

FRI-ONLINE-1-PP-01

CARTOONS AND VIDEO CLIPS AS A MEANS OF GETTING ACQUAINTED WITH THE SURROUNDING WORLD IN PRESCHOOL AGE¹

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***Abstract:** The 21st century is characterized by social and technological changes, which necessitate a redefinition of the learning model, especially in the aspect related to the use of information and digital technologies. In this regard, this report analyses the scientific literature on the impact of cartoons and videos on the acquaintance of preschool children with the surrounding reality, as well as on the formation of social and cognitive horizons. Some of the most popular among Bulgarian children series of animated films and videos are exhibited. Animation, sound, video, new 3D technologies will make the perception of information unusual, different and interesting, arousing their enthusiasm, unlocking positive emotions. We believe that their inclusion in the traditionally conducted learning process will help make it from boring and monotonous to more attractive, stimulating and activating creativity, logical thinking, supporting the formation of social skills and those for practical problem-solving.*

***Keywords:** Cartoons, video clips, education, social and cognitive skills, preschool age.*

INTRODUCTION

The 21st century is characterized by social and technological changes, which necessitate a redefinition of the learning model, especially in the aspect related to the use of information and digital technologies. Modern children, the ‘generation Z’ or ‘digital generation’, as they are called, are born and raised surrounded by technologies - smartphones, tablets, TVs, computers, and others, which they handle with ease in early childhood. They are faced with the need to improve their skills and competencies, because of the use of information technology and equipment, multimedia and multimedia applications (Ivanova, 2017; Rashkova, 2020(b)), the Internet, animation, videos and more, are the future of our time. As *J. Doncheva* emphasizes: ‘At the beginning of the 21st century, the new digital technologies provide humanity with the historical opportunity to make fundamental changes in children's education. Digital technologies change not only the way children learn, but also affect the content and subjects of the educational process and adds that: ‘Introducing young children to the reality around them can also be supported by modern technological advances’ (Doncheva, 2015: 71-73).

EXPOSITION

According to *M. Guney*: ‘Adults use ICT extensively for purposes such as business, banking, education, shopping, entertainment, and communication for most of the day. Generation Z children are born in an environment with more than one technological device and grow up by taking their parents’ or siblings’ use of technology as an example. Therefore, it is quite normal for them to be

¹ Докладът е представен на конференция на Русенския университет на 29 октомври 2021 г. в секция Педагогика и психология с оригинално заглавие на български език: АНИМАЦИОННИ ФИЛМИ И ВИДЕО КЛИПОВЕ КАТО СРЕДСТВО ЗА ЗАПОЗНАВАНЕ С ОКОЛИНИЯ СВЯТ В ПРЕДУЧИЛИЩНА ВЪЗРАСТ.

curious about these technological devices and applications. Today, it is impossible to imagine children who are completely isolated from ICT' (Guney, 2021:141). Recent research on the use of ICT in preschool shows that children aged 0-6 prefer devices such as smartphones, tablets, TVs, computers and the Internet more than others because they include activities such as games, animation, videos, music and photography (Guney, 2021). Communication technologies attract childrens' attention and thus can cause an increase in their motivation and naturally cause learning to occur more easily and in a more entertaining way (Broussard & Garrison, 2004; Rashkova, 2020(a)). Modern educational and communication environments can offer alternative ways in the learning process (Islam et al., 2014). 'Technology provides a learning environment increasing both teachers' and students' motivation. If integrated appropriately into the classroom environment, communication technologies make the teaching process easier for teachers, increase students' motivation and interest in learning, and support learning' (Jhurree, 2005). In this regard, this publication presents the possibilities for using animated films and videos in the educational process in acquainting preschoolers with the surrounding reality, as well as their influence in forming a social and cognitive outlook.

In the past, animated cartoons have been used primarily in the entertainment and advertising industries, but with the advent of powerful new computer graphics software, they are used increasingly in education and classroom teaching. Cartoons and videos are an example of instruments that enable children or students to learn effectively and have recently and frequently been used in the learning/teaching process (Banchonhattakit et al., 2015; Wijnker et al., 2018). Cartoons, videos and audio-visual materials increase students' interest and motivation while reducing their cognitive burden and providing them with unique learning experiences (Toledo et al., 2013; Gero & Zoabi, 2014). Furthermore, they have certain advantages for learning: motivation is increased using this type of materials, children are focused on the video, the images, the language, intonation, etc.; gaining some knowledge of current events and demonstrating understanding (Kitao& Kitao, 1997; Holliday & Grskovic, 2002).

Several of researchers (*P. Steel, Toledo et al., Dalacosta et al, etc.*) point out that, the power and efficacy of cartoons and video clips have long been recognized because of their readability and visual appeal to the audience. They have also provided the opportunity to enhance the critical thinking skills of students through issue resolution by making responsible decisions on certain environmental issues. Media cartoons and videos increase students' knowledge and understanding of science concepts, exploring connections among different disciplines and present solutions on selected environmental issues through visual frameworks (Steel, 2006; Toledo et al., 2013; Dalacosta et al., 2009).

