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Practice of Watching and Following Hindi Cartoons among Bangladeshi Children: A Study in Dhaka City

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Abstract

This study investigates the sociolinguistic and cultural effects of Hindi-dubbed cartoons on Bangladeshi children, with a specific focus on urban centers in Dhaka. It aims to understand how sustained exposure to foreign-language media particularly Hindi during formative linguistic stages shape children's speech behavior, peer interactions, and cultural preferences. The findings reveal that nearly all children watch Hindi-dubbed cartoons daily, while about 57% integrate Hindi phrases often unconsciously into daily conversation, including in school and home environments. This linguistic hybridity is reinforced by peer dynamics, parental permissiveness, and the acute shortage of engaging Bangla-language media. The paper concludes with strategic recommendations at multiple levels: policy reform to mandate Bangla dubbing of imported content, investment in localized animation and storytelling, school-based media literacy education, and parental awareness programs. Overall, the study contributes empirical evidence to the debate on media-induced linguistic shift and offers actionable insights for language preservation, cultural policy, and child media regulation in Bangladesh.

Keywords

Hindi Cartoons,
Bangla Language,
Language
Acquisition,
Linguistic
Imperialism,
Children, Cultural
Influence

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Introduction

Children's media consumption has long been recognized as a critical factor in shaping their cognitive development, linguistic acquisition, and socio-cultural orientation (Linebarger & Walker, 2005; Barlett et al., 2023). Audiovisual content such as animated cartoons exerts a profound influence on language learning due to its repetitive, engaging, and emotionally resonant nature (Sharma & Mehta, 2023; Fernando et al., 2021). During the early and middle childhood years, when language skills are rapidly developing, children are highly receptive to the linguistic codes embedded in the media they consume (Vygotsky, 1978; Bandura, 1986).

In Bangladesh, children's television programming has historically lacked sufficient locally produced content. This deficiency has allowed a flood of foreign-language programming particularly Hindi-dubbed cartoons from Indian television channels to dominate the entertainment landscape for children. Channels such as Nick India, Hungama TV, and Cartoon Network India regularly broadcast shows like *Doraemon*, *Motu Patlu*, *Shin Chan*, and *Ninja Hattori*, which are extremely popular among Bangladeshi children (Islam & Biswas, 2012; Islam, 2014). These shows, although originally produced in Japanese or English, are dubbed into Hindi for the South Asian market, and thus expose Bangladeshi viewers to a non-native language during a sensitive period of linguistic development.

Existing literature has drawn attention to the phenomenon of linguistic imperialism, wherein dominant global or regional languages infiltrate the linguistic practices of subordinate language communities, often through cultural products like media (Phillipson, 1992; Khan, 2010). In the case of Bangladesh, the pervasive exposure to Hindi media is resulting in observable changes in children's speech behavior, including code-switching, use of Hindi expressions, and phonetic shifts (Islam & Biswas, 2012; Shrestha, 2022). Anecdotal evidence from guardians and educators suggests that some children even prefer speaking in Hindi during playtime, associate positively with Hindi-

speaking cartoon characters, and show declining interest in Bangla-based narratives (Bdnews24.com, 2013; Dasgupta, 2013).

From a theoretical perspective, this situation raises concerns related to Saussure's semiotic theory, which emphasizes the internalization of language signs through repetition and social context (Saussure, 1916), and Fairclough's (1989) critical discourse analysis, which views language use as an instrument of power, ideology, and identity formation. Children are not passive recipients of language they absorb, imitate, and recontextualize what they see on screen in their daily lives, influencing how they think, speak, and interact.

Although television is widely available and often used as a form of "electronic babysitting" in urban Bangladeshi households (Hindustan Times, 2013), there has been little effort at the policy level to regulate the language of imported content or to develop compelling local alternatives. As a result, children's exposure to Hindi-dubbed cartoons is largely unregulated, habitual, and socially normalized. This raises critical questions about the long-term implications for Bangla language acquisition, national identity, and cultural continuity, particularly among the youngest citizens of Bangladesh.

Statement of the Problem

Despite growing public concern and sporadic media coverage, the linguistic and cultural consequences of Hindi-dubbed cartoon consumption among Bangladeshi children have not been adequately examined through empirical research. Most of the existing academic studies are limited in scope focusing on single cartoon characters (e.g., *Doraemon*) or conducting descriptive analyses without systematic data collection (Islam & Biswas, 2012; Islam, 2014). Others focus broadly on the concept of media imperialism but lack child-centered data that would illuminate the impact on early language formation (Khan, 2010).

This lack of comprehensive research leaves several crucial questions unanswered: To what extent do children in Dhaka watch

Hindi cartoons, and how frequently? What kinds of Hindi expressions do they adopt in everyday speech, and in what social contexts? Are these linguistic changes a form of temporary imitation, or do they signal a deeper shift in language preference and usage? How do parents perceive this influence, and what coping strategies or demands for intervention are emerging at the household level?

