



The Influence of Cartoons on Children's English Language Use and Development in Kenema

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ABSTRACT

This study, which was done in Kenema City, Sierra Leone, examined the influence of cartoons on children's English Language use and development. It suggests that children watch cartoons and, as a result, they are able to learn vocabularies or new words in English Language through television, newspapers, magazines and books. The study also reveals that children are interested in toys and costumes; learn lesson about "Love" and "Honesty"; and they learn English Language from common channels such as channel XYZ TV, Video Cassette, Cine Plus, and GTV. The study also reveals that fighting and ways of speaking English Language, together with the use of new vocabularies and dress code are some of the values of cartoons.

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Introduction

This study is on how the watching of cartoons influences children's English Language usage and development. **Cartoon** means a humorous drawing, often with a caption, a drawing satirizing current public figures, caricature, etc. or in the same place, (ibid). In Kenema City the life style of children is changing rapidly day-by-day due to technological advancement, than it was during rebel war when parents monitored their children. After the war, there has been rapid increase in technology with a sudden increase in the production of devices: videos, televisions, mobile phones, all of different designs and types. All these devices continue to be sources where children connect themselves into watching cartoons. This has had direct effects on the child's physical, mental and psychological disposition. Children nowadays find the use of such devices as a means of entertainment to themselves, thus promoting violence to some extent, even though language is acquired in the form of improving the children's knowledge in learning new vocabulary by which they acquire language children as they keep on using television, www.sienajournals.com

Grolier (1985) states that if you ever watched someone looking at a magazine, a newspaper, it is cartoons that are first looked at before reading about stories because they smile or frown at the cartoons that they see. Also, cartoons are usually entertaining and because it takes only a moment to look at them, cartoons are read by not only children but by everyone. Thus, cartoonists know that just about every reader of the publication in which their work is printed will react to their message, cartoons may make us laugh, but they can also make us think about important matters. The history of cartoons emphasizes that the founder of modern cartoon was the English Artist William Hogarth (1697 – 1764). Hogarth was interested in human nature – in the character and attitudes of people. His drawings ridiculed drunkenness, the stupidity of spoiled youngsters, the custom of parents arranging

marriages for their children, and crooked elections, (Grolier, 1985).

Thomas Rowlandson (1756 – 1827), another English Artist, worked mainly in etching – fruits made from drawings that have been etched (burned with acid), into copper. His cartoons were printed in large quantities and sent all over England. They were fancy and humorous, and they exaggerated human features to make people look ridiculous, (Grolier, 1985).

In the same way, www.worldbook.com highlights that people throughout the world enjoy cartoons. Cartoons are animated motion pictures in movie theaters and on televisions, in comic strips and comic books, advertisements, and a wide variety of merchandise. Cartoons are particularly popular in children's entertainment; children respond to cartoons and are able to recognize them and produce their own simple cartoons at an early age.

Kinds of cartoons children watch include editorial cartoons, single panel cartoons, illustration cartoons and advertising cartoons. Editorial cartoons accomplish in pictures what editorials do in words.

An editorial cartoon encourages a reader to develop an opinion about someone or something prominent in the news. **Single panel cartoons**, like editorial cartoons, have been popular in magazines after most editorial cartoons had migrated in newspapers - the senses are illustrated in lines in these type of cartoons, whereas **illustration cartoons** are an important part of children's book illustrations. They are used for lighter works such as collections of jokes or humorous stories. And **advertising cartoons** make frequent use of the cartoons ability to clarify the messages of the service or product being sold, (www.wolkbook.com).

This study is concerned in what is the best cartoon to learn English Language. Studies identify best cartoons to learn English Language among which are:



- “Martha speaks” What it is: a dog that learns how to speak after eating some alphabet soup...
- “Postcards from Buster...”
- “Adventure Time”...
- “Regular show”...
- “Dexter’s Laboratory”...
- “Phineas and Ferb”...
- “Inspector Gadget”...
- “Teen Titans” or “Young Justice”...
- “And other superhero shows”...

It is noted further that “you can use children’s cartoons for learning English as well as other shows or movies; from them, bright colours, tons of action, animation, upbeat music, tons of humour sounds, like in some English cartoons are observed,” ([@q=cartoon language....](https://www.google.com/search?Source=hp@eu=czmxerQmmxwaii ova)).

