Impact of Watching Cartoons on the Acquisition of English Inflections:
A Case Study of an Arab Child

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Abstract

The aim of the study is to describes a longitudinal case where a Saudi boy watching selected TV cartoon programs for three hours daily since he was 3 years old until he was 10 years old. The present study focused on the child's acquisition of grammatical inflections. The child, Anmar, was born and grown in Saudi Arabia, in Buraidah city, which is considered to be an EFL setting. This longitudinal research study relied substantially on the case study methodology. It included observation, fieldnotes, audio, and video recordings. To add more transparency to the study two native speakers of English participated in analyzing the collected materials of audio and video recordings. Storytelling and grammatical tests were also administered to triangulate the research findings. The result of the study showed that Anmar, although showing slight resistance to watch English cartoons, soon he was totally engaged in these programs. He started to produce corrected memorized inflectional forms. Later after a few years the child stared to produce his own ideas using correct grammatical inflections with plural–s, 3rd singular –s, ed in the past, and irregular tense. Additionally, Anmar developed a high rate of awareness towards the use of other inflections even beyond the scope of the study, such as knowledge about gerund and participle. Although the study has its own limitation, it calls educational institutions, teachers and parents to organize a similar program for the children to facilitate the acquisition of the language in their childhood and early stages of schooling.

Index Terms

Arab - EFL/ ESL - English cartoons - grammatical inflections - language acquisition - television

Introduction

It is common knowledge that the English language serves as a global means of interpersonal communication, with the help of which people of different backgrounds have the opportunity to establish effective dialogue and to reach mutual understanding. In the modern world, English constitutes an essential element of a whole range of aspects of life, from politics

to science, technology, and culture, and the situation is unlikely to change in the future, despite the relentless global shift in economic and political power. Excellent knowledge of English can also substantially improve one's social and financial status, opening up new opportunities for self-fulfillment and allowing individuals to receive a proper upbringing and education and to find top-level well-paid jobs. Language can also be regarded as a condition to accede to some other benefits, including the establishment of useful linkages, the opportunity to generate a better understanding of foreign cultures and to avoid committing cultural faux pas, and so on. All of this undeniably underlines the importance of obtaining greater English language proficiency.

It is, however, notable that learning English is not always an easy task and this process may pose a serious challenge to Language learners. The point is that one may find it difficult to understand how to employ diverse rules of English grammar and exceptions to them, and grammatical contradictions or to remember the order in which English words are placed. Like any other human language, English is a complex system with specific features, relationships, and processes that have to be followed by the speakers to ensure that their speech is understood by their communicators. It is also true that the acquisition of the second language does not take place in a vacuum and that there is a certain interference between first and second language acquisition. Derakhshan and Karimi (2015) confirm that individuals who are in the process of learning a foreign language have a tendency to structures, patterns, etc. dominating in their native languages when getting acquainted with the systems of the target languages and trying to produce a meaningful response with their help.

This is what calls for the need to seek ways to alleviate the burden placed on the EFL learners and to continue to analyze their experiences and to assess different approaches to acquiring a new language or enhancing their proficiency to find effective and innovative solutions to their challenges. Authentic materials such as cartoons are among many other potentially beneficial tools for individualized learning that are extraordinarily helpful in mastering foreign challenges, comprehending alien cultures, motivating learners to practice speech by imitating the ways in which cartoon characters communicate, and in improving their listening and speaking skills. The point is that this type of audiovisual programs allows for a more natural learning approach to second language acquisition. As Krashen (1982) explains, when acquisition takes place, the learner absorbs information at an unconscious level while easily storing it in their memory (which is why it is so important), whereas plain learning is a more mechanical process and is less effective, as it relies solely on a top-drop instruction of the existing linguistic patterns. VanPatten (2017), in turn, insists that language cannot be taught and learned explicitly, for it is a distinctively complicated and abstract phenomenon. By this, it is meant that although conventional modes of learning foreign languages are aimed at presenting the existing rules and paradigms, they largely fail to reflect what is inside the speakers' minds. Cartoons can thus create a supportive environment for acquiring English language proficiency and facilitate the perception of correct English speech, enabling the learners to digest proper

grammatical patterns that the native speakers use to perform the effective verbal interaction. At the same time, one can assume that when watching animated videos, one tends to learn these structures naturally, through simple exposure, without even realizing it. Moreover, cartoons primarily function as a means of entertaining, which implies that second language acquisition can be enjoyable, and there is a variety of cartoons, which means that everybody can find something to enjoy. It is no secret that animated programs are particularly popular among children, including young ones. In fact, they are originally intended for this particular age group (Oyero, & Oyesomi, 2014). This makes one assume that watching one's favorite cartoon characters speak English has the potential to substantially improve youngsters' English language skills.

