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**L'apprentissage d'expressions figées en anglais
lors du visionnage de sitcoms : le rôle de l'intentionnalité**

**Learning Fixed Expressions in English through watching Sitcoms:
The role of Intentionality**



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Abstract

Our thesis investigates the role of intention in learning fixed expressions in English through watching Sitcoms. One of the main topics of interest in this thesis is the seemingly unlimited range of activities web 2.0 offers. Internet users can exploit it for entertainment, information, communication, socializing, training and, what interests us the most in this thesis, language learning. To answer our research question **“To what extent can different levels of intention impact the learning of fixed expressions while watching Sitcoms in English?”**, we carried out a three-phase study with five objectives in mind. The first phase consisted of a questionnaire aiming (1) to understand the current context of exposure and use of English of French university students outside of class and (2) to explore the possible intentions guiding sitcom viewing. In the second phase we conducted a quasi-experiment (3) to measure the impact of intention on learning fixed expressions while watching sitcoms and (4) to a better understanding of learners’ gaze while watching sitcoms to analyze the learning of fixed expressions. Finally, the third phase was designed (5) to investigate the role of teacher intervention in promoting metacognitive awareness. We found that a considerable number of students receive a substantial amount of input in English, in which series viewing is the favorite audiovisual activity they undertake. Results also indicated that the enjoyment sitcoms bring is an underlying reason for series watching, together with the intention to learn the language. By watching *Friends*, *How I Met Your Mother*, *The Big Bang Theory* and *Brooklyn 99*, every participant learned at least one of the six fixed expressions (*Way to go*, *Hang in there*, *You’re on*, *Knock it off*, *Get over it* and *Good grief*). Furthermore, nonverbal clues in the expressive facial expressions helped participants learn some of the expressions, while reading captions seemed to have helped other target items. Finally, results show a considerable difference in gains between just asking participants to pay attention to the language and helping them direct attention to it, through strategy training. This indicates that different degrees of intention can change learning outcomes.

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Introduction

“Questions are, in many respects, the hallmarks of the philosopher's trade.”
(Watson, 2021)

Inquisitiveness, reflectiveness and curiosity are at the center of this doctoral research for two reasons. Firstly, we were inspired by Socrates's distinctive questioning style and, therefore, throughout this thesis, we ask questions to illustrate and support our underlying theoretical points and our line of reasoning: (1) for some of them we have found answers in the literature, (2) a few will be answered thanks to our study, (3) others are meant to provoke reflection and curiosity. Furthermore, and most importantly, most of our findings generated other relevant and challenging questions, detailed in our conclusion. The second reason is that our research question, to be presented at the end of this introduction, emerged from a query about why people engage in informal learning practices, as well as what is possible to learn and how English is learned in such contexts. Suffice to say, the approach taken in the following pages is based on the attempt to contribute to debates in Applied Linguistics with intellectual humility, rigor, and open-mindedness (Baehr, 2011).

One of the main topics of interest in this thesis is the seemingly unlimited range of activities web 2.0 offers. Internet users can exploit it for entertainment, information, communication, socializing, training and, what interests us the most in this thesis, language learning. This myriad of possibilities has generated a growing enthusiasm in some researchers in Applied Linguistics, who have always been intrigued by the practical applications of linguistics and language theories (Richards & Schmidt, 2010, p. vi) and are now investigating how language learning takes place in such virtual environments.

One advantage of internet use for learning English is the immersion it provides. Research has pointed out that university students in France produce, interact, read and listen to English in their free time (Kusyk & Sockett, 2012; Toffoli & Sockett, 2010, 2015b; Yibokou, 2019). This immersion may contribute to language development (Donohoe, 2022; Sanz, 2014; Yang, 2016), helping learners achieve higher levels of proficiency even when they do not or cannot go abroad (Mangenot, 2011). Given the pioneering work started in the 2000's, the time may be right **to understand the current context of exposure and use of English of French university students outside of class**¹. Our hypothesis is that a considerable number of university students still receive a great deal of input in English and have opportunities to use the language in their daily lives.

¹ The theoretical framework for this objective is developed in the first chapter “Second Language Learning”.

This thesis seeks, however, to reveal many other facets of language learning. The reasons why learners engage in such practices constitute a relatively unexplored area in our field and, with this in mind, we also aim to examine users' intentions guiding practices in these out-of-class contexts. Recent research² with a theoretical basis that draws on constructivism (Kusyk, 2015) generally collects and analyzes data from a social perspective, based on the premise that language is learned through interaction and reaction to people's environment (Martinez, 1989). These studies dialogue with psychological theories concerned with "how social-contextual factors support or thwart people's thriving through the satisfaction of their basic psychological need for relatedness" (Ryan & Deci, 2017, p. 3).

Notable examples of this line of work are studies conducted by Rivens Mompean (2010), Toffoli & Sockett (2010, 2015) and Cappellini et al. (2016), who have made significant contributions to the study of language learning by investigating learning practices and social interactions online. Even though their research questions did not focus on uncovering the reasons why humans engage in such activities, their studies were built upon the idea of relatedness and their findings could suggest that this is one of the forces that moves users. Thus, it is very likely that one of the driving forces behind watching series, reading and writing in forums, in blogs and on social media is the feeling of being significant among others, of belonging to a community, and of contributing to organizations beyond oneself. Given the relevant contribution that these studies have made to relatedness, this thesis set out to investigate the two other paramount human psychological needs: competence and autonomy.

The following pages will present our research context, which falls within the scope of Adult Language Learning, and concerns the role of intention in the learning of fixed expressions through sitcoms (situation comedy). It is paramount to point out from the beginning that no distinction will be made between language acquisition and language learning (Krashen, 1982)³. Central to this decision is that we defend the role of intention and proactivity in language learning, even in situations in which individuals are supposed to "pick up" the language with no effort (such as watching series). Above all, we support the premise that subconscious learning does not exist (R. W. Schmidt, 1990) and consciousness is part of the process of gaining new knowledge at various dimensions and levels, which will be discussed in chapter one (Benson, 2011; R. W. Schmidt, 1990), arguments that will be fully discussed in our theoretical chapters. In what follows, we will not only explain the above-mentioned key words, but we will also discuss the importance of the internet, describe the psychological theory

² (Schugurensky & Rieu, 2007; Sockett, 2014; Toffoli, 2008)

³ According to Krashen's influential acquisition theory (1982), acquisition is an effortless process of internalization of a language, while learning is related to teaching and rules (p. 10).

behind our hypotheses, and present the five guiding objectives that will allow us to answer our general research question.

Ryan and Deci's well-established 1985 Self-Determination Theory (SDT) formulates the principle that people's life motivations stem from three basic psychological needs: *Relatedness, Competence And Autonomy* (Ryan & Deci, 2017, p. 3), needs that are essential for optimal motivation and for individuals' general well-being. In this thesis, we argue that other than feeling socially connected, people may also engage in informal practices in English (out-of-class activities) to gain in competence, which is "our basic need to feel mastery, manifested in our curiosity and epistemic motives" (Ryan & Deci, 2017, p. 11)⁴. According to the theory, developing skills and abilities is a crucial motive for human behavior and this mastery is attained over time, requiring directed, selective, and persistent activity (Deci & Moller, 2005, p. 581). Ryan & Deci (2017) stated that, this desire for competence "energizes myriad behaviors, from people in leisure moments playing mobile video games to scientists discovering the laws of the universe" (p. 11). Therefore, activities that contribute to skills attainment are a great incentive for frequency in engagement leading individuals to pleasant affective states (Schultheiss & Brunstein, 2005).

Moreover, in light of research done on media use (Sherry, 2004), competence is one of the drives for engagement. In his 2004's article, Sherry explains that films and television programs are designed according to conventions and, for that reason, some may be more difficult than others. In order for a medium to be intrinsically motivating for an individual, and promote their well-being, the choice of media is usually connected with competence, namely the individual's ability to interpret the medium's message as well as the person's usage skills. For it to have a high potential for enjoyment, users must be able to cope with the difficulty of the media, which brings them to choose media whose message is challenging but not too difficult. All things considered, a few questions have arisen: "what does it mean to enjoy media? ... Why do we spend so much time pursuing entertainment? Are we mindlessly 'amusing ourselves to death' ... or is there a deeper motivation behind this common form of human behavior?" (Sherry, 2004, p. 328). According to Sherry (2004), the answer is "Flow".

What do people experience when they are deeply enjoying an activity? In 1975, researcher Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi developed the concept of Flow by studying the question above:

⁴ We use the term competence as gaining skills (Ryan & Deci, 2017), contrarily to definitions related to how successfully a person performs or the achievement of competitive success (Schultheiss & Brunstein, 2005; Zimmerman & Kitsantas, 2005).

“The basic assumption was that, in all the various groups studied, the respondents reported a very similar subjective experience that they enjoyed so much that they were willing to go to great lengths to experience it again. This we eventually called the ‘Flow experience,’ because in describing how it felt when the activity was going well, several respondents used the metaphor of a current that carried them along effortlessly” (Csikszentmihalyi et al., 2005, p. 600).

Flow is, thus, the feeling of full enjoyment in which the individual forgets everything else and the experience is its own reward (Csikszentmihalyi, 2014, p. 183). For individuals to reach Flow, certain conditions must be met. Traditionally, three components are considered primordial: goals setting, chance of completion and instant feedback. According to Csikszentmihalyi et al. (2005), Flow occurs when an activity contains a clear set of goals, for it adds direction and purpose to behavior. There must also be a balance between perceived challenges and perceived skills: one must feel able to accomplish the task to feel absorbed by it. Csikszentmihalyi (2009) explains that this is a fragile balance given that if the activity becomes too difficult or too easy the individual may become anxious or bored, respectively. Finally, the activity must provide clear and immediate feedback, which informs the individual of how well they are progressing in the activity, and dictates whether to adjust or maintain the present course of action.

Based on the fundamental assumption that Flow guides media use, and considering that goal setting is one of its essential components, our research also aims to examine what university students experience when they are watching one specific type of program in English: sitcoms⁵. Sitcom, an abbreviation for *Situation Comedy*, is a category in series broadcast by TV and streaming companies. They are short and address everyday life. Based on the premise that humans are born with an internal need for improvement (Ryan & Deci, 2017), and as far as the easy message Sitcoms convey, could watching sitcoms be guided by the desire to learn English?

Altogether, given the little attention paid to it in our field, we believe that some or much of the learning that happens in informal practices may be self-directed⁶, with an intention to learn the language. Hence why our second objective is **to explore the possible intentions guiding Sitcom viewing**⁷. Our hypothesis is that the intention of learning English is one of the reasons that makes people want to continue with the effort required to view in a foreign language and competence is, thus, a driving force to this informal learning practice.

⁵ A discussion on the choice of the use, authenticity and difficulty of Sitcoms is held in chapter four.

⁶ Self-direction is a type of learning in which the person has the intention to learn when engaging in an activity (Benson, 2011). A discussion on the topic is held in chapter one.

⁷ The theoretical framework for this objective is developed in chapter two.

Our search for understanding intention when watching sitcoms is two-fold. In addition to exploring the general intention behind this practice, presented above, we also seek to contribute to the field by assessing the role of intention immediately prior to watching. If our hypothesis that Flow pertains to sitcom viewing is confirmed, how would setting a specific goal before watching influence learning?

This question stems from the study of goal pursuit (Csikszentmihalyi, 2009; Gollwitzer & Bargh, 2005; Schultheiss et al., 2008), concerned with the intersection of competence and motivation. This association is significant because for over 20 years now, scholars⁸ have been questioning the role learners should take in language learning, arguing for the development of autonomy, reflexivity, agency, *apprenance* and self-direction⁹. Thus, we hypothesize that encouraging learners to set vocabulary learning goals (intentional vocabulary learning) while watching sitcoms may foster more learning.

Considering that viewers must have at least an intermediate level of proficiency in English to cope with unknown words in the medium (Milton, 2010b; Nation, 1990; van Zeeland & Schmitt, 2012), and that colloquialisms and idiomatic expressions are of major importance to achieve a high proficiency level in a foreign language (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 27)¹⁰, we aim to shed light on a frequent type of formulaic language found in sitcoms: fixed expressions¹¹. We assume that sitcom watching gives a significant advantage for viewers to learn useful language¹².

In spite of the large amount of research on intentional and incidental (non-intentional) vocabulary learning through aural means, concerning single words and multi-word expressions, most discussions have remained at either theoretical considerations or analysis of each type of learning individually¹³. In view of the valuable association between intention, the use of sitcoms and its possible influence in the acquisition of fixed expressions, our third objective is **to measure the impact of intention on learning fixed expressions while watching sitcoms**. Our hypothesis is that watching with the objective of learning fixed expressions results in better vocabulary gains than watching just for entertainment.

⁸ (Albero, 2009; Albero et al., 2008; Carré, 2020, 2022, 2023; Esch, 1999; Jézégou, 2022; Rivens Mompean, 2013, 2014; Schugurensky & Rieu, 2007)

⁹ These concepts emerged from the study of autonomy and are fully explained in chapters one, two and five.

¹⁰ The connection between proficiency levels and the learning of vocabulary is discussed in chapter three.

¹¹ Fixed expressions are “strings of words for which the interpretation is not (entirely) derived from the individual meanings of the words comprising the string Further, this non-literal interpretation has become 'fixed' in the language by use” (Hillert & Swinney, 1999, p. 2).

¹² A full discussion on fixed expressions is held in chapter three.

