

## Televised Cartoons and Incidental Learning of Foreign Language among Children: A Case Study of Doraemon Cartoon in Pakistan

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### Abstract

Learning once deemed as a face-to-face/classroom activity has been revolutionized by the advent of new information and communication technologies (ICTs). These technologies are used for the new modes of education such as distance education, virtual learning, e-learning and online learning. This study examines that whether children's exposure to television cartoon results into incidental learning regarding different cultural elements, especially language. For this purpose, the researchers studied relationships between exposure to Hindi-dubbed Japanese cartoon, Doraemon and learning of various words of Hindi language among a sample of children (both girls and boys), aged 06-11 years living in Islamabad. The researchers used both content analysis and survey techniques. Content analysis was employed for examination of usage of Hindi words in the cartoon program during one-week time period (February 01, 2014 to February 07, 2014) while survey method was used to collect data from a sample of 200 children. The results showed that greater the frequency of the use of Hindi words in the selected episodes of Doraemon, the greater was learning of these words among the respondents. The findings also indicated that age and gender bear significant relationships with incidental learning (learning of words of Hindi words) whereas the extent of time spent in watching the cartoon did not show a significant relationship with learning of Hindi words.

**Keywords:** Televised cartoon, doraemon, incidental learning, online learning, foreign language.

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## Introduction

The new modes of education such as on-line learning and e-learning are some of the outcomes of the new information and communication technologies (ICTs). Learning which was once deemed as an output of face-to-face/ classroom activity between the learner(s) and the teacher has been revolutionized by the advent of new information and communication technologies (ICTs). Learning is a lifelong process and it is no more limited to face-to-face environment. It encompasses not only the formal learning, which takes place in schools, training institutes, and universities but it also includes all those encounters that are not primarily aimed at imparting education/skills to the learners (The World Bank, 2003). Acquisition of knowledge and skills may also be taken place unintentionally, especially while audience are consuming mass media for some intended purpose other than learning such as entertainment, fun, passing time, company, relaxation etc. but after exposure to the media content they along with entertainment/ fun/ amusement end up with some learning, which was indeed not intentional initially. This type of learning is called incidental learning (Schramm, Lyle, & Parker, as cited in Lowery & DeFleur, 1995).

As a matter of fact, when we are exposed to some mediated content such as film, drama or some other entertainment programme we learn about people, culture, places, events, etc while we are entertained. Same is the case of children's media stuff, especially cartoon programmes. Television teaches children the views and outlooks of life which they would not have otherwise become aware of. Media in general and television in particular plays a key role in our lives and hence it should neither be considered as a tool in the home or school to keep the children engaged, nor it should be deemed as a monster sitting in the corner of the living room, kitchen or bedroom waiting to put an evil influence over young members of the household. Rather television is a means of entertainment and learning (Gunter & McAleer, 1997).

Children not only observe acts being portrayed in the television cartoon programmes rather they also imitate and even learn whatever they notice in the cartoons (Maqsood & Amer, 2014). Besides foreign culture-related things these cartoon programmes are an important source of learning of foreign language. Lemish and Rice (1986) found that even babies and toddlers absorbed vocabulary and could identify letters and numbers who were exposed to Sesame Street. Similarly, Linebarger (2005) in a study on 'infants' and toddlers' television viewing and language outcomes' found that some children's programmes could lead to

larger vocabularies and higher word building scores among younger children (under three years). Saleem's (2004) study substantiates the results of Linebarger in the context of Urdu language. He found that Urdu language was receiving undesirable additions from the Hindi-dubbed Indian cartoons. This incidental learning of foreign languages is a sort of cultural invasion.

Besides children, cartoons programmes are also a good source of incidental learning for adults, especially in the case of learning some second language. A study titled 'Incidental Learning through Animated Cartoons' was undertaken in the University of Arizona, America in 2014, which examined acquisition of Italian language through a cartoon 'Peppa Pig'. The study found that Peppa Pig proved as a good source for the respondents in areas like vocabulary, pragmatics and idiomatic expressions from contextual clues (Bahrani, 2014). Similarly, Shahrokni (2009) in his study, conducted in Iran, investigated the effects of English subtitles on 90 adult elementary Iranian EFL learners of Iran University of Science and Technology. His results indicated that a combination of text and still images resulted in significantly better incidental vocabulary learning. Likewise, Karakas and Saricoban (2012) explored incidental learning in Turkey among adults while they viewing cartoons. Karakas and Saricoban (2012) in their study 'The Impact of Watching Subtitled Animated Cartoons on Incidental Vocabulary Learning of ELT Students' in Ankara found that there was an improvement in the pre and post- test scores in the vocabulary development of the respondents.

