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PAPER

Movies and Television Shows as Effective Tools for Teaching and Learning English: Open Educational Resources

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One of the specifics of language learning, as opposed to mechanics, biology or literature is that the learning objectives are not content based only, but rather the vehicle that carries the content: a capacity to use the language in question is the goal. To achieve this, language learning can build upon diversified contents as the 'content based language learning' approach shows. This approach has now been used for over thirty years.

Use of Open Educational Resources (OER) is a result of multi-faceted studies in the arena of teaching and learning English. UNESCO's 2011 definition of OER is that "...OER materials used to support education that may be freely accessed, reused, modified, and shared." OER involves using movies and television shows as effective tools for teaching and learning English, if used strategically. Watching TV in foreign/second languages improves listening skills, reading skills (by reading subtitles), and is an effective way to absorb foreign culture, along with the vocabulary. This also helps to reduce anxiety as the students are familiar with the realistic contexts rather than text book based activities.

A survey was conducted among fifty first year students enrolled for the Bachelor of Arts in English Language and Literature Studies at the University of Kelaniya, to identify their frequency of watching movies and TV series. Results of a questionnaire and structured interviews (with a subgroup of 15 lecturers of ELTU) provided valuable insights of how various TV shows and movies can be used to develop different components in English language teaching and learning. The survey revealed that the undergraduates are more interested in watching a part of a movie or an episode of a TV series than any other OER activity during the lecture, and even at home, if they are given guidelines. Information gathered from the lecturers revealed different paths to enhance the material and utilize in the teaching process. The findings of this survey will help improve the standards of the curricula of English language teaching and will motivate the students in experimenting with OER.