Abstract

Using the tools of cognitive linguistics, I analyze the meaning construction process at work in the first two seasons of the children’s animated television show *Pocoyo*. The show communicates with viewers and clarifies the primary use of objects through application, and through interaction between the characters and the narrator. The tools of cognitive linguistics, including blending theory and viewpoint analysis, enable this study to explain the meaning construction process of *Pocoyo* and consequently how virtual experience fosters usage-based understanding. As the viewer is immersed in the narrative through narrative space interaction, viewpoint alignment and blending, the viewer associates on-screen concepts with their own personal embodied experience. From this perspective, the viewer learns concepts alongside Pocoyo.
Preface

This thesis is original work by the author, D. Spady. All of the data were collected independently. No part of this thesis has been published before. Several screenshots from episodes of *Pocoyo* are cited in this thesis. Since permission to republish the images was unobtainable, I encourage the reader to follow the included citations in order to understand the visual elements referenced.
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Acknowledgements

I’d like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Barbara Dancygier, for igniting my interest in cognitive linguistics, and for providing feedback and encouragement as this project developed. Barbara’s enthusiasm for my analysis gave it life. I am also grateful to Dr. Ian Hill for his incisive comments throughout the writing process, which gave indispensable structure to my thoughts.

Thanks to Lindie, for supporting me.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The English version of the children’s television show *Pocoyo* began airing in the UK in 2005 as a program designed to educate and entertain pre-school audiences. The show familiarizes young children with the world around them as it follows Pocoyo and his friends on their adventures in a blank white space with infinite narrative possibilities. It has been succeeded by numerous iterations, including a series specifically designed to teach English to Spanish-speaking children (*Let’s Go, Pocoyo!*), movie-length episodes, and YouTube and DVD releases. My study begins by examining how the show defines objects and introduces young viewers to new concepts. Through a cognitive linguistic approach, I build a model of meaning construction in *Pocoyo* that explains how viewers interact with the show, and how the show communicates the primary use of objects through virtual association with personal embodied experience. The tools of cognitive linguistics enable this study to explain the meaning construction process at work in the first two seasons of *Pocoyo* (in English) and consequently how virtual experience fosters usage-based understanding.

1.1 COGNITIVE LINGUISTICS

A cognitive linguistic approach allows for a detailed study of how *Pocoyo* effectively entertains and informs its viewers. Cognitive linguistics is an interdisciplinary academic approach concerned with the centrality of cognition to human communication. It studies meaning rather than structure, attempting to link the emergence of meaning to cognition and experience. A historical account of cognitive linguistics, “The Cognitive Linguistics Enterprise: An Overview” (Evans, Bergen & Zinken), details the international emergence of cognitive
linguistics from Fillmore’s work on frame semantics beginning in the mid-1970s. The authors note that cognitive linguistics “does not constitute a single closely-articulated theory,” but is rather “an approach that has adopted a common set of core commitments and guiding principles” (3). A handful of canonical and emerging cognitive linguistic theories inform this project but also serve as conceptual boundaries for my analysis.

Blending theory is integral to this study. Developed by Turner and Fauconnier through a series of publications in the 1990s, given full form in their 2002 book *The Way We Think*, and adapted by subsequent researchers, blending is one of the most pervasive cognitive linguistic tools. Essentially, a blend is a product of select inputs from multiple conceptual spaces. Take, for example, the blend of Pocoyo’s friend Pato, who is an anthropomorphic duck. One input space is “human,” which perhaps contributes hands, bipedal locomotion, and an item of clothing to the blend. Not all aspects of the “human” input contribute to the blend. The other input is “duck,” which contributes a fuzzy yellow body, a beak, and quacking noises. The blend is the character that emerges from the two inputs with prominent duck characteristics and human behaviours. Blending is more than a basic explanation of anthropomorphism, of course, and can be applied in much more complex analyses. However, the Pato example illustrates the basics of blending.

The model of meaning construction in this study does not rely solely on blending theory. It incorporates narrative space models, viewpoint analyses and the centrality of basic sensory experience to familiarizing the viewer with previously unfamiliar concepts. Joseph Grady’s primary metaphor theory informs my argument for the centrality of basic sensory experience in conceptualization. His theory analyzes the correspondence between sensory experience and neurological patterns of association. Beginning with his doctoral thesis on primary metaphors in 1997, Grady built on Lakoff and Johnson’s conceptual metaphor theory to argue that recurrent
metaphors are mappings from a sensory source domain to a conceptual target domain. For example, the “circumstances are surroundings” metaphor reflects an association between mental states and physical surroundings. As we move through physical circumstances and simultaneously through changes in internal states in early stages of development, we establish a correlation between the two that emerges linguistically, like in the statement that one has “reached a good place in life” (Grady 288). My analysis of sensory association differs from Grady’s, because my model of meaning construction does not incorporate primary metaphors. Instead, my model examines instances of personal sensory experience and their relation to the narrative. However, Grady’s work identifies the importance of embodiment in understanding cognitive association, which informs my sensory experience-based analysis.

Like primary metaphor theory, studies in gesture tie embodiment to interpersonal communication; unlike primary metaphor theory, gesture studies also address non-linguistic components of interpersonal communication. In the late 20th century, David McNeill expanded gesture studies with his theories on the relationship between gesture and language. McNeill’s findings, including those published in *Hand and Mind* and the later *Gesture and Thought*, demonstrate the centrality of gesture to communication as a dialectical counterpart to language. Gesture physically includes people in narrative spaces, incorporating embodied experience in communication.

Recent studies in viewpoint, including those published in Barbara Dancygier and Eve Sweetser’s *Viewpoint in Language*, have examined the relationship between gesture and viewpoint, and how both tie into cognitive processes. Both viewpoint and gesture relate to embodiment, situating the narrator and other narrative components in relation to each other and to the listener. Viewpoint is central to meaning construction, and consequently to my project, as
communication is always rooted in perspective. Sweetser notes in *Language and the Creative Mind* (ed. Borkent, Dancygier and Hin nell) that narratologists such as Genette have provided foundational viewpoint analyses through research of viewpoint in narratives (243). Cognitive linguistic viewpoint studies build on narrative studies, as they consider the effects of viewpoint in communication, but they additionally examine how viewpoint is situated and communicated as researchers seek to understand how human minds produce, share, and interpret information.

Viewpoint is an important component of this study but not its goal. Identifying the viewpoints in *Pocoyo* and examining their interaction is one of many steps in the process of determining how meaning is constructed in the show. As chapter three will explain, the viewpoints in *Pocoyo* interact to produce a dynamic narrative dialogue. The camera, an important meaning construction component, is a viewpointed conceptual tool that ties together all visual elements of the show. It pulls the viewer between viewpoints, leading the viewer to learn alongside Pocoyo. Identifiable viewpoints situate pieces of the narrative in relation to each other, and the viewer must piece the elements together, thereby engaging in the meaning construction process.

Viewpoint, embodied expression and the centrality of sensory experience are all components of the meaning construction model developed in this study. Studies that are most closely related to this one employ the tools of cognitive linguistics such as viewpoint analysis, gesture studies or blending theory to examine how children learn. Michael Tomasello’s book *Constructing a Language* presents his theory that language acquisition is a cognitive process driven by pattern recognition. While he is cited throughout this analysis, he provides groundwork in the direct relation of concepts to physical experience, and his work and this study share the objective of understanding how children construct meaning, his theory does not direct my
analysis. He focuses on children’s linguistic development, whereas this study is more interested in how children understand virtually presented concepts in relation to their individual embodied sensory experience.

In *Constructing a Language*, Tomasello identifies two skills that are central to language acquisition: intention-reading and pattern-finding (3, 4). As he develops his explanation of those primary skillsets, Tomasello’s work demonstrates the interconnectedness of language acquisition with other aspects of cognitive development. Although this study also finds those skills central to the meaning construction process as it relates to *Pocoyo*, it does not attempt to produce a universal theory of children’s conceptual processes to build on or challenge Tomasello’s research. Instead, by providing a case study of learning through virtual experience, it contributes to an understanding of how children and adults learn and communicate through sensory data and usage-based association.

A cognitive linguistic approach, without obligations to carry on in the theoretical framework of any one contributor to the field, allows me to examine the cognitive impact of this show, which is designed to be an effective pedagogical tool for young children. Through analysis of how the show is constructed and how it operates, this study assembles a comprehensive examination of the process by which *Pocoyo* communicates the primary definitions of concepts.

The study moves beyond an examination of the linguistic and visual stimuli of the show to look at patterns, cues and ties to primary conceptualizations of personal physicality. It does not aim to connect the show to social experience, but instead it seeks to find the root of familiarity in the show—how *Pocoyo* ties the process of defining concepts to personal cognition and thus enables an emergent understanding of distinct concepts.
1.2. MEANING CONSTRUCTION IN POCOYO

Pocoyo is ideal data for a study of meaning construction in television for young viewers, because it is simple, it directly addresses its viewers, and it is expressly educational. My thesis will explore the meaning construction processes in the first two seasons of Pocoyo to argue that it uses on-screen depiction of sensory input to build narrative structure and ascribe meaning to objects and situations through virtual experience. This work contributes to the field of cognitive linguistics by identifying and exploring frame evocation that relies primarily on televisual representations of embodied sensory input.

The meaning construction process operates on many levels, involving creator vision, the compilation of sensory data, narrative trajectory, and the viewer both as a placeholder and an individual—especially as a pre-school-aged child. The purpose of this exploration is not to identify linguistic phenomena. Rather, it will identify a model of the process through which young children construct meaning in relation to this particular show. The focus will be on the model rather than the effects, since the data is not feedback from young subjects but the show itself. In uncovering how meaning is constructed in a relational model between a young viewer and Pocoyo, I will also contribute to a broader understanding of how people—especially young people—interact with animated representations of real-world concepts.

The title Pocoyo, which roughly translates to “little I” in Spanish (Cantolla), signals the meaning construction process in which the viewer experiences Pocoyo’s world as if the character’s actions were the viewer’s own. Pocoyo familiarizes viewers with everyday real-world concepts by including the viewer in the on-screen exploration of objects, cues and situations through viewpoints, narrative space interaction and blending. Viewpoint alignment fosters shared interaction with the narrator, successfully inviting the viewer to self-identify with Pocoyo and
explore concepts through animated representations in Pocoyo’s world. In *Hand and Mind: What Gestures Reveal about Thought*, McNeill describes the first stage of a young child’s linguistic and gestural interaction with others: “There is an initial emphasis on denoting concrete objects and situations. This is possible with very simple expressions—provided there is sufficient context shared by the child and others” (295–6). The shared focus of the viewer, narrator, in-show audience and Pocoyo provides the basis for learning about concrete objects and situations together. Viewpoint interaction in *Pocoyo* pulls the viewer into the narrative, while familiarity and blends create new frames. From a joint exploration of concepts, knowledge arises.

