



Universidad de Cuenca

Facultad de Filosofía, Letras y Ciencias de la Educación

Carrera de Lengua y Literatura Inglesa

Using Sitcoms in B1/B2 EFL Environments to Enhance Listening Skills: A Pragmatic Approach

Trabajo de titulación previo a la
obtención del Título de Licenciada en
Ciencias de la Educación en Lengua y
Literatura Inglesa

Autora: Sofía Marcela Egüez Carrión

C.I. 0105778112

Tutor: PhD. Fabián Darío Rodas Pacheco

C. I. 0101867703

Cuenca-Ecuador

2018



Resumen

Este proyecto de investigación tiene como objetivo analizar el impacto de ver comedias situacionales en las habilidades lingüísticas, la de escuchar particularmente, en estudiantes en algunos países y determinar si es que esta herramienta podría también ayudar a los estudiantes del Instituto de Idiomas de la Universidad de Cuenca o no. Los resultados de este estudio fueron obtenidos del análisis de las opiniones, perspectivas e intereses en relación a las comedias de situación y series de televisión en general de los docentes y estudiantes. Los resultados muestran que los estudiantes en el Instituto de Idiomas están interesados en mejorar su inglés mientras ven comedias de situación. Sin embargo, para lograrlo, la frecuencia con la que las ven definitivamente necesita incrementar. Los docentes del Instituto creen firmemente que las series de televisión y las comedias de situación pueden promover la motivación y el interés en el aprendizaje del inglés de los estudiantes mientras mejoran sus habilidades pragmáticas y de escucha. Después de analizar los resultados, una serie de actividades basadas en comedias de situación fueron creadas para facilitar el uso de comedias de situación como herramientas para estudiantes y profesores de inglés en ambientes de inglés como lengua extranjera.

Palabras clave: COMEDIAS DE SITUACIÓN, PRAGMÁTICA, HABILIDAD DE ESCUCHAR



Abstract

This research project aims at analyzing the impact of sitcom-viewing on students' language skills, listening in particular, in certain countries and to determine whether these tools could also help students at the Institute of Languages at the University of Cuenca or not. The results of this study were obtained from an analysis of teachers' and students' opinions, perspectives, and interests regarding sitcoms and TV series in general. Results showed that students at the Institute of Languages are interested in improving their English by watching sitcoms; however, in order to do so the frequency of viewing definitely needs to increase. Teachers at the Institute strongly believe TV series and sitcoms can boost students' motivation and interest towards English while enhancing their listening and pragmatic skills. After analyzing the results, a set of sitcom-based activities was created in order to facilitate the use of sitcoms as tools in EFL environments for English students and teachers.

Key words: SITCOMS, PRAGMATICS, LISTENING SKILLS



Table of Contents

Resumen.....	2
Abstract.....	3
Table of Contents.....	4
Cláusula de Licencia y Autorización para Publicación en el Repositorio Institucional.....	7
Cláusula de Propiedad Intelectual.....	8
Dedication.....	9
Acknowledgements.....	10
Introduction.....	11
Chapter 1: Description of the Research.....	13
1.1 Statement of the Problem.....	13
1.2 Background and Justification.....	14
1.3 Research Question.....	17
1.4 Objectives.....	17
1.4.1 General.....	17
1.4.2 Specific.....	17
Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework.....	18
2.1 Introduction.....	18
2.2 Pragmatics.....	18
2.2.1 Interlanguage Pragmatics.....	20
2.2.2 Cross Cultural Pragmatics.....	22
2.3 Pragmatics in the EFL Classroom.....	23
2.4 Language Skills.....	24
2.4.1 Listening Skills.....	26
2.5 Situational Comedies.....	27



2.6 Conclusion.....	30
Chapter 3: Literature Review.....	31
3.1 Introduction.....	31
3.2 Relevant Studies.....	33
3.3 Conclusion.....	48
Chapter 4: Research Methodology.....	50
4.1 Research approach.....	50
4.2 Participants and Setting.....	51
4.3 Instruments.....	54
4.4 Data Collection and Analysis.....	54
4.4.1 Qualitative Instruments.....	54
4.4.2 Quantitative Instruments.....	56
4.5 Ethical Considerations.....	57
4.6 Limitations.....	57
Chapter 5: Results and Discussion.....	59
5.1 Qualitative Methods.....	59
5.1.1 Document Revision.....	59
5.1.2 Interviews.....	60
5.2 Quantitative Methods.....	68
5.3 Discussion.....	79
5.4 Development of a Booklet of Sitcom-Based Activities.....	81
Chapter 6: Conclusions and Recommendations.....	83
6.1 Conclusions.....	83
6.2 Recommendations.....	85
References.....	87



Appendices.....	90
Appendix 1: Institutional Permission (1).....	90
Appendix 2: Institutional Permission (2).....	91
Appendix 3: Teachers' Interview.....	92
Appendix 4: Students' Survey.....	94
Appendix 5: Transcripts From Teachers' Interviews.....	98

List of Figures and Charts

Figure 1: Participants' English studies outside the Institute of Languages.....	69
Figure 2: Students' perceptions of the most difficult skills.....	70
Figure 3: Students' percentage of abroad travelling.....	71
Figure 4: Students who had taken English proficiency tests.....	71
Figure 5: Students' interest, motivation, and confidence.....	72
Figure 6: Students' viewing frequency.....	73
Figure 7: Percentage of students who enjoy watch sitcoms.....	74
Figure 8: Reasons why students watch sitcoms.....	75
Figure 9: Sitcoms students would like to watch.....	76
Figure 10: Students' opinion about the use of sitcoms for English learning.....	77
Figure 11: Use of audio and subtitles when watching sitcoms.....	78
Chart 1. Relationship Matrix.....	51



**CLÁUSULA DE LICENCIA Y AUTORIZACIÓN PARA PUBLICACIÓN EN EL
REPOSITORIO INSTITUCIONAL**

Yo, Sofia Marcela Egüez Carrión en calidad de autor/a y titular de los derechos morales y patrimoniales del trabajo de titulación "Using Sitcoms in B1/B2 EFL Environments to Enhance Listening Skills: A Pragmatic Approach", de conformidad con el Art. 114 del CÓDIGO ORGÁNICO DE LA ECONOMÍA SOCIAL DE LOS CONOCIMIENTOS, CREATIVIDAD E INNOVACIÓN reconozco a favor de la Universidad de Cuenca una licencia gratuita, intransferible y no exclusiva para el uso no comercial de la obra, con fines estrictamente académicos.

Asimismo, autorizo a la Universidad de Cuenca para que realice la publicación de este trabajo de titulación en el repositorio institucional, de conformidad a lo dispuesto en el Art. 144 de la Ley Orgánica de Educación Superior.

Cuenca, 26 de Julio de 2018

Sofia Marcela Egüez Carrión

C.I: 0105778112



CLÁUSULA DE PROPIEDAD INTELECTUAL

Yo, Sofía Marcela Egüez Carrión, autor/a del trabajo de titulación "Using Sitcoms in B1/B2 EFL Environments to Enhance Listening Skills: A Pragmatic Approach", certifico que todas las ideas, opiniones y contenidos expuestos en la presente investigación son de exclusiva responsabilidad de su autor/a.

Cuenca, 26 de Julio de 2018

Sofía Marcela Egüez Carrión

C.I: 0105778112



Dedication

I want to dedicate this work to my parents and siblings, who have always been there to motivate and inspire me to do better and work hard to achieve all of my goals. This project is also dedicated to my boyfriend, José Antonio, who has been next to me to support and encourage me every step of the way. You have been my rock during this process, and you have been the key to my overcoming all of the obstacles on my way.



Acknowledgements

I am sincerely grateful to my supervisor, Fabian Rodas, and to my teacher, Tammy Fajardo, who have guided me during this process from beginning to end. Without your help, it would have been extremely hard to successfully culminate this project. I also want to thank anyone who somehow collaborated with the development of this project, teachers, and students from the Institute of Languages.



Introduction

This study focuses on the use of a current tool to enhance English listening skills all around the world, situational comedies. After analyzing a number of studies conducted in different countries and determining how useful situational comedies (sitcoms) have proven to be for English learners, this study aims at discovering if students and teachers at the Institute of Languages at the University of Cuenca would be willing to use these tools as well.

This project is developed in six chapters for a proper comprehension of the reader. The first one explains the importance of English nowadays and the problems that learners may face when practicing their listening skills, and it also includes the objectives and purposes of this research.

The second chapter focuses on explaining theories, definitions, and concepts from several authors and researchers regarding pragmatics, its importance when learning a foreign language, listening skills, and situational comedies. Since this study has a pragmatic approach, a great emphasis is given to sitcoms as pragmatic sources for learners of English as a foreign language. Washburn (2001) stated, “although different genres of television shows can provide input for the development of pragmatic language, only sitcoms reliably provide models with marked violations of the norms and commentary that can help the viewer interpret the pragmatic language use” (p.23).

Through extensive investigation in chapter three, the researcher was able to identify the importance of sitcoms in English learning. Results from several studies have demonstrated that sitcom-watching can in fact enhance learners’ language skills, especially



listening. Sitcoms were also considered as sources of authentic language input, hence their relevance in EFL environments.

The following chapter explains the methodology used for this research. Both, qualitative and quantitative instruments were applied in the Institute to students and teachers to determine how relevant they think sitcoms are when it comes to English learning. Thus, this mix-methods research obtained textual and numerical results that were of great importance.

The results obtained from the previously mentioned instruments are detailed in chapter five. They show that both teachers and students at the Institute of Languages agree on the fact that sitcoms can enhance students' language skills, and they all showed interest in using sitcoms and sitcom-based activities during their English classes.

Finally, chapter six includes the conclusions from this study and a few recommendations for future studies regarding the same topic. Additionally, a booklet of sitcom-based activities was created to motivate students and teachers to work with sitcoms to enhance listening and pragmatic skills in an innovative and entertaining way.



Chapter 1

Description of the Research

1.1 Statement of the problem

When learning a language, we specially consider four skills: writing, speaking, reading and listening. The first two skills involve production, and the other two are related to language comprehension. The relevance these skills have for learners usually varies from one student to another, as well as the importance of each one of them. Powers (2010) mentions that, “what English tests users value most often is a person’s ability to communicate in English in a variety of contexts that is likely to involve the use of multiple language skills either singly or in combination” (p. 2). Hence, all four skills are crucial, and even if they seem to work separately, the four of them influence each other.

This research will focus on one of those four skills, listening. Abad (2011) stated, “listening is considered an essential skill for learning a second language and it appears to be one of the most difficult for students” (p. 8). Therefore, both, teachers and students are concerned with finding a relevant audio-lingual source that can have an impact on students’ English learning.

According to Heras (2014), “sitcoms or movie clips contain language that can be considered fairly authentic and they also often represent a specific culture” (p. 54). Thus, using this type of material could somehow reduce the use of classroom language and provide innovative language input to students. Therefore, the aim of this research is to analyze the influence and the effects that sitcoms may have on English students’ listening skills in EFL environments.



After studying a number of sources related to the use of sitcoms in English classrooms, a survey will be conducted to English students from the seventh and eighth level at the Institute of Languages at the University of Cuenca. This survey will determine their interests and preferences in relation to sitcoms in English, and whether they will be willing or not to learn English using this kind of material.

Finally, a booklet of sitcom-based listening activities will be created to demonstrate the possible uses of situational comedies in B1/B2 EFL environments. Since this research will approach English learning pragmatically, it will consider not only how language is supposed to be used, but also how it is actually used.

1.2 Background and Justification

Nowadays, English is considered a lingua franca all around the world. Mahu (2012) stated, “English is the official or co-official language from 45 countries and is spoken extensively in other countries where it does not have official position” (p. 1). Therefore, people who are able to successfully communicate with others using the language, have great advantages in their work fields, education, and life experiences in general.

Given the importance of English nowadays, this research will analyze an innovative form of language learning. It will focus on how sitcoms can be used as tools for enhancing listening skills in students who have a B1/B2 English level, and how it can be done.

In EFL environments, learners are usually in contact with classroom language, which is not real at all times. It is easier and simpler, so students can understand the topics without many difficulties. Classroom language can be really helpful for beginners who are starting to



get familiar with the language and need it to be less complicated than it actually is; however, it makes English sound completely different.

Hadhi (2013) indicated that “when second language learners engage in conversations with native speakers, difficulties may arise due to their lack of mastery of the conversational norms involved in the production of speech acts” (p. 1). English is fast, full of expressions, sarcasm, and contractions that as a non-native speaker can be hard to understand, so learners may get frustrated and lose interest in learning.

Hence, to fully understand English, students must acquire knowledge of its pragmatics. This will help them overcome difficulties they may encounter in a variety of contexts that sometimes are not common in EFL classrooms. However, only about five studies at the University of Cuenca have had a pragmatic approach when speaking of English linguistics.

According to Heras (2014), pragmatically, sitcoms can be useful for learners of English because they offer an authentic-like input. Therefore, students could be aware of how English is used by native speakers on a daily basis and what to expect when they listen to English speakers in real life. They could be exposed to authentic language without leaving the country or even the classroom. Kung (2013) stated,

one of the ways for Taiwanese EFL learners to have the authentic input is through TV series. The popularity and accessibility both make it easy and fun for students compared with other traditional EFL textbooks that are often outdated and monotonous. (p.118)



Thus, sitcoms are an excellent source for real language input given that the scripts include vocabulary, grammar, idioms, and expressions used by native speakers in everyday situations and probably are not comprised in regular English textbooks.

Also, students can access more information when watching sitcoms because they can listen to what is happening and relate it with what they are learning (Kung, 2013). They could analyze how language can be used in different situations and forms and use it in the same way when they seem to be in one of those situations. Consequently, they will not only study the language as it should be used, but as how it is actually used by speakers. English learners could acquire a pragmatic knowledge of English that can be as necessary as any of the four skills when trying to achieve communicative competence.

Developing listening skills may be a hard task for learners, but using sitcoms as a tool in EFL environments may motivate students to keep learning. According to Kung's research (2013), "implementing TV series-based instruction in class helped students to be more prepared and willing to speak English, and their interests, confidence, and self-assessed speaking competence were also boosted" (p. 113). Hence, by improving their listening skills, students can develop a more phonologically correct speech because they will reproduce the sounds in a more similar way to the one they listen in sitcoms.

Even though, Vanderplank (2013) indicated that "TV has still not developed as a global resource for language learning and teaching" (p. 6), teachers in the 21st century are constantly looking for new and innovative ideas to encourage their students when learning a language. Thus, the use of TV shows with academic purposes at the University of Cuenca can cause positive outcomes in its B1/B2 EFL students' English learning process, and also



increase the amount of students willing to enhance their English skills within Ecuadorian classroom environments.

1.3 Research Question

To what extent can sitcoms be considered pragmatic tools to enhance listening skills in B1/B2 learners?

1.4 Objectives

1.4.1 General Objective

To create sitcom-based activities as tools to enhance the listening skill in B1/B2 EFL students.

1.4.2 Specific Objectives

- To analyze the possible effects that watching sitcoms may have in students' listening skills when used in EFL environments.
- To analyze students' interests and preferences when watching sitcoms.
- To analyze sitcoms' content to determine the sitcoms and the number of episodes on which the activities will be based on.
- To analyze teachers' opinions and perceptions about the use of sitcoms for English learning.



Chapter 2

Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction

Learning English has become fundamental in today's world because it is necessary in almost every professional field. British Study Centers points out that "English is the language of science, of aviation, computers, diplomacy, and tourism. Knowing English increases your chances of getting a good job in a multinational company within your home country or of finding work abroad" (10 Reasons to Learn English, n.d.). Therefore, people are always looking for new ways to teach and to learn English.

This project focuses on one of those new techniques for English learning. First, it will cover the importance of Pragmatics when learning English. Then it will analyze how situational comedies could help learners enhance their language skills, especially listening. Finally, this project will lead to the creation of a booklet of sitcom based activities that can be helpful for B1/B2 English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners.

2.2 Pragmatics

In her book *Pragmatics for Language Educators*, LoCastro (2012) explains that "the term *pragmatics* was first coined by Charles Morris, a philosopher of language, in 1938, to label 'the science of the relation of signs to their interpreters,' thereby locating this new field of linguistic analysis within semiotics" (p.5).

Heras (2014) mentions that learning the main skills of a language is not enough in order for a person to be considered communicatively competent. English learners must learn



the pragmatics of the language as well to fully understand, use, and respond to speech acts in different contexts. Green (2017) defines speech acts as “acts that can, but need not, be carried out by saying and meaning that one is doing so” (p.1). Thus, for the purpose of this project it is relevant to analyze the role of pragmatics in EFL environments. Leech (2014) stated,

the subject of ‘Pragmatics’ is very familiar in linguistics today. Fifteen years ago it was mentioned by linguists rarely, if at all. (...) Now, many would argue, as I do that we cannot really understand the nature of a language itself unless we understand pragmatics: how language is used in communication. (p.1)

Ferrera (1985) defines pragmatics as “the systematic study of the relations between the linguistic properties of utterances and their properties as social action” (as cited in LoCastro, 2012, p.5). Hence, it can be said that pragmatics deals with the meaning words acquire according to the context and intonation.

This area of Linguistics is precisely the opposite of Semantics, which considers words’ literal meaning, for example, the one in the dictionary. Pragmatics takes culture, background, gender, and age into account; therefore, rules governing pragmatics tend to be subjective (Heras, 2014).

Crystal (2008) argues that “pragmatics focuses on an ‘area’ between semantics, sociolinguistics and extralinguistic context; but the boundaries with these other domains are as yet incapable of precise definition” (as cited in Beltrán-Planques and Querol-Julián, 2018, p.2). Since this branch of Linguistics has gained more and more importance through the years, it is important to mention an accepted definition of it. According to Yule:



Pragmatics is concerned with the study of meaning as communicated by a speaker (or writer) and interpreted by a listener (or reader). It has consequently more to do with the analysis of what people mean by their utterances than what the words or phrases in those utterances might mean by themselves. Pragmatics is the study of speaker meaning. Pragmatics is the study of contextual meaning. Pragmatics is the study of how more gets communicated than is said. (as cited in Heras, 2014, p. 18)

However, EFL books and texts do not always include pragmatics in their content. Hence, students could find it very difficult to overcome communication gaps if they do not acquire pragmatic skills. LoCastro (2012) states that “pragmatic failure refers to mistakes in producing and understanding situationally appropriate language behavior” (p. 83).

Martínez and Fernández (2008) said, “effective communication cannot be achieved if extra linguistic factors are ignored, and it is here that pragmatics comes into the picture” (p.31). From there, we can infer or make predictions in relation to meaning, word choice, and uses of specific words, phrases, slang, figurative speech, etc.

Nevertheless, understanding how the pragmatics of our native language works is not enough in order to fully comprehend the pragmatic rules of a second (L2) or foreign language. The learner may apply or transfer some of the pragmatic knowledge of his or her first language (L1) when learning an L2, but the rules will not always be the same. Therefore, the study of interlanguage pragmatics is absolutely necessary.

2.2.1 Interlanguage Pragmatics

Félix-Brasdefer (2012) argues that “Interlanguage pragmatics (ILP), or second language (L2) pragmatics, is the study of how learners, whether adults or children, acquire



the ability to produce and understand communicative action in an L2” (para.1). This involves a number of aspects related to speech acts, such as ordering food, apologizing, answering the phone, asking for permission, complaining, etc.

However, this research project will not cover such specific aspects of pragmatics. It will focus on the general features related to L2 Pragmatics. This means analyzing the context, language use, pronunciation, and meaning.

One aspect of a learner’s communicative competence is his or her pragmatic knowledge, which includes two basic components according to Félix-Brasdefer (2012):

The first, pragmalinguistic knowledge, refers to the linguistic resources that are available in a particular language and that are necessary to express a specific communicative effect. This includes knowledge of different forms and their meanings. The second component, sociopragmatic knowledge, refers to knowledge of social conventions at the perception level, such as an awareness of the differences in social distance or social power among interlocutors. (para. 2)

Félix-Brasdefer is not the only author who argues about the importance of pragmatic and communicative competence for L2 learners. Beltrán-Planques and Querol-Julián (2018) stated, “the ultimate goal of language teachers is to increase learners’ communicative competence in order to help them to communicate and use the additional language successfully in a variety of contexts, with speakers of different linguistic backgrounds and for several purposes” (p.1), and so, that leads us to analyze the importance of pragmatics in EFL environments.



2.2.2 Cross-Cultural Pragmatics

English is commonly used as a lingua franca in today's world; this means that people use English as their second or foreign language to communicate with others when needed. Hence, when it comes to English pragmatics culture, background, ethnicity, education, gender, etc., must be taken into account.

The same thing applies to sitcoms, where we find people from different countries and cultures that find themselves using English every day. These people usually have a different accent or dialect, and their language use is often influenced by their background. Therefore, for the purpose of this project, it is necessary to analyze the importance cross-cultural pragmatics (CCP) has in EFL learning.

Kasper and Blum-Kulka (1993) defined CCP as “the study of linguistic acts by language users from different cultural backgrounds” (as cited in LoCastro, 2012, p.80). This specific branch of pragmatics can, therefore, lead to contrasting speech acts among languages.

LoCastro (2012) states that “Cross-cultural pragmatics (CCP) is arguably the subfield of pragmatics that draws the most attention in the modern world where on a daily basis participants interact while not sharing the same native or primary language for communication” (p.79).

CCP is in fact related with interlanguage pragmatics because both fields study pragmatic skills in second and foreign languages. However, there is an important differentiation between them that is worth mentioning. LoCastro (2012) explains that “In contrast with interlanguage pragmatics, CCP looks at issues outside classrooms and



concentrates on environments where participants are not explicitly learners, but full members of the target language community” (p. 80).

When watching sitcoms in English, the viewer is exposed to both, interlanguage pragmatics and cross-cultural pragmatics. IP because the learner acquires new skills to overcome the difficulties he may encounter when using his L2 based on what he hears. On the other hand, CCP is present when characters (with different cultural backgrounds) from the sitcom interact with each other.

