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**THE USE OF SITCOMS FOR CULTURAL LEARNING IN EFL: A  
WORKSHOP FOR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS**

**EL USO DE LAS *SITCOMS* PARA EL APRENDIZAJE CULTURAL  
EN EL AULA DE IDIOMAS: UN SEMINARIO PARA  
UNIVERSITARIOS.**

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*This article examines the perceptions of EFL university students regarding an intercultural workshop that uses a sitcom (Master of None) as an instructional tool. Prior to detailing the workshop and the students' assessment, this paper deals with the evolving role of culture in the English language classroom. Concentrating on cultural facts about English-speaking countries has proven insufficient for today's world, where the vast majority of interactions happen among non-native speakers. Students need to work on developing skills and attitudes in order to become intercultural citizens. Even though language teaching has evolved to accommodate this shift in cultural perspective, textbooks, the backbone of language teaching, have remained almost unaffected by this change of paradigm. In this context, TV shows can*

*be a dependable cultural training tool. Data obtained via a Likert-scale questionnaire show the participants' appreciation for the workshop, and their highly positive perception of the acquisition of cultural knowledge and the development of attitudes and skills using this type of workshop.*

**Key words:** *Cultural learning, intercultural competence, big "C", small "c", television*

*Este trabajo analiza las percepciones de un grupo de alumnos universitarios tras participar en un seminario de formación intercultural en el que se ha usado como herramienta pedagógica un episodio de la serie Master of None. Como paso previo a la exposición de los contenidos del seminario y a la evaluación que los propios alumnos han hecho del mismo, este artículo ha profundizado en la evolución del concepto de cultura dentro del ámbito de la enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras. La enseñanza de contenidos culturales referentes a países de lengua extranjera ya no es suficiente en el mundo global que habitamos, donde la mayoría de las interacciones en inglés tienen lugar entre hablantes no nativos de esta lengua. Los alumnos han de desarrollar una serie de habilidades y actitudes que les permitan convertirse en ciudadanos interculturales. A pesar de que la enseñanza de idiomas está tratando de acomodarse a este cambio de perspectiva cultural, los libros de texto, que conforman su columna vertebral, no han experimentado dicho cambio. En este contexto, las series de televisión pueden ser una eficiente herramienta de formación cultural. Los resultados de la evaluación, extraídos de un cuestionario de escala Likert, muestran que los participantes muestran interés por este tipo de actividad y que su percepción es muy positiva en lo que se refiere a la adquisición de conocimientos y el desarrollo de actitudes y habilidades culturales.*

**Palabras clave:** *Aprendizaje cultural, competencia intercultural, cultura visible, cultura invisible, televisión*

## 1. Introduction

Globalization, technological advances and mobility have reshaped our world. We live in increasingly multilingual societies and, as a consequence, the intercultural concept has been broadened.

Parallel to the growing status of English as lingua franca, the teaching and learning of a foreign language has also evolved to include intercultural skills and intercultural consciousness. Then, culture is an essential component of the curriculum in foreign language education. “Whether students may or may not be ready to reflect and decentre, the teacher does need to provide opportunities for them to begin to see other perspectives” (Byram, 1997, p. 83). This is of paramount importance so that the students can adapt their knowledge, skills and attitudes to each new interaction. As the cultural content of textbooks mainly focuses on external aspects and cultural facts, we believe audiovisual material can be used as an additional tool to bring out less visible aspects of culture and cultural self-awareness. Sitcoms, in particular, can be extremely useful since they are a “window into the world of the target language and culture, with depictions of socio-economic-political issues and a myriad of human relationships” (Kaiser and Shibahara, 2014, p. 1).

In the second part of this paper, we describe the workshop we have developed to introduce less visible cultural aspects and increase cultural awareness in the foreign language classroom. It consists of different activities and a Likert-scale questionnaire to assess the students’ self-perception. Next, we present the results of the statistical analysis of the data, followed by a discussion of these results, and some suggestions for improvement.