1.3. CHAPTERS

Chapter two argues that narrative spaces are central to the meaning construction processes of *Pocoyo*, by identifying the narrative spaces and exploring their interaction with the viewer and each other. Narrative spaces contain narrative components and situate them in relation to each other. They are useful in determining how the narrative functions as a product of interaction between participants and possibilities. Dancygier summarizes a narrative space as “a mental construct participating in the emergence of the story, having distinctive topology and narrative status, and linked to other narrative spaces in ways which prompt story construction” (*The Language of Stories* 36). My model is based on Dancygier’s narrative space models in *The Language of Stories* (and some earlier texts). It incorporates three narrative spaces: one that encompasses the entire narrative structure, one that houses the show’s characters, and one that houses the narrator and in-show audience.

Narrative spaces are introduced in chapter two because they are essential to understanding the viewpoint analyses in chapter three. Primarily, the visual elements of the show play out in the
main narrative (MN) space, and the off-screen audience and narrator reside in the separate story-viewpoint (SV) space. Both of these are encompassed by the meta-narrative space, and they share an exchange of action, as Pocoyo reacts to the narrator and audience, and the narrator and audience respond to Pocoyo. As the narrator, off-screen audience and Pocoyo interact, they implicate the viewer in their exchanges, incorporating the viewer in the on-screen activity. The viewer, who is addressed alongside the narrator and Pocoyo in the dialogue, participates in the exchange and is thereby drawn into the meta-narrative space.

Chapter three demonstrates how meaning is constructed through viewpoint (VP) manipulation. It identifies the viewpoints in the show (character, narrator, viewer, in-show audience and camera) and explores how those viewpoints are established. The camera VP is central, because it provides the viewer with access to the narrative without binding the viewer to any other VP. As I explain in chapters two and three, the camera is not a physical device but a viewpointed conceptual tool that ties together all visual elements of the show. Although “the camera” as referred to in this study is the product of visual and narrative prompts rather than a physical device, it narratively functions as a physical recording device would. The camera is mobile; its movement is the result of sequential object placements in the frame. It records all visual data and presents it to the viewer. It contributes to the construction of the various viewpoints as it explores the main narrative space introduced in the second chapter. It produces an independent viewpoint that presents the main narrative space from the perspectives of Pocoyo, the narrator and the viewer but also breaks from all of these at times. Regardless of the camera’s alignment, though, it always dictates the focus of the viewer VP.

While the viewer follows on-screen cues and pieces together the intended meaning of events and sequences, they also construct unintended meanings from the given information,
using the skills of pattern-finding and intention-reading. Intention-reading and pattern-finding, identified by Tomasello as the two primary skillsets necessary for language acquisition (Constructing a Language 3–4), equip the viewer to piece together camera movement in a meaningful way. Intention-reading is essentially the ability to read the motives of others’ actions by understanding symbolic events. Tomasello breaks intention-reading into the abilities “to share attention with other persons to objects and events of mutual interest,” “to follow the attention and gesturing of other persons to distal objects and events outside the immediate interaction,” “to actively direct the attention of others to distal objects by pointing, showing, and using of other nonlinguistic gestures,” “and to culturally (imitatively) learn the intentional actions of others, including their communicative acts underlain by communicative intentions” (3). Along with pattern-finding skills, intention-reading skills allow for recognition, understanding and reproduction of symbolic information. The act of following cues and connecting sequences also reinforces pattern-finding and intention-reading skills as it is carried out. Pocoyo leads viewers through pattern recognition and guides intention perception as the camera dictates viewer focus, building both skillsets as it invokes them.

Chapter four builds on the understanding of viewpoint and narrative spaces established by the preceding chapters to argue that viewpoint and narrative spaces enable blends and virtual sensory experience, which teach concepts. Pocoyo presents a narrative through blending, as it relies on familiar concepts to inform novel contexts. The familiar concepts relied upon in Pocoyo, though, are primarily basic sensory data the viewer would have acquired through direct physical experience. The show rarely relies on the viewer’s awareness of non-sensory experience. As the narrative of Pocoyo is constructed, blends that are established earlier in the narrative may function as frames in new, later blends, allowing blends that are new within the
context of the narrative to feed into even newer blends, and thus producing a more complex model of engagement with the world outside the viewer’s own body—through virtual reference to the viewer’s embodied experience.

Through blending, sensory experience, narrative space interaction and viewpoint alignment, *Pocoyo* draws viewers into a virtual world filled with simulations of real-world concepts. Alongside Pocoyo, viewers explore conceptual frames and learn about the real world through shared virtual experience. The show builds the conceptual framework of its viewers, but it also contains more advanced blends—like Pocoyo’s anthropomorphic animal friends—that provide interesting studies in the effectiveness of blends that are built on knowledge-based frames (i.e., elephant) rather than exclusively on basic sensorimotor-based frames. This thesis builds and explains a model of meaning construction in *Pocoyo* and demonstrates how the show familiarizes its young audience with the primary use of objects.

As I discuss in the conclusion, my analysis of meaning construction in *Pocoyo* produces a model of meaning construction that can be applied to other programs and visual media but also to communication in educational settings. The effectiveness of a usage-based approach to meaning construction implies that children learn to define concepts by applying sensory experience and frame evocation to a variety of contexts, ultimately building frames through application and learning concepts through personal sensory experience. *Pocoyo* provides a comprehensive model, including visual, linguistic and experiential data, which facilitates a thorough analysis of how educational television works. The model of usage-based meaning that *Pocoyo* exemplifies in this study can—and should—be tested in other similar contexts to refine its universal application and provide a tool for understanding human learning processes.
CHAPTER 2

NARRATIVE SPACES

The first component of meaning that this paper will discuss in detail is space. Space allows the narrative to take place, but it also demarcates and connects narrative elements including characters, referents and the viewer. All elements, characters and viewers are localized in relation to each other (and in relation to the narrative at large), which allows them to interact as distinct entities. The spaces that house narrative components are both physical and theoretical—identifiable sensorily, such as the white space of the show or the audible narrator space, and mappable through relation of the spaces to each other, such as the in-show audience’s positioning in communication with Pocoyo. Chapter three on viewpoint will discuss how viewpoints blend and overlap, blurring the distinction between them, but the unique positioning of each narrative element—including the viewer—is still necessary to the blurring process, as well as to a basic understanding of the show.

*Pocoyo* can be effectively mapped as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Figure 1 is a reworking of Barbara Dancygier’s models of narrative spaces in two novels, *The Blind Assassin* and *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius*, from *The Language of Stories.*
Dancygier’s model has been altered in Figure 1 to show the narrative spaces of *Pocoyo* and their relation to camera activity. The meta-narrative space encompasses the story-viewpoint (SV) space and the main narrative (MN) space. The SV space houses the narrator and in-show audience, who respond to the action in the MN space. The MN space is the visible space of the show, where Pocoyo and his animated friends encounter new objects and situations. The meta-narrative space contains both the SV and MN spaces, so that the two can interact while still both existing within a larger narrative space. The viewer interacts with *Pocoyo* as a whole—the meta-narrative space—but also with the SV and MN spaces individually. Although it arises from specific texts, this model provides a framework for understanding many narratives that involve internal commentary or imaginative reworking of events within the narrative.

Narrative spaces in television shows, for the most part, adhere to a consistent model in keeping with a basic literary model wherein the story and the narrator are contained in a larger meta-narrative space. The television screen houses the narrative as a whole, with the viewer accessing the narrative from outside the meta-narrative space. The action unfolds in visible shots, and any information external to the central narrative is provided in a separate space still housed within the meta-narrative umbrella. This basic narrative model is complicated in *Pocoyo* by dialogical interaction between the SV and MN spaces, the complex role of the camera, and the presence of an in-show audience.

In the MN space, the story is constructed through movement and anchor placement, as anchors, which are identifiable visual cues, situate the elements within scenes. Anchors hold a visual or narrative element in place. Anchors can manifest in a variety of ways, with a variety of purposes. In *The Language of Stories*, Dancygier defines narrative anchors: “expressions which set up or suggest the availability of narrative spaces, but do not elaborate them right away” (42).
Anchors will be important in the discussion of characters’ physical expressions and how we understand basic states later in the analysis, but they are also essential to understanding movement and identification. Due to the brevity and straightforward plot line of most Pocoyo episodes, the show does not often rely on narrative anchors, but instead on visual anchors, which function in a similar way to narrative anchors but with defining differences. Visual anchors are visually conveyed conceptual frames that anchor a particular shot in relation to a subsequent shot, or comprise distinguishing features of particular characters or items.

The viewer looks directly into the MN space (see Figure 2); the MN space contains every visual element of the show. If narrative commentary and viewer participation were removed, the MN space would remain as a contained narrative—Pocoyo’s adventures with his friends in the white space they inhabit. However, the show is spurred on by Pocoyo’s interaction with the narrator, the in-show audience and (through a complex viewpoint setup) the viewer. Therefore, the MN space is housed within the larger meta-narrative space, which allows dialogue to take place.

The viewer accesses the narrative from outside the meta-narrative space. The action unfolds in a sequence of visible shots, and any information external to the central narrative is provided in a separate space still housed within the meta-narrative umbrella. The action in the MN space is directly affected by—and directly affects—the action in the SV space. Figure 2, a reworking of Figure 1 with additions to show causation in the narrative, demonstrates how the two spaces propel the narrative as they interact. The viewer looks directly into the MN space but also aurally witnesses the interactions that occur in the meta-narrative space. (The next chapter, on viewpoint, will explain how the viewer aurally interacts with the dialogue between the SV and MN spaces.)
2.1 THE META-NARRATIVE SPACE

The meta-narrative space houses the exchange of action between the SV and MN spaces as well as the spaces themselves. Interaction between the spaces can occur only because they have clearly defined boundaries—action in the SV space is never included in the MN space visually. In fact, the SV space has no visual dimension at all; it is only audible. On a small scale, the SV space reflects predicted viewer reactions to action in the MN space. The SV space houses the narrator and the in-show audience, who both respond to the visible action of the MN space. The voices in the SV space play the role of virtual viewers—giving the MN space an audience even in the absence of a real-world viewer. The difference, of course, between the SV space and the real-world viewer is that the viewers in the SV space reciprocally interact with the characters in the MN space to move the narrative forward.

