

Influence of Hindi Cartoons on the Language Development of Pakistani Urdu/English Schoolchildren

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Abstract

Not surprisingly, children expand their linguistic repertoire with the maturation of their cognition and their daily activities such as watching cartoons influence their language development. Many if not all parents fear that the Hindi cartoons are contaminating the linguistic repertoire of their children. Eventually, Pakistan Media Electronic Regularity Authority has banned Hindi dubbed cartoons. However, it is quite paradoxical that they always wish to improve the English language skills of their children but they have negative grounding towards the Hindi language. With this background in minds, the present study was carried out to examine the influence of some popular Hindi cartoons (such as *Doraemon*, *Motu Patlu*, and *Chota Bheem*) on the phonological development of children from middle and upper-middle class schools located in Lahore. By taking the Labovian apparent hypothesis as a theoretical lens, a sample of 84 Urdu/English bilinguals of different age groups was selected to investigate a prevalence of most commonly occurring phonological variants (such as /k^h/ for /x/, /g/ for /ɣ/, /d̪z/ for /z/, and /f/ for /p^h/) in their speech. The study revealed that the influence of the Hindi phonology remained temporary on the language development of the participants. They were open to the usage of Hindi phonemes unless they developed alternatives phonological system in their first language (Urdu) and second and the most prestigious language (English). The participants who were around 10 years of age were found relatively less prone to using the Hindi phones. We may not rule out completely whether or not the above-mentioned phonological variants were part of their linguistic repertoire when they reached to puberty. It was observed, on the other hand, that some low-level phonological variations recycled invariably in the speech of the participants. Hence, the study suggests investigating these variations beyond this age bracket. The study takes a diametrically opposite stance and suggests an exposure to multilingual vocabulary as a correlate of cognitive development during the early childhood education.

Keywords: Hindi cartoons, Urdu/English bilingual children, phonology, Pakistan, language development

1. Introduction

Meri sahaili! Gussa (گصہ) *kyon hoti ho, Chinta mut kro...agar tumhara gubara* (گبارہ) *phatt gya hai to apnay pita say ja kr kay kaho. Fir* (فیر) *wo tumhain naya le dain gay. Abto khush* (کھوش) *hojao.* (My friend! Why are you getting angry? Don't worry? If your balloon is blown-up you may request your father to buy one for you.)

A five years old girl was consoling her friend, while I was eavesdropping her lexical choices and phonological elements e.g., *Gussa* (for Anger), *Chinta* (for worried), *Gubara* (Balloon), *Pita* (for father), *Fir* (for then) and *Khush* (happy). These lexical and phonological variations highlight a kind of influence of the Hindi language on the language development of Pakistani schoolchildren. It was observed and reported by parents as well that children tend to replace the Urdu phonemes e.g., 'خ' /x/, 'غ' /ɣ/ and پھ /p^h/ with the Hindi counterparts e.g., 'کھ' /k^h/, 'گ' /g/ and 'ف' /f/ particularly in their informal interactions with their peers. A prevalence of Hindi words and phones in the communication of schoolteachers instigate the researchers to investigate how far this influence lasts in their phonological system. The investigation would help us to vouch for the observation or/and fear of parents whether their children's language is being meshed up by the Hindi cartoons. The findings of this study would also reflect on the decision made by the competent authority to ban the Hindi cartoon channels across Pakistan.

Parents allow their children to watch cartoons perhaps to keep them engaged while they are into other things. Pakistani children enjoy watching Hindi dubbed cartoons (e.g., *Doraemon*, *Motu Patlu*, and *Chota Bheem*) mostly because of linguistic affinity. It is important to note that the Hindi language is in many ways similar to the Urdu language in its spoken form. There are some phonological and lexical differences between Urdu and Hindi which become intelligible to folks with the passage of time. Rahman (2011) argues that there is much similarity between Urdu and Hindi. He claims that Urdu is a pidgin of Hindi which was creolized and standardized over several hundred years. It seems as there are more similarities than differences between Hindi and Urdu, which help children enjoy Hindi cartoons in their leisure hours.