### **Patterns of Children's Television Viewing**

Various studies have been conducted in different countries which examined patterns of television viewing among children. Besides television there are other digital devices which are being used by children mainly for entertainment purposes. They spend more time with media than they spend in school or with family. In addition to television they use other media like video games, computer, cell phones, music/audio, print, etc too. Due to their excessive usage of these digital devices children of the present age are also called Generation M (Silva, 2015).

Schramm et al., (1961) found that even in the early years of television 96 per cent American children by the age of nine years were regular viewers of television. They also found that the viewing percentage increased with increase in age of the children. Their results revealed that children of age group nine years spent daily two and a half

hours in viewing television. With the growth of television, multiplicity in content and genres, and satiating the needs of children viewers, the average time American children which they spend in front of their television screens also increased (Schramm et al., 1961). Even children under five years spend a bigger chunk of their time daily in watching television content. Findings of a survey conducted by Neilson Company in 2009 showed that children in the age group 02-05 year spend on average three hours and 55 minutes daily in watching television (Nielsen, 2009). Canadian and Australian children of age group 2-11 years spend more than two hours per day in television watching, while British children of the same age group watch television for 2 and a half hours daily (Smith, 2011).

Television viewing time of Pakistani children is not very much different from that of other countries. According to Gallup-Pakistan (2013) Pakistani children spend two hours and forty eight minutes in viewing television per day.

### **Children and Television Cartoon**

The liberalization of airwaves in Pakistan during the Musharaf regime resulted into the establishment of a great number of private television channels in Pakistan. These channels besides other content also telecast cartoon programmes. These cartoon programmes include action / *Dramatic Cartoons*: Ben 10, Avatar and Kung Fu Panda; funny cartons: Tom and Jerry, Loony Tunes; *Educational Cartoons*: Dora the Explorer, Go Diego Go; *Social Cartoons*: Barney and Friends, and Sesame Street, etc. These cartoon programmes are either presented in English or in Hindi (Hindi-dubbed). Children generally like to watch cartoon programmes. Pakistani children are no exception. According to Hassan and Daniyal (2013) 80 per cent of the young Pakistani television viewers termed cartoon as their favorite television program.

Although since 2002 there is an influx of private television channels in Pakistan but very little indigenous content is being produced for needs' gratification of the young viewers. Hence, this vacuum is filled by foreign television channels, especially by the Indian Hindi-dubbed cartoons. Different television channels in Pakistan telecast Hindi-dubbed cartoons. These cartoon channels are the main focus of children's attention (Mahsud, Rawan & Yaser, 2009). It has been observed that among the Hindi-dubbed cartoons Doraemon is considered as a very popular cartoon amongst its Pakistani children viewers.

Doraemon, a Japanese animated cartoon, produced by Fujiko Fujio Productions in collaboration with the Walt Disney Company is tremendously popular among the children internationally (Japan Info, 2015). For viewers of the Indian Subcontinent, it is dubbed in Hindi and aired on Disney Channel in Pakistan. It is watched by many children all over Pakistan every day via cable television networks.

The Hindi-dubbed Doraemon cartoon is also popular among Bangladeshi children. According to Islam and Biswas (2012) due to high exposure to Doraemon and its popularity amongst Bangladeshi children, the Hindi language has already been mixed in Bangla language, especially of the youth. They viewed it as cultural invasion and suggested ban on Doraemon in their country (Bangladesh). Unlike Urdu language Bangla does not exhibit resemblance with Hindi language. Although Hindi has a different lexigraphy from that of the Urdu but in speaking it shows resemblance to Urdu (Ali, 2012). However, it does not mean that both Hindi and Urdu are the same languages. Hence, these Hindi-dubbed cartoon programme (Doraemon) is supposed to be a source of learning Hindi words (incidental learning) by the Pakistani children who are exposed to this programme. Simpson (2007) views that Hindi language is not only influencing Bangladesh's language but also has a similar dominance over the languages of Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bhutan (as cited in Islam & Biswas, 2012).

As mentioned above both Hindi and Urdu show resemblance with one another but these languages are not the same. The researchers therefore, designed the present study with the objective to investigate that whether and to what extent a television programme presented in a language which exhibits similarity to the language of the viewers but is not the same can cause incidental learning among the viewers. The focus of incidental learning was on the language of presentation instead of the content/ theme/message of the programme.

