

Enhancing EFL Students' Cultural Awareness through Friends Sitcom

Osama Mudawe Nurain Mudawe*

English department, College of Arts and Humanities, Jazan University, PO box 114, Jazan, Saudi Arabia

Corresponding Author: Osama Mudawe Nurain Mudawe, E-mail: onurain@jazanu.edu.sa/osamanurain@hotmail.com

ARTICLE INFO

Article history

Received: March 08, 2020

Accepted: May 21, 2020

Published: July 31, 2020

Volume: 9 Issue: 4

Advance access: July 2020

Conflicts of interest: None

Funding: None

ABSTRACT

The ever-changing global practices have dramatically dissolved cultural diversity, Cultural myopia, and cultural peculiarities in an unprecedented way. These practices reveal the necessity of having a mutual understanding of cultural entities for creating and developing meanings across various cultures. Languages seem to be the vehicle that drives global communication. However, mastering linguistic skills would not be sufficient for understanding the representation of cultural-bound expressions that identify global communication. Hence, the current study attempts to investigate the cultural phenomena substantiated in a sitcom for facilitating cross-cultural communication in EFL/ESL teaching contexts. Friends, as one of the most famous American sitcoms, is used in the study as a corpus to analyze the cultural facets used by speakers in particular socio-cultural settings. The study makes use of the corpus-based method to examine how sitcoms can be utilized for developing EFL students' cultural awareness. Throughout the study, distinct conversational patterns are meticulously analyzed through discourse perspectives to locate cultural nuances and their impact on developing the meaning of the target culture. Consequently, Sitcoms, as a corpus, have a remarkable impact on increasing EFL students' cultural awareness of multi-cultural contexts. Building cultural-based activities around sitcoms would expose students to significant cultural aspects beyond the confinement of textbooks and course materials. Attributed to the analysis and the findings of similar studies, it could be proclaimed that sitcoms have great promises for classroom implementation as a repository of authentic resources that would be of extreme instructional value in enhancing EFL/ESL students' communicative competence in discrete socio-cultural contexts.

Key words: Cultural-bond expressions, Authenticity, Sitcoms, EFL

INTRODUCTION

Apparently, technology diffusion, flourishing of business sectors, and foreign relations, to mention but a few, have influenced communication behind the realization of regions, knowledge, and cultural backgrounds in a dramatic way. These types of constant connectivity bring people altogether from different parts of the world to interact and communicate irrespective of what cultural backgrounds they keep and maintain. These new practices have raised the importance of understanding cultural issues being waved in any social situation where often, communication takes place.

Hence, communicating in a cross-cultural environment has become one of the most critical and challenging issues that deserves global understanding through various dimensions. How people perceive the global trends reshapes how intellectually they fit into it and develop a self of belongingness. Social and cultural identities are no longer exists in the virtual world where people interact and share their values and beliefs, and almost all of their lifestyles and norms. To claim our bits and bobs to the world, assimilating others' socio-cultural attributes has become critical for greasing the

wheel of communications. Cross-cultural interaction thrives and becomes fertile areas for scholars and researchers to prove its potential role in shaping many aspects of various domains of human knowledge. In language teaching and learning setting, the relation between culture and language established a long time back. Culture is the essential requirement of mastering communicative competence represented in various types of speech acts, whereas the language is a vehicle for extensive exposure to the target culture.

In the context of teaching English as a second or a foreign language, mastering linguistic skills alone would not make students as successful participants in a cross-cultural environment. Therefore, EFL students need to understand other aspects underlining the language itself that is critically demanded by global communication. In the same context, EFL instructors are overwhelmed by how their students are exposed to cultural-related materials to broaden their cultural perspectives and awareness for better involvement in global communication across various cultures. Contextualizing the teaching of cultural aspects through the authenticity of tasks and activities seems to be the ever-possible solution.

However, the lack of authentic materials constitutes a real dilemma for EFL students to understand cultural references and nuances that embedded in real and natural conversation. Therefore, the inadequacy of cultural exposure could be a real obstacle for students to communicate in a cross-cultural environment where the use of idiomatic expressions and phrasal verbs, for instance, is heavily involved in impulsive conversations. This exposure to culture represents a problematic area for teachers as what to teach remains uncertain. As an attempt to clarify these doubts, the goals of the study are to enhance EFL students' cultural awareness by exposing them to a wide range of authentic materials, to provide EFL instructors with a practical idea for building lessons around sitcoms, and to investigate the potentials of sitcom *Friends* in enhancing EFL instructors' pedagogical sound practices. To achieve this end, *Friends* is used in the study as a corpus to determine its fruitfulness as a repository of authentic materials where various contextualized learning opportunities can be built around particular scenes of episodes to foster and increase EFL students' cultural awareness.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Culture: General Concepts