¹³ Some examples of studies involving single words are: Brown et al. (2008) working on incidental learning of pseudo-words through stories; (Feng & Webb, 2020) working on single words through viewing a documentary; and Majuddin & Siyanova-Chanturia (2021) comparing incidental and intentional learning of collocations.

Other questions arose during our inquiry. If our hypothesis that university students watch sitcoms in their free time is confirmed (first objective), that one of the motives behind it is language learning (second objective), and that it is possible to learn fixed expressions while watching (third objective), the obvious ensuing question is how does it happen? So, our study explores further the notion of vocabulary learning, trying to contribute to the currently available picture of factors that affect ESL vocabulary acquisition, such as the importance of multimodality (images and captions) in learning (Dressman, 2020b; Montero Perez, 2020b).

Given the extensive research that shows the superiority of written (reading) over aural means (listening) in vocabulary learning (R. Brown et al., 2008; van Zeeland & Schmitt, 2012), it was unsurprising when research indicated that captions (subtitles in the target language) help vocabulary learning (Fievez et al., 2020; Montero Perez et al., 2013, 2014). However, little is known about how attention to captions, compared to attention to images, affects learning. Thus, we aim to **contribute to a better understanding of learners' gaze while watching sitcoms to analyze the learning of fixed expressions**¹⁴.

Finally, our study furthers its agenda with a fifth objective, which concerns the role of teachers in informal learning. If teaching and learning have long been topics of interest in society and many ancient beliefs and methods have inspired practices used nowadays, how can Socrates's ways (471/470-399 B.C) enlighten our teaching beliefs and our contemporary practices? Away from institutions, schools or any particular place, Socrates was known for interacting with his disciples aiming at fostering critical thinking without any concerns over examination or regulation (Mares, 2018). Socrates understood a master's role as an encourager of learning search, helping individuals self-educate and reflect independently, rather than being a knowledge holder (Araújo Batista, 2015). For a historical overview, it was only with one of his disciples, Plato (424/423 - 348/347 B.C), that a notion of a more utilitarian, institutionalized education was envisaged (Mares, 2018).

Plato developed a different concept of education: He discoursed on more controlled instructions, since he considered it as a way of specializing individuals to fulfill needs of the polis (Mares, 2018). Organized by the state, the objective of these meetings was to teach virtues appropriate to different professions, to allow men to fully contribute to society, such as a balance of temperance for artisans, prudence for political leaders or courage for soldiers (Mares, 2018). Organized around learning goals, individuals would be tested every 10 years or so, to determine whether they would continue in academia or practice a specific profession, according to the virtues

¹⁴ We will analyze learners' gaze by using eye tracking technology. More information is presented in chapter five.

they had acquired. It was later in 384–322 BC that these two philosophies would be blended by Aristotle.

Socrates' never-ending quest for wisdom and Plato's state-controlled education model were combined in Aristotelian philosophy which preached learning through reason and habits. For instance, in order to learn rhetoric, one must perform speeches regularly (Mares, 2018). This idea that learning should last for the entire life persisted, and now, more than ever, researchers in different fields have looked into what it is and how it can be further fostered¹⁵.

The present thesis tackles this issue from the perspective of Ryan & Deci's (2017) self-determination theory and human beings' need for autonomy, by **investigating the role of teacher intervention in promoting metacognitive awareness**. Given that autonomy is the need to self-regulate one's experiences and actions (Ryan & Deci, 2017, p. 10), in chapter five, we will explore the significance of learner's engagement in knowledge construction, focusing on reflexivity to promote agency¹⁶ and the development of metacognition, which can be beneficial in informal learning contexts.

Despite the extensive research done in autonomy in language learning, metacognitive and reflexive self-consciousness are "interesting notion[s], but not one[s] on which there has been much research" (R. W. Schmidt, 1990, p. 134). Some exceptions are the work done by researchers working on education in the work place, such as Polanyi (1967), Eraut (2004), and Schugurensky & Rieu (2007). They have highlighted the interest of reflecting on informal and implicit knowledge to make it available to use, for it is also a key to develop a new competence. Because some people may not be aware that they have learned something in a particular experience until they talk to someone else about it, it is through the interaction with a researcher or a teacher that retrospective awareness may be enabled.

Therefore, our aim is to encourage reflexivity in informal learning via nonformal contexts, such as a meeting in a language center, to develop metacognitive strategies and bring the individual one step further in the autonomy process. That means putting an accent on having learning goals to fulfill our need for mastering new things in a context that is in itself enjoyable (watching sitcoms). As Dweck (2000) puts it, "the attention here is on finding strategies for learning. When things don't go well, this has nothing to do with the student's intellect. It simply means that the right strategies have not yet been found" (p.16). Based on the belief that combining autonomy and competence in sitcom watching will bring satisfaction and will drive the individual to action (Ryan & Deci, 2017, p. 7), we hypothesize that encouraging the search for learning, self-direction and reflection through

¹⁵ Research in lifelong learning (Rivens Mompean, 2013; Schugurensky & Rieu, 2007; Tough, 2002) and *apprenance*, or "the need for a proactive, positive set of dispositions to learn from various contexts, in different modes, with formal or informal resources" (Carré, 2023) are discussed in chapter five.

¹⁶ Agency refers to the capacity of human beings to act intentionally and autonomously, being able to make their own choices and carry them out in a rational manner by effectively allocating resources to them. (Jézégou, 2022, p. 41)

consciousness-raising (metacognitive awareness) and learning strategies are great assets for informal vocabulary learning. Needless to say, our defense of learning strategies in a nonformal context should reflect our desire to encourage students to be autonomous. Sessions in a nonformal context should provide learners with strategies that will either become automatic with time, or tools to be used when the individual desires and finds convenient.

In view of an academic and professional contribution as to how to support informal learning, our research question is: **To what extent can different levels of intention impact the learning of fixed expressions while watching Sitcoms in English?** This question is supported by objectives two, three and five, which investigate intention as motives for watching, intention prior to watching operationalized in goal-setting and intention as a metacognitive strategy, respectively (in blue in Figure 1). Objectives one and four, the context of exposure and the role of multimodality, respectively, should come as a support for better understanding the learning process.

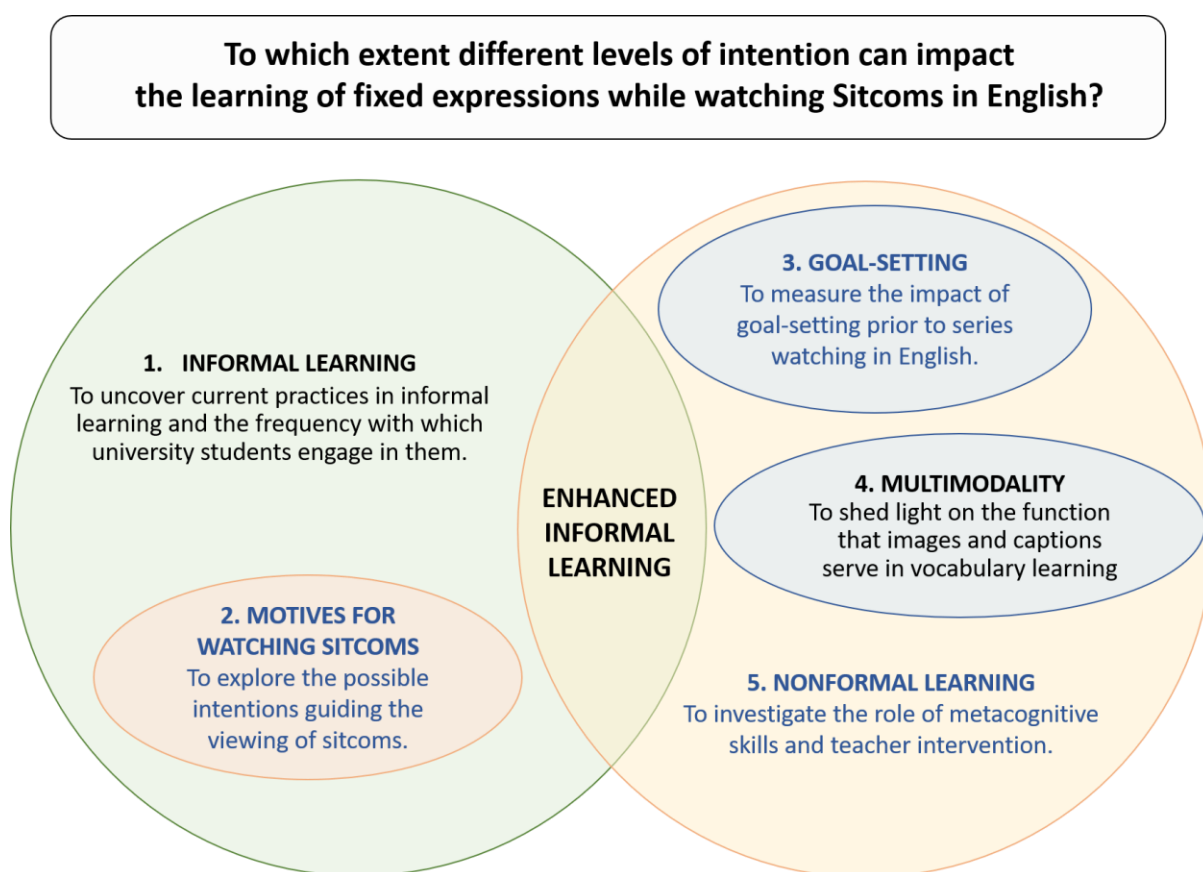


Figure 1 - Interaction between research objectives

The stakes of such a question are not trivial. Exploring the role of intentionality in learning may provide key contributions to learners in their pursuit of proficiency, to teachers who seek to

better aid learners to become more autonomous and to researchers working on different types of language learning. For this reason, this thesis will explore 1) the different dimensions in second language learning beyond the classroom, 2) the different levels of consciousness in learning, 3) learning fixed expressions, 4) learning with series, and 5) learning in autonomy, respectively in our theoretical chapters.

Having discussed how we have established our research objectives and how their connection can help us answer our research question, the final paragraphs of this introduction address the content of each chapter of this thesis. As explained in the previous lines, we consider the order of the objectives important to have a better picture of the learning process and the different levels of intention involved and, for that reason, our chapters will follow the same structure.

The first part of this thesis, 'Exploring types of learning and notions of vocabulary acquisition', corresponds to the theoretical framework and includes five chapters. Even though each chapter presents one research objective, they converse with each other while providing theoretical bases that will be explored in the subsequent chapters. The first two chapters outline concepts and arguments related to different types of learning, with the objective of better understanding the articulation between their dimensions and levels. The other three chapters present and discuss various findings related to vocabulary acquisition, as well as learning means and environments.

Chapter one defines terms such as (language) learning, internet immersion, exposure and different dimensions in language learning, such as formality and pedagogy (Benson, 2011). It also underpins our field of research, 'Second Language learning', drawing a historical panorama of informal and nonformal learning in order to provide a theoretical viewpoint that justifies our argumentation on the role of intention in informal language learning. Chapter two further explores the concept of intention in light of the debate started by Schmidt (1990), who indicated the many senses the terms may have, often used interchangeably with 'consciousness'. This chapter reflects the way in which we approached our object of study and the discussion is invaluable to understanding not only our position regarding intention in informal learning, but also to shed light on the meaning different authors have given to it in recent empirical research over the years.

The remaining theoretical chapters focus on aspects of vocabulary learning, through different means (reading and listening). Chapter three underlines factors influencing learning, such as frequency, number of encounters, context, salience, as well as the different degrees of knowledge (receptive and productive uses). It provides a critical review of relevant research findings and defines our object of study, fixed expressions. In chapter four, we discuss recent findings involving vocabulary learning through written and aural means to later focus on the frequency of fixed expressions in

Sitcoms. Finally, chapter five debates the relevance of studying multimodality (images and captions) in learning through audiovisual material, presents the use of eye-tracking, and ends by discussing the role of language centers in helping learners better navigate series viewing and vocabulary learning in informal learning contexts.

The second part of this thesis concerns methodological considerations and the results of our study. Chapter six describes the data collection of all three phases of the work, tightly connected to our five research objectives, through the use of a questionnaire, pre and posttests, a quasi-experiment, eye-tracking procedures and an interview. Chapter seven presents the results related to each research objective and provides a preliminary discussion on these findings.

In the third part, in chapter eight, we hold a detailed discussion to analyze and interpret the data based on what the literature indicated and the hypothesis we developed. We try to answer some of the questions asked throughout this thesis, by connecting them with our theoretical framework and laying out our contributions to learners, researchers and teachers.

Altogether, the elements presented in this introduction offer a brief theoretical overview regarding the role of intention in the learning of fixed expressions through sitcoms, in order to present our guiding objectives and our research question. It also outlines this thesis' organization, detailing the theoretical chapters and the methodology designed to address our inquisitiveness and curiosity. We anticipate that our investigation, culminating in theoretical analysis and our initial yet promising results and discussion, will indicate to what extent adding intention to the process of informal language learning can be beneficial.

“I hope that by offering an answer, I can play a worthwhile role in stimulating, advancing, or opening up that discussion.” (Watson, 2021)

PART I. Exploring the research context and gap on types of learning

Language learning is “the process by which change in behavior, knowledge [and] skills comes about through practice, instruction or experience and the result of such a process” (Richards & Schmidt, 2010, p. 328). Because learning can be developed in different ways, in the literature in Applied Linguistics, many terms and concepts have emerged throughout the years to define and explain the mechanisms involved in the process, as well as to understand and find ways to stimulate learning. One topic of interest in the field is learning English as a Second Language (ESL) and this thesis investigated this subject from three dimensions: formality, intentionality and explicitness, concepts that are detailed in the following chapter.