The study was aimed to know that how much time Pakistani children spend in watching Doraemon cartoon, and whether the frequency of Hindi Words in the cartoon programme and the time spent in watching the cartoon have any association with learning of Hindi words by the viewers. The researchers also examined that whether age and gender of the children (respondents) had any relationship with learning of Hindi vocabulary.

### **Research Methodology**

As the study was aimed at investigating incidental learning amongst children viewers of Doraemon cartoon in Pakistan hence, the researchers

employed both content analysis and survey techniques. Content analysis is a frequently used method to study media texts (Wimmer& Dominick, 1991).The researchers randomly selected one week (January 1, 2014 to January 07, 2014) for analyzing the frequency of use of Hindi words in each episode (evening time) of the Hindi-dubbed cartoon (Doraemon).

Population of the survey was all the school going children of Islamabad, aged 06 to 11 years, who used to watch Doraemon cartoon daily. The researchers used multi-stage sampling technique. In the first stage F-sector (a residential sector) was randomly selected among the residential sectors of the federal capital, Islamabad. In the second stage one sub-sector (F-6) out of the 12 sub-sectors of the F-Sector (from F5 to F17) was chosen, whereas in the third stage F-6/2 was randomly selected amongst the sub-sectors of F-6 sector. In the fourth, fifth and sixth stages a school, classes (girls and boys sections) and respondents were selected respectively. Data from the respondents were collected through interview schedule. The researchers selected a sample of 200 (100 girls and 100 boys) qualified volunteers.

### Measures

Content analysis of seven episodes (from Jan. 01-07, 2014) of Doraemon cartoon on Disney Channel (evening) was carried out. Each episode, including advertisements, was of 30 minutes duration. The analysis in the present study comprised four groups of variables: demographics (age and gender), access to television, cartoon viewing habits of the children, and time spent in viewing Doraemon (low and high). The criterion variable was incidental learning of Hindi words by the respondents.

### Results (Content Analysis)

#### Use of Hindi Words

Table 1 given below shows frequency distribution of Hindi words used in the selected seven episodes. As the table indicates Chinta is the most frequently used word in the selected seven episodes of the cartoon programme where as Guffa and Niraash are the words which occurred the least in the same episodes.

Table 1

*Frequency of Hindi words used in the selected episodes of Doraemon cartoon*

S#	Hindi word	frequency
1	Chinta	31
2.	Sapna	27
3.	Shaant	23
4.	Sundar	23
5.	Chamatkaar	21
6.	Taapu	10
7.	Wishwaas	7
8.	Swagat	05
9.	Samay	05
10.	Desh	04
11.	Raksha	03
12.	Jeevan	03
13.	Swadisht	03
14.	Surakshit	03
15.	Neeyam	03
16.	Shareer	02
17.	Shabd	02
18.	Bhukamp	02
19.	Bhavishya	02
20.	Saavdhaan	02
21.	Guffa	01
22.	Niraash	01

The researchers did not consider Hindi words given in the above table whose frequency was two or one in the seven episodes for further analyses.

### Results (survey)

Analysis of the collected data shows that 87.5 per cent of the respondents watched Doraemon cartoon for one hour and fifty minutes a day, whereas only 12.5 per cent of the children were spending less than an hour per day in watching Doraemon. The respondents were selected between the age group of six to eleven years. They were divided into five categories. Out of the 200 respondents 19.5 % were in the six to seven years group, 23 % of age group 7.1 years to eight years, 24.5 % of age group 8.1-9 years, while 15.5 % and 17.5 % respondents were between the age groups of 9.1 to 10 years and 10.1 to 11 years respectively. Ninety-four percent (188 out of 200) respondents were using television for watching Doraemon cartoon while six per cent (12 out of 200) were using internet for the same purpose

### Frequency of Hindi Words and Incidental Learning

To examine that whether frequency of the Hindi words has any relationship with the learning of Hindi words being used in the cartoon programme, the researchers compared results of the frequency of Hindi words with the respondents' answers to a question (survey question) in which they were given correct as well as incorrect options of the meaning of each Hindi word. Table 2 given below shows that occurrence (frequency) of the Hindi words in the selected seven episodes which were analyzed by the researchers bears relationship with learning of the Hindi words. As the table indicates respondents gave more correct meanings of Hindi words 'Chinta', 'Sapna', 'Shaant', 'Sundar', and 'Chamatkaar' whose frequencies are greater as compared to the rest of the Hindi words.

The children viewers of Doraemon were in fact, watching the cartoon for joy and fun however, as the above given table (Table 2) shows they learnt Hindi words too.