The most straightforward and comprehensive definition of culture could be seen as a "way of life." How people tend to get everything done through their perspectives. These perspectives are shaped by a set of beliefs and norms that identify and explain why these things are done that way. At a deeper level, culture is how people tend to communicate their ideas and interpret them to other people in particular social contexts. Furthermore, arriving at a proper definition of the nature of culture is a culturally based concept itself. However, the advancement of technology and the concepts of globalization have much contributed to broaden the concepts and disseminate its features to include the capability in having efficient, communicative competence in a cross-cultural environment where cultural diversity cannot be tapped. Various studies have attempted to define the necessity of culture in today's communication. For instance, Karatepe & Yilmaz (2018) explain:

Culture has become a prominent aspect of modern life with the fast-spreading use of digital interaction in the globalization era. Young people, in today's world, are in connection with the other people from various countries via internet sources and the social media. They are expected to be more aware of the significance of cultural elements on language use. This can offer opportunities to get in touch with different cultures and to learn different languages.

Likewise, Stringer & Cassidy (2009) perceive culture as "...a systematic way of thinking and behaving within a group requires that we think of culture beyond any simple groupings of nationality, ethnicity, or gender." On the other hand, Guiso, Sapienza & Zingales (2006, p. 23) define culture as "those customary beliefs and values that ethnic, religious, and social groups transmit fairly unchanged from generation to generation."

Teaching Target Culture

One of the most crucial and critical aspects of teaching is to appreciate the value of L2 culture in fostering global communication. Teachers have to identify the impact of culture on developing students' communicative competence to skillfully interact with the dynamic changing world. In consequence, language and culture enjoy distinct and intricate ties that demonstrate the notion that language is an arbitrary system, and culture is one of the elements of that system. Language and culture are apt to be intersected and overlapped. As the former is used to convey and transmit the later, and the later has to be identified to enable the former to be understood. This reciprocal relation constitutes the bottom line for establishing a reliable entity of the relation between language and culture. Linguistically speaking, a language can be defined as an arbitrary system where several cognitive skills are involved. This point is illustrated by Wardhaugh (2002, p. 2) as he defines language as "knowledge of rules and principles and of the ways of saying and doing things with sounds, words, and sentences rather than just knowledge of specific sounds, words, and sentences." Conversely, culture could not be a system like a language based on various elements that even hinder the persisting attempts to come up with a definition. Culture has become a universal language that dramatically connects people. Krasniqi (2019) perceives the relation between culture and language as

...language and culture complement each other through various forms, such as; words, gestures, behavior, attitudes, discipline, work, and history. Although there are languages that expose culture to a certain extent, there are also cultures that hide their language to a similar or even greater extent". In the same regards, Brown (2000: 177) explains, "It is apparent that culture... becomes highly important in the learning of a second language. A language is part of a culture, and culture is part of a language; the two are intricately interwoven..."

In language teaching and learning setting, Culture is the essential requirement of mastering communicative competence represented in various types of speech acts, whereas the language is a vehicle for extensive exposure to English-Speaking culture. Andreeva (2016: 14) states, "Cultural norms and variations in language use are expressed through the speech functions or speech acts." This statement consolidates the importance of exposing EFL/ESL students to contextualized social situations to carefully assimilate and practice speech functions to develop meaning and awareness of cultural implication exists within that particular social contexts. Consequently, EFL/ESL instructors should take into account how culture-oriented contexts that include connotation of words, idiomatic expression, knowledge of particular social values, phrasal verbs, for instance, can be taught. The question of "How" remains baffling as there is no particular textbook for teaching culture. However, some writers made humble attempts to integrate cultural-oriented components into textbooks. Yet the issue of what to teach remains controversial. However, many scholars believe that using authentic materials would help in bridging the gaps associated with the pedagogical sound practices and the context as well.

Since the spread of technology-enhanced language teaching and learning and its impact on fostering teaching approaches, teaching cultural aspects has become critical issues. Using web-based reading activity, for instance, students may face some difficulties in assimilating cultural-oriented texts. Most of the cultural issues encounter EFL students are represented in understanding verbal and non-verbal communication that employ cultural reference, the use of the idiomatic expression, proverbs, collocations, popcorn culture, and culturally-bound sayings. The complexity of assimilating these cultural issues is based on the idea that Native speakers share their knowledge and experiences with each other's behind the realization of EFL students'. Therefore, and as an attempt to bridge those cultural gaps, students should be prepared and equipped with the knowledge that enables them to interact successfully in cross-cultural communication. (Franklin, 2007; Kostková, 2012; Reid, 2012). Getting students ready to cope with the dynamic changing world requires skillfully designing learning opportunities to foster cultural awareness of the target culture, which, in fact, is represented in written and spoken communication. Consequently, involving students in a meaningful situation with the help of authentic materials would expose students to a variety of cultural aspects. Through instructional perspectives, building activities around authentic materials seems to be daunting since teachers are always confused about what to teach in the first place and what materials fit into their instructional purposes.

