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The Development of the Intercultural Communicative Competence through Sitcoms in an EFL Context

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ABSTRACT

One of the main purposes of language learning is to communicate effectively. With the learning of the English language this aim is even more important since it is the language used to communicate with people from all over the world. These past few decades, this necessity has been reflected in the “English as a Foreign Language” classroom. This new approach has resulted in the integration of cultural knowledge and awareness in EFL. Nevertheless, acquiring factual knowledge of a cultural group is not enough. In order to have a successful communicative act it is imperative to develop the intercultural communicative competence. This competence refers to the ability to act adequately in a communicative situation with people from other cultures. A speaker needs to comprehend that communication is influenced by one’s cultural values and beliefs. This cultural complexity can result in an unsuccessful communication act if the interlocutor does not have the appropriate awareness and knowledge. Different approaches have been explored to develop interculturality in the EFL classroom, such as the use of authentic materials. One of the most popular and accessible authentic material is audio-visual media. Authentic videos are an excellent window to the target culture and language since they were not created with pedagogical purposes. This paper focuses on the use of sitcoms to foster the intercultural communicative competence in the EFL classroom. It puts forward a teaching proposal in which these materials aid the students in their acquisition of the competence. This proposal is divided in four sessions and a final task. In each session various sitcoms will be viewed in the classroom in order to foster interculturality.

Keywords: *Intercultural Communicative competence, English as a foreign language, culture in the classroom, authentic materials, sitcoms*

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1. Introduction

Nowadays, it is established that the English language is the lingua franca of the world (Turkan and Çelik 2007, 18). Therefore, learning this language is essential to communicate with people all over the world, both with English native speakers and non-native speakers. This situation is reflected in the “English as a Foreign Language” classroom where in the past few decades one of the main aims has been to develop communicative competence. Nevertheless, it is not an easy objective. In order to communicate effectively, learning a language with all its linguistic rules is not sufficient. Many scholars have stated that cultural knowledge and awareness of the target language is essential to achieve a satisfactory level of CC (Rivers, 1981; Fenner, 2000; Nguyen, 2017). Cultural competence, then, is essential in the EFL classroom. However, it is argued that cultural knowledge, as simple cultural information such as traditions and art, is not enough for the learner. To reach this goal, it is crucial that the intercultural communicative competence is enhanced in the language classroom.

The intercultural communicative competence is a complex term to define, and even more complex to introduce in the language classroom. Nevertheless, it is of great importance to foster communicative skills. This competence refers to the ability to act adequately in a communicative situation with people from other cultures (Meyer 1991, 137). In order to master this competence, the student must understand the cultural complexity behind every interaction and how every interlocutor will be influenced by its own cultural norms. Once an interlocutor comprehends that communication is influenced by one’s culture, they will be able to adapt their language and manners to have a successful communication act (Choudhury 2013, 20). An interculturally competent speaker will be able to effectively communicate with people from all over the world while critically reflecting on their own culture and others. The importance of the intercultural dimension in the language classroom is reflected in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* where interculturality is considered to be one of the competences essential for communication (Council of Europe 2001, 101).

While there are different approaches towards developing the intercultural competence in the EFL classroom, in this dissertation I will focus on the use of authentic audio-visual media. The educational world has witnessed a technological revolution in the last years, making the introduction of authentic audio-visual media in the classroom easily accessible. These resources include films, news programmes, cartoons, sitcoms, documentaries, and so on. Some authors have suggested that the use of these resources is motivating for students because they provide real exposure to the real world and language (Richards, 2006; Gilmore, 2007; Beresova, 2015). While they help students enhance skills like listening or speaking, these materials are also of significant relevance for the development of the intercultural competence. Video-based instruction gives students direct access to other cultures that are not their own (Fenner, 2000). Sitcoms, in particular, are a great window to the target society since the comedy and the language are deeply influenced by the cultural norms and values of the language being studied (Sherman 2003).

1.1. Justification

As I was able to witness during my training period of this master's degree, teachers ignore this competence. In the textbooks there is a section each unit devoted to cultural knowledge. However, teachers tend to overlook it in order to prioritize the learning of grammar structures and vocabulary. Even if the teachers develop this section of the book in the classroom, culture is not that significant. There is a reading or listening activity related to an English-speaking country to develop these skills or to introduce new vocabulary of the unit. No activities are devoted to the acquirement of cultural knowledge to enhance intercultural skills. Moreover, even though there is a clear lack of this competence in the textbook, teachers do not try to incorporate it in the classroom with their own resources and activities.

Furthermore, videos are used solely to entertain students with no didactic purpose. When teachers have not prepared a lesson plan or have finished a unit, they put a movie on to distract students. If there are no tasks related to the video, students only enhance their listening skill. Even though they are a valuable

cultural source, I observed that they are not viewed with that purpose. This tendency is supported by the lack of research done on the use of audio-visual media for intercultural learning. If teachers are not aware of the cultural advantages of a video such as intercultural training, they will not make the most of it. The few scholars who have ventured into this field, have focused on films (Roell 2010; Chao 2013; Pandey and Ardichvili 2015; Yue 2019). Therefore, there is no research on how sitcoms can be introduced in the classroom to foster the Intercultural Communicative Competence.

1.2. Structure

This dissertation will be divided into two main parts. First, there will be a theoretical background. This section will focus on culture in the classroom and the intercultural competence. Both culture and this competence will be defined. Furthermore, it will be reviewed how this competence has been treated in the EFL classroom in the last decades. I will also analyse various scholars' works on how the introduction of authentic language input materials —more specifically audio-visual media— can enhance the intercultural competence. Namely, I will explore the use of authentic audio-visual media to integrate culture and the intercultural competence in the language classroom. I will also briefly examine the small amount of research that has been carried out on the use of sitcoms in EFL because it will be the genre used in the design of the didactic proposal.

In the second part of this dissertation I will create a didactic proposal in which sitcoms will be used to develop the intercultural communicative competence. This proposal will be designed for students of fourth of ESO. This level was chosen after having closely witnessed the students' knowledge during my training period in *CC Sagrat Cor*. Students were barely aware of the importance of culture, even less of the intercultural competence. Therefore, the proposed activities will be an introduction to interculturality. I will divide the activities in four sessions. Each session will deal with a factor that interferes with intercultural communication that will have been discussed in the literature review. These sessions will focus on intercultural awareness, stereotypes, and the cultural value of language. By the end of these sessions, there will be a final task.

In this task students will prove their acquisition of this competence, and the teacher will assess their progress.

1.3. Main Objectives of the Study

There are two main aims to this dissertation, according to the structure. Firstly, one of the aims will be to reflect the importance of the ICC in language learning in the literature review. I will analyse the importance of this competence in the language classroom to enhance students' communication skills. However, since the ICC is a broad concept that can be introduced in a wide variety of ways in the classroom, I will focus on a specific approach using authentic materials. This approach is related to the second purpose. In this paper I aim at analysing the cultural value of these materials in language training. More specifically, the advantages of using audio-visual resources. The overall objective of the literature review will be to analyse how the ICC can be developed in the foreign language classroom by means of authentic audio-visual materials.

Secondly, the main aim of the second part of this study is to create a teaching proposal to introduce the intercultural communicative competence in the EFL classroom. By the end of this proposal, students should be interculturally aware. This proposal will focus on the developing of this competence with the viewing of sitcoms. The purpose is to prove how these authentic audio-visual resources can be of value in intercultural training. More specifically, there are various aims to be achieved throughout this proposal. To begin with, it aims at bringing awareness of the importance of intercultural competence in real life interactions with people from various cultural backgrounds. Moreover, another purpose is to be able to identify and erase stereotypes. Prejudices towards other cultures can hinder an intercultural communicative situation. This proposal aims at helping students realise this and be more openminded in order to achieve a successful intercultural interaction. Another purpose is to bring awareness of the cultural value of the language by analysing the jokes of sitcoms. In the end, the main purpose of this proposal is for students to be more confident and prepared when interacting with people from other cultures.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Defining culture

The term “culture” has always been difficult to define in a straightforward way. It is a concept that covers a wide variety of characteristics that define society. Various scholars have concluded that it is impossible to arrive at a simple single definition for “culture”. For instance, Claire Kramsch (1996) claims that due to its intricate nature this term will always refer to two different defining features of a community. Therefore, there are two main definitions. To begin with, culture is “the way a social group represents itself and others through its material productions” (2). This first meaning refers to all the products and works that reflect the mechanisms and history of a society such as art, literature, music, film and theatre, amongst others. This factual knowledge is easy to study and interpret and constitutes what it is referred to by some authors as “culture with a capital C” (Hendon, 1980; Chlopek, 2008). Furthermore, there is a second definition to understand the concept of “culture”. As Kramsch (1996) explains, culture also makes reference to the values, beliefs and behaviours shared by members of a community (2). This is a more intricate definition since it encompasses a wide range of elements including “attitudes, assumptions, beliefs, perceptions, norms and values, social relationships, customs, celebrations, rituals, politeness conventions, patterns of interaction and discourse organization, the use of time in communication, and the use of physical space and body language” (Chlopek 2008, 11). These patterns of a society are not as easy to analyse as the fine arts and are referred to as “culture with a small c.” (Hendon, 1980; Chlopek, 2008).

2.2. Culture and Language Teaching

Culture has not always been a significant component in the EFL classroom. It was greatly ignored when the aim of language learning was to foster the linguistic competence (Larzén-Östermark 2008, 527). During that time, the sole purpose of teaching a language was to teach its grammatical structures and lexicon. Culture was not considered relevant and was subordinate to the language (Scarino 2010, 324). Language teachers would only teach “culture with a capital C”: the history, the traditions and the fine arts of the target language culture. It

was pure information. However, this situation changed when the communicative approach started gaining ground in the 1970s. The major aim of language learning changed from learning its structures to mastering the ability to communicate with other speakers and convey one's message clearly (Purba 2011, 46). However, the knowledge of information and how to share it is not enough for this purpose. To achieve a successful act of communication "the exchange of information is dependent upon understanding how what one says or writes will be perceived and interpreted in another cultural context" (Byram 1997, 3). The speaker needs to be able to comprehend and respect the cultural norms of the other for the interaction to be successful and civil.

In order to achieve this deeper understanding of the other and communicate properly, students "need to be aware, for example, of the culturally appropriate ways to address people, express gratitude, make requests, and agree or disagree with someone" (Choudhury 2013, 20). These trivial and common situations that students will encounter in real life are deeply connected to the cultural norms of a society. As Stern (1997) emphasizes, "we cannot teach a language for long without coming face to face with social context factors which have bearing on language and language learning" (191). Therefore, with this shift, linguists realised that it was essential to incorporate culture in the classroom:

Culture and communication are inseparable because culture not only dictates who talks to whom, about what, and how the communication proceeds, it also helps to determine how people encode messages, the meanings they have for messages, and the conditions and circumstances under which various messages may or may not be sent, noticed, or interpreted. In fact, our entire repertory of communicative behaviours is dependent largely on the culture in which we have been raised. Culture, consequently, is the foundation of communication. (Samovar, Porter, and Jain 1981, 24).