## **2. Culture and Language Teaching**

Culture is a difficult and complex term to define (Williams, 1983), partly because it belongs to different academic disciplines. Moreover, some scholars have harshly criticised the concept of “culture” arguing that it is usually wrongly conceived as a static entity and associated with national cultures (Halliday, 2011). We cannot deny that cultures are dynamic (Kramsch, 1998) and not homogeneous, i.e., an individual’s behaviour cannot be taken as the standardized representation of a culture. However, Byram and Wagner (2018) acknowledge that national cultures are deeply rooted in people’s minds and concede that the concept “culture” is useful from a pedagogical point of view: “the term remains part of language educators’ vocabulary and cannot simply be ignored” (2018, p. 142). On this matter, they claim that the pedagogical approach has always been to simplify the term to learners before adding complexity.

In a pedagogical context, the concept of “culture” has been approached in different ways. Holliday (1999) claims that we should leave behind the “large” culture paradigm, which refers to culture from an ethnic, national or international perspective as this “results in overgeneralization and otherization of ‘foreign’ educator, students and societies” (Halliday, 1999, p. 237-238). As an alternative, he proposes to focus on “small” culture, a non-essentialist view which relates to cohesive social grouping. Risager (2011) addresses the problem of national discourse and offers a transnational paradigm, which is based on a dynamic and flowing conception of language and cultural aspects. Liddicoat and Scarino (2013) examine the different ways in which culture has been analysed. They reshape the idea of language and culture as a continuum incorporating their interpretative and symbolic nature in communication.

In language teaching, there is academic consensus on the idea that language and culture are intertwined (Weninger & Kiss, 2015). To emphasize that connection, researchers have even coined some terms such as “languaculture” (Agar, 1994) or “linguaculture” (Risager, 2007). Thus, educators acknowledge that language teaching implies culture teaching. In the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), cultural teaching has gone through several stages, parallel to the evolution of the concept of culture. Before the advent of the communicative approach in the 1990’s, culture was presented as factual information about national cultures (Weninger & Kiss, 2013). The emergence of the communicative approach in language teaching called into question the notion of culture as external facts and brought about the relevance of internal culture (Hall, 1976), which looks at the values, beliefs and assumptions underlying culture. Furthermore, from a methodological point of view, the development of the intercultural approach (Byram, 1997) redefined the goal of Foreign Language Teaching (FLT). The last stage begins with the new century and focuses on the transnational nature of culture. Key concepts such as “critical citizenship” (Guilherme, 2002) or “intercultural citizenship” (Byram, 2008) accentuate the need for the students “to be politically conscious citizens of a modern society” (Weninger & Kiss, 2013, p. 698).

Despite the evolution of the concept, cultural teaching and learning has not kept pace with the progression. Earlier research shows that textbooks tend to focus on external aspects of culture (Tomalin & Stempleski 1993; Lee 2009; Varón, 2009; Raigón-Rodríguez & Larrea-

Espinar, 2015). Since textbooks remain the backbone of ELT, teaching culture is still commonly misinterpreted as passing on cultural information about a country (Byram & Wagner, 2018).

In order to redress this imbalance, this work proposes the use of audiovisual material to improve cultural awareness and develops an integrated approach to language and culture learning.

### **3. Categorization of Culture**

As pointed out above, it is generally agreed that culture is an essential component of the curriculum in foreign language education. From a pedagogical perspective, there has been considerable debate about what exactly should be learnt and several models (or approaches) to cultural teaching have been put forward. However, as of today, a general consensus is lacking. Tang (2006) reviews three prominent categorizations of culture. In the first model, culture is comprised of achievement, behaviour and information (Hammerly, 1986). The second proposal introduces the concepts of “big C” and “little c” (Seelye, 1984). This twofold conceptualization is also referred to as “visible” and “invisible” culture (Hinkel, 2014). The third model develops the framework of the “Three Ps”, namely, perspectives, products and practices (National Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century, 1999). In the same year, Paige, Jorstad, Paulson, Klein & Colby (1999) proposed a conceptual model of cultural learning, building on earlier contributions from Byram (1997) and Kramsch (1993), with the aim of integrating the teaching/learning of language and culture. Their work is highly influential for educators since it introduces the idea that culture consists of general and specific aspects incorporating a threefold distinction between knowledge, behavior and attitudes. In that way, students should acquire not only culture-specific, but also culture-general aspects, which are transferable across cultures.

