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CONTRIBUTION OF LULLABIES IN LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHILDREN OF VEHARI, PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

The current study aims at establishing the link between lullabies and language development of the children. It highlights the effectiveness of lullabies in accelerating the language acquisition process and preparing a sound basis for better communication skills of the children who had been hearing lullabies in preschool age in comparison with those children who could not receive this experience. The researcher personally interviewed the randomly selected twenty (20) girls and twenty (20) boys of grade four and then conducted a survey of their parents and teachers' opinions using semi-structured interviews as research tool of the study. The collected data was analyzed qualitatively. The research shows that the children who had heard lullabies most frequently possessed better lingual knowledge and communication proficiency than the students who had not the same experience.

INTRODUCTION

Lullaby, the very word transports us into the golden period of our childhood when our mothers used to lull us to sleep in their laps or cradles by singing rhyming and melodic poems mostly embedded with cultural knowledge and moralistic stories. It is generally considered that lullabies are meant for soothing a crying baby and putting him to sleep (Çifçi, T. (2016). In the lullabies, the parents usually wish for their baby's good fortune, good health, fast growth, being a bride or bridegroom, and success in every field of life. Moreover, the lullabies also include local facts, customs and traditions and transfer of cultural knowledge through festivals, rituals, food and music, etc.

But the modern psychological and musical researches indicate that they can exert a very positive influence on the development of infant's brain and speed up its processes of linguistic nature as well. The harmonious words within the lullaby may have soothing effect on the child's brain. Resultantly, his sub consciousness is positively affected and he can easily recognize new sounds and learn the simple words of the lullabies comparatively at a greater speed (Carroll, 2000; Larsen-freeman and Long, 2000, Williams and Burden, 1997). The left hemisphere of the human brain stores concepts which can be further expressed in the form of written or oral communication. The task of non-verbal communication is performed by the right hemisphere of the human brain. The songs or lullabies reach the right hemisphere of the human brain by entering through the left ear in a different manner causing the brain to speed up learning activity.

Infants have great motivation for language just as they have strong desire to walk. Their language acquisition process can be stimulated by introducing them with musical experience of listening to lullabies because of their warm response to the natural maternal lullabies as compared to any other stimuli (Cooper and Aslin, 1994). Language developmental process involves four interactive fundamental skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing (Bozorgian, 2012). Listening skill has been recognized to play the role of gasoline to fuel the language acquisition process (Nunan, 2003). Simple and melodious music of the lullabies enhances the brain activity of both the hemispheres of the infant brain sharpening it to acquire as well as learn a language earlier and at a greater speed.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the journey of investigating the contribution of lullabies in the language development of children, the researcher found that past researches indicate a sound relationship between music and language. Jusczyk and Krumhansal, 1993 opine that melodic elements aid learning sound patterns and syntax also. Chen-Hafteck, 1997 mentions a link between music and language development in children. Her investigation was about three aspects of language development; early perception of sound, pre-linguistic and pre-musical vocalization and the emergence of speech or singing. As music and language both are interlinked, they can be used to support the learning of either or the both. According to Howle, 1989 lullabies improve the listening skill of the babies and they begin to recognize new sounds and words early. Fernald, 1989 in his study, shows that the musical elements become very helpful in learning sound patterns and meanings as linguistic functions.

In his book, *The Music in Our Minds*, Weinberger, 1998 writes that scientific literature supports the view that music has strong biological roots. Just like biological behaviors, music is universal and ever present in all cultures. Across the cultures, communication with infants takes place through musical talk and lullabies. Music plays role in brain development and sharpens the skills of math and reading as well. The melody is processed by the right hemisphere of the brain whereas the left hemisphere is responsible for processing language. In Human brain, music and language both occupy same status. Language

acquisition process is positively influenced by the music. Nazzi et al., 2000 investigated the role of rhythm in the evolution of infant's abilities for within class language discrimination propelled by their experience with their native language. Two case studies reveal the advantages of conjoint music therapy showing that not only the vocalizations are facilitated but the vocal quality is also improved. These positive changes indicate that music can influence the speaking abilities of the human beings.

