Investigating the Impact of Multilingualism on Language Development: A Case Study Approach

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ABSTRACT

This research study follows the effects of a multilingual setting on the language development of a toddler. The participant of this research grew up in a household where three languages were spoken. The case study investigates the participant's language development via observational analysis, unstructured child interviews, and parental questionnaire. The findings conclude that the respected individual's language development progressed at a slower pace compared to normal language development patterns. Her exposure to different linguistic structures and limited peer-peer interactions affected her language development, resulting in code mixing and cross linguistic influence. Moreover, there is also a comparison of the participant's language milestones to the normal pattern of speech development in this study. Lastly, the study concludes that multilingualism can have both positive and negative influence on language development, and early intervention strategies are recommended for children with language delay in multilingual environments. Further research is encouraged to explore the impact of cross linguistic influence on multilingualism in diverse populations.

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INTRODUCTION

Multilingualism is the ability of an individual speaker or a community of speakers to communicate effectively in three or more languages. Contrast with monolingualism, the ability to use only one language, a person who can speak multiple languages is known as a polyglot or a multilingual (Nordquist, 2019).

According to Bloom (1993), language development refers to the procedure by which infants are gradually able to make use of language in order to verbally express themselves. Pinker (1994) argues that language development is an innate ability that is hard-wired into the human brain like what Chomsky –the famous linguist - had stated in his previous theories. Tomasello (2003)

proposes a 'usage-based theory' of language acquisition, which suggests that language development is shaped by the social and communicative interactions that infants have with their caregivers.

Multilingualism is a common phenomenon in Pakistan, especially in Lahore, where individuals are exposed to multiple languages from an early age. While multilingualism can have several positive impacts on language development, such as cognitive advantages and cultural benefits, there have been concerns raised about the potential negative influences of multilingualism on language development (Baker & Wright, 2017; Kohnert, Yim, Nett, Kan, & Duran, 2005). In particular, concerns have been raised about language delay and confusion caused by code-switching (Baker & Wright, 2017). This research paper aims to lay emphasis on how the absence of suitable language acquisition and learning environments along with absence of useful attention results in speech and language delay in children. Therefore, this research revolves around a 4-year-old girl who was showing signs of speech delay according to the language development stages. She lived in a multilingual environment in Pakistan i.e., English, Urdu, and Punjabi. While her mother was native Punjabi speaker, other people she was surrounded with and spent most time with were bilingual (English and Urdu) speakers. The participant's L1 was Punjabi, L2 was Urdu and L3 was English. Along with this, there were no learning-based activities that she was keenly indulged in and so, most of her time was utilized playing with cats. Unlike other children, she did not communicate with her age mates. As any normal thirty-six (36) month old child, she was not able to make it to a clear multi-word stage, her syntactic structures still contained babbles, however, the research participant did try to speak a small number of clear words. Along with these clear words, she used gestures and hand movements to express the intended meaning and convey her message. She understood Urdu and Punjabi clearly and was able to speak jargons from both languages. Moreover, she still was unable to speak even the simplest of the sentences or even two or more meaningful words together which means that she found it difficult to make cognitive and schematic connections with words, their meanings and how to use them appropriately with accuracy. This research will clarify the reasons pertaining to these facts.

Research Questions

1) What is the influence of the multilingual surrounding have on the speech and language development?

2) How far has the multilingual environment caused cross-linguistic influence?

3) What early intervention steps should be taken if suspicion of delayed development in language development arises?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Early language environment plays a critical role in child language and cognitive development that is related to later personal, academic, and social achievements (e.g., Gilkerson et al., 2018, Hart and Risley, 1995, Huttenlocher et al., 2002, Topping et al., 2011, Wang, Jung, Bergeson, & Houston, 2020). In the landmark longitudinal study, Hart and Risley (1995) examined the amount of language that children heard from 42 Kansas families of various socioeconomic status. They recorded monthly hour-long interactions between caregivers and their children from age 7 months to 3 years, and calculated the number of words caregivers produced. Based on these calculation, it was estimated that by 4 years of age, children from low-income families were exposed to 30 million fewer words (known as the 30-million Word Gap) than children from professional families.

