

Schooling and Leisure Time Uses of Television, San Diego 1978

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"If the skills developed by television are of a less logical, analytical, or abstract sort than those cultivated by, say, reading, we can expect the development of the former to come at the expense of the latter. Hence, television watching would not only be expected to cater to the less analytical abstract skills (and hence to less verbally able children), but also to cultivate skills which may work at odds with reading skills. This suggests the possibility that television watching and school performance are therefore negatively related in some segments of the population." (P. 7)

"... we do not know as yet what skills are required by media other than language, nor how they are related to those required in school learning." (P. 7)

"... there is now evidence to show that the cultivation of skill by a medium depends on the amount of mental effort invested by its user processing its messages." (P. 7)

purpose of television literacy program - (P. 10)

1. To select, understand, and retain the medium's useful content
2. To evaluate critically the 'information' presented in entertainment programs, in news and public affairs programming and in advertising
3. To appreciate the craft and construction of television programs."

study of entertainment programs re: the ability of children to select, understand and retain useful content indicates that - "...until adolescence children are likely to learn much content which adults consider irrelevant to the basic plot, that children younger than about seven have great difficulty correctly sequencing even the major incidents of a program and that this ability continues to develop at least to adolescence, that even at the age of eight or ten children have only rudimentary understanding that plotlines include motivations, actions, and consequences, that there is a gradual increase throughout childhood and adolescence in the number of 'facts' students remember from entertainment films and from television, and that children younger than about ten are unlikely to try to draw inferences relating one part of a program to another." (P. 11-12)

NOTE - presumably educational or instructional TV per se, that is in its familiar linear format, is not necessarily any better, ie. not necessarily more effective. It can still be as shallowly processed as 'I Love Lucy.'"

"We do not as yet have a grammar of television (although the beginning efforts are being made now), and such a grammar seems requisite to identification of the skills necessary to select, understand, and retain useful television content."

Research questions re: selection, understanding and retention-

- "1. What is the grammar of television, including the visual and auditory elements used to construct programs and commercials, the rules by which they are organized, and the usual variations in these rules?
- 2. What knowledge and skills are necessary to decode and encode television content well?
- 3. When do various types of students acquire the knowledge and skills without explicit instruction and which ones are generally not acquired without some instruction (which may even come from teaching reading and writing)?
- 4. How can the knowledge and skills for selecting, understanding, and retaining useful television content best be taught in school.
- 5. How can we insure that the knowledge and skills are then transferred to the viewing that is customarily done at home." (P.12)

Salomon -

"These differences suggest that 'televiwing' is not an invariant quality. One can view a program with greater investment of mental energy (more 'serious' watching) or with lesser energy investment. The amount and complexity of acquired information would be related to the amount of mental energy invested." (remarking on fact that Israeli kids watching fewer hours on a one channel black and white system, show greater literate viewing than a comparable sample of Boston fourth and sixth graders. Israeli families watch more often together) (P. 43)

"Television by virtue of the symbol systems it uses may allow the viewer to extract meaning that please him/her with less mental effort (i.e. with a lesser investment of mental energy) than print. Printed language (the dominant symbol system of school) is, in this respect, much more 'demanding' by its very symbolic natures. Hence, for instance, the superiority of pictures over words in memory studies. This urges upon us the possibility that TV's great appeal is due, in great part, to the 'shallowness' of information extraction that its symbol systems allow (not require). (P. 44)

"Hence, TV can be expected to affect children's preferences for the less mentally demanding."