

Do guessing games work?

A pilot for a TV magazine – The quiz item tested by preschool children

Hardly any other target audience is in greater danger of its cognitive abilities being bypassed than that of preschool children. Therefore, aside from a carefully selected design and a creative and high-quality technical implementation, it is important to conduct audience reception studies, in order to make a programme first-rate. In the following, several results from studies about the German preschool TV magazine *Die Sendung mit dem Elefanten* (*The Programme with the Elephant*, WDR) are presented.

The Popsicle race

According to the pedagogical concept of the programme, preschool children need time to observe, understand and guess along with the programme, e. g. on screen 2 popsicles are seen next to each other. They both begin to melt, however, they melt differently from



Simple questions help to grasp the gist of the quiz

each other. The melting ice cream is shown twice in this episode. How should this scene be narrated?

In the 1st variant, a jazz improvisation is played in the background. The preschool children comment on the happening on screen and discuss their favourite ice cream flavours.

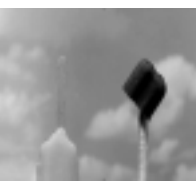
In the 2nd presentation with different ice cream flavours, some children have grasped the concept and join in guessing the one that will melt first. Another group of preschool children

watches the 2nd variant with a voice-over: “The sun is shining and it is hot. Too hot for ice cream! Which one will melt first?” and in the 2nd scene of the melting ice cream, the voice-over says, “And you? What do you think? For which ice cream is it too hot this time?”

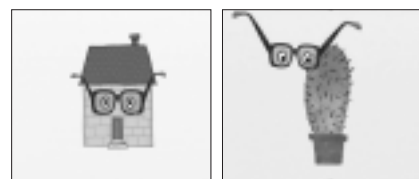
Both versions animate the children to participate. But the number of children’s comments is higher during the 2nd variant – the magazine item is more appreciated and there is more laughter. The result: A contextualisation of guessing games that focuses the children’s attention is much more attractive for preschoolers.

The flying spectacles

A pair of spectacles flies from one object to another and sits on a house, a cactus, a flower, etc. until it finally lands on the nose of a man. The children watch the scene excitedly and



shout “wrong” – Until at the end “right”. Children enjoy putting their everyday knowledge into practice. Simple quiz items make children participate without specific instruc-



Surprising combinations are fun

tions. The principle of the quiz has to be simple enough and easy to grasp.

The result: This magazine item presents a good way to allow children the time to observe, understand and analyse.



This guessing game is too complex

Circle + foot = football

A painted circle, a plus sign, a photograph of a foot followed by an equals sign are shown on the screen. After a short pause a child’s voice solves the puzzle and calls out “football”. A circle plus a bell pepper: “pizza”, a circle plus stars: “full moon”, etc.

The interviewed children are unable to solve these puzzles on their own. Some of the preschool children who have seen the episode several times, remember the result and mention the word. None of the interviewed children remembered this magazine item as positive.

The result: It was a nice idea of an associative guessing game, yet unfortunately too complex.

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