Additionally, a study by Blom and Paradis (2013) found that children who are exposed to multiple languages from an early age may develop a more flexible syntax, as they learn to adapt to the different structures of each language. However, the study also found that these children may have difficulty mastering the syntax of each language, particularly if they are not exposed to consistent and correct usage of each language. Overall, research suggests that multilingualism can have both positive and negative effects on syntax development, depending on the child's age of exposure, the amount and quality of input they receive in each language, and other factors such as language dominance and language mixing.

In the development of multiple language systems, these multiple languages can influence each other. This is called cross linguistic influence. Multilingual people have knowledge of more than two languages by meaning, therefore, the possibility of influence automatically increase with the number of languages the individual is familiar with (Peric, 2015). In regards to a person being multilingual, they may draw upon the syntax (rules, structures, and vocabulary) of one language while using another language resulting in various manifestations, such as code-switching/code-mixing (Wei, 2000). Variation in the degree of cross linguistic influence depends on many factors such as language proficiency, language exposure, and language dominance. In multilingual environments, cross-linguistic influence is a common and natural process (Grosjean, 2010); both positive and negative effects on language development can be anticipated. While on one hand, similarities between languages facilitate the acquisition of additional languages, on the other hand, interference from one language might lead to errors or challenges in producing or comprehending another language (Heredia & Altarriba, 2008).

In a research study, according to Ramus, one of the first tasks facing children growing up in a multilingual setting is to distinguish and separate the speech input to which they are exposed into two (or more) languages, i.e., language discrimination. A well-established finding from earlier research in this area is that monolingual and bilingual infants show similar patterns of sensitivity to perceptual cues provided by languages rhythmicity, that is they are able to discriminate languages from different rhythmic classes at birth (i.e., Ramus, Miller et al, 2000); this means that sounds play a significant role for them to develop understanding for any language. This understanding then leads them to produce speech sounds and comprehend it gradually. Moreover, at around four to five months, they can also discriminate languages from the same rhythmic class (e.g., Bosch and Sebastián-Gallés, 2001).

A study conducted by Kaushanskaya and Marian (2009) found that bilingual children often outperform monolingual children in tasks related to cognitive control, which involves the ability to shift attention and inhibit irrelevant information. However, the study also found that bilingual children may experience some confusion in language separation, which could result in slower language development.

Williamson expresses the notion of a child's vocabulary being directly proportional to the mother-child talk and this being an essential part of the language acquisition process (Williamson, 2008). This clearly sheds light on the significant discussion that a child learns and grasps most in terms of the language acquisition process from their mother, so it is crucial that there exists a healthy communicating connection between them. This connection further is assistive for the child in adding numerous acquired words in their developed vocabulary list, drawing relevant connections between those words in sentences and finally producing meaningful speech. This stands true in our case as well because the mother - child talk in the case study shows the proficiency of 'Punjabi' vocabulary being dominant than the other two languages of the surrounding. If the mother is multilingual, ultimately the child will be a native speaker of those languages too.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is based on a qualitative approach. The research design for this study is ideally a longitudinal observation. This design allows collection of data of the participant over a long period of time, in essence, 6 months of age till 4 years of age; capturing the participant's language developmental milestones and progression of expressive language skill. Moreover, data collection was done through primary sources that revolved around the participant being studied, namely, the parents, environment of child and the child herself. It was done using three data collection tools to cover a holistic aspect of language development. These were inclusive of unstructured interview, Observations and parental questionnaire.

As this is a case study dealing with the influence of multilingualism on language development, the sample of this study is a 6-month old baby who was analyzed every 6 months for 3.5 years till 4 years of age. Convenient sampling technique was used to choose the participant because the participant was available in an ideal multilingual setting with minimum education and interaction with age mates. The research participant resides in a multilingual setting comprising of 3 languages (Urdu, English and Punjabi), she had no siblings and did not attend any educational or language based activities. Her parents were mostly busy working as the house help in the place where they resided in Lahore, Pakistan.

Data Analysis

The collected data for this research is analysed keenly to reach the findings. In order to draw a fair analysis and as a result, a credible set of findings for this case study, the triangulation method was made use of. Triangulation is defined by Schuh (2009) as a source of using multiple data collection methods. This technique leads to a more reliable and valid outcome; as supported by (Thurmond, 2001, p. 254) the advantage of triangulation includes credibility in research data, making innovative ways of comprehending a phenomenon, concluding unique findings, and providing a clearer understanding of the problem. This method consisted of an observational analysis and an unstructured interview of the participant of the research who had been living the prime language acquiring years of her life in a multilingual environment. Moreover, there is a parental interview which tends to gather all the relevant information from the parents bringing more authenticity to the analysis.

