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The effect of modern visual culture on children's drawings

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Abstract

This study aims to determine the way of children's comprehension of visual culture through the pictures they draw. For this purpose, the children between 7-12 year olds will be observed to state which visual media elements they are affected, what kids of pictures they draw, and their sensual and intellectual reactions about the visual media element affected. The research conducted by 102 students ranging from 7 to 12 year olds, attending to the first stage of primary education and representing middle socio- economic level. To determine the effects of modern visual media on children, they are asked to select a topic and draw a picture related to the elements of visual media which they have seen and affected previously. Pictures was examined with the help of content analysis technique. Results of the study are oriented to mention that children use digital images- produced by television and computer- in their pictures more than printed images. It was observed that children had internalized those images as if there weren't a screen, but they did not comment on the images.

Key Words: Primary School, Children Drawing, Visual Culture

1. Introduction

The power of visual images and the effects of this power on people have increased in this communication era. Today, it is easy to see that visual images have surrounded everywhere. There is no doubt that rapid development in technology that produce image and mass media play important roles. Now, individuals of modern societies are under the influence of visual culture that constantly produce images via LCD screens, televisions, digital images, internet, mobile phones, newspapers, magazines, and multi-media devices. Furthermore, it is common to see electronic eyes that spy on everywhere. We can see them at every corner; such as entrance of buildings, subway, stores and parks. It can be said that eye-centered societies have formed in this new century under the control of visual culture (Parsa 2007).In this sense, seeing is a new way of culture. This new culture is put down to seeing, images being shown, and visions (Karadağ 2004).

Bannard (2002) defined visual culture as a combination of words visual "which is visual" and cultural "which is cultural" and explained that "visual is everything that is functional, communicative and/or has aesthetic purpose and produced and interpreted by people". According to Tavin (2009), visual culture is a state that affects people's experience as a result of products produced by various Technologies. Mitchell (2002, 169) states that visual culture is the social structuring of the visual one. All of those definitions have in common that every vision affects a person's attitude towards life, contributes to his ideas and presents new suggestions. For this reason, the vision itself is not discussed in visual culture, instead what it produces for a society and an individual. In this century, everywhere is covered with visual images instead of words and printed materials. In social interaction, audile and visual cultures supersede printed culture (Parsa 2008). Consequently, in modern world's culture, visual productiveness affects a person's aesthetic experience, and plays an important role in determining his cultural identity. In other words, constantly increasing visual images have been produced by people and have structured

people's ideas. Especially popular items that are produced by mass media are important learning experience for children and young people. However, all the images that are shown or seen are not innocent. Most of the images do not reflect the life itself; instead they reflect their fictional meanings (Karadağ 2004). The studies state that children and teenagers are under the influence of visual images. According to a study carried out by Tavin and Anderson (2003), Disney cartoons (Alaaddin and Tarzan) affect children how to see others/other in the society.

Pedagogic studies on visual culture are generally about examining, interpreting, and assessing visual culture (Mitchell 2002, Duncum 2002, Tavin 2003). Studies emphasize that visual culture is vitally important for children and teenagers' life. Especially visual culture should take part in visual arts education. Some of the related studies are about conducting visual culture practices in different educational institutions. Studies about culture based child pictures focus on the effects of socio-economic cultural differences on child pictures (Cibelek 1990). However, there are no qualitative studies that examine child's perception of visual culture and stories they formed about the pictures.

Firstly, a student's development level in art has to be understood in order to examine child pictures and comment on them. It is seen that children start to reflect their environment to their pictures at he age of 7-8 (Yavuzer 1997). It is a sign that he is in an interaction with visual images around him. Drawing pictures is one of the ways of self expression and it is a way of reflecting objects that they see. According to Arnheim (1960), development in pictures of a child is a perceptional phenomenon. This development occurs in perceptional differentiation process. The child creates the structural equivalent of objects in his pictures (drawings). That's to say, they draw what they see, not what they know (cited in Kırışoğlu 2002, 75).the question is how children are affected by today's visual images and what kind of images they use in their drawings to reflect them. The purpose of this study is to understand children's styles in perceiving the visual culture by using their drawings. The researcher tries to find answers to the following questions:

1. Which dynamics of visual culture have affected children's drawings?
2. What do they think about the visual culture images they have been affected?
3. What images of visual culture do they use in their drawings?

