KIND AND UNKIND COMMUNICATIVE BEHAVIOUR
OF CARTOON CHARACTERS AS A SOURCE
OF LANGUAGE COMPETENCE FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

MAGDALENA TRYSIŃSKA

Institute of Polish Philology, Warsaw University

Abstract

The purpose of the article is to analyze kind and unkind communicative behaviour of characters in cartoons for children. The characters create a sort of community and they play certain social roles. For the purpose of this article I have chosen the animated films which present an equal or unequal system of roles. The analysis is limited to one communicative environment: school.

I assume that the language of cartoon characters will matter greatly in the process of socialization and acquisition of communicative competence. The film characters often become the role-model for viewers, especially the young ones. Children willingly copy the behaviour seen in the cartoons, they play the roles of favourite characters and speak their language. The analysis shows that popular cartoons might create desirable or undesirable linguistic patterns. Therefore, analysing communicative behaviours of film characters should become a field of interest not only for psychologists but also for linguists. This knowledge may also help teachers of 1st and 2nd educational stage with planning their curriculum.

Keywords: communicative behaviour, communicative competence, socialization, language of TV, cartoons for children

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The role of television and its impact on child development

Television plays an important role in the lives of children, especially the younger ones (infants, toddlers and preschoolers) who have not yet turned to the mobile devices. In Poland after 1989 we have observed a fast expansion of cable and satellite TV channels. The development of a cable and digital television means that more and more children, regardless of their place of residence and social status, have got access to the same channels[1]. Systematic studies conducted since the 1990s show that the daily time spent in front of the TV continues to grow. In the second quarter of 2013 a statistical Pole watched TV for 5 hours and 33 minutes a day[2]. Children, in Poland and elsewhere, spend more time on various types of media than on any other single activity (except for sleeping). Preschoolers watch an average of 4 hours of television per day, older children and adolescents up to 7 hours (Anderson & Evans, 2001; Rideout, Vandewater & Wartella, 2003; Rideout, Foehr & Roberts, 2010[3]). Improving economic conditions of many families, as well as falling prices of electronic equipment means that a lot of children (about 30 percent of older preschoolers and approximately 75 percent of teenagers) have a TV set in their room (Christakis, Ebel, Rivara, Zimmerman, 2004; Rideout, Foehr & Roberts, 2010; Roberts & Foehr, 2008[4]). Such intensive exposure must have an impact on the development of the young generation.

Television fulfills important functions: informative, educational, formational and ludic. Research on the psychological aspects of TV reception and content of media messages shows that television as a medium has as many supporters as opponents. All the while they are unanimous about the fact that television broadcasting has a significant impact on children's development.

The studies in developmental psychology show that during play interactions children willingly imitate the scenes from cartoons, impersonate their favorite characters and speak their language (Bandura, 2002; James & McCain, 1982; Barthelemes et al., 1991; Ogrodzka-Mazur, 2009; Desmurget, 2012). International scholars indicate a strong relationship between time spent on television viewing and the development of language skills. While in the case of children under two years old watching television does not influence their language acquisition, in the case of preschoolers who watch educational programs such as *Sesame Street* the researchers observe a faster process of vocabulary acquisition and a higher level of

---

[1] *The TV market in the 2nd quarter of 2013, The National Broadcasting Council, The Department of Monitoring; http://krrit.gov.pl [access 10.10.2013r]*

[2] *ibidem*

[3] *Quoted in: Kołodziejczyk (2013: 50).*

[4] *ibidem*

understanding new words (Naigles & Mayeux, 2001; Rice, 1983 Rice & Haight, 1986; Rice & Woodsmall, 1988; Lemish & Rice, 1986; Krcmar et al., 2004; Lemish, 2008). The researchers also point out that children who are high users of television often have a smaller range of vocabulary than children who prefer other activities (Close, 2004). Moreover, the level of understanding of television broadcasts, as well as their potential benefits depend on many factors, such as socio-economic status of a child, the presence of parents (co-viewing) and the vocabulary resource. Children with a larger vocabulary resource are more willing to choose educational programs which further develop their lexis, while children with smaller lexical resource prefer the popular cartoons (entertainment programs) (Wright, Huston, Scantlin, Koltler, 2001).

Research on spoken language shows that younger children acquire vocabulary through imitation (Sénéchal, 2006). Rice (2004) draws attention to the fact that while learning to communicate, children have access to two types of situations: direct interactions in which they participate, and indirect interactions, in which they are observers. She asserts there are reasons to believe that the indirect observational learning can play an important role in the assimilation of the child's communication skills. By observation she means listening to the conversations of adults, as well as watching television (Rice, 1983; Rice & Woodsmall, 1988).

