

## **The Impact of Cartoons on Toddlers' Language Acquisition**

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**Abstract**

The present family scenario is totally different from the earlier one. In earlier time Indian societies used to have the joint family system, where language acquisition by infants was not at all an issue. However, shift from joint family to nuclear family system made heavy impact on the process of language acquisition which is a very important phenomena of human life. The present paper investigate the contribution of media in language acquisition by children belonging to nuclear families. The effects of watching animated cartoons and you tube short clips on toddlers has been mainly searched in this paper. The data for this study has been collected from the Aligarh city of Utter Pradesh, India. This study further analyses the effect of cartoons on the mental development of young children. Cartoons on one hand contribute in a positive way to the process of language acquisition but at the same time they also have some negative impacts. Children who are excessively exposed to the cartoons sometimes become lethargic, violent etc. depending upon the nature of cartoons they are exposed to.

**Keywords:** Language acquisition, vocabulary enhancement, acquisition through animated cartoons

### **1. Introduction**

Children are believed to be the future of the nation. The period of childhood is very critical because in this period behaviors can be easily moulded. Toddlers learn and develop skills by interacting, observing, and experiencing the creations around them. The environment associated with the child determines the child's conduct. Earlier they are

influenced by the family, later on by peers and schools. “The family is the first school for the overall psychological development of the children as it lays the foundation for the development of a healthy personality in adulthood”. According to A.G. Sudha, the school plays a very important and formative role in the development of cognitive linguistic, social, emotional and moral functions and competencies in a child. She further says that the mental health of children is deeply rooted in the socio-cultural milieu and environment in which they live. Television is one of the most important media influencing the children lives. Through television, children are exposed to a variety of programs pertaining to nature, entertainment, cartoons, films, serials, advertisements, sports etc. Some particular cartoons have gained prominence among children because of their high speed flashes of light, rapid color changes and movements arrest the child’s concentration. (Sudha, 2011).

By and large preschool period is the point when the child is most actively taken in learning everything and language acquisition in detail. They just focus on learning new things, focusing on what others are saying, they sustain a quality of imitating and repeating what they find out. We live in a universe where the media have gone into all walks of our spirits. Bringing up kids is a orbit which is mainly attended by the media as the present day, mothers are extremely engaged and could not devote much time to their children. Thus toddlers spend most of the time in front of animated films. These animations have both positive and negative effects on kid’s developments. They cause a negative impact on behavior as Cartoon programs also have violent characters. “It is noted that cartoon content is full of violence than serial plays and comedies” (Potter and Warren, 1998). As a consequence, “children are more exposed to violence showed on the cartoon program than any other TV program aired during prime time i.e.8 p.m. to 11 p.m.” (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan and Signorelli, 1994).

However, there are positive effects of animations on the language developments of toddlers, as they are able to enrich their vocabulary in a very short time. Earlier cartoons were real short as they were exhibited in the movie theatres before the feature films. When cartoonists could put their shows on TV, they got longer, creating the half hour block shows on Nickelodeon, Cartoon Network, Disney Channel etc. Most favorite cartoon network in India is Dore moan. Media also give ranking to the animated cartoons according to the percentage of viewing audience.

Cartoon Network is the most favorite cartoon channel in the globe. Its transmission was started in 1992, and since then it has been growing in terms of public liking and hit record breaking popularity. Since August 2002, it has been observed in more than 80 million households in the United States of America and in 145 countries throughout the globe. It is one of the top ad supported channels for cable tv network. Cartoon network is the 24/7 channel and broadcasting only “cartoons”. So far its 68 percentage audience belongs to children of age group 2 to 17 years, whereas rest 32 percentages belongs to the age group of

above 18 years and adults. The youngsters from the age group from 6 to 11 are the core audience of the cartoon network. (Stabile and Harrison, 2003).

### **Most watched cartoons in India**

1. Doraemon
2. Pokemon
3. Shin-Chan
4. Dragon Ball Z
5. Beyblade
6. Ben 10
7. Ninja Hattori
8. Tom and Jerry
9. Supa Strikas
10. Motu Patlu
11. Chhota Bheem
12. Bakugan
13. Naruto
14. Galactik Football
15. Slugterra
16. Looney Tunes
17. Oggy and the Cockroaches
18. Kochikame
19. Winx Club
20. Dragon Booster

### **2. Research Questions**

1. Do toddlers get enough exposed to social interactions?
2. In an environment where toddlers are less attended by their parents and hence less social interactions, do animated cartoons come as a rescue to increase the vocabulary of preschool kids.

