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Programmes for Children: Their Language and Culture

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1 Abstract

This thesis deals with television programmes for children. The aim of it is to introduce the topic and analyse them from language and cultural point of view, including the aspect of their suitability for children viewers. Importance of Media Education and following its basic principles are highlighted too. Children viewers are divided into groups according to various criteria, i.e. age, speech abilities and psychical development. The thesis contains research focused on parents' approach to Media Education and learning foreign languages via television programmes. Those are compared as to criteria that are established in the thesis. The author would like to present the topic, divide the viewers into groups and analyse the programmes with the emphasis on benefits of Media Education.

Keywords: television programmes, children viewers, Media Education

2 Resumé

Tato práce se zabývá televizními programy pro děti. Jejím cílem je představení tématu a analýza programů z hlediska jazykového a obsahově-kulturního, se zohledněním jejich vhodnosti pro dětské diváky. Rovněž je zde vyzvednuta důležitost Mediální výchovy a dodržování jejích základních principů. Děti jsou zde rozděleny do skupin podle několika kritérií, například věk, řečové schopnosti a psychický vývoj. Práce obsahuje výzkum, který zjišťuje přístup rodičů k zásadám Mediální výchovy a výuce cizích jazyků pomocí televizních programů. Tyto jsou porovnány podle kritérií uvedených v práci. Autorka by chtěla představit téma programů pro děti, rozdělit dětské diváky do skupin a analyzovat programy s důrazem na přínos Mediální výchovy.

Klíčová slova: dětské pořady, dětský divák, Mediální výchova

3 Introduction

In these days television is an ordinary part of most people's everyday lives. It offers them much information, entertainment and even educational programmes. Some of them are dedicated to children. As the topic of the thesis suggests I have chosen television programmes for children.

The purpose of the thesis is to analyse children's programmes from the language point of view, i.e. attention will be paid to linguistic branches, mainly to show their help develop children's language knowledge of the mother tongue, whether they are presented on the equal level or if one of the branches is more prominent. Apart from that, the programmes will be analysed from the cultural point of view. Culture is a very complex phenomenon, so this thesis will deal with it in terms of the content of the programmes, describing, explaining as well as analysing the situations and problems presented in the programmes. It is certain that this topic is tightly connected with psychology of children and that is why some basic facts and information relevant to a correct analysis of the content are included. Moreover, a brief evaluation of the programmes is presented, taking into consideration language skills of the viewers supported by facts from the field of psycholinguistics. Another phenomenon related to the children's programmes is the media which is very often a subject of discussion, particularly as to the contents of programmes that are broadcasted. Due to increasing significance of this topic it is included in this thesis too, especially in relation with Media Education and suitability of the programmes for the children of certain age groups. Also, the role of the family and parental guidance in connection with the programmes is discussed as well as the background of Media Education at schools. Practising rules of media literacy at home will be analysed and evaluated in the research. Last part of the text includes comparison of two television programmes and their applicability as teaching aids.

The expected results of the thesis are general introduction of the topic, division of the viewers taking into consideration criteria of their speech development, language level and awareness of the world around them. Educational purpose and possible usage of the programmes as teaching aids is included too. The research is carried out in the form of questionnaires which are constructed to reflect parent's approach to television programmes for children, basic principles of Media education and learning foreign languages via

television. The aim of the comparison part is to find out whether the programmes follow the criteria established in the thesis.

4 Television programmes for children from the language point of view

In this thesis the television programmes will be analysed as to language and cultural points of view as well as to the suitability for the viewers.

Although the title of the chapter suggests that only the programmes broadcasted on TV are to be discussed, the facts concerned in the thesis are valid for the programmes on the Internet or video too.

4.1 Criteria for analysing TV programmes for children

In the following chapter different criteria for analysing the programmes for children will be presented and discussed.

For the purpose of this work the following criteria, i.e. points 1, 2 and 3 were established since they are significant for analysing the programmes for children, mainly those on TV. (The division of the viewers will be dealt with in part 4.2.).

1. The age group the programme is focused on, which means whether the structure is suitable according to the level of comprehension of the information presented and mother tongue knowledge. This is vital especially for the younger group of viewers because as Barrie Gunter and Jill McAleer mention: "Some studies have found that children's understanding of television up to about 8 years of age is poor. In general, up to the age of 8, children retain a relatively small proportion of depicted actions, events and settings in typical programmes; memory for programme content improves significantly between the ages of 8 and 12 years" (43).

- 1.1. Referring to the fact that children up to the age of 8 do not remember much the content of the programme, a very important aspect of television shots is timing and placing the key moments. Usually the shots in programmes for younger viewers are not too long, approximately up to five minutes, and the emphasis is put on the variability of themes and topics. The goal of the video is very often presenting one fact or one bit of information which can be, for example, a new word, a number or

a special occasion. The attention of the younger viewer (i.e. up to the age of 6) is kept and encouraged by songs, poems or pauses in which children are supposed to complete the story on their own or find a suitable word. This type of activity is based on the fact that development of speech is not formed only by passive reception but also by active production.

2. The second criterion is the linguistic point of view. This includes particularly the proper and suitable choice of the language style which is tightly connected both with the criterion of the age group and with the educational purpose of the programme. It is evident that the programmes concern all linguistic branches because they use the language as a whole. However, what should be highlighted is the fact that the programmes are very often focused on a certain level of the language, namely:

2.1. The lexical level, particularly while concentrating on developing the children's word stock, using different registers or presenting new words which appear in the programmes for younger viewers.