The purpose of this article is to answer the question whether popular cartoons targeted at young children differ in terms of promoted communicative behaviour, and, if so, to what extent. The analysis of the characters' language behaviour will help to determine the direction of communicative competence development of the young audience.

2.   RESEARCH SAMPLE (CORPUS OF FILMS), METHODOLOGY

The article examines kind and unkind communicative behaviour of the characters from the selected cartoons for children. Cartoons are the most popular type of TV programs among preschoolers. In Polish networks cartoons are predominantly dubbed, therefore for the purpose of this article all the quotes and references to the language of cartoons and cartoon characters relate to the dubbed format, which is tailored to the preferences of Polish viewers. From a wide range of children's programs I have chosen cartoons aired in two thematic channels: Mini Mini (MM) and Cartoon Network (CN). In terms of viewership, both channels occupy high positions in the TV ratings[5]. The juxtaposition of the two channels is purposeful because cartoons they broadcast differ in terms of their cultural functions and target audience. MM is primarily aimed at children up to 7 years old whereas CN targets older children in preschool and school age. Without parental control children are more likely to choose the CN cartoons. Research also shows that older preschoolers are no longer interested in shows with educational elements. When

---

[5] *Quoted after Media2.pl – research: http://media2.pl/badania/ [access: 26.11.2013r.]*

given the opportunity, they select dynamic movies with fast-paced action and loud music, as well as programs for adults. From the point of view of a child, the ludic function takes precedence over the educational value (Kubicka & Kołodziejczyk, 2007; Lemish, 2008).

The corpus for the analysis was collected between 2010 and 2013. The cartoons were recorded and then transcribed. The conclusions are based on my analysis of 60 hours of recordings. For the purposes of this study the detailed analysis was limited to 20 ten-minute episodes which are located in a school setting.

To study the content of television broadcasts, I use qualitative and interpretative methods (Berger, 2000). The theoretical framework of pragmatics and the speech acts theory allows me to distinguish the basic element of study - a minimal unit of the conversation. This may be a single speech act or a pair of adjacent speech acts (e.g. question and answer). To be able to make a comprehensive analysis of the communication behaviour of the cartoon characters, it is necessary to take into account two planes: sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic. They allow for a complete description of the interaction, taking into consideration three main factors: the situation of communication (in this case it will be a school), the hierarchy of roles: equal (peer to peer) vs. subordinate (teacher to student) and the function (intention) of speech communication.

In the cartoons the characters take part in social interactions which reflect the real situations in a child's life. In each of the analyzed episodes the characters perform certain social roles. The hierarchy of roles requires of those who participate in the interaction to respect the rules of communicative conduct (Grabias, 2011). Communicative situation is of primary importance since both kind and unkind speech acts are immersed in the wider concept of communication. For this reason I have limited the analyzed speech acts to one selected communicative situation – the school. This choice is justified because the school plays an important role in a child's life. For young children (preschool and primary school) a teacher acts as their role model and the school evokes positive associations. Communicative behaviour relating to school which is depicted in the cartoons may affect the actual communication processes of children in a real school situation. Therefore, the diagnosis of these behaviours seems to be of great importance.

3.   KIND VERSUS UNKIND ATTITUDE

Kindness and unkindness are pragmatic categories. Both are difficult to define. We can talk about kind and unkind speech acts, as well as a kind or unkind attitude of the sender towards the recipient or the person/object he talks about. The attitude here is a broader concept because it determines certain speech behaviours.

The attitude is defined as: "a tendency to a positive or negative response to the object: a thing, a person or an event." (Nęcki, 1998: 425). Attitudes are considered with respect to the object which is being assessed positively or negatively. In the article the objects takes the following forms: the direct recipients of verbal acts,

third parties (those referred to), facilities, such as a school or a school canteen, and, finally, activities related to school life, such as homework. Kind and unkind attitudes are realized in kind and unkind speech acts which constitute the basis for further analysis within the scope of pragmatic linguistics (Austin, 1993; Searle, 1969).

I adopt the assumption that the kind attitude is reflected in polite communicative behaviour and the unkind attitude is most often associated with impolite communicative behaviour, and even aggression. Both attitudes, kind and unkind, are conditioned by various situational factors.

To attribute individual speech acts to the kind or unkind category, the criteria for their classification must be defined. The key criterion is the sender's intention inscribed in the message. The unkind speech acts relate to the desire to act to the detriment of the recipient or the person/object in question. They pose a threat to the positive face of the recipient[6] or the person/object he refers to, and they intend to construct his negative image. The kind speech acts are aimed at appreciating the recipient or the person/object mentioned and create a positive self-image – a positive face. The second criterion is to analyze the attitude of the sender. The unkind speech acts are associated with a reluctant and dismissive approach whereas the kind speech acts elicit a friendly and eager disposition. The attitude manifests itself not only in the verbal expression, but also in body language and intonation. Finally, I take into account the choice of emotionally-laden words. However, the lexicon itself is not a sufficient criterion. For instance, on the linguistic level the message may adopt the traits of kindness, but the non-verbal context shows that the sender uses the polite acts of communication ironically. Conversely, the message classified semantically as impolite can be used as a term of affection.

