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Exploring informal and colloquial language through Netflix's *Derry Girls*.

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Abstract

The presence of colloquial and informal language is rather neglected in today's EFL classrooms. The following study aims to demonstrate that this vocabulary, part of a genuine, real-world English, can be incorporated into the lesson in a unique way; by using authentic audio-visual materials like television sitcoms. For this dissertation, several fields have been explored in depth, such as the value of those genuine products as a teaching tool, that goes hand in hand with students' motivation, the relevance of the cultural competence and further aspects like the purpose of working with informal and colloquial word-forms, the irrefutable role of captions and an analysis of the incidental vocabulary acquisition phenomenon in the language learning experience. Moreover, this MA dissertation includes an empirical study conducted with 4th of ESO students which aimed at analysing whether using the Northern Irish TV show *Derry Girls* is a beneficial tool to gain new vocabulary like idioms and phrasal verbs. The results obtained indicate that students were more motivated when learning English this way; moreover, it in fact helped most of them learn new vocabulary.

Keywords: informal language, colloquial language, EFL, TV sitcom, Derry Girls.

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1. Introduction

Studying colloquial and informal English language through television series in a classroom setting is quite an unexplored field; however, it has gained certain popularity in the last decade, especially within the world of education. This recent interest is clearly related to two cultural aspects. Firstly, access to TV shows is easier now than in the past, thanks to streaming services such as *Netflix* or platforms like *YouTube*. Secondly, we are living in the second golden age of television, where series have a massive impact on popular culture and are commented in diverse social media platforms. Moreover, these shows provide a wide range of options to work with different language skills, so they can perfectly be integrated as a tool for the teaching of English as a Foreign Language (EFL).

Since it is evident that television shows have a real presence and impact on our daily lives, teachers should considerate using them to teach language. As our students are constantly watching TV and are first-class consumers of audio-visual materials outside the school, using shows inside the classroom can be taken as an excellent tool to practice and learn authentic English colloquial and informal vocabulary (Frumuselu, 2015; Bradford, 2010).

Traditionally, EFL teachers have used audio-visual resources for different purposes. However, the approach is usually shallow and mundane, scratching only the surface of what a media product could provide. Some teachers profit from the use of films, for instance, on special occasions (such as Christmas or Halloween) or even as time-fillers. The problem with that usage is that the focus is often on the movie's own content rather than on its language components or peculiarities. Therefore, a different approach to the use of authentic audio-visual materials in the classroom is needed to focus on its unique language input. This shift in vision implies an innovative approach to the learning and teaching of a foreign language by adapting the classroom to the students' reality.

Luckily, nowadays, there is a huge range of sitcoms to deal with, from the regular comedy to a more dramatic show with different perspectives. In general, these TV shows provide us with a feasible and believable world, filled with

situations that mimic real life. Thus, a perfect scenery is set, creating a fictional space where learners can see themselves and their stories reflected on the screen. So, by bringing real materials into the classroom, the teacher makes the learning experience significant as well as motivational for students.

The present proposal introduces a different perspective on the use of TV shows in the classroom. Bearing in mind that these materials provide real situations, they also provide real language that must be accounted for. The value of authenticity of these products relies on the fact that they are made by and addressed to native speakers, so they are not a manufactured product created for students with didactic purpose. By bringing real-life language into the classroom, students will be exposed to a wide variety of accents, intonations, dialects and more shades of real-life English. After all, this can only be beneficial for the learner since it is about integrating the reality of the language in the class. So, the main focus of this study will be to test if students are able to acquire informal and colloquial vocabulary by watching a Northern Irish TV sitcom, created by Lisa McGee, *Derry Girls*.

As its name indicates, *Derry Girls* is set in Derry (officially Londonderry) during the 90s and it explores a group of teenage girls navigating through their daily life. This show has been chosen, on one hand, because it is recent (it premiered in 2018) and most students will be unfamiliar with it, and, on the other, because it represents a perfect example of a real context with authentic language, full of informal and colloquial expressions and a colourful vocabulary. Moreover, the language is one of the shows' most notable features due to the Irish accent and the Derry dialect, Ulster English, that is quite distinctive from what students are used to hearing in the classroom. Thus, it is expected that the participants on this study, a group of 4th year of Obligatory Secondary Education students (*ESO* in Spain), will feel identified with the characters' attitudes and the real-life based situations that the sitcom explores in a comedic tone.

Another benefit that *Derry Girls* provides for the classroom is the perspective of Northern Ireland's' culture and history, that goes hand in hand with authenticity of the language. This can be observed throughout the different episodes, as well as in the characters' personality and their lifestyle. So, the

amount of socio-cultural values the series provides is also a relevant factor that adds meaning to the learning of informal and colloquial English language while fostering the cultural competence, providing a fresher perspective. Moreover, by working with a Northern Irish sitcom, learners can become familiar with other cultures and move away from the typical places usually dealt with in EFL classes in Spain, such as England or the US.

All in all, then, the main aim of this piece of research is to reinforce colloquial and informal language acquisition in the classroom by using authentic audio-visual materials such as *Derry Girls*. Additionally, subtitles will play an important role regarding vocabulary acquisition in this study. Subtitles are also a tool for learners to read dialogues in context, complemented by the original sound of the audio-visual product. At the same time, by reading subtitles and contextualising the situation, learners are exposed to cultural information (Frumuselu, 2015), something that enriches the language learning experience.

2. Literature review

The use of authentic audio-visual materials in the classroom is rather a new field of study. It started to be the focus of multiple studies in the early 90s and continued in the late 00s by researchers such as Mayer (2009). Attention was paid to comprehension and language skills, such as listening (Frumuselu, 2015). Nevertheless, in the last decade, scholars have redirected that focus to the use of language and the benefits of working with these resources in the classroom, as bringing a 'slice of living language' to it (Allan, 1985, p.48). This interest in the study of TV shows as a language tool for educational purposes has notably increased through the years. It goes hand in hand with the unstoppable development of the multimedia world. Moreover, there aren't any precedent researches about *Derry Girls* nor about Northern Irish informal and colloquial English. That is why this dissertation deals with a new academic possibility and it will aim at contributing to present-day English teaching.

The following literature review will start with a broad introspection on Northern Ireland' linguistic, cultural and historical characteristics, to give a frame to the present study. Then, the use of audio-visual materials as a language tool

will be explored and discussed, followed by the relevance of authentic products as the central pillar of this dissertation. This topic will be further developed via an analysis of how those authentic aural and auditory products can foster student's cultural competence as well as spark their motivation and interest. Finally, a reflection will be made on the purpose of teaching informal and colloquial vocabulary and the role of subtitles in that learning process.

2.1 Northern Ireland and Derry, a frame

Northern Ireland (NI) was born as a country in 1922, right after the approval of the Good Friday Agreement, that granted the official separation from the Irish Free State (or Republic of Ireland) after decades of violence and suffering (Bright, 1994). As a consequence, the Northern Ireland province is currently formed by six Ulster counties and is part of The United Kingdom of Great Britain, in the north-west of Europe. According to the last statistics bulletin published in 2012 by the *Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency*, there is an estimation of 1.811 million population, formed by British, Irish and Northern Irish citizens along with other minority ethnic groups such as Polish, with English as the main language, coexisting with Irish (NISRA, 2012). To give some frame to this study, an attempt to summarise some of the main events that characterise NI will follow in this section.

Even if Northern Ireland is part of the European Union, as Spain, little is said or taught in our schools or TVs about our fellow colleagues. This lack of attention gives us the perfect opportunity to incorporate such an interesting and troubled nation into the classroom; not only to explore its rich culture and language but also its history, which is so close to ours. NI is the centre of this dissertation because, as mentioned in the introduction, it is where *Derry Girls* takes place, set in the early 90s. Londonderry is the second largest city of the county, and it has been the core of political violence and civil right' rallies and the protagonist of events such as "The Troubles" (Bright, 1994, p.24). Moreover, the city shares a part of the country border with the Republic of Ireland, another key historical trace.

Ireland's history has been marked by a constant fight for peace, a never-ending circle of violence that is still present in Northern Ireland's modern society (Bright, 1994). The origin of this disturbance comes from a long way, starting with the English process of "colonization" of Ireland around 1170 (Bright, 1994, fp.25). This period was characterised by the British government controlling Irish lands, forcing English and Scottish lords to take power. They formed a large group of Protestant immigrants that settled in the north and imposed English rule. Throughout history, Irish have constantly resisted and opposed the aforementioned situation by revolting and demanding its own government (Bright, 1994). These disorders caused a division among civilians; on one hand, the *Republicans* or *Nationalists*, usually Catholics, and, on the other hand, the loyalist to the Crown, the *Protestants*. This division caused a deep breach among Irish civilians. The former fought for emancipation from British rule, while the later was eager to continue under British leadership (Bright, 1994).

It is relevant to mention here the existence of the Irish Republican Army (IRA), formed in 1918 (Bright, 1994). This Catholic and Nationalistic group divulged a violence campaign through acts of terrorism across the country. At the beginning, IRA targets were mainly military, such as British soldiers or symbols of British rule. Nevertheless, these targets varied throughout their brutal operations, leaving a trace of murdered innocent citizens as protest for the British government (Bright, 1994). The home rule was a central issue between Irish and English politics, as well as religion. The *Easter Rising*, in 1916, is an example of this dichotomy, a symbol of rebellion and of Ireland's fraction in the middle of World War I, against British supremacy. After this horrid event, politicians looked for ways to end this extreme violence, concluding with a treaty that recognised the government of the Irish Free State (Bright, 1994). That treaty, in 1921, entailed the formation of the new providence of Northern Ireland, but trouble would not cease in the Ulster community.

The Troubles englobes a period stained by a harsh sectarian violence that blew up in 1968 (Bright, 1994). Civil rights were the epicentre of numerous protests (heavily influenced by the African-Americans in the United States) lead by Catholic activists in the 60s (Scott, 1972). In those protests, civilians

demanding politicians to amend Catholic discrimination, a minority group that was left “bitter and betrayed” after separation (Scott, 1972, p.1). This tension between Catholics and Protestants started to build up a civil war. The returning circle of violence (Bright, 1994) that affected both Christian branches was aggravated by the British administration, that placed troops, military check points across the state and other security forces in Northern Ireland; soldiers that were, once more, target of IRA’s rage. The peak of *the Troubles* was on *Bloody Sunday*, a tragic event that took place in Derry in 1972 (Bright, 1994). It ended up with the death of twelve unarmed men, including children, killed by the British force. This caused the dissolution of the Northern Irish Parliament and a stronger presence of the British military in the land (Bright, 1994).

Sadly, the struggle is still present in today’s NI, though not so violent. The ‘modern conflict’ can be analysed as a consequence of politics and a national identity crisis, tied to Northern Ireland’s past historical and religious conflict (Bright, 1994). In the already mentioned statistics bulletin, 45% of Northern Ireland’s population are either Catholic or brought up as such, and 48% are either Protestant or from other Christian denominations, co-existing with other minority religions (NISRA, 2012). There is no doubt then that, nowadays, there is a religious division in the country which is still a source of discomfort for many citizens, especially in politics.

Moving on to another remarkable aspect about Northern Ireland is its language. English is predominant in the county (Pritchard, 1990). Ulster Irish, the variety spoken in the province, derived from Irish and Scottish, is nowadays spoken only by a minority of residents (Pritchard, 1990). This is closely related to the fact that Irish is considered as the second language in the educational system, plus, it is considered as a dying language (Pritchard, 1990). Nevertheless, this northern dialect has some distinctive traits that make it curious enough to make it the centre of this study. Irish is a Celtic language, very tied to Scottish Gaelic. Nowadays it has more predominance in Ireland, since it has a constitutional status (Ó Ceallaigh & Dhonnobháin, 2015). In Northern Ireland, the language survey *Heritage and Language* (NISRA, 2012) suggests that Irish is mainly used as the household language for most of the

population; only 2% speak it on a daily basis (Ó Ceallaigh & Dhonnobháin, 2015). This data suggests that Irish is an autochthonous language that is slowly dying (Pritchard, 1990) and that it has to face disuse associated to the country's struggle and never-ending circle of violence (Bright, 1994), that started during times of the Great Famine (1845-1849). Native Irish speakers, that, at the time, formed the poorest community, were forced to emigrate to other lands such as America to survive. That emigration had a terrible impact on the Irish language because the land was left with a minority of speakers (Ó Ceallaigh & Dhonnobháin, 2015). That period changed the language's status since only a few people could speak Irish; it began to be associated with "poverty and lack of power" (Ó Ceallaigh & Dhonnobháin, 2015, p. 181). In contrast, English acquired a new position, associated with ideas of "power, wealth [...] and a better future and life" (Ó Ceallaigh & Dhonnobháin, 2015, p. 181). Additionally, Irish was banned for a period of time in the educational system, something that further damaged the language (Ó Ceallaigh & Dhonnobháin, 2015). In the case of Derry, the dialect is known as *Mid-Ulster English* (Hickey, 1999), with distinctive phonological features such as the intonation of the final rise on declarative sentences, alveolarization of velar nasals or lack of vowel length among others (Hickey, 1999).

