

Impact of Watching Cartoons on Pronunciation of a Child in an EFL Setting: A Comparative Study with Problematic Sounds of EFL Learners

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to describe a longitudinal case study of pronunciation acquisition for an Arabic child who watched English TV cartoons in an English as a foreign language (EFL) setting, basically in Buraidah, Saudi Arabia. The child, whose name is Anmar, was raised in a typical Arabic environment where Arabic was the only means of communication he experienced. He watched selected English TV cartoons since he was three years old and until he was ten years old. This research study focused on Anamr's acquisition of pronunciation, although the chances to use the language were very limited due to his EFL environment. Additionally, the study aims at comparing Anmar's pronunciation of problematic sounds to Arab learners of English, as stated in previous studies. The research adopted a longitudinal research methodology aiming to find if watching English TV cartoons without even minimum use of language could impact the child's pronunciation compared to his counterparts of Arab learners of English. Therefore, this research utilized some methods, including rating some audio and video recordings of conversations with his father and storytelling. Two native speakers of English rated his performance. A mispronunciation recognition test was carried out to evaluate Anmar's recognition of mispronunciation. The study found out that Anmar's pronunciation was native-like. He far outperformed the Arab learners of English concerning the problematic sounds to Arab learners. He easily differentiates between, for instance, minimal pairs, diphthongs, consonant clusters, vowels, and intonation. The study concluded that children might acquire English pronunciation by watching TV cartoons to be able to overcome the pronunciation problems that many Arab speakers experience. Additionally, English learners in elementary schools may watch such programs to train them to listen to authentic language in media.

Keywords: Acquisition, Arab, EFL learner, English cartoons, phonetics, phonology, pronunciation

Cite as: Alghonaim, A. S. (2020). Impact of Watching Cartoons on Pronunciation of a Child in an EFL Setting: A Comparative Study with Problematic Sounds of EFL Learners. *Arab World English Journal*, 11 (1) 52-68. DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol11no1.5>

Introduction

The systematic study of how people acquire a second language is still subject to further studies, although it began many years ago. Second Language Acquisition (SLA) refers to the study of how students learn a second language (L2) in addition to their first language (L1). The existence of the first language implies the challenges and parameters of the field of SLA. Here L2 refers to the process of learning any word after the first language or as the learners are still acquiring the first language inside or outside the classroom where learners communicate with the use of L2 outside their homeland (Ellis, 2000). There are different ways to acquire or learn second or foreign languages. It can be in a formal way as in a classroom environment or informal means, such as when the learners pick up the words by being culturally active participants of the society of L2. Usually children living in a foreign country have a chance attend public. Likewise, ESL adults may engage in activities that require routine immersion in the community. It is extremely important in second language acquisition to study if some local cultural tools and media of L2 available to foreign language learners may enhance the acquisition of L2. What other factors can these tools and media provide to EFL learners and children may also add to second language acquisition? Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and Early Language Learning (ELL) received considerable attention from linguists over the years. There is a widespread belief that second language acquisition among children is achieved relatively fast and without effort (Nikolov & Djigunovi'c, 2009). What may SLA research yield if children in EFL settings face this effortless second language acquisition via English TV programs? How much do they learn? Do they resist to watch different programs? What language aspects do benefit the most from watching English TV programs? This research study represents only one aspect related to pronunciation.

Definition of Pronunciation:

Cook (1996, as cited in Gilakjan, 2016) introduces pronunciation as the articulation of English sounds. Paulston and Burder (1976, as cited in Abbas, 2016) propose a definition for the pronunciation that ensures the use of a sound system, which facilitates communication between the two parties, the speaker and the listener. Kristina, Diah, Rarasteja, and Zita (2006) emphasize this concept between the speaker and listener. They perceive that pronunciation requires the production and reception of sounds to achieve interaction. To facilitate communication, Otlowski (1998) states that speakers should avoid pronunciation mistakes by producing certain sounds in an acceptable manner (Richard & Schmidt, 2002).

Pronunciation is an essential skill that learners should acquire because it is the "bridge" for oral communication. In fact, mispronunciation hinders communication and discussion. In English classrooms, according to mispronunciation creates significant difficulties, whereas proper pronunciation positively impacts language learning.

Acquisition of L2 Pronunciation

Language acquisition entails language exposure and language communication (Celce-Murcia et al., 1996), which is absent in EFL environments. Therefore, the acquisition of pronunciation falls into the same challenge for EFL language learners. Most language input for EFL learners is limited to classroom instruction, which, according to Larson-Hall (2008), comprises minimal information through a few hours per week. Therefore, EFL learners meet some difficulties with the sound system second or foreign language.