Farmer, 2003 through his experimental study, reaches the conclusion that music can positively influence even the children with autism and their verbal responses are increased thus improving their verbal and nonverbal communication suggesting that lullabies can be beneficial for improving the communication skills of the children. Rauscher, 2003 in his research article concludes that music is capable of playing the role of a catalyst for cognitive abilities in various disciplines.

Overy, 2003 is of the view that temporal processing abilities can be developed by musical training because of being relevant to phonological segmentation skills. Koelsch, 2005 in his study on Neural Substrates of Processing Syntax and Semantics in Music reached the conclusion that human brain has overlapping cerebral structures responsible for overlapping cognitive mechanisms regarding the processes of music and language both strengthening the very assumption that music and speech are interrelated since birth. Masataka, 2007 concludes in his study that babies respond strongly to music and before becoming able to produce words, they begin to communicate through music. Patel, 2008 has explored the network of relation which exists between music and language. This identification of the similarities and differences between these domains helps us to understand how mechanisms of the human mind work or to assemble communicative abilities of complex nature from basic and simple cognitive processes.

According to Schön et al., 2008 songs may participate a significant role for language acquisition in multiple ways. Firstly, since the lullabies are packed with affection and melody of the mothers' voice, they cause definite increase in the arousal and attention of the children. Secondly, the presence of pitch contours enables them to discriminate the phonological elements because change in syllables is mostly accompanied by change in pitch. Thirdly, the operations of learning process are thus optimized due to the consistent mapping of musical and linguistic structures. Vosoughi et al., 2010 investigated the effects of prosody of caregivers' speech on child's lexical acquisition and determined that it has significant role in lexical development of children.

Hemati and Nazari, 2014 have highlighted the role of lullabies in socializing the children. They are polished mirrors capable of reflecting the true picture of diverse cultures because they come from the heart of common people. Mireskandari and Sharbatian, 2015 in 'An Anthropological Study of Folklore in Gilan Province' maintain that lullabies can play significant role in transmission of cultural knowledge from generation to generation.

Kaya and Özkut, 2016 in the introduction of their study maintain that the first interaction between mother and the baby is very important regarding language development. Lullabies sung by the mother not only initiate language developmental process but are helpful also in developing the desired behaviors of children in all the walks of life.

METHODOLOGY

The research is qualitative in nature. Verbal Survey Method has been applied in order to test the research questions made about the contribution of the lullabies in the language development of the students of grade four of Hawks Elementary School Hasnain Campus Tehsil Mailsi District Vehari. Verbal surveys include telephone and face-to-face interviews. The researcher has preferred to conduct the face to face interviews because of their flexibility as research tool and being capable of capturing verbal inflexion, body language and the gestures of the interviewee to obtain additional insights into the answers by the observation of the respondent.

DATA COLLECTION AND DATA ANALYSIS

The information collected from the interviews of the students and their mothers and from the teachers of these students of grade four was recorded in the Student Assessment profile and then analysed qualitatively to reach the final conclusion. But, before conducting the actual survey, a pilot study was done for testing and refining the research instrument.

Pilot Study and its Consequences

For conducting the pilot study, only ten students of class four; five girls and five boys of grade four were picked with the permission of School administration. Student Assessment Profile was designed for recording the data about these students. On realizing, that the Questionnaires and the Design of Assessment Profile (SAP) need to be improved, the Research Tool was refined and revised with changes in some questions and the addition of rubric in the profile for actual study.

Actual Study

In the light of pilot study, for preparing new SAP's to conduct actual study, forty students; twenty girls and twenty boys were randomly chosen by the researcher. The observation was made and revised questionnaire was used for this purpose. The assessment of the students was made according to the criteria mentioned in the Student Assessment Profile and then entered in the SAP of every student. The teachers after the observation and evaluation of six weeks also entered their assessment of these students in their respective SAPs. After the completion of these forty profiles, the transcripts of the interviews were studied again thoroughly for discussion and analysis.