The relevance of language in this study is focused on its unique tie with culture. Identity and nationalistic politics in NI and the Irish language can be understood as a cultural expression, a representation of the Irish identity that has been historically repressed (O'Reilly, 1999). Northern Ireland is regarded as a bicultural society, meaning that one region is divided in two different cultural identities, in this particular case and simplistically said, British and Irish (Craith, 2003). Ulster Irish is part of the identity of Northern citizens, representing its cultural heritage with depiction of war, poverty and struggle from two different perspectives (Miller, 2014), a symbol of their history and individuality. When the Irish Free State emerged, there was a campaign for Irish revival that affected the educational structure, implanting different policies to enhance Irish usage (Ó Ceallaigh & Dhonnobháin, 2015). Besides Irish as a cultural element, the Ulster personality is also quite influenced by its Scottish neighbours, a cultural contact

that favoured diversity (Evans, 1970). The providence is divided with both Catholics and Protestants traits, both sharing a global culture interest (such as football, pop music or Hollywood) as well as a common background based on Gaelic traditions such as games or dances (Evans, 1970). Protestants have the traditions of the marching bands, parades and the Orange Order – a very present Protestant society (Evans, 1970). Nationalists also represent historical events in the form of murals as cultural meanings and Derry and its walls is an excellent example (Craith, 2003). The glue that ties it all together is the focus on the family life as central to their community (Evans, 1970). Both Protestants and Catholics have their own political visions and their own religious celebrations but share identity symbols such as the Celtic harp or the shamrock.

Derry and its frontier with the Republic of Ireland is the perfect example of NI representation. Mainly known for its historical events such as *Bloody Sunday*, most of the population is formed by middle-class Catholic communities that live inside the city's walls. Famous for its representative and historical murals, the "Free Derry Corner" in the Bogside is the reflection of the city, symbolising the *Civil Rights Movement* and constant fight against British rule. A metaphor of freedom and hope very present in the community (McClements, 2019). Derry is also known for its increasing and problematic ethnic segregation against Protestants, confined in a small neighbourhood known as the Fountain, a community that even today suffers from vandalism against local houses and businesses (Craith, 2003).

2.2 The use of audio-visual materials as a language teaching tool

We live in a multimedia society, constantly bombarded with all sorts of information such as pieces of news, adds and videos in a 24/7, nonstop loop. This incessable input affects every member of our community, especially today's adolescents who are digital-native from a young age, first-class citizens of an interactive, barrier-free planet. Nowadays, for example, we can directly access the World-Wide-Web from our mobile phones, tables or laptops and we can enjoy diverse audio-visual materials on smart televisions; these gadgets have a massive impact on our daily life. Multimedia has changed

communication and, consequently, the way people interact with one another. This global extension is one of the reasons why teachers have adapted their approach to the teaching of EFL. Thereupon, teachers' methodologies have evolved, embracing those new technologies and products like audio-visual materials, making space for them in the classroom thanks to the countless benefits they have as language tools.

Audio-visual materials are defined in the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) as “products that use a combination of images and sound in a video format” (Audio-visual, n.d.). According to the 2018 report by the *Asociación para la Investigación de Medios de Comunicación* (AIMC) about media in Spain, Spanish youngsters spend around 3.5 hours a day watching television, while they spend an average of 2 hours browsing things on the Internet (AIMC, 2018). Other surveys state that the time spent using social networks as in platforms like *YouTube* or *Instagram* is even higher, 5 hours (RTVE, 2018). Hence, when students are not in the classroom or practicing any other activities, they devote most of their free time to engrossing audio-visual materials from various platforms. Fortunately for EFL teachers, most of those available products on the net are in English, the cyberspace's dominant language (Internet World Stats, 2018). This means that, today, students have easy access to the language from the commodity of their home, not limited to the prefabricated content seen in class. Consequently, learners can see English as a key, the *lingua franca* (Seidlhofer, 2005 and Jenkins, 2009) to communicate online and have access to endless sources of entertainment. This intrinsic interest can be used in the teacher's favor by incorporating audio-visual products into the classroom, as to bring reality and authenticity as a motivational factor.

Numerous theories support the idea that using audio-visual materials as a resource helps students to absorb language better. Notably, during the last decade, the use of video materials in the classroom has significantly upraised, although it isn't something relatively modern (Çakir, 2006). The linguist and researcher Krashen represents a key figure in this field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) for his 'Input Hypothesis' and concept of the 'Affective Filter'. Krashen's hypothesis published in the 80s helped teachers and analysts to

interpret the language learning process. He departs from what he calls the 'Comprehensible Input' that defends that learners acquire language when the input that is given (the material to teach) is intelligible and challenging, that it exceeds a little the competences that the learner already dominates (Krashen, 1982). Applied to audio-visuals, as it is an aural and visual exposition, students can better connect and interpret it. Tied to this theory is, from the same author, the 'Affective Filter Hypothesis', where Krashen (1982) justifies that non-linguistic variables from the learner (like motivation or confidence) fulfil a meaningful role in the process of language acquisition. The linguist exemplifies that, when this 'Affective Filter' is low, pupils maintain an appropriate motivation, are confident in their skills and are relaxed, resulting in a successful performance (Krashen, 1982). Reflecting on this, media is then a provider for creativity and practical ideas that promotes students' confidence and motivation to continue with English exposure outside the classroom (Tafani, 2009).

Another relevant theory to comment on is the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method. This pedagogical approach in the SLA field is based on the Communicative Competence, that engages learners in a fictional usage of language (Brown, 2000). Consequently, fluency and accuracy are part of the Communicative Approach as to engage learners to produce and receive the language (Brown, 2000). Connected to this are the visual and auditory styles, when students learn better through images and/or sounds (Brown, 2000). Then, an audio-visual product, like a TV show, conveys both images (in a video format) and sounds (speech and dialogues). So, CLT focuses on the "social, cultural and pragmatic features of language as well as the grammatical elements of communication" (Zhou, 2018, p. 7), meaning that it intends to engage students into a proper practice of English, the language of authentic TV products. Furthermore, the CLT approach is closely linked to the Audiolingual Method (ALM). Born out of the necessity for soldiers to speak the language of both allies and enemies in the outbreak of World War II, it consisted on learners accessing target language's materials structured in dialogues. Without receiving any grammatical explanations, vocabulary was acquired through context and audio and visual aids were displayed (Brown, 2000). ALM's aim was to focus on

a successful and practical communication by habit formation (Brown, 2000), similar to the objectives of working with audio-visual materials in the classroom.

On top of that, Mayer's (2001) 'Multimedia Learning' theory also represents a fundamental part in this dissertation. This theory investigates the "effects of multimedia strategies on learning" and its benefits as a language acquisition tool (Berk, 2009, p.4). The term 'multimedia' refers to the presentation of materials with pictorial aids combined with audio/verbal content such as PowerPoints, games or videos (Mayer, 2001). Mayer's (2001) cognitive theory consists on activating learning in five different steps, but his research can be summarized through his results. His study demonstrated that the use of meaningful videos was an effective technique for visual learners because they "increase memory, comprehension, understanding, and deeper learning" (Berk, 2009, p.5). Connected to this theory is the concept of 'visual learners', that taps into Gardner's theory (1983) of 'multiple intelligences', referring to those pupils whose intelligence is stimulated by images. Additionally, Allan's theory (1985) also tested how video could be interpreted as a "realistic and comprehensive piece of language" since it provides an "entertaining and motivating environment, thus being prone to enhance motivation in learners" (p. 47).

There are multiple advantages in using audio-visual products in EFL lessons. Teachers must interpret those goods as information providers, beneficial and motivational for English students that enhance their language skills throughout endless possibilities (Tafani, 2009). By providing both aural and visual input, it is more straightforward for pupils to organize, remember and communicate their ideas by having visual models and references (Tafani, 2009). Working with videos, for instance, makes the activity much more collaborative among classmates, by fostering communication in a more interactive and practical manner (Tafani, 2009). Hence, an audio-visual material can be profited for unlimited pedagogical approaches; from analyzing its content, to transform it into a roleplay activity or even reconstruction of events (Tafani, 2009). It turns learning more accessible, especially for spatial-visual learners – those who, according to Gardner and his 'multiple intelligences' theory (1983), work better through images. By the same token, using videos in

the classroom promotes creativity and the learner's capacity to understand, so students can express themselves eloquently, be critical and promote different ways of thinking (Tafari, 2009). By using visual and aural products for didactic purposes, the teacher offers a stimulation, based on images that present the target language naturally, just as in the world outside the class (Çakir, 2006). Nevertheless, the teacher must consider the suitability of the materials to match the learners' needs and interest, as well as the teaching objectives. As King (2002) sets, if teachers appeal to the class' inquisitiveness, their response will be positive; ergo, their experience will be focused on "absorbing language and get the general gist of what is said" (p. 510) as they connect with it.

In the case of this dissertation, the selected audio-visual good is TV sitcom *Derry Girls*. Apart from being formed by aural and visual elements, television series have extra factors that help learners comprehend beyond its content, such as listening comprehension. Audio, a long side of a visual component (non-linguistic element) is a key part in the process of acquisition, allowing viewers to create a mental picture of the input (Frumuselu et al., 2015). In a recent study carried out by professor Frumuselu (2015), students were exposed to nine episodes of the TV show *Friends*. Results showed there was a difference between the first and the last episode viewed, since tests' results indicated that participants had gained comprehension throughout the process (Frumuselu et al., 2015). To summarize, it can be said that the language present in the speech on TV episodes is build up with the presence of the visual elements and, optionally, subtitles (see section 2.3.1 for more information), a combination that can potentiate "meaning comprehension and vocabulary learning" (Frumuselu et al., 2015, p. 108). Thus, by incorporating videos in the classroom, the experience becomes more "interesting and meaningful" for both teachers and students (Bajrami & Ismaili, 2016, p. 505).

2.2.1 Authentic audio-visual products

Several meanings can be distinguished when defining the term 'authentic materials'. For the purpose of this dissertation, authentic materials will be defined as those products in which language is formed by "a real speaker/writer

for a real audience, conveying a real message” (Gilmore, 2007, p.100). Characterized for containing a large amount of language variety, they offer contrasting natural discourses, accents, dialects, spontaneous conversations, and other attributes that bring genuine linguistic examples to the school room (Frumuselu, 2015). The non-simplified language, “pronounced at a real speed, not simplified, in real context of communications” displays a wide range of native users with different voices, tones, voice pitches, slang, body language, even cultural customs and realistic elements that are part of the original usage of English (Frumuselu, 2015, p. 112).

The fundamental aim of using those goods with pedagogical purposes is to “develop students’ skills for the real world” (Guariento & Morley, 2001, p. 347). By exposing pupils to this real-world language, they can “bridge the gap between classroom knowledge” and their linguistic competence to excel their strategies for reality (Guariento & Morley, 2001, p. 347). Videos provide an “original and authentic input as they are produced originally for native speakers” (Bajrami & Ismaili, 2016, p. 503). In other words, materials like TV shows assist learners to fulfill their communicative competence abilities at the fullest, so students are capable to communicate in the target language on their own, outside the safety and comfort of their school (Gilmore, 2007).