Focus on Expressive Language

The data collection was in accordance to the expressive language, so was the analysis of the data. Expressive language is based on how language is used to express oneself and the ideas one has. Expressing of ideas can either be done by speaking or writing. This research study aims to understand how the expressive nature of language, particularly, verbal language or form of communication, gets affected due to multilingualism of a 4-year-old. The triangulation method also focuses on gathering data in terms of the expressive language. The observational analysis is based on analyzing the production of language by the participant. Similarly, the unstructured child interview is based on making the child speak in order to understand and interpret her language development pattern. Additionally, the parental interview is also based on the perception of the parents on their daughter's development and acquirement of the verbal language and mode of communication. Therefore, this research mainly focuses on expressive language and not the receptive one.

Observational Analysis

The participant of this case study was a toddler who grew up in a multilingual environment. She was the only child of her parents and did not have the opportunity to interact regularly with peers and same age mates. Additionally, she did not attend school during the data collection period, which further limited her exposure to a diverse linguistic environment. As the only child, her primary sources of language input were the adults around her.

Due to the multilingual environment, the participant did not strictly follow the typical language development stages as set standards. At the age of 1-2 years, the child was not able to exhibit clear progression in the pre-talking stage and could not understand even 50 worded sentence, and remained in the cooing and babbling stage till age 2-3 years. Although, at instances where she was made to imitate words and sounds, she was able to achieve those goals. Moreover, non-verbal communication i.e., gestures and eye contact were one of the key elements of her language development that was mainly used in place of verbal language.

It was observed that the participant's language development progressed at a slower pace, and she did not reach a clear two-word stage until the age of 3. In fact, by the age of 2, her vocabulary did not compromise of even 50 words for any single language. This delay in language development may be associated to the exposure of multiple languages and the complexities attributed with acquiring vocabulary, grammar, and syntax in each language.

The participant's language exposure consisted of three languages: Punjabi, Urdu, and English. Among these languages, Punjabi was the dominant language in her immediate environment and it was also her mother-tongue and as Williams (2008) expressed in the previous literature, that the child's vocabulary is directly proportional to mother-child talk, this stood true in the case study as well. The participant had most enhanced vocabulary in Punjabi than any of the other two languages. This means that Punjabi was the language most commonly spoken and used for everyday communication within her household. Moreover, Urdu is closely related to Punjabi in context to the phrase structure/syntax and phonology; it is considered mutually intelligible. As a result, the participant was able to understand and acquire the semantics and syntax of both Punjabi and Urdu to a certain extent. Even if she was not able to speak equally well in Urdu as she was able to speak in Punjabi by the end of the study period, the participant had the tendency to completely understand Urdu and reply in Punjabi.

While Punjabi and Urdu formed the mainstay of the participant's linguistic input, some exposure to English was also present when she interacted with individuals of her parents' workplace. Although the participant did not have extensive exposure to English, she managed to pick up some vocabulary and expressions in the language; for example, 'open door', 'no', 'hello', 'thank you', 'bin', 'please'. It is worth noting that the participant's exposure to English was likely limited to instances when adults around her occasionally used the language.

During playtime, the participant engaged with cats as her companions, indicating a limited to no social interaction with children of her age group. Additionally, it is true to say that the child actively tried to vocalize herself even without the use of words as a means of trying to talk to elders. This lack of peer interaction and exposure to a wider range of language models may have influenced her language development and the variety of linguistic structures she encountered.

Despite the limitations in her language environment, the participant displayed a tendency to quietly listen to people when they spoke in the three languages. This suggests her attentiveness and

receptiveness to linguistic input, even if she did not participate equally well in the conversations. However, still by the age of 4, she was not able to complete even one mid length sentence of about 15-30 words in its most correct form. Additionally, in the same age, she was not able to respond to questions such as "What are you doing?" This is due to her lack or slow pace of interpretation.