2.3 Pragmatics in EFL Classrooms

Given that EFL text books do not cover much when it comes to Interlanguage Pragmatics, acquiring those skills might become a complicated task for L2 learners. Thus, teachers must find a way to include ILP in their lesson plans to boost their students’ language skills.

Clennell (1999) developed a model for raising awareness of potential communication difficulty at three distinct levels: socio-pragmatic, pragmalinguistic, and linguistic. Clennell (1999) explains that this model provides samples of contextualized spoken interaction promoting pragmatic awareness among learners. Thus, this method includes different levels of language usage and meaning. It involves analyzing sociocultural, phonological, and syntactic aspects of language. Clennell (1999) believes his model “enables learners to see how sociopragmatic meanings are embedded in the discourse, and how effective communication is dependent on interaction and mutual negotiation” (p.90).

According to Beltrán-Planques and Querol-Julián (2018),



the study of pragmatics is therefore fundamental to understand how speakers and listeners co-construct and deconstruct meaning in a given interaction. However, regardless the importance of pragmatic competence in the communicative competence construct and its prominent role in interaction, this competence is not typically addressed in the language classroom, probably due to the lack of a curriculum planning and materials based on pragmatics. (p.2)

Ifantidou (2013) remarks that “the need for naturalistic settings of interaction in assessing pragmatic competence has been recently advocated by scholars who adopt a conversation-analytic perspective to describe L2 users’ ‘interactional competence’ in a variety of interactional contexts” (p. 3). Therefore, one of the purposes of this project is to determine the impact pragmatics could have on students’ L2 skills and their development. Hence, it is relevant to define and link them to the communicative competence.

2.4 Language Skills

Morehouse (2017) explains that “the four skills of language (also known as the four skills of language learning) are a set of four capabilities that allow an individual to comprehend and produce spoken language for proper and effective interpersonal communication” (para.1). These skills include Listening, Speaking, Writing, and Reading, and all four of them are absolutely necessary in order to reach language proficiency.

Language skills can be divided into two categories. Listening and reading are considered receptive skills, while speaking and writing are productive skills. Nonetheless, all four skills are linked to each other for educational purposes. Tavi (2010) indicates that,



the process of integrating language skills involves linking them together in such a way that what has been learnt and practiced through the exercise of one skill is reinforced and perhaps extended through further language tasks which bring different skills into use. (p.765)

The acquisition of the different language skills in about 40 languages is regulated according to The Common European Framework of Reference for Language Learning, Teaching and Assessment (CEFR), and English is not an exception. According to the Council of Europe (2017), “the CEFR is a framework of reference designed to provide a transparent, coherent and comprehensive basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses and curriculum guidelines, the design of teaching and learning materials, and the assessment of foreign language proficiency” (A transparent, coherent and comprehensive reference instrument section).

The CEFR describes foreign language proficiency at six levels: A1 and A2, B1 and B2, C1 and C2. It also defines three ‘plus’ levels (A2+, B1+, B2+). The Council of Europe (2017) then adds, “based on empirical research and widespread consultation, this scheme makes it possible: to establish learning and teaching objectives, to review curricula, to design teaching materials, and to provide a basis for recognizing language qualifications thus facilitating educational and occupational mobility” (Six levels of foreign language proficiency section).

The CEFR will be of great relevance to this research project which focuses specifically on listening skills, how students acquire them in EFL environments, and the importance of pragmatics as a tool to enhance these skills.



2.4.1 Listening skills

The Oxford Dictionary (2018) defines listening skills as the ability to pay attention to and effectively interpret what other people are saying. This skill allows us to receive messages, and it defines how well a conversation goes. Since we receive most information by listening, it requires concentration and focus when learning something new, especially a language.

Schwartz stated that “language learning requires intentional listening that employs strategies for identifying sounds and making meaning from them. The complexity of the listening process is magnified in second language contexts, where the receiver also has incomplete control of the Language” (as cited in Puma, 2011, p.2).

Since this research project focuses mainly on B1/B2 English learners, it is important to analyze what they are expected to be able to do when referring to listening skills. The CEFR (2017) indicates that language learners who have a B1 level of proficiency,

can follow much of everyday conversation and discussion, provided it takes place in standard speech and is clearly articulated in a familiar accent. Can generally follow the main points of extended discussion around him/her, provided speech is clearly articulated in standard speech. (p. 56)

Likewise, according to the CEFR (2017), language learners who have a B2 proficiency level,

can understand standard spoken language, live or broadcast on both familiar and unfamiliar topics normally encountered in personal, social, academic or vocational



life. Only extreme background noise, inadequate discourse structure and/or idiomatic usage influence the ability to understand. Can understand the main ideas of propositionally and linguistically complex speech on both concrete and abstract topics delivered in standard speech, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can follow extended speech and complex lines of argument provided the topic is reasonably familiar, and the direction of the talk is sign-posted by explicit markers. (p. 56)

The CEFR does not only evaluate students' four language skills. It also considers the importance of pragmatics when using a language, and it gives certain standards according to the students' proficiency level in the language. The Council of Europe (2017) indicates that the CEFR examines six aspects of pragmatics: flexibility, taking the floor (turntaking), thematic development, coherence, propositional precision, and spoken fluency (Structured overview of all CEFR scales, p.30-31).

Since the importance of both, pragmatics and listening skills, in language learning has already been established, it is necessary to start focusing on how pragmatics can be taught in EFL environments. This project will discuss mainly how situational comedies fit in the pragmatic context as tools for English learning, and specifically to enhance listening.

2.5 Situational Comedies

McNulty and Lazarevic (2012) agree with other authors in their research when they explain that “video technology can support learning efforts by improving long-term listening comprehension skills, student confidence, and pronunciation proficiency” (p.52). The same authors then add, “listening and watching videos provide an opportunity for students to hear



accurate pronunciation of words and sentences as they are spoken by the native English speakers” (p.52). Hence, learning with videos could have a very significant impact on the students’ language development.

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2018) defines situation comedy as a radio or television comedy series that involves a continuing cast of characters in a succession of episodes. This term was first used in 1925 and has become very popular since then. Nowadays people use the word blend ‘sitcom’ to refer to this type of TV series that have had a great impact around the world. North American sitcoms are usually the most popular among people; however, there are a variety of Chinese, Japanese, Russian, British, and Spanish situation comedies. In our country, sitcoms have also been created to entertain Ecuadorians, usually in the afternoon.

Since sitcoms’ main feature is humor, they usually make everyday situations, family problems, and regular circumstances as fun and entertaining as possible (Palu, 2016). Every episode usually lasts about 20 to 25 minutes. Additionally, some sitcoms are filmed in front of an audience, but not all of them.

Sitcoms can be used as audio-visual material for English learning. Swaffar and Vlatten (1997) indicate that “as a multisensory medium, video offers students more than listening comprehension: Students have the opportunity to read visual as well as auditory messages. Apparently, reading what is seen as well as what is heard enhances learning” (p.175).



By watching sitcoms, students can focus on linguistic aspects such as pronunciation, vocabulary, pragmatics, intonation, grammar, and especially listening, which is the main purpose of this research project. According to Harmer (2009),

utilizing videos such as American dramas or sitcoms is an extremely helpful and motivating way of providing exposure to actually used or updated expressions in different varieties in English, because the language is used by a diverse community of speakers and each one will have its functioning or operative variety. (as cited in Kung, 2013, p. 130-131)

Harmer is not the only author who believes sitcoms to be tools for language learning. Palu (2016) states, “English sitcoms are an excellent way to support English language studies due to the creation of a positive, inspiring, exciting background for learning” (p. 6).

According to Martínez and Fernández (2008), through sitcoms, English learners will be exposed to humor based on puns, sarcasm, and cultural factors that can be as important as language itself. Hence, this aspect can keep students motivated in class, and they will enjoy listening to what the characters have to say.

By improving their listening skills, students may realize that humor is often hidden in other aspects of the language they are learning. In addition, Martínez and Fernández (2008) stated, “when we speak we communicate more than we actually say, and when it comes to humour this statement becomes even more significant” (p.33).

Kusumarasdyati (2006) argues that “Subtitled movie DVDs turn out to be an effective teaching device to develop the EFL learners’ listening skills and equip them with the relevant knowledge of the target culture simultaneously” (p.10). Since both, movies and sitcoms,



reflect everyday situations and use language as it is actually used by native speakers, we can say that sitcoms also enhance listening skills and cultural awareness among EFL learners.

Moreover, Kozhevnikova (2014) agrees by stating,

watching sitcoms in English, reading magazines and surfing the Net are considered fun by many teachers and students and not perceived as activities that can do good to students' language proficiency. Yet these resources can considerably increase learners' general and cultural awareness and should be interwoven into studying routines, because background knowledge is a tremendous facilitator of comprehension. (p.4463)

LoCastro (2012) indicates that "pragmatics concerns speaker meaning, specifically deriving the intended communicative message from what is said in a particular context" (p.7). This is exactly what happens in sitcoms. The meaning of an utterance is always linked to a particular context or situation.

2.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, there can be a great number of positive consequences of using sitcoms to enhance students' listening skills such as the acquisition of pragmatics, better understanding of a foreign language, increasing motivation and interest in students, and also, students can end up improving their speaking and pronunciation skills along with their listening skills.



Chapter 3

Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

After analyzing all of the relevant definitions to this project, it is time to review studies that have been conducted in relation to this topic. Given the significance that English has nowadays in our globalized society, it is of extreme importance that non-native speakers learn how to overcome the communicative difficulties that they may encounter when using the language. Thus, as established in the theoretical framework, learners should acquire pragmatic skills that would help them avoid communication breakdowns.

The ultimate goal for most English learners is to be able to communicate while using the language accurately in a variety of situations related to their studies, work field, trips, etc. Palu (2016) states that “without communication skills, humans are isolated from one another, unable to share thoughts and feelings with family, friends, and colleagues” (p. 3). Therefore, students’ aim is to use the foreign language in the most natural possible way, just as if they were using their native tongue.

Today, according to a great number of researchers around the world such as Kung, Palu, Washburn, Vanderplank, and others, situation comedies are a possible pragmatic resource for English learners. Hence, it is necessary to determine why and how TV series and pragmatics are connected in order to find out if they can help Ecuadorian English students as well.



Kung (2013) deeply believes that “having the language exposure every day is the key to learning a second language successfully” (p.116). However, sometimes it can be hard for students to interact with English native speakers, so being exposed to sitcoms is a good opportunity to enhance their skills as sitcoms represent nearly authentic language input (Palu, 2016). Yet, enhancing one’s language skills through TV series is not as simple as it sounds. As stated by Vanderplank (2013), “TV requires viewers to actively overcome their own expectations that little effort is required, if they are to benefit in educational terms. Educational benefits come only to those who put in considerable mental effort” (p.4).

A number of authors, teachers, and linguists have come to the conclusion that since sitcoms reflect everyday situations and use colloquial language, they provide great pragmatic input for the viewers. In his paper, Washburn (2001) strongly supports the use of sitcoms in EFL environments by stating,

sitcoms provide the best conditions for pragmatic language learning and the best teaching materials. Like dramas and soap operas, and unlike most textbooks, television sitcoms offer models that are rich, varied, and contextualized. Sitcoms present many models of appropriate pragmatic language use among various characters of differing status, familiarity, gender, and in varied settings, such as at work, at home, in public places, and at formal gatherings (p. 22).

This idea has been corroborated by research and studies done in Taiwan, South Africa, The United States, China, Turkey, and many more countries around the world. This variety of studies and research projects have used TV series such as, *Friends*, *How I met your mother*, *The Big Bang Theory*, *Two and a Half Men*, *Glee*, *Gossip Girl*, etc. The studies



include activities, analyses, interviews, questionnaires, role plays, recordings, and other interesting tools that helped students enhance their language skills.

3.2 Relevant Studies

For instance, a study conducted by Fun-Wei Kung (2013) aimed at proving that Taiwanese EFL learners can in fact improve their listening and speaking competence through TV series. Kung (2013) highlighted that “students generally lack confidence in speaking English for fear of making grammatical and structural mistakes” (p.115), hence the purpose of his study.

The 52 participants involved in this study were students at a university in Northern Taiwan, and all of them had received an average of 10 years of English instruction in the same country. Because of their low confidence, all the participants believed their listening and speaking skills needed substantial improvement. Kung (2013) stated that “speaking English for daily communication has become something impossible simply because students in Taiwan are not used to doing so” (p.115).

All 52 participants solved a pre-assessment questionnaire which included 50 questions regarding listening comprehension, and 10 questions regarding speaking ability. These questions were designed to understand their interests, feelings, opinions, and confidence of their English proficiency. All of them scored a low grade, so they had to enroll in an intermediate listening and speaking class, where the researcher was the instructor. Since English is taught only as a foreign language in Taiwan, having access to American sitcoms and movies would help English students overcome the obstacles they usually encounter



(Kung, 2013, p.116). Hence, aside from the textbook and handouts, the instructor included the first season of the American TV series *Gossip Girl* in the curriculum.

During the 12 week course, the students watched one episode per week without subtitles and were asked to discuss what they had learned with a classmate. The episode was played once, and then it was fast forwarded for extra explanation regarding vocabulary, phrases, expressions, and questions from the students during the discussion period. Besides, a variety of activities were conducted in order to enhance the students' ability to understand meaning from context, listen to what the characters were saying, and describe what was happening in the show.

The instructor and researcher of this study videotaped the participants' in-class performance and took notes of their reactions to listening and speaking activities. Then a post-assessment questionnaire similar to the first one was administered to the participants to see if there was a significant difference in their listening and speaking performances. Finally, a 5-minute interview was conducted in order to assess participants' reflections and feedback individually.

Kung (2013) stated that "there was a significant difference in students' perceptions, interests, and motivation in learning English" (p.125), proving that TV series can have a positive effect on EFL students' learning process. Kung then added,

the surveys showed that they were generally more willing to speak English, and they had also become more confident in speaking up after this study. They were more active to ask questions in class in English and they were not afraid of making mistakes. (p. 126)



The participants were happy with their improvement after receiving TV series-based instruction and most of them stated that they were interested in learning English with American dramas. Kung (2013) stated that “almost three quarters of the participants believed that TV series gave them ample opportunities to learn from the L2 input, making them more aware of the language uses in actual environments” (p.130).

After finishing his research, Kung (2013) concluded that “TV series could also be combined for L2 speaking improvement along with listening comprehension. Authentic materials such as TV series can substantially boost L2 speaking acquisition in various ways, which empirical studies have yet to document” (p.131).

Similarly, Martínez and Fernández (2008) conducted a study in Spain that focuses mainly on the use of sitcoms in EFL classrooms with the purpose of including pragmatics in the curriculum. The authors believe there is a need to include authentic language material in order for students to be pragmatically aware. A total of 23 fragments of the sitcom Friends were chosen by the researchers. Martínez and Fernández (2008) stated that “the scripts of Friends capture the main features of authentic language in a fine way, and they are a good source of everyday, natural expressions” (p.33).

The participants were 15 second-year university students whose major was English. During the classes, the participants watched a number of episodes of Friends, and they were asked to write down the dialogues or parts they thought were humorous. After that, they were asked to explain the reasons why they believed the scenes were funny. All of this was accompanied by theoretical explanation of pragmatic aspects by the researchers, so the participants could analyze the scenes properly.



At the end of their research, the authors could demonstrate that humour in sitcoms is usually caused by word play, which can only be accurately understood if the person has acquired L2 pragmatic knowledge that allows him/her to develop proper communication skills. Another important conclusion reached by the researchers is that since people communicate more than what they actually say, the speaker's intention has an important role in humorous aspects of communication (Martínez & Fernández, 2008, p.41).

Finally, the authors believe that using audiovisual material in EFL classrooms can catch students' attention and interest. Thus, boosting their motivation and involving them in the tasks they are supposed to fulfill (Martínez & Fernández, 2008, p.41).

Furthermore, Thomas C. Messerli (2015) conducted a research about the laughter markers in the sitcom *2 Broke Girls*. These markers facilitate the process of recognizing and understanding jokes for the viewers, thus the main objective of humour markers is to intentionally communicate humour to the audience (Messerli, 2015, p.4). In this paper, laughter is considered as an expression of amusement and as a humour trigger.

The researcher used ELAN, a professional tool for the creation of complex annotations on video and audio resources, to transcribe the dialogues from the sitcom, so all instances of laughter markers could be easily identified for the purpose of this study. Messerli (2015) highlighted that "viewers are assumed to be able to detect humour markers employed by characters and to infer humorous character intentions based on those markers" (p.5). Consequently, this helped viewers understand the context of each scene or situation.

The fact that viewers laughed according to the humour markers presented either by the script or by the speaking character showed that learners were able to infer, recognize, and



appreciate humorous situations as part of the sitcom's context. Therefore, by using their pragmatic skills, learners could fully understand the scene.

In her article Pérez (2009) emphasizes the importance of language evolution throughout the years. The author believes English textbooks and dictionaries are no longer the most reliable sources of language input nowadays. Pérez (2009) stated, "we cannot guarantee our students will recognize or be aware of recent English expressions which they should incorporate into their lexicon. We need to find a way to raise their explicit attention to their existence and use" (p. 4).

Therefore, she introduces a new proposal in her article which purpose is to include 'real' English input into the classroom through sources such as sitcoms and TV series, podcasts, internet texts, and recent best sellers. The same sources will be then used to solve a number of innovative activities to enhance students' language skills.

One of the techniques suggested by Pérez (2009) was telecollaboration, which allowed English students to communicate with native English speakers e-tutors in order to ask them questions related to grammar, vocabulary, culture, common expressions, and so on. Another recommended source were sitcoms which, according to Pérez (2009), "will help students become familiarized, from a receptive point of view, with the language which is actually used outside the confines of the classroom and, from a productive one, to foster their fluency through the use of such expressions" (p.6).

To conclude her article, the author emphasizes the need of updated sources of language that can have a greater impact of today's English students. Pérez (2009) states,



diverse sources of input, such as telecollaboration and ‘coffee and talk’ sessions with native English speakers, sitcoms and TV series, podcasts, Internet texts, and recent bestsellers, have been suggested, together with possible ways to exploit them in line with trendy language teaching methods. (p.7)

Kozhevnikova (2014) conducted a study in Russia which aimed at analyzing the importance of culture when it comes to communication. The author believes that sometimes very little emphasis is given to cultural aspects of a language when learning it as a second or foreign language. Kozhevnikova (2014) stated, “every language reflects the cultural values of the society in which the language is spoken. Linguistic competence alone is just not complete for learners of a language” (p.4462).

For this study, Kozhevnikova (2014) used authentic language materials such as the popular American sitcom *Friends* (about 50 episodes), and the British magazine *Take a Break* (25 articles). The participants of this study were 20 students from Tourism and IT majors, who were exposed to the previously mentioned materials during their English classes. Kozhevnikova (2014) believes “authentic video reflects authentic use of target language and brings extended context motivates students and they achieve significant gains in overall cultural knowledge after watching videos from the target culture in the classroom” (p.4464).

After including *Friends* and *Take a Break* in their classes, all participants were interviewed in order to analyze their opinions and perceptions related to the study they took part of. A total of 95% of the participants agreed that the use of authentic materials was highly beneficial for their cultural and linguistic development. They even believed these sorts of materials can increase their motivation regarding language learning in general, not only



English. However, five percent of the participants viewed these activities as useless or boring (Kozhevnikova, 2014).

Results also showed that students' motivation towards English learning increased about 85% due to the fun content and topics of the materials that were used, and 95% of the students believed the material have helped them enrich their vocabulary. Moreover, participants were able to identify socio-cultural aspects such as popular celebrations in the US while they were enjoying the sitcom. To conclude her study, Kozhevnikova (2014) stated,

exposure to the second language is essential, where natural exposure is not available, the classroom exposure to authentic materials can be quite beneficial for students, if certain conditions are observed. It's teachers' primary task to select cultural data and authentic materials to provide a wide array of cultural and linguistic information.
(p.4465)

As it has been shown, teachers can use sitcoms in EFL environments to approach different language skills and sub skills; however, since the aim of this project is to enhance English students' listening skills, it is of extreme importance to analyze the effects that TV series can have on students' listening abilities during and after class. The connections between what students see and what they hear can be crucial for their language learning process, and it can produce a variety of reactions among them (Palu, 2016).

Hea-Suk Kim (2015) conducted a study at Seoul Women's University in South Korea with the purpose of investigating if the use of video resources can help EFL learners improve their listening comprehension skills. The students were taught for a 10 session's course over 3 weeks during the summer, and they were divided into 3 groups. The low group consisted of



29 students, the intermediate group also had 29 students, and the advanced group included 28 students.

The videos used for this study included talk shows, sitcoms, news, songs, and movies, and all groups used the same videos and studied the same material. One video was shown in each session, and it lasted approximately 5 minutes. A pre-test was taken at the beginning of the study, and a similar post-test at the end in order to determine the results of this study. The participants also answered a questionnaire regarding their attitudes, opinions, interests, and enjoyment when watching videos to expand their listening comprehension skills.

Kim (2015) concluded that the benefit of learning English through videos can only be extended to the intermediate and advanced groups. The low group could not benefit from this technique given that their proficiency level did not allow them to comprehend some features and characteristics included in the videos (Kim, 2015, p.19). Students in the intermediate and advanced level significantly improved their listening skills based on their pre and post-tests.

Nonetheless, finding the perfect methodology to enhance listening skills can be a hard task for educators. Kung (2013) stated that “some practitioners and researchers have started implementing authentic video-based instruction (TV series-based instruction) in several ESL/EFL settings to familiarize students with not only authentic language input, but also engaging as well as interesting materials” (p.5).

Palu (2016) stated that “using video, watching TV, listening to original in language learning is a great opportunity to improve the level of language mastery” (p.5). However, it is important for students to decide whether to watch sitcom episodes with English captions, their native language captions, or no captions at all. There is still a debate based on whether



subtitles help students and to what extent. Some researchers believe captions only distract students, and others believe that they actually help students because they make them work various abilities at the same time (Vanderplank, 2013).

Kusumarasdyati (2006) conducted a study that supports the idea of using subtitled videos in EFL classrooms at State University of Surabaya in Indonesia. The researcher also suggested some pre-viewing, while-viewing, and post-viewing activities for students.