The search for the authentic and original in the EFL field started to be present in the 1960s (Gilmore, 2007). It was used in different methods, such as the already mentioned Audiolingual technique. Nevertheless, during the 70s, when linguists like Chomsky (1965) remarked the importance of the communicative competence, the use of authentic products re-emerged in the educational scenery and gained prominence (Gilmore, 2007). Thus, they became popular since they contrasted naturally with traditional textbooks; when using audio-visual resources, the center of attention is on meaning and communication, rather than form and accuracy as textbooks characterize (King, 2002). The use of school books in education as the standardized teaching methodology lacks a presence of “realistic and meaningful context”, consequently failing to “deal with contemporary issues that are relevant to their lives” (King, 2002, p. 510). So, students perceive the use of, for instance, films

in the classroom as a refreshed experience, which brings “language to life” in a more dynamic and interactive way (King, 2002, p. 510). Moreover, these materials are also available outside the classroom, something that can help them to contextualize language by “stimulating the student’s autonomy and proactivity” (Bajrami & Ismaili, 2016, p. 504). Genuine materials also contrast with traditional textbooks for not having an “artificially manipulated” use of English, so it brings reality closer to students and connects both what they can encounter in and outside the schoolroom, in a more natural style (Frumuselu, 2015, p. 112).

Teachers need to be aware of the kind of genuine audio-visual materials they can work with in EFL classrooms. For instance, popular products tend to be relevant and comfortable for learners (Hwang, 2005). The implantation of this material in activities needs to be done carefully, so students do not get lost or interpret the exercise as pointless. It’s the teachers’ task to provide support regarding language comprehension, aiding pupils in different aspects like with unfamiliar vocabulary (Hwang, 2005). A way to deal with that is by creating pre- and post- watching tasks, before and after viewing a particular video. Since this dissertation’s spotlight is to work with informal and colloquial language, the activities to prepare students for the moment before and/or after watching the episodes need to be aimed at the acquisition of that new vocabulary. Moreover, the goal should always be to increase the students’ language skills and linguistic competence with small dosages, not too many words to prevent overwhelming them (Bajrami & Ismaili, 2016).

Derry Girls, the show used for this dissertation, is unique for its genuine use of language. Filled with countless idioms and expressions from English and the Irish variety spoken in Northern Ireland, it brings a contemporary and fresh perspective of real-life language and other elements that enrich it, like culture. By using *Derry Girls*, students will see the same actors in the course of six episodes, so they will be familiar with their accents, tones and voices (Lunin & Minaeva, 2015). At the start, if they are well motivated, students will want to see more episodes, meaning that they will be engaged and active in class discussions or exercises. Since the selected TV sitcom presents a cultural and

language diversity, students are expected to connect with it out of curiosity and perceive it as entertaining (Lunin & Minaeva, 2015).

2.2.2 Fostering the cultural competence

The cultural competence is one of the seven key capacities present in the Spanish current educational law *Ley Orgánica 8/2013 para la Mejora de la Calidad Educativa* (LOMCE in Spain). This document is based on the *Common European Framework* that establishes language learning' standards for secondary education students. According to the definition proposed in the LOMCE, the awareness and expression of the cultural competence implies being familiar, comprehending and valuing critically but respectfully various cultural and artistic manifestations (LOMCE, 2013). Learners must absorb this capability as a source for personal enrichment and as is part of the wealthy and patrimony of nations (LOMCE, 2013). Moreover, the cultural competence assists in the cultural experience and contribution to both the cultural and artistic heritage of any community the learners are part of. For this reason, learners are required to have knowledge of the different patrimonial manifestations, like history, artistic past, literature, philosophy and other cultural fields (LOMCE, 2013). Since this cultural ability must be worked on school, it is then intrinsically connected to EFL. So, for this dissertation, the cultural competence is understood as the students' ability to comprehend, interact and collaborate with other cultural origins that allow them to operate in multicultural contexts. Overall, we live in a multicultural and interconnected world where the necessity of learning a foreign language is extremely up to date. Consequently, acquiring EFL is not only about learning linguistic and grammatical structures, but also a way to enroll and engage with unique cultures, acknowledging the importance of multiculturalism in our modern society.

To understand the cultural competence in the context of this study, a specific definition needs to be given. The term 'culture' is an abstract body of representation, a dynamic entity constructed by "multiple voices [based on] an imperfect sharing of knowledge [together with] people's involvement with the creation of multiple contexts that constitute their social worlds" (Moll, 2000,

p.25). As a result, culture is not a static concept but a fluid and intergenerational element which is in constant evolution and change (Moll, 2000). Additionally, culture is relevant when teaching EFL, since it is instructed “implicitly” with language (Peterson & Coltrane, 2003, p.1) and both elements are “bound up” (Harklau, 1999, p. 109) to reflect certain values that belong to a specific community (Nieto, 2008).

There is an intrinsic link between the cultural elements and language. This has to do, among other elements, with the relationship the speaker has with culture awareness and the set of values that belong to a society, including “people’s behavior, beliefs and worldviews” (Nieto, 2008, p. 5). Culture is always evolving, in constant production and change, a “dynamic process subjected to variations made by individuals or the community as a way of improving, adapting or modifying culture” (Nieto, 2008, p. 6). In this sense, culture connects with language and aid individuals to “shape the conceptualization of the world” and its comprehension (Nieto, 2008, p. 8). Language is a powerful tool through which humans “connect their impressions of the world and organize them into concepts” (Nieto, 2008, p. 8); in other words, thank to language acquisition, individuals process abstract ideas into actual forms that are easier to assimilate. These associations between concepts and the abstract world, produced in the mind, are expressed through language via terms with cultural connotations (Nieto, 2008). According to the linguist Benjamin Whorf as cited in Nieto (2008), “it is possible to understand the speaker’s worldview through the study of the speaker’s language” (Nieto, 2008, p. 8). Consequently, “language both reflects and shapes reality” (Nieto, 2008, p. 8), so, for instance, one word may have a meaning in one country and different connotations in another since culture adds into the mix.

Other hypotheses about the relationship between language and culture also recognize this connection. Vygotsky, the father of cultural-historical psychology, advocate of the consciousness’ theories, defended that words gained meaning as “representations of the speakers’ world and reality” (Nieto, 2008, p. 8). Additionally, Vygotsky was one of the first theorists whom studied the impact of the society’s environment in SLA, so it is a topic highly present in

his research. Vygotsky endorsed the perspective that this connection between language acquisition and the social environment “exemplifies the socio-cultural context in which learning takes place” (Nieto, 2008, p. 34), and, subsequently, the cultural competence aids speakers into comprehending the language in the world, as it is a reflection.

Moreover, culture is also present in the classroom through different manifestations. Different cultural origins can collide inside an EFL context, which constitutes the perfect opportunity to bring new perspectives. Thus, educators have a significant role when dealing with culture; they must be aware of the different expressions which are present in the class, to make sure of an existing collaboration among them and help learners to adjust to the target culture (Harklau, 1999). If students from diverse cultural backgrounds are comfortable in one classroom, a cultural safe space for sharing is thus created and guided by the teacher, bringing the particular opportunity to learn and further enhance the cultural competence (Nieto, 2008). Furthermore, professor Bollin (2007) analysed the relationship between culture and the teacher in the EFL schoolroom to defend that it is beneficial for students to develop their cultural awareness. His main aim was to motivate future educators to look for different perspectives of the world in the same classroom by bringing together diverse angles that both learners and their parents could contribute to, to further nurture social values like empathy (Bollin, 2007). So, teachers can be seen as “mediators” between the class’ culture and the target language culture (Harklau, 1999, p. 129). Additionally, EFL teachers are also cross-cultural figures, adapting their behaviour and getting involved in the understanding of other cultural manifestations that collide in the classroom (Ruusunen, 2011).

Through the use of authentic audio-visual materials, learners can “acquire a great amount of cultural background information” by immersing into the atmosphere of, for instance, a TV sitcom (Bajrami & Ismaili, 2016, p. 503). In that sense, genuine video aids contribute to the learning and comprehension of different cultures, allowing an observation throughout the screen on “how people behave” in a variety of communicative situations (Bajrami & Ismaili, 2016, p. 503). Moreover, images in motion can “enhance comprehension

[through the observation of] gestures, facial expressions and other aspects of body language, together with the authentic language” (Frumuselu, 2015, p. 112) that, all at once, bring culture into the classroom. A TV show can then be a model for pupils to recognize, among others, “the culturally appropriate ways to address people, [to] express gratitude, make requests, and agree or disagree”, distinguish “behaviors and intonation patterns” and general characteristics of the target language’s community (Peterson & Coltrane, 2003, p.1).

Derry Girls is an embodiment of the 90s in Northern Ireland. By working with this TV show in the schoolroom, learners are “given the chance to become acquitted” not only with the language but with the culture in a unique experience (Brown, 2010). Throughout the viewing, Irish culture is embedded in the language, so it is taught implicitly (Peterson & Coltrane, 2003). Still, learners need to be aware of those cultural features and it is the teacher’s role to expand that knowledge acquisition through different activities as to transform the visuals into an authentic cultural experience (Peterson & Coltrane, 2003).

2.2.3 Students’ motivation and interests

Today’s education is more student-centred than ever. In the case of Spain, the classroom was teacher-centred traditionally, with the educator dictating the lesson and being the sole protagonist of the learning experience. The origins of the learner-centred approach in the EFL field have varied since it was born in the core of the Communicative Language Learning methodology (Calvo, 2007). This shift in attention was present in other popular methods at the time, such as the Total Physical Response, Suggestopedia and even the Natural Approach (Calvo, 2007). Those techniques were based on the learners’ learning process and how to ease it, aiming at their communicative competence rather than on the educator (Calvo, 2007). Over and above, this learner-centred methodology is proven to be quite suitable for SLA, since it promotes inductive learning where students figure out the rules of the language through using it, thus being the heart of the language’s growth.

Back in the 70s, when video tapes were popularly used as teaching resources, students were motivated “because learning was now entertaining”

(Brown, 2010). For this dissertation, a definition of motivation that fits within this belief is to understand it as an element that gives energy and direction to human behaviours, a significant part in the process of learning a foreign language (Bahous et al., 2011). This motivation, when focused on SLA, influences the learners' attitude and perceptions towards the target language as their efforts to engage in the acquisition (Mayer, 2013). So, one option to enhance and foster motivation in students is to employ authentic materials that those very same pupils use outside school, during their leisure time. Thus, by giving them real language, present in authentic materials, "they are in touch with a living entity, the target language as it is used by the community which speaks it" (Guariento & Morley, 2001, p. 347). By transforming their interests into tools to learn, it stimulates "genuine communication in the classroom" and, consequently, the process is easier (Calvo, 2007, p. 192). Motivation results in students learning better when they are engaged in the educational space, being appealed by originality.

Previous research has justified the belief that learners actually profit from the use of audio-visual materials in SLA. Studies such as Sueyoshi and Hardison's (2005) as cited in Frumuselu's (2015) demonstrated that students performed optimally in comprehension after using video materials. The notable improvement was because students could see the speaker's body language, gestures and facial expressions, which facilitated the dialogues' comprehension (Frumuselu, 2015). This aids the construction of a positive attitude from pupils; as they comprehend and connect with the target language a pleasantness is felt, transforming it into a powerful motivation. In broad terms, then, it could be said that if learners enjoy the contents seen in the classroom, for instance, by working with audio-visuals, the English learning experience will be exciting, and they will wish to continue. Frumuselu (2015) carried out an attitude survey for the participants in her study. They were divided into two groups; all of them had watched several episodes from the Northern American TV sitcom *Friends*, but with different subtitling conditions. She claims that for the majority of members "learning from television was a *Pretty Good Use of Time* and *Pretty Enjoyable*" (Frumuselu, 2015, p. 158). That attitude survey was applied to the participants'

perception on language comprehension and vocabulary acquisition, which resulted also in positive feedback. This exemplifies the importance of taking students' interests into consideration to use authentic audio-visual materials as to motivate and engage learners in the experience. Frumuselu (2015) adds that EFL students in her research had a positive attitude because they believed that "viewing television had a useful effect on their English ability" (p. 156) and that their comprehension had improved after the experience.

Additionally, having pupils interested in the English subject helps in the construction of a relaxed and gratifying atmosphere, which can potentiate language learning at its fullest. Krashen and his "affective filter" theory (1985) play an important part in this idea. Studying EFL can be difficult so it is essential for educators to make the language accessible to apprentices, as in creating a "less stressful environment [to] enhance the chances of the student to success" (Nieto, 2008, p. 36). In other words, if teachers keep in mind the interests and motivations of the classroom, learners can become more confident and inspired, positioning Krashen's filter in a low position. This means that the students' capacities and skills may increase as their chances to be successful in the language acquisition experience, since they are more courageous in their abilities. When the contrary happens, i.e., that the students' filter is raised, it blocks the learning process and causes anxiety, stress and a low motivation, sometimes due to not seeing any progress in their knowledge (Brown, 2010). This flat motivation can lead to the feeling of boredom and a lack of interest, resulting in negativity that may end in failure or the "creation of a language barrier" (Lunin & Minaeva, 2015, p. 269). Therefore, it is fundamental for teachers to care about creating an appropriate environment where the student feels safe and free to make mistakes in the process without fear of failing.