However, positive effects as well as negative effects are usefully identified when children watch movies and televisions containing cartoons, leading to behaviour change in children. Children acquire language from cartoons. They usually exhibit aggressive behaviour when they watch cartoons. Cartoon contents affect children when they acquire moral behaviour and social values. Cartoons lead children extend violent behaviour to their siblings. Children imitate the behavior patterns of others through cartoons, and so parents must monitor their children as they watch cartoons, Machado (1999)

This study investigates the influence of cartoons on children s language use and development in Kenema. The child is a special combination of inherent traits, whose growing language skill is a useful tool for satisfying needs and exchanging thoughts, hopes and dreams with others. The natural capacity of a child to categorize, invents, and remembers information aids that child’s language acquisition. Thus, language is a system

of intentional communication through sounds, signs (gestures), or symbols which are understandable to others; and communication as a broader term refers to the giving and/or receiving information, signals, or messages, Machado (1999) Machado highlights that “language is quintessentially or typically human: we use spoken language every day, face-to-face, as a means of communication and written language allows us to record and hold on to our history across generations”.

Language itself is very complex; it has a sound system that allows us to use numerous distinct words, a vocabulary of some 50,000,000 terms for many adults, and a series of constructions for relating these words. Language allows us to express innumerable ideas, describe events, tell stories, recite poems, buy, sell or bargain in markets, administer legal systems, make political speeches, and do the myriad other activities that make up the societies we live in. Language allows us to coordinate what we do with others, relay information, find out answers, and carry out everyday activities-gossiping, making puns, writing memos, reading newspapers, learning histories, enjoying novels, greeting friends, telling stories, selling cars, reading instructions, the list is unending. Language calls for an intricate web of skills we usually take for granted. It is an integral part of everyday life that we rely on to convey wants and needs, thoughts, concerns and plans, Clark (2003).

The study focuses therefore on child’s acquisition of language through cartoons. Spencer (1985) notes that in normal situations, a person generally interprets the communications of others before responding to them, and that young children vary in their ability to listen. Thus, Listening ability in children can be appreciative, purposeful, discriminative, creative and critical. In terms of the children’s ability to appreciate cartoons, Machado (1999) highlights that the listening process includes

responding to stimuli involving their awareness or discrimination of what is being listened to, organizing the stimuli in a sequence including synthesizing and scanning, and understanding the meaning of what is being heard by classification, integration and monitoring. Gokhman (2015) reports that you can use children's cartons for learning English just as well as other shows or movies. Sometimes they are even better! Not all cartoons are for kids, either – The Simpsons and Family Guy might be cartoons but they both contain a lot of violence and inappropriate jokes that are definitely not for children. Even some cartoons that are for kids have several layers that can give them a completely different meaning when an adult watches them. For example, just this one short clip from adventure time has themes of marriage, love, loss and scary stalkers (people who follow you everywhere). A child might find it silly, but an adult may think it's even disturbing!

Additionally, children listen to voice cartoons thus enabling them to enunciate clearly; the shows are repetitive – they repeat words, phrases, and even whole sentence structures. Children's cartoons contain episodes drawn in very unique styles that explain new English vocabulary about expedition or voyage.

Purpose of the Study

Cartoon programmes continue to reflect societal events day by day on noticeboards, radios, newspapers, television and books in Sierra Leone.

Therefore, there is need to survey how cartoons can promote research and innovation through language use.

Method of Data Collection

A survey method was used to collect Data. Data was collected from children through questionnaires. Data was particularly collected from children through parents from different homes in order to have a reliable study or result from the data by completing questionnaires.

The total number of respondents for the study was 100. The study area selected was Kenema City where there is constant supply of electricity. The data was simply into tables, analysed, and interpreted so as to draw a conclusion from the study. The focus of the study concerned the following:

- Frequency (duration) parents allow children to watch cartoons.
- Frequency (duration) children watch cartoons per day
- Sources from which children watch cartoons
- Things/Items children like most from cartoons
- Lessons children learn from cartoons
- School subjects children learn from cartoons
- Concerns (suggestions) after watching cartoons.

Presentation and Analysis of Data

Table 1: Showing age ranges of children who watch cartoons

Age ranges of children who watch cartoons	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1 – 5 years	18	18.0
6 – 10 years	34	34.0
11 – 16 years	16	16.0
17 – 21 years	32	32.0
Total	100	100.0%

Table 1 shows the age ranges of children who watch cartoons. 34.0 percent are children ranging 6 – 10 years, 32.0 percent are 17 – 21 years, 18.0 percent are between the age range 1 – 5 years and 16.0 percent are children between the age range 11 – 16 years.

Table 2: Duration for which parents allow their children to watch cartoons

Duration	Frequency	Percentage (%)
30 minutes only	4	4.0
1 hour only	22	22.0
2 hours 30 minutes	25	25.0
2 hours only	20	20.0
More than 2 hours	29	29.0
Total	100	100.0%

Table 2 shows duration for which parents allow their children to watch cartoons. 29.0 percent parents allow their children watch cartoons for

more than 2 hours, 25.0% for only half hour, 24.0% for 1 hour only.