Scholars started to be aware that foreign language students must become culturally competent to communicate accurately. Proper communication cannot exist without cultural knowledge. If students are not exposed to the basics of the target culture, they will end up miscommunicating with native speakers. As Damar (2013) suggests, "many EFL learners do not develop good language skills because of unawareness about other cultures' assumptions, values and beliefs at the discourse level, and they experience pragmatic failures in international

settings” (752). If students are to talk with people from other cultures, they should know the basics of their codes of behaviour (Hendon 1980, 192). Otherwise, the communicative situation will be incomplete.

Furthermore, this change in emphasis of the competences showed that learning simple factual knowledge of the target culture was not enough anymore. Traditionally, teaching culture had focused on teaching traditions and arts that define the target society. Textbooks presented a series of texts about the foreign language “with the aim of learning and accepting facts” (Fenner 2000, 143). Even now, teachers tend to simply use these materials they are provided with “due to factors like shortage of time, lack of cultural knowledge, or lack of training as to which aspects of culture to teach” (Yeganeh and Raeesi 2015, 535). With this approach of teaching culture, the division between cultural knowledge and language is widened since they keep being considered two distinct elements. Students do not realise how culture impacts their language and communication skills. In addition, this teaching methodology helps promoting the stereotyping of other societies. As Rivers (1981) argues, students are not encouraged to develop their critical thinking and discuss the implications of the cultural elements they are being introduced to (315). In fact, they are only asked to accept facts as if these were the only truth. By doing so, teachers are unconsciously creating and perpetuating stereotypes and misconceptions about other cultures (315). Rivers states that this opportunity of learning about another culture should be “a liberating experience in that students are encouraged to develop tolerance of other viewpoints and other forms of behaviour” (318).

Another problem that arises if culture is not approached correctly in the language classroom is what Choudhury (2013) calls “linguistic imperialism” (20). If students are constantly exposed to the target cultures in EFL they will lose their own culture and identity. It is imperative that teachers take into account the students’ home culture when introducing students to other cultures. If not, students who are still trying to find their own identity might embrace these cultures and reject their own or lose confidence in their values. Rivers (1981) also acknowledges this issue. When he clarifies that learning a culture should be “a liberating experience”, he also highlights the importance of approaching these

new cultural norms “while understanding better those of their own society or cultural group” (318). Therefore, these authors show that the traditional approach to culture in the foreign language classroom raises various issues instead of improving the communicative competence.

As a result of this situation, scholars have studied more favourable methods of addressing culture in EFL. The traditional approach ignored the importance of culture to enhance the communication skills of the student. Even though learning cultural information is still essential, it is more important that these learners foster their cultural awareness and critical thinking. In order to achieve this goal, both descriptions of culture —culture with capital C and small c— should be integrated in the classroom. Moreover, several authors agree that it is essential that students learn about the target cultures while paying special attention to their own in order to not undermine their own cultural identity (Fenner 2000; Yeganeh and Raeesi 2015; Wolf and Tasker 2018). As Nguyen (2017) states, with this approach students can “develop their ability to reflect, self-reflect, argue and construct their own critical views of different cultural issues and their cultural identity, that help building their tolerance and harmony with themselves, with other people and cultures” (150). By fostering their critical views and awareness, students would be able to further understand other cultural norms and their own.

More importantly, this method to introduce culture in language teaching would be advantageous to develop the communicative competence with people from all over the world. As Scarino (2010) observes it would help the learner to realise that culture shapes the contextual framework in which people communicate (324). Everyone is subconsciously influenced by their own culture when they are communicating with others. Becoming aware of this fact, aids the students at developing their intercultural capability. The intercultural communicative competence is considered to be one of the basic elements necessary to accomplish a satisfying communicative function of the language, along with “grammatical competence, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence” (Mahbouba 2008, 33). The introduction of culture in the EFL classroom to

improve students' communication skills should aim at fostering the Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC).

2.3. The Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC)

The Intercultural Communicative Competence is considered to be the 'fifth skill' of a language (Mao 2009, 145). Just like the term "culture", this competence is a complex concept that has been defined and analysed by various scholars. Meyer (1991) defines this competence as "the ability of a person to behave adequately and in a flexible manner when confronted with actions, attitudes and expectations of foreign languages" (137). In order to master this adequacy, Meyer explains that it is imperative that the speaker does not reject their self-identity of their own culture (137). The importance of the knowledge of one's own culture is supported by other authors like Michael Byram (1997) who states that "the mutual perceptions of the social identities of the interlocutors is a determining factor in the interaction" (32). It is from this self-understanding that the speaker should be able to understand and respect other cultures. Furthermore, this competence will allow the speaker to handle any miscommunication problems that may arise in communicative situations with speakers from other cultures in a foreign language.

One of the most important authors in this field of study is Michael Byram. In one of his works, he creates a model of intercultural communication where he provides the different qualities and factors that a speaker should have in order to be considered an 'Intercultural Speaker'. According to him, there are four factors to take into consideration in intercultural communication: skills, attitudes, education, and knowledge (1997, 34):

- To begin with, there is the education of the intercultural speaker. This factor refers to the political education that a speaker receives and that enhances their critical cultural awareness (34). This factor is of vital importance since it will be present in all the other factors.
- Secondly, there are the attitudes of the speaker. With this factor, Byram is referring to the behaviour of the interlocutor "towards people who are perceived as different in respect of the cultural meanings, beliefs and behaviours they exhibit" (34). Byram explains that one should not always be

positive and accepting of every single aspect of other cultures, since this attitude could drive the speaker to create prejudices. While it is important that the speaker is open and ready to receive other beliefs and behaviours, it is also imperative that he or she questions these unexplored elements (34). The interlocutor must be able to interpret and judge other cultures without being biased. In order to achieve so, it is important that “there is an awareness about one’s own values” (35). Therefore, according to Byram, the perfect attitude of an intercultural speaker is one that is accepting but also capable of critically analysing other cultures.

- The third factor that should be fostered is knowledge. Byram divides it into two different categories. Firstly, there is the knowledge about social groups and their cultures both in one’s own country and of the interlocutor’s country (35). The first category is primarily acquired through the process of socialisation and formal education. This knowledge of our own culture is “often dominated by the notion of a ‘national’ culture and identity” (35). However, when an individual acquires this type of knowledge about another country it is usually ‘relational’. This knowledge will be presented in comparison to one’s own discourse, meaning that there is a high chance that it will be tainted with prejudice and stereotypes (36). The second category is more complicated to achieve. This category refers to the knowledge of the process of interaction. For the intercultural communication to be successful, the speaker has to be aware of their own processes and to know how to act in various circumstances (36).
- Lastly, Byram refers to the skills of the speaker. This factor is closely related to the factors that have been previously mentioned. Intercultural speakers should have two different sets of skills. To begin with, they have to be able to interpret and relate the information and the knowledge that they receive (37). Secondly, they must have the skill of discovery which will allow them to build up specific knowledge in situations that may be new to them (38).

Therefore, if all these factors are present, one will be able to successfully interact in intercultural situations. If a speaker masters this competence, he or she will occupy a “third place” in intercultural communicative situations

(Choudhury 2013, 23). From this “third place” one is able to comprehend that everybody sees the world in a different way (23). The interlocutor will “overcome both linguistic and cultural barriers they may encounter” (Ho 2009, 72). A speaker who is interculturally competent occupies this “third place” and is able to successfully interact with people from all types of cultural groups.

2.3.1. The ICC in the Educational Legal Framework

The significance of the intercultural communicative competence is reflected on the legal framework of education. More specifically, the value of this competence is shown in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (Council of Europe, 2001). In this document, it is explained that intercultural awareness and the skills that accompany it are essential to communicate (43). Therefore, to become plurilingual, interculturality must be fostered. Furthermore, interculturality is present in the general competences that a learner must acquire to enhance their communication (101). To begin with, it can be found in the competence ‘declarative knowledge’ or ‘*savoir*’ (101). This competence refers to both empirical and academic knowledge, and it is considered crucial for communicative situations to occur (11). Within this competence, one of the factors to take into account is ‘intercultural awareness’:

Knowledge, awareness and understanding of the relation (similarities and distinctive differences) between the ‘world of origin’ and the ‘world of the target community’ produce an intercultural awareness. It is, of course, important to note that intercultural awareness includes an awareness of regional and social diversity in both worlds. It is also enriched by awareness of a wider range of cultures than those carried by the learner’s L1 and L2. This wider awareness helps to place both in context. In addition to objective knowledge, intercultural awareness covers an awareness of how each community appears from the perspective of the other, often in the form of national stereotypes. (103)

Therefore, this sub-competence mainly refers to the knowledge from one’s own culture and the target culture that the learner must obtain in order to perform successfully in communicative situations.

In the CEFR, interculturality is also present in another general competence: ‘skills and know-how’ or ‘*savoir-faire*’ (104). This competence deals with the aforementioned knowledge and how to put it into practice. The segment refers to

intercultural awareness and is titled 'Intercultural skills and know-how' (104). It is divided into four skills. These skills refer to the learner's abilities to connect the different cultures, to use strategies for communication with speakers from other cultures, to become a cultural intermediary, and to overcome stereotypes.

In the Spanish legal framework, the term 'interculturality' is also present. To begin with, in the *Boletín Oficial del Estado* (Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte, 2015) the intercultural competence is one of the competences essential in the learning of a foreign language (254). This competence is first mentioned in relation to the learner's need to be respectful and value other people's cultures, beliefs and values (253-254). Furthermore, intercultural communication is one of the contents to develop in the classroom in the four segments of the academic curriculum of EFL (269-276). In the segment, referred to the production of oral and written texts, this competence is also considered in the evaluation criteria (269, 270, 275, 276). The students are expected to be able to introduce this competence in their speech and written words. They have to adjust their words to the context and to overcome any cultural barriers they may encounter (269, 270, 275, 276).

Equally, in the *Butlletí Oficial de les Illes Balears* (CAIB, 2015), interculturality plays a big role in EFL. In the section devoted to L1, interculturality is once again mentioned as a necessity to achieve a satisfactory communication (25151). Moreover, one of the specific objectives of the subject is to develop interculturality (25240). However, unlike the BOE (Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte, 2015), this document does not consider the intercultural competence as a specific content to be worked on in the classroom, nor a competence that should be evaluated. In conclusion, even though the importance of this competence varies within the different documents, its presence in the educational legal framework demonstrates its significance in EFL.

2.3.2. The ICC in Language Teaching

The fact that English is the lingua franca (Turkan and Çelik 2007, 18) means that speakers will use this language to communicate with people from other cultures. English has become the language of interaction with both English native speakers

and speakers from other countries. For this reason, the ICC “is increasingly being promoted as a way to develop learners’ ability to negotiate meanings across languages and cultures and prepare them for living in a multicultural world” (Ho 2009, 63). Several authors (Chlopek 2008; Ho 2009; Scarino 2010) have emphasised the significance of developing the ICC in the English language classroom to successfully communicate in intercultural situations. As Chlopek (2008) suggests, “successful international communication is reason enough to introduce the intercultural approach into EFL classrooms” (12). Once it has been developed, the students will be capable of overcoming any cultural and linguistic barriers they encounter in future communicative situations. For this purpose, however, it is not enough to learn factual cultural knowledge. Choudhury (2013) underlines that this competence “is not so much about knowledge as about skills” (23). He explains that with the introduction of this competence students should be encouraged to not accept a fact without questioning it, to listen to the others and their values, to negotiate, and to avoid stereotyping (23). Students will be able to communicate only when they have internalised these skills.