ESL designates “English [as] the second language of anyone who learns it after learning their first language in infancy in the home” (Richards & Schmidt, 2010, p. 192) and, since the 1980s, the interest for understanding its acquisition has intensified among researchers. Stephen Krashen (1982) is a particularly important scholar in the field and his theories on language acquisition and language learning have had a great deal of influence on subsequent research. On the one hand, Krashen puts forward the idea that language learning is a process that requires intellectual effort to occur: It is the act of learning when trying to learn, being able to talk about what was learned, especially in a classroom context, and it involves the study of explicit rules of language (Krashen, 2013). On the other hand, acquisition refers to a process in which one internalizes the language when exposed to it, by “picking up” the language when focused on meaning rather than form. The user of the language does not know that it is happening and they are not aware of the rules they acquired (Krashen, 1982).

More recent research, however, has adopted different terminologies to describe the learning/acquisition process. Researchers have used more specific terms to focus on the context of learning (whether it is in or outside the classroom environment), the intentions of individuals (learning when trying to learn or not), the internal functioning at play (the study of rules or “picking up” the language) and the learning results (being able to talk about what was learned). These concepts are often intertwined and they dialogue in different ways. For that reason, the words ‘learning’ and ‘acquisition’ are used interchangeably in this thesis, not as opposites. Our objective is to study how these alternative terms have been employed in the literature, to clarify their meaning, to shed light on the continuums involved in the topic and to examine how they can be associated.

This first chapter gives a short account of learning in immersion contexts to highlight the importance of exposure to the target language in order to learn it. Subsequently, it discusses more in depth three learning conditions in which users of the language have more or less intention to learn: naturalistic, self-directed naturalistic, and self-directed learning.

Chapter 1. Reframing definitions on Second Language Learning

1.1 Language Learning

“There is far too much to learn, and not enough time to learn half of it.”
(Dickinson & Carver, 1980:1)

One important concept that has been studied in ESL, and a key concept of this thesis, is the different levels of formality in learning. It is widely-believed that a learner who has access to language classes and is able to learn through out-of-class activities has the best of both worlds. Historically, researchers in Applied Linguistics have studied formal learning contexts, which are usually organized “by educational or training institutions, with structured learning objectives, learning time and support provided” (Mangenot, 2011:2). This includes “classes in a language center or even private tutoring lessons, if those lessons are organized and taught regularly by an instructor” (Dressman, 2020a, p. 4), focusing on classroom management, grammar explanation and error correction, for instance. Only more recently have other learning contexts been taken into account.

In the late 1960s, the paradigm began to shift due to a global need to meet basic educational needs. Philip Coombs (1968, 1973) outlined how the term Education had been strongly linked to formal systems but had to change to take into account other modes of learning that are not time-bound, do not depend on a place, a method, the age of the learner nor is it measured by years of exposure. In a book called “Attacking rural poverty: how nonformal education can help” (1974), Coombs & Ahmed explain that a highly institutionalized education, which can be found in school or university, could not account for all people who need to learn, neither could it fulfill all of people’s needs, and, therefore, suggested the concepts of nonformal and informal education, in which the teacher is not the main source of knowledge for students.

The central concern of Coombs & Ahmed (1974) is how education could be “organized and systematic, [but] carried on outside the framework of the formal system to provide selected types of learning to particular subgroups in the population” (p. 8), which they defined as “nonformal education”. They gave the following examples: “agricultural extension and farmer training programs, adult literacy programs, ... youth clubs with substantial educational purposes, and various community programs of instruction in health, nutrition, family planning [etc.]” (p. 8). This concept has been borrowed by researchers in Applied Linguistics, stressing its structured nature, with deadlines, support and goals.

Over the past decade, in Applied Linguistics, nonformal learning (instead of nonformal education) came to be a term applied to knowledge organized by a third party, involving the use of “professionally produced learning materials in a non-academic context” (Sockett, 2014:11), not belonging to any educational or training institution, and generally not leading to any certification (Mangenot, 2011). It is the case of websites for language learning (such as Rosetta Stone, Live Mocha, Babbel and Tell Me More), (e-)Tandem, textbooks, CD-ROMs and DVDs, all of which are available commercially in order to learn a language privately (Mangenot, 2011; Sockett, 2014). Such materials are part of SaaS, or *Software as a Service*, in which users engage in a mixture of free and subscription contents (Sockett, 2014:11).

In 2014, Sockett was already calling our attention to the dematerialization of learning materials in the digital age and the phenomenon has increased ever since. This detail is significant because technological developments have greatly increased the growth of online learning, may it be with the emergence of learning mobile applications (apps), or other platforms that do not have a pedagogical purpose but allow learners to be in constant contact with the target language, such as news, streaming, music and shopping apps. To reflect on the impact that such technologies have on language learning, since they give people the opportunity to be surrounded by the English language on a daily basis, subsections 1.1.1 and 1.1.2 stimulate a discussion that leads us to the concept of ‘informal learning (section 1.2), which “generally takes place outside [formal] contexts and is, thus, organized differently” (Sundqvist, 2020, p. 323).

1.1.1 The potential of immersion conditions

“Go to your local university and seek out some students who are international or “foreign”. Ask them how they learned to speak, read, and write your language so well. Their first answer might be that they took lessons or learned in school. But then, press them: How did they *really* learn the language? How did they pick up its slang and master its pronunciation so well? How did they acquire its pragmatics, or understanding of use in context? They might hesitate, but in most cases, they will tell you: They learned these things from watching movies online or on satellite television, or from playing video games, or from chatrooms or perhaps from a friend or relative with whom they practiced. Yes, they had a teacher and took classes, but the learning that led to being able to use the language to do things was informal, and came from human contact online or in person, and from watching many, many movies and television shows or listening to a lot of music in their target language.” (Dressman, 2020, p. 1-2)

Research in Applied Linguistics has answered many questions as to how individuals “pick up slang and master pronunciation so well” and how they “acquire [the] understanding of [the

language's] use in context" (Dressman, 2020a, p. 2). Dressman (2020) goes as far as to say that "nearly every foreign language teacher we have ever known would agree that in areas such as acquiring pronunciation and fluency, there is no substitute for 'immersion' in a community of speakers" (p.2). While anecdotal evidence is a good start to understand the potential of immersion conditions, what does scientific research say about immersion and learning? What happens when individuals are in a context of immersion, such as Study Abroad programs? How is it that others still manage to achieve native-like proficiency without ever going overseas?

Studying abroad continues to be perceived as an experience that fosters intensive, regular and contextualized encounters with the language (Yang, 2016), providing favorable conditions for language development (Sanz, 2014). Due to the complexity of the phenomenon, different methodologies have been used to understand and measure learning in different immersion contexts but, for now, most findings have been reported as inconclusive and, in some cases, contradictory (Donohoe, 2022; Sanz, 2014; Yang, 2016). The prevailing impression is that "while abroad, learners imbibe the language, soak it in, they feel like sponges, they are surrounded, covered with language, their brains saturated. They learn by doing, by living, until one day they discover themselves thinking in the language" (Sanz, 2014, p. 1).

A parallel could be drawn between immersion programs and the use of technology in English by university students today. Profound changes have taken place in the way online English language media is used in France (Sockett, 2011; Yibokou, 2019), which is the context of the present research. The significant amount of exposure to the language makes it possible to achieve native-like proficiency without being in a country that speaks the target language (Mangenot, 2011). In 2001, Mangenot pointed out how successful gamers can be in language learning because of the number of hours they spend playing in the target language and the passion they put into it, which helps them make remarkable progress. These factors are developed in the subsection that follows (1.1.2): learners' exposure to English, according to empirical research, and the role of exposure in language learning.

1.1.2 The value of exposure in language learning

Given the illimited number of possibilities of access to the English language today, compared to 50 years ago, researchers in Applied Linguistics have started to investigate their role in Adult Second Language Learning. Accessibility has rapidly increased in the past three decades, giving people access to international chatrooms such as mIRC and MSN (in 1995). Ten years later (2005), it was followed by Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games (MMORPGs), pirate music streaming, legal

downloads with iTunes, as well as platforms in which people share their lives, thoughts and culture (such as blogs, YouTube and Facebook). Another decade and illegal downloads of films and series became a reality, succeeded by subscription video on-demand and Netflix as we know today (2013), all of which were not developed and intended for language learning specifically, but can be appropriated for that purpose by many users, which is called 'authentic materials' in ESL (Richards & Schmidt, 2010, p. 42), developed in chapter four.

The means mentioned above have an immersive potential and can be highly favorable to language learning when done in the target language. Because of English's pervasive nature (Sockett, 2011) nowadays, it has become a second language to its users, rather than a foreign language. This had been observed by Crystal (2003) and R. Ellis (2008) who pointed out that considering English as a Foreign Language is a poor reflection of the language's sociolinguistic reality, as it can no longer be distinguished as 'local' or 'foreign' (Mitchell et al., 2012). And now more than ever: Thanks to the internet, the language is present in scientific language, computer use and popular music (Sockett, 2011a; Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2016c). For these reasons, in the past decade, English as a Second language and its broad use outside the classroom has interested other researchers, who have conducted empirical research on forums (Rivens Mompean, 2007), movies (Berk, 2009), blogs (Rivens Mompean, 2010), series (Sockett, 2011a; Wang, 2012; S. Webb, 2011), social networks (Sockett, 2012) as well as music (Schwarz, 2013).

One of the first empirical studies on how French university students are exposed to English outside of class was conducted by Toffoli & Sockett in 2010. In their survey, they obtained 250 answers from university students in Strasbourg, France, finding that they produce, interact, read and listen to English in their free time. Speaking is the skill they practiced the least, even with the development of VOIP technologies such as Skype at the time: 70% of students surveyed said they never use such services in English. That does not mean, however, that they do not produce the language: Findings showed that students use English as a lingua franca to write to friends on social networking websites such as Facebook, on a weekly basis, which was not possible a decade before. The researchers reported that the type of writing they engage in is mostly characterized by short sentences and focused on interaction, with private and/or personal content, such as in blogs, instant messaging, social networks and e-mail.

When it comes to comprehension activities, Toffoli & Sockett (2010) found that, for most students, reading is part of an interactive process, such as reading in social media. 25% of respondents claimed to read English on a variety of websites at least once a week, but the largest group of respondents claimed to read documents on the web less than once a month. Furthermore, they found that the majority of learners of English were exposed to authentic materials, especially through aural

means: 90% of students claim to listen to English at least once a month, of whom more than 50% of them listen to English at least once a week. Their favorite activities are listening to music, watching films and television series (that they download or stream).

In a similar vein, Yibokou (2019) also found that French university students spent several hours a week using English outside the classroom (p. 305). They mostly communicated with others face to face (N=11), rather than online (N=9), listened to an average of 2.4 hours of music per week and watch on average 10 hours of American series. In another recent study, conducted by Peters (2018), 19 year-old Dutch speaking learners of English were surveyed, and findings confirmed that they are **regularly** exposed to aural input a few times a week: over 98% of them listened to songs, over 57% are exposed to subtitled TV programs (L1/L2), 38% to programs without subtitles, 42% to movies without subtitles and 42% to subtitled movies (L1/L2). Results also showed that many learners (around 32%) never read books in English and half of them only do it a few times a year. Another interesting finding is that in their study, when it comes to playing computer games, the two extremes had the most answers: around 38% of the respondents never play, and 28% play games a few times a week.

Furthermore, Peters et al. (2019) compared high school and university students' in and out-of-school exposure to two foreign/second languages (French and English), and concluded that, despite fewer years of English instruction, participants' vocabulary knowledge in English was considerably larger than in French, due to the large amounts of out-of-school exposure to the English language. All in all, as a result of such exposure, research has consistently shown that contact with English in student's leisure time explained variance in learners' speaking performance, general language proficiency and vocabulary knowledge¹⁷.

A further point to consider is that if university students fully engage in activities in English in their free time, it is fair to assume that these practices provide them with enjoyment. It has long been defended that the choice of entertainment plays a fundamental role in language learning: the passion individuals put into games (Mangenot, 2011) and the desire to understand the plot of a series (Toffoli & Sockett, 2015) seem to be relevant factors in language learning. As such, this seems to have an effect on the amount of time spent on these activities.

In order to understand why some people engage in countless hours of an activity, it can be useful to know the concept of Flow. In 2009, Csikszentmihalyi developed a theory of optimal experience based on this concept: it is "the state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter" (p. 4). This state makes the moment more enjoyable, it increases self-

¹⁷ (González Fernández & Schmitt, 2015; Kusyk & Sockett, 2012; Peters, 2018; Sockett, 2014)

confidence, a sense of novelty, of accomplishment, which, in turn, is essential for developing new skills. Csikszentmihalyi (2009) says that after an enjoyable event, people know that something changed in themselves and they have become more complex as a result of it. Flow entails awareness, intention and attention, concepts to be developed in the next chapter.

In Applied Linguistics, this concept has been mentioned in Krashen's Compelling Hypothesis (2013), in which he explains that to enter in a state of Flow, the material must be, not just interesting, but compelling. A compelling book, for instance, is an optimal framework for language acquisition because they get into a reading zone and forget it is written in another language. Compelling material also encourages individuals to use it on a regular basis, which ends up providing extended exposure.