DISCUSSION

First of all, 20 Student Assessment Profiles of girls after entering complete data were discussed one by one starting from the most language proficient girl to least language proficient girl. Then, 20 Student Assessment Profiles of boys

after entering complete data were discussed on the basis of their proficiency in descending order. In this article, only the profiles of the most proficient and least proficient girls and boys will be discussed.

SAP of the Most Language Proficient Girl

The study of SAP of G1 of the proficiency group 'A' clearly indicates that she is the most proficient girl with excellent command on her language. According to her profile, she captured a lot of attention of her parents in her childhood, especially her mother who merely being a house wife could give her a lot of time. G1 has enjoyed the experience of listening to the lullabies of various kinds from her mother and father too in her preschool age.

According to her teacher, her communicative abilities and cultural knowledge are marvelous and she always performs quite well in her class room communicative activities. While communicating with the researcher, her language remained very impressive. Her interactive abilities were also very good and her answers she gave to the researcher were logical and interesting. For example, when she was asked about the reason of her friendship with her close friend, she replied that I like her because of her intelligence. She likes pink colour because it looks beautiful like pink fragrant roses. Islamic Studies is her favourite subject because it gives knowledge about Allah's commands. She wants to become a doctor to serve the humanity.

Table 1: Information about G1-GpA1 (The Most Language Proficient Girl) as Shared by the Mother

Serial #	Information to be Extracted from the Mother about the Student through Interview	Findings
1	The student heard/couldn't hear lullabies in preschool age.	Heard lullabies
2	Age of uttering first word	In the 7 th month
3	Age of initial communication	One and half year
4	General Assessment of the child's Lingual Knowledge and Communicative Abilities by the mother (excellent/very good/good/poor/very poor)	Excellent
5	Lullabies contributed in his language development or not.	Contributed to a great extent

The interview with her mother reveals the following information about her:

- She heard lullabies from her mother and other relatives to a large extent.
- She uttered the very first word 'papa' when she was only seven months old and started speaking properly at the age of seven months.

- She became able to communicate properly when she was one and half year old.
- According to her mother, her lingual knowledge and communicative abilities as compared to other children of her age who received less experience of the lullabies is better. The visitors are mostly fascinated by her sweet talks.
- Her performance in language subjects Urdu and English both is always good.

In short, it can be said in the light of her SAP, it is found that G1 is the most proficient girl as for as her communicative abilities are concerned not only in her mother tongue but in Urdu and English as well.

SAP of the Least Language Proficient Girl

G20 is the least proficient and the last of all the 20 girls of grade 4 randomly selected for the present study. According to her SAP, she lives in a joint family and is the only sister of two brothers. According to the mother, G20 is the eldest girl who was a very peaceful child therefore, she felt no need to sing lullabies for her. Then very early after the birth of baby boy who was seriously ill, she had to give all her attention to her son. She sang lullabies for lulling him to sleep. But G20 remained deprived of the melodious experience in her infancy. The mother is a seamstress. She spends her weekends by visiting children-park. Summer vacations, she mostly spends with her aunt. Cauliflower and grapes are her favourite food. Red is the colour she like to wear most. She studies English with keen interest and wants to become a doctor to treat poor people.

The conversation of the researcher with G20 made her realize that she has poor communicative abilities. The researcher had to make an effort to elicit required information from her because she was deficient in almost all the skills of language. The teacher too finds deficiencies in her language and communication. Her vocabulary is also poor. She lacks accuracy and fluency in her sentences she delivers while communicating with other people.

Table 2: Information about G20-GpE2 (the Least Language Proficient Girl) as Shared by the Mother

Serial #	Information to be Extracted from the Mother about the Student through Interview	Findings
1	The student heard/couldn't hear lullabies in preschool age.	Did not hear lullabies in her infancy but heard only when the mother sang for her younger brothers.
2	Age of uttering first word	In the 18th month
3	Age of initial communication	At the age of 3 years

4	General Assessment of the child's Lingual Knowledge and Communicative Abilities by the mother (excellent/very good/good/poor/very poor)	Poor
5	Lullabies contributed in his language development or not.	She could not hear lullabies in her early childhood.

