

Enhancing L2 Learning Through Web Series in the TBLT Classroom: Harnessing the OTT Binge-Watching Trend

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Abstract

The study suggests conceptual and theoretical frameworks for designing lesson plans for Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) classroom. Further to strategise and offer perspectives to harness the Over-the-Top (OTT) trend of binge-watching Web Series (WS) in the language classroom by using it as an edutainment to facilitate Second Language (L2) learning and acquisition. The TBLT approach is a learner-centred approach, hence, it complements the use of Web Series content as a digital audio-visual text to design tasks to support language learners.

Incorporating Web Series in the TBLT language classroom has shown a progressive improvement in second language (L2) acquisition of tertiary learners, and enhanced their speaking skills, imparting knowledge on cultural awareness and intercultural language transactions. The research aims to contribute a model TBLT lesson plan framework to integrate Web Series in L2 language classroom to facilitate learning, and to use Web Series as an edutainment. Facilitators could design task-based lesson plan for language classroom by using the features of an OTT platforms to facilitate L2 acquisition in TBLT classroom.

Keywords: Web Series (WS), acquisition, edutainment, over-the-top (OTT), TBLT

Introduction

The digital revolution has had a significant impact on people's lifestyles over the past decades, especially after the industrial revolution. Over-the-

Top (OTT) platforms have become a commodity rather than a luxury due to the huge demand for online streaming content and internationalisation. In India, OTT platforms have grown significantly over the past decade, with an increasing number of consumers. OTT players like Hotstar and Jio Cinema have expanded their market share, while global players like Netflix and Amazon Prime have also expanded their market share in India (Pand et al., 2021). This concept has revolutionised the way people view content, leading to an increase in subscriptions and changing traditional television viewing habits. OTT platforms have become an indispensable part of the entertainment industry in India, catering to diverse audience preferences and providing a variety of content options.

The concept of “Binge-watching” Web Series is the practice of rapidly watching several episodes of Web Series, sometimes in one sitting or over a brief period. As streaming services and internet platforms that offer full seasons or series in one place have grown in popularity, so has this tendency. Binge-watching can involve active engagement of the learners. Learners can actively participate by taking notes, repeating words, or evaluating language, analysing grammar and thinking critically. Outside language learning, binge-watching refers to the popular cultural phenomenon of watching multiple episodes of the same Web Series.

The trend reflects changing audience habits and preferences due to the rise of streaming services and online platforms. Binge-watching has become a social phenomenon, with many learners taking to social media to share their viewing experience and discuss their favourite shows. Accidental learning of a language happens, because the learner is the subject to the real use of the language, idioms and conversation problems. The learners absorb information, vocabulary, and cultural references to learn the target language. It could help the learners to observe and learn vocabulary, and improve their critical thinking, analytical skills and cultural understanding.

Research Objectives

The study aims at the following objectives:

1. To promote L2 learning with Web Series
2. To enhance language learning through tasks designed by harnessing OTT binge-watching trend

3. To facilitate tertiary learners to access language content through the OTT platforms
4. To find the effectiveness of the Web Series integration into the L2 TBLT language classroom

Research Questions

The study aims to answer the following questions:

1. Does the task designed by integrating the binge-watching trend of Web Series enhance the learners' communication skills?
2. How to integrate the OTT Web Series in a TBLT language classroom to promote language learning of the second language tertiary learners?
3. What are the practical recommendations for facilitators to harness the trend of binge-watching Web Series as an edutainment to enhance language learning?

Review of Literature

A Web Series is a series of episodic content distributed over the internet. Web Series can be of various genres, such as drama, comedy, or reality television, and can be produced by independent creators or by major production companies. The history of the Web Series dates to the late 1990s and early 2000s when the Internet began to acquire greater popularity and accessibility. Early Web Series were often low-budget productions independently created and distributed by individuals or small production companies (Honmode, 2019). These early Web Series were often short-form and distributed on platforms such as YouTube and other video streaming sites. As the internet and streaming technology evolved, Web Series began to receive more attention and wider acceptance.

In the mid-2000s, streaming services such as Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, and Hulu began investing in and distributing Web Series. This helped to increase the production value and quality of Web Series and helped bring them to a wider audience. The Web Series helps introduce audiences to the unique concept of "anywhere, anytime," where audiences can watch and interact with programmes comfortably and through personal media. The emergence of Web Series is leading to the

creation of new content by digital media providers. The expansion of internet access in rural and urban areas has contributed significantly to the growth in viewership of Web Series on digital platforms.

