

**Role of Linguistic Similarity in the Acquisition of Imperative Request form
by Urdu Punjabi Simultaneous Bilinguals: A Study of Bilingual Children
Living in Lahore, Pakistan**

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Abstract

The aim of this research paper is to find out the role of linguistic similarity in the acquisition of imperative request form in Urdu Punjabi simultaneous bilingual children living in Lahore, Pakistan. The hypothesis for this work adopted was whether the linguistic similarity accelerates or delays the acquisition process in these sister languages. 36 simultaneous bilinguals from 3.0-6.0 years divided into 6 groups age wise speaking Urdu and Majhi dialect of Punjabi in Lahore were interviewed and their responses were recorded. Across the group and across the language analysis was done. The results indicated that bilingual children showed the acquisition of imperative request form in both the languages during the same time period i.e. 3.5-4.0 which pointed out that the correlation between the languages facilitated the acquisition process.

Key words: Imperative request form, simultaneous bilinguals

Introduction

Urdu, not only a language but “a life changer of Indian Muslims” in 18th and 19th century, by making them an independent nation (Pakistani) remained fascination for the rest of the world even in 21st century as the 11th most spoken languages of the world with almost 170 million native speakers.¹ In Pakistan it



is spoken as a native language in East and West Pakistan.² Sharing the same origin Punjabi a “modern Indo-Aryan language” has been extended from Punjab of Subcontinent to East Africa, England, Canada, United States, France, Netherland, New Zealand and United Arab Emirates with almost 113 million native speakers.³ Punjabi in Eastern Punjab (India) is different from Western Punjab (Pakistan) due to the impact of Sanskrit as its origin and many other regional languages like Hindi and English while Western Punjabi received many loan words from Arabic, Persian and Urdu.⁴ The writing pattern of Eastern Punjabi is from left to right in Gurumukhi Script with the help of total 53 symbols while Western Punjabi has “a modified Arabic Script” i.e. Shahmukhi with 54 symbols which follows right to left pattern.⁵ In Pakistan Urdu is the official language although Punjabi being the most widely spoken language (44%) of the country.⁶ Punjabi is closely related to Urdu which is why its more “structural influence” on Urdu can be observed.⁷ Belonging to same language family (also called as “sister languages”) and lexical, structural similarity, Urdu and Punjabi are mutually intelligible.⁸

Urdu Imperatives

Grammatically Urdu borrowed influence from Persian, Arabic and Basha languages.⁹ Infinitive, verbal stem and subjunctive form can be used as imperatives (request forms) which are of three forms used for second person pronouns [tU, تو tum, تم AAP, آپ (“you”)].

○ Neutral imperatives-----referring to *tum*, تم (“you”): e.g.

تم جانا (Go!) [tum jA-nA]
(you-2.Pl.Nomi) - go- Inf.Nomi (Imp.2.Pl)

تو جا (Go!) [tU jA]
(you-2.S.Nomi) go.V.St (Imp.2.S)

تم جاؤ (You may Go) [tum jA-o]
(you-2.Pl.Nomi) go. Subj.2.Pl (Imp.2.Pl)

○ Polite imperatives-----referring to *Aap* آپ, : e.g.

آپ جائیے (Please go!) [AAp jA-iye]
(you-2.Pl.Nomi) go-Imp.2.Pl

○ Extra polite imperatives----with the addition of *gA*, گ (“-gA”), suffix: e.g.

آپ جائیے گا (You please Go!) [AAp jA-iye g-A]
(you-2.Pl.Nomi) go-Imp.2.Pl Fut.M.S

Punjabi Imperatives

Imperatives are inflected in number, person and degree of politeness.¹⁰ Simple imperatives are based on the stem of the verb in 2nd person singular. While plural is formed with the addition of *vao*, و (“-o”). In Majhi dialect, polite imperatives are formed with the addition of *choTi ye*, ی (“-i”) in singular and “-eo”, ایو “-io” ایو to the plural¹¹ while in extra polite imperatives *jiim baRi ye*, جے (“-je”) is often used as *kareo je*, کریو جے (“do”)¹²: e.g.

○ Simple imperative - referring to *tuN* as singular: e.g.

توں روٹی کھا (Eat bread!) [tuN roTi khA]
(you.2.S.Nomi) bread.N.F.S.Nomi eat-V.St (Imp.2.S)

○ Simple imperative --- referring to *tusi*, تسی (“you”) as plural: e.g.

تسی روٹی کھاؤ (You should Eat bread!) [tus-I roTi khA-o]
(you.2.Pl.Nomi) bread.N.F.S.Nomi eat -Subj.2.Pl (Imp.2.Pl)

○ Polite imperatives---referring to *tuN* توں as singular: e.g.

