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## **Pedagogical Intervention: The Place and the Influence of Contemporary Animated Movies on Pedagogical Process**

**Abstract:** Nowadays, the most expansive factor which determines the various aspects of human life are social communicators. Among them there is a consistent dominance of television for decades. This social mean of messaging, being a common utility good has changed its status, in recent times. It seems that from the electronic device intended for remote receiving the moving images, it became an inalienable part of the family – often its binder. What’s more, a new feature that TV performs, fully enables parents to entrust essential pedagogical - educational process of youngest members of the family. This means, more than once, many hours of child’s mindless contact with animation movies. At that time, uncontrolled by the parents and guardians, contents of animation are received and assimilated by the child (unconditionally-E. M.) influencing the evolution or changes in the personality, attitudes, and behaviors. The phenomena that occur in the sphere of child’s personality under the influence of the assimilation of media content, just encompass the educational scope. This means that childhood is the most important period of human development and an essential

part of pedagogical and educational process where our personality and character, our attitudes and behavior and action are shaped. Hence, pedagogical intervention becomes necessary to contemporary content of animation, which is easy to receive on the one hand promotes hedonistic behaviour patterns and mass culture, on the other "(...) does not provoke to work on yourself, (...), rather adulate the recipient, confirming him to the belief that he/she has the right to do what he/she wants" [Bobrowska 1999, pp. 67–73].

**Key words:** animated, upbringing, education, child, perception, violence, aggression.

### Introduction

Animated movie, as a separate genre, appeared in the culture at the end of the twentieth century and became extremely popular with the viewers – the receivers of “fairy-tale” message. Since then, the process of directed changes aiming at reaching more and more excellent form and quality came into effect really fast. It is due to the significant contribution of animation technique trail blazers as well as geniuses including Walt Disney or Polish animators such as Marian Wantoła, Julian Józef Antoniszczak (Antonisz), Władysław Starewicz, Jacek Karpiński and many more.

Animated movie gained the biggest popularity among children and is definitely associated with them. For 100 years, the animation technique developed tremendously and the progress has been remarkably dynamic as of late. This is the direct result of the enormous possibilities offered by modern computer graphics.

Viewers of animated movies, mainly children and teenagers, are presented with the unreal reality which is the safe world full of fantasy and colours, the world in which the good always prevails and the evil is defeated every single time and annihilated. Thus, the unreality of the imaginary world generated in the animation seems to determine the feature which appeals to children audience who loves this kind of movies.

In the initial phase of its existence, animated movies showed short and funny vicissitudes of the main characters, however, they became longer with time and they started presenting more and more complex issues, adventures and events. As the years gone by, cartoons’ content became a carrier characterized by growing dose of aggression, violence, vulgarity and emotional hollowness. Nowadays, the level of these vehicles became even more intensified. It means that the influence of animated messages, mainly on children, is acquiring dimension which is more pejorative than valuable and at the same time it enhances educational-pedagogical process. The ability to perceive the form taken by the content of contemporary animation implies the necessity to classify it as an embryo of the future pedagogical problems.

## 1. Short history of animated movie

According to some parts of cinema critics, the first full-length animated movie was produced in 1926. It was a work of Lotte Reinger entitled “The adventures of Prince Ahmed”. There are some critics that debunk this thesis by claiming that Quinino Cristani the Argentine creator born in Italy produced over an hour long movie called “The Disciple”. The movie was a political satire. These contradictions may probably result from the fact that in these times every author ascribed the trail-blazing role on the field of animated movies, not knowing that there were many similar authors in different parts of Europe or on the other continents.

On the field of children movies, the first successful attempt of creating this kind of work was undertaken by the Pole who lived in Russia – Władysław Starewicz [Gizycki 2000, p. 30] – honoured but forgotten by the history, who created works of different topics, mainly with the use of puppets. In 1912 he shot the movie “Christmas at the forest inhabitants”. It is a story of Santa Clause puppet who during the Christmas Eve walks down from the Christmas tree and goes into the forest to give away gifts for beetles, grasshoppers and other insects.

