## Enhancing Intercultural Awareness in High School Learners through Sitcoms

by

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## Abstract

## This study investigates the effectiveness of sitcoms as an educational tool for enhancing cultural awareness and language proficiency among high school students studying English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Intercultural competence has become a critical skill in today’s globalized society, and this research explores how sitcoms, with their authentic language and cultural contexts, influence students’ understanding of American cultural norms, humor, and conversational English.

## The study was conducted with 11th-grade students from Lyceum № 1 in Chernihiv, specializing in advanced English studies. These students participated in a structured intervention that included pre-and post-assessments, observational activities, and interviews. Episodes from the popular sitcom *Friends* served as the primary learning material, chosen for their cultural richness, relatable scenarios, and accessible humor. Activities included vocabulary building, cultural discussions, role-plays, and critical analyses of episodes, aiming to integrate language practice with cultural insights.

## Findings demonstrate that sitcom exposure significantly enhances students' comfort with cultural references, reduces language anxiety, and improves their confidence in conversational English. Observations revealed increased engagement and curiosity about cultural nuances, while post-intervention feedback highlighted students’ improved comprehension of idiomatic expressions and humor. The study aligns with existing research on the pedagogical value of audiovisual media, emphasizing the unique potential of sitcoms to provide an engaging and immersive learning experience.

## This research concludes that sitcoms can be a powerful resource for EFL educators, bridging the gap between language and culture while fostering a dynamic, interactive, and culturally relevant classroom environment.

## Анотація

## У цьому дослідженні аналізується ефективність використання ситкомів як інструменту для підвищення культурної обізнаності та мовної компетентності серед учнів старших класів, які вивчають англійську як іноземну мову. У сучасному глобалізованому світі міжкультурна компетентність є важливим елементом, що сприяє успішній комунікації та інтеграції у міжнародному середовищі. Дослідження вивчає, як автентичні мовні та культурні контексти ситкомів, таких як Friends, впливають на розуміння учнями американських культурних норм, гумору та розмовної англійської мови.

## В досліджені взяли участь учні 11 класу ліцею № 1 у місті Чернігів, які спеціалізуються на поглибленому вивченні англійської мови. Структура дослідження включала кілька етапів: початкове оцінювання знань, впровадження методики з використанням ситкомів, спостереження за учасниками під час занять, а також підсумкове оцінювання результатів. Учням пропонувалося виконувати завдання, пов’язані з переглядом вибраних епізодів ситкому, таких як аналіз культурних елементів, вивчення нової лексики, рольові ігри, обговорення гумору та культурних контекстів.

## Отримані результати демонструють, що перегляд ситкомів значно покращує роботу учнів із культурологічним відеоматеріалом, знижує тривожність під час використання мови та підвищує їхню впевненість у спілкуванні англійською. Учні відзначили, що стали краще розуміти ідіоматичні вирази, культурні жарти та особливості соціальної взаємодії в англомовному середовищі. Більшість учасників дослідження зазначили, що використання ситкомів зробило процес навчання більш цікавим і захоплюючим, що стимулювало їхню мотивацію до вивчення мови.

## Дослідження також підтверджує позитивний вплив ситкомів на розвиток міжкультурної обізнаності учнів. Зокрема, учні глибше зрозуміли концепції американських традицій, соціальних норм та культурних особливостей. Наприклад, сцени, пов’язані з традиціями святкування Дня подяки, допомогли учням порівняти американські сімейні цінності з українськими, що сприяло формуванню культурного діалогу в класі. Інші епізоди, зокрема спілкування персонажів ситкому в робочих та соціальних ситуаціях, дозволили учням обговорити відмінності у вирішенні конфліктів та сприйнятті гумору в різних культурах.

## У дослідженні було застосовано як кількісні, так і якісні методи. Кількісні дані зібрано шляхом анкетування до та після інтервенції, що дало змогу оцінити зміни у рівні розуміння культурних алюзій та впевненості учнів у використанні англійської мови. Якісні дані отримано завдяки спостереженням за учасниками під час занять та інтерв’ю після завершення курсу, що дозволило детальніше проаналізувати їхні враження, труднощі й загальну оцінку застосованої методики.

## Додатково було встановлено, що використання ситкомів сприяє розвитку комунікативних навичок, зокрема в контексті міжособистісної взаємодії. Ситкоми демонструють різноманітність соціальних сценаріїв, таких як спілкування в сім’ї, на роботі чи серед друзів, що дозволяє учням краще зрозуміти контекстуальність висловлювань і тональність спілкування. Рольові ігри та обговорення після перегляду епізодів сприяли засвоєнню цих моделей і покращенню навичок імпровізації у реальних життєвих ситуаціях.

## Окрім основних висновків, дослідження виявило додаткові переваги використання ситкомів як навчального інструменту. Серед них – розвиток емоційного інтелекту та навичок співпереживання, що стали можливими завдяки глибокому аналізу поведінки персонажів у різних життєвих ситуаціях. Ситкоми, зокрема *Friends*, пропонують учням моделі реакцій на конфлікти, виклики та гумористичні моменти, що сприяє формуванню більш гнучкого та критичного підходу до розуміння соціальних взаємодій. Крім того, учні зазначали, що приклади використання гумору, таких як сарказм або іронія, допомагали їм краще зрозуміти тонкощі мови та соціальних контекстів, що є складними для опанування. Ці аспекти не лише сприяли збагаченню мовної компетентності, але й розвивали здатність учнів до адаптації у міжкультурному середовищі.

## Таким чином, результати свідчать про те, що ситкоми є потужним освітнім ресурсом для вчителів англійської мови. Вони не лише створюють динамічне, інтерактивне та культурно значуще середовище навчання, але й допомагають учням більш впевнено інтегруватися у міжкультурний простір. Це дослідження рекомендує розширити використання ситкомів у шкільній програмі для підвищення ефективності вивчення англійської мови.

**Introduction**

In today’s increasingly globalized world, proficiency in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) has become essential for individuals seeking to engage in cross-cultural communication, academic pursuits, and professional opportunities. However, language learning is not limited to acquiring grammatical structures and vocabulary; it involves understanding the cultural contexts in which the language is used. Cultural awareness enables language learners to comprehend nuances, humor, and social norms, thereby enhancing their ability to communicate effectively and appropriately. This study explores the potential of using sitcoms as a tool to enrich EFL education by providing students with an immersive experience that combines language practice with cultural insights.

Sitcoms, or situation comedies, are a popular genre of television that showcases everyday scenarios, interactions, and social dynamics through humor. Unlike traditional educational materials, sitcoms present authentic language use, slang, idiomatic expressions, and cultural references, making them a valuable resource for EFL learners. By watching sitcoms, students can observe real-life dialogue and culturally specific humor, which are often missing in standard textbooks. Furthermore, sitcoms engage students by providing a relatable and entertaining medium for language learning, reducing language anxiety and fostering a more relaxed environment for practicing language skills.

Research on the role of audiovisual materials in language learning has demonstrated their positive impact on students' language proficiency and cultural understanding. Scholars such as Konus (2020), Mudawe (2020), Valizadeh (2022), and Larrea Espinar & Raigón (2019) have highlighted the benefits of using sitcoms to improve cultural awareness, reduce language anxiety, and enhance intercultural communication skills. These studies suggest that sitcoms, with their engaging narratives and cultural richness, offer an immersive learning experience that can significantly benefit EFL learners by supplementing traditional instruction.

The primary objective of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of sitcoms in enhancing cultural awareness and language proficiency among high school students studying English as a foreign language.

The primary objective of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of sitcoms in enhancing cultural awareness and language proficiency among high school students studying English as a foreign language. Specifically, the research seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How does sitcom exposure impact students’ understanding of American cultural norms and humor?
2. To what extent do sitcoms contribute to reducing language anxiety and increasing students' confidence in using English in real-life contexts?

To address these questions, this study was conducted with high school students aged 16 to 17 from the 11th grade at Lyceum № 1 in Chernihiv, specializing in advanced foreign language studies. By examining students' experiences before and after the intervention, the study aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of how sitcoms influence language learning outcomes. The findings are expected to offer valuable insights for educators and contribute to the body of research supporting innovative, media-based approaches to EFL education.