Kusumarasdyati (2006) argues that,

to promote the learners' mastery of listening skills, lecturers need to carefully select and present a variety of quality materials and appropriate teaching aids to be used in a language laboratory, ensuring that the learners will attain optimum results from the lessons. (p.1)

The participants were undergraduate students who were majoring in English Literature. The materials for this study included some DVDs and worksheets for the students to work on according to the movie they were showed. The movies were watched with Indonesian subtitles to facilitate the students' learning process.

The pre-viewing activities usually included presenting the topic of the movie and pre-teaching the key vocabulary. After that, the students had to answer to some of the questions in the worksheet while they watched the movie. The post-viewing activities included analyzing the movie's cultural context and background and comparing it to their own. This last activity helped students to enhance their pragmatic skills by understanding how culture can influence language and vice versa. Learners became aware of the great linguistic



diversity that can exist between two countries and within the same country as well (Kusumarasyati, 2006, p.10).

Kusumarasyati (2006) concluded that “subtitled movie DVDs turn out to be an effective teaching device to develop the EFL learners’ listening skills and equip them with the relevant knowledge of the target culture simultaneously” (p.10). Also, the author noticed how videos greatly motivated and engaged students in their learning process, especially due to the emphasis given to the cultural contexts presented in the movies.

Wang (2012) conducted a study in China to demonstrate the effects of self-directed language learning through watching English television drama (ETD). The use of sitcoms and TV series in general for English learning has become popular around the world, and that is the case of the five participants involved in Wang’s study.

This study describes the participants’ experience. All five participants majored in Chinese and reported their English learning process being as long as 20 years. They also report watching ETD between three and six years, and only one of them has traveled to an English speaking country. A total of three interviews were conducted to each participant, and their main purpose was to analyze the participants’ experience, viewing process and schedules, and reflections regarding EDT watching in order to develop a self-directed language learning process.

The participants were Chinese teachers, and Wang (2012) stated, “they believe that the best way to learn a foreign language is to learn it through real-life communication” (p.342). This shows that all five participants were aware of a language’s pragmatic value. They believe that ETD were able to provide them with something that regular English



textbooks could not. Wang (2012) then added, “attracted by the contexts and values contained in these dramas, the study participants did not seem to have stopped at simply enjoying an entertainment while sitting comfortably on the sofa; instead, they intended to learn something serious” (p.343).

After analyzing the results of the interviews, Wang (2012) concluded that there were seven aspects that were involved in the participants’ English learning pedagogy. These seven aspects were: selection, repetition, use of subtitles, note-taking, imitation, practice, and study. The author then mentions that sitcoms such as *Friends* as well as ETD are proper sources of authentic language that can boost English learners’ motivation not only in China, but around the globe. Wang (2012) finishes his paper by saying, “learning English serves as an arena where out-of-school and post-school education takes place, and this needs to be further promoted and facilitated” (p.347).

However, it is essential for this study to mention that in Ecuador, there are not many studies (neither in English nor Spanish) that consider sitcoms as a useful tool for learning of any type. At the University of Cuenca, less than five research projects have been done in relation to the use of sitcoms for an academic purpose. Hence, this project aims at fulfilling some possible gaps and motivating students and teachers to use sitcoms as a pragmatic source of language.

One of the few studies done at the University of Cuenca was conducted by Esteban Heras, a teacher of the English Major. In his research, Heras (2014) worked with two groups of participants, one from the 4th semester of the major and the other one from the 8th



semester. It is important to mention that the second group had already taken the subject Pragmatics in a previous semester while the other group had not.

To begin his investigation, the researcher applied a diagnostic test to participants from the 8th semester. The purpose of this test was to determine how much information the students remembered regarding pragmatics in general, idioms, and the importance of pragmatics in language learning.

After that, the researcher started working with the main group, 31 students from the 4th semester. The participants filled in a questionnaire regarding their demographic data and English learning process. They were asked to explain their attitudes toward English, the difficulties they had experienced, and their English input through audio visual materials such as movies, TV series, and videos outside the classroom. After analyzing the results, the author decided to use videos and an episode of a popular sitcom during class.

Next, the researcher organized a guest speaker event in order to test the participants' speaking skills during a free and natural conversation. The participants were divided into groups, and each group had one English native speaker. The participants sat around the guest and took turns, so all of them could talk to him/her. The native speaker, who was a teacher, came up with the discussion topic, so the students had no freedom regarding the subject matter. Students' pragmatic and communicative ability was tested during this event.

Then students took a test that required them to make conclusions based on pragmatically loaded contexts. Also, they had to analyze non-standard utterances used by native speakers. They had to decide if the utterances were grammatically correct or not. If not they had to change it to its standardized form.



The next step was to introduce a pragmatics booklet to the participants. The booklet was used during 36 sessions of one hour each. Its purpose was to increase students' pragmatic awareness and to boost their pragmatic skills in English through a series of activities. The activities included discussing different topics, watching videos, identifying different expressions, vocabulary and gestures, interacting with others, preparing dialogues, answering questions regarding a specific topic or video, analyzing cross-cultural differences, identifying mistakes and obstacles in communication, etc. All of these activities were based on a number of videos presented by the researcher and an episode of the sitcom *Two and a Half Men*.

After finishing his study, Heras (2014) stated that the booklet of activities helped students develop their pragmatic skills to a certain level. They were able to understand pragmatic language use, expressions, and sarcastic utterances. The researcher added that students' L1 pragmatic skills might have helped them understand L2 pragmatic situations that were presented to them.

In addition, the author noticed that the participants used expressions and pragmatically loaded exchanges when they were asked to use the booklet; however, they did not apply their recently acquired pragmatic knowledge when freely talking to their classmates. Finally, Heras (2014) concluded,

the subjects of this study benefited from the use of videos and sitcoms for pragmatics instruction. The students showed much enthusiasm and willingness to participate.

This might be due to the fact that professors do not use audiovisual materials in their instruction very often. (p.100)



Likewise, Pinos (2014) conducted a study at the University of Azuay. This study did not focus on the sociolinguistic aspect of sitcoms, but it used sitcoms in order to enhance students' ability to acquire and understand vocabulary in context. The participants of this research were 22 first-semester students, whose English proficiency level corresponded to A1, according to the CEFR. The study was carried out during 80 lessons, and it used the popular American sitcoms *Drake and Josh*, *Malcolm in the Middle*, and *Friends*.

The researcher began her study by applying a questionnaire in Spanish to the participants in which they expressed their opinions and preferences regarding sitcoms. The participants expressed which sitcoms they enjoy watching, how often they watch them, their reasons for watching them, and how sitcoms may help them improve their English level.

Furthermore, pre and post-tests were applied to the participants to measure vocabulary breadth and meaning from context in relation to reading comprehension. These tests included a variety of questions that allowed the researcher to collect the data. After that, the participants were interviewed in order to analyze their perceptions and feeling regarding the treatment. The interview was also conducted in Spanish, and it included questions concerning the students' reactions to watching sitcoms in EFL classes.

The researcher also used a journal as a tool to record useful information related to the project. It was divided into two parts, one for positive and negative aspects of the teaching process, and one for the positive and negative aspects of the learning process. The treatment included pre and post viewing activities designed to promote vocabulary acquisition. The activities allowed students to select unfamiliar words in the video script and then analyze their meaning after watching the video.



After finishing her study, Pinos (2014) concluded that even if this treatment was effective for the acquisition of vocabulary and strategies for understanding vocabulary in context, it did not have a significant impact on reading comprehension.

Since this study focuses mainly on students' listening skills, it is important to mention that those skills can influence students' feelings, emotions, confidence, and motivation in relation to their language acquisition process (Méndez & Peña, 2013). Research shows that these aspects are often linked to students' memorization capacity. Consequently, teachers aim at creating positive experiences in the classroom that will help their students enhance their listening skills. Palu (2016) mentions that "watching sitcoms will be interesting for learners because of humor and always changing actions. Students will love learning, if they feel happy, safe and motivated during the lesson" (p.9).

Chumbi and Narvaez (2016) stated, "audio visual strategies such as Sitcoms contain significant elements to be analyzed and synthesized to merge Listening and oral replication on a determined basis, throughout an established course of learning" (p. 36). In the same sense, Palu (2016) mentioned that "listening and speaking are very closely related processes, one cannot exist without another. The more we listen, the easier it gets to communicate with other people in a foreign language (p.15). Therefore, if sitcoms can enhance students' listening skills, they might improve their speaking skills as well. Furthermore, Palu (2016) highlights, "the better our listening skill are the easier it is for us to speak" (p.13).

Nevertheless, not every sitcom is a proper source for English learning, especially for enhancing listening skills. The person in charge of the learning process must keep in mind his/her students' age, gender, language level, context, interests, motivation, and so on. For



instance, the teacher must consider the amount of available time. Usually, as sitcoms only take about 20 minutes, teachers can prepare some activities for students to work on after watching the episode. However, if the chosen sitcom does not fit the students' interest, they might get bored and will not like to work on the assignments.

Additionally, it is important to consider the sitcoms' year of release and plot. If the group of learners is young, they may want to watch something that they might relate to, but not something too old that they may not even understand or laugh at. Teachers should better consult with their students before planning a sitcom-based activity, and in that way he/she will maintain the students' motivation and interest in the class. Kim (2015) stated,

authentic video resources need to be carefully chosen to minimize difficulties and to ensure that their content is of general interest in learners. In addition, to enhance comprehension, teachers should consider how many times to repeat listening resources to ensure that students have understood the material. (p.22)

Moreover, the variety of activities the educator prepares also determines whether students are willing to complete them or not. Learners usually enjoy constant change, and they like to avoid repeated activities, so one has to be creative when it comes to preparing worksheets, exercises, projects, and more.

3.3 Conclusion

To conclude it can be said that different tools can be used in EFL environments for better understanding of the language, and sitcoms have gained popularity among teachers in today's classrooms. Kim (2015) argues that "the use of movies or sitcoms can make students more interested in learning and thus repeated exposure to L2 regardless of their proficiency



Universidad de Cuenca

level appears to be an effective teaching tool” (p.20). Hence, this research project aims at analyzing whether this method can also help English learners at the University of Cuenca, as it has helped other students around the world. This research project will consider teachers’ and students’ perceptions regarding sitcoms as tools for English learning.



Chapter 4

Research Methodology

4.1 Research Approach

The following chapter aims at explaining the process that was followed in this research. In order to reach the objectives previously established in this paper, this project employed a mixed methods research approach, which according to Tashakkori and Creswell (2007) is “research in which the investigator collects and analyzes data, integrates the findings, and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches or methods in a single study or a program of inquiry” (p.4).

Through quantitative and qualitative data collection instruments such as interviews and surveys, this project analyzed and collected data in relation to teachers’ and students’ interests and perceptions at the Institute of Languages at the University of Cuenca when it comes to the use of situational comedies in EFL environments.

Therefore, this project includes two types of data, numerical from the students’ surveys and textual from the teachers’ interviews, and its analysis is both, statistical and thematic respectively (Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007). The following chart indicates how the instruments used in this project answered to the research question and reached the specific objectives.



Research Question	Research Objectives	Instrument
To what extent can sitcoms be considered pragmatic tools to enhance listening skills in B1/B2 learners?	To analyze the possible effects that watching sitcoms may have in students' listening skills when used in EFL environments.	Document revision
	To analyze students' interests and preferences when watching sitcoms.	Survey
	To determine the sitcoms and the number of episodes on which the activities will be based on.	Sitcoms (videos and scripts)
	To analyze teachers' opinions and perceptions about the use of sitcoms for English learning.	Interview

Chart 1. Relationship Matrix

4.2 Participants and Setting

Setting

The Institute of Languages at the University of Cuenca became the setting for this research project mainly because of the importance that it gives to languages, especially to English. At the Institute of Languages, university and non-university students can enrol in language courses such as English, French, German, Japanese, and more. The Institute's main



purpose is to promote language learning by focusing on culture, communication, society, and more aspects that allow its students to be part of today's globalized civilization.

Students at the University of Cuenca must enrol on English courses at the Institute of Languages for three semesters. These three levels of mandatory courses are known as English credit courses. However, the Institute of Languages also offers voluntary English intensive courses, which go from level four up to level eight. After finishing all eight levels, students are supposed to reach a B2 level, which is equivalent to a high intermediate proficiency level.

Participants

The participants of this research project were students and teachers of the Institute of Languages at the University of Cuenca. A total of 84 students filled in a survey, and seven English teachers were interviewed in order to fulfill the purpose of this paper in relation to the use of sitcoms as tools for English learning.

The first group of participants were 58 students from seventh level and 26 students from eighth level of the Institute of Languages, which according to the Institute, represents a B1 and B2 level in the CEFR. A total of 52 women and 32 men participated in this research by answering questions from a survey regarding their English learning process and preferences and their interests regarding situational comedies. The participants' ages varied from 18 to over 41 years old, but the majority of the students, about 55%, were from 18 to 25 years old. Moreover, most of the participants had already finished their Bachelor's studies, and a few of them even had a master's degree.

The students' majors and areas of study varied considerably, which gave this study a more general aspect rather than a specific one according to their career choice. Finally, only



35% of the students had taken English courses besides the ones at the University of Cuenca, opposite to the 64% of the students who had experienced some kind of English instruction in different institutions and language schools in Cuenca.

In order to participate in this study, the students had to be enrolled in seventh or eighth level of the intensive English courses at the Language Institute, which means that they were proficient enough to understand and answer the questions in the survey. Also, students with a higher proficiency level are able to discuss, analyze, and decide which tools or techniques can enhance their language skills and which ones cannot. Hence, the students needed to express their opinion based on their experience.

The second group of participants were a total of seven English teachers, five women and two men, from the Institute of Languages whose age range varied from 26 to over 51 years old. Furthermore, all of the participants had taken an English proficiency test, except one who was a native speaker, showing a proficiency level of C1 according to the CEFR.

All seven teachers were in possession of a master's degree, and six out of the seven teachers had lived in an English speaking country for at least four months. Also, six out of the seven participants had over ten years of experience as English teachers. All these characteristics proved that the participants were more than capable to answer questions from an interview regarding students' English learning process, skills improvement, and the use of sitcoms as techniques in EFL environments, and that their opinions would be of great importance for the purpose of this study.



4.3 Instruments

This project used both, qualitative and quantitative instruments that allowed the researcher to collect numerical and textual data, which was analyzed statistically and thematically. Hence, the research approach of this project was mixed-methods. The qualitative instruments were an extended document revision, which focused on theories, definitions, studies, and experiments from other countries and an interview of 13 questions that was conducted in order to analyze teachers' perceptions, opinions, and beliefs about the use of situational comedies for English learning. The quantitative instrument was a survey of ten closed questions that was applied to English students regarding their language learning process and their interests and opinion in relation to sitcoms and their possible uses in the English classroom. Some of the questions from the survey and interview were taken from the questionnaires and surveys used in Kung (2013), Heras (2014), and Pinos (2014).

4.4 Data Collection and Analysis

4.4.1 Qualitative Instruments

Document Revision

In order to reach the objectives established at the beginning of this project, it was necessary to review some definitions, concepts, theories, studies, articles, and research papers related to topics relevant to this study. First, the researcher covered topics such as pragmatics, interlanguage pragmatics and cross-cultural pragmatics. These theories and definitions were fundamental to determine the approach of this project. The purpose of analyzing these topics was to emphasize the importance of pragmatics when learning English as a foreign language.



Next, the researcher focused on language skills, especially listening, and the importance of enhancing it through a variety of material and tools. Then the use of situational comedies was discussed by analyzing opinions and theories from researchers like, Palu (2016), Kusumarasdyati (2006), Harmer (2009), etc.

After that, the researcher focused on a number of studies that were conducted all around the world, which were related to this project in one way or another. For instance, a study conducted by Martínez and Fernández (2008) proved that communication also involves humour and that humour is included in pragmatics. So by watching the sitcom *Friends* in the classroom, students were able to develop their pragmatic skills, and to realize how important those skills are. This study is relevant to this project because it also aims at analyzing the importance given to these skills in the English courses at the Institute of Languages at the University of Cuenca.

A study conducted in China by Wang (2012) demonstrated that the use of TV series can in fact be absolutely useful and a proper tool for language learning, especially because of their pragmatic context and input. In this study, the participants were able to learn English by themselves only by using these tools. That fact is relevant for this study, which focuses on how often students at the Institute of Languages are exposed to TV series, sitcoms in particular, and whether teacher believe they are tools for English learning or not.

The document revision was concluded by stating the fact that not many studies have been conducted in Cuenca, Ecuador in relation to the use of sitcoms for English learning. Thus, emphasizing the purpose of this project, which is to create a booklet of sitcom based activities that could be useful for Ecuadorian English students.



Interview

In this study, seven English teachers from the Institute of Languages were interviewed in order to find out their English-related background and experience, their thoughts when it comes to English learning, the importance of pragmatics when learning and teaching English, and the role that sitcoms may have in an English classroom.

Teachers were interviewed on May 31st, June 1st and 4th, 2018. Each interview was conducted in English, included 13 questions, and lasted from eight to 14 minutes approximately. All seven audio-recorded interviews were then carefully transcribed in order to be properly analyzed through Qualitative Content Analysis, which according to Hsieh and Shannon (2005) is defined as, “a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns” (p.1278). This method led to the selection of relevant themes and topics in order to organize and analyze the collected information.

4.4.2 Quantitative Instrument

Survey

Additionally, a total of 84 students from levels seven and eight of the English intensive courses at the Institute of Languages completed a ten-question survey which aimed at revealing students' interests and perceptions towards sitcoms, and whether they think this technique can be considered tools for English learning. All students who were present on the day of the survey were willing to collaborate with the researcher by answering the questions, and the researcher was able to help them in case they had a doubt about one of the questions in the survey.



The survey was administrated on May 31st, June 1st and 4th, 2018 in the students' classroom. It was conducted in English and took about 15 minutes. After collecting all data from the 84 surveys, all quantitative information was analyzed through Excel 2010. Finally, charts, graphics, and tables were created in order for the reader to clearly understand the results retrieved from the survey.

4.5 Ethical Considerations

In order for this study to be properly conducted, first, the researcher scheduled a meeting with the Director of the Language Institute. During the meeting, the researcher informed what type of study this was, what its purpose was, and what instruments were going to be used to collect data from students and teachers of the institute. After a meeting was held among the board of the Institute, permission was granted for the researcher to apply an interview to teachers and a survey to students regarding the use of situational comedies for English learning.

Since all 91 participants, between students and teachers, were 18 or older there was no need of parental consent or any other type of permission. All participants were able to decide by themselves whether they wanted to collaborate with this project or not. Luckily, all of them were happy to participate and share their opinion in the best way they could.

4.6 Limitations

In this study, as in any other, there was a limitation; however, it was not a major one. Despite the researcher's effort to explain, some students and teachers did not clearly understand the difference between TV series in general and situational comedies in particular. As previously explained in the theoretical framework, TV series are any type of TV shows



Universidad de Cuenca

that are related to drama, romance, thrill, science fiction, etc. Sitcoms on the other hand, are TV shows that are only related to comedy on everyday situations. This limitation caused a little confusion for both, teachers and students, at the time of suggestions in their answers.



Chapter 5

Results and Discussion

After collecting and analyzing all data retrieved from qualitative and quantitative instruments, this chapter aims at explaining all results obtained from them. All results are clearly described, emphasizing the main points, topics, and themes. So as to reach the general objective of this study, which is the creation of a booklet of sitcom based activities, all sitcoms, episodes, and type of activities that are included in the booklet are illustrated in the following chapter.

5.1 Qualitative Methods

5.1.1 Document Revision

The document revision performed for the purpose of this research was fundamental in order to analyse today's perceptions towards the use of videos, movies, TV series, and sitcoms to enhance language skills, especially listening. All comments, research results, and opinions regarding this topic from researchers such as Kung (2013), Messerli (2015), Kozhevnikova (2014), kim (2015), Wang (2012), and many more agreed on the fact that sitcoms and TV series could actually help enhance students' listening skills when learning English.

Likewise, all previously mentioned researchers believe sitcoms can enhance students' pragmatic skills and cultural awareness as well. They believe that language structure and vocabulary are not the only thing that matters when learning a language. Kozhevnikova (2013) believed "authentic materials are sometimes the only way of exposure to foreign



culture and language and provide the only source of cultural and non-verbal information for students in some countries and communities” (p. 4465).

Wang (2012) suggested that besides formal language learning with teachers and textbooks, people who want to learn English could do it through English Television Drama (ETD). He stated, “provided that the potential pedagogical benefits of ETD are acknowledged by instructors, numerous examples of features that characterize natural conversation can be illustrated with a television show such as *Friends*” (p.347). Wang (2012) concluded his research about self-directed English learning by saying “ESL teachers and educators should consider refining the self-directed ETD pedagogy for those who wish to learn English on their own” (p.347). Therefore, showing that students can learn through sitcoms and TV shows in general if they try it because he already proved that it is possible.

Kim’s (2015) study was related to the use of videos in class as a source of authentic material. At the end, the researcher concluded, “its capacity to increase learners’ interests and motivation, and its potential to improve listening skills can hardly be denied” (p.22). Similarly, all studies that were previously mentioned in the literature review show that sitcoms can absolutely motivate, enhance, and support students’ English learning process.

5.1.2 Interviews

In this study a total of seven interviews (INTW) were carried out with teachers (I) at the Institute of Languages. Then all interviews were analyzed through qualitative content analysis and the following results are described according to five major themes: difficult skills, students’ motivation, importance of pragmatics, the use of videos in class, and the use of sitcoms for listening. Moreover, two of the themes include subcategories.



Difficult Skills

All teachers were asked which skill they thought was the most difficult, and speaking and listening were considered the most difficult skills for students to acquire based on the teachers' experience. Speaking was considered difficult because of the students' fear of making mistakes when pronouncing the word in English, which sometimes can be complicated.

I think speaking is the most difficult skill probably because the pronunciation in English is a little bit more challenging than in Spanish because in English you don't say it the way you spell it, so the pronunciation can get very confusing. And I also think students are a little bit scared to speak in front of their peers. They're scared of making mistakes. (INTW T5)

On the other hand, listening was considered problematic because the lack of input and practice of listening to the variety of accents that exist in English.