Krashen (1982), together with other influential researchers in the field (N. C. Ellis, 2002; Nation, 2017; Schmitt & Schmitt, 2014), have studied the role of exposure for language learning and concluded that it is an important driving force for learning to happen. Not only in terms of quantity, but also in quality of context and forms. This concept is developed in chapter three - Examining notions on Vocabulary Learning.

Each of these arguments make an important contribution to our understanding of how learners may achieve native-like proficiency without going overseas. So far, research has shown that university students dedicate long hours of their week to out-of-class activities in English, and that these activities are a source of learning. It is partly because of the enjoyment found in them, and their compelling nature, which may lead to a state of Flow. The remaining lines of this chapter are dedicated to exploring different dimensions of learning in informal contexts, to better understand the theory behind it.

1.2 Informal Learning

One of the first definitions of informal learning comes from the literature in Education. It is

“the lifelong process by which every person acquires and accumulates knowledge, skills, attitudes and insights from daily experiences and exposure to the environment - at home, at work, at play. ... Generally, [it] is unorganized and often unsystematic; yet it accounts for the great bulk of any person's total lifetime learning-including that of even a highly ‘schooled’ person.” (Coombs & Ahmed, 1974, p. 8).

Some examples are traveling, reading newspapers and books, listening to the radio, and viewing films and television shows.

More recently, in research on learning in the workplace environment, Henschel (2001) and Cross (2007) provide a similar definition to informal learning, although emphasizing that in these contexts, the uppermost driving motive of such learning is to belong to the community – a concept that is further developed later on in this section. Daily exchanges in which people question colleagues, call on others, join conversations and have reflections on events of the day (Cross, 2007) are part of this natural and continuous lifelong learning that, once again, can be accidental (p. xiii), unplanned and impromptu (p. 15), but also happen intentionally (p. 16). In all cases, it is the learner who is responsible for their learning, since it is not imposed by anyone else.

The unanimous interpretation in the field of Applied Linguistics is that informal learning is linked to the circumstances in which any type of knowledge is gained: it is any activity involving understanding, knowledge and skill without an imposed curriculum by an institution (Livingstone, 2006; Schugurensky & Rieu, 2007). What seems to still be open to debate is its “accidental, unplanned and impromptu” nature. Some researchers in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) have supported the theory that attention to language (noticing) is a condition to language learning (Godfroid et al., 2010; Paribakht & Wesche, 1999; Pigada & Schmitt, 2006; Schmidt, 1990) and, to the best of our knowledge, no research has made its research goal to determine learners’ intention to learn when engaging in informal activities.

Our argument is based on the idea that researchers do not fully understand the reasons behind the various informal practices carried out by users of English and that means that, so far, we do not know how much of it is purely accidental or is somehow planned. We argue that some attention may be put into language without an original intention to do so, but there is a possibility that learners are aware of the potentiality of L2 learning when choosing to do activities in English. This means that some informal learning can indeed be more planned or deliberate than initially believed.

This stance is supported by research in SLA that differentiates formality from pedagogy (Benson, 2011; Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2016b). From this standpoint, informal learning is a term connected to many others and it incorporates other concepts. In the ESL literature, different notions, other than the circumstance of learning, have often been associated with informality. Here below we analyze them individually according to Benson’s four dimensions (2011): location, locus of control, formality and pedagogy.

In 2011, Benson pointed out that a variety of terms gravitate around the topic **Language Learning Beyond the Classroom**, such as “out-of-class”, “extramural”, “nonformal”, “informal”, “self-instructed”, “naturalistic”, “independent”, “self-directed” and “autonomous” language learning.

Even though some may be used as synonyms, most terms slightly differ from one another and for that reason, the author prefers the larger concept to welcome all types of research in the field. To explain what kind of activities are included in Learning Beyond the classroom, he described four dimensions, to show how different and rich in meaning such terms can be.

Location is the first dimension in Benson's conception of Learning Beyond the classroom. It answers the question '**Where** does it happen?' and the answer is 'all places beyond the classroom'. Terms such as "out-of-class" and "extramural" focus on the location in which the learning is taking place, but it must be used carefully as it includes the idea that these learners not only take language classes, but they are also involved in other types of language activities. Hence, these terms do not include individuals who only learn on their own, nor does it take into account how and by whom the activity is organized.

The second dimension, **Locus of control**, refers to the process of decision to engage in an activity. It is mostly studied in out-of-class contexts, when the decision can be made by the learners themselves or by a third party. When the learner is autonomous and independent, they make the initial decision to participate or engage in learning and they can carry them out without needing help from other people. It is important, however, to have in mind that teachers and institutions can also control learning out of the classroom, when they oblige students to go abroad in order for them to obtain university credits, for instance. In the classroom, the locus of control is mostly with the teachers, who prepare the curriculum to be taught in class, but Benson (2011) points out that learner autonomy has its place inside the classroom, even if "the extent to which there can be 'genuine' autonomy in compulsory language education remains questionable" (p. 12). Thus, the locus of control can be with the learner or the teacher, both in and out of class.

The third dimension is **Formality**: What's the **context** of learning? Learning beyond the classroom includes nonformal programs as well as informal practices, accounting for, respectively, any language learning activities that do not involve tests (e.g., MOOCs and apps) or any knowledge gained through hobbies or work.

Finally, **Pedagogy** is the fourth dimension and it refers to whether learning is likely a consequence of instruction or teaching. When the learner decides to use materials *designed for pedagogical* use, may it be a MOOC, an app, a book or a radio program, for instance, self-instruction is taking place, because the learner is being instructed. However, when an individual is watching TV in a foreign language, the program is 'teaching' them. In this teaching scenario, these individuals may be engaging in self-directed learning, when having the intention to learn or in naturalistic learning, when there is no intention to learn. According to Benson (2011), self-instruction and naturalistic learning lie at two ends of a pedagogical continuum, concepts which are further explained below, together with

‘self-directed naturalistic learning’, in which the learner sets up a naturalistic learning situation with the intention of language learning, but “once engaged in the situation, switches the focus of attention to communication, enjoyment or learning something other than the language itself” (p.11).

Figure 2 shows how the two dimensions of formality and pedagogy interact. The green line shows how both nonformal and informal learning are situated in the same continuum, both out of class, and the blue line indicates how pedagogy can be closer or further from the ends of the formality continuum.

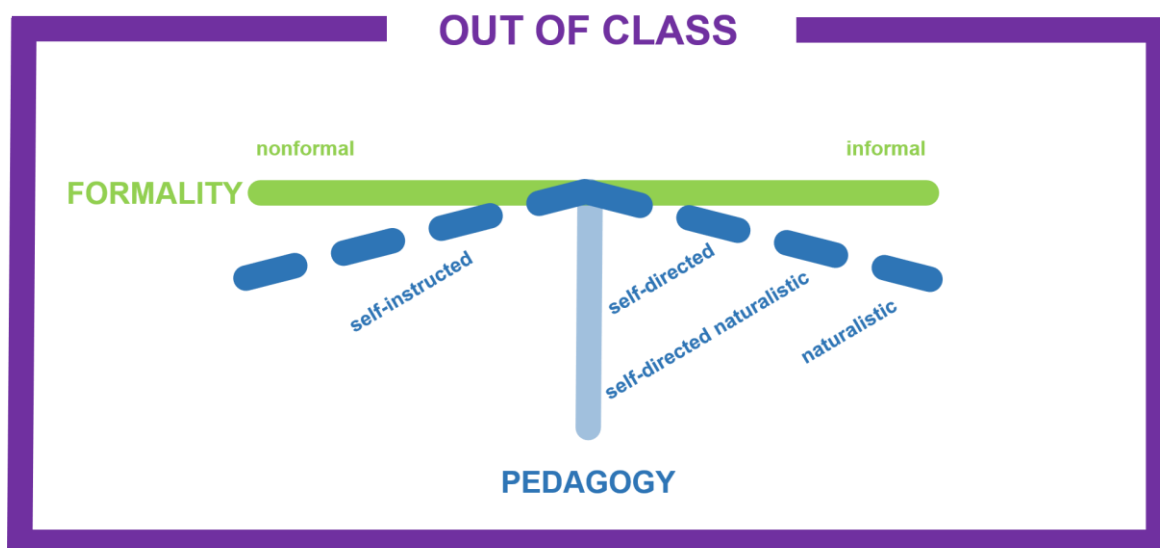


Figure 2 - Organization of two out-of-class dimensions of learning: Formality and Pedagogy

In order to understand the methodological choices presented later in this thesis, some characteristics should be considered about pedagogy. In *Language Learning Beyond the classroom*, when learning is organized by a third party, we are necessarily dealing with a nonformal context. When the learning is organized by the learner, however, the material they are using determines the framework. By choosing apps to learn, learners engage in a nonformal approach to learning (Mangenot, 2011) because they are being instructed (Benson, 2011). By choosing to watch films and series in the target language, they are engaging in informal learning, because these materials are not made with learning purposes. The intention behind the activity determines whether the learning is self-directed, self-directed naturalistic or naturalistic.

Before exploring awareness, consciousness and intentionality in depth (in chapter two - Awareness in language learning), it is important to understand Benson’s pedagogy continuum in order to clearly see the types of learning this thesis tackles. Over the past decade, some scholars have approached informal learning from a specific angle: an out-of-class scenario, when it is learner

initiated (locus of control) and naturalistic (pedagogy). Nevertheless, as mentioned earlier, locus of control is a controversial topic as Benson argues for the possibility of control from the learner and third parties in all ends of each continuum. As, to the best of our knowledge, no research has covered theoretically or empirically the difference in learning gains between learner and teacher-initiated activities, this dimension is not further developed. The next subsection is an attempt to clarify the three dimensions of pedagogy present in informal learning.

1.2.1 Naturalistic learning

Naturalistic learning (NL) is at one end of Benson's (2011) pedagogy continuum in the informal sphere (Figure 2). As such, we understand NL as part of informal learning and not as a synonym of it. Some definitions in the field of ESL, however, define informal learning as having no instruction, no specially designed materials and no intention to learn. This is, however, Benson's definition of Naturalistic learning (2011, p.11) which we adopt in this thesis. Because a case is made for the role of intentionality in informal learning in the following chapter, a distinction between informal and naturalistic learning is kept.

Researchers in France have conducted pioneering and insightful work on NL (which they call informal learning), whose location is "outside of school contexts", in which there are "no products designed for learning" (Kusyk, 2015, p. 20), learning "does not take place as part of a lesson, whether during class time or as a homework assignment", is not bound "to a timetable or progression known to the learner, neither does it take place at fixed times" (Toffoli & Sockett, 2010, p. 3). As shown in Figure 3, NL accounts for learning that combines all the right ends of the continuums in Benson's dimensions (2011). Figure 3 also shows the lack of intentionality in naturalistic learning (Kusyk, 2015), in which the individual "does not set out to learn and ... attention is paid to the material" (Toffoli & Sockett, 2010, p. 3).

Beyond the classroom learning

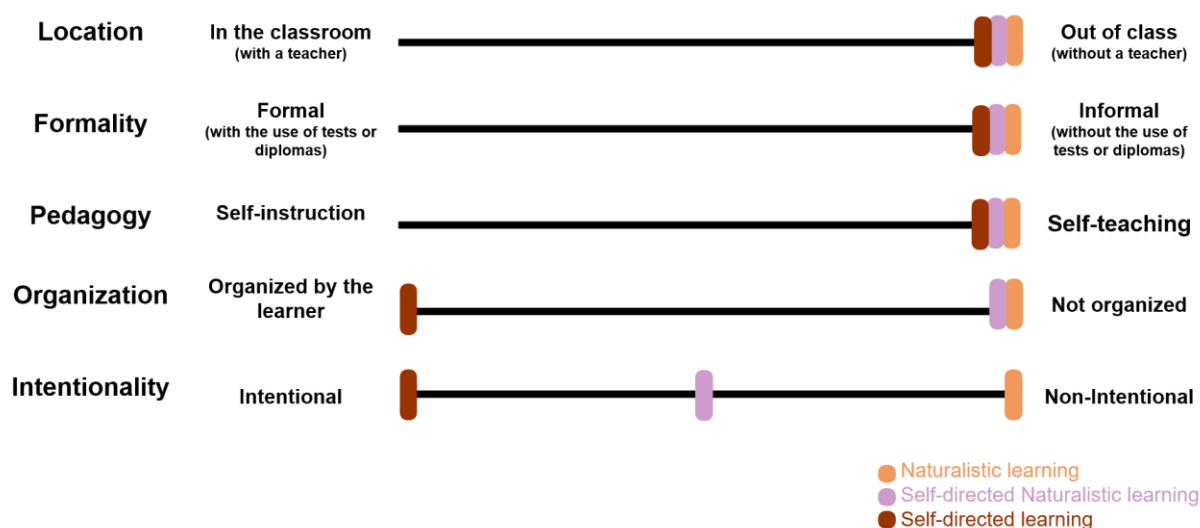


Figure 3 - Different dimensions in Beyond the classroom learning: Naturalistic, self-directed naturalistic and self-directed learning

In Applied Linguistics, researchers have directed their attention to Naturalistic Learning as far back as Bialystok (1981) and Krashen (1982). Since then, it is commonly believed that “the most functional [learning] situation would likely occur outside the classroom, in a natural setting, where conveying the message is the only essential goal of the language occasion” (Bialystok, 1981, p. 24), and Krashen’s theory on Acquisition (1982) is based on the process in which one internalizes the language when exposed to it, by ‘picking up’ the language when focused on meaning rather than form. From a sociolinguistic point of view, these definitions are highly connected with the notion of participation in social groups.