4.   THE ANALYSIS OF KIND AND UNKIND COMMUNICATIVE BEHAVIOUR UNDER THE THEORY OF SPEECH ACTS

The classification of kind and unkind speech acts can be done within the framework of the theory of speech acts which include directives, assertives, commisives, expressives and declarations. In many cases we have to deal with combinations of speech acts, especially in the case of expressives, which often coexist with other speech acts, e.g. directives or commisives.

4.1.1   Directives

Directives intend to control the behaviour of the recipients. They can express both kind and unkind attitudes. Polish researchers of the school discourse point out that in the didactic communication, which is dominated by the unequal role system (teacher has a higher social rank), directives represent the majority of all speech

---

[6] *Negative face / positive face – original idea by Goffman in 1967. (Goffman, 2006)*

acts and have a categorical character (Przybyla, 2004; Skowronek, 1999). The teacher is the sender and the student is the recipient.

Directives expressing the unkind attitude were identified only in the CN cartoons. They are dominated by commands, which have a clear indication of the time of their execution – immediacy. Depending on the verb, commands may be more or less aggressive. However, they always convey a negative, ill-intentioned teacher to student relation.

Text 1 [from the cartoon: "The Powerpuff Girls," episode "Ice Sore"]

> Teacher: *Of all the days the air conditioner had to break today.*
> Student: *Teacher, I made the drawing. Do you like it?*
> Teacher: [angry] *Andy, I'll look at it later! Now go play!*

Text 2 [from the cartoon: "The Powerpuff Girls," episode "Ice Sore"]

> Teacher: *Ok kids! Today, the air conditioning in the classroom does not work, so there will be no classes. Now you can go and play outside*. [Students express discontent]
> Teacher: [shouts] *Leave!*

Text 3 [from the cartoon: "Cramp Twins," episode: "Miss Kissy"]

> Teacher to students: *Class dismissed. Get out! Get out!*

Text 4 [from the cartoon: "Franklin," episode: "Franklin and the Broken Globe"]

> Student*: It's so nice in here! Are those new building blocks?*
> Teacher*: That's right. Today we are going to use them to build beautiful castles. Please, choose a partner, then take a seat and start building.*

In the first part the teacher answers the student's question using the indicative mood: she tells her students what they will be doing in the classroom. Then she applies an indirect request and the performative *please* tones down the imperative power of her command. What is immediately visible is the teacher's kindness towards her students. She wants to please them, and therefore she stresses that the castles the children are going to build will be beautiful.

Speech acts with imperative function are also used to discipline students.

Text 5 [from the cartoon: "Franklin," episode: "Franklin's Collection"]

> Teacher*: Please, be quiet. Now it's Franklin's turn. Tell us about your collection*.

Text 6 [from the cartoon: "Laura's Star," episode: "Bosom Friends"]
[Laura and Sophie arguing]

> Teacher: *Oh dear, what 's going on here ? Laura, Sophie, calm down. I don't understand what is your problem. Girls, get along. You're friends.*

In both Texts (5 and 6) teachers resort to complex speech acts. In addition to directives aimed to discipline the students, the speakers use explanations. In Text 5 we can see an intermediate request introduced by *please.* Again this basic courtesy phrase alleviates the pragmatic power of command. As a result, the teacher can reduce the distance between herself and the students, without disturbing the pre-

ordained relationship. In Text 6 the teacher asks a question which at the same time expresses her emotions – concern, as evidenced by an exclamation *oh dear*. Concern is a negative emotion, but targeted at the recipient. The modal framework for concern is 'I'm worried about you.' The sender in fact cares about the recipient's welfare.

In the MM cartoons declarative statements characterize only the teachers' discourse. This is understandable and justified given the teacher's role. It should be noted that in the CN cartoons directives function also in a reversed situation when the student is the sender, and the teacher is the recipient.