2.2. The phonetic aspect that includes the use of proper pronunciation, which is of great significance. Dialects and their use are included as well. Words and sentences are pronounced very carefully and correctly in order to influence the passive reception of the language in a good way. Moreover, rhythmical features are included to avoid wrong understanding of the text. A very interesting fact connected not only to pronunciation on TV is mentioned by David Crystal in his book *How Language Works*: "Technology has always exercised a major influence on the development of language, as can be seen in the way the printing press, telephone, radio, television, and computer have extended our communicative opportunities. At the same time, the constraints introduced by each technology have fostered the use of conventions whose purpose is to maximize the efficiency with which the medium is used. For example, the broadcasting medium demands different norms of articulation if its output is to be universally understood" (467).

2.3. The syntactic point of view is worth noticing as well since the structure of the utterances must be adapted to the age group of the children. Programmes for the younger viewers use simple language with uncomplicated clause patterns. In addition, frequent questions and repetition of the sentences also occur. The older the viewers the more complex language is used including long sentences and

abstract words. (The children's ability to understand and use the abstract words will be discussed in chapter 4.2.)

3. The third criterion is the cultural point of view. Culture in the programmes is presented from various points of view and there are many aspects to be considered, such as the background and settings or the situations that are shown with emphasis on traditions and special days or events (e.g. Christmas, Easter, birthday, holiday etc.). The content of this paragraph is closely related with multiculturalism, which offers the viewers the presentation of different nationalities and their habits, customs, lifestyles and culture.

This chapter dealt with criteria, namely the age of viewers, their level of the language development and understanding of the world. The classification of the viewers is presented in the following chapter.

4.2 Types of viewers

For the purpose of this thesis, the viewers are divided into three groups according to their speech abilities and their understanding of the world around them.

1. The youngest viewers, i.e. children from 2 to 4 years of age. In this period their word stock widens and simple sentences containing at least two words are formed. Also the stage of intense questioning is very important in this age as the children try to understand the world around them including less usual situations. It is evident that the main role in this stage is played by the parents as a source of information, i.e. in explaining relationships, daily routines etc., but here the programmes can help as well: they can function as an illustration of the information obtained, which means that when a child is told some information, usually by parents, the performance of the situation or fact on TV can help him or her to understand it better. Furthermore, attention must be paid to the suitability of the topic and its presentation and the parental or teacher's comment is needed in order to clarify the aspects which could make the children confused.

- 1.1. In addition, it must be mentioned that parental guidance is vital because around the age of 3 years the lexicon changes significantly. As David Crystal claims, by the age of 2, spoken vocabulary exceeds 200 words and then a dramatic change follows: at the age of 3, there is an enormous growth in size and diversity and the

lexicon. Active vocabulary reaches 2000 words. To support this great development, parents should actively contribute to the construction of children's lexicon. This can be done for example by juxtaposing a new expression with familiar words. A television programme can help with this. In fact, children do not accept the meaning given, they deduce it themselves. An additional comment might prevent problems in the speech development such as overextension (i.e. children use one term to name subjects that have only partly identical features but are not interconnected), underextension (i.e. children use the term only for one particular subject) or mismatch (i.e. wrong naming of subjects, which is very often irreversible). The clarification of the information that children perceive does not have to be in the form of mentoring or explaining. On the contrary, there are many activities and games based on guessing or asking and answering that can encourage and support children's imagination and alert as well.

2. Younger viewers, i.e. children from 5 to 6 years of age. This is the stage when children prepare for school, mainly in kindergartens. Their wordstock contains abstract words. As a matter of fact, learning to read extends the lexicon hugely and at the age of 5 it contains up to 4000 words. Moreover, the children are able to make more complex sentences than in the previous stage. The sense of responsibility develops, too. The programmes may have a supporting role in these cases since they can include some topics or facts that children can encounter at pre-school, if they attend any. This means numbers, letters and information about nature etc. It is certain that the programmes cannot replace the time spent playing and learning with parents; however, they can develop or improve the child's general knowledge in the form of a game presented by the characters that he or she is familiar with. In this stage the programmes developing the natural sense of language can be very helpful, making use of the fact that children of this age have the word stock wide enough to create rhymes and/or to complete sentences.

- 2.1. As to the development of understanding even more complicated expressions, younger viewers still make use of contextual information, which means that word distinction comes from associated pictures or real objects. A correct division of topics that includes sorting words into interconnected branches helps children to organize the words into semantic fields, which is another aspect that should not be omitted.

3. School age viewers, i.e. children from 7 to 11 or 12 years of age. One of the main goals of the programmes should be the cultural point of view, taking into consideration that the correct use of the mother tongue, reading and writing is controlled at school. The programmes can certainly support the development of children's language usage in a proper way by using correct pronunciation and grammar. In this stage less ordinary situations can be presented, for example some problems (i.e. relationships at school, bullying, drugs) and their solutions. Other topics can cover meeting minorities (it is a very important point in showing a correct, polite and tolerant approach) or different cultures with emphasis on enrichment of the school age viewer's culture that they can provide. It is apparent that the parental guidance in this age is far more complicated than that for example in the group of the youngest viewers, nevertheless, there still should be some: perhaps not in the form of giving advice, but rather as a discussion about the topic presented which could help to establish good moral and ethical values for life. In this case, additional explanations and comments would not have to be presented only by parents.

As the name of this age group suggests, these children attend school where they may be given some essential information in the subject called Media Education. The importance of this subject is undisputed because the more children watch television the higher is probability of seeing some facts that are not objective or clear. It has recently been introduced into Czech schools. Its conception is based on dealing with topics that are tightly connected with the media, i.e. serious versus tabloid information, advertisement and its tricks, manipulation etc. Nowadays when the media is a part of even children's lives it is vital to learn how to understand it and that is why the establishment of this subject is very enriching.