As indicated by the dotted line surrounding the meta-narrative space in Figure 2, the meta-narrative space is not defined like the SV and MN spaces. The SV and MN spaces house specific narrative elements and are also defined in relation to each other. The meta-narrative space, on the other hand, is only definable as the space that contains the SV and MN spaces. The
entire narrative unfolds in the meta-narrative space, but the space itself is only present insofar as it encompasses the narrative. It can be neither shown nor heard; unlike the SV and MN spaces, it is only a theoretical space—necessary but not contributory to the narrative. The camera enters the meta-narrative space as it looks directly into the MN space.

2.2 THE CAMERA

The camera, as it is referred to in this study, is not a physical device. It is a conceptual tool which presents the narrative visually, contributing to narrative space formation and maintenance. The term “camera” is used because the function of the “camera” in *Pocoyo* and in this analysis is consistent with the function of the camera in other kinds of visual narratives, although the nature of the actual device is conceptual rather than physical/mechanical. Instead of capturing the real-world data in an intentional way, the camera in *Pocoyo* (and other computer-based animations) is a space in which conceptual triggers are intentionally placed by animators. In both cases, the camera is the visual presentation that emerges from the relationship of the capturing device and the data being captured. It mediates all visual aspects of the narrative but does not necessarily parallel the viewer’s viewpoint. The camera may present information in a limited way (similar to the function of a limited narrator) while the viewer’s viewpoint may be informed by other sources or assumptions in addition to the information provided by the camera. Chapter three will discuss the camera viewpoint in more detail, providing examples of the camera viewpoint aligning with various viewpoints and existing independently.

The camera contributes to meaning construction in the show as a viewpointed presence similar to the narrator or the in-show audience, which are also products of the narrative they help sustain. Camera movement is implied by visual differences between shots. Without the camera,
the shots show placement rather than movement. Without the camera, the viewer is not involved in experiences of proximity but is rather presented with different-sized objects in space. The conceptual, rather than physical, origins of the camera do not negate either its presence or its narrative contributions as a viewpointed device.

The MN space is constructed visually as the camera moves through it, as modelled in Figure 3.

Figure 3

![Figure 3](image.png)

The dotted line in Figure 3 indicates that the MN space is elastic. It expands as the camera moves through it, growing to contain the visual breadth of the narrative. The camera differentiates the MN space from the other narratives spaces; the MN space is the only visual narrative space, and every visual component of the show occurs within the MN space. Although the MN space accommodates the visual entirety of every episode, the space is reset to the initial camera shot at the beginning of each new episode. The initial space is restricted to the first camera shot, but it contains the potential for more than the contents of the first shot. As the camera moves from the first shot, it expands the MN space of the episode.
2.3 THE MAIN NARRATIVE (MN) SPACE AND NARRATIVE POSSIBILITY

Although the MN space is restricted to what the camera constructs in each episode, the space contains theoretically infinite possibilities, allowing characters and objects to enter the space from outside the shot, without actually residing outside the space at any time. The MN space contains the potential for everything that happens within the space as captured by the camera; characters and objects which are not shown in the MN space prior to their entrance exist in the theoretical realm of MN space possibilities. Their presence on-screen encapsulates their existence in the MN space. When off-screen, they exist in theory but not in actuality, within the MN space, nested inside the meta-narrative space, because they do not have any agency outside the space. The MN space expands by incorporating previously inexistential concepts that can exist within the space once they have been given visual form within the shot.

An understanding of the functional nuances of the MN space is foundational for the discussion of camera viewpoint in chapter three. The space is visually constructed as the camera reveals it, so it only contains what the camera establishes through consecutive shots. The space does not expand until the camera moves—or, in complex cases, a parallel space is introduced such as by an elevator opening onto the ocean floor (as in “The Key to it All” [“Session 4” 5:08]). Even in such instances, though, the MN space is established visually, by the camera. The camera connects each consecutive shot, establishing the physical and conceptual parameters for each episode.

Within the first two seasons of *Pocoyo*, the MN space plays out visually in a blank, white space. The space is the backdrop for characters and props, much like a simplistic comic strip or a blank piece of paper. The complexity of the white space of *Pocoyo*, though, is its multidimensionality. Even if the space were two-dimensional—flat, and measurable only in width and
height—it also includes a temporal dimension. But the space is four-dimensional. The camera moves through the white space, establishing the width and height of every shot, but also establishing that time informs the space, since movement is impossible without time. Depth is established through camera movement, object size and shadow placement.

The complication of the space, defined in height, width, depth and time, is its uniformity: the space is entirely white. With no variation, how are the four dimensions possible? The location and positioning of characters is the most obvious constructor of dimension in the space. For example, the transition between Pocoyo’s stances in Figures 4 and 5 below demonstrates the construction of height, width and time in the adjacent frames.

As Pocoyo’s front leg meets the ground in Figure 5, he also moves further ahead on the screen. The rightward movement of the character from the first frame to the second indicates the passage of time. The viewer conceptualizes this process through identifying the visual anchors of the Pocoyo character and comparing the positioning of the character in the two frames. Shape, size and colour are the primary visual anchors informing the comparison at the root of this conceptual process. Pocoyo is identifiable because of his round head and comparatively small body. His limbs are set in sequential positions in these frames, and both legs are clearly visible at all times. His left arm is interesting here, because it is not visible in the second frame. Yet,
because the viewer recognizes the shape, colour and consequent sequence as depicting the same character, the viewer assumes the presence of the not-visible left arm. The progression between the two frames is sequential rather than detached and jarring because of visual anchors (which will be explained in more detail in later chapters). Since the progression is sequential, it is time-dependent—sequence cannot exist outside of time. Therefore, the adjacent frames in Figures 4 and 5 demonstrate time as a necessary component of the narrative.

Despite the lack of detail in the white space, objects and characters cast shadows, as select real-world physical laws apply to the space. As real-world laws contribute to MN space activity, they become a reality of the space without active construction by the viewer, because the viewer already abides by real-world laws. The viewer naturally assumes the space is governed by real-world physics, until certain properties are negated by behaviour inside the space. For instance, when a door is opened to reveal the sky, then the ocean floor, complete with water and sea-dwelling creatures, real-world physics are instantly suspended to allow for such an occurrence (“Duck Stuck” 1:58). But when Pocoyo casts a shadow on the ground, real-world properties are invoked.

Take, for example, the sequence in Figures 6, 7 and 8 below. As Pocoyo grows in size, the viewer assumes that he is running towards the camera rather than increasing in mass.

This set of figures indicates depth, in addition to height, width and time. Like Figures 4 and 5
above, Figures 6, 7 and 8 are sequential, as indicated by the similar positioning of Pocoyo’s body and the gradual increase in size as Pocoyo runs toward the camera. Pocoyo appears to be approaching the camera in this shot, but this discussion is interested in how that appearance is conveyed, since the mechanics of the process help define and reveal the topology of the MN space.

The process that is actually occurring is one of growth by comparison (as a result of visual anchors). Pocoyo is increasing in size as the frames progress. This growth, in combination with the downward movement of Pocoyo’s shadow, presents Pocoyo as running toward the camera and the viewer. As the shadow moves proportionally to his growth, it indicates depth. It also demonstrates that the characters within the MN space are able to traverse the depth of the white space.

The white space is the setting for all episodes of the first two series of *Pocoyo*. Objects and characters are present in the space according to the demands of the episode, and the camera pans through the space as necessary. Occasionally, the white space is broken with displays of unannounced captivity that somehow are not jarring or frightening. Our acceptance of confinement within the white space may be due to the ways in which the function of the white space mirrors the function of our collective imagination—expanding and allowing for unrealistic circumstances when they are necessary to the narrative.

As indicated by the above example of the ocean being present in the MN space, Pocoyo’s adventures often take him beyond the white space while also keeping him confined to it. The sea, the sky and outer space are always within reach of the blank white space where the adventure began. This unspoken confinement to the white space (as a sort of blank slate, regardless of how the stage is set) makes Pato’s threat to leave in “My Pato!” one of the most interesting challenges
to the MN space (“Session 19”). In this episode, Pocoyo and Elly fight for Pato’s attention on his birthday. Eventually fed up with their dispute, Pato takes his belongings (flowers and a colourful ball) and boards a bus (24:25).

Up to this point, all of the adventures in the ocean and outer space have still taken place within the bounds of the MN space—and indeed, within the white space of the collective imagination. When such adventures occur, the white space is always easily accessible. Pato’s threat of departure, though, threatens the established bounds of the MN space, because the notion that departure is possible implies that the MN space is not infinite. The threat of a transgressible white-space boundary is only present in this episode, however, and it never develops. Pato boards the bus, on which Pocoyo and Elly have thrown a party to apologize for their feud. The friends dance, and Pato decides to stay (24:51).

The narrator sheds some light on the concept of Pato’s departure when he asks, “Pato, you’re not really going to leave us, are you?” (24:19). The notion that Pato is leaving “us” conveys that Pato is not planning to depart the MN space but instead the meta-narrative space and the show as a whole. Pato’s physical bus ride out of Pocoyo’s world is only a visual imagining of Pato’s departure from the space of narrative possibility. Thankfully, for Pato’s friends and for our critical analysis of the narrative spaces, the narrator negates the possibility of Pato ever leaving—and therefore of the space being transgressible—by announcing, “This isn’t a going-away bus for Pato, it’s a birthday-party bus!” (24:32) as the episode ends.

2.4 CONCLUSION

As dialogue between the SV space and the MN space occurs, it shapes the activities in the MN space, which in turn influences the responses from the SV space. This exchange of
action propels the narrative of each episode, but it also pulls the viewer into the process. Sometimes, the viewer is beckoned through direct verbal or visual address, such as the narrator asking, “Can you tell Pocoyo…” or Pocoyo pointing directly at the camera lens. Other times, though, the viewer moves from the role of observer into the role of active participant through camera movement between the narrator’s viewpoint and Pocoyo’s viewpoint.