The following information was collected through G20's mother's interview by the researcher:

- G20 did not enjoy the musical experience of lullabies because according to the mother her daughter kept on sleeping most of the time therefore, she had not to sing lullabies to lull her to sleep.
- She uttered the very first word 'Baba' at the age of 18 months.
- The mother sang lullabies frequently for her younger son who uttered the very first word at the age of six months only.
- According to G20's mother, boys speak earlier than the girls.
- The mother is of the view that lullabies have positive impact on the language of children particularly they speed up language acquisition.
- Content of the lullabies is responsible for the type of lingual knowledge enhanced in children.
- She suggests that mothers should sing lullabies for their young ones as they may have beneficial influence on the language, brain and personality of the children.

The profound analysis of G20's SAP confirms the very idea that lullabies, the wonderful genre of music can play considerable role in developmental processes of the infant's brain and cause earlier initiation of language acquisition.

SAP of the Most Language Proficient Boy

B1 the most language proficient boy of all the selected boys belongs to the proficiency group A. He is from a joint family. His mother is a house wife who devotes plentiful time for the upbringing of her three kids. His grandmother also devotes her time for them. B1 likes to read poems. He sang the following poem for the researcher:

"Twinkle, twinkle little star"
How I wonder what you are?"

He heard lullabies both from her mother and the grandmother. His mother sang the following lullaby for him:

“Allah Allah Lori doodh bhari katori
Doodh mein batasha munna keray tamasha”

About his weekend activities, he shared with the researcher that he recites Holy Quran, does his homework, plays cricket and visits his uncle. During Summer Vacation, first of all, he completes his homework. Then, his family goes to various cities for outing.

B1 is fond of eating chicken fried rice and mutton curry. Yellow is the colour of his choice. He always prefers to play cricket with his friends. He celebrates all the festivals with full zeal and zest. Very excitedly, he shared with the researcher all the activities he performed on both the Eid festivals. He amusingly gave the details how much excited he was on Eid Day to wear new dress, to go to ‘Eid Gah’ to say Eid prayer, hug everyone and receive ‘Eidee’ from his elders and distribute to youngsters. He gave the details of variety of dishes his mother cooked on both the festivals. He shared the details of a funfair he attended once. B1 has three friends. The good reason of his friendship with his close friend he said was that his friend is a nice boy and never quarrels with anyone. He spends half to one hour with his grandparents who are very friendly with him. He often plays ‘Ludo’ with his grandmother. His favourite subjects are Mathematics and Urdu. His mother and sister help him in doing his homework. He wants to become a soldier to defend his country and nation.

According to the researcher’s assessment, B1’s communicative abilities are very impressive and he has great lingual knowledge as well. The teacher is also of the similar opinion and has awarded him ‘A’ grade on the basis of his language proficiency and communication skills.

Table 3: Information about B1-GpA1 (the Most Language Proficient Boy) as Shared by the Mother

Serial #	Information to be Extracted from the Mother about the Student through Interview	Findings
1	The student heard/couldn’t hear lullabies in preschool age.	Heard lullabies frequently
2	Age of uttering first word	In the 9th month
3	Age of initial communication	two years
4	General Assessment of the child’s Lingual Knowledge and Communicative Abilities by the mother (excellent/very good/good/poor/very poor)	Excellent

5	Lullabies contributed in his language development or not.	Contributed to a great extent
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The mother's interview made the following facts obvious:

- B1 heard lullabies frequently not only from her mother but his grandmother also.
- The very first word which he uttered at the age of 9 months was 'Mamma'.
- He began to form sentences at the age of two years.
- According to his mother, his sons began to speak earlier than her daughter.
- In her opinion, the children who hear lullabies possess better lingual knowledge than those who had not heard the lullabies.
- The children who had not heard lullabies cannot communicate so well.
- Lullabies have positive role in accelerating the speed of language acquisition.
- Lullabies should be sung for all the kids.

The profound study of B1's SAP certifies the contribution of lullabies in language development of the children. B1 being the youngest of all kids, fully enjoyed the lap and attention of his mother in his preschool years that is why he is capable of wonderful communication.