Web series can be an effective way to teach a language, as they offer a more engaging and interactive way to learn. Many Web Series are also available with subtitles in their original language; this can be helpful for learners who are still in the early stages of learning the language. Watching Web Series in the target language provides authentic and useful input that exposes the learner to real-life conversations in the target language. Web Series can also provide an engaging way for learners to practise their vocabulary and grammar. By following the storylines and characters, learners can become more invested in the learning process and motivated to improve their language acquisition/learning.

Overview of the Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) Approach

Starting in the 1970s, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has become popular among researchers and teachers of foreign and foreign language acquisition. During the 1980s, “task” replaced the term “communicative activity.” “Task-based language teaching (TBLT) has become a new teaching method widely applied in language classroom (Hasan, 2014). The concept of “task” is central to task-based language teaching, which distinguishes between actual or target tasks and instructional tasks. Target tasks refer to language use in the world outside the classroom, while instructional tasks take place within the classroom (Nunan, 2004). As with content-based teaching, the task-based approach provides learners with a natural context for language use. As learners attempt to complete a task, they have many opportunities to interact with each other, as well as with the teacher and the lesson content. Such interaction is assumed to facilitate language acquisition, as learners must make efforts to understand each other and express their ideas.

TBLT is an approach to learning and teaching foreign languages that takes classroom tasks as the main teaching goal. The focus of classroom activities is the task, and language is the tool that learners use to complete that task. Task-based language teaching allows teachers to develop a variety of tasks, which can help learners become more interested in speaking lessons (Baihaqi, 2016).

Research Methodology

Quantitative research method was used to study the effectiveness of the Web Series integration to enhance language learning of the L2 tertiary learners in the TBLT language classroom. Convenient sampling was preferred for selecting the research population.

Research Population

The participants were 30 tertiary level learners of the undergraduates of the Arts and Science programmes from St. Joseph's College, Tiruchirappalli, India. The participants are diversely chosen, with different economic and educational backgrounds, but primarily active members of the OTT binge-watching groups of non-native tertiary level English learners. The demographic details are ideal for studying the effects of integrating the binge-watching trend to design tasks for the L2 TBLT classrooms, as they are more likely to be motivated and interested in Web Series.

Data Collection

Pre-test and Post-test

A pre-test and post-test were used in this study to compare learners' speaking skills before and after the test. The test was conducted twice. The first test was used to obtain the pre-test scores, and the second was used to obtain the post-test scores. Speaking skills were assessed in four categories: pronunciation, grammar, fluency, and vocabulary. The results of these tests were measured with the Common European Framework Reference (CEFR) rubrics.

Data Analyses

Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 26 was used to analyse the data collected from the learners. The means and standard deviations of the sample group's pre-test and post-test were calculated. The paired sample t-test was used for statistical analyses. The means of pre-test and post-test results were then compared, with the significance of one tail (p-value) used as a reference to determine the significant difference between the calculated means. In the pre-test and post-test, the learners described the same topics. "Explain your favourite Web Series." To ensure consistency of scores, the pre-test and post-test topics

were the same. Each learner's speaking test lasted three minutes, and the content was no less than ten sentences. Criteria such as pronunciation, grammar, fluency and vocabulary were taken into account to calculate the scores using the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

Procedure

The researcher chose one Web Series, consisting of 30 episodes based on the series rating, dialogue and content. The researcher chose easy-to-understand segments from the series based on the dialogue and content, and they were shown in class with English subtitles. The learners were asked to watch one of the episodes and prepare a review of an episode of their choice. Initially, a few learners struggled to give reviews in English. A sample movie review video clip was shown in the classroom as a warm-up task. Then, the learners were instructed to form groups with 4 or 5 members each. Each group was given a list of expressions, phrases and vocabularies to be used in the review. Each group presented a review of the episode they watched. Various scenarios and tasks were given to each group based on the episodes they watched in the upcoming classes.

