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Architecture Awareness in Children Through Cartoon

Çizgifilm Aracılığıyla Çocuklarda Mimarlık Bilinci

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Abstract

For children, as adults of the future, to be involved in any kind of work related to city and architecture and will improve their architecture awareness. The architecture awareness provided at early ages make children stronger in understanding the settlement where they live. Cartoons can be shown as one of the most effective ways to bring architecture and urban with child cultures. Because cartoons are the dominant element during a particular period of time in children's life. Cartoons are used as a tool for many educational knowledge. Within this scope, in 2011-2012 organized by the Children and Architecture Centre at Ankara Branch under UCTEA Chamber of Architects (Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects) the "Childish Cartoons Contests" were investigated, which aim to raise awareness of children for urban and architecture at a very young age and develop a sense of scale. Two cartoons were selected which received a degree in the competition. Firstly, the theme and fiction were studied through the stages performed in cartoons and the themes and fictions were examined. Secondly, the children's behaviors were observed and then they were asked to draw a picture; furthermore, the teachers' views were received. In this project, the class of the age group of between 4 and 6 years was selected in Trabzon BonBon Kindergarten (KTU), and the experiment was performed with the class of 8 students, 4 boys and 4 girls. At the end of this study, it has been observed that cartoons can be both educational and informative tool in the relationship between children and architecture.

Keywords: Child, Urban, Architecture, Cartoon, Film.

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Öz

Çocukların, kent ve mimarlığa dair her türlü çalışma içinde yer alması geleceğin bireyleri olan çocukların bilinçlenerek farkındalıklarını geliştirecektir. Erken yaşlarda verilen mimarlık bilinci, çocukların yaşadıkları çevreyi tanıma ve anlama gücünü arttırmaktadır. Mimarlık ve kent ile çocuk kültürünün buluşturulmasında en etkin yollardan biri olarak ise çizgi filmler gösterilebilir. Çünkü çizgi filmler çocukların yaşamında belli bir dönemin hakim unsuru konumundadır. Birçok eğitici bilgi için çizgi filmler araç olarak kullanılmaktadır. Bu kapsamda; TMMOB Mimarlar Odası Ankara Şubesi, Çocuk ve Mimarlık Çalışmaları Merkezi'nin 2011-2012 yıllarında kente ve mimarlığa karşı duyarlılıklarının küçük yaşta oluşturulması ve ölçek kavramlarının geliştirilmesi amacıyla düzenlediği 'Çocukça Çizgi Film Yarışmaları' incelenmiştir. Yarışmalarda derece alan iki çizgi film seçilmiştir. İlk aşamada çizgi filmlerde işlenen sahneler üzerinden temalar ve kurgu irdelenmiştir. İkinci aşamada çizgi filmlerin izletildiği çocukların davranışları gözlemlenirken sonrasında resim yapmaları istenmiş ve eğitimcilerin de görüşleri alınmıştır. Bu kapsamda, Trabzon BonBon (KTÜ) kreşinde 4-6 yaş grubu sınıf seçilmiştir. 2 eğitmen gözetimindeki 4 erkek 4 kız olmak üzere 8 kişilik olan sınıf ile çalışma yürütülmüştür. Çalışmalar sonucu mimarlık ve çocuk ilişkisinde çizgi filmlerin hem eğitici hem de bilgilendirici bir araç olarak kullanılabileceği gözlemlenmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Çocuk, Kent, Mimarlık, Çizgifilm, Film.

1. Introduction

Children, the youngest in society, are the assurance for the future of society. Building the healthy environments is possible with the individuals who understand the importance of the balance between natural and constructed environment and the adoption of architectural culture. Therefore, the environmental awareness is an element that people must have since childhood. The rate, quality and nature of environmental interaction are effective throughout the child's life. In designing the physical environment, it is obvious that child factor should not be neglected in consideration with its significance in his or her development (Durukan, 2018). As such, it must be kept in mind that the child is a user while designing all the environments ranging from a house to an urban scale, his or her spatial perception, needs, and choices should be taken into consideration, and in the light of these data the setting may be designed (Tandoğan, 2014). The reason is why children have a view of their own world even though they are very young (Acer, 2016a; Acer, 2016b). As much younger as they discover the architecture, children might have a chance to affect their own environments such as schoolyard, playgrounds, and neighborhood. The architecture awareness provided at early ages make children stronger in understanding the settlement where they live. With this, combining the child culture with architecture and urban culture can be made with different ways. Among these, cartoons can be an option that they do access to get via TV and internet, the most effective educational appliance.