Significance of the Study

The significance of the present study emerges from the notion that watching TV cartoons in an EFL setting at an early age may have an impact on the child's grammatical inflections. It is specifically significant due to the contribution it makes to show if the hypothesis of watching English cartoons may have effect on grammar accuracy on a non-speaking English child. This study may serve as a background for language teachers in elementary levels.

Problem of the study:

The researcher, who is a member of the English teaching staff in a Saudi university, found out that Saudi English learners have major problems in grammatical inflection application although they study them. EFL learners' exposure to English is limited which minimizes the opportunities to practice English. Saudi English learners' proficiency is ranked very week (Sawahel, 2015). This research attempts to answer the question if watching TV cartoons at early age may support children to acquire grammatical inflections and develop their awareness towards their use.

Research Question:

The study attempts to answer the following research question:

How is a child's language acquisition of grammatical inflections impacted by watching selected English TV cartoons ?

Research Hypothesis

Children in EFL settings experience difficulties in acquiring English grammatical rules. However, due to the presence of media, this can be acquired through watching selected English TV cartoons.

Hence, the present paper will concentrate on evaluating the impact of exposure to cartoons on the acquisition of grammatical inflections by children at an early age by analyzing the experience of a young Arab child who learns English by means of cartoons viewing and on exploring how exactly children learn about the process of word formation in the context of the given practice.

Literature Review

Language Acquisition in Early Childhood

Many researchers, including Bloch and Edwards (1999), Kuhl (2004), Lust (2006) and others, tend to believe that unlike adults, children, acquire foreign language skills much easier, for, at birth, individuals come into possession of the ability to develop language, be it native or foreign one. Ghasemi and Hashemi (2011) support the view that children's brains are some sort of "sponges" for learning the language and suggest that the period from birth to ten years of age represents a critical period for learning languages. During this time, the human brain is particularly susceptible to absorbing new information, including specific features of the complex systems of foreign languages. The point is that the human brain undergoes a lot of development and changes during the early years when it is being constructed and structured day by day, thus enabling the outside stimuli to impact the complex developmental process. As Lust (2006) stresses, upon turning three years old, children are more likely to grasp much of the elementary system of a language they have been exposed to during the early stages. If they continue to acquire language skills after this milestone, they have every chance to obtain a perfect command of this specific language in later stages of childhood. After the given period of time, children are believed to start losing this unique ability and experiencing more challenges with second language acquisition. The capability to learn languages easily in the early years of a child's life resulting from an increased sensitivity to the basic means of communication, however, makes it vital to pay due attention to how knowledge consumption takes place; it has to be done in a deliberate and cautious manner. Moreover, as Ortega (2009) argues, "an early start does not guarantee complete and successful acquisition in all cases, as some children who start learning the L2 at an age as early as four or even two may be found to differ from native speaker performance in subtle ways" (p. 29). In such a way, the researcher reminds that there can be a great deal of individual variation when it comes to language acquisition.

Language Exposure in natural setting vs. language exposure via TV cartoons

The language used in some TV cartoon programs resembles the language of mothers' speech (Jylhä-Laide, 2006). This feature allows children to listen to a simplified language similar to the caretaker language. Therefore, comprehension potentiality is likely to occur, especially if children are familiar with these programs as time elapses. According to Snow (1977), simplified language, or so called motherese, is normally used with children

Another aspect of similarity between natural exposure of language and language acquisition through watching TV cartoons relates to the quality of the selected programs that enables negotiation of meanings through attentive speech, speech repetition, speech rate, fluency, and concrete language (Jylhä-Laide, 2006). These features compose contextual information similar to the information that a language learner experiences in naturalistic situations, therefore viewers receive comprehensible input from TV cartoons (Enayati & Kakarash, 2017).