It is essential to bear in mind that all students are different and have contrasting cultural perspectives. Some may have their own culture more defined than others. Consequently, “it becomes almost impossible to expect students to grow interculturally at the same rate” (Moeller and Nugent 2014, 5). Some learners may have already developed prejudices which will make the understanding of other cultures more arduous. Nevertheless, it is the teacher’s responsibility to ensure that all students are making an effort to become aware of other cultures, even if they don’t agree with these (Chlopek 2008, 18). Even if some students are slower, they should all be aware of the importance of the Intercultural Communicate Competence for successful communication. It is meaningful to develop this competence in the classroom in order to achieve a successful international communication, even if students do so at different speeds.

As it is postulated in the skills developed by Choudhury (2013, 23), if this competence is developed properly it can help students to not accept the

perpetuated hegemonic discourse and to promote their own self-identity without being shaped by others. Teaching this competence will “permit learners to actively construct their own image of cultural phenomena” (Marczak 2010, 9). Introducing this competence in the classroom aims at helping students to raise awareness against intolerance and prejudice. Intercultural communication can be negatively affected by stereotypes since “the selectivity in our perception and interpretation produced by stereotypes and prejudice induces distortion and defensive behaviours” (Samovar, Porter, and Jain 1981, 126). Negative stereotypes can even drive the student to prevent intercultural contact with interlocutors that are stereotyped (126). It is crucial, then, to encourage students to question the different discourses they are being introduced to and to eradicate all preconceived prejudices in order to communicate properly. Therefore, one of the aims of ICC should be to “sow the seeds of tolerance, acceptance, understanding, and respect.” (Chlopek 2008, 12). When this competence is bolstered in the classroom and students start to question what they are told, it can help to eliminate stereotypes and to promote respect towards other cultures. They need to be encouraged to question but also to have positive attitudes towards people from diverse cultures and communities (Byram and Morgan 1994, 7). If this is achieved, the intercultural communication will be more effortless.

Furthermore, when teaching from an intercultural perspective, it is essential that teachers ensure that students do not neglect their own culture. As Marczak (2010) comments, the term ‘intercultural’ itself illustrates that this competence will deal with various cultures, not only the target culture (3). Intercultural teaching should be introduced in language teaching “without attempting to mimic the native speaker model of cultural behaviour” (6). It is important that in the classroom the teacher does not reject the students’ own culture in favour of the target culture. If students are only exposed to the target culture, they may adopt these new values as their own. An intercultural approach, therefore, “involves developing in learners’ critical cultural awareness of their own culturally-shaped world view and behaviours as well as the skills and attitudes to understand and successfully interact with people from other cultures” (Ho 2009, 63). Therefore, in the classroom the activities to develop the ICC should not only

be aimed at the target culture. Teachers should design activities that also deal with the home culture of the students.

Different scholars have reiterated that the intercultural communicative competence needs to be approached by means of comparison (Kramsch 1996; Ho 2009; Marczak 2010; Scarino 2010). The intercultural approach should deal with one's own culture and the target culture. In the end, the learner should be able to stand between cultures. As Meyer (1991) remarks, "the learner is able to explain cultural differences between his own and the foreign cultures because he can make use of information he has acquired concerning his and the foreign countries" (142). Including one's culture is not only important for students to not ignore their own values and belief. It is also important for students to be encouraged to self-reflect "on the influence of their own culture on their language use in interaction with people from other cultures" (Ho 2009, 66). If they understand how the language mechanisms are influenced by their own values and behaviours, their intercultural interaction will improve considerably. The interlocutor will be able to comprehend that the words from other speakers are also influenced by their cultural values. This awareness will be the starting point for the student to respect and understand the other.

2.3.3. Approaches to Introduce the ICC in the Classroom

The ICC is such a complex concept that there is not a definite way to approach it in the language classroom. Regardless of its complexity, it should not be ignored. This competence "should be fostered at every stage of the English language learning experience" (Turkan and Çelik 2007, 24). Even though most authors focus on culture in the classroom, various scholars have specifically studied the introduction of this competence and proposed different strategies and materials to foster it. For instance, Moeller and Nugent (2014) offer five different intercultural activities that can be carried out in the foreign language classroom. These activities include a "*cultura* online blog exchange" (9) and the study of proverbs (11), amongst others. However, I want to highlight one idea that I consider quite valuable. They propose that students document their transformation collectively (10). The idea is that at the beginning of a cultural unit

the students share their preconceived ideas about the topic. At the end, they go back to these ideas and reflect on what they have learnt (11). The authors state that this type of activity is essential “to provide evidence of growth to students so that they can see the benefits of the intercultural process.” (10). This strategy is highly suitable to help students realise the importance of what is being developed in class. In this case, the intercultural competence. Furthermore, students will be able to become more self-aware and change possible negative attitudes that promote stereotyping.

Furthermore, several authors have not only put forward intercultural approaches, but they have also implemented these in the language classroom to analyse the results. In a case study carried out by Fernando Gómez in 2018, he worked on this competence by means of international news. In his study, four Colombian university EFL students, with an intermediate English proficiency level, were exposed to various authentic international news with controversial cultural issues (192). They had to read these texts by themselves and come to the scheduled sessions —four in total— with reactions to these pieces of news. (193). As Fernando explains, “through the analysis of different news, they started to understand and discuss cultural ideologies, values, and beliefs and gradually became more reflective intercultural learners” (193). In his findings, he realised that these students started to develop this competence thanks to these documents. They gained “new cultural knowledge about contentious viewpoints and behaviors related to race, segregation, domination, and religion as conceived by other groups different from their own cultural environment” (196). Therefore, with his study, Fernando proved that authentic materials such as international news are valuable for ICC.

In another article written by Marchis, Ciascai, and Saial (2008), they propose various activities with multimedia. By using these materials, the authors claim that students also develop their media literacy (41). While the authors do not explicitly claim that these activities have been designed for the language classroom, they can easily be introduced in language learning. The first activity focuses on the analysis of a picture to formulate the intercultural messages (41). Students will realise that different people perceive different messages, which will help to

develop their understanding. Even though this activity is simple, it is a great introductory approach to this competence for the students. The second and third activities are similar but with different types of media: one with a picture and the other with a short film. The students are shown this media and are asked to reflect on it and to write a short dialogue related to these materials (42-43). With this approach, the students will be able to identify the difficulties of thinking from another cultural perspective and will also understand other's point of views. The authors carry out these activities in a real school classroom in Portugal and in a university in Romania (43-46). They conclude that students have proved to have a good knowledge of intercultural issues and enjoyed working with different media (47). Therefore, there are various ways in which the ICC can be approached in the language classroom. However, for the purpose of this dissertation I will focus on the intercultural approaches with audio-visual media like this last one.

2.4. The Use of Authentic Audio-visual Input in the Language Classroom

In language teaching, textbooks are not the only source of input that can be used. Teachers have a wide variety of materials available that they can take advantage of to improve their student's language proficiency. One of the most popular and successful materials in the classroom is audio-visual input. These materials "are shown as an effective method in teaching English language as a foreign language" (Bajmari and Ismaili 2016, 502). For years, videos have been introduced in the language classroom. Back in the 20th century, these materials proved to be beneficial since they "add a new dimension to the students' experience of other places, capturing sounds, sights, and the nonverbal behaviour of the speakers of the language" (Melvin and Stout 1987, 52). In recent years, the development of technology has made it possible to introduce various audio-visual materials in the language classroom (Bahrani and Shu Sim 2012, 56). Most classrooms are equipped with computers and interactive whiteboards which allow teachers to easily access these materials and work with them in the classroom.

Due to this wide range of audio-visual media that teachers have access to, it is important that they understand the distinction between the types of videos that

can be used. Principally, there are two main types: videos that have been designed with the sole objective of language teaching and authentic videos. When using videos created with pedagogical purposes, the learner is not exposed to the real target language and culture. As Gilmore (2007) explains, by using textbooks as an example, adapted materials are “a poor representation of the real thing” (98). The grammar and vocabulary of these materials are readjusted to accommodate the students’ knowledge, needs and level. However, this adaptation can be disadvantageous since it does not prepare students for the real world. Authentic audio-visual materials, on the other hand, are all those videos “published in contexts designed specifically for native-speaker consumption, with no thought given to non-native accessibility” (Beresova 2014, 196). These videos were produced for the entertainment of native speakers. If there is an authentic video input, the students are shown the true language and culture in a setting that has not been modified for them.

The introduction of authentic video materials can be challenging. To begin with, it can be laborious and time-consuming for teachers to find the perfect video for their lesson. As Hart (1992) explains, these materials “are often difficult to use in class — the language is colloquial, dense and rapidly paced, the programs are of unsuitable length for class study, and the subject matter does not always sustain the interest of teenage language learners” (1). Therefore, even though new technologies have made the task of finding videos easier, it is still difficult to find the most suitable one for your students. If the language learner finds the language too difficult or that it adds knowledge above their capacity, this resource might not aid the student’s learning at all (Chung and Huang 1998, 561). When students are not capable of deciphering the video they are exposed to, it can “lead them to feel frustrated, confused, and more importantly, demotivated” (Guariento and Morley 2001, 348).

This source that is being introduced to break from the monotony of the textbook and to bring authentic language in the classroom, can be extremely negative for the learner if it is not developed properly. When the student is not able to understand the video, their motivation will decrease. They will consider that the goal of speaking like native speakers and understanding them is way too

demanding. These videos, then, will create a barrier between the learner and the model of language perfection (Hart 1992, 4). Finally, “relying too much on these audio-visual aids and resources during teaching can lead to monotony and boredom” (Mathew and Alidmat 2013, 91). Even though this kind of input may seem innovative and motivating, it is crucial that teachers do not completely depend on it. Students who are constantly exposed to videos, will end up getting bored and demotivated. All in all, the use of authentic video materials can be harmful if they are not worked correctly.

Nevertheless, the advantages of these materials in language teaching outweigh the disadvantages. If these resources are introduced and treated correctly, the students can deeply benefit from them. Firstly, authentic video is a rich source of language (Sherman 2003, 2). Students will be exposed to different accents, English varieties, lexis, grammar, and discourses (2). This variety of authentic language items cannot be taught through a textbook that has been adapted to teach specific grammar points and vocabulary. Moreover, if the videos are contemporary, it can teach them up-to-date linguistic components (2). All these language items offered, will be useful for communicative situations outside the classroom with native speakers. A second advantage is that using authentic materials can be motivating for the student since they are experiencing the language through stimulating materials (Tomalin and Stempleski 1993, 3). When using this alternative approach, we “relieve students from the boredom of the traditional class language drills” (Chung and Huang 1998, 554). Moreover, learners can be motivated since they are learning the ‘real’ language from an authentic source (Guariento and Morley 2001, 347). To keep this motivation, it is crucial that the teacher chooses the materials and carries out the activities carefully, so students are not demotivated with the difficulty.

Furthermore, authentic video is a *stimulus* in the classroom. This is very important since these resources can lead to a wide range of activities in the language classroom. These “can be used for discussions, for writing assignments, as inputs for projects or the study of other subjects” (Sherman 2003, 3). The teacher can create diverse activities that are suitable for the students’ level as not to demotivate them. Moreover, videos can foster all

language skills (Bajmari and Ismaili 2016, 503). It may be believed that out of all the language skills, viewing videos only benefits the hearing skill. However, as Abdel Gawad Mekheimer (2011) explains, “videos further offer a variety of stimuli for viewing comprehension, listening comprehension and reading comprehension” (6). It can stimulate reading if it is played with subtitles. Moreover, these can also foster production skills. The designed tasks that the teacher may propose related to the materials can range from oral activities to written ones. Overall, viewing a video in the language classroom should not be a passive task. It must be developed suitably in order to not demotivate students and to foster all skills.