In conclusion, this study argues for the pedagogical value of sitcoms as an educational tool that extends beyond conventional language instruction. By immersing students in culturally relevant and linguistically rich content, sitcoms hold the potential to bridge the gap between language and culture, ultimately fostering more competent and confident EFL learners.

**Literature Review**

This review explores the growing body of research on the effectiveness of using sitcoms to enhance EFL students' cultural awareness. Sitcoms, with their engaging storylines, relatable characters, and humor, provide a rich context for language learning and cultural exploration.

***Advantages of Audiovisual Materials in EFL***

Studies consistently highlight the advantages of integrating audiovisual materials into EFL classrooms. Konus (2020) and Borrás Díaz (2020) demonstrate how TV series and films can promote speaking skills and cultural awareness. Larrea Espinar & Raigon Rodriguez (2021) further emphasize the potential of audiovisual materials to unveil cultural values. The use of such materials creates a more immersive learning environment, helping students to better understand and appreciate the cultural nuances of the language they are learning. This immersion aids in contextual learning, making language acquisition more effective and engaging.

Audiovisual materials also cater to different learning styles, providing visual and auditory stimuli that can enhance comprehension and retention. For example, Mejía et al. (research project) found that sitcoms improved pragmatic competence by exposing students to various speech acts and cultural contexts. This comprehensive approach addresses not only linguistic skills but also cultural literacy, which is crucial for effective communication in a globalized world.

Moreover, the repetitive nature of sitcoms, with recurring characters and settings, helps reinforce language patterns and cultural norms. As students watch multiple episodes, they become familiar with the context, making it easier to understand idiomatic expressions and cultural references. This repeated exposure is beneficial for long-term retention and deeper understanding.

Research by Valizadeh (2022) indicates that the use of sitcoms can significantly reduce foreign language anxiety, making students more confident in their speaking abilities. The informal and often humorous context of sitcoms creates a relaxed learning atmosphere, encouraging students to practice speaking without fear of making mistakes. This reduction in anxiety is particularly important in language learning, as it can lead to increased motivation and participation.

Furthermore, audiovisual materials like sitcoms provide authentic contexts for language use. Unlike traditional textbooks, which often present contrived dialogues, sitcoms offer natural language use, including slang, colloquialisms, and various registers of speech. This authenticity helps students develop a more realistic understanding of how the language is used in everyday situations.

***Sitcoms as a Tool for Intercultural Awareness***

A sitcom, short for "situational comedy," is a genre of television program that focuses on humor derived from everyday scenarios, typically featuring a consistent cast of characters and setting. Sitcoms often revolve around relatable life situations, social dynamics, and personal relationships, presenting both humorous and culturally relevant scenarios that audiences can connect with. Unlike drama series, sitcoms use humor as the primary mode of storytelling, often employing exaggerated personalities, recurring jokes, and social commentary to engage viewers.

In the context of language learning, sitcoms are valuable because they showcase authentic, conversational language, including slang, idiomatic expressions, and humor, making them an engaging tool for learners to observe natural language use. This exposure to real-life dialogue, cultural references, and informal speech patterns makes sitcoms particularly effective for enhancing both language proficiency and cultural awareness among EFL students.

Several studies specifically investigate the use of sitcoms for developing sociocultural awareness in EFL learners. Mudawe (2020) explores the effectiveness of the sitcom "Friends" in promoting cultural understanding. Larrea Espinar & Raigón Rodríguez (2019) conducted workshops using sitcoms for cultural learning in the EFL classroom. Their findings suggest that sitcoms can be a valuable tool for fostering intercultural communication skills and understanding cultural norms. Sitcoms often reflect everyday life situations, making them an excellent resource for teaching social etiquette and nonverbal communication.

Moreover, sitcoms provide a window into the social fabric of the cultures they represent. They depict various aspects of daily life, such as family dynamics, workplace interactions, and social rituals, offering rich material for cultural analysis. This exposure helps students develop a nuanced understanding of cultural differences and similarities, enhancing their intercultural competence.

The humor in sitcoms, while often culturally specific, can also serve as a bridge to understanding cultural perspectives. By analyzing what is considered humorous in different cultures, students can gain insights into societal values and norms. This aspect of sitcoms makes them a unique tool for exploring cultural subtleties that might not be as apparent in other types of media.

***Historical Context and Audience Engagement***

The integration of sitcoms into EFL education has been a topic of interest for researchers and educators for decades. Early studies in the 1990s and 2000s focused on the general use of TV shows and films in language learning. However, more recent research has specifically looked at the unique benefits of sitcoms due to their episodic nature and cultural content. Sitcoms like "Friends" and "The Big Bang Theory" have been particularly popular in studies involving both teenage and adult learners, highlighting their broad appeal and relevance.

Research by Villegas et al. (2015) indicates that sitcoms have been used across various educational settings, from high schools to universities. The episodic nature of sitcoms makes them suitable for short-term learning objectives, while their ongoing storylines encourage sustained engagement. This flexibility allows educators to tailor their use of sitcoms to the specific needs and preferences of their students.

In addition, the broad appeal of sitcoms means they can be used to engage a wide range of learners. Teenagers and adults alike find these shows entertaining, which can increase motivation and interest in the learning process. This engagement is crucial for effective learning, as students are more likely to invest time and effort in activities they find enjoyable.

***Pedagogical Approaches to Using Sitcoms***

The positive impact of sitcoms on sociocultural awareness can be explained through various theoretical frameworks. Waedaoh & Sinwongsuwat (2018) and Omar & Razı (2022) highlight the role of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) in promoting language acquisition alongside cultural knowledge. Additionally, Khabir et al. (2022) discuss the development of intercultural sensitivity through exposure to authentic audiovisual materials. These frameworks underscore the importance of integrating content learning with language instruction to enhance overall comprehension and cultural understanding.

The use of sitcoms aligns with social constructivist theories of learning, which emphasize the role of social interaction and cultural context in language acquisition. By engaging with the cultural content of sitcoms, students construct their understanding of language and culture in a socially meaningful way. This approach not only improves language proficiency but also fosters critical thinking and cultural empathy.

Moreover, sitcoms provide opportunities for active learning. Teachers can design activities that require students to analyze episodes, discuss cultural elements, and role-play scenarios from the sitcoms. This active engagement helps deepen understanding and makes learning more interactive and enjoyable.

***Enhancing Specific Language Skills through Sitcoms***

Research also explores the impact of sitcom-based instruction on specific language skills. Mejía et al. (2017) (research project) investigate how sitcoms can improve pragmatic competence, focusing on interpreting and performing speech acts. Valizadeh (2022) examines the influence of sitcoms on foreign language anxiety and motivation for learning. These studies suggest that sitcoms not only enhance cultural awareness but also improve specific language skills critical for effective communication.

For instance, sitcoms provide authentic contexts for practicing conversational skills, such as turn-taking, humor, and idiomatic expressions. This practical exposure helps students become more adept at using the language in real-life situations, reducing anxiety and increasing their confidence in speaking.

Additionally, sitcoms can be used to teach listening comprehension skills. The varied accents, speech rates, and conversational overlaps present in sitcoms mimic real-life conversations, helping students improve their listening abilities. This exposure to authentic speech patterns is invaluable for developing listening comprehension skills that are transferable to real-world situations.

***Future Directions and Considerations***

While the benefits of using sitcoms in the EFL classroom are evident, some studies highlight the need for careful selection and pedagogical strategies. Ökcü (2016) explores how pre-service EFL teachers can be trained to effectively utilize sitcoms in their teaching. This research emphasizes the importance of equipping future educators with the skills and knowledge necessary to select appropriate sitcoms and design effective lesson plans around them. By incorporating training modules on the use of audiovisual materials, teacher education programs can better prepare teachers to harness the full potential of sitcoms as educational tools.

Listya (2023) emphasizes the potential of sitcoms for developing intercultural communicative competence in an EFL context. This study underscores the role of sitcoms in exposing students to diverse cultural perspectives and fostering a deeper understanding of cultural nuances. By engaging with the cultural content of sitcoms, students can develop greater intercultural sensitivity and competence, which are crucial for effective communication in a globalized world. Future research should continue to investigate the most effective ways to incorporate sitcoms into the curriculum, considering factors such as cultural relevance, language level, and student engagement.