The viewer also actively participates in construction of the MN space by inferring spatial details from visual anchors, which further involves the viewer in the narrative. The process of viewer construction is fostered by the uniformity of the MN space. If the space were not plain white, the viewer would not need to actively construct the details of the space. The blankness of the MN space incorporates the viewer in the shared imagining of the narrative and pulls the viewer into the exchange of action within the meta-narrative space.
CHAPTER 3

VIEWPOINT

This chapter will explain the viewpoint (VP) layout of Pocoyo, to provide the reader with an understanding of the VPs that contribute to meaning construction in the show. It will also demonstrate how viewpoint manipulation constructs meaning through unexpected association. Interactions between the various distinct (and sometimes aligned) viewpoints are essential to meaning construction, because meaning is rooted in perspective. As Eve Sweetser succinctly notes in her introduction to Viewpoint in Language, “Viewpoint permeates human cognition and communication—predictably, since we never have experience of the world except as a viewpoint-equipped, embodied self among other viewpointed, embodied selves” (1).

Television—Pocoyo, in particular, as an animated show that frequently addresses the viewer through verbal and gestural cues—is a particularly embodied medium. The dominance of visuality and sound in television situates the viewer within in the on-screen action through sensory experience. It is only through viewpointed experience that the viewer can access and learn through Pocoyo’s interaction with the objects and friends around him.

Pocoyo operates on five distinct VPs, but they are not as separate or as tidy as they might seem. The primary VPs at play in Pocoyo are narrator, viewer, in-show audience, character and camera. These will be discussed in detail in this chapter, with an emphasis on how the various VPs inform viewer participation in the show. Viewpoint is a crucial part of the meaning construction process, but the purpose of this discussion is to build on awareness of VP centrality to uncover how viewpoints function in Pocoyo. This chapter will explain how the various VPs are established and conveyed in Pocoyo, including through visual and linguistic cues, and how those VPs direct the viewer’s meaning construction process.
3.1 VIEWPOINTS: NARRATOR, CHARACTER, VIEWER, IN-SHOW AUDIENCE AND CAMERA

Pocoyo operates on five viewpoints: the narrator VP, camera VP, character VP, viewer VP and in-show audience VP. As Parrill notes in “Interactions between discourse status and viewpoint in co-speech gesture,” “Most researchers seem to agree that viewpoint is, in its most basic form, spatial” (97). The previous chapter has provided us with an understanding of the spatial layout of the narrative of each Pocoyo episode, so we are equipped to understand where the various viewpoints are situated and how they interact with each other.

As is to be expected, the narrator VP is the viewpoint of the show’s narrator, who responds to the visual and audio action in the main narrative (MN) space discussed in the previous chapter and shown in Figure 9. The in-show audience VP also originates, along with the narrator VP, in the story-viewpoint (SV) narrative space and also responds to action in the MN space. Character VP can be tied to any of the show’s characters in the MN space. The most important character VP is Pocoyo’s VP. The viewer VP is compound. It refers both to the viewpoint implied in the constructed narrative as well as to the perspective and interaction of the
human viewer with the narrative. The narrator VP and character VP (specifically Pocoyo’s VP) perform the majority of the dialogical interaction that propels the narrative. The viewer and in-show audience VPs, however, are crucial to the construction of the narrative as an exchange directed at young children. The camera VP is especially complex, as it situates the viewer and aligns with other VPs as the narrative unfolds.

3.2 CAMERA VP

The VPs in Pocoyo originate in all narrative spaces—with the viewer VP based outside of the meta-narrative space altogether. The camera connects the viewer VP to the other VPs and to the narrative as a whole. The viewer’s cognition, rather than the camera’s prompts, is at the heart of this analysis. However, since the target viewer’s mind cannot be used as data, the study is built on observation of the functions of the narrative elements at play in the creation of meaning as it is presented to the viewer. The camera is a conceptual tool that emerges from connections between the visual data in sequential shots that connects the viewer to the narrative. However, it operates narratively as a physical camera would.

The camera is a primary source of the information presented in each episode. As explained in the previous chapter, the camera establishes the MN space as it moves. The camera also connects and distinguishes VPs as it follows the commands of the narrator or portrays a particular perspective on a shot. Camera movement is an important meaning constructor in the show—building the MN space and fostering dynamic VP interaction—but, since the camera is a conceptual device whose physicality is created and sustained by visual cues, camera movement would not be possible without the presence of visual anchors in the MN space.
Visual anchors, discussed earlier as they relate to character identification, also play an important role in camera behaviour. A stationary visual anchor, such as a tree, the sun or a stool, establishes immobility within a scene. Anchors are often simple and always very visible against the white background of the MN space. Camera movement is conveyed visually as the position of anchors on the screen changes. Anchors also provide the MN space with real-world characteristics, such as relation between ground and sky. The white space is distinctively uniform, but anchors such as the sun and trees distinguish the sky from the ground and define the distance between them. Space-defining anchors within the MN space represent equivalent real-world orienting anchors. The sun is only recognizable as a sky-defining anchor because it is anchored in the sky in the real world. In the real world, it can be referred to when understanding your own position in relation to it, because it occupies the sky during the day. In Pocoyo’s world, the sun is oriented in relation to the rest of the white space, defining the space around it as sky, because of its positioning. If the real-world sun were to suddenly be located outside of the sky, the sky could still be defined as a space above the ground (from our viewpointed perspective, of course, as small beings on the Earth). When the sun is absent from Pocoyo’s sky, the sky itself becomes absent, leaving only white space. As the camera moves through the white space, anchors situate it. Anchors also make movement possible. Although anchors are actually moving on the screen in a “moving” shot, the anchors are understood to be stationary, which transfers the movement to the camera.

As the camera moves through the MN space, it cycles through the narrator, character and independent VPs to connect the narrative.
Figure 10

Figure 10, also shown (as Figure 3) in the previous chapter, indicates that the narrator, Pocoyo and the camera (independent from either) inform the viewer VP—and the behaviour of the camera. The viewer is always tied to the camera, even when separated through movement. For example, when Elly grabs and kisses the camera in Session 2 (18:41), the viewer is neither shaken nor kissed. The viewer VP is not confined only to the viewer’s experience through the camera, but draws from the viewer’s reality as informed by the camera as well as the viewer’s physical experience. Because the viewer is not physically being shaken, this moment removes the viewer VP from the camera VP, highlighting the presence of the camera between the viewer and Pocoyo.

Likewise, when the camera moves as a gestural extension of the narrator’s linguistic cues (e.g. in “Where’s Pocoyo?” [“Session 4”]), the viewer is distinguished even further as a separate VP, since the camera VP is in this case tied directly to the narrator VP. Although the narrator VP and viewer VP align at times, the narrator is constructed as a figure of guidance, often dialogically interacting with the viewer and in-show audience. When the viewer VP is tied to the narrator VP, the narrator is directing the camera. Of course, the viewer cannot manipulate the camera, since the camera’s actions are determined prior to viewer engagement. The inability of
the viewer to affect the movement of the camera reinforces the narrator’s authority, as the
narrator inevitably directs the camera while the viewer follows.

The camera is a conceptual device that emerges out of sequential visual data. There are
instances, though, where the show plays with the idea of a physical camera between the viewer
and the narrative. The camera being grabbed by Elly, mentioned above, constructs a tactile
physicality around the camera, placing it inside the narrative. Unless the camera were
constructed as a physical device in this instance, it would be impossible to grab it. Another
example of the camera moving as if it were a physical entity within the MN space is in
“Vamoosh on the Loosh.” A flying machine is barrelling through the MN space, leaving
destruction in its path. As the narrator tries to warn Pocoyo, the vamoosh flies through the shot
and cuts very close to the left side of the screen (4:08). As the machine passes, the camera
shakes, as if the movement of the machine affected its stability. Such occurrences contribute to
the shared imaginary construction of the camera as an actual device within the MN space—at
times. Other times, it reflects, for instance, Pocoyo’s VP, and cannot therefore also inhabit the
role of a physical device that is manipulable within the MN space.

The camera VP is particularly complex when it functions as an independent VP, since the
occurrence is rare—and because the viewer VP is always privy to all information revealed by the
camera, even when the two are not being narratively linked. For instance, in “Where’s Pocoyo?”
the camera roves as the viewer is asked to help the narrator look for Pocoyo (“Session 4” 19:48).
Narratively, the viewer VP and camera VP are separate. However, the camera reflects the
viewer’s desire to look for Pocoyo as suggested by the narrator, allowing the viewer to act within
the MN space through VP alignment.
3.3 VIEWER VP

The viewer VP is complex even in isolation, because it exists as a narrative component regardless of the presence of an actual viewer. The viewer VP is a placeholder as well as a perspective; it is the recipient of all audio and visual information presented by the show, even when a viewer is not present. Insofar as it can be broken down into two distinct elements, this study refers to the narrative-restricted and expanded versions of the viewer VP.

As a viewpointed space, the narrative-restricted viewer VP situates the entire narrative, providing both a reason for the narrative to exist and a target persona. The VP is restricted to the narrative in the sense that it is built into the narrative structure. The viewer VP is addressed as if the viewer were a very young child, with a primarily sensory understanding of the world. It provides a recipient for the action in the meta-narrative space. Despite being restricted to the narrative, the restricted viewer VP is not a part of the meta-narrative space. It still resides outside the meta-narrative space—a narrative necessity, but not actually a part of the narrative action. (The in-show audience, discussed below, provides viewer interaction inside the meta-narrative space.)

When a viewer is actually present, the viewer VP expands to allow for human interaction with the narrative. The expanded viewer VP, with allowance for human engagement, is more subjective than the other VPs, because it incorporates the viewer’s own unique sensory experience. The expanded viewer VP also incorporates the camera VP, even when the camera VP is linked to another VP. For example, if the camera is moving up and down as Pocoyo looks up and down within the MN space, the viewer still shares in the experience, incorporating the viewer VP in the VP alignment. When this occurs, the narrative-restricted viewer VP is not included in the movement, because it still serves as a static placeholder to which the narrative is
directed. Despite the stasis of the restricted viewer VP, the actual viewer is given access into character experience through the camera’s alignment with Pocoyo’s VP. Figure 10 above shows the viewer VP tied to the camera. The narrator VP, character VPs and in-show audience VP are not nested in the viewer VP, but they do inform it, as they direct the camera.

3.4 IN-SHOW AUDIENCE

Much like the moments of camera physicality noted above, the in-show audience gives the viewer VP physical place within the meta-narrative space via its sound. The physicality of the in-show audience and the physicality of the camera are different, though, on a few levels. Firstly, the in-show audience is audible, not visual. Secondly, the camera is only occasionally portrayed as a physical device within the MN space. (It always functions narratively as a physical camera would even when characters do not perceive it as a camera in their world.) The in-show audience is always present in the SV space, regardless of whether it is audible.