While studies from neighboring countries like Sri Lanka (Fernando et al., 2021) and Nepal (Shrestha, 2022) have shown clear associations between foreign cartoon exposure and linguistic displacement in local youth populations, there remains a significant gap in Bangladesh-specific research that links cartoon viewership to measurable changes in children's language behavior, cultural expression, and media habits. Moreover, research that integrates both quantitative and qualitative perspectives including direct input from children and their guardians is virtually nonexistent.

The current media environment in Bangladesh, particularly in urban centers like Dhaka, is overwhelmingly tilted toward Hindi-language entertainment, with minimal regulatory oversight and few localized alternatives. This asymmetry may be unintentionally reinforcing linguistic subordination, especially among children in their formative years of identity and language development. According to UNESCO (2022), when native languages are not promoted and used consistently, they risk endangerment over time a concern that is now increasingly relevant in the context of Bangladeshi youth and their media consumption habits.

Therefore, this study addresses an urgent research gap by systematically investigating how Hindi-dubbed cartoons affect the language practices, speech patterns, and cultural identification of Bangladeshi children in Dhaka. The study provides both statistical insights and rich qualitative narratives that aim to inform educational policy, parental guidance, and future directions for children's media content in Bangladesh.

Objectives of the Study

This study aims to explore how Hindi-dubbed cartoons influence Bangladeshi children's language use and preferences. It seeks to measure viewing patterns, identify factors driving Hindi media consumption, and propose strategies to protect Bangla language development.

- To assess the frequency and nature of Hindi cartoon viewing among Bangladeshi children.
- To analyze the pattern of Hindi language use among children following cartoon exposure.
- To identify contributing factors behind the preference for Hindi-dubbed cartoons.
- To provide evidence-based recommendations for safeguarding Bangla language development.

Research Questions

The research is guided by questions that examine the extent and impact of Hindi cartoon viewership among children in Dhaka, focusing on their speech behaviors, motivations for consumption, and parental perspectives on potential interventions. However, the study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the current rate of Hindi cartoon viewership among Bangladeshi children?
2. Do children practice Hindi speech patterns as a result of watching Hindi cartoons?
3. What specific ways and situations do children use Hindi language after watching cartoons?
4. What are the motivations and social factors behind this media consumption?
5. What are the parental expectations or demands regarding media solutions?

Rationale of the Study

Language development in childhood is a dynamic process that is highly sensitive to environmental stimuli, especially auditory and visual input (Linebarger & Walker, 2005). The early years are characterized by what Vygotsky (1978) describes as the “zone of proximal development,” wherein children acquire linguistic structures through social interaction and observation. In urban settings like Dhaka, where access to television and internet-based entertainment is widespread, children’s linguistic environment is increasingly shaped by media exposure rather than traditional interpersonal interactions or educational instruction.

In this context, Hindi-dubbed cartoons represent a dominant cultural-linguistic force. As Indian satellite channels broadcast a steady stream of engaging, brightly animated content with Hindi dialogue, Bangladeshi children especially those from middle-income urban families consume these programs as part of their daily routines (Islam, 2014; Khan, 2010). While cartoons such as *Doraemon*, *Motu Patlu*, and *Chota Bheem* are not inherently harmful in terms of content, they embed Hindi as the primary linguistic medium, which is gradually becoming normalized among Bangladeshi children.

Despite growing concern from guardians and educators, as well as occasional government bans (e.g., the 2013 ban on *Doraemon* by BTRC; Bdnews24.com, 2013), academic inquiry into this phenomenon has been limited. Most existing studies are descriptive, lack systematic data, or fail to integrate both child and parent perspectives (Islam & Biswas, 2012). Moreover, empirical studies that address the interplay between language use, media consumption, and cultural identity formation among Bangladeshi children are virtually nonexistent.

This study is thus timely and necessary. By combining quantitative data and qualitative narratives, it offers robust evidence on how foreign-language media is influencing children’s speech behavior,

peer communication, and self-expression. Furthermore, the research contributes to broader conversations on linguistic imperialism (Phillipson, 1992), cultural assimilation, and the need for Bangla language preservation policies aligned with UNESCO's language vitality frameworks (UNESCO, 2022). The findings are expected to inform not only media regulation and educational curriculum but also national discourse on the protection of cultural identity in an increasingly globalized media landscape.

Theoretical Framework

This study draws upon three interrelated theoretical lenses to critically analyze the linguistic and cultural effects of Hindi-dubbed cartoon content on Bangladeshi children. These frameworks Semiotics Theory (Saussure), Linguistic Imperialism (Phillipson), and Critical Discourse Theory (Fairclough) collectively provide a multidisciplinary foundation for understanding the processes of language acquisition, symbolic dominance, and media-induced cultural assimilation. Together, these theories help explain not only *how* children internalize foreign language structures but also *why* such patterns persist and what power structures underpin them.

Saussure's Semiotics Theory: Language as a System of Signs

Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic theory emphasizes the role of signs in the development of meaning and communication. According to Saussure (1916), language is a system composed of "signifiers" (sound patterns) and "signified" (concepts), which together construct meaning through social convention. For children in the early developmental stage, repeated exposure to language especially through auditory-visual mediums such as cartoons help them form associations between signs and meanings. This process, known as *internalization*, is particularly powerful when the exposure is emotionally charged or repetitive (Barlett et al., 2023).