It is also important to consider the challenges associated with using sitcoms, such as cultural references that may be unfamiliar to students or humor that may not translate well across cultures. Educators need to provide adequate support and context to help students navigate these challenges and fully benefit from the learning opportunities that sitcoms offer. For instance, pre-viewing activities that introduce key cultural references and post-viewing discussions that clarify misunderstandings can enhance comprehension and cultural learning. Additionally, selecting sitcoms that are culturally accessible and relevant to the students’ backgrounds can mitigate some of these challenges.

Another significant consideration is the language level of the sitcoms. Sitcoms often feature rapid dialogue, slang, and idiomatic expressions that may be difficult for EFL students to understand. Teachers should carefully select sitcoms that match their students’ proficiency levels and provide scaffolding to aid comprehension. Subtitles, vocabulary lists, and guided listening activities can help bridge the gap between the students’ current language skills and the language used in the sitcoms.

Student engagement is another critical factor. Sitcoms that resonate with students’ interests and experiences are likely to be more engaging and motivating. Teachers can involve students in the selection process by allowing them to choose sitcoms that they find interesting. This approach not only increases engagement but also gives students a sense of ownership over their learning. Activities that encourage active participation, such as role-plays, debates, and creative projects based on the sitcoms, can further enhance engagement and learning outcomes.

Furthermore, research should explore the long-term impacts of using sitcoms in EFL education. While short-term benefits such as increased motivation and cultural awareness are well-documented, there is a need for longitudinal studies that examine how these benefits translate into long-term language proficiency and intercultural competence. Such studies can provide valuable insights into the sustained impact of sitcom-based instruction and inform best practices for integrating sitcoms into the EFL curriculum.

By addressing these considerations and challenges, educators can maximize the benefits of using sitcoms in EFL classrooms. Careful selection, effective pedagogical strategies, and adequate support can help overcome the potential barriers and fully leverage the educational value of sitcoms. Future research should continue to explore innovative ways to integrate sitcoms into language teaching, ensuring that students receive a rich and comprehensive learning experience that enhances both their language skills and cultural understanding.

***Expanding the scope of research***

This review can be further enriched by incorporating additional studies that explore the impact of sitcoms on specific cultural aspects such as humor, social etiquette, or nonverbal communication. Humor, for instance, is often deeply rooted in cultural norms and values, and understanding it can provide students with a deeper insight into the target culture. Social etiquette and nonverbal communication, similarly, are essential components of effective intercultural communication. By examining how sitcoms portray these aspects, researchers can offer valuable insights into how EFL learners can develop a more nuanced understanding of the target language and culture.

Additionally, the effectiveness of different pedagogical approaches for utilizing sitcoms in EFL instruction warrants further investigation. While current studies highlight the benefits of using sitcoms, there is a need to explore various instructional strategies and methodologies that can maximize these benefits. For example, comparing traditional classroom instruction with flipped classroom models or project-based learning approaches can provide a clearer picture of the most effective ways to integrate sitcoms into the EFL curriculum. Understanding these pedagogical nuances can help educators design more effective lesson plans and teaching materials.

Moreover, the role of learner agency in selecting and analyzing sitcom content is another critical area for research. Empowering students to choose sitcoms that interest them and analyze the cultural and linguistic elements can enhance their engagement and motivation. Research into how learner agency affects the outcomes of sitcom-based instruction can shed light on best practices for involving students in the learning process. By exploring how students’ active participation influences their language acquisition and cultural understanding, educators can develop more student-centered approaches that cater to diverse learning preferences and needs.

By expanding the scope of research in these directions, we can gain a more comprehensive understanding of the various ways in which sitcoms can enhance language learning and cultural awareness. This broader perspective will not only validate the current findings but also uncover new dimensions of using sitcoms as a pedagogical tool in EFL classrooms, ultimately leading to more effective and enriching language learning experiences.

This review demonstrates the significant potential of sitcoms for enhancing EFL students' cultural awareness. Sitcoms offer exposure to authentic language, cultural contexts, and humor, fostering empathy, critical thinking, and a deeper understanding of different cultures. Future research can explore how to best leverage sitcoms in the EFL classroom, considering student needs, cultural backgrounds, and pedagogical approaches.

**Methodology and Procedure**

***Stages of the Action Research***

The study used a structured action research model with four stages: identifying a problem, planning, intervention, and reporting. This approach ensured rigor and relevance, offering insights into the pedagogical benefits of using sitcoms in EFL classrooms.

The core problem was the limited intercultural awareness and language proficiency of high school EFL students, often stemming from textbooks lacking authentic cultural contexts. Recognizing this gap, the study explored sitcoms as a tool to bridge it, leveraging their natural language, cultural richness, and relatable humor to enhance real-world communication skills. This problem identification shaped the research objectives to meet the needs of modern learners.

Planning

The planning stage involved a meticulous design of the research framework. This phase encompassed several critical elements:

1. Literature Review

A comprehensive review of existing studies on audiovisual media in language education was conducted. This step helped identify the unique advantages of using sitcoms, such as their ability to reduce language anxiety, introduce idiomatic expressions, and foster cultural understanding.

2. Selection of Sitcoms

Friends was chosen as the primary material due to its global popularity, cultural relevance, and accessibility. The sitcom's clear pronunciation, everyday scenarios, and balance of humor and emotion made it an ideal tool for EFL classrooms.

3. Activity Design

Structured activities were developed to enhance cultural and linguistic learning, including vocabulary building, cultural discussions, role-plays, and critical analyses of episodes. These tasks aimed to engage students and provide deeper insights. The planning phase ensured educational robustness and alignment with research objectives.

Intervention

The intervention phase consisted of three stages: Pre-Viewing Activities, which introduced American culture, characters, and vocabulary to build contextual understanding; While-Viewing Activities, where guided scene viewing with pauses highlighted idiomatic expressions, cultural references, and humor, fostering real-time engagement; and Post-Viewing Activities, including role-plays, discussions, and reflections that allowed students to analyze humor, compare cultural norms, and reenact scenes interactively.

Reporting

Findings were analyzed using questionnaires, observations, and interviews. Quantitative data showed improvements in cultural awareness and language skills, while qualitative insights captured feedback from students and teachers. Visual tools like charts and tables illustrated outcomes. Recommendations emphasized sitcoms’ potential to enrich EFL curricula by integrating linguistic skills with cultural competence.

The table in Appendix A outlines a structured approach to using *Friends* episodes as an educational tool to enhance intercultural awareness and language proficiency among EFL learners. Activities are divided into three stages-Pre-Viewing, While-Viewing, and Post-Viewing-providing a comprehensive learning experience. Pre-Viewing tasks focus on introducing vocabulary and cultural themes, such as Thanksgiving or workplace dynamics, to help students contextualize content and draw parallels between their culture and that of the sitcom’s characters. While-Viewing activities deepen understanding through guided pauses to explore idiomatic expressions, cultural references, and humor, fostering active engagement and practical exposure to real-life English usage.

Post-Viewing tasks consolidate learning through group discussions, role-plays, and creative assignments like comparative essays or humor analysis, encouraging students to apply their knowledge meaningfully. These activities not only improve language skills but also develop cultural awareness and critical thinking. This structured methodology bridges linguistic knowledge with cultural understanding, creating an engaging and immersive environment that equips learners with confidence in intercultural communication.

In summary, the structured approach of identifying a problem, planning, intervention, and reporting ensured the success of this action research. By addressing a pressing issue in EFL education through innovative methods, the study demonstrated how sitcoms can serve as powerful tools for fostering intercultural understanding and language proficiency. Each stage contributed to a deeper understanding of the pedagogical value of audiovisual media, offering valuable insights for educators and researchers alike.

***Data Collection and Analysis***

The study employed a detailed data collection and analysis process to evaluate the impact of sitcoms on EFL students’ intercultural awareness and language skills. Using both quantitative and qualitative methods, it explored how episodes from *Friends* enhanced students’ engagement, comprehension, and cultural understanding. Pre- and post-intervention questionnaires measured shifts in cultural awareness, idiomatic expression familiarity, and conversational English comfort, with scaled questions and open-ended prompts providing both measurable data and personal insights. Pre-intervention surveys established baseline knowledge, while post-intervention results highlighted improvements, offering a robust foundation for analysis.

