

# IWoDA'16

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**September 29<sup>th</sup> - 30<sup>th</sup>**

**Extended Abstracts**

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## **Preface**

This volume is divided into two main parts. The first part consists of the plenary speakers' abstracts and biographical notes. The second part contains the extended abstracts of the presenters.

On behalf of the Organizing Committee of IWoDA'16, we would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere gratitude to all authors for providing their valuable work.

Dr. Milagros Torrado Cespón

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***Interactivity in educational TV shows for children: an exploratory study*, Francesca Coccetta, Ca' Foscari University of Venice**

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Educational TV shows for children are designed with educational and prosocial purposes in mind and in their production producers draw on Sociocultural Theory which, *inter alia*, holds that children's learning is primarily dialogical and co-constructed through the interaction with an adult (Wertsch, 1991). These shows follow a similar format where TV characters have to deal with a problem and encourage the viewers to actively engage in its solution. Research (e.g. Kirkorian, Wartella, & Anderson, 2008; Tizard & Hughes, 2008) has demonstrated that preschoolers benefit from these shows because the presentation of problem-solving situations and the direct interaction between the TV characters and the viewers stimulate the development of the latter's basic skills in literacy and mathematics as well as their social skills.

In the field of education, educational TV shows have been studied extensively as exemplified by Fisch (2004), and research has contributed to the improvement of existing as well as future TV series from a pedagogical perspective (Fisch, 2005). On the contrary, they seem to have attracted scant attention among discourse analysts. Yet, these shows need to be studied from a discourse analysis perspective, particularly a multimodal one (Jones, 2013), to better understand how they function. Given their great impact on children, it is important for researchers in the field of education and in that of multimodal discourse analysis to join forces to help TV producers make educational TV shows even more effective.

The present study adopts a multimodal approach to the analysis of educational TV shows for children to shed some light on the discourse characteristics of this genre. In particular, it investigates their discourse structure, the nature of interaction between the TV characters and the viewers, and the role of the various semiotic resources used in the episodes (e.g. language, gaze, gestures, actions and sound) in the creation of their meaning. Considering the exploratory nature of the study and the fact that in educational TV shows all episodes follow a similar format, the analysis focuses on one

single episode of three famous shows among children, namely *Mickey Mouse Clubhouse*, *Jake and the Never Land Pirates* and *Dora the Explorer*.

The analysis adopts and adapts theoretical frameworks and analytical approaches taken from discourse analysis traditions modelled on Halliday's theory of language: 1) Sinclair and Coulthard's (1975) model of classroom interaction; 2) Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) framework for visual analysis; and 3) Baldry and Thibault's (2006) tools for multimedia analysis. Their integration will contribute to a better understanding of the *Educational TV Show for Children* genre as exemplified in the three episodes selected for the study.

Given their educational goals, it is reasonable to assume that these shows conform to the typical structure of classroom interaction as described by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975). In the 1970s, they analysed the organization of classroom discourse in English primary schools and from their data it emerged that classroom discourse was characterised by the high frequency of exchanges consisting of the following moves: (teacher's) initiation ^ (pupil's) response ^ (teacher's) follow-up. The study revealed a teacher-centred classroom setting where pupils had no opportunity to initiate an exchange. This type of interaction is somewhat similar to the one-way communication flow that characterises educational TV shows. What needs to be investigated is the extent to which they conform to Sinclair and Coulthard's (1975) model.

Considering the multimodal nature of educational TV shows, their analysis needs to go beyond language and take into account all the semiotic resources these shows rely upon as well as the way in which they are combined to address children and enable the TV characters to interact with them thus enhancing their learning. The analysis presented in this study draws on Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) grammar of visual design and Baldry and Thibault's (2006) tools, which have been successfully applied to the analysis of a wide variety of multimedia discourse genres, including animations (see Coccetta, 2012 for an example).

This study represents a first step towards the understanding of how discourse, and interactivity in particular, is constructed in educational TV shows for children. For children, the discourse constructed in these shows forms an important site within which



their learning is enhanced. Therefore, further discourse-oriented studies should be carried out to complement the extensive research that has already been carried out in the field of education.

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