Text 7 (from the cartoon "Johnny Test," episode: "Johnny Bench")

> Student: *Aaaa but you don't just sit on this bench, it has many other functions.* / / <u>*So, how about that A?*</u>
> Teacher: *Ooh, lovely music. Who is it?*
> Student: *I don't know. I couldn't care less.* <u>Just A please.</u>

Text 7 illustrates a situation in which the student presents the teacher with his homework – he had to make a wooden bench to sit on. The student uses imperatives. The first time it is a request in the form of a question (*So how about that A?*), whereas the second is a seeming request. Although on the text surface we can see a performative verb *please*, whose task is to create a polite and kind communication situation, but a pragmatic context analysis proves that this is a request as it is shown by the sender's facial mimicry and the tone of his voice expressing impatience. In addition, the imperative is supplemented with an expressive speech act (*I couldn't care less*), showing the negative attitude of pupils to school duties, and thus to the teacher.

The whole communicative situation should be assessed as impolite, and therefore unkind. The student has exceeded his competence since he assumed the role of his interlocutor with higher social status and thus broke the rules of the school etiquette. Such behaviour does not occur in the MM cartoons. I have never found a single example of an impolite student speech behaviour directed at the teacher.

4.1.2   Commisives

Commisives are another group of speech acts characteristic for the discourse of education. Searl (1970) defines them as statements in which the sender makes a commitment to take some action. Some examples include: promises, oaths, contracts, warranties, threats and warnings. Some of these acts exhibit an inherent kind or unkind attitude in their semantic structure. The promise, for instance, carries positive connotations because we promise something that is beneficial to the recipient. The threat, on the other hand, implies sanctions which the recipient finds detrimental. Other speech acts may have different illocutionary power depending on the changing pragmatic conditions. In the analyzed material commisives have been identified only in the CN cartoons.

Promises in general work in favor of the students. However, in the case of the CN cartoons promises become an expression of unfriendly attitudes:

Text 8 [from the cartoon: "Cramp Twins," episode: "Weepy Wayne"]

> Teacher: (...) *Well, my dear, If anyone would like to challenge Maniek to a tear-drop duel, they would be excused from homework this week* (...).

> (in the next scene): Teacher: *What's the matter Maniuś, are you going to cry?*

The teacher has made a promise to the students: they would not have to do their homework. It is a win-win situation for the students. The condition for its fulfillment, however, is the humiliation of another student since the task is to make one of the Cramp Twins weep. The intention of the teacher is therefore not making her students happy, but hurting one of them instead. This reflects the unfriendly or even hostile attitude contained in the malicious question: *What's the matter Maniuś, are you going to cry?*

Threats are also an expression of an unfriendly attitude.

Text 9 [from the cartoon: "Cramp Twins," episode: "Weepy Wayne"]

[The student angrily breaks the ruler]

> Teacher: *That's what I'll do with you if you fail the chemistry test.*

Threats demonstrate the poor didactic skills of teachers who otherwise cannot motivate their students to work. Threats are responsible for the breach in the process of interaction since they breed tension and increase the distance between the sender (the one that threatens) and the receiver (the one who is intimidated). They serve as teachers' tools to demonstrate the superiority over the students who are positioned lower in the social hierarchy. And they do more so if the teacher threatens to use force.

4.1.3   Declarations

Declarative speech acts are intended to produce certain states of affairs in social relations. In the analyzed material some of the acts described below may also be labeled as assertives, but because of their illocutionary power (the desire to make changes in the extra-linguistic reality), I should discuss them here.

Text 10 [from the cartoon: "Cramp Twins," episode: "Miss Kissy"]

> Teacher: *And now at the end of the lesson <u>I would like to make a few of you suffer</u> in front of the class. Wayne!*

Text 11 [from the cartoon: „Cramp Twins," episode: „Miss Kissy"]

> Teacher: *Sit down and stop bothering him Wayne. Luszyn is not on detention. He's here voluntarily to help me with the school magazine. <u>Of course, I hoped that at least to some extent this fact will intensify your suffering, and thereby it'll add to my personal pleasure.</u>*

In Text 10 the teacher made a statement in which she informs the class of her intention to embarrass one of the students. In Text 11 the same teacher uses an informative speech act, but her intention is to humiliate the student, and not to inform about the situation. In both cases speech acts are explicit. The teacher informs her class in a direct manner about her unkind attitude towards one specific student. Public humiliation gives her pleasure, which is emphasized by the phrase *of course*.

Assurance is another example of declarative speech acts. They appear in the MM cartoons.

Text 12 [from the cartoon: "Franklin," episode: "Franklin's Valentines"]

> Teacher: *Franklin, what happened?*
> Student: *My mom forgot to pack my cards. I'm sorry, I didn't bring any gifts.*
> Teacher: *That's all right, Franklin. Your friends will understand.*

Text 13 [from the cartoon: "Franklin," episode: "Franklin and the Broken Globe"]

> [The teacher to the student who knocked down the globe:] *All right, Goose, don't worry, it was just an accident. It could happen to anyone.*

Texts 12 and 13 show that the kind teacher wants to help her students – she cares about their welfare and their well-being. The assurances, which in these two examples represent the acts of consolation, are intended to lift up the recipient's mood. At the same time they are supplemented with justification, so that they sound more reliable.