- 3.1. Its goal is to give the pupils a guideline about the way of watching TV programmes critically and about analysing them to see the core of the topic that is being broadcasted. The instructions are provided by depicting the processes which the topics in the media are presented, including changes and methods used while creating a certain effect on the viewer. After gaining this sort of education, ideally, children should not just consume the programmes, but they should be able to analyse them and take the beneficial facts. Very often parents do not have much time for their children and for talking to them about TV programmes and that is why this subject will certainly be more important in the future. Another

contribution could be in the skill of watching for example television news and being capable to distinguish the relevant and objective pieces of information from those that are more emotional but less enriching.

4.3 Types of the viewers and their speech abilities

Speech and language level are the areas which psycholinguistics studies. This thesis has partly to do with children's speech and is thus linked to developmental psycholinguistics. As Iva Nebeská mentions two factors from psycholinguistic branch that are significant for this thesis. The first one is the age of the children and the second one is the influence of environment and family, meaning mainly the stimulation of the correct development of the children's speech.

The factor of age is interconnected not only with the verbal development but also with cognitive and social progress.

In the group of the youngest viewers a very interesting process occurs. Approximately between the 2nd and 3rd year of age, children tend to overgeneralize the language, which means that they create actively new sentence constructions and try to apply grammatical rules. The problem is that the children do use the rules too correctly. "The sorting out of grammatical errors is a particular feature of four-year-old speech. Many of the irregularities of syntax and morphology are being mastered around this age, though it can take several years before such errors as the following are eliminated: *It just got brokened. That's more better* (etc.)" (Crystal, 256-7). This is not really a mistake because it can be understood as a sign of children's methodical thinking. Nevertheless, it is important for the parents to speak with the children often to avoid the persistence of this phenomenon. Here is the moment where the programmes may help by exposing children to utterances which are grammatically correct.

1. It is obvious that the most dramatic changes appear in the group of younger viewers. Not only due to the period of intensive questioning, as has already been mentioned, but thanks to an overall leap in development on all the levels of children's lives. The efficiency of communication increases rapidly. In fact, children become able to address the speech to a certain person, which means that they distinguish between the language styles (expressing different attitudes by means of utterance) they can use and what is

more, at the end of this stage, i.e. at 6 years of age, children understand synonymy, homonymy and are partly capable to comprehend jokes, puns and even irony.

2. Speech development comes to an end at the time when children start attending school. The ability to learn and use the language fades with the onset of adolescence. The proper way of speaking (i.e. using grammatical rules and correct pronunciation) must still be encouraged but some additional ways of supporting the language abilities occur, i.e. reading or playing with letters.

Another considerable factor influencing the children's language skills is the environment which is in most cases represented by the family. A necessary part of the language support is contact with speakers around him or her which affects the verbal, social and cognitive levels. Younger children try to use the language and the expansion that is completion of the sentences that the child pronounces can be a really beneficial process. Obviously, the parents' language plays a great role because children do establish the standards of their speech according to their parents' utterance. They tend to learn and repeat the phrases that are spoken most frequently and naturally, children form social formulas of communication.

This chapter dealt with the ways of analysing television programmes for children considering different aspects. The viewers were divided as to their age and language knowledge. The factors influencing the children's language development were introduced. In the following part the programmes will be compared as to the criteria that have been formed recently.

5 Television programmes for children from the cultural point of view

This chapter will deal with the contents of the programmes from the perspective of culture, habits and customs that are presented in the programmes.

Children's programmes being a complex topic, the cultural aspect must not be left out. Indeed the language and the form of the programme are highly important, yet the content is significant as well. The programmes and the settings vary to a great extent but what they have in common is presenting a certain cultural background and in some situations also the phenomenon of multiculturalism. As Claire Kramsch defines in her book *Language and Culture* the term multicultural: "In an individual sense, it characterizes persons who belong to

various discourse communities, and who therefore have the linguistic resources and social strategies to affiliate and identify with many different cultures and ways of using language” (82).

One of the vital goals of the programmes is leading children to tolerance and empathy, which can be supported and encouraged by presenting children’s collective as mixed, including children of different nationalities, handicapped children and many others and taking them as absolutely equal members of the society. Moreover, highlighting the fact that these people can be inspiring for other people’s lives in the way that they can present their interesting background, traditions and habits or as in the case of handicapped children they can teach the others to help people who need it and consider it as something natural.

This chapter emphasised the importance of cultural variety in the programmes in order to lead the children to tolerance and open-minded thinking.

5.1 Media Education

As a matter of fact, Media Education is a part of school curriculum dedicated to explanation and proper understanding of contents that are presented by television, newspaper, radio, Internet and so on. It must be admitted that media is sometimes the only means that the audience meet some situation through. Jan Jirák in his article gives the example of war conflicts that people do not take part in and they would probably not even know about it without media.

Due to this fact there is an urgent need for children to be able to decode and analyse the information presented in the media. This means to know the principles and strategies which are used to construct the media message, including choice of words, music, pictures or video shots. Another vital aspect of understanding the media is interpreting the purpose of the report, i.e. whether it is informative, educative, manipulative or amusing.

In Framework educational programme, Media Education is enlisted as a cross-curricular topic developing children’s communication abilities and orientation in today’s world. It is focused not only on analysing but also on estimating the role of media in national as well as in regional extent. Other factors supported by this school subject include exploiting the media as a source of information, understanding their significance in

democratic society or establishing the basics of redaction cooperation or teamwork, practised especially in creating various projects.

Media Education may also form the children's approach towards the world around them, particularly in supporting the sensitivity to prejudice and unjustified judgements about minorities, in appreciating the value of their own life and its fulfilment or in considering the relevancy of the freedom of speech noticing the rights as well as the obligations.

In the Framework educational programme, the activities connected to Media Education are divided into two branches, i.e. receptive and productive.

