



Transmitting Meaning through Media

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Abstract

Vocabulary instruction should provide plenty of exposure and details of how words are used. Appropriate vocabulary instruction should also involve having the children actively engaged while learning words in context. Because language development is a gradual, context-dependent process, lexicalization could only result after multiple experiences with words. Television programming provides repeated exposures to contextual matter but also vocabulary strategies that foster language development. Repeated viewing of an educational show leads to heightened attention, verbal, and nonverbal interactions among toddlers, leading to believe that the children's attention is therefore driven by the comprehension of the content. In a sense, cultural meanings also begin to take form through extensive exposure of a particular television program.

Second language vocabulary learning in an animation-based multimedia context was not enough to support development. Beginning learners of a second language must be provided learning supports before encountering new words. Familiarity with the show provides good support for language learning. The children's TV show, *Dora the Explorer*, presents their viewers with a set of characters that perform in ways that lead to captivating their audience in ways that also encourage language learning, providing word meanings subject to cultural interpretation; for this reason, multiple vocabulary instructional strategies are employed as a way to construct semantic content. This particular show makes use of context clues to help viewers infer meaning through contextual clues. These can take form by the use of word definitions, synonyms, mood, experience, antonym, example, series, expression, general usage. *Dora* and the other characters of the show sing and rhyme as a way to develop a child's phonological awareness. For children whose native language is Spanish, a television show that fosters L2 oral development by way of supporting a child's first language could also have greater implications in regard to more advanced L2 skills such as excelling in L2 reading comprehension; semantic content is also shaped by L2 strategies such as code-switching and translation throughout this show. Gestures such as beat, iconic, deictic and metaphoric types construct meaning alongside verbal interpretations. Graphic representations by way of still pictures and animation present visual properties for concrete objects that are perhaps more easily learned by children. The extent to which questioning strategies are used could elicit children's own engagement and development throughout the viewing of the program.

Because *Dora the Explorer* provides copious opportunities for language growth, the frequency of the aforementioned language strategies will be measured across a season. In addition, an assessment of the types of words represented alongside these strategies will be beneficial in knowing whether high utility words are used for the show's viewership.