2. Method of the Study

This is a qualitative study that examines children pictures in order to identify their perception of visual culture. 102 students, between the age of 7-12, had participated in the study. They were 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and fifth grade students of an elementary school and they were selected randomly. 7-12 age range was proffered because they start to have a view about their environment in those ages. Richness of sketches in their drawings is an evidence that shows that they are more aware of everything and they start to interact with everything around them (Yavuzer 1997). 9-10 age range is the period that they give more importance to details and they discover their environment and objects in their environment. In those ages they are more interested in TV, computer, plays, and magazines with pictures (Kehnemuyi 1993). At the age of 11-12, with his will to reflect the reality, he faces success and failure and finds his own way by the help of the images around him. They fell the need to reflect their views to their works. Social awareness, interest to the problems of world and society increase (Linderman 1997).

2.1. Collecting the data

Students were asked to draw a picture they see in visual media. For this reason, students were presented an instruction that includes the following items: draw a picture of something that affects you and you see in a newspaper, magazine, on TV, computer, and a billboard. After you have finished drawing it, write your name, surname, age, gender, what you draw, where did you see that item before, how did it affect you, what it is about, and what you want to learn about it at the back of the paper. They were delivered crayon, a set of colored pencils, and 25x35 cm. paper and told that they had 60 minutes to draw their pictures. The texts that children wrote to tell the pictures were used to assess the pictures.

2.2. Analyzing the data

Content analysis was used to analyze the data. Aesthetic values of the pictured were not assessed because the study focused on visual culture elements that child cared. During this period, pictures were examined regularly. After this process, by focusing on the theoretical framework and its purpose, draft code list was formed. Then within the framework of code list, children's pictures were encoded and checked whether meaningful data units were

attained or not. All the pictures were encoded by another expert in order to ensure the reliability. To test the consistency between two encoding, people who perform the encoding came together and reviewed the meaningful data units. Meaningful data units that were coded differently were discussed and agreed on. Draft themes were identified at the same time and they were taken into consideration. However, final draft themes were obtained during the data encoding process.

3. Findings

Findings depend on three themes that are identified by content analysis.

1. Visual media that affect them.
2. Cognitive and affective responses towards the image that children had been affected by.
3. Images that are used in the pictures.

3.1. Visual media being affected

In the study students were directed this question: "Where did you see the image you want to tell before?" Depending on the studies about children's drawings and children's pictorial narratives, 71% of them were affected from images on TV, 28% of were from computer, and 4% of them from newspaper and magazines. In addition, it was identified that 88.8 % (28 students) of them who preferred pictorial narration were boys.

3.2. Affective and cognitive responses towards the image being affected

In the study students were asked to mention the following items: "In what ways were you affected from the thing you had seen? What did you wonder about that image? What did it tell you? As a result of analyzing the data, codes and themes were reached in Figure 1.

Figure1: Affective and cognitive responses towards the image being affected

Emotional impact of the image	f	Intellectual impact of the image	f
Speed and Power	32	Real or not	10
Wonder	17	Questioning the social structure	11
Beauty (Color,cloth,jewelly etc.)	23	The curiosity about the end of the film or the game	18
Multi forms (Music, words, sound effects etc.)	15		
Social events	15		

After examining the explanations at the back of the pictures, 10 codes have been reached. Students' interests were mainly about speed/power, wonder, beauty – color, cloth, jewellery etc., multi forms- music, words, sound effects, etc. Students have also shown their affective responses towards social and global events (e.g., global warming, honor killings, hazards of smoking, famine in Somalia)

Students' cognitive responses towards images that they were affected by in visual culture are generally a wonder about the reality of the image, and the curiosity about the end of the film or the game. Students' intellectual responses towards images are generally in the form of exteriorization of the effects of TV and virtual world rather than interrogating and exploring.