I think that one of the most difficult skills is listening. [...] I think because of the different accents. For example, sometimes when we're teaching English, they get used to listening to us, but when we play maybe a track from a person maybe from India then they don't understand anything, so the accents I think is the one of the most difficult thing to, I don't know, get used to. (INTW T3)

Students' Motivation

Another relevant theme was students' motivation, which as reported by four of the seven teachers varies between the credit courses students and the intensive courses students.



Teachers thought students from the credit courses were not that interested in English because, for them, it was only a matter of taking a mandatory course for their majors. On the contrary, intensive courses students were really motivated and interested in learning English because they have travel or study plans for their future, or even just because they realize the importance of speaking English nowadays.

The biggest group, which is the credit courses students, they're pretty much trying to fulfill the requirements, and they say 'I'm tired of it' and 'I just want to graduate'. In contrast, you know, those students who take intensive courses, they have, in my opinion, they do have a plan in life. I mean, they intend to go abroad, they mean to study hard, to get a higher education, so that makes a difference. (INTW T4)

I think it depends. For example, in intensives we accept students that are not only university students, but also students from all over the city. They're very, very motivated and because they have specific goals as to what they want to study. Credits, which is just undergraduate students it really just depends on the individual students. Some are really motivated to learn, some are motivated about their grades and not so much about learning English, and then also some of them have had bad experiences with English in the past, and they really don't like English at all. (INTW T5)

Importance of Pragmatics

Since this study has a pragmatic approach, one of the questions of the interview aimed at analyzing how important pragmatics is for English teachers. Five out of seven teachers stated that pragmatics is a very important part of learning a language, and that without it,



students will not be learning the language properly because pragmatics involves learning real English through authentic input.

I would definitely say that it's very important as you do not learn the language, like in an isolated way. You need to learn the language in context, and even better if you can have them, you know like, exposed to you know the real context like in this case like movies or like sitcoms or any of those options. I would say definitely, like pragmatics is a must for us, you know, when teaching a language. (INTW T1)

Thus, agreeing with Martínez and Fernández (2008) when they say that “pragmatics deals with the mismatch between what is said and what is really meant since, in most communicative scenarios, speakers mean more than they say in a strictly semantic sense” (p. 31).

Martínez and Fernández's (2008) study focused mainly on pragmatics and its use inside the EFL classrooms. They used humor and pragmatics to explain that meanings are sometimes not explicit when it comes to language, and the learner must infer it from the context. Therefore, supporting teachers' opinion regarding the importance of pragmatics in EFL environments.

However, it is important to mention that two teachers believed pragmatics to be relevant according to the students' proficiency levels and purposes for learning the language.

I think it's important for advanced levels, you know? I think if you talk about pragmatics with beginners, they're gonna get confused. [...] So I would really recommend it for probably the eight level courses or the courses for the TOEFL preparation. (INTW T2)



In this theme, the subcategory *teaching culture* caught the interviewer's attention due to the fact that only two teachers mentioned it when talking about pragmatics. Some teachers mentioned that pragmatics involves learning colloquial expressions and slang, but the importance given to culture by two teachers was very relevant for the purpose of this study.

Pragmatics is everything. [...] I'm a big fan of culture and if the student doesn't learn about culture, he's not learning properly the language. So they're exposed to a lot of topics from a lot of intercultural situations from other countries, not only the United States. [...] So they're exposed to a lot of different topics related to culture, related to the language, a little bit of history as well. (INTW T6)

The importance given to culture by this teacher can be compared to Kozhevnikova's (2014) study, which emphasizes the importance of learning culture while learning a new language. Kozhevnikova (2014) argues, "cultural learning positively affects students' linguistic success and it should be placed on an equal footing with language teaching" (p. 4463). Thus, showing that culture is linked to language, and that teachers should keep that in mind at the moment of planning their lessons.

Kozhevnikova (2014) then adds, "the culture associated with a language cannot be learned in a few lessons. Culture is a broader concept linked to many of the linguistic concepts taught in language classes" (p. 4463). Hence, teachers should consider culture-teaching throughout the whole English learning process.

The Use of Videos in Class

When asked about what tools, techniques or material they use to enhance students' listening skills, six out of seven teachers claimed they do it by using short videos either from



YouTube, the BBC, the National Geographic, or 6minuteEnglish.com. The majority of teachers believe audio-visual material like videos, movies, TV series, or sitcoms can enhance student's language skills, especially listening.

Absolutely! I think is one of the best strategies to use. [...] I'm also working with extra-curricular activities in which one of them was watching movies, and [...] according to the results I obtained, they loved that because they learn English, and they're motivated intrinsically. They're learning, but they don't know they're learning. [...] I think a lot, all, of the teachers should use them for any kind of strategy because it's not just for listening or speaking. (INTW T3)

Thus, agreeing with Kung's (2013) study, which encouraged the incorporation of TV-series in EFL environments, and emphasized the advantages of using video-based instruction in a number of aspects related to language, such as culture, authenticity, students' interests, etc.

Nevertheless, two teachers specified that audio-visual material could help students who already have a certain level of English that allows them to understand the language, instead of beginners who might get confused by using those types of sources because their skills are not as developed.

Yeah, yeah of course they can, but I see that you need your students to have a certain level of English. What I mean is like, for example, you cannot use that kind of material with students that are in a first or second level. I think they are very useful because this is authentic material, so students can and this is a fun way for students to learn, and they can learn vocab, pronunciation, which is really important. (INTW T7)



The Use of Sitcoms for Listening

All seven teachers agreed on the fact that sitcoms can be used as tools to enhance their students' language skills. They believe students can learn vocabulary, pronunciation, culture, slang, common expressions, and improve their overall speaking and listening abilities through the use of sitcoms.

However, they believe one clue aspect of enhancing listening by watching sitcoms is the use of subtitles or captions. Some teachers believe students should not use them at all, others think students should avoid Spanish subtitles, and some think that if students use English captions, they could learn even more.

At the beginning they usually go with subtitles in English because, you know, sometimes you can actually have them in Spanish, but the point here is listening and reading at first, but then they can actually just delete the subtitles and continue.

(INTW T4)

Furthermore, one of the teachers strongly emphasized the fact that it is not enough to watch sitcoms, but students need activities based on that. According to her, students can learn a lot of things through sitcoms as long as after watching them, they can do something with the new material.

If you decide to work with this, is an excellent tool, but you have to practice. You have to have activities; otherwise you're just showing your students something for fun. As a teacher, you're doing nothing. You're just presenting this thing. (INTW

T7)



The first subcategory in this theme is *the use of sitcoms and sitcom based activities in class*. One teacher believed it is complicated for students to agree on which sitcom to watch, so for him, using sitcoms in class was not a really good idea. However, six out of the seven teachers mentioned that they would love to work with sitcoms in class, and some of them had already worked with these tools in their classes. Some even re-stated how beneficial they think sitcoms are for students.

Definitely, definitely. I would support all kind of initiatives, you know, with sitcoms. I would totally work with them. (INTW T1)

Nonetheless, two teachers consider that time could probably be a complication regarding this type of activities. One of the teachers does these types of activities, but using only extracts from sitcoms and not the whole episode. This was an important aspect to consider for this study, given that watching sitcoms in class could take time, and it is not always possible for teachers to plan such a long activity when they have so many things and topics they need to cover in class.

Well, I kind of feel frustrated sometimes because it's time consuming to do it in class. [...] What I would do with students is I ask them to watch them at home, and they take their time. [...] It would be a good idea to, like split the activity. You can watch at home, and then you come to class and we'll discuss. You choose the questions, I don't know, the activity. (INTW T4)

The second subcategory is *the use of sitcoms outside the English classroom*. All seven teachers stated that they would definitely recommend their students to watch sitcoms at home. They believe students can learn so many things by doing this by themselves. They



even mentioned that they have in fact recommended certain sitcoms for students to watch, and that they have liked them. Teachers believe students can definitely enhance their listening by watching sitcoms and TV series such as *Friends*, *The Simpsons*, *How I met your mother*, *Heartland*, *White collar*, *Annie with an E*, *The big bang theory*, etc.

A lot of my students say listening is the hardest part, but I tell them 'you can improve your listening at home. You don't need me as a teacher to improve your listening'. [...] I think listening is the easiest thing to do, but you have to watch TV and, you know, movies or something like that. (INTW T5)

This opinion definitely agrees with Wang's (2012) study which was previously mentioned in the literature review. It points out the importance of self-directed English learning by watching TV shows on a daily basis, and teachers at the Institute of Languages recognize the importance of having natural language input outside the English classroom. Wang (2012) stated, "the growth of ESL learners' L2 acquisition requires voluminous experience with rich and natural input, because the meaning of a word cannot be fully grasped unless the word is encountered in varied situational contexts" (p. 345).

5.2 Quantitative Method

Students from intensive English courses at the Institute of languages, levels seven and eight, participated in this study by filling in a survey that aimed at determining their opinion regarding English learning and their perceptions about the use of sitcoms inside and outside the English classroom. All quantitative information retrieved from the survey was analyzed using Excel 2010, and the results were the following.



From a total of 84 participants, only 30 of them had been enrolled in another type of English course besides the one at the Institute of Languages at the University of Cuenca. Some of them had studied in well-known institutes such as *Wall Street*, *CEDEI*, *Abraham Lincoln*, etc. Their studies at those institutions lasted from two months to six years. On the other hand, 64% of the students had never studied English at another institution other than the Institute of Languages at the University of Cuenca.

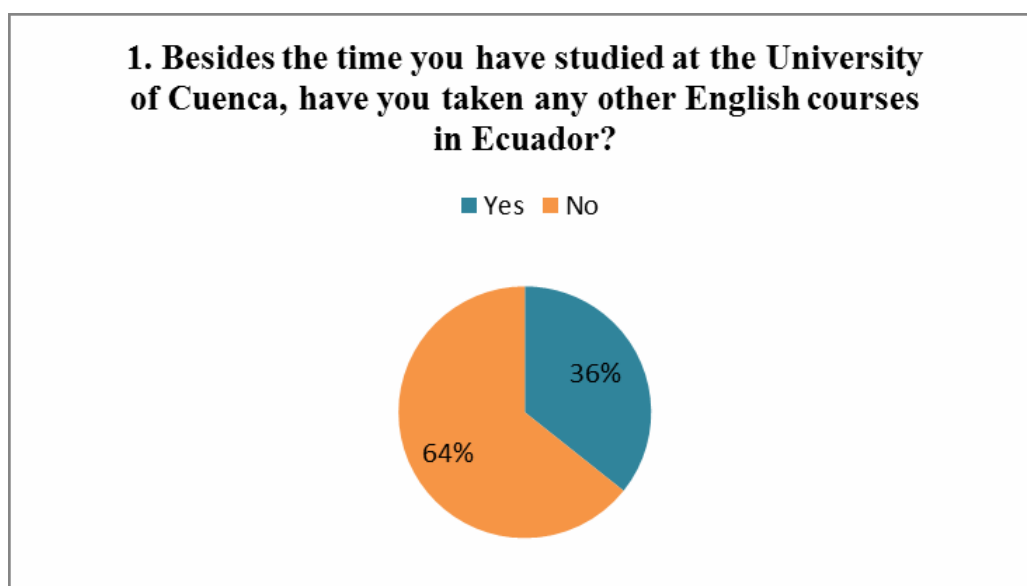


Figure 1. Participants' English studies outside the Institute of Languages.

Difficult Skills

The second question from the survey aimed at determining which skill or ability was the most complicated one for these adult learners. They were free to select more than one option, so a total of 96 responses were given by the 84 participants. For them, listening came



first with 34 votes. After that, came speaking with 31. Then reading with 29 and interestingly writing got only one vote.

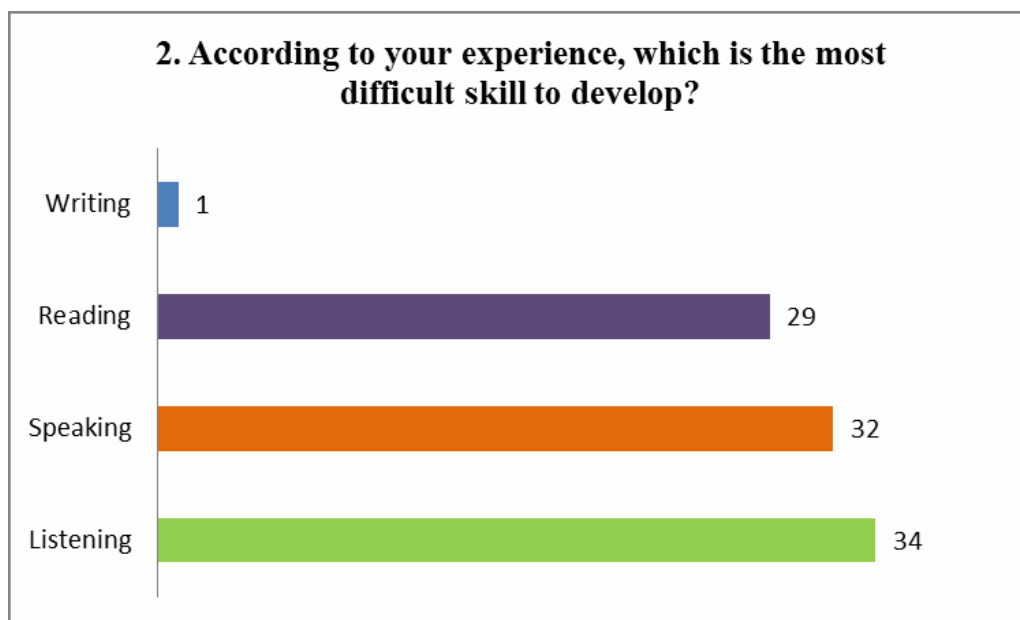


Figure 2. Students' perceptions of the most difficult skills.

Abroad Travelling

The purpose of the following question was only to determine the possibility of students having an experience abroad either for language learning purposes or just in general. The fact that only 17% of the students have had this opportunity showed that most of them have probably had very little, if any, contact with English native speakers outside Ecuador. The length of their stays varied from a month up to one year, and the countries they had visited were United States and Canada.

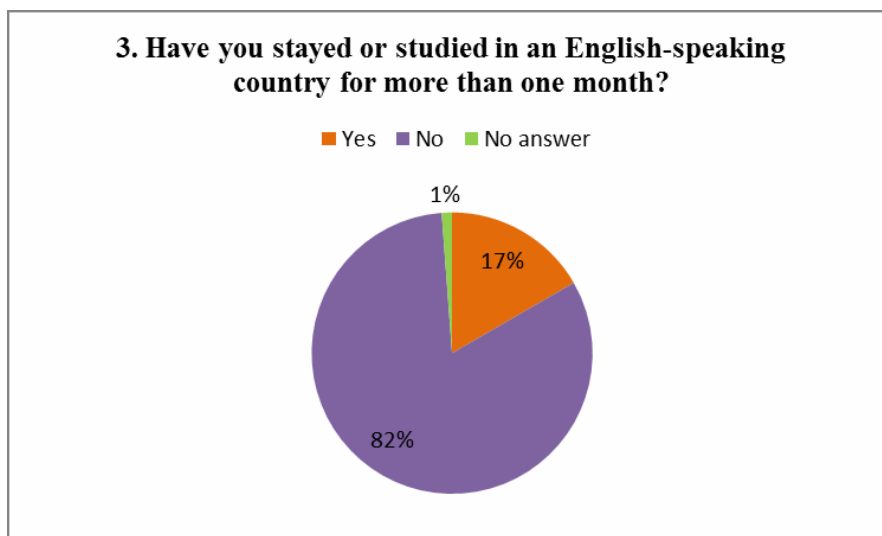


Figure 3. Students' percentage of abroad travelling.

English Proficiency Tests

The sole purpose of question four was to determine how many students were familiarized with any kind of English proficiency test. However, only 14 students had had that experience. They mentioned taking the *Army test*, *Cambridge test*, *TOEFL test*, *EDL Toronto Test*, *CEDEI test*, and the *Institute of Language's admission test*. However, all the rest of students had not taken an English proficiency test.

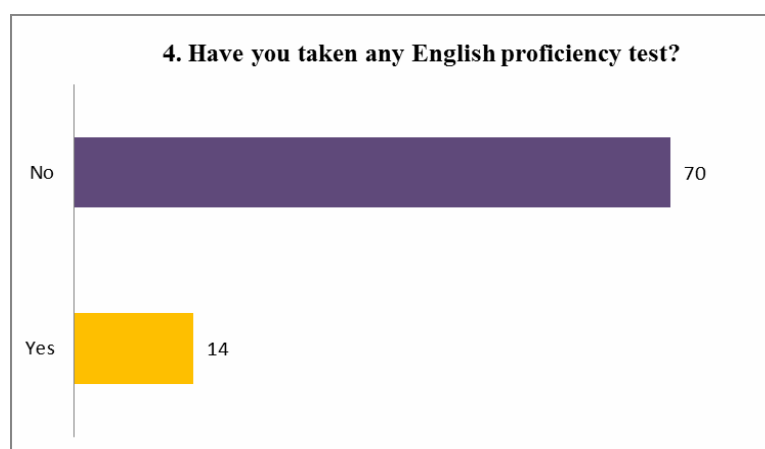


Figure 4. Students who had taken English proficiency tests.



English Learning Experience

The fifth question from the survey was a Likert Scale that aimed at determining the participants' opinion in relation to their motivation, interest, and confidence when learning English as a foreign language. Results showed that students are really interested on learning the language. Hence, 94% of them feel motivated and active in the process. Likewise, 79 of the 84 participants claimed to like and be willing to speak in English. However, only 67% of the participants feel confident when doing so.

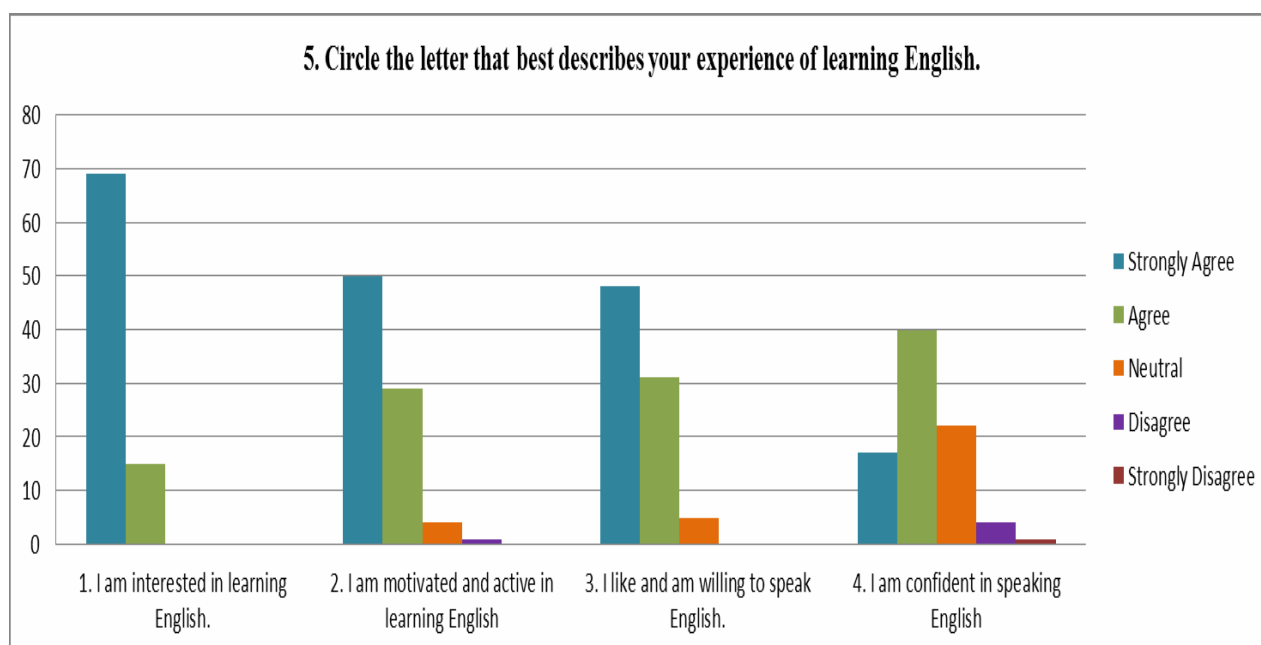


Figure 5. Students' interest, motivation, and confidence.

Frequency of Viewing

After analyzing the participants' interest and motivation related to English, they were asked to answer a question about the frequency with which they watch sitcoms, movies, TV series, shows, or any kind of video in English. On their questionnaire they were given the



options: once, twice or three times a week and, additionally, they had a space in case they wanted to specify any other frequency of viewing that may be more specific for them. The following bar graph shows the results.