SAP of the Least Proficient Boy

B20 is the least proficient and the last of all the 20 selected boys. He belongs to the proficiency Group E. He is from joint family where his mother as a house wife is responsible for the upbringing of three kids; one daughter and two sons. The mother never sang lullabies because of two reasons, first, she is overburdened with her responsibilities and the second that she cannot sing well. However, her children's grandfather sang lullabies but very rarely for some of her kids. B20 likes poems but cannot sing at all.

He cannot recall and sing any lullaby. He spends his weekend by playing cricket and spends Summer Vacations at home. Biryani is his favourite dish. White colour appeals him much. In his spare time, he always plays cricket. Eid ul fitar he celebrates by distributing sweet dish among his relatives and Eid ul Adha by distributing goat meat among their relatives and the needy by slaughtering the goat at home. His mother cooks minced meat balls, biryani and custard for him and for the guests at home. He has two friends with whom he plays cricket. He

spends two hours with his grandparents. His tutor helps him in doing his homework. He wants to become engineer by profession.

The researcher found B20 deficient in all the significant skills of language. His interaction, vocabulary and grammar are extremely poor. He is deficient in fluently expressing his thoughts and conveying his ideas to others. The teacher's assessment also indicates that he is very language deficient boy with very poor communication skills. B20 is an intelligent boy who is unable to express his thoughts to other people.

Table 4.40: Information about B20-GpE2 Shared by the Mother

Serial #	Information to be Extracted from the Mother about the Student through Interview	Findings
1	The student heard/couldn't hear lullabies in preschool age.	Did not hear lullabies
2	Age of uttering first word	12th month
3	Age of initial communication	Two and half years
4	General Assessment of the child's Lingual Knowledge and Communicative abilities by the mother (excellent/very good/good/poor/very poor)	Poor
5	Lullabies contributed in his language development or not.	N A

Mother's interview revealed the following important aspects:

- B20 did not hear lullabies in his preschool age.
- He uttered the very first word 'dado' in the 12th month.
- B20's brother who heard lullabies from grandfather spoke earlier and can communicate a little bit better than B20.
- The girls according to the mother start speaking earlier than the boys.
- She said that since she herself had not sung lullabies for her children therefore she could not give her personal opinion about the impact of lullabies on language development.
- However, she is of the opinion that lullabies are good for children. Parents should not miss this beautiful and beneficial experience.

The profound study of B20's SAP confirms the role of lullabies in language development. B20 is deficient in communication and lingual knowledge and he has not heard lullabies on the other hand the children who have heard lullabies are proficient in communication.

FINDINGS

According to detailed data analysis of SAPs in the previous chapter, it is found that the lullabies have positive impact on the language acquisition. The boys who heard lullabies most frequently in early childhood spoke earlier than those who heard less except B10 who in spite of hearing lullabies uttered first word later (at the age of 18 months).

The findings show that the girls who heard lullabies for a longer period in their preschool age possess better cultural & lingual knowledge than those who have heard lullabies in their preschool age for a shorter period of time.

- Only 1 out of 20 girls possess excellent cultural & lingual knowledge whereas 5 out of 20 boys possess excellent cultural & lingual knowledge.
- 8 out of 20 girls are very good in cultural & lingual knowledge whereas 6 out of 20 boys are very good in it.
- 6 out of 20 girls are merely good in cultural & lingual knowledge whereas 4 out of 20 boys have good cultural & lingual knowledge.
- 5 out of 20 girls possess poor cultural & lingual knowledge similarly 5 out of 20 boys possess poor cultural knowledge.

Above findings show that boys are more proficient in cultural & lingual knowledge than the girls.

It was found that the lullabies contributed a lot in preparing a solid basis to sharpen better communicative abilities of children for their future language repertoire. The information gathered recommends the singing of lullabies to the children for their language development.

CONCLUSION

On the basis of above findings, it is concluded that the lullabies play an effective role in the language development of children. The children who heard lullabies most frequently in their infancy began to utter first word in the sixth month of their age. And the children who did not hear lullabies in their infancy began to utter first words in the 12TH month and some even in the 18th month of their age.

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