produce inferential requests by hinting.

As reviewed above, early in the 1970s, studies on English-speaking children have proposed the repertoire of children's requests and the development of the repertoire across age. In contrast, Mandarin-speaking children's repertoire of requests remains little explored and documented, despite the studies accomplished by Hsu (1996) and Zhou (2002). To make a small contribution to children's pragmatic development, Mandarin-speaking children's in particular, this study is dedicated to the

examination of the repertoire of Mandarin-speaking children's requests — the linguistic devices children use to make requests in naturalistic conversations.

Moreover, previous studies have pointed out the effect of contextual situations on children's performance of requests. Based on speech made in toy playing and book reading activities, Yont et al. (2003) pointed out that children appear to be sensitive to contexts when making requests. However, it seems that the factors that may affect children's requests have not been specified, given the complexity of context.[1] In addition, children may also be engaged in interactions of book reading or story telling, and most of the time, children are involved in routine or daily ordinary conversations with their parents, where no particular activities engage them (Gordon-Ervin-Tripp 1984; Ninio & Snow 1996). It is assumed that in different types of interactions, children and parents may be assigned different roles with different interpersonal statuses and hence different linguistic forms are pertinent for children to make requests in these different types of interactions. The present study thus aims to investigate the possible correspondences between children's uses of request forms and different types of interactions. Following this hypothesis, it is thus further assumed that children, when interacting in different types of interactions, may make use of different linguistic devices or constructions as their major request form in that particular interaction type.

As mentioned previously, when involved in different interactional scenarios, children may be assigned different roles. For example, most of the time children are engaged in daily ordinary interactions with their parents. In such situations, they are playing their inherent role, namely the role as a child. In other situations, cooperative games, for example, children may be interacting as a partner who is collaboratively engaged in a task with their parents. With respect to the different roles, it is likely that children use different linguistic forms respectively when making requests. As proposed by Bates et al. (1975), children in the pre-linguistic stage gesture to communicate, and these gestures are classified into proto-declaratives and proto-imperatives. Although it is believed that these pre-linguistic gestures then developed into corresponding linguistic forms, it remains unclear what linguistic forms they develop into respectively, given that children's request repertoire has been amassed in some studies. Based on the assumption of the major request forms utilized by children in different interactional situations, the present study wishes to point out a possibility that these major request forms replace proto-declarative and proto-imperative gestures. These major request forms may then be the primal request forms which will then develop into various and more complex request forms. In addition, along with the suggestions in other studies (e.g., Tomasello 2006; Deutscher 2005), this study would like to propose a hypothetical process through which children's intention of request develops — from expressing their own wants or desires to using others as instruments to meet their communicative goal.

2. Methodology

The study utilized spontaneous speech between children and their parents to examine how children convey requests, as did Ervin-Tripp et al. (1990). Spontaneous speech or

[1] Context may subsume such factors as interactional activity, textual information, physical setting, interpersonal relationship, (which may imply social status, social distance, gender difference, age difference, etc.), and others.

naturalistic conversations in this study refer to self-initiated conversations produced by the children and their parents; children and parents carried out interactions themselves without predetermined activities or interactional topics.

2.1. *Subjects*

Two girls were observed longitudinally. One of the girls (CH1) was observed during the ages from 1;7 to 3;2, and the other (CH2) from 1;10 to 3;0. Both girls were living in the Greater Taipei of northern Taiwan when recorded. When observed for this study, both children were looked after by a babysitter or grandparents during the day and spent the night, weekends, and holidays with their parents. When interacting with their parents, both children spoke Mandarin Chinese.[2] Occasionally, the parents might speak regional languages in Taiwan such as Taiwan Southern Min or foreign languages such as Japanese or English, but linguistic units in these languages were only restricted to lexical forms and few occurrences. Except for these lexical forms, never did the parents speak these regional languages or foreign languages to the children beyond the scope of an utterance. These children were physically healthy and did not have problems performing social tasks.

2.2. *Data*

Data investigated here were drawn from a larger database, consisting of longitudinally collected spontaneous speech.[3] The data observed in this study were naturalistic conversations between the children and their mothers. While they were interacting, no predetermined topics, activities, procedures, or tasks were given to the children and their parents. The children and the parents themselves decided what to talk about, what activity to carry out, and what game to play in each interaction.

All of the spontaneous speech observed in the study was collected at the subjects' homes. The observer paid two visits each month to record the conversations with a camcorder. Since the data were collected at the subjects' homes, the children were very familiar with the physical setting of the house and they would not feel uneasy or nervous during the recording. In addition, the observer started the data collection after having previously paid several visits. During the previous visits, the observer spent some time with the children and the parents in order to familiarize them with the recording task and make the children comfortable with the presence of the observer and the camcorder. During each visit, the observer would not start the recording until the children had been used to the presence of the observer and the camcorder. Each session of the recording lasted for one hour or so. Normally, the recording was not suspended unless it was necessary — when the children needed to use the bathroom, for example. During data collection, it was inevitable that the children might occasionally look at the camcorder or the observer, but only for a few seconds.

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[2] Here Mandarin Chinese refers to Taiwan Mandarin Chinese, which may be linguistically different from Beijing Mandarin (or *Putonghua*) to some extent.

[3] The data observed here belong to the Language Acquisition Lab of the Graduate Institute of Linguistics, National Chengchi University, which is directed by Prof. Chiung-chih Huang. I am grateful to her for her generosity.

Although there were no pre-determined activities or topics, all the data observed here were balanced according to situational contexts or activities. All sessions of conversations in this study contained similar activities and interactions, including unstructured daily conversations, cooperative activities, narratives or book-readings, and role-playing.

As suggested by Hsu (1996) and Zhou (2002)[4], these two children's spontaneous speech produced during the period from 24 months old to 36 months old was sampled for investigation. Following Ervin-Tripp et al. (1990), this study examined requests that children spontaneously produced at an interval of about six months, which in turn divided the data into three time points: 2;0~2;1 (mean age 24.5 months old) as Time 1, 2;6~2;7 (mean age 30.5 months old) as Time 2, and 3;0 (mean age 36 months old) as Time 3. An analysis of these two children's MLT (Mean Length of Turns) revealed that their pragmatic development were comparable at each time point (an MLT test run by CLAN program indicates that at Time 1 these two children's ration of utterances over turns (U/T) is 1.05~1.17 and their ration of words over utterances (W/U) is 1.28~1.35; at Time 2 U/T is 1.07~1.22 and W/U is 1.25~1.30; at Time 3 U/T is 1.12~1.13 and W/U is 1.14~1.26, as seen in Table 1 below), which further assured that such grouping would not distort the potential results of this study.