A study conducted by Binturki (2008) found that ESL learners in college had significant problems with minimal pairs. In the study, the participants were Saudi nationals who had started learning English from the age of twelve years and later went through an ESL program in the US. Even after the ESL program, these college students were unable to correctly differentiate between /f/ and /v/ as well as /b/ and /p/ (Binturki, 2008). Similarly, Hago and Khan (2015) researched pronunciation problems among Saudi secondary school students. They found that they had a problem with the sound /v/ since it does not exist in the Arabic language. The participants mispronounced the phoneme /v/ with /f/, which is the closest sound.

Therefore, and in order to deal with the dilemma of L2 pronunciation problems, many researchers introduce several instructional techniques to teach pronunciation (Elliott, 1997; Lord, 2008; Hahn, 2004). These techniques include phonetic training, minimal pair drills, contextualized minimal pairs, twisting of tongue, reading aloud, and recordings of learners' sounds (Morales, 2017). Altamimi (2015), for example, introduced a technique to train students to differentiate between minimal pairs after he noticed that students have a significant problem with relative sounds, such as /b/ and /p/ and between /f/ and /v/. Additionally, Hamada (2017) used an instructional technique called "shadowing," where students hear sounds and repeat them as accurately as possible.

However, previous studies on L2 pronunciation instructions in EFL contexts have been unsuccessful (Fullana & Mora, 2009; Garcia, Gallardo, 2003; Monje-Sanguesa, 2016). Calvo, Benzie, (2014) and Moyer (1999) showed that failure of these explicit instructions refers to the nature of pronunciation acquisition, which requires a long time and a large amount of language exposure and not only applying some techniques for a few weeks. With these issues concerning the dilemma of L2 pronunciation, one might think of the significant source of the problem that is related to the age of L2 learners who had minimal exposure to L2 in their childhood.

Critical Period and Pronunciation Acquisition

It has become widespread that second language learners learn better and faster than adult learners. It is Lenneberg (1967) who coined this idea of "critical period hypothesis" (CPH). Critical period suggests that due to biological and neurological reasons, language learners lose some flexibility that prevents successful language acquisition after the age of puberty. At that time of the critical period, language learning tends to be slow and inaccurate.

The critical period hypothesis is related to the age of the language learner. However, it affects some domains of language acquisition. Pronunciation is said to be the most sensitive domain that is associated with the age of the learner (Scovel, 1969). The acquisition of pronunciation, after the age of 14, is supposed to be invariably identified as non-native or non-nativelike performance (Long, 1990). De Guerrero (2004) asserts that at a young age, a child uses inner speech in L2 and internalization to develop fundamentals in L2 acquisition. Evidence in support for the CPH is well-established in the literature. Many studies have attempted to test the CPH (Asher & Price, 1967; Snow & Hoefnagel-Hohle, 1977; Thompson, 1991).

Language Input and Language Interaction

Although interaction and input have been controversial issues in language acquisition, this research doesn't favor one to the other. It views the status of cartoon watching regarding to the two theories. Both theories have significant roles in second language acquisition. Long (1996) claims that interaction "facilitates language acquisition because it connects input (what learners hear and read); internal learner capacities, particularly selective attention; and output (what learners produce) in productive ways" (pp.451-452). By this, he assumes that interaction and meaning negotiation enhances language acquisition and language learning. Although interaction theory is not geared directly to pronunciation, according to Long (1996), it allows language learners to receive feedback, which eventually involves linguistic input (morphemes, words, utterances). However, interaction in EFL environments, though indispensable, rarely exists.

On the other hand, comprehensible input, which first proposed by Krashen (1985), emphasizes the role of the linguistic data that language learners receive in the target language. Krashen views interaction as a source of contribution to the learner, which later is governed by the affective filter that decides language manipulation.

Both two theories, interaction and comprehensible input, highlight one another. Krashen, for example, emphasizes the role of communication. Long, on the other hand, puts great emphasis on the importance of comprehensible input (Muho & Kurani, 2011). The existence of both theories creates an ideal environment for language acquisition and language learning. The absence of either one calls language learners and language teachers to work on alternative techniques or ideas to compensate for the lack of language exposure in EFL settings. The current research focuses on the impact, if there is, of input received from TV programs on the acquisition of pronunciation by a child in a non-native speaking country (EFL), Saudi Arabia, in the absence of minimal interaction.

