

Is it boring to watch an item four times?

Preschoolers respond to a reaction chain

The German preschool programme *The programme with the elephant* (WDR) includes a reaction chain in close-up which runs 1 min. 40 seconds. But are preschoolers interested in this? – 33 children aged 3 to 6 years watched this programme item 4 times on 4 consecutive days and were videotaped during the 1st and 4th reception.



A hand nudges over the first building brick in a row and – clack clack clack – all building bricks fall down like dominoes. The last brick in the row initiates a metal ball to roll down a spiralled plastic tube. It detaches a hammer that knocks against four wooden balls hanging on chains. A mousetrap snaps, a string is pulled and water starts to drop on a small mill ...

Right from the beginning all children are captivated by the reaction chain. They are very interested and concentrated during the 1st as well as during the 4th reception. When the 4th reception starts, they already know what is going to happen and express their delight: “Yeah, that’s cool!”



Now, a bike chain makes a long ball turn. Little sticks on this balk push thin boards, which bang on a huge xylophone and create a melody.

As the music resounds at the 1st reception, some of the children start to move with the rhythm, act as if they were playing xylophone and clap their hands. At the 4th reception more children swing their bodies, nod their heads and tap their feet with the music.



A big white marble plops into a sack which gives way to a couple of marbles that then jingle down a happy coloured marbltree creating deeper and deeper tones.

Some children comment the happenings as they watch this scene for the 1st time. When the children spot the marble tree at the 4th reception they announce what the following is going to be like: “That will be cool!”



A building brick domino clacks towards a yellow balloon filled with water. A nail on the last brick makes the balloon burst and the water splashes out. The bursting of the balloon is zoomed in on and repeated in slow motion.

When the children watch the balloon explode for the 1st time, they are astonished and surprised: “Cool!” At the 4th reception they are excited about what is going to happen, comment and shout enthusiastically: “That will be cool with the water balloon! Watch out!” During the part in slow motion they explain that the balloon bursts because of the nail.

The children were thrilled by the reaction chain, followed every step highly attentive and active. Their response to the xylophone, the marble tree and the bursting balloon demonstrates that especially events accompanied by outstanding sounds activate children during their viewing process. With every repetition, children watched the programme item even more intensely while anticipating certain moments and interacting with the TV.

