

Language Acquisition of Korean Children in an Indian Multilingual Society

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Abstract

Indian society is linguistically diverse. There are multiple languages that are spoken in India. Small children have the capacity to learn language at a faster rate as compared to the adult. Language acquisition occurring in a particular context and differing environment are bound to influence the way language is learned and used by the young children. The children who are born and growing up in a linguistically diverse country like India are bound to have a different experience than those who encounter only one language. All these conditions will eventually have a profound impact on the social, linguistic and cognitive development of children. The present study has been focused on 12 Korean children who are growing up in Indian multilingual society. Through this paper an attempt has been made to highlight that how the children acquire language and what are the rate of the acquisition of phonetic sounds of the languages that they are exposed to.

Keywords: Multilingualism, Bilingualism, Phonetic and Phonemic sounds, Innateness, Behaviorism, Cognitive Development.

INTRODUCTION

In all parallels between the child language and the language of the world, what is most conclusive is the identity of the structural laws which determines always and everywhere, what does or will exist in the language of the individual and in the languages of the society. In other words, the same hierarchy of values always underlies every increase and loss within any phonological system. Jakobson's theory as published in *Child Language Aphasia and Phonological Universal* (Jakobson, 1941/68, pp. 171-183) is perhaps the best known theory of phonological development of children where he has specified the acquisition of sound classes as an invariant chronological sequence that is followed by all children regardless of the language being learned (Macknen & Ferguson, 1983, pp. 255-282).

Jakobson stated that whatever the languages be for the child to acquire, every description based on careful observation repeatedly confirms the fact that relative chronological order of phonological acquisition remains same everywhere and it appears stable in its fundamental

characteristics, while the speed of succession in contrast, depends on the individual and is exceedingly variable. Language acquisition occurs in a context, and differing environments, are bound to influence the way language is learned and used by young children. Children growing up in bilingual environments will have different experiences than those who encounter only one language, and these differences may have a profound impact on children's social, cognitive, and linguistic development. The varied linguistic environments where the children are exposed to more than two languages have a drastic impact on their overall development.

EARLY CHILDHOOD BILINGUALISM

Phonological development in bilingual situation is expected to be different as compared to a monolingual environment because the child is acquiring two or more phonological patterns of languages heard by him. Much of the cross-linguistic studies support the hypothesis that universal patterns do appear to exist in phonological development, but there are also data which suggest that differences do exist.

Martin Ball (1984, pp. 77-81) argues that there are several factors that affect the phonological development of a bilingual child, which includes:

- a) the distinction noted between simultaneous acquisition of two or more languages and successive acquisition (L1 followed by L2)
- b) the possible L1-L2 interferences depending upon the stature of the language being acquired,
- c) Apart from the area of interferences does the acquisition of two languages imply that identical phonological process is used for both.

Several studies including that of Stern (1924:4-34), D. Crystal (1976:141-156), E. Clark (1977: 151-155), Ingram (1989:196-200) and others have concentrated on different stages of language acquisition depending upon the specific goals of the study. All of these however, do recognize some stages in the speech/language development. Some of the clearly marked stages in a **child's language development** as recognized by Crystal (1976: 151) are tentatively listed below:

Stage 1: Between the birth and around six months age, when children use non-linguistic, biologically conditioned vocalizations.

Stage 2: From six months to around nine months age, the vocalizations begins to take place on some characteristics of language features of pitch, rhythm etc.

Stage 3: From nine months to around twelve months, it is possible to identify segments of vocalizations that seem to correspond to words. Though intonations and gestures at this stage are extremely ambiguous and indeterminate features of expressions.

Stage 4: The learning of sound systems of the language begin then and continue till the age of 7-8 years.

Stage 5: Clark has recognized the last stage as that up to 5 years, saying that the most of the phonological system is acquired by the time the child is 5 years of age, except for few exceptions.

Studies including that of Clark expressed that the last phase in this progression towards adult like speech sounds usually begins sometimes between the age of nine months and twelve months. According to Jakobson (1941/68, p.141) there is a sharp discontinuity between the stage in vocalization and the present onset of actual speech. He proposed two separate parallels of phonological development: the first stage is the Babbling stage in which the infant shows the ability to babble or produce all possible speech sounds. The second period dates after an abrupt discontinuity from the point at which the child recognize that certain sound have a distinct linguistic value and are used for designation.

THEORETICAL APPROACHES TOWARDS CHILD'S LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

In his second edition of 'The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language' David Crystal has discussed various theories as suggested by some of the renowned researchers and linguists, where he explains the ways a child acquires language.

Behaviorism

Traditional behaviorists believed that language learning is the result of imitation, practice feedback of success and habit formation. Children learn to speak in a popular view, by copying the utterances heard around them. The behaviorists consider that the language is learned through imitation. It is also important to note the children's imitations are not random; they don't imitate everything they hear. Unlike a parrot that imitates the familiar sounds and continues to repeat the same things again and again, children's imitation is selective and based on what they are currently learning. The behaviorist's explanations for language acquisition offer a reasonable way of understanding how children learn some of the regular and routine aspects of language. Children do imitate a great deal, especially in learning sounds and vocabulary; but their grammatical structures cannot be explained in this way.