Observations

The four components of speaking skills—pronunciation, grammar, fluency, and vocabulary—were assessed in the pre-test and post-test. The pre-test scores revealed learners' initial difficulty in accurate pronunciation, using vocabulary in context, often relying on basic words and often using inaccurate intonation patterns. Learners hesitated frequently, abruptly pausing between sentences, and struggled to maintain a consistent flow of speech. Learners had difficulty understanding spoken language. In the post-test observation, the learners showed significant improvement in pronunciation, fluency and confidence. The learners maintained coherence and communicated effectively. The learner develops a better understanding of language and follows conversations more easily.

Framing Lesson Plan for Designing Tasks with Web Series for the TBLT Language Classroom

Designing tasks using an episode from the Netflix Web Series will encourage them to analyse and participate actively; and promote critical

thinking in language learners as they participate in the tasks. The lesson plans and different types of tasks are designed based on the Web Series *Stranger Things*.

Suggestive Context for Sample TBLT Tasks to Utilise Web Series

1. Episode Review: Individual Task

Learners will watch an episode of *Man vs. Bee* from Amazon Prime. The Web Series is about the protagonist who is assigned to housekeeping. He struggles to chase a bee which leads to a series of hilarious incidents. A facilitator must provide exposure by displaying the audio-visual content to learners for review tasks. Learners will actively participate. As the learner describes the series of events from the episode, he/she will try their best to narrate the incidents. The facilitator must provide clarity through formative assessment soon after the learner's presentation.

2. Dubbing: Paired Task

The facilitator will ask the learners to imagine themselves as voice artists and directors for a dubbed version of the *Stranger Things* Web Series from the Netflix OTT platform in their target language. The learners can choose the scene of Mike and Eleven meeting, conversation between Joyce and Hopper about Will's disappearance, and the encounter Nancy and Jonathan have with the Demogorgon. The learners will perform a live dubbing along with a partner for a scene from an episode; and by paying attention to the characters' emotions, tone, and language use without subtitles and audio. Learners will experiment with different accents or dialects.

3. Role Play: Group Task

The facilitator will give a role play task on the Web Series *Money Heist* from Netflix. The learners will watch the scene and understand the characters. They would work as a team to accomplish the task. A facilitator may ask the team to hide an object or a thing and provide hints for the opponent team to retrieve the hidden object, and vice versa.

Results

The scores of the pre-test and post-test were fed into the SPSS software and the paired sample t-test tool was selected to analyse the collected data.

Table 1. *Paired Samples Statistics of the Pre-test and Post-test Scores Using SPSS*

Paired Samples Statistics					
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pre-test	5.97	30	1.159	.212
	Post-test	7.57	30	1.040	.190

Table 2. *A Report of the Paired Samples Test of the Pre-test and Post-test Scores Using SPSS*

Paired Differences of Sample Tests								
	Mean	Std. Devia- tion	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2 Tailed)
				Lower	Upper			
Pair 1 Pre-test- Post-test	-1.600	.498	.091	-1.786	-1.414	-17.588	29	0.000

Findings

The mean score of the learners’ pre-test speaking skills was 5.97, with a Standard Deviation (SD) of 1.159, as shown in Table 1. The mean score in the post-test was 7.57, with a standard deviation of 1.040. The post-test SD was less than the pre-test SD, indicating that the learners’ post-test scores were closer to the mean. The p-value was less than 0.05. This meant that the learners’ speaking skills had improved as a result of the Tasks on Web Series, and the difference between pre-test and post-test scores was statistically significant.

Guidelines for Teaching English with Web Series in the L2 TBLT Language Classroom

Here are a few guidelines for teaching English with Web Series:

1. Choose a Web Series appropriate to the tertiary learner’s English level.
2. Use Web Series to introduce new vocabulary and grammar structures. For example, if a character uses a particular verb tense,

- explain it to the learners and ask them to practise using it in their own sentences.
3. Encourage learners to watch episodes of Web Series in their free time and ask them to complete related tasks or discussions in class. This will help them practise their listening comprehension and speaking skills.
 4. Use Web Series as a reference for other tasks such as role-playing, debating, or writing.
 5. Encourage learners to watch episodes with subtitles in English, as this will help them understand the spelling of vocabulary and to practise dialogues better; and improve their reading skills.
 6. It is important to note that the use of Web Series in the classroom should be part of a comprehensive digital material to assist language learning.
 7. Give specific audio-visual clips from the episodes for learning goals such as identifying a theme or a language structure.
 8. Encourage discussion about the episode to foster critical thinking and personal connections to the content.
 9. Develop creative tasks such as role plays, debates, and writing prompts based on the series to reinforce language skills.
 10. Provide constructive feedback during task cycles and encourage the tertiary learners to take self-assessment.
 11. Use online resources on Web Series from other platforms for captions, discussion forums, and supplemental materials to enhance language learning.
 12. Encourage the use of subtitles and audio features in the target language to help them to engage in self-paced exposure, and to gradually rewind and fast-forward content.
 13. Allow learners to express opinions, relate personal experiences, and analyse character motivations.

