Context Clues

Visual Media and Language

Although technology has been useful as a teaching tool, the (1) _____ of young children to television or video is still believed to have a negative effect on learning. In the first twelve months of life the brain triples in size. It continues to develop, in the next two years, more than at any other period in an individual's life. What children experience during this time can therefore have (2) _____ effects on their (3) _____ and learning skills and especially their ability to learn language. Unfortunately, studies have shown that exposure to television can make it more difficult for infants to learn language.

Children learn many lessons about the (4) _____, sensual, and emotional world through three-dimensional reality. It makes no difference if this reality involves a ball sailing through the air, (5) _____ pots and pans on the kitchen floor, or seeing your mother annoyed at the noise. This is not the case with images on a screen that look broken up to a very young child. A baby can only see bright (6) _____of color and light. Babies are attracted to colorful images but can't make sense of them or learn anything.

Some parents watch television with their young children and actively explain images on the screen, instead of using the "tube" as a babysitter! But even that doesn't change the fact that every time the television is on, children are doing a passive activity instead of participating in social interaction. According to Dr. Dimitri Christakis, a University of Washington pediatrician, no matter how much parents communicate with their children when the television is on, there are fewer occasions for children to learn language. It is during social interaction that children are able to hear, process, repeat, and learn language, not during silent television viewing. This is a particularly worrying statistic for the 30% of American households where the television is on most of the day, regardless of whether anyone is watching. Surveys tell us about 40% of infants are watching some sort of video by age five months, and by age two the number rises to 90%.

According to Christakis, baby videos may be connected with the drop in language acquisition (learning the first language) in infants, a fact which led the American Academy of Pediatrics to

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prevent any and all television watching for babies under two years of age.

Though such studies are limited to the effects of learning and language acquisition on very young children, it does make one (7) _____ the effects that staring at screens, passively, instead of interacting actively with other people have on individuals of all ages, at all stages of their (8) _____.

A **banging** making a very loud noise (by hitting something against a surface or object)

B **cognitive** connected with thinking and conscious mental processes

C **development** the process of growing or changing (cognitive development, physical development)

D **exposure** experiencing something or being affected by it because you are in a particular place or situation

E **long-term** continuing a long time into the future

F **patches** small parts of a surface or material that is different from what is around it

G **physical** relating to things that you can see, touch, hear, smell, or taste

H **wonder** ask yourself a question or wish to know about something

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