In the case of Hindi-dubbed cartoons, recurring Hindi expressions, character catchphrases, and interactional dialogues serve as semiotic anchors through which children learn and reproduce new linguistic elements. These signs are not merely linguistic in function; they are also affective and performative, as children often mimic characters as part of imaginative play. This reinforces Saussure's notion that language learning is socially and symbolically structured, and that signs can cross linguistic boundaries through culturally appealing media.

Phillipson's Linguistic Imperialism: Media as a Tool of Cultural Hegemony

Robert Phillipson's theory of Linguistic Imperialism (1992) offers a critical lens to understand how dominant languages are systematically spread and maintained through institutional, political, and cultural mechanisms often at the expense of local languages. Originally developed in the context of English language dominance, the theory is equally applicable to the increasing penetration of Hindi in South Asian linguistic spaces, including Bangladesh.

From this perspective, the prevalence of Hindi-dubbed cartoons on Indian satellite channels can be seen as a form of soft linguistic imperialism. The availability of visually captivating, easily accessible, and narratively engaging content in Hindi ensures the normalization of Hindi among children who lack comparable alternatives in Bangla (Fernando et al., 2021). Such repeated exposure during critical language development results in a shift in linguistic preferences, usage patterns, and even identity alignments, often without conscious realization. In line with Phillipson's framework, the study interprets the erosion of Bangla usage among children as a consequence of systemic linguistic subordination facilitated by regional media dominance (Islam, 2014; Khan, 2010).

Furthermore, the findings of this research echo concern raised by other scholars in the South Asian context. For instance, Sharma and Mehta (2023) note that regional language displacement is accelerated when media ecosystems fail to support indigenous content production, thereby allowing more dominant languages to fill the void. The same

pattern is visible in urban Bangladesh, where limited Bangla-language programming has made room for Hindi media hegemony to thrive.

Fairclough's Critical Discourse Theory: Language, Power, and Identity Formation

Norman Fairclough's (1989) Critical Discourse Theory (CDT) focuses on the ideological and power-laden nature of language. CDT argues that language is not a neutral medium of communication; rather, it reflects and reinforces social hierarchies, political ideologies, and cultural norms. Media discourse plays a central role in constructing what is seen as desirable, acceptable, or prestigious in society.

Applying this framework, the study considers how Hindi cartoons implicitly convey discourses of cultural superiority and normalization of Hindi as a regional lingua franca. Children exposed to these programs are not just learning a new language; they are being socialized into a value-laden linguistic environment where Hindi is portrayed as the language of heroes, humor, and everyday interaction. Over time, this framing influences not only speech behavior but also the cultural self-perception of young viewers.

Qualitative findings from this study show that children often use Hindi phrases in emotionally expressive contexts or when engaging in playful mimicry of cartoon characters. Such behaviors indicate that language is being internalized not merely as a functional tool, but as a marker of identity and social alignment a key concern in Fairclough's discourse theory. Moreover, the lack of Bangla-centered alternatives results in what Fairclough terms *discursive exclusion*, where the child's native linguistic and cultural narratives are rendered invisible or irrelevant in media spaces.

Synthesis of Theoretical Perspectives

These three theories together enable a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. Saussure's theory explains *how* children acquire language through symbolic association, especially in visually stimulating environments. Phillipson's framework helps

contextualize the broader political economy of media and language, explaining *why* Hindi dominates the linguistic landscape of children's entertainment in Bangladesh. Fairclough's discourse theory highlights the ideological implications, explaining *what* is at stake cultural identity, language loyalty, and social perception.

Together, they form a triangulated theoretical scaffold that enriches the interpretation of data and reinforces the urgency of intervention. They also validate the core hypothesis of the study: that unchecked exposure to foreign-language media in childhood may result in behavioral and cognitive shifts with long-term implications for language use, identity formation, and cultural continuity.

Literature Review

The relationship between children's media consumption and linguistic development has long been a subject of concern within the fields of sociolinguistics, education, and media studies. Scholars widely acknowledge that television, especially animated content, serves not only as a source of entertainment but also as an informal yet powerful pedagogical tool shaping language acquisition, social behaviors, and cultural orientation (Linebarger & Walker, 2005; Vygotsky, 1978). In the context of globalization, children's media is increasingly transnational, often resulting in cross-cultural and cross-linguistic influences, particularly when local programming is lacking.

Global and Asian Contexts

Internationally, multiple studies have documented how children's exposure to foreign-language cartoons can result in lexical borrowing, code-switching, and even preference for non-native languages. For instance, Fernando, Perera, and Silva (2021) found that the consumption of English-dubbed cartoons in Sri Lanka significantly altered the language patterns of preschoolers, sometimes leading to delayed proficiency in Sinhala and Tamil. Similarly, Shrestha (2022) reported that Nepali children regularly imitate English expressions from animated shows, with visible impact on home language practices.

From a theoretical standpoint, Phillipson's (1992) framework of *linguistic imperialism* remains relevant. It argues that dominant cultures extend control by promoting their language through media, education, and policy, often undermining indigenous or minority tongues. This view aligns with Fairclough's (1989) critical discourse theory, which asserts that media content is not neutral; rather, it functions as an ideological apparatus that transmits power-laden narratives. These frameworks are increasingly applied to South Asian children's programming, where Indian media especially Hindi content dominates airwaves across the region.