Innatism

The limitations of the generative account of language, led the linguist Noam Chomsky claims that children are biologically programmed for language and language develops in the child in just the same way as other biological functions. Chomsky argues that the behaviorist theory fails to recognize what has come to be called 'the logical problem of language acquisition'. He argued that human brain is ready for language, in the sense that when children are exposed to speech, certain general principles for discovering or structuring language automatically begin to operate. These principles constitute the 'Language Acquisition Device' (LAD), which a child uses to make sense the utterances heard around him. Apart from these, inputs given to the child in the form of 'motherese', 'parentese' and linguistic inputs from siblings, neighbors and other relatives help children to acquire language fast. The inputs play a significant role as they are stock vocabulary for the children. Once their speech organs are developed enough, these inputs from stock help the children to utter speech sounds.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The main aim of the study is to see how the children's speech is developed in a multilingual environment and for the present study the main focus is drawn upon the **order of acquisition of stops and fricatives** in 12 Korean children living in India, with Korean as their MT and Hindi and

English as their second language. The focus is on the **order of phonological development of the speech sounds in these children.**

Subjects

12 Korean children in the age range of 2.4- 4.11 yrs. living in India for more than one year, having Korean as their MT (Mother Tongue) and Hindi and English as their SL (Second Language) served as subjects. All the 12 subjects were presumably normal and did not suffer from any disorders or any sort of speech problems. The subjects share the same socio-economic conditions i.e Upper Middle Class.

Variable

The two variables selected for the present study are:

1. Age
2. Duration of family exposure in India

Age is an important variable as it serves the main purpose to see and mark the phonological development of the children falling in a particular age group. A deliberate attempt has been made to select children falling in the age group of 2 years- 5 years. This is age group which can be marked as the period of maximum phonological development.

Duration of the family exposure in India is also an important variable due to sociolinguistic feature of India. India being a multilingual country is a home of many languages. Due to its linguistic diversity, the people are exposed to multiple languages at the same time. It was very interesting to study on the aspect that the foreigners who are coming to India, how their children, either born or brought up, learn language/languages.

PROFILE OF THE CHILDREN

The following table shows the complete profile of the Korean children, who have served as Subjects for this particular study.

N O	AGE & NAME	How long have been in India	Gender	MT	Education of Parents
1	2 years and 4 month (Seojun Park)	2.2 years	M	Korea n	Both of them have Master's degree
2	2 years and 6 month (Jeonjin Kim)	Since birth	M	Korea n	Father is Doctor Mother has Bachelor gree
3	2 years and 8month (Seohee Jang)	2years	F	Korea n	Both of them Master's degree
4	3years and 2 month (Daeun Kim)	Since birth	F	Korea n	Both of them have Bachelor degree
5	3years and 3month (Mina Kim)	1.6 years	F	Korea n	Both of them have Master's degree
6	3years and 4month (Cheolho Kwak)	1years	M	Korea n	Both of them have Bachelor degree

7	3years and 7 month (Yejin Son)	2.3years	F	Korea n	Both of them have Bachelor degree
8	3years and 7 month (Yeaeun Lee)	3years	F	Korea n	Both of them have Bachelor degree
9	3 years and 9 month (Seohee Kim)	3.4years	F	Korea n	Both of them have Bachelor degree
10	4 years and 1 month (Jinyoung choo)	1year	M	Korea n	Both of them have Bachelor degree
11	4 years and 6 month (Mose Jang)	From the birth	M	Korea n	Both of them have Bachelor degree
12	4 years and 11 month (Bada Kim)	From the birth	F	Korea n	Father is Doctor Mother has Bachelor gree

Table 1: profile of the 12 Korean children, the time period, and the literacy rate and socio economic condition of the family. (MT=Mother Tongue)

The profile of the Korean children shows the Age, Name, duration of the stay in India, Gender, MT and literacy of the Parents. It is very interesting to note that maximum children have lived in India for more than one year. Which means that during their phonological process of language acquisition they were exposed to multiple languages? Also the literacy rate of their parents is high, which again states the fact that they have received a well-defined input at home. The gender also plays a major role, as the language acquisition differs in both male and female children.

DOMAINS OF LANGUAGE USE

NO.	AGE	Parent	Sibling	Neighbors	Peer group	School	Environment	Babysitter
1	2.4 years	K	K	H/E	H/E	E	K/H/E	H
2	2 .6years	K	K	H	H/E	E	K/H/E	H
3	2.8 years	K	K	H	H/E	E	K/H/E	H
4	3.2years	K	K	H/E	H/E	E	K/H/E	H
5	3.3years	K	K	H/E	H/E	E	K/H/E	H
6	3.4years	K	K	H	H/E	E	K/H/E	H
7	3.7years	K	K	H	H/E	E	K/H/E	H
8	3.7years	K	K	H/E	H/E	E	K/H/E	H
9	3 .9years	K	K	H/E	H/E	E	K/H/E	H/E
10	4 .1years	K	K	E	E	E	K/H/E	H/E
11	4.6 years	K	K/E	H	H	E	K/H/E	H/E
12	4.11 years	K	K	H	H/E	E	K/H/E	H/E

K: Korean H: Hindi E: English.

(Table 2: the domains of the language used by the children and the source of the language input)

Language input plays a significant role in the language acquisition. Hence it was important to discuss the source of the language inputs which the children receive. It is interesting to see that the children having their MT as Korean language receives major inputs in Hindi and English. Many children are exposed to Hindi language since their childhood. The reason is that their parents leave for the job and the child is looked after by the babysitter, who speaks majorly Hindi and few words of English.