Language Acquisition via TV Programs

TV programs for children provide great amount and high level of language. Yet language exposure in natural settings without any systematic intervention represents the ideal source of language acquisition where language receivers experience language characteristics in a substantial manner. According to Koolstra and Beentjes (1999), the full meaning of the word becomes comprehensive when language learners receive the words in various semantic contexts. Incidental language acquisition is what signifies natural language acquisition. Similarly, research has shown that watching TV programs in a foreign language allows learners to acquire language incidentally (Lekkai, 2014). A study by Poštič (2015) found that students born in a non-English country who had watched American cartoons in their childhood developed American accent over time. This vital development occurs with little effort and almost without their realization. Therefore, watching cartoons allows a young learner to immerse himself in a foreign culture, which creates an environment for learning and acquiring the English language. Several researchers (San Jose & Vicencio, 2018; Sipra, Alsolami, & Farooq, 2016; Nurhayati, 2015) have emphasized that watching TV cartoons is interested and enjoyable to children and creates instinct motivation to view and continue watching (Prosic-Santovac, 2017).

Previous studies on the effect of watching TV programs (Lekkai, 2014; Rapaport, 2000; Koolstra & Beentjes, 1999) were either conducted on the impact of watching subtitle programs or

with some writing activities during watching, which means that watchers already have a minimum amount of language. Many studies have investigated the influence of watching subtitled or captioned TV programs for a short time in experimental settings, academic settings (Koolstra & Beentjes, 1999; Rapaport, 2000; Webb & Rodgers, 2009; Brown et. al., 2008; Vidal, 2003). Other studies have researched the influence of watching subtitled TV programs in non-academic experiments (d'Ydewalle et. al. ,1989; 1995, 1997; Pavakanun et. al., 1992).

However, the present study is different since it focuses on a child raised in a typical EFL country and who started to watch English TV cartoons with zero knowledge about the English language and without any intention to acquire or develop pronunciation. Furthermore, this study does not track child pronunciation stages. It, instead, compares the performance of the child and Arab speakers of English regarding the problematic sounds they have, as shown in literature studies.

Problems of Pronunciation of ESL and EFL speakers

This part serves as referential data of erroneous pronunciation to compare the child's pronunciation with ESL /EFL Arab and Saudi speakers. The errors of pronunciation experienced by Arab and Saudi learners of English as a second or foreign language have received much attention by researchers (Al-Saidat, 2010; Kharma & Hajjaj, 1989; Al-Shuaiabi, 2009; Binturki, 2008; Altaha, 1995; Tushyeh, 1996; Wahba, 1998, Barros; 2003, Hago & Khan, 2015; Watson, 2002; Val Barros, 2003; Avery & Ehrlich, 1992). Although these studies may give different labels and different reasons for pronunciation errors, they provide almost similar examples.

This research doesn't review these studies but refers to them to cite the familiar erroneous sounds that Arab, and in particular, Saudi Arabian, speakers of English commit. They focus on different problematic sounds. The following table shows the common sound problems investigated in the studies mentioned above. This current study will investigate the subject's performance with regard to these doubtful sounds. Also, the study will describe the impact of watching cartoon programs on the subject's performance.

Table 1. *problematic sounds produced by Arab speakers of English*

Sound Label	Type of Error	Examples of Errors
consonant cluster	Breaking cluster by inserting vowel	Spring /sɪprɪŋ/ wished /wɪʃɪd/ Asked /askɪd/
Consonant doubling	Separating two consonants	Allow /al-low/
Distinct phonemes	Loosing phonetic features	Light /l/
Sound replacement	Sounds are replaced with other sounds	/t/ in /bat instead of /d/ in /bad/, /t/ in /mat/ instead of /d/ in /mad/
Minimal pairs	Confusion between certain pairs of sounds	/p and /b/ in /beoble/ for "people" /v/ and /f/ in /faporite/ for "favorite"
Diphthongs	Replacement of diphthongs by other sounds	We need to use phonetic symbols
Vowel distinction	Replacement of a vowel by another vowel	/ɪ/ and /e/ in /sit/ and /set/ /ɒ/ and /ʌ/ in /lock/ and /luck/

Significance of the Study

This longitudinal study will provide the field with an optimal way to quickly master a persistent language problem, basically pronunciation problems that those Arab speakers of English face. Data gathered will help English teachers in elementary grades to make pupils imitate the same way Anmar did. It is also significant because it guides parents to help their children with instruments and tools that are available for free and have an impact on them and their attitudes towards English. The study will inform parents how the case of Anmar is applicable and useful to their children. This study is significant in whole as watching cartoon is the main source of the acquisition of pronunciation. The subject preview of language pronunciation acquisition has not resulted from other effects of subtitles or captions shown on the screen. The child started watching TV cartoons with absolutely zero English and was not exposed to any other sources later.