Empirical Insights from South Asia

The cultural reach of Indian entertainment across South Asia is particularly evident in children's media consumption. Sharma and Mehta (2023) explored the role of regional language media in India and found that children exposed to non-native content, particularly Hindi, showed reduced interest in their mother tongue. Their findings underscore the linguistic vulnerability of smaller language communities.

Moreover, Islam (2014) critiqued the phenomenon of "Hindi generation" in Bangladesh, tracing how Hindi-dubbed programs have shaped youth language and fashion trends. His study, rooted in dependency theory, emphasizes the unidirectional flow of cultural influence from India to Bangladesh, a dynamic he warns could destabilize national cultural identity if left unchecked.

In a complementary study, Khan (2010) examined media imperialism in South Asia and highlighted the disproportionate dominance of Indian media in Bangladeshi homes, primarily through satellite television. He argued that such asymmetry not only marginalizes Bangla content but also facilitates the internalization of foreign values and speech norms by impressionable children.

Bangladeshi Studies on Children's Media Consumption

Several localized studies reinforce these regional observations with empirical evidence. For instance, Islam and Biswas (2012) conducted a critical discourse analysis on the Hindi-dubbed cartoon *Doraemon* and found that Bangladeshi children adopted both Hindi vocabulary and behavioral expressions portrayed by characters. Their analysis concluded that this adoption was subconscious but systematic, driven by repeated exposure and character affiliation.

Furthermore, the Bdnews24.com (2013) report on the government's temporary ban on *Doraemon* pointed to increasing societal concern. The article cited educators and parents who reported growing use of Hindi words like *tum*, *kya*, and *chalo* in daily communication among young children in urban Dhaka. Similarly, Dasgupta (2013) reported that children had started referring to common household objects and emotions using Hindi terms, often at the expense of Bangla vocabulary.

More recently, a study by Haque and Hossain (2019) explored the correlation between cartoon consumption and academic performance in Dhaka. Though their study did not focus exclusively on language, it reported that Hindi-dubbed cartoons were the most-watched genre among the sample group, and children who consumed these shows daily demonstrated lower proficiency in Bangla reading comprehension compared to those who watched less or preferred local programming.

The UNESCO (2022) report on *Language Vitality and Endangerment* also raised alarms for countries like Bangladesh, where linguistic and cultural assimilation through media is accelerating. Though the report does not single out Hindi cartoons, it recommends strategic interventions in educational and broadcast policy to preserve local languages under threat from foreign cultural saturation.

Research Methodology

This study adopted a mixed-methods explanatory design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to examine the influence of Hindi-dubbed cartoons on the language use and cultural behavior

of Bangladeshi children. The rationale behind employing a mixed-method strategy was to obtain a comprehensive understanding of not only the frequency and patterns of Hindi cartoon viewing but also the deeper linguistic and social implications derived from parental and contextual narratives.

Research Design

This study followed a cross-sectional mixed-methods design, primarily quantitative in nature, using structured surveys with children and their guardians. To deepen understanding, qualitative data were also collected, enabling data triangulation for improved validity and insight (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). The design captured a comprehensive view of linguistic and media behaviors across selected urban areas of Dhaka.

Study Area and Population

The study was conducted across 15 thanas (sub-districts) of Dhaka City, chosen due to their high population density, socio-economic diversity, and accessibility to satellite television. The target population comprised children aged between 6 and 12 years, a critical stage in cognitive and linguistic development (Vygotsky, 1978), along with their primary caregivers or guardians, who could provide supplementary behavioral and contextual information.

Inclusion criteria for child participants included:

- Regular access to television or internet-based cartoon content.
- Absence of any mental or developmental disabilities that could impact communication.
- Availability of parental or guardian consent.

Guardians were chosen because they are closely involved in the child's daily media viewing and habits.

Sample Size and Sampling Strategy

A statistically robust sample size was calculated using the standard formula for finite population proportions:

$$n = \frac{Z^2 \cdot p \cdot q}{d^2} = \frac{(1.96)^2 \cdot 0.5 \cdot 0.5}{0.05^2} \approx 384$$

To account for possible non-responses, a 10% buffer was added, resulting in a final sample size of 420 respondents, comprising child-guardian pairs. This translated to approximately 28 participants per thana.

Sampling followed a multi-stage strategy. Initially, convenience sampling was used to select 15 thanas representing diverse socio-economic zones. Within each thana, stratified random sampling was applied to identify schools, homes, and coaching centers as data collection sites. From these sites, random sampling was used to select participants who met the study criteria. The final dataset included a balanced representation across gender and socio-economic status, ensuring generalizability within the urban context.