The Benefits of Cartoon Viewing for Language Acquisition

Cartoons have long been regarded as an easy and effective source of entertainment for children. They are funny, colorful, and captivating. What is more significant is that many studies reveal that cartoons do more than entertain. It is Bahrani and Soltani (2011), Karakas and Sariçoban (2012), Poštič (2015), Enayati and Kakarash (2016) who confirm that watching cartoons is an important and effective practice by means of which children can significantly improve their knowledge of the target language. Poštič (2015), for instance, explains that in the process of watching cartoons, a natural language environment is created. It is what includes everything that the language learners need to hear and see to be able to communicate effectively. The researcher also notes that cartoons serve as a powerful source of motivation, which encourages the young viewers to pay attention to and memorize characters' speech, as their main aim is to understand what happens on screen. Harmer (2004) even puts forward the idea that children's emotional attraction to their favorite characters can be so strong that they may feel the need to learn to speak the same language. Here, it also needs to be pointed out that cartoons often show basic life situations that children are familiar with, thus allowing them to learn about phrases and expressions that are relevant in this or that particular situation. When observing how the cartoon characters use them in a natural environment, children also unintentionally pay attention to details such as intonation and body language, thereby generating a more profound understanding of culturally appropriate patterns of behavior. At the same time, one should not underestimate the diversity of animated videos and characters. There are, for instance, concept cartoons or popular animation movies that focus on diverse thematic issues. This presupposes that there is always something for everyone and that cartoons are a universal educational tool.

More importantly, some of the recent research projects, including the one carried out by Enayati and Kakarash (2016), demonstrate that cartoon viewing has a positive impact on

elementary school pupils' grammatical accuracy, enabling them to better understand how grammatical structures are formed in the target language. The researchers noted the positive impact of cartoons on language. Although this practice has little effect on young children's writing skills, the fact remains that it is helpful in introducing young viewers to grammatical features of languages they learn and in providing the appropriate language input for language acquisition (Enayati & Kakarash, 2016).

The Acquisition of Inflections at an Early Age

It is notable that studies, including the one conducted by Soderstrom (2002), indicate that children began to respond to the availability of the inflectional marker –s, which serves as one of many aspects of early syntax, at a very early stage of development. To be more precise, the researcher concludes that already "by 19 months, infants are sensitive to the presence of the –s inflectional marker, but do not yet have a full grasp of its appropriate grammatical use" (Soderstrom, 2002, p. iii). This is what implies that young children generate a more comprehensive understanding of grammar than is commonly believed.

More than that, studies show that there is a certain order in the context of which the acquisition of different word endings takes place. Thus, when examining 20-36 month-old children's language development, Brown (1973) notes that infants normally learn to apply the third person singular verb ending in the proper language context only after the processing and acquisition of forms such as –*ing*, plural and possessive –s (of nouns), *the* and *a*, and ending –*ed* takes place. After that, children proceed with the acquisition of grammatical inflection –s and learn about the proper use of auxiliary verbs (Brown, 1973). Cruttenden (1979), in turn, differentiates between three separate stages during which children acquire knowledge of verb inflections. First, they tend to memorize words on a case-by-case basis, and yet, at this stage, they form verbs either with or without the help of the inflection. After that, children are believed to begin to draw attention to common patterns that are used to create different forms and to resort to what is referred to as overgeneralizations. For instance, they note that the past tense form of verbs features the ending –*ed*, which makes them assume that one has to add it to irregular verbs as well (e.g. a child can say "runned" instead of using the correct past tense form "run"). According to Cruttenden (1979), it is during the third stage that children start using correct inflections during speech production. One can thus assume that the acquisition of verb inflection –s does not come easy and that to figure out the rule concerned with this specific ending, one has to learn more about the use of some other grammatical patterns. This, in turn, makes it clear that knowledge of grammatical inflection develops gradually (Aguado-Orea, & Pine, 2015). The fact remains that children start learning to produce accurate grammatical constructions at an early stage of their lives.