2.3 Informal and colloquial language

The study of informal and colloquial language in the classroom is not present in today's education. Popularly, this vocabulary group, that includes forms like slang or casual expressions, has had a negative connotation since these words have been interpreted as being vulgar and having no place in an academic and

formal context such as school. Nevertheless, from my point of view, teachers should pay some attention to these collections of words since they represent authentic, genuine, outside-of-the-classroom language.

First, it is important to define 'vocabulary' as "the words of a language, including single items and phrases or chunks of several words which convey a particular meaning" (Lessard-Clouston, 2013, p. 2). Parting from that statement, vocabulary is then central to the English language teaching field since without enough of it, learners may struggle when expressing themselves. For this reason, it is of highest relevance to help students in gathering as much productive vocabulary knowledge as possible (Lessard-Clouston, 2013). Secondly, the *OED* defines the term 'informal language' as a speech style used mainly between people the speaker is familiar with, in casual contexts and containing 'taboo' vocabulary, described as rude, sometimes offensive words that should generally be avoided (Informal language, n.d.). Moreover, according to the *Cambridge Dictionary (CD)*, 'informal language' is practiced in speech rather than writing, defined for features like the use of contractions, ellipsis and slang and practiced in social groups to create a sense of common identity among members of the same status (Informal language, n.d.). It differs with 'formal language', the style found in, for instance, official documents or journals, suitable for serious and academic situations, employed to interact with unknown people (Formal language, n.d.). 'Formal language' is present in writing, associated to particular forms of grammar and vocabulary as not using contractions or the use of relative pronouns (Formal language, n.d.). In between, the variety 'Standard English' can be found, as a tool to teach, present in textbooks and media (Standard English, n.d.). It is more common in speaking and contrary to slang, it is a greater permanent variety of English that evolves through time (Standard English, n.d.).

For this dissertation, the focus will be placed on informal and colloquial words and expressions, part of a more casual style of language. Slang, colloquialism and euphemisms are key aspects of non-formal English which mainly appear in conversational speech found in real communicative situations, although these can also exist in informal texts, for instance, in the form of

abbreviations. They are characterized by their colourful expressions and regional, non-standard vernacular, which sometimes makes certain vocabulary words inaccessible to outsiders (Lale, 2018). 'Slang' is defined as the epitome of informal language, sometimes offensive, comprised by words and expressions that are in constant change (Slang, 2019). These varieties of vernacular are mainly used in spoken form, since it adds multicoloured, witty expressions than enrichen speech (Trask, 1999). As has been mentioned before, slang phrases are quite present in determined social groups and serve as a shared identity among its members (Trask, 1999). Slang units are "transient", meaning that they are used for a short period of time and are then replaced by newer terms (Trask, 1999, p. 185). Some linguists have been very critical regarding the presence of slang in the classroom, dismissing it as a "disease of the language"; other perspectives defend it as an "evidence of the vitality of a language" (Trask, 1999, p. 186), since it is a unique characteristic of the multiple English varieties that nowadays exist. Having defined slang as non-standard vocabulary (Lale, 2018), colloquialism style can be described as informal expressions that speakers use in relaxed and unselfconscious atmospheres. Additionally, colloquialisms are formed by a liberal use of contractions, connectors and tautologies as 'y'know', omission of the subject in utterances, slang, redundancy, swear words or short forms like 'gotta' (Trask, 1999, p. 27). According to Trask (1999), today's linguists regard colloquialism as a field of research, giving this kind a relevance to understand a language and its very own people.

Even though informal language tends to be generally dismissed in the study of EFL, it should be enhanced in the classroom. There is an evident, tangible connection between the use of these forms with authentic language, quite present in the students' life through the Internet or genuine audio-visual products, such as TV shows. Therefore, informal language groups like idioms conform a significant part of a "natural communication", regarded as a "tool to increase conversational fluency" and to boost self-confidence in learners so they see themselves in real-life communicative settings (Frumuselu, 2015, p. 43). Moreover, according to professor Frumuselu (2015), colloquial speech is

the most difficult style for one to acquire a “native-like competence” (p. 42). She defends that achieving it is a crucial process to reach proficiency, since failing at the use of slang and related lexical forms may denote “failure of understanding” (Frumuselu, 2015, p. 42).

Previous literature about both informal and colloquial language is quite reduced, since focus has mainly been placed on thesauruses and books with lists of idioms and slangs (Frumuselu, 2015). Meanwhile, there are other studies related to the teaching of colloquialisms inside the classroom like Bradford’s (2010), but there is generally poor evidence of the “process of learning” and acquiring informal vocabulary (Frumuselu, 2015, p. 42). Again, this lack of academic study denotes how little attention has been devoted to this language style in educational settings, clearly connected with the methodology and the approach teachers give to EFL.

Exposure to informal language in academic settings can be achieved using original audio-visual materials. This input, accessible to all levels outside the classroom, brings a rich part of the language not captured in textbooks, being meaningful for students to integrate their communicational and comprehensive abilities (Bradford, 2010). Consequently, more attention should be paid to it in the lesson, as to help learners acquire a more natural style with idioms, slang, phrasal verbs and informal expressions, part of the linguistic phenomena of English (Frumuselu, 2015). Additionally, by using authentic products made for native speakers, pupils can confront those informal words in an educational frame, units they may encounter when interacting with locals or browsing on the net. Genuine videos provide meaningful contexts where those lexical items can be put into place and give some sense of their significance in a framework. The imagery connected to the dialogue in an audio-visual product provides this context, advantageous for language learning to figure out the vocabulary as well as to acquire it (Frumuselu, 2015). Furthermore, the creation of background knowledge for learners can be achieved using a TV series in the classroom, since episodes are linked to one another and the same recurring characters increase the students’ awareness through cues and repetition (Frumuselu, 2015).

Finally, it must be mentioned that the presence of informal language (including slang and colloquial forms) is quite strong in *Derry Girls*. More specifically, there is an energetic appearance of the Northern Irish variety, Ulster English, highly influenced by Scottish and Irish forms in the 17th century (Hickey, 1999). The most notable features that Ulster English present in the Northern areas of Ireland are, for instance, the use of vowel lengthening and lexical incidence, dental and plosive fricatives, intervocalic preglottalisation distinction between the sounds / ω - Ω /, use of the schwa epenthesis and the absorption process (López, 2015). Ulster is then the Standard English form of language in NI and contains dialect vocabulary, not part of standard forms with its Gaelic and Scottish origins (Kirk, 1999). Most of this unique glossary is oral, introducing a wide range of subject matter, such the folklife theme, that include vocabulary for customs, food, the natural world, activities, housing and much more (Kirk, 1999). *Derry Girls* is presented with this dialect and their Northern Irish characters use thousands of words that reflect it. Undoubtedly, *DG* and its collection of informal forms present a unique opportunity to bring both the colloquialism style and a new cultural perspective into the classroom.

2.3.1 The role of subtitles on vocabulary acquisition

Nowadays, subtitles are considered an advantageous appliance to use when dealing with audio-visual materials in the academic context. Subtitles are texts that typically appear in movies or TV series at the bottom of the screen with a literal transcription of the dialogue, reinforcing what it is heard. It aids the viewer to, first, be able to read and follow the speech, which is simultaneously heard, and, secondly, to pay attention to new words and discover meaning through context. Traditionally, there has been two distinct types of subtitles: interlingual and intralingual (Frumuselu, 2015). The first is when the sound is in the target language (L2) and the text is in the mother tongue (L1); the second is when both text and audio are in the L2. Within this distinction, researchers also label intralingual subtitles as captions (Bisson et al., 2014).

Subtitles were originally intended to aid deaf and hearing-impaired viewers, but some years ago, teachers and linguists started to utilize them in

teaching EFL. The objective was that learners could simultaneously read while hearing the words (Bisson et al., 2014). Garza's study (1991), which evaluates the use of captioned video in EFL, demonstrated that subtitles could be used as a pedagogical tool. Moreover, he cemented a set of criteria to aid in the selection of video materials to work as a teaching tool (Matielo et al., 2015). Subtitles then eased English comprehension aiding the listening skill without any possible disturbances like noises or unfamiliar accents (Bisson et al., 2014). Additionally, Bravo (2008) defended in her study about screen translation and EFL learning that subtitles combined with the original tongue "stimulates learners to consolidate what they are listening, enriching their vocabulary and making them familiar with the culture of the foreign language in an authentic setting." (p. 165). This consolidation stimulates vocabulary acquisition "due to the reinforcement of spoken forms on screen in the shape of same-language subtitles", presenting a triple connection between image, sound and text (Frumuselu, 2015).

The benefits of captions linked to EFL are a fruitful topic of research that has been discussed by numerous linguists. Subjects vary within the subtitles field of investigation, part of Audio-visual Translation, a sub-discipline of Translation Studies (Frumuselu, 2015); from studying how reading skills can enhance vocabulary acquisition to informal and colloquial language learning. Danan (2004) has widely studied the use of captions and its effects on language learning, focusing on vocabulary acquisition. As cited in Frumuselu (2015), Danan's research exposed the advantages of intralingual subtitles "facilitating" language learning by helping students "visualize what they hear" (p. 168). Nonetheless, to prove captioning as an efficient technique, students would benefit from some previous training to cope with the process, needing to develop advanced viewing strategies that are required for an adept experience of learning through captioned material. In other words, if pupils cannot follow subtitles while watching, for instance, a film, the event could result in frustration and failure. Vanderplank (1988) was one of the first scholars to take on the field of subtitles as a teaching tool in the 80s. His study proved that captions were beneficial regards language comprehension, especially for lower level students.

Moreover, this same author reinforced the view of subtitles as a crutch to learners, since their “affective filter” (Krashen, 1985) was positioned low. So, by having an unstressful environment, captions favoured language learning acquisition. Following Vanderplank studies, Borrás and Lafayette (1994) also focused on the benefits of subtitles in multimedia products on speaking skills (Frumuselu, 2015). The results from their study proved that the presence of captions relieved learner’s anxiety and that it transformed their trembled experience into a pleasant one (Frumuselu, 2015).

One of the most relevant academics of this theme is D’Ydewalle, whose research, based on the analysis of learning through subtitled television, marked the path in the field. One of his earlier studies in 1991 investigated the effects of intralingual subtitles in language comprehension connected to information processing and cognitive psychology (Frumuselu, 2015). Results showed that participants followed captions while listening because they felt it facilitated comprehension (Bisson et al., 2014). D’Ydewalle and Van de Poel also theorized about the three different input channels that come into play when using subtitled products; the visual image, the soundtrack and the caption *per se* (Van de Poel & D’Ydewalle, 2002). He argued that the visual image and the events that follow through were sources of information acting as assistance to “either understanding the spoken language or reading the subtitle” (Van de Poel & D’Ydewalle, 2002, p. 59). In other words, it can be interpreted that this triple connection aids comprehension, reading and listening skills, phonetics, spelling, grammar associations and even the retention of language usage in an authentic setting (Lunin & Minaeva, 2015).

It can be confirmed that the benefits of subtitles for language learning are numberless. By using them, a rich and engaging context is given to the pupils because it presents information through different means (Almeida & Costa, 2014). Since multimedia products are usually well-received by students, they advocate for motivation and a positive attitude that helps in the creation of a non-stressful language-learning setting (Almeida & Costa, 2014). Learners can also recall expressions and information easier, recognizing words and sentence constructions as well as different pronunciations, spellings and connotations

(Almeida & Costa, 2014). When using captions, viewers process the three already-mentioned sources of information: the soundtrack, comprised by the diverse sounds together with the character's speech, narrators and dialogues; the subtitles, representing the text in actual letters; and finally, the images through which learners watch the scenery and the body language of the characters (Bisson et al., 2014). Conclusively, the selected theories that have been just synthesized demonstrate that captioned video is an effective tool in EFL that also boosts a positive attitude to learn, allowing them to safely monitor the speech of an audio-visual material.

