



TENSE MARKERS IN 6-8 YEARS OLD TYPICAL CHILDREN SPEAKING HINDI

Himani Bansal*

Postgraduate Student, Dr. M. V. Shetty College of Speech and Hearing, Mangalore 575015, Karnataka, India *Corresponding Author

Dr. Satish Kumaraswamy

Professor & Principal, Dr. M. V. Shetty College of Speech and Hearing, Mangalore 575015, Karnataka, India

ABSTRACT Language acquisition entails the acquisition of several crucial linguistic components like phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics. Individual elements merge seamlessly with each other giving birth to insightful communication whenever needed. Among these varied but fundamental aspects necessary for any competent communicator, is adding on the vital aspect of tense marking appropriately into conversations or text rendering accurately when an event occurred or will occur. We must appreciate this pivotal role played by acquiring fluency in using verb tenses by young children seeking effective communication alongside understanding its importance a bit more in the language development process. The study attempts to investigate the acquisition of tense markers in typical children speaking Hindi with the goal of assessing data from children in the age range of 6-8 years. Results suggested that tense markers increased with age. Almost half of the tense markers were not fully acquired by the age of 8 years. The research also analysed various studies that uphold the findings.

KEYWORDS : Tense marker, Hindi language, syntax

INTRODUCTION

Language acquisition is a remarkable achievement during childhood and the acquisition of tense marker plays a crucial role in child's linguistic development. To specify when an action occurred in relation to their message, speakers rely on conjugated verbs that reflect tense. These distinct forms help convey temporal information about what happened while maintaining clarity and precision in communication. The acquisition of tense marker varies across different languages, making it imperative to study the acquisition patterns in various linguistic contexts.

This research article aims to investigate the acquisition of tense markers in 6-8-year-old typical children who speak Hindi, an Indo-Aryan language widely spoken in India. By examining the developmental pattern and challenges faced by children in acquiring tense marker, this study will contribute to a deeper understanding of the linguistic development of children speaking Hindi.

Sunny, Xavier & Kumaraswamy (2015) did a study to analyze the presence of tense markers among 4-7 years old typical children speaking Malayalam and the researchers obtained noteworthy results. The older group of children attained commendable scores across all tense markers in contrast to their younger counterparts. Their research suggests that accurate utilization of tense forms progresses with age.

The 2017 investigation by Kaur and Tashreefa centred on examining the use of tense markers in Hindi-speaking children who had intellectual impairments against typically developing children whose mental ages matched those with ID's characteristics. The findings indicated that as the child grows older, syntax improves significantly over time regardless of the group status (ID or TD). By six years old, children are accustomed to daily conversations using both present and past tense modes frequently; whereas four-year-olds did not use any other marker besides present marker systems albeit relatively accurate in grammatical construction composition too. Present Indefinite & Present Continuous remained preferred; alongside other variations such as Present Progressive & Present Progressive Continuous amongst TD children subjects took up prominent usage but occurred sparingly during similar circumstances for ID peers. Furthermore, observation did reveal some sightings of occasional past-tense forms utilization patterns like Past Indefinite and very little episodes of Past Progressive. The Future Indefinite tense marker also featured in some sequences as well.

Rice & Wexler (1996) examined the influence of language impairment on the acquisition of tense marker in English-speaking children, comparing typical children and children with specific language impairment (SLI). They proposed an Extended Optional Infinitive Account (EOI), according to which, the set of morphemes that marks tenses in English is likely to appear optionally in the grammars of children with SLI at a rate lower than the optionality evident in younger controls.

Tense Markers in Hindi

The tenses in Hindi are:

1. Present Tense
2. Past Tense
3. Future Tense

These tenses are further classified as:

1. Present Tense:
 - a) Present Indefinite Tense
This makes use of word |h æ|
 - b) Present Continuous Tense
This makes use of word |raha: hæ|
 - c) Present Perfect Tense
This makes use of word |ta: hæ|
 - d) Present Perfect Continuous Tense
This makes use of word |ta: ja: raha hæ|
2. Past Tense:
 - a) Past Indefinite
This includes addition of |ya: | to existing verb.
 - b) Past Continuous
This includes use of word |raha: 0a: | with existing form of verb
 - c) Past Perfect
This includes use of word | 0a: | with |ya: | in addition to the existing form of verb
 - d) Past Perfect Continuous
This includes use of word | hoga: | with |a: | in addition to the existing form of verb
3. Future Tense:
 - a) Future Indefinite
Addition of word |ega: | to existing verb form.
 - b) Future Continuous
Use of words like |Ja:yad| and |sambhav h æ|
 - c) Future Perfect
Addition of word |hoga: | to existing verb form.
 - d) Future Perfect Continuous Tense
Addition of word |raha hoga: | to existing verb form.