One of the most important advantages is that students will have direct access to the target language and culture (Melvin and Stout 1987, 52). Videos are a rich source of cultural information since they are created by native speakers for their community. These resources are where “the learner encounters language as culture” (Fenner 2000, 147). In most cases, it is the closest that students will be able to experience the real target culture and language in the classroom. Videos can be a window to the “culture with a small c” (Sherman 2003, 2). As it was previously mentioned in this paper, introducing this part of culture can be difficult. Most textbooks and teachers only focus on cultural knowledge related to “culture with a big C”. However, videos are ideal since they “illustrate many aspects of the target culture, including culturally based practices and beliefs and both linguistic and non-linguistic behaviour” (Richards 2001, 253). These materials allow students to acquire knowledge that cannot be adapted into a textbook.

The great availability of videos allows teachers to choose different videos for the many aspects related to culture that they want to cover in class (Richards 2001, 253). They can choose videos that deal with racism, gender, or nationality amongst others. It is crucial, however, that these videos are not used as a time-filler. If we want students to increase their cultural awareness with these resources, we must engage students in activities. Purba (2011), for instance, proposes that students discuss the cultural norms and behaviours and what these may say about the cultural values (53). Due to the authentic video’s cultural richness, several scholars have explored its use in the language classroom to

improve cultural knowledge and awareness (Herron et al. 2000; Bueno 2009; Song 2013; Akyüz et al. 2017).

This closer contact with the target culture, will also benefit the student's communicative skills. The students have access to a language with strong cultural influence. Through the activities, students are encouraged to use this "new language authentically themselves, to communicate meaning in meaningful situations rather than for demonstrating knowledge" (Melvin and Stout 1987, 46). In this sense, video can be used as an approach for the development of the Intercultural Communicative Competence. As Marczak (2010) observes, applying these resources to intercultural teaching "permits multi-sensory teaching, provides a closer alternative to real-life experience, and helps demonstrate a variety of opinions" (11). New technologies have made accessible endless videos that can deal with different types of intercultural themes. Teachers should take advantage and design activities that will help to foster this competence. Numerous scholars have explored the use of these materials for the development of the ICC. For instance, as Purba (2011) proposes, students could be encouraged to discuss the behaviours they observe and compare these to their own cultural behaviours (51). After this analysis, students "determine strategies for effective communication in the target language" (52). Therefore, if it is approached correctly, videos can be a rich source for the ICC because students are dealing with the authentic target culture and language.

2.5. The Use of Authentic Video for Intercultural Teaching

Despite the cultural richness of authentic audio-visual aids, not many scholars have explored the success of these materials in the paradigm of interculturality. However, it is not totally unexplored. For instance, Roell (2010) studied the advantages of using films for intercultural training. She explains that films can be excellent sources because they deal with different intercultural themes and even though they "cannot substitute for actual interaction with members of other cultures, they can provide useful preparation for those encounters by fostering understanding and developing sensitivity" (3). These themes include topics related to culture representation (3) and patterns of behaviour (4). Therefore, as

she explains, although it is not as advantageous as actual intercultural communication with other interlocutors, a film is a perfect item to develop this competence. With her article, she proves that an easily available material like a film is a very rich source for the intercultural competence. Film is the most popular authentic audio-visual aid to develop interculturality amongst scholars (Roell 2010; Chao 2013; Pandey and Ardichvili 2015; Yue 2019). Some authors have carried out studies to analyse the success of these materials in a real educational context.

For instance, Pandey and Ardichvili (2015), analysed the benefits of this tool to teach intercultural concepts in universities in the United States and India. They focused their research on the film *Outsourced* (2006). They considered that it was a useful example of intercultural differences between the countries that participated in this research (40). Even though the method differed between universities, all the participants had to take notes and hold discussions about the movie (40-41). During the collection of data, the researchers analysed which themes had arisen from these activities and found that there were seven themes in common (41). The themes identified were: “awareness of cross-cultural differences, cultural stereotypes, culture shock and cultural adaptation process, high-context and low-context cultures, personal space and time orientation, cultural intelligence and intercultural competence, and effectiveness of the film in teaching cross-cultural concepts” (42). Therefore, with just one movie the researches helped students realise the cultural issues that were depicted. The students were able to identify the different topics, which would be beneficial for their interculturality in the future. Therefore, with their study, it is shown that film can be a useful resource to encourage students to discuss complex intercultural themes.

Another researcher, Yue (2019), also carried out a case study to analyse the effects of film in the language classroom in terms of interculturality. He carried out his research in China, with non-English major undergraduate students. He selected the Disney movie *Mulan* because it portrayed a Chinese folktale and their culture from a foreign perspective (199). This is an interesting approach, since one of the foundations of the ICC is the comparison between one’s own

culture and the target one (Byram 1997, 32). With this movie, these students were presented with norms and values of their own culture, but with distorted representations due to the creators of the film being foreign. Therefore, when analysing the movie and these distortions, the students would most likely find it easier since it is familiar to them. The students were asked “to write about the film’s plot, their understanding of the film, and compare Disney version of Mulan with its Chinese counterpart” (Yue 2019, 199-200). This comparison is essential in intercultural learning. In the end, Yue agrees that films with diverse cultural elements are a beneficial tool for ICC (202). All in all, with this article he shows that allowing students to compare this tool with their own culture is crucial for the development of ICC.

Nevertheless, even though film is the most popular audio-visual resource, it is not the only one that can be used in the language classroom to improve intercultural skills. Other authors have explored the advantages of using authentic materials such as TV commercials. In his study, Velasco (2017) carried out three experiments. In the first activity, the only one with authentic video, he exposed 23 Japanese students to a Chinese detergent ad that had caused controversy and a video of American audience reacting to it. At the end of the viewing, they had to discuss these videos in small groups (165). The conclusion of this study was that intercultural activities were positively valued by the students in English language classes. These activities helped them “with opening the lines of communication cross-culturally while providing crucial opportunities to reflect on personal thought and opinions on a variety of topics” (168). They thoroughly enjoyed it and understood the impact that these activities had on their communicative skills.

2.6. Sitcoms and Intercultural Teaching

Despite the benefits that arise from using authentic audio-visual materials in the classroom for intercultural teaching, there are various materials that have been barely explored. For example, the TV series. These resources are as easy to access as films and TV advertisements thanks to new technologies and video-on-demand services. Moreover, the teacher has a wide range of programmes to

choose from to make it more suitable for the lesson and his or her students' level. There are different types of TV series that could be useful such as soap operas, sitcoms, crime series, sports programmes... However, for the purpose of this dissertation, I will focus on sitcoms or situation comedies. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* defines sitcoms as:

Situation comedy, also called sitcom, radio or television comedy series that involves a continuing cast of characters in a succession of episodes. Often the characters are markedly different types thrown together by circumstance and occupying a shared environment such as an apartment building or workplace. Sitcoms are typically half an hour in length; they are either taped in front of a studio audience or employ canned applause, and they are marked by verbal sparring and rapidly resolved conflicts. (Encyclopaedia Britannica 2013).

With this material, students will be motivated both because of the use of video and because of the entertaining nature of sitcoms. Moreover, the short length of the episodes makes the viewing in classroom easier than of a full movie. It also allows teachers to carry out activities and discussions in the same session the viewing. Due to these reasons, sitcoms appear to be a suitable material for the language classroom that teachers have forgotten.

Nevertheless, there are reasons as to why teachers avoid the use of sitcoms in the language classroom. To begin with, the language may be too difficult for students. As Sherman (2003) argues, "comedy plots are often complicated; the language, even if standard, is often fast, plays with words and puns, dance about between registers, using formality and informality to exaggerate situations, and uses idioms, colloquialisms and slang" (38-39). When dealing with an authentic text such as a sitcom, the language tends to be difficult for students since it has not been adapted. As it was previously stated in this dissertation, if the audio-visual resource is too difficult the student may feel demotivated (Guariento and Morley 2001, 348). In a comedy, this situation is enhanced because the language relies heavily on jokes, wordplays and puns. If the students are not able to comprehend this language, they will not make the connections and "when the laughter comes they are cruelly excluded" (Sherman 2003, 39).

In addition to this disadvantage, the comedy in sitcoms is linked to the culture of the community (Leah 2014, 97) which will make its understanding even more

arduous. The language used is culturally rich and the jokes and puns are full of cultural references, which makes the understanding almost impossible if the student does not have knowledge of the target culture. As Sherman (2003) explains, “we laugh because we are in the know when a brief cultural reference taps a pool of knowledge” (38). When a learner has restricted cultural knowledge, he will feel even more excluded from the narrative. For instance, a British sitcom “might portray regional differences throughout the UK, the British class system, family issues, religion, race and ethnicity, gender issues, social issues, politics and numerous others” (Leah 2014, 97). If students are not familiarised with the British culture, all comedic meaning will get lost. Nevertheless, the fact that sitcoms are full of cultural references can be advantageous, especially in intercultural teaching. It is an opportunity for “learners [to] encounter various customs, attitudes, beliefs and ways of life; furthermore, they can compare and contrast the culture of English-speaking countries with the culture of their mother tongue” (98). Therefore, teachers should not be discouraged to use sitcoms. They must be cautious and prepare the students beforehand with suitable tasks. If they achieve to do so, “getting the joke creates a sense of social triumph” (Sherman 2003, 39) that will motivate the learner.

Despite these difficulties, the use of sitcoms in the language classroom is not totally unexplored. For instance, Waedaoh and Sinwongsuwat (2018) carried out a study in which they used the genre of situational comedies to enhance language learners’ conversation abilities by means of CA-instruction (124). The researchers faced some difficulties due to the complexity of the language and cultural norms (127-128). Nevertheless, sitcoms boosted learners’ conversation abilities, grammar, appropriacy, and motivation since they could relate the language learnt to the real world (127). They conclude that “sitcoms could provide a rich resource for acquiring spoken language features (127). In a similar study conducted by Martínez and Fernández (2008), they tried to demonstrate how sitcoms such as *Friends* could improve learners’ communicative competence by explaining the generation of humour (31). Their results also suggested that the use of these materials motivated students and helped them to understand the strategies used in communication (41).

A different approach would be the one used in Saeedi and Biri's study (2016). They explored the use of sitcoms for grammar instruction, namely the introduction of conditional sentences (18). They concluded that this approach improved the participants' learning of the conditional sentences significantly (30) and that students held favourable attitudes to this approach (33). Therefore, the use of sitcoms can be favourable in the language classroom and should be encouraged. Nevertheless, these studies focus on the communication skill and grammar. Sitcoms are a valuable cultural source (Leah 2014, 97), but the value of this resources has not been fully exploited yet. No research has been carried out about their impact in an intercultural lesson.