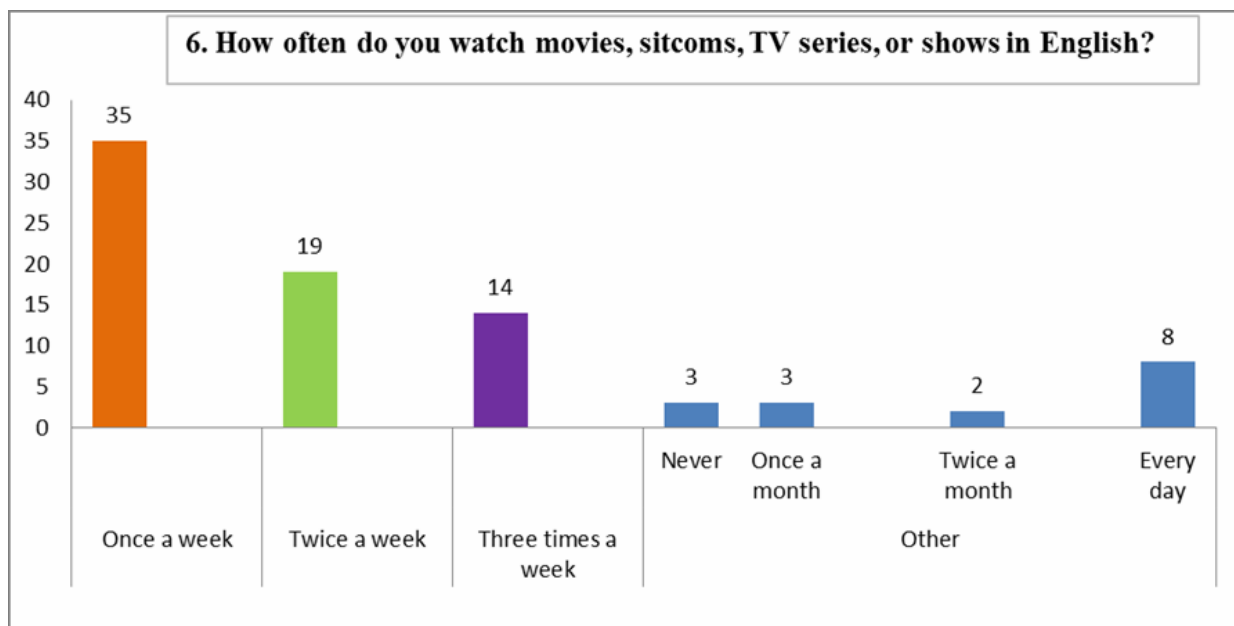


Figure 6. Students' viewing frequency.

Surprisingly, the bigger group, about 41% of the participants, claimed they watch these types of sources only once a week. About 23% and 14% said they watch them twice or three times a week respectively. Only 8 out of 84 people wrote they watch these types of videos every day. The other 9% of the participants rarely watch or do not watch them at all. These results prove that students receive very little English input outside the classroom, so they are probably not used to listening to the language other than in English class.

Watching Sitcoms

The following four and last questions of the survey were related only to sitcoms. The researcher aimed at finding out whether students at the Institute of Languages like watching



sitcoms or not, if they would like to watch them in their English classes, if they thought sitcoms could improve their language skills, which ones they would like to watch, and finally, which type of audio and subtitles they used when watching sitcoms.

The results obtained from question seven showed that 85% of the participants actually like watching sitcoms in English, and they were able to choose as many reasons as they wanted why they like doing this. The most important reason was fun and entertainment, which is not surprising if we remember the fact that sitcoms are mainly related to comedy. Source of authentic language input was the second most voted reason, which means the participants believe the language used in sitcoms is close to real life English. Third, students think sitcoms involve real life situations, which again, is the sole basis of sitcoms. Finally, the last reason was that they watch them because there was nothing else on TV. However, compared to the others this reason is not of great significance.

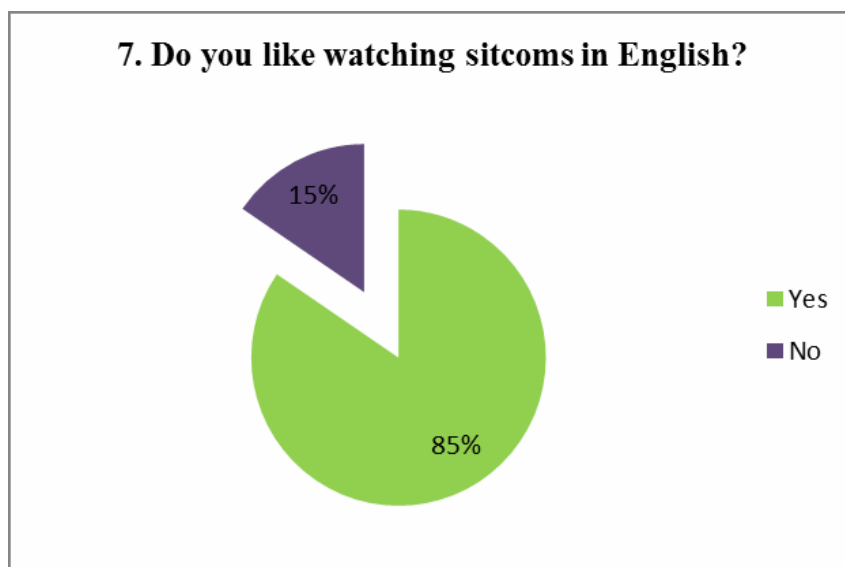


Figure 7. Percentage of students who enjoy watch sitcoms.

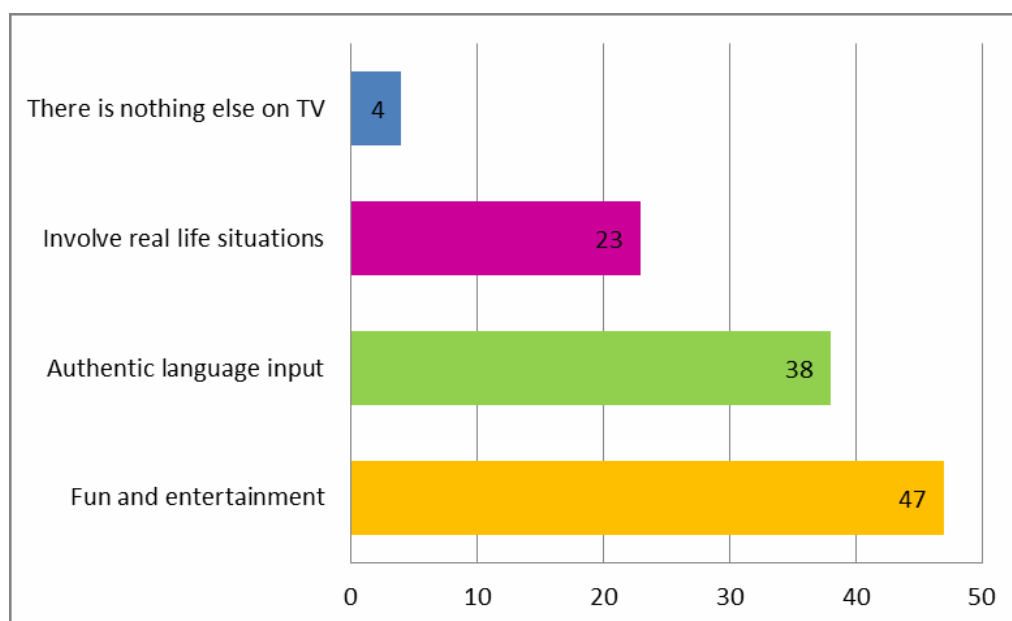


Figure 8. Reasons why students watch sitcoms.

When asked about watching sitcoms in their English classes, the majority of students claimed they would like to do so. However, 12% of the participants would not enjoy that. The ones who answered ‘yes’ where asked to choose sitcoms they would like to watch, but they could also write down their own option.

Unfortunately, all the options they wrote were TV series and not sitcoms in particular, which as explained in the limitations of the study, some of the participants got confused with the difference between them. Sitcoms such as *Malcolm in the middle*, *Friends*, *How I met your mother*, and *Two and a half men* were among the most popular.

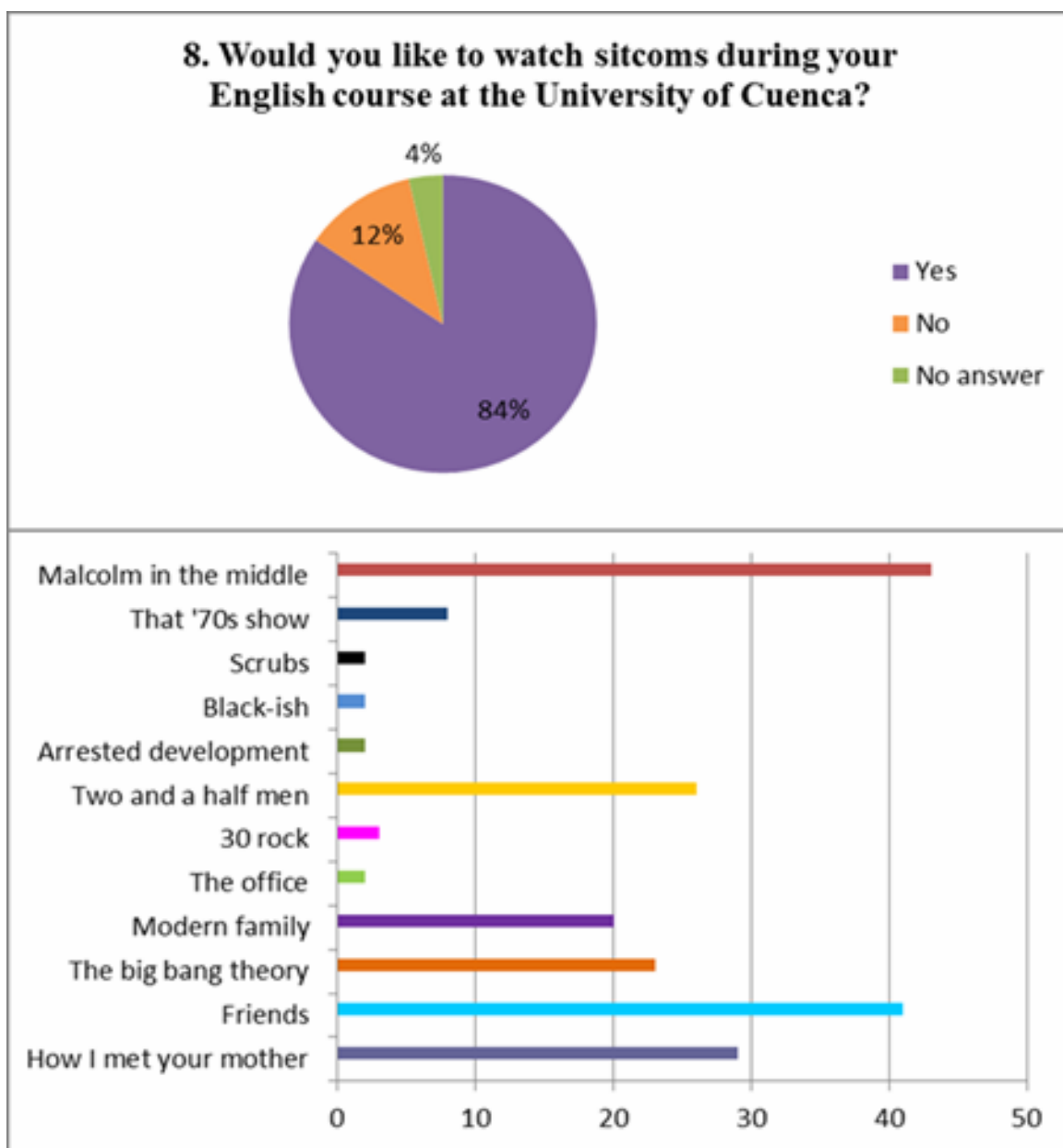


Figure 9. Sitcoms students would like to watch.

After asking students whether they would like to watch sitcoms or not and their preferences, they were asked if they thought sitcoms could help them learn English. The ones



who answered ‘yes’ were asked to choose the reasons why they thought they would, so the following chart explains the results from question nine.

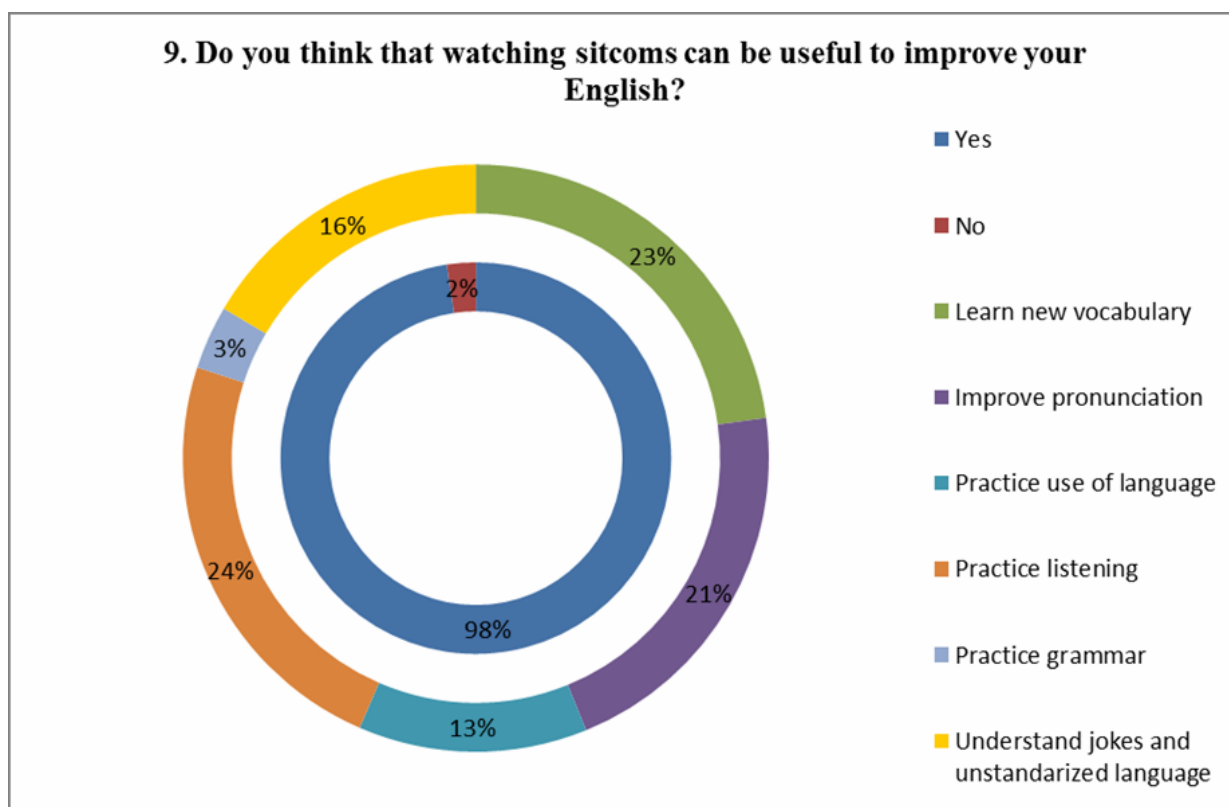


Figure 10. Students' opinion about the use of sitcoms for English learning.

A total of 98% of the participants thought sitcoms could help them boost their language skills, mainly listening, vocabulary, and pronunciation. The results obtained from this question are similar to the results obtained in the studies previously mentioned in the literature review. For instance, Kim (2015) concluded,

most of the students seemed to prefer using movies or sitcoms to practice their English listening. It can be suggested that the use of movies or sitcoms can make



students more interested in learning and thus repeated exposure to L2 regardless of their proficiency level appears to be an effective teaching tool. (p.20)

Finally, the participants were asked to choose the type of audio and subtitles they use when they watch sitcoms. About 49% of the students claimed they watch sitcoms using both audio and subtitles in English, which could be a sign of the interest in the language showed in question five. About 31% stated they use English audio and Spanish subtitles; however only 9.5% of the participants said they used English audio and no subtitles at all. This demonstrates they have the skills and feel comfortable enough with the target language, but sadly it is not the majority of the students who feel this way. Surprisingly, seven participants revealed they use Spanish audio and English subtitles when watching sitcoms. Lastly, two students admitted watching sitcoms using only Spanish audio, which could be a sign that for them, watching sitcoms is not a tool to enhance their language skills and overall listening score.

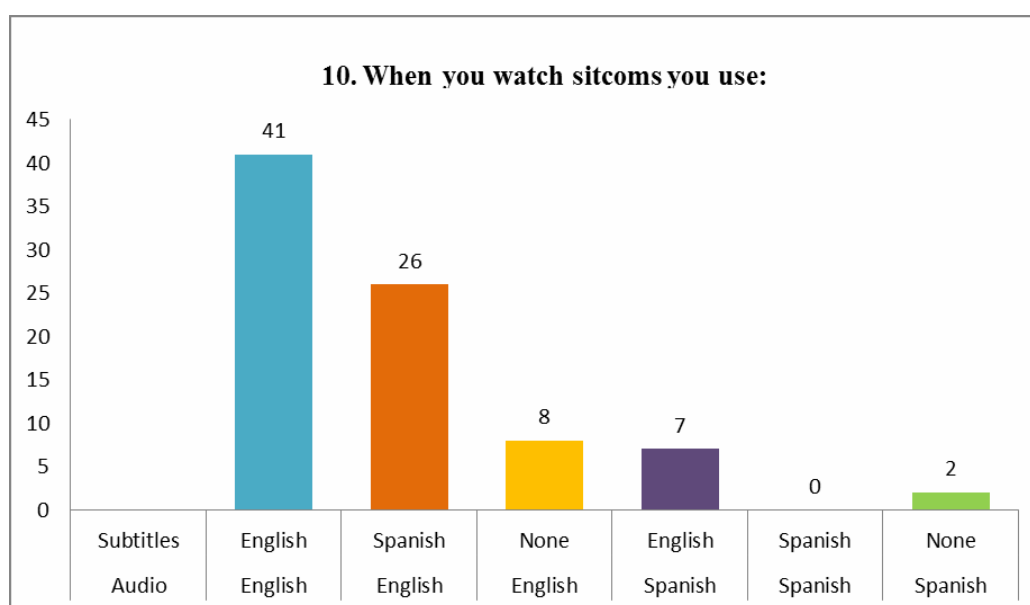


Figure 11. Use of audio and subtitles when watching sitcoms.



5.3 Discussion

After analyzing both students' and teachers' perspectives regarding the use of sitcoms as tools for English learning, it can be said that the answers provided in the surveys and interviews show a number of similarities and very few discrepancies among them, and with the studies that were previously discussed in this paper. Hence, it is important to discuss the most relevant connections.

For instance, most teachers and students agreed on the fact that speaking and listening are the most difficult skills to acquire, thus giving relevance to this study, whose purpose is to enhance listening. Reading was also considered difficult for some students; however, none of the teachers mentioned reading being hard for learners.

Moreover, when it came to motivation, teachers said students from the intensive courses are highly motivated about learning English for different purposes. This thought is similar to the results from the survey, in which it is clearly stated that students from levels seven and eight are highly motivated and interested in learning English. In Kung's (2013) study, motivation took an important role. The results showed that watching sitcoms in English class help increase students' motivation and interest in language learning (p. 125). Therefore, sitcoms may help increase motivation level from students not only from higher levels, but from all levels at the Institute of Languages.

Furthermore, all seven teachers believed sitcoms to be a tool to enhance language skills, and 98% of the students agreed with that. Teachers mentioned that by watching sitcoms students could enhance their listening, learn new vocabulary, improve their pronunciation, etc. Likewise, students chose a number of reasons why they believed sitcoms



could help them improve their English. The three main reasons were the same as the ones from teachers, enhance listening, learn new vocabulary, and improve pronunciation.

Since this project focuses on enhancing listening skills, it is important to link its findings to other studies discussed in the literature review. For instance, the results from Kim's (2015) study showed that authentic videos actually helped learners enhance their listening skills. However, the author emphasized the importance of carefully choosing the proper videos according to the learners' level and interests (Kim, 2015). Kim (2015) concluded, "the results supported that videos are more useful and effective than traditional lecture-based instruction for developing English listening" (p.22).

Additionally, both teachers and students were asked about the use of sitcoms in their English classes at the University of Cuenca. Six out of the seven teachers mentioned they would like to use them in class, despite the fact that it could be time consuming, and 84% of the students said they would like that, too.

When asked about the use of sitcoms outside the classroom, all seven teachers strongly emphasized the importance of doing so. They said they recommend their students to watch sitcoms all the time. Nevertheless, despite 85% of the students stating they like watching sitcoms, the frequency of sitcom watching was surprisingly low. Only 8 students watch sitcoms every day, and 33 students watch them twice or three times a week. The majority of students watch sitcoms only once a week or even less than that.

In Kung's (2013) research, results showed that the majority of students were willing to watch TV series at home after watching them at their English classes at university. Kung (2013) stated, "their attitudes and experiences for this course were fairly positive, and many



of them had also shown their interests in learning English by watching more TV series by themselves in the future” (p. 129).

Based on these results, it can be said that students at the Institute of Languages at the University of Cuenca may need teachers to motivate them a little bit more towards watching sitcoms, TV series, or movies in English. They could start by doing so in class, and maybe students will become more interested and motivated to use authentic material at home. As Kozhevnikova (2014) stated in her study,

using authentic sources helps to engage students in authentic cultural experiences.

Sources can include films, news broadcasts, and television shows; Web sites; and photographs, magazines, newspapers, restaurant menus, travel brochures, and other printed materials. Teachers can adapt their use of authentic materials to suit the age and language proficiency level of the students. (p. 4464)

5.4 Development of a Booklet of Sitcom-Based Activities

As mentioned above, the general objective of this project was to create a booklet of sitcom-based activities that could be useful for English learners. This booklet will allow students to practice and improve their languages skills, especially listening, through a number of comprehension exercises. The booklet includes activities of three episodes of each sitcom (four for *Friends* and *Malcolm in the Middle*) with a brief plot at the beginning, and it is attached as an annex at the end of this paper. The booklet will also include an answer key of each worksheet in case it is necessary. Hopefully, it will be helpful for students and teachers at the Institute of Languages at the University of Cuenca.



The researcher chose the sitcoms based on students' and teachers' answers to the survey and interviews that were applied respectively. According to some teachers, *Friends*, *The Simpsons*, *How I met your mother*, and *The big bang theory* could be good options for students to enhance their listening skills. Nonetheless, they did mention the fact that these sitcoms are not current, so students might not find them interesting or fun. Surprisingly, the six most voted sitcoms according to students likes and dislikes were *Malcolm in the middle*, *Friends*, *How I met your mother*, *Two and a half men*, *The big bang theory*, and *Modern family*. Thus, students actually like three out of four sitcoms that teachers mentioned, giving the researcher a clear idea of which sitcoms to use for the development of the booklet.

By reading scripts and watching several episodes of each sitcom it was possible to determine which episodes would be more interesting and useful for students. Thus, content, setting, language, and context were the criteria for episode selection. The episodes are included in the CD that is attached at the end of the booklet, so it would facilitate its use in class, or teachers can find the episode online in websites such as *seriesonline.io* and *estream-tv.one*. This booklet aims at enhancing students' language skills, listening in particular, through fun and innovative activities that could boost their English listening learning process.