There is abundance of literature that considers cartoons as a source of entertainment and education. Research (Hassan & Daniyal, 2013; Stamou, Maroniti & Griva, 2015; Raza, Awan & Gondal, 2016) has established that cartoons influence children's dressing style, language, and behavior. They prefer to buy watches, caps, shirts, pencil boxes and other various accessories based on these cartoon characters. The cartoons are effective in teaching basic linguistic abilities to children, (Uchikoshi, 2005; Linebarger & Vaala, 2010; Rai et al., 2016) enriching their imagination, ripening their esthetic inclinations, providing them with multidimensional insight, making children's learning long-lasting, and, introducing to and providing them national and worldwide culture (Yagli (2013) cited by Gedik & Akin, 2016; See also Saxton, 2010; Gupta, 2013; Ukpong, Uyanga & Nyorere, 2015; Sezer, 2016).

Most of the parents who are from the Punjabi speech community of Pakistan fear that Hindi cartoons are 'contaminating' the linguistic choices of their children. The issue was discussed in the national Assembly of Pakistan and vis a vis reported by various media houses. Eventually, Pakistan Media Electronic Regularity Authority banned Hindi dubbed cartoons on October the 19th, 2016. However, it appears to be paradoxical that Punjabi parents would like to enroll their children in English medium schools to improve their English language skills but they have negative grounding towards the Hindi language. Pakistan is a country with dual national languages (Urdu and English) while hosting over 70 regional languages where a changing and post-colonial world is placing demands on Punjabi folks among others to communicate and do business in English. Needless to say, the divide between Urdu and Hindi is more political and ideological than linguistics. The studies cited in the next section unarguably acknowledge the impact of Hindi dubbed cartoons on the language of children.

2. Literature Review

As noted above, watching cartoons for long hours is reported to bring change in children's language. Aslam, Rehman, Qasim and Abbas (2012) conducted a study on 'Media and the language shift: Urdu speaking children's use of Hindi words as viewed by their parents' to find the impact of Hindi dubbed cartoons on the language of children. Based on structured interviews, the data was gathered from the parents of 3 to 10 years old children. The study revealed that children frequently used the Hindi words in their conversations. They articulated Hindi kinship titles such as *deedi* (sister), *pita* (father), *pati* (husband) *patni* (wife) among religious terms such as *aishwar* (god), *devi* (goddess), *rakshas* (satan), *aarti* (A Hindi ritual), *pooja* (worship) including greeting words such as *namastay* (Hindi greeting) and expressions like *vishwas* (trust), *shakti* (power), *shama* (forgive me), *svadish* (tasty), etc. among others. The study demonstrated that most parents disliked the use of Hindi language by their children.

Malik and Arslan (2013) investigated the impact of the Hindi language cartoons on the language of Pakistani students. A questionnaire was used to obtain parents' observation regarding the Hindi language use of their children. One hundred parents of 3 to 10 years old children residing

in Lahore, Pakistan were involved in the study. As many as 90% parents admitted that their children love to watch cartoons and 10% were of the view that they sometimes watch cartoons. They enlisted *Doremon*, *Ben 10* and *Chota Bheema* among the favorite cartoon shows. 60% parents disclosed that the Hindi cartoons have affected their children's language. Among others, the most used phrases were *shanti rakho* (38%) (Don't panic), *namastay* (24%) (Hindi word for Greeting). Another study was undertaken by Yousaf, Shehzad and Hassan (2015) on 100 male and female children of 7 to 12 years of age who were residing in Gujrat, Pakistan. The results revealed that 60% of the participants experienced a change in their accent after regularly watching cartoons. Similarly, Chaudhry (2017) found that the Hindi dubbed cartoons influence the language of children. She noted most frequently used Hindi words *sunndar* for *khobsorat* (beautiful), *Guffa* for *Ghaar* (cave), *Raaj kumar/Raja* for *Badshah* (king) in the linguistic repertoire of the participants. She further claimed that this influence was temporal – as the participants reached to teen age bracket and eventually had more exposure to first language (Urdu) and the regional language (Punjabi) their native language, the use of Hindi words was dramatically decreasing.

Islam and Biswas (2012) investigated the use of Hindi words by the Bangladeshi 3 to 8 years old children as an outcome of watching Hindi dubbed cartoon show *Doremon* through critical discourse analysis. The study revealed that 93% of the participants used Hindi words more fluently than English. The study concluded that the first language of the participants was getting 'polluted' due to code-mixing of Hindi words, which may lead on to hampering their cultural values – kind of linguistic imperialism.