### **3. Literature Review**

Mohammad Reza Ghorbani (2011) in his study analyzed how a kid can produce his/her oral communication by watching English cartoons with captions. This longitudinal case study was based on an in-depth investigation of a single learner to explore the advantage of subtitling in EFL learning. The participant was an Iranian 12-year old boy Morteza. He was well at reading, but weak at the other three skills as well as pronunciation by at the age of 10 when he left school that and was divulged to more than 20 cartoons with subtitles from June 2008- June, 2010 as he was getting up and attending Iranian school. The result of this two years long study is Morteza now speaks English fluently and reads the original cartoons without any subtitle quite well later on catching them two or three times. He

is real adept at spelling and composition as well. His pronunciation became native-like at the age of 12.

Alexis R. Lauricella et al (2011) worked on 48 toddlers below two years. The toddlers were provided randomly with three types of videos. Those three categories were, socially meaningful videos, the second is less socially meaningful videos and the last one is no exposé of social significance. The outcome of this study was toddlers learn better social meaning from the first picture. So finding of this study was toddlers learn cognitive and logical reasoning skills from video under the age of two.

Kaj Bjorkqvist and Kirsti Lagerspetz have worked on the types of cartoons and their use and side effects in their paper “Children’s Experience of Three types of Cartoon at Two Age Levels”. They carried out this work in order to investigate how the children of both sexes in two age groups, some of whom had abundant aggressive fantasies experienced three types of cartoons. To gain information about possible sex differences, both boys and girls were included, and they found that the boys behaved more aggressively than girls.

Huesman, et al, (1984) found that children who thought that TV films resembled real life to a great extent were more aggressive than children who thought they did so to a lesser extent. Boys thought TV films resembled real life more than girls did and the same was found true of young children in comparison with older ones. (Kaj Bjorkqvist and Kirsti Lagerspetz, 1985).

Ching-Ting et al (2014) in their paper found, how technology is beneficial for kids and grownups. According to them technology gives positive results to children and adults. Through technology children perform better and move towards multi-culturalism. In this paper, researchers also discussed about how technology supports children’s social development. Tablets, PCs, digital cameras or recorders and computer programs are all tools for youngsters to indulge in communication.

According to Siripen Lamurai School, Cartoon animation has a great impact on children’s mind because all children love to see cartoons. Through the world media, the Reward Center in technologies has been created. However, this cartoon system has affected the new generation with more aggressive characters and negative mind in sociality and they are being obstructed for learning good behavior. (Siripen, 2009).

Dr. Zahid Yousaf, et al. (2015) A case study of Gujrat city of Pakistan. In this paper, researchers found that kids spend most of the time on watching cartoons. The busy schedule of parents allows them to expend less time with their kids so they choose to watch cartoons instead of betting games. In that case, children spent most of the time on watching TV. Taking in more television has a negative impact on behaviors but at the same time this also aids in bettering their oral communication.

Joanne Cantor (2002) in her paper titled “The psychological effects of media violence on minors and adolescents” mention two ways in which media violence affects young children and adolescents. The foremost is through imitation, which researcher calls “the most direct and obvious manner”. Children imitate the televised actions that result in hostility and wild behaviors. Another psychological effect that researcher discussed is that of desensitization. Referable to the repeated exposure to televised violence and injury, there is a reduced arousal and emotional disturbance while viewing violence in real life. As a consequence of which there is a reduction in sympathy for the victims thus take longer time to react. Then researcher also mentioned Interpersonal hostility. The second means that media violence psychologically affects its viewers are, what Cantor calls in her subject field as “the induced effects”. In this research paper, it is maintained that increase frequency of sleep disturbances is a psychologically induced anxiety due to media violence.

Shazia Akbar Ghilzai in her paper “Impact of Cartoon Programs on Children’s Language and Behavior” writes about the use of Cartoons. She claims that mostly children watch cartoons for fun (41%) 23% for action and 17% for learning. By watching cartoons, the children become aggressive in character as these cartoons have many things that promote violence and aggression. However, Cartoons have a great impact on children as their animation help children to learn at a vey fast pace.

#### **4. Objectives of the Study**

1. To examine the elements those influence the toddlers to watch the cartoon program.
2. To highlight the importance of cartoons seen by toddlers for language acquisition.

#### **5. Research Sample and Methodology:**

The area chosen for study was Aligarh city. Multistage sampling technique was used to take information. The researcher selected 1 toddler who was using mobile, tablets and television. They experience how to utilize YouTube.