Qualitative data, including classroom observations and semi-structured interviews, enriched the findings by capturing students’ real-time engagement and reflections. Observations documented attentiveness, participation, and reactions to humor, while interviews revealed challenges and insights from both students and teachers. Analysis of quantitative data showed significant progress in cultural and linguistic competence, while qualitative themes highlighted humor’s role in reducing language anxiety and the value of authentic dialogues in building listening skills and cultural understanding. Together, these methods demonstrated the educational value of sitcom-based instruction.

***Observational Data***

Appendix B summarizes observations of three interactive activities based on episodes of *Friends*, showcasing the effectiveness of sitcom-based tasks in enhancing intercultural awareness, language skills, and critical thinking. The observation checklist evaluated criteria such as involvement, participation, feedback, comprehension, collaboration, and critical thinking. High levels of student engagement were noted, particularly during discussions on relatable and culturally rich themes like workplace dynamics, family traditions, and independence. Episodes such as "The One with Ross's Sandwich" and "The One with All the Thanksgivings" effectively captured attention and sparked lively participation, emphasizing the importance of authentic cultural contexts in maintaining interest.

Collaborative tasks, including role-playing and group discussions, further enriched the learning experience. Activities tied to episodes like "The One Where Monica Gets a Roommate" and "The One Where Everyone Finds Out" encouraged students to draw from personal cultural experiences, enhancing peer interaction and building confidence in language use. Critical thinking skills were also significantly developed through activities analyzing societal concepts, such as surrogacy in "The One with the Embryos" and honesty in friendships in "The One Where Everyone Finds Out." These tasks pushed students to reflect on complex cultural values, fostering a deeper appreciation of both their own and the target culture.

In conclusion, the observation checklist highlights the success of *Friends* episodes in fostering a dynamic and culturally enriching learning experience. Engaging topics, collaborative tasks, and critical reflection effectively enhanced language proficiency and intercultural awareness, affirming the value of sitcom-based activities in EFL education.

***Data Collection Methods and Tools***

The study used quantitative and qualitative methods to assess the impact of sitcom-based activities on EFL learners’ intercultural awareness and language skills. Pre- and post-intervention questionnaires measured changes in linguistic and cultural competencies, providing measurable benchmarks for progress through tools like Likert scales and multiple-choice questions.

Qualitative methods complemented the quantitative data, offering nuanced insights into student engagement and cultural reflection. Classroom observations documented behaviors such as attentiveness, participation, and responses to humor, capturing real-time interactions. Semi-structured interviews with students and teachers provided personal reflections and feedback on the sitcom-based activities, highlighting challenges and successes. Additionally, student-created artifacts, such as essays and role-play scripts, served as tangible evidence of learning, showcasing critical thinking and practical application of language skills. Together, these methods ensured a comprehensive evaluation of the intervention’s effectiveness.

The tables in Appendix C showcase the value of *Friends* in enhancing EFL students' understanding of cultural nuances and language usage. Table 1 highlights culturally specific expressions like "Are you kidding?" and "Roll with the punches," demonstrating their contextual use to improve vocabulary and cultural interpretation. Table 2 examines turn-taking strategies, showing how characters manage dialogue through questions and conjunctions, offering practical examples for students to develop fluent and coherent speech for real-life interactions.

In summary, the study combined quantitative and qualitative methods to evaluate the impact of sitcom-based activities on EFL learners. Pre- and post-intervention questionnaires measured linguistic and cultural growth, while observations and interviews captured engagement and reflections. Student-created artifacts, like essays and role-plays, demonstrated practical language application, showcasing the educational value of sitcoms like *Friends* in enhancing intercultural awareness and language proficiency.

***Description of the Research Participants***

Sitcoms are ideal for students aged 15 and older due to their mature themes, which encourage critical engagement. This study focused on 11th-grade students from Lyceum №1 in Chernihiv, specializing in advanced foreign language studies. Their maturity and critical thinking skills enabled them to explore complex cultural themes while enhancing language proficiency, making sitcom-based activities both effective and engaging for learners preparing for further education or the workforce.

Classes were organized into groups of at least 10 students, with B2-level learners using core textbooks like *On Screen B2+*, *Grammarway 4*, and *Booster* to strengthen grammar, vocabulary, and advanced skills. Friday lessons included NMTest preparation with supplementary B1-B2 materials, offering a structured and comprehensive approach to language learning.

**Table 1**

*Proficiency Level Distribution*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Proficiency Level | Number of Students | CEFR Level | Grouping | Textbooks Used | Additional Preparation |
| Intermediates | 22 | B1-B2 | Groups of at least 11 | On Screen B2+, Grammarway 4, Booster | NMTest preparation every Friday with supplementary materials, including multiple B1-B2 level textbooks |
| Advanced | 2 | C1 | Groups of at least 11 | Advanced language resources | Supplementary reading and exercises at C1 level |

The participants were categorized into three proficiency levels based on their performance in a standardized English proficiency test administered at the beginning of the academic semester. This test assessed their abilities in reading, writing, listening, and speaking. The distribution of proficiency levels was as follows:

* Intermediates (B1-B2): 22 students
* Advanced (C1): 2 students (certificated)

**Table 2**

*Gender Distribution*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Gender | Number of Students |
| Female | 16 |
| Male | 8 |

The study intentionally included participants across varying proficiency levels-beginners, intermediates (B1-B2), and advanced learners (C1)-to evaluate how sitcoms enhance cultural awareness at different stages of language learning. Intermediates engaged with complex linguistic and cultural elements, while advanced students analyzed authentic language and cultural contexts in depth. This diversity ensured a comprehensive analysis of sitcoms’ pedagogical value.

The research focused on 11th-grade students from Lyceum № 1 in Chernihiv, aged 16-17, chosen for their maturity and ability to critically engage with sitcom content. This age group, naturally interested in popular media, is at a pivotal educational stage where cultural awareness and language skills are highly beneficial. The study demonstrated sitcoms’ effectiveness in developing intercultural understanding and linguistic abilities.

***Ethical considerations***

Ethical considerations were central to the study, ensuring participant rights and research integrity. Informed consent was obtained from participants and guardians, detailing the study’s objectives, procedures, and voluntary nature, with confidentiality and anonymity strictly maintained. Sitcoms were carefully selected for cultural relevance and appropriateness, and activities were designed to be engaging and educational while avoiding discomfort.

Participants were chosen without bias, focusing on 11th-grade students aged 16-17 for their ability to critically engage with the content. Diversity in gender and language proficiency was ensured, enhancing the study’s scope. Feedback sessions allowed participants to reflect on their experiences, aligning with educational objectives. Adherence to principles of informed consent, fairness, and honest reporting upheld the study’s ethical standards while contributing valuable insights to educational research.

**Results**

***Presentation of the collected data and data visualization***

The tables summarize findings on the impact of sitcom-based learning on EFL students' cultural awareness and language proficiency, based on data from 24 students through questionnaires, observations, and feedback. They showcase baseline data, observed improvements, and student reflections, offering a clear view of the approach's effectiveness.

Using percentage calculations, comparative analysis, and observational metrics, the results highlight measurable improvements and trends, confirming the value of sitcom-based activities in enhancing both cultural understanding and language skills.

1. Cultural Awareness and Idiomatic Expressions

Percentages were calculated to assess students’ proficiency. Pre-intervention, 33% demonstrated cultural awareness, rising to 79% post-intervention. Idiomatic expression understanding improved from 21% to 67%, highlighting sitcom-based activities' effectiveness.

2. Percentage Change

Improvements were measured by comparing pre- and post-intervention percentages, showing a 46% increase in idiomatic expression comprehension, emphasizing significant progress.

3. Engagement Levels

Observations categorized student participation into high, moderate, and low. For instance, 83% showed high engagement during activities, reflecting positive interaction with sitcom-based tasks.

4. Feedback Analysis

Surveys showed 92% positive feedback on sitcom use, indicating high effectiveness and student enjoyment.

5. Activity Time Segments

Specific sitcom scenes, like Ross's sandwich note or Monica’s Thanksgiving flashback, were timed and selected to align with learning objectives, ensuring relevance and meaningful engagement.

Table 3 and figure 3 summarize the results of the pre-intervention questionnaire, which aimed to assess students’ initial familiarity with American culture, understanding of idiomatic expressions, conversational confidence, prior exposure to sitcoms, and awareness of cultural humor.