The abovementioned studies and those cited therein have investigated lexical influence of Hindi on the linguistic repertoire of children, however there is scarce literature on phonological impact of Hindi dubbed cartoon on the language development of children. Moreover, these studies represent a synchronic impact of Hindi dubbed cartoons. Hence, by taking the Labovian apparent time hypothesis as theoretical lens the present study explores what is the influence of Hindi dubbed cartoons on the speech of Urdu/ English bilingual schoolchildren of Lahore, Pakistan? This study, in a way would endorse or counter the perspectives that the Hindi language has negative impact on the language development of children. Furthermore, the study would provide us basis to argue the grandiose assumption the Hindi language has long-term impact on the language of Pakistani children.

3. Methods

3.1 Data Collection

A pilot study was carried out before the main study to improve the data collection strategies. Eighteen participants from 5 to 10 years of age were involved to enlist words including phonological features such as پ /p^h/, خ /x/, غ /ɣ/ and ز /z/ which have a different realization in Hindi. They were also asked to name their favorite cartoons. They named *Doraemon*, *Motu Patlu*, *Chota Bheem*, *Abdul Bari* and *Vir: The Robot boy* among their favorite cartoon shows. The researchers watched these cartoons to decide how frequently the selected phonemes were pronounced in these cartoons shows. Both in *Doraemon* and *Motu Patlu*, Hindi phones such as کھ /k^h/ in place of خ /x/ [$\text{کھوبی} \rightarrow \text{خوبی}$ (*Khoobi-quality*)] and گ /g/ for غ /ɣ/ [$\text{گصہ} \rightarrow \text{غصہ}$ (*Gussa-anger*)] were used overwhelmingly. *Doraemon* was one of the favorite cartoons shows of the participants. The pilot study showed that children preferred *Doraemon* and *Motu Patlu* over *Abdul Bari*. One reason of its less popularity is that it highlights socio-religious values which guide children about morality and ethical practices. Unlike this, children like naughty and mischievous characters which take them into fantasy world.

The participants were also asked about the number of hours they watch their favorite cartoons in a day. As many as 50% of the participants between 5-6 years watched cartoons from 5 to 6 hours in a day and rest of the participants' (7-10 years) watching time was from 3 to 4 hours in a day. The pilot study revealed that older the participants, lesser the watching time was. Pearson Chi-square $002 < .05$ shows a significant difference between the cartoon watching time and the age group. This result is in-line with previous studies (c.f., Yousaf et al. 2015; Ergun, 2012; Buyukbaykal, 201; Gunter, Charlton, Coles & Panting, 2000) which demonstrate a positive correlation between the watching time and the age bracket of children.

Table 1 shows the words and Urdu and Hindi phones used to elicit the data. It is important to note that the selected phonemes have some unique manner of articulation in Urdu: (a) 'خ' /x/ is unaspirated, voiceless, velar/uvular fricative unlike 'کھ' /kh/ which is aspirated, voiceless and a velar stop, (b) 'غ' /ɣ/ is unaspirated, voiced and velar fricative, whereas 'گ' /g/ is unaspirated, voiced and a velar stop, (c) 'پھ' /p^h/ is aspirated, voiceless and a bilabial stop, in contrast to 'ف' /f/ that is unaspirated, voiceless labiodental fricative and (d) 'ز' /z/ is fricative alveolar voiced, however 'ج' /dʒ/ is unaspirated, voiced, palatal stop.

Table 1: Urdu phones with their Hindi variations and their usage in words

Urdu phoneme	Hindi sound	Words with their meanings
خ /x/ خوش	کھ /kh/ کھوش	خوش (<i>Khush</i> -happy); خربوزہ (<i>Kharbooza</i> -melon); خالی (<i>Khali/Khatam</i> -finished); خرگوش (<i>Khargosh</i> -rabbit); ناخن (<i>Nakhun</i> -nail); خون (<i>Khoon</i> -blood); خراب (<i>Kharab</i> -out of order)
غ /ɣ/ غبارہ	گ /g/ گبارہ	غبارہ (<i>Ghubara</i> -balloon); غائب (<i>Gaib</i> -vanished); غصہ (<i>Ghussa</i> -anger); غلط (<i>Galat</i> (wrong); مرغہ (<i>Murgha</i> -cock); فارغ (<i>Farigh</i> -free); غریب (<i>Ghareeb</i> -poor)
پھ /p ^h / پھونک	ف /f/ فونک	پھونک (<i>Phoonk</i> -blow); پھلانا (<i>Phulana</i> -blow); پھول (<i>Phool</i> -flower); پھسل (<i>Phisal</i> -slipped); پھٹ (<i>Phat</i> -torn); پھینک (<i>Phaink</i> -throw); پھاڑنا (<i>Pharna</i> (tear apart)
ز (/z/ زور	ج /dʒ/ جور	زبان (<i>Zaban</i> -tongue); زردی (<i>Zardi</i> -Yolk); زرافہ (<i>Zarafa</i> -Giraffe); زمین (<i>Zameen</i> -Earth); زیادہ (<i>Ziada</i> -more); زکام (<i>Zukam</i> -Flu); زور (<i>Zor</i> -strongly)