This study complements previous studies due to the distinction it of its nature. Whereas previous studies such as (Baltova, 1999; Danan, 1992, 2004; Garza, 1991; Markham, 1999; Neuman & Koskinen, 1992) focused on the comparisons between the effect of captioned and non-captioned TV programs on ESL/EFL adult language learners' grammatical accuracy, this study attempts to explore the impact of watching TV cartoons on the acquisition of grammatical inflections of an EFL child who was mainly exposed to English through TV cartoons at an early age. Particularly this study aims to investigate if a child living in an EFL country and is totally surrounded by his mother language can acquire grammatical inflections as he is exposed to the language through watching selected English TV cartoons.

Subject of the Study

In this context, it is of particular importance to discuss the main and only subject of the study. Anmar was born in Buraidah, which is the center of the so-called Al-Qassim Region in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The child's family, including his parents and two brothers, are native Saudis, which implies that the Arabic language is their mother tongue and the principal means of communication. Anmar's parents, however, have long been interested in allowing their son to master English and in finding the most optimal way to succeed in this endeavor. Here, it is also worth mentioning that the child's father was the only family member who could speak English fluently, but he rarely initiated conversations with his son in English. The boy thus began to watch cartoons in English upon turning three years of age and cartoons were the only source of exposure to the target language. Cartoon viewing normally took place in the morning (when Anmar's older brothers were away) to ensure that nothing and no one interrupts the exposure to animated programs (and the process of acquiring knowledge of English, in particular, the process of word formation in the English language). At first, Anmar used to spend around three hours a day watching his favorite cartoons in English. However, there were instances when the boy was able to complete all of his tasks early. In such situations, he was allowed to watch more cartoon episodes. Sometimes this initiative was presented as a reward for Anmar's behavior. In either way, it is challenging and almost impossible to clearly determine the duration of the entire process of cartoon viewing. As for the beginning of the process of gathering data on the targeted variable, the researcher started collecting information on Anmar's linguistic behavior after one and a half years after his first exposure to cartoons in English, that is when the subject was four-and-a-half years. It was observed that by that time, the boy was already in possession of some language skills. In particular, he had the basic vocabulary and general knowledge of English. As for Anmar's experience of learning English in the school setting, it needs to be mentioned that he started learning English with the rest of his classmates in the fourth grade (i.e. when the subject turned ten years of age and after six-year exposure to English through cartoon viewing). Anmar is now twelve-year-old, he excels in English and other school subjects and has a distinctively communicative, self-assured, and creative personality.

TV Cartoon Programs

Special attention should be placed on the types of animated programs Anmar was watching in the course of his exposure to these specific means of entertainment. To assist with the experiment, the researcher asked Anmar's parents to concentrate the child's attention on three popular cartoons, namely, *Dora the Explorer*, *Lazy Town*, and *Sponge Bob*. The former can be regarded as an educational kids cartoon, in which the main character explores interesting things and problem-solving scenarios through the interaction with the audience and other cartoon characters. The choice fell on this program for the reason that it relies on rather simple vocabulary and clear pronunciation, thus creating all the necessary conditions for the stress-free acquisition of the target language and its grammatical characteristics and providing young viewers with the opportunity to correctly perceive all the sounds (word endings included) produced by the characters. *Lazy Town* is another noteworthy kids cartoon which is largely aimed at promoting a healthy lifestyle. Similar to *Dora the Explorer*, it is characterized by uncomplicated language and proper pronunciation. Sponge Bob is an extraordinarily popular animated series, in which the characters put themselves in various funny everyday situations. It is remarkable that it contains rather meaningful dialogues and grammatical structures, which indicates that the cartoon has the potential to influence children's English language acquisition. Moreover, despite that the characters talk to each other in funny voices, it hardly influences one's sound perception. Additionally, it needs to be stressed that upon gaining some confidence in perceiving English speech, Anmar could independently choose programs in English and his choice was not limited to cartoons.