Table 1
The Children's Mean Length of Turns across Three Time Point[*]

Time Points	U/T	W/U
2;0~2;1	1.05~1.17	1.28~1.35
2;6~2;7	1.07~1.22	1.25~1.30
3;0	1.12~1.13	1.14~1.26

*U/T refers to children's ration of utterances over turns, and W/U refers to their ration of words over utterances.

The overall length of the data examined in the study was about nine hours long. All the recorded and observed conversations were further transcribed into Chinese characters, according to the CHAT format suggested by the CHILDES project (MacWhinney 2000). The transcribing conventions are shown in Appendix A. The total number of request utterances at each time point for each child is as follows (also seen in Table 2 below): CH1 — 13 (Time 1), 31 (Time 2), and 55 (Time 3), with 99 tokens in total; CH2 — 39 (Time 1), 83 (Time 2), and 16 (Time 3), with 138 tokens in total. The average proportions of total requests to all children's utterances in the data were 14.5% (Time 1), 27.9 % (Time 2), and 12.6% (Time 3). The criteria used to identify request cases in the present study will be presented in the following section.

[4] As suggested by Hsu (1996) and Zhou (2002), children are able to produce linguistic requests after they have reached 14 months old, as mentioned earlier in Section 1.

Table 2
Children's Request Utterances[5]

Time Points	CH1	CH2	Proportions of Total Requests in the Data (%)
Time 1	13	39	14.5
Time 2	31	83	27.9
Time 3	55	16	12.6

2.3. *Data analysis*

Cases of requests in the data were identified according to the following principles. All utterances produced by the children were first functionally determined as to whether they conveyed an illocutionary act of request in the immediate context. An utterance was identified as a request according to the addressee's (compliant or incompliant) response or reaction, i.e., the perlocutionary act of the utterance (Austin 1962). When the addressee provided cues, verbally or non-verbally, that revealed a positive response to the request, a response of this sort was then considered compliant. In addition, to identify a request case definitely and systematically, a set of criteria were also taken into consideration, including the prosody of the children's utterance, the children's and parents' non-verbal cues, non-linguistic context, and prior or subsequent discourse. The examples below can illustrate these criteria.[6]

(1) A request case identified by the addressee's compliant response:[7]
Context: the child was playing with toys and was going to put the toys away.
*FAT: *Hao # women shou-qilai.*
OK we put-away
'OK, let's put them away.'
*FAT: *Hao-bu-hao?*
Good-no-good
'All right?'
*LJW: *Ni na-zhe ranhou wo shou.* ←
You hold then I put-away
'You hold this and I put them away.'
*FAT: *Hao # wo na-zhe ni shou.*
OK I hold you put-away
'OK, I will hold this while you put them away.'

(2) A request case identified by both verbal and non-verbal cues:

[5] I am thankful to the editor and anonymous reviewers for their suggestions to present the information in tables (Table 1 and Table 2).

[6] I would like to thank the reviewers for suggesting this revision to improve the quality of the study.

[7] The arrows at the end of utterances indicated the target cases in question. The initials used in transcription include: LJW for child 1, YOU for child 2, MOT for mother, FAT for father, and YPC for observer.

Context: The child's father was holding a pack of balloons, and the child would like to play with them.

*LJW: *Gei wo la* [% trying to get the pack of balloons in FAT's hand]. ←
give me PRT[8]
'Give me [that].'
*FAT: *Wo bang ni chai.*
I help you open
'I'll unpack [it] for you.'
*FAT: *Wo bang ni chai.*
I help you open
'I'll unpack it for you.'
*FAT: *Daihui wo bang ni chai.*
wait-a-while I help you open
'I'll unpack it for you in a while.'

(3) A request case identified by prior or subsequent discourse:
Context: The child was playing with building blocks while her mother was watching her doing it.
*LJW: <*Mama* -: > [<].
Mom
'Mom…'
*LJW: *Wo bu-hui zuo # zuo na-ge.*
I not-can do do this-one
'I don't know how to make this.'
*MOT: *Zuo na-ge?*
do which-one
'Which one?'
*MOT: *Ni yao zuo na-ge?*
You want do which-one
'Which one do you want to make?'
*LJW: *Ma wo bu-hui.*
Mom I not-can
'Mom, I can't.'
*LJW: *Ni jiao wo zuo liuhuati.* ←
You teach I do slide
'You teach me how to make a slide.'
*MOT: *Liuhuati o?*
Slide PRT
'A slide?'
*LJW: /m/.
Mm
'Mm.'
*MOT: *Liuhuati yao xian zhe-yang.*
Slide must first this-way
'To make a slide, you need to do this first.'

[8] The glossary of glossing abbreviations is listed in Appendix B.

(4) A request case identified by the child's prosody cue:
Context: The child was playing with toy cars together with her mother and little sister.

*YOU: *Guo-lai* *na* *tai* *gei* *wo* [% loud]. ←
over-come that one give me
'Here, give me that car!'
%sit: YOU takes the toy car away forcefully.
*MOT: *Wo yao* *ping zai* *yiqi* *a* -: .
I want put ZAI together PRT
'I intend to put [it] together with other cars.'
*YOU: *Buneng.*
can't
'No, you can't.'
*MOT: *Weishemo?*
Why
'Why not?'
*YOU: *Yinwei* -: *zhe shi wo-de*.
because this is mine
'Because this is mine.'

(5) A request case identified by non-linguistic context:
Context: There was a pack of juice on the table and the child was trying to have it.

%sit: YOU reached her hand to get the pack of juice on the table.
*MOT: *Zhe wo-de* [% MOT takes the juice right away].
this mine
'This is mine.'
*YOU: /m/?
Mm
'Mm?'
*MOT: *Zhe wo-de.*
This mine
'This is mine.'
*YOU: *Wo hai* *yao* [% referring to juice]. ←
I more want
'I want more [juice].'
*MOT: *Buxing.*
no-way
'No way.'
*YOU: *Wo hai* *yao.*
I more want
'I want some more.'
*MOT: *Meiyou le.*
No PRT
'There is none left.'