Finally, declarative acts result from the teachers' position, who by virtue of their role have the right to regulate the social life in the classroom.

Text 14 [from the cartoon: "Franklin," episode: „Franklin's Valentines"]

> Teacher: *I think you are really great friends, so it must be celebrated. Attention everyone! I hereby declare that from now on this day will be called the friendship day!*

Text 15 [from the cartoon: "Clifford the Big Red Dog," episode: "Islander of the Year"]

> Teacher*: The pictures of the Islander of the Year and of the person who'll write the essay about him will be put on our wall of fame. Well, the best essay will be published in the newspaper, the Voice of Birdwell Island.*
> Students: *Ooooh! Great! In the newspaper!*

Text 16 [from the cartoon: "The Amazing World of Gumball," episode: "The End"]

> Teacher: *Kids, Today I have a surprise for you ... A test! Hahaha.*

Text 15 is a typical announcement. The teacher, using a typical model of a declarative speech act, sets up a new school holiday. The declaration was preceded by her approving opinion regarding the students' behaviour. Moreover, the teacher indirectly applied praise when she appreciated that the students were friendly and that they behaved like true friends. The entire combination of speech acts in Text 14 guaranteed the atmosphere of kindness. Similarly, in Text 15, the teacher an-

nounced the terms of the competition, to which the students responded with great joy.

On the other hand, the statement of the teacher in Text 16 on the surface sounds nice for the students, but then there's disappointment. At first, the teacher's announcement *I have a surprise for you* prepares the students for a pleasant continuation. Surprise in fact is generally defined as something that gives pleasure. Then, however, the surprise turns out to be a class test, which the students hardly ever welcome with enthusiasm. A test is rather a sad necessity. A combination in a single act of speech of two very different phenomena – a surprise and a test – demonstrates the attitude of the teacher who wants to irritate the students. It is concluded with his mocking laughter that appears at the end of his speech.

4.1.4   Expressives

Expressives serve an evaluative function. They often form combinations with other types of speech acts. As with all speech acts, expressives can convey kind and unkind attitude of the speaker to what / whom he is talking about. Of all speech acts discussed in the article, expressives are the most numerous.

Cartoon characters may have a kind or unkind attitude to the school itself. They express their opinion in the form of assertives which inform about the world.

Text 17 [from the cartoon: "Codename: Kids Next Door," episode "Operation: Foodfite"]

> Student 1: Dude, I hate this cafeteria. The same gray goo every day.
> Student 2: *Easy, Number 4* (11). *Grub is terrible, but if you try, you won't puke.*

In the Text 17 Student 1 characterizes his strong negative emotions as hatred, which is directed at the school cafeteria. The second part brings information about what you can eat there. The meal is defined as the *gray goo* which means that you cannot tell what dish is being served. *Grey goo* is in fact a semi-liquid thick substance which looks and smells revoltingly. It is a pejorative and colloquial term. A similarly negative opinion is expressed by Student 2 who calls the food the slang word *grub*. The negative rating of the canteen is also included in the directive act to Student 1 when Student 2 assures his friend that swallowing lunch is an individual act. The statement *but if you try, you won't puke* implies that lunch is so disgusting that it causes nausea.

Similarly disapproving is the following example:

Text 18 (from the cartoon "Ed, Edd'n Eddy," episode: "Cool Hand Ed")

> Student: Damn this PE.

Text 18 contains a swear word. The word which appears in the Polish version – *szlag* – used to be considered as vulgar but at the moment it is classified as milder in a colloquial language variety. This expressive speech act serves a performative function. A student uses words to elicit a change in the extra-linguistic reality.

Expressives can also be found in the MM cartoons. The main difference, however, is that the MM cartoons are infused with positive emotions. The students exhibit a kind attitude towards school as a place of learning.

Text 19 [from the cartoon: "Franklin," episode: "Franklin and the Broken Globe"]

> Student: It's so nice in here! Are those new building blocks?

Text 20 [from the cartoon: "The Secret World of Benjamin Bear," episode: "Teddy Tech"]

> Student: School is great!

Text 21 [from the cartoon: "Clifford the Big Red Dog," episode: "Islander of the Year"]

> Teacher: *Before you leave, I want to remind you of our upcoming annual competition for the islander of the year.*
> Student: *Great! I must take part in it.*

Texts 19-21 are dominated by approving acts such as exclamations and adverbs expressing admiration. They are also informative speech acts. While the CN characters inform us about their dislikes, the MM characters talk about what they like (*I like building castles*). They also react to their teachers' proposals with enthusiasm to show their approval (*Excellent idea! Great! Fantastic!*).