In summary, the observational analysis was assistive in understanding that the participant's language development was primarily influenced by the input from adults in her household, with Punjabi serving as the dominant language. The participant also had exposure to frequent Urdu usage and some English, albeit to a lesser degree. The absence of regular peer interactions and limited exposure to diverse language models may have affected her overall language development process. Furthermore, to have a clearer concept of how her language had been developing or lacking, the normal pattern of speech development was consulted and compared with the participant's pattern of speech development. For further in depth understanding, an observational checklist is attached at the end.

Unstructured Child Interview

Another method of data collection were the unstructured interviews of the research participant which were assistive to interpret the child's grip and hold over each of the three languages: English, Urdu and Punjabi. These interviews are a combination of small talks between the researcher and the research participant which are transcribed in the appendix section at the end. The provision of these unstructured interviews were essential as they were recorded and helped massively in gathering and reaching findings of this case study.

Through these interviews, it was found out that the child was not able to say the letter 'F' or 'S' or pronounce their sounds in various other words. She was more comfortable with using the 'esh' sound in place of the /f/ and /s/. Apart from this, pronouncing the sound of 'L' also appeared as a challenge to her since she failed to pronounce the word 'glass', 'please', 'apple' and 'bolo' correctly. In addition to this, it was also found out that she found difficulty in pronouncing words with multiple syllables, for example; 'chocolate'. Additionally, a lot of repetition of sounds during her tries to converse were also witnessed.

The participant possessed the tendency to do code mixing and code switching amongst the three languages spoken in her environment; English, Urdu and Punjabi. It has been visibly seen that she combines the vocabulary and syntactic rules of the three languages. For example, "Han jee, main khawan gee", here she combined Urdu and Punjabi. At another instant, when she was asked that what exactly is she doing, she replied "Main yeh karing." This signified that she implemented the – ing rule of verb with Urdu's vocabulary. On the contrary, she even uses vocabulary rules of Urdu for English words. For example, when asked if she would like to have a bar of chocolate, she replied, "eatoon gee." This signified that she implemented the rule for the word "khaoon" in Urdu for English's word "eat." The participant was not able to distinguish the different forms of verb in English and its correct usage.

Furthermore, her grip over all three of the languages can be termed as weak which is why she fails to communicate her ideas efficiently. Although, as stated earlier, Punjabi is her dominant language, still she has not amply absorbed its syntax and semantics. As a result, she makes sentences based on her own understanding of the structure of the three languages which seem nonsensical. For example, "Mama jaba, apa, do dua. Main, mama, papa, caca, baji, main, tu, main, apa odu du dua." She uttered this sentence during the unstructured interview at age 2 which fails to convey a sentential meaning.

Parental Interview

As part of the triangulation method mentioned above, a parental interview was also conducted which is also transcribed in the section of appendix. According to the parents of this research's participant, the child was surrounded by an environment of three spoken languages. Among which Punjabi was the most dominant one and then come Urdu, finally English was present too. Primarily, her parents used Punjabi and Urdu to communicate with her. However, they believed that she was not able to execute a firm grip over any of the three languages.

In addition to this, they claimed that by the age of 1, she was not even able to utter easy two syllable words such as 'mama' and 'baba'. This signified a significant delay to acquiring any language or inability to utter words. Furthermore, her parents stated that her normal conversation consisted of a combination of various babbles from all three languages of the multilingual environment and merely some words which was a challenge for strangers to understand. This is because her mind was jumbled and perplexed in terms of the languages; their semantics, syntax and lexical meanings. Due to this very reason, she was not able to identify the correct structure and essential usage of even one of the languages properly.

Another noteworthy aspect was the fact that the parents were not able to spend ample and needed time with the child due to their schedules. They would leave for their work in the morning and would return late. For this very purpose, less of mother - child interaction was possible which resulted in weaker linguistic development of the child in her native language. Also, the parents believed that investing more time with the child and indulging her in playful linguistic activities would enhance her language development massively.

Moving on, when the parents were asked if they have ever sought professional help or consulted a speech therapist for their child, they refused to it. The participant's parents belong to one of the rural areas of Pakistan where there are considerable low literacy rates. Thus, there exists a prominent lack of awareness over matters such as intervention over a child's language development. Henceforth, the never consulted any professional help due to rise in illiteracy and due to being unaware of the pros this can have over developing a child's language.