The ongoing academic debate on the role of culture in FLT has brought upon a body of extensive research examining textbooks. Hence, different approaches have been adopted to analyze how culture is incorporated in EFL textbooks. The most functional proposals have proven to be content or evaluation checklists. Lee (2009) adapted the conceptual model of Paige et al. (1999), adding a classification by thematic categories.

Drawing on Lee's ideas, we put forward a more practical proposal to examine the cultural content of textbooks (Raigón-Rodríguez & Larrea-Espinar, 2015). We have used this checklist in our worksheet to identify cultural categories and themes in sitcoms. In that way, we have been able to determine and classify the type of cultural content and the topics in the sample episodes presented in the second part of this paper.

Seelye	Hammerly	Three Ps	Paige et al.
Little c	Behaviour	Perspectives	Culture-specific
		Practices	
Big C	Information	Products	
	Achievement		
			Culture-general: Knowledge Skills Attitudes

#### 4. Intercultural Competence

In language teaching, the functional perspective came to replace the structural approach, shifting the focus from grammatical accuracy to communication. Nevertheless, linguistic, sociolinguistic and discourse competences were proven insufficient to capture the whole complexity of communication in an increasingly globalized world. In consequence, an interactional view of language started to take shape. Thus, the intercultural approach (Byram, 1997) was a decisive milestone for FLT. The essence of the intercultural dimension is “to help language learners to interact with speakers of other languages on equal terms, and to be aware of their own identities and those of their interlocutors” (Byram, Gribkova & Starkey, 2002, p. 7). In this sense, communication is seen as a vehicle for interpersonal relations, negotiation and interactions. This conceptualization challenges the view of the native speaker as a model and supports the development of intercultural speakers or mediators. As such, intercultural communication is defined as “the ability to meet and engage successfully with people of another social group” (Byram, 2015, p. 38). Moreover, Byram asserts that intercultural

communication “takes into account the complex interplay of our students’ identity in different linguistic and cultural backgrounds” (Byram & Wagner, 2018, p. 144), which implies an understanding of themselves and of their own society. Liddicoat & Scarino (2013) suggest that communication needs to be interpreted so in an intercultural exchange, learners are required both to examine the meaning-making process and to make sense of that meaning. Thus, the goal of FLT is to achieve Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC), which consists of four interrelated competences: linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse and intercultural communication. Byram’s model (1997) identifies five basic components of intercultural competence (IC): attitudes (for example, curiosity, openness, readiness to suspend own beliefs...), knowledge (about social groups and their products), skills of interpreting (a document or event from another culture) and relating (it to one’s own), skills of discovery and interaction (under the pressure of real life interaction), critical cultural awareness/political education (evaluate critically practices and products in one’s own and other cultures).

Other authors have provided different conceptualizations of IC (Chen, 2003; Gudykunst, 2004). However, underpinning these other attempts is the recognition that IC should include three dimensions: affective, cognitive and behavioural (Chao, 2013). IC, therefore, requires the development of attitudes, knowledge and skills which will help students become intercultural citizens “able to engage in intercultural communication, to think and act critically, and to negotiate the complexities of today’s world” (Byram & Wagner, 2018, p. 141). According to Conway & Richards (2018, p. 373), the development of attitudes is related to openness, curiosity and the understanding of “otherness”. The ability to understand the world from others’ perspective is precisely the key element of IC (Deardorff, 2011). Language educators wrongly assume that intercultural competence is automatically taught when teaching a language (Byram & Wagner, 2018). As the development of IC is something that needs to be learnt and addressed, we have designed a workshop aimed at the acquisition of cultural knowledge, and the development of skills, attitudes and cultural awareness.