Thanks to Earl Hurd’s invention of 1914 [Thomas 1997, p. 72], the production of animated movies became easier. He made use of celluloid, which he placed on painted background to set the pictures in a smooth motion. In that time, the cartoons were just motion pictures about two-dimensional character who was running from gag to gag, irrelevant of the plot.

However, the true genius of this art, the person who became unforgettable in the history of animated movies, the person whose name is known to every generation all over the world is undoubtedly Walt Disney. His works charmed millions of people and gave them really intelligent entertainment. Disney mastered the animation technique and raised the bar high for other creators. He desired his movies to be credible and funny, he added colour and sound to his productions. He forced his animators to upgrade their skills perpetually until they were able to create full-length animated movie.

## 2. Animated movie and the child’s potential for perception

According to Izdebska [1981, p. 57], the process of children’s perception of art is influenced by basic mechanisms: identification and projection. They aid and facilitate the reception and the understanding of the message. One of the main mechanism of child’s perception of art is the identification with the character. This identification enables the child to cooperate with the character, experience his adventures as they were the child’s own. Boys, in most cases, identify themselves with their own sex characters, on the other hand girls are willing to identify with the characters of the opposite sex [Tyszkowa 1979, p. 81]. Until they are 9 years

old, children cannot distinguish between what is important and what is secondary in the movie [Tyszkowa 1979, p.85], the reception is episodic in its character. Syncretism is the characteristic feature of children's observations which translates into holistic understanding of the objects. The child perceives only the characters and objects which are described by the small number of details. It would be easier for the children to recognize people and objects if the main characteristics are emphasized [Kielar 1978, p. 22]. Fast movement and changes to the size ratio on the screen make movie reception difficult for the children. It results from the lack of the ability of perspective understating of the space. The child is not able to catch two dimensions simultaneously and determine their relations. According to Kielar [1978, p. 25]: „the problems in space perception are connected with the lack of the objectivisation of space relations which in turn is conditioned by child's egocentrism. The position of object can be only evaluated in the relation to children's own position”.

Movie, owing to the possibility to show the event at different phases and reflecting the “happening” makes it easier for a child to determine the relations between objects. Maria Kielar [1978, p. 24] suggests that „(...) it would be good if the changes of the movie takes happened so slowly that the next picture including new features would include the previous ones as well which in turn would let children identify with the previous picture. For pre-school children all the editing measures will not be noticeable to the same extent. The most suitable would be fading out which the child associates with the ending, the closing of the book or coming of the nighttime”. During the showing of the movie, the child can maintain longer or shorter eye contact with the screen. The phenomenon is conditioned by the properties of the movie itself. One luminous spot on the screen and presenting motion pictures of moving things is the factor which focuses scant attention of a young viewer. The ability to perceive and understand the content of the pictures grows with age. Initially, the child enumerates only the things that he/she sees, while watching a movie children follow the characters with their eyes. With the passing of time, the child is able to enumerate the characters' activities and alternatively their properties and in the end the child is capable of interpreting the whole picture and understanding the relations between its elements and can integrate pictures. Researches [Kielar 1978, p. 141] showed that every age group in the range of 4 and 6 years perceives animated movies differently. 4-year olds cannot concentrate on what's happening on the screen for the longer time. They memorize single events and weave their imagination around these events, they do not grasp the whole structure of the movie. However, the movie inspires them to play and perform drawing and painting activities. These activities do not often correspond with the content of the movie they have watched.

The distinct changes in the perception can be noticed between 5th and 6th year [Kielar 1978, p. 145]. Children can already suppress their reactions. They

follow the lives of the characters cautiously and emotionally. They identify the people, spot the relations between events. They can evaluate the demeanour of the characters and comprehend the moral of the film's story. Movie inspires them to play and perform drawing and painting activities and they are connected with the topic of the movie they have watched.