Finally, they believed that the child would gradually start to speak, understand better and ensure correct usage of language. But this did not happen. The outcomes of the parental interview coincided with the outcomes of the observational analysis and the unstructured child interview and conformed to the findings of this research.

Normal Pattern of Speech Development Vs Participant's Achievement

Table 1: Normal pattern of speech development

Age/ months	ACHIEVEMENT
1 to 6	Coos in response to voice
6 to 9	Babbling

	10 to 11	**Imitation of sounds; says "mama/dada" without meaning**
	12	**Says "mama/dada" with meaning; often imitates two- and three-syllable words**
	13 to 15	**Vocabulary of four to seven words in addition to jargon; < 20% of speech understood by strangers**
	16 to 18	**Vocabulary of 10 words; some echolalia and extensive jargon; 20% to 25% of speech understood by strangers**
	19 to 21	**Vocabulary of 20 words; 50% of speech understood by strangers**
	22 to 24	**"Vocabulary > 50 words; two-word phrases; dropping out of jargon; 60% to 70% of speech understood by strangers"**
	24 to 30	**Vocabulary of 400 words, including names; two- to three-word phrases; use of pronouns; diminishing echolalia; 75% of speech understood by strangers**
	31 to 36	**Use of plurals and past tense; knows age and sex; counts three objects correctly; three to five words per sentence; 80% to 90% of speech understood by strangers**
	36 to 40	**Three to six words per sentence; asks questions, converses, relates experiences, tells stories; almost all speech understood by strangers**
	40 to 46	**Six to eight words per sentence; names four colors; counts 10 pennies correctly**

Source: *Information from Schwartz ER. Speech and language disorders. Pediatric primary care; A problem oriented approach. St. Louis Mosby, 1990*

A normal pattern of speech development indicates that a child responds to voices by cooing in the first six months and afterwards, transfers to the babbling stage from the 6th to the 9th month. However, the participant in this case study was in the cooing stage for the first nine months and then for the next nine months she was in the babbling stage. Henceforth, a distinguishable difference is highlighted here indicating delay in speech development. This is because a normal child would be in the stages of cooing and babbling, combined, for the first nine months. Whereas, the individual took double the time and was in the stages of cooing and babbling for the first eighteen months.

According to the normal pattern, a child imitates sounds and repeats two syllable words in the first 10-11 months. In this stage, the child is unaware of the meaning of words. And then, by the age of 1, the child imitates two to three syllable words and starts to understand the meaning. For example,

the child would eventually understand that "mama" is their mother. On the contrary, the child in our study repeated two syllable words without knowing its meaning and imitated sounds, from 19th to 21st month. Also, at two years of age, she started to understand the meanings of two syllable words such as "mama".

Furthermore, a normal pattern of speech development indicates that from 13-15 months, a child's vocabulary of 4 to 7 words in addition to jargons is developed and their speech is understood by at least 20% of the strangers. However, the participant was at the exact same stage by the months 24-30. This is quite a vast difference since by the same age, a child with the normal speech development would have a vocabulary of 400 words, two- to three-word phrases; use of pronouns; diminishing echolalia and 75% of speech understood by strangers. Significantly, it indicates that by the time this research's participant developed 4 to 7 words with 20% of their speech understood by strangers, simultaneously a child with the same age with normal development would have a hold over vocabulary of 400 words and 75% of their speech would be understood.

A child with normal development in the months 31 to 36 would make use of plurals and past tense; knows age and sex; counts three objects correctly; three to five words per sentence; 80% to 90% of speech understood by strangers. On the other hand, at the same age the individual in this study had a vocabulary of 10 words incremented; 20% to 25% of speech is understood by strangers. She used two words in a sentential manner to express her intended message. For example, to tell that she is going somewhere she would just say, "main jati". Another instance is when she wanted to convey that her father had gone for work, she would make use of two of the Urdu words to say, "Papa kaam".

By the months 36 to 40, a child with a normal pattern of speech development initiates to ask questions, to converse makes use of 3 to 6 words per sentence, tells stories and experiences. By this time, their speech is almost clearly understood by strangers. In the case of the participant, by the months 36 to 40, vocabulary of about 20 words was developed. About half the speech understood by strangers. However, there was no focus on sentence structure of any of the three languages.