Chapter 6

Conclusions and Recommendations

6. 1 Conclusions

Nowadays, pragmatics is considered an important aspect when learning a second or foreign language. As it was shown in the theoretical framework, authors and researchers such as Leech (2014), LoCastro (2012), Clennell (1999), etc., believe pragmatics takes an important role because the context of particular situation can define the meaning certain utterances acquire in different settings. Therefore, pragmatics is present during all aspects of language learning and could be linked to any language skill or sub skill.

This study aimed at analyzing how a particular skill, listening, could be enhanced through the use of sitcoms, to what extent could they be considered as pragmatic sources of language input, and whether students and teachers at the Institute of Languages enjoy or would enjoy using them for English learning.

In the first chapter of this study, a research question was established, *To what extent can sitcoms be considered pragmatic tools to enhance listening skills in B1/B2 learners?* The results obtained from this study show that sitcoms actually contain pragmatic material, such as common expressions, slang, cultural aspects, everyday vocabulary and situations, etc. These results prove that Harmer (2009) was right to say that sitcoms provide exposure to authentic and updated expressions and varieties of English. Thus, making sitcoms entertaining, interesting and useful for students to watch and learn at the same time. Sitcoms were considered sources of authentic language input by researchers, teachers, and students that participated in this study one way or another. Both, researchers and teachers emphasized



that the use of sitcoms can enhance students' listening skills through constant practice.

Otherwise, the effect will not be as accurate as expected.

The general and specific objectives established for this research were reached through intensive research, application of qualitative and quantitative instruments to teachers and students at the Institute of Languages at the University of Cuenca, and the creation of a booklet of sitcom-based activities based on students' and teachers' perceptions and opinions regarding situational comedies.

In relation to listening, teachers thought sitcoms provide a great variety of accents and dialects which can help students develop their listening skills only by watching them constantly. Thus, agreeing with Félix-Brasdefer (2012) regarding the importance of interlanguage pragmatics. Through sitcoms, English learners can enhance their ability to produce a great number of speech acts and understand other communicative aspects of a language.

Teachers emphasized the fact that learners can do this on their own, at home, and according to their likes, interests, and purposes for English learning. Thus, showing that listening skills could be enhanced not only in the English classroom, but in any type of EFL environment. Furthermore, researchers like Harmer (2009), Palu (2016), and more believe that by watching sitcoms learners can be more enthusiastic towards English learning because they will create a positive and exciting environment.

As previously mentioned in the theoretical framework, since sitcoms provide authentic language input, English learners will listen to the language as it is used on a daily basis by native speakers. Therefore, by watching sitcoms students can acquire pragmatic



skills, improve their pronunciation, learn new vocabulary, and enhance their listening skills in a fun way.

6.2 Recommendations

There are some things or aspects that should be taken into consideration for future research related to pragmatics and the use of sitcoms in EFL environments. Hopefully, the following recommendations will be useful for English education in Ecuador. For instance, researchers should analyze to what extent cross-cultural pragmatics is emphasized in English classes in Ecuador and whether students' motivation increases when doing so or not. As mentioned by Kasper and Blum-Kulka (1993) in the theoretical framework, cross-cultural pragmatics allows students to properly learn a language that is being used by speakers from different backgrounds.

Another recommendation would be the use of the booklet that was created as part of this project by teachers and students not only from the Institute of Languages, but from any English learning environments. With the activities included in this booklet, students would be able to solve exercises based on sitcoms that would help them enhance their listening, pragmatic, and language comprehension skills in a fun and interesting way. As for teachers, the booklet could be an aid when planning their lessons, and it will make it easier for them to include pragmatics and authentic material in their classes.

Likewise, it would be interesting to include not only situational comedies but TV series in general in EFL lessons. Both, students and teachers, when asked to give recommendations, they suggested drama, crime, action, science fiction, horror, and romance TV series. They recommended TV series such as, *Gossip Girl*, *Gilmore Girls*, *Grey's*



Anatomy, The Walking Dead, Breaking Bad, Arrow, Suits, etc. Therefore, they not only like comedies, but other types of genres as well. Since according to authors such as Kozhevnikova (2014), Swaffar (1993), Vlatten (1993), etc., TV series in general, not only sitcoms, are sources of authentic language, they can actually enhance students' language skills as well, so teachers should consider using them, too.

The final recommendation, which could be the next step for this study, would be to analyze, describe, and document the effects that the use of sitcoms and sitcom-based activities may have on students' listening skills. Research and perspectives from students and teachers show that watching sitcoms is in fact beneficial for English learners. Then why not keep record of it for future learners who can include pragmatics in their learning process.

Learning English is not an easy task. Students can encounter a number of difficulties that are not always easy to overcome. By including sitcoms in their lesson plans, educators can encourage their students to practice and work hard not only in class, but at home, too. Sitcoms are considered a great source of language input, and the more access learners have to them, the easier it would be for them to enhance their language skills.



References

- Abad, M. (2011). *Analyzing The Impact of Strategy- Based Instruction*. Cuenca: Universidad de Cuenca.
- Beltran-Planques, V., & Querol-Julian, M. (2018). English Language Learners' Spoken Interaction: What a Multimodal Perspective Reveals About Pragmatic Competence. *Elsevier*, 1-11.
- British Study Centers*. (n.d.). Retrieved from 10 Reasons to Learn English:
<https://www.british-study.com/adults/10-reasons-to-learn-english.php>
- Chumbi, V., & Narváez, J. (2016). *Implementing The Usage of Sitcom (Situational Comedy) Videos*. Cuenca: Universidad de Cuenca.
- Clennell, C. (1999). Promoting Pragmatic Awareness and Spoken Discourse Skills With EAP Classes. *ELT Journal*, 83-91.
- Council of Europe*. (2017). Retrieved from Structured Overview of All CEFR Scales:
<https://rm.coe.int/168045b15e>
- Council of Europe. (2017). *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)*. Retrieved from <https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/>
- Felix-Brasdefer, J. C. (2012). Interlanguage Pragmatics. *The Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics*, 1-7.
- Green, M. (2018, May 30). *Speech Acts*. Retrieved from Oxford Research Encyclopedias of Linguistics:
<http://linguistics.oxfordre.com/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199384655.001.0001/acrefore-9780199384655-e-200>
- Hadhi, P. (2013). *Speech Act in English Language Teaching*. Depok: University of Indonesia.
- Heras, E. (2014). *Designing and Piloting Part of an Introductory Pragmatics Workbook for 3rd Level Students of the English Degree Course, University of Cuenca*. Cuenca: Universidad de Cuenca.



- House, J. (2013). Developing Pragmatic Competence in English as a Lingua Franca: Using Discourse Markers to Express (Inter) Subjectivity and Connectivity. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 1-11.
- Hseih, H.-F., & Shannon, S. E. (2005). Three Approaches to Qualitative Content Analysis. *Qualitative Health Research*, 1277-1288.
- Ifantidou, E. (2013). Pragmatic Competence and Explicit Instruction. *Journal of pragmatics*, 1-24.
- Kim, H.-S. (2015). Using Authentic Videos to Improve EFL Students' Listening Comprehension. *International Journal of Contents*, 15-24.
- Kozhevnikova, E. (2014). Exposing Students to Authentic Materials as a Way to Increase Students' Language Proficiency and Cultural Awareness. *Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 4462-4466.
- Kung, F.-W. (2013). *Fostering EFL Students' L2 Listening and Speaking Competence Through TV Series-Based Instruction: Methods and Applications*. Shantou: National Taiwan Normal University.
- Kusumarasdyati, K. (2006). *Subtitled Movie DVDs in Foreign Language Classes*. Melbourne: Monash University.
- Leech, G. N. (2014). *Principles of Pragmatics*. New York: Routledge.
- LoCastro, V. (2012). *Pragmatics for Language Educators: A Sociolinguistic Perspective*. New York: Routledge.
- Mahu, D.-P. (2012). Why is Learning English so Beneficial Nowadays? *Perspectives on Communication*, 374-376.
- Martínez, B., & Fernández, A. (2008). *The Teachability of Pragmatics in SLA: Friends' Humour through Grice*. La Rioja: Porta Liguarium.
- McNulty, A., & Lazarevic, B. (2012). Best Practices in Using Video Technology to Promote Second Language Acquisition. *Teaching English with Technology*, 49-61.
- Méndez, M., & Peña, A. (2013). Emotions as Learning Enhancers of Foreign Language Learning Motivation. *Teachers' Professional Development*, 109-124.
- Merriam-Webster Dictionary. (2017). *Situational Comedy*. Retrieved from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/situation%20comedy>
- Messereli, T. C. (2015). Extradiegetic and Character Laughter as Markers of Humorous Intentions in the Sitcom 2 Broke Girls. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 1-14.



- Morehouse, K. (2017, May 18). *LinguaCore*. Retrieved from <https://www.linguacore.com/blog/the-four-skills/>
- Oxford Dictionary. (2018). *Listening Skills*. Retrieved from https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/listening_skills
- Palu, I. (2016). *Developing Oral Communication Skills in English Through Sitcoms (The Big Bang Theory)*. Narva: Narva College of The University of Tartu Division of Foreign Languages .
- Pérez, M. L. (2009). Reengineering English Language Teaching: Making the Shift towards 'Real' English. *English Language Teaching*, 3-10.
- Pinos, M. I. (2014). *Sitcoms as a Resource For Acquiring Lexicon and Developing Strategies For Understanding of Vocabulary in Context*. Cuenca: Universidad del Azuay.
- Powers, D. E. (2010). The Case for a Comprehensive, Four-Skills Assessment of English Language Proficiency. *ETS*, 12.1-12.11.
- Puma, G. (2011). *Listening Strategies to Help Students Improve Their Listening Performance*. Ambato: Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador Sede Ambato .
- Spiro, J. (2013). *Changing Methodologies in TESOL*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Swaffar, J., & Vlaten, A. (1993). A Sequential Model for Video Viewing in the Foreign Language Curriculum. *The Modern Language Journal*, 175-188.
- Tashakkori, A., & Creswell, J. W. (2007). Editorial: The New Era of Mixed Methods. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 3-7.
- Tavil, Z. M. (2010). Integrating Listening and Speaking Skills to Facilitate English Language Learners' Communicative Competence. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 9, 765-770.
- Wang, D. (2012). Self-Directed English Language Learning Through Watching English Television Drama in China. *Changing English*, 339-348.
- Washburn, G. N. (2001). Using Situation Comedies for Pragmatic Language Teaching and Learning. *TESOL Journal*, 21-24.



Universidad de Cuenca

Appendices

Appendix 1. Institutional Permission (1)





Universidad de Cuenca

Appendix 2. Institutional Permission (2)

Cuenca, 31 de mayo de 2018

Magíster
Fabián Rodas Pacheco
DIRECTOR DE LA CARRERA DE LENGUA Y LITERATURA INGLESA

De mi consideración.

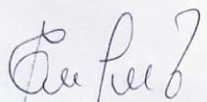
Con un cordial saludo y por medio del presente me permito comunicar a Usted la resolución emitida por el Consejo Académico del IUL, en su sesión de 30 de mayo de 2018, que textualmente señala:

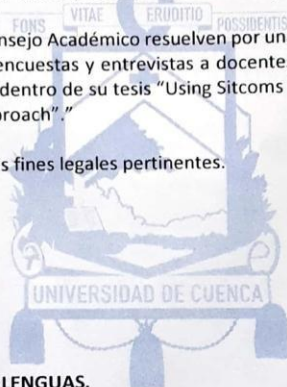
"7.5.- Se conoce la solicitud presentada por el Mgt. Fabián Rodas por medio de la cual solicita se le conceda permiso a la estudiantes Sofía Eguez Carrión con la finalidad que pueda aplicar su propuesta de titulación "Using Sitcoms In B1/B2 EFL Environments To Enhance Listening Skills: A Pragmatic Approach", en el instituto, la misma que consistirá en la aplicación de encuestas y entrevistas tanto a estudiantes como a docentes.

Al respecto los miembros del Consejo Académico resuelven por unanimidad acoger la solicitud presentada y autorizar la aplicación de encuestas y entrevistas a docentes y estudiantes del IUL, por parte de la estudiante Sofía Eguez Carrión, dentro de su tesis "Using Sitcoms In B1/B2 EFL Environments To Enhance Listening Skills: A Pragmatic Approach".

Particular que comunico para los fines legales pertinentes.

Atentamente,


Dra. Tania Iglesias Vázquez
**SECRETARIA-ABOGADA DEL
INSTITUTO UNIVERSITARIO DE LENGUAS.**



c.c. Srta. Sofía Eguez Carrión
Archivo



Appendix 3. Teachers' Interview

Using Sitcoms in B1/B2 EFL Environments to Enhance Listening Skills: A Pragmatic Approach

Teacher's Interview

Please answer the following questions regarding English learning. Your opinion would be helpful to conduct a research project. For the purpose of this study, this interview will be recorded; however, your personal information is confidential and will not be used.

Teacher #: _____

Gender: Male ☐ Female ☐

Age: 20-25 ☐ 26-30 ☐ 31-35 ☐ 36-40 ☐ 41-45 ☐ 46-50 ☐ 51 or more ☐

Studies: Bachelor ☐ Master's ☐ PhD ☐

1. How long have you been teaching English?
2. In your experience, which is the most difficult skill to acquire? Why?
3. Have you lived in an English speaking country? If yes, for how long?
4. Have you taken an English proficiency test? If yes, which one, and what level did you reach?
5. What levels have you taught at the University of Cuenca?
6. To what extent do you think students of the Institute of Languages at the University of Cuenca are interested in learning English?



7. How would you describe your classes at the Institute of Languages?
8. Which tools or methods do you usually use in class to enhance students' listening skills?
9. To what extent do you think Pragmatics is important when learning English as a foreign language?
10. Do you believe videos, movies, TV series, sitcoms, etc., can enhance students' language skills? If yes, please explain the reasons why.
11. Do you think sitcoms can improve students' listening skills? If yes, which ones would you recommend?
12. Would you be willing to use sitcoms and sitcom-based activities as a technique to enhance students' listening skills? Why or why not?
13. Would you recommend your students to watch sitcoms outside the classroom? Why or why not?



Appendix 4. Students' Survey

Using Sitcoms in B1/B2 EFL Environments to Enhance Listening Skills: A Pragmatic Approach

Students' Survey

Please fill in the gaps and answer the following questions with your information regarding English learning. Your opinion would be helpful to conduct this research project.

Gender: Male ☐ Female ☐

Age: 18- 25 ☐ 26-30 ☐ 31-35 ☐ 36-40 ☐ 41 or more ☐

Studies: High School ☐ Bachelor ☐ Master's ☐ PhD ☐

Major: _____

1. Besides the time you have studied at the University of Cuenca, have you taken any other English courses in Ecuador?

Yes ☐ No ☐ If yes, for how long? Please specify. _____

2. According to your experience, which is the most difficult skill to develop?

Listening ☐ Speaking ☐ Reading ☐ Writing ☐

3. Have you stayed or studied in an English-speaking country for more than one month?

Yes ☐ No ☐ If yes, how long? Please specify. _____

4. Have you taken any English proficiency test?



Yes ☐ No ☐ If yes, which one? _____. Score/Level _____.

5. Circle the letter that best describes your experience of learning English.

SA (strongly agree), A (agree), N (neutral), D (disagree), SD (strongly disagree).

1. I am interested in learning English. SA A N D SD

2. I am motivated and active in learning English. SA A N D SD

3. I like and am willing to speak English. SA A N D SD

4. I am confident in speaking English. SA A N D SD

6. How often do you watch movies, sitcoms, TV series, or shows in English?

Once a week ☐ Twice a week ☐ Three times a week ☐

Other (please specify). _____

7. Do you like watching sitcoms in English?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, please specify the reasons why.

Fun/ Entertainment ☐ Involve real life situations ☐

Authentic language and context ☐ There is nothing else on TV ☐

Other (please specify). _____

8. Would you like to watch sitcoms during your English course at the University of Cuenca?



Universidad de Cuenca

Yes ☐

No ☐

If yes, which ones,

How I met your mother ☐

Two and a half men ☐

Friends ☐

Arrested development ☐

The big bang theory ☐

Black-ish ☐

Modern family ☐

Scrubs ☐

The office ☐

That '70s show ☐

30 rock ☐

Malcom in the middle ☐

Other (Please specify). _____

9. Do you think that watching sitcoms can be useful to improve your English?

Yes ☐

No ☐

If yes, please specify how.

Learn new vocabulary ☐

Practice listening ☐

Improve pronunciation ☐

Practice grammar ☐

Practice use of language ☐

Understand jokes and unstandardized language ☐

Other (please specify). _____

10. When you watch sitcoms you use:

1. Audio: English Audio ☐

Spanish Audio ☐



Universidad de Cuenca

2. Subtitles: English subtitles ☐ Spanish Subtitles ☐ No subtitles ☐

Other (Please specify). _____

You have finished. Thank you for your participation in this study.



Appendix 5. Transcripts of the Teachers' Interviews

Interview Teacher 1 (10 min 32 sec)

Interviewer: Welcome. First of all thank you for agreeing to do the interview with me. So the first question is: how long have you been teaching English?

Teacher 1: Ok hi. I've been teaching English around 18 years now.

Interviewer: Ok.

Teacher 1: I've taught, you know, at different levels. I started teaching in a kindergarten, then I moved into a high school, then I moved into an institute, and finally I started teaching here at the university.

Interviewer: Ok. In your experience which is the most difficult skill to acquire? And why?

Teacher 1: Ok. Throughout these 18 years I've noticed that writing is one of the most complicated skills for students to develop and also speaking. I guess that it has to do with the fact that we did not learn, you know, how to write, like, the process of writing even in our native language, and so that may be the cause, you know, for not developing or for being, you know, like one the most difficult skills to develop.

Interviewer: Ok. Have you lived in an English speaking country?

Teacher 1: Well, what do you mean by living exactly?

Interviewer: Like have you stayed for a long period of time.

Teacher 1: Actually the longest period of time that I stayed in the United States was four months. That the longest period of time.



Interviewer: Ok, so yeah you've lived in the United States. Have you taken an English proficiency test?

Teacher 1: Yeah. I had to take one to enter the master's program that was a TOEFL test.

Interviewer: Ok. And the score or level you got according to the Common European Framework?

Teacher 1: Yeah. At that moment we didn't get the levels by the Common European Framework but we just got a grade. The test was over about 120 if I'm not mistaken I entered second, and I got like a 110 more or less.

Interviewer: Ok, so really high.

Teacher 1: I think so.

Interviewer: Yes. What levels have you taught at the University of Cuenca?

Teacher 1: Yeah. I would say that I've actually taught all levels, from beginners to advance. I have even taught the TOEFL preparation course which would be even. We have like 8 semesters or like 8 levels in the intensive courses, and afterwards you have this TOEFL preparation course, and that's the one I've taught.

Interviewer: Ok, so from beginners to really advanced.

Teacher 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: Ok. To what extent do you think students at the Institute of Languages at the University of Cuenca are interested in learning English?



Teacher 1: I can say because I have actually seen the interest has change from the very beginning when I started teaching English here, the motivation wasn't really like high due to the fact that they had to take English as a requirement, but nowadays as you know globalization has taken over and everything so students are more interesting in graduating and then applying for a masters and traveling abroad. Then I would say that motivation due to that fact has actually increased. So I would say that they are motivated now.

Interviewer: Yeah. They've realized the importance of English.

Teacher 1: Yeah. They realize the need of learning another language.

Interviewer: Yes I agree. Ok. How would you describe your classes at the Institute of Languages?

Teacher 1: I really like working here because you get to work with you know multiple learning style students. Since they come from different study programs you get to have, like these different behaviors, these different types of personalities, and it's really interesting. You get to see, you know, how they're motivated how they want to build their professional career all these years. I really like working here.

Interviewer: Ok. How would you describe their level or how they acquire language?

Teacher 1: We still face a reality most of our students come from public education and again we have to face the fact that, you know, in high school the level is not really good so they don't come with a good level of English and so we really see students getting form zero you know acquiring the language all through these 3 semesters at different passes. There are students who despite the fact that they did not have a good level of English in school, they do



well here. And on the other hand you have students who are kind of like slow learners, but still try to do their best and little by little. I would say that were trying like I mean we're coming out of that stage were people will not speak English at all and now having students you know handling the language not that accurate as we might expect, but I would say that they get there little by little.

Interviewer: Ok. Which tools or methods do you usually use in class to enhance students' listening skills?

Teacher 1: Ok. I am a technology oriented teacher, and I love technology ever since I got involved in that, so I use podcasts a lot, so I use YouTube, and then I download videos. I convert them into mp3.

Interviewer: Formats?

Teacher 1: Yeah and so I actually play that in class, and I develop my class from that podcast. You know, trying to do like comprehension, inferencing. You know trying to develop those subskills within the listening skills.

Interviewer: Ok. To what extent do you think pragmatics is important when learning English as a foreign language?

Teacher 1: I would definitely say that it's very important as you do not learn the language, like in an isolated way. You need to learn the language in context, and even better if you can have them, you know like, exposed to you know the real context like in this case like movies or like sitcoms or any of those options. I would say definitely, like pragmatics is a must for us, you know, when teaching a language.



Interviewer: Yes I agree. Do you believe videos, movies, TV series, and sitcoms can enhance students' language skills?

Teacher 1: Definitely, definitely. I can talk from first-hand experience I'm actually that type of learner. When I was a kid we didn't have any internet or like any technology. We just had cassettes to listen to music and I grew up listening to English music and would say that actually helped me, you know, like with the accent with the pronunciation and I would definitely agree with using those tools you know for learning a language.

Interviewer: Ok yeah I agree. I'm that type of learner as well. Do you think sitcoms can improve students listening skills?

Teacher 1: Definitely, I agree with that one, and I would like to add something else you know like an advantage of using sitcoms. Nowadays you're getting music comes and that's a good thing because you can expose students to real language, you know, language evolves through time, and you know you have slangs and different new words coming out at all time and so sitcoms could be a very good tool, you know, well first of all we teachers can actually learn from them and then help our students to also learn new vocabulary in context. Yeah. Definitely, I love sitcoms.