Spain is a traditional dubbing country (Almeida & Costa, 2013). Most of the foreign imported movies and TV programs usually are voiced-over in Spanish. This predominant practice has an intrinsic connection with culture and language policies from the 30s (Almeida & Costa, 2014). With the aim of promoting nationalist values, policies such as the law 'Defensa del Idioma' emerged in 1941 with the subtle objective of censoring any foreign beliefs that contradicted domestic interests (Campillo, 2015). This tradition has strongly continued because dubbed products are more attractive and easier to follow since Spanish viewers perceive subtitles as an annoyance (Almeida & Costa, 2014). Additionally, most audio-visual consumers view the time devoted to watching TV or a film as something "ludic", so they do not want to "make the effort to read something when they could just hear it in their own language" (Zanón, 2006, p. 42). Sadly, this disregard for subtitles can be traced to a lack of habit, and it is the reason why it is crucial to promote the awareness and consumption of original and captioned audio-visual materials. Especially, in the case of Spain, since captions bring a one-of-a-kind opportunity to profit from English, in and outside of the school.

2.3.2 Incidental vocabulary acquisition

One of the promising advantages of using captions as an educational device is the potential for incidental acquisition of vocabulary (Bisson et al. 2014). Evidence points out that incidental learning usually takes place outside the classroom in an unconscious process, unlike intentional learning, which

happens in the classroom, being the focus of attention (Frumuselu, 2015). It can be defined as the knowledge which the learner gains unintentionally, without actually being aware that a learning experience is taking place (Kusyk and Sockett, 2012). This curious development is closely related to Krashen's (1989) subconscious process of SLA by means of 'comprehensible input', meaning that vocabulary incidental acquisition "takes places naturally by providing [it when] the learner's attention is focused on the meaning rather than on the form" (Ramos, 2015, p. 158). It is believed then that, in this acquisition process, teachers bridge the gap between incidental and intentional learning, something that can be achieved by using audio-visual products, connecting the real word with the classroom setting (Frumuselu, 2015).

Empirical data for the study of informal and colloquial language acquisition through a TV product are very little. Captioned TV started to be a topic of interest in the early 90s. Studies such as the one by Neuman and Koskinen (1992) were already based on incidental word learning. Their research departed from the mentioned Krashen's (1982) 'comprehensible input'. They divided participants (children) into four groups with different captioning conditions: one with captions, one without them, one reading and listening the TV text and one with a textbook (Matielo et al., 2015). Throughout the performance of different pre- and post-test and activities, the group with higher scores was the one with subtitles, which confirmed the "beneficial role of captioning for incidental vocabulary acquisition" (Matielo et al., 2015).

D'Ydewalle's testing on this same theme also started being prolific in the 90s. Unlike other researchers, d'Ydewalle and Gielen (1992) theorized about the automatization of reading subtitles by recording eye-movement (Matielo et al., 2015). Parting from the premise that reading was an automatic process, it should be a skill already acquired in order for acquisition to be successful. Regarding vocabulary, their study resulted in an improvement with the advantages of subtitles (Matielo et al., 2015). Up to this point, it was confirmed by different theorists that the presence of captions in audio-visual materials behaved as a tool for SLA enhancement, particularly regarding vocabulary acquisition.

Moving to the 00s, the exploration of this issue continued in different forms, focused on other skills. Research such as Webb and Rogers's (2009) aimed at creating a thesaurus of common vocabulary, which was classified into words families from various TV shows genres; it proved that, by watching one hour of television per day, students could potentially incidentally-acquire the most frequent 3.000 word-forms. Other recent studies like Kusyk and Sockett's (2012) used an adapted vocabulary knowledge scale as a tool to, first, look at learners' self-evaluation and verification from the instructor, and second, to have "an idea of where a given word is situated on a student's individual vocabulary spectrum" (p. 5). They reached the conclusion that regular watchers (those with watching television habits) self-evaluated themselves higher than non-regular watchers. Nevertheless, some gains in listening comprehension and new terms acquisition occurred as a result of frequency, meaning that positive and accumulative effects on vocabulary knowledge happened over long periods of exposure with frequent watchers (Frumuselu, 2015).

The key study that has served as the principal source of inspiration for the present dissertation is the one by Frumuselu's (2015). In her research, she defended that when students encounter some unknown vocabulary in an audio-visual material, they tend to rely on captions, which makes it simpler for them to recognize new forms and have an easier access to unfamiliar accents. Frumuselu (2015) stated that, for the process of vocabulary acquisition to take place, learners should first recognize the unknown words to be able to learn them. Also, Frumuselu and her team investigated the multiple profits from using subtitles through the TV sitcom *Friends*, parting from five studies with different objectives on diverse language skills. All those researches had a common interest; the benefits regarding incidental learning of colloquial and informal language in a formal classroom environment. By dividing their participants into two groups (depending on the study, using intra and interlingual subtitles or captions and no captions groups), researchers hypothesized about whether the intralingual conditions would have a greater effect than the interlingual one on the post-test. Their results confirmed that subtitled videos "increased vocabulary learning when compared to videos without captions", finding that an average of

six words were acquired after the viewing of 10 *Friends* episodes (Frumuselu, 2015, p. 143). Further findings on their study stated that there was a low correlation between the vocabulary acquired and the frequency of the gained forms and, on top, when asking participants about their beliefs of the investigation (the perception of having learnt new terms), 100% of the group with captions answered affirmatively (Frumuselu, 2015).

In conclusion, it can be affirmed that using captioned video products favours the phenomenon of incidental vocabulary acquisition. Both teachers and students should profit from that in the classroom since it brings the opportunity to learn without even realizing it.

3. The study

For the sake of this study, an avant-garde experiment was carried out to corroborate the fact that using TV series helps students to learn authentic informal language in the classroom. To start with the development of the research, a context is provided, after the design and the procedure that was followed during the exercise will be explained. A short analysis of the participants is also included, as to give an approximate idea of their profile. Moreover, the materials and the data collection processes are depicted in detail, proceeded by a contextualisation of the selected TV sitcom, *Derry Girls*. The next sections explore the creation of the produced tests, culminating with some examples of activities done in class. Finally, the results have been analysed in detail at the end.

3.1 Context

The following study took place in a 4th of ESO classroom in IES Politènic, a very diverse and modest high school in Palma. It is both a morning and evening centre since it offers both ESO and Vocational Training (*Formación Profesional* in Spanish) and its students' body is formed by different ethnical backgrounds. Regarding English as a foreign language subject, groups are split in two, so each group has around ten students. Three fifty-five minutes sessions are given per week, so approximately ten inconsecutive sessions were held in between

March and April of 2019, devoted to the procedure of this study. It was inconveniently paused for one week (three sessions were missed) since half of the students were on school trip. These lessons took place during my second period of the master's training, where I tried to transform regular lessons into dynamic previews of *Derry Girls*, mixing diverse activities to deal with Irish informal and colloquial terms.

I believe it is important to consider the context in this study since IES Politècnic is such a unique and particular high school. Generally speaking, this educational centre has very low academic results, a reflection of the learners' poor studying habits. Nevertheless, in the case of the English subject, my groups of students displayed an appropriate level for their course year. Most of them attended the lessons regularly, a positive outcome considering absenteeism is a serious problem in this educational context.

3.2 Design and procedure

For the design of this methodology, several decisions were taken considering the purpose of the research. The main aim of this experiment, that has been already stated, was to determine if working with *Derry Girls* in an EFL class is profitable in terms of authentic informal and colloquial language acquisition. The design of this research has been inspired by professor Frumuselu and her article titled *Television series inside the EFL classroom: Bridging the gap between teaching and learning informal language through subtitles*, published in 2015, based on her principal doctoral thesis *Subtitled television series inside the EFL classroom: long-term effects upon colloquial language learning and oral production*, also published in 2015. Additionally, it was decided that all 6 episodes of the TV sitcom were going to be shown in class because of their short duration (20 minutes each).

A quantitative approach and analysis were used for this study. For this purpose, two questionnaires and two multiple-choice tests were designed, considering the English level of the participants, their context and background as well as the main objective of this study. Both questionnaires and tests were constructed around different types of questions, focused on bringing suitable

and specific answers related to the main issue of the research (see sections 3.4.2, 3.4.3, 3.4.4 for further information). A list of all the informal and colloquial expressions was made from every episode, separated in three sections: expressions, phrasal verbs and general vocabulary. Some forms were afterwards chosen from that list to create both the pre- and post-tests.

So, parting from the afore mentioned model, this study can be divided into four phases. The first stage consisted on students completing the background questionnaire and the pre-test, before viewing the TV show. The second phase was focused on giving participants some context about Northern Ireland, so they would have a sense of its history and culture to become familiar with *Derry Girls*' cultural background. By giving them an historical frame, it was believed they would better understand the main contents of this TV show. This was executed through the creation of different activities, such as the completion of a NI's timeline by watching a short video and, afterwards, commenting on those main events (see section 3.4.5 for further information). In the third phase, the students watched all 6 episodes while pre- and post-exercises were intercalated, dealing with the key informal and colloquial terms. The final phase was based on a general reflection on the show and students' attitudes towards it as whether they believe it had helped them learn English.

3.3 Participants

The participants for this study were a heterogeneous group of teenage students in 4th of ESO in IES Politècnic. They were studying EFL as a mandatory subject. This group was formed by 10 students, five girls and five boys and their age ranging from 15 and 17. Although the sample may seem rather modest, it is mainly due to the fact that the educational curriculum in the Balearic Islands in 2016 stated that the number of students in each EFL class should be reduced, splitting pupils in two groups with two different teachers.

The approximate level of English for a 4th of ESO student, according to the Cambridge English Scale, corresponds to a B1 (Cambridge English, n.d.). It can be said that the English level of the participants within this specific course

was quite consistent, meaning that all members were, linguistically speaking, on the same page.

These 10 learners were one of the two groups I had during my teacher training period. On the first day of class they were explained that they would be part of this dissertation. Also, pupils were told about the process of the experiment, of the multiple tests they would be completing but not graded, creating an exciting atmosphere. Although students were a bit nervous on the first sessions, they were quite participative and displayed interest for the different exercises throughout the whole experiment.

3.4 Materials and data collection

The main material required for this dissertation was, of course, the TV series *Derry Girls*. Season 1 is formed by six episodes with an approximate length of 20 minutes each (see section 3.4.1 for further information). The episodes were played with original audio with English subtitles, also labelled as captions. Besides the audio-visual product, the classroom's projector, screen and speakers were used to reproduce the show. It must be said that no previous study at the moment has investigated the linguistic advantages that *Derry Girls* presents.

To collect information, several tests were carried out by the participants (see sections 3.4.2, 3.4.3, 3.4.4 for further information). An initial questionnaire, centred on the background and the television habits of the participants, was done at the beginning of the research process. Moreover, it was used to discard any possible students that, for instance, were English native speakers or were already familiar with the TV show. Before starting the previewing, a second test was done with multiple-choice questions regarding informal and colloquial vocabulary, to check students' knowledge on some of the target words. After the preview of the sitcom, a third test was accomplished to have as a comparative. The final test was a more informal approach to know the participants' opinion on this experience.

3.4.1 Derry Girls

The northern Irish' TV sitcom *Derry Girls* premiered in February 2018 in British public-service Channel 4. It became so popular that gigantic US streaming-service *Netflix* bought it for its own platform and turned it into an international sensation in December of the same year. The success after the first episode was so prominent that the show was renewed for a second season, which premiered in March 2019 while a third season has recently been confirmed. Undoubtedly, *DG* is the most successful sitcom of Channel 4, being viewed by over 2 million of people, the highest-rated comedy launch (Broadcasters' Audience Research Board, n.d.).

Lisa McGee is the creator and writer of the series, produced by Hat Trick Production, filmed exclusively in Derry and Belfast. McGee was born and raised in Derry during the 90s, the frame of the TV show, loosely based on her experience as a troubled teenager in Northern Ireland. In words of the journalist Shilpa Ganatra, Lisa McGee illustrates “a show that [...] basks in the nostalgia of 90s pop culture while depicting the reality, and frustration, of living in a city where life can be postponed [...] thanks to the bomb threats” (Ganatra, 2018). So, part of Derry's history and culture is reflected in the show, like the infamous *Troubles* or British soldiers' checkpoints inspecting the school's bus, capturing “the national mood” (Ganatra, 2018) in a comedic and unique perspective. Ganatra describes *DG* as an authentic sitcom, not only because it portrays life as it was at that time in a never-seen-before manner, but also for its display of “Derry's colourful vernacular” and a portrayal of a female-led generation that reaches a sort of universality through comedy (Ganatra, 2018).