Study Problem

Students may acquire language through socialization and the media. Therefore, the language development of students should end in their classrooms. Since English is not the native language, pupils often find difficulties in learning it quickly. Nowadays, children can easily acquire knowledge and ideas on what they see on screens. Children under the pre-elementary stage usually need more considerable attention in catching their interest in learning to develop their listening and speaking skills. During this time, they formally or informally associate words with actions and actions with signals and symbols that they see at home. Children, at this level, acquire knowledge based on what they hear and see. Though there are a lot of motivational devices used by parents at home and teachers in schools, those are not enough for students who just began learning and attending schools. Pre-elementary students do not stay in school longer than 5 hours, so, most of the time, they are at home resting, playing, and watching the television, specifically English cartoons. From there, children's learning progress also grows. They are fond of watching cartoons, and besides being entertained, they learn something from it and most probably live with the language used by those cartoon characters and by their parents and siblings through imitation.

Study Setting

The study took place in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, where Arabic is the mother tongue of Saudi people and English is a foreign language. Saudi students start learning English at the fourth Primary Grade. The subject of the study was three years old when he started watching cartoons in English. Arabic was the only means of communication at home and in school.

Television Cartoons

Anmar started watching just "Dora the Explorer" as his English was zero. After he had gained some language and confidence, he started watching other cartoons such as "Lazy Town" and "SpongeBob." Then he began watching episodes of real characters of children.

- Dora the Explorer

Dora the Explorer is a program for children. This cartoon teaches many things by interacting with young viewers. The program is based on a problem-solving task through the use of a map. Some episodes are particularly geographic (Carter, 2008). The English language used is simplified, in which the characters continuously repeat words. The creators of the program claim that the show was created based on Gardner's Multiple Intelligence Theory that encourages children to use all

pits of intelligences to help Dora resolve the problems she experiences during the tour in the woods (Carter, 2008). The program contains active participation by giving children opportunities via long pauses to allow children to interact with the characters.

- **Lazy Town**

Lazy Town, in a town full of lazy people, one hero, Spartacus, tries to make a difference by teaching people how to live healthy lives. It is about promoting a healthy lifestyle for children, in a positive, entertaining, and catchy way. It is a cartoon from Iceland. Its central characters are Stephanie, Spartacus, and Rotten Robbie. It is a combination of live-action, puppetry, and computer-generated animation with a tale full of energy. The series promote a healthy lifestyle through a fun mix of music and comedy, which has an exact story with a dynamic colorful world, turned upside-down (Barth & Ciobanu, 2017).

- **Sponge Bob**

Sponge Bob is an entertaining cartoon. It is about Sponge, who lives in the ocean. It presents everyday language. The program is suitable for children of six- to 11-year-olds.

Methodology

This study is a longitudinal investigation of a child's pronunciation through viewing cartoons in English. It shows the child's acquisition of pronunciation of some problematic sounds compared to other English learners from the same country, Saudi Arabia, and EFL speakers of English from other Arab countries. It adopts the case study method. A child born in Saudi Arabia, a non-English speaking nation, started watching strictly specific TV cartoon channels at the age of two. Arabic was present in everyday dialogue with his parents, his two brothers, his relatives, and his friends. He kept watching English cartoons until he was eleven. So, the primary quantitative part of the research is connected to the actual time spent in front of the TV and, more specifically, cartoon channels, and the qualitative part represents the influence cartoon-watching had on the English-language acquisition of pronunciation of the child.

Thus, this research used a longitudinal case study approach since it offers the necessary features for this study. As noted by Duff (2008), case studies are common in education and linguistic research. Additionally, the qualitative aspect of the research is deductive, as it entails the description of a linguistic phenomenon. In particular, the study is attempting to explore the correlation between watching cartoons and English pronunciation acquisition and describe the observed impacts. One of the advantages of case studies is that it is exploratory and allows for theory building, and it is critical in longitudinal studies due to in-depth features (Duff, 2008). The collected data was analyzed where distinct themes such as consonant clusters, minimal pairs, and others, which represent common pronunciation challenges faced by Arab learners of English, were evaluated.