Data Collection Instruments

Data collection was conducted using a semi-structured questionnaire, carefully designed to capture both quantitative indicators and qualitative insights. The tool was divided into two integrated segments:

- *Child-Focused Section:* This part included simple yes/no questions, multiple-choice items, and short prompts designed to elicit spontaneous expressions, preferences, and media habits. Language and content were age-appropriate and pre-tested for clarity.
- *Guardian-Focused Section:* This segment included open-ended and scale-based questions to explore parental observations, concerns, motivations for allowing certain media content, and perceptions regarding linguistic influence.

The questionnaire was further divided into five thematic sections:

1. Section A: Socio-demographic information.
2. Section B: Media consumption patterns.
3. Section C: Language adoption and usage.
4. Section D: Motivations and social influences.
5. Section E: Recommendations and parental expectations.

Prior to full deployment, the instrument was pilot tested with a group of 10 child-parent pairs to refine wording, timing, and flow. Feedback from the pilot phase led to adjustments in language simplicity and sequencing of questions.

Data Collection Procedure

Two trained research assistants conducted the fieldwork under strict ethical protocols. Before initiating interviews, informed consent was obtained in both verbal and written form from all guardians. Consent was also sought from relevant institutional authorities such as school principals, community leaders, and local commissioners, wherever applicable.

Data was gathered through in-person interviews, ensuring active engagement with respondents and clarity in communication. Interviews with children were conducted in a relaxed and child-friendly environment, either at their home, school, or coaching center, with the presence of a guardian. On average, each child-guardian interview session lasted between 25 to 40 minutes.

Confidentiality and anonymity of responses were maintained throughout the process. No audio or video recordings were made without explicit permission.

Data Processing and Analytical Approach

The data analysis process was bifurcated along methodological lines. The quantitative data from closed-ended questions were coded

and entered into SPSS Version 20 and Microsoft Excel for statistical analysis. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, and cross-tabulations were calculated to identify patterns in viewing habits, language usage, and associated factors.

For the qualitative data, responses from open-ended questions were subjected to thematic analysis. This involved identifying recurring concepts, emotional tones, and parent-reported behavioral changes. Codes were generated inductively and grouped under broader themes, such as emotional attachment to characters, media as a babysitter, and cultural displacement.

Visual representations such as bar graphs, pie charts, and tables were used to illustrate key findings and support interpretation. The dual-mode analysis approach allowed for comprehensive insight, enriching the interpretation of numerical data with contextually grounded explanations.

Findings

The present study analyzed data collected from 420 child-guardian pairs, selected through stratified random sampling across 15 thanas of Dhaka City. The objective was to understand how exposure to Hindi-dubbed cartoons influences children's linguistic patterns, media preferences, and cultural alignment. The findings reveal picture of media influence, where Hindi cartoons function not merely as entertainment but as vectors of language acquisition, identity modeling, and behavioral imitation. Each subsection presents quantitative results triangulated with qualitative narratives to provide a multidimensional interpretation of the findings.

Demographic Profile of Respondents

The age distribution of children spanned from 6 to 12 years, a critical developmental window for language acquisition and identity formation. The age group of 10–11 years was most represented (37.4%), followed closely by 6–7 years (29.3%). Gender representation was nearly balanced, with males constituting 51.9% and females 48.1%.

Table 1: Age and Gender Distribution of Respondents

Demographic	Category	Percentage
Age Group	6–7 years	29.3%
	8–9 years	24.0%
	10–11 years	37.4%
	12 years	9.3%
Gender	Male	51.9%
	Female	48.1%

These findings confirm that the majority of participants are situated within the early-to-middle childhood period, during which auditory exposure and social modeling have a lasting impact on linguistic structure and expressive behavior (Vygotsky, 1978). Nearly all children were enrolled in formal education institutions, which should theoretically reinforce Bangla instruction yet media consumption seems to override this influence.

Cartoon Viewing Habits and Preferences

The study confirmed a near-universal engagement with cartoon content among children. A striking finding was that none of the children watched cartoons for less than an hour per day. The largest segment (45.7%) watched for 2–3 hours daily, while 13.3% reported watching between 6–7 hours a duration that far exceeds recommended screen-time guidelines (AAP, 2020).

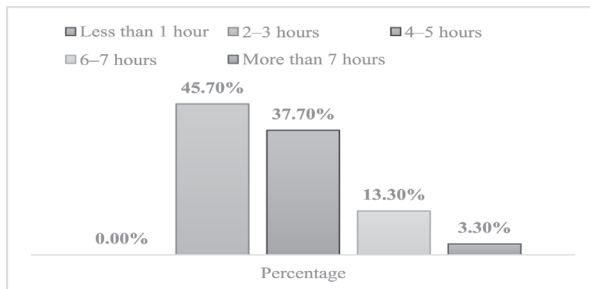


Figure-01: Daily Cartoon watching screen time

When asked about specific preferences, respondents

overwhelmingly identified Hindi-dubbed cartoons as their favorites. The most popular show was *Doraemon* (82%), followed by *Motu Patlu* (73%) and *Ninja Hattori* (67%).