3.3. Images used in pictures

In this study, when the pictures that the students drawn, it is found that they include theme-based, sociologic and advertisement images.24 different types of narration have noticed in the study.

Figure 2: Images used in pictures

Sociologic images	f	Thematic images	f	Advertisement images	f
Natural Disasters	3	Speed/Power	16	Car	2
Famine	2	Death and Killing	18	Foof/drink	3
Honor Killing	2	War/Weapons	15	Napkin	1
Reckless driving	2	Magic	10	Wall paint	3
Martry's funeral	1	Money/Scores	4	Shampoo	2
Social Campaigns	4	Fun/adventure	7	Telecommunication	3
		Fighting and Anger	5	White goods	3

These narrations/codes have been divided into three categories. The code themes that have been reached are shown in figure 2.

Sociologic images: When the students' pictures are examined it is concluded that they are influenced by mass media, printed resources. The themes that they have reflected on their drawings are issues of social awareness such as earthquake in Japan, forest fires, global warming, famine, honor killing, reckless driving, martry's funeral, and social campaigns (reading, hazards of smoking, schooling girls). These issues seen in 11-12 year old students' pictures are usually seen on the news, street cams, and newspaper. Images seen in the drawings of 15 out of 18 children who have participated tells their awareness of social problems.

Picture 1: 12 Age- Girl Child- TV Picture 2: 12 Age- Girl Child- TV

When picture 1 is examined, it is seen that a murder scene has been drawn. There are two figures pointing guns at each other, one figure shot dead lying on the ground, five figures crying over the dead body. The explanation of the student who has drawn the picture is that he saw the image on TV and was affected by the honor killing. Picture 2 has been drawn by a twelve year old girl. In the foreground a girl in white is seen while a figure holding a horse, a bearded man with a walking stick, and a woman figure are plotted in the background. The student commented on her picture like this: "A 15-year-old girl was forced to marry a 70-year-old man. I feel concerned and worried for the girl". When the child is displaying her emotional attitudetowardsthe imageseen on TV, he gave the signal of being addicted to TV by mentioning his curiosityand wonder aboutthe story of the character and/or the end of the film.

Thematic images: Students reflect such issues as speed and power, death and killing, war and weapons, magic, fun and adventure, money and scores, fighting and anger to their drawings as a result of mass media effect. The first three of these issues were particularly attracted attention of the male children's paintings. It is identified that these issues, seen on 7-10 –year- old children's pictures, were painted with the influence of cartoons and computer games. When those interrelated issues (themes) are examined in detail, it can be concluded that speed and power stem from some computer games about car races, and images related to death, battle, and weapon (Picture 3,4,5) originates from some TV films and series. Also, in some paintings speech bubbles have been used to show the money won, the level reached, and the points won.

Picture 3: 8 Age- Male Child- Computer   Picture 4: 8 Age- Male Child- Computer   Picture 5: 8 Age- Male Child- Computer /TV

A battle scene is seen after examining picture 3. An arrow, a sword, and various weapons were pictured in the hands of figures. Another important point in the picture is 100 score that is desired to win. Student's answer about the picture is like this: "this is the battle between righteous and wicked. The winner will get 100 points." most of the pictures drawn by the influences of computer games have expression like finish, level, score, and power. Similarly, picture 4 is drawn with the effects of computer games. Student's explanation about the picture includes a belief that the most powerful car is the one that wins the race. Another striking point in the picture is the narration in the shape of a long vehicle is personified with a face. "Death" was written on the vehicle. Picture 5, which is drawn by an eight year old boy, tells a battle again.