Participating in social groups and learning with them is a recurrent theme in the fields of education, work environment and sociolinguistics research. It refers to the learning of values, attitudes, behaviors, skills and knowledge that occurs naturally in everyday life, which Schugurensky & Rieu (2007) call “natural assimilation” and in which the learner has no prior intention of learning. As already mentioned, Cross (2007) evoked that the driving motive in such settings is to belong to the community (even though he called it informal learning) and to participate successfully in life, at work, and in the groups that matter to the individual. In Applied Linguistics, Toffoli & Sockett (2010) argued that any definition in language learning in Europe “should include a reference to the aim of participating in social groups with other language users” (p.3). They also give examples of the web 2.0, whose interfaces “provide a practical outlet” for socializing (p.3).

As shown in Figure 4, socializing is a major part of NL. It shows socializing as an unintentional practice presented in the literature in Applied Linguistics. By no means we are suggesting that there is no intention of communication and interaction in other types of informal learning. Quite the opposite: blogs, social networks and forums are examples of settings in which learners can interact in the target language (Toffoli & Sockett, 2010), with or without intention to learn. In these contexts, they can interact with others, share their tastes and opinions, as well as make friends worldwide. Toffoli and Sockett (2010) defend that even when learners engage in comprehension activities, such as reading and watching series, their main purpose is to gain knowledge to be able to communicate and socialize.

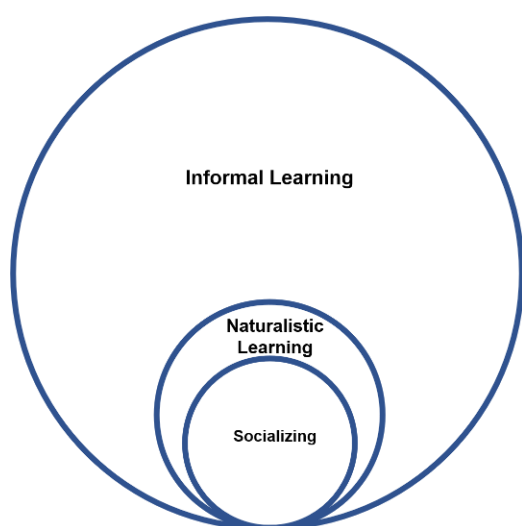


Figure 4 - Interaction between Informal Learning, Naturalistic Learning and Socializing

Untangling the intentions behind choices and practices in all dimensions in informal learning is a complex matter. De Bot & Evers (2007), have found that for learners, learning English is useful for both communication as well as for the comprehension of materials themselves, such as understanding song lyrics, books, tv, and computer programs. For now, in SLA, little is known of people's real reasons for engaging in such activities, how much intention is put into them and how these intentions may shift in the process. This leads us to the next pedagogy dimension, self-directed naturalistic learning.

1.2.2 Self-directed naturalistic learning

“If one is learning partly through conscious attention to a language and partly through immersion in the pleasure of a video text, is one acquiring a language or learning it? Consider the example of the teenager in Turkey who becomes ‘hooked’ on K-pop, picks up some expressions, and then begins consciously to study Korean to understand the lyrics sung by his or her favorite group. Is that learner ‘acquiring’ Korean by picking it

up from the music she or he loves, or is that teenager ‘learning’ Korean by studying it? Or, consider the case of the Moroccan university student who learns English by watching TED Talks with captions or subtitles in Arabic or French. Is that student studying (learning) English or acquiring English if she takes notes as she watches, or rewatches some parts of the video that she particularly enjoys, ‘soaking up’ the gestures and expressiveness of the speaker along with vocabulary and ideas?” (Dressman & Sadler, 2020, p. 3)

Benson (2011) calls our attention to the fact that naturalistic learning may be a hypothetical state. Even when accidental or unexpected, such as running into a lost tourist on the street, the decision to start or continue the conversation might be taken based on an intention to learn. Going to a restaurant in a foreign country (example given by Bialystok, 1981) can also be seen as an opportunity to learn. In this sense, watching films and series in the target language can also contain learning intentions. A strict dichotomy between intentional and unintentional is, as far as technology goes, practically impossible to determine.

One of this thesis hypotheses is that, as much as locus of control, intention can be present across the board, in all learning dimensions, having learning as a main or secondary objective. That being said, it is useful to pinpoint the subtleties in learners’ main intentions in informal learning for methodological reasons, for researchers to be able to communicate their object of study with precision, and to avoid broad terms that create confusion. If Naturalistic Learning is a ‘pure state’ of learning without the intention to learn, which seems unlikely to exist, and self-direction is, as it is presented in the next subsection, learning with the intention to learn, where can researchers place learning when an individual chooses to increase their opportunity to learn in their daily lives such as going to movies, reading books, or talking to native speakers?

Engaging in daily activities in another language to create opportunities to learn is what Bialystok (1981) calls ‘Functional Practice’, or what Benson (2011) calls ‘Self-directed Naturalistic learning’ and it is likely to occur when “the informal learner does not decide to learn English, but chooses his or her leisure activities in English” (Toffoli & Sockett, 2015, p.159). In short, Self-Directed Naturalistic Learning is when “the learner engages in language use for pleasure or interest, but also with the broader intention of learning” (Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2016c).

Intention to learn may be more present in informal contexts than what is usually described in the literature. For learners who engage in self-directed learning, for instance, the limit between the main and secondary intention can be blurry and constantly changing. Self-directed learning is explained in the next subsection as we seek to better understand this variation and to account for ways of fostering intentional learning.

1.2.3 Self-directed learning

As discussed previously, informal learning is learning through socializing and leisure activities. One way of categorizing these different practices is through intentionality or, more precisely, the main objective to carry out an activity. Self-directed learning is the last subject to be addressed before summarizing the different dimensions and introducing the first objective of this thesis.

In the informal sphere (Figure 3), self-directed learning is learning through authentic materials and encounters in the target language, with the main intention of learning the language. Not only is it intentional, but it is organized by the learners themselves. In Schugurensky & Rieu's words (2007), it accounts for "educational projects undertaken by individuals (alone or within a group) without the help of a teacher, although there may be the presence of 'resource people' who do not consider themselves professional educators" (p. 15).

As the intention to learn is well established at this point, it seems important to develop the notion of organization. As a matter of fact, organization refers to two aspects: decision making and planning. In self-directed learning, the learner is the one to decide how, when, and where to learn. They can plan in advance, setting learning goals, choosing the materials, resources and occasions to learn and, the time devoted to the effort, the pace of learning, the deadline for completion, etc. (Tough, 1971), all with the deliberate purpose of improving their competence. The following example given by Bialystok (1981), illustrates the notion well: "A language learner may want to hear the target language spoken so that he may learn the phonological system more precisely. To accomplish this, he listens to conversations between native speakers or goes to movies. His intention here is to study an aspect of the language system" (p. 25).

Even though there always seems to be intention and logic in the process of self-directed learning, preplanning is not an imperative part of organization: In most cases, learners start the process of self-direction and choose what to do 'on the go', which Spear & Mocker (1984) call "organizing circumstances". According to the authors, learners' choices are mostly related to organizing factors external to the learner, such as the available resources within their environment. In many of the cases, learners have a general intention that is flexible and adaptable to what they find.

Candas (2013) conducted qualitative research on self-direction and findings supported Spear & Mocker's: "The learning process progresses from one learning episode to the next and it is only in retrospect, once the project is completed, that the trajectory gives the impression of being linear and directed towards a long-term goal" (p. 31). In her research, she found that adults who successfully completed their self-directed projects had not planned anything specifically, apart from having vague objectives, and the resources used were often found by chance:

“[In the Language Center], learners have always taken very little time to choose a resource that they have worked on long enough, often for a whole session, after having explored a very small part of the resources available. [...] Students rarely cited a learning objective or, if they did mention a goal, it was very general (e.g., to learn more vocabulary, to better understand people who speak). They often said they chose the resource because they liked it; other more ordinary parameters such as what they wanted to do that day and how tired they were also came into play. It was only after working on a resource for a full session that several students mentioned to want to continue working with the same resource or a similar one afterwards.” (p. 33)

Each of these dimensions and types of learning make an important contribution to the discussion on the definition of informal learning. Our research adheres to the definition of Lee & Dressman (2018) of Informal Digital Learning of English (IDLE), that encompasses all pedagogy dimensions of informal learning practices, including self-directed learning (intentional and/or form-focused practices), contrarily to Sockett's perspective (2014) of informal learning in the Online Informal Learning of English (OILE) that only takes into consideration naturalistic, meaning-based examples of activities in digital environments.

1.3 Learning Dimensions and Language Centers

According to Rivens Mompean (2014b), Language Centers (LCs) do not have a single definition and functioning. Not only learners have different needs in different contexts, but universities also have distinct structural, financial and pedagogical means: they have variable institutional support, size of structure and budget, they offer a variety of languages and provide distinct (human) resources. Other than what they provide, their name can also differ: In her seminal book "Le Centre de Ressources en Langues : vers la modélisation du dispositif d'apprentissage", Rivens Mompean (2013) catalogued 14 designations only in France, appellations that include references to languages, physical and digital resources, distance and face-to-face learning, laboratory and self-access.

Amidst the different names, one thing is certain: All of them mention that one of their essential missions is to provide connection, exchange and support to language and communication competences (Rivens Mompean, 2013). According to Rivens Mompean, when the European Confederation of Language Centers in Higher Education (CercleS - Confédération Européenne des Centres de Langues de l'Enseignement Supérieur) was created, in 1991, they defined the core functions of LCs accommodating what was being done, but also allowing for development and heterogeneity. LCs give practical language training especially for learners not specializing in languages,

provide appropriate technology for language learning, and foster research and development in the field of language teaching and learning.

Correspondingly, LCs stand out for their role in questioning the nature of traditional pedagogies as well as that of teaching content and know-how (Esch, 1999). Nowadays, innovating means providing support mediated learning, self-direction and autonomy, with guidance and resources (Rivens Mompean, 2014b). This idea is well supported by Alberio et al. (2008) who propose to organize learning in a framework in which students learn to become responsible, autonomous and reflexive, without abandoning them to their own devices. They suggest that LCs should provide open, user-friendly workspaces, rich in resources and support (a referent teacher, tutors and monitors) and that they facilitate the appropriation of content and methods (Rivens Mompean, 2013).

Moreover, LCs should also be a place in which students can come to “learn to learn”. Rivens Mompean (2013) argues that for learners to be able to make their own choices, they need to be helped at specific times, so that they will learn to engage in metacognitive reflection, and come to better understand their needs, be able to set objectives when needed and determine the means by which they will achieve them. This reflects our understanding of autonomy: a learned ability, not inborn but acquired either by ‘natural’ means or (as most often happens) in a deliberate way (Holec, 1981, p. 3).

This ability can be learned in a classroom. However, in line with the work of (Rivens Mompean, 2013, 2014b, 2014a, 2014b), we argue that the role of LCs is to involve innovative purposes, and one of them is to accompany learners towards autonomy. Being autonomous in ESL means that learners take control of their own learning (Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2016a) and it is closely related to non-formal and informal learning because in order to take advantage of the potential that out-of-class activities have, it is useful to be in contact with learning strategies.

Looking back at Figure 3, LCs are virtual or physical locations that navigate between non-formal and informal modalities. It is not formal because it is not a classroom, but they are often physically present in universities. Other than this physical matter, a LC is a place in which students can engage in self-directed (naturalistic) learning: they are free to choose activities (self-instruction or self-teaching), to organize learning or not, alone or with help. We argue that going to a LC to be in contact with the language is often intentional – even though casual meetings can take place in the locality, the fact that students go there could possibly put intention to learn above social interaction – hypothesis still to be tested by research.

Thus, LCs contribute to a change in paradigm, for learners are encouraged to be in charge of their own learning and teachers and tutors become responsible for facilitating autonomy, forming a “partnership for learning” (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 140). Therefore, teachers are required to be aware of learning processes in their great variety, both the unconscious products of experience or the

clearly formulated products of theoretical reflection” (p. 141). Our view is that teachers can offer a contribution to the partnership for learning to help students recognize these different types and possibilities of learning as well.

1.4 Summary and First Objective

The current chapter focused on the context of our research, which is the different dimensions in language learning and how they interact. The first objective of this thesis is to better understand the exposure to and use of English by French university students in an out-of-class context. This chapter summarized the knowledge in the field that led us to our hypotheses, described below.

As discussed in the literature of English as Second Language (ESL), **immersion** provides favorable conditions for language development (Donohoe, 2022; Sanz, 2014; Yang, 2016) and, due to advances in technology, English became easily accessible, making it possible to achieve high levels of proficiency without needing to go abroad (Mangenot, 2011). Games, films, series and music are examples of authentic tools that are available on the internet in the target language and which can be appropriated by users for language learning (Sockett, 2011a; Toffoli & Sockett, 2015b).

Other than the importance of exposure in ESL, this chapter briefly discussed what can drive individuals to dedicate hours of their week to materials in a target language. As a matter of fact, when an activity procures enjoyment, people tend to put the hours and the passion into it. This may be explained by the theory of Flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 2009) and Krashen’s compelling hypothesis (Krashen, 2013). As a consequence, these practices may help them make remarkable progress in English.

When it comes to improving language competences, research has accounted for gains in speaking performance, general language proficiency and vocabulary knowledge (González Fernández & Schmitt, 2015; Peters, 2018), especially because they are exposed to language use in context (Dressman, 2020), in a meaningful and comprehensive way (Krashen, 1982).