Even by the months 41 to 48, the individual could only speak 6 to 8 words per sentence but the connection between words lacked. This is why there was no proper sentential meaning. Therefore, she tried to use individual words to make sense of her speech. Unaware of code mixing and its repetition, she likely used it often. For example, to show gratefulness, she said ,"Shukriya aap ka thank you". Similarly, to have the door open, she would say, "Open door khol do". In both these sentences, there is code mixing between English and Urdu languages.

Code Switching and Code Mixing

Code switching and code mixing can occur between two or more than two languages. The research participant in our study tends to do both of them due to her exposure to multilingualism. Although there is no such harm in doing code mixing and code switching, but the individual in our study does it in a way that the syntactic structures of languages are compromised so is the lexical essence of words in English, Urdu and Punjabi. This is part of the cross linguistic influence.

Following are some examples of code mixing and switching done by the participant:
In Punjabi, a 'door' is referred to as 'bua'.
In Urdu, 'open' is referred to as 'kholo' or 'khol'

If the research participant wanted any door to be opened, she would either say "Open bua" or "Door kholo". These two are examples of code switching. Sometimes, she does code mixing and repetition and says, "Open door khol"

Cross Linguistic Influence

Cross linguistic influence, as described earlier, is the influence of knowledge of rules of one language over the practical usage of the other. The research participant tends to be influenced by this factor because she has been observed to apply rules of one language on the other, quite a few times.

For example, if she is asked "What are you doing?"
She replies, "main yeh karing."
Now, 'kar' is an Urdu word, and '-ing' form of verb exists in English which she applies to the Urdu language.

Another example is that, if she is asked, "If you want to have a chocolate?"
She replies, "Main eatoon gee."
Here, she uses a correct lexical form of Urdu word 'khaoon' to English's word 'eat' making it incorrect.
Henceforth, it is said that exposure to too many languages may lead to cross linguistic influence.

DISCUSSION

Influence of multilingual surrounding on language development

According to the findings of this study based on the triangulation method, it can be stated that while multilingualism can have positive impacts on speech and language development, it tends to have some adverse effects too. Although the research participant had an underdeveloped language pattern for three languages since she was surrounded by a multilingual environment, there were other factors that contributed to her inability to develop language too. For example, no conversational connection to any age-mate, less mother child talks an

d seeking no professional help.

However, the child lived in a multilingual environment where she failed to develop even one language properly. This was due to the extreme syntactic, semantic, lexical and morphological differences between the three languages. Although Urdu and Punjabi are still somewhat similar but English has a complete different structure. This difference in languages perplexed the little mind so much that she could not even imitate some basic sounds by the age of 6 months. Also, by the age of 1 year, she was not able to recognize her own name.

Furthermore, as a result of multilingualism, her mind started to develop a vocabulary distinct from any of the three languages and she started to make sentential structures which were completely nonsensical and not understood by most of the people. This is why her pattern of speech development was far more slow paced as compared to other children with a normal pattern of language development.

Cross-linguistic influence caused bu multilingual environment

With respect to this research study, the multilingual environment has caused cross linguistic influence. As stated earlier, the research participant has shown prevalence of factors of cross

linguistic influence by applying rules of one language over the other. The rules of English, Urdu and Punjabi languages and their lexicons have been used interchangeably by the participant in her tries to convey the intended meaning.

Furthermore, she has been heard and observed using the '-ing' form verb rule in Urdu to a word acting as a verb in the respective language. For example, "main yeh karing". This is a mixture of Urdu sentence and lexicons with English rules highlighting the cross linguistic influence. Whereas, the correct form of this Urdu sentence would have been "main yeh kar rahi hoon", which the participant reduced, combined and changed according to her understanding and ease to communicate.

Similarly, there is a phrase in Urdu "main khaoon gee" which means "I will eat". The participant in her efforts to respond to a question said, "main eatoon gee", this signify her inability to distinguish that rules of language are not applicable to all the languages. Since, she lives in a multilingual environment, she is in a keen habit to use the lexical and syntactic rules to her convenience without knowing and realizing the deficient conveyance of meaning.

Additionally, there exists code mixing and code switching too in the individual's tries to converse. She uses words of all the three languages according to her understanding and vocabulary level to convey her intended meaning. For example, 'open door bua', 'open bua', 'door khol' etc. All these examples are combinations of the three languages emphasizing on the single idea to 'open the door'.