Table 2: Most-Watched Hindi Cartoons

Cartoon Series	Respondents Watching
Doraemon	82%
Motu Patlu	73%
Ninja Hattori	67%
Oggy & the Cockroaches	61%
Chota Bheem	52%

Qualitative narratives reveal a functional reliance on cartoons. Many parents, especially in dual-income households, reported that cartoons serve as childcare surrogates. One mother from Dhanmondi remarked: *He watches cartoons while I cook or attend online meetings. I didn't think it was a problem until he said 'Main tujhe dekh lunga' to his sister.*

This underscores the unregulated nature of screen time and highlights how Hindi expressions are unconsciously integrated into daily interaction.

Linguistic Impact: Adoption of Hindi Expressions

The core research concerns the impact on children's language practices was directly supported by data. A significant 57% of children used Hindi expressions, with 23.7% doing so frequently, without situational prompting.

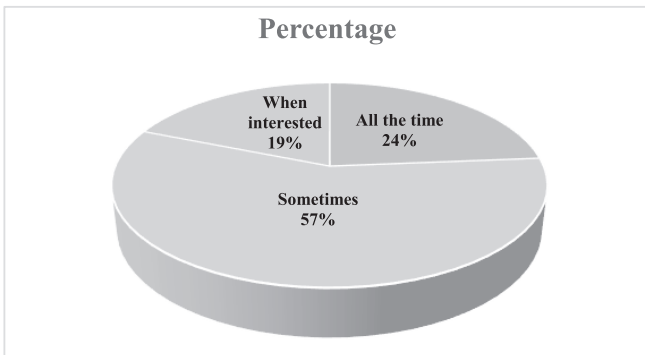


Figure-02: Frequency of using Hindi

Beyond frequency, the depth of linguistic adoption was also explored. While 61% used isolated Hindi words, 31% were observed using full sentences, and 8% could carry out entire conversations in Hindi suggesting a form of early bilingualism, albeit unintended and media driven.

Table 3: Depth of Hindi Language Use

Expression Type	Percentage
Few Hindi words	61.0%
Full sentences	31.0%
Full conversations	8.0%

Parents reported code-switching patterns that blended Hindi grammar with Bangla vocabulary. For example:

My son now says ‘Mummy bhukh lagi’ instead of ‘Ma, khide peyeche’. It’s not just mimicry it’s becoming his default.

This aligns with Phillipson’s (1992) theory of *linguistic imperialism*, where dominant languages encroach upon and displace native linguistic patterns.

Imitative Behavior and Social Motivation

To understand the motivational drivers of Hindi cartoon consumption, both children and parents were asked to identify reasons for preference. The leading factors were peer influence (71.0%) and entertainment value (67.6%), followed by the absence of appealing local alternatives (44.8%).

Table 4: Reasons for Watching Hindi Cartoons (Multiple Response)

Reason	Percentage
Friends also watch them	71.0%
They are interesting	67.6%
Colorful and fun	59.2%
No local alternatives	44.8%

In terms of parental motivations, the majority cited a lack of

alternative entertainment (62.5%), alongside practical constraints such as absence of playgrounds (21.3%) or time pressures (16.2%).

Qualitative data revealed that children often emulate characters' speech and emotional expressions. One mother recounted:

My daughter sulks like Shizuka and says, 'Mujhe baat nahi karni.' It's like she's living inside a cartoon episode.

This confirms the emergence of parasocial relationships (Hoffner & Buchanan, 2005), where children adopt not only language but also emotional cues from animated figures.

Social Spread of Hindi Usage

The study also examined whom children were speaking Hindi with. Surprisingly, the most common interaction group was school peers (31.3%), followed by siblings (26.5%) and even parents (22.4%).

Table 5: Interaction Groups for Hindi Language Usage

Group	Percentage
School peers	31.3%
Siblings	26.5%
Parents/Guardians	22.4%
Neighborhood friends	19.8%

These findings illustrate that Hindi is functioning as a social code, extending beyond the screen and into everyday communication networks. This diffusion is particularly concerning in formal environments like schools, where it may interfere with academic instruction in Bangla (Sen, 1911).

Guardian Concerns and Suggested Interventions

Parental concern was widespread and consistent across socio-economic categories. Eighty-seven percent of guardians believed that Hindi exposure had a negative impact on their children's language or cultural orientation.

Table 6: Guardian Recommendations

Suggested Solution	Percentage
Develop Bangla-language cartoons	33.0%
Dub foreign cartoons in Bangla	23.4%
Provide better local alternatives	21.6%
Regulate cable content (BTRC)	13.5%
Promote indoor non-screen hobbies	8.5%

A strong emotional undertone was present in parental interviews. A mother from Area-12 stated:

They know about Indian food and festivals but nothing about our heroes. Who will tell them about Lalon or Nazrul?

Such concerns highlight a deep anxiety about cultural dilution, especially among urban parents who feel unable to shield their children from dominant cross-border media influences.

Synthesis of Findings

The results of this study can be synthesized across four major insights:

1. *Media Consumption is High and Unchecked:* Children regularly exceed healthy screen-time limits, with Hindi-dubbed cartoons being the primary content.
2. *Language Adoption is Deep and Emotional:* Children mimic characters' speech, demonstrating behavioral integration and emotional investment.
3. *Local Media Ecosystem is Insufficient:* The lack of attractive Bangla alternatives directly contributes to preference for Hindi content.
4. *Parents are Concerned but Disempowered:* Despite awareness, parents lack tools, alternatives, or regulatory support to counteract the linguistic shift.