PHONEMES PRESENT IN HINDI AND KOREAN

The following table displays the Phones and Phonemes present in Korean and Hindi language. As the children were majorly exposed to these two languages, hence an acquisition of the two languages have been taken into consideration for the present study. Korean and Hindi language are entirely distinct to each other, in terms of the word order and number of the sounds and syllables. Its really interesting to note that how the children whose MT is Korean learns and acquires an entirely different and distinct language. A display of the phonemes present in both the languages have been discussed in the following table.

HINDI			KOREAN		
STOPS		FRICATIVES/ AFFRICATIVES	STOPS		FRICATIVES/ AFFRICATIVES
/ p /	/ph /	/ f /	/ p /	/ ph /	-
/ b /	/ bh /	/ v /	/b /	-	-
/ t /	/th /	/ s /	/ t /	/ th /	/ s /
/ d /	/dh /	/ s /	/d /	-	-
/ t /	/ th /		-	-	-
/ d /	/dh /	/ c /	-	-	/ c /
/ k /	/ kh /	/ ch /	/k /	/ kh /	/ ch /
/ g /	/ gh /	/ j /	/g /	-	/ j /

Table 3: Phonemes present in Korean and Hindi languages

Description of the phonemic sounds (Korean and Hindi) used for the present study

(a) STOPS

/p/, /ph/, /b/, /bh/, /t/, /th/, /d/, /dh/
/T/, /Th/, /D/, /Dh/, /k/, /kh/, /g/, /gh/

(b) FRICATIVES

/f/, /v/, /s/, /S/, /c/, /ch/, /j/, /jh/

METHODS AND METHODOLOGY

Data Elicitation

Phonemes for the present study in both the languages were arranged according to the articulation test chart. Each phoneme was tested by means of words using the phoneme in initial, medial and final positions.

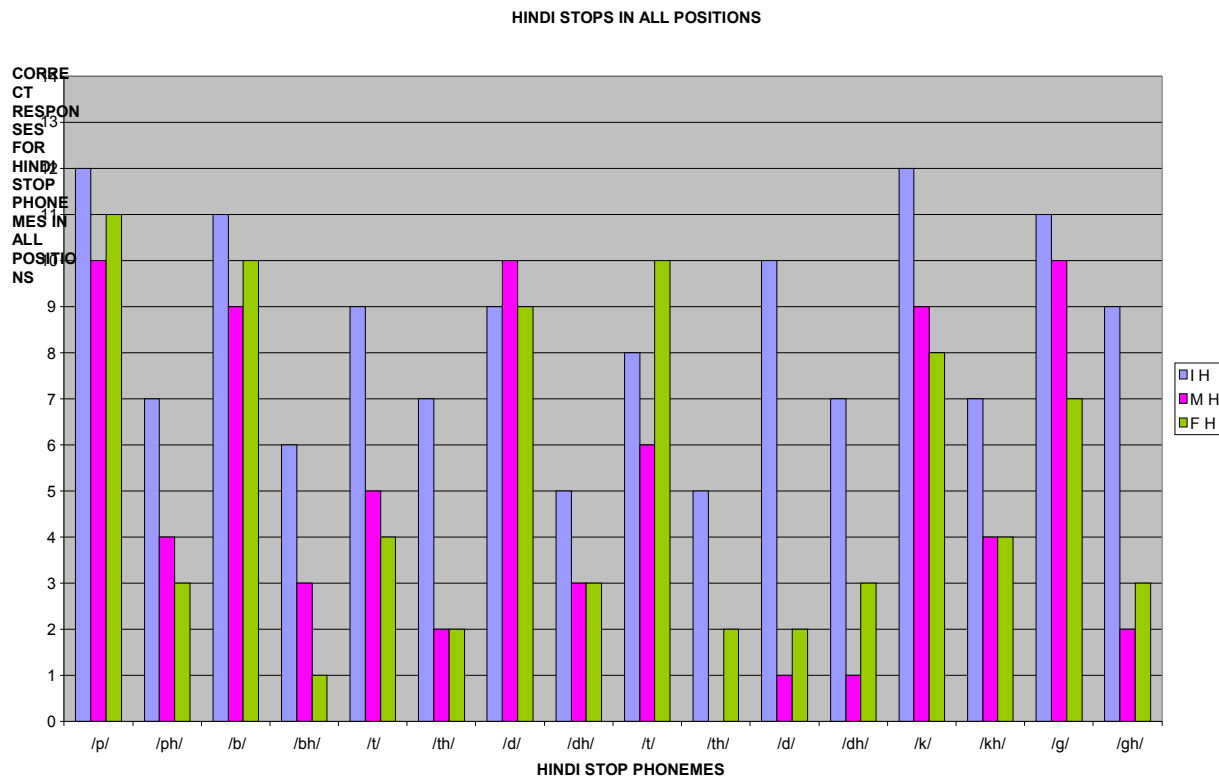
The test words were presented in the form of picture-cards using the **elicitation method**. Each **phoneme was presented in the form of picture cards**. The child was shown these picture cards and were asked to recognize the objects and name them. Sometimes the names of the objects were prompted and the child was asked to repeat them. The responses were noted down. And finally any mispronounced sound was retested by imitation procedure. The responses were even recorded for further analysis.

Data Analysis:

Tabulation- The data was classified and tabulated indicating variations from the expected responses for each sound as against the two variables age and the tie span or period to the child’s family in India. The analysis was done from the general patterns which emerge from the tabulated responses presented separately in the following sections.

