
PROMOTING THE ENVIRONMENT TO CHILDREN THROUGH ANIMATED MOVIE: AN ALTERNATIVE TO GROWING LOVE TO THE ENVIRONMENT

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Abstract

Animated movie is a learning medium that is very popular among children. Related to this nature, this article explored the introduction of the environment to children through animated movies. There were two problem statements discussed in this article. First, how to introduce the environment to children through animated movies. Second, what kind of animated movies are categorized in the environmental theme. Third, the function of animated movies related to the environment for children. In the discussion, the strategy to introduce the environment to children includes several stages, (1) review, the teacher gives review of the attractiveness of animated movie content with environmental theme to the children; (2) exploration, children are asked to watch animated movie with environmental theme; (3) explanation, children are asked for opinions about the content of the movie they watched (in relation to the environment); (4) experimentation, after watching the movie, is there any impact on children? In this article, the animated movies with environmental theme being discussed are Happy Feet, Wall E, The Lorax, and Up. In addition, several functions of promoting environment through animated movies presented as well, namely: cognitive, projective, recreative, practical, and academic.

Keywords: *environment, children, literature, animated movie*

Introduction

In this era of media literacy, children learn from what they see (Kress, 2003). One of them is learning through movies as media (Rufer, 2014:4). Based on the research, children watch movies for 25 minutes per day (Rideout, Roberts & Foehr, 2005). In fact, Marsh (2006:494) shows in details that children watch movies for 2 hours per day. Through watching movies, children may act as the character in the movies (Hall & Bracken, 2011). Therefore, movie is a very good learning medium for children, especially in terms of building positive character.

Nowadays, children are familiar with animated movies and they are also be able to access them easily (Bulman, 2017, Kasai & Hsu, 2012) through various media, for instance, via internet or television. Animated movies are popular among children because they offer many heroic and fictional characters that suit the lives of children. Referring to the views of Uno & Bybee (1994), animated movies fall into scientific literacy category, a medium which introduces children to science.

In relation to the introduction of the environment to children, animated movie is considered as an appropriate medium. Children may infer the moral value of the movie they watched (Ratelle, 2015), especially environmental- related morals. In addition, children may recognize, understand, and practice things related to environmental learning contained in the animated movie. Referring to Kowalewski (2002:20), environmental learning in children can be done through two domains; cognitive and experimental. Thus, teacher may ask children to watch animated movie containing environmental learning.

Teachers as facilitators at school should also have the knowledge about animated movie or so-called media literacy. In this context, the knowledge should be related to animated movies with educative values for children. Thus, according to Szabo & Poohkay (1996), teachers should be able to understand and use the media, especially animated movie for learning purposes.

This article explores how to introduce environment to children through animated movie along with its function for children. The exploration is described qualitatively.

Result and Discussion

The Strategy in Promoting Environment through Animated Movie

There are four phases in promoting environment to children through animated movie. Those phases are described as follows.

First, review phase. In this phase, teacher gives review of the attractiveness of animated movie content with environmental theme to the children. Hopefully, through this review, children can understand the movie in

general. Therefore, in this early phase, has emerged children’s motivation and desire to watch animated movie.

Second, exploration. In this phase, children are asked to watch animated movie with environmental theme. While watching animated movie, they are asked to record important things related to the environment, for example, the character fighting for the environments’ safety, the character damaging the environment, or in which environment the movie takes place (land, sea, beach, or mountain).

Third, explanation phase. In this phase, children are asked for opinions about the content of the movie they watched (in relation to the environment). Those opinions are related to how children behave when seeing the environmental damage occurred in the movie; how children behave toward those who strive for the environment. In this phase, it is expected that children’s love for the environment emerge in the context of cognitive and affective. According to Morris (2015), this is called movie stimuli against children. Through animated movie with environmental theme, children are psychologically stimulated by the movie.

Fourth, experimentation phase. In this phase, after watching animated movie with environmental theme, children are asked to record behavioral development related to the love for the environment. Love for the environment, for example, begin not to litter; begin to grow trees and flowers. This experimentation phase is related to the impact of behavioral changes in children after watching animated movie (Scott, 2002). The impact of movie in children, how they behave after watching animated movie related to the environment, is in the behavioral domain.

Table 1. Four Phases in Promoting Environment to Children through Animated Movie

| Phase | Activity |
|--------------------------|--|
| Phase 1: review | Teacher reviews the attractiveness of animated movie being watched. |
| Phase 2: exploration | Teacher asks students to watch animated movie with environmental theme. |
| Phase 3: explanation | Teacher interviews children about the movie they watched. |
| Phase 4: experimentation | Teacher supervises children’s behavioral development or changes after watching animated movie. |

The phases in promoting environment to children are not limited to those four phases. If teachers want to develop and add other phases, it would be better.

Animated Movie

Animation is one of dynamic media of which objects are manipulated using certain instruments to be displayed as moving objects. Animated movies are mostly produced for children and teenagers. Movies with this genre are usually associated with cartoons or animation technology. According to Pikkov (2010:10), generally, there are two types of animated movies; two-dimensional (2D) and three-dimensional (3D), and 4D animation (with high resolution resulting splendid image details). Those movies are also categorized based on the duration; short movie and feature length movie. Since this article specifically discusses environment-themed movies, the following explanation would review some animated movies with environmental theme.