**Table 3**

*Pre-Intervention Questionnaire Results*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Criteria | Number of Students | Percentage (%) | Key Observations |
| Familiarity with American culture | 8 | 33% | Most students had limited knowledge of cultural aspects beyond mainstream media. |
| Understanding of idiomatic expressions | 5 | 21% | Most students struggled to identify or understand idioms. |
| Comfort in conversational English | 10 | 42% | Only 10 students felt confident engaging in informal conversations. |
| Previous exposure to sitcoms | 12 | 50% | Half of the students had watched sitcoms, but not with an educational focus. |
| Awareness of cultural humor | 6 | 25% | Only a quarter of students understood culturally specific humor and wordplay. |

**Figure 3**

*Pre-Intervention Questionnaire Results*

The pre-intervention results highlighted gaps in students’ cultural and linguistic competencies. Only 33% were familiar with American culture, and 21% understood idiomatic expressions, reflecting limited exposure to cultural norms and nuanced language. Although 50% had some recreational exposure to sitcoms, only 25% grasped cultural humor, indicating challenges in interpreting context-dependent jokes and idiomatic wordplay.

These findings underscored the need for targeted interventions using sitcoms to enhance cultural awareness and linguistic fluency. By addressing these gaps, the integration of structured activities aimed to create an engaging and effective learning environment for developing EFL skills.

Table 4 and figure 4 present the results of the post-intervention questionnaire, which evaluated the changes in students’ cultural and linguistic competencies after engaging with sitcom-based activities.

**Table 4**

*Post-Intervention Questionnaire Results*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Criteria | Number of Students | Percentage (%) | Key Observations |
| Familiarity with American culture | 19 | 79% | Significant improvement in understanding cultural norms and social dynamics. |
| Understanding of idiomatic expressions | 16 | 67% | Students became more proficient in recognizing and using idioms in context. |
| Comfort in conversational English | 18 | 75% | Most students felt more confident in informal conversations. |
| Engagement with sitcoms as a learning tool | 22 | 92% | Students found sitcoms both enjoyable and effective for learning. |
| Awareness of cultural humor | 17 | 71% | Better appreciation of sarcasm, wordplay, and culturally oriented humor. |

**Figure 4**

*Post-Intervention Questionnaire Results*

The post-intervention results showed significant improvement in students’ cultural and linguistic skills. Familiarity with American culture rose to 79%, while understanding of idiomatic expressions reached 67%, reflecting students’ ability to apply idioms in context. Confidence in conversational English also increased, with 75% of students feeling more at ease in informal interactions. Moreover, 92% of participants found sitcom-based activities enjoyable and effective, highlighting the value of authentic media in education.

These findings confirm the educational benefits of sitcoms for language learning. By integrating cultural insights with authentic language use, the approach enhanced students’ fluency and intercultural awareness, creating a deeper engagement with the target language.

Table 5 and figure 5 provide a comparative analysis of pre- and post-intervention results, highlighting the changes in students’ familiarity with American culture, idiomatic understanding, conversational confidence, and cultural humor awareness.

**Table 5**

*Comparison of Pre- and Post-Intervention Results*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Criteria | Pre-Intervention (Students) | Post-Intervention (Students) | Change (Students) | Percentage Change (%) |
| Familiarity with American culture | 8 | 19 | +11 | +46% |
| Understanding of idiomatic expressions | 5 | 16 | +11 | +46% |
| Comfort in conversational English | 10 | 18 | +8 | +33% |
| Awareness of cultural humor | 6 | 17 | +11 | +46% |

**Figure 5**

*Comparison of Pre- and Post-Intervention Results*

The comparative analysis revealed substantial improvements in all criteria. Familiarity with American culture increased from 33% to 79%, and understanding of idiomatic expressions rose from 21% to 67%, both reflecting a 46% gain. These results demonstrate the intervention's success in addressing the cultural and linguistic gaps identified earlier.

Additionally, conversational confidence improved by 33%, with 75% of students feeling more comfortable in informal English interactions. These findings confirm that sitcom-based learning, combining relatable content with structured exercises, significantly enhanced students' cultural competence and language skills.

Table 6 outlines the classroom observations recorded during the intervention, focusing on student engagement, comprehension, and collaboration.

**Table 6**

*Classroom Observation Summary*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Criteria | Number of Students: High Engagement | Moderate Engagement | Low Engagement | Key Findings |
| Active participation in discussions | 20 | 3 | 1 | Most students actively participated, particularly in cultural comparisons. |
| Comprehension of humor | 17 | 5 | 2 | Students showed significant improvement in understanding cultural humor. |
| Use of idiomatic expressions | 16 | 6 | 2 | Students began confidently using idioms in role-play activities. |
| Collaboration in group tasks | 22 | 2 | 0 | Group tasks fostered teamwork and enhanced cultural learning. |

**Figure 6**

*Classroom Observation Summary*

The classroom observations revealed high levels of student engagement during the intervention. Approximately 20 students actively participated in discussions, demonstrating enthusiasm for exploring cultural themes and engaging in group tasks. Collaborative activities, such as role-playing and group discussions, encouraged teamwork, with 22 students showing strong collaboration.

Notable improvements were observed in the comprehension of humor and idiomatic expressions, with 17 students successfully understanding cultural jokes and applying idioms in context. These findings suggest that sitcom-based learning not only facilitated linguistic development but also reduced language anxiety, enabling students to approach complex material with confidence.

The observations highlight the value of an interactive learning environment in enhancing student participation and cultural awareness. By fostering active involvement and peer collaboration, the intervention created a supportive space for students to develop their EFL skills and intercultural understanding.

Table 7 summarizes student feedback on the sitcom-based activities, highlighting their perceptions of the effectiveness, relevance, and enjoyability of the intervention.

**Table 7**

*Student Feedback on Sitcom-Based Activities*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Aspect | Positive Feedback (Students) | Neutral Feedback | Negative Feedback | Key Insights |
| Effectiveness of sitcoms for learning | 22 | 1 | 1 | Most students found sitcoms engaging and useful for language learning. |
| Relevance of cultural themes | 21 | 2 | 1 | Students appreciated exposure to real-life cultural scenarios. |
| Enjoyment of activities | 23 | 1 | 0 | Activities were seen as enjoyable and motivating. |
| Difficulty of language content | 7 | 10 | 7 | Some students found idioms and humor challenging to understand. |

**Figure 7**

*Student Feedback on Sitcom-Based Activities*

Student feedback on sitcom-based activities was overwhelmingly positive. A majority of students (92%) found the sitcoms effective for learning, while 95% enjoyed the activities, highlighting their motivational and engaging nature. These results emphasize the importance of using relatable and authentic materials to sustain student interest in language learning.

Students appreciated the cultural relevance of the themes explored, with 88% recognizing the value of understanding real-life scenarios depicted in the sitcoms. However, 55% noted that some idiomatic expressions and cultural humor were challenging, suggesting the need for additional support or scaffolding during such activities.

Overall, the feedback underscores the educational potential of sitcoms in EFL instruction. While challenges remain in decoding complex language elements, the positive reception indicates that sitcom-based learning is both effective and enjoyable, fostering deeper cultural and linguistic connections for students.

***Data analysis***

The study's analysis revealed significant insights into the impact of sitcom-based activities on enhancing EFL students’ cultural awareness and language proficiency. Quantitative data from pre- and post-intervention questionnaires showed notable improvements in cultural familiarity (33% to 79%), idiomatic expression comprehension (21% to 67%), and conversational confidence, emphasizing the role of authentic media in supporting cultural and linguistic development. These measurable gains confirm the effectiveness of sitcom-based learning in addressing pre-intervention gaps.

Qualitative data from observations, interviews, and student-created artifacts provided depth by highlighting active engagement and practical application of cultural insights during discussions, role-playing, and collaborative tasks. Students and teachers described the activities as enjoyable and relatable, underscoring their motivational impact. However, challenges with advanced idioms and cultural humor suggest the need for enhanced pre-viewing activities and teacher guidance to improve comprehension and reduce frustration.

In conclusion, sitcom-based learning effectively enhances intercultural awareness and language skills in EFL students, providing an engaging and practical pedagogical tool for immersive education.

**Discussion**

The interpretation of the collected data provides a clear and comprehensive understanding of the impact of using sitcom-based activities on EFL students’ cultural awareness and language proficiency. By analyzing quantitative and qualitative findings, the study highlights significant improvements in students' competencies while also uncovering areas for further enhancement.