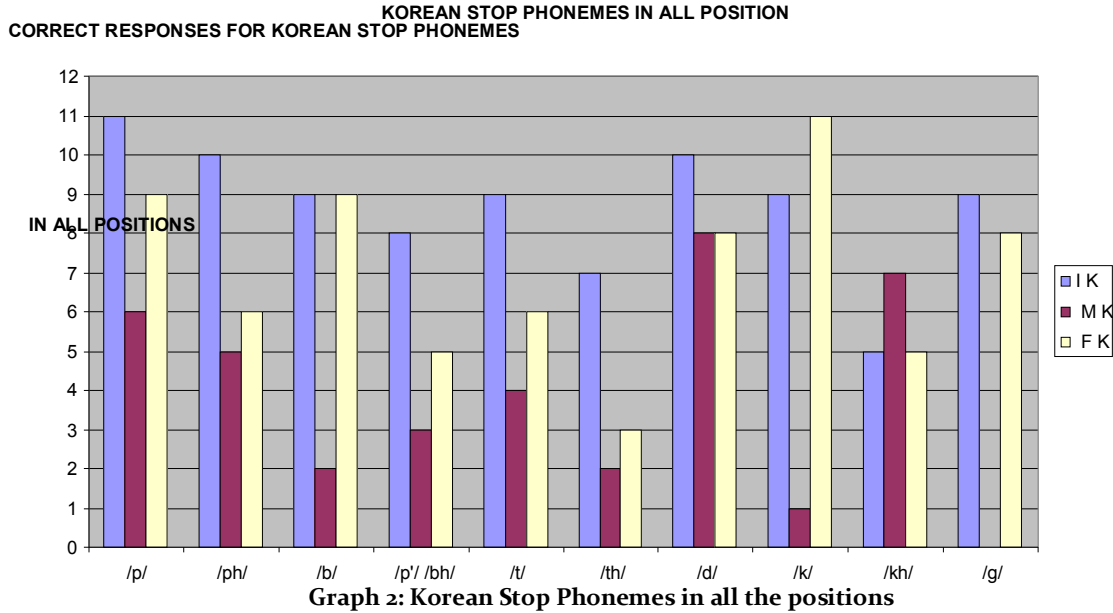
Data Illustration, Tabulation and Analysis

The following section deals with the graphic representation of the 12 Subject’s acquisition of Hindi and Korean phonemes (Stops and Fricatives) in all the positions and also a brief comparison is made to show the pattern of language acquisition in both the languages, thereby marking an influence of an environment in the child’s acquisition of language.