Methodology

This research employs qualitative methods. The qualitative research serves the purpose of case studies in language and literacy studies (Dyson & Genishi, 2005). This method provides detailed examples and description for the situation being undertaken (Yin, 2014). Similarly, Patton (1990) believes that qualitative research should use thick description, which is considered as an advantage as the emphasis is on people in natural setting. Therefore, this study employs a longitudinal investigation of the linguistic behavior of an Arab child Anmar, who is a native Arabic speaker. Therefore, the present longitudinal research project relies substantially on the case study method. According to Sturman (1997), case study is defined as a method to describe and explore an individual or group phenomenon, which can be applied to education. The case study has been chosen because it fulfills the purpose of the study to trace the language changes of grammatical inflections throughout a period of eight years. Specifically, it concentrates on analyzing an isolated case of a specific contemporary phenomenon in the real-life context. This

particular approach is widely used in modern studies, including the ones related to linguistics, for it is practical and allows for the application of diverse techniques for carrying out research and describing its results (Duff, 2008).

This study relies on observation as it serves to investigate the case study from the standpoint of the child (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It conducted repeated observations of one and the same variable (in the given context, a variable is a person, namely Anmar) and longitudinal data (observations are made over a specified time interval). It is crucial to note here that observations were carried out without manipulations on the part of the third party. This observational research project seeks to assess the impact of repeated viewing of cartoons in English on the young boy's second language acquisition by examining the extent to which Anmar uses grammatical inflections such as third-person singular verb ending, regular and

Procedures

The observations were made in the period between 2010 and 2018. That is, the current study examines Anmar's second language development of grammatical inflections from the age of three to ten. The researcher collected several written records in which Anmar's English learning progress is described. Additionally, some video materials recorded by the subject's parents were made available. According to Edwards (2004), video recordings in research provide spontaneous and transitory information that can be captured. The video recordings in this current research feature Anmar speaking English, which made it easy to trace changes in the way the subject recognized and used grammatical properties of English sentences during different stages of childhood. It was the subject's father who made a considerable contribution to data-gathering by sharing his recollections of the son's success in acquiring knowledge of English grammar. At the same time, the analysis of these valuable materials involved the participation of two native English speakers to increase transparency and impartiality of the researcher. They made a considerable contribution to the study by allowing the researcher to identify a maximum number of changes the subject of the study underwent when mastering English grammar through cartoon viewing. When gathering data, the researcher relied substantially on the approach that involves writing fieldnotes to help capture the scene. Fieldnotes, according to Rubin and Rubin (1995) allow the researcher not to be bias when notes are written instantly. By means of this method, it was possible to document as many examples of the use of diverse English inflections by Anmar as possible. A careful examination of fieldnotes was what allowed the researcher to classify information and to trace any changes that Anmar made during different periods of time.

The researcher was also able to hold several conversations with the subject of the study with the aim of making a first-hand assessment of the child's progress. These meetings were helpful in assessing the overall achievements Anmar made due to cartoon viewing. The major tools for evaluating the child's knowledge of English inflections that were used in the course of these face-to-face interactions were storytelling and simple grammatical tests (see Appendix A).

Thus, the subject was asked to tell about his favorite scenes from the cartoons he had recently watched. It was particularly useful in testing Anmar's ability to use inflections indicating the past and present tense. To gather data, the subject was also asked to complete several carefully designed sentences (which incorporated several helpful hints) while trying to ensure that correct inflections are used, e.g. (1). The (boy) (go) to the park. They had a good time there. (2). I like my school. I (go) there every day.

Results

Reaction to cartoon Watching

Despite a certain reluctance to engage in cartoon viewing at the first stages of exposure to English, the subject soon began to show great enthusiasm for the selected animated programs. It is quite clear that it is the overall appeal of the cartoons that Anmar was encouraged to watch that contributed to the child's willingness to watch cartoons in English. The observations indicate that the child was not just watching what is going on the screen; he was also keen to repeat after the cartoon characters, memorize new words and to identify their meanings.