This present study is an empirical investigation. In the present study both primary and secondary data were collected extensively in order to accomplish the aims of this work. To take in primary data, field study technique was taken for the present study, the researcher took the observation method and went herself in the study and collected the data in natural settings for a long time. It was observed that most of the words were acquired from animated films and even difficult words were acquired very easily and quickly before starting school.

The secondary information pertaining to the survey was obtained from the database maintained by the library and Net resources.

#### **6. Data**

## First Observation

There was a girl named Afsheen Faisal, only 20 months old who belongs to educated family her mother being a research scholar does not have much time to spend with her, but Afsheen has a rich vocabulary of her mother tongue (Urdu –Hindi language). After thorough thinking the researcher worked out the reason that the youngster is spending most of the time watching animated movies and short clips from the net. She is very smart to find YouTube in her mother's mobile. In spite of being so young, she needs no assistance in searching animated movies on YouTube. She also imitates the words and small sentences used in animations. She is really addicted to animated movies; her addiction is to the extent that she declines to sleep before watching videos or animations. Watching videos have both pros and cons. One positive result of watching animations is in the process of speech acquisition in very immature kids. Thus, Afsheen is acquiring language much faster and in a natural mode. Some of the incepts from her language are as follows:

### 1. Skip Advertisement.

### 2. Singing Songs and Poems

- A). aa dhoob jau teri ankhon ke ocean me, slow motion me from movie “Bharat”
- B) bala bala shaitaan ka saala from movie “Housefull 4”
- C) johny johny yesh papa
- D) eating sugar no papa
- E) macli jal ki rani hai
- F) fruit salad =tut taled
- G) ye ladki pagal hai pagal hai
- H) twinkle –twinkle little star

### 3. Animal sounds

- A) Cat –miau-miau
- B) Dog-bhau- bhau

## Second Observation

### 4. Some readymade english sentences:

- a) How do you do?
- b) Where are you?
- c) My name is Afsheen Faisal.

### 5. a)when mother speaks ,she pauses the video.

b) At the time of azan , she pauses the video.

c) When mother goes outside without duppatta ,she told mumma duppatt

### 6. Learn phonemic alphabet from youtube.

7. Acquire the fruits name, which elder people don't know eg. kiwi,cranberry,blueberry and so on the list is too long.

### 7. Data Analysis

Twenty months is the time point when children generally have limited vocabulary and many a times undergo the stage of telegraphic message, but being a regular visitor of animations and videos her language development was ahead of her age. Some of the chief lineaments of her speech are:

- 1.She Learns to sing some bollywood songs.
2. She was easily managing Phonics aa ba ba.
3. In spite of being born to pure Urdu-Hindi speaking parents, she managed the beginning of the development of bilingual mental lexicon. She was also producing some common sentences of English.
4. She was easily producing and associating sounds with animals.
5. She learned Nursery rhymes and used to recite them all alone.

### 8. Suggestions

1. Children's developments is in accordance to the input they get from the surrounding. Therefore, it is mandatory that they should be provided with a better atmosphere so that they can change their thoughts and feel more positive.
2. The work brings out that children of working couples should watch animated films on a regular basis as they behave as an audio-visual aid for the development of mother tongue and the extraneous terminology.
3. It makes child's anxiety free, because these audio-visual aids they finish their kinder garden syllabus before joining the school.
4. Pictures and animated moving pictures should be allowed on the big screen so that parents are also affected and keep guiding children to avoid adopting negative behavior.
5. In Indian education system, audio-visual classrooms should be encouraged for little kids.
6. The companies making animations should be requested to make positive cartoons/animations to inculcate good thinking in children.
7. Above all, children should be encouraged to play with peer group. This saves them away from hazardous rays coming out of smart phones, laptops etc. It is also important for their physical and mental wellbeing.



## 9. Conclusion

The paper concludes that children should be provided with rich language inputs for fast acquisition of language. It will also help them to develop mentally. Everything has its pros and cons so is modern gadgets used as audiovisual aids for language learning. It cannot be denied that English language learning has become an important component of modern education system. So children should be earmarked to spend some hours to watch selected English animated videos. Since English language is a very important language, therefore, animations help children memorize it in a natural easy manner.

## 10. Limitation

1. Animations make children lethargic.
2. Generally Hindi cartoons are violent by nature, so children imbibe aggression in an unconscious manner. Heavy weapons become their favorite play item.
3. Outdoor games are really important for a child's physical fitness but children get addicted to cartoon programs and refuse to get away.

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