Cartoons are the dominant element during a particular period of time in children's life. Then, cartoons are an opening door from the actual to the dream world for children. A child would fictionalize himself or herself in this bourn however he or she want and in the meantime, bring into the real world what he or she has seen and learned from that world where he or she entered into. By this means, it is possible to formulate the child and in one respect, his or her lifestyle (Türkmen, 2012:139) In this context, as a communication medium cartoons should be both pedagogical and educational and serve for a social purpose. The used language in all cartoons is actually an icon. Defined as "a symbol such as picture, letter, plant, animal, etc. having a agreed-on, specific meaning", icon is used to facilitate the communicative behaviors in a society. Thus, "icons become media of communication." Every cartoon film has a message in it and usually gives the message with an iconic expression (Güler, 2016:175). Hereby, each element

creating the cartoon describes the information to children indeed. This can be over many subjects. Among these is the spatial perception since any message goes through in a venue.

In the study, cartoons were used as a tool to contribute children to have spatial perception and gain architecture awareness. Within this scope, in 2011-2012 organized by the Children and Architecture Centre at Ankara Branch under UCTEA Chamber of Architects (Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects) the "Childish Cartoons Contests" were investigated, which aim to raise awareness of children for urban and architecture at a very young age and develop a sense of scale. The cartoon works of Metehan Koyaş, ranking first in 2011 and second in 2012, were examined with respect to the contest themes. Then, in order to highlight cartoons in this style and receive the teacher's view on this concept, we got the audiences to watch the cartoons, those of who are eight students in the age group of 4 to 6 years and two teachers, in Bonbon Kindergarten in Trabzon (Karadeniz Technical University, KTU). In this context, it has been determined that cartoons can be both educational and informative tool in the relationship between children and architecture.

1.1. Child, Architecture and Cartoon

Children of today are the future determiners of the constructured environment. The knowledge, skills and competencies that children may acquire during their education underlie their own decisions and responses within this period (URL-1, 2018). Childhood is the fastest-changing period of development, and some characteristics may last lifelong. Furthermore, the most progress is cognitively made in childhood period (URL-2, 2018).

Children become the persons quickly engaging in all periods of life with any acquired information from being totally functionless and looker-on. Every piece of true information that can be attained in such a period will shape the future in the right way. Likewise, teaching children on the conciousness of urban and architecture in these periods of time will enhance their level of awareness on this topic. Gizem Kıygı, a team member of Atelier "Urban and Child", emphasizes that childhood is of vital importance in forming a sense of scale, security or space and bonding with the environment in life. From 2015 on, this team has guided children to design their dream cities using entertaining methods, and according to them one of the most important issues is lack of spaces enough for kids to express themselves within the urban (URL-3, 2018).

As an alternative for the artificial world offered to children so as to be a "consuming individual", any efforts to make for a culture of producing for children together with children is getting more valueable as time goes by (URL-4, 2018). In this regard, it is considered that involving children in any social project of city and architecture will make them conscious and foster their awareness as future individuals. The scientific and technological developments have largely influenced human life, and hence people have to be currently educated under these circumstances (Ilgaz, 1998:9). The diversity in mass media has also increased in association with technological advances. The most prevalent one of these communication instruments, TV and in recent years, internet, have very wide broadcast network and are active in meeting the human need for education and entertainment. Today children grow up using both TV and internet. Out of these communication options, cartoons are the first of the most favorite programs among kids. In general they are watched at any age although the observations indicate that the cartoons of choice have changing characteristics, contents and perceptions depending on the age groups (Yörükoğlu, 1984:71; Kara, 2016:17). In addition, the animated cartoons are preferable by all child audiences from pre-school up to adolescence period. In a study conducted in Turkey (Cesur and Paker, 2007:108), it has been found that they draw a great attention from the children nearly up to the age of ten years, and its level declines afterwards (Oruç, et al. 2011:305). It is a fact that the preschool children between the ages of 2 and 6