Stages of Acquisition of Grammatical Inflections

It is remarkable that due to cartoon viewing, the subject acquired a basic vocabulary in a distinctively short period of time. Upon starting to watch cartoons, he was able to figure out the meaning of a range of verbs, including those ones describing one's actions. To be more precise, the first verbs Anmar learned were (*to*) *jump*, *swim*, *walk*, *cross*, *run*, *sing, carry, attack, escape,* and *smell*. At the same time, the analysis of data shows that at the very first stage of acquiring knowledge of inflection in English, the subject showed a tendency to simply memorize the forms of the verbs that are used in the characters' speech, without paying regard to rules related to their use (see Table 1). For instance, when trying to reproduce what a cartoon character had just said, he could exclaim "Run!," "Singing!" or "Ball" (when referring to several objects). In this context, it is remarkable that when reproducing verbs, the child would often imitate gestures of a person performing this or that particular action. This is what demonstrates that Anmar was aware of the actual meaning of verbs he pronounced. As soon as the child turned eighth, he could already express his own thoughts and ideas and describe one's actions and qualities. At the time, the child began to demonstrate certain awareness of the general principles and patterns governing inflections (see Table 1). For example, he would only use the negative particle *n't* in negative sentences to accentuate the presence of negation (denial/refusal/prohibition). When it comes to positive sentences, he would likely apply his knowledge of the conventional construction of affirmative sentences. At this stage, the subject also tended to demonstrate awareness of the use of the plural *–s*. It is also noteworthy that there were instances when he could forget where rules are applied or use them where their application is not needed, for Anmar was still increasingly prone to grammatical mistakes. For instance, the child could say "I am needing it," "I canned do

that" or "This is badder than that." When it comes to the first example, there is no denying the fact that there are cases when the verbs of opinion/preference/necessity can become subject to grammatical conjugation, but it is quite evident that at that time, Anmar was unaware of the role played by the context and had a tendency to overgeneralize in trying to produce grammatically correct combinations. Later on, the subject reached the stage when the number of grammatical errors made in the process of speech production was reduced to a minimum, and he could initiate an effective communication with his father using English as a means of interaction. It was by the age of 10 that Anmar went through the stage of overgeneralizations and was more confident in applying correct inflections, including irregular verb forms (see Table 1). That is, one can assume that by that age, the child acquired a more or less extensive knowledge of basic grammar rules in English.

Table 1. The 3 Stages of Acquiring Grammatical Inflections

Stage	Progress	Examples	Additional notes
1.	Memorization of the infinite forms of the verbs	Run. Jump. Stop. Singing. Say. Crying.	The subject frequently uses gestures to support their speech.
2.	Acquisition of an understanding of the general principles and patterns governing inflections	He don't know. I canned say. This is the littlest ball. She cries. His foots are big.	The subject has a tendency to make grammatical mistakes.
3.	Acquisition of a more or less complete understanding of the proper use of inflections	He isn't here. I cannot hear. Birds are flying. Mice ran away.	The subject makes very few grammatical mistakes.

Order of Acquiring Grammatical Inflections

Unfortunately, it appeared impossible to determine the order in which different grammatical inflections were learned by the subject, although it is easy to note that the first type of inflection that Anmar learned due to cartoons was the plural –s. Indeed, the analysis of the data retrieved in the data collection process demonstrates that the subject began to show awareness of the existence of this grammatical peculiarity before he started acknowledging the importance of other types of inflections. As for the acquisition of the third-person singular –*s*, Anmar began to demonstrate his knowledge of this type of inflection relatively early, which means that it did not take a long time to learn about the existence of this grammatical characteristic of the English language. At the same time, it is remarkable that the child experienced difficulties with comprehending the function and usage of gerund, especially in the meaning of a noun. The process of learning the correct forms of irregular verbs also represented a challenge for Anmar and took a relatively long time.

Anamr's Proficiency of Grammatical Inflections

Storytelling tool reported that Anmar normally used the past tense to simply describe the content of some specific episodes (e.g. "Yesterday, I watched Sponge Bob. Patrick was ill and could not play with Sponge Bob."). The present tense was utilized in those cases when the child intended to provide some general information or that on the occurrence of some events (e.g. "I watch this carton every day. I laugh when I see Patrick."). Anmar sometimes is asked to explain or comment on some events in order to examine his commitment to the grammatical inflections. Interestingly, it was evident that Anmar continued to keep the right tense or the inflectional endings even when he was taking about the story.