The receptive part contains namely critical reading and analysing the media messages, interpretation of the relationship between statements and reality, construction of the report influenced by the author's opinion and the role of the media in society, mentioning its influence on people's everyday life, financing, or the importance of the media in politics.

The productive part of the lesson is represented by two activities that can be done during the lessons of Media Education: creating the message in the media and working in a team which provides the media work. In fact, it is evident there exist many more activities to be done in Media Education, since it is rather new and open.

5.2 Home media education

The importance of following basic principles of Media Education, especially discussing problematic issues with the child and confronting the things he or she notices on television with the real world, is supported by the fact that children very often accept the roles they see:

- a) "The child identifies himself or herself with the characters that are in some way similar to him or her and that resemble to his or her life.
- b) Identification of the children with an ideal which enables to carry out (at least symbolically) things that would not be possible in the real life.
- c) The child may need to identify himself or herself with a character that is generally evaluated in a negative way, breaks the standards and does things

which are banned, so to a certain extent, the character can be attractive for the child” (Vágnerová, 212, as translated by Marie Majerová).

Klára Šedřová in her book *Family Socialisation of Children’s television watching* uses a very interesting term, namely home media education. She emphasises the fact that parents should provide guidance to their children while watching television. Many parents do so but we have to distinguish between commenting on the programmes on purpose and simple watching television together. The author uses the term coviewing for this activity which includes watching programmes that are not primarily for children and it is caused by using the same space by children and adults (34, as translated by Marie Majerová).

6 Comparison of two television programmes for children and their evaluation

This chapter will deal with a comparison of two television programmes for children. The focus of the evaluation will be not only on the programmes themselves but their additional activities and internet support as well. It should be highlighted that both the programmes are supposed to be watched by native speakers of the language the programme is broadcasted in. The first part of the subchapter is general characteristic of the programmes; the second part is the comparison itself.

6.1 General characteristics

A great majority of the programmes is concentrated on developing the lexical part of the whole children's language knowledge. The way children perceive information is either passive in the form of watching shots or active in the form of completing different activities or exercises. The shots are quite short (approximately up to 5 minutes) and their story is not very complicated so they usually do not require any additional comment. For the purpose of this thesis, television shots are classified into two groups:

- a) Programmes representing either a fairy tale or a story accompanied by pictures that describe it in order to make it more attractive and also easier to understand.
- b) Programmes based on songs or poems accompanied by music using eurhythmmy to attract the listener's attention and to make the text of the poem or song easier to remember.

6.2 Comparison of the programmes

One of them will be a Czech programme, namely Kouzelná školka (Magic Kindergarten) and one of them will be British, Sesame Street.

The television shots will be rated according to the criteria that were presented in this thesis, i.e. adequacy of the programme to the age of viewers, to their speech abilities and mental capacity. The contents will be taken into consideration too. Possible usage of the programmes as teaching aids or as materials for home education will be discussed in a

special subchapter, on pages 22-25, including some suggestions for activities. The programmes will be compared in a chart. If there is a difference between them while accomplishing the criteria it will be evaluated whether it is advantage or disadvantage.

6.2.1 Kouzelná školka (Magic Kindergarten)

This programme is broadcasted on Czech Television, channel 1, in the morning and in the afternoon. The time duration of this programme is 30 minutes. As the name suggests, the goal group of viewers is between 3 and 6 years of age.

The time duration may seem to be long for the age of the viewers who are supposed to watch this programme but it is split into several parts so the concentration cycles are not overloaded.

The content of the programme is based on a key character of the narrator, who leads the whole story and introduces television shots, stories or fairy tales inserted. The narrator has got a puppet, named František, who represents the world of magic and children in his homeland called Fanfárie. Magic Kindergarten has got two websites. One of them is a section of the official sites of Czech Television and comprises information about the programme, particularly the broadcasting time, the contents and the emphasis on the harmony of the dialogue about the world around and the ethic principles on the one hand and of keeping the safe and playful feeling of childhood on the other. On the official websites the narrators are introduced and each of them has got his or her specialisation, such as arts, music and reading.

The second website is in fact a commercial server dedicated to the live shows of the actors representing the narrators, their organisation and invitations.

As a complementation of the activities in the programme a quarterly magazine called Magic Kindergarten is published. It contains worksheets, colouring pages, stories and so on.

The dialogue of the adult (the narrator) and the child (puppet) is the leitmotif of this programme. In some situations the puppet asks for advice or support in resolving its problems. The topics chosen for the programme (i.e. friends, family relationship, animals etc.) are adequate for the age category of the children. There are songs and

nursery rhymes involved in a remarkable amount. The overall character of the programme is educative in the form of playing and interaction.

The educational purpose of this programme is established in the Codex of Czech Television, as the articles say:

“10.1. Czech Television creates and makes a stable space in the timetable for popular education and informative programmes dedicated to different age and interest groups. In cases where it is possible and convenient, it (Czech Television) exploits the advantages and particular forms that television communication offers, so it suitably contributes to the resources that people may educate themselves from. It enriches the presentation of educative and informative programmes by the offer of different sources of information about the topic including publishing of the knowledge on their own websites (e-learning).

10.2. In the arrangement of educational programmes of the Czech Television a remarkable attention is paid to programmes contributing to the knowledge of foreign languages” (20, as translated by Marie Majerová).

Despite the improvement of the situation and the legal support, as Marína Landová in her study *Educational Role of Czech Television* says:

“Extension of the educational potential of the Czech Television by careful connection of the educational and documentary programmes that are broadcasted with their web presentation and wide e-learning, following the example of the BBC websites does not exist” (102, as translated by Marie Majerová).