Example (1) above illustrates a typical case where the child made a request to direct her father to do an act and her father complied with her request. Example (2) illustrates a request case where the child's request was accompanied by a non-verbal cue (i.e., the reaching gesture), which further suggests that the child was making a request, although her father did not explicitly comply with her request. Example (3) shows that the request case was identified as a target case on the basis of the subsequent discourse, what the child's mother said after the child's request. Example (4) illustrates a request case in which the child used prosodic cues, a loud voice in this case, to accentuate her request, and such a prosodic cue can be a clue for the identification of a request case. Last but not lease, non-linguistic context, or the physical setting, wherein a request was issued can help identify a target request case. As seen in example (5), there was a pack of juice in the physical setting when the child made a request by saying that she wanted to have more juice. Although the desired object was not specified in the child's request, the non-linguistic context could help determine the request case. Based on these cues in interaction, request cases were identified for further analysis.

After identified with the illocutionary act, each request case was then analyzed with regard to their respective linguistic form (e.g., Ervin-Tripp 1976, 1977; Garvey 1975; Gordon & Ervin-Tripp 1984; Searle 1975). A request can be encoded with imperative forms, such as *gei wo* 'give me', *dakai* 'open it', and *he shuei* 'drink the water'; interrogative forms, such as *ke-bu-keyi gei wo* 'Can you give it to me?';, e.g., WANT statements, e.g., *Wo xiang he shuei* 'I want to drink water'; and declarative forms, e.g., *Dianhua xiang-le* 'The phone is ringing.'

After request cases and their respective linguistic forms were identified, each request case was then coded with regard to their respective interaction type. As mentioned in the previous section (Section 1), some activities are commonly found in parent-child interaction, such as routine conversations, pretend plays, book reading, and toy playing (e.g., Ninio & Snow 1996; Yont et al. 2003). Based on these studies and judged by the activities that the children were involved in, interactional situations were classified into four types, including common talks, cooperative activities, narratives, and role-playing. Common talks referred to ordinary daily conversations, where no particular activities engaged the children and their parents; cooperative activities referred to activities involving toy playing that involved both parents and the children; narratives referred to mainly book-reading activities; lastly, role-playing referred to imaginary games where the children or their parents pretended to be an imaginary person that was different from their original roles — as a child or a parent. In fact, these four types of situations can be grouped into two major categories, if necessary. Tomasello et al. (2005), on the basis of intentionality, classified interactions into three types, including dyadic engagement, triadic engagement, and collaborative engagement. Based on their classification, the four situation types can be grouped into either dyadic engagement, where individuals are involved in mainly social interactions with their parents, and triadic engagement, where individuals, namely parents and the children, work together to reach a shared goal. In this study, the former were dubbed as unstructured interactions, while the latter were coded as activity-based interactions. Since in common talks, the children and their parents were mostly involved in social interactions where they shared their emotions and commented on their behaviors, common talks could then be considered unstructured interactions. In other situations, children were interacting with their parents toward a shared goal in book reading, role-

playing, and toy playing, and thus they could be considered as activity-based interactions.

After the coding process, the coded data were then examined for inter-rater reliability. In this study, the inter-rater reliability was evaluated with the Cohen's kappa value, which indicated that the inter-rater reliability reached an agreement that is nearly perfect (k = 0.84) (Landis & Koch 1977).[9] The incongruous parts were further resolved via discussion with a third rater, who was also familiarized with the coding system utilized in this study.

3. Results

3.1. *Children's various request forms*

It has been found that children, when requesting, seem not to utilize one single linguistic form persistently. They appear to use a variety of requests forms, including simple imperatives, WANT statements, imperatives with sentence-final particle, declaratives, imperatives with a tag, and yes-no interrogatives.[10] Among these forms, the former four types, namely simple imperatives, WANT statements, imperatives with sentence-final particle, and declaratives, appear to be the major request forms that the children use. The other two forms, imperatives with a tag and yes-no interrogatives, seem infrequently used. Frequencies of these six formal devices are summarized in the following table (Table 3).

Table 3
Frequencies of Children's Request Forms[*]

	Time1 (*N*)	Time 2 (*N*)	Time 3 (*N*)	Total
Simple Imperatives	42.31%(22)	50.0%(57)	45.07%(32)	46.84% (111)
WANT Statements	25.0%(13)	23.68%(27)	35.21%(25)	27.43% (65)
Imperatives with Sentence-Final Particle	9.62%(5)	12.28%(14)	2.82%(2)	8.86% (21)
Imperatives with a Tag	0	0.88%(1)	0	0.42% (1)
Yes-No Interrogatives	0	0.88%(1)	1.41% (1)	0.84% (2)
Declaratives	23.08%(12)	12.28%(14)	15.49%(11)	15.61% (37)
Total	(52)	(114)	(71)	(237)

* The mean age is 24.5 months at Time 1, 30.5 months at Time 2, and 36 months at Time 3.

[9] According to Landis & Koch (1977: 159-174), the Cohen's kappa value falling within the range between 0.81 and 1 means an 'almost perfect agreement' between the two raters.

[10] The term, simple imperatives, is used in contrast with other imperatives such as imperatives with a tag and imperatives with sentence-final particle.

Among all the request forms, simple imperatives appear to prevail throughout the data. Nearly half of the request cases observed at each age and all ages are found encoded with simple imperatives, as shown in Table 3 above. WANT statements are found to account for 27.43% (mean of 25%, 23.68%, and 35.21%) of all requests cases, which makes WANT statements the secondly prevalent form used to request during the age span observed here. In addition, other linguistic forms, such as declarative forms and imperatives with sentence-final particle, seem to be sporadically used, accounting for around 15% and nearly 9% of the requests observed respectively. Imperatives with a tag and yes-no interrogatives may be considered accidentally used, because of the few instances found in the data. Children may be able to produce such linguistic forms at the time, but they may not yet consistently associate such forms with the illocutionary force of requests. As shown in Table 3, children appear to develop the command of various linguistic forms to issue requests from an early age on, as early as 24.5 months old or so.

The four major formal devices utilized by children to convey their requests can be illustrated with the following excerpts.

(6) (From YOU, at 2;0, Line 152)
Context: Mother offered YOU a pudding and asked YOU if she would like to have it.

*MOT:	*Yao chi <zhe-ge>* [= pudding]	*ma?*
	want eat this	PRT
	'[You] want to have this [referring to pudding]?'	
%com:	MOT is showing YOU a cup of pudding.	
*MOT:	*<Yao>*[/] *yao chi ma?*	
	want want eat PRT	
	'[Do you] want to eat this?'	
*YOU:	*<gei wo>*[/] *gei wo* [% reaching for the pudding].	←
	give me give me	
	'Give me that; give me that.'	