An equally significant matter is terminology. The second half of the chapter dealt with informal learning for it is a rich term that includes many others. As much as it is a strength, this range of definitions raises several key issues in research as it becomes hard to compare results that use the same term but are not testing the same type of learning. Thus, clarifying terminology is a necessary tool for overcoming some difficulties associated with the multiple developments in different contexts and pedagogies.

Benson's approach (2011) to learning beyond the classroom is one way of understanding the complexity of Informal Learning (IL). It provides a clear account of different dimensions involved in learning beyond the classroom, specifying IL as the context of learning: the knowledge gained through hobbies or work. He also explains other directly connected dimensions such as location, locus of control (related to whom initiates learning) and pedagogy (associated with the organization of activities).

These two last dimensions seem to provoke some confusion in the literature. One type of learning in pedagogy, for instance, is naturalistic learning: highly connected to hobbies, without any instruction, no specially designed materials and no intention to learn. Nevertheless, this definition is often used to define informal learning itself. **In our study, we do not intend to determine how much intention there is in informal learning, but to explore the possibility of its presence, hoping that it will encourage future research to look deeper into this matter.**

Another point to consider is that in research conducted by Toffoli & Sockett's (2010, 2015), findings show that French university students engage in informal learning in their daily lives, specially through comprehension practices, such as reading in social media, listening to music and watching films and TV series in English. In the English-speaking world, research has shown the benefits of such practices for Language Learning (N. Ellis, 2002; Nation, 2017; Schmitt & Schmitt, 2014), a topic which is further discussed in the next chapters. The lifespan of such practices has been questioned by Toffoli & Sockett (2010) and proved to be more perennial than anticipated in their research in 2015 (Kusyk & Sockett, 2012; Yibokou, 2019). With this in mind, we want to investigate what its current state in 2023 is. **Our first objective is, thus, to uncover current practices in informal learning and the frequency with which university students engage in them** (the findings related to this objective can be found in section 7.1).

Finally, as far as language centers (LCs) are concerned, this chapter started a discussion on their essential mission of connection, exchange and support to language learning (Rivens Mompean, 2013). Their role is also to question the nature of traditional pedagogies and promote innovation, such as viewing the role of learners as learning to take responsibility for their own learning through learning self-direction and reflecting on the potentialities of informal learning practices thanks to physical and human supports. As a place in which learners can engage in self-directed (naturalistic) learning, LCs seem a perfect fit for developing the present study. More insights about its role are presented in chapter five).

The following chapter presents arguments to support another aim of our study, which is to develop an overarching framework to comprehending intentionality. It discusses its definition, conversing with the dimension of pedagogy, to examine its role in language learning.

Chapter 2. Consciousness in language learning

“One of the more controversial issues in applied linguistics concerns the role of conscious and unconscious processes in second language learning. ... The time may be right for serious reconsideration of the phenomenon of consciousness and the role it may play in language learning. ... We must have a clearer idea than we usually do of what we mean by conscious and unconscious, together with a number of associated terms. ... In everyday language, consciousness has several senses and is often used ambiguously. In scientific discussion also, conflicts of opinion are often due as much to terminological vagueness as to substantive disagreement (White, 1982)¹⁸. In order to understand the numerous issues related to second language learning, it is necessary to distinguish carefully several senses of the term.” (Schmidt, 1990, p. 129-131)

Consciousness is a topic discussed in many fields of study, notably in Cognitive and Language Sciences, as well as Psychology. In Second Language Acquisition (SLA), the term is adopted to describe different levels in learning. Similarly to informal learning that is sometimes used to describe many dimensions, ‘(not) being conscious’ in learning may have different meanings according to different authors. This chapter focuses on the different levels of consciousness to clarify these terms in our field in order to later make a case for their role in informal language learning.

It is important to mention that the current chapter is not built to explain how consciousness works at a neurological or psychological level, but to approach it from a phenomenological model based on information theory, as proposed by Schmidt (1990) and Csikszentmihalyi (2009). They examine consciousness from a perspective based on the experience of the individual, rather than its neurochemical processes.

Researchers in SLA have mentioned the presence or absence of consciousness when defining different types of learning (Cross, 2007; Krashen, 1982, 1982; Schugurensky & Rieu, 2007; Toffoli & Sockett, 2010). These definitions use heterogeneous terminology, making it complex to compare theories. This causes myriad problems in defining informal learning, for instance, which is said to be conscious for some authors (Schugurensky & Rieu, 2007) and unconscious for others (Toffoli & Sockett, 2010). One approach to overcome the strong separation resulting from such dichotomy is to look back at Richard Schmidt’s seminal work on the role of consciousness in Second Language Learning (1990).

Schmidt’s (1990) approach to language learning is based on the assumption that learning involves conscious and unconscious processes. Distinguishing all the senses consciousness may have in the field is useful because it ties together many related concepts that are often not precisely

¹⁸ In Schmidt (1990): White, P. 1982. 'Beliefs about conscious experience' in G. Underwood (ed.).

defined, such as attention, intention, understanding, knowledge and reflexiveness. Schmidt affirmed that “while these ambiguities cannot always be avoided, it should now be clear that whether second language learning is conscious or unconscious is not one question, but may reflect several different contrasts” (p. 134).

As research has shown that learning can be conscious or unconscious at many levels, in this chapter, we are not going to defend one or the other, but explore the six contrasts enumerated by Schmidt (1990) to clarify what is meant by ‘consciousness’ in the literature. We introduce Schmidt’s ‘levels of consciousness’, each as a continuum, together with other associated terms: Incidental, Intentional, Implicit and Explicit learning. Hopefully, the following sections shed light on this complex issue, discussing their relation to some of the dimensions from the previous chapter, expecting to clarify it and depolarize this view, showing that levels and dimensions do interact for optimal learning.

2.1 Types of consciousness

2.1.1 *Consciousness as Attention*

The first level in consciousness to be explained is **noticing**, which is the process in learning that happens between the input and the intake. In SLA, the term ‘input’ means “language which a learner hears or receives and from which he or she can learn” (Richards & Schmidt, 2010, p. 285). In Schmidt’s (1990) noticing hypothesis, for an individual to learn a language from any input, they must notice the language, and only then can this input become intake, which refers to “that part of the language to which learners are exposed (input) that actually ‘goes in’ and plays a role in language learning” (Richards & Schmidt, 2010, p. 288). The definition of input and intake can be illustrated by the following representation: Imagine someone speaking (producing input); then picture the listener, who is perceiving the sounds; some of this input is being noticed, which goes to the short-term memory (Schmidt’s preliminary intake or Krashen’s comprehensible input). According to Schmidt (1990), this attention is a filter that selects what is important so that the complexity of the input does not overwhelm the listener.

The noticing hypothesis emerged from Schmidt’s (1983) analysis of a Japanese learner’s errors and later with Schmidt & Frota’s (1986) study of Schmidt’s learning of Portuguese in Brazil. In the latter, in his five-month stay, the co-author kept a journal, recording the most salient aspects of his learning experience. To compensate for some of the limitations of the diary study, they also

tape-recorded conversations. The analysis of the data was a starting-point for the noticing hypothesis because they identified that the progress made by the learner was not due simply to exposure, frequency of the input or to corrective feedback, but highly connected to the language he actually noticed.

These experiments brought about the concept of '**noticing the gap**', a process that involves one level of consciousness: attention. Awareness and attention seem to be used interchangeably in Schmidt's work. In his 2001's article, he describes two types of attention: The first one is passive, involuntary and data driven. He gives the example of hearing a loud noise, whether one wants to or not. The second one is voluntary: "it is top-down in the sense that attention is directed to outside events" (p. 17). It is through attention that speakers become "aware of a mismatch or gap between what they can produce and what they need to produce, as well as between what they produce and what proficient target language speakers produce" (p. 6). Thus, noticing can happen when attention is naturally or intentionally directed to an aspect of the input.

Another important distinction is the difference between perception and noticing. Schmidt (1990) gives the example of reading, in which we notice the content, but can only perceive "peculiarities of the writer's style, ... the music playing on a radio in the next room, or background noise outside the window" (p. 132) and may pay attention to it (notice it) if we choose (proactively) or naturally (reactively), if for some reason the stimulus captures our attention, as evidenced in the following quote:

"It is clear, therefore, that language learners are not free to notice whatever they want whenever they want and that a number of factors influence noticeability. Still, learners do have some leeway. Studies in selective listening, such as the shadowing experiments, show that it is possible to direct attention voluntarily to one source of information, while ignoring another. Hulstijn and Hulstijn (1984)¹⁹ have shown that it is possible for language learners to allocate their attention to either information content or linguistic form in production, and a recent study by Van Patten (1987)²⁰ deals with attention to form vs. content in input processing. ... In Schmidt and Frota (1986) we claimed that those who notice most learn most, and it may be that those who notice most are those who pay attention most, as a general disposition or on particular occasions." (Schmidt, 1990, p. 144)

The noticing hypothesis challenges the belief that only being exposed to the input is sufficient for learning to happen, and holds the premise that noticing is the necessary condition for input to be internalized. Schmidt (2010) explains that the hypothesis involves noticing the input particularities:

¹⁹ In Schmidt (1990): Hulstijn, J. and W. Hulstijn. 1984. 'Grammatical errors as a function of processing constraints and explicit knowledge.' *Language Learning* 34: 23-43.

²⁰ In Schmidt (1990): Van Patten, B. 1987. 'Can learners attend to form and content while listening to the L2,?' Paper presented at the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese Meeting, Los Angeles, 14-16 August 1987.

learning happens when the learner notices “whatever features of the input are relevant for the target system. That is to say, in order to acquire phonology, one must attend to phonology; in order to acquire pragmatics, one must notice both linguistic forms and the relevant contextual features” (p. 725).

Central to the noticing hypothesis is the idea that learning cannot be subliminal. This is not to be mistaken with subconscious processes that can indeed take place in language learning (to be developed in section 2.3 Implicit learning). Subliminal learning, on the contrary, means that language that is not attended to, can still be learned when it is part of the input. In Schmidt’s hypothesis, he argues that unconscious learning, meaning ‘picking up’ stretches of speech without ever noticing them, does not exist. This stance is well supported by evidence in the field of cognitive psychology and SLA that has shown that not all input learners are exposed to is transformed into intake. It is, thus, widely assumed that attention does mediate input and learning²¹.

Furthermore, the construct of noticing has been a rationale for interactionist approaches:

“Gass (1997) for example, argues [that] an initial step in grammar change is the learner’s noticing (at some level) a mismatch between the input and his or her own organization of the target language. That is to say, linguistic input from an interlocutor must first be noticed before it may begin to be integrated into the learner’s interlanguage.” (B. Smith, 2012, p. 53)

Noticing is also key to cognitively-oriented studies into textual enhancement techniques, the use of focus on form and for task-based L2 teaching (R. Ellis, 2009; Godfroid et al., 2010; Leow, 2000). From a cognitive perspective, Smith (2012) argues that input that is not attended to (noticed) cannot be held in short-term memory and, therefore, is not available for further processing. Because of that, researchers have developed new methodologies that have proven, across the board, that “more noticing leads to more learning” (Schmidt, 1994, p. 129).

As far as methodology is concerned, research in the line of attention and memory has been carried out through offline and online techniques. The first studies to account for noticing used offline techniques (Schmidt, 1983; Schmidt & Frota, 1986), in which data are collected an instant after the input, such as diaries and recorded interviews. Nevertheless, they have been insufficient for they (1) require a high level of self-awareness, because learners must be aware that they have noticed (Schmidt, 1993) and (2) cannot account for everything that learners notice, because they need to make a record of that noticing.

²¹ This argument as well as evidence can be found in Bergsleithner, Frota, Yoshioka, et al. (2013), Godfroid et al. (2010), Izumi (2002), Leow (1997), Mackey (2006), Mennim (2007), Qi & Lapkin (2001) Robinson (1995), B. Smith (2012), and Ünlü (2015).

A recent example, over a decade after Schmidt's 1986 diary study, was conducted by Leow (2000) to assess learners' awareness of an irregularity in Spanish grammar. For that, he used think-aloud protocols, an online technique in which participants speak during the task, and that began to be favored by researchers as "the temporal resolution of online measures is of course much higher and in view of the fleeting nature of noticing" (Godfroid et al., 2010, p. 174). Considering it as a more reliable option, Izumi (2002) also chose to ask participants to report their thoughts, this time in the form of note-taking, to assess noticing and learning of English grammar. Another relevant study on noticing was carried out by Rosa & Leow (2004), who tested consciousness at the level of attention and understanding of Spanish grammar: Through a think-aloud protocol and postexposure questionnaires, they found that noticing is facilitative of learning and participants that not only noticed but were also conscious at the level of understanding (subsection 2.3 below) had even higher gains.

In their 2010 article, Godfroid and colleagues stated that "think aloud protocols are undoubtedly a useful tool to capture clear, 'outspoken' instances of awareness (at the level of noticing and at the level of understanding), but less pronounced instances are likely to slip through the net that think-aloud procedures cast" (p. 187), hence, they supported the adoption of online techniques, but with caution. According to the authors, such techniques "provide a window into mental processes" (p. 174), but think-aloud or note-taking protocols can influence the cognitive process, interfering negatively or positively in performance and behavior. Alternatively, they chose to use a combination of online and offline measures to have a more complete picture of the process.