The data was collected from participants through picture naming technique (see e.g., Tavakoli, 2011). The picture naming technique motivated them to produce the data required to address the underlying research question. Mannay (2013) argues that picture naming technique is valuable being objective and free from researchers' influence. Throughout the data elicitation process, the sequence of each picture was kept identical. One of the researchers acted as an observer while recording the data that was transcribed later and assigned pre-decided codes such as; Urdu pronunciation= 1, Hindi Pronunciation= 2, and any other pronunciation=3. This pre-coded-number-marking technique was devised and adopted to keep the process simple, clear and uncomplicated. Some additional demographic information (such as age, favorite cartoon shown and watching time) was also taken from the participants to interpret the findings.

The data was drawn from 5 to 10 years old participants. This age group was further classified into six subgroups (such as five-year-old, six-year-old, seven-year-old, eight-year-old, nine-year-old and ten-year-old) that covered the span of one-year. A sample of 84 participants including 14 participants from each year were selected to study the phonemic variation demonstrated in table 1. They were attending middle class English medium schools. Although most of them were from Punjabi parents, Urdu was their school and home language. They are not encouraged to speak

Punjabi for various reasons. But most of them if not all acquire Punjabi from informal discourses. In many ways, the sample was homogenous and sufficient to address the research question.

3.1.1 Ethical Considerations

Murphy and Ding wall's ethical guidelines: respecting the participants' rights, confidentiality and autonomy, avoiding any harmful effects to them, and trying to treat them fairly and equitably were considered while collecting, handling and analyzing the data (cited in Uwe Flick, 2009, p.37). The consent of the schools' administration was taken prior to the data collection as it was very difficult to approach each parent in this process. The phonemic variation was marked by one of the researchers without giving any hint about the appropriateness of the pronunciation. The participants were not guided about the true nature of the study as it could have steered their responses in undesired directions. They were distracted by the impression that this is only an easy everyday picture naming activity. British Association for Applied Linguistics (2016) does not term this distraction as deception as it is in-line with the research objectives and is not harmful to the participants apparently. The researchers used the Urdu language for communication (Crowley, 2007) with the participants throughout the data elicitation process. This helped build up a rapport with the participants.

3.2 Data Analysis

Labovian Apparent Time Hypothesis was used as theoretical lens to analyze the data gathered from six age groups. As many as 28 words from each participant were recorded based on the above-mentioned four variants. The data was assigned pre-coded numbers for SPSS analysis. Initially, a descriptive analysis was done to find out what are the phonological alterations in the speech of the children by calculating frequencies. Afterwards, the variation patterns were classified in each age group. The Chi-square Pearson was calculated to measure the correlation between the linguistic variants and the age groups. However, in order to gauge the strength of the relationship, the symmetric measure was also calculated. This was useful to show how powerful the relationship is between the two variables. The quantitative measurement of the data led to generalization of the findings beyond the selected sample.