Either way, there can be no denying that practices such as cartoon viewing contribute substantially to second language acquisition in early childhood and is instrumental in further progress. In this connection, one should address recollections shared by Anmar's father. Allegedly, the father once had a conversation with his ten-year-old son concerning grammatical mistakes that he considers the most difficult to overcome. Notably, Anmar expressed that irregular nouns and verbs and the comparative and superlative adjective rules no longer represented a challenge for him and that when his classmates happened to use incorrect forms of the words in a sentence, he used to note that their utterances "jumped out" of it. In general, observations indicate that when starting to master English in the school setting, the child was already in possession of a relatively vast body of knowledge of English grammar and inflections and was able to use this knowledge in practice. Indeed, during the meetings with Anmar that were held before the child's first English lesson at school, it was clear that the child had a good grasp of grammatical inflections and did not experience difficulties with using the correct forms of the words in oral speech. When the researcher asked him to present the grammatically correct

forms of the words used in sentences like "(Child) (go) to bed early yesterday because they were very tired", Anmar figured out the proper inflections easily and quickly. Either way, it is notable that Anmar had no trouble accumulating knowledge presented by his English teacher, carrying out in-class activities, and doing home assignments. In fact, one could conclude that Anmar was more competent in the application of different types of grammatical inflections than the rest of the class. Anamr, based on the father narrations, has become his class consultant regarding grammatical inflections, especially before and after English lesson examinations.

Discussion

One can thus assume that cartoon viewing indeed managed to have a positive impact on Anmar's linguistic behavior and contributed greatly to his progress in the English classroom, making it easier for the pupil to get a grasp of more complicated grammar rules and to fulfill his academic potential. This is in line with what Bahrani and Soltani (2011), Karakas and Sariçoban (2012), Poštič (2015), Enayati and Kakarash (2016) mentioned that watching cartoons is not only an effective means of entertainment but they have the potential to contribute to children's linguistic development, allowing them to learn more about the basic features of the target language and how they are reflected in speech.

Hence, one can argue that overall, the given study complies with the view that language acquisition is distinctively effective (Krashen, 2003). It is thus notable that the Arabic-speaking child succeeded in learning the usage of diverse grammatical inflections without resorting to the traditional modes of learning the foreign language. He had no understanding of English grammar because of the lack of exposure to the language. Cartoon viewing, however, enabled the child to acknowledge the existence and significance of grammatical inflections such as the plural, possessive and the third-person singular –s, as well as the past tense –(e)d (along with the forms of some of the commonly used irregular verbs), the negative particle not (and its reduced form n't), –ing forms of verbs, and both the comparative and superlative suffixes, although at different stages of acquiring knowledge of English grammar and inflections, the subject experienced certain challenges with absorbing the relevant information. And yet, the research supports the view that young children are exceptionally perceptive to new information and can easily learn foreign languages by means of different approaches.

In this context, it also needs to be mentioned that although Anmar did not have access to a full-fledged English speaking environment, he was still able to acquire valuable English skills due to cartoons. The child rarely had the opportunity to hear English speech, and yet, when watching cartoons, he was able to get a grasp of some of the key grammatical forms. This conforms to what has been stated earlier in the literature review that TV cartoons provide comprehensible input due to repetition of language, and association of words with objects, and rate of speech that is perceivable and comprehensible (Jylhä-Laide, 2006). Anmar watched

many episodes of "Dora The Explorer," which provided a plenty of cases of interactions where Anmar had chances to think and participate via the intervals that the program allows. These opportunities lead Anmar to gain confidence and acquire a foreign language. For example, the analysis of Anmar's linguistic progress revealed that prior to his first English lesson at school, the child could already differentiate between a gerund and a participle and use these forms in relevant contexts ("I was astonished when I saw it" vs. "This is astonishing"). This is what demonstrates that cartoon viewing is an effective English learning tool even in circumstances where it is impossible to increase a child's exposure to the English language by other methods.

At the same time, it needs to be stressed that what the child managed to obtain is what is understood as metalinguistic awareness, "the capacity to use knowledge about language" that does not require the child to know how to explain rules that it incorporates (Bialystok, 2001, p. 124). By this, it is meant that when watching cartoons, memorizing, and reproducing the speech of the fictional characters, Anmar was not conscious that he was actually learning the basics of English grammar which is why he would not be able to explain why he applied this or that rule. This is in line to what Enayati and Kakarash (2017) stated that the language received on TV is contextual similar to the language experienced in natural situations.

