

Impact of TV Shows on English Language Acquisition



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Abstract: *The present study deals with the impact of TV shows and sitcoms in one's English language proficiency. The objective of this study is to find out the different types of English TV shows that people enjoy watching and how they have had an impact on their English language. The researcher has tried to look for the various ways in which people think that their communication has improved. A survey was conducted among the undergraduate students belonging to a technical institution in Vellore district, Tamil Nadu. Based on the results of the survey, findings and conclusions have been arrived at. The survey results show that the television shows have a remarkable impact on one's language acquisition.*

Keywords: Language Acquisition, Sitcoms, TV Shows.

I. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, television series and sitcoms are becoming as watched as feature films, with a vast array to choose from. People have become engrossed in episode after episode of plots and characters. In our country the old TV shows have the same generic story line with a hero and a heroine but the introduction of English TV shows has grabbed the attention of the population and it has also changed the scenario and caused Indian producers to make better content. With the ever-increasing popularity of TV series over films, the effect caused by these shows has increased substantially. English is largely viewed as a language of the modern, educated professionals. Watching English TV shows is one of the best ways to improve both the listening and the speaking skills. The conversations in TV series show how native-English

speakers communicate verbally with one another in real life, so the English you learn from these conversations is authentic. Initially, it can be challenging to understand but in the long run one can pick up the nuances of this foreign language and improve language proficiency. Sitcoms are easier to understand compared to TV shows, so watching them could be more preferable to improve one's language.

II. NEED FOR THE STUDY

Language plays a vital role in everyone's day-to-day life. Developing language skills enhances effective communication. Effective communication skills are fundamental to be successful in many aspects of life. Many jobs require effective communication skills and people with good communication skills usually enjoy better interpersonal relationships with friends and family. Communication is a key interpersonal skill, and improving it assures many benefits. Today schools and colleges focus more on quantitative teaching rather than qualitative teaching. They teach the language skills required to get through the prescribed subject and fail to fulfil the ultimate goal of acquisition of language. Skills like Listening and Speaking are not at all given importance as concentration is more on Reading and Writing. This lapse can be compensated by allowing the learners to watch TV shows and sitcoms. Unlike movies, TV shows are longer and people get involved with good characters. A well-written character is someone that people want to see, grow and develop and enjoy returning to. Continuous watching deepens the audience's understanding of the relationship with the characters. There is also the shared experience factor and the water cooler moment. TV gives the audience something to discuss together in the workplaces/colleges/schools. Questions like 'Who will win this reality TV show?' or 'What will happen to this character?' form the backbone of conversations.

III. METHODOLOGY

A survey was conducted among the undergraduate students belonging to a private engineering institution in Vellore. Engineering students belonging to the age group of 17 to 22 were selected for the survey. Primary data were collected through survey using questionnaire. A set of questions pertaining to the research was prepared and circulated among the respondents through various modes like E-mail, WhatsApp, Instagram and Facebook. Responses were collected from 106 respondents.

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The institution selected for the study consists of students across the country which is not a common factor in all other institutions in Vellore or in any other institution in Tamil Nadu. This can be considered as one of the limitations of the study. If the same study is done in any other institution, the results may vary. This study cannot be introduced to beginners or primary school children as it involves a lot of comprehension and critical thinking to understand the concept.

IV. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Several studies have already been made on using television shows in an L2 classroom. Guillory (1998), Taylor (2005) and Etemadi (2012) have investigated the comprehension level of the L2 learners. These authors used either a video material designed for this purpose or a documentary running to five to seven minutes. Sitcoms have been used by the researchers (Sun Quan, 2016, Mayer, 1997) for developing the pronunciation, intonation and vocabulary aspects among the ESL learners. The investigation made by Zarei A A & Rashvand Z (2011) and Kruger J-L, Hefer E, Matthew G (2013) shows that subtitles in films and other audio-visual materials help the learners of English language to acquire language skills. Joe Hambrook, in his article *BBC English by Television (on Secondment to Children's Television Workshop)*, published in the book *The Use of Media in English Language Teaching* (1979) opines that television materials have been used for language learning purposes since 1930. However, he advocates in his article that the material has to be selected, graded and produced depending on the requirements. The principal objective of the present study is entirely different from what has been done so far. This study aims at introducing TV shows and sitcoms to the young learners in order to give them an English air in the Indian atmosphere by encouraging them to communicate with their peers and colleagues in English.

V. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In terms of the language spoken by the respondents, it is observed that they are using either of the following languages as their first language: Hindi, Telugu, Malayalam, Bengali, Tamil, Kannada, Marathi, English and a few other languages. Out of these 30% of people are using Hindi as their first language or mother tongue. More than 95% of respondents who belong to the age group of 17 to 22 watch TV shows and when asked about the number of TV shows they have watched, nearly 57% of people responded that they had watched 10 or more TV shows. Those who have watched more than three or four TV shows agree that they are able to realise that their language skills are gradually improving. Almost 35% of students have agreed that they watch these shows at least two hours a day and another 30% of students have responded that they watch the shows one hour a day. When there was a question about the choice of the programme, whether they prefer watching TV shows or a bunch of random YouTube videos, more than 63% responded that they prefer TV shows while the remaining respondents (nearly 37%) prefer to watch a bunch of random YouTube videos. TV shows have varied genres like Action, Thriller, Law, Crime, Romance, Comedy, Romantic Comedy,

Suspense, Politics, Science, Suspense, Anime and many others that are mentioned in a poll. They have become so varied that there is something for anyone to enjoy. But a few genres are always more popular than their counterparts. The top genres include: Suspense/Thriller (56.6%), Science Fiction/Crime (55.7%), Detective/Suspense (50%), Comedy/Fantasy (45.3%) and Anime (34.9%). When people are asked about the improvement in their fluency level before and after watching the TV shows, 56% of the respondents feel that their fluency has improved whereas the remaining 44% say that they are not sure about it as they are already fluent in the target language. On the other hand, when they are asked about the usefulness of the shows, 88% are happy to say that there is an overall development in acquiring grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, intonation and listening. 91% of the respondents agree that they have learnt contracted forms or expressions for a lengthy word or phrase by watching these TV shows. When there is a specific question about the development of the language skills, surprisingly, 67% of the respondents say that they have improved their speaking skill whereas improvement level for listening is 63%, vocabulary 61% and grammar 37%.

TV is a very interesting medium where ideas are brought to life. Good shows drag the audience into the show's world and make them care for the characters. Some shows even end up being favourite ones and they are remembered forever. As such, the favourite characters tend to have a good impact on the audience and they pick up a few signature phrases from them. These newly-learned phrases are incorporated into one's day-to-day communication consciously or unconsciously. People even tend to use these phrases and expressions as their WhatsApp status. While investigated about the everyday use of phrases and catchy expressions acquired from the TV shows, 85% of respondents agree that they use TV references in their daily lives. At the same time more than 81% of respondents have said that they interact with people who watch similar TV shows though they are unknown to them. This statement again proves that they are confident of communicating with different kinds of people. Given below are some of the expressions which they feel catchy and they are picked up from the TV shows: No more half measures, Got dreams worth more than sleep, Binge, I'm not in danger, I am the danger, Antagonist, Void in my chest, Overwhelming power, When there's a gun pointed at your head, you have 147 different ways to counter, How you doing!, Bazinga, Entourage, That is an oopsie!, Winter is coming! You better take that back and It is a delicacy at any age.

The most common way of doing things is by imitation. When someone recommends to people to do something, they are ready to follow it instead of taking their own decisions. 96% of respondents say that they recommend to others to watch a show if they feel that it is worth watching. People who watch many shows have few favourites which they tend to watch on and on. These might excite them or make them feel comfortable. Given here are some of the favourite shows of the respondents: *Breaking Bad*, *Rick and Morty*, *Sherlock*, *Air Crash Investigation*,

The Originals, Suits, Game of Thrones, Narcos, The Flash, Supernatural, Death Note, Naruto, 13 Reasons Why, Brooklyn 99, Young Sheldon, Vampire diaries, How I met your mother, World of dance, Lucifer, Stranger things, Arrow, Dexter, Hunter X Hunter, Silicon valley and F.R.I.E.N.D.S.

VI. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Watching TV shows/sitcoms is normally a way to pass time either alone or with others. Unknowingly, this helps us learn new words, phrases or sentences. Watching them with subtitles improves the quality of understanding. From the present study on The Impact of TV Shows on English Language Acquisition, the following findings are put forth:

1. Majority of the respondents prefer to watch TV shows rather than YouTube or other Audio-visual sites.
2. On an average, two hours a day are spent on watching TV shows.
3. A large number of the respondents improved their language skills and gained fluency only after watching the shows.
4. The tendency to interact with people has improved as they start discussing the TV shows initially.
5. The viewers are able to pick up a few words, phrases and expressions from the shows and use them in their everyday language.
6. Genres like Thriller, Crime, Detective, Comedy, Fantasy and Anime are watched more than the rest of the dramas.

VII. SUGGESTIONS

In order to strengthen the learning possibilities among the student community, the following suggestions can be considered:

1. Since the interest of the student is more on the ungraded TV shows and online audio visuals than the graded prescribed materials, teachers can think of creating worksheets and assigning tasks based on any of the popular TV shows.
2. As the time spent on watching those TV shows is reasonably high, instructional plans are to be arrived at for using it effectively for learning purposes.
3. There should be a space in the curriculum for teacher autonomy so that he can design his own instructional materials depending on the level and interests of the learners.
4. Tasks related to enacting a scene from the show or role play can be assigned to students as a follow-up activity, thereby giving them an opportunity to use the acquired vocabulary.

VIII. CONCLUSION

It is observed from the study that there is a huge impact of TV shows on one's English language proficiency. They not only serve entertainment purposes but also show a steady learning curve. People with varied interests communicate with one another as these shows act as a spark in their conversations. They also have a common feel that the way they communicate in English has become better but they might have to be slightly cautious about what they pick up and watch as everything around is not good.

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