These findings confirm that cartoon media in its current unregulated form is not merely entertainment, it is a powerful linguistic and cultural

force with long-term implications for identity, language development, and national heritage.

Discussion of Key Findings

The findings of this study reveal a significant and multilayered impact of Hindi-dubbed cartoon programming on the language use, cognitive development, and cultural orientation of children in urban Bangladesh, particularly within Dhaka City. The results underscore a form of media-driven linguistic shift, rooted not merely in entertainment preferences but in deeper socio-cultural and systemic forces. These are discussed in light of established theoretical frameworks and relevant comparative literature.

Media as a Linguistic Socializer

The most compelling revelation of the study is the widespread adoption of Hindi expressions among Bangladeshi children. Approximately 62.9% of children were found to integrate Hindi into their speech—either through isolated phrases or full sentences—without prompting or external encouragement. This echoes Bandura’s Social Learning Theory (1986), which posits that children learn behaviors and language by observing and imitating influential models, in this case, cartoon characters such as Doraemon, Motu Patlu, and Ninja Hattori. The repetitive and emotionally engaging nature of these shows serves as a fertile context for language internalization.

This trend is not unique to Bangladesh. Similar findings have been observed in Sri Lanka (Fernando et al., 2021) and Nepal (Shrestha, 2022), where children consuming Hindi or English-dubbed cartoons showed altered language habits. What differentiates the Bangladeshi context is the lack of counterbalancing local content—an asymmetry that exacerbates the issue.

Linguistic Imperialism and Media Hegemony

These findings directly support Phillipson’s theory of Linguistic Imperialism (1992), which posits that dominant languages extend their influence over subordinate linguistic communities through systemic

channels such as education, governance, and media. Hindi cartoons, broadcast widely through Indian satellite channels, exemplify this mechanism of soft power. The unregulated influx of Hindi media into Bangladesh—contrasted with the absence of Bangladeshi content on Indian networks—illustrates a clear imbalance in regional media diplomacy and cultural equity.

Scholars such as Islam & Biswas (2012) and Khan (2010) have previously warned of the “Hindi generation” of Bangladeshi youth via satellite television. The present study affirms these concerns with empirical evidence. Children not only imitate language but emotionally identify with Hindi-speaking characters, leading to behavioral mimicry and identity formation rooted in a foreign linguistic context.

Code-Switching and Cognitive Interference

A particularly notable phenomenon observed in the study is code-switching, where children blend Bangla with Hindi in casual speech. This has serious implications for cognitive-linguistic development. As Linebarger & Walker (2005) suggest, exposure to non-native language media without appropriate scaffolding may lead to semantic confusion, delayed vocabulary acquisition in the mother tongue, and reduced syntactic fluency.

In the Bangladeshi context, where English already serves as a second language in formal education, the added burden of Hindi as a dominant informal language may complicate children’s trilingual negotiation in their developmental years. This could erode Bangla’s primacy as the default language of thought, especially if expressive functions are increasingly outsourced to Hindi.

Emotional Attachment and Parasocial Influence

The study also documented strong emotional bonds between children and fictional characters, a classic case of what Hoffner & Buchanan (2005) define as *parasocial relationships*. Children imitating characters’ dialogue, gestures, and emotional expressions reflects the power of media in shaping not only

speech but emotional frameworks. In cases where children “act like Shizuka” or mimic threats from Motlu Patlu, media becomes a substitute emotional teacher, especially in contexts where parental engagement is limited.

This emotional attachment deepens linguistic adoption by associating specific words and expressions with comfort, power, or humor. The psychological reinforcement of Hindi expressions within emotionally resonant moments makes them stickier than Bangla equivalents, particularly when the latter are not supported by equivalent local programming.

Parental Awareness and Helplessness

One of the more paradoxical findings was the coexistence of parental awareness and inaction. While 87% of guardians expressed concern about Hindi’s influence, they admitted to lacking viable alternatives. This is not due to negligence, but structural deficits: absence of locally produced cartoons, lack of regulation, urban spatial limitations (e.g., no playgrounds), and heavy reliance on screens for child supervision.

Similar sentiments have been echoed in urban studies in Delhi (Sharma & Mehta, 2023) and Colombo (Fernando et al., 2021), where parents in lower-middle-class households rely on screens as a substitute for unavailable recreational infrastructure. In the case of Dhaka, where traffic, density, and limited public space further restrict outdoor activity, screen dependency becomes normalized pushing foreign-language content into the core of the child’s daily routine.

A Crisis of Cultural Content Production

A core enabling factor behind this linguistic infiltration is the near-absence of competitive Bangla-language media content for children. Despite the historical success of shows like *Sisimpur* or *Meena*, the production and innovation in Bangladeshi animation have stalled. Guardian comments suggest nostalgia for older content, but children reject it due to poor animation, outdated references, or lack of digital availability.

This void has allowed Indian media to fill the gap. As Islam (2014) noted, the dependency on foreign satellites for entertainment has created a one-way cultural pipeline. Children grow up knowing about Diwali but not Nabanna, celebrating Krishna but not Lalon, quoting Nobita but not Nasiruddin.