V. Gorodiska, A. Rosmiati et al., M. Sagri et al., P. Lopez, M. Guney, etc. found that the application of animated films and videos in the educational process in preschool has a positive impact on language learning (learning a native or foreign language), as well as in the formation of the moral values of children (Gorodiska, 2015; Rosmiati et al, 2020; Sagri et al., 2018; Lopez, 2014; Guney, 2021)

S. Veres и *I. Magdas* identifies several categories of animated films/videos for preschoolers and young schoolchildren (5-7 years):

- animations in the form of stories/fairy tales;
- animations with informative-scientific valences;
- animations in the field of environmental education;
- animations that stimulate introspection and personal development;
- animations that promote social values;
- animations with soundtrack/songs that are capitalized musically, rhythmically;
- animated films designed to train and develop competencies specific to the visual arts and practical abilities (Veres, Magdas, 2020:71).

From the above categories, animated films and videos could be successfully used by teachers in preschool education, in acquaintance with the surrounding reality, as well as for the formation of social and cognitive outlooks in young children. We briefly present and analyze some of the popular for the Bulgarian children's audience animated films and videos.

❖ **Animated films**

Nick Jr. is an American children's television channel. Since January 20, 2013, it has been broadcasting a localized version for Bulgaria, and on March 1, 2018, it has been translated in 100% into Bulgarian language, and there is a possibility for broadcasting the TV shows in English as well. Some of the most famous animated films (series) offered by the channel are: *'Blaze and the monster machines'*, *'Rusty Rivets'*, *'Bubble Guppies'*, *'Butterbean's café'*, *'Barbapapa: one big family'*, *'Peppa Pig'*, *'Santiago of the seas'*, *'Deer squad'*, *'Shimmer and Shine'*, *'The adventures of Paddington'*, *'Paw Patrol'*, *'Dora the explorer'*, *'Blue's clues and you'*, and others. We will briefly present those of them that correspond to the topic of the publication:

➤ ***Blaze and the Monster Machines*** – the American-Canadian animated series is the first series for preschool children with an educational focus on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). Young viewers learn in an accessible way about different STEM concepts of adhesion, force, friction, trajectory and magnetism. They learn physical laws, how technology works, solve cases through mathematics. In addition, they embark on a variety of adventures in which they have to solve problems with the help of technical or mathematical skills. (*Figure 1*).



Figure 1. Blaze and the Monster Machines

➤ ***Rusty Rivets*** – a Canadian 3D animated serial film in which the main character, a little boy, uses his engineering skills to reconfigure machine parts and create an invention, and his friends are robots. The film highlights a variety of concepts related to basic sciences and technologies (*Figure 2*).



Figure 2. Rusty Rivets

➤ **Paw Patrol** – a Canadian animated series in which the main characters are a little boy and his seven brave puppies. Watching the film, young viewers acquire valuable social skills, as well as those for solving problems and taking a civic position (Figure 3).



Figure 3. Paw Patrol

➤ **Butterbean's Café** – an animated children's series in which the main character is a fairy named Butterbean, who owns a small cafe. The plot of the series is aimed at developing creativity, social and leadership skills, as well as those for dealing with problems. In addition, it contributes to the formation of moral values such as kindness, mercy, respect, empathy and more. (Figure 4).



Figure 4. Butterbean's Café

➤ **Peppa Pig** – a British animated series suitable for preschoolers, following the life of piglet Peppa, her friends, parents and her younger brother George. Episodes usually include daily activities, such as visiting friends, grandparents, cousins, playing on the playground, swimming or cycling. The characters demonstrate different emotions, blushing when embarrassed, as well as sadness, happiness, irritation, bewilderment and confusion. Watching the film, young children form useful social skills and those for understanding and expressing emotions (Figure 5).



Figure 5. Peppa Pig

❖ **Video clips**

In recent years, with the advancement of technology, a variety of videos suitable for 3-7-year olds have appeared on the Internet. Here is a brief description of some of them:

➤ **HeyKids** is a children's YouTube channel that contains entertaining 3D animated videos of popular songs and fairy tales. From them, children gain knowledge and skills related to the surrounding natural and social environment: environmental protection, recycling, personal hygiene, healthy lifestyle, vehicles, professions, fruits, vegetables, seasons, holidays and more (Figure 6).



Figure 6. HeyKids

➤ **Margaritka** (Daisy) is a Bulgarian YouTube channel created by Victoria Velichkova and Yana Lipovanska, containing 3D video animations of popular children's songs and fairy tales, as well as videos on personal hygiene and healthy living, introduction to colors, numbers and geometric shapes (Figure 7).



Figure 7. Margaritka (Daisy)

The described animated films and videos are a small part of the ones available on the Internet and TV channels. Despite the variety of resources, we believe that teachers should carefully select those that will assist them in carrying out the educational tasks assigned to the topics studied. In addition, to protect children's safety and health, it is particularly important to use them within reasonable limits.

CONCLUSIONS

It is an indisputable fact that the inclusion of cartoons and videos will help teachers to maintain interactivity in the learning process, helping children to acquire the necessary knowledge faster and more permanently.

In addition, animation, sound, video, new 3D technologies will make the perception of information unusual, different and interesting, arousing their enthusiasm, unlocking positive emotions.

We believe that modern information and communication technologies, equipment, multimedia, animation and videos will break the traditional training process, which at this stage has

already lost its attractiveness and effectiveness. Interactivity in teaching and assimilation of information and knowledge make it more attractive, stimulating and activating creativity, logical thinking. In addition, the formation of key competencies fundamental to personal development such as social skills, practical problem solving and many others will be supported.

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