The in-show audience VP and the viewer VP are separate VPs, because they enter the narrative from different spaces and perform different narrative tasks. The viewer is the intended recipient of the narrative, whereas the in-show audience is internally involved in narrative development. However, frequently, the viewer is addressed, and the in-show audience verbally responds, blurring the distinction between the two. The in-show audience may function as a perceived peer group or an audible representation of the viewer, depending perhaps on the viewer’s age or self-alignment inclinations. As a peer group, the in-show audience encourages communication with the narrative by responding to it as a group of children themselves. The audience’s linguistic proficiency also provides familiarity with word sounds and sentence construction.
As an audible extension of the viewer, the in-show audience can also pull the viewer into the meta-narrative space by aligning the viewer with its internal VP. From the SV space, the in-show audience (and, by extension, the viewer) interacts with the narrator as a present figure of authority and directly communicates with Pocoyo. Pocoyo’s responsiveness continues the process of incorporating the viewer in the narrative. As the audience and Pocoyo speak and respond to each other, the viewer is pulled deeper into their conversation and encouraged to interact in the exchange. Interaction in the exchange, coupled with external observation and processing from outside the meta-narrative space, gives the viewer a more comprehensive understanding of the narrative content.

3.5 LINGUISTIC CUES

This chapter has already established that the camera is central to viewpoint indication and connection, and that it provides the viewer with access to the narrative. But the camera is not the only link between viewer and narrative that is always tied to the viewer VP. Language also connects the various VPs, while always involving the viewer.

Figure 11

Figure 11 above shows the viewer’s linguistic interaction with the show, with the triangular pale blue set of lines between the viewer and the meta-narrative space indicating that the viewer never
dialogically interacts with any internal VP. Unlike the arrows connecting internal VPs, the pink arrows connecting the viewer to the narrator and Pocoyo are one-directional. Instead of dialogically interacting with specific VPs, the viewer actually responds to the show as a whole. The pale blue triangle represents this interaction, with the lines terminating once they have entered the meta-narrative space, without directly reaching any of the internal VPs.

The dialogue between VPs within the show is indicated by the pale blue arrows. These VPs do directly interact, propelling the narrative through an exchange of action, as discussed in the previous chapter. The internal arrows and the triangular series of lines are the same colour, indicating that all internal dialogue is also heard by the viewer and therefore involves the expanded viewer VP.

The pink arrow representing Pocoyo’s communication with the viewer is only a dotted outline, to illustrate that it is indirect. Pocoyo does seem to speak directly to the viewer. Actually, though, he is speaking to the camera while interacting with the in-show audience. The viewer is implied in the exchange, through the connection of the viewer VP to the camera and the in-show audience.

Pocoyo is included in Figure 11 as a specific character VP, because he is the primary character, and he interacts with the narrator and in-show audience more than any of the other characters. The characters do interact with each other within the MN space, but the narrator usually acts as an interpreter between them. Inclusion of the narrator allows for the audience to also be included in exchanges between the characters, since Pocoyo is the only one that speaks in words rather than exclusively non-linguistic noises.
3.6 NARRATOR VP

The narrator provides VP alignment through linguistic cues, situating each VP in relation to the camera, even as VP alignment fluctuates over the course of each episode. Sweetser provides insight into the narrator’s linguistic cues through a useful example of the distinction between relative spatial reference systems and absolute directional language in “Creativity Across Modalities in Viewpoint Construction.” She describes a situation in which a speaker gives directions to locating a piece of paper in their office, despite neither the speaker nor the listener inhabiting the office while the directions are given. She explains that in a relative spatial reference system, “I might say the paper is to the left of my computer on the desk;” whereas in an Absolute directional language,

I would need to say instead something like the paper is to the east of my computer on the desk … The difference is that the east/west distinction does not require the bodily position of an imagined viewer or computer user to be comprehensible: a global directional viewpoint is enough. But to understand what would be the left of the computer, I have to imagine a computer user in canonical orientation with respect to the computer, and compute that user’s left and right. (241–2)

Later in the chapter, Sweetser builds an explanation of how multiple viewpoints can inhabit one body as a story is told. Particular viewpoints are assigned to physical spaces, such as the speaker’s hands holding a document while the speaker’s face relates the reaction of the person who was not holding the document in the story (248). The listener’s understanding of viewpoint and gesture correlation is natural, but it is crucial to understanding the story as its pieces interact to form a narrative whole.
The narrator of *Pocoyo*, working with the camera, conveys the narrative of each episode to the viewer. As he speaks directly to particular characters and to the audience (both the viewer and the in-show audience), he balances the VPs in relation to each other while bringing them together in a narrative whole with which the viewer can then interact. Sweetser notes that when storytellers speak directly to their listeners while narrating, “the retention of the story-character’s viewpoint seems frequently to be a way of visibly holding the floor for return to the narrative, even while granting the temporary floor to an interruption by the story-listener” (248–9). The narrator of *Pocoyo* does just that when he interacts with the audience—he breaks from the MN space through language, bringing the viewer into the narrative, while the camera holds the MN space until the narrator’s attention returns to it, bringing the viewer along with him.

The narrator responds to action in the MN space from the other side of the camera, alongside the viewer. In “Boo!” Pocoyo and his friends exit the shot, then suddenly pop into the shot and exclaim, “Boo!” (6:23). The narrator breathes in quickly, as if scared, and says, “Uh! You got me that time!” Unless the narrator were looking into the MN space from behind the camera, the scare would be impossible, since it requires that the narrator’s VP be bound by the limitations of the camera.

In “Vamoosh on the Loosh,” the narrator frantically calls to Elly to watch out for a large flying machine headed her way (4:11). The camera, though, does not move toward Elly. The camera cuts from scene to scene, visiting the different characters as harm hurtles their way, while the narrator is confined to each static shot, calling as if physically trapped at a distance. The stasis of the shot re-establishes the distinction between the narrator VP and the camera, while also demonstrating that the narrator does not necessarily direct the camera when the two are aligned, but also that the narrator is viewing the action in the MN space alongside the viewer.
3.7 PERSPECTIVE SHIFT

Viewpoint is also manipulated to produce new perspectives on familiar items. The episode “Guess What?” is predicated on VP manipulation. The narrator’s confinement to the camera VP is crucial to the episode, as the viewer and narrator navigate new perspectives together. The episode opens with the narrator telling Pato that he is looking for Pocoyo, because Pocoyo has offered to teach the narrator a new game. Pato has not seen Pocoyo, and he begins to walk away. The camera follows him, and a blue post floats into the shot as the camera moves. The post is Pocoyo’s leg, revealed after the camera zooms out to show Pocoyo standing on his head (“Session 14” 8:26). The incident is followed with a close-up of the top of Elly’s head. The camera zooms out just far enough to reveal Elly’s smiling eyes, and the narrator asks, “Can any of you lend me a hand? Do you know what this is?” (9:42). The in-show audience responds correctly, and the camera zooms out to reveal the rest of Elly’s body.

Initially, the narrator vocalizes a suspicion that the top of Elly’s head is a mountain. Clouds float above Elly in the shot, but the confusion stems from Pocoyo and Pato in the background. They are flying—apparently above the “mountain” but in fact far behind Elly (Figure 12).

Figure 12

“Pocoyo in English - Session 14
Ep. 01-04” 9:18
The episode is an exercise in perspective, demonstrating that visual properties appear different from different angles and distances. Having the in-show audience announce Elly’s presence gives the viewer time to recognize Elly’s eyes and the top of her head as familiar and related, leading the viewer through the process of distance assessment and perspective reimagining.

3.8 CONCLUSION

The camera is central to perspective shifts and is the only source of all visuality in the show. It is a viewpointed device that emerges out of sequential visual data and always mediates viewer interaction with the narrative. Camera movement is constructed by visual anchors but must conceptually exist as “movement” (not simply object placement in a blank space) so that the viewer perceives the narrative as one would through a camera. Otherwise, perspective would be impossible—close-ups and different angles would present separate objects, since viewer movement within the MN space depends on a mobile mediator. The camera VP thus crucially informs the viewer VP and allows the viewer to dynamically interact with objects and characters in the MN space.

The viewer VP, which includes the narrative-restricted viewer VP and the expanded viewer VP, is also guided by dialogue between the other VPs. The restricted viewer VP, built into the structure of the narrative, includes the in-show audience as well as a target viewer that the show addresses regardless of the presence of an actual viewer. When the viewer VP is expanded, it involves the actual viewer who perceives the narrative subjectively and in relation to their body. Sharing a viewpoint, the in-show audience guides the viewer in interaction with the narrator and characters in the show, and the viewer learns through interaction with the narrative.
CHAPTER 4
BLENDs AND MEANING CONSTRUCTION

The previous chapters have been introductory looks at how viewpoint (VP) and narrative spaces function in *Pocoyo*. This chapter builds on viewpoint and narrative spaces to explain how meaning construction takes place. An understanding of viewpoint and narrative spaces is essential to a discussion of meaning construction in the show, since meaning must be constructed in space by an active agent. This chapter explains how real-world understandings of space can be mapped onto virtual space—specifically the narrative spaces explained in chapter two. The complexities of the viewer VP and the translation of real-world space to virtual space produce the capacity for learning through engagement with the show. *Pocoyo* is effective as a series because it successfully engages its viewers while also expanding their understandings of the world they encounter with their own bodies.

*Pocoyo* begins with a green box, out of which the characters pop. Pocoyo and his friends then run around the screen assembling a line of six coloured boxes, which Pocoyo bounces upon to reveal the word “Pocoyo” (Figure 13). The sequence is fun and serves to introduce the characters, but it also cleverly establishes a model of meaning construction for the show. Pocoyo works together with his friends to build a complete concept—in this case, the title—out of discrete packets of information. The introduced concepts contribute to the narrative of each episode, while the narrative in turn contextualizes and supplements the individual concepts. The boxes in the title sequence are effective visualizations of conceptual frames, which contain information that becomes available when evoked. When the frames are arranged relationally, a blended concept is introduced—and the blended concept elucidates the relational value of its component frames. In this case, the characters that come out of the frames come together to
present a representation of “Pocoyo” as a concept: characters working together to construct complete concepts in an entertaining way.