Additionally, *Derry Girls* has become a sort of Derry's pride and beloved cherub. The show was widely accepted and celebrated in the city; Derry's citizens have even commemorated this beloved sitcom with the creation of one of their famed murals, found on the corner of Badgers Bar, with the face of the protagonists. Derry natives interpret the sitcom as a humorous, positive portrayal and a new representation with a “chasm of joy” (Lanigan, 2019) that Northern Irish people are not used to seeing on national television.

DG is then a comedy show that evolves around the daily life of a group of four Northern Irish' female teenagers with one out-of-the-water English male while growing up in the 90s in troubled Derry. Together they go to Our Lady Immaculate Girls' School where the protagonists suffer from uncountable humiliating moments and their own pack of troubles. Erin, Michelle, Orla, Clare and James orchestrate the most hilarious and lively bits that the show presents, seeing them involved in different hilarious situations that most adolescents have lived through. This show connects with a universality of teenagers since it accounts for common incidents of that age like being grounded or studying for a test the night before.

Since this show offers a new, fresher perspective of NI's history, it is interesting from a cultural and historical point of view. That is one of the reasons why this sitcom was selected in the first place, to contrast from the typically-seen programs dealt with in the classroom, usually with a British or Northern American background. It provides a rich cultural frame, displaying NI traditions such as the Orange Order, the already mentioned Derry murals or going to the "chippy" shop on Fridays. This colourful and lightweight humorous series is complemented by the delightful Ulster English dialect combined with a strong presence of the Irish accent, so characteristic of this sitcom. Together they form an outstanding combo which brings another perspective of British people that EFL students are not used to seeing in the classroom.

3.4.2 Background test

The first test the participants of the study did was titled *TV Watching Habits and Northern Ireland Survey*. This one-page questionnaire (see section 7.1 Appendix 1) was divided into two parts. The first one, *TV Watching Habits*, aimed at checking students' tendencies regarding their TV shows consumption and to get to know whether working with a television product would be profitable and well received. Moreover, there was one question (number 3) designed specifically to check if the participants usually watched TV in English and about their use of captions. The second part, *Northern Ireland*, was focused on discovering students' knowledge about the country beforehand, so as to know

how much context would be needed to be provided before watching *Derry Girls*. Both parts contained five multiple-choice items, with three options (*a*, *b* and *c*), so participants answered a total of 10 questions.

This test was given on the first day of class. That same day, the researcher explained the study to the students and they were given clear instructions to complete the questionnaire, knowing that no mark was going to be given and that there were no right or wrong answers. It took around 10 to 15 minutes to complete. The results will be further analysed in section 3.5.

3.4.3 Pre-test

To collect the samples for the study, a pre-test was handed out before watching any episode. This was done during the same session than the background test. Similarly, as the previous data collection material, it contained a total of 20 multiple-choice questions (see section 7.2 Appendix 2), divided into three differentiated sections. The first one, titled *Expressions and idioms*, was formed by 10 questions devoted to checking students' knowledge about some informal and idiomatic Irish forms present in the TV show. The second section, *Phrasal verbs*, was about the participants' awareness of certain combinations of verbs and prepositions frequently used in *Derry Girls*. This part only contained 5 multiple-choice questions, to not overwhelm participants. The third part also consisted of 5 multiple-choice items, focused on some *General vocabulary*, specific of Ulster English. It took around 15 to 20 minutes for the participants to complete this test. Students were required to answer all the questions, even if they were not sure about the correct option.

The main objective of this pre-test was, of course, to verify students' expertise on some colloquial and informal vocabulary present in *Derry Girls*. Moreover, this test was useful to compare with results of the post-test, which was carried out at the end of the study.

3.4.4 Post-test

The Participants, after watching the sitcom, filled out a multiple-choice test. The post-test (see section 7.3 Appendix 3) was designed very similarly to the pre-test so as to be able to compare the results afterwards; it also contained 20 items with three options, divided into the same three categories. Again, all the questions were related to the informal and colloquial expressions and vocabulary seen and worked on in the class from *DG*. Most of the questions were repeated (from the pre-test) with some changes to incorporate terms that were seen in the activities done during the sessions to favour students' acquisition. As explained above, the main objective of this post-test was to compare it to the pre-test, checking participants' process of acquisition of the new vocabulary after having watched six *DG* episodes. For further information about the results' parallelism, consult section 3.5.4.

Additionally, a final opinion survey was done by the participants of the study, with the main intention of receiving their feedback about the sessions and procedure. This last questionnaire (see section 7.4 Appendix 4) consisted of three different parts with statements that students had to rate from 1 to 4. At the end, it contained one open-ended question, so they could express themselves freely and contribute to the study. The principal objective was to check whether learners had had a good time during the sessions and if they believed that watching a TV show in class was productive and motivational. The results of this survey are further analysed in section 3.5.4.

3.4.5 Activities

As mentioned in the literature review, it is essential that when working with vocabulary acquisition teachers prepare students for it. So, to cultivate new terms, several tasks were designed in order to reinforce this gain. For the creation of those activities, the already cited list of forms that appeared in the TV sitcom was used; this list included expressions, phrasal verbs and general vocabulary. Additionally, some activities were designed to be culturally-oriented to foster the cultural competence. One exercise before and another one after

watching every episode were regularly carried out, so a total of six activities were created. Again, the goal of the pre- and post-tasks was to boost students' acquisition process of colloquial and informal Irish vocabulary.

A combination of different exercises was designed to keep the dynamicity and interest in the classroom. One of the first activities consisted in displaying a list of terms that learners copied in their notebooks and guessed the meaning in context. After the viewing of the first *DG*' episode, students commented and verified their answers. Some of those forms were, for instance, 'wise up', 'cheeky' or 'stickler'. A variation of this task was to convert it into 4 multiple-choice items, checking if by providing participants some options it would improve the acquisition. One exercise that did not work so well was the one which consisted of giving participants the opportunity to come up with a list of words that had called their attention. Most students focused their scavenger on random forms and not on informal or colloquial Irish terms. After that, I decided to continue giving them several options to discuss the meanings. Finally, another activity was carried out by showing some pictures of some Derry murals. The intention was that participants could connect the background of the TV show with previous activities done at the beginning of the study, so they could express themselves and prove their comprehension. Surprisingly, this exercise was quite successful since half of the students linked the political graffiti to some particularities of *DG* and NI's history.

In summary, six different tasks were completed during the preview of the TV show. The purpose was to build up students' informal and colloquial vocabulary acquisition in the EFL classroom. Some of them were not successful in engaging participants, but some others gave students the chance to show their gained knowledge about NI and *DG*.

3.5 Results and analysis

Ideally, there were several goals to be reached at the end of this study. First, it was expected that the participants would show a notable improvement from the pre- to the post-tests as to confirm the hypothesis that the use of TV sitcoms is a beneficial language tool to acquire informal and colloquial forms in the

classroom. Second, that students would have had an enjoyable experience with the procedure, proving that using audio-visual materials was a refreshing aid. Finally, parting from the thought that it is important to bring a novel proposal into the classroom, a favourable feedback from the participants was also expected.

The only variable that affected students' performance was attendance. Since the group was so reduced (only 10 subjects), when some participants missed any sessions, episodes were still watched for reasons of time. The post-test was the part that could have been affected the most by this, resulting in a lack of some vocabulary forms dealt within the classroom. Additionally, the fact that there was a one-week break (due to the school's trip) in between lessons, could have affected students' comprehension of the storyline, forgetting details about *DG*.

3.5.1 Background questionnaire analysis

As has been already mentioned, the finality of this early survey was to gather information about the participants' television watching habits and their basic knowledge about NI (see section 7.5 Appendix 5). So, the first part of the questionnaire was devoted to students' tendencies regarding their consumption of TV shows. Answers for the first question were divided concerning the frequency that participants watched or followed any TV shows. More than half of the replies indicated that they watched "one or more" TV series while the other half watched television "sometimes". The second question, about the time invested in carrying out activities of this type, most of the participants answered "1-5 hours weekly". So, according to the data presented in section 2.2 about the use of audio-visual materials, AIMC claimed that Spanish teenagers spent around 3.5 hours viewing television. The selected participants for this study were within this standard, even surpassing it. Moving on to the third item, a variety of answers were given which indicates a division regarding TV habits. Forty per cent of the students answered that they usually watched episodes in English with Spanish subtitles while 30% marked that they use English captions; the remaining 30% use Spanish audio. Interestingly enough, this

question was relevant for this study since it was decisive that participants were used to consuming products with English audio and subtitles. The fourth question was designed to get to know about the participants' pre-disposition to learn by using a television sitcom in the classroom, and all of them answered "yes". For this study, the students' attitude and motivation to collaborate was key. The last item was about the type of TV products participants consumed the most, with a clear majority answering "comedy sitcoms". This favoured the reception of *Derry Girls*, since it fits in this category.

Proceeding to the second part of the background survey, it was focused on gathering participants' base knowledge about Northern Ireland and use it as a point of departure. For the sixth question, most students guessed that NI was "part of the United Kingdom", while a minority thought it was "part of the Republic of Ireland". Regarding the language spoken there, the greatest amount selected "English and Irish" while some picked "English dialect". For the eighth item, all but two members confessed having "no idea" about NI's history. This question, in particular, brought to the table the issue regarding the absence of Ireland's perspective in the Spanish educational system, especially regarding EFL. The fact that most students have little to zero knowledge about our Irish colleagues brought the chance to explore it through *Derry Girls* in a unique and one-of-a-kind manner. When asked about Derry, results were split. Fifty percent marked they had no idea while 40% guessed that it was a NI city, with 10% thinking that it was an Irish metropolitan. Finally, the tenth question was, once more, oriented to become familiar with the participants' open-mindedness to learn about a new country, with the vast majority answering that it was "interesting".

To summarise this background knowledge, it can be said that it established a prominent departing point. Having participants with little knowledge about Northern Ireland opened a door for learning and discussion in the classroom. Moreover, that fact that pupils favoured the use of a TV sitcom as a language tool and most of them had promising watching habits created a positive and motivational environment. To add an alluring note, most students, while entering the class asked if for that lesson an episode was going to be watched, translating this excitement to the group.

3.5.2 Pre-test analysis

Moving to the pre-test results, these are illustrated in *Table 3* (see section 7.6 Appendix 6). Once more, the main objective of this multiple-choice questionnaire was to dare participants to guess, guided by their intuition and knowledge, the meaning of some informal and colloquial forms. Since they purely used their background understanding, incorrect answers were expected.

Part I was based on some questions for participants to figure out the meaning of diverse expressions and idioms, some typically from the Northern Irish dialect, with three possible answers. Phrasal verbs were displayed in questions in the form of sentences, which were extracted from dialogues in *Derry Girls*. Forms such as *beat up* or *break to* caused confusion among answers. As can be seen in *Table 3*, there is a homogenous indecision among results, most answers being divided equally. There is only one case, in question number 1, where 100% of participants agreed with the same option. For the rest of questions, as it has been already mentioned, there was a general repartition of the marked responses. In questions 2, 6 to 8 and 10, most participants guessed correctly. For queries 3 to 5 plus 9, interpretations were divided into two to three possible answers.

Part II of the pre-test was concerned with phrasal verbs. Surprisingly, most answers (from questions 1 to 3) were divided into different options, while for questions 4 and 5 the majority of participants selected the correct one. This meant that, generally speaking, participants had little knowledge about the meaning of those forms. Nevertheless, it must be said that in some questions, a few selected answers gave the impression of having been marked a bit randomly since students were asked to select an option in all of them.

The final part was about general vocabulary from the series, with some Ulster' forms present in the TV show. Results from this section are quite positive because the majority marked the correct answer (in questions 2 to 4). For items 1 and 5, a balanced result was given in between two possible answers. Deducing from the choices that were available, it is possible to assume this uniform distribution since they were similar.

3.5.3 Post-test analysis

While exploring *Table 4* (see section 7.7 Appendix 7), about the post-test results, some changes were noticeable. It must be remembered that some terms were altered to enhance students' results, since the changed items were about vocabulary which was finally not worked on class. Those word-forms were replaced by others that were indeed present during the lessons.