First, *Happy Feet* (2006) tells a story about penguin who was born different from his friends. He can dance differently as well. One day, there was a problem in the polar area since large amount of fish are being caught causing the penguins to suffer from hunger. Furthermore, the penguins are captured and put into the zoo. In that zoo, the penguin asked human for help by dancing interpreted as language. Through this movie, it can be concluded that a large scale of fish exploitation in the ocean will lead to the extinction of fish.

Second, *Wall E* (2008) tells the story of a mankind moving into space (for five years) because the earth is polluted by electronic waste. On earth, there are robots in charge of cleaning the garbage piling up. Hopefully, five years later, the earth is clean. However, the fleeing to outer space has run up to 700 years since the earth is considered polluted and cannot be occupied. This movie shows that someday, if the garbage mounts, what about human existence?

Third, *Rio* (2011) explains about the world of birds. In this movie, there is a male macau (a rare one) who was taken away to Rio de Janeiro. This movie is fun because it shows different types of birds. In essence, this movie shows that the current population of birds is getting less. Birds that have beautiful colors and melodious sounds toward the brink of extinction. Therefore, it takes love of animals by letting them live in the wild.

Fourth, *The Lorax* (2012) tells about a city full of plastics since almost all of the goods are synthetic including trees, fish, and flowers. A little boy named Ted appears as a character who wants to restore life as it is used to be, a natural life. Thus, he is assisted by his aunt and the woman he likes to find the only living tree seed.

The struggle was successful and that little boy finally found the only seed. In the flashback scene, it was shown that there was a child cutting the trees in the forest. At first, he was allowed to do so by Lorax, the watchman of the forest. However, over time, he cut all the trees and left only one seed.

Through this movie, it is projected that the future will be an artificial world. The creatures, including fish, birds, and flowers, will be all artificial. Indeed, nowadays, the artificial arts about nature, animals, and plants can be found easily in several stores. We can buy artificial orchid that is similar to the original one. Therefore, from now on, we have to love our nature so that later, it will not be replaced by artificial things.

Fifth, *UP* (2009) tells about a scout boy called Russel who loves adventure. Russel meets Carl (an old man) who wants an adventure heading to Paradise Fall, a very beautiful place. It was there that their adventure began. Russel and Carl are trying to save the rare animal (a giant bird) which was captured by the enemy (Muntz). Finally, Russel and Carl are able to save that rare animal.

Those animated movies have narrative power in the storytelling of people and environment. Through such narration, teachers can use them as media to introduce the environment to children. Nevertheless, there are other animated movies with environmental theme that can be selected as learning media. In the ecopsychology perspective, children not only recognize the ecological environment, but also the psychological love of the environment.

The Functions of Animated Movie with Environmental Theme for Children

After watching animated movie with environmental theme, children may get the following functions.

First, cognitive function. Children may recognize heroic characters fighting for the environment. Children may understand the strategy in saving the environment done by the heroic characters. This function called as “connecting children to the world” (Reid, 2015:189) in which the children may recognize and understand the world through their favorite heroic characters.

Second, projective function. Children may take on positive characters in the animated movies with environmental theme (Ahmadi, 2015; 2017). Children will project themselves as the characters in the animated movies so that they will love what the characters do in the movies. They may be able to do positive action in the movies such as saving the environment, not littering, protecting rare animal, and not damaging the environment.

Third, recreative function. Watching animated movies with environmental theme is one of recreational activities. They may enjoy the movies and imagine their journey through the story of travelling to the outer space, a jungle trip, an adventure at sea, or a friendship story with animal. According to Mayer (2001:258), by doing so, children may understand something new that they might not experience in real life.

Fourth, practical function. Animated movies may cultivate love for the environment. In their daily life, children can do positive things according to the movies. For instance, children love and care for animals, they love farming and gardening, they do not like littering, and love ecological studies, etc ecopsychology, ecocriticism, green writing (Ahmadi, 2017, 2018).

Fifth, academic function. Animated movies have academic function in relation to the curriculum. Watching animated movies also support the development of school curriculum related to the understanding of narration (Parry, 2011). Thus, children who love watching movies may get ‘nutritional intake’ to produce narrative writing.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Based on the previous explanation, it can be concluded that appropriate strategy is needed in promoting environment through movies. The strategy includes (1) review, the teacher gives review of the attractiveness of animated movie content with environmental theme to the children; (2) exploration, children are asked to watch animated movie with environmental theme; (3) explanation, children are asked for opinions about the content of the movie they watched (in relation to the environment); and (4) experimentation, after watching the movie, is there any impact on children? Indeed, there is only a few of animated movies with environmental theme. Thus, teachers should be more selective in choosing them and *Happy Feet*, *Wall E*, *The Lorax*, and *Up* are considered appropriate to introduce environment to children. In addition, several functions of promoting environment through animated movies might be fulfilled as well, namely: cognitive, projective, recreative, practical, and academic.

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