The source of authentic materials is varied in nature and format. However, Web-based resources are the best source of authenticity due to its accessibility and availability. The web offers an abundance of materials for exposing students to an assortment of cultural implications to develop their understanding of language use and increase their awareness through linguistic and cultural authenticity. Some of these resources are, but not limited to, as follows:

1. YouTube: One of the most significant resources available online for classroom applications. YouTube provides billion of tutorial resources, lectures, courses, and lessons in audio and video formats.
2. Online News Websites (CNN, BBC, Fox News)
3. Live TV shows, Sitcoms, TV series. Movies.
4. Newspapers and Magazines.
5. Literature online resources.
6. Software, computer games, and applications
7. Broachers, flyers, menus, and pamphlet

Sitcoms: A Source of Authenticity for Enhancing Cultural Awareness in EFL Settings.

Authenticity has become one of the essential concepts in teaching and learning English as a foreign language. This peculiarity of authentic materials lies at the fact that communicative approaches, materials-based activities, tasks, and pedagogical approaches appreciate the role of the authenticity of tasks in creating real-life situations for students through contextualized learning opportunities. Furthermore, authenticity has been deeply rooted in the underlying assumptions of constructivist and socio-constructivists theories. These theories

have assumed that the best way to teach language is through meaningful contexts that represent real-life situations. The socio-cognitive theory places much emphasis on the authenticity of tasks and resources to create authentic learning opportunities for students. These theories encourage learning collaboratively and interactively through groups working on authentic-based activities and tasks to make sense of real-world situations. Consequently, authentic materials and resources are the most sophisticated tools for supporting pedagogical approaches for teaching cultural aspects in EFL settings. Tremendous researches and studies have been carried out to identify the conceptual and practical role of authentic materials in bridging the gap between the existing textbooks and the actual use of a language in socio-cultural contexts. (Daskalos and Jellum Ling 2005; Nunan and Miller 2002; Laniro 2007). Based on that, teachers' role is to identify and locate authentic materials that can be used as a supplement of the existing textbooks to create learning opportunities based on the socio-cultural aspects that represent the use of the language for cross-cultural communication. Teachers could choose from a range of authentic materials in audio or video format for classroom instruction. The evaluation of those materials before classroom implementation helps teachers identify the best resource that would help them in achieving the predetermined learning objectives and improve students' communicative competence. Hence, through instructional perspectives, EFL instructors have applied tremendous authentic resources to create meaningful situations for exposing students to a range of skills that are vital for their survival in the 21st century. Sitcoms, as one genre of authentic audiovisual resources, have captured a prominent place in teaching and learning languages.

Sitcoms, sometimes known as situated comedies, are that type of TV shows that have gained popularity among different people all over the world. Its popularity comes from the fact that it represents different aspects of daily life situations in funny and homered manners. According to the Cambridge dictionary, a sitcom is "a television series in which the same characters are involved in amusing situations in each show." A limited number of actors who appear mostly in all episodes is one of the characteristics of sitcoms. A sitcom is usually short as the length of each episode is ranged from 20 to 25 minutes. Hložková (2013: 9) reported, "Sitcoms are usually a half-hour series segmented into episodes, where the same characters appear in the same settings. The episodes are finite; what happens in the episode is explained and solved". Sitcoms provide the ultimate sense of comfort and relaxation among people as a remarkable source for entertainment. Sherman (2003) defines sitcoms, as

A radio or TV show are in sharp dichotomy with documentary and news programs. Sitcoms represent insignificant factual events where a sense of humor, hilarity, comicality are representing the core notion. In each episode, characters are dealing with a situation through analysis of each part of the situation. In the end, they arrive at a better solution with an extreme sense of humor. These types of analysis often provide assumptions about how the situation could be resolved through social, cultural, and linguistics parameters. (14)

The reality underpinning the privilege and popularity manifests in spontaneous conversation, which represents the effective use of the language in a socio-cultural situation. Hložková (2014) explains the advantages of using sitcoms as a source of authentic and up to date source of language.

Perception and comprehension of modern English expressions lead to the practice of these words and phrases in oral as well as written production. As a result, students' communicative competence in English becomes closer to native speakers. Despite the fact that there are some obstacles in clear comprehension of 'real' English, teachers can arrange the lesson around the sitcom in a way which would lead to progress in learners' language acquisition.

There are two genres of sitcoms: American and British. The study focuses on the American sitcoms for popularity worldwide. *How I met your Mother*, *The Simpson*, *Everybody Loves Raymond*, and *Friends* are the best examples of the most recognized sitcoms. *Friends*, the focus of this study, is one of the most popular and well-known American sitcoms created by Marta Kauffmann and David Crane. Sitcoms started in 1994 and ended in 2004. Within these ten years (seasons) of performance, *Friends* has gained overwhelming impressive attitudes not only within American society but also all over the world. *Friends* sitcoms, amazingly, has much contributed to reflecting tremendous social and cultural issues that characterized American society through funny and hilarious manners. *Friends'* main cast are Jennifer Aniston as Rachel Green, Courteney Cox as Monica Geller, Matt LeBlanc as Joey Tribbiani, Lisa Kudrow as Phoebe Buffay, and David Schwimmer as Ross Geller. The cast astoundingly handles tremendous social and cultural issues that have been frequently encountered in daily life situations.