(7) (From LJW, at 2;1, Line 794)
Context: LJW would like to have a pudding, while her father asked her to wait till her mother came home. As soon as her mother came home, LJW asked for the pudding.

*LJW:	*Mama lai le.*	
	Mom came LE	
	'Mom came back.'	
*FAT:	/hei/ *Mama lai le.*	
	Mom came LE	
	'Hey, Mom came back.'	
*LJW:	*<Wo>*[/] *wo yao chi bu-ding.*	←
	I I want eat pudding	
	'I want to have pudding.'	
*YPC:	0 [=! laughing] .	
*MOT:	*Ni yao she-mo?*	
	You want what	

'What do you want?'

*MOT: *Ta shuo she-mo?*
She say what?
'What did she say?'

*FAT: *Ta shuo ta yao deng ni hui-lai chi bu-ding la.*
She say she want wait you back eat pudding PRT
'She said that she would not eat the pudding until you came back.'

*MOT: *O ni yao deng wo hui-lai chi bu-ding o?*
Oh you want wait me back eat pudding PRT
'Oh, you would not eat the pudding until I came back?'

(8) (From LJW, at 3;0, Line 499)
Context: LJW was reading an interactive book with her father and she was trying to put on shoes for a character in the book.

*LJW: *You xie-zi.*
have shoes
'There are shoes.'

*FAT: +^ *Hai-you xie-zi.*
More shoes
'There are other shoes.'

*FAT: *Bang ta chuan xie-zi dui-bu-dui?*
Help him wear shoes right-not-right
'[We] should help him put on the shoes, right?'

*LJW: *Ba wo bu-hui nong.* ←
Dad I can't do
'Dad, I don't know how to do it.'

*FAT: *Keyi ya.*
Can PRT
'You can [do it].'

*FAT: *Ni ba ta zhe xx qilai a.*
You BA it this up PRT
'You put them up together.'

(9) (From YOU, at 2;6, Line 1553)
Context: YOU and her mother were role-playing. They were playing cooking games and YOU asked her mother to have pudding together with her.

*YOU: *kuai-dian chi bu-ding o -: .* ←
hurry eat pudding PRT
'Come on and eat some pudding.'

*MOT: *Wa -: o.*
Wow PRT
'Wow…'

*MOT: *Hao-bang o -: .*
good PRT

'How nice!'

Excerpts (6) to (9) illustrate children's requests with simple imperatives, WANT statements, declaratives, and imperatives with sentence-final particle respectively. In excerpt (6), the girl used a simple imperative form to ask for a pudding. With the same intention to have a pudding, the girl in excerpt (7) used a WANT statement to make her request. Excerpt (8) illustrates that the girl asked for her father's help with a declarative — to help her dress the character in the book. Finally, in excerpt (9) the girl and her mother were playing cooking games; the child, as the cook, asked her mother to enjoy puddings together with an imperative form with sentence-final particle.

In addition, excerpts (10) and (11) exemplify how children use imperatives with a tag question and yes-no interrogatives to make requests.

(10) (From YOU, at 2;6, Line 990)
Context: The girl's mother was talking about sugar to YOU.

*MOT:	*Zhe-ge*	*shi*	*she-mo*	*ni*	*zhi-dao*	*ma?*	
	This	is	what	you	know	PRT	
	'Do you know what this is?'						
*YOU:	*Tang-tang.*						
	Sugar-sugar						
	'Sugar.'						
*MOT:	*Dui-*:	*zhe-ge*	*shi*	*tang-tang.*			
	Right	this	is	sugar			
	'You're right. This is sugar.'						
*YOU:	*Wo*	*ke-yi*	*chi*	*ma?*	←		
	I	can	eat	PRT			
	'Can I have some?'						
*MOT:	*En-*:	*bu*	*ke-yi* [= shaking the head].				
	Mm	not	can				
	'Mm…you can't.'						
*YOU:	*Wie-she-mo?*						
	Why						
	'Why not?'						
*MOT:	*Yinwei*	*zhe-ge*	*shi*	*yao*	*jia*	*zai*	*ka-fei*	*limian-de.*
	Because	this	is	to	add	in	coffee	inside-DE
	'Because this is to be added to coffee.'							

(11) (From YOU, at 2;6, Line 1393)
Context: YOU and her mother were leaving her grandparents' place and going upstairs. While they were leaving, YOU asked to take something with her.

*MOT:	Let's go.					
*YOU:	*Na*	<*zhe*> [= grandma's bracelet]	*shang-qu*	*hao-bu-hao*?		←
	take	this	up-go	good-not-good		
	'Take this upstairs, all right?'					
*MOT:	*Bu-xing #*	*na*	*nainai-de.*			
	No-way	that	grandma's			
	'No, that's grandma's.'					

*YOU:	*Zhe*	*wo-de.*			
	This	mine			
	'This is mine.'				
*MOT:	*Naiani # Gaoyouxuan*	*na*	*ni-de*	*shuo-huan* [% loud].	
	Grandma YOU	take	your	bracelet	
	'Grandma, YOU is taking your bracelet.'				
*YOU:	*<Zhe>* [/]	*zhe*	*wo-de.*		
	This	this	mine		
	'This is mine.'				
*MOT:	*Ni*	*ba*	*ta*	*gan*	*chu-qu.*
	You	BA	her	drive	out-go
	'Grandma, you should ask her to stay out.'				
*YOU:	*Bu-xing.*				
	No-way				
	'No.'				
*MOT:	*Fang-hao #*	*zhe*	*nainai-de.*		
	Put-well	this	grandma's		
	'Put it back; this belongs to grandma.'				

In excerpt (10) above, the child used a yes-no interrogative to obtain a permission to have some sugar while her mother was talking about the use of sugar. This can be considered a case of request for permission. In excerpt (11), the child asked for the possession of a bracelet that did not really belong to her by using an imperative with a tag question. As exemplified in these two excerpts, it seems that these two formal devices were found in the cases by only one of the two children. Because of the rarity and the biased distribution of these two request forms, they will not be pursued in the following discussion.