Table 3: Duration children watch Cartoons

Duration children watch cartoons	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Half an hour only	25	25.0
1 hour only	24	24.0
2 hours only	22	22.0
More than 2 hours	29	29.0
Total	100	100.0%

Table 3 shows duration for which children watch cartoons. 29.0 percent children watch cartoons for more than 2 hours, 25.0 percent watch cartoons for

half an hour, 24.0 percent children watch cartoons for 1 hour only, while 22.0 percent children watch cartoons for 2 hours.

Table 4: Sources from which children watch cartoons.

Sources from which children watch cartoons	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Television (TV)	81	81.0
Newspapers	13	13.0
Magazines	4	4.0
Books	2	2.0
Total	100	100.0%

Table 4 shows the sources from which children watch cartoons. 81.0% children watch cartoons from television, 13.0 children watch cartoons from

newspapers, 4.0 children watch cartoons from magazines and only 2.0 percent children watch cartoons from books.

Table 5: Things from cartoons which children like most

Things from cartoons children like most	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Food items	10	10.0
Wedding gifts	11	11.0
Toys	48	48.0
Costumes	31	31.0
Total	100	100.0%

Table 5 shows the things from cartoons which children like most. 48.0 percent of the respondents like toys most, closely followed by 31.0 percent

who like costumes most, and only 11.0 and 10.0 respondents like wedding gifts and food items respectively.

Table 6: Lessons which children learn from cartoons

Duration children watch cartoons	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Honesty	29	29.0
Sincerity	10	10.0
Love	32	32.0
Success	19	19.0
Development	10	10.0
Total	100	100.0%

Table 6 reveals that 32.0 percent respondents showed that cartoons which they watch teach them lessons about love, 29.0 percent showed that cartoons teach them lessons about honesty, 19.0

percent showed that they learn lessons concerning success, while only 10.0% and 10.0% respectively responded that cartoons teach them lessons about development and sincerity.

Table 7: Whether or not children learn English language from watching cartoons.

Whether or not children learn English Language from Cartoons	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	80	80.0
No	20	20.0
Total	100	100.0%

Table 7: Shows whether or not children learn English Language from watching cartoons. Overwhelmingly, 80.0 children reported that they

learn English Language from watching cartoons. Only 20 percent children reported that they do not learn English Language from watching cartoons.

Table 8: The channels from which children watch cartoons

Channel from which children watch cartoons	Frequency	Percentage (%)
TVXYZ	15	15.0
Video Cassette	21	21.0
Cine Plus	9	9.0
GTV	7	7.0
Joy Prime	5	5.0
Fox Crime TV	3	3.0
TV 3	6	6.0

Hungama TV	1	1.0
PBS Kids	1	1.0
Christ TV	1	1.0
Niclodeon TV	1	1.0
Discovery Kids	1	1.0
Channel 2127	1	1.0
Boom Rang TV	2	2.0
Cartoon Network	2	2.0
Kids TV	1	1.0
Galaxy TV	1	1.0
New Day TV	1	1.0
Pogo	1	1.0
Toonami TV	1	1.0

Channel from which children watch cartoons	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Vniversal TV	1	1.0
Zee World	1	1.0
Disney XD	1	1.0
Maha Cartoon TV	1	1.0
Baby TV	1	1.0
African TV	1	1.0
Nick Jr. TV	1	1.0
Toon Cast TV	1	1.0
Power TV	1	1.0
Channel O. TV	3	3.0
Cannal TV	1	1.0
Disney TV	2	2.0
Animax TV	1	1.0
Teletoon Retro TV	2	2.0
Zee Q TV	1	1.0
Chutti TV	1	1.0
Soni TV	1	1.0
Teen Nick	1	1.0
The Hub TV	1	1.0
AYV TV	5	5.0
Wesleyan TV	1	1.0
Jetix TV	1	1.0
Kiddy Wins	1	1.0
Total	100	100.0%

Table 8 shows 43 channels from which children watch cartoons. 21.0 percent children watch cartoons from TV XYZ, followed by 15.0 percent children who watch cartoons cassettes, 9.0 percent from Cine Plus, 7.0 from GTV and 6.0 from TV3, whereas from each of the following, 5.0 percent children reported that they watch cartoon from the Joy Prime and AYV TV. And from each of these

ones, 3.0 percent children reported that they watch cartoons from the channels: Fox Crime TV and channel “O” TV, but only 2.0 percent each watch cartoons from these channels: Boom Rang TV, cartoon Network, Disney TV. Teletoon Retro TV. Nonetheless, only 1.0 percent children reported that they watch cartoons from the other channels as shown in the table.