Enormous studies and researches have carried out aiming at investigating the potentials of using sitcoms as a source of authentic materials for exposing EFL students to natural language, cultural reference, variety of language use, to mention but a few. Ulusoy and Demirbilek (2013), in their study "*The Effects of Using Situation Comedy Video on English Speaking*," have explained the instructional value of situation comedy in improving students of grade 10 speaking skills. The finding of their studies supports the idea that using sitcoms as a source of authentic materials has a deep impact on developing students speaking skills. Another study carried out by Alerwi and Alzahrani in 2020 entitled as "*Using Sitcoms to Improve the Acquisition of Speech Acts by EFL Students: Focusing on Request, Refusal, Apology, and Compliment Response*" has added another dimension by appreciating the value of using sitcoms as a source for consolidating students' pragmatic competence. Moreover, the British council has thoroughly explained the merits and advantages of using sitcoms for improving students' overall language skills, pragmatic competence, and linguistics skills. *Using Sitcoms as a Tool for ELT* has become one of the most important articles that has clearly identified the promises for sitcoms for English language classroom instructions. This study represents a point of reference to this study by supporting evidence to the effect of sitcoms for enhancing EFL students' cultural awareness.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Design

The study adopts a corpora-based method where a sample of conversations from various episodes are used as a database and repository of authentic representation. The components of the corpus from *Friends* are analyzed systematically to determine its instructional value for the enhancement of cultural awareness among EFL students. Moreover, the selected samples were analyzed through the discourse analysis perspectives that emphasize the functional role of the language in social settings. What is more, issues like meaning creation, development, and management are meticulously investigated based on various examples of conversational patterns. Conversely, how speakers use the language to convey their attitudes, beliefs, values, and make assumptions and develop an intention towards others while speaking are also included in the study. The discourse analysis of the conversational patterns was based on Luo (2019, August 23).

Study Questions

To such an extent, the ultimate goal of this study is to prove the suitability and appropriateness of *Friends* sitcom as a source of authentic materials that would create authentic-based activities for students to develop their cultural awareness through direct exposure to the natural conversation. Consequently, the central study questions are:

1. What are the potentials of sitcoms in enhancing EFL students' cultural awareness?
2. In what ways does the use of various discourse patterns impact EFL students' understanding of the target culture?

Study Instrument

The corpora-based authentic conversation is used in the study as an instrument to identify the fruitfulness of *Friends* spontaneous conversation in terms of cultural reference and culture-bound expressions and its effectiveness in increasing EFL students' cultural awareness.

Data Analysis

The data collected from the various scenes of *Friends* sitcom is analyzed through a multi-variation perspective examining the functional sequences of cultural-bound expressions by native speakers that bring changes to the language use and variation that reflect the real purpose of language use in today's changing world. Additionally, the analysis of data is apt to scrutinize how these practices impact the process of meaning construction among EFL/ESL students who have no or less exposure to the target culture. Furthermore, data is analyzed through three dimensions: accountability, falsifiability, and replicability to determine its suitability and appropriateness for EFL/ESL teaching settings as a source for authentic materials.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis of Particular Scenes from Friends for Cultural-bound Expressions

As stated in the study methodology section, Friends is used as a corpus for explaining and interpreting how a language is magnificently constructed and used to represent particular cultural components. The interpretation of the level of authenticity is demonstrated to investigate the impact of these cultural issues in exposing EFL students' to enormous cultural variation and cultural-based contexts that would facilitate their understanding of how cultural entity impact the process of constructing meaning, develop understanding, and then, increasing cultural awareness. Therefore, a sample of authentic conversation-based cultural-bound expressions is identified from various scenes of Friends. The following table demonstrates the meanings of particular cultural components used by speakers (cast) in various socio-cultural contexts.

Discussion

What are the potentials of sitcoms in enhancing EFL students' cultural awareness?

The purpose of the study is to investigate the incorporating of sitcoms as a repository of authentic resources to increase EFL students' awareness of cultural-bound expressions that exist within the spontaneous conversations that often take place in various social contexts. To achieve that end, the scope of the analysis entails three dimensions: accountability, falsifiability, and replicability, to bring a higher degree of authenticity to the context of sitcoms—the analysis based on units of meaning that could be observed within the functional sequences of cultural-bound expressions. The selected conversations are broken down into units such as Cultural references, the use of idiomatic expressions, intensifiers, and pop culture.