To limit reactivity, Godfroid et al. (2010) used eye tracking technology (instrument also used by Smith, 2012; Nisiforou & Laghos, 2013; Godfroid & Winke, 2015; and Gass et al., 2019). As using such equipment does not involve a secondary task, participants' behavior during the task was described as more natural as they read short paragraphs for the experiment. Their study also involved vocabulary and content posttests as well as a stimulated recall protocol to measure learner-initiated noticing of words when reading for meaning, as well as to determine uptake of vocabulary. The results of this experiment are discussed in chapter three (*Examining notions on Vocabulary Learning*) and more details on the use of eye tracking are given in chapter five (*Multimodality*).

What is important to understand in this chapter is that over the past two decades, scholars have approached noticing as the condition for learning, in all locations, contexts (formality), through any pedagogy and, as supported by the quote below, it is independent of who has the locus of control:

"When learners shift their attention to form 'by themselves' they engage in what we may term 'spontaneous' or 'learner-initiated noticing'. This is arguably the same type of cognitive processing as when Focus on Form (FonF) sequences succeed in drawing students' attention to the desired linguistic form. Thus, noticing as induced by a teacher in FonF and 'learner-initiated noticing' are complementary in the learning process: the

more learners occasionally shift their attention to form by themselves, the less they will require a teacher bringing formal linguistic items to their attention. The teacher could then spend the freed-up time on further communicative activities instead.” (Godfroid et al., 2010, p. 169)

Each of the arguments presented above were meant to contribute to our understanding of consciousness as attention. As philosopher and psychologist William James (1890) pointed out, not all items surrounding our senses enter into our experience. “Why? Because they have no interest for me. My experience is what I agree to attend to. Only those items which I notice shape my mind—without selective interest, experience is utter chaos” (p. 402). Once more, as mentioned earlier in this section, research has supported the fact that attention can be drawn to an aspect of language deliberately or not, both providing opportunities for learning. Therefore, a more informed discussion on this topic is held in the next section.

2.1.2 Consciousness as Intention

“Conscious and unconscious learning may be distinguished on the basis of **intention and effort**. This is the incidental learning question: if noticing is required, is such noticing automatic or must learners consciously pay attention?” (Schmidt, 1990, p. 134)

As far as definitions are concerned, learning unconsciously often means unintentionally, without any consciousness that one will learn. It is the intention that precedes learning (Oliveira Santos, 2022), accounting for learning inadvertently (Schmidt, 1990), or as a by-product of doing something else (Schmidt, 1993). Bergsleithner, Frota, & Yoshioka (2013) point out that “all learning requires attention and a lower level of consciousness (which he calls noticing) but not necessarily intention to learn” (p. 7). Thus, noticing an aspect of the language (i.e., a word, a structure, pronunciation), can happen intentionally or unintentionally.

Learning without the intention of doing so is called **incidental learning** (Schmidt, 1990). The Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching & Applied Linguistics defines it as “learning one thing while intending to learn another, for example, unintentionally picking up vocabulary, patterns, or spelling through interaction [and] communicative activities” (Richards & Schmidt, 2010, p. 276), when the objective is human exchange, understanding a message or for pleasure. This is very similar to naturalistic learning – the difference in the terms is only a matter of perspective: the former from the point of view of intention, the latter as the context and organization. **Intentional learning**, on the

other hand, is defined as a deliberate will to learn, or “a deliberate attempt to commit factual information to memory” (Hulstijn, 2013, p. 1).

From a methodological perspective, in SLA, the criterion often adopted to distinguish between incidental and intentional conditions, is the expectation of a test, “pertaining to the absence or presence of a notification whether subjects would be tested after exposure” (Hulstijn, 2013, p. 1). For instance, in a study conducted by Reber (1989), in order to assess incidental learning of underlying grammar, subjects did not know they were going to be tested afterwards. However, research cannot yet account for the extent to which the absence of test announcement effectively differentiates the two learning conditions (Majuddin & Siyanova-Chanturia, 2021): In experiments in which participants are exposed to strings of words, for example, it is difficult to know whether the repetition triggered noticing and up to what point participants started searching for rules and patterns.

To overcome this uncertainty, research designs can operationalize focus on meaning (Nakamura, 2013; Richards & Schmidt, 2010). When participants are asked to pay attention to the meaning because they will be asked comprehension questions, they tend not to think that they “have to memorize the lexical items in a mechanical way because they are going to be evaluated on their learning later on” (Vidal, 2003, p. 59). Therefore, in controlled experiments on incidental learning, participants are told to perform meaning-focused tasks to understand content whilst the researchers’ interest is in the processing of form (Bell, 2012; Fievez et al., 2020; Hulstijn, 2013; Nation, 2017). In such studies, participants are not informed that they will be tested on a language aspect of the task. A recent example in the literature is the research through audio-visual input conducted by Montero Perez (2020), in which participants were not informed of a vocabulary test, but “were forewarned about a comprehension task to make sure that they would take the task seriously and watch attentively” (p. 7). Conversely, to determine knowledge gains in intentional vocabulary learning, participants are told in advance what the assessment is going to be.

Furthermore, it is not uncommon to ask for both focus on meaning and on form: in a study conducted by Van Patten (1989), university students of Spanish were required to perform different tasks while listening to a three-minute passage with the objective of determining to what extent L2 students are able to simultaneously process form and meaning. The findings of this study led the author to conclude that if students concentrate on meaning first, a task involving conscious attention to important lexical items does not necessarily hinder comprehension. Thus, this supports the idea that students can concentrate on both form and meaning when required.

Central to this thesis is the position that intention is a level of consciousness present in informal, nonformal and formal learning. It supports Cross’s (2007) position that “informal learning

can happen intentionally or inadvertently” (p. 16), when it is part of (naturalistic) self-directed learning (Benson, 2011; Schugurensky & Rieu, 2007), as discussed in chapter one. We also hold the belief that intentionality is a fruitful area for research in informal learning (Kusyk & Sockett, 2012).

It should be clear by now that in intentional learning, the individual aspires to learn the language. Godfroid et al. (2010) shed some light on what may happen at an incidental level:

“If we think of incidental learning as this attentional gradient shifting temporarily from the primary learning goal to a secondary goal, then it links up easily with noticing. Noticing occurs when the focus of attention shifts to secondary aspect(s) of the activity, while the primary aspects still remain in the ‘fringe’ of consciousness.” (p. 176)

This means that even when the focus is on meaning, attention may shift naturally to language for a number of reasons. When this shift happens, language can be learned, whether or not learners realize it.

When conducting research on informal contexts, researchers have often focused their attention on naturalistic settings. When a person’s objective is socializing (Schugurensky & Rieu, 2007; Toffoli & Sockett, 2010) or viewing for entertainment (Hulstijn, 2013; Peters & Webb, 2018; Toffoli & Sockett, 2015b), especially at more advanced levels (Sockett, 2011b), it is commonly believed that incidental learning of language is at play. The most accepted assumption is that when engaging in such activities, people’s main intention is not learning. At the other end of the continuum, self-directed learning (as discussed in chapter one) is defined as both intentional and conscious: intentional because learners aim to learn something before the learning process even begins, and conscious because they are aware that they have learned something (Schugurensky & Rieu, 2007).

In light of what has been discussed in parts 2.1 and 2.2, the above-mentioned definitions raise two challenging questions. The first one being the belief that language learners socialize and engage in viewing in a target language with the utmost (or only) motive of communicating or belonging to a community. To the best of our knowledge, this has not been empirically tested in research in informal learning. This observation remains, for the moment, highly hypothetical. Our field would benefit to explore students’ (perceived) intentions in order to establish clear and coherent theoretical foundations.

The second problem is that considering incidental learning as conscious because students know that they have learned something (Schugurensky & Rieu, 2007) is an assumption that combines two different concepts. Schmidt (1990) distinguished the levels of consciousness to palliate such confusion: While incidental learning precedes the process of learning, consciousness to have learned something follows it. They are not at the same level or continuum and do not interact in an exclusive

way (Bell, 2012). ‘Consciousness of what was learned’ is further developed in subsection 2.1.4 of this chapter.

As attention and intention have been established as two different types of consciousness, the next subsection discusses another type of consciousness: the internal processing of learning, or consciousness as understanding.

2.1.3 Consciousness as Understanding

The contrast between conscious and unconscious learning can also refer to consciousness at the level of understanding. Individuals can learn with or without the conscious “induction of principles, rules, or algorithms” (Schmidt, 1990, p. 134). This process is often called ‘implicit’ or ‘explicit’ and it concerns the internal processes during learning.

Fundamentally, **implicit learning** refers to “the internalization of rules, schemata, or abstract principles without conscious understanding of them” (Schmidt, 1993, p. 213). Any learned rules are based on insight (Schmidt, 1990) and an intuitive feeling for what is correct and acceptable (Bialystok, 1978), and learners acquire rules without any conscious understanding of them. Language that has been learned before will have an influence in learning new language items, but there is no activation of these memories in consciousness, nor are any hypotheses formed or analyzed (Godfroid & Winke, 2015; Schmidt, 1994; Schmidt, 1990). This is learning in which the learner does not know that they are learning (Bell, 2015), or the lack of consciousness of the structure being noticed. A practical example given by Schmidt (1990) is “when we read or listen to an utterance in our native language or in a second language in which we are fluent, we become aware of its meaning but are seldom aware of any part of the complex decoding processes that precedes awareness” (p. 131).

Conversely, **explicit learning** denotes analytic consciousness of the properties of the target language (Smith, 1981), such as hypothesis formation, testing and the use of strategies - e.g. techniques of memorization (Richards & Schmidt, 2010, p. 209). The learner knows the learning object at the time of learning (Williams, 2009) and makes links with previous experiences to understand the linguistic object in question, forming and testing hypotheses (Schmidt, 1990, 1994).

With this in mind, we encourage a serious reflection about the interaction between consciousness at the level of understanding and formality. Many researchers in SLA hypothesize that Naturalistic Learning (NL) happens implicitly (Krashen, 1982; Schugurensky & Rieu, 2007; Sockett, 2011b). This comes mainly from a broader theory in language learning: Krashen's acquisition

theory (1982), in which language acquisition is a process of natural assimilation, and people are not aware of what is happening, as explained in the beginning of chapter one. In this view, individuals "pick up" the language when having a conversation, reading a book or watching a film in a target language, for example. Even in the classroom, learners would learn not because teachers were teaching, but because they had access to comprehensible input from classroom language (Ellis, 2008, p.55). This reinforced the Natural Approach (Krashen, 2013; Terrell, 1977), endorsing the idea that immersing children in contexts where only the target language was spoken, would suffice for them to acquire it, disregarding the role of native or additional languages effects, and, above all, the influence of explicit learning.

Despite the acceptance of such connections among some authors, the issue remains controversial. This is not surprising, given that research findings have not given a simple answer to whether language acquisition reflects conscious or unconscious internal processes (N. Ellis, 1994). This is mainly due to methodological reasons, for it is difficult to test implicit learning. This is especially true in naturalistic settings: According to N. Ellis (1995), in contexts of natural language acquisition, it is difficult if not impossible, to demonstrate (and not simply assume) the lack of awareness or analysis of patterns during acquisition. As he stated,

“It is difficult enough to properly determine just what people are aware of at any particular time. It is even more difficult to keep a record of the contents of their consciousness throughout their learning experiences. It is impossible to exhaustively log the on-line contents of language learners’ consciousness in real-world learning situations.” (p. 4)

There are a few field studies which usefully bear on this issue. Most of them used artificial grammar²² and pseudowords²³. The rigor of experiments with artificial language, however, may be questioned, as it is conducted at the cost of ecological validity, devoid of social meaning (N. Ellis, 1995, p. 4).

Consciousness as understanding is, thus, related to the internal processes of learning, occurring implicitly and explicitly. There is no academic agreement on how they interact in their continuum, no consensus on whether explicit learning plays a role in acquisition or even if implicit learning exists. Our thesis falls within the scope of N. Ellis's view (1995) that human learning can take place implicitly, through communication, and explicitly, through selective learning. In the classroom, it is reasonable to consider that learners can learn because (1) they notice the language being used and because (2) teachers help them direct attention to form. Our assumptions are also in connection with Bell's

²² See Reber, 1993 for reviews.

²³ (Godfroid et al., 2010; Pellicer-Sánchez, 2016; Uchihara et al., 2019; S. Webb, 2008).

findings (Bell, 2012) that implicit and explicit learning may alternate within a single learning episode. A real-life example given by the author is:

“Reading the newspaper and suddenly [coming] across an unknown word or unknown structure that impedes comprehension in some way. ... However, on meeting the unknown word/structure, some type of explicit analysis takes place that may or may not be successful at comprehending the unknown word/structure.” (p. 146)

A final remark concerning implicit and explicit learning is that, in the literature, it can also refer to the results of knowledge. Contrarily to understanding, knowledge is what can be used by the learner – this topic is discussed in the following subsection.

2.1.4 Consciousness as Knowledge

Consciousness can also refer to knowledge, which Schmidt (1990) calls “the articulate report question” (p. 135). This level of consciousness is also called implicit or explicit in the literature, but contrary to consciousness as understanding, which is the internal process of learning, this fourth level concerns the results of such processes.