Interviewer: Ok. Which sitcoms would you recommend to your students?

Teacher 1: I was taught with an American English, but now I'm sort of getting inclined with a British English, and so there's this English sitcom that is called *The Royals*.

Interviewer: Ok.



Teacher 1: And it's mainly you know British English so I love that because the language you get is polite language, and also you get some kind of like, you know, people cursing sometimes and you also get that type of language as well but it's a well spoken language and I would definitely use that one for example in one of my classes.

Interviewer: Ok. Any other?

Teacher 1: Well I love the royals, there was one, there's this one I can't remember the name well, it's *Annie with an E*. It's about this orphan girl and it's a very interesting one it's British also. More complicated but a nice one too.

Interviewer: Ok. Would you be willing to use sitcoms and sitcom based activities as a technique to enhance students listening skills?

Teacher 1: Definitely, definitely. I would support all kind of initiatives, you know, with sitcoms. I would totally work with them.

Interviewer: Ok and would you recommend your students to watch sitcoms outside the classroom?

Teacher 1: I do actually as a matter of fact I do this sometimes I recommend sitcoms to watch and there's no need to recommend nowadays since you have Netflix they got into that so they're the ones coming and saying things like 'have you seen breaking bad?' and all those new sitcoms and so yeah, yeah that's our reality nowadays.

Interviewer: Ok. That's it thank you very much.

Teacher 1: You're welcome.



Universidad de Cuenca

Interviewer: Thank you very much for participating in this. You've been a lot of help to me.

Teacher 1: You're welcome.



Interview Teacher 2 (7 min 35 sec)

Interviewer: So first of all thank you for agreeing to do this interview.

Teacher 2: It's ok. My pleasure.

Interviewer: The first question is how long have you been teaching English?

Teacher 2: I have been teaching English for like 15 years and 7 years here at the university.

Interviewer: Wow! That's a lot.

Teacher 2: Yeah.

Interviewer: In your experience which is the most difficult skill to acquire?

Teacher 2: I'd say speaking because most of our students don't want to. They are so shy and they think that if they make a mistake it's the end of the world.

Interviewer: Yeah you're right. Have you lived in an English speaking country?

Teacher 2: No I have not lived there.

Interviewer: No? Never? But you've traveled?

Teacher 2: Yeah I have traveled to Seattle in the United States.

Interviewer: Ok, but you haven't lived there.

Teacher 2: No.

Interviewer: Have you taken an English proficiency test?

Teacher 2: I have taken some. But I remember the last one was related to TLC.



Interviewer: Ok. And which level did you reach according to the Common European Framework?

Teacher 2: C1.

Interviewer: C1. Ok. Good. What level have you taught here at the University of Cuenca?

Teacher 2: Beginners, intermediate and advanced.

Interviewer: So a little bit of everything, right?

Teacher 2: Yes, exactly.

Interviewer: To what extent do you think students at the institute of languages are interested in learning English?

Teacher 2: Well it depends. We have credit courses and most of the students there are forced to study. They have to finish because of their major. But if we're talking about intensive courses, then the majority of the students there really want to learn English.

Interviewer: Ok do you think they realize the importance of English nowadays?

Teacher 2: Yeah I do think so. And nowadays we have a lot of students at the intensive courses so it's good.

Interviewer: How long. Oh sorry. How would you describe your classes at the Institute of Languages? Like in general.

Teacher 2: It's an interesting question. Nowadays I teach intensive courses, as I said. And I like it so much because most of the students, as I said, are interested in learning English they understand how important it is and I really have fun and the only problem is that being an



intensive class we only have like seven weeks and that's it so I'd say that I would like to have more time with each one of the groups.

Interviewer: Ok, ok. That a good thing right? To have more time with them.

Teacher 2: Yeah.

Interviewer: Which tools or methods do you usually use in class to enhance students' listening skills?

Teacher 2: Well, I'm a big fan of the eliciting method, so I like to use a lot of techniques of the same category not just one in particular.

Interviewer: Ok.

Teacher 2: But what I think what works a lot with my students is stories. I like to use stories with them. I always have like pictures every Wednesday, and I bring them to the class and we analyze the story with the pictures and listen to the story like twice.

Interviewer: Ok.

Teacher 2: And then I ask them to listen to the story by being retelled by other students.

Interviewer: Ok. To what extent do you think pragmatics is important when learning English as a foreign language?

Teacher 2: I think it's important for advanced levels, you know? I think if you talk about pragmatics with beginners, they're gonna get confused. They'll probably talk about pragmatics and talk about the use of the language but it a simple way for them. With my students of level six even though they're in an intermediate level, I cannot still talk about



pragmatics with them. So I would really recommend it for probably the eight level courses or the courses for the TOEFL preparation.

Interviewer: Ok, so for advanced students.

Teacher 2: Yeah.

Interviewer: Ok. Do you believe videos, movies, TV series, and sitcoms can enhance students language skills and why?

Teacher 2: I think it depends. The majority of students can say ‘I don’t understand why my listening is so bad. I always watch series on television and I use the subtitles’ and all that stuff, and they say ‘I still don’t understand why my listening is so bad’. I ask them ‘when you use the subtitles you used them in English?’, and they say ‘yes, sometimes’. First problem. Second problem, they focus on the grammar and the structure and vocabulary when they are reading the subtitles that they forget the message from the videos, and then they don’t like it because they say ‘I don’t understand the video ‘cause I’m so stressed with all the captions’ and all that stuff and ‘I would prefer to watch it in Spanish’. So I think it depends on the needs of the student. If the student gets to the point that that he realizes that using the captions and the subtitles is good in order to understand the meaning of the video, it’s good. But if the use is only to supposedly practice English then it’s not that good.

Interviewer: Ok so even if they watch the video with English subtitles you think it can be tricky?

Teacher 2: Exactly.

Interviewer: Ok even if they use it in English.



Teacher 2: Even if they use it in English.

Interviewer: Ok. Do you think sitcoms can improve students listening skills?

Teacher 2: Again I think it depends because sometimes the teacher chooses the sitcom according to his or her likes. For example once I did that. I chose *Friends*. I thought that everyone was gonna like that sitcom, and I realized that most of the students nowadays don't know anything about *Friends*.

Interviewer: It's too old.

Teacher 2: Exactly. I realized that I was old. And they told me who are they? So it depends on your students' likes.

Interviewer: Ok. And which one would you recommend?

Teacher 2: Nowadays it's kind of hard because for boys for example the majority of my students for example they love *Workaholics*, but the girls think that *Workaholics* is too offensive for them. So it's really tough. Probably what you could do is like one week work with one sitcom and another week with another one according to your students' interests.

Interviewer: Ok, so you would ask them.

Teacher 2: Exactly.

Interviewer: Ok very good. Would you be willing to use sitcoms and sitcom based activities as a technique to enhance students listening skills?

Teacher 2: As I said, I have already used some of these sitcoms, but I don't know. I think it's good, but to a certain point it's complicated when you ask them because if you ask them



they're happy because they feel that their opinion is worthing, but if you don't have an agreement when you have like eleven sitcoms in a class of 20 students how do you do it? So I would like to have sitcoms in my class but only if I get an agreement with my students. Only if the majority of them say 'yeah we'd like to watch that sitcom'. Only in that case.

Interviewer: Ok so as long as they all agree you would use the sitcom.

Teacher 2: Yeah.

Interviewer: Ok. And would you recommend your students to watch sitcoms outside the classroom?

Teacher 2: Yeah of course. I think it's part of their assignments their homework. If they only practice at the University then obviously they're not going to learn anything yeah but the hard thing is to make them understand this. They say 'oh but teacher I work and I have other responsibilities' and all that stuff so what I try to do is just send homework on the weekend and the yeah I ask them to watch series and all that stuff.

Interviewer: Ok, ok. Thank you that's it thank you very much for your help.

Teacher 2: Sure ok no problem.

Interviewer: Your opinion is really important for me.

Teacher 2: Thank you.



Universidad de Cuenca



Interview Teacher 3 (10 min 47 sec)

Interviewer: Ok thank you for agreeing to do the interview.

Teacher 3: Thank you.

Interviewer: Ok, so the first question is: how long have you been teaching English?

Teacher 3: Ok. I've been teaching English here at the University level for about 11 years, but before that I was teaching English for four or five years in high school.

Interviewer: Ok. In your experience which is the most difficult skill to acquire?

Teacher 3: Well, according to my experience in class, I think that one of the most difficult skills is listening. Listening is one of the most difficult ones.

Interviewer: And why?

Teacher 3: I think because of the different accents. For example, sometimes when we're teaching English, they get used to listening to us, but when we play maybe a track from a person maybe from India then they don't understand anything, so the accents I think is the one of the most difficult thing to, I don't know, get used to. That's why they don't, when they listen to different kinds of accents they get, I don't know, dizzy and they don't understand.

Interviewer: Yeah, I know what you mean. Have you lived in an English speaking country?

Teacher 3: Well, I've been in the United States for several occasions, but living living maybe for one year because I went to an exchange program. That's why I stayed there for one year, but not more.

Interviewer: And you learned English there?



Teacher 3: No, well yes for one semester I went to study there.

Interviewer: Ok. Have you taken an English proficiency test?

Teacher 3: Yes, I took it a long time ago, maybe ten years ago. It was IELTS, and I remember my grade was, I think it's out of nine points, I think it was, seven point five or eight. I'm not sure.

Interviewer: That would be maybe C1 according to the Common European Framework?

Teacher 3: A little bit more because it's out of nine.

Interviewer: So maybe a C2?

Teacher 3: Exactly, maybe. Maybe a C1 or B2 I'm not sure.

Interviewer: Ok. What levels have you taught at the University of Cuenca?

Teacher 3: I think all of them because here at the Language Institute I've been teaching first, second, third, up to seventh level. There are eight levels, but I've been teaching up to seventh level, and in the major in English Literature I have taught writing, reading, and also conversation.

Interviewer: Always in the first semesters?

Teacher 3: No, I think third and fifth as well.

Interviewer: Ok good. To what extent do you think students at the Institute of Languages are interested in learning English?



Teacher 3: Yeah. Well, let me tell you that it is a problem because we have different kinds of students here. First, we have the students who are willing to learn English, and they are in the intensive courses, so they're supposed to like English, I don't know. 'Cause the thing is that they come here to work in other countries or to get a masters or something like that. The other kinds of students we have here are the ones that are in credit courses, and we have a problem with them actually because not all of them are willing to learn English, and they're here because they have to take these classes. And at some point I understand them, for example if they make me take mathematics class I would be like 'oh my god! I can't do this', and 'I don't like this', so I think sometimes I understand them, so the thing is that we have to try to let them know how important it is to learn English, maybe not now but maybe in the future, so we have to extra motivate them.

Interviewer: Yeah. You're not the first teacher that mentions that.

Teacher 3: Really? I think it's very important to get them motivated.

Interviewer: Ok. How would you describe your classes at the Institute of Languages?

Teacher 3: Well we've had different kinds of classes as well. It depends on the group. Sometimes when we have large groups, it's more difficult to manage the class and to make them all participate, but in general students, most of them come to class, and they try to learn, but as I told you sometimes they're not motivated, so they're like 'ok, I just want to pass' and 'I'm good just to get 60 points and that's all what I need', and that's a problem actually.

Interviewer: Ok. Which tools or methods do you usually use in class to enhance students listening skills?



Teacher 3: Yeah. As you know I like to use videos. I love to work with videos especially sitcoms or movies because I think it's a good strategy especially for them to learn phrases or, I don't know, cognates which are, no it's not cognates, it's like collocations I'm sorry. Collocations that sometimes we as teachers don't use here, and teachers of a foreign language. I think is good for them because they are also listening to some different kinds of accents, as I told you, which is a very difficult problem for them. And I for example, have a lot of movies, and sometimes I ask my students 'hey I have movies or I have ,you know, songs or whatever if you need them just ask me and I can give them to you movies, sitcoms, etc'. I think it's very good. I actually have some students who have told me 'hey I have learned English just listening to music or just watching movies', and it's amazing how nice and, I don't know, how complete English they have, so it's very nice it's a very nice thing.

Interviewer: To what extent do you think pragmatics is important for learning English as a foreign language?

Teacher 3: It is very important! We have to situate them in a context and it's important for them to learn real English and that's why sometimes I really like some of the activities. I also do with my students is, for example, interviews. I don't know if you did that. I ask my students to interview foreign people.

Interviewer: Yeah I think so.

Teacher 3: I think the more real English is for them is, I don't know, it's very important for them to know why they're learning English and how to use it, so I think it's very important.

Interviewer: Ok. Well, this one is easy for you. Do you think movies, videos, TV series or sitcoms can enhance students' language skills?



Teacher 3: Absolutely! I think is one of the best strategies to use, and, as I told you, I'm also working with extra-curricular activities in which one of them was watching movies, and there were, actually according to the results I obtained they loved that.

Interviewer: Ok.

Teacher 3: Because they learn English and they're motivated intrinsically. They're learning, but they don't know they're learning, and that's good because they feel motivated. And I was very happy with that and all of the things that I see here, for example, videos, I don't know, sitcoms are really really important and TV series as well, so all of them are very important. I think a lot, all of the teachers should use them for any kind of strategy because it's not just for listening or speaking. You can use any strategies, for example, for writing; maybe to create a summary of what they saw, or maybe a conversation class. So you have a lot of activities that you can apply with them.

Interviewer: Ok. Do you think sitcoms can be used for, you know, to enhance listening skills in particular?

Teacher 3: Yes, totally! As I told you, I think listening is first, one of the most difficult skills to acquire, and if they listen to different accents, as I told you, I think it's really important.

Interviewer: Ok. Would you be willing, well I know you are, to use sitcoms and sitcom based activities as technique to enhance students listening skills?

Teacher 3: Yes, always, always. I like to do that and to try to find the best, you know, something related to I, for example, used to love using sitcoms to teach culture as well. For example, if it is Christmas I can show them how they celebrate Christmas in other countries



as well as any other Halloween, for example, as well. So besides listening skills improvement, they can also know about other cultures of other countries.

Interviewer: And would you recommend your students to watch sitcoms outside the classroom?

Teacher 3: Yes, for example, now, right now I am teaching in the medical school. Over there, they only have four hours of English, and they have two extra hours to work at home, so I sometimes say 'hey you have to watch this movie and after that we are going to discuss it here in class' because, you know, sometimes the problem with students is 'yes I'm going to watch a movie in English', but they use the subcaptions in Spanish, so it's like they're not learning anything. I advise them to use the subcaptions but in English as well, so they can relate how the word is pronounced, and how it's written. So it's very nice of course. I really like them to do this.

Interviewer: Which sitcoms would you recommend?

Teacher 3: I recommend *Friends*. First, because it's short, because it is funny, and because, as I told you, it has a lot of cultural aspects that can be learned in class. *The Simpsons* as well. Yes, I think they're very funny, and they also, I don't know, makes us learn a reality of the American, typical American, not typical, but one of the typical American families.

Interviewer: Like the stereotypes.

Teacher 3: Yes! Exactly, stereotypes. It's very nice. I think those are the main ones that I generally use in class with my students.

Interviewer: Ok. So that's it. Thank you very much for your help.



Universidad de Cuenca

Teacher 3: Thank you very much.

Interviewer: Your opinion is really important.

Teacher 3: Ok. Thank you.



Interview Teacher 4 (14 min 43 sec)

Interviewer: Ok. So thank you for agreeing to do the interview.

Teacher 4: No problem.

Interviewer: So, the first question is: how long have you been teaching English?

Teacher 4: Well, I've been teaching English for about, uuh, I started in 1998 more or less, so it's been 20 or so.

Interviewer: Whoa! That's a lot.

Teacher 4: Yeah.

Interviewer: In your experience, which is the most difficult skill to acquire?

Teacher 4: Speaking, definitely.

Interviewer: Ok and why?

Teacher 4: Speaking, well because first, for students it's very difficult to pronounce the words. Pronunciation is an issue and then to get to a point where students actually respond to questions based on the English language not translating from Spanish into English. So that's a big issue they keep on, like, literally transporting words into English and even counting. Sometimes they're like 'hey teacher I have five words in Spanish but how come do I have only three in English?' They need to get rid of that.

Interviewer: Have you lived in an English speaking country?

Teacher 4: Oh yes, yes, yes. In the States.



Interviewer: Ok. And for how long?

Teacher 4: Well, I lived there, well I was an exchange student when I graduated from school, from high school. I was there for a year, and then I had the chance to teach Spanish four years ago, so I stayed there for four months or so. For a semester.

Interviewer: Did you learn English over there?

Teacher 4: Yeah, the first time, yes. The second time I was actually teaching, teaching Spanish.

Interviewer: Have you taken an English proficiency test?

Teacher 4: Well, not an official one, but, you know, to be a part, or actually to take the master's program we had to pass the official test.

Interviewer: Ok. What levels have you taught at the University of Cuenca?

Teacher 4: Well, many different levels. They keep switching me from credits to intensive courses. Well, I've taught credits one, two, and three. I've taught intensive courses, third level, fifth level, sixth level, seventh level, and then I've also taught at the Language and Literature school, well, many different subjects also like, public speaking, creative writing, writing, and speaking well.

Interviewer: Ok. So, a little bit of everything.

Teacher 4: Yeah.

Interviewer: Ok.

Teacher 4: In 12 years, yes.



Interviewer: Ok. To what extent do you think students at the Institute of Languages are interested in learning English?

Teacher 4: Well, we do have different, well I wouldn't say kind of students, but yeah I would say different interests.

Interviewer: Ok.

Teacher 4: The biggest group, which is the credit courses students, they're pretty much trying to fulfill the requirements, and they say 'I'm tired of it' and 'I just want to graduate'. In contrast, you know, those students who take intensive courses, they have, in my opinion, they do have a plan in life. I mean, they intend to go abroad, they mean to study hard, to get a higher education, so that makes a difference. Well, we do have credit students who are really trying to finish their credit program, and then they switch to the intensive courses, so we do have, like, students coming from placement tests. In addition, we have a bunch of students coming from the credit system, and yeah I pretty much state that we do have like two big different groups.

Interviewer: Ok. How would you describe your classes at the Institute of Languages?

Teacher 4: My own classes.

Interviewer: Like, in general.

Teacher 4: Well, in general I really try to be a friend and a teacher with my students, so they feel comfortable I think in the environment or class environment. It's so essential when students want to learn something, you know, if you look like a police officer or something they're not going to be willing to do things in class, and that's the first aspect I really take



into account at the time of teaching. And then of course I'm pretty strict. I'm demanding to the students. I keep, well I usually say 'I'm not your mom, but yeah you should actually do this and that'. You know, you need to keep pushing them.

Interviewer: Which tools or methods do you usually use in class to enhance students' listening skills?

Teacher 4: Well, there're many different strategies. Well, I encourage them to, well, we do some activities in class, but most of the time I explain them how important it is to do it at home. I mean, on their own, based on their interests. Let's say they like hip hop or I don't know tennis, so they can actually watch videos in English and listen to different topics in English. But in class I really encourage my students to work together and to, well, pair work, group work, individual work, so we switch back and forward to, you know, promote collaboration in class.

Interviewer: Ok.

Teacher 4: In addition to that, well, I have different kinds of activities like, completing. Sometimes I just play an audio, and I say 'Ok, retell the story, I wanna hear what you', 'look, was there any new word?' or, you know, using different kinds of activities to make them feel really encouraged to understand, not just watching. And also listening to different accents. Having a Japanese person speaking English and this British people speaking English also it's fun.

Interviewer: Ok. To what extent do you think pragmatics is important when learning English as a foreign language?



Teacher 4: Well, you really need to be aware of many different things when you're learning English, but I, you know, like going, well, probably when you're going to become a teacher I think many things you need to be aware of, but a person that wants to succeed professionally is not probably aware of many elements that we as teachers should know, so it would depend on what you're trying to do with the English language, in my opinion. So we do need, but probably more, like, I mean according to what we want to do in life. I mean, your professional life.

Interviewer: Ok. Do you believe videos, movies, TV series, sitcoms, can enhance students' language skills?

Teacher 4: Well, definitely. Again, going back to one of the questions I answered, again you know, there're many sitcoms, series, you know, like, Netflix is a fever today.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Teacher 4: So, students have plenty opportunities to listen to many different stories or information that they're interested in or just even for entertaining themselves. So this way, you know, I usually tease them, you know, saying 'Ok instead of listening to reggaeton or something like that' and they just laugh. I say 'do something useful, uplifting, that may lead you to the next step in the language', so they go 'ok, yeah, yeah', but yeah, consider that because sometimes, you know, just five minutes ten minutes on a daily basis would make a difference.

Interviewer: Yeah. Do you think sitcoms can improve students' listening skills in particular?



Teacher 4: Definitely, yes. Well, beginners tend to be, like reluctant to do those kinds of things. I may understand that because they say ‘Oh teacher, I won’t understand anything’, and I say ‘you will, something, at least a word’. At the beginning they usually go with subtitles in English because, you know, sometimes you can actually have them in Spanish, but the point here is listening and reading at first, but then they can actually just delete the subtitles and continue, and it’s amazing how. Well I haven’t used them very often but I’ve heard do it on their own based on their series or sitcoms they love so later on they say ‘oh teacher you know what? I just watch one of the chapters or episodes and I actually understood what was going on’, and I’m just like ‘yeah. If you train your ear, you will’.

Interviewer: Which one would you recommend? Which sitcoms?

Teacher 4: Sitcoms are series, right?

Interviewer: Yeah, like, the ones related to comedy more or less.

Teacher 4: Well again, it’s kind of difficult. Well, if you’re gonna be exposed to good English, anything’s good. I always say, you know, entertaining, uplifting, and good stuff. Good, not junk or trash, you know, like, really good stuff. Well, I’ve watched *White Collar* for example, it’s really nice. It’s not really, like, sexual things or violent, and it’s fun. It’s really good. I’ve watched that. I have recommended that to my students, but they have actually watched *The Walking Dead* or, you know, those kind of, in my opinion, kind of scary stuff, but they like it, and I say ‘as long as you like it, make sure it’s good enough for you’ and ‘just go ahead’. Go ahead and try to pick words and it’s good because they say ‘I learned this word’, and I go ‘ok good. Now how are you gonna use that?’