Based on (Table 1), numerous cultural-bound expressions are identified from various scenes of Friends. For instance, expressions such as *Are you kidding? Shot to the stars, glass is half empty, give it a shot and make a move* are some of the expressions that have been frequently used. These types of cultural-bound expression can be categorized into distinct groups such as idioms, phrasal verbs, collocations, and figurative language. Apparently, EFL students are not familiar with these types of expressions because of their shortness of adequate cultural exposure and lack of references. What makes these cultural-bound expressions as a problematic area for EFL students is closely associated with the underlying meaning of the whole phrase or sentences that could not be possible by breaking the utterances into specific lexical meaning. Sherman (2003) demonstrates this point as

Learners who have not stayed in an English-speaking country or community are often unable to produce natural spoken English. When asked to role-play or script a dialogue, they frequently produce strange scholastic language, inappropriate tone, distorted idioms, unlikely collocations, and a limited repertoire of functional language and colloquial phraseology. (14).

Moreover, sitcoms expose students to a set of cultural references that any textbook will not accommodate. Cultural references, in particular, are the most obscured issues to handle due to peculiarities in nature. Even if the exposure to these types of cultural references is exempted to EFL students, yet, meaning could not be understood. The logic behind that, in a particular context where native-speakers involve cultural references in their conversation, they are probably talking about issues that are familiar to all participants because they belong to the same culture and having the same degree of knowledge and experiences. Some examples of cultural references are associated with discrete categories such as politics, sports, movies, weddings, festivals, music, and entertainment. To name but a few, *bucks* for dollars, *drop the ball* for missing up something, *driving someone nuts* for making him/ her crazy, According to USING SITCOMS IN THE EFL CLASSROOM. (2019, May 17), "Sitcoms are full of cultural references. From slang and colloquial language to celebrities and fashion, sitcoms provide a window into a country and culture which language learners may not otherwise be exposed to". Similarly, Kozhevnikova (2014) illustrates this idea as:

Sitcoms are full of cultural references. Since authentic materials representing non-EFL environments give examples of particular language functions in operation, there are situations that EFL learners are likely to encounter through their day-to-day socio-cultural interaction with native speakers of English.

For example, in "Friends" students can find at least three episodes of the celebration of Thanksgiving, Christmas, four episodes of wedding ceremonies, several episodes about bridal showers and bachelor parties, New Year's parties, etc. where they can see how people interact and behave during these events.

Analyzing the natural and spontaneous conversation would also reveal the use of Catch up phrases such as *Hi, Could I be..., OMG, How you doin', what's up, and Not too much*. Speakers frequently use these types of Catch up phrases to indicate a culture-bound message to participants. These phrases are colloquial and idiomatic. On the other hand, using "What's up" as a phrase indicates the casual use of the language.

In the same perspective, the use of non-verbal communication throughout the sitcoms is manifest and noticeable. These non-verbal components are very much concerned with paralinguistic features that contribute significantly to the process of meaning creation and management. The facial expression, gestures, body language, and eye contact, for instance, play a significant role in conveying a message when the context deactivates utterances. These types of paralinguistic features are culturally bound expressions in nature. A thumb up is assign of agreement where thumb down is a sign of disapproval. Throughout various episodes of Friends, more complicated features are demonstrated to convey a particular meaning in a particular context. Paralinguistic features to convey the meaning of surprise, shock, approval, and disapproval, and so on and so forth are most common in Friends.

Table 1. Sample of cultural-bound expressions and associated meaning presented in Friends authentic conversation

Cultural –related expression	Meaning	Authentic examples form Friends
Are you kidding?	Being surprised of what someone says or 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 taught situation.	It's funny, um, uh, we agreed we'd spend the rest of our lives together. Things change, roll with the punches.
Shot for the stars	Having a higher aim in life	Mr. Geller: Look, there are people like Ross who need to shoot for the stars, with his museum, and his papers getting published. Other people are satisfied with staying where they are- I'm telling you, these are the people who never get cancer.
Glass is half empty	Being so pessimistic	(Chandler to Ross) Aren't we, Mr. "The glass is half empty."
To break up	Ending a romantic relationship	Joey: Well, you.re timing couldn.t be better. She.s not my girlfriend anymore. Chandler: What? Joey: Yeah, she broke up with me. Chandler: Oh, uh, when?
Keeps rolling	Keeps recording	Ross: So when she came in, I got distracted and totally forgot about the camera. It kept rolling and recorded everything.
Come on into someone	Make sexual advancement	Ross: How about this, there is an anthropologist at school who totally came on to me during the interdepartmental potluck dinner.
Make eyes at	Have a great desire	(Scene changes to later that night) Monica accidentally spilled her drink on Bob's shirt and is wiping it off. Joey is making eyes at Angela.
For the hell of it	Without specific reasons	Chandler: All right. Once I got on the subway, right, and it was at night, and I rode it all the way to Brooklyn... just for the hell of it.
Make a move	Grab the opportunity	Joey: Because you waited too long to make your move, and now you're in the friend zone.
Make a move	Seducing someone	Monica: Phoebe, what is it? Phoebe: all right, you know Paolo? Ross: I'm familiar with his work, yes... Phoebe: Well, he made a move on me.
Kick (sb's) butt/ass	Beating someone easily	(Monica) kicked our butts. You could be on the Olympic standing-there team.
Give something a shot	Try /attempts	Rachel: Yeah. Thought I'd give it a shot. I'm still on the first chapter. Now, do you think his 'love stick can be liberated from its denim prison'?
Pick on someone	Maltreat him/her/unfair treatment	It's okay, you know, you just nodded off again.
Have a blast	Having a good time	Chandler: That's so weird, I had such a blast with him the other night.
Break free	Runaway escaping	Chandler: No, no, the actual cartoon character. Of course, the balloon. It's all over the news. Right before he reached Macy's, he broke free and was spotted flying over Washington Square Park. I'm goin' to the roof, who's with me?

