

CARTOONS IN LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING

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*English is the language on which the sun does not set,
whose users ever sleep*

- Randolph Quirk and H.G.

ABSTRACT: Education revolves around the process of learning and teaching. Learners find difficulty in learning English. Understanding the nature of the learners and society in which the activity of the education is taking place is the first requisite of a teaching learning programme. Motivation plays a crucial role among learners, which helps in learning a language energetically and it also kindles the learners' interest. A teacher, who can keep his learners well motivated, has won half the battle. Learners outside class hours are thought of as being out of education, unless they are doing home work, but watching cartoons may demand that we reassess the relationship between learning and playing. Learners respond to voices, music and to moving pictures. Learners who learn informally through the cartoons seem likely to be high achievers.

Cartoons can be used at anytime during the teaching and training as long as they are relevant to the point or purpose. This specific purpose can be supportive to start a lesson, to keep the learners occupied, alert, and live up the class and to wake them up

after a lunch break. Cartoons can be used as a useful source of improving the learning atmosphere. Cartoons are a wonderful and versatile medium in enhancing teaching and training. Visually, the impact of cartoons is immediate and people from all walks of life, irrespective of age or background, are able to respond immediately in the same way to the educational point that is being made. Cartoons can attract the attention and interest and it motivates the learners to learn.

INTRODUCTION

Language is essential in every aspects of human life. It is used to inform the people of what is felt, what is desired and to understand the world. The main purpose of learning English language is not for the acquisition of knowledge or culture of the people who spoke it, but to gain the ability to get along in the day to day situations of ordinary life. The success of an endeavour hinges on the ability to communicate effectively in today's fast paced life. Effective communication centres round the usage of words, speed in the delivery of words, pitch modulation and body language. Using the right tools to communicate the right messages at the right time can salvage a crisis and motivate people to work towards success.

LEARNING THROUGH CARTOONS

We often hear learners complaining about boring classes and activities. Using cartoons would certainly break the monotony (Rae, 2000) of reading text after text in the educational institutions. Very often a picture speaks louder than words and has more impact than just reading the text. It is also believed that the usage of cartoons can reduce boredom and decrease academic stress, anxiety and unruly behaviour. We might have to incorporate some of these interests within our training environments.

Now-a-days, learning is often seen as a serious and stressful activity. A good laugh, either in pictorial or verbal form promotes a positive learning and healthy environment. Thus, we often insert cartoons for this purpose especially in lengthy

training session. Other benefits include the enhanced relationship between teacher and learners as cartoons can create a light and playful mood and learners are basically prone to learn new ideas from their sources of entertainment rather than formal instruction. Watching cartoons helps learners to improve their pronunciation, vocabulary and their speaking ability

Learners will be engaged in the dialogues of the significant scenes in the cartoons. They imitate the characters and speak fluently as the characters do. Teachers, more than ever before, need to listen to the learners and observe their behaviour from the point of thought and language development. The teachers may be surprised to discover how much of the language, creativity and thinking ability of the learners are developed and they could observe the spontaneous responses of learners after watching cartoons. Cartoons are very important for the learners, because it improves the learner's imagination, attention, thinking and memorisation in all the mind process.

IDENTIFICATION OF PROBLEM

Learners find difficulty in language learning, though there are many ways to improve the English language skills. The learners feel bored and they lose interest in learning English, as it is the second language. Teachers are in search of a proper guiding tool to improve the speaking and writing skills of the learners. This research helps to give a solution to such problems by helping the learners enhance their speaking and writing skills through cartoons. When a medium that is more interesting and entertaining is used in the process of language learning, the learners will be more motivated and interested in the acquisition of the language skills.

AIM OF THE STUDY

The main purpose of the study is to attempt a change in the teaching and learning method in order to improve the learners speaking and writing skills through cartoons. While using cartoons, learners get involved and interested in developing their skills.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The scope of the study is to encourage the learners and they feel happy if they are taught in an interesting way and it makes the learners to be active in the classroom. Creative learning kindles the learners' creativity and they will be interested to learn in the classroom. Cartoons will be the motivating tool for the learners to enhance their productive skills.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

“Cartoon is an excellent form of expression, which can deliver positive messages and can create awareness among learners as the characters speak to you and narrates the whole story through their gestures” says Ian Diamond, the senior vice president and General Manager of Turner Entertainment Networks Asia, Inc (TENA) (Dr.A.G. Sudha, Factors Influencing The Change In Behaviour Of Children On Viewing Cartoon Programs, 2004).

A lot of research has been done on gender representation in cartoons and much more is taking place. It is a fact that most of the cartoons show male dominant characters. Many researchers such as (Merskin, 2002, Strenglenz&Serbin , 1974, Thomson and Zerbinos1995, 1997) are of this point of view that cartoon world is a male world. In a study Streicher (1974) also described male as dominant in cartoons and she categorized them as "chase-and-pratfall". Male characters in the cartoons are shown as strong and powerful and the female characters are weak, helpless and dependent. Dr. Hudak says “Cartoons, in their current state, are depicting significant differences in the status, behavior and capabilities of female and male characters. Thus cartoons tell cultural stories that can't help but inform young minds about who they are to become”. (Gender Role Portrayal On Saturday Morning Cartoons, 1997).

