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English TV Series: A Revolutionary Tool to improve Speaking Skills

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Abstract

As India ushers into the era of Digital India, the easy access to technology has changed the scene of entire education system. However, the classroom practices to teach English are yet to evolve. On the other hand, with the advancement of technology and India marking its presence in almost all the domains globally, the ability to communicate in English is a prerequisite to succeed in any field. But most of the students, especially in Gujarat, still cannot hold a conversation in English even after studying English as a part of their curriculum throughout schooling. This paper aims to throw light on the possible pedagogical revolution with the least explored and implemented tool that is English TV Series. It explores the immense potential of English TV Series as a method to improve speaking skills of students. Moreover, this makes learning English more interesting and organic.

Keywords: Classroom practices, English TV Series, Organic, Speaking skills.

English, recognized as a global language, is not 'foreign' to India anymore. From business transaction documents to the government issued license documents are all printed in English. So, it is safe to state that English is the commonly accepted language for official communication in all domains. To add to that, even in the socio-cultural milieu, the ability to speak English holds utmost significance these days. However, there is still a prodigious class of the educated people in India who cannot talk in English. The students in Gujarat especially feel anxiety over English while appearing for a job interview or while attending a social gathering. Hence, some innovative techniques have to be employed which focus on the actual discourse in English language.

With the booming entertainment industry across the world, TV is no longer just an 'idiot box'. The youth of India occupy the largest consumer base

in that aspect. So, teaching English through TV Series will appeal to them instantly and it will lead to a more engaging language class. Moreover, English TV series have native characters communicating in their cultural set-up which provides real-life exposure to the language actually spoken. There are a lot of interesting English TV series pertaining to various genres. But the most widely accepted genre to teach English is sitcom (situational comedy).

The fundamental reason to choose a sitcom to teach English is because it is funny. The students tend to focus more on what they enjoy watching, resulting into a better attention span in the classroom. Moreover, sitcoms are relaxing and refreshing. As Sherman claims,

"What makes people laugh often has to do with 'in-knowledge', with making quick connections and coming close to sensitive issues. We laugh because are in the know when a brief cultural

reference taps a pool of knowledge. We laugh when we suddenly see the hidden implications and can close the gap that the actors have set up for us.....or when we see incongruities created by juxtaposition."

Ultimately, laughter indicates participation and because the sitcom is a social event, the audience perceptions are quick, shared and simultaneous.

However, the teacher must keep in mind that not all the sitcoms or episodes are appropriate for the classroom. So the editing of scenes and selection of particular episodes should be done well in advance. Moreover, a brief introduction of the plot of the sitcom and the central characters also helps prepare students for what they are about to view. If time permits, the teacher can also undertake some activities based on the TV Series episode shown on a particular day. Moreover, the most important part of this entire exercise is to focus on enhancing the listening skills of the students. So the TV Series episode should be played at least twice: once without the captions and once with the captions. Thus, students will be able to comprehend the dialogues and script better. This practice will also increase their vocabulary and will motivate them to use the same in their communication.

Additionally, when students get to practice listening skills in this manner, they will try to adopt and imitate what the TV characters speak in their own day to day conversations. This will hone their speaking skills automatically. For example, instead of learning idioms and phrases in isolation, here they will have the context in which they are used. Hence, it is easier for them to remember it for a longer period of time and to reproduce it with its proper understanding. Not only that, students can also work on the intonation and other aspects of language based on this exposure to TV series. To sum up, English TV series have immense potential to be an indispensable tool for improving speaking skills.

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