Speech in movie spectacles is only an auxiliary factor. It is proclaimed by the readability of silent movies which portray their subject area and action through the picture material [Kielar 1978, p. 305]. Animated movies are created by separated links [Kielar 1978, p. 305] – separate pictures which unwind one after another, appear on the screen for a while and because of the fact that each of them builds coherence with picture that will appear on the screen as the next one and at the same time sets the stage for the succeeding one. Thanks to this cohesion, the sensible and continually developing content, lively action and organized and well-structured movie composition is created.

Among the pictures children find only suitable things that facilitate perception namely vivid colours, sharpness, clear, light and saturated colours, smooth surfaces, evenly covered with colours, globally treated and distinctively separated shapes [Landy, Kwiatowska, Topińska 1970, p. 263]. The picture can raise profound moral and social experience of the child, which depending on the age, the child is able to. The pictures can also provide children with a lot of humour and fun. Characters in the animated movies are equipped with many comical traits which evince both in the appearance and behaviour that aim at making children laugh. Animations are full of funny gags and comical situations. This humour often comes from nonsense which children notice and enjoy. Notwithstanding, children until certain time do not see anything funny in situational nonsense that directors use to show humour. With age, however, they spot more and more humorous elements.

It is easier for small children to understand situational humour resulting from different events that accompany funny adventures of characters [Landy, Kwiatowska, Topińska 1970, p. 270]. On the other hand, the comprehension of the joke based on the word play requires a certain degree of mental maturity. Verbal humour consists in changing the meanings of words and nonsense. Maria Kielar [1978, p. 40] underlines that “amusement is caused by the scenes showing different children pranks, the games in which children laugh and funny mistakes that results from the character's lack of attention or his/her clumsiness”.

At the end of the kindergarten period children can comprehend more subtle humour. Nevertheless, they do not comprehend the satire and the irony of tales that contain a trope and stigmatize people's character flaws.

### 3. The content of the animated movie

The content embraced in the movies or literary works is abound with dramatic tensions but the ending is always a happy one. The noble hero always triumphs and good defeats evil. There are interesting, colourful, fantastical, distinctive characters and beings, there are also supernatural powers, magic spells and admonitions. The characters are equipped with skills which do not exist in a real world [Landy, Kwiatowska, Topińska 1970, p. 272]. Wild nature and the surrounding also play an important role, especially in the events connected with the main character, animals play important role as well. The main characters of movies or fairy-tales are often children (that is young boys and girls) and their adventures are all about overcoming the dangers.

Animated movies, similarly to fairy-tales should mould child's attitude towards moral value: good, evil, honesty, lies and the like, should teach children to praise the noble traits of characters because of the fact that the child reacts strongly to the characters' fate, is suggestible and processes their acts in its own way, wants to help them, or fervently condemns their deeds [Kwiatowska 1978, p. 340].

The author finds some films or tales negative for the children, they can cause fear, present scenes of graphic cruelty, promote violence and aggression, blur the right proportions of reality and the like. Allowing children to watch this kind of movies without a parental guidance over the message coming from such movies can influence child's psyche and nervous system badly. Consequently, long-lasting reception of pejorative pictures, contents and patterns of behaviour may lead to night terror, bed-wetting, auto-aggression and aggression directed towards the environment.

For a child, both world and the content itself presented by the tale (of book or movie) can be areality equivalent to the surrounding. It means that in child's eyes, the content does not have a made-up nature of a story, fiction but suggests the events that can be real to child's perception. Thus, for a child every tale (regardless of its setting and visualization) can constitute an alternative reality which compared to the everyday and stark environment is more colourful and because of that can be more desired and appealing.

### 4. The issue of violence and aggression in animated movies

By aggression we understand the behaviour which aims at harming the person towards whom it is directed and aggressiveness is a relatively constant tendency for aggressive behaviour [Braun-Galkowska 1995, p.13].

