

Using Situation Comedy (Sitcom) to Enrich Learners' Vocabulary

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Introduction

In a college course of reading and vocabulary I used the TV sitcom show, *Everybody Loves Raymond*, to build up my students' vocabulary. The comedy creates an intriguing and relaxing learning environment in which the students learn not just English words but also culture, humor and body language. Because the vocabulary activity was an innovation in this kind of course, I surveyed the students after using it on the first day of the class. Almost all the students in the class agreed that the activity was an effective way to develop their vocabulary and should be applied for the rest of the semester.

Setting

The two hour college course was conducted in a large computerized classroom. In the front of the classroom is the teacher's computer which is connected to the rest of the computers. The software installed in the main computer allows the teacher to control and monitor the students' computers so that they can engage in the same activity all together.

Material

Everybody Loves Raymond is a popular American sitcom TV show which is about how Raymond, a sportswriter, deals with the conflicts from his marriage and families. Throughout the semester, fifteen episodes from the first season of the show were used. The students watched one episode of the show for about 22 minutes during the second hour of the class each week.

Procedure of the Vocabulary Activity

Step 1: Watch the Sitcom

To start the activity, the teacher plays the DVD with English subtitles and allows students to watch the show on their own computer screens. While watching the DVD, each of the students is required to jot down at least three English words or phrases that they want to learn from the show. Therefore, while some students may pick out all the vocabulary, others may want to watch the show more relaxingly and pick up just three new words.

Step 2: List the Vocabulary

After watching the DVD, the students are asked to volunteer to list on the board the vocabulary words they picked from the show. To facilitate this, the teacher divides the students into halves (left and right) and draws two vertical lines to divide the board into three portions (left, middle and right). The students who sit on the left-hand side of the classroom write their vocabulary on the left portion of the board whereas those at the right write theirs on the right. The middle portion of the board is for the teacher to select vocabulary from the students' for a follow-up open discussion.

Step 3: Discuss the Vocabulary

The teacher then chooses five words from the left side of the board and the other five from the right side. Sometimes, the

teacher lets each side choose some of the vocabulary. These ten vocabulary words will then be discussed as a whole class according to their meanings in the context of the situation comedy. These vocabulary words will be tested in both the mid-term and final examinations.

Conclusion

This sitcom provided students with a good source of vocabulary and the students learned more than 30 vocabulary words from each episode. There are many good words that the students are not exposed to in textbooks such as "lollipop", "jumble", and "unanimous". This sitcom activity can help the students to become more active in language learning and may lead to the development of learner autonomy (see Holec, 1981; Boud, 1988; Little, 1991; Wenden, 1991; Dam, 1995; Benson, 2001; Chiu, 2006).

References

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Appendix

Sample Vocabulary Test

Please fill in the most appropriate item from the list of vocabulary below.

a. convert; b. jumbled; c. standard deviation; d. petit four; e. reciprocation

- () 1. I like to eat _____ because it is so delicious.
- () 2. George's IQ is one _____ higher than Mary's.
- () 3. The results of the IQ test was _____, and Mary is the smarter one.
- () 4. A woman wants to be nurturing but if there is no _____ from men, it can lead to resentment.
- () 5. Why do people who _____ try to drag everyone along with them?

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