Figure 13

[Pocoyo in English - Session 1
Ep. 01-04” 0:56]

Pocoyo’s opening sequence only conveys meaning because colours, shapes and movement are identifiable through sensory association with concepts already in mind. In Cognitive Linguistics, Croft and Cruse note, “In fact, no concept exists autonomously: all are understood to fit into our general knowledge of the world in one way or another” (16). This is an underlying assumption in cognitive linguistics, especially when considering how particular concepts are referenced. It is the understanding that no conceptual frame can exist independent of broader context that drives this study of meaning construction. Even ignoring the characters, the word “Pocoyo” only contains meaning because we recognize the shapes of the letters and understand their significance as linguistic symbols—an understanding that is socially generated. Other elements of the title sequence, such as bodily expressions and proximity between characters, are less dependent on social awareness and informed primarily by our understandings of our own bodies through physical experience.
4.1 GESTURE, SENSORY DATA AND SIMULATED ACTION

Conceptual frames referred to in *Pocoyo* are often very basic concepts built on sensory data. Recent developments in cognitive linguistics suggest that all concepts are fundamentally based on sensorimotor experience. In “Visible Embodiment” A.B. Hostetter and M.W. Alibali build their study of embodiment and the mind on the argument that linguistic meaning is “tied to perceptual experience, rather than derived from relationships among abstract, amodal symbols” (497). The Gesture as Simulated Action theory developed by Hostetter and Alibali explains how gesture arises from motor imagery and visual imagery. As the speaker/gesturer processes language, mental visualizations of the concept and an understanding of the motor processes at work in a physical idea of the concept combine to produce a cycle of action and perception that informs how the speaker communicates the concept (503). Gesture is a product of the action and perception cycle, tying motor and visual imagery together in a coherent visualization.

Working backwards through Hostetter and Alibali’s model of gesture origins, we can break gesture down to its components, providing a model of how Pocoyo’s bodily movement communicates concepts. As Pocoyo moves through the white space and interacts with other entities, the viewer sees his spatial interactions as well as movements reflecting his reactions. From the physical formation of Pocoyo’s body, the viewer infers his actions and his perceptions, leading the viewer to an understanding of the motor properties involved in the action, as well as an awareness of the visual components of the present objects. As the viewer learns how to define concepts through Pocoyo’s encounters with them, the concepts are associated with Pocoyo’s actions. Hostetter and Alibali note that visual imagery and motor imagery are closely tied, giving the example of a pencil. “For instance,” they explain, “a visual image of a pencil likely involves simulation of the actions typically performed with a pencil” (503).
Gesture connects the viewer VP to the character VP, compelling the viewer to co-experience the character’s sensory involvement with on-screen objects. In *Hand and Mind*, McNeill explains that children understand concepts experientially rather than referentially:

To take a homely example, a spoon is mentally represented by a child—not only with respect to a taxonomy of cutlery or contrasting shapes or metallic instruments (various ways an adult might choose)—but also in terms of the actions the child himself performs with the spoon: picking it up, putting it in his mouth, licking it, pounding with it, etc. The child doesn’t see himself presenting meanings so much as enacting them… (298)

As the viewer watches Pocoyo gesture and physically interact with objects, the viewer virtually inhabits Pocoyo’s experience. For example, as Pocoyo experiments with the umbrella in Session 1, the viewer conceptualizes each application from a first-person perspective. Recognition of Pocoyo’s body as similar to the viewer’s own is established partially through alignment of the viewer VP with Pocoyo’s VP and through anchors, which will be discussed in the “Embodied Blends” section below.

Ibbotson, Lieven and Tomasello conclude from their study of eye gaze and syntactic structure that children have an easier time comprehending what is occurring in a scene “when the focus is on the agent” (472). The camera, the narrator’s linguistic directions and the Pocoyo-centrality of the show all contribute to a consistent focus on Pocoyo as the agent of the show. The viewer, then, focuses on Pocoyo and his interaction with objects and situations, learning as he learns.

Gesture also connects the viewer to Pocoyo by providing interaction similar to that a child would have with another person. Pocoyo often uses his body, rather than language, to express direction. One of the first four episodes offers an ideal example, when Pocoyo responds
by pointing when the narrator asks “What do you think you’d like to do today?” (“Session 1” 19:16). The camera follows Pocoyo’s gesture, also following the viewer’s presumable impulse to do the same. The shot then settles on a nearby telephone, directing the viewer to focus on the phone.

Pocoyo’s answer to the narrator’s question is implicit in his gesture that suggests the narrator and viewer shift their attention to the phone. By directing attention to the phone, Pocoyo’s gesture communicates that Pocoyo would like to explore the use of the phone today. The gesture shifts the dialogue to a gesture-based exchange, in which the narrator’s question must also be critically treated as a gesture. Although it is a linguistic inquiry about Pocoyo’s desired activity, the question is an expression of attention rather than a linguistic prompt—the narrator has vocally gestured to Pocoyo, and Pocoyo has responded through physical, rather than vocal, gesture. Pocoyo’s gesture has transformed the dialogue from a linguistic exchange into an exchange of action. The narrator is present and engaged, and Pocoyo responds to the narrator’s presence by expressing interest in the telephone.

4.2 BLENDING

A blend is a structure that emerges when pieces of multiple frames are combined to form a novel concept. The objective of Pocoyo is not to complicate familiar frames and blends but to lead the viewer through the discovery of existing frames representing everyday concepts, which it often accomplishes through blending. The blends in Pocoyo arise, though, from the foundation that the viewer is not yet familiar with the concepts that would otherwise be frames. For instance, episode four introduces the concept “phone.” “Phone” is a frame for most adults. The phone frame evokes the object (phone) and use (to contact people), as well as allusion to social
referents (iPhone, social networking, etc.), linguistic associations (such as the phrase “phone it in”) and personal sensory associations (recalling one’s own phone, for instance). However, the episode assumes that “phone” is an unfamiliar concept to its viewers and aims to build a “phone” frame, which it does through blending and use.

*Pocoyo* achieves its objective by using basic sensorily constructed frames such as pleasure/displeasure, shapes, familiar sounds and simple gestures to produce more advanced (though still basic, to many) frames through blending. In the case of Pocoyo’s telephone (Figure 15 below), the “ring” frame is blended with the “Elly” frame to produce the “phone” blend that incorporates Elly’s colour and sound with ringing. The “friend” frame is also contributing to the “phone” blend, as an active piece of the “Elly” frame. Elly is already a blend within the space of the show—no viewer comes to *Pocoyo* with the “Elly” frame already in mind. Once established through blending of its various input frames (friend, elephant, pink), though, “Elly” is a frame that can be invoked in new blends. Figure 14 demonstrates how blends are constructed through frames from outside the meta-narrative space, as well as frames that have been established through blending within the narrative.
Most blends can function when all of the input frames are not familiar to the viewer. For example, if the viewer is not familiar with the concept of an elephant, the Elly frame still functions. Each blend is different in this regard, but the Elly frame is most dependent on the notion that Elly is a character who is a friend to Pocoyo. “Elly” functions in the meta-narrative space in relation to Pocoyo, not as an elephant, therefore the “Elly” blend still functions without viewer awareness of what the elephant frame is contributing.

Another tricky component of blending within the meta-narrative space is the presence of mutually informed blends. Figure 14 includes “friend” as an input frame in the “Elly” blend and “Elly” as an input in the “friend” blend. Mutually informed blends are not a problem, conceptually. Both concepts are learned simultaneously, in relation to each other, as they contribute to each other and gain substance as separate blends. Elly is a specific character,
differentiated through visual and audio clues, whereas “friend” can also apply to Pato, Baby Bird and Pocoyo’s other friends. As blends are constructed in the meta-narrative space, they also become applicable as frames in the real world.

4.3 THE SUM OF IT ALL: MEANING CONSTRUCTION IN POCOYO

In Cognitive Linguistics, Croft and Cruse the major hypotheses they see at the root of cognitive linguistics, including that “knowledge of language emerges from language use” (1). This hypothesis guides the educational process of Pocoyo: knowledge emerges from use. As Pocoyo encounters new objects, he discovers their value through use. The viewer observes Pocoyo’s use of the object and thereby becomes familiar with the object. The sensorimotor experience creates the frame through use. More importantly for the purpose of the show, though, the frame expands to include relational value to Pocoyo (and the viewer, by extension) and to other frames.

Through virtual sensorimotor experience, the viewer is introduced to distinct concepts. For instance, as Pocoyo explores the many uses of an umbrella (“Session 1”), the umbrella is established as a distinct concept—a conceptual frame. Pocoyo’s umbrella is red, with a long, curved handle. He finds that it can be held by the handle and also from the opposite end, and that it can be moved by the breeze. All of these characteristics inform the “umbrella” frame. The viewer builds the frame as Pocoyo interacts with the umbrella, as the viewer simultaneously conceptualizes Pocoyo’s experience as the viewer’s own, through VP alignment. Through this experience, the viewer understands the umbrella’s physical properties and its uses.

Pocoyo also learns what a telephone is, in “Who’s on the Phone?” After Pocoyo and the narrator have determined that Pocoyo would like to learn about the phone, it rings (“Session 1”
19:33). Pocoyo then compares it to other ringing objects, in order to define it by association. He is unsuccessful, and he only learns the use of a telephone once he recognizes Elly’s voice coming out of it. In both the case of the telephone and the case of the umbrella, Pocoyo learns how to define an object in terms of its intended functionality.

Figure 15

The phone, shown in Figure 15, is quite unique. It is modelled after a rotary phone, but playfully shaped and very brightly coloured. When it rings, the receiver jumps, directing the viewer to associate the ringing sound with the phone—but a jumping receiver is hardly a standard telephone feature. Pocoyo learns how to refer to the phone when the narrator asks the in-show audience, “Can any of you tell Pocoyo what it is?” and they respond, “It’s a telephone!” (19:39). The narrator’s next statement, though, indicates the real substance of the lesson, as well as the method by which objects are defined in Pocoyo. “So, Pocoyo,” he remarks, “I suppose you’re trying to work out what it does” (19:50). Instead of then explaining the telephone’s function, the narrator weaves a network of characteristics, beginning with the reiteration of its linguistic referent—an interesting place to start a description of the telephone’s function. “Well, that curious object is called a telephone.” He goes on to describe how the telephone makes a sensory impression: “sometimes it makes a noise. It says … ‘ring, ring.’ And when it says ‘ring,
ring, it means…” (20:04). At this point, the narrator trails off, leaving the discovery up to Pocoyo.