#### **4.1. Assessment**

There is general consensus on the difficulty of assessing IC (Conway & Richards, 2018; Zheng, 2014;). First, there is the challenge of the assessment

being interpretive (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013). Then, we need to determine what to assess, which is influenced by the IC model. We support anthropological approaches (Risager, 2007), as we agree on the idea that IC is connected to communicative competence but it is not within linguistic competence. As mentioned above, Byram's ICC model (1997) is the most relevant, but because of his complex conceptualization of IC, some components are easier to assess than others. While knowledge and skills are simple to assess being quantifiable, the challenge remains on assessing attitudes (like curiosity and openness) and awareness (Fantini, 2009, p. 459). Thus, there have been several attempts to identify "operationalised objectives" (Lenz & Berthele, 2010, p. 10). In this sense, the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) Companion Volume (2018) goes a step beyond the old sociolinguistic appropriateness scale, expanding on the notion of IC through the "Building on Pluricultural Repertoire" descriptor scale. As the document indicates, "many notions that appear in the literature and descriptors for intercultural competence are included" (2018, p. 158). The Companion also endorses the development of the Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches (FREPA), since the aspects included in the scale are quite broad: "FREPA lists different aspects of plurilingual and intercultural competences in a hypertextual structure independent of language level, organised according to the three broad areas: Knowledge (savoir), Attitudes (savoir-être) and Skills (savoir-faire)" (2018, p. 158).

The development of the framework was approached in an inductive way, analysing the content of approximately 100 publications. According to Candelier, Daryai-Hansen & Schröder-Sura (2012, p. 248), the most genuine contribution of FREPA was the descriptors of knowledge (K), attitudes (A) and skills (S). Although this framework is much more detailed, we still need empirically validated assessment instruments.

In the context of education, IC has been usually carried out as alternate assessment (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013), which favours learning from a sociocultural perspective and includes performance, formative, classroom-based and dynamic types of assessment. The nature of IC assessment is basically pedagogic, so the results tend to be used formatively, i.e., assessment for learning: "the first priority is to serve the purpose of promoting learning, rather than certification or accountability" (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013, p. 126). Unlike standardized evaluation, which is more constricted, formative assessment allows multiple possibilities. Portfolio



has been frequently favoured as an assessment tool and, in that sense, it is worth mentioning the Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters developed by the Council of Europe and the INCA project. Byram (2008) stresses the importance of self-assessment as it supplies valuable insights and promotes self-reflection and awareness. Additionally, Hei, Tabacaru, Sjoer, Rippe & Walenkamp endorse Deardorff's view (2011) recommending the compilation of direct and indirect evidence: "Intercultural competence should be assessed using a mixed-method approach through direct evidence, namely critical reflection and performance, as well as indirect evidence using self-report measures such as surveys or inventories" (Hei et al., 2019, p. 4). In our proposal, direct evidence could be collected through the debriefing questions. As for the gathering of indirect evidence, we have designed a Likert-scale questionnaire to assess the students' self-perception. For our purposes, it is more relevant the analysis of the students' self-assessment, which we will discuss in the second section of this paper.

## **5. Audiovisual Material in English Language Learning and Sitcoms**

Since communication is multimodal (Bonsignori, 2018), English Language Teaching has embraced the use of films from the very beginning, being the preferred genres "mainly film adaptations of canonical school novels, or critically acclaimed high-brow movies" (Hofmann, 2018, p. 270). In recent years, as TV has exponentially gained social and cultural relevance, TV shows (series and sitcoms) have been accepted for language teaching as well. Nowadays TV shows offer productions that present and represent popular culture (Bednarek, 2015).

The advantages of using audio and aural material for English language teaching and learning have been identified in many studies, which have usually focused on the improvement of language (English) proficiency including: incidental vocabulary learning (Webb, 2010; D'Ydewalle & Van de Poel, 1999), vocabulary enrichment (Kaiser, 2011; Bonsignori, 2018), fluency and oral skills (Dikilitas & Duveney; 2009; Lazaraton, 2001), listening practice and strategies (Flowerdew & Miller, 2005; Dunkel, 1986) and acquisition of pragmatic language and strategies (Wasburn, 2001; Al-Surmi, 2012; Bruti, 2015). Besides, audiovisual material can be used to pay attention to non-verbal communication and prosodic features (Bonsignori, 2018).

