

The impact of Albanian cartoon films on the learning process, stimulating thought, imagination, and their use as an instructional tool for improving and facilitating the implementation of the preschool curriculum

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Abstract

With the development of technology, teachers face the challenge of finding new and creative methods to improve the educational process in their work with preschool children and cartoon films for children can be an instructional and educational tool for using in the classrooms, preschools or other educational activities for preschool children. Using cartoon films for children could be a very interesting method, instructional and could improve children's attention, improve language and communication skills, establish relationships between subjects in the film and develop problem-solving skills, enhance their imagination and help comprehend emotions and discussions about them. In an experiment realised with children 4-6 years in 4 public and private preschools in Tirana, while showing cartoon films for children in Albanian language and produced by public artistic institutions during the years '80, '90, it was noticed that the children were interested and engaged in discussing about the topics of the cartoon films content. Showing cartoon films for children as an instructional method for explaining topics about hygiene and health, respecting rules and community, helping others and preventing bullying, resulted to be a very useful tool for implementing the activities of the basic-preschool-curricula and that facilitated the work of teachers in getting the attention of children, explaining important topics and involving children in discussions.

Key words: *children, cartoon, problem-solving skills, movies, language*

Introduction

With the development of technology, teachers face the challenge of finding new and creative methods to improve the educational process in their work with preschool children. It is important to develop creative and interesting activities that make learning more enjoyable and also interesting for children. The use of creative models and visual representations help the learning process by developing creative and critical discussions among children. Cartoon films are one of these methods. The presentation of cartoon films grasp children's attention and ensures the continuity of this attention reduces tension and anxiety by creating a calmer environment for learning (Heitzmann, 1998). The cartoon films using visual images became very effective in teaching children values, concepts and rules which are easily identified by them. In the process of discussing the film's content,

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children give ideas about each detail, comment and develop the story by making easily the connections between the objects and figures they see. Children thus develop creative and critical thinking (Özalp, 2006). In order to see the impact of cartoon films in the process of learning and development of conceptual thinking in preschool children, we decided to bring back 20 old Albanian cartoon-films through the screen, because the language of films is in Albanian and their content is appropriate for the children 4-6 years and the topics could be useful for treating helpful and educational topics and thematic. The films were divided into categories according to the topics and messages they conveyed as: -films that announce the topic of protection and care for the environment and health: (The swing, Zana dhe Miri, Elkana and the swallow, Fight for life, The worm); - bullying: (For a nut, The snowboy, Çufo, Two feasts, Te adventures of Piku); -health and hygiene: Fight for life -helping others, implementing the rules in the community and empathy,(The bear searching for his father, Genti's clocks, The scribble, Erinda and the doll, etc).

Methodology

The participants were the children of preschool groups in 4 public and private kindergartens in Tirana Municipality. Children aged 4-5-6 years were shown films based on the selected topics. While watching the films, the children generated various discussions and comments. The children were left free to discuss and then asked about what they saw. From the discussions and questions raised by them, it is noticed that through the presentation of the cartoons, the children brought ideas about the concrete objects and events they saw in the film, developed imagination and creative thinking, proposed solutions to specific situations and generated question-answer discussions between each other.

Cartoons can promote learning and for this reason very useful as an instructional tool in the education activities and programs. The use of comics and visual activities during the educational process resulted to be more effective in learning skills and abilities in children, improve language and writing skills, develop problem-solving skills, increase attention, develop critical thinking and understanding, improve the memory, improve communication skills (Kleeman, 2006, Eker, Karadeniz, 2014;)

Results

During the presentation of the cartoon films, we noticed that the children developed the following skills:

Such short-cartoon films help the children to develop what is called comic speech,

which allows them to learn. It was noticed that while watching the films the children were more focused and involved in the discussion process, also the presence of humour stimulated their interest and they found it easier to remember the subject of the film. During the activity, the children were involved in discussions about the content of the films. “How did the squirrels get the nut?”, “Do you help each other in the garden?”; -”yes”; “sometimes”;- Did the squirrels share the nut with each other? Who took the nut? - “The Bear took the nut, the squirrels were left with nothing”. (For a nut.)