Table 3. *Model TBLT Lesson Plan Framework for Web Series Integration*

Lesson Plan Framework for Integrating Web Series in TBLT Language Classroom	Task Lesson Plan No: TL 00
<p align="center">Task Facilitator and Affiliation Details</p> <p>Course Facilitator: Mrs. I. Anto Arockiya Anita Designation: Research Scholar (PhD) Institution: St. Joseph's College (Autonomous), Tiruchirappalli-620 002. Affiliation: Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu, India-621 024.</p>	
<p align="center">TBLT Workspace</p> <p>Task Title: Skill(s) Focussed: ____ Skill(s); Task Duration: ____hour(s) / day(s); ____week(s). Language Focus: Task Focus: Language focussed (Meaning) / Form focussed (Grammar) Task Type: Task Mode: Online / Offline ; Task Category: Individual / Paired / Group Task Level: Slow / Moderate / Advanced ; Sample Population: ____ (Tertiary L2 Learners)</p>	
<p>Task Objective is to _____</p>	
<p align="center">Web Series Workspace</p> <p>Title: Season: 00 ; Episode: 00 ; OTT Platform: _____. Play Timing-From: 00/00/00 - Till: 00/00/00 (e.g: HH/MM/SS) ICT Tools and Features Checklist Audio: Enabled / Not Enabled; Video: Enabled / Not Enabled; Subtitle: Enabled / Not Enabled</p>	
<p align="center">Learner Preparatory Assignment (Prior to Participation in the Task)</p> <p>Web Series to Watch: Season: 00 ; Episode: 00 ; Play Timing-From: 00/00/00 - Till: 00/00/00 Focus on: Dialogue Exchange between Characters Prep-Duration: ____ Hour(s) / Day(s) / Week(s) / Month(s).</p>	
<p align="center">Pre-Task Duration: ____ min.</p>	<p align="center">Facilitator Role:</p>
<p align="center">Main Task Cycle: ____ . Duration: ____ min.</p>	<p align="center">Learner Role:</p>
<p align="center">Assessment Formative / Summative</p>	<p align="center">Task Stage / Plan Stage / Report Stage: Post-Task Instruction</p>
<p align="center">Feedback Session Facilitator / Learner Duration: ____ min.</p>	<p align="center">Assessment Scale:</p>

Developing Lesson Plan Framework to Integrate Web Series as an Edutainment in TBLT Classroom

The structure of the lesson plan for the integration of the web series as the Edutainment tool in the language education class based on the task (TBLT) was developed by the facilitator. The framework describes key elements such as task title, skill orientation, duration, language orientation, and task type, and can be adapted for learners at different levels, especially advanced L2 Learners. It includes a preparatory assignment that requires learners to watch specific segments of the web series, with emphasis on dialogue exchanges to improve language skills. The framework also details the use of ICT tools with audio, video and subtitle options. It also covers the cycle of pre-tasks and core tasks, types of assessment (formative and summative), and feedback sessions to evaluate learners' participation and understanding. This structured approach aims to create an interactive and meaningful language learning experience using modern media.

Conclusion

Integrating Web Series in education meets several goals in language teaching. A creative and resourceful teacher can produce significant results not only in developing learners' language skills but also in fostering higher level critical thinking skills. Accordingly, careful selection of Web Series along with some learner-friendly tasks should be included in the language curriculum.

The proposed course structure aims to balance the use of web sequences with intended learning objectives and incorporate a set of tasks that enable learners to engage with the material individually. By using a series of websites as sources of authentic language input and providing opportunities for learners to use language in appropriate contexts, facilitators can create more engaging and effective learning experiences.

The scope for further research is found in the context of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), that can help learners develop the language skills necessary for their specific career needs. Integrating Web Series as an edutainment into the TBLT classroom is a promising combination that deserves to be further explored and implemented in the field of language teaching.

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