More importantly, audiovisual material favours motivation (Bada & Okan, 2000; Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005) and helps contextualize the learning process (Sherman, 2003). Films and TV shows expose learners to “authentic” dialogues or interactions, i.e., “created for native speakers and not learners of the language” (Kaiser, 2011, p. 233). It can be argued that this type of material is authentic but not natural, since it has been “written to sound natural” (Bonsignori, 2018, p. 59). In this manner, natural conversation is related to spontaneous use while authentic conversation “occurs between or among interlocutors in a specific context (stage, TV show, classroom, etc.) for the sake of reproducing, replicating, or mocking a real natural conversation” (Al-Surmi, 2012, p.673). Despite this minor flaw, it is certain that this material presents language “with much wider linguistic, paralinguistic and paragrammatic levels. [...] The language is ungraded and un-simplified and is spoken at a normal pace and in typical accents” (Yang & Fleming, 2013, p. 299).

Regarding captions, the advantages of using subtitles with pedagogical aims have also been clearly established. Consequently, watching a TV show with same-language subtitles is positive for vocabulary acquisition and language proficiency (D’Ydewalle & Van de Poel, 1999; Huang & Eskey 1999; Kuppens, 2010; Ghia, 2012; Vanderplank, 2016).

In line with the revisited role of culture in language teaching and learning, educators should attempt not only the development of linguistic competence but also the promotion of (inter)cultural awareness. Thus, considerable attention has been put on the value of films and TV shows as carriers of cultural information. As they provide “a window on culture” (Yang and Fleming, 2013, p. 299), films and TV shows are useful tools to interpret cultural features and broaden cultural awareness (Chao, 2013). By displaying and addressing cultural values, TV shows immerse learners in a particular culture (Chang, 2015). In that way, they can become interculturally competent speakers, being able to interpret “foreign cultural products (e.g., films and TV series), taking into account their cultural context” (Yang & Fleming, 2013, p. 297).

Within TV shows, situation comedies (popularly known as “sitcoms”) have been commonly used in ELT due to its short-running time and the closed nature of episodes. Both features enable the instructor to

show a single episode without time-consuming contextual explanations. Although films have been usually favoured to address cultural information in the EFL class, there is a growing body of research analysing the cultural display on sitcoms: Lee (2016) examined culture in *The Big Bang Theory*; González-Alafita, Dávalos & Gutiérrez (2012) addressed cultural messages in *Modern Family* in relation to Mexican values, Rucynski (2011) reviewed *The Simpsons* from a sociocultural teaching perspective; in Spain, Larrea-Espinar & Raigón-Rodríguez (2012) delved into the American values portrayed in *Friends*.

### 5.1. Criteria for Sitcom Selection

In theory, almost any sitcom can provide students with input and opportunities for language learning, especially for those who have reach an independent user competence level. However, selecting material for raising cultural awareness and developing intercultural abilities is an entirely different matter. A set of criteria must be established with both our main objective and potential “audience” in mind (university students). These criteria must depend on characteristics such as interest, stereotype awareness, topic and language complexity, among others (King, 2002). Special attention must be paid to stereotyped characters, which are mere clichés rather than the depiction of an actual person. Moreover, episodes must provide opportunities for cultural understanding of small “c” categories. As we have already mentioned, cultural behaviours and products are easier to perceive. However, it is the understanding of the beliefs and worldviews shared by a particular group what will allow students to develop interpreting and discovering skills.

Some sitcoms cannot be used to fulfill this purpose since they do not portrait realistic interactions, and as such they do not provide a window to reality and are not effective from a cultural viewpoint (e.g., *The Office*, *Scrubs* or *The Simpsons*). An excessive presence of profanity might pose a problem depending on context as well. It is not necessary to censor material for university students, but shows such as *Fleabag* and *Insecure* might exemplify sitcoms whose profanity surpasses actual interactions. On the other hand, American network television series (those which are broadcasted “over the air”) lack authenticity due to this censorship, absent in OTT (“over the top”) or cable shows (Kaye & Sapolsky, 2009).