years grow with cartoons to a great extent. According to Çelenk (1995), the cartoons gain children learning something from what they are watching, buying behavior, and tendency to violence (Çelenk, 1995). However, when cartoons are made use of for the right purposes, they might have positive effects on children such as more information, better creativity, self-expression rather than all these adversities or entertainments. Children can learn some sort of advanced information according to their age from the cartoons. That's why, they are used as a tool for a good deal of educational knowledge. Child makes out relation with space parallel to the direction of mental and perceptual development (Yavaşoğlu, 2005). Answers are sought for the question "What is the contribution of cartoons' to this relationship?". These studies are supposed to have such effects as raising the awareness of children for constructed environment, creating their sensitivity of spatial perception, providing their development for gaining urban awareness, and endearing architecture, and cartoon may become a tool in making all these achievements (URL-4, 2018).

2. Methodology

One of the most effective initiatives to create urban awareness in children is the project of "Childish Cartoon Contexts" organized by Child and Architecture Centre under UCTEA Chambers of Architects, Ankara Branch, in order that children can gain architecture and urban awareness using written and visual materials (Figure 1). In the context of meeting of architecture with the society, a "Childish Cartoon Contest" was first held in 2011 with the aim of sharing achitecture, environment and urban culture with children. This contest aimed to help the candidate children fictionalize their communications with architecture, urban, and the natural and constructured environment where they live through "Animated Films". With this purpose, the second event in 2012 was arranged under a specific theme of "Cultural Heritage".

Figure 1. Banners of 'Childish Cartoon Contests 2011-2012' (URL-5, 2018).

In the study, two cartoons were used: the first is "Sand Street" (*originally* Kum Sokağı) ranked first in the first contest, and the second is "A New Day" (*originally* Yeni Bir Gün), one of two films ranked second in the second one, both of which are animated by Metehan Koyaş under the "Childish Cartoon Contests 2011-2012". The present study consists of two steps: İn the first, the themes and two cartoon fictions of

nearly seven minutes were examined. By this means, the themes were modulated with samples of scenes from the cartoons. In the latter, the children's behaviors were observed in order to point out that these or similar cartoons would also possibly be watched in the educational institutions, and then they were asked to draw a picture; furthermore, the teachers' views were received. In this project, the class of the age group of between 4 and 6 years was selected in Trabzon BonBon Kindergarten (KTU), and the experiment was performed with the class of 8 students, 4 boys and 4 girls (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Study group

Two different pictures were asked from the children that have watched the cartoons before. The aim was that they would reflect the images emerged in their memories into both and it could be determined if they were able to make a communication with theme. For this, the views of the teachers that have been simultaneously watching the cartoons with the children were obtained by asking two questions since in such studies, the thoughts of teacher or parents are more guiding in nature. The teachers were first questioned whether they found these useful, built upon architecture awareness and then if they would choose to use them as a material in their teaching courses.

3. Data and Analysis

The cartoons of Metehan Koyaş from "Childish Cartoon Contests in 2011-2012" organized by Child and Achitecture Centre under UCTEA Chamber of Architects Ankara Branch are examined with themes. In this context, the theme in 2011 was identified as the communication with architecture, the urban, and the natural and constructed environments, and that in 2012 as cultural heritage. As such, the playing cartoons include the scenes as in Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 1. Scenes from the cartoon "Sand Street"

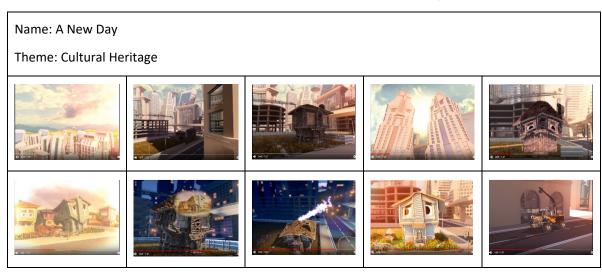| Name: Sand Street |
|---|
| Theme: Communication with architecture, the urban and the natural and constructed environments |

Here, there are two main characters in the cartoon of Sand Street: a child and a cicada aiding him. Apart from that, the elements in relation to the theme are a crowded, dirty street including tall buildings, and an obsolete playground. In the cartoon, the frames of how the street and park in the child's dream are and that their actualization is possible if wished are displayed.

