

Using Radio Scripts in English Language Learning

Skip Reske

Sierra College

Rocklin, California

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Finding good supplemental reading material for ESL students can sometimes be difficult. Radio scripts offer stimulating, unique, and authentic possibilities. The radio scripts discussed in my presentation were transcriptions of actual radio broadcasts from the “Golden Age of Radio”. Many of these scripts, especially from radio theatre, can be a truly wonderful supplemental reading resources just in their original forms. However, radio scripts can also be adapted to increase their value for English language teaching and learning.

Why Use Radio Scripts?

There are several reasons why radio scripts are a valuable and unique source of supplemental reading material. Radio scripts (a) offer high-interest stories; (b) include drama, mystery, romance, and comedy; (c) provide pleasurable reading; (d) use authentic language; (e) model spoken English; (f) serve a flexible range of English language learners; and (g) are readily and freely available on the Internet.

How to Use Radio Scripts

There are many unique ways to use Internet-accessible radio scripts. For example, scripts can be assigned as an online reading activity, or they can be downloaded from the Internet and printed for use in the classroom or use at home. Also, “classroom sets” can be created for a reusable teaching resource. Scripts can be acted out in whole or part in the classroom in variable-sized group work. Audio recordings of original radio broadcasts are readily available in different formats; combined with printed scripts, they can be used for integrated reading and listening activities. Scripts can also be adapted and developed using multimedia and interactive elements to provide an enriched, multi-learning style experience. In the poster session that this writer presented at the CATESOL 2005 conference, online, publicly available material for supplementing ESL reading classes was demonstrated. Although this material involves a

considerable adaptation of radio scripts, it might be more properly viewed as simply an extensive demonstration of some of the possibilities of web-enhancement. Simpler modifications might suit the needs of particular groups of students quite well and be accomplished with considerably less work.

“Radio Scripts for English Language Learners”

This publicly accessible online site of radio scripts (bits.westhost.com/scripts) was created by Skip Reske to provide an enriched, supplemental reading resource for web-enhancement to traditional ESL reading courses. It was designed to appeal to multiple learning-styles. This public version is an expanded version of a final graduate project for the M.S. in Education with a focus on online teaching and learning offered at California State University – East Bay. At this time, three complete radio scripts are presented: “Casablanca”, “It’s a Wonderful Life”, and “The Time Machine”. Scripts were edited to remove or rewrite obscure or dated words and idiomatic expressions.

The scripts were divided into parts of about 1,000-1,200 words each to provide flexibility in the quantity of material that can be assigned. Multimedia elements were added to add appeal and interest to all types of learners. Because radio presentations based on original Hollywood movies were selected, stills from the movies were captured and added to the scripts. Also, short video clips from the movie were included and match the dialogue word-for-word in the text.

A common grammar problem area for many English language learners, the use of articles, was chosen to showcase how interactive highlighting can be applied to increase the experience of “noticing” as an aid to awareness and retention. Vocabulary development is aided by short definitions of selected vocabulary items available in reader-activated “popup” messages. A type-in box is also available for students to quickly get online definitions from Dictionary.com. In

addition, a quick interactive, reading comprehension quiz is included at the end of each reading part.

Conclusion

At the CATESOL 2005 conference, radio scripts were presented as a way to add unique, worthwhile supplemental reading material to ESL classes. In particular, this writer sought to adapt that material to take advantage of the interactive and multimedia possibilities of web-based enhancement. The Internet presents a rich supply of resources for anyone wanting to explore using scripts for English language teaching and learning.

Resources for Radio Scripts and Audio on the Internet

Scripts:

- Simply Radio Scripts (<http://simplyscripts.com/radio.html>)
- The Generic Radio Workshop (<http://www.genericradio.com/>)
- The Mercury Theatre on The Air (<http://www.unknown.nu/mercury/>)

Free audio:

- Jezner Studios (http://www.jezner.com/old_time_radio/)
- Old Time Radio (<http://otr.us/>)

Audio collections:

- Old Time Radio Now (<http://www.otrnw.com/>)
- OTR Cats (<http://www.otrcat.com/>)

Skip Reske's web sites

- Radio Scripts for English Language Learners (<http://bits.westhost.com/scripts/>)
- BITS Interactive Reading Activities (<http://bits.westhost.com/>)