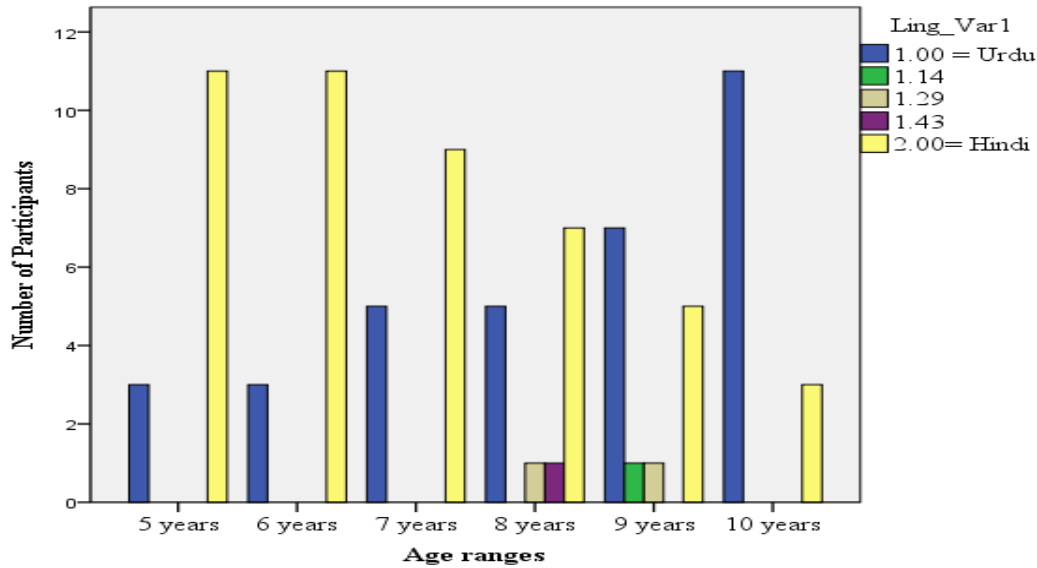
4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Use of 'خ' /x/ or 'کھ' /k^h/

The data analysis regarding the linguistic variable 'خ' /x/ reveals that of 14 participants from 5 to 6 years old, 11 of them pronounced 'خ' (/x/) as 'کھ' (/k^h/) and the remaining 3 articulated Urdu phonemes. They pronounced کھرگوش instead of خرگوش. However, relatively less variation was observed in the pronunciation of these variants by seven-year-old participants. That is; 9 out of 14 participants chose Hindi variant. The pronunciation of Hindi variant 'کھ' (/k^h/) was gradually decreasing in rest of the age groups. Although the older participants especially from 8 to 10 years old articulated some words such as *kharbooza*, *khargosh*, and *nakhun* with the Urdu phoneme خ /x/, they also pronounced *khush*, *khali/khatam*, *khoon*, and *kharab* with the Hindi phonemes 'کھ' (/k^h/).

Storkel and Morrisette (2002) assert that phonology and lexicon keep on influencing each other in the phase of language development. They have cited Girolametto, Pearce, & Weitzman (1997) whose research vouch that the process of a child's phonological acquisition is likely to be influenced by the lexical knowledge and vice versa. So, once a lexical representation is activated, it will also activate its corresponding phonological representation. Therefore, when children frequently listen to some lexical items in the cartoon shows, their corresponding sounds also get installed into their memory and they start associating those specific sounds with those lexical

items. Pearson Chi-square value (.009<.05, .02<.05, .01<.05) which is less than .05 across the age groups shows statistically significant relationship between var-1 and var-2 as demonstrated in figure 1.