According to Lucyna Kirwil [1995, p. 17]: „The influence of television is particularly significant when a viewer is young, not judgemental and does not have an access to other sources of knowledge, other patterns of values, consumption or lifestyles and does not encounter the assessment of the watched content. The

reception of television programmes by the individual viewer depends on his age, experience and shaped traits of character, demeanour and values. Bearing that in mind, it must be underlined that the child as the recipient of the animation who do not possess wealthy experience nor moulded personality traits is exposed to uncritical absorption of presented content and pictures. During one day of watching movies, the child receives messages of different nature including important and trivial ones, shallow and profound ones as well as funny and tragic ones. They require viewer's selection, classification and evaluation. These operations are extremely difficult and the children, especially these of kindergarten age, are not able to perform them. At this age the nervous system is not fully formed and immune yet. Thus Małgorzata Szymik [1998, p. 347] points out that the child should not watch movies with graphic scenes because of being unable to distinguish between real and fantasy world. That means that the child is not capable of distinguishing between important and secondary things, moreover, the child is unable to prevent or help events showed on the screen and there is no rational distance between the viewer and the viewed characters and events".

Since birth the child learns and gets to know through the imitation which is a process of shaping the personality and imparting (read conveying) of attitudes and patterns of behaviour. This influence, in the context of parental guidance and upbringing seems natural and obvious. The fairy-tales have similar impact (especially the animated ones when the child does not have to excite and update imagination but receives the readymade visualization in which he or she finds him/herself). If imitation is so influential factor of cognitive and learning process, then Winnick rightly indicates the fact that "children follow the example from their favourite tales, TV series or cartoon characters, and it is not important for them whether the characters are real or fictitious. Most characters while fighting the evil teach how to use tricks and sophisticated methods of demeanour and frequently the art of killing. By manipulating the psyche of a young viewer, the authors suggest that violence in which their fictional characters indulge is justified, repays and is often awarded. Thus, it seems essential to verify the quality of the animated message that reaches the young addressee".

Regarding Bandura's social learning theory, what is watched it will be imitated or will influence child's beliefs. Indeed, by observing children while they play, mainly during school breaks, we can notice that they behave in the similar way to their movie idols. They imitate vocabulary – repeatedly vulgar, movements – mainly karate moves or ways of hitting and kicking different objects. Where do the reasons for such behaviour come from? It seems that animations may be the answers. Sosa [2000, p. 21] points out action movies are full of violence, arguments and fight and the fate of movie characters revolve around cheats, killings, abductions or unhealthy jealousy. The child observes it and learns



(specific – E.M.) lessons. Child also becomes aware of the fact that the world is based on the outrage and violence and even the most noble goals are achieved by means of force and tricks. Psychosis of fear and bestriding – the phenomena omnipresent in American cartoons – puts forward the demand for being canny, physically fit and if necessary ruthless and brash”.

Movie idols are often good role models even if they play the roles of “villains”. It happens because the fascination with negative characters has its source in the way they are presented. They impress with their canniness, craft, physical attractiveness, the ability to come through every plight or so called cold blood. Moreover, it seems that the excessive underscoring or accentuation has got nothing to do with it. In the world controlled by the fear of loss and embarrassment these traits are extremely valuable and the aggression towards others reflects “strong character”. Sensitive, trusting and ethical individuals cannot accomplish a lot without resorting to violence.

The significant conclusion that comes from Braun-Galkowska [1995, p. 13] research is that adopting the vision of the world in which violence is omnipresent translates into indifference towards it. Repeated watching of scenes full of fights, accidents and human harm triggers emotional agitation but in time it becomes more and more indifferent. Stimuli cease to be stimulating and normal psychophysiological reaction disappears. Growing indifference to this kind of scenes becomes apparent and the scenes have to be even more shocking to trigger any reaction.