In line with what has been discussed, another sort of culture is known as pop culture. According to Spacey (2018, May 10), "*Pop Culture or Pop Culture are shared experience enjoyed by the masses. This includes any elements of culture that are organized by most people in a nation. Pop*

culture can also exist at a global level". The pop culture, which has been introduced lately, has become a legitimate type of many aspects like drama, movies, sports, celebrities, etc. It is a culture that is considered as a vehicle of identifying affinity and belongingness to the universe. Amazingly,

pop culture plays a critical role in unifying the whole world, regardless of politics, economics, languages, ethnicity, gender, religion, and culture. Some components of pop culture have gone viral through social media platforms: zombies, stars war, Harry Potter, Kardashian, to name but a few. Friends, as a popular sitcom all over the world, have contributed to developing pop-culture, especially among teenagers. The manifestation of pop-cultural references in most of the episodes represents how cultural references are employed within the natural flow of the conversation. Some examples from friends are: *Being someone Lobster* is used to indicate emotional attachment with somebody for the rest of his/her life, *A friendly finger* to indicate disagreement with someone's criticism, UNAGI, "pronounced as unagi," used as a cultural reference to advise someone to stay alerts.

In what ways does the use of various discourse patterns impact EFL students' understanding of the target culture?

English native speakers tend to employ various discourse patterns to express their cultural identity in various situations. These discourse patterns are associated with how cultural distinctiveness shapes the discourse patterns used by native speakers in different social and cultural contexts. This idea is illustrated by Kaplan (1966) as:

The discourse pattern (the logical arrangement of ideas) of an expository text or of an oral presentation for informational purposes will vary depending on the culture and the native language of the writer/speaker. That is, logic is not universal. The logical arrangement of ideas is culture-bound. (2).

Consequently, the study strives to constitute an analysis scale in which a sample of the spontaneous conversation patterns from Friends episodes are used. Furthermore, the speakers employ multi-cultural discourse patterns as an attempt to convey their cultural values represented in beliefs, personal identity, and various range of intentions through utterances (verbal) and gestures and body language (non-verbal). The scale is entirely based on the underlying assumptions of Conversation Analysis (CA) and the guidelines proposed by Luo (August 23, 2019). These guidelines were used in the study to constitute the proper maxims that serve as the mechanisms in which sample conversations from Friends are interpreted for constitutive elements of culture. To achieve this goal, some levels of communication are analyzed through the Lexical use of a particular vocabulary, verbal components and non-verbal components, and conversational code.

The use of lexical items

The natural and spontaneous conversations are used by different speakers in friends that reflect the employment of great lexical use of the language to express and convey cultural entity and norms in particular social situations. The frequent use of *dude* and *cool* is shown below in example 1. Lexical items represented in the use of intensifiers such as *So*, *very*, *really*, *absolutely*, *totally*, and *pretty*, have been continuously used in almost all episodes. The underline

use of these lexical units is closely associated with how the speakers want to enforce and stress their utterances to convey their attitudes, beliefs, and level of agreement and disagreement. "So" as one example of lexical items has been frequently used to indicate a cultural meaning rather than the actual meaning of the word itself. "So" is used as an adverb and a conjunction. However, in Friends, the use of "So," as a discourse marker, indicates the speaker's intention to close the conversation and switch over to something else. (See Example 2) or wrap up what has just said (See Example 3)

Example 1

Chandler: And I also got... two more apples.
 Ross: We are four short of a bush-o (pause). God I feel so alive, I love being in the country!
 Chandler: I also got this great salt and pepper shaker from the restaurant.
 Ross: Oh, that's not cool.
 Chandlers: Dude, none of this is cool.

Example 2

Monica: Okay, everybody relax. This is not even a date. It's just two people going out to dinner and- not having sex.
 Chandler: Sounds like a date to me.
 Chandler: Alright, so I'm back in high school, I'm standing in the middle of the cafeteria, and I realise I am totally naked.
 All: Oh, yeah. Had that dream.

Example 3

Rachel:..... (TO MONICA) So anyway I just didn't know where to go, and I know that you and I have kinda drifted apart, but you're the only person I knew who lived here in the city.