The Longman Dictionary defines implicit knowledge as “knowledge that people can be shown (by their behaviour, their judgements about grammaticality, and so forth) to possess intuitively, but which they are unable to articulate. Implicit knowledge is contrasted with explicit knowledge, which is verbalizable” (Richards & Schmidt, 2010, p. 274). In other words, by analyzing what learners are able to say or explain what they seem to know, researchers are tackling implicit and explicit learning as a product rather than properties of the learning process (Frensch & R nger, 2003; Reber, 1967). It is preferable to call it ‘knowledge’ rather than ‘learning’ to avoid mistaking the levels.

As mentioned in the previous sections, methodologically speaking, researchers have encountered difficulties detecting noticing and understanding. When it comes to detecting knowledge (what was learned), offline measures have also proven to be limited. As Schmidt (1990) puts it:

“The lack of a verbal report cannot be taken as evidence of failure to notice unless the report is gathered either concurrently or immediately following the experience. There are also conscious experiences that are inherently difficult to describe. We may notice that someone has a regional accent without being able to describe it phonetically, or notice a difference between two wines without being able to describe the difference.” (p. 132)

That is, learners do not necessarily verbalize everything they notice and learn (Schmidt, 1993) or, inversely, the lack of self-report or recall does not necessarily imply lack of awareness or learning

(Rosa & O'Neill, 1999, p. 517). This pinpoints the methodological challenges at this level of consciousness. Equally to the case of consciousness as understanding, knowledge is “essentially too intractable to be properly assessed in naturalistic situations and are better pinned down in the laboratory” (N. Ellis, 1995, p. 4). What Van Zeeland & Schmitt (2013) have suggested can partially solve this issue: In experiments in a laboratory context, to test vocabulary gains, they chose to assess participants as being able to, on the one hand, recognize words and, on the other hand, being able to use them in context. This issue is further developed in chapter three.

As we have demonstrated so far, a careful reading of the second language literature indicates no regularity in the use of the concept of consciousness, which raises key issues in understanding the existence of explicit knowledge in informal learning. Weighing the theories and findings mentioned, it is fair to say that popular beliefs such as the idea that informal learning happens unconsciously have not had empirical support and little theoretical validity. As far as informal learning is concerned, much has been discussed since Krashen (1982) described acquisition (naturalistic learning) as the lack of ability to verbalize what was learned, and recent claims on consciousness of knowledge being always present in incidental learning and self-direction (Schugurensky & Rieu, 2007) is not supported by latest empirical research.

Our hypothesis is that all levels interact, some more frequently than others, as shown in Figure 5, published by Oliveira Santos (2022). The figure shows the different levels described in the sections above and their interaction with formality. It presents informal and formal learning as being a starting point of multiple interactions among the levels of consciousness, in which intentionality and explicitness are connected by noticing. In this article, the author illustrates the automaticity of attention between incidental learning and noticing, whereas attention is directed between intentional learning and noticing. More empirical research can shed light on how implicit and explicit learning interact.

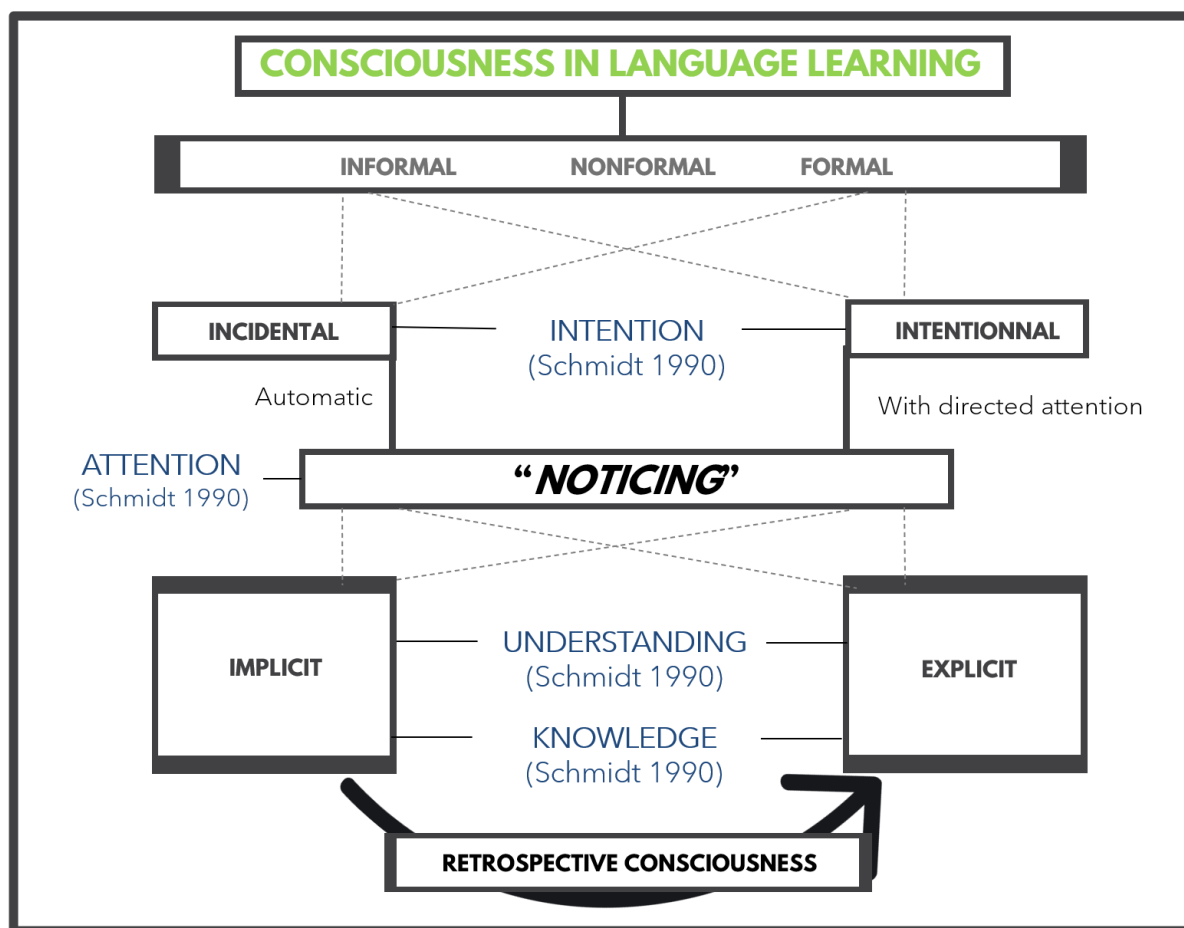


Figure 5 - *Consciousness in Language Learning*, translated and adapted Oliveira Santos (2022)

So far in this chapter, arguments have been developed to clarify what consciousness means from an internal perspective. It is also meant to defend the idea that research on cognition is essential to understanding informal learning. As a relatively new research topic, one must not exclude the various levels and dimensions that explain the richness of informal learning. The next subsection explores external factors, but before doing so, it is important to stress that only exploring external factors would provide an incomplete account of what fosters learning. According to Schmidt (1993),

“Learners may look for rules even when told not to, fail to notice highlighted words in a text, fail to understand grammar explanations, or fail to see how such explanations apply. Learners may also notice target language features that have not been made artificially salient and may form accurate or inaccurate hypotheses in the absence of instruction, or as alternatives to instruction that is not understood. When the experimental treatment and the learner's mental state do not coincide, it is surely the latter that influences the course of acquisition, so there is no choice but to continue to approach these questions from both external and internal perspectives, giving equal attention to experimental treatment and the assessment of learner awareness.” (p. 219)

Given these arguments, if one is to try to help learners achieve higher proficiency, efforts should be devoted to helping them understand the dynamics at play. More than focusing purely on instruction, one must attend to conscious external stimulations, such as planning and reflexivity, which is developed in the next section.

2.1.5 Consciousness as Reflexiveness

This subsection explores how (human) resources may play a role in learning under three headings: planning to study (2.1.5.1), reflexivity (2.1.5.2), and learning strategies (2.1.5.3).

2.1.5.1 Planning

Consciousness of learning can also refer to having a plan to study. According to Schmidt (1990), one might learn having reflected on how to study: having more or less organized it (self-directed learning or self-directed naturalistic learning, respectively), or not having prepared it, such as in naturalistic learning, and still have learned language.

In chapter one it was discussed that there are several degrees to consciousness in planning. One can set objectives and an action plan or simply make the time to study and choose what to do depending on the organizing circumstances (Spear & Mocker, 1984), both of which would constitute self-directed learning. One may create functional [learning] situations (Bialystok, 1981), such as watching series or meeting people to speak the target language, which could be described as self-direction or self-directed naturalistic learning, according to the main objective of the language user, and how intention may shift during the activity. Unconscious learning at this level means engaging in naturalistic learning by accident, such as being stopped by someone on the street who speaks the target language, or checking a scene on the TV in the next room because something called their attention.

It is argued throughout this chapter that a language center (LC) is a propitious and flexible place for guidance, in which learners' informal use of English can be accompanied, notably through reflexive tools to help them *learn to learn* (Rivens Mompean, 2022). These reflections are also a way of helping the learner plan their learning. The argument put forward in section 1.3 that a LC is a place for metacognitive reflection (Macré & Rivens Mompean, 2021), understanding of one's needs as well as for establishing and accomplishing their objectives is relevant in this chapter because, as pointed

out by Rivers Mompean (2013, p. 152), teachers and tutors have a role in assisting learners to plan. The CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) has mentioned that even though learners are ultimately concerned with language learning, they will not necessarily be (or simply do not know how to be) proactive in planning and reflecting on their own learning processes (p. 140). If evolving alone in some aspects is an important part of learning, teachers can (1) help learners avoid wasting their time and motivation with resources that are too difficult or too simple and (2) guide them towards effective methods instead of letting them linger on ineffective practices that they are used to. This is especially true for learners who struggle to learn a language and to be autonomous. Hence, in the next subsection we discuss how success can be achieved through reflection.

2.1.5.2 Reflexive consciousness

“Reflection is a form of practice.” (Brown et al., 2014, p. 26)

Reflexive consciousness (or reflexive thinking) is the ability to reflect on what one has learned after an experience (Schmidt, 1990). It is close to the concept of explicit knowledge, but in a more global sense, as it represents the process of engaging memory and, often, discussion with someone else. It is the **retrospective recognition** of new forms of knowledge, understanding or skill acquired, as well as the recognition of the process of acquisition (D. W. Livingstone, 1999). Schmidt did not further explain the concept in his writings as, at the time, researchers had not widely explored the topic in SLA. Nowadays, the notion has interested some researchers in the field of education, due to its strong connection with informal learning and autonomy.

Theoretical contributions from Tough (1971), Livingstone (1999) and Schugurensky & Rieu (2007), who call it ‘retrospective consciousness’, highlight the importance of reflexiveness for informal learning using the iceberg metaphor, stating that most of it is submerged and invisible. Livingstone (1999) argues that this is exactly why it is so hard for researchers to reveal such knowledge: “Most people do not recognize much of [it] until they have a chance to reflect on it.” (p. 8). As difficult as it is to grasp this “hidden and difficult object” (Khasanzyanova, 2021, p. 3), reflective thinking is a key component to support deep learning (Khalid et al., 2015).

Needless to say, now more than ever, with the evolution of technology and society's conception of the world, the role a teacher plays has become increasingly complex. This was nuanced by Khalid et al. (2015):

“The availability of thousands of websites and learning materials may spur learning in more meaningful ways. In line with this progression, learners are now expected to become more independent, reflective learners. Teachers are no longer solely information

providers; rather, the role of teachers is to facilitate learners' learning. Thus, it is essential that today's learners acquire the capacity to engage in reflective practices, as having such skills will help them to become effective in their professional contexts (Thorpe, 2004). The ability to reflect on one's learning and to learn from reflecting on experience is a fundamental skill for learning and improvement." (p. 2160)

With this change of paradigm, teachers should act as a "resource person" to support learning, to engage learners in an active process of personal construction of knowledge and encourage them to set their own learning goals (Brudermann & Péliissier, 2016). With this in mind, the question raised by certain scholars is how teachers and researchers can make learning gains explicit. How can individuals be made aware of the learning they have acquired through multiple experiences (Khasanzyanova, 2021)? Can and should formal instruction incorporate insights from informal learning (Dressman, 2020)?

The answers to these questions may vary from leaving informal out of formal contexts entirely, to using informal resources in class, ensuring the preservation of its primary qualities when formalizing it (as done by Fierro Porto & Schofield, 2022). Consciousness-raising is another valuable option, explored in the Language and Education sciences (Khalid et al., 2015; Khasanzyanova, 2021; Rutherford & Smith, 1985; Schugurensky & Rieu, 2007; Smith, 1981; Thorpe, 2004). It is so because it values the presence of a teacher in the learning process while still being student-centered, having as its starting point what learners do in informal learning.

This recognition of knowledge can occur any time after the experience, and the process can be internally generated or externally driven. In order for learning not to remain unconscious forever, Schugurensky & Rieu (2007) suggest semi-guided interviews, with a list of potential learning points in which participants rate their level on a Lickert scale at two distinct moments: before becoming involved in the learning process and later with a researcher. When answers vary, the researcher can encourage the participant to talk more about the difference. This strategy encourages participants to reflect on their learning and makes this knowledge more explicit, strengthening motivation.

Consciousness-raising is an important part of the overall objective of this thesis because it gives an insight into the dynamics among the levels of consciousness and the four learning dimensions presented in the previous chapter. This stance is illustrated by Figure 6, in which informal learning is brought to a nonformal context (a language center, for instance) so that new strategies will be learned to uncover the knowledge gained and equip learners to apprehend informal learning differently, using various learning strategies when they find it suitable.