توں روٹی کھائیں (You may) Eat bread!) [tuN roTi khA-iN]
(you.2.S.Nomi) bread.N.F.S.Nomi eat-Imp.2.S

○ Polite imperatives --- referring to *tusi* as plural: e.g.

تسی روٹی کھائیؤ	(Please eat bread!)	[tu-si roTi khA-io or khAeo],
(you.2.Pl.Nomi)	bread.N.F.S.Nomi	eat- Imp.2.Pl

○ Extra polite imperatives --- with the addition of “-je” suffix: e.g.

تسی روٹی کھائیؤ جے	(Please eat bread!)	[tu-si roTi khA-eo je]
(you.2.Pl.Nomi)	bread.N.F.S.Nomi	eat-Imp.2.Pl Fut. 2.Pl

Literature Review

The children who acquire two languages simultaneously during their early years of language development are called Simultaneous bilingual.¹³ It is a common phenomenon throughout the world.¹⁴ The similar morphosyntactic structures accelerate acquisition process as compared to difference.¹⁵ The study on Galician and Spanish bilingual confirms this by showing that children acquired their morphosyntactic categories more quickly as compared to their monolingual mates.¹⁶

The other studies reveal that children acquire imperative forms earlier than any other verb form even at the pre-morphological stage at the age of 1;4 - 1;5 while Romance - speaking children over-generalize these forms at the age of 2;0 - 2;4.¹⁷

Another study of English-Cantonese bilingual children revealed the absence of polite expression by male respondents while female respondent used it infrequently. This difficulty in the acquisition of polite imperatives was related with the complexity of structure and social and pragmatic use.¹⁸

Similarly another study of 17 German-English bilingual children age ranged 1;8 - 10;17 suggested the importance of syntactic complexity and the degree of directness in the acquisition of request form in these bilinguals.¹⁹ Children use request forms when they use proper nouns (Nelson, 1973).²⁰

Hypothesis

Whether or not linguistically similarity accelerates acquisition of imperative request form inflection in bilingual children.

Research Question

Does linguistic similarity accelerate the acquisition of imperative request form inflection in bilingual children?

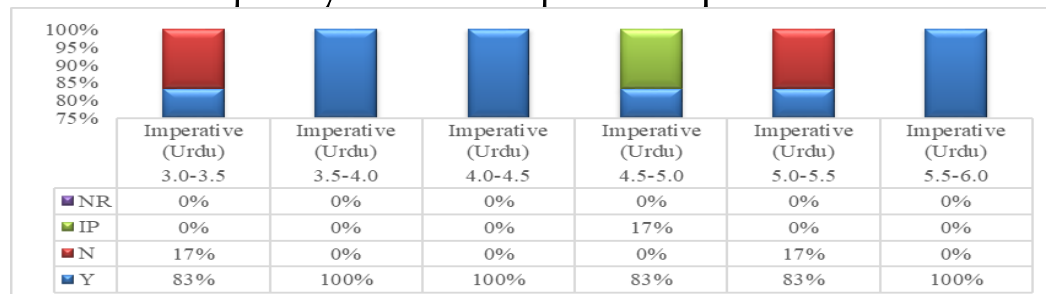
Methodology

36 simultaneous bilingual respondents of 3.0 - 6.0 years divided into 6 groups age wise like 3.0 - 3.5, 3.5 - 4.0, 4.0 - 4.5, 4.5 - 5.0, 5.0 - 5.5, 5.5 - 6.0, could speak Urdu and Majhi the most prestigious and out of more than 25 dialects standard one²¹ spoken in Lahore were interviewed.

Interview technique was used for imperatives as a question was asked like *jab bhuk lagti hE to mAma ko kyA kehte / kehti ho?* جب بھوک لگتی ہے تو ماما؟ ("When you get hungry what do you say to your mama?") and the researcher got information out of this conversation. Recording and transcription was done in Roman and their across the group and across the language analysis was done.

