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The use of interactive educational animated series to enhance second language development in preschool children

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Abstract

This research report aims to encourage the research, development and production of interactive educational animated series in southern Africa such as the highly successful US series *Dora the Explorer*, specifically to teach southern African languages.

Over the years mediums of imparting knowledge to children have changed rapidly (mainly due to ever-evolving technology), but the fact that children learn best when they are having fun has remained constant. Animation has been a leader in children's entertainment as it has the power of expanding their imaginations and at the same time captures their attention.

Animated series such as *Dora the Explorer* and *Blues Clues* have been popular with preschool children and impart valuable lessons. *Dora the Explorer* in particular helps children learn Spanish as a second language. The research takes a look at how children acquire a second language and how animation can aid the process of learning. Various theories on how children learn reveal the link between language, age and play. It is revealed that during production, careful consideration of content is required for educational animation to be an effective learning aid. This leads to the discovery of Richard Mayer's principles that are recommended to be considered when creating effective educational animation.

Included is a comparative analysis of the development processes of successful US children's educational animated series to similar southern African productions. The research aims to

inform the possible creation of an educational interactive animated series to enhance second language development for preschool children.