What can be interesting as well, nonetheless, is why children rarely use such request forms as declaratives, imperatives with sentence-final particle, imperatives with a tag, and yes-no interrogatives. The attribution to the scarcity of uses of these request forms can possibly be threefold. Formally speaking, the linguistic complexity of these request forms may be a reason why children rarely use them at this age as young as three. As pointed out in a review by Clark (2003), these request forms, particularly imperatives with a tag question, imperatives with sentence-final particle, and yes-no interrogatives, are structurally more complex, compared to simple imperatives and WANT statements, and these structures are usually not observable until children's MLU has reached 3.0 and above. The MLU of the children observed here, however, are testified to be around 1.5, and thus it is likely that they have not yet developed these structures well.[11] In addition, Hsu (1996) in his observation of Mandarin-speaking children's syntactic development also reports that these request forms are comparatively more complex in structure and are developed later than simiple imperatives and WANT statements; not until over the age of three can children consistently produce such request forms. Another aspect regarding the scarcity of these request forms may be the frequency of these forms in adults' input. As pointed out by Hsu (1996: 83), in adult speech (to other adults), these request forms are frequently observed. However, when adults are interacting with children, they seldom use these request forms. Such a

[11] The average MLU of the children observed here is 1.358 at Time 3.

tendency seems true as far as the data observed here are concerned. Moreover, the scarcity of these request forms may also be attributed to the pragmatic functions associated with these constructions. In terms of pragmatic forces, these request forms convey less forceful requests compared to simple imperatives and WANT statements, while in parent-child interactions, indirect request forms may not be as desirable or expected as direct request forms, as pointed out by some studies (e.g., Axia 1996; Ervin-Tripp et al. 1990; Zhou 2002). Even in the Chinese culture, request forms with implicit or suggestive pragmatic forces may be discredited in parent-child interactions; parents may be unhappy about children using such request forms as declaratives to implicitly convey their requests (Zhou 2002). Because of the improperness of the use of these request forms in parent-child interactions, the children during the age span may not have developed the functional association between these request forms and their pragmatic appropriateness, and in turn, they scarcely use these request forms. Of course, further studies and other studies are desirable to elucidate this.

Based on the observation, it seems that children draw upon a variety of linguistic forms to convey their request intents from an early age on (as early as two years old). Among these request forms, simple imperatives and WANT statements appear to perform the foremost role. In addition, declaratives, imperatives with sentence-final particle, imperatives with a tag, and yes-no interrogatives are also used, but they appear incomparable to the other two request forms. These various request forms can therefore mirror children's linguistic competence. At about this age (younger than three years old), children, Mandarin-speaking ones in particular, may have developed such constructions, particularly simple imperatives and WANT statements, and they have been able to extend most of these syntactic constructions to their communicative goal, particularly request intention.

3.2. *Request forms and contexts*

As pointed out in previous studies, children's request forms are subject to the context (Axia 1996; Bosco et al. 2004; Ervin-Tripp, Garton & Pratt 1990; Hsiao 1990; Pan 2000). It is hence assumed that the diversity of request forms observed in the study is also motivated by different communicative situations. Table 4 below summarizes the percentages of the request forms observed within each contextual situation across three time points of observation. At first glance, it appears that children's request forms are not really susceptible to contextual situations. Overall, children seem to use mainly simple imperatives and WANT statements across the three time points. On closer examination, however, children's requests seem indeed sensitive to contextual situations.

As seen in Table 4, the occurrences of such contexts as role-playing and narratives appear to be fewer than those of the other two contexts. To simplify the discussion and to accentuate the distribution of request forms across contexts, four contextual situations are further lumped into two major types: Unstructured daily conversations and activity-based interactions, based on the classification of interactions proposed by Tomasello et al. (2005). The former refers to ordinary daily interactions wherein children are interacting with their parents as their original role — a child without any particular activity and they are involved in "dyadic engagement" (p. 681), where they share with their parents emotions and behaviors. The latter refers to

situations in which children and their parents, while interacting, are involved in a particular activity, such as role-playing games, and toy playing or book-reading activities; in these activities children and their parents are involved in "triadic engagement" (p. 681), where they collaboratively act on a shared goal, in other words, to complete a task together. Given these two major activity types, children's use of request forms in these interactions is summarized in the following figure.

Table 4
Distributions of Request Forms within Contexts across Time in Percentage

Contexts	Request Forms	Time 1 (*N*)	Time 2 (*N*)	Time 3 (*N*)
Common Talks (CMT)	Declaratives	23.53 (4)	12.9 (8)	22.73 (5)
	Imperatives with particle	5.89 (1)	4.84 (3)	4.55 (1)
	Imperatives with a tag	0	1.61 (1)	0
	Simple imperatives	35.29 (6)	41.94 (26)	36.36 (8)
	WANT statements	35.29 (6)	37.1 (23)	36.36 (8)
	Yes-No interrogatives	0	1.61 (1)	0
	Total	100(17)*	100(62)	100(22)
Cooperative Activities (COA)	Declaratives	44.45 (4)	16.67 (6)	10.72 (3)
	Imperatives with particle	11.11 (1)	13.89 (5)	0
	Imperatives with a tag	0	0	0
	Simple imperatives	22.22 (2)	66.67 (24)	53.57 (15)
	WANT statements	22.22 (2)	2.77 (1)	35.71 (10)
	Yes-No interrogatives	0	0	0
	Total	100(9)	100(36)	100(28)
Narratives (NAR)	Declaratives	0	0	12.5 (2)
	Imperatives with particle	7.69 (1)	16.67 (1)	0
	Imperatives with a tag	0	0	0
	Simple imperatives	69.24 (9)	83.33 (5)	43.75 (7)
	WANT statements	23.07 (3)	0	43.75 (7)
	Yes-No interrogatives	0	0	0
	Total	100(13)	100(6)	100(16)
Role-Playing (RPL)	Declaratives	30.77 (4)	0	20 (1)
	Imperatives with particle	15.38 (2)	50 (5)	20 (1)
	Imperatives with a tag	0	0	0
	Simple imperatives	38.47 (5)	20 (2)	40 (2)
	WANT statements	15.38 (2)	30 (3)	0
	Yes-No interrogatives	0	0	20 (1)
	Total	100(13)	100(10)	100(5)

* The numbers in parentheses are tokens of requests observed in that particular contextual situation.