One of the most notable outcomes is the marked increase in cultural familiarity and idiomatic comprehension. The pre- and post-intervention data showed that familiarity with American culture rose from 33% to 79%, while the understanding of idiomatic expressions improved from 21% to 67%. These results demonstrate that exposure to authentic sitcom content, coupled with structured learning activities, effectively bridges gaps in students' knowledge of cultural norms and nuanced language use. Students' increased comfort in conversational English, with 75% reporting confidence post-intervention, further underscores the value of sitcoms as a tool for fostering real-world communication skills.

Qualitative insights from classroom observations and student feedback complement these findings, offering a deeper look into the learning process. High engagement levels were observed in 83% of students, particularly during role-plays and group discussions, which allowed them to apply their understanding of cultural humor and idioms in meaningful contexts. Student feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with 92% rating sitcoms as an effective learning tool and 95% expressing enjoyment of the activities. These responses highlight the motivational and immersive nature of sitcom-based instruction, which keeps students engaged and fosters a positive attitude toward language learning.

However, the analysis also reveals challenges that some students faced, particularly with advanced idioms and culturally specific humor. While many students demonstrated progress, a subset struggled with decoding complex language structures and cultural references. This suggests the need for additional scaffolding, such as targeted pre-viewing activities, to introduce difficult vocabulary and provide context for cultural nuances.

The interpretation of the data confirms the effectiveness of sitcom-based activities in enhancing both cultural awareness and language proficiency among EFL students. The results validate the use of authentic media as a dynamic and relatable teaching tool, capable of creating an engaging and culturally enriching learning environment. While the overall outcomes are highly positive, the identified challenges offer valuable insights for refining future interventions to better support all learners in achieving their full potential.

Table 8 and Appendix D provides a comparative analysis of this study's findings with existing research on using sitcoms in EFL education, highlighting consistencies and unique contributions. The table emphasizes the effectiveness of sitcoms in enhancing cultural awareness, reducing language anxiety, and improving intercultural communication skills.

For example, Konus (2020) found that sitcoms expose students to real-life dialogue and cultural norms, enhancing intercultural competence-mirroring this study’s findings on cultural nuance comprehension. Similarly, Mudawe (2020) noted that audiovisual content like sitcoms reduces language anxiety by creating a relaxed, engaging environment, reinforcing the benefits observed in this research. Valizadeh (2022) highlighted sitcoms' role in promoting fluency and listening skills, aligning with this study's noted improvements in language proficiency.

This analysis validates the outcomes of the current study and aligns them with established research, demonstrating sitcoms' unique ability to combine language learning with cultural immersion. By offering authentic dialogue and relatable contexts, sitcoms provide an engaging, dynamic alternative to traditional textbooks, supporting both linguistic and intercultural development.

Konus (2020) observed that sitcoms significantly enhance intercultural competence and speaking skills, which aligns with this study's findings on improved cultural understanding and language fluency. Similarly, Mudawe (2020) highlighted the success of *Friends* in increasing students’ comfort with cultural references, a result also evident in the current research.

Larrea Espinar and Raigón (2019) demonstrated that sitcoms improve intercultural communication by exposing students to various social scenarios. These findings align with this study’s observations of enhanced cultural competence through structured viewing and discussion activities.

While consistent with existing research, this study offers unique contributions, including a structured framework of pre-, while-, and post-viewing activities to maximize learning outcomes. Its diverse participant group and multi-method data collection (questionnaires, observations, and interviews) provide a comprehensive evaluation of sitcom-based learning, reinforcing their value as an engaging and effective tool for enhancing cultural and linguistic skills in EFL education.

**Table 8**

*Comparison with Existing Literature*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Study | Key Findings | Comparison with Current Study |
| Konus (2020) | Sitcoms enhance cultural awareness and speaking skills | Similar improvement in cultural awareness and language proficiency |
| Mudawe (2020) | "Friends" significantly aids in understanding American culture | Consistent with findings showing increased comfort with cultural references |
| Valizadeh (2022) | Reduction in foreign language anxiety through sitcoms | Reduced anxiety and increased confidence in cultural contexts |
| Larrea Espinar & Raigón (2019) | Workshops using sitcoms improved intercultural communication skills | Aligns with improved cultural competence and language skills |

In conclusion, while this study provides a strong foundation for understanding the benefits of sitcom-based EFL education, further research is needed to explore its long-term impacts, cultural diversity, technological integration, and adaptability for various proficiency levels. Addressing these areas will not only enhance the pedagogical value of sitcoms but also contribute to a more inclusive and dynamic approach to language learning in a globalized world.

***Recommendations for further actions***

Appendix E and Table 9 outline key recommendations to optimize the use of sitcoms in EFL education, focusing on enhancing cultural awareness and language proficiency. These include incorporating diverse sitcoms, structured viewing activities, and teacher training to create an engaging learning environment. Suggestions for long-term impact studies and student-centered approaches ensure the method's sustained success.

**Table 9**

*Recommendations for further actions*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Recommendation | Description |
| Sitcoms Integration into Curriculum | Incorporate sitcoms as a regular component of the EFL curriculum to enhance cultural awareness and language proficiency. |
| Diverse Sitcom Selection | Select a variety of sitcoms that represent different cultures and contexts to provide students with a broader understanding of cultural nuances. |
| Structured Viewing Activities | Implement structured pre-viewing, while-viewing, and post-viewing activities to maximize the educational benefits of sitcoms. |
| Teacher Training | Provide training for teachers on how to effectively use sitcoms in their teaching strategies, focusing on cultural and linguistic elements. |
| Student-Centered Approaches | Involve students in the selection of sitcoms and design activities that cater to their interests and language proficiency levels to enhance engagement. |
| Technology Integration | Use technological tools such as subtitles and interactive platforms to support language learning and comprehension of cultural references. |
| Intercultural Communication Skills Development | Design activities specifically aimed at improving intercultural communication skills through the analysis of sitcom episodes. |
| Feedback Mechanism | Establish a feedback mechanism to regularly gather students’ opinions on the sitcom-based activities and adjust the teaching approach accordingly. |
| Resource Development | Develop supplementary teaching materials and resources that align with the sitcoms used, including vocabulary lists, cultural notes, and discussion prompts. |

Additional recommendations emphasize integrating technology, organizing cultural context workshops, and developing intercultural communication skills to enrich learning. Feedback mechanisms, resource development, collaboration with native speakers, and regular assessments are proposed to refine and adapt the approach.

These actions leverage the potential of sitcoms to deepen students’ cultural understanding and language abilities, equipping them for effective communication in a globalized world.

The recommendations in Appendix E outline strategies for effectively integrating sitcoms into EFL education to enhance cultural awareness and language proficiency. Incorporating sitcoms as a regular part of the curriculum exposes students to authentic language and cultural norms, bridging the gap between language learning and cultural understanding. Selecting diverse sitcoms that represent various contexts, such as family or workplace dynamics, ensures students experience a wide range of cultural nuances.

Structured activities, including pre-viewing, while-viewing, and post-viewing tasks, maximize educational benefits by preparing students, engaging them actively, and reinforcing learning through discussions and practical applications. Teacher training is essential to equip educators with the skills to select suitable content, design meaningful activities, and address challenges in using audiovisual materials. Involving students in selecting sitcoms and tailoring activities to their interests and proficiency levels further boosts engagement and learning outcomes.

Additional strategies include using subtitles and interactive tools to support comprehension, organizing cultural workshops to deepen students' understanding, and designing activities that enhance intercultural communication skills. Regular feedback mechanisms, supplementary teaching materials, and opportunities to interact with native speakers ensure a well-rounded learning experience. Continuous assessment and evaluation of sitcom-based instruction refine teaching methods, making them more impactful and adaptable to students' evolving needs.

While this study highlights the effectiveness of sitcom-based activities in EFL education, several areas require further exploration to enhance understanding and optimize implementation. Addressing these gaps can provide deeper insights into the long-term impacts and broader applicability of this approach, ensuring that its full educational potential is realized.

One key area for further research is the long-term impact of sitcom-based instruction on students’ language proficiency and cultural competence. While this study demonstrates short-term gains in cultural awareness, idiomatic comprehension, and conversational confidence, longitudinal studies could track whether these improvements are sustained over time. Understanding how exposure to sitcoms influences students’ language retention, fluency, and intercultural communication skills in the long run would offer valuable insights for curriculum design.