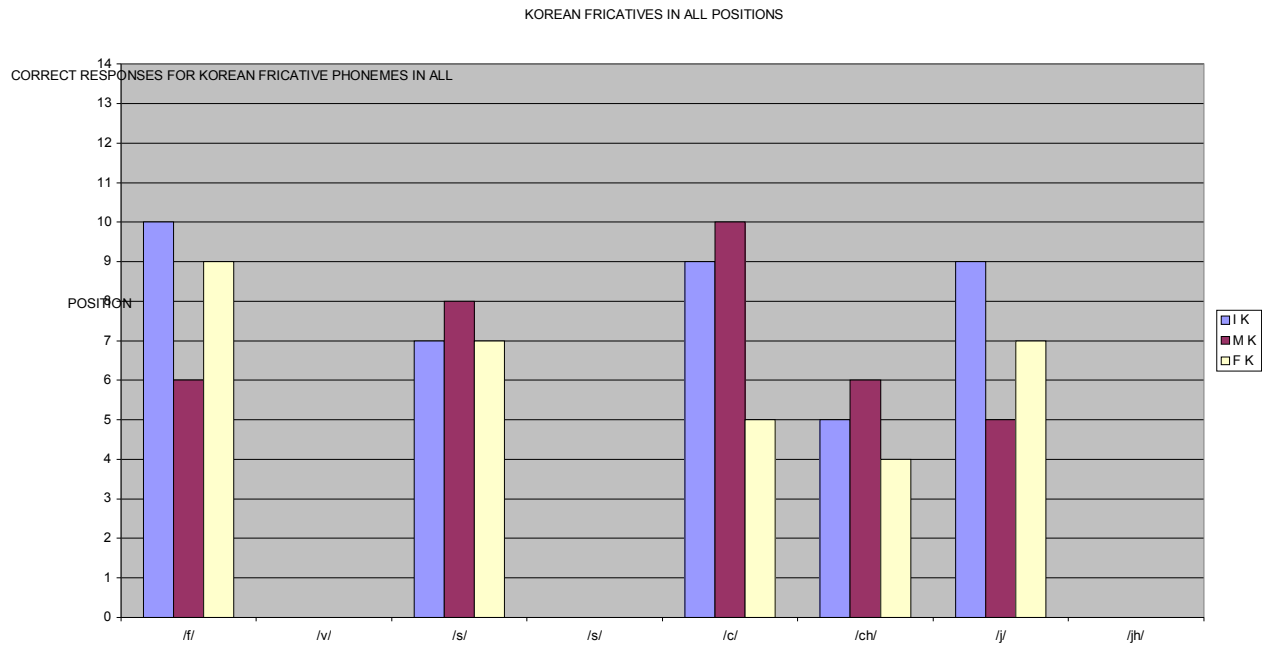


Graph 1: Hindi Stop Phonemes in all the positions

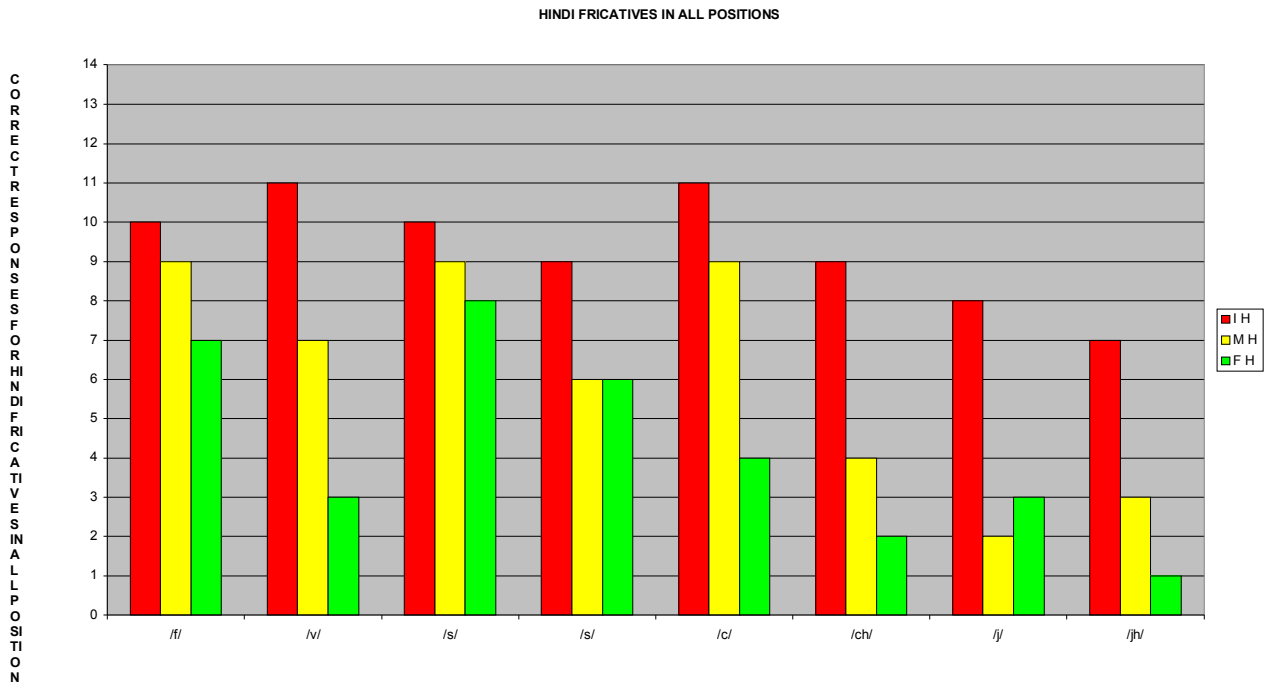
The above graph shows the correct responses of Hindi stop phonemes in all the positions. Here we can see that /p,b,k,g/ are acquired at the initial stage. Almost all the 12 subjects have given correct responses with the above mentioned phonemes. While /d,t,T,D/ are acquired late by the children, where only 2-4 subjects have given correct responses of the phonemes in all the positions.



Graph 2 presents the correct responses of the Korean stop phonemes in all the three positions. /p,d,k/ are the phonemes in which almost all the subjects have given good responses. While the responses are pretty low in /b,th,bh,k/ in the medial positions.



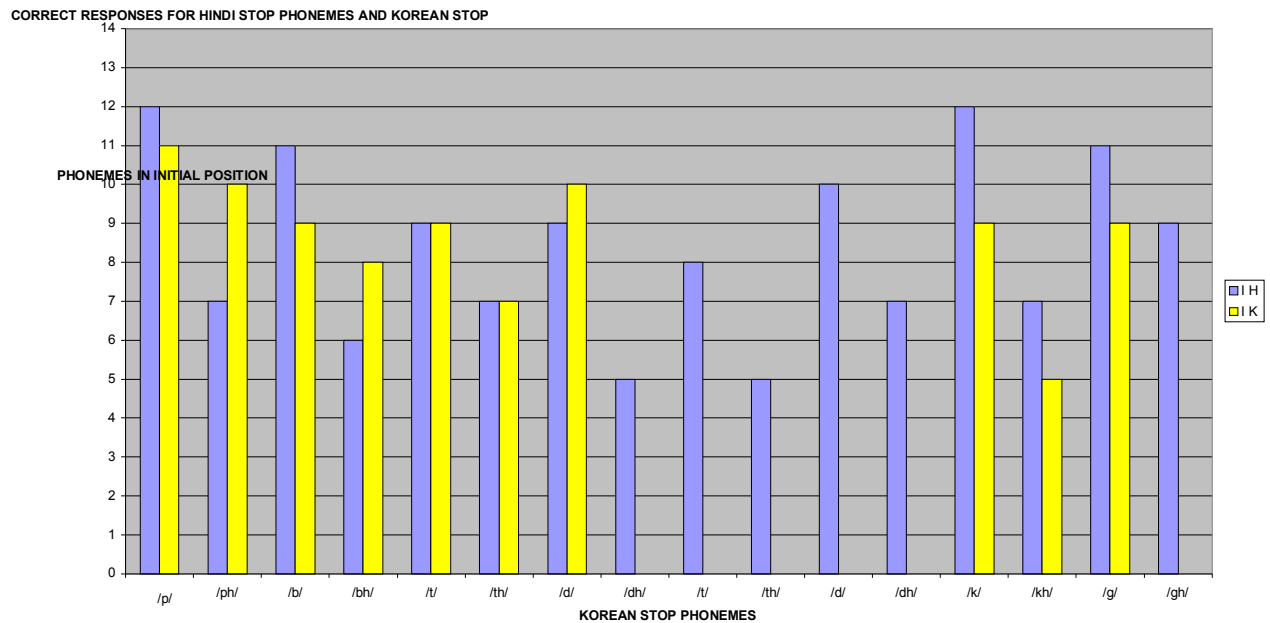
The above graph shows the correct responses given by the subjects of the Korean fricatives in all the three positions. Around 10 subjects have shown correct responses in the initial positions of /f,s,j/. And good responses have also been marked in /f,c,ch/ in the medial positions.