3. Teaching Proposal

A teaching proposal has been designed considering all the information aforementioned in this dissertation. The main purpose of this proposal is to foster the Intercultural Communicative Competence in the EFL classroom with the aid of sitcoms. This teaching proposal is aimed at students of Secondary Education, more specifically of 4th of ESO. These activities are considered to be adequate for the language proficiency of students at that level. These have been designed for small groups of 13-15 students since English classes are generally divided into groups of this size. Furthermore, there will be numerous class discussions that would be arduous to carry out with many students. They will be exposed to the cultural nuances that influence language and will explore how culture impacts communicative experiences with the other. This teaching proposal consists of four sessions in which different ICC factors will be introduced and fostered in order to enhance the students' awareness and communicative skills. During these sessions, the various activities and tasks will be divided into: pre-viewing, viewing, and post-viewing activities. These will mainly focus on the enhancement of the ICC, but other skills and competences will also be developed. The competences that will be taken into considered are the key competences defined in the BOE (Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte 2015, 4). Lastly, a final task will be created in which all the contents developed throughout these sessions will be put into practice and assessed.

In the following section of this paper, I will explain the teaching proposal designed in detail. I will expand on the activities/tasks, the materials chosen and created, and the objectives to be achieved. I will also explain how each session is of significance in the paradigm of interculturality and the expected results. These sessions have been designed with the intention of promoting a different aspect related to interculturality in each one and they are created to last for 55 minutes. However, this is relative to the students and the pace at which they assimilate this new knowledge. It is crucial to let students learn at their own pace, and not rush them since this will be the first time they are dealing with this competence. The fact that the designed sessions are divided in three parts will allow teachers to carry out the activities throughout various sessions, as deemed more favourable for their students. By the end of these four sessions, the students will put into practice what they have learnt with a final task.

Nevertheless, even though these sessions are connected, the idea is not to put them into practice in the classroom one after the other. Ideally, this proposal would be implemented throughout five units. In each unit, in the students' book there is—or there should be—a section devoted to cultural matters. However, they deal with aspects from the culture with a “capital C” from various English-speaking countries. These aspects are considered to be independent from one another, and the students are not encouraged to understand their importance in real-life communication. By replacing these segments of the books by the sessions that will be developed in this dissertation, students will be able to work on culture with a “small c” and understand its importance in an intercultural communicative situation.

3.1. Session 1: Becoming Interculturally Aware

3.1.1. Objectives

The activities designed for the first session are merely introductory. The main objective of this session is for students to understand the importance of interculturality. It is essential that students are aware of what they are learning and the reason behind it. The sole purpose of introducing the ICC in the language classroom is for students to be able to communicate interculturally without the

barriers caused by the other's culture. If they know that this competence is crucial for them to communicate in the real world, they will most likely become more interested because they will discern a tangible goal. Moreover, another aim of the following activities is to develop students' ability to identify and analyse the intercultural message while decoding an audio-visual aid. Students will realise that in most communicative situations with people from various backgrounds, culture plays a big role in the communicative act. It is important that students that are able to at least identify the most basic messages. Once students can achieve this, their communication with people from other countries and cultures will be more prosperous. Moreover, throughout this session, students will foster their listening and speaking skills by means of watching videos and having class discussions. Finally, there is also an essential objective for the teacher. With this session, he or she will have to analyse the cultural values and beliefs of her students. As it was previously mentioned in this paper, students will grow interculturally at different speeds due to their own beliefs and values (Moeller and Nugent 2014, 5). The teacher should take advantage of this session to ponder whether interculturality should be approached one way or another in the classroom, and at which pace.

3.1.2. Previewing Activities

The first activity of this warm-up section has been taken from an article that has already been analysed in this paper by Marchis, Ciascai, and Saial (2008). In their article, they put forward a proposal in which students were shown various pictures of people from different ethnicities interacting and they had to discuss about these (41). I believe that this is an excellent introductory exercise since it will allow the students to see how their classmates think and the teacher to analyse the beliefs and possible prejudices of the students. In this teaching proposal, the idea is to show the students similar pictures with the projector in order to elicit a class discussion. It is important that the teacher considers the diverse cultures that are present in the classroom in order to include as many as possible in the pictures.



Figure 1. Picture with people from diverse cultural backgrounds interacting.

Source: (Advancement Sources. A Wiley Brand., 2014)

The picture will first be shown without context. The teacher will just ask the students to describe what they think when they look at it. This moment is crucial for the teacher's objective since it will show the students' cultural values. Once the teacher is satisfied with the answers, she will write down two questions on the blackboard: Do you think culture can influence in a communicative situation? Do you think your own culture influences the way you communicate with people from other cultures?

With these two questions, the teacher will encourage a second discussion in which they will work on their social and civic, and cultural awareness key competences. In this second activity, students are encouraged to enhance their critical thinking skills. They will come up with diverse reasons as to why culture can influence language and communication with people from other cultures. It is crucial that they also reflect on their own culture, since it is one of the foundations of interculturality (Ho 2009, 63). That is why it is important to try to include all the cultures present in the classroom in the pictures.

3.1.3. Viewing Activities

For the viewing activity, the episode "Diversity Day" (Novak and Kaling, 2005) from the sitcom *The Office* (2005-2013) has been chosen. Specifically, due to

lack of time, the students will be analysing a short clip. In this, the characters are doing a team building exercise where they have a piece of paper with the name of a race stuck in their foreheads. They have to go around the room and talk to the others, trying to decipher their own culture (2005, 12:00-18:50). The prejudices of some of the characters towards these cultures bring about grave miscommunication and even disrespectful situations. I have chosen this clip, because it clearly shows how preconceived ideas of a culture can influence our communicative acts.

Before putting the video on, the teacher will give a brief context of the situation. The teacher will also introduce some of the vocabulary that may be difficult for the students. She will write down these words and expressions on the blackboard. Then, when viewing this video, the teacher will stop the video every time an interaction between two people is about to happen. Before watching the actual conversation, the students will be asked to analyse how this conversation could go wrong due to prejudices about the respective cultures. Afterwards, the video will be played. When watching the actual conversation, the students must write down what went wrong.

3.1.4. Post-viewing Activities

After finishing the video, there will be a final discussion in the classroom. The students will have realised the amount of prejudices and stereotypes that can be present in conversations between people from different cultures. To begin with, they will be asked to share the information that they have written down with a partner. They will have to put the problems that they observed during the video in common. Finally, the idea is to share these issues with the rest of the class in order to elicit a final discussion. Once again, they will have two questions that have been written by the teacher on the blackboard: Do you think cultural background is a big factor in communication? How would you solve the problems that have arisen in the video? The key competences that were fostered throughout the previewing activities will also be developed during this final discussion.

3.1.5. Expected Results

This session would be the first contact of the students with the intercultural communicative competence. Ideally, students should have started working on this competence at lower levels of secondary education. Nevertheless, as I explained in section 1.2. of this paper, I have designed this teaching proposal after having witnessed the knowledge of actual 4th of ESO students during my training period. I observed that in the English classroom, culture is a topic that is barely developed. Even though there is a segment in each unit dealing with cultural knowledge, it is usually overlooked due to lack of time. For the same reason, the intercultural competence is not even considered in the classroom. Furthermore, since this competence is not to be found in the book, teachers disregard it and interculturality is entirely unbeknownst to learners of higher levels. Therefore, this could be the first approach to ICC for these students.

By the end of this session, the students are expected to start becoming aware of the importance of culture in intercultural communicative situations. The students will understand that our interactions are deeply influenced by our own values and beliefs. Therefore, when talking with a person from another culture, preconceived notions of their culture will affect the way they act and the language that is used. Students at the end of this session will understand this impact of culture in communication and will start to be able to discern some of the cultural norms and values that can affect language. The knowledge about interculturality will be minimum since it will be the first time they approach it. Nevertheless, students will know of its existence and will start to wonder about it.

3.2. Session 2: Race and Ethnicity. Erasing Cultural Stereotypes and Prejudices

3.2.1. Objectives

After the first session, students will have started to become aware of how cultural awareness and background can affect an intercultural communicative situation. This second session designed is crucial since the activities will foster some of the qualities of an intercultural speaker as defined by Byram (1997) in the students. The main purpose of this session is for students to be more observant and

conscious of stereotypes related to ethnicity and race. Their preconceived notions will affect their behaviour when interacting with people from various cultural groups. That is why students need to be aware of the existence of stereotypes related to race and ethnicity in order to identify them and avoid them. They must understand that these stereotypes are a product of one's own culture and identity. Our own cultural society perpetuates a hegemonic discourse that creates the knowledge about other cultures relational to our own. This objective is closely related to one of the factors of interculturality defined by Byram (1997): the knowledge of the speaker (35). As this author explains, formal education plays an important role in the acquirement of cultural knowledge. A speaker must know about another culture to have a better understanding and improve communication. However, the speaker must not forget that the knowledge acquired is tainted by one's culture (35). Therefore, the first main objective of this session is for students to know more about stereotypes of other cultures and the influence of one's own cultural background, and how it can hinder communication.

Once students are capable of recognising these stereotypes and prejudices, the second purpose of this session is to make the learners question these. The idea is not only to teach the students the existence of these and the impact that they have in an intercultural communicative act, but also to be able to analyse them by themselves. This ability refers to one of the intercultural skills postulated by Byram (1997). He declares that an essential skill of an intercultural speaker is being able to interpret the knowledge that they receive (37). That is why, it is crucial that we do not teach them what is right and wrong when it comes to stereotypes. We should allow them to develop their intercultural attitude to question what they are taught instead of accepting it and creating prejudices in the end. Byram explains that the perfect speaker should not be biased towards other cultures (34). This will only be achieved if we help students to identify and interpret stereotypes, without imposing the teacher's opinion on them.

The third and last objective of this session is to erase stereotypes that may lead to racism. While it is important to influence their cultural notions with our own, as teachers we should educate them on which stereotypes are harmful

towards other cultures. If we help them to erase these stereotypes, they will develop their social and civic competence, and their intercultural communication will be more successful. Stereotypes being erased will mean that the speaker will not negatively judge the other speaker only because of their origins. Nevertheless, once more, the idea is not to force them to think one way or the other, but to guide them towards an attitude where they do not allow preconceived stereotypes to affect their communicative skills negatively. Finally, while we are helping to erase stereotypes, they should also understand that the people they will interact with may not be as open-minded as them. Even if they are conscious of stereotypes and their harmful impact, some interlocutors from other cultures will not. That is why students should be prepared to be stereotyped. If they do, they will be more prepared to react.

Throughout this session students will mainly develop their speaking skill. There will be various oral discussions held in the classroom and the final activity will be a presentation in front of the classroom. Moreover, they will also work on their listening skills since they have to listen to their classmates in order to carry out the discussion. They will also be listening to real language through the viewing of the clips, which they have to carefully listen in order to analyse them. In terms of key competences, the main objective is to foster the social and civic competence. The students will be dealing with stereotypes that have shaped our modern society. They will have to understand how destructive these can be and how it can influence communication. Furthermore, they will have to analyse these harmful stereotypes and try to erase them from their own values in order to achieve a more respectful mindset.

3.2.2. Previewing Activities

The warm-up section of this session is vital since it is when students will understand why stereotypes play such a big role in communication. To begin with, the teacher will ask the students to brainstorm orally some stereotypes that they know about the Spanish culture. This part can vary depending on the diverse cultures that are present in the classroom. If there is at least one student from another cultural group, stereotypes about theirs should be elicited in the

classroom too. All cultures in the classroom should be acknowledged. Once the teacher is satisfied with their answers, she will ask them to think the other way around. They will be asked to name different cultures which the teacher will write down on the blackboard. Once the students have named all the cultures they can think of, they have to get in pairs. They will have three minutes to choose three of the mentioned cultures and write a stereotype about these. Once they are all finished, they will all share their answers and put in common the stereotypes. The teacher will have divided the blackboard in two: one side for the good/neutral stereotypes and the other for the harmful ones. While they are sharing their ideas, the students will have to write down the stereotypes on one side or the other, as they consider correctly. It is important that the teacher, from the very first moment, promotes a healthy and respectful classroom atmosphere because these activities and discussions could get heated.