METHODOLOGY

Aim Of The Study

The aim of the present study was two- fold:

- a) To describe the types of tense markers in 6-8 years old typical children speaking Hindi
- b) To compare the acquisition of tense markers across the age groups.

Subjects

50 school going children from Kanpur district, who are academically good performers as per school records, further divided into 25 each in the age range of 6.0-6.11 years and 7.0-7.11 years respectively participated in the present study.

Inclusion Criteria

- Age range of 6-8 years of age.
- Hindi as native language.

Exclusion Criteria

- No history of speech, hearing and language problem.
- No neurological deficits.

Stimulus Used

Various materials including toys, books and pictures were used to elicit language responses from children. A list of materials is shown in table below.

Table 1: Toys And Materials Used For Language Data Collection

Category	Material
Toys and Play Materials	Doll house, Building blocks, Toy cars and toy train, Kitchen set, Paper-pencil
List of Pictures	Road traffic, Village scene, Birthday party, City scene
Topics for elicited Responses	Family, School life, TV programmes, Cartoon scenes, Favourite clothes/music

Procedure

Natural conversational samples were video recorded, during clinician-child and parent-child interactions at the time of play. The recordings took place in a quiet corner room at the school premises where distractions were kept at minimum levels. Each sample was about 10 to 15 minutes in length and aimed at highlighting each child's unique expressive tendencies in response to different stimuli (toys/pictures). Therapists/parents facilitated maximising natural expression by providing minimal instructions.

Data Analysis

After collecting the samples, a comprehensive analysis was performed which involved transcribing all details from the conversation. Statistically evaluating recorded data enabled us to summarize it by frequency and percentages. Z test for proportions allowed us to compare tense markers across various age categories.

RESULTS

The primary goal of our research was to investigate how typical children speaking Hindi acquire tense markers by examining language samples from natural conversations, with additional focus on evaluating differences in type and presence amongst different age levels. The obtained data was statistically analysed and results are discussed below.

Table 2: Showing Gender And Age Wise Distribution Of Subjects In Each Group

	Age Group	Gender					
		F		M		Total	
		Count	Column N %	Count	Column N %	Count	Column N %
	6.0-6.11 yrs	11	44.0%	14	56.0%	25	50.0%
	7.0-7.11 yrs	14	56.0%	11	44.0%	25	50.0%
	Total	25	100.0%	25	100.0%	50	100.0%

Table 3: Showing Acquisition Of Tense Markers And Their Comparative Values Across Age Groups

TENSE	AGE GROUP				Comparison between the age groups- p value	
	6.0-6.11 yrs		7.0-7.11 yrs			
	Count	%	Count	%		
Present Indefinite	25	100.0%	25	100.0%	1.000	NS
Present Continuous	25	100.0%	25	100.0%	1.000	NS
Present Perfect	25	100.0%	25	100.0%	1.000	NS
Present Perfect Continuous	19	76.0%	21	84.0%	0.241	NS
Past Indefinite	25	100.0%	25	100.0%	1.000	NS
Past Continuous	25	100.0%	25	100.0%	1.000	NS
Past Perfect	19	76.0%	21	84.0%	0.241	NS
Past Perfect Continuous	16	64.0%	19	76.0%	0.180	NS
Future Indefinite	23	92.0%	25	100.0%	0.078	NS
Future Continuous	13	52.0%	17	68.0%	0.127	NS

Future Perfect	13	52.0%	15	60.0%	0.286	NS
Future Perfect Continuous	10	40.0%	14	56.0%	0.132	NS

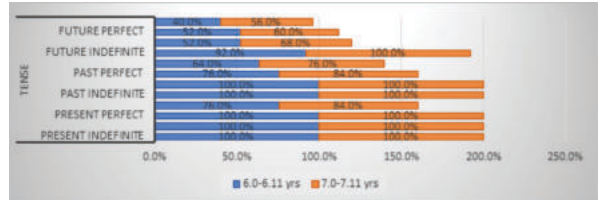


Figure 1: Showing Acquisition Of Tense Markers Across Age Groups

The results showed that present indefinite, present continuous, present perfect, past indefinite and past continuous tenses were acquired by the age of 6 years. The future indefinite tense marker was acquired by the age of 7 years. The remaining tense markers (present perfect continuous, past perfect, past perfect continuous, future continuous, future perfect and future perfect continuous) were not fully acquired by the age of 7.11 years. The comparative values showed no significant difference across age groups.