Graph 4: Hindi Fricative Phonemes in all the positions

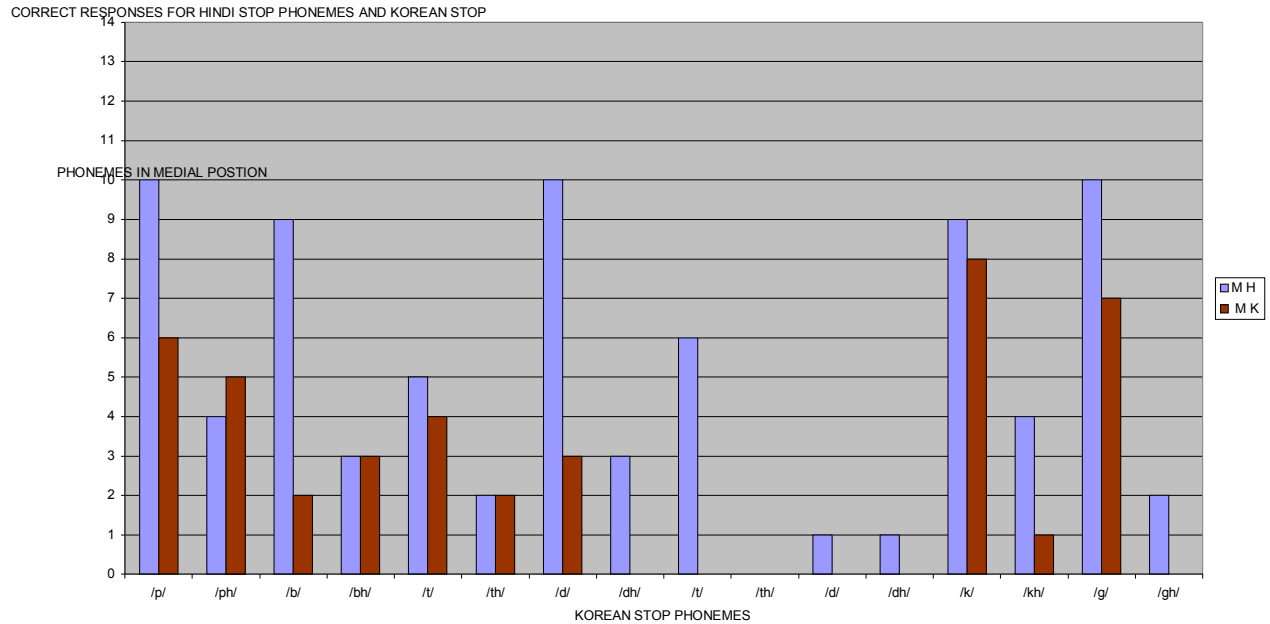
Graph 4 presents the correct responses by the subjects in Hindi fricatives in all the three positions. /f,v,s,c/ are Hindi fricatives in which around 10 subjects have shown better responses. While in the final positions /v,ch,j,jh/ are the phonemes that are acquired late by the children hence the correct responses are also less in these four phonemes.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION



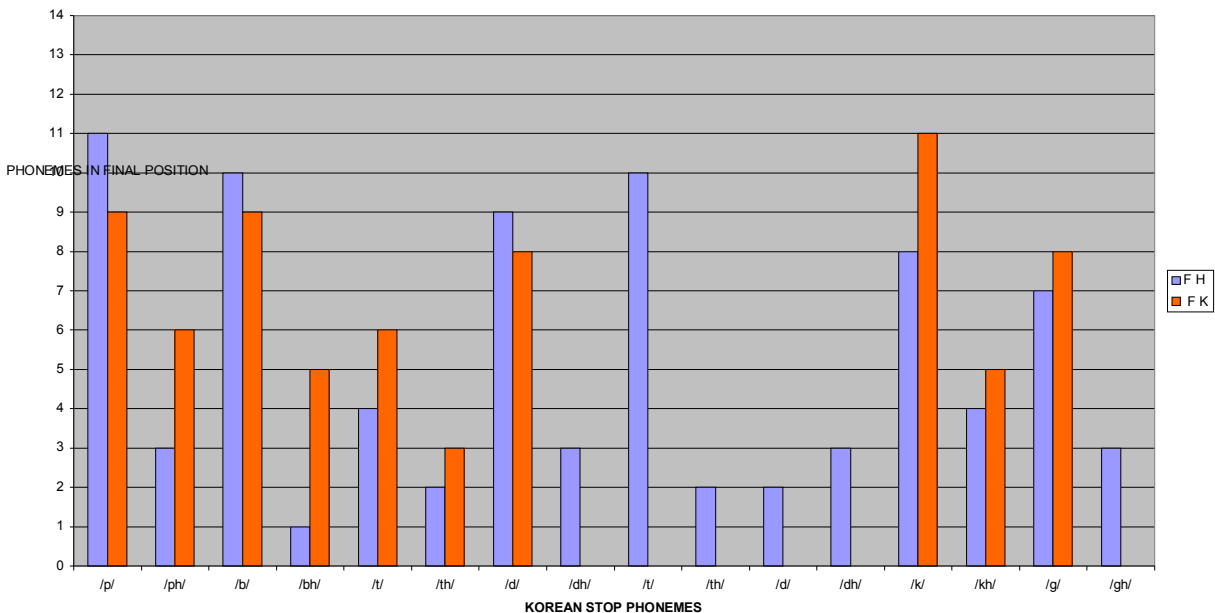
Graph 5: Comparison of Hindi and Korean phonemes