Once they have finished sharing their ideas, it is the teacher's responsibility to raise awareness about stereotyping. She will have to elicit a discussion, developing their critical thinking, in which students understand that stereotypes are product of their own culture. This session's warm-up focuses mainly on the student's own culture, which will help them realise how their own culture is affected by stereotypes and how it produces them too. Finally, one last question for the discussion will be: are stereotypes harmful? During this final discussion, students are expected to realise how ingrained stereotypes are in our daily lives and how they can hurt other people. Ideally, their conclusion should be that these stereotypes are reflected in a communicative situation with people from different cultures. These can even create a situation in which the communication is not successful due to preconceived prejudices. The teacher, within her capacity, should lead the discussion towards this last idea.

3.2.3. Viewing Activities

Once students understand the importance of stereotypes, during this part of the session they will be asked to identify them. Specifically, they will have to identify racial stereotypes from the American perspective. It is important to emphasize to the students that they are working with audio-visual products that are produced

in the US. Thus, reflecting their culture and stereotypes. Before the viewing of the selected clips, the teacher will write down difficult vocabulary from the clips on the blackboard. Then, she will divide the classroom into four groups. Each group will be given an A2 size piece of card with a picture of the character that is being targeted and their culture. Each group will be assigned one of the characters. When the teacher gives them the piece of card, they have to write around the character stereotypes that have been discussed in class or that they can think of in red.



Figure 2. Images of the characters and their cultures.

Sources: (USA Network, n.d.), (New Girl Wiki, n.d.), (Brooklyn Nine-Nine Wiki, n.d.), (Arrested Development Wiki, n.d.)

After they have written down all their ideas, the teacher will give them a flashcard with a brief context of the sitcoms that will be analysed (Appendix A). Each group will watch a short clip of a sitcom, which has been chosen due to its cultural relevance. However, the worksheets will have information about all the sitcoms for students to understand the others when they put the information in common later. The group analysing Latin American stereotypes, will watch two clips from *Modern Family* (2009—) in which some latino characters engage in a telenovela-like scene in the middle of a hospital (Higginbotham 2012, 10:45-12:15; 15:30-16:35). The group analysing Hindu stereotypes, will watch a clip from *New Girl* (2011-2018), in which three of the main characters—one of them being of Hindu origin— have a conversation about India. One of these characters is confronted about his knowledge about this country, which ends up in a comic

situation full of stereotypes (Axler 2011, 16:00-17:20). The third group will watch a clip from the sitcom *Brooklyn Nine-Nine* (2013—) where one of the characters is being targeted due to his skin colour (Jackson 2017, 4:22-6:00), in order to analyse some stereotypes attributed to African American people. Finally, the fourth group will watch a clip from *Arrested Development* (2003-2019) to analyse British stereotypes from an American viewpoint. (Day and Hurwitz 2005, 07:50-11:10).

During the viewing, the students will have to write down on their pieces of card any other stereotype that they can identify in the clips. They will have to write these new stereotypes in another colour. If one of the stereotypes is repeated from the ones they already wrote, they will highlight it. By the end of the exercise, the students will have a visual representation of racial stereotypes of various cultures from their own country and from the United States.

3.2.4. Post-viewing Activities

Once students have finished analysing their respective clips, the idea is to share their results with the rest of the classroom. Each group will be asked to come up to the front of the classroom with their finished cardboards. Firstly, they will briefly explain the clip that they analysed, to give more context to their classmates. Then, they will show the poster with the picture and all the stereotypes. While they explain the ideas that they analysed, the teacher will give them a green marker. Every time they mention stereotypes or prejudices that are harmful towards a culture, they will be asked to cross it out and replace it with a positive quality. This new trait can be product of the clip that they just watched, or they can come up with it from their own experiences or beliefs. During this part of the exercise, the whole class will be encouraged to participate. The teacher, even though she can help and guide them, should allow them to think critically by themselves and not influence their ideas. However, it is important that she promotes respect towards the classmates and the other cultures. By the end of the presentations, each group will have a poster with crossed out negative stereotypes, replaced by positive qualities. These posters will be hung in the classroom walls for the students to have a positive reminder of their own agency.

They have the capacity of not only identifying stereotypes that can be harmful, but to replace them with kind qualities.

3.2.5. Expected Results

This session is one of the most important ones in this teaching proposal. As it was previously explained in this paper in section 3, these sessions are expected to last 55 minutes. Nevertheless, this session is so complex and crucial that teachers should divide it into as many days as necessary. The teacher will decide whether to extend the activities into various lessons. By the end of these activities, students are expected to have a better understanding of how stereotypes shape our society. And by extension, how these can shape an intercultural communicative act. If someone has harmful prejudices towards a whole culture, their interaction with a person from this culture will be unsuccessful. The students will realise during the warm-up section how their own culture creates stereotypes that affect their perception of other cultures, and how this situation occurs the other way around. People from other cultures will project stereotypes onto them. Furthermore, at the end of this session students will be able to discern stereotypes and realise by themselves how these can be pernicious. Moreover, students are expected to learn how to work in teams and respect each other's opinions. Finally, and most importantly, students will have the ability of erasing these prejudices. Without the bias of the teacher, the students will have the autonomy to not allow these stereotypes to have influence over their interaction with people from other cultures.

3.3. Session 3: Understanding the other. Beyond Race and Ethnicity

3.3.1. Objectives

This session has been designed with a similar purpose to the previous one. These activities will deal with stereotypes imposed by the people from a culture. However, these stereotypes will not be related to race and ethnicity. Instead, they will deal with gender and sexuality. The main purpose of this session is for students to understand that every culture has its own values and beliefs not only towards race and ethnicity, but also towards sexuality and gender. Just like with race and cultural origin, these traits that define one's identity will also influence

the way people treat you. The main purpose of this session, then, is for students to realise how other issues related to culture with a small C can also influence their intercultural communication. They need to be aware of how they will stereotype, and be stereotyped, taking into account someone's gender and sexuality.

The objectives of the activities designed are similar to the ones from the previous session. Students will be more conscious of stereotypes, but this time related to gender and sexuality and the big role that culture plays on these prejudices (even their own cultural background). Moreover, another purpose is for students to become more aware of these cultural values to be able to question and even erase them. It is important to achieve these objectives since it will raise awareness within the students. They will understand to what extent stereotypes play a role in our society and in how we communicate. Regarding skills, this session will be more complete. Students will still foster their speaking and listening skill. However, they will also develop their writing skill with the final activity. In terms of key competences, the students are still dealing with stereotypes and prejudices that harm our society. Therefore, they will be mainly working on their social and civic competence.

3.3.2. Previewing Activities

During the warm-up section, students will be asked to do a roleplay. The teacher will give them flashcards (Appendix B) with people of different genders and sexualities in various settings that they will have to enact. With the instructions given in the flashcards, it is expected that the students will create characters that are exaggerated and charged of stereotypes. For instance, one of the settings will be two children, a boy and a girl, arguing about which toys they should play with. Students will most likely portray a boy who wants to play football or with trucks, while the girl wants to play with dolls. The idea is that it is the teacher who analyses which stereotypes related to these issues are being portrayed, not the students. She will write them down and later share the results with the students. The second activity of this section will be the discussion. The teacher will tell the students the stereotypes that were represented in the classroom and try to elicit

more. Even though there are numerous genders and sexualities that could be discussed, we will focus on the ones that will be represented in the clips. Ideally, students should be introduced to many more existing sexualities and genders. However, due to lack of time and representation, the teacher will focus on the ones present.

Once all stereotypes have been shared, a discussion will be held in the classroom. The teacher will be the one conducting this activity. Once again, it is imperative that she ensures a respectful atmosphere in the classroom. All students should be respectful, even if they do not agree with some of the ideas being shared. During this discussion, students are expected to realise that even in the 21st century, stereotypes related to the discussed issues are still prevailing. Moreover, the teacher will ask the pertinent questions as to elicit students to talk about how one's culture defines these stereotypes. In order to achieve this last objective, the teacher will use the stereotypes that were portrayed during the roleplay. She will explain that these imitations are a product of the cultural beliefs and values that they have accepted.

3.3.3. Viewing Activities

The students will be divided in three groups, one for each clip that has been chosen. One of the groups will deal with the representation of sexuality. More specifically, they will analyse the stereotypes portrayed related to homosexuality in *Modern Family* (2009—). The clip depicts two pairs of homosexual parents playing with their children in the park (Higginbotham and Poter 2017, 11:40-16:20). This clip was chosen because during this game, various stereotypes related to their sexuality are being reinforced. The second and third group will be analysing stereotypes related to gender. They will deal with stereotypes connected to the two biological sexes. One group will analyse masculinity in a clip from the sitcom *Friends* (1994-2004). In this video, it is shown what one of the male characters considers to be masculine or not through the figure of a male nanny (Kauffman and Crane 2002, 10:20-13:00; 16:10-18:15). He is undermining someone's gender just because he shows traits that have been historically connected to females. Finally, the last group will deal with sexism and misogyny

with a clip from the sitcom *The Big Bang Theory* (2007-2019). These clips were chosen because they show the expectations that some husbands have of their wives to care for them (Molaro et al. 2013, 07:10-08:40; 11:30-13:00; 15:00-16:20). The figure of the housewife is being perpetuated.

Once again, students will be reminded that they are dealing with stereotypes perpetuated in the North American culture. Moreover, the teacher will explain that the sexuality and gender spectrum is wider than the one represented in these clips. However, due to the lack of representation in sitcoms, these are the genders and sexuality more prominent. Each group has to watch the selected video and write down the stereotypes that they can identify. While the students are doing this activity, the teacher will divide the blackboard in three sections: one for each issue that is being analysed. Once students have finished analysing their clips, they will come up to the blackboard and write down the stereotypes they found in the respective column.

3.3.4. Post-viewing Activities

When the students have finished writing the stereotypes on the blackboard, the teacher will ask a group to give their opinion about one of the stereotypes. The group will be analysing stereotypes that belonged to another group's clip. That means that if a group analysed *Modern Family* and homosexuality, they will be asked to opine about a stereotype from another group. The idea is for students to reflect on stereotypes that other groups found to expand their knowledge in this issue. Once this group has given their opinion, the group that wrote that idea will agree with them or counterargue. Ideally, students should realise by themselves that these stereotypes should be eradicated in order to achieve a more equal society. In the end, a debate will be created amongst groups.

Finally, this is the only session in which students will be given homework. They will have to write an opinion essay in which they reflect on stereotypes related to sexuality and gender. They will be given a worksheet (Appendix C) with instructions of the writing. In this worksheet they will have five statements with stereotypes that have been discussed in class and additional ones referring to other sexualities and genders. The essay will last between 130-150 words and

will be divided in two paragraphs. In the first paragraph of the essay they have to give their opinion about the stereotype that the statement chosen is perpetuating. They have to explain its meaning and argue whether they agree or not. In the second paragraph, crucial for the development of the ICC, they have to write about how this stereotype could interfere in communication between someone who supports it and someone who is that gender/sexuality. This final activity would replace the writing section of the unit they are working on.