Expressives may also reflect the attitudes of students to their teachers.

Text 22 [from the cartoon: "Cramp Twins," episode "6th senselessness"]

> [The student complains that the school newspaper printed the articles written by teachers:] *Why would they publish the work of <u>some old buffers</u>!*

Text 23 [from the cartoon: "Cramp Twins," episode: "Miss Kissy"]

> [A student about the teacher:] Oh! Miss Hissy and a man! Icky!

Text 24 [from the cartoon: "Ed, Edd'n Eddy," episode: "Cool Hand Ed"]

> Student: *Let's synchronize our watches, gentlemen. Okay, break up before <u>the screws</u> see we're gone.*

The unkind attitude is articulated by lexical components: the teacher is a *screw* in terms of a 'prison guard' (Text 24) and an *old buffer* (Text 22). In other fragments teacher's qualities are also presented as *vicious, unattractive, horrible*. Through the language the students externalize their hatred, mockery and insults. The utterances about the teachers are always accompanied by negative emotions, such as disgust. These emotions are often extreme (Text 23).

Such an attitude is absent in the MM cartoons where the students do not speak about their teacher. There are few speech acts which describe the teacher-student relation.

Text 25 [from the cartoon: "Franklin," episode: "Franklin and the Broken Globe"]

Text 22 [from the cartoon: "Cramp Twins," episode "6th senselessness"]

Student: *So do you think Miss Owl will be angry?*

A student in a conversation with a friend is concerned about the teacher's reaction to his inappropriate behaviour (the student knocked down the globe). However, there is no negative assessment of the teacher. The student knows that he did wrong and the teacher is referred to with respect.

Expressive speech acts also appear in the teachers' statements, mainly in the CN cartoons. They are unkind speech acts in the form of insults (teachers offend their students).

Text 26 [from the cartoon: "Cramp Twins," episode: "Miss Kissy"]

Teacher: *Boys, girls and outcasts; you nosy rascal; you little spy.*

Addressing the students, the teacher used invectives, which belong to the aggressive speech behaviour. In this way she depreciates the students, increases the distance and emphasizes the hierarchy. The use of invectives is allowed for those who have a higher social position and feel superior.

On the contrary, the teachers from the MM cartoons always call their students by their first names and not the nicknames. Their attitude is kind and friendly as can be seen in the expressive acts of praise:

Text 27 [from the cartoon: "Franklin," episode: "Franklin Collection"]

Teacher: It is a very carefully prepared collection. Very colorful . I think that your collection proves that you can have a lot of fun when you collect what you like.

Text 27 is an extended act of praise. The teacher justifies why she likes her student's collection. Her use of the verb in the first person singular (*I think*) emphasizes the subjectivity of the expressed opinion. It is important because younger students regard the teacher as their authority and therefore they care a lot about their opinion. The word of appreciation from the teacher makes the student undoubtedly pleased and manifests the teacher's kindness towards the student and his work.

In the MM cartoons we can also find the expressions conveying teacher's positive emotions evoked by the meeting with the students:

Text 28 [from the cartoon "The Secret World of Benjamin Bear," episode "Teddy Tech"]

Teacher: *My name is Poppy and I will be your teacher. I am truly delighted that I have so many new students.*

Expressives, such as the acts of praise (congratulations) can also be found in the CN cartoons.

Text 29 [from the cartoon: "Cramp Twins" episode "6th senselessness"]

Teacher: *Congratulations, Wayne. Another F to your collection. Apparently, you don't have a talent for geography either.*

Although the teacher applied the expressive act of congratulations with positive connotations, its illocutionary force is derogatory to the student. The teacher's utterance is clearly marked with a sneer, which is opposite to a kind communicative

behaviour. The teacher emphasizes that the student collects bad grades and by using the word *either* she asserts that the student falls equally poor in other subjects. The non-verbal context makes it additionally clear that insulting this particular student brings the teacher a lot of pleasure. Again, we are dealing here with an unkind attitude.