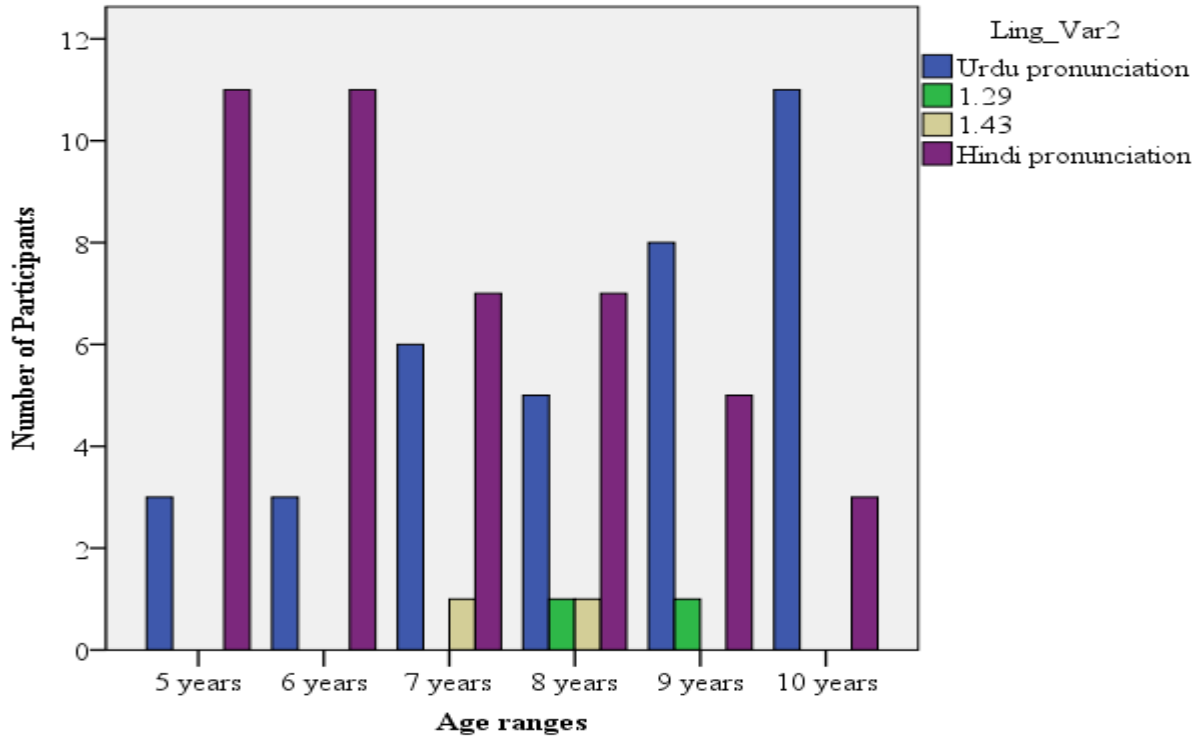


1= Urdu Pronunciation 'خ' (/x/), 2= Hindi Pronunciation 'کھ' (/k^h/)

Figure 1: Variation in Pronunciation of 'خ' (/x/) Across Age Groups

4.2 Use of 'غ' (/ɣ/) or 'گ' (/g/)

The second linguistic variable 'غ' /ɣ/ was pronounced 'گ' (/g/) by 11 out of 14 participants from 5 to 6 years. They pronounced 'غائب' as 'گائب' and 'غلط' as 'گلط'. Of 14, only 3 of them pronounced the Urdu phoneme 'غ' /ɣ/. As many as 50% of the participants articulated words such as *Ghubara*, *Murgha*, *Farigh* and *Ghareeb* with 'غ' /ɣ/ and the remaining 50% chose 'گ' /g/ phoneme in the pronunciation of these words. In two different age groups, 9 participants pronounced 'غصہ' as 'گصہ' and 'غلط' as 'گلط' and 8 participants pronounced 'غائب' as 'گائب'. Moreover, Pearson Chi-square value (.009<.05, .006<.05, .014<.05) which is less than .05 across the age groups shows statistically significant relationship between var-1 (age) and var-2 (linguistic variable 'غ' /ɣ/) as demonstrated in figure 2. Moreover, the symmetric measure that ranges between 41%-44% also reveals a strong relationship between this variant and age.



1= Urdu Pronunciation 'غ' (/ɣ/), 2= Hindi Pronunciation 'گ' (/g/)

Figure 2: Pronunciation Variation of 'غ' /ɣ/ Across Age Groups

As it is evident in figure 2, the participants who were five-year-old, six-year-old and ten-year-old exhibited the pronunciation variation in all words containing 'غ' /ɣ/. A majority of the participants of five and six years pronounced 'گ' (/g/) in place of 'غ' (/ɣ/), unlike them those who were ten-year-old chose Urdu phoneme, overwhelmingly. Interestingly, some participants who used Hindi phoneme in the pronunciation of 'غلط', 'غصہ' and 'غائب', pronounced the rest of the words using Urdu phoneme. As noted in the following excerpt drawn from *Motu Patlu*, there is a repeated use of 'گ' (/g/) phoneme, which in many ways reinforces its presence in the linguistic repertoire of young participants. This example clearly illustrates how children frequently listen to some words and their pronunciation more often as compared to others which resultantly leaves a certain impact on their minds sometimes leading to phonemic variation.

اگر یہ کامیاب رہی تو گریب سے گریب آدمی بھی اسے کھرید سکتا ہے

[If it proves successful even a poor man can buy it.]

موٹو: یہ سموسہ گائب ہو جائے

Motu: I wish this samosa gets vanished.