## 6. Methodology

Taking this body of literature into account, we have designed a workshop not only to provide students with L2 culturally specific information, but also to make them aware of their own values and non-verbal aspects of communication. Its final aim is to develop positive attitudes, such as willingness to learn about other cultures and overcoming prejudices against otherness. The students' perception regarding their own cultural learning will be measured afterwards.

The participants (N=33) are second-year students of Translation and Interpreting (undergraduate, English as first foreign language) at the University of Córdoba (Spain) enrolled in "English Language (C1)".

We have chosen *Master of None* (Netflix), one of the most popular sitcoms being streamed at the moment. It tells the personal and professional life of Dev (Aziz Ansari), a 30-year-old actor in New York. We worked with the second episode of the first season ("Parents"), first available 6<sup>th</sup> November 2015. The storyline presents Dev and Brian (Dev's friend) trying to show their appreciation for their immigrant parents at a joint family dinner. This episode is very illustrative of the essential sitcom clash between traditional and modern values, as we are told the history of two families' arrival to the United States.

The workshop is structured as follows:

1. Pre-watching: Before watching the episode, students attended a seminar on the concept of culture, dealing with the culture-specific and culture-general aspects discussed by Paige et al. (1999), external and internal culture (see "Categorization of culture"), and the importance of our own cultural values in human interaction. Thus, prior to watching the episode, students became familiarized with cultural categories (big "C" and small "c") and were given general information about the show and its characters. Together with providing a theoretical background, this pre-activity's objective was to raise the students' interest.
2. While-watching: As they watched the episode, students were asked to complete a worksheet with comprehension questions and cultural checklists (see annex 1).

3. After-watching: Students' answers were checked and discussed with the whole class. Then, students were arranged in groups for a debriefing activity in which they discussed questions regarding invisible cultural categories, for example, "Is the origin of conflict a cultural gap (American vs. Eastern/Asian) or a generational gap (sons vs. parents)?"; "Are you able to establish analogies between their interactions and your interactions with your own parents?"; or "Debate around the "invisible" small c categories presented in the episode" (see annex 1 for full description).
4. Assessment: Besides the worksheet, a six-item Likert scale questionnaire has been elaborated for the assessment of this pilot experience.

We have chosen this type of assessment because, as we have previously mentioned, assessment tools for IC should be formative in educational contexts (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013) and rely on self-reports in order to promote self-reflection (Byram, 2008, Hei et al., 2019). The items are based on descriptors extracted from the FREPA project (Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches) and intended to measure the participants' perception. Together with their online teaching materials database, FREPA "lists different aspects of plurilingual and intercultural competences in a hypertextual structure independent of language level, organized according to the three broad areas: Knowledge, Attitudes and Skills" (in *CEFR, Companion Volume*, Council of Europe, 2018, p. 158). In addition to being endorsed by the Council of Europe, we have chosen this option over other available rubrics such as the "Intercultural Knowledge and Competence Value Rubric", elaborated by the AACU (Association of American Colleges and Universities), because the latter does not adjust to self-assessment as efficiently, having a more simplistic range (as acknowledged by its own authors).

The six questionnaire items are listed with their corresponding FREPA descriptor in parenthesis:

We performed a number of procedures and analyses to check the validity and reliability of the instrument in the survey. The validity of instrument content was tested using the expert judgement approach (6 scholars related to the area of Language Learning), while the Cronbach's alpha (0.761) was used to ascertain item reliability.

Knowledge	This kind of activity helps me identify characteristics from my own culture and become aware that they are not universally shared. (K13)
	This kind of activity helps me understand behaviors are determined by underlying cultural values. (K8).
Skills	This kind of activity allows me to perceive reality from a different viewpoint, suspending my own beliefs. (S2).
	This kind of activity allows me to compare my own non-verbal communication practices with those of others (S3).
Attitudes	This kind of activity makes me more interested and curious about other cultures (A3).
	This type of activity makes me want to distance myself from my own cultural perspective before judging the behavior of others (A12).