6.2.2 Sesame Street

This programme is dedicated to the group of viewers from 3 to 7 years of age. The main characters are puppets, called muppets, the human narrator is missing. The structure of the programme is rather similar to *Magic Kindergarten*. It is divided into several shorter parts or video shots in order to keep the attention attracted constantly. There are more muppets and their roles and specialisations in fact resemble to those of the narrators in the Czech programme, for example the character of Count Von Count who loves counting and numbers and so on. Vice versa, the childhood element is represented by a real child who interacts with the muppets answering the questions and

sometimes the children take the role of the tutor and they explain some facts to the puppets. The clear distinction between the authority and the child is missing in this case the relationship between these two is more on a cooperative level.

Sesame Street programme is mentioned on the websites of BBC but the viewer is redirected to the official web of this programme which is full of video shots, extra materials and activities with the possibility of logging in and creating the child's own website containing his or her favourite videos, songs or photos.

In the following part, the differences between the programmes and their fulfilment of the different criteria that have been established in the thesis are presented in a table. The advantages and disadvantages of the contents of the programmes are discussed too.

The programme Criterion	Magic Kindergarten	Sesame Street	Advantage or disadvantage
Adequacy of the programme in reference to the age group of the viewers	The programme is adequate, the topics discussed are comprehensible and the setting is pleasant	The programme is adequate, the characters are funny and colourful, the contents of the programme are easily comprehensible	
Language used in the programme	The language in the programme is adequate, the vocabulary and sentence constructions used are simple and clear	The language of the programme is complex but clear there is not used a complicated vocabulary	

The programme <hr/> Criterion	Magic Kindergarten	Sesame Street	Advantage or disadvantage
Contents of the programme from the cultural point of view	<p>In the programme, there are discussed topics that are familiar for the children, i.e. family relationships, friendship, school and there are some elements of media education (suggestions for children to decrease frequency of watching TV)</p>	<p>In this programme the spectrum of the topics that are discussed and presented is similar in a significant part but in this programme more attention is paid to multiculturalism</p>	
Educational purpose	<p>The educational purpose in this programme is clear, it stimulates language development, suggests spending free time on sport or craft activities etc., teaching foreign languages is missing</p>	<p>The educational purpose of this programme is obvious, it develops the language of the children using dialogues, rhymes, songs and so on and it extends children's general knowledge; teaching foreign languages is missing</p>	

The programme	Magic	Sesame Street	Advantage or disadvantage
Criterion	Kindergarten	Sesame Street	Advantage or disadvantage
Additional materials, presentation on the Internet, interactivity	With the exception of the quarterly magazine the additional materials are not very rich, the internet background for some extras is missing at all	The supplementary presentation of this programme is done in a very good way, especially the websites are a very rich source of different interactive games, quizzes or additional videos	In this case a clear advantage comes for Sesame Street because the amount of additional materials helps to exploit the educational potential of the programme.

Having made the comparison according to the criteria established it was found out that in 4 out of 5 points the programmes show similarity. A very important fact is that all the criteria presented in the thesis were at least partly fulfilled which seems to suggest that both programmes are of high quality.

The only point that was not completely accomplished by both the programmes was teaching foreign languages. Considering the fact that the programmes are designed for native speakers, some bases of a foreign language could be useful. The argument speaking against this option is the choice of a particular language, which may not suit to all the viewers and keeping approximately a constant level which may be complicated in the aspect of attracting the youngest viewers as well as those who have been watching the programme for several years.

7 Programmes for children and their use as teaching aids

Programmes for children are usually designed to be watched at home, nevertheless, their use may be much wider. The teacher can record them and then show them to children in a kindergarten or at school. The extension can have various forms: working out handouts,

creating children's own stories based on the programme, playing games applying the new information gained from the broadcasting.

The video shots may be in the mother tongue and their main goal is the cultural point of view or some informational value. Many possibilities come with the use of the programmes in English Language Teaching (ELT). Some of them are intended to be self-study materials; however, others can be exploited by the teacher and may serve as a very enriching educational resource. Here the cooperation of the pupils and the teacher is to be highlighted, as Jack Lonergan proclaims in his book *Video Applications in English Language Teaching*: "The television programmes are reinforced with pre-viewing materials, with reference points during the programme, and follow up activities – usually requiring personal contact with a course tutor. It is perhaps self-evident that no learner of a foreign language will acquire communicative fluency in that language by receiving television instruction only" (71). The handouts and supporting materials can be produced by the teacher or, while using the Internet, printing out and practising with the papers presented on these websites. The advantage of the additional information on the different types of media is that the pupils may recall their knowledge even without seeing the programme again. The age is no limit in this case because the youngest pupils may work with a handout too, of course, if it is adapted to their level.

7.1 Suggestions and example of using the programmes analysed beyond as teacher's aids

This subchapter will present some ideas for exploiting the programmes Magic Kindergarten and Sesame Street as sources of activities and educational material. The capacity for further use in classes or for home study is tightly connected with the supplementary presentation of the programme.

7.2 Suggestions for extending activities connected to Magic Kindergarten

The options of downloading or printing additional worksheets are limited by the offer on the supplementary media branch, i.e. Internet, magazines, books etc. Unfortunately, the internet source of some extras is not very rich, in fact there is not any possibility to fill in or print out any handout or game. The only option of gaining some materials is buying a magazine that has been mentioned before.

Nevertheless, the programme itself may be used as a teaching material. It requires the tutor's or parent's direct cooperation with the child. It can be done in the form of dialogue about the topics presented in the programme as the thesis discusses in the chapter called Media Education or it may be performed as playing games that are familiar to the child, like guessing words, making tests or colouring pages or asking him or her to retell the story, elicit some words in order to extend the wordstock or drawing and creating craft subjects that were shown in the programme.