LANGUAGE AND CARTOONS

Cartoons are the better medium of communication and, therefore, it deserves to be studied. Surprisingly, compared to the popularity enjoyed by the art and the artists and also compared to the importance of the art, there has been little work done in the art of cartooning. There is language involved in cartoons, a different kind of language. This makes it a matter of interest to study cartoons. Cartoon has always been considered an effective medium for several reasons. The language used is usually simple for the learners or the children to understand. Humour is an art of communication and is very useful to communicate something that is not so pleasant.

Language learning and language teaching take place unconsciously. Cartoons help this process to take place. It creates a realistic target language world for the learner that assures learner-involvement. Since the learner is exposed to a realistic use of language, he becomes a participant of the target language world. This unconscious involvement of the learner in the language interaction process helps him acquire the language.

Language is learnt mostly outside the classroom, i.e., in natural circumstances where language is used for communication. This objective can also be realised by television. This medium is readily accepted by learners, since they recognise it as being a part of their life outside classroom. Once the learner knows how to comprehend the language spoken on cartoons in an interactive classroom situation, they can improve and incorporate these skills and techniques into their regular cartoon viewing which gradually will result in their acquisition of the language.

Cartoons would be an excellent tool for developing awareness of the critical features of the target language. Learners get an exposure to the culture where the language is spoken (through video recordings, commercials) along with the language. Child literacy is one of the main priorities of both federal and private organizations around the world. Literacy holistically involved the ability to use language for communication and interaction with other people.

ADVANTAGES OF CARTOONS

Learners who watch cartoon very often are effective in their communication and educational institutions should assist the learners in developing their language skills.

The main advantages of cartoons are as follows:

- Cartoons are very good attention capturing devices and motivate the learners.
- They can reveal the truth or reality about the people, events and incidents in an interesting way.
- They are useful in modifying behaviour and developing positive attitude, interests and character of learners.
- They are capable of creating humour and interest among the viewers and explaining various concepts.
- They are helpful for providing opportunity for self-expression and creativity among learners.
- Cartoons encourage the learners to listen to their own speech and read their own writing.
- Cartoon exposes the learners to a wide variety of language and it increases creative thinking.

CARTOONS AND MOTIVATION TOWARDS LEARNING

Motivation is what makes people do things. In another sense, it is what make them put real effort and energy to what they do. Motivation of the learner is an important factor in his learning a language. It is believed that authentic audio-visual materials ensure a high motivated value for the learners. Cartoons expose learners to an 'input-rich' environment but the 'input' might not be comprehensible so that the learners can interact in the language environment to acquire language. To make this interaction possible, the teacher has to mediate between the learners and the medium. Ensuring a

meaningful exposure to a language is the job of the teacher. Many teachers like to use cartoons as devices to stimulate conversation. The facial expressions of cartoon figures may inspire learners to interpret the thoughts behind the expressions and the story implicit in cartoons provides the learners with something to describe or to narrate. Generally, it is best to show cartoons without captions, or without dialogues or strips, so that the learners can supply his own interpretations.

A positive effect of cartoons in children is its stimulation of learning. The Education Resources Information Center presented an article by Robert Gill in 2000 called as 'The Effects of Cartoon Characters as Motivators of Preschool Disadvantaged Children'.

TEACHING THROUGH CARTOONS

Communication skills can be improved and enriched through many ways. The researcher had found one of the best and interesting ways to enrich learners speaking and writing skills through cartoons. Cartoons make the class lively and energetic. Activities can help learners to get rid of the fear to interact with their friends in English. Activities make learners to think creatively and it helps the learners to participate and mingle with others without any hesitation and compulsion. The researcher had framed some activities to enhance the productive skills of the learners through cartoons. Some names and objectives of the activities are given below.

Name of the activities	Objectives
Finding out the differences	To enhance the speaking skill of learners.
Dumb Charade	To develop learners vocabulary.
Rolling the Dice	To make the learners understand the quality of their language.
Blind fold	To develop the creativity of learners

Choose the colour	To develop learners confidence level
Match and write	To make learners write efficiently in English
Vocabulary building	To encourage learners individual participation in the classroom activity
Spin and Win	To develop the learners group participation in the classroom activity
Shuffle, Arrange and Speak	To develop learners confidence in speaking and writing in English
Letter to your favourite character	To enrich the observing power of the learners

FINDINGS

The researcher found that all the activities implemented in the classroom were very useful for the learners. The activities were helpful to improve the speaking and writing skills. The researcher found that all the activities received the learners attentions to a great extent and it will be more helpful to them in the future. Some of the findings that researcher has observed are given below:

- Developed learners' spontaneity in speaking and writing in English.
- Improved learners' concentration.
- Developed learners thinking skill.
- Enriched the capacity of learners' observation.
- Made the learners speak and write efficiently in English.
- Developed learners' confidence in speaking and writing in English.
- Helped the learners interact with their classmates.
- Improved learners' vocabulary.

- Created awareness on the importance of productive skills.
- Learners used the language without compulsion.
- Made the learners understand the quality of their language.
- Developed learners' creativity.
- Made the learners think differently.
- Helped the learners to get rid of their fear in speaking and writing English.

CONCLUSION

The research can be widened to all the disciples and the number of activities can be increased. Activities using cartoons can be implemented to enhance not only the productive skill but also the receptive skill. Cartoons can also be used to teach literature. This activities were helpful to the learners to develop their speaking and writing skills through cartoons. Cartoons made the learners to enjoy the class and they were interested and curious to participate in the activities. They involved themselves with great enthusiasm in all the activities very actively. They did not show any hesitation to come forward and they interacted in English with their friends. Cartoons are harmless and it entertains everyone in learning a language naturally.

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