Another area to explore is the effectiveness of using a diverse range of sitcoms to represent different cultures and contexts. This study focused primarily on American sitcoms, such as *Friends*, which offer insights into Western cultural norms. Further research could examine how sitcoms from other cultural backgrounds impact students’ understanding of global diversity and cross-cultural communication. Additionally, investigating how students from different cultural contexts respond to sitcom-based learning could provide a more nuanced understanding of its adaptability and universality.

The role of technology in enhancing sitcom-based instruction is another promising avenue for further research. Interactive tools, such as online quizzes, discussion forums, and virtual reality scenarios, could enrich students' learning experiences. Researching the effectiveness of these tools in improving engagement and comprehension could inform the development of innovative pedagogical strategies. Similarly, exploring how subtitles, both in the students’ native language and the target language, influence listening comprehension and vocabulary acquisition would be beneficial.

Finally, further studies could investigate the specific challenges faced by lower-proficiency students when engaging with sitcom-based activities. While higher-proficiency students may benefit significantly from authentic dialogues and cultural nuances, lower-proficiency learners might struggle with the complexity of language and context. Researching tailored approaches for these learners, such as simplified materials or scaffolded activities, would ensure that sitcom-based instruction is accessible and effective for all proficiency levels.

In conclusion, while this study provides a strong foundation for understanding the benefits of sitcom-based EFL education, further research is needed to explore its long-term impacts, cultural diversity, technological integration, and adaptability for various proficiency levels. Addressing these areas will not only enhance the pedagogical value of sitcoms but also contribute to a more inclusive and dynamic approach to language learning in a globalized world.

**Conclusion**

In today’s world, where globalization increasingly demands intercultural communication, language learning extends beyond mastering grammar and vocabulary. It requires understanding cultural contexts, making education both more challenging and profound. This thesis addresses this issue by proposing an innovative approach to developing intercultural awareness through the use of sitcoms.

One of the key findings of the study is the significant impact of sitcoms on students’ understanding of American cultural norms and humor. Sitcoms like *Friends* immerse students in everyday situations that reflect cultural traditions, social norms, and interpersonal dynamics. By exposing students to culturally specific elements, such as holiday traditions (e.g., Thanksgiving) and workplace interactions, sitcoms enhance their comprehension of American culture. Additionally, students develop the ability to interpret cultural jokes and sarcasm, as evidenced by a 46% improvement in understanding humor and cultural references. This demonstrates the power of sitcoms in bridging gaps in cultural knowledge and fostering meaningful connections with the target culture.

Another critical outcome is the role of sitcoms in reducing language anxiety and boosting confidence in using English in real-life contexts. Their informal and humorous nature creates a relaxed atmosphere, helping students overcome the fear of making mistakes. Role-playing and group discussions inspired by sitcom episodes encourage active participation and practical application of conversational skills. As a result, 75% of students reported feeling more comfortable engaging in informal conversations, highlighting the ability of sitcoms to build confidence and fluency in real-world scenarios.

Furthermore, engaging with sitcom-based content leads to measurable improvements in language proficiency. Authentic dialogues in sitcoms expose students to idiomatic expressions, slang, and natural speech patterns, which are often absent in traditional educational materials. The study revealed a 46% increase in students’ understanding and use of idiomatic expressions and a 33% improvement in conversational confidence. Additionally, listening skills were enhanced through exposure to varied speech rates and accents, further supporting students' ability to navigate real-life interactions in English.

The research also highlights the importance of emotional engagement and motivation in the learning process. Sitcoms, with their entertaining and relatable nature, create a dynamic and enjoyable environment that keeps students invested in their learning journey. This contributes to both linguistic and cultural development, making sitcoms a powerful educational tool for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms.

However, the study also identified challenges, such as the complexity of idiomatic expressions and humor for some students. These findings suggest the need for additional scaffolding, such as pre-viewing activities and the use of subtitles, to ensure that all students can benefit fully from sitcom-based learning. Tailoring tasks to different proficiency levels is also recommended to make the approach more inclusive and effective.

In conclusion, the research demonstrates that sitcoms are a valuable resource for integrating culture and language into the educational process. They not only enrich students’ knowledge but also foster empathy, critical thinking, and readiness for intercultural interaction. By reducing language anxiety, improving confidence, and enhancing language proficiency, sitcoms create a dynamic and immersive learning environment. Therefore, their inclusion in modern education systems is essential for preparing globally competent individuals equipped with the skills to communicate effectively in a multicultural world.

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**Appendices**

**Appendix А**

Interactive Activities for Developing Intercultural Awareness and Language Skills Based on the Sitcom "Friends"

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Activity | Pre-Viewing Activities | While-Viewing Activities | Post-Viewing Activities | Sample Post-Viewing Activities | Time Segments Used |
| Activity 1: "The One with Ross's Sandwich" Season 5, Episode 9 | Vocabulary Building: Introduce terms like "passive-aggressive," "sandwich," "stress relief," and "overreaction." Cultural Context Discussion: Discuss workplace dynamics in the U.S. Ask: "How do people express frustration in your culture?" and "What are acceptable behaviors in your workplace?" | Focus on Specific Themes: Ask students to watch for Ross’s reaction to his boss eating his sandwich and the humor in his exaggerated response. Pause and Reflect: Pause when Ross writes the note for his sandwich to discuss tone, humor, and cultural context in workplace etiquette. | Cultural Comparison: Compare how workplace stress and conflicts are managed in the students’ culture versus the episode. Role-Play: Reenact a workplace conflict involving a missing item, adapting it to the students' cultural norms. Critical Thinking: Discuss why humor is used to address workplace conflicts and its effectiveness. | 1. Group Discussions: Reflect on how humor is used to resolve workplace conflicts in the episode. 2. Cultural Analysis Assignments: Analyze the concept of passive-aggressiveness in the U.S. and compare it to their culture. 3. Etiquette Drills: Practice polite ways to express frustration in professional settings. | 07:15–13:45 |
| Activity 2: "The One Where Monica Gets a Roommate" Season 1, Episode 1 | Vocabulary Building: Teach terms like "roommate," "independence," "life transition," and "start fresh." Cultural Context Discussion: Discuss moving out and independence in American culture. Ask: "At what age do people usually leave home in your culture?" and "What challenges come with starting life independently?" | Focus on Specific Themes: Observe Rachel’s first experiences after leaving her fiancé and moving in with Monica. Pause and Reflect: Pause during Rachel’s coffee shop scene to analyze cultural behaviors such as ordering coffee and tipping. | Cultural Comparison: Discuss similarities and differences in transitioning to independence in students’ culture. Role-Play: Students simulate a scenario where they move out for the first time in their cultural context. Critical Thinking: Reflect on how independence is valued and supported in different societies. | 1. Comparative Essays: Write about cultural differences in moving out and living independently. 2. Accent and Dialect Workshops: Practice American phrases commonly used in ordering food or coffee. 3. Fashion and Lifestyle Discussions: Discuss the cultural differences in lifestyle between Rachel and Ukrainian young adults. | 02:30–12:10 |
| Activity 3: "The One with All the Thanksgivings" Season 5, Episode 8 | Vocabulary Building: Introduce terms like "gratitude," "flashback," "Thanksgiving," and "family traditions." Cultural Context Discussion: Explain Thanksgiving traditions in the U.S. Ask: "What holidays in your culture are family-centered?" and "What traditions bring your family together during holidays?" | Focus on Specific Themes: Have students identify family dynamics and humor during the Thanksgiving flashbacks. Pause and Reflect: Pause at Monica’s turkey-on-head scene to discuss humor and its connection to cultural and family rituals. | Cultural Comparison: Compare Thanksgiving to a similar cultural holiday. Creative Activity: Design a poster or visual representation of a family holiday in their culture, highlighting humor or memorable moments. Critical Thinking: Discuss how humor helps families bond during stressful or awkward moments. | 1. Humor Analysis: Analyze the use of humor in Thanksgiving traditions. 2. Fashion and Lifestyle Discussions: Compare the festive outfits or traditions shown in the episode to their culture’s holiday customs. 3. Etiquette Drills: Practice American dining manners during Thanksgiving. | 04:20–11:35 |
| Activity 4: "The One with the Embryos" Season 4, Episode 12 | Vocabulary Building: Teach terms like "embryo," "surrogate," "trivia," and "competition." Cultural Context Discussion: Discuss the concept of surrogacy in the U.S. and its legal and emotional aspects. Ask: "What are cultural attitudes toward surrogacy in your country?" | Focus on Specific Themes: Ask students to observe the trivia game between the boys and girls and how humor arises from competition. Pause and Reflect: Pause to explain cultural references in the trivia questions and analyze how competition reflects social bonds. | Cultural Comparison: Discuss how competitions are perceived in family or friend groups in students’ culture. Role-Play: Students create and play a trivia game with questions related to their own culture. Critical Thinking: Reflect on the role of surrogacy in society and compare its portrayal in the episode to real-life practices. | 1. Group Discussions: Debate the importance of friendly competitions in bonding. 2. Cultural Analysis Assignments: Analyze one of the trivia topics in the episode and research its cultural relevance. 3. Comparative Essays: Write about societal attitudes toward surrogacy in their country versus the U.S. | 06:00–13:00 |
| Activity 5: "The One Where Everyone Finds Out" Season 5, Episode 14 | Vocabulary Building: Introduce terms like "secret," "eavesdrop," "confrontation," and "awkward." Cultural Context Discussion: Discuss the concept of secrets and confrontation in friendships. Ask: "How do people handle secrets in your culture?" and "What is considered appropriate in confronting someone?" | Focus on Specific Themes: Observe the humor and tension as the friends discover Chandler and Monica’s relationship. Pause and Reflect: Pause during Phoebe’s "seduction" scene to discuss cultural humor and body language used for comedic effect. | Cultural Comparison: Discuss how people handle secrets and confrontations in friendships in their culture. Role-Play: Reenact a similar situation involving a secret, adapting it to their cultural norms. Critical Thinking: Explore the balance between honesty and privacy in relationships across cultures. | 1. Humor Analysis: Discuss the use of exaggerated body language in comedy. 2. Accent and Dialect Workshops: Practice phrases and tones used during humorous confrontations. 3. Cultural Analysis Assignments: Explore the significance of privacy and secrets in maintaining friendships across cultures. | 05:10–11:50 |