Theoretical Integration

These multi-layered findings can be situated within Fairclough's (1989) Critical Discourse Theory, which argues that language is not merely communication, it is a social practice shaped by ideology and power. The uncritical broadcasting of Hindi-dubbed cartoons reflects an invisible language policy, one that privileges dominant languages by default and marginalizes local ones by omission. The symbolic power of Hindi is reinforced daily in living rooms across Dhaka, while Bangla is relegated to textbooks.

Recommendations

The findings of this study present a clear call for immediate and strategic intervention across multiple levels media regulation, educational reform, content development, and cultural diplomacy. As Hindi-dubbed cartoons continue to influence children's linguistic habits and cultural preferences, particularly in urban centers like Dhaka, it becomes imperative to adopt a comprehensive framework that not only counters the effects of linguistic imperialism but also fosters a robust environment for Bangla language development and cultural preservation. The following recommendations emerge directly from the study's key findings.

Firstly, there is a pressing need for national media policy reform to regulate the influx and dominance of foreign-language children's content. The Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) should enact policy measures that mandate all foreign cartoon content aired on national television or digital platforms be dubbed into Bangla or subtitled during peak children's viewing hours. This will reduce passive Hindi language acquisition and ensure that Bangladeshi

children grow up engaging with their native language through media.

Secondly, long-term change will only be sustainable with greater investment in local animation and content creation. The severe lack of engaging and culturally relevant Bangla-language cartoons has pushed children toward Hindi programming by default. Government agencies, along with private media houses and development partners, must prioritize funding for original children's content that reflects Bangladeshi values, folklore, and social contexts. Incubating a local animation industry would not only address cultural gaps but also open new creative and economic opportunities.

Thirdly, there is scope to revive and modernize successful legacy programs such as *Sisimpur*, *Meena*, and *Montu Miah*, Bangla dubbed cartoons etc. which once played a pivotal role in children's entertainment and education. These programs should be upgraded in terms of visual appeal, thematic relevance, and digital distribution so that they can compete with high-production-value international cartoons and regain influence over the young audience.

Fourthly, schools must play an active role in promoting media literacy and language reinforcement. Introducing modules that encourage critical engagement with television content, as well as extracurricular clubs focused on Bangla storytelling, drama, and poetry, can strengthen children's connection to their mother tongue. This would counterbalance the informal influence of foreign media and support cognitive development through native-language expression.

Fifthly, parental awareness and digital mediation tools are necessary to empower guardians who often feel helpless in managing their children's media consumption. National campaigns via television, social media, and community centers should educate parents about the linguistic and psychological impacts of prolonged exposure to Hindi media. Additionally, developing user-friendly apps and curated directories of Bangla-language programs can help parents make informed viewing choices for their children.

Sixthly, community-level alternatives to screen-based entertainment must be developed to reduce children's dependency on television. Urban planning should prioritize safe public spaces for play, while community centers can offer workshops, book reading programs, puppet shows, and local storytelling festivals. These non-digital experiences not only support language use but also help foster creativity and social interaction in natural settings.

Finally, regional media equity and diplomatic engagement are necessary to restore balance in cultural exchange. Currently, Bangladeshi viewers have extensive access to Indian content, while Bangladeshi media faces restrictions in India. Bilateral discussions must advocate reciprocal broadcasting rights and cultural protection measures to ensure a more equitable media environment in South Asia. This will help preserve linguistic sovereignty and resist cultural homogenization under regional media hegemony.

In conclusion, these interconnected strategies rooted in policy, production, pedagogy, and diplomacy are essential for preserving Bangla language and identity in the face of growing external media influence. Without decisive action, the current trends of linguistic assimilation may continue to displace the mother tongue from the foundational years of childhood development.

Conclusion

This study provides robust evidence that Hindi-dubbed cartoons are exerting a profound influence on the linguistic behavior and cultural preferences of Bangladeshi children. With the majority of children not only preferring Hindi-language content but also actively incorporating Hindi expressions into their daily communication, the findings suggest a growing linguistic shift that extends beyond entertainment into identity formation and social interaction.

The issue is not simply media preference but a reflection of structural deficiencies—namely, the lack of quality Bangla-language content, weak regulatory frameworks, and the absence of meaningful alternatives in children's leisure and educational spaces. These

challenges are magnified in urban environments like Dhaka, where screen dependency is high and parental oversight often limited by structural constraints.

The study's findings support theoretical perspectives such as Phillipson's linguistic imperialism and Bandura's social learning theory, illustrating how repeated media exposure at a young age can normalize foreign language use and values. Alarming, these trends may undermine the linguistic gains Bangladesh has historically fought for, potentially weakening the national identity anchored in the Bangla language.

To counter this, a comprehensive, multi-sectoral response is required spanning policy reform, investment in local animation, education-based interventions, and enhanced parental support. Preserving linguistic and cultural integrity is not just a cultural aspiration but a developmental necessity. By creating engaging, language-conscious media and educational experiences, Bangladesh can ensure its children grow up fluent not only in speech but in cultural belonging.

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