7.2.1 An example of an activity which may be used in a lesson or while learning at home

After watching an episode of Magic Kindergarten, there may be done these activities:

- a) The child can choose a fairy tale or story he or she liked the most and retells it. In case something ambiguous occurs, the child discusses it with the parent or teacher.
- b) Then the child can draw a picture showing the scene he or she has retold before.
- c) Description of the picture follows; the tutor encourages the child by asking questions, developing the story using the sentence construction "What if..."
- d) The child evaluates the activity and says what would like to do the next time.

Respecting the rules of the Media Education, the parent or the teacher should suggest some compensation to watching television, for example sport.

7.3 Suggestions for extending activities connected to Sesame Street

As it has already been mentioned on page 23, the exploitability of the programme is closely related to the sources of the supplementary materials and activities. Considering this point of view, Sesame Street has got very good resources, particularly on the Internet. The website www.sesamestreet.org contains several sections, including television shots, games, playlists etc. Working with the applications requires basic literacy, i.e. knowledge of numbers and simple words, mostly orders. Interactivity is supported by eliciting the actions that are to be done. Many of the exercises are done in the form of songs, using

rhymes and word games. The web activities are focused on one topic, for example counting. In comparison with Magic Kindergarten, it is possible to watch the whole episode online, which may help children to understand the supplementary activities better and to connect all the information directly together.

7.3.1 An example of an activity which may be used in a lesson or while learning at home

After watching an episode of Sesame Street the child could:

- a) Retell the story of the episode with the emphasis on the parts he or she liked or if something unclear occurs, discuss it and explain the ambiguous moments
- b) In the case of teaching a single child, the parent may let him or her colour a picture in the art section or play more video shots related to the topics that were presented in the episode and use the interaction. If there is a group of children, the teacher can print the worksheets in the art section and distribute them. When the children are ready, they may describe their picture, revising the vocabulary focused on colours, shapes, body parts, clothes etc.
- c) Then a discussion follows, children choose their favourite topic or scene, evaluate the activity and suggest what would like to do next time.

Taking into consideration the rules of the media education, the parent or the teacher should suggest some compensation to watching television, for example sport.

8 Research

In chapter 2 children viewers were divided into several groups according to the aspect of age and language abilities. While discussing and analysing the criteria the question whether the television programmes are suitable for children arises. The relevance of parental guidance was mentioned too. The goal of the research part of the thesis was to find out parents' approach to the factors that influence the children viewers, i.e. amount of time spent on watching television, percentage of the programmes focused on the children viewers that they

watch, parental guidance and explanations of the moments that are confusing for the children and using the programmes as teaching material.

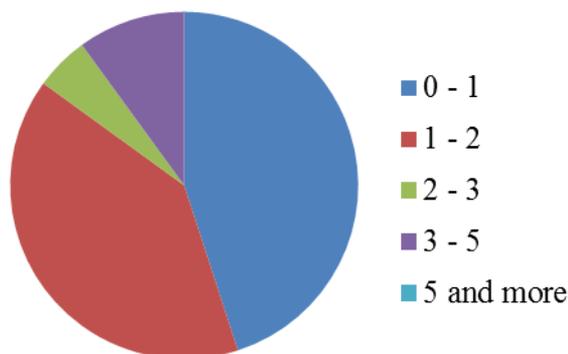
In order to find out the results that the research was focused on, a questionnaire was made, containing questions on the amount of time that the children spend watching television, including the percentage of the programmes for children. The other questions were focused on parental guidance, suitability of the programmes that the children watch, preference of certain genres and on the programmes that teach a foreign language.

Parents were asked to fill in the questionnaire constructed in the cloze form, which means to circle one possibility out of four or five. The question on the percentage was open and parents were asked to fill in a number. The questionnaire that was distributed is in the Appendix. The research was anonymous.

These questionnaires were distributed in the kindergarten MŠ Bezová in Prague 4 with the kind permission of the management. They were responded in April 2010. The results of the research are displayed in the graphs below.

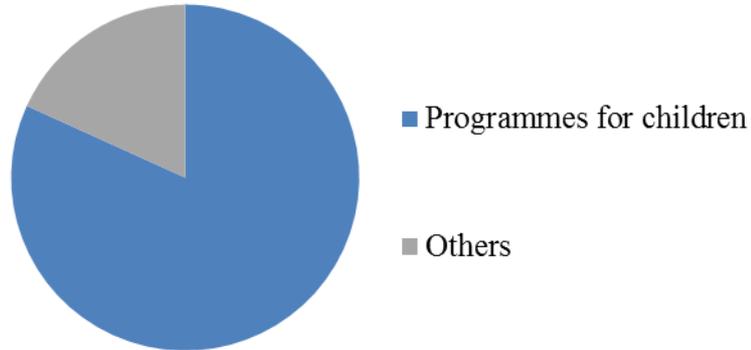
Question 1

How many hours per day does your child spend watching television?				
0 - 1	1 - 2	2 - 3	3 - 5	5 and more
9	8	1	2	0



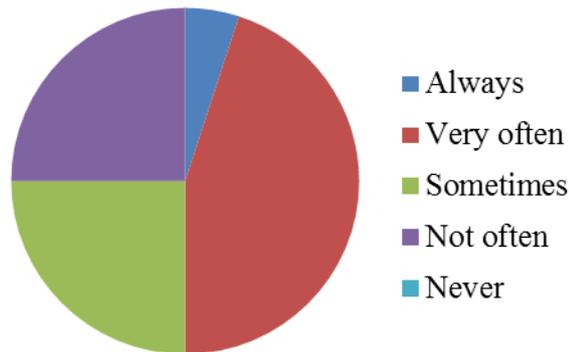
Question 2

What amount of that time is dedicated to the programmes for children only?	
Programmes for children	Others
ø 81.8%	ø 18.2%



