



Making plurilingual/pluricultural education accessible. Bremen 2022,

Learning culture with TV: *Superstore* and the downside of the American dream

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Introduction

- ▶ Workshop for university students: results to be published soon
- ▶ Why? EFL textbooks cultural content falls short
- ▶ TV, specifically sitcoms
- ▶ US and the world: love and hate relationship
- ▶ Values underlie behaviors
- ▶ 3-4 hours: for you, abridged version and no required reading

Workshop structure

- ▶ Warm-up
- ▶ Pre-watching activities: PPT and required reading
- ▶ While-watching activities: comprehension questions
- ▶ Post-watching activities: discussion and debriefing
- ▶ Assessment



“We don’t see things as they are;
we see them as we are”

Annais Nin



What American behaviors
or aspects of American
society are more difficult
to understand from your
own cultural perspective?

External-internal culture

- ▶ Hall: hidden dimension of culture iceberg analogy (1976)
 - External culture: behaviors → easily changed
 - Internal culture: beliefs and values → subconscious and difficult to change

An iceberg floating in water, used as a metaphor for the relationship between visible behaviors and hidden internal states. The tip of the iceberg is above the water line, while the much larger part is submerged. The image is overlaid with a grid of horizontal bands in shades of blue and purple. The text labels are placed within these bands: 'BEHAVIORS' is in the top blue band, 'BELIEFS' is in the middle purple band, and 'VALUES' and 'THOUGHT PATTERNS' are in the bottom purple band. A red vertical bar is located in the top right corner of the overall image.

BEHAVIORS

BELIEFS

VALUES

THOUGHT PATTERNS

TV: CC development

- ▶ Motivating instrument in education
- ▶ Area of FLT, research focuses on using TV shows for the development of linguistic competence
- ▶ Films and TV shows expose learners to “authentic” dialogues or interactions (Kaiser, 2011, p. 233).
- ▶ “The language is ungraded and un-simplified and is spoken at a normal pace and in typical accents” (Yang & Fleming, 2013, p. 299).

TV: IC development

- ▶ TV provides a window into culture (Yang & Fleming, 2013).
- ▶ Area of FL, research on developing IC, promoting culture learning, enhancing cultural awareness and assessing cultural competence.
- ▶ Fosters reflection on students' own culture → transcend ethnocentrism

Sitcoms as TV Genre

- ▶ As TV genre: transition from the radio
- ▶ Comic tone: clash between social change and tradition
- ▶ Typical features: half hour, comic basis and “problem of the week” → solved following commonly accepted moral values that lead to didactic conclusions
- ▶ Characteristics standardized in the 1950's but new subgenres reject moral conventions

Sitcoms as TV Genre

PRODUCTION	22' Live studio audience Single stage and several fixed sets Laugh track Multi-camera set up	Around 25 or 30' - X X X More natural and realistic (documentary)
NARRATIVE STRUCTURE	Main plot and up to 3 sub-plots Two-part episodes with cliffhanger Episodic Single problem-resolution	Deviation from traditional narrative Inclusion of other genres Narrators
CONTENT	Traditional Everyday situations Stereotypical characters	More varied and progressive
HUMOUR	Classic Running gags Catchphrases Visual gags	X X Irony and subtext More Subjective

Criteria for sitcom selection

- ▶ Why?:

- ▶ Short running time

- ▶ Closed nature of episodes

- ▶ Criteria for IC development:

- ▶ Interest

- ▶ Stereotype awareness

- ▶ Need for context

- ▶ Topic and specialization level

- ▶ Language appropriateness



Larrea-Espinar, A. & Raigón-Rodríguez, A. (2019). Sitcoms as a tool for cultural learning in the EFL classroom. *Pixel-Bit. Revista de Medios y Educación*, 56, 33-50. <https://doi.org/10.12795/pixelbit.2019.i56.02>

American values system

RIGHTS

RESPONSIBILITIES

Individual
freedom



Self-Reliance

Equality of
opportunity



Competition

Material
wealth




Hard work

Datesman, M.K., Crandall, J., & Kearny, E.N. (2014). *American ways: An introduction to American culture*. Pearson Education.


Superstore



Superstore
Season 1 Episode 11 "Labor"



A part of that mythology is the American Dream, a Shangri-La rooted in the psyche of the immigrants, who came to this land looking for individual freedom, opportunity and wealth. Despite the fact that many Americans still believe that it is possible to go from rags to riches, many authors claim that this dream is dead, as equality of opportunity does not exist anymore. According to David Simon (Alvarez, 2009, p. 6), creator of *The Wire*, “in Baltimore, as in so many cities, it is no longer possible to describe this as a myth. It is no longer possible even to remain polite on the subject. It is, in a word, a lie” (Larrea & Raigón, 2022, p. 95).



For a full explanation of the workshop, please
revise

Larrea-Espinar, Á., & Raigón-Rodríguez, A. (2022).
Las sitcoms como herramienta para el
acercamiento a los valores culturales americanos.
Porta Linguarum, (37), 89-104.

<https://doi.org/10.30827/portalin.vi37.21093>

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