5.   CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the kind and unkind communicative behaviour of the cartoon characters demonstrates stark differences. Although in both the MM and the CN cartoons we can distinguish the same categories of speech acts: declarative, commisive, assertive and expressive, their illocutionary power is different. The MM cartoons are dominated by the kind speech acts whereas the CN cartoons display the unkind speech acts. The intention of the MM characters, both teachers and students, is to create the atmosphere of kindness, while the CN characters seek to depreciate the person or object they talk about. With the use of the specific speech acts, both types of protagonists give expression to the social categorization of the recipient (humiliation, exaltation) and their relationship to the person or object in question. With the use of specific speech acts, on the one hand they express respect, friendship and care, and, on the other hand, neglect, indifference and intention to harm. The MM characters create a polite communicative situation as opposed to an impolite communicative situation constructed by the CN characters. It should be emphasized that the use of impolite speech acts does not elicit any criticism; the senders of impolite speech acts do not incur any sanctions. Therefore, the viewers may misinterpret the observed communicative behaviours. Children do not know yet (due to developmental deficits specific to their age) that unkind speech acts can disrupt relationships, intensify conflicts or even prevent reconciliation, whereas kind speech acts create a polite communicative situation, which in many cases can help to establish relations, enhance relationships between the participants of a communication process and resolve conflicts.

The primary function of the CN cartoons is entertainment. The characters are meant to entertain rather than educate. However, to be able to see the humor of these forms, the viewer must possess some knowledge about the world, his own culture and the stereotypes. Such knowledge, for obvious reasons, is abstract for young children. Therefore the analyzed cartoons are more likely to become a sort of a lesson of bad manners. The linguistic behaviours of the MM characters meet with the approval among the young audience, yet the behaviour of the characters from the CN cartoons is definitely more attractive. K. Ożóg, who specializes in contemporary Polish language, and the language of the younger generation in particular, writes: ". . . the younger generation is known for their aversion to sentimentality, pathos, exaltation, disclosure of positive feelings and emotions" (Ożóg, 2005: 13), which is exactly what we find in the cartoons such as "Franklin" and "The Wonderful World of Benjamin Bear." Ożóg continues: "There is a slapdash fashion

of speaking, rampant tendency to express negative feelings, which, unfortunately, in many conversations dominate over positive emotions (Ożóg, 2005:13). The CN cartoons seem to confirm and perpetuate this trend. The kind attitude is no longer attractive.

The analysis of communicative behaviour of cartoon characters allows us to determine the potential direction of the development of communication skills of children who are the audience. In everyday life a child will have to make a choice of an appropriate language variant dependent on the social role of their interlocutor. Since the situations featured in the cartoons are an imitation of a child's everyday life, there is a high probability that certain behaviours will be reproduced by the children. And because the CN cartoons are more attractive for young viewers, the unkind speech acts will be easier to memorize. As a result, a negative image of school will be solidified faster than a positive one and impolite communicative behaviour will enter the active vocabulary of the child more easily. The studies of the child language acquisition show that the repeated exposure increases the chance to learn new words. When we think of television as a source of new words and phrases, it is even more important that the children watch the same program repeatedly and the repeated contact with the same text increases the chances of memorizing it (Sénéchal, 2006).

Due to the fact that young audience does not instantaneously analyze the visual and verbal message, they absorb many forms of linguistic behaviour involuntarily. Therefore the media create both opportunities and risks with respect to the acquisition of pragmatic and sociolinguistic competence by children. Undoubtedly this is an important kind of information for teachers whose task is to develop the language skills of their students in a comprehensive way. Being familiar with the communicative behaviours of cartoon characters may allow for better and more efficient development of teaching methodology at all levels of education.

REFERENCES

Anderson D. R & Evans M. (2001). Peril and potential of media for infants and toddlers. *Zero to Three, 22*(2), 10-16.

Austin, J.L. (1993). *Mówienie i poznawanie. Rozprawy i wykłady filozoficzne.* [*Speech and cognition. Philosophical Papers*], trans. B. Chwedończuk, Warsaw. [in Polish]

Bandura, A. (2002). Social cognitive theory of mass communications. In J. Bryant, & D. Zillmann (Eds.) *Media effects. Advances in theory and research* (p. 121-155). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Berger, A. (2000). *Media and communication research methods. An introduction to qualitative and quantitative approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Christakis, D.A., Ebel, B.E., Rivara, F.P., & Zimmerman, F.J. (2004). Television, video, and computer game usage in children under 11 years of age. *Journal of Pediatrics, 145*, 652-658. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jpeds.2004.06.078

Close, R. (Ed.) (2004). *Television and Language Development in the Early Years. A review of the Literature*. National Literacy Trust, London.