Ending the sentence with “it means” indicates that the meaning of the phone is yet to be discovered—in its application. We have learned what a telephone is called and what it sounds like, but we have yet to understand what the telephone is. Pocoyo takes us through a series of experiments to determine the meaning of the phone, beginning with comparison with similar sounding objects. Pocoyo sets an alarm clock next to the phone, and the narrator patronizingly corrects him: “Oh, I see, Pocoyo, you thought the phone might like another ring-ring to talk to. What a fun idea. But I’m afraid a phone isn’t for talking to other things that ring” (20:49).

Interestingly, Pocoyo is on the right track, as sensory association will ultimately reveal the phone’s proper use. At the end of the episode, Pocoyo answers a phone call from his friend Elly, inviting him to a party. Recognizing Elly’s voice leads Pocoyo to understand that telephones are for talking to your friends when they are not physically present.

The definition of telephone in Pocoyo’s world never makes reference to the visual characteristics of a phone, but distinct similarities in the phone’s and Elly’s colouring contribute to the process of associating the phone with Elly. (Both are pink with blue accents.) The auditory characteristics of the phone are cited regularly, but they do not give the object meaning, as indicated by the narrator’s insistence on finding out the meaning of the phone even after Pocoyo discovers that it rings. Even recognition of Elly’s voice does not provide meaning; rather, it is another catalyst in Pocoyo discovering the meaning of the phone. The meaning is usage-based. Recognition of Elly’s voice allows Pocoyo to make the connection between the telephone and talking to friends.
Like the phone, the umbrella is ultimately defined by its intended use. Initially, the narrator offers to tell Pocoyo what the umbrella is for, but Pocoyo shushes him. The narrator yields to Pocoyo: “Oh, I see, Pocoyo wants to find out for himself” (1:48). Since “Umbrella, Umbrella” is the first episode of the series, the exchange sets a precedent for meaning construction in the show. Eventually, rain begins to fall in Pocoyo’s world. Pocoyo and his friends gather under it once the narrator has prompted, “Pocoyo, can you think of anything that might keep you dry? Can any of you [the audience] tell Pocoyo what will keep him dry?” (6:20). While Pocoyo stares expectantly at the camera, the large, red umbrella is the only static object in the shot, guiding the viewer VP to focus on it. The in-show audience responds, “the umbrella!” and Pocoyo picks it up and exclaims, “umbrella!” (6:26). The narrator then reinforces the meaning of umbrella by restricting it to one use: “That’s right, Pocoyo! Umbrellas keep you dry” (6:38).

Like the phone, the umbrella is defined by its functionality. This usage-based model of meaning allows the concepts of phone and umbrella to be translated into the real world. A child will likely never encounter a telephone that looks or sounds exactly like Pocoyo’s, but because cell and cordless phones also allow friends to speak with each other at a distance, they are recognizable as telephones.

Some critical complexity arises from Pocoyo’s many uses of the umbrella. He uses it as a windsail and a hiding place, while Elly also contributes an option, holding it decoratively in a scooter-based dance routine. The narrator responds positively to each use, encouraging Pocoyo and his friends in their exploration and playing along with the ideas, even remarking that Elly’s obscure artistic expression is “a wonderful way to use an umbrella” (5:52).
Each object’s usage-based definition is unstable and therefore contributes to a growing understanding of socially shared context. Pocoyo does not experiment nearly as much with the use of the telephone—talking to other ring-rings is hardly as satisfying a function as allowing Pocoyo to communicate with his friends. However, Pocoyo uses the umbrella for a variety of applications and seems to enjoy doing so. The narrator’s encouragement suggests that Pocoyo is free to explore new uses of objects, but it also reinforces the meaning of each object as it is tied to one particular function. Encouraging rhetoric and indefinite articles (such as “that’s a good use!”) indicate that the actual function of the object is not yet being demonstrated. Without an intended use, though, deviation would not be possible. Pocoyo would still be free to use any object for any fitting purpose, but the imaginative element would be restricted to an ongoing exploration rather than a new variation. Without an intended use, using one’s imagination would not be necessary, because every use would be within reason.

Moving on from the meaning of individual objects, let’s look at how concepts are conveyed through ways other than usage-based application. Anchors were introduced in chapter two as objects that enable movement and situate the viewer in the main narrative space. Anchors also serve a more complex function, though, in meaning and narrative construction. Anchors—which are not necessarily physical or visual objects—inform across frames, tying the story together and creating meaning through blends. In *The Language of Stories*, Dancygier explains the process of anchor evocation and re-activation that mutually informs the input spaces in which the anchors are situated (44). Dancygier’s explanation of anchor evocation and re-activation cites examples from Atwood’s *The Blind Assassin* to demonstrate that the novel’s narrative spaces are mutually informed as corresponding anchors are evoked in the different spaces. For example, a character in one narrative space is described as “wearing a blue, worker’s shirt but smoking
The description is also applied to an unnamed character in a different narrative space. The evocation of this description leads the reader to associate the two characters and cross-inform them, fleshing them out with information from the contrasting narrative spaces. Through this process, both characters are constructed and eventually merge as one character depicted in two spaces.

Anchors are necessary for camera movement and the viewer’s understanding of sequence, and for tying narrative moments together meaningfully. Each narrative unfolds with the help of anchors, but the show also requires anchors to achieve its educational goals. Episode ten of season one demonstrates the centrality of anchors to meaning construction in *Pocoyo*. The title of the episode, “A Mystery Most Puzzling,” indicates the process of meaning construction through collection and association. The mystery finds Pocoyo chasing the character who has stolen his Polaroid-style camera. The thief leaves a series of pictures in their wake, which Pocoyo subsequently investigates by comparing the images to the characteristics of friends and objects he encounters. The first photograph is of a pink foot. Pocoyo compares the foot to that of his dog Loula. Despite Loula’s endearing ability to shake a paw, the pink foot in the photograph and Loula’s tan paw are not similar in colour or shape. Pocoyo recognizes the dissimilarity and continues his search. He then finds a second photograph depicting a wheel. Conveniently, Pato rolls into the shot on a skateboard. Pocoyo stops Pato and points to the wheels of his skateboard, then to the photograph, and says only “wheels,” indicating that both are, in fact, wheels. The question the narrator then asks indicates the complexity of the matching process: “Is it the same?” (4:17). The in-show audience responds with a strong “No!” with one trailing voice even stating, “It’s not the same” (4:23).
How is it that the wheels are not the same, when the usage-based model of meaning construction established above would suggest otherwise? In this scenario, a different kind of frame is being developed. Pocoyo is not trying to define an object; he is trying to match something piece by piece. He is attempting to compile a frame based on visual identification rather than application. If he were learning the “wheel” frame, the two wheels the audience determined were different could be considered the same—they are both wheels—but conceptualizing two objects as the same frame is always dependent on context. In this context, the frame in question is not wheel but the frame to which the wheel in the photo belongs. The wheel in the photo is an aspect of the frame—an anchor that Pocoyo can refer to in his efforts to find the matching wheel. The wheel-matching exercise—made possible through anchors—introduces context as an important component of meaning.

Anchors also establish basic states, which can be manipulated to convey expression or movement. In “Umbrella, Umbrella,” Pocoyo finds himself hanging in a tree, and he expresses concern in his face. In the “Embodied Blends” section below, I will explain how anchors make his expression possible. First, though, let’s look at how anchors situate the viewer in relation to the ground. In this scene, the camera plays with perspective to suggest that the ground is further below the shot than is actually the case. Pocoyo, who has experimented with the umbrella as a glider, is swept into a nearby tree by the wind. Pocoyo looks down worriedly as the narrator asks, “Now how are you ever going to get down from there?” (“Session 1” 3:35–40). The camera then zooms out slightly, revealing the bottom of the tree, seen in Figure 17 below. Pocoyo’s dog Loula then bounds into the frame, at which point Pocoyo, the narrator and the viewer realize that Pocoyo is within a safe dropping distance to the ground.
Figure 17 demonstrates how anchors visually lay out the space. Perspective is created by size and position—the red and purple tree in the background is smaller than Pocoyo’s umbrella and is higher than Loula’s feet. Partially informed by the shadows, the viewer naturally assumes that the distant tree is further from the camera than the characters (not simply smaller and floating), automatically reads the space as three-dimensional and assumes the horizon runs parallel to the base of the smaller tree. The colour and shapes of the trees indicates that they are probably iterations of the same frame. Since the tree on the left is much smaller, it can be read as distant, rather than miniature. Real-world spatial principles can be invoked, since sensorimotor experience in the real world already informs the viewer’s understanding of distance.

The excitement of Pocoyo’s adventure in the tree is due to viewpoint manipulation, but it relies on more than a zoom out by the camera. Pocoyo’s reaction to his situation contributes more anxiety to the sequence than the camera alone can provide—if Pocoyo wore an indifferent expression throughout, the viewer would have no cause to be concerned. The camera is the viewer’s—and the narrator’s—only means of assessing Pocoyo’s situation, but from his own VP, Pocoyo has enough information to know that the ground is only a short drop away. As Figure 16 shows, Pocoyo himself seems distressed about the prospect of getting down from the branch before the camera reveals the short distance to the ground. This is an example of Pocoyo’s VP
aligning with the viewer’s. Pocoyo often seems to express the confusion, anxiety or excitement of the viewer rather than his own reactions as a character with knowledge of the space beyond the boundaries of the camera.

Pocoyo’s adventure in the tree is an example of real-world properties determining the viewer’s assumed reaction to the situation. However, blends also allow for occurrences that could not realistically happen in the real world. Through blending, unrealistic situations can combine with real-world properties to allow for unrealistic occurrences to logically occur. Take for example the episode that depicts Octopus’s flight. Octopus, who already challenges real-world physics with his dry-land existence, is able to putter through the sky in “All for One” (“Session 14”). The flying Octopus blends the frame of an octopus having multiple tentacles (though this is already a blend, since this particular octopus has only four) and the helicopter frame, in which multiple spinning blades facilitate flight. Both of these frames are accessed at a distant and generalized level—the physics behind flight are not a part of the helicopter frame, nor are number or purpose of tentacles a part of the octopus frame. Rather, the octopus frame provides multiplicity, and the helicopter frame provides movement. Together, they produce the blend that is necessary for flight in this context.

4.4 EMBODIED BLENDS

Pocoyo’s umbrella adventure also demonstrates the process of blending to convey an emotional state. The look of surprise on Pocoyo’s face as he hangs from the tree is an embodied portrayal of an emotional reaction that could be felt by the viewer. Embodiment, in this case, is a blend. The viewer VP is projected onto Pocoyo’s expression, and the projection combines the viewer’s assumed perception of the moment with Pocoyo’s form. It also includes an important
third component: the face. Pocoyo’s expression blends recognizable basic face shapes with expressive manipulations, but basic facial expressions are in themselves a complex example of the blending necessary to animated characters.