Surprisingly, the results from the first part of the post-test were heterogenous. For questions 1 to 3, 6, 8 and 9, most participants selected the correct answer while for questions 4, 5 and 10 there was an even distribution of selected options. Item 7 was an exception since most of the students opted for the wrong statement. In contrast with the first part, the second and third section of the post-test were more homogenous; the greatest number of participants selected the correct answer.

3.5.4 Pre-test and post-test analysis

When comparing both the pre- and post-test, regarding the repeated questions, there were some noticeable features, reflected in *Table 5* (see section 7.8 Appendix 8). First, there were some cases in which answers for the same items were still dispersed for both the pre and the post-test, like questions 5 and 16. Responses for those two were discordant, but most of the participants marked the valid option in the post-test. Especial attention was given to other queries like 7, where the majority selected the right option in the pre-test but marked it wrong in the post-test. The same case happened with question 10; on the pre-test, 80% selected the right option, while in the post-test, only 50% did so. Nevertheless, positive results are derived from the rest of the enquiries, like 9, 14,15,17, 19 and 20, where the correct answer was the most selected option.

Analysed in conjunction, it can be confirmed that there has been a positive evolution in between the pre- and the post-test outcomes. From the 11 questions that were repeated in both examinations, 7 of them were correctly answered by most participants, while the other 4 were either evenly or wrongly selected. Apparently, the meaning of some informal expressions and

vocabulary, even if it was worked on during the sessions, was still not clear for some of the participants. This means that maybe the activities done in class before and after watching the episodes were not enough, or perhaps other types of tasks would have better suited pupils' acquisition. Also, it can denote that students did not pay enough attention to certain expressions or that they were confused and did not ask for a clarification. Even so, the outcome for this study is mainly positive, confirming that it is possible to acquire informal and colloquial vocabulary using authentic audio-visual materials.

4. Conclusion

Through the development of this study, several facts have been proven. Firstly, that a television show can be used as a teaching tool in the EFL classroom, since it can enhance students' motivation and interest as well as their capacity for vocabulary acquisition. Secondly, that the value of authenticity in those products is of great concern as it mimics genuine, outside-of-the-school language, which learners may confront in real life. By working with informal and colloquial language in the safe space the classroom represents, it can give them confidence and less anxiety to practice English out-of-doors. Thirdly, this study has demonstrated that through the execution of well-thought activities that evolve around the target vocabulary it is possible for students to acquire it, having a TV series such as *Derry Girls* as a background. Moreover, cultural aspects have also been explicitly and implicitly taught through the viewing of the show, bringing a new perspective into the EFL classroom, enriching students' cultural competence. Finally, that using intralingual subtitles (also known as captions) builds up the purpose of acquiring vocabulary while fostering all language skills. In the future, the study of the effect of different TV shows focused on different competences could be done to follow research.

5. Didactic proposal

After carrying out this dissertation, it is clear that working with informal and colloquial language provides numberless benefits for learners in the EFL classroom. By incorporating it through audio-visual materials like sitcoms, the

teacher also tackles into pupils' interests and galvanizes them into a one-of-a-kind learning experience, making lessons more entertaining while breaking away from traditional methodologies. This brings a superb opportunity to elaborate an original didactic proposal that reflects the ideas present therein this dissertation.

First of all, before working with genuine audio-visual products in the classroom, it is essential to prepare students. Initially, it would be ideal to be familiar with their television or film habits, which can be done through, for instance, a questionnaire or an interview activity about what kind of materials they consume, in which language, genres, etc. Additionally, testing learners' skills on reading captions and paying attention to language and content should be checked as well, since it is relevant for the success and well-reception of the project. If students are not used to reading English captions, it could turn into a difficult and frustrating experience, consequently losing the enthusiasm and compelling of the experience. As teachers, the priority should always be to inspire pupils, so the language acquisition process is as enjoyable and significant as possible. Moreover, considering the goals of the project, it is pertinent to choose a suitable TV show, according to the class' inclinations and the teacher's criteria, connected to the educational curriculum, aiming at students putting their language skills into practice.

For the following proposal, the Australian TV show *Please Like Me* (2013-2016) has been chosen. This comedy drama, written and lead by Aussie Josh Thomas follows its protagonist, a gay young adult discovering his place in the world through his relatable and realistic issues, in a humorous and ironic tone. The first season is formed by six episodes, with a duration of around 30 minutes each, which makes it suitable for a 55-minutes lesson. Ideally, this TV comedy would be worked with older students, such as 4th of ESO or *bachillerato* as it deals with early adulthood situations, so a stronger connection could be made with maturer learners. Episodes will be played with original audio (Australian English) with English captions. Furthermore, this product reflects aspects and traditions of the Australian culture combined with a display of their unique accent and presence of Australian English, including slang and

colloquial forms. Again, by including a non-classic nationality in the EFL classroom, it can increase pupils' curiosity as they enrol with a new perspective. Also, they will become familiarised with a new accent, an unusual accent which students are not acclimated to.

The first three sessions of this didactic proposal will be devoted to building up a frame for learners, to help them form an image of the Australian personality. It should be complemented with the history of their country as well as their customs and traditions. For this purpose, several exercises will be done. In the first session, as a lead in activity, the group will brainstorm about what they already know regarding Australia, taking it as a chance to open an in-class debate on stereotypes and clichés. Ideas will be noted down on the blackboard, resulting in the creation of a mind map. In the same session, a preview of a short documentary will be done to further explore the already made comments. The second session would consist on pupils completing a *WebQuest* worksheet with the purpose to investigate on their own about Australia. It can be done in small groups of three or four students. To wrap up this first contact stage, a small and short presentation in pairs would be done (connected to the *WebQuest*) touching a certain aspect, like Australian festivities, customs, celebrities, etc. So, pupils can actively be involved in the process of constructing a context about the country. Those presentations will be around 5 to 8 minutes each and they can use video, PowerPoint slides, a poster or any other resources they come up with. It will be graded with a holistic scale and considered as a 'speaking' mark. Of course, the main aim of these exercises is to spark students' curiosity on the topic, to stimulate them to participate and be an active agent in their own learning process.

Additionally, in the first lesson, the main task will be explained. Students will have to create an online and individual portfolio, formed by three different parts, which will be delivered at the end of the semester. A detailed list of resources alongside exhaustive instructions will be also be given together with an example of a finished portfolio. The first part is a journal, which will be done to keep track of all the newly learnt vocabulary from the TV show. By making pupils take notes while watching the episodes, it will help them consolidate their

acquisition and put into practice their linguistic strategies. In addition to the journal, this project will have an outline about the show. This sketch can be done in the form of a mind map or a scheme, and it should include the name and the relations of the characters plus some of the themes dealt with inside the episodes. The third part of the portfolio is an opinion essay of a minimum of 500 words (1 page and a half). It will contain not only the student's opinion on the TV show, but also a reflection on their individual educational experience with it. Learners can further expand on it with notes about how they felt about the show, whether if they liked it or not. Of course, this portfolio, an alternative and informative form of assessment, will be given a mark according to an analytic rubric, which will be created explicitly for this project. This rubric will consider linguistics aspects (for instance, grammatical mistakes in the essay), the effort put into the collection of the new vocabulary (for instance, whether if the student has collected a great number of words), originality, attitude and participation, among others. The main objective is that pupils acquire informal and colloquial Australian lingo while working their cultural and digital competence. Additionally, some time will be devoted to working on the portfolio in class since it is such a time-consuming activity. So, a total of two sessions, distributed in the sequence, will be given for this.

Moving on to the rest of the sessions, once pupils have a general concept about Australia and its people, it is time to introduce the series. As an inaugural task, the trailer will be showed in the fourth session. Individually, students would come up with ideas about the topics they believe the show deals with. So, a group reflection with individual participation can be made to spark excitement and, somehow, create positive expectations. A list of questions will be displayed to facilitate conversation and tackle the most relevant topics. For instance, learners will talk about how they relate to the characters that appear in the trailer or if they had caught any cultural element similar to their own culture. Some phrasal verbs and words will come up in the trailer, and those terms would also be discussed, trying to extract meaning in context. It must be added that, before this session, the teacher would have had watched the six episodes to create a list of linguistic forms worth dealing with in the lessons. Based on

those suitable terms, the teacher would also elaborate the activities for before and after the preview of the episodes.

For the following sessions (fifth to twelfth), a combination between activities and the preview of the episodes will be carried out. A total of six episodes will be played. A task will be exposed before the viewing, to give students clues about what they need to pay attention to. These activities will be completed after the episode and rounded up with a final comment. Having in mind that sessions are 55 minutes long, short exercises would fit with a 30 minutes episode. The goal is to explore the linguistic and cultural aspects present in *Please Like Me* like colloquial vocabulary and expressions. For that, around four to five informal and colloquial terms (including vocabulary, phrasal verbs and expressions) will be worked on for episode. Furthermore, one class before the fourth episode will be devoted for in-class work in the portfolio as well as another session after the end of the preview of the show (session thirteenth). If necessary, an additional day would be added, depending on the students' rhythm and difficulties with the project. It is relevant that students feel supported and aided by the teacher, so they do not fall behind and stay focused.

The fifth session will start with a brief display of some sentences with underlined words through a PowerPoint presentation. Students will read them out loud and try to guess the meaning of the marked forms. Ideally, around five utterances will be worked on as to not overwhelm pupils. The episode will be played, and the teacher would ask for their first reactions at the end. Then, the sentences will be displayed again and corrected orally. For session six, a list of meanings will be displayed. Learners would have to look for a synonym of those terms in the episode. Some clues can be given as providing the type of form they have to look for (a noun, a verb, etc.). The next session, number seven, will include some multiple-choice questions. These enquiries will similarly contain sentences with underlined word-forms and three possible meanings. Students will read all the questions and, after watching the TV show, answer them using their intuition. If time allows it, this second part of the activity can be done through the app *Kahoot*. It is important to constantly remind pupils before watching the episode to take notes for their portfolios. Lesson number eight,

again, will be for students to start their portfolio design in class-time. Continuing with session nine, a matching activity will be designed. Two columns will be displayed, one with forms and the other with meanings. After watching the episode under analysis, pupils have to correctly match them. For the preview of the fifth episode, in lesson ten, learners will be handed a worksheet containing several pieces of dialogue with some gaps. During the analysis of this audio-visual material, they will fill out those missing forms with the dialogue. After, the worksheet will be corrected, paying attention to meaning. For the eleventh lesson, students will watch the episode, and, in the end, they will have to share with the rest of the class four unknown forms which caught their attention. The last lesson will be committed to continue elaborating the final portfolio.

As it has been implicitly stated, this didactic proposal is focused on fostering a collaborative and cooperative methodology where students, by actively participating, remain the centre of the learning experience. The cultural and digital competences are given special attention since they are quintessential in the EFL classroom. Additionally, an interdisciplinary movement can be complementarily created; for instance, working with Australia alongside the Geography, History and even the Universal Literature subjects, helping pupils to better connect contents and to reach a more significant learning experience.

6. References

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7. Appendices

7.1 Appendix 1 – Background test

Part I – TV Watching Habits	Part II – Northern Ireland
<p>1. Do you watch or follow any TV shows?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Yes, I watch one or more.b. No, I don't like TV shows.c. Yes, I watch TV series sometimes. <p>2. How many hours do you spend watching TV a week?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. None.b. 1-5 hours weekly.c. More than 5 hours a week. <p>3. When you watch any TV show episode, you...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Watch it in English with Spanish subtitles.b. Watch it in English with English subtitles.c. Watch it with Spanish audio.d. Other: <p>4. Do you think it is possible to learn new words by watching a TV show in English?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Yes, if I watch it with English audio and subtitles, I try to pay attention to new vocabulary.b. I think is difficult to listen and read at the same time, but it is possible.c. No because I rather watch it with Spanish subtitles. <p>5. I usually watch...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. TV sitcoms, comedy.b. Drama shows.c. Other:	<p>6. Northern Ireland is...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Part of the Republic of Ireland.b. Part of the United Kingdom.c. It is an independent European country. <p>7. In Northern Ireland, they speak...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. An Irish dialect called Ulster Scots.b. English and Irish.c. An English dialect. <p>8. Northern Ireland's history...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Has been pacific as part of the United Kingdom.b. I have no idea.c. Has been marked by violence and political conflicts such as "The Troubles." <p>9. What do you know about Derry?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. I guess it is a Northern Ireland city.b. I guess it is an Ireland city.c. I don't know what Derry is. <p>10. Would you like to know more about Northern Ireland?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Yes, it sounds interesting.b. No, I don't care.c. I would love to talk about it in class.