Responses to leisure, magic, adventure, and fighting are generally seen in girl's pictures. Picture 6 was drawn by a six-year-old girl. There are two girl figures and they are described as colorful. The girl says that: "they are magical, they have fun and deal with everything with magic, and I love them". The child's narration is at the level of admiration. Indeed, Süzen and Utkan (2009) mention that while students are drawing their own images; they reflect what they want to do, things they are longing, and prohibitions**.**

Advertisement images: The effects of advertisements on children are another reflection of visual culture. Elements related to the ads shown on TV, and their effects have seen in 16 children. When contents of pictures have been analyzed, car , food/drink, napkin, wall paint, shampoo (picture 7), telecommunication (picture 8), white goods are found as themes. According to the written explanations at the back of the pictures – written by students- figures like child, robot, imaginary hero, music have influenced the child. In this sense, the power of advertisement images is inevitable.

Picture 6: 8 Age – Girl Child-TVPicture 7:   9 Age- Girl Child- TV   Picture 8: 10 Age- Girl Child- TV

It is seen that children who acts and imaginary heroes who take part in ads make them more attractive to children.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

Visual culture has the feature of culture that reaches public as quick as possible and its effect is widely felt. In this sense, the most important tool is mass media and technologies that produce image to it. Media is the symbol of an important power in the construction of the visual culture. The media both formats visual culture and naturally masses. Formatting of the masses indicate a learning experience. But learning how?

In this study, the effects of contemporary visual culture on children is tried to be understood by looking at their paintings. As a result, how children are affected by mass media and what they think about those images are tried to be understand. The results indicate that printed media is less effective on children than TV and internet, briefly virtual world. The continuity of motion, sound, music is generated by screen display and this situation is very effective. The representation of reality on the screen and its effect on the child indicates that the child is not aware of the differences between reality and representation. When children were asked what they wonder about those images, their responses were like this: "were they real, and how many points they will get or how much money they will win". The question that includes what they think about social problems (honor killing, reckless driving) are largely unanswered. In this context, the children internalized the images as if there weren't screen but they didn't comment on those images. Alfredo Carlo Moro conducted a study in 1977 on the children between 0-10 years of age, and he tried to verify the role television during identity formation process. according to this study " although it is accepted that television occupied a large part of domestic life, it is not necessary to demonize TV, because thanks to this device they become more open to superior feelings, experiences, and visions (cited in Uysal 2010). However, Sartori

(2004) criticized the results of Moro's study. According to him "television makes children Einstein headed, but chick- bodied little monsters."

When the literature is examined, internet is the main place that displays the power of media. Internet is defined as the new space of culture and learning (Eker and Aslan 2010). Kline and others (2006) suggest that problem solving with computer games is helpful for automatic and computerized areas of life. However, the results of this study show that meeting with the computer games at early ages is harmful for children in terms of speed, power, battle, limitless competition, and death to the point of admiration. Thus, these images are often found in the paintings of children, especially among 7-10 years boys. In this sense, the results of the study are similar to a recent study done by RTUK. The study reveals that boys are more affected from those negative behaviors they see on TV than girls.

Another subject which has seen in children's painting is images of advertisement. According to Berger (1995), advertising is a process to produce charm. In this sense, advertisement images used children's paintings are capable of attracting children by supporting child figure, imaginary heroes, and elements of music. As a result, children are not indifferent to those elements. According to the study, children have become an important target of advertisement industry. TV commercials suggest consuming by giving importance to the topics that attract children's attention (Şener 2010). However, When children's paintings that include advertisement elements have been examined and their narrations have been read, it is seen that wonder, admiration, and affection.

In modern life, images are in the structure of bringing new concepts to life and changing classic forms of life. The results present that this new form is introduced to children in the form of entertainment. The media is structured in the styles of seeing and not seeing to affect masses (Innes 2004). In other words, sometimes screen prefers the way of informing people wrongly. In this context, children should make investigations about the modern age they live in and while doing this they should understand the world. It is essential to form new pedagogical structures to handle the productions and consumptions of visual culture. Especially elementary school teachers and visual arts education teachers are required to be informed about the pedagogy of visual culture. This training can be helpful if it includes the meanings of visual culture objects, by whom they were produced and the purpose of production.

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