Exclusive audio and video recordings were collected during the child's conversations with his father or from the child's monolingual speech, such as when he plays with his toys or the songs he memorized. The communication between the child and his father served the the research. Two native speakers of English listened to these conversations, analyzed, and compared the child's pronunciation performance to the pronunciation problems of Saudi learners in particular and Arabs

in general. These problems, regardless of their sources, are well stated by previous studies, as mentioned earlier.

The native speaker raters paid particular attention to the familiar sounds that Saudi and other Arab speakers of English face. For more and through data, the child was recorded reading several passages to better rate his pronunciation competence for both segmental and supra-segmental sounds.

The study does not focus on the child's pronunciation development or his problems. It investigates his pronunciation performance compared to the pronunciation problems experienced by English as a second language (ESL)\EFL Saudi speakers and Arab speakers, as well. Additionally, the study tries to examine the child's recognition ability to distinguish the problematic sounds through mispronouncing these sounds and giving him a chance to decide whether it is correct or not.

The reason behind choosing Saudi and Arab EFL and ESL speakers serves the purpose of the study. From one aspect, the case study relates to Saudi children who face persistent difficulties in learning English. Including the Arab learners of English is because Anmar speaks the same mother tongue of Arabs, although they talk about variant accents of Arabic. Therefore, the researcher assumes that this study, within its limitation, might add to the related literature of SL and FL acquisition in general and pronunciation acquisition in particular.

Rating the Child's Speech

Two English native speakers volunteered as raters (Baker and Smith). One of the evaluators is a Ph.D. student at Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP). The other evaluator is a master student at the same university. Both assessors were enrolled in the English Department at IUP and were provided with a list of the problematic sounds of Saudi and Arab EFL and ESL speakers to judge if the child produces similar doubtful sounds or outperforms them. The raters used a scale of 10 points to judge the accuracy of the pronunciation of the target sound problems. Appendix A presents a description of this scale. The raters did not know the source of language acquisition of the child or his case, so they do not show any tolerance, mercy, or sympathy with the child's pronunciation.

Findings

Acquisition of pronunciation

Imitation

The purpose of the paper was to describe the impact of watching TV cartoons on pronunciation acquisition in an EFL setting and investigate the performance of the subject in terms of English pronunciation against Arab speakers of English, as shown in previous studies. Although the subject of the study was initially reluctant to engage in the first stages of the research, he soon became enthusiastic about watching cartoons in English. Anmar was able to acquire various phonetic features by listening and reproducing them. The child had started by attempting to mimic English sounds as spoken by the characters and soon progressed to pronounce English words, phrases, and sentences almost similar to how the characters spoke. The subject started viewing

cartoons from the age of three years and continued to watch animated characters as he grew up. This duration was critical in acquiring proficiency in pronunciation.

Child's Performance

The study found that the child's pronunciation rating was native-like, which implied that he had an incredible English pronunciation given that he lived in a non-English environment. Previous studies have evaluated the pronunciation performance of EFL Arabs and found that they experience significant challenges when speaking the English language. Various phonetic elements prove challenging to most Arab learners of English. However, this study reveals that the subject outperformed participants in the previous studies since he performed well in most themes, and developed a native-like accent of English.

It is impressive how watching cartoons during the early stages of a child's language development can aid in achieving proper pronunciation for EFL. The initial phases of the learning process demonstrate that the child had difficulties in spelling some of the English words, but still he progresses to become proficient in the English sound system. For instance, Anmar pronounced the words *better*, *bottle*, and *little* with a noticeable /d/ sound, which is similar to how English natives pronounce a /t/ sound with a /d/ sound. Table 1 shows his performance regarding various pronunciation problems common among Arab learners of English. Appendix A describes the rating used.

It is also important to note that Anmar's accent is American since most of the programs he watched were American. He can also accurately identify British English and American English since he has experienced both accents over time.

The child also properly performed intonation techniques during pronunciation. He could pause appropriately when the meaning of the text required so. so. in many instances he would reread the text to pause appropriately after he discovered the sense.

Acquisition of Problematic Sounds

Minimal Pairs

The study also found that Anmar has a good acquisition of minimal pairs. He does not have problems in confusing certain sounds such as /p/ with /b/ or /f/ with /v/. For instance, he can easily differentiate between "map," "bridge," and "bag". In another instance, the child had stated how his EFL teachers confused /f/ with /v/ in the word "favorite," and this indicates his ability to recognize and appropriately pronounce words with such phonetic features.