Desmurget, M. (2012). *Teleogłupianie. O zgubnych skutkach oglądania telewizji nie tylko przez dzieci.* [*TV Lobotomy. The evils of television watching not only by children*], trans. E. Kaniowska, Warsaw. [in Polish]

Goffman E. (2006). *Rytuał interakcyjny*. [*Interaction Ritual]*, trans. A. Szulżycka, Warsaw. [in Polish]

Grabias, S. (2011). *Język w zachowanich społecznych.* [*Language in social behaviours*.] Lublin. [in Polish]

James, N.C., & McCain, T.A. (1982). Television games preschool children play: Patterns, themes and uses*. Journal of Broadcasting, 26*, 783-800. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/08838158209364048

Kołodziejczyk, A. (2013). Media w życiu rodziny. Rodzaje mediacji korzystania z mediów. [Media in family life. Types of media mediation use]. In A. Ogonowska, & G. Ptaszek, (Eds.), *Współczesna psychologia mediów. Nowe problemy i perspektywy badawcze.* [*The contemporary media psychology. New problems and research perspectives*], (p.49-69). Cracow: Impuls. [in Polish]

Kubicka D., & Kołodziejczyk A. (2007). *Psychologia wpływu mediów. Wybrane teorie, metody, badania*. [*The psychology of media influence. Selected theories, methods and research*]. Cracow: Impuls. [in Polish]

Lemish, D. (2008). *I bambini e la TV*. [*Children and Television*]. Milano. [in Italian]

Lemish, D., & Rice, M.L. (1986). Television as a talking picture book: a prop for language acquisition. *Journal of Child Language, 13*(2), 251-274. http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0305000900008047

Naigles, L., & Mayeux, L. (2001). Television as incidental language teacher. In D. Singer, & J. Singer, *Handbook of children and the media* (p. 135-152). London: Sage Publications.

Nęcki, Z. (1998). *Postawy i ich zmiana, Encyklopedia psychologii.* [*Attitude changes, The Encyclopaedia of Psychology*], ed. Szewczuk W., Warsaw. [in Polish]

Ogrodzka-Mazur, E. (2009). Nabywanie przez dziecko kompetencji komunikatywnych w czasie zabaw tematycznych. [The acquisition of communicative competence by a child during the thematic plays]. In B. Dymara (Ed.), *Dziecko w świecie zabawy. O kulturze, cechach i wartościach ludycznej edukacji.* [*A child in the world of fun. Culture, characteristics and values of entertaining education*], (p. 239-253). Cracow. [in Polish]

Ożóg, K. (2005). Współczesny model polskiej grzeczności językowej. [Polish contemporary model of linguistic politeness]. In A. Dąbrowska, &A. Nowakowska (Eds.), *Życzliwość i agresja w języku i kulturze.* [*Friendliness and aggression in language and in culture*], (p. 9-16). Wroclaw. [in Polish].

Przybyla, O. (2004). *Akty mowy w jezyku nauczycieli.* [*Speech acts in the language of teachers*]. Katowice. [in Polish]

Rice, M. (1983). The role of television in language acquisition. *Developmental Review, 3*, 211-224. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0273-2297(83)90030-8

Rice, M. (2004). Cognitive aspects of communicative development]. In B. Bokus & G.W. Shugar (Eds.), *Psychology of child language. Achievements, new perspectives*. Gdańsk. [in Polish]

Rice, M.L., & Haight, P.L. (1986). "Motherese" of Mr. Rogers. A Description of the Dialogue of Educational Television Programs. *Journal of Speech and Hearing Disorders*, *51*, 282-287. http://dx.doi.org/10.1044/jshd.5103.282

Rice, M.L., & Woodsmall, L. (1988). Lessons from television: children's word learning when viewing. *Child Development, 59*, 420-429. http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/1130321

Rideout V., Vandewater E., & Wartella E. (2003). *Zero to six electronic media in the lives of infants, toddlers and preschoolers*. Menlo Park, CA: Kaiser Family Foundation.

Rideout, V., Foehr, U., & Roberts, D. (2010). *Generation M2: Media In the lives of 8- to 18-year-olds*. Menlo Park, CA: Kaiser Family Foundation.

Roberts, D.F., & Foehr, U.G. (2008). Trends in media use. *The future of children, 18*, 11-37. http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/foc.0.0000

Searle J. R., Speech Acts. An Essay. In *The Philosophy of Language*, Cambridge 1969, [Pol.: Searle, J.R. Akty mowy. [Speech acts], trans. B. Chwedończuk, Warsaw 1987]

Sénéchal, M. (2006). Reading Books to Young Children: What It does and doesn't do. *L1 – Educational Studies In Language and Literature, 6*(3), 23-35.

Skowronek, B. (1999). *O dialogu na lekcjach w szkole średniej. Analiza pragmatyczno-językowa.* [*On dialogue in high school lessons. Linguistic and pragmatic analysis*]. Cracow. [in Polish]

Wright, J., Huston, A., Scantlin, R., & Kotler, J. (2001). The Early Window Project: Sesame Street prepares children for school. In S.M. Fisch, & R.T. Truglio (Eds*.) 'G' is for Growing: Thirty Years of Research on Children and Sesame Street*. Mahwah, (p. 97-114). New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.