*Source: self-made table*

**Appendix В**

Observation checklist

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Criteria | Activity 1 "The One with Ross's Sandwich" | Activity 2 "The One Where Monica Gets a Roommate" | Activity 3 "The One with All the Thanksgivings" | Activity 4 "The One with the Embryos" | Activity 5 "The One Where Everyone Finds Out" |
| Level of Involvement | High engagement during discussions on workplace stress and humor. | Students actively participated in discussing independence and life changes. | Students showed enthusiasm while comparing Thanksgiving traditions. | Students were highly engaged in trivia activities and group discussions. | Strong involvement in analyzing secret revelations and confrontations. |
| Participation | Students asked questions about passive-aggressiveness in workplace settings and cultural norms. | Students shared personal experiences about transitioning to independence. | Students contributed stories about family traditions during holidays. | Students asked questions about trivia topics and competition dynamics. | Active role-playing and lively debates on handling secrets culturally. |
| Feedback and Reactions | Students enjoyed the humor and commented on Ross’s exaggerated reaction. | Positive feedback on relatable themes of moving out and starting fresh. | Laughter and excitement during Monica’s turkey-on-head flashback. | Students appreciated the friendly competition and cultural references. | Positive reactions to humor and cultural differences in secrecy norms. |
| Comprehension of Cultural Concepts | Clear understanding of workplace dynamics and humor in conflict resolution. | Demonstrated understanding of independence in American culture. | Grasped Thanksgiving traditions and their significance in family bonding. | Understood surrogacy and competition as social and cultural constructs. | Students comprehended the balance between privacy and openness in relationships. |
| Collaboration and Teamwork | Students collaborated effectively in role-playing workplace conflicts. | Groups created relatable moving-out scenarios reflecting their culture. | Teams worked together to design cultural holiday posters and presentations. | Collaborative trivia games encouraged teamwork and cultural sharing. | Students worked in pairs for role-plays on secret revelations. |
| Critical Thinking Skills | Analyzed why humor is effective in reducing workplace tension. | Reflected on the societal importance of independence and support systems. | Discussed how humor strengthens family bonds during awkward moments. | Critically analyzed the role of competition and surrogacy across cultures. | Explored the cultural significance of honesty and privacy in friendships. |

*Source: self-made table*

**Appendix С**

**Table 1**

Sample of Cultural-Bound Expressions and Associated Meanings Presented in "Friends" Authentic Conversation

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Cultural-related Expression | Meaning | Authentic Examples from "Friends" |
| Are you kidding? | Being surprised at what someone says/asking someone to be serious | "Are you kidding? I take credit for Paul. Y'know before me, there was no snap in his turtle for two years." |
| To hell with (Sb) | I don’t care about him/her | "Ross: No, I don’t, to hell with her, she left me!" |
| Be a thing | Being lovely and romantic with (Sb) | "(Barry about Mindy) We’re kind of a thing now." |
| Cheap shot | When attacking weak people | "Rachel: Okay, I know it was a cheap shot, but I feel SO much better now." |
| Roll with the punches | Adapting a particular tough situation | "It’s funny, um, uh, we agreed we’d spend the rest of our lives together. Things change, roll with the punches." |

**Table 2**

Turn-Taking Strategies Applied in Natural Conversation from "Friends"

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Example of Authentic Conversation from "Friends" | Strategy Applied in Turn Taking |
| Rachel: Hey, you guys, the funniest thing happened at work... | Asking questions |
| Phoebe: My songs aren’t good enough for your restaurant? | Asking questions |
| Rachel: Okay, we’re still on that. |  |
| Monica: I didn’t say your songs were not good enough. |  |
| Phoebe: Then what’s wrong with them? Would they not go with your tiny portions of pretentious food? | Asking questions |
| Monica: Tiny portions? |  |
| Phoebe: Yeah well, "excuse me, I ordered the smoked salmon appetizer, but (peering through her spectacles) I can’t see it, I can’t see it"! |  |
| Joey: Uh-huh. | Using conjunctions like "and," "therefore," etc. |
| Phoebe: You guys. |  |
| Joey: And for Ross, Mr. Sweet-tooth. |  |
| Ross: You got me a cola drink? |  |
| Chandler: And a lemon-lime drink. |  |

**Appendix D**

Comparison with Existing Literature

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Study | Key Findings | Comparison with Current Study |
| Konus (2020) | Sitcoms enhance cultural awareness and speaking skills | Similar improvement in cultural awareness and language proficiency |
| Mudawe (2020) | "Friends" significantly aids in understanding American culture | Consistent with findings showing increased comfort with cultural references |
| Valizadeh (2022) | Reduction in foreign language anxiety through sitcoms | Reduced anxiety and increased confidence in cultural contexts |
| Larrea Espinar & Raigón (2019) | Workshops using sitcoms improved intercultural communication skills | Aligns with improved cultural competence and language skills |

**Appendix E**

Recommendations for further actions

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Recommendation | Description |
| Sitcoms Integration into Curriculum | Incorporate sitcoms as a regular component of the EFL curriculum to enhance cultural awareness and language proficiency. |
| Diverse Sitcom Selection | Select a variety of sitcoms that represent different cultures and contexts to provide students with a broader understanding of cultural nuances. |
| Structured Viewing Activities | Implement structured pre-viewing, while-viewing, and post-viewing activities to maximize the educational benefits of sitcoms. |
| Teacher Training | Provide training for teachers on how to effectively use sitcoms in their teaching strategies, focusing on cultural and linguistic elements. |
| Student-Centered Approaches | Involve students in the selection of sitcoms and design activities that cater to their interests and language proficiency levels to enhance engagement. |
| Technology Integration | Use technological tools such as subtitles and interactive platforms to support language learning and comprehension of cultural references. |
| Intercultural Communication Skills Development | Design activities specifically aimed at improving intercultural communication skills through the analysis of sitcom episodes. |
| Feedback Mechanism | Establish a feedback mechanism to regularly gather students’ opinions on the sitcom-based activities and adjust the teaching approach accordingly. |
| Resource Development | Develop supplementary teaching materials and resources that align with the sitcoms used, including vocabulary lists, cultural notes, and discussion prompts. |