7.2 Appendix 2 – Pre-test

<p>Part I: Expressions and idioms</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The expression to <i>shed some light on a situation</i> means... <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. To clarify something b. To illuminate a room c. To turn on a light 2. To <i>cut a deal</i> means... <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. To divide something into equal pieces b. To reach an agreement c. To offer something at a good price 3. To <i>get one's head around something</i> means... <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. To convince someone to do something b. To change your opinion about something c. To understand something that is confusing 4. To <i>take something with a pinch of salt</i> means... <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. To make a bad joke b. To not believe something you are told c. To feel sad about a movie 5. To <i>give peace of mind</i> means... <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. The absence of worry b. To solve a problem c. To forgive somebody 6. <i>Broke the bone</i> means... <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. To hit someone very hard b. To be hugely embarrassed c. To wish luck 7. A synonym of <i>to catch yourself on</i> is... <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. "Don't be so ridiculous" b. "Get a friend" c. "Check your manners" 8. To <i>be ready for the hills</i> means... <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. To start a mountain marathon b. To feel relaxed c. To be under pressure 9. To <i>elope with someone</i> means... <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. To run away and get secretly married b. To team up with your worst enemy c. To be in love 10. To <i>have an eye on someone</i> means... <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. To be obsessed with sunglasses b. To keep someone out of trouble c. To be attracted to someone 	<p>Part II: Phrasal verbs</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 11. <i>They were worried that the lads would beat him up</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. To hit someone b. To stop talking suddenly c. To insult someone 12. <i>Wise up, Jenny</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. To think and act in a more intelligent way b. To be asked to leave c. To be immature 13. <i>How am I going to break it to him?</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. To hit someone b. To give good news c. To reveal upsetting information 14. <i>Count me out, I am not interested</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. To not include someone in something b. To lose a fight c. To not be able to attend an event 15. <i>Do you mind not interrupting? I am trying to come out here</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. To go somewhere b. To reveal something that has been kept a secret c. To do an intense activity <p>Part III: General vocabulary</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 16. A <i>wain</i> is... <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. A child b. An older person c. A potato 17. To be a <i>nutcase</i> is... <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Someone who has a nut bag b. Someone who behaves in an extremely silly way c. A professional chef 18. A <i>stalker</i> is someone who... <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Delivers speeches b. Fears stairs c. Follows and watches someone obsessively 19. A <i>fella</i> is... <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. A man or a boy b. A grandad c. An Irish sweet 20. Someone who is a <i>simpleton</i> is... <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. A very intelligent person b. A foolish person c. Someone from a village
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7.3 Appendix 3 – Post-test

<p>Part I: Expressions and idioms</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The expression <i>to despise someone</i> means... <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. To clarify something b. To detest someone c. To secretly marry someone 2. To <i>be cheeky</i> means... <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Someone that is bold or rude in a funny way b. To reach an agreement c. Someone that is a bad liar 3. To <i>live on a knife's edge</i> means... <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. To be unable to decide b. To feel anxious about a stressful or difficult situation c. To behave as a crazy person 4. To <i>lose sight of something</i> means... <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. To forget something important b. To not believe something you are told c. To not be able to see very well 5. To <i>give peace of mind</i> means... <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. The absence of worry b. To solve a problem c. To forgive somebody 6. To <i>nick something</i> means... <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. To hit someone very hard b. To like someone c. To steal 7. A synonym of <i>to catch yourself on</i> is... <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. "Don't be so ridiculous" b. "Get a friend" c. "Check your manners" 8. To <i>have first dips</i> means... <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. To claim something first b. To eat chips c. To be under pressure 9. To <i>elope with someone</i> means... <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. To run away and get secretly married b. To team up with your worst enemy c. To be in love 10. To <i>have an eye on someone</i> means... <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. To be obsessed with sunglasses b. To keep someone out of trouble c. To be attracted to someone 	<p>Part II: Phrasal verbs</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 11. <i>They were worried that the lads would <u>beat him up</u></i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. To hit someone b. To stop talking suddenly c. To insult someone 12. <i><u>Wise up</u>, Jenny</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. To think and act in a more intelligent way b. To be asked to leave c. To be immature 13. <i>Great party, you are <u>a credit for yourself!</u></i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. To be proud for being a good host b. To give good news during a party c. To reveal upsetting information 14. <i><u>Count me out</u>, I am not interested</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. To not include someone in something b. To lose a fight c. To not be able to attend an event 15. <i>Do you mind not interrupting? I am trying to <u>come out here</u></i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. To go somewhere b. To reveal something that has been kept a secret c. To do an intense activity <p>Part III: General vocabulary</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 16. A <i>wain</i> is... <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. A child b. An older person c. A potato 17. To be a <i>nutcase</i> is... <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Someone who has a nut bag b. Someone who behaves in an extremely silly way c. A professional chef 18. The meaning of <i>wrecked</i> (adj.) is... <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. To be very drunk b. To be extremely tired c. To be in tension 19. A <i>fella</i> is... <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. A man or a boy b. A grandad c. An Irish sweet 20. Someone who is a <i>simpleton</i> is... <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. A very intelligent person b. A foolish person c. Someone from a village
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7.4 Appendix 4 – Opinion questionnaire

QUESTIONNAIRE: How useful were these activities for you?

Rate 1 (not interesting), 2 (somewhat interesting), 3 (interesting) to 4 (very interesting).

ACTIVITIES ABOUT VOCABULARY/EXPRESSIONS

➤ Find the word with the meaning	1	2	3	4
➤ Guess meaning of words	1	2	3	4
➤ Multiple choice	1	2	3	4
➤ Take notes	1	2	3	4
➤ Other:				

Rate 1 (very difficult), 2 (difficult), 3 (not difficult) to 4 (very easy).

DERRY GIRLS

➤ Follow the story	1	2	3	4
➤ Understand the dialogues and accents	1	2	3	4
➤ Follow the subtitles	1	2	3	4
➤ Remember characters	1	2	3	4
➤ Use English subtitles	1	2	3	4
➤ Understand cultural elements	1	2	3	4
➤ Other:				

Rate 1 (disagree), 2 (neutral), 3 (agree) to 4 (totally agree).

GENERAL THOUGHTS

➤ I've been motivated to come to class	1	2	3	4
➤ The activities done in class were adequate	1	2	3	4
➤ The teacher prepared the lessons	1	2	3	4
➤ The teacher solved my doubts	1	2	3	4
➤ The teacher was clear on her explanations	1	2	3	4
➤ I liked working with a TV show	1	2	3	4
➤ I learnt new vocabulary	1	2	3	4
➤ I learnt about Northern Irish culture	1	2	3	4
➤ I liked the activities done in class	1	2	3	4
➤ I was able to follow and understand the lessons	1	2	3	4
➤ Others:				

Comments (about what you liked, disliked, suggestions, complaints, etc.) FEEDBACK IS APPRECIATED! ☺

7.5 Appendix 5 – Background test results

Part I – TV Watching Habits	Answer A	Answer B	Answer C
Question 1	50%	10%	40%
Q 2	0%	70%	30%
Q 3	40%	20%	40%
Q 4	90%	10%	0%
Q 5	80%	0%	20%
Part II – Northern Ireland			
Q 6	30%	60%	10%
Q 7	20%	50%	30%
Q 8	0%	80%	20%
Q 9	40%	20%	40%
Q 10	90%	0%	10%

Table 2. Background survey results

7.6 Appendix 6 – Pre-test results

Part I: Expressions and idioms	Answer A	Answer B	Answer C
Question 1	100%	0%	0%
Q2	10%	60%	30%
Q3	50%	10%	40%
Q4	50%	50%	0%
Q5	30%	40%	30%
Q6	50%	0	80%
Q7	20%	20%	60%
Q8	0%	30%	60%
Q9	10%	40%	50%
Q10	10%	10%	80%
Part II: Phrasal verbs			
Q1	40%	60%	0%
Q2	70%	0%	30%
Q3	40%	10%	50%
Q4	70%	0%	30%
Q5	20%	60%	20%
Part III: General vocabulary			
Q1	40%	50%	10%

Q2	30%	70%	0%
Q3	10%	0%	90%
Q4	90%	0%	10%
Q5	0%	50%	50%

Table 3. Pre-test results

7.7 Appendix 7 – Post-test results

Part I: Expressions and idioms	Answer A	Answer B	Answer C
Question 1	10%	90%	0%
Q2	70%	10%	20%
Q3	20%	80%	0%
Q4	50%	30%	20%
Q5	40%	50%	10%
Q6	0%	20%	80%
Q7	60%	10%	30%
Q8	60%	0%	40%
Q9	70%	10%	20%
Q10	0%	50%	50%
Part II: Phrasal verbs			
Q1	80%	0%	20%
Q2	70%	10%	20%
Q3	90%	0%	10%
Q4	90%	0%	10%
Q5	20%	70%	10%
Part III: General vocabulary			
Q1	60%	20%	20%
Q2	0%	90%	10%
Q3	20%	20%	60%
Q4	90%	0%	10%
Q5	10%	80%	10%

Table 4. Post-test results.

7.8 Appendix 8 – Pre- and post-test results comparative

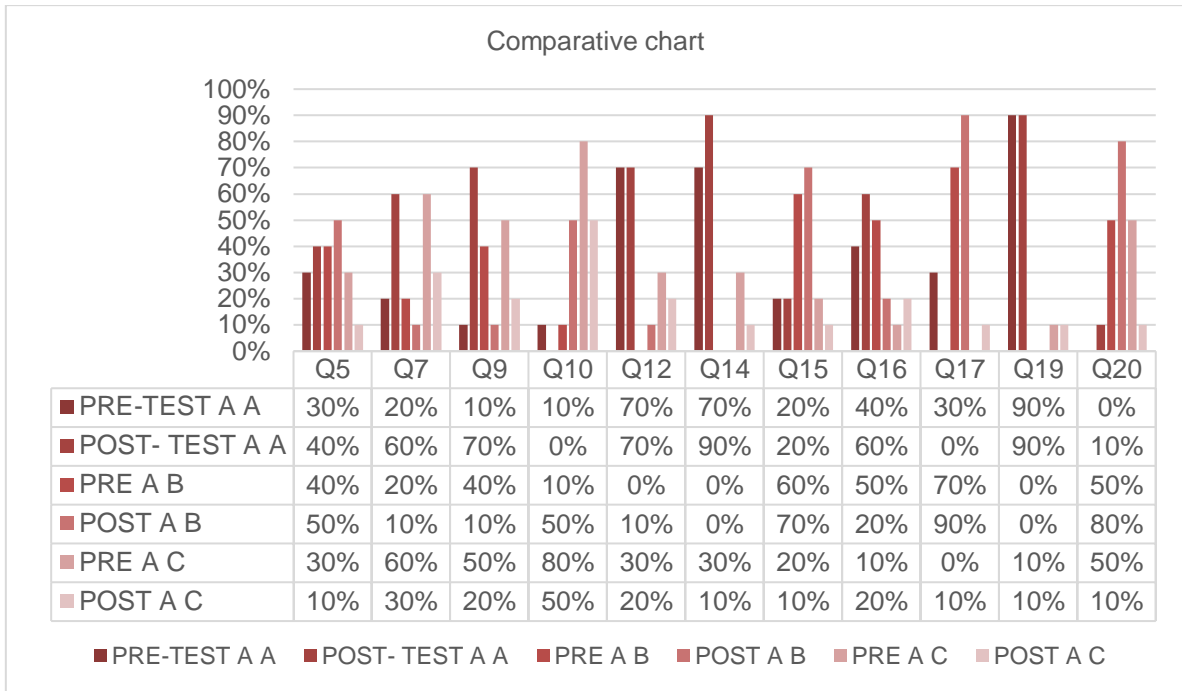


Table 5. Pre and post-test comparative of each answer

	Q5	Q7	Q9	Q10	Q12	Q14	Q15	Q16	Q17	Q19	Q20
Correct answer	A	C	A	C	A	A	B	A	B	A	B