پتلو: ارے! سموسے کھالی نہیں مانگ سکتے تھے کیا؟

Putlu: You could have wished for the samosas alone?

پتلو: سارے سموسے گائب ہو جائیں

Putlu: I wish all samosas are vanished.

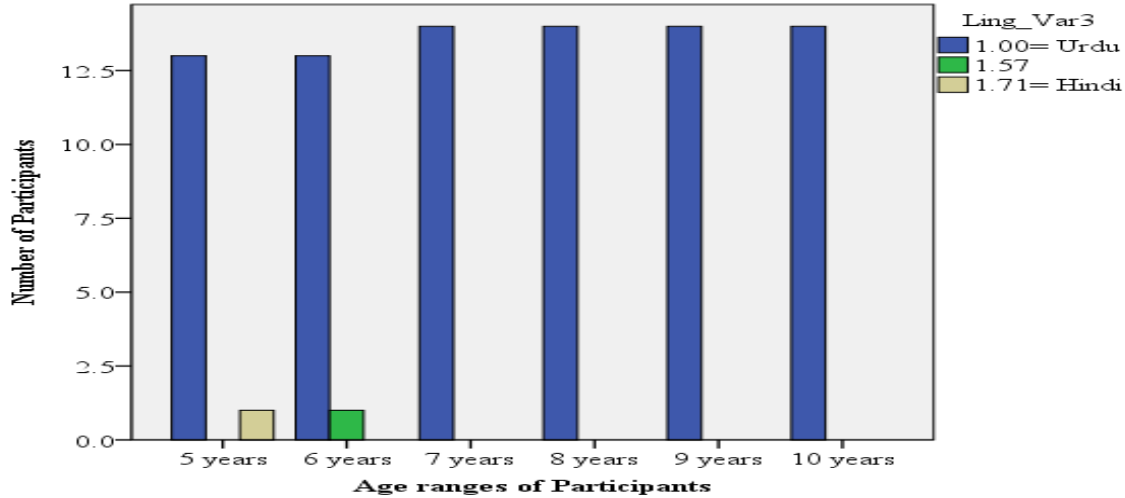
موٹو: یہ کیا سارے سموسے گائب کر دیے۔

Motu: What? Why did you get all samosas vanished?]

4.3 Use of 'ز' /z/ and 'ج' /dʒ/

The five years old pronounced five words having 'ز' (/z/) as 'ج' (/dʒ/) i.e. 'زرافہ' as 'جرافہ', 'زمین' as 'جمین', 'زور' as 'جور', 'زکام' as 'جکام' and 'زیادہ' as 'جمین', 'جمین'.

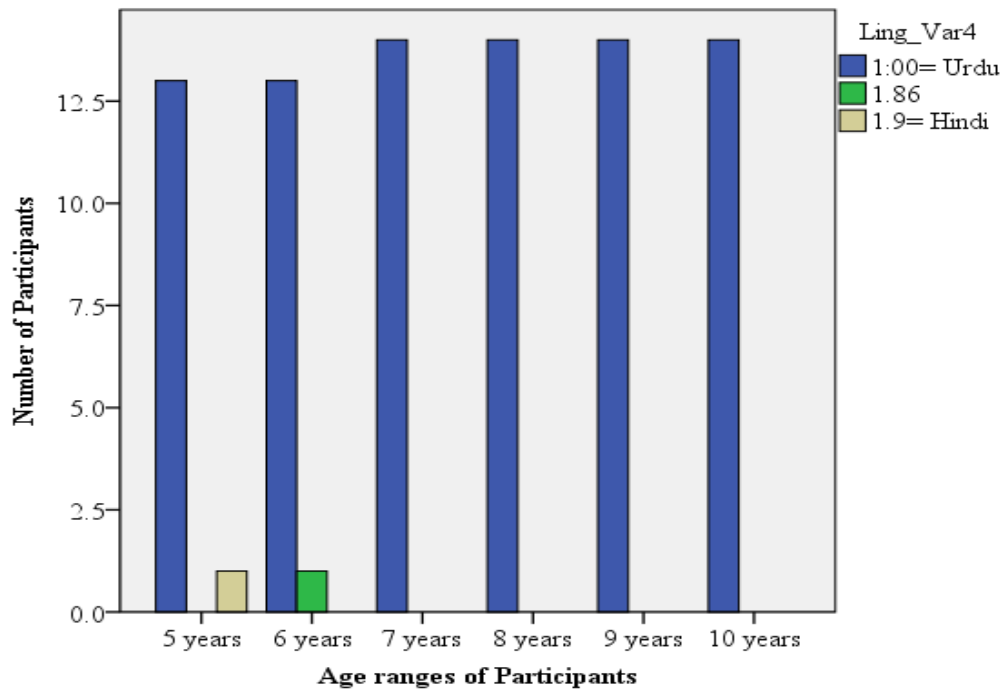
participant pronounced these four words using Hindi pronunciation except 'زمین'. The data exhibits the phonological impact of the Hindi language cartoons on the speech of these two participants. Whatever input they had from the Hindi dubbed cartoons, they tried to imitate it and the influence of cartoons is evident in their speech. All participants pronounced 'زبان' and 'زردی' with Urdu phones. Other five words containing 'ز/z/' were also pronounced properly by eighty-two participants. Pearson Chi-square value (.53>.05, .40>.05) which is more than .05 across the age groups shows statistically insignificant relationship between var-1 and var-2 as indicated in figure 3. Furthermore, the symmetric measure that ranges between 22%-24% also supports an insignificant relationship between the variant and age.