Early intervention steps

"The efficacy of early family intervention in children with language delays is promising." (Zhao et al, 2022) Early intervention steps are crucial to support and aid any child's delayed language skills; it can significantly improve language outcomes as well as reduce the impact of language difficulties on the child's overall development. The first and foremost action which is to be taken for any suspicion of delay in language development is taking the child to an allied health expert in essence to speech and language pathologists (SLPs) and audiologists (AUD). They will examine the child's listening and speaking organs to cater any prevalent problem before it's too late. Additionally, it is important to note that every child's language development is unique, and it is recommended to consult with above mentioned professionals who can assess and provide individualized guidance for your child's specific needs.

The parents of the research participant denied having knowledge and awareness of early intervention for language development and when they were told of the availability. Of such professionals, the parents agreed that they should have taken steps for their child's language development. After giving them a brief introduction of such allied health experts, they were questioned to assess what they believed should be done for their child. The parents expressed 'we think we should speak more with the child and indulge her in activities involving language'. However, they themselves did not implement any intervention before because like any other family from a rural area, they believed she would gradually catch up with her fellow age mates. This thought kept the individual in a slow learning process with respect to language development.

Furthermore, a number of steps can be taken for early intervention and these can be explained as follows:

Interaction and communication

Engaging the suspected child in interaction and communication in all languages present in the household can help minimize the effects of speech delay. Respond to their attempts to communicate even if the surrounding people are not able to understand completely what the child is trying to

convey. This will make the child feel heard and he/she would want to communicate more in the target languages, consequently improving the expressive language skills. Moreover, children need peer interactions to learn best too. Involve the children in peer to peer interactions for assisted language enhancements.

Repetition and practice

As observed in the unstructured interview with the research participant it is true to say that repetition is essential for language learning, children pick up words and phrases which they hear when being talked to them. Repeat various types of words and phrases deliberately; provide ample opportunities for the child to interact and practice using language in different contexts for example, when a child is indulging in new experiences like understanding colors and fruits, ask them what fruit it is and the color of it. This can be done using flash cards as well.

Focus on languages

Living as a multilingual child, it is essential for parents to provide the desired focus and practice in communicating with the child in all the present languages respectively. For example, speak in mother tongue at home and in Urdu only when outside the house. This way the child will develop all languages equally well because of the rich input available.

Play-based learning

Research indicates that engaging in play has a positive impact on a child's language development. Throughout the preschool years, children experience substantial growth in their vocabulary, and play-based learning facilitates natural conversations to take place.

Family involvement

Educate the surrounding people about strategies that can be used to aid language development at home. This positive attitude will result in a positive lingual environment for the child to nourish his/her linguistic skills.

CONCLUSION

The findings suggest that growing up in a multilingual household, where Punjabi, Urdu, and English are spoken, can pose both advantages and challenges to language acquisition. The participant's language development progressed at a slower pace compared to children in monolingual or bilingual environments, and she displayed tendencies of code mixing and code switching due to exposure to diverse linguistic structures. Moreover, limited human interactions were observed, which had an unprecedented impact on her language skills. The participant's language difficulties, least vocabulary, code mixing, and cross-linguistic influence, highlight the depth of language acquisition in multilingual contexts. Early intervention strategies, increased input and interactions may have been beneficial for supporting her linguistic development stages. Overall, this study emphasises the need for increased awareness and support for language development in multilingual environments, particularly in rural areas where access to professional help may be limited along with little awareness in regards to this matter. By understanding the complexities and challenges faced in such settings, we can take proactive steps to enhance language development and ensure every child has the opportunity to thrive in their linguistic abilities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This research study analyzed one child's language development in a multilingual setting, it is recommended to observe a number of children to have a detailed and comparative analysis for an in

depth insight on this topic. The results could deem more reliable and authentic if it is done on multiple children with various linguistic, cultural and economic backgrounds. Moreover, the help of medical and allied health examiners will be fundamentally helpful for proper improvisation and in-depth critique for the analysis of the effect of lingual environment on their language development. Additionally, keeping under consideration various underlying reasons impacting language development of multilingual children such as peer interaction, parental involvement, cultural influences, socio-economic factors and neurological underpinnings can harvest new fruitful results in the domain of language development and multilingualism.

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