The obligation of TV, regardless if its public or private is to take care not to be harmful for the children, on the contrary, it is supposed to provide children with positive patterns that would mould their pro-social attitude. Assuming the negative view of the world, in which there is no friendship or charity, and fighting, deception and revenge are the norms leads to the fact that viewers perceive that kind of behaviour as commonplace and there is no other behaviour possible. Limiting the violent pictures by TV is not enough, it has to present positive contents as well. It should not incorporate aggression into people’s souls but should be medium of positive values. It is not about “erasing” all the violent scenes from TV programmes but more about lowering their number and the level of explicitness and at the same time satiating TV programmes with positive values and keeping balance between positive and negative scenes [Braun-Galkowska 1995, p. 17].

The process of preparing children to appropriate movies’ reception should start from the early ages, moulding the habits and behaviour crucial in this field, implementing children to the correct reception, arousing cognitive, social and cultural needs. Parents should provide a child with adequate conditions to watch TV programmes by planning the time of watching together with a child. If only

movies are watched together and the parents manage the reception and perception process, animated movies can become the integrating factor for the whole family, they can broaden the experience of all family members and support educational-pedagogical process. It translates into the fact that the caretakers have the duty to control what their charges should watch as it affects their present behaviour and what kind of people they will become in the future. Braun-Galkowska [1995, p. 17] concludes: „when we take a look around our closest environment including family, school, neighbourhood we can see mental wounds inflicted to one another, it is difficult to say anything to defend the aggression. On the contrary – only shaping the positive and benevolent behaviour can raise hope”.

#### **4. Pedagogical aspect of contemporary animated movies**

All the impacts in which the subject of influence is every person – immature individual who is unable to function in the society is defined as upbringing. It constitutes a methodological and deliberate process which means it is directed at shaping and developing determined physical, intellectual and emotional state of a child (pedagogical subject – E.M.), thanks to which the child develops personality, character as well as talents and skills needed to function in social environment (also: family, peer and institution environment). Presently, we live in a reality in which a tendency to standardization, unification and codification of every aspect of human existence is promoted. It is expressed among other in mimicry of identity and social awareness and systematic losing of appropriate social roles. Its reflection seems to be the marginalizing of pedagogical-educational process for the benefit of permanent influence of media – mainly animated movies.

„Mass participation of children and youth in the movies reception and the possibility of movie’s pedagogical influence make it necessary for kindergartens and schools to control these contacts. Only well selected repertoire can translate to pedagogical benefits” [Sokolowski 1995, p. 26]. This control can be fruitful if it is based on the knowledge of a child and the knowledge of the film theory. The commonness of movies that reach the contemporary viewer not only by the means of cinema but also TV and video can become an ally in child’s upbringing. It is beyond doubt that film play an important role in child’s mental development and at the same time is one the children’s favourite entertainments. Children live by the movies which can be a source of valuable experiences, they can provide children with role models, they substitute for letting off the steam, can be a way to escape the reality, additionally movies provide children with the knowledge of world and are the fundament for creating fantastical projections and myths about different countries, epochs, events, cultures and societies. Such a role can be also played by animated movies. Pedagogical contents of the movies can reach a child only when the film proves to be interesting for them. “If an animated

movie is to play a pedagogical role, a positive one must be rationally dosed by the educators, parents and must be well selected and constructed by the authors. It should be an entertainment given in a clear way which lets child relax, learns to cognize and experience the world” [Kielar 1978, p. 150]. Watching every single proposition of commercial station in terms of contemporary animated movies can result in child’s passive and consumerist attitudes and can also make children aggressive and indifferent to human harm. Children can also become unwilling to make an individual effort to organize their own time. Children who watch movies carefully selected by the educators will be emotionally involved in these movies in a stronger way.