1= Urdu Pronunciation 'ز' /z/, 2= Hindi Pronunciation 'ج' /dʒ/
Figure 3: Phonological Variation of 'ز' /z/ Across Age groups

4.4 Use of 'پھ' /p^h/ and 'ف' /f/

Although 'ف' (/f/) is frequently pronounced in Bollywood movies, songs and Hindi drama shows, there is more use of Urdu phoneme 'پھ' /p^h/ in the Hindi dubbed cartoons. For example; the Urdu phoneme 'پھ' /p^h/ is used in *Doraemon*. Unlike this cartoon show, the characters in *Abdul Bari* pronounce all 'پھ' /p^h/ words with 'ف' /f/'. Hence, the participants who were not watching *Abdul Bari* could pronounce 'پھ' /p^h'. On the other hand, two of the participants who were exposed to *Abdul Bari* pronounced پہلانا as 'فلانا' and 'پھونک' as 'فونک'. Moreover, five-year-old participants pronounced 'پھ' /p^h/ in all seven words as 'ف' /f/ whereas the six-year-old participant pronounced 'پھول' correctly while other six words were pronounced with Hindi phones. Pearson Chi-square value (.53>.05, .40>.05) across the age groups is greater than .05 which shows statistically insignificant relationship between var-1 and var-2 as demonstrated in figure 4. The symmetric measure that ranges between 22%-24% also supports a weak relationship between the variant and age.



1= Urdu Pronunciation ‘پھ’ /p^h/, 2= Hindi Pronunciation ‘फ’ /f/

1.1.1.1.1.1 Figure 4: Phonological Variation of ‘پھ/p^h/’ Across Age Groups

5. Conclusion

Although Hindi dubbed cartoons influence the language of Urdu/English bilingual children, there is no evidence of its long-term impact. However, the short-term impact is only due to the initial excessive linguistic exposure to the cartoons shows in case. Not surprisingly, children tend to imitate the pronunciation of their favorite cartoons until the maturation of their linguistic competence in Urdu (as their primary language of communication), English (one of the academic languages or the most prestigious second language), Punjabi (the regional language for an informal communication) and Arabic (for worship and to recite the Holy Quran) as supported by Bloomfield (1933) that the process of addition and deletion undergoes until the age of puberty. This study counters the parental fear about the use of Hindi words and sounds by their children which was politicized and sensationalized by Pakistani media. Both Urdu and Hindi share a lot of common linguistic properties. The difference between them is only ideological and political so this a growing fear of Pakistani parents about the Hindi dubbed cartoons. Needless to say, a language is mere a structure of words. It is its use that can be invasive. Cartoon programs, however, due to their immense popularity in children, can act as an effective communication tool in delivering the national and the regional languages as well as teaching them multilingual skills for national cohesion.

6. Limitations of the Study

The data was gathered from 5 to 10 years old schoolchildren over four linguistic variables only. The researchers used the picture naming technique for data elicitation than lived experiences of children and parents.

7. Direction for Future Research

The study suggests investigating the underlying research question with more than four variants and beyond this age bracket of 5-10 years old school children. The study suggests promoting multilingualism and cultural cohesion through local cartoon productions.

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