Consonant Clusters

Furthermore, the subject was well equipped to handle consonant clusters. He can pronounce words without inserting vowels to break the consonants. For instance, he does not mark the word /asked/as /askɪd/ as is the case for most Arab learners of English. This attribute suggests that watching TV cartoons aids in better consonant cluster acquisition and avoids problems with its pronunciation.

Diphthongs

Anmar has a good understanding of diphthongs compared to most Arab learners. The typical error committed by most Arab EFL learners is the replacement of diphthongs by other sounds (Al-Busaidi & Al-Saqqaf, 2015). For instance, the word /wait/ is pronounced with a gliding sound /ey/, but they tend to mark it as /wet/ thereby confusing between the sound /ey/ and /e/ (Al-Busaidi & Al-Saqqaf, 2015). However, Anmar is capable of pronouncing these sounds correctly. Anmar exemplified high-level ability to recognize and mention some of the words that are often mispronounced by his EFL teachers and provide the correct pronunciation. In particular, he demonstrated proficiency in mispronounced words such as "pat" and "bat," "lap," and "rap."

Table 2. *Anmar's correction of mispronounced words*

Words	Mispronounced words	Anmar's correction and recognition of these words
Wait	/wet/	/weyt/
Stay	/staɪ/	/steɪ/
Nice	/nɪs/	/naɪs/
Map	/mæb/	/mʌp /
Asked	/askɪd/	/ɑ:skt/

Vowel Distinction

Lastly, the study found that the subject made clear vowel distinctions during his pronunciations. Contrary to most Arab learners of English, Anmar can differentiate various English vowels. For instance, he does not confuse the /ɪ/ sound with the /e/ sound in the words /sit/ and /set/.

Table 3. *Anmar's performance against common English pronunciation problems based on recorded audios*

Sound Label	Examples	Frequency of errors	Anmar's performance (rating for each sound label)
Sound replacement	Latter, liter, better, bottle, little, mat, sat	0	10
Minimal pairs	Map, bridge, favorite, pat, bat, harp, fan, lap, pal, safe, fine	0	8
Intonation	Have you read this book?	0	10
consonant cluster	street, stay, pray, empty, asked, grandfather, complete, bumped, sixteen,	0	8
Diphthongs	Wait, nice, high, shine, guide, boy, sky, cow, loud, ride	0	10
Vowel distinction	Hot, sit, pin, lock, dock, lid, din, bit, hill, not	0	9

Discussion

Child's Performance

The native-like accent of the subject demonstrates that his pronunciation was quite similar to the pronunciation of children who acquire English in natural settings because children who watch TV cartoons receive language incidentally and without realization (Lekkai, 2014). Similarly, Poštič (2015) found that although children living in non-speaking English countries may develop American accents over time if they extensively watch American TV cartoons. Thus, Anmar developed American accent due to watching American cartoons. Interestingly enough, although still young, since Anmar now started to select the programs that he likes, he can easily differentiate American accent from the British accent.

It is also important to note that the subject enjoyed watching cartoons, which played an essential role in his impressive pronunciation performance. He kept watching because he was watching what he loved since he was very young. This process is in line with two crucial aspects mentioned earlier in literature review: first the Critical Period Hypothesis notes that learning a second language late is slow, unlike learning at a younger age; second, children's attitudes towards sources of language content are crucial in language acquisition (San Jose & Vicencio, 2018). Also, this concept is emphasized earlier by (Sipra, Alsolami, & Farooq, 2016) that language exposed in a natural setting is quick and incidental. In the case of Anmar, he liked watching cartoons since his childhood, which enabled him to learn English quickly and avoid various pronunciation errors committed by most Arab learners of English.

The aspect of watching an exciting cartoon program is related to motivation, which is pivotal in language acquisition. As noted by Prosic-Santovac (2017), when a young child watches cartoons with likable content, the child develops intrinsic motivation that allows him or her to have the interest to learn English as a foreign language. Additionally, the author notes that such cartoon programs are necessary instructional tools since the content includes repetition, as in the case of Dora the Explorer, which aids in language acquisition. Similarly, creative and exciting activities, including media, enhance learner's English pronunciation (Nurhayati, 2015). Anmar watched three cartoon programs that offered easy language comprehension, and the characters spoke with audible sounds. Besides, these cartoon programs were exciting. Therefore, the present paper recognizes that parents or caregivers should allow their children to watch cartoons in their preschool stages so that they develop their motivation towards English when they grow up. This motivation, if raised, has the potential of increasing their language acquisition in general and their pronunciation in particular.

