

## Developmental Pathways in Mandarin Polysemy Acquisition: The Cases of *Yao* and *Hui*

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This presentation reports on the acquisition of "yao" (要) and "hui" (會), which share three basic meanings: (1) the ability to do something (dynamic), (2) the promise or permission of an act (deontic), and (3) the judgment of the possibility of a future event (epistemic). Analysis of spontaneous language samples from three children aged between 18 months and 42 months shows that children primarily use "yao" to express three functions in sequence: (1) expressing needs or desires (dynamic), (2) describing obligations or the necessity of events (deontic), and (3) inferring the occurrence of an event (epistemic). The acquisition of "hui" follows a similar developmental pathway, with distinct nuances in the structural patterns employed. The acquisition pathways of "yao" and "hui" are closely related to the development of children's control of structural patterns as well as their social cognition. Children expand the use of "yao" and "hui" from one function to another by leveraging already mastered grammatical structures. The progression to express obligations or the necessity of events mirrors the frequency of adults using this function, revealing the role of adult input. In summary, the developmental pathways revealed in the acquisition of the polysemous "yao" and "hui" demonstrate an intriguing interplay between the linguistic domain and social cognition, contributing to the current research framework in first language acquisition by highlighting the integrated roles of linguistic structures and social cognitive development.