The proper supervision of the movies, with the room left for the other forms of activity, will provide good conditions to spontaneous television education and prepare children for reception of more complex contents, presented in different ways. It must be indicated there are no movies destined only for preschool children. That is why, it is so important for parents to take part in a proper selection of the movies are about to be watched. Pedagogues and parents expect the movies to provide children with new information about surrounding world, to inspire them to create their own plays or artistic activities but mainly educate and provide children with the positive behavior patterns and social-moral conduct. As Kielar’s research [1978, p. 111], shows animated movie can play a significant role in groups of older preschoolers (5–6 years old) because these children can understand most social situations presented in the movie. Because of the older preschool children’s line of reasoning, the way of presenting social situations becomes so important. These situations should be outlined in a way that conduct of characters can be deciphered in an unambiguous manner and the evaluation should be justified by characters of particular behaviour. For the oldest preschooler groups, the film can play a role not only in gaining orientation in social reality but also to provide models of social-moral behaviour. The same viewpoint is shared by E. Jaszczyszyn, A. Kozłowski and B. Pietrewicz [1993, pp. 329–330], who point out on what the child can achieve when facing well organized reception of TV programme: “(..) new items of information and the help to comprehend many notions, the expansion and the development of both passive and active vocabulary and finally the help to connect facts logically, the development of interests and cognitive skills, the shaping of social-moral attitudes, providing new topics and triggering the desire to play and developing plastic skills. It all can happen – the authors underline – only in certain conditions. First and foremost must be appropriate to the viewer’s age, watching time must be precisely determined and the contents of the watched movies must be analyzed and interpreted”.

Unfortunately, the conditions are rarely met by the adults. The reason for this state is the lack of parents’ knowledge of what their children watch. It causes the

increasing negative influence of television. They include: “the communication disruption as the dialogue with the screen is always one-sided, the isolation from the real world by filling it with television contents, the imagination and artistic activity distortion – it’s not needed for the reception of programs (movies) having a form suitable for “direct acquiring”, impairment of correct pronunciation of the youngest children, especially these who watch too many movies. The characters of these movies communicate by the peculiar speech which is in turn acquired by children, the impairment of perspective perception, the development of photographic and two-dimension perception of the reality watched on the screen, the development of suggestibility and indiscriminateness, creation of artificial needs, induction of aggressive behaviours, phobias and fears connected with the content of the watched movies” [Jaszczyszyn, Kozłowski, Pietrewicz 1993, p. 333].

The presence of parents while watching cartoons by the children (preferably accurately selected beforehand) is needed to help a child interpret received contents, abstract the message and critically look at different elements or explain unclear aspects.

The optimistic fact is definitely the introduction from 1st May 2014 by Polish Television new digital channel addressed to the youngest viewers. This station presents movies such as “Miś Uszatek”, „Pszczółka Maja”, „Opowieści z mchu i paproci”, „Żwirek i Muchomorek”, „Rumcajs”, „Bolek i Lolek”, „Kot Filemon” and many others. These are movies devoid of aggression, wise, full of warmth, showing the respect for nature and positive and profound interpersonal relations, the movies appropriate for preschool age which are so different than the contemporary productions. Thus the appeal for all parents to show this kind of movies to their children; the movies that truly educate, convey universal values in a suitable and understandable way for a small viewer, do not promote aggression, vain, hatred and the whole set of negative traits, in short spiritually deprived, hollow and commercial entertainment.

### **Conclusion**

Cruel contemporary rules adopted by the surrounding world unconditionally come from the TV screen (and other media) penetrating the subconsciousness of the viewers, mainly children. They, in turn, uncritically receive presented contents: pictures, behaviours, modes of addressing and communicating. Adults for their own comfort and for the “moment of peace” give their children over to the tutelage of movie animations with a false belief that they are trivial and harmless.

Do the contemporary animations have pejorative influence on the educational-pedagogical process? Yes, in most cases and in the face of many hours’ lack of parental control.

Nowadays electronic media make it simple to access animated movies, the only problem is the proper selection. It is vital that the presented contents correlate with the child's developmental period at the same time stimulating educational process. Moreover, it must be taken into account that the most indicated need of every child is a close relation with the parents who will appropriately present and explain the surrounding world. This is the core of parenthood and its main task: the upbringing. It seems inconsiderate to hand over this role to one of the many media – means of mass communication.

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