Table 4: Showing Gender Wise Comparative Values Of Acquisition Of Tense Markers

TENSE		GENDER				Comparison between the sex- p value	
		F		M			
		Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %		
Present Indefinite	6.0-6.11 yrs	11	100.0%	14	100.0%	1.000	NS
	7.0-7.11 yrs	14	100.0%	11	100.0%	1.000	NS
Present Continuous	6.0-6.11 yrs	11	100.0%	14	100.0%	1.000	NS
	7.0-7.11 yrs	14	100.0%	11	100.0%	1.000	NS
Present Perfect	6.0-6.11 yrs	11	100.0%	14	100.0%	1.000	NS
	7.0-7.11 yrs	14	100.0%	11	100.0%	1.000	NS
Present Perfect Continuous	6.0-6.11 yrs	8	72.7%	11	78.6%	0.369	NS
	7.0-7.11 yrs	12	85.7%	9	81.8%	0.003	HS
Past Indefinite	6.0-6.11 yrs	11	100.0%	14	100.0%	1.000	NS
	7.0-7.11 yrs	14	100.0%	11	100.0%	1.000	NS
Past Continuous	6.0-6.11 yrs	11	100.0%	14	100.0%	1.000	NS
	7.0-7.11 yrs	14	100.0%	11	100.0%	1.000	NS
Past Perfect	6.0-6.11 yrs	8	72.7%	11	78.6%	0.369	NS
	7.0-7.11 yrs	12	85.7%	9	81.8%	0.003	HS
Past Perfect Continuous	6.0-6.11 yrs	6	54.5%	10	71.4%	0.196	NS
	7.0-7.11 yrs	10	71.4%	9	81.8%	0.068	NS
Future Indefinite	6.0-6.11 yrs	11	100.0%	12	85.7%	0.102	NS
	7.0-7.11 yrs	14	100.0%	11	100.0%	1.000	NS
Future Continuous	6.0-6.11 yrs	4	36.4%	9	64.3%	0.089	NS
	7.0-7.11 yrs	10	71.4%	7	63.6%	0.020	Sig
Future Perfect	6.0-6.11 yrs	4	36.4%	9	64.3%	0.089	NS
	7.0-7.11 yrs	7	50.0%	8	72.7%	0.373	NS

Future Perfect Continuous	6.0-6.11 yrs	4	36.4%	6	42.9%	0.373	NS
	7.0-7.11 yrs	7	50.0%	7	63.6%	0.251	NS

The above values show that there was highly significant difference between genders in the acquisition of present perfect continuous tense and past perfect tense in the age group of 7.0-7.11 years. Whereas, significant difference was found in the same age group in the acquisition of future continuous tense.

DISCUSSION

In essence, this research serves as a reliable point of reference to grasp the finer nuances of language development amongst children speaking Hindi with normal developmental patterns. Such inferences can also be applied towards enhancing communication skills of concerned kids who require assistance. Tense markers present indefinite, present continuous, present perfect, past indefinite and past continuous were acquired by the age of 6 years. The future indefinite tense marker was acquired by the age of 7 years. The remaining tense markers (present perfect continuous, past perfect, past perfect continuous, future continuous, future perfect and future perfect continuous) were not fully acquired by the age of 7.11 years. The comparative values showed no significant difference across age groups.

We noted that the use of present and past tense was predominant while future tense was only used minimally. This observation is consistent with other Indian language investigations (Subbarao, 1995; Kaur, Jiji & Rao, 2017). Furthermore, it is notable that our data is consistent with previous research that shows typical children's speech to be characterized by frequent usage of the present tense (Subbarao, 1995). The result of present study also aligns with that of Kaur & Tashreefa (2017).

SUMMARY & CONCLUSION

Limited data exists on the subject of tense marker acquisition among typical children speaking Hindi; particularly those within the 6-8 year age bracket. This study seeks to address this issue by examining both the form and frequency of usage for said markers among typical children speaking Hindi language who fall within that specific age bracket; in addition to noting any differences seen across age groups via both picture descriptions and informal speaking tasks. The study group consisted of 50 students from similarly structured schools who were divided into two evenly distributed equal-aged cohorts; toys, books and pictures were among some stimuli provided for eliciting language use over video-recorded sessions using Vivo V2029 smart phone in order to make thorough analyses possible. After transcribing all recordings obtained for research purposes and conducting thorough examinations thereof via statistical inquiry using completed record sheets, broad evidence of tense markers being used was found anew within both original age cohorts studied. Notably, comparative evaluations revealed distinct differences between gender subgroups in the acquisition of present perfect continuous tense and past perfect tense in the age group of 7.0-7.11 years. Whereas, significant difference was found in the same age group in the acquisition of future continuous tense. Moreover, the older cohort outperformed younger participants in all areas related to tense markers with accuracy levels being significantly increased with experience, as our study concludes.

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