Non-verbal features

In view of this, speakers (cast) tend to apply non-verbal features "tone of voice, pauses, gestures and sounds like "um" (Luo, August 23, 2019) to convey a wide range of attitudes, thought, beliefs, and emotions. These types of non-verbal signs are cultural bond as its meaning and realization are shared with all participants involved in the conversations.

Otherwise, the proper interpretations of these signs may develop misapprehension of the communicated messages, therefore, misinterpreted.

Conversational code

Another point of concern is associated with the conversational code that develops by speakers. Obviously, the speakers tend to develop a mechanism for participation in a particular talk and conversation. These mechanisms demonstrate the turn-taking of each participant in a conversation. What actually governs turn-taking in a conversation? Gibson (2009)

Table 2. Turn-taking strategies applied in the natural conversation from Friends

Example of Authentic Conversation from Friends	Strategy applied in turn taking
Rachel: Hey, so you guys, the funniest thing happened, at work... Phoebe: My songs aren't good enough for your restaurant? Rachel: Ok, 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? 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"!	Asking questions
Joey: Uh-huh. Phoebe: You guuuuys. Joey: And for Ross, Mr. Sweet-tooth. Ross: You got me a cola drink? Chandler: And, a lemon lime. Ross: Well this, this is too much, I feel like I should get you another sweater. Chandler: And last but not least.	Using conjunction like and, therefore, etc.,
Chandler: all right, now look at her and tell me she doesn't look exactly like her sister. Joey: <u>I'm sayin'</u> I see a difference. Chandler: They're twins! Chandler: You're right, and I'm sorry! This means a lot to me! I want you to be my friend again! I swear, I won't say another word tonight. Joey: So are you gonna start taking this thing seriously? Chandler: <u>Absolutely!</u>	using appropriate phrases showing agreement or disagreement,
Rachel: Have you ever had any weird romantic dreams? Monica: Let me think. Oh, when I was younger I used to dream that I got married to Mayor McCheese, and on our wedding night I ate his head. Ross: (COMING BACK IN WITH RACHEL) Hey, you guys! What do you, what do you think about making that beach trip an annual thing? Chandler, Monica, and Joey: NO!!!	Asking about opinion
Mr. Posner: Yes, that's very good. Now a uh, big part of this job is cultivating personal relationships, especially with designers. Rachel: Yes, I realize that. Joanna: (INTERRUPTING) And Rachel shouldn't have any problem with that. The only problem might be getting a little too friendly, if you know what I mean.	Use of fillers for pauses

explains the necessity of developing a particular mechanism for governing the smooth flow of a conversation without overlapping and interruptions.

There are lots of other maxims that participants use to decide, inter alia, who's turn it is next, when it is their turn, when might be a good time to make a conversational turn, what kinds of topics those turns might reasonably deal with, how turns can be organized to bring about an opportunity to talk about something, and so on.

Turn-taking is a cultural and social phenomenon and represents the identity of the participants. As shared by many cultures, women tend to be more talkative than men do. The discrepancy in managing the turn-taking could disturb the conversation and cause misunderstanding or frustration. For example, interrupting or even paying no attention to someone while talking considered an impolite behavior that entirely rejected through cultural perspectives. In Friends, it has been observed that speakers (cast) take turns in a conversation by applying distinct types of strategies. These strategies are explained in Table 2.

CONCLUSION

In EFL settings, task-based authentic materials remain the best option for teachers to expose students to a wide range of authentic materials where access to native speakers is denied. Based on the ultimate goal of the paper to investigate the potentials of using sitcom Friends as a repository of authentic materials in EFL teaching settings, the analysis of scenes of friends reveals unprecedented potentials for innovative pedagogical sound practices. These possibilities have been recognized in various studies. (Abdi and Biri, 2015; Al-Surmi, 2012; Larrea-Espinar and Raigón-Rodríguez, 2019). What makes sitcoms as a promising source of authenticity is the possibility of using the natural flow of conversation to teach students about pop and contemporary culture of the target language. Undoubtedly, sitcoms represent the most relevant, dynamic, and contemporary resources for teaching cultural aspects for EFL students. The reason why sitcoms have become a powerful tool for classroom instruction is based on the fact that it exposes students to an abundance of comprehensible and meaningful inputs that support their understanding of

a particular culture of the target language. (Input hypothesis developed by Stephen Krashen). Moreover, using and incorporating sitcoms along with methodological frameworks enable EFL instructors to design ample learning opportunities through authentic tasks and activities to increase students' awareness of the target culture. Ultimately, sitcoms with its authentic components have a substantial instructional value in presenting a spontaneous conversation with amazing capabilities to engage students in a contextualized learning context to foster their understanding of intercultural components that would facilitate their communicative competence in a variety of socio-cultural environments.