Table 2

*Learning of Hindi words used in the selected episodes by their frequency*

Hindi words	Frequency	Correct meaning	Don't Know	Wrong meaning
Chinta	31	121	68	11
Sapna	27	121	53	26
Shaant	23	116	75	09
Sundar	23	117	69	14
Chamatkaar	21	106	73	21
Taapu	10	55	123	22
Wishwaas	7	105	74	21
Swagat	5	84	95	21
Samay	5	91	87	22
Desh	4	109	72	19
Jeevan	3	64	115	21
Surakshit	3	60	117	23
Raksha	5	7	112	21

### Time Spent in Watching Television Programme and Incidental Learning

The researchers also wanted to find out that whether the time spent by Pakistani children in watching Doraemon cartoon has any association their leaning of the Hindi words which were used in the cartoon programme. To address this question the investigators examined the relationship between the two variables (learning of Hindi words and time spent in watching the cartoon) by using crosstabulation technique with chi square as the test of significance. Table 4 shows that there was no



significant relationship between learning of Hindi words and the time spent in watching the cartoon programme.

Table 3

*Learning of Hindi words by the time spent in watching Hindi-dubbed Doraemon cartoon*

Hindi words	Meaning	Time spent in watching Doraemon		$\chi^2$	p
		Less than 01 hr	More than 01 hr		
Chinta	Correct	13(11%)	108(89%)	3.56	.16
	Don't know	12(18%)	56(82%)		
	Incorrect	0(0%)	11(100%)		
Shaant	Correct	14(12%)	102(88%)	1.62	.44
	Don't know	11(15%)	64(85%)		
	Incorrect	0(0%)	9(100%)		
Sawadisht	Correct	14(13.5%)	90(86.5%)	.97	.61
	Don't know	9(13%)	58(87%)		
	Incorrect	2(7%)	27(93%)		
Wishwas	Correct	10(9.5%)	95.5%	1.84	.39
	Don't know	12(16%)	62(84%)		
	Incorrect	3(14.3%)	18(86%)		
Sundar	Correct	14(12%)	103(88%)	2.77	.24
	Don't know	11(16%)	58(84%)		
	Incorrect	0(0%)	14(100%)		
Chamatkaar	Correct	11(10%)	95(90%)	3.46	.17
	Don't know	13(18%)	60(82%)		
	Incorrect	1(5%)	20(95%)		
Swagat	Correct	10(12%)	74(88%)	.09	.95
	Don't know	12(13%)	83(87%)		
	Incorrect	3(14%)	18(86%)		
Sapna	Correct	17(14%)	104(86%)	2.07	.35
	Don't know	7(13%)	46(87%)		
	Incorrect	1(4%)	25(96%)		
Samay	Correct	10(11%)	81(89%)	.34	.84
	Don't know	12(14%)	75(86%)		
	incorrect	3(17%)	19(86%)		
Surakshit	Correct	4(7%)	56(93%)	3.66	.16
	Don't know	19(16%)	98(84%)		
	Incorrect	2(9%)	21(91%)		
Raksha	Correct	3(5%)	54(95%)	4.59	.10
	Don't know	20(16%)	102(84%)		
	Incorrect	2(9.5%)	19(90.5%)		
Jeevan	Correct	4(6%)	60(94%)	4.15	.12
	Don't know	19(16.5%)	96(83.5%)		
	Incorrect	2(9.5%)	19(90.5%)		
Taapu	Correct	2(4%)	53(96%)	6.53	.03
	Don't know	21(17%)	102(83%)		
	Incorrect	2(9%)	20(91%)		

### Gender and Incidental Learning

The researchers further analyzed the data for gender-wise difference in learning the Hindi words after exposure to the Doraemon. Table 4 given below indicates that learning of Hindi words from exposure to Doraemon was not the same among the boys and girls viewers.