Table 9: What children learn about most from the cartoons they watch

What children learn about most from the cartoons they watch	Frequency	Percentage (%)
English language and other languages	35	35.0
Fighting	34	34.0
Fashion	8	8.0
Behaviours and mannerisms	1.4	4.0
Dressing	9	9.0
Total	100	100.0%

Table 9 shows what children learn about most from the cartoons they watch. 35.0 respondents reported that they learn about English Language and other languages too, while 34.0 percent reported that they learn about fighting when they watch cartoons, but only 14.0 percent of them said they learn about the behaviour and mannerisms of people, 9.0 percent reported that they learn about dressing when they watch cartoons and 8.0 percent reported that they learn about fashion when they watch cartoons.

Discussion of the findings

Even though 18.0 percent children within the age range 1 – 5 years reported that their parents allow them to watch cartoons, a larger proportion of children of 34.0 percent reported that they allow their children watch cartoons at ages ranging between 6 – 10 years, indicating that these children are a bit strong to sit down to watch cartoons for longer hours compared to the former, whereas between ages 11 – 16 years and 17 – 21 years, despite the fact that the responses were fairly higher, less interest might be given to watching cartoons because children at these ages are far older and might focus much more on school work such as completing assignment, studying for examination or tests, and so on.

On the other hand, 29.0 percent parents allow their children to watch cartoons for over 2½ hours. This suggests that children need enough time to watch cartoons to learn different vocabularies or new words from fun cartoons, for example. The same

percentage of 29.0 shown by parents holds for the children for watching cartoons, (tables 3 and 4), because they too agreed with the view of their parents that indeed, they watch cartoons for more than 2 hours 30 minutes to enable them articulate well in English and other languages.

A very high number of respondents that is 81.0 percent reported that television is the major source from which children watch cartoons. Televisions enhance groups of children to gather together in their parlours to achieve their common goals or interests, including watching cartoons. Children also watch cartoons from newspapers, magazines or books, despite the fact that the percentages in this case are not usually too high, as shown in table 4.

The study further revealed that children like toys and costumes when they watch cartoons. This is indicated by 48.0 percent and 31.0 percent respectively in Table 5. “Love” and “Honesty” ranked highest on the lessons children learn from watching cartoons, (Table b). It reveals that children categorize information leading to episodes, as in the case of “Martha speaks”. Children also appreciate characteristics such as “sincerity”, “success” and “development”. From the study, fairly low percentages were given by children showing lessons they learn from cartoons: 10.0 percent, 16.0 percent and 19.0 percent, (table 6).

An overwhelming number of children reported that they learn English Language and other



languages from watching cartoons. This is shown by 80.0 percent. However, this is evident in Gokhman (2015), “children’s cartoons use words that are simple enough for low level English learners to understand, but also throw in plenty of challenging new words for more advanced learners”. On the contrary, though, only 20.0 percent children reported that they do not learn English Language through the watching of cartoons, (Table 7).

The study further revealed that TV XYZ, Video Cassette, Cine Plus and GTV are the most common channels through which children learn cartoons. 13.0 percent children reported that they watch cartoons through the XYZ TV channel, followed by 11.0 percent through Video Cassette TV and 9.0 percent through Cine Plus TV. But a fairly reasonable percentages were reported by children that they watch cartoons through other channels, including 5.0 percent through TV 3, 5.0 percent through AYV. The responses were relatively too low by a few children who varied their choices of channels.

(Table 8). The study showed that 35.0 percent of children learn English Language and other languages most. The report gives 35.0 percent for this, followed closely by 34.0 percent children who reported that they learn about English language and other languages most, but 14.0 percent said they learn about behaviour and mannerisms most, 9.0 percent learn about dressing most, and 8.0 percent learn about fashion most.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The study was carried out in order to survey ways in which research and innovation promote language through cartoons. From the study, we can conclude that children adopt to watching cartoons and are able to learn vocabularies or new words in English Language through television, newspapers, magazines and books. Also, children are interested in toys and costumes when they watch cartoons and

learn lessons about “love” and “Honesty” for which information is usually about different episodes, on one hand, while “sincerity” “success” and “development” often characterize some cartoons that they watch. Through cartoons children learn English Language and other languages where necessary. Channels like XYZ TV, Video Cassette, Cine Plus and GTV are mostly used by children to watch cartoons, but other channels are also used by children to watch cartoons.

From watching cartoons, the study revealed that fighting and ways of speaking english using new vocabularies, and dressing are copied by children. Finally, the study revealed that children acquire values such as learning about phrases and words from cartoons, Yulya (2015). Children should be encouraged to watch cartoons that are educative, teach morals and positive behaviour.

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