REALITY TV AS AUTHENTIC LISTENING

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REALITY TV
OBJECTIVES

• Define authentic materials and why they are useful

• Introduce the reality TV show 90 Day Fiancé and explain why it’s the perfect authentic listening material for advanced level adult ESL students

• Show how to structure a listening and speaking lesson about 90 Day Fiancé

• Discuss how to use reality TV shows as authentic listening materials in your own classes
WHAT ARE AUTHENTIC MATERIALS?

• Any materials not specifically produced for the purpose of language learning or teaching (Nunan, 1989)

• Can be frustrating for lower level learners if they are not cognitively ready to comprehend the message (Nunan, 1989)

• Partial comprehension is ok; careful selection and proper planning are essential (Calabrich, 2017)
WHY USE AUTHENTIC MATERIALS?

• Input is more likely to be comprehended and processed when it is interesting and relevant to the learner (Krashen, 1981)

• “Authentic video is beneficial in providing natural, content-rich samples of the target language…. [It] has also been shown to be motivating” (Weyers, 1999)
90 DAY FIANCÉ

• A reality TV show on TLC about 6 couples from different countries who have 90 days to get married before their K-1 visas expire

• 7 seasons and 6 spinoffs!
WHY 90 DAY FIANCÉ?

- Accessible level of English
  - There are often subtitles
  - Important plot points and scenes are repeated, which aids comprehension
  - My students chose not to use captions so they could focus on listening instead of reading
WHY 90 DAY FIANCÉ?

• Practice listening to diverse voices
  o Both native and nonnative speakers of English
  o English as a Lingua Franca
  o Exposure to different accents
  o Some Spanish and Spanglish
WHY 90 DAY FIANCEÉ?

• Exposure to real colloquial language and idioms
  o Vocabulary I wouldn’t have thought of
  o Words are recycled throughout the series
WHY 90 DAY FIANCÉ?

• High-interest topics that students can relate to generates lively discussions
  o Immigrants can identify with the fiancés’ experiences in a new country
  o Adults can identify with the relationship issues
WHY 90 DAY FIANCÉ?

• Motivation to watch the next episode
  o It’s dramatic!
  o You follow the characters and story throughout the series
  o Students can continue watching other seasons in their free time

SPOILER ALERT!
WHY 90 DAY FIANCÉ?

• Cultural aspect
  o Life in different parts of the U.S.
  o Religious and racial issues
  o Cultural differences between other countries and the U.S.
WHY 90 DAY FIANCÉ?

• Season 2 was a good length for my class schedule
  o 10 episodes, 45 minutes each
• Available at Amazon.com
• Structure of each student-centered lesson:
  o A **review** of the previous episode’s content and vocabulary
  o **Pre-teach** vocabulary and pronunciation before the episode
  o Focused comprehension questions for note-taking **while** watching the episode
  o Small-group discussion and presentations **after** the episode
PRE-TEACH VOCABULARY

• Read the list of words and definitions.
  - www.ldoceonline.com

• Match each underlined stressed syllable to the Color Vowel Chart sound.
In the first episode, we meet the couples and the fiancés arrive in the United States.

Each group will focus on learning about one of the couples:

1. Justin & Evelin
2. Danielle & Mohamed
3. Brett & Daya
4. Chelsea & Yamir
DURING & POST 90 DAY FIANCÉ

• Take notes about the answers to these questions:
  o Describe the couple. Where are they from?
  o How did they meet?
  o Why did they fall in love with each other?
  o What’s your opinion of their relationship?

• Discuss the questions with your group. Try to use the vocabulary we’ve studied. Choose a spokesperson who will tell the class what you discussed.
What do you remember from the first episode? Discuss with your partner:

- What do you think of Justin’s life as a bachelor?
- What happened that was overwhelming for Danielle?
- What are some examples from last week’s episode that show Brett is a pushover?
- Do you think Chelsea is manipulative? Why or why not?
• How could you adapt this idea in your teaching context?
• What kinds of instructional activities would you like your students to do?
• What other reality TV shows might work well as authentic listening materials in an ESL class?
STUDENT TESTIMONIALS

• “To have the opportunity to listen to the TV show was incredible because I think that helped me to understand more when people talk in English so I think that was so good.”

• “I did like the TV show… because we could react in different ways with each person. Sometimes I was angry with Daya and with Danielle and Mohamed. It was really fun, really funny.”

• “First the idea of watching the 90 Day Fiancé television show did not appeal to me very much, but the linguistic part has been really interesting.”
REFERENCES


THANK YOU!