It was only when he started learning English officially (in school) with the help of conventional learning methods that he generated a theoretical understanding of grammatical rules, including basic ones. Still, the analysis shows that only through cartoon viewing, the ten-year-old Arab child would be capable enough to initiate a meaningful and effective conversation in English, which would include the proper usage of grammatical inflections.

Interestingly enough, when taking a closer look at the dynamics of acquisition of inflections in early childhood, it is easy to observe that the present study is in line with the understanding of inflections acquisition developed by Cruttenden (1979). Apparently, children indeed tend to undergo three separate stages of the acquisition of inflectional morphology and show identical patterns of linguistic behavior (e.g. overgeneralizations). Still, it is important not to underestimate the role of factors that may contribute to varying outcomes (e.g. individual qualities, mental capacities, willingness to study a foreign language, etc.) At the same time, the study fails to confirm the ideas described by Brown (1973). It cannot provide evidence that there is a certain order in the context of which different types of inflection are normally acquired by children. By and large, one can arrive at a conclusion that the acquisition of inflections through cartoon viewing constitutes a time-consuming process and that it is difficult to predict what types of grammatical inflections the child would learn first.

Implication of Research Findings

The researcher hopes the findings of this research will help readers, linguists, teachers of English, and language program designers to recognize the effects of watching cartons or TV episodes on ESL/EFL acquisition. Consequently, teachers and course designer may consider to

integrate watching interesting TV cartoons in the lessons. Additionally, parents need to do some efforts to make their children watch English cartoons. Once children keep watching they will feel familiar with the content of the programs. Furthermore, as this study focused on a single subject, researchers may compare the findings of a similar study involving a large number of ESL/EFL participants. A subsequent study on this regard study may be could be significant to the field. Finally, the researcher of this study is the father of the child; therefore the child might have been under any pressure to please his father, the researcher. A study in which the researcher is not attached to the subjects would be valuable.

Conclusion

This study aimed to find out if watching English TV cartoons in an EFL setting at an early age has an impact on acquiring grammatical inflections. It employed qualitative research methods using a number of research tools. The main findings of the study show that the child started to acquire basic vocabulary soon after he started watching TV cartoons. Gradually, he started to imitate the characters' speech on TV in by means of using some verbs. When Anmar turned eight, he started to use grammatical inflections in English. later, Anamr developed boarder use of correct grammatical structures.

Exposure to cartoons in English at an early age and throughout childhood is an effective tool for generating a good understanding of how the grammar of this or that particular language operates and of how native speakers construct grammatically correct word forms, expressions, and sentences. Cartoons' entertaining abilities serve as a bonus, for they turn the process of acquiring knowledge of the target language into a fascinating stress-free enterprise, in the context of which the child does not really realize that they absorb new valuable information. Animated programs also create a stimulating environment in which the child easily learns to use linguistic patterns used by native speakers in diverse life situations. Needless to say that cartoon viewing alone is not sufficient for learning the grammatical structures and rules representing the fundamentals of the foreign language's grammar system. Through this practice, the child only learns how to use the knowledge gained intuitively; they do not gain an understanding of why some particular rules are being applied in this or that specific case. On the basis of this knowledge, the child can obtain a deeper understanding of the role and usage of diverse characteristics of the target language, including inflections. Hence, cartoon viewing can be considered a useful investment in the child's future progress in mastering a foreign language.

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Appendix A

1.   (Child/children/childrens) (go/goes/goed/went) to bed early yesterday because they (be/are/were) very tired.

2.   I (look/looks/looked/looking) around the room and (find/finds/found/finding) the book.

3.   She (walk) through the part right now. I just (see) her.

4.   You (…) (…) this book. It (…) very interesting.

5.   Dora (…) tired. I (…) she (…) ill.

6.   (Understand/ understanding) is difficult

7.   Children (didn't/ don't / aren't) play well

8.   He (hates/ hate/ hated) me

9.   I (drank / drinked / drink) my water in school yesterday

10.   My friends (know English / knows English)