Interviewer: Ok. Would you be willing to use sitcoms and sitcoms based activities as a technique to enhance students' listening skills in your class?

Teacher 4: Yes, yes, yes. Well, I kind of feel frustrated sometimes because it's time consuming to do it in class, so what I've done before, and what I try to do now especially in medicine, you have four face to face hours and two online hours, so it's kind of difficult to balance and manage the online part. However, what I've asked students or what I would do with students is I ask them to watch them at home, and they take their time. They can even watch it once or twice. Here, in class, you just do it once and if somebody is lost, is lost, but the advantage of doing it at home, it actually helps students to take their time to do it in the morning, evening, any time they can to do the task. So I think yeah it's not probably a good activity to do it in class hours, but probably it would be a good idea to like, split the activity. You can watch at home, and then you come to class and we'll discuss. You choose the questions, I don't know, the activity.

Interviewer: Ok. Well, you've kind of answered to the last question, which is: would you recommend your students to watch sitcoms outside the classroom?

Teacher 4: I always do that.

Interviewer: Ok.

Teacher 4: Well, in order to improve their listening skills, to watch, to listen to good music, to listen to radios. There're many online radios from the States, from Australia, from Europe, that you can just click and listen to. I always tell them, you know, I wish I had this when I was younger, you know, it wasn't actually that way. But today they do have many tools,



many sources where they can actually just learn by themselves. I've had students learning English on their own just clicking.

Interviewer: Yeah. You're not the first one, actually, who mentions that some students.

Teacher 4: Not all of them. They've been the miracles in my life, but they were really engaged, intended. I remember saying to really be willing to do to really invest time to learn something good. But here our students are listening to reggae, reggaeton, hip hop, or something, but it's not really, and I asked them the question a few days ago 'ok so you really love that kind of music? What do they say? Tell me about the lyrics', and they just go like 'I think they' and I say 'you don't even know what they're saying' and sometimes it's just junk.

Interviewer: Yeah, usually.

Teacher 4: Yeah. I encourage them to make good decisions on their learning and their lives, actually, so they're happy, and they get what they want.

Interviewer: Ok. So that's it. Thank you very much for helping me.

Teacher 4: Ok. No problem Sofi. So nice meeting you.

Interviewer: You too. Thank you very much.

Teacher 4: Ok.



Interview Teacher 5 (7 min 46 sec)

Interviewer: So, thank you very much for letting me do this, and the first question is: how long have you been teaching English?

Teacher 5: Two years.

Interviewer: Two years in here?

Teacher 5: Yes, at the University of Cuenca.

Interviewer: Ok. You've never taught English before.

Teacher 5: No.

Interviewer: Ok. In your experience, which is the most difficult skill to acquire?

Teacher 5: I think speaking is the most difficult skill probably because the pronunciation in English is a little bit more challenging than in Spanish because in English you don't say it the way you spell it, so the pronunciation can get very confusing. And I also think students are a little bit scared to speak in front of their peers. They're scared of making mistakes. So, they have to kind of lower the filter and not be so worried of speaking.

Interviewer: Yeah. I know what you mean. Well, you've lived in an English speaking country, right?

Teacher 5: Yes.

Interviewer: You were born in the States, right?

Teacher 5: Yes.



Interviewer: Ok. Have you taken an English proficiency test?

Teacher 5: No.

Interviewer: No? Never?

Teacher 5: No.

Interviewer: I mean you're a native so it's ok, you're the exception. What levels have you taught at the University of Cuenca?

Teacher 5: This is a good question. Ok. I've taught level 1 and 2 of the credits program. I have taught 6, 7, 8 of intensives. I have taught Vanguardia Honors Program, two separate semesters of academic English, and on Saturdays I prepare a special course for professors and it's through the postgraduate to the graduate school, and I prepare a course from B1 to a B2 and we're doing B2 to a C1.

Interviewer: Ok. So you've got a lot of experience in only two years.

Teacher 5: A lot of levels, yeah.

Interviewer: It's a good thing.

Teacher 5: Yeah.

Interviewer: To what extent do you think students at the Institute of languages here at the university are interested in learning English?

Teacher 5: I think it depends. For example, in intensives we accept students that are not only university students, but also students from all over the city. They're very, very motivated and because they have specific goals as to what they want to study. Credits, which is just



undergraduate students it really just depends on the individual students. Some are really motivated to learn, some are motivated about their grades and not so much about learning English, and then also some of them have had bad experiences with English in the past, and they really don't like English at all.

Interviewer: Ok.

Teacher 5: So, I think it just depends on what area you're in. But I think some people have like this trauma from the past that they're not good at English, or somebody maybe told them that they weren't good at English, and they're a little bit, like have a block.

Interviewer: Ok. So you think there's a difference between the intensive courses and credit courses.

Teacher 5: Oh, yeah. Definitely.

Interviewer: You're not the first teacher who's told me that. How would you describe your classes at the Institute of Languages?

Teacher 5: My classes. What I really like, for example, about the credits class that I'm in this semester, is that it's four days a week for an hour and a half, which for learning a language is great. An hour and a half, 90 minutes is the perfect amount of time. We see each other Monday to Thursday, so I feel like they're benefiting a lot from that class having it four days a week. And intensive courses are intensive. That's why they're called intensive courses. It's every day for two hours, for seven weeks at a time, so it's very intense, but I also think that they're getting the most out of what they're trying to do, so they're benefiting from it. So, yeah. The most difficult class to teach is on Saturdays because we go a whole week without



seeing each other or if there's a holiday it's two weeks and so that's the hardest class I think because of the break of time.

Interviewer: Ok. Which tools or methods do you usually use in class to enhance listening skills?

Teacher 5: Listening skills. Well, in my higher levels the class is completely taught in English because it's high enough that all of the instructions.

Interviewer: Like this one?

Teacher 5: Yeah. Level seven is completely taught in English. It's easier for me too. But with like some lower levels we have to do. I teach in English but not the whole time because I do give them some grammar and that stuff in Spanish. We have to do more listening activities, we've to do more watching short videos, we have to do audio practice. In my credits one class, we listen to music sometimes popular music that they like that's in English. We try to fill in the blanks with the words. We try to understand the meanings of the songs. Thinks like that. The advantage that we have in Ecuador is that a lot of people listen to music in English already, so a lot of my students tell me their favorite artists and it's usually Ed Sheeran or Taylor Swift, and so we have that advantage going for us but we still have to do more listening practice.

Interviewer: Ok. To what extent do you think pragmatics is important when learning English as a foreign language?

Teacher 5: What do you mean?

Interviewer: Pragmatics?



Teacher 5: Like math?

Interviewer: Oh no. No, no. Like pragmatics is the part of linguistics that deals with context and meaning from context, and not literal meaning.

Teacher 5: Oh yeah. Like getting the meaning from the context that's going on?

Interviewer: Yeah. Like using idioms for example, it's not the literal meaning of the word but, you know, the meaning from context.

Teacher 5: I think this is important because when you watch a movie or you watch a film or something like that, these things are going to come up, and if you don't understand you're gonna get really lost. They're in sitcoms a lot, but if you watch friends there are a lot of, like, colloquial expressions that you're gonna have to understand like from living in the United States or studying those things. Yeah, I think it's important.

Interviewer: Do you believe videos, movies, TV series, sitcoms can enhance students language skills?

Teacher 5: Yes, especially listening because I always. A lot of my students say listening is the hardest part, but I tell them 'you can improve your listening at home. You don't need me as a teacher to improve your listening'. My husband bought all the CDs of, all the discs, like back on the day, of *Friends* and we'll watch it, and that's how he got his listening to be improved for the TOEFL score, so I think listening is the easiest thing to do, but you have to watch TV and, you know, movies or something like that.

Interviewer: Ok. You answered, basically, to the next question which is: do you think sitcoms can improve students listening skills?



Teacher 5: Absolutely, 'cause my husband is a testimony of that.

Interviewer: Ok. Yeah. It's a good thing. I mean, you talk from experience from your husband.

Teacher 5: Yes.

Interviewer: Would you be willing to use sitcoms and sitcom based activities as a technique to enhance students' listening skills? I mean in this class.

Teacher 5: Yeah, definitely!

Interviewer: Ok, and which sitcoms would you recommend?

Teacher 5: Well, I really like *Friends* 'cause I watch it all the time. *Friends*, *Grey's Anatomy*. Well, *Grey's Anatomy* is more like a drama.

Interviewer: Yeah, like a TV series.

Teacher 5: Yeah. *How I met your mother* is very funny, is very sexist though. I'm trying to think what else. And some from England too, like so we could have a mix of the accents and stuff like that.

Interviewer: Ok.

Teacher 5: But I don't know any from England, but you can find them on Netflix now. So, yeah.

Interviewer: And the last question: would you recommend your students to watch sitcoms outside the English classroom?



Universidad de Cuenca

Teacher 5: Absolutely. Definitely.

Interviewer: And why?

Teacher 5: Because they can learn more vocabulary. They can get more used to different accents, and I think they will improve their speaking score overall or their listening score overall.

Interviewer: Ok. So that's it. Thank you very much for your help.

Teacher 5: Thank you



Interview Teacher 6 (8 min 50 sec)

Interviewer: So thank you, first of all, for letting me do this in your class. The first question is how long have you been teaching English?

Teacher 6: Well, I've been teaching English for over 25 years.

Interviewer: That's a lot!

Teacher 6: Yes.

Interviewer: In your experience, which is the most difficult skill to acquire?

Teacher 6: For me or for my students?

Interviewer: For your students, of course.

Teacher 6: Well, it has changed over the years. Before it was speaking, but now I think listening and writing are the most difficult. And also based on the diagnostic exams from my students, their speaking is pretty good.

Interviewer: Ok.

Teacher 6: But their writing is very low in some, in others not. And listening also, they had a hard time with the questions, but I think listening to new material like TED Talks, for example. I encourage them to watch them and understand and also now, what we're using is 6minuteenglish.com from the BBC which, today they gave some presentations, so I think it helped them a little bit.

Interviewer: Ok. Have you lived in an English speaking country?



Teacher 6: Yes.

Interviewer: And for how long?

Teacher 6: 13 years.

Interviewer: Oh whoa! That's a lot.

Teacher 6: Yes, I went to college in the United States.

Interviewer: Ok, so you learned English over there.

Teacher 6: Yes, yes I did.

Interviewer: Ok. Have you taken an English proficiency test?

Teacher 6: TOEFL a long time ago and also another TOEFL to enter the master's program.

Interviewer: And which level did you reach?

Teacher 6: The first time, years ago, it was different, like. I don't remember. The highest number was 200 and I got 180 or something.

Interviewer: Ok, but according to the Common European Framework maybe a C1?

Teacher 6: Yes, yes, yes.

Interviewer: Ok. What levels have you taught at the University of Cuenca?

Teacher 6: Well, I've been teaching the advanced levels for the longest time. I used to teach speaking at the Language, Literatura Inglesa, a long time ago. But now mostly in here at the Language Department, Language Institute now it's called, mostly levels seven and eight.



Interviewer: Seven and eight, ok. To what extent do you think students of the Institute of Languages at the University of Cuenca are interested in learning English?

Teacher 6: A lot. I mean, now, because of the master's programs that are mandatory now for students to get a job. I think they are more interested because these, the ones that you see here, are students who just want to learn the language. It's not a mandatory class for their major.

Interviewer: How would you describe your classes at the Institute of Languages?

Teacher 6: In what sense?

Interviewer: I mean, in general, how do you see your students? How do you conduct your classes?

Teacher 6: Well, first of all, the ideal, I would say it's my modo, is to make a comfortable environment, but with a lot of respect among the students and with the teacher. And if they're relaxed in a conformable environment, I think they acquire the language better.

Interviewer: Yeah. Which tools or methods do you usually use in class to enhance students' listening skills?

Teacher 6: Listening? Like I told you, well, I use the CD from the book because it has some really interesting topics related to the topics from the units, but I use a lot of other sources, like I told you, the 6minute English, that's great, TED talks. I mean it's good exercises. CDLP California Adult Learning is also another website, and a lot of videos that I upload for teach them grammar. This is, the levels seven and eight we just develop skills not grammar.



Grammar is there but in a limited way I would say, like, some specific topics that I upload videos related to that as well so they're exposed to a lot of listening.

Interviewer: Ok

Teacher 6: In the class and outside the class.

Interviewer: Ok, good. To what extent do you think pragmatics is important when learning English as a foreign language?

Teacher 6: Pragmatics is everything. The students well, for me, I'm a big fan of culture and if the student doesn't learn about culture, he's not learning properly the language. So they're exposed to a lot of topics from a lot of intercultural situations from other countries, not only the United States I concentrate on England and Australia. India as well because English is their mother tongue, so I mean, not their mother tongue but it's the first.

Interviewer: Yeah, the official language.

Teacher 6: So they're exposed to a lot of different topics related to culture, related to the language, a little bit of history as well.

Interviewer: Ok. Do you believe videos, movies, TV series, sitcoms can enhance students' language skills?

Teacher 6: Definitely! I had a friend who learned English through *Friends*, and it's amazing how much she learned. She was from here, she hasn't been to the United States, but just watching *Friends*.

Interviewer: And why do you think sitcoms can help?



Teacher 6: Because it's real language, authentic language. I have recommended to my students a series in Netflix called *Heartland* and it's Canadian English, but the way they speak is very clear, so it's a real situation. So they're interested in that, not the artificial reading that's sometimes in text books. Oh before you say something, how they are exposed to listening, also I always bring native English speakers to the class.

Interviewer: Oh really?

Teacher 6: Yes, I invite them, and people from many different not only from English speaking countries. I have a friend from Norway who speaks English very well, and she comes here to talk to them about anything.

Interviewer: Yes, so they enhance their listening skills. Do you think sitcoms can improve students listening skills? Sitcoms in particular.

Teacher 6: Yes, yes of course. Like I told you, I saw a friend of mine, and I ask my students to watch *The big bang theory*. For me it's difficult. Ok, when I listen.

Interviewer: Yeah, because it's fast.

Teacher 6: Yeah, and for them sometimes it's impossible, but some students are very good at it.

Interviewer: And would you be willing to use sitcoms and sitcom based activities in your classes?

Teacher 6: Yes, I would like to. I have used it but just extracts from it, very short.

Interviewer: Ok, so not all of it.



Teacher 6: No, no. Not the whole thing.

Interviewer: And why not?

Teacher 6: I don't know, I haven't thought about it. I mean, I ask them to watch at home, but not to show them in class or to do exercises based on it. Just like a free activity for them.

Interviewer: Well, you kind of answered to the last question which is: would you recommend your students to watch sitcoms outside the classroom?

Teacher 6: Yes, I always do, I always do. The ones I like or movies that I like I highly recommend them. Where I see that they can learn something from it. Also about the culture, you know, *Friends* used to be great, but they don't watch *Friends* any more.

Interviewer: Yes because it's kind of old, right?

Teacher 6: Exactly. *Heartland* a friend of mine, a student of mine recommended it to me, and I liked it, and it's about young people, so they like it.

Interviewer: Ok. That's it. Thank you very much for your help.

Teacher 6: Sofi, I wish you the best.

Interviewer: Thank you.

Teacher 6: Ok.



Interview Teacher 7 (10 min 52 sec)

Interviewer: Ok. How long have you been teaching English?

Teacher 7: Well, I've been teaching English for almost ten years, and well, I've been teaching to different ages.

Interviewer: In your experience which is the most difficult skill to acquire? and why?

Teacher 7: I think that listening. Listening 'cause, well, I think that probably students are not used to listen to it, to listen to for example, sometimes they listen to songs, but they are not aware of the lyrics. They just listen to them because they like the rhythm, but not because they like the. Sometimes they do not even know what the lyrics are about.

Interviewer: Or what their saying.

Teacher 7: Yeah.

Interviewer: Ok. Have you lived in an English speaking country?

Teacher 7: Well, I haven't lived, but I have gone to London and when I went there, I stayed there like for three months. I took an English course there, and also I went to Dublin, in Ireland, and I took a teaching course there, and I went there for a month.

Interviewer: Have you taken an English proficiency test?

Teacher 7: Yes I've done the FCE and well.

Interviewer: Which level did you reach?

Teacher 7: C1.



Interviewer: C1, ok. And you took also the, I mean you take the DELTA course. Is it the DELTA course?

Teacher 7: Yeah. I took the CELTA course.

Interviewer: Oh, it's the CELTA.

Teacher 7: Yes, I did the CELTA course.

Interviewer: And, what levels have you taught at the University of Cuenca?

Teacher 7: At the University of Cuenca. Well, right now I'm teaching second level and, second and third yeah.

Interviewer: Those are the credits courses, right?

Teacher 7: Yeah.

Interviewer: Ok and to what extent do you think students of the Institute of languages at the University of Cuenca are interested in learning English?

Teacher 7: Well, I think that they are really interested in learning English, but I think that some of them see it as a very hard obstacle that they have to overcome.

Interviewer: Ok.

Teacher 7: But I think they are interested not only because they have to approve the levels or things like that, but also because they have to learn. Remember, nowadays a lot of students want to travel abroad, so I think most of them are interested but it's very difficult for them to reach.



Interviewer: How would you describe your classes at the Institute of Languages?

Teacher 7: Describe my classes.

Interviewer: Like in general, I mean, how do you see your students? How are they learning?
How do you manage to?

Teacher 7: Well, in my classes. Well, if you go to one of my classes, you would see that I like to work a lot with the production part and well, sometimes what I follow are this like three piece method. Like, sometimes you present something and it's like they practice a little, they listen or reading and then I want students to produce something, so they can write or they can speak, so I always try to work in that way, and I think that students like that the same time because they are working in pairs or in groups, so they have the chance to work individually, which is really important and also in groups or pairs.

Interviewer: Ok.

Teacher 7: Yeah.

Interviewer: Which tools or methods do you usually use in class to enhance students' listening skills?

Teacher 7: Well, for listening. Well, I've used different things like songs or series. For example like, *Friends* series or *The big bang theory* or videos from the British Council or videos from the National Geographic, so different kind of things.

Interviewer: Ok. Do you believe videos, movies, TV series, sitcoms can enhance students language skills?



Teacher 7: Yeah, yeah of course they can, but I see that you need your students to have a certain level of English. What I mean is like, for example, you cannot use that kind of material with students that are in a first or second level. I think they are very useful because this is authentic material, so students can and this is a fun way for students to learn, and they can learn vocab, pronunciation, which is really important. Usually teachers do not focus their classes on pronunciation that much, but in grammar, so in this way you can emphasize pronunciation, communication skills, and things like that.

Interviewer: Ok.

Teacher 7: Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: To what extent do you think pragmatics is important when learning English as a foreign language?

Teacher 7: Well, I think it's important. It's important because if you see, sometimes in a language you do not only need, like, the form of a phrase, but also the meaning so. And this is the interesting part of teaching, I think, a language because you can compare things. And you can see and this is what I'm usually telling to my students because they tend to use Google translator which I think, I think that this translator is a very useful tool, but not for low levels however, but for people who have a high level of English. But, yeah, I think it is really important, so in that way people can compare languages and can see that they cannot take out the literal meaning of something.

Interviewer: Yes.



Teacher 7: They cannot have that like and the thing that I'm always telling to them is: 'was this a piece of cake?' so they are like translating these things and in that way they can see.

Interviewer: Ok. Do you think sitcoms can improve students' listening skills?

Teacher 7: Yes, yes, of course. But I think that students need, I think that if you decide to work with these kind of things, as a teacher, it is not like 'today we are gonna work with a sitcom' and then I, it's forgotten. I think you have to work with this frequently.

Interviewer: Ok.

Teacher 7: So the students get used to this because at the beginning is going to be very difficult for your students to get a meaning of what is going there in the series, so I think that, as a teacher, if you decide to work with this, is an excellent tool, but you have to practice. You have to have activities; otherwise you're just showing your students something for fun. As a teacher, you're doing nothing. You're just presenting this thing. I don't know if you remember, in high school our teachers were like 'hey today we're gonna watch a movie' but there was nothing else after the movie so it was like.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Teacher 7: And obviously as a student, at that moment, I remember, it was the best thing for us, but if you think right now we were watching the movie.

Interviewer: But we did nothing with it.

Teacher 7: We could have had taken more advantage of it.



Interviewer: Well, you kind of answered to the next question which is: would you recommend your students to watch sitcoms outside the classroom?

Teacher 7: Yes, yes. I think that they can watch in the classroom and well I actually think that they watch not because I am telling them to do it, but they do watch. But probably what they do, they use captions or subtitles all the time, so probably to ask them whether they are watching them or not and how hard they're trying to get the meaning probably in that way we can advise them what to do or how to try, or you can send them as homework for example 'ok everyone I want you to watch this', but also with some activities, so they have to answer, so they know what to look for.

Interviewer: Ok. Which sitcoms would you recommend them to watch?

Teacher 7: Well, I'm kind of old in this kind of thing. For example, I love *The big bang theory*.

Interviewer: Ok.

Teacher 7: I love this kind of series, and I think it's kind of easy to understand, and I also love *Friends*. It was funny because the first time that I showed this to my students, for me it was like 'it's *Friends*', so it's like the most common thing. However, no one, for all of them it was kind of new, so I was like 'really?', so it's like, those are the series that I have used.

Interviewer: Ok, and the last question. Would you be willing to use sitcoms and sitcom based activities as a technique to enhance students' listening skills at the University of Cuenca?



Teacher 7: Yes, yes, yes. It would be a good idea. Do you remember, I don't know if you had this teacher in high school that. There was one teacher, who used a lot of sitcoms. Well, it was one series that she used all the, during all the semester, so we knew that we were, let's suppose, that on Friday we were watching this, so we had like, so we were interested.

Interviewer: To see what happens.

Teacher 7: We were curious about what was going to happen the next, so, and we were working in a very good way. I liked it a lot.

Interviewer: So that's it. Thank you very much.

Teacher 7: You're welcome.