The animated body is a visualization of the sensory experiences of the viewer’s (and the animator’s) body. Gesture, as previously discussed, activates sensory imagery in the viewer’s mind, leading to comprehension of spatial interactions in the scene. But specifically human characters—and the complex variant of anthropomorphic non-human characters—are constructed as familiar bodies before they can be read as having the capacity to gesture. The bodies of human characters are blends, with inputs from the viewer’s perception of their own bodies as well as their perception of other people’s bodies.

Pocoyo’s face is astoundingly expressive considering its relative simplicity. The shapes of his unicolour mouth and eyes convey a full range of emotions, perceptible by the viewer because of their familiarity in human expressions. Animation works to reduce the expressive potential of the face to a few anchors that have expressive capacity through manipulation. The face is anchored as the responsive front of the head, and the eyes, nose and mouth are identifiable in relation to each other, because the viewer is familiar with facial arrangements in real life. Strangers’ expressions are identifiable by their similarity to familiar faces; likewise, Pocoyo’s face is identifiable as similar to a familiar basic facial model.

The facial elements themselves—eyes, nose and mouth—are anchors, which express different emotions when manipulated in some way. The eyes, for instance, are consistently a particular size and shape. When they are shaped or sized differently, they reflect an alteration of the eyes as anchors. The viewer’s perception of anchor alterations is informed by the viewer’s experience with real-world iterations of alterations. For example, if Pocoyo’s eyes are drawn
larger than usual, as in Figure 16 above, they express surprise, just as widened eyes would in the real world.

The animal characters’ expressions function in the same way as Pocoyo’s. In Figure 17, Loula’s curiosity is indicated by her raised ear, just as many dogs’ curiosity or concern is expressed in the same way in the real world. Her ear is recognizable as raised because of its positioning on her head and in comparison to her other ear. Pocoyo’s other friends, though, pose a more interesting study in expression, since they are anthropomorphic animals. Pato and Elly make duck and elephant noises, respectively, and are visually consistent with properties of their respective animals. They walk on two legs, though, and play with Pocoyo as friends rather than animal companions (i.e., Loula)—building with blocks, skateboarding and throwing parties, among other activities. Clothing (Pato’s hat and Elly’s backpack) and limb use highlight the difference between Pocoyo’s friends and Pocoyo’s pet. Unlike Loula, Pato and Elly’s expressions are usually facial. Their eyes are the most expressive components of their bodies, like Pocoyo’s.

Blending makes Pato and Elly possible. Human properties like bipedal locomotion, schedules and propensity for fashion are combined with animal properties like basic animal shapes and noise-based communication. Since Pato and Elly are human-animal blends, the expressiveness of their eyes is an expected occurrence, along with corresponding animal-like noises. When Pato becomes upset, for example, he quacks loudly and repeatedly. He also expresses frustration, usually while quacking, by quickly spinning his head around (e.g., “Session 12” 8:35)—not an expected reaction for a human or a duck. The head spinning is also made possible through blending, which combines properties of heated items (increase in velocity consistent with increase in temperature), select biological laws (attachment of the head to the
body, but not impossibility of head spinning) and feelings one may experience when angry (heatedness, boiling emotion).

4.5 IMAGINARY BLENDS

The show occasionally uses blending and visual viewpoint alignment cues to incorporate the viewer in Pocoyo’s imaginings. In “Vamoosh on the Loosh,” the process by which the viewer is incorporated in a shared imagining is visualized quite cleverly. The vamoosh—a blend of a bubble, a bird and a helicopter—is Pocoyo and his friends’ vehicle. Having been denied driving lessons by Pocoyo, Baby Bird has gone for a joyride in the vamoosh. Pocoyo is desperately looking for the vehicle, in an effort to stop Baby Bird from causing danger to himself or others. At one point in Pocoyo’s search, he puts his hands to his face as if holding binoculars (4:49). The camera then cuts to Pocoyo’s perspective, which is framed by the instruments of a binocular-like device (Figure 18).

Figure 18

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“Pocoyo - Vamoosh on the loosh (S02E18)” 4:52
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When the camera cuts back to the viewer VP, it reveals that Pocoyo still does not actually hold any kind of device in his hands, although they are still shaped as if he did.

The viewer is invited, in this scene, to join Pocoyo in imagining an instrument into existence in the MN space. The VP in Figure 18 is Pocoyo’s, but because the viewer is tied to the
camera, it also becomes the viewer’s VP. Through VP alignment, the viewer quite literally sees what Pocoyo imagines—drawing the viewer into a state of make-believe even in an already fictional space. The viewer blends the experience of looking through a device through Pocoyo’s VP with a separate VP awareness that Pocoyo does not actually hold anything, producing a situation in which the viewer is aware that both they and Pocoyo are imagining looking through a device. Like the narrator’s encouragement to use the umbrella in a variety of ways, this scene fosters use of the imagination inside the meta-narrative space, as well as in the real world.

4.6 CONCLUSION

Viewers learn by associating Pocoyo’s virtual experiences with their understanding of the world through their own bodies. Using the same blending techniques involved in recognizing familiar expressions in other people, the viewer identifies Pocoyo’s expressions as they relate to the viewer’s own. Through embodiment, as well as a focus on Pocoyo as the primary agent of the show, *Pocoyo* leads the viewer through simulated physical experience. The viewer’s consequent understanding of Pocoyo’s physical experience is the groundwork for usage-based and associative models of object definition, leading the viewer to apply Pocoyo’s usage of animated objects to personal experience with the objects’ real-world counterparts.

The usage-based model of meaning construction in the show facilitates learning as it defines objects through experimentation with their functions. The show always indicates the socially shared intended use of a particular object, but in doing so leaves room for further exploration of how the object can be used unconventionally, encouraging imaginative play. Association, demonstrated in Pocoyo’s quest to find the camera thief, broadens meaning construction to include context. Blending completes the meaning construction model by
providing the groundwork for embodiment and virtual experience, which pull the viewer into the narrative as the viewer self-identifies with Pocoyo.

Blending produces the animated representations of characters and objects on the screen. While doing so, it highlights recognizable frames that inform the blend, peripherally familiarizing the viewer with multiple input concepts. Blending also connects the viewer’s physically based self-awareness to Pocoyo’s embodied experiences, through facial shapes and body positioning. Additionally, blending allows for a range of unrealistic but evocative scenarios, such as Pato’s spinning head, that would otherwise be outside the bounds of representation. Blending, context and usage produce a model of meaning construction that effectively communicates concepts to viewers while keeping their attention through prompts to self-identify with Pocoyo.
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_Pocoyo_ constructs meaning by pulling the viewer into the narrative, where the viewer can explore concepts alongside Pocoyo. Scenes that encourage imaginative exploration reinforce the real-world application of the show, demonstrating that virtual experience and the suspension of reality can contribute to a deeper understanding of the physical world. As the viewer looks through Pocoyo’s imaginary binoculars, for instance, the scene becomes more visually dynamic and Pocoyo is able to locate the vamoosh more effectively than before. The binoculars scene visualizes the shared experience that Pocoyo and the viewer undergo throughout the show. As both look through the binoculars, they share a visual perspective, just as they share a position of inexperience as they go through the learning process together.

The binoculars also demonstrate the power of imaginary experience in the show. In learning about the phone, for instance, the viewer does not actually handle one. Watching Pocoyo experiment with the phone, though, contributes to the viewer’s understanding of a phone and its function, as the viewer imagines picking up the phone while watching Pocoyo do it. The multi-sensory data of seeing the phone and hearing Elly bolsters the viewpoint alignment that occurs as the viewer learns with Pocoyo. Although the viewer does not actually use the phone while learning about it, this is not uncommon in development. Realistically, children observe the use of many objects before first using them. Indeed, the process of learning through observation continues throughout life, as well, as we are presented with descriptions, images and demonstrations of new concepts in educational and social settings.

A viewer who is involved in the creative process, actively constructing meaning from narrative prompts, learns while associating the concepts at hand with their own neurological
patterns of experience and association. *Pocoyo* demonstrates an effective meaning construction model based on viewer participation, and this analysis offers a breakdown of the narrative elements that make up that model. The model involves the viewer in an active learning process through narrative space interaction and viewpoint alignment. The exchange of action between the MN and SV spaces pulls the viewer into the meta-narrative space, involving the viewer in internal VPs. The placement of visual anchors in the MN space involves the viewer in actively imagining the space through the mapping of real-world concepts onto it. Viewpoint alignment through camera and narrative cues guides the viewer through interactions with the narrator and characters that place the viewer in an active learning position. Basic, familiar frames are invoked as inputs informing blends, and blends are tested through usage-based application to ensure the concept is contextualized.

More complex meaning construction processes, such as perspective shifts, expand the viewer’s associative abilities and demonstrate that the viewer inhabits a limited perspective, contributing to viewer self-awareness as a situated body. As the camera pulls the viewer VP into alignment with other VPs, it expands the viewer’s capacity to understand perspective as a product of situation. The example of Elly’s head temporarily resembling a mountain exposes the relationship between Elly and a mountain in a particular context, not shifting the viewer’s perspective from one to the other but tying both together. It takes the viewer through the process of associating Elly and the mountain and determining how they are related. The initial shot of the mountain is examined for evidence of what it could be conceptually connected to, leading the viewer through the process of analyzing frames associatively while identifying them as they are presented. Perspective exercises expand our understanding of how our bodies relate to space—an
important element of early development, as a child is beginning to work out of a broader frame base.

Ideally, this case study will inform future research into learning through virtual experience—how it neurologically occurs, what effect virtual experience has on our minds and memories, and how physicality fits into it. This model demonstrates the methods of meaning construction this show employs and the learning techniques it uses. It would be complemented by a scientific study of target viewers’ cognitive activity as they participate in the meaning construction process. Coupled with other studies of cognition and effective meaning construction techniques in various media, this study could contribute to our understanding of how we absorb and share knowledge, and how we foster meaningful connections to information and its sources.
FOOTNOTES

1. I refer to the real world throughout this study, but I do not intend to make claims about the nature of reality. Rather, I use the terms “real world” and “reality” only to refer to the viewer’s physical surroundings as separate from the virtual space of *Pocoyo*. 
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