Table 1: Questionnaire items

	N	1		2		3		4		5		M	SD
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%		
Item 1: Own Culture	33			1	3	8	24.2	6	18.2	18	54.5	4.24	.936
Item 2: Underlying cultural values	33							11	33.3	22	66.7	4.67	.479
Item 3: Suspending own beliefs	33					6	18.2	14	42.4	13	39.4	4.21	.740
Item 4: Non-verbal communication	33					8	24.2	10	30.3	15	45.5	4.21	.820
Item 5: Curiosity	33					3	9.1	9	27.3	21	63.6	4.55	.666
Item 6: Prejudice	33					4	12.2	16	48.5	13	39.4	4.27	.674

Table 2: Descriptive statistical analysis

## 6.1. Results

We performed a descriptive statistical study. Its results are shown in table 1. Even though all items score very high, there are several differences worth highlighting. For example, items 2 and 5 score significantly higher than the rest ( $x=4.67$  and  $x=4.55$ ).

Regarding frequencies, it is worth mentioning how the results per item are distributed. Four items (2, 3, 5 and 6) concentrate more than 80% in the 4-5 range of the Likert scale (quite agree or totally agree). Furthermore, items 2 and 6 present an even higher concentration in that range (100% and 87.9% respectively).

		Item 1	Item 2	Item 3	Item 4	Item 5	Item 6
Item 1: Own Culture	Pearson correlation	1	.395*	.510**	.257	.182	.238
	Sig. (bilateral)		.023	.002	.150	.310	.181
Item 2: Underlying cultural values	Pearson correlation	.395*	1	.471**	.663**	.392*	.387*
	Sig. (bilateral)	.023		.006	.000	.024	.026
Item 3: Suspending own beliefs	Pearson correlation	.510**	.471**	1	.387*	.138	.444**
	Sig. (bilateral)	.002	.006		.026	.442	.010
Item 4: Non-verbal communication	Pearson correlation	.257	.663**	.387*	1	.354*	.457**
	Sig. (bilateral)	.150	.000	.026		.043	.007
Item 5: Curiosity	Pearson correlation	.182	.392*	.138	.354*	1	.354*
	Sig. (bilateral)	.310	.024	.442	.043		.043
Item 6: Prejudice	Pearson correlation	.238	.387*	.444**	.457**	.354*	1
	Sig. (bilateral)	.181	.026	.010	.007	.043	
* Correlation is significant at 0.05 (bilateral).							
** Correlation is significant at 0.01 (bilateral).							

Table 3: Pearson correlation

The most unsatisfactory distribution is found in item 1, where 27.2% believe this type of activity does not help them identify characteristics from their own culture or become aware that these are not universally shared. Besides, a 24.2% of participants do not perceive improvement regarding non-verbal communication patterns.

When applied to our sample, the Pearson correlation coefficient (PCC) shows significant relation between item 1 (“This kind of activity helps me identify characteristics from my own culture and become aware that they are not universally shared”) and item 3 (“This kind of activity allows me to perceive reality from a different viewpoint, suspending my own beliefs”) ( $r=0.510$  and  $p=0.002$ ). There is also a moderate relation between item 2 and items 3 ( $r=0.471$  and  $p=0.006$ ) and 4 ( $r=0.663$  and  $p=0.000$ ), which is the strongest of all. Item 3 consequently shows a moderate correlation with items 1 and 2, but also with item 6 ( $r=0.444$  and  $p=0.010$ ). Items 4 and 6 show a moderate correlation ( $r=0.457$  and  $p=0.007$ ). Item 5 shows a weak correlation with the remaining items.

## **7. Discussion of Results and Conclusion**

As we have highlighted in the theoretical section, there is general agreement among scholars on the interconnection between language and culture. Consequently, language teaching implies culture teaching. In EFL, the teaching of culture has undergone different stages before embracing the concept of “intercultural citizenship” (Byram, 2008). From a pedagogical perspective, different models have been put forward for the categorization of culture, but there is not a generally accepted proposal. Ultimately, cultural teaching and learning do not seem to have kept pace with the development of the concept of culture and the academic debate, as textbooks’ emphasis on big “C” illustrates.

