

Exploring the Role of Edutainment through Sitcoms Inside Language Classrooms

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"Language is a city to the building of which every human has brought a stone"

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

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Abstract

Language is the primary source of communication through which we share our thoughts and ideas with others whereas on the other hand, it separates us from animals and makes us human beings. The English language is essential to the field of education because it is a primary language of press, in the research field and science. Language being global and to adapt to the present scenario in teaching language may seem quiet complex. Nevertheless, to prop interest and to simplify complications, situational comedies act as a medium to enrich language through not only words but expressions. This paper establishes views on teaching a language through the means of situational comedies, having implemented the cultural theory of schema where the schema is a generalized description or a conceptual system for understanding knowledge how it is represented and how it is used.

Keywords: communication, situational comedy, schema theory.

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English as a Global Language

English has become an international commodity, like oil and microchip. Without petrol and computers, the world will come to a halt; the English language has made the world a 'global village' by giving it a global language for communication. Salman Rushdie, the renowned novelist, says that 'The English language ceased to be the sole possession of the English some time ago' and it 'grows from many roots'. The colonial education was deep-rooted by Charles Grant, William Bentinck and Thomas Macaulay. The teaching of English in India during the British period was classical and humanistic. The enlightened natives made use of English education and their command of English starting from Swami Vivekananda, who presented India and its spiritualism to the outside world. The main objective of liberal education is associated with the shaping of a gentleman, the moulding of character, the development of aesthetic sense and the cultivation of ethical thinking.

Three Circles Model

English around the world is seen as the language of business, global media and global economy. It is the language of the media and new media were as the official language for aerial and maritime communications. English language has not only become a global phenomenon but has a family of its own with all kinds of varieties.

An Indian linguist Braj Kachru classifies the Englishes in terms of three circles. It is a paradigm shift from English to Englishes not only native speakers contribute to a language but the effect of local languages and cultures on English and multiple literary canons.

The 'inner circle' refers to the traditional bases of English where it is used as the first language; the 'outer circle' shows the earlier phases of the spread of English where the language is used as an important second language and 'expanding circle' involves the countries and areas where English is recognized as an essential language for trade or international communication. Arguments given above shows that English has become a significant tool for mobility, social and economic success in the present-day world. As Marnie Holborow says, 'the language of capitalism at the turn of the twenty-first century is English (The Politics of English 1999 – Sage Publications, London).

English Language learning is a need of an hour

Every country has its national language, and a variety of local languages are spoken and understood by its people in different regions. Over time, the English language is essential for communication where people from different countries usually use English as a common language to get a touch on an international level.

Higher education role is to produce students who are prepared for the workforce. Education should provide its learner's skill to strike a balance between academic and practical experience. To relate and express their experience, knowledge and academic credentials, graduates need to possess communicating in English as their primary skill. Communication skills comprise receptive skills and productive skills. This research paper concentrates on listening and speaking skills through sitcoms in language classrooms to develop the student's fluency and their pronunciation through listening. These two skills help learners to comprehend and produce spoken language for proper and effective interpersonal communication. Through receptive skill, the learner receives the language and decodes the meaning to understand the message.

Speaking Skill

Speaking is an act of making oral sounds by expressing one's thoughts and feelings in spoken

language. The skill allows the speaker to convey meaning their message in a passionate, thoughtful and convincing manner. Speaking skills also help to assure that one won't be misunderstood by those who are listening. Good speaking skill is the act of generating words that are understood by listeners. To improve speaking skills, the speaker should know the audience, tailor their speech to meet their needs. A speaker should be an active and dynamic participant by listening.

Listening Skill

Listening skill is a receptive skill which helps the student to analyze sounds, organize them into recognizable patterns, interpreting the patterns and understanding the message by inferring the meaning. Many of the problems we experience with people in our daily lives are primarily attributable to ineffective listening. In active listening, meaning and evaluation of messages must take place before a listener can respond to a speaker.

Schema Theory

Schema theory states that all knowledge is organised into small units, and education or schemata is stored information. A schema then is a generalised description or a conceptual system for the understanding how it is represented and how it is used. This theory will affect the information of the text, affecting comprehension but also continued to change as new data is received.

Cultural Schema Theory

Cultural Schema Theory is to understand members of other cultures and add new data to previously available categories. Social interaction is cognitive structures that contain knowledge in a person's cultural environment. Schemas are generalized collections of knowledge of past experiences that are organized into related knowledge groups. This theory proposes that when we interact with members of the same culture in certain situations many times or talk cultures, schemas are created and stored in our brain.

Language learning through Sitcoms

The sitcom is a situational comedy, a genre of comedy that features characters sharing the same common environment such as a home or workplace,

with humorous dialogue. Besides the source of humour, sitcoms are mirrors of society. Therefore sitcoms are set in the present, not in the past. These programs originated in radio, but nowadays sitcoms are found mostly on television. Sitcoms provide us with authentic English where “sit” refers situations that are universal. Depending on the situations these references might portray regional differences throughout the family issues, religion, race and ethnicity, gender issues, social issues and politics. Students inside the classroom will be surprised by aspects of British culture through watching sitcoms and by creating a positive classroom atmosphere. A large part of communication is non-verbal, which develops us to see gestures and facial expressions and helps students grasp the meaning of the words spoken and also the underlying insinuations.

Creators of sitcoms suppose that the sitcom relates to its audience, in other words, that the characters represent and resemble the audience (Berman). Hence, there are various sitcoms which are suitable for different age groups from children through teenagers to adults. Up to date, sitcoms deal with social change and modern social themes such as homosexuality or everyday living influenced by information, communication and high technologies. Not only do sitcoms present current social problems, but they also suggest solutions to them; they are full of advice about hot social issues. Since the sitcoms are interconnected with their audiences, it tries to socialize us, change our habits and make us better (Berman).

Sitcoms and Cultural Schema Theory

Sitcom through Cultural Schema Theory determines the students’ ability to comprehend the native speaker’s language through watching television series. Researchers obtained massive evidence showing that people’s behaviours are deeply related to what they store in their brains. Hudson (1990) demonstrated how schemas are stored in long-term memory and how they used in

the real world. The cultural schemas become more organized, abstract and compact when we interact with the members of the same culture in certain information with them for several times; cultural schemas are generated and stored in our brain. This paves the way for our better communication by choosing British sitcom series as a medium of learning a language inside the English classrooms. Usually, an episode in sitcom lasts 30 minutes, which helps students familiar with the characters and phrases. Sitcoms provide us with authentic English through native speakers in the series.

By consolidating sitcoms inside the ELT classrooms, the cultural schema of the students helps to understand British culture and add new information to the prior knowledge of them. The cultural schema for social interaction is an exchange between individuals and is a building block of society. Sitcoms are full of cultural references. Depending on the situation these cultural references exhibit through schemas stored in every individual. Every British sitcom has its trademark and accent by exposing different varieties of English and makes them speak a standardised version of the language. This deepens the knowledge by developing cultural schema through sitcoms as a medium to improve the student’s communication by learning more about the culture and its implications to understand better. The use of multimedia in learning English into video clips is an excellent way of improving the language and enhance culturally for better understanding.

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