“What does the boy have?”; “He will not eat”; - “The boy will find an appetite to sweep because mom told him to sweep the house.”; “Wood is not for eating, it is for taking home to warm up”.;- “He was tired, he has a little more and ran out of wood.” (Lost appetite)

“The grandparents dressed Loli with so much clothes. Loli became white”; “He became like a snowman”. (Snow Boy).

“They are both playing with a ball”; - “The ball fell on the flowers”; - “The flower was plucked.” The other flowers were upset.” (Zana and Miri).

“That old man is working, the boys are playing”?; -”They are working the land. What are they looking for”?; -”Were they tired”?; -”They planted the earth”?; -”There is no pipe”? (Work is gold).

Children are easily distracted during an activity and also bored if it is only narrative in nature. The cartoons we presented to them had duration of 5-10 minutes, so they were not distracted while watching it and their attention was higher. Children have the opportunity to express creative ideas and stimulate imagination through watching movies.

-”Microbe is a king. Microbes are hunting”.(Fight for life),

- “The flowers helped the children and they took care of the flowers”. (Zana and Miri).

The cartoon films make an important contribution to the development of thinking and understanding skills in children; develop the child’s ability to comment and improve critical skills. Children’s perspectives and interpretations of what happens in the film will be different regarding the same subject, in this way they would face a variety of ideas, and improve the learning results. Through the cartoon films, children establish relationships between subjects in the film and develop problem-solving skills. By showing the film, asking the children about what they saw, it is easier for the teacher to get their attention and involve them actively in the lesson. Children also develop good writing and speaking skills, learn concepts, rules and values by describing and discussing in groups the images and events they see in the films.

“Microbes make us sick when we don’t wash our hands.” “Here at the kindergarten we play with the toys, then we go to wash our hands before sitting at the table for eating the lunch”. (Fight for life).

“Once when I was in the elevator, I lost my grandfather... but then I found him.” “We don’t leave without our parents’ permission, because then we get lost.” (The bear who was looking for his father).

“The tree was broken by the wind and the worm.” “The tree grew, those things that came (here the child is talking about the wind, the goat and the worm) destroyed the tree, he was trying to protect it but the tree was broken.” (The worm).

“Loli dressed a lot of clothes, because the grandmother was worried about him getting sick.” ; “Loli didn’t play and can’t move because he’s wearing a lot, a lot of clothes.”; “They are bullying Loli, we don’t joke with our friends.” (Snow Boy).

“The little ant won the race because he didn’t cheat.” (The ants race).

The visual presentation of images promotes communication and helps memorize the message related to the learning objectives. Learning through cartoons is not about rote memorization. As long as the movies are made up of images and symbols, they can stay in the memory for a longer time; therefore it is easier to bring back the learned knowledge.

“When we kill the arm, we put bandages on it.” (Woodworking).

“The leaves of the tree fell because the wind blows.”; “The mice dug up the bricks”. (The worm).

“The boy did the chores because he had no appetite, he helped his mother and then he ate all the dishes”; “When my sister makes a mess, I clean the house too.” “I help my mother with the broom”. (Lost appetite).

Cartoons also help children to understand and talk about emotions. The children involved in this experiment used a lot of words or tried to find them for expressing what they saw.

“That girl is upset.”; “She is waiting for the swallow”. (Elkana and the swallow).

“The bear is crying”? - “He lost his father”. (The bear that was looking for its father).

“Wow, the tree is crying, the tree’s arm broke, it was killed”. - “The tree is awake”?!,- “The children are petting the tree”. (The swing).

Also, the use of films according to the proposed topics helped the teachers use the films as an interesting and instructional tool to discuss those topics for the purpose of the implementation of the preschool curriculum.

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