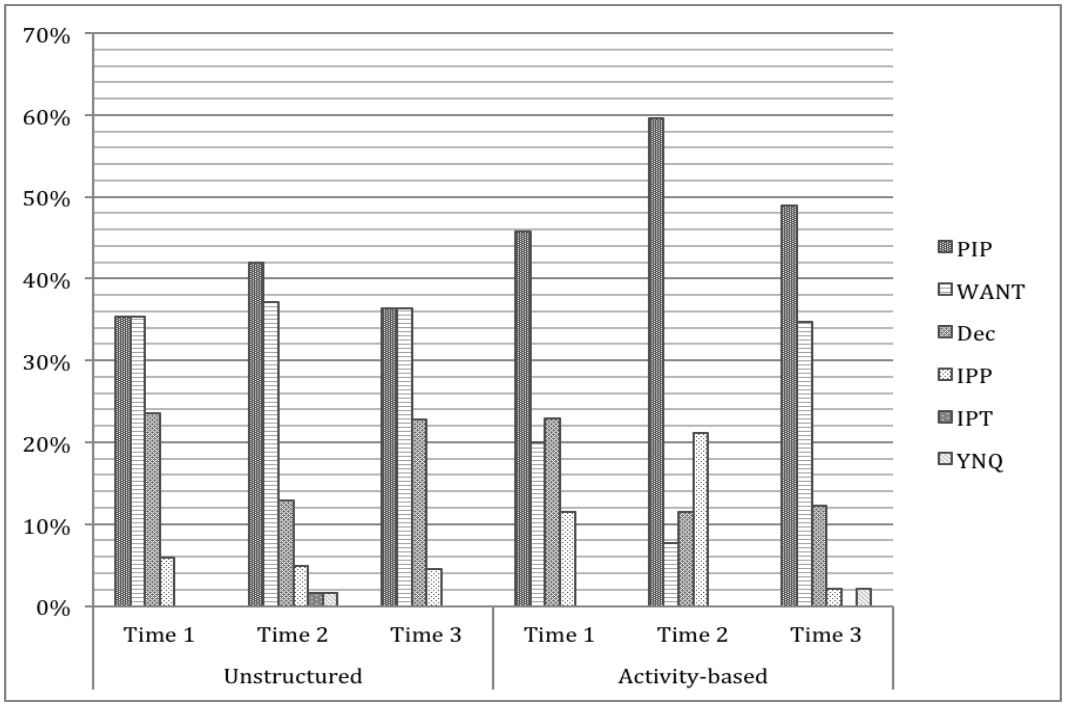

Figure 5. Children's uses of request forms in two major situations (in percentage)[12]

Given the two major contextual situations, the sensitivity of request forms to contextual situations in children's requests can thus be revealed. As shown in figure 5 above, when the children are requesting in unstructured daily conversations, they primarily draw upon both simple imperatives and WANT statements throughout three time points. In the meantime, they may also utilize such request forms as declaratives to convey their requests. The uses of declaratives in this situation, however, not only are incomparable to those of the two major types of request forms but also fluctuate greatly across three time points. The change of the children's uses of declaratives seem not to alter the general pattern: They request most with simple imperatives and WANT statements when involved in unstructured daily conversations with their parents, and thus are not included in the following discussion.

By contrast, the children seem to pivot on simple imperatives when requesting in activity-based interactions. As seen in the figure, the uses of simple imperatives to request in such situations appear to outnumber the other linguistic forms by at least 20 percentage points, even the secondly frequent form, i.e., WANT statements; such a preference for simple imperatives appears obvious at Time 1 and Time 2. This disproportionate distribution of simple imperatives appears particularly clear at around age 2;6 (Time 2). At Time 2 children's uses of simple imperatives are nearly six times more than those of WANT statements in such situations. Despite the increase of the uses of WANT statements at Time 3, simple imperatives remain favored. An analysis of

[12] In Figure 5, PIP stands for simple imperatives, WANT for WANT statements, Dec for declaratives, IPP for imperatives with particle, IPT for imperatives with a tag, and YNQ for yes-no interrogatives.

variance showed that simple imperatives are significantly preferred in activity-based interactions, $F(11, 24) = 5.366$, $p = .000$. Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD post hoc criterion for significance (at an alpha level of .025) indicate that the average uses of simple imperatives in activity-based interactions are significantly higher than the other request forms in the same interactions and in unstructured interactions ($M = 23.67$, $SD = 5.56$). Although the average uses of simple imperatives in unstructured interactions are significantly preferred over the other request forms, the mean score is relative higher than the other request forms ($M = 13.33$, $SD = 11.02$).[13] In essence, it seems that in activity-based interactions, children tend to draw upon imperative forms to issue their requests, particularly in favor of simple imperatives, while they may alternatively use both simple imperatives and WANT statements in unstructured daily conversations.

The following excerpts illustrate children's uses of request forms in unstructured daily conversations and activity-based interactions.

(12) (From YOU, at 2;6, Line 725)
Context: YOU was playing the piano, but she would like to stop and was trying to close the cover of the piano.

*YOU:	*Ma-*:	*mama-*: .						
	Mom	mom						
	'Mom, mother.'							
*MOT:	/ha/?							
*YOU:	*Mama*	*bang*	*wo*	*guan*	*zhe-ge* [= piano lid].	←		
	Mama	*bang*	*wo*	*guan*	*zhe-ge*			
	Mom	help	me	close	this			
	'Mom, help me close this.'							
*MOT:	*Ni*	*ziji*	*guan*	*# qingqing-de*	*cai*	*buhui*	*shou-shang-o-*: .	
	You	self	close	lightly	and	won't	hurt	PRT
	'You yourself close it; do it gently or you may get hurt.'							
*YOU:	*Hao.*							
	Okay							
	'Okay.'							

(13) (From LJW, at 3;0, Line 229)
Context: LJW and her mother were having beverages. Her mother was drinking red wine, and LJW also wanted to drink something.

*MOT:	*Ni*	*yao*	*she-mo?*			
	You	want	what			
	'What do you want?'					
*LGW:	*Wo*	*yao*	*dong-xi.*			
	I	want	things			
	'I WANT something.'					
*MOT:	*Ni*	*yao*	*he*	*she-mo*?		
	You	want	drink	what		
	'What do you want to drink?'					
*MOT:	*Ni*	*ye*	*yao*	*he*	*jiu*	*ma*?

[13] I would like to thank the editor and anonymous reviewers for their suggestion on the statistic analysis that helps improve this study.

	You	too	want	drink	wine	PRT
	'Do you WANT some wine, too?'					
*LJW:	*Wo*	*yao*	*he* +/.			
	I	want	drink			
	'I want to drink…'					
*MOT:	*Ni*	*yao*	*he*	*she-mo*?		
	You	want	drink	what		
	'What do you want to drink?'					
*MOT:	/ha/?					
*LJW:	*Wo*	*yao*	*he*	*hei-mai-zhi*.		←
	I	want	drink	malz beer		
	'I want some malz beer.'					