REFERENCES

- Abdi, R., & Biri, A. (2015). A Study of Apology Speech Act in Sitcoms: Implications for Language Teaching and Learning. *English Language Teaching, 1*.
- Alerwi, A & Alzahrán, A (2020). Using Sitcoms to Improve the Acquisition of Speech Acts by EFL Students: Focusing on Request, Refusal, Apology, and Compliment Response. *Journal of Applied Linguistics and Language Research* Volume 7, Issue 1, 2020, pp. 63-79 Available online at www.jallr.com ISSN: 2376-760X
- Al-Surmi, M. A. (2012). *Authentic ESL Spoken Materials: Soap Opera and Sitcom versus Natural Conversation* (Master's thesis, Northern Arizona University., 2012) (pp. 1-169). Eric.
- Andreeva, I. (2016). "Teaching Culture through Social Situations in English as a Second Language Classes" Master's Projects and Capstones. 330. Retrieved on May 15, 2019, from <https://repository.usfca.edu/capstone/330>
- Brown, H. Douglas (2000). *Principles of language learning and teaching* (4th ed). White Plains: Pearson Education.
- Daskalos, K., & Jellum Ling, J (2005). Authentic texts or adapted texts - That is the question!. Retrieved on March 28, 2020, from <http://muep.mau.se/bitstream/handle/2043/1964/authenticandadapted.pdf>
- Franklin, P. (2007). Languages and Cultures in Europe (LACE). The Intercultural Competences Developed in Compulsory Foreign Language Education in the European Union. Europäische Kommission DG EAC.
- Gibson, W (2009) Intercultural communication online: conversation analysis and the investigation of asynchronous written discourse. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/ Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 10(1): article 49.
- Guiso, L., Sapienza, P., & Zingales, L. (2006). Does culture affect economic outcomes? *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 20(2), 23-48.
- Hložková, M. (2014). *Sitcoms as a Tool for English Language Teaching*. MASARYK UNIVERSITY BRNO. FACULTY OF EDUCATION. Department of English Language and Literature. MA Diploma Thesis. Retrieved March 31, 2020, from https://is.muni.cz/th/270029/pdf_m/DIPLOMA_THESIS.pdf
- John, Spacey. (2018, May 10). What is Pop Culture? Simplifiable. Retrieved from: <https://simplicqble.com/new/pop-culture>
- Kaplan, R. B. (1966). Cultural thought patterns in intercultural communication. *Language Learning*, 16, 1-20
- Karatepe, Ç. & Yılmaz, D. (2018). Teaching culture in EFL context: Student teachers' perspective. *Turkish Studies-International Periodical for the Languages, Literature, and History of Turkish or Turkic*. Volume 19(1), 823-839. Doi: 10.7827/TurkishStudies.13373.
- KOSTKOVÁ, K. 2012. *Rozvoj interkulturní komunikační kompetence*. Brno: Masarykova univerzita. 2012. ISBN: 9788021060357.
- Kozhevnikova, E. (2014). Exposing Students to Authentic Materials as a Way to Increase Students' Language Proficiency and Cultural Awareness. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 116, 4462-4466. doi: 10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.01.967
- Krasniqi, K. (2019). The Relation between Language and Culture (Case Study Albanian Language). *Linguistics and Literature Studies*, 7(2), 71-74. doi: 10.13189/lis.2019.070205
- IANIRO, S. (2007). Authentic materials. CALPRO. Retrieved on May 28, 2020, from <https://www.calpro-online.org/documents/AuthenticMaterialsFinal.pdf>
- Luo, A. (2019, August 23). *Discourse Analysis: A Step-by-Step Guide with Examples*. Retrieved in March 31, 2020, from <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/discourse-analysis/>
- Nunan, D., & Miller, L. (2002). *New ways in teaching listening*. Alexandria, VA: Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc.
- REID, E. (2012). Compatibility of the National Curriculum in Slovakia with the CEFR with Respect to Intercultural Education. In: Horváthová, B. *New Directions in Teaching Foreign Languages* (138-157). Brno: Masarykova Univerzita, 2012. ISBN: 9788021060036.
- Sherman, J. (2003). *Using authentic video in the language classroom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- SITCOM: meaning in the Cambridge English Dictionary. (n.d.). Retrieved March 28, 2020, from <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/sitcom>
- Sitcoms as a tool for ELT. (n.d.). Retrieved April 28, 2020, from <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/sitcoms-a-tool-elt>
- Stringer, D. M., & Cassidy, P. A. (2009). *52 Activities for improving cross-cultural communication*. Boston:
- Ulusoy, G., & Demirbilek, M. (2013). The Effects of Using Situation Comedy Video on English Speaking. *The Anthropologist*, 16(1-2), 351-361. doi: 10.1080/09720073.2013.11891362
- USING SITCOMS IN THE EFL CLASSROOM. (2019, May 17). Retrieved from <https://www.theteflacademy.com/blog/2019/05/using-sitcoms-in-the-efl-classroom/>
- Wardhaugh, R. (2002). *An introduction to sociolinguistics* (Fourth Ed.). Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.