Table 2. The scenes from the cartoon "A New Day"

Name: A New Day

Theme: Cultural Heritage

In the cartoon of A New Day, the topic is the comparison of the old-fashioned, low-rise buildings and the new high-rise constructions. Regarding the theme, the period of obsolescense and destruction of a historical structure is narrated, and it highlights that it is stucked into a high-rise residential area. In the film, there are a variety of scenes about the old and new version of the settlement, and afterwards, the renovated historical building has been saved from demolition.

Both cartoons successfully narrated their themes by creating either settings or characters. The first one includes five settings, and the other with one setting. In the first, the child is leading role while a manlike structure appears in the second cartoon.

Starting from here, the themes and cartoons were identified, and then in order to draw attention to potentially displaying these and similar cartoons in the schools or kindergartens, the animated films were

watched to the class of 10 persons, 8 students in the age group of from 4 to 6 years (4 boys and 4 girls) and 2 teachers, under the supervision of those educators, in Trabzon BonBon Kindergarten (KTU). After that, they were asked to draw pictures from these cartoons and paint the thing red, which they memorized the most. 7 kids didn't want to do because they couldn't well understand the cartoon of Sand Street, except for a kid at the age of six. In his picture, he emphasized the bucket and the closed playground in particular (Figure 3).
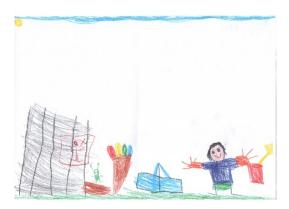

Figure 3. That picture of the cartoon Sand Street

The other cartoon of A New Day was drawn by six children and they mostly used old house, big houses, such words as destructed, seemingly clean, etc. while painting. The last picture that the kid at 4 years drew was unclear, yet he spat it out the concept of old-fashioned house when we asked about the cartoon. They painted high-rise structures red in these pictures. In the first and second pictures, only historical constructions were marked with red color, and they would like to picture and highlight the caterpillar there for demolition of buildings (Table 3).

Tablo 3. The pictures of the cartoon "A New Day"

At the end of these experiments, the teachers' views were received. The educators stated that these cartoons are quite didactic as regards to their topic and content, and wanted the students to watch them in their classes. They specified that it is required to explain the theme with games before getting them to watch such thematic, informative cartoons. The reason is why the age group involved in the activity of watching the animated film was preschool children.

4. Conclusion

Children may win a chance to influence their environment at early ages in the case that they are taught to recognize, inquiry and locate the urban and space where they live, develop his or her urban awareness, and hence establish his personal relationship with the urban. It should not be forgotten that child is a member of the constructured environment. As much as the child can make his discovery in this pathway earlier, he or she will catch the chance for affecting his surroundings and become an individual having a true urban awareness. Here, the basic goal of many studies on the theme of child and architecture is to create a society with such awareness. Teaching with cartoons may be a tool other than various instruments used to achieve this goal. The animated films should be understandable among any age group if they particularly encompass a specific theme. In this context, the cartoon ranking first in 2011 that was watched under this project might have attracted the children's attention enough, however it would be ineffective as a result of the picturing experiment for measuring the audiences' perception. It was observed that the other cartoon ranking second in 2012 was easily understood by preschool kids subject to their pictures corresponding to the films. Moreover, the teachers' views suggest that it is possible to gain a better attitude towards the urban through true information and right materials. The educators well appreciated that the watched films had been selected via the contests.

Within this context, we might conclude that:

- Cartoon may be used as a key tool to gain children the architecture awareness

- The film producers may contribute into the cartoon sector on specific themes with necessary academic assistance for this purpose.

- A number of educational institutions can arrange the similar activities by different age groups in order to create architecture awareness in children.

- This study can be expanded and repeated using all cartoons meeting the criteria in the contests, including the attitudes of preschool children and public school students and the educators' views. By this means, more generalized results can be obtained.

- In our country, Turkey, the support of the relevant institutions for children should be enhanced through different actions such as competitions so as to develop the animation industry.

Acknowledgment

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