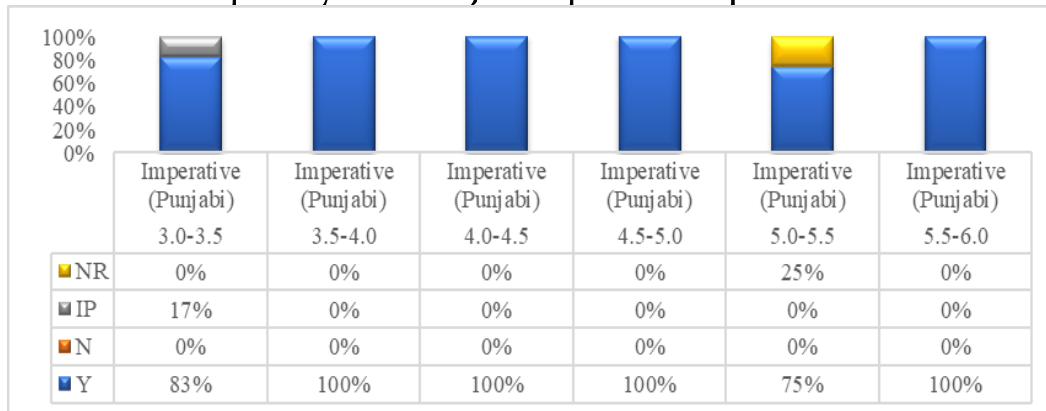
Result and Analysis

Across the Group Analysis of Urdu Imperative Acquisition



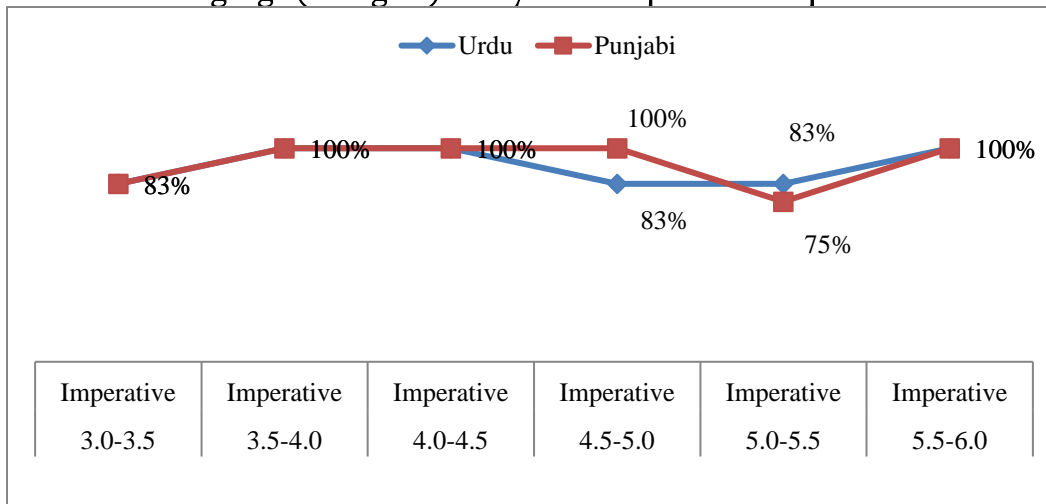
The graphical picture of the results of Urdu imperative request form showed that children of this study knew the most appropriate use of this form from the very beginning and at the age of 3.5 - 4.0, they used it in a correct manner, the way it was used by the elders. IP (in process) construction and the negative response in the next groups could be related with the other way of saying the same thing but did not indicate the use of inflection.

Across the Group Analysis of Punjabi Imperative Acquisition



The age wise result of Punjabi imperative request form showed that the children acquired and used it very early and 3.5 - 4.0 was the most suitable period for the perfect use of request form. And once the children had developed the grammatical knowledge of how to use it they continued its use without any mixing if a sufficient opportunity of speech was provided to them.

Across the Language (Bilingual) Analysis of Imperative Acquisition



Bilingual results of both the languages showed that children acquired and knew the proper use of how to make a request quite early i.e. at the age of 3.5 - 4.0 which also proved the claim that bilingual children acquired imperative forms

even before the acquisition of other verb forms. The variation in the use of these forms in both the languages by these bilinguals was due to In process constructions and some time the negative response by the respondents. Otherwise the end state of these bilinguals was balanced acquisition and use of imperative request form.

Conclusion:

The aim of this research was to see the role of linguistically similar languages in the acquisition process of imperative request form by Urdu Punjabi simultaneous bilinguals living in Lahore, Pakistan. The hypothesis was to find out whether this sameness quickens or delays the process of acquisition. The results indicate that bilingual children starting with either through gestures or incomplete expressions like *roTi*, روٹی, (“bread”) instead of *roTi de deN*, روٹی دے دے (“Give me a bread.”) acquired the imperative request form in both languages at the same time period i.e. 3.5-4.0. During the age of 4.0-5.5 due to over generalization they exhibited in process constructions like the respondent instead of making request, asked question like *roTi hE*, روٹی ہے (“Is there any bread?”) instead of *roTi de deN / de de*, روٹی دے دے / دے دے (“Give me bread.”). It also indicated the other ways of saying the same thing but afterwards they overcame it and used it in a proper way. So linguistic similarity seemed to facilitate and expedite the acquisition process.

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