Excerpts (12) and (13) illustrate the children's requests in unstructured daily conversations. Excerpt (12) exemplifies requests made with a simple imperative. This request was made by the girl to ask for her mother's help. Although the request is mainly carried out with an imperative, the imperative is mitigated with social deixis, *Mama* 'mother', and a lexical device to show her awareness of politeness, *bang* 'to help' (cf. Ervin-Tripp et al., 1990). Excerpt (13), on the other hand, illustrates children's requests with WANT statements. The girl asked her mother to provide her with some drink by expressing her desire to drink something.

(14) (From LJW, at 2;6, Line 657)
Context: LJW and her mother were playing building blocks together.

*MOT:	*Lai*	*fang*	*shang-qu.*		
	Come	put	onto		
	'Here, put it on top.'				
*LJW:	*Mama*	*fang* [= give mom a building block].			←
	Mom	put			
	'Mom, you do it.'				
*MOT:	*Mama*	*lai* #	*mama*	*fang.*	
	Mom	come	mom	put	
	'Let me do it.'				
*MOT:	*Xian-zai*	*gai*	*she-mo*	*wu*?	
	Now	build	what	house	
	'Now, what kind of house should we build?'				

(15) (From You, at 2;6, Line 320)
Context: YOU's mother invited her to a game and YOU directed where the game should take place.

*MOT:	*Hao*	*women*	*lai*	*wan*	*tu-ka.*
	Good	we	come	play	flash cards
	'Okay, let's play with flash cards.'				
*YOU:	*Hao.*				
	Okay				
	'Okay.'				

*YOU: *Lai ba.*
Come PRT
'Come on.'
*YOU: *Lai wo zhe-bian.* ←
Come me here
'Come to me.'
%sit: MOT put some toys away in a box.

Excerpts (14) and (15) show how children request with simple imperatives in activity-based interactions. In excerpt (14), the child knew that she and her mother were both involved in a block-building game, in which they took turns placing a block. To indicate the turn, the girl used a simple imperative. Likewise, excerpt (15) illustrates another activity-based interaction where a request with simple imperative was performed. This activity was established when the mother initiated a new game in the first utterance of the excerpt. With her mother's initiation, the child then knew that her mother and she were both involved in this game, thus a cooperative activity. As a result, the girl used a simple imperative to direct how the game should proceed.

It has been found that children tend to utilize a variety of linguistic forms to convey their requests, and in the variety of request forms, WANT statements and simple imperatives appear to be the two major linguistic devices used to request in unstructured daily interactions. By contrast, children pivot on simple imperatives to perform their requests in activity-based interactions. Therefore, children's request forms appear influenced by context, with some forms strongly preferred in particular contexts.

3.3. *Request repertoire across ages*

Figure 5 above shows that at Time 1 (mean age 24.5 months), when requesting their parents to perform an act, the children tend to use both WANT statements and simple imperatives in both situations; with a preference for simple imperatives in activity-based interactions, but without a clear preference for either one of the two request forms in unstructured daily conversations. When considering the overall distribution of request forms across situations, we can see that children used a wide variety of requests forms to encode their requests at Time 1, including four major request forms, despite their slight preference for WANT statements and simple imperatives.

At Time 2 (mean age 30.5 months), a division of labor among request forms seems to emerge. The children's use of request forms in unstructured daily conversations shows a similar picture to that at Time 1, except that the use of declaratives reduces (from 23.53% to 12.9%). In such situations, the children tend to request with either WANT statements or simple imperatives (37.1% vs. 41.94%). By contrast, the children at this time appear to disproportionately utilize simple imperatives to issue requests in activity-based interactions. As shown in figure 5, when requesting in such situations, the percentage of simple imperatives appears considerably higher than those of other request forms, including WANT statements (59.62% compared to 7.69%, 21.15%, and 11.54% respectively). This relatively higher percentage of the use of simple imperatives in activity-based interactions can therefore reveal a developmental change — from a rudimentary preference for a particular request form to a remarkable preference for simple imperatives, particularly in activity-based interactions.

At Time 3 (mean age 36 months), the major picture that has developed at Time 2 by and large seems to remain. As shown in figure 5, simple imperatives appear prevalent in activity-based interactions, despite the increase in the use of WANT statements. Declaratives remain less frequent as they appear at Time 2, after the decline from Time 1 to Time 2. During this time, the children may have further consolidated their basic deployment of these primary request forms. Simple imperatives appear to be the primary syntactic forms, while WANT statements seem to be the secondary syntactic devices in the children's requests, followed by declaratives and imperatives with sentence-final particle. The relative division of labor between simple imperatives and WANT statements, which have been demonstrated at Time 2, appears quite constant across contextual situations, as mentioned in the previous section (Section 3.2). It is likely that during the period from 24 moths old to 36 months old, children's linguistic development may not manifest itself solely in the maturation of linguistic forms; it may also be disclosed in the systematic association between forms and uses in contextual situations. In a nutshell, children's development of request forms is likely to be a function of request forms and contextual situations.

4. Discussion

A comparison to the developmental pattern of request forms amassed by Ervin-Tripp (1977) reveals a general cross-linguistic accordance in the development of linguistic devices in children's requests. The children observed in this study generally develop their request repertoire on a par with the pattern put forth by Ervin-Tripp, except that the children appear to be able to convey their request intents implicitly with declaratives as early as two years old, on limited occasions though. The children examined in the study, although no noticeable formal development with age has been found, by and large encode their requests primarily with simple imperatives and WANT statements.

In addition, the results also show that the children seem to be inclined to use simple imperatives when requesting in activity-based interactions, while they tend to utilize simple imperatives as well as WANT statements in unstructured daily conversations. Apparently, children's request forms appear to be subject to contexts. An intriguing question in this regard can be what aspects of context seem to influence the children's use of these two request forms. One possible account for this seeming formal division of labor can be children's awareness of interpersonal relation suggested in the situation. In activity-based interactions, the children and parents are engaged in the activity they agreed to undergo, and thus they are cooperating to reach the communicative goal, i.e., to have the activity completed. Because of the cooperative relationship, the children may know that it can be appropriate to control their parents or to use their parents as an instrument to complete a task (Ervin-Tripp et al. 1990; Gordon & Ervin-Tripp 1984). They thus draw upon simple imperatives to issue their requests in such situations. By contrast, such a cooperative relationship seems not to be inherent in unstructured daily conversations. In unstructured daily conversations, children and parents are not presupposed to be cooperative, since no particular activity is imposed on them and they need to negotiate their interpersonal relationship in the immediate context. Because of the lack of a cooperative interpersonal relationship, children may not have confidence in using simple imperatives only and thus they appeal to use both simple imperatives and WANT statements. Therefore, it is suggested that children's

awareness of the interpersonal relationship between themselves and their interlocutors — whether they are cooperative in the very interactional situation — may be a factor that influences their choices of request forms.