Given that Anmar was able to provide correct intonations, The cartoon programs he watched played a pivotal role in this language development. Children can unconsciously grasp the way characters in the programs interact and observe essential conversation elements such as intonation and body language. A study by Morales, Montenegro, Ruiz, and Concha (2017) showed that when children watch cartoons in English, they can learn to stress certain words and present the required meaning during communication because cartoon characters exaggerate their speech, which makes it possible for learners to differentiate words through intonation. However, the study involved tenth-grade students learning English as their foreign language, and although they showed an improvement in pronunciation, their accent was not native-like. By watching cartoons

and eventually deriving the meaning of how characters interact, a child understands this context in a native-like manner. To this effect, Anmar was able to recognize the meaning of words, observe how actors communicated, and use these elements in speaking the English language.

Pronunciation and Interaction via TV Cartoons

Furthermore, although Anmar was in an EFL setting, he outperformed well as compared to other subjects in the same context. By receiving a rating of native-like, it meant that his linguistics and social environment did not have a significant effect on his pronunciation. That is, although Anmar rarely used the English language since Arabic is the primary language of communication, his English pronunciation was better compared to Arab learners of English. According to communicative approach, learners gain fluency in pronunciation from practice and engagement in actual interaction (Long, 1996). However, learners in an EFL setting experience difficulties to practice English in day-to-day communications. Therefore, watching selected cartoon programs over time lets children observe how characters interact in English in various situations that require specific ways of pronunciation. Although children may not have communicated in English in social settings, by watching cartoons, they learn to pronounce correctly, beginning with internalization then practicing to speak afterward. De Guerrero (2004) asserts that at a young age, a child uses inner speech in L2 and internalization to develop fundamentals in L2 acquisition. Thus, a child voluntarily or involuntarily utters L2 and silently repeats what he hears in this foreign language. Therefore, Anmar performed better than his counterparts. He had enough time to watch and internalize, which led to the development of sound articulation and native-like accent.

Acquisition of Problematic Sounds

The fact that Anmar outperforms ESL Arabic learners, although he has a pronunciation problem regarding sound replacement, demonstrates the significance of the only source of language acquisition, TV cartoons. For instance, he applies minimal pairs, that offer significant challenges to Arab participants. In particular. The study conducted by Binturki (2008) supports the finding of this research. Binturki found that Saudi ESL learners in college failed to apply /f/ and /v/ as well as /b/ and /p/. in their speech. Given this, early exposure to cartoon programs in English leads to improved English proficiency. In particular, a person who has had childhood exposure to audio-visual learning acquires better pronunciation skills compared to ESL. Therefore, if children develop their English, strategies that aim to improve pronunciation such as minimal pairs training, as suggested by (Altamimi, 2015) become unnecessary for them. Thus, allowing a child to have a setting where he or she can watch cartoons in English leads to better language acquisition, especially pronunciation aspects. Apart from college students, Anmar also outperformed secondary school students, who, according to Hago and Khan (2015), had a problem with the sound /v/. They replaced it with the phoneme /f/ because it is the closest sound to it in the Arabic sound system. In the present study, Anmar had adequate mastery of these sounds and could easily differentiate between them. Surprisingly, Anmar criticizes his teachers' performance concerning these minimal pairs. In his dairies with his father, he quickly notices his English teacher's failure in pronouncing \v\ sound in "favorite" or /p/ sound in "palace." Instead, these sounds were pronounced as /f/ and /b/ respectively.

When EFL learners have a clear understanding of consonant clusters and can use them appropriately, they demonstrate an important step in English language acquisition. The subject of

this study developed high selectivity of English sounds, and he didn't not insert vowels to break the clusters. This significant achievement happened due to watching cartoons from an early age. However, acquiring this key pronunciation component is difficult when a child is not offered this form of learning and only experiences English in conventional environments. For instance, Hago and Khan (2015) found that Saudi secondary school learners inserted vowels in the initial, medial, and final consonant clusters. The researchers attributed this challenge to the tendency of the participants to integrate the English language with Arabic. It becomes difficult for these individuals to pronounce consonant clusters, which leads them to insert vowels to make the pronunciation easier (Al-Saidat, 2010). According to Al-Saidat, Arab learners of English experience cluster splitting due to mother tongue interference, where learners insert vowels to make the pronunciation of consonants easier. Anmar, even though he is a native Arabic speaker, his mother language had no influence on him in this regard. However, when Anmar was correcting consonant cluster mistakes, he was not able to provide the name of these mistakes, nor was he able to explain how these errors because the acquisition of pronunciation occurs incidentally.