3.3.5. Expected Results

The expected results of this session are similar to the previous session. However, it is expected that the desired results will be achieved faster since students have previously worked with stereotypes in the classroom. The students are expected to understand how these new ones related to gender and sexuality shape society. Therefore, these can influence our interactions with people from other cultures. Moreover, they will understand how these can shape our view of the other, and how the other will see us. Finally, the activities in the post-viewing section will allow students to be able to question these and slowly erase them.

3.4. Session 4: Joke's on Them. Understanding Comedy

3.4.1. Objectives

Previously this paper (in section 2.9) it was stated that sitcoms have been rejected in the EFL classroom due to its difficult language. Due to their comic nature, their language relies heavily on jokes, idioms, puns, and plays with words (Sherman 2003, 38-39). Furthermore, this language is even more demanding because comedy is linked to the culture of the community (Leah 2014, 97). The purpose of this session is to work with this comedic language in order to facilitate students' understanding of the jokes and puns frequent both in sitcoms and real life. To begin with, the principal aim is for students to understand the close relation between comedy and culture. Students will identify the cultural connotations of some jokes and puns. It is not practical to believe that we can teach students to understand all jokes from other cultures, since they are not the target audience. In order to achieve so, they should have acquired a vast knowledge of that culture. However, we can help them understand that there is a cultural innuendo

behind comedy so that they will not feel completely out of place. In terms of interculturality, the objective is to achieve that students do not shy away from intercultural situations just because of comedy, which is very present in every day casual interactions. This will be the shortest session. While the others can be expanded to last various sessions, the activities in this session are too connected to each other to carry out on their own.

In terms of skills and competences, this session aims at fostering the speaking and listening skills. Like the other sessions, most of the activities will be oral in the classroom and they will be listening to clips. Moreover, with the final task they will also be developing both skills. Another skill that is not usually worked in the language classroom that will be fostered in this session is the creative skill. Students will need to use their imagination in order to carry out the post-viewing activities. In terms of competences, students will develop the linguistic and cultural awareness competence.

3.4.2. Pre-viewing activities

The teacher will start this session in Spanish. She will ask students to share some jokes and puns they know in Spanish. This will create a relaxed atmosphere in the classroom, which will be helpful since they will be working with a difficult topic for the first time. Once the teacher is satisfied, she will ask students to get in groups of four. They will be given a worksheet with various jokes and puns, charged with cultural connotations. In turns, they will tell the jokes to one another within the group. The majority of the students will most likely not laugh at these since they will not understand the language or the message. When all groups have finished, the teacher will elicit a short discussion with a question written in the blackboard: why do not we understand jokes in English? Students first answer will be that the main barrier is the language. Here, the teacher will not help them understand the role of culture in comedy since they will have to find out by themselves later.

3.4.3. Viewing Activities

In order to introduce the importance of culture in this type of language, students will first watch a clip without guidelines. They simply have to watch it and try to understand it. The material chosen for this activity is a clip from the sitcom *How I Met Your Mother* (2005-2014). This episode is ridden with jokes about the feud between Americans and Canadians (Tatham 2013, 2:00-4:00). If someone is not familiar with this conflicted relation between the countries, the joke is most likely missed. When students have watched it once, the clip will be played again with subtitles, so that it is easier to follow. This time they will be asked to write down all the jokes they can identify. The teacher will have a power point presentation with all the jokes ready, so that students can actually see them all in the end.

Once the clip has been watched twice, the teacher will ask them to share what they wrote down. She will proceed to show the presentation with all of the jokes in case they missed some. Here, the teacher starts the second part of the discussion from the previewing activities. She will ask the students whether they still think that language is the most important barrier in understanding jokes. In this discussion students will understand that culture is also a big factor here as it is seen in the clip analysed. After the previous sessions, students should be able to arrive to that conclusion by themselves since they will identify many stereotypes. However, the teacher can still guide them. During this discussion, the teacher will also recall some of the Spanish jokes that were shared at the beginning of the previewing section. She will ask them to think of more Spanish jokes with stronger cultural connotations so that the students understand it better.

3.4.4. Post-viewing Activities

In this final part, students will have to use their imagination to create jokes themselves. In the groups from the beginning of this session, they will have to come up with two jokes in English. One of the jokes must have Spanish cultural connotations. The second joke must have cultural connotations from one of the English-speaking countries. Students should have minimal knowledge of some of these countries from previous years, and even from the previous sessions of this proposal. Once students have come up with these, they will share it with the

rest of the class. This activity has been designed as a contest. The teacher can even decorate the classroom as a comedy club to motivate students to win. The group that makes the other group laugh most, will be the winner. The teacher will decide the award depending on the group and their motivations.

3.4.5. Expected results

By the end of this session, students should be aware of the cultural background that is needed in order to understand most jokes from other cultures. This knowledge will help them in intercultural communicative acts. They will feel more confident in these situations. They will understand that if there is miscommunication with a speaker from another culture that uses a lot of jokes it is not due to their language proficiency. Because of this confidence, students will not avoid intercultural situations or watching sitcoms in English. Most importantly, with this session they are not expected to understand all jokes. It is important that they are aware of this to not feel demotivated. They will not acquire the cultural knowledge necessary to get the references. It would also be impractical to believe that someone is able to understand jokes from all cultures. They will understand that it is very difficult to understand these. However, they will be aware of the cultural value behind them. Therefore, if they wish to expand their cultural knowledge, this session will hopefully motivate them to do so.

3.5. Final task: Creating Your Own Sitcom

3.5.1. Objectives

After the four sessions previously developed, there will be a final task in order to assess their acquisition of the intercultural competence. At this point, students will understand why it is important to deal with this competence in the English classroom. Considering that a real intercultural conversation is unlikely in the classroom, unless the high school has the resources, a simulation will be created in this final task. The main purpose is to put all the knowledge related to interculturality that has been acquired throughout this teaching proposal in practice. They will have to prove that they understand what interculturality is and how stereotypes can damage it. Moreover, they will have to demonstrate that they have understood the importance of culture in comedic situations.

They will also be assessed in terms of language skills and key competences. The skills to be developed more thoroughly with this task are the speaking and the writing ones. The students will have to hand in a piece of writing that will be evaluated. Moreover, they will also have to prepare a video in which they will be fostering the oral skill. Regarding the key competences, they will work mainly on the linguistic competence while developing the previous mentioned skills. Moreover, they will foster their cultural, and social and civic competence. They have to ponder over cultural stereotypes and how it can affect communication with other cultures. Students will also be developing their learning to learn competence. In order to be more accurate in the representation of other cultures and their stereotypes, they will have to do some research on their own. Finally, for the first time in this proposal, students will develop their digital competence. Students will have to work with various ICT tools when filming and editing the final product.

3.5.2. Task description

In this final task, students will have to create their own sitcom scene in groups of four to five people. This scene will have to revolve around a dialogue between people from various cultures. They will have to write a script and film it. This task will be divided in three lessons, to allow students to work cooperatively in the classroom. If they are asked to do it at their homes, they will most likely divide their tasks and do it individually. By obliging them to work in the classroom, the teacher can monitor that all students are working equally. Moreover, they must all perform in the video so that the teacher can grade them in their oral skill. The idea is that students brainstorm the ideas and do research during the first lesson. The second and third lessons will be devoted to the writing of the script and the recording of the video. Students must finish their script in the classroom. By the end of the third lesson, they will hand it in. To complete the task, students are allowed to film at their homes since they may need more time and/or a specific scenery. By the end of this task, the students will send the final video to the teacher. The videos will be played in the classroom.

Even though they will be given the freedom to create it however they want, they will have to follow some guidelines. To begin with, the scene will have to last between four to six minutes. If they do not adjust to this time limit, it will be penalised in their final mark. I believe that it is important to do so in order to give everyone a fair chance. Videos that are shorter are likely to have less mistakes in them. On the other hand, if the video lasts longer they have more chances to make errors even though they worked harder. If they have a limit, all students will be graded equally. Secondly, they can create a scene with whichever cultures they prefer. They will be encouraged to include as many as possible. However, they are required to include their own. By doing so, they will demonstrate that they understand how their own culture can affect them in future intercultural situations. Including one's own culture, will also make the task easier since they will not have to do extensive research on it.

Thirdly, they will be asked to put into practice all the knowledge acquired throughout the previous sessions. They must include stereotypes related to race, sexuality and/or gender. They will have the freedom to choose which ones and how many, as long as they include one of each. I consider that this task is quite complex, so students should not be asked to incorporate a large number of stereotypes. The main goal is that they prove that they are interculturally aware. It is better that they introduce fewer stereotypes, but they do it adequately. Moreover, they will also be instructed to include some jokes. These can be the ones we worked on in the classroom, jokes that they create or existing ones. These must be culturally charged. Once again, they will have the freedom to choose the number of jokes they include. Finally, not all groups will have to create a successful intercultural interaction. Some groups will have to recreate a situation in which culture is a barrier. Even though this competence is introduced in the EFL classroom to aid students in future intercultural interactions, they should also understand to which extent intercultural communication could go wrong. If they are asked to create unsuccessful interactions, they will be able to discern which problems they have to consider. The teacher will randomly allocate the students which situation they need to portray.

3.5.3. Assessment

The final product of the students will be assessed by means of summative assessment. This type of assessment, as defined in *The Glossary of Education Reform*, is “used to evaluate student learning, skill acquisition, and academic achievement at the conclusion of a defined instructional period” (2013). I believe that this is the most adequate approach since the goal of this task is to assess the students’ acquisition of the ICC after having developed it throughout several sessions. Moreover, this type of assessment can be useful for teachers to determine students’ progress (2013). Depending on the results, she can assess whether this approach has been the most satisfactory for her students.

The tool that will be used for this assessment will be an analytic rubric (Appendix 4). This tool takes into account all the criteria that the teacher wants to evaluate individually (DePaul, n.d.). This type of grid will allow the teacher to assess the students in all the aspects that she considers best. Both the script and the video will be evaluated, as well as the acquisition of the competence. The rubric will be divided in three parts.

To begin with, the script will account for a fifteen percent of the final mark. On the one hand, this mark will reflect their writing proficiency. The teacher will take into consideration the grammatical mistakes, the structure of the sentences and whether the vocabulary is suitable. On the other hand, she will also assess the work done in the classroom. During the three lessons devoted to this task, the students will develop the script. The teacher will check which students are working adequately in the classroom and indicate it in the rubric.

Secondly, the teacher will assess the students’ final video. This segment of the rubric will account for a thirty-five percent of the final mark. It has a higher mark than the previous one because it is more complex to produce. Moreover, considering that the ICC is mainly a competence that deals with the speaking skill, it should be reflected in the rubric. To begin with, this section will take into account the timing. As it was explained before, students will be given strict instructions on the length of the video. Students will once again be graded in their English proficiency. In this section, this criterion will count less since they have

already been graded in the script. Nevertheless, I consider that it is important to still consider their English since they will most likely make changes from the original script. Thirdly, they will be assessed on their pronunciation and fluency. Being an oral product, it is essential that the student does not make considerable mistakes in pronunciation that impedes understanding, and that the vocalisation and rhythm is adequate. Finally, students will also be assessed on their digital competence. The teacher will evaluate the final video and its editing.