Regarding Foreign Language Teaching, it is widely accepted that the goal is to achieve Intercultural Competence. Since this is not automatically attained in the classroom, educators need to work on its development.

In line with the previous ideas, we developed a workshop using audiovisual resources. Thus, we designed a worksheet with pre-, while-



and after-watching activities in order to help students develop cultural awareness and identify less visible aspects of culture.

As we seek to promote positive attitudes, such as willingness to learn about other cultures and overcoming prejudices against otherness, it was decisive to measure the students' perceptions. In relation to IC assessment, initiatives such as FREPA have succeeded in developing a set of descriptors endorsed by the Council of Europe. However, designing and validating objective assessment tools is a different matter altogether. As we have previously stated, assessing the attitudes and awareness that compose intercultural competence has been proved elusive at best (Fantini, 2009). For these reasons, formative self-assessment tools are recommended. Following these ideas, we decided to elaborate a Likert-scale questionnaire to measure the students' perception regarding cultural knowledge, skills and attitudes towards otherness.

After carrying out the statistical study, the results show that, in general, students perceive this type of activity as very positive. Participants particularly valued the possibility to uncover invisible cultural values (item 2) and that this type of activity increases their curiosity and motivation (item 5), which is key to positive attitude development according to Conway & Richards (2016).

As stated by Deardoff (2011), the ability to suspend one's own beliefs (item 3) is essential for intercultural competence development. In our study, this ability correlates with avoiding prejudice and understanding that cultural beliefs underlay behaviors (items 6 and 2), which again corroborate this author's ideas. Furthermore, the relation between items 1 and 3 seems to attest the interdependence between becoming aware of one's own cultural values and the ability to decentre (Byram, 2008). Finally, the correlation between items 4 and 6 seems to indicate students perceive that correctly decoding non-verbal communication is a way to avoid its prejudicial interpretation, which oftentimes lead to cultural mishaps.

The authors are aware of the small size sample used, which precludes extracting general transposable conclusions. However, this study suggests that in our particular setting (Higher Education English Language C1 classroom), students perceive this type of workshop as a valid tool for skill

and attitude development, i.e., as a way to effectively develop their intercultural competence.

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## ANNEX 1

**WHILE YOU WATCH**

A) Answer these comprehension questions

FIRST PART (0:01-9:10)

1. How is Dev and Brian's fathers' reaction to their sons' selfishness?
2. What kind of difficulties do their parents encounter when arriving in the US?

SECOND PART (9:11-16:44)

3. What do Dev and Brian complain about their parents?
4. What does Dev learn about his father while having tea with Dr. Ramusani?
5. What are "first generation kids"?

THIRD PART (16:45-END)

6. How was their parents' childhood?
7. How was Dev's mother first day in the US?
8. How did Dev's parents meet?
9. What story does Brian's father share?

B) Check the cultural categories as you observe them in the episode (not all must be checked)

Big 'C' Categories (visible)	
Ethnic groups	
Urban life/infrastructure/housing/transportation	
Education	
Dress-style	
Food	
Social customs	
Leisure/sports	
Family	
Non-verbal communication	

Small 'c' categories (invisible)	
Individualism/collectivism	
Materialism	
Confrontation	
Nurture (up-bringing)	
Level of formality	
Communication styles: direct vs. indirect	
Self-improvement	

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***AFTER YOU WATCH***

C) Discuss these questions in groups:

- In the first part, what is the origin of conflict in both situations?
- Is the origin of conflict a cultural gap (American vs. Eastern/Asian) or a generational gap (sons vs. parents)?
- Are you able to establish analogies between their interactions and your interactions with your own parents?
- Debate around the “invisible” small c categories presented in the episode (individualism vs. collectivism, communication styles, materialism...)
- How does the music in the episode provide with context and “tells” the story?

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