Also, Arab learners experience pronunciation challenges due to unawareness of spelling mistakes (Aloglah, 2018). Al-Saidat (2010) advises that practice and experience are critical for these learners to overcome the challenge. The implication is that when Arab children watch cartoons in English, they can notice spelling errors and correct mistakes when speaking the language since they have learned the correct pronunciation from watching cartoon programs. Therefore, it is not surprising that in this study, Anmar developed high-level spelling of words, which affected his spelling awareness, and this reflected on his pronunciation of words in general and on the avoiding problematic sounds that his counterparts have.

This paper has shown that watching cartoons is critical for Arab learners of English when the learning starts during childhood development as opposed to advanced stages. Al-Saidat (2010) asserts that the stage of development plays a crucial role in language acquisition, where interlanguage is the main component. The researcher notes that the learner modifies his first and foreign language by adding or deleting rules based on the learner's errors (Al-Saidat, 2010). Additionally, learning requires enough time to master certain language features since some mistakes belong to the beginning stages, and others occur in later stages (Al-Saidat, 2010). To this effect, exposing a child to cartoon programs from an early stage allows him to form a good understanding of various English language rules, thereby minimizing pronunciation errors from an old age. Moreover, as the child continues receiving this form of learning, his mastery in the language is improved. Therefore, Anmar outperformed other Arab participants in phonology since he had ample time to learn the English language as opposes to other participants who started at a later stage.

Since cartoons have short durations, children perceive them as exciting to eliminate boredom. However, as the child grows, the duration of audio-visual programs may increase and, in that case, cartoon movies are also crucial in helping a child to acquire proper English pronunciation skills (Wahyuni & Fata, 2016). Thus, watching cartoons is critical in encouraging a child to watch more programs and thus broaden the language exposure, which in return, increase the opportunities to acquire advanced words and their pronunciation. Anmar dared later to watch real character programs of his own, and gained self-confidence.

Anmar was assigned specific durations to view English cartoons before he joined the school, and this helped him to have adequate preparation in learning English in a familiar environment. While he was at home, he had specific periods to watch cartoons, and this was beneficial to his foreign language development. This process is also constructive since it acts as a hobby for the child forming part of his daily routine since he usually stays at home doing nothing. Thus, parents should allocate specific times for their children to view cartoons while at home and before joining the school. The assigned time does not affect the acquisition of the mother tongue since the environment is monolingual: the child uses the mother tongue to communicate at home and in the community.

Conclusion

So, early exposure to cartoons and continuous exposure as the child grows is a critical tool for developing proper pronunciation in either second or foreign language. Comics are fun, which motivates children to understand the language used in the cartoons. According to San Jose and Vicencio (2018), English pronunciation is the most challenging aspect of language acquisition by Arab learners. However, this paper has demonstrated that exposing a young child to watching cartoons in English can minimize this vital challenge. Early exposure to a native-like environment allows the child to reproduce what he observes in the cartoon programs, which then leads to proper language acquisition at a faster pace and the required competency. Anmar had a native-like English accent, which reveals English pronunciation was not a challenge to him as it the case for most Arab learners of English. Also, Anmar's pronunciation of individual sounds where he replaces the /t/ sound with /d/ is similar to the American pronunciation. Watching cartoons from an early age is essential as it enables a child in a non-English speaking background and country to develop proper pronunciation skills because a child has less hindrance in acquiring the language since the process starts at a young age, that is optimum for language acquisition, and the materials provided are captivating. Watching cartoons in English from an early age presents an individual with the opportunity to learn English pronunciation and practice it effectively. This form of learning is better than starting to learn English at a later stage of development. Parents should allocate specific times for children to watch English cartoons while they are at home and before joining the school to make them ready when they start learning English in schools. This duration does not affect L1 acquisition since the dominant language in use is his mother tongue. An early start presents enough time to understand the language intuitively, distinguish between sounds, and eliminate pronunciation errors. Thus, viewing cartoons is a critical commitment that will allow the child to have proper foreign language pronunciation amidst first language interference.

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Appendix A

Does the child produce similar problematic sounds or outperforms them? Yes or No (1). The answers were then combined with the question about the accent of the child ranging from non-native-like to native-like and scored from 1(Yes and Non-native-like) to 10 (No and native-like).