Additionally, the findings here may lend support to the idea proposed by Tomasello et al. (2005) that children are able to participate in collaborative activities with shared goals and intentions. As pointed out in the findings, the children observed in the study tend to make requests with simple imperatives more in cooperative activities. This may reveal that the children acknowledge that in such activities, they and their parents share intentionality and share a goal, so that they interact to reach the very goal. On the other hand, in unstructured daily conversations, the children seem to primarily use both simple imperatives and WANT statements, because they may not be sure if they and their parents share a goal. Because of the uncertainty, the children may opt for two request forms when making their requests. All in all, the children's requests and uses of different request forms in different types of activities may indicate that children, as young as two years old, acknowledge that humans are intentional beings (Tomasello et al. 2005). Thus, children develop the functional association between intentionality and request forms; they may associate simple imperatives with requests to an interlocutor who collaboratively shares an intention (Tomasello et al. 2005), according to the findings here.[14]

Alternatively, such an apparent formal division of labor can also be accounted for in terms of interpersonal status. Children's use of simple imperatives in activity-based interactions may be a result of their equal status to parents. If so, such an account may not suffice to explain the finding that simple imperatives are also frequently used in unstructured daily conversations. Another likely account may be the supposition that children consider simple imperatives and WANT statements effective request forms to reach their own communicative goals. Whichever the alternative account may be, the examination in the present study may not suffice to provide any accounts for these two alternatives. Further studies are desirable in these respects.

Moreover, Deutscher (2005) discusses the overall development of human languages and points to the 'me first' (pp. 218-219) preference when interlocutors are selecting conversational topics. He argues that the entire human language system may have developed from the basic motivation to talk about the speaker himself, starting with commenting on or sharing ideas about 'me'. According to Deutscher's arguments, therefore, the 'me first' preference seems not only to determine the primary path of human language development, but also to establish the fundamental syntactic structure of most human languages. Deutscher's proposal appears to be on a par with what Tomasello and his colleagues propose (2005): Human beings are intentional beings who share intentionality.

Based on Deutscher's (2005) proposal and the findings in Ervin-Tripp's (1977) and Hsu's (1996) studies as well as the findings here, it seems plausible that the children's uses of WANT statements can be fairly likely to reveal children's intention to show their desire, or to share emotions with others in Tomasello et al.'s (2005) terms, since such a syntactic structure mainly means to express the speaker's personal desire or needs, i.e., to talk about 'me', and the type of request forms appears to be frequently used in unstructured daily conversations, where no particular interpersonal relationship or no clear collaborative goal is shared between children and their parents. Therefore, as

[14] I am thankful to two anonymous reviewers for providing this literature to improve the present study.

far as children's request intention is concerned, when making a request, children are likely to develop the ability to express one's own desire or needs first and then the ability to use the others in the conversation as an instrument to fulfill the desire or carry out an act (cf. Gordon & Ervin-Tripp 1984). Together with what Tomasello et al. (2005) propose, for children to be able to make requests by expressing their wants or needs, they should presumably be aware that they themselves and their interlocutors are intentional beings and that they collaboratively share intentionality with their interlocutors. Nonetheless, the findings in this study may only suffice to make speculations in this regard. Further studies are desirable to consolidate the speculation.

Notwithstanding the findings, the present study undoubtedly has its limitations. One issue that further studies can work on can be the significance of WANT statements in children's pragmatic development and/or linguistic development. Is it possible that WANT statements develop out of proto-declarative gestures at children's pre-linguistic stage (Bates et al. 1975)? Given the overall frequencies of request forms observed, it is understandable to consider simple imperatives the primary linguistic devices utilized by children to issue requests, since the overall frequencies of simple imperatives turn out to be the highest; the highly frequent imperative forms are believed to replace those proto-imperative gestures and vocatives that children use in their pre-linguistic stage (e.g., Bates et al. 1975; Bruner 1983; Kelly 2007). Such a consideration, however, is simply based on the frequency of a request form, while apparently neglecting the influence of contextual effects and/or interpersonal factors that may affect children's uses of request forms. Further studies are also desirable to pursue this issue.

5. Conclusion

As far as the data at hand are concerned, Mandarin-speaking children are found to draw upon various linguistic devices to convey their request intents, including simple imperatives, WANT statements, imperatives with sentence-final particle, declaratives, imperatives with a tag, and yes-no interrogatives. Among these formal devices, simple imperatives and WANT statements are likely to be the two major request forms that children use in their early ages. When contextual situations are taken into account, it seems that children may be aware of cooperative interpersonal relationship in activity-based interactions and thus they tend to make requests with simple imperatives. Such a preference is apparently not obvious in unstructured daily conversations, where simple imperatives and WANT statements are both used. It is thus speculated that children's use of request forms may be subject to cooperative interpersonal relationship suggested in contextual situations and that simple imperatives and WANT statements are likely to be two primal request forms in children's pragmatic development.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Transcribing symbols
(Adapted from MacWhinney, Brain. 2000. The CHILDES Project: Tools for Analyzing Talk. Third Edition. Hillsdale, NJ: L. Erlbaum.)

xxx	unintelligible speech, not treated as a word
.	period
?	question
#	pause
-:	lengthening
+…	trailing off
+//.	self-interruption
+^	quick uptake
[= text]	explanation
[% text]	comment on main line
[/]	retracing without correction
0	action without speech
%com	comments by investigator
/… /	delimiters for phonetic notation
,,	tag question
< >	portion of utterances been overlapped
[>]	overlap follows
[<]	overlap precedes
%act	action performed while speaking
%sit	situational description

Appendix B

Glossary of Glossing Abbreviations (Ordered alphabetically)

BA object marker (把)
DE possessive marker or adjective marker (的)
JIU then, just (就)
LE a change-of state or completeness marker (了)
PRT sentence-final particles