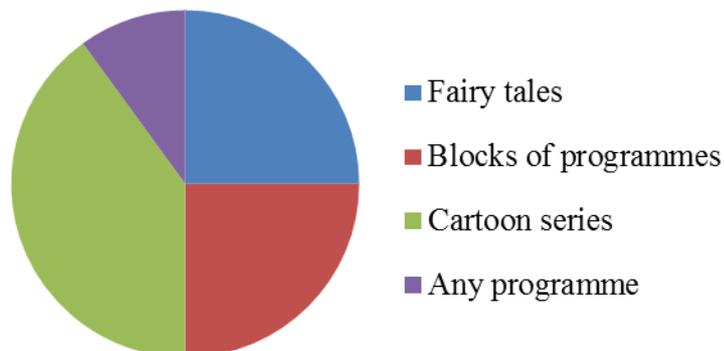
Question 3

Do you watch programmes for children with your child?				
Always	Very often	Sometimes	Not often	Never
1	9	5	5	0



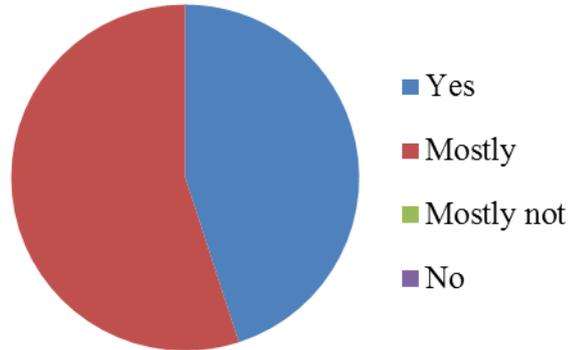
Question 4

What type of programmes does your child prefer?			
Fairy tales	Blocks of programmes	Cartoon series	Any programme
5	5	8	2



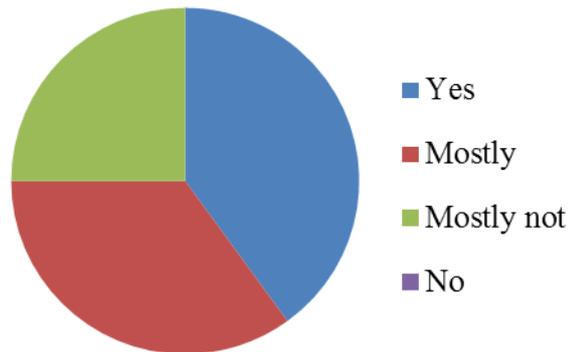
Question 5

Does your child watch programmes that are adequate to his/her age?			
Yes	Mostly	Mostly not	No
9	11	0	0



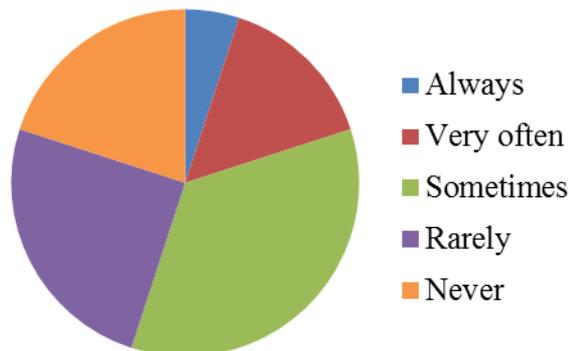
Question 6

If your child sees an inadequate topic on television will you discuss it with him/her?			
Yes	Mostly	Mostly not	No
8	7	5	0



Question 7

Does your child watch programmes focused on learning a foreign language?				
Always	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
1	3	7	5	4



The results of the research prove that children who took part in it watch television daily but not for inappropriately long time and their parents do discuss the problematic issues with them.

The percentage of programmes for children in the whole amount of time spent watching television is surprisingly high: it is 81.8% and refers to the parental participation in the choice of the programmes that their children watch.

Answers to question number 4 show that children prefer cartoon series to programmes designed for entertainment and educational purposes. The reasons in this situation may be either the quality of the programmes for children that was discussed in the preceding chapter, or just the children's need to relax while watching television.

In question number 5, parents responded that their children watch programmes adequate to their age. Surprisingly, no one answered in a negative way.

Responses to question number 7 illustrate that children do not learn foreign languages from television systematically; the most frequent answer was that they watch programmes focused on teaching languages just from time to time. In this case the fact that not many programmes specialised in teaching foreign languages are available on Czech television channels.

The result may serve as an overview of children's preferences in television programmes. What is more, it shows parents' approach to the free time of their children because in most cases observed they do care about the content of the programmes and about its adequacy.

Findings of the research may be an inspiration for the parents who do not dedicate that much time to guidance of their children's time in front of television because the basic principles of Media Education can be applied even at the groups of the youngest and very young viewers. Furthermore, it can be used by the teachers who may make profit of the gap in learning foreign languages on television thus they can exploit the programmes as a teaching material, supplemented by additional worksheets and materials (e.g. posters, pictures, board games and so on), of course.

9 Conclusion

This thesis dealt with programmes for children. The aim of it was to introduce the topic not only in the general aspect but to analyse the programmes from various points of view.

While studying the materials about children, including developmental psychology, psycholinguistics and psychology of children the most suitable criteria for division of the viewers proved to be age, speech abilities, language level and cultural awareness, which means children's general knowledge about the world around them. The theoretical part, especially chapter dedicated to analysis of the programmes from cultural point of view, contains information about Media Education. This subject is quite new in the Czech Republic but fortunately, it is integrated in Czech school curriculum. The fundamentals of it, particularly analysis of the programmes from critical point of view and avoiding consumerism of the information presented on television, may not be used only at schools but the principles may be applied at home, as soon as possible. The aim of following the rules of Media Education even at children of preschool age is mainly to discuss the problematic issues they could see, to compensate watching television by some other activity and for parents to choose an adequate programme. A vital fact is that Media Education does not deal only with television, it focuses on all the kinds of media (i.e. print, radio, Internet) but for the purpose of this thesis the television branch was drafted.