Table 4

#### *Learning of Hindi words by gender of the respondents*

Hindi words	Meaning	Gender		$\chi^2$	p
		Boy	Girls		
Chinta	Correct	50	71	9.228	.01
	Don't know	43	25		
	Incorrect	7	4		
Shaant	Correct	64	52	7.01	.01
	Don't know	35	40		
	Incorrect	1	8		
Sawadisht	Correct	77	27	51.79	.0005
	Don't know	19	48		
	Incorrect	4	25		
Wishwas	Correct	57	48	3.1	.20
	Don't know	36	38		
	Incorrect	7	14		
Sundar	Correct	50	67	6.65	.03
	Don't know	43	20		
	Incorrect	7	7		
Chamatkaar	Correct	54	52	2.7	.25
	Don't know	39	34		
	Incorrect	4	14		
Swagat	Correct	57	27	18.61	.0005
	Don't know	36	59		
	Incorrect	7	14		
Sapna	Correct	77	44	25.70	.0005
	Don't know	19	34		
	Incorrect	4	22		
Samay	Correct	57	34	11.30	.004
	Don't know	36	51		
	Incorrect	7	15		
Surakshit	Correct	23	37	10.62	.005
	Don't know	59	58		
	Incorrect	18	5		
Raksha	Correct	24	33	12.43	.002
	Don't know	58	64		
	Incorrect	18	3		
Desh	Correct	57	52	1.5	.46
	Don't know	36	36		
	Incorrect	7	12		
Jeevan	Correct	23	41	15.85	.0005
	Don't know	59	56		
	Incorrect	18	3		
Taapu	Correct	23	32	10.58	.005
	Don't know	59	64		
	Incorrect	18	4		

### Age and Incidental Learning

The present study was also aimed to know that whether age of the children has any relationship with incidental learning. To address this question the researchers analyzed the collected. The values of chi square and corresponding significance level given in Table5 signify that age of the television viewer (in the present case children viewers of Hindi-dubbed Doraemon cartoon) has significant relationship with his/her incidental learning. The table shows that children of greater age categories had learnt the Hindi words more than the children of lower age categories.

Table 5

*Respondents' learning of Hindi Words by their age*

Hindi words	Meaning	Age in Years					$\chi^2$	P
		6-7	7.1-8	8.1-9	9.1-10	10.1-11		
Chinta	Correct	17	28	21	22	33	43.04	.0005
	Don't Know	21	16	26	4	1		
	Incorrect	1	2	2	5	1		
Shaant	Correct	11	25	29	24	27	34.91	.0005
	Don't Know	27	21	16	6	5		
	Incorrect	1	0	4	1	3		
Sawadisht	Correct	11	25	28	20	20	18.07	.02
	Don't Know	22	16	12	5	12		
	Incorrect	6	5	9	6	3		
Wishwas	Correct	16	19	25	28	17	44.70	.0005
	Don't Know	20	24	21	2	7		
	Incorrect	3	3	3	1	11		
Sundar	Correct	15	29	21	19	33	39.75	.0005
	Don't Know	23	14	24	7	1		
	Incorrect	1	3	4	5	1		
Chamatkaar	Correct	13	24	18	17	34	63.14	.0005
	Don't Know	24	19	29	4	1		
	Incorrect	2	3	6	10	0		
Swagat	Correct	9	15	22	22	16	41.91	.0005
	Don't Know	27	28	24	8	8		
	Incorrect							

Sapna	Know							
	Incorrect	3	3	3	4	8		
	Correct	15	29	31	20	26	28.32	.0005
Samay	Don't	20	14	11	2	6		
	Know							
	Incorrect	4	3	7	9	3		
Surakshit	Correct	14	17	23	20	17	29.30	.005
	Don't	22	26	22	10	7		
	Know							
Raksha	Incorrect	3	3	4	5	7		
	Correct	6	8	11	14	21	33.89	.0005
	Don't	29	34	27	15	12		
Desh	Know							
	Incorrect	4	4	11	2	2		
	Correct	6	7	11	14	19	27.40	.001
Jeevan	Don't	29	34	29	15	15		
	Know							
	Incorrect	4	5	9	2	1		
Taapu	Correct	16	19	25	28	21	41.10	.0005
	Don't	20	24	21	2	5		
	Know							
Jeevan	Incorrect	3	3	3	1	9		
	Correct	6	8	13	14	23	34.51	.005
	Don't	29	33	27	15	11		
Taapu	Know							
	Incorrect	4	5	9	2	1		
	Correct	3	7	10	14	21	38.79	.0001
Jeevan	Don't	31	35	30	15	12		
	Know							
Taapu	Incorrect	5	4	9	2	2		

## Conclusion

Keeping in view results of the present study the researchers conclude in general that exposure to entertainment content, especially cartoon programmes of television also leads to incidental learning. These results support Schramm et al., (1995) results. It is also concluded from the study that frequency of the words of a foreign language in television programmes, and age and gender of the viewers bear relationships with incidental learning of the viewers however, the time spent in viewing the content (less than one hour or more than one hour) has no significant relationship with incidental learning. On the basis of these results we can conclude that television can play a very pro-social role in the lives of children. Television cartoon and even other animated television

programmes can be used for teaching purposes to kids at homes as well as in schools. Nonetheless, to avoid physical effects such as eyestrain, parents and teachers will be required to observe proper conditions of minimum distance and darkness in watching television by the children.

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