

Individual Paper Session 21
Child SLA
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Associations between gender, home and school languages, and language learning beliefs, and achievement in two second languages (L2s)

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The study is situated within the context of Malay children undergoing primary school learning of three languages, where Mandarin is the school medium of instruction and both English and Malay are learnt as a subject. While Malay is the children's native language, both Mandarin and English are acquired simultaneously in school. As part of a bigger study, this paper reports on the associations between young children's gender, languages spoken at home and in school, and language learning beliefs, as the independent variables, and their achievement in two second languages as the dependent variables.

Two-hundred and six (206) Malay primary school children between Years 3 and 5 (ages between 9 and 11) took part in this study. Data were obtained by means of a questionnaire, which the children completed, and from school records. Achievements in all the three languages were found to positively correlate with each other. Significant differences were observed in the children's achievement in English and Mandarin based on gender, where female students outperformed male in both.

Significant differences were also noted in the language achievements based on the languages the children use at home and at school. Nineteen language learning beliefs item were used, out of which, statistically significant association with English achievement was observed in four items, concerning in particular language learning beliefs and communication strategies.