The above graph shows the comparison of Hindi and Korean phonemes in the initial position. /p,b,k,g/ phonemes in Hindi shows maximum acquisition while /bh,dh,th/ shows minimum acquisition. In Korean /p,b/ shows maximum acquisition while /kh/ shows minimum acquisition.



Graph 6: Comparison of Hindi Stops with Korean stops in Medial position

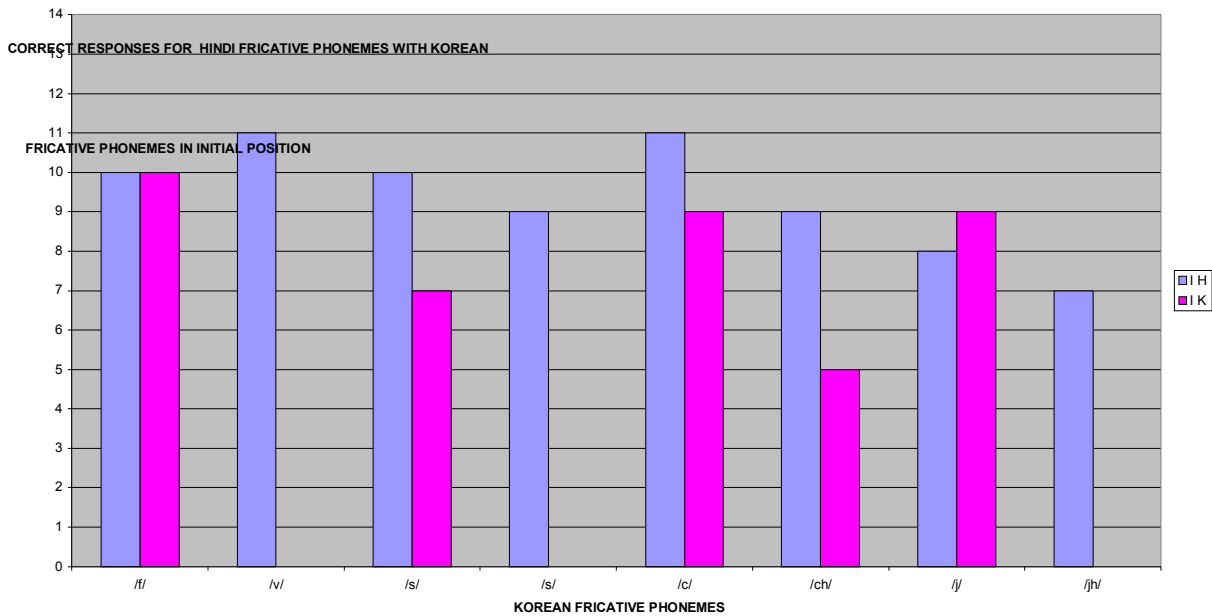
The above graph shows the Hindi and Korean phonemes in the medial positions. Through this we can say that in Hindi the maximum acquisition is being shown in /p,b,d,k,g/ while /th,bh,d,dh/ phonemes are acquired late by the children.



Graph 7: Comparison of Hindi Stop Phonemes and Korean Stop Phonemes in Final Position

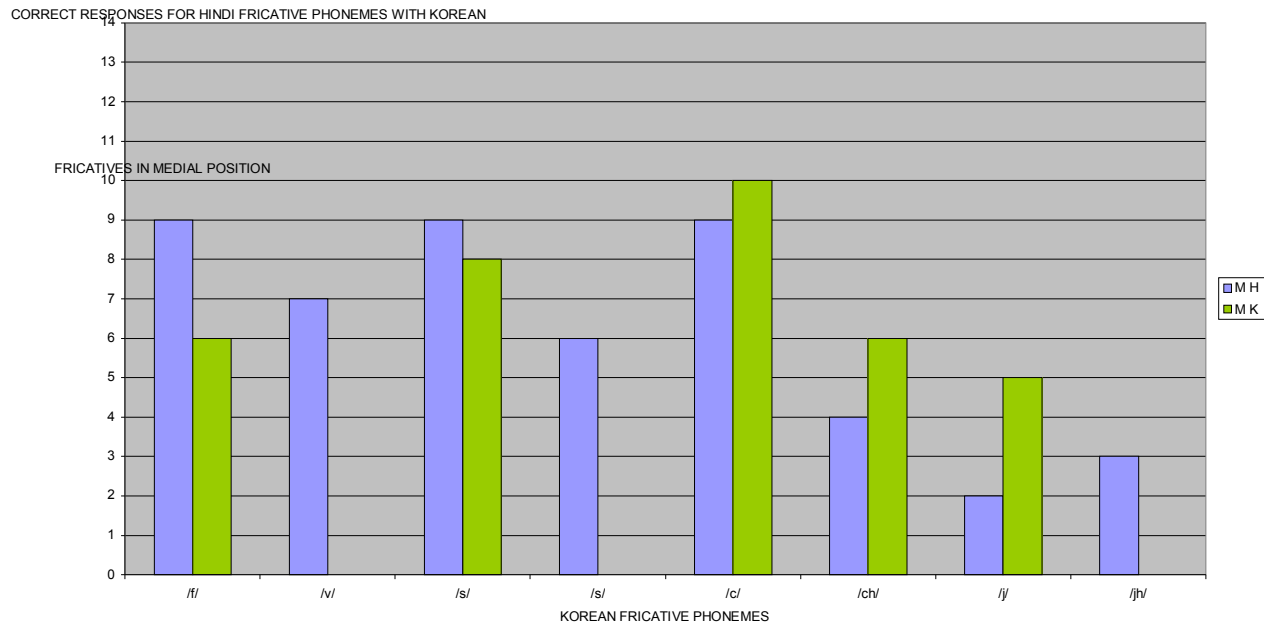
The above graph shows the Hindi and the Korean phonemes in the final position. /p,b,d,t/ are Hindi phonemes which are acquired by the children very early while /bh,th,Th,d,dh/ are acquired