One of the chapters was dedicated to usage of the programmes as teaching aids. Exploiting them as sources of teaching materials may be done at school or at home as well. Additional materials published either on the Internet or in printed version may help to enlarge the spectrum of activities related to the programmes. Some suggestions for lessons, including working with worksheets, colouring pages etc. were mentioned too.

The research was carried out with the aim to find out parents' approach to programmes for children, learning foreign languages on television and to following basic principles of Media Education, i.e. reducing amount of time spent in front of television and discussion about problematic topics.

The author used the possibility to contact the parents of children between 3 and 6 years of age via the questionnaire (see Appendix) in MŠ Bezová. After collecting and analysing the forms, it proved that most of the parents who took part in the research follow the basic principles of Media Education and they do not let their children watch inappropriate

programmes or spend large amount of time consuming television programmes. Learning foreign languages through television does not appear to be frequent which is explained in the comparative part of the thesis by noticing the fact that not many programmes on Czech Television offer this possibility.

The chapter dealing with comparison of the programmes is based on analysing the episodes of the programmes, taking notes whether they fulfil the criteria of the thesis and then evaluating and comparing them with each other. This chapter presents information about the style and contents of contemporary programmes for children. While watching and analysing the programmes they show some identical features, i.e. proper use of language, educative purpose or choice of the topics. To a certain extent, the similarity between the programmes could be explained by the fact there exist legislative restrictions and rules as to the educational purpose, topics that should be suitable and follow the general moral and ethic principles.

The author hopes that the overall review presented in this thesis will contribute to the issue of the television production dedicated to children because this field has a great future and it will be discussed and analysed very often.

10 Appendix

Vážení rodiče,

Vyučuji ve zdejší školce anglický jazyk a ve své bakalářské práci se zabývám tematikou pořadů pro děti. Součástí této práce je i výzkum, a proto bych se na Vás chtěla obrátit s prosbou o vyplnění následujícího dotazníku. Jeho výsledky budou vyhodnoceny a zahrnuty v mé práci.

Děkuji za spolupráci

Marie Majerová

Zakroužkujte, prosím, možnost, která nejvíce vystihuje Vaši odpověď:

1. Kolik hodin denně tráví Vaše dítě sledováním televize?				
0-1	1-2	2-3	3-5	5 a více

2. Kolik z tohoto času zabírají pořady určené výhradně dětem?				
Vyjádřete prosím v procentech:				

3. Díváte se s dětmi na pořady pro ně určené?				
Vždy	Velmi často	Někdy	Málo	Nikdy

4. Jaký typ pořadů preferuje Vaše dítě?				
Pohádky	Pásma pořadů pro děti	Animované seriály	Jakýkoli pořad	

5. Sleduje Vaše dítě pořady přiměřené svému věku?				
Ano	Spíše ano	Spíše ne	Ne	

6. Pokud Vaše dítě v televizi zhlédne pořad obsahující pro něj nevhodná témata (např. násilí, sex, katastrofy apod.), hovoříte s ním poté o věcech, které vidělo?				
Ano	Spíše ano	Spíše ne	Ne	

7. Sleduje Vaše dítě programy pro děti zabývající se výukou cizího jazyka?				
Vždy	Velmi často	Občas	Zřídka	Nikdy

Dear parents,

I teach English language in this kindergarten and my bachelor thesis is about the programmes for children. The thesis contains a research part and that is why I would like to ask you for kindly filling this questionnaire. The results will be analysed and included in the thesis.

Thank you for cooperation

Marie Majerová

Please, circle the possibility that is the closest to your answer:

1. How many hours does your child spend on watching television per day?				
0-1	1-2	2-3	3-5	5 and more

2. What amount of that time is dedicated to the programmes for children only?				
Please, express in percentage:				

3. Do you watch programmes for children with them?				
Always	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never

4. What type of programme does your child prefer?				
Fairy tales	Blocks of programmes for children	Cartoon series	Any programme	

5. Does your child watch programmes adequate to his/her age?				
Yes	Mostly	Mostly not	No	

6. If your child sees a programme containing inadequate topics for him/her (e.g. violence, sex, catastrophes...) will you discuss the problem with him/her?				
Yes	Mostly	Mostly not	No	

7. Does your child watch programmes for children focused on teaching foreign language?				
Always	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never

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Contents

	Bachelor Thesis	1
1	Abstract	5
2	Resumé.....	5
3	Introduction	6
4	Television programmes for children from the language point of view	7
4.1	Criteria for analysing TV programmes for children.....	7
4.2	Types of viewers	9
4.3	Types of the viewers and their speech abilities	12
5	Television programmes for children from the cultural point of view	13
5.1	Media Education	14
5.2	Home media education.....	15
6	Comparison of two television programmes for children and their evaluation.....	17
6.1	General characteristics	17
6.2	Comparison of the programmes.....	17
6.2.1	Kouzelná školka (Magic Kindergarten)	18
6.2.2	Sesame Street.....	19
7	Programmes for children and their use as teaching aids	22
7.1	Suggestions and example of using the programmes analysed beyond as teacher´s aids	23
7.2	Suggestions for extending activities connected to Magic Kindergarten	23
7.2.1	An example of an activity which may be used in a lesson or while learning at home	24
7.3	Suggestions for extending activities connected to Sesame Street.....	24
7.3.1	An example of an activity which may be used in a lesson or while learning at home	25
8	Research	25
9	Conclusion.....	30
10	Appendix	32
11	Works Cited.....	34