Thirdly, and most importantly, a fifty percent of the mark will be devoted to the intercultural communicative competence. Here, it will be considered if students have followed the task correctly. They have been given guidelines that they must follow in which it was specified how their intercultural situation should develop. Moreover, it is imperative that they use the stereotypes correctly, whether it is in a successful or an unsuccessful interaction. Students have identified, analysed, and questioned various stereotypes in the EFL classroom. They understand that stereotypes are one of the biggest barriers in intercultural communication. Even though there is not a mandatory number of cultures and stereotypes to be represented, the use of a wide variety will be reflected positively in the mark. Finally, they will be assessed on their use of jokes. The teacher will evaluate whether the jokes and puns used in the scene have a significant cultural value.

Finally, students will also assess their classmates. This evaluation is more informal and will not be reflected in the actual final mark of the task. However, I believe that students will be benefited with this responsibility. To begin with, it demands that they pay attention to their classmate's works and do not get distracted. Moreover, it will help them to further develop the ICC. They will be evaluating contents related to this competence, not the language proficiency. This will allow them to realise whether they are able to identify the issues discussed in the classroom. They will be given a simpler rubric (Appendix 5) to evaluate each group. At the end, using their own results, they can hold a class discussion in order to evaluate what was learnt.

4. Conclusion

This master's dissertation has discussed the importance of intercultural communicative competence in language learning. English is the language used to communicate with people who speak other languages, not only English native speakers. Mastering this competence allows the speaker to interact with the other without any cultural barriers. Therefore, it is essential that this competence be introduced in the English classroom. There is a wide variety of possibilities to approach this competence in the classroom as it was explained previously. In this dissertation, however, I focused on the use of authentic audio-visual materials. These resources are of great cultural value since they offer a non-filtered portrayal of the target culture and language. Nevertheless, as it was previously stated in section 2.5., video-based instruction of this competence has barely been explored in language teaching. The few studies carried out have focused mainly on the use of film (Roell 2010, Chao 2013, Pandey and Ardichvili 2015, Yue 2019). Other genres such as sitcoms have been ignored in this field of study despite their link to culture thanks to their comedy nature (Leah 2014, 97). Due to this lack of research, I put forward a teaching proposal in which interculturality is fostered with the aid of sitcoms.

It is important to note that there was a great limitation when creating this teaching proposal. The timing of the sessions is purely hypothetical. Due to lack of time during my training period, these activities were not carried out in the classroom with real students. Even though they are expected to last 55 minutes, a session may last longer. It is the first time that students will be dealing with interculturality. That is why the activities were divided into three main stages: previewing, viewing, and post-viewing. This will allow the teacher to put into practice the activities at the rate they deem suitable. If the students do not achieve the expected results in the proposed period, teachers will have the freedom to extend the sessions.

In the proposal I created, various intercultural themes and factors discussed in the theoretical framework were developed throughout the sessions. To begin with, the activities of the first session focused on bringing awareness

about the importance of interculturality. This part is essential because this proposal was designed after observing a group of fourth of ESO during my training period. These students were not acquainted with this competence. Therefore, this would be their first contact with interculturality. The second and third sessions are more complex. These sessions are devoted to stereotypes. As it was postulated by Samovar, Porter, and Jain (1981), prejudices induce defensive behaviours and can even drive the speaker to prevent intercultural contact (126). These sessions aim at helping students realise the existence of these barriers and overcome them by developing the intercultural knowledge and skills defined by Byram (1997, 35-37). Stereotypes related to race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality are covered in the classroom. Students analyse these to understand how these can hinder their intercultural communication acts and try to erase them.

The fourth and final session was created to tackle one of the issues discussed about the use of sitcom in the EFL classroom. Scholars like Sherman (2003) and Leah (2014) explained that sitcoms are difficult for students since the comedy relies on the cultural values and beliefs of the target audience. In this proposal, instead of ignoring these types of TV programmes, this background cultural background was valued. Activities were designed for students to realise the cultural significance of jokes and puns. This comprehension will help them in future intercultural interactions. They will accept that if they do not understand a joke it is not due to their language proficiency, but because of the different cultural background. Students will not feel demotivated in these situations. Throughout these sessions, students developed other key competences and language skills with the various activities. However, in each session there was at least one oral discussion related to the topic that was being developed. This allowed students to express their values and to also understand their classmates' cultural beliefs. Finally, all this knowledge was assessed in a final task. In this task, developed throughout various sessions, students put all the acquired knowledge into practice. To conclude, even though sitcoms present various difficulties, they can be a great genre for intercultural training with the adequate activities.

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6. Appendixes

6.1. Appendix A. Worksheet with Episodes' Context

SITCOMS & STEREOTYPES

MODERN FAMILY: LATIN AMERICAN

In this episode Cameron and Mitchell (North Americans) receive an exciting phone call. A mother (Latin American) from Calexico chose them to adopt her baby. Since she is giving birth at that moment, they go to the hospital with Gloria (Latin American). She is there to help them translate because the whole family speaks Spanish... What will happen now?

NEW GIRL: HINDU

Cece (Hindu) stays at her best friend's apartment. She has to interact with Schmidt (North American) and Winston (African American), two of her flatmates. During a conversation with them in the living room, Schmidt shows his "knowledge" about her cultural group... How do you think it will go?

BROOKLYN NINE-NINE: AFRICAN AMERICAN

Terry (African American) has two children. One of them loses her favourite blanket in the street. She cannot sleep without it so he decides to search for it. After finding the blanket, he is stopped by a police officer... What will happen to him?

ARRESTED DEVELOPMENT: BRITISH

Michael (North American) is investigating his father's crimes. In order to find some evidence, he goes to the British section of Orange County. How do you think it will go for him?

6.2. Appendix B. Flashcards for Roleplay

<p>ROLEPLAY IN PAIRS:</p> <p>You are both seven years old. One of you is a boy and the other is a girl. You are fighting because you cannot decide with which toys you want to play.</p>	<p>ROLEPLAY IN PAIRS:</p> <p>You are teenagers. You are a boy and a girl. One of you comes out the closet to the other. The other is not surprised.</p>
<p>ROLEPLAY GROUP OF FOUR:</p> <p>You are a group of teenagers. You are all boys. One of you is homosexual. You are changing clothes in the locker room.</p>	<p>ROLEPLAY GROUP OF FOUR:</p> <p>You are all teenagers. Two of you are girls and two of you are men. You are in PE class playing football.</p>
<p>ROLEPLAY GROUP OF THREE:</p> <p>You are all middle-aged. Two of you are married (husband and wife). You are having problems and you decide to go to couples' therapy. The third component is the therapist (woman).</p>	<p>ROLEPLAY GROUP OF THREE:</p> <p>You are in your twenties. You are three girls. One of you is a lesbian. You are looking for wedding dresses because one of you is finally getting married to her boyfriend.</p>

6.3. Appendix C. Worksheet Instructions Writing



DEFYING STEREOTYPES

OPINION ESSAY

Choose one of the following stereotypes to write about:

1. Boys do not play with dolls or like the colour pink.
2. Gay men are always more feminine and lesbians more masculine.
3. A wife's first priority should be her husband.
4. Girls are not good at sports.
5. Everyone is born heterosexual.

You have to write an essay discussing the statement you have chosen (130-150 words). You have to divide the essay into two paragraphs.

In the first paragraph you have to explain the statement that you chose and argue whether you agree or not.

In the second paragraph you have to explain various reasons as to why this stereotype could interfere in communication. Do not forget to give a conclusion!



6.4. Appendix D. Rubric of the Final Task

		Beginning	Developing	Accomplished	Exemplary
SCRIPT (15%)	ENGLISH LANGUAGE (10%)	There are several major grammatical mistakes. The structure of the sentences is Spanish-like and makes understanding difficult. The vocabulary used is unsuitable. (0)	There are some major grammatical mistakes. The structure of the sentences is sometimes Spanish-like. The vocabulary used is unsuitable (0.34)	Correct use of grammar and well-structured sentences with some major mistakes. Most of the vocabulary used is suitable. (0.68)	Correct use of grammar and well-structured sentences with minor mistakes. The vocabulary used is suitable. (1)
	WORK IN THE CLASSROOM (5%) *	The student did not work with the rest of the group during the lessons.	The student did little work with the rest of the group during the lessons.	The student worked and collaborated with the group most of the time. He/She helped prepare the script during the lessons.	The student worked and collaborated with the rest of the group all the time. He/She helped prepare the script during the lessons.
VIDEO (35%)	TIMING (5%)	The video lasts less than two minutes or more than eight minutes.	The video lasts between two and three minutes, or between seven and eight minutes.	The video lasts between three and four minutes, or between six and seven minutes.	The video lasts between four and six minutes.
	ENGLISH LANGUAGE (5%) *	There are several major grammatical mistakes. The structure of the sentences is Spanish-like and makes understanding difficult. The vocabulary used is unsuitable. (0)	There are some major grammatical mistakes. The structure of the sentences is sometimes Spanish-like. The vocabulary used is unsuitable (0.17)	Correct use of grammar and well-structured sentences with some major mistakes. Most of the vocabulary used is suitable. (0.34)	Correct use of grammar and well-structured sentences with minor mistakes. The vocabulary used is suitable. (0.5)

	PRONUNCIATION AND FLUENCY (10%) *	Considerable mistakes in pronunciation impeding understanding. Poor vocalisation and rhythm.	Some considerable mistakes in pronunciation. Poor vocalisation and rhythm at times.	Good pronunciation with some minor mistakes. Good vocalisation and rhythm	Excellent pronunciation, vocalisation and rhythm.
	FINAL VIDEO AND EDITION (10%)	The edition of the video is inadequate: the sound and the image are not clear, there is no background music, there are no transitions or credits.	The edition of the video is mediocre: the sound or image are not clear, there is no background music, there are some transitions or credits.	The edition of the video is good: the sound and image are clear, there is some background music, there are some transitions or credits.	The edition of the video is excellent: the sound and image are clear, there is background music, there are many transitions and credits.
ICC (50%)	TASK ADEQUACY (10%)	The group did not follow the guidelines. They did not create an intercultural situation.	_____	_____	The group has followed the guidelines correctly. They created a successful or unsuccessful intercultural situation.
	STEREOTYPES (25%)	The stereotypes portrayed were inaccurate and irrelevant. Little to none stereotypes were depicted.	Some of the stereotypes portrayed were accurate and relevant. Few stereotypes were depicted.	Most of the stereotypes portrayed were accurate and relevant to the dialogue. Various stereotypes were depicted.	The stereotypes portrayed were accurate and relevant to the dialogue. A great number of stereotypes were depicted.
	JOKES (15%)	No jokes were introduced in the dialogue. The jokes did not have a cultural value.	Only one or two jokes were introduced in the dialogue. The jokes did not have a cultural value.	Various jokes were introduced in the dialogue. The jokes had a significant cultural value.	A great number of jokes were introduced in the dialogue. The jokes had a significant cultural value.

*INDIVIDUAL MARKS

6.5. Appendix E. Rubric for Students to Evaluate Classmates

		YES	NO
Did the group create an intercultural communicative situation?			
Did the group introduce stereotypes related to race and ethnicity?			
Write down some of the stereotypes			
Did the group introduce stereotypes related to sexuality and gender?			
Write down some of the stereotypes			
Did the group introduce cultural jokes in the dialogue?			