very late. In Korean language /p,b,d,k,g/ are acquired very early while /th,kh/ are acquired at the later stage.



Graph 8: Korean and Hindi Fricative Phonemes in initial position

The above graph shows the Hindi and Korean fricatives in the initial positions. /f,v,s,c/ in Hindi has maximum acquisition by the children while /jh/ has the minimum acquisition. In Korean language /f,c,j/ are acquired earlier by the children while /ch/ is acquired very late.



Graph 9: Comparison of Hindi and Korean Fricatives in Medial position

	F		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
/S/	I						*	*	*	*	*	*	*
	M				*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
	F					*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
/c/	I		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
	M		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
	F					*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
/ch/	I			*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
	M				*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
	F				*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
/j/	I		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
	M							*	*	*	*	*	*
	F				*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
/jh/	I			*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
	M						*	*	*	*	*	*	*
	F							*	*	*	*	*	*

Table o6: Age wise acquisition of the Hindi fricative phonemes

The following table shows the age wise acquisition of the Korean Fricative phonemes in all the initial, medial and final positions.

K F		2.4Y	2.6Y	2.8Y	3.2Y	3.3Y	3.4Y	3.7Y	3.7Y	3.9Y	4.1Y	4.6Y	4.11Y
/f/	I		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
	M			*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
	F			*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
/s /	I		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
	M		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
	F		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
/c/	I		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
	M		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
	F			*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
/ch/	I					*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
	M				*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
	F					*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
/j/	I	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
	M				*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
	F		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*

Table o7: Age wise acquisition of the Korean Fricative phonemes in all the positions

RESULTS AND CONCLUSION

1. After comparing the phonemes of both the languages in the initial, medial and final positions we that the phonemes which are present in Hindi but are absent in Korean are acquired late by

the children. Phonemes like / bh,dh,t,th,,gh/ are stop phonemes in Hind which are not there in Korean language. We get poor responses or no responses making the children utter the words like 'bhaalu'(bear), 'thoda (little), ghar(home) and such are stop phonemes in Hindi which are not present in Korean ,hence these phonemes are acquired a little late by the Korean children.

2. Those children who have been born in India or whose parents have been in India for more than two years, they have shown maximum acquisition in Hindi phonemes as compared to the Korean phonemes.

3. Stop phonemes in the initial and final positions are acquired early by the children in both the languages.

4./p,b,d,k,g/ are stop phonemes in Hindi which are acquired by the children very early. While in Korean /p,b,d,k/ stop phonemes have shown better acquisition results.

5./p,b,k,g/ are stop phonemes which are acquired very early at the age of 2.4./dh.dh/ are aspirated sounds which are acquired late at around 3.9 years.

6. Retroflex /d,dh,t,th/ are acquired a little late at the age of 3.9 years.

7. Aspirated sounds are present in Hindi but are almost absent in Korean so the percentage of their acquisition is very low. The children can utter /d/, /g/,/p/ and /b/ but faced difficulties in uttering /dh/,/gh/,/ph/ and /bh/.

8. Voiced sounds /b,g,d/are acquired early as compared to the voiceless sounds /p,t,k/

9./f,s,c/ are the Hindi fricatives which are acquired at the early age that is at the age of 2.6 years. /j,h/ are acquired late at the age of 3.9 years.

10. At the age of 2.6 years all the fricatives are acquired.

11./v,s,S,c,ch/ are acquired till the age of 3.2 years.

CONCLUSION

Language is the key interface between our social and cognitive worlds. Language acquisition occurs in a context, and differing environments are bound to influence the way how it is learned and used by young children. Children growing up in bilingual or multilingual environments will have different experiences than those who encounter only one language, and these differences may have a profound impact on children's social, cognitive, and linguistic development. The present study has clearly shown that the children acquire the language that they are more exposed to. Those children who are getting maximum inputs in their MT i.e Korean have shown a better acquisition of the Korean language, as compared to the children whose parents are working and the children are spending more time either in playschool or with the caretaker. During the study a very interesting thing was observed. One child aged 2.4 years whose parents are in India for more than one year, leave the child to a caretaker as they both are working parents. The caretaker being Indian speaks Hindi. The child has learned Hindi and has shown better acquisition of Hindi phonemes as compared to Korean, which is his MT. The Input hypothesis does a significant role in the language acquisition of children. To conclude we can say that in a

multilingual environment, the input that the child receives plays a major role. The nature of the input determines the rate of the language learned and the order of the phonemes acquired by the child.

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