



secondary levels, augmenting but not replacing the normal classroom observations conducted individually by education students.

Recently, television dialogues have been initiated among UCI students and Irvine administrators, principals, teachers, students, and resource personnel. Educators from the school district make direct input into what future teachers are learning, while those same future teachers directly question educators in the field. This link between the university and the school district is strengthened by UCI instructors who are available as resource persons, via interactive video, to interested parties in the school district.

Plans are being made to connect the entire UCI campus to the existing network. One may ask what a university physics professor will have to say to a second grader. There can be no certain answer to this question as yet. If, however, communications across such a wide gulf of age and knowledge can be accomplished with sufficient ease, that answer may prove surprisingly positive. The usefulness of such a system will be limited only by the needs and imagination of those whom it links together. ■

"Reading" Television

Warren J. Ashley

Passively viewing television can be detrimental to children's school achievement. Fortunately, using the television observation laboratory, it is possible to develop children's television literacy and mitigate TV's ill effects.

The television observation laboratory is a room with 30 chairs placed in a circle around four television sets, so that students have a clear view of the TV screen and each other. The teacher, who sits in the circle and controls the videocassette recorder connected to the four TVs, can easily interrupt a program at any point to ask students to analyze what they have been watching. The point of this analysis is to stimulate students to use higher levels of thinking skills while they "read" television.

During the spring of 1980 I conducted a pilot study of this concept at Del Amo Elementary School in Los Angeles. Ten classes of more than 240 students in grades three to six participated in a test of television observation skills. Bloom's seven levels of knowledge were combined to form three levels of television observation skills: (1) recall of information; (2) inference or interpretation of information; and (3) analysis, synthesis, evaluation, and application of information.

The test given to the Del Amo students consisted of 45 questions that evaluated their ability to apply the three levels of thinking to a particular commercial television program, selected as representative of children's current viewing experience. Five of the classes, serving as the experimental group, participated in 30 one-hour lessons over 16 weeks. The other five classes served as the control group and did not participate in the lessons.

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A survey of television viewing habits and academic performance verified that the two groups were reasonably comparable. Other than the television lessons, their curriculums were equivalent.

Although each of the lessons focused on a different half-hour of programming of such shows as *Gomer Pyle USMC* and *Laverne and Shirley*, the format was always the same: (1) a brief summary of the program; (2) a major and minor theme; (3) seven vocabulary words related to the program; (4) directions for interrupting the program at approximately five-minute intervals; and (5) nine questions, three for each skill level, per interruption. First-level questions required students to recall information; for instance, "What was the job the Sergeant told Gomer to do?" Second-level questions required students to interpret and make inferences: "How did Gomer feel about the job the Sergeant gave him to do?" Third-level questions required students to analyze and evaluate: "Does the government have the right to take the farmer's land for the Marine Corps base? Why do you feel that way?"

The same test of television observation skills was given to all of the students following the 30 lessons. Although the experimental classes did better than the control classes, the variance of the differences between the groups was not statistically significant. However, a subgroup of the experimental group did have gains significantly greater than the control group. This subgroup, approximately 40 percent of the students, did not have library cards, were not doing well in reading or math, and had low scores on the pretest of television observation skills. These students showed a gain of 20 percent.

One explanation for the skewed impact of the lessons is that the cognitive skills of this latter group were less developed than those of their peers, so they were not doing well in the basic subjects. They were thus particularly receptive to the television observation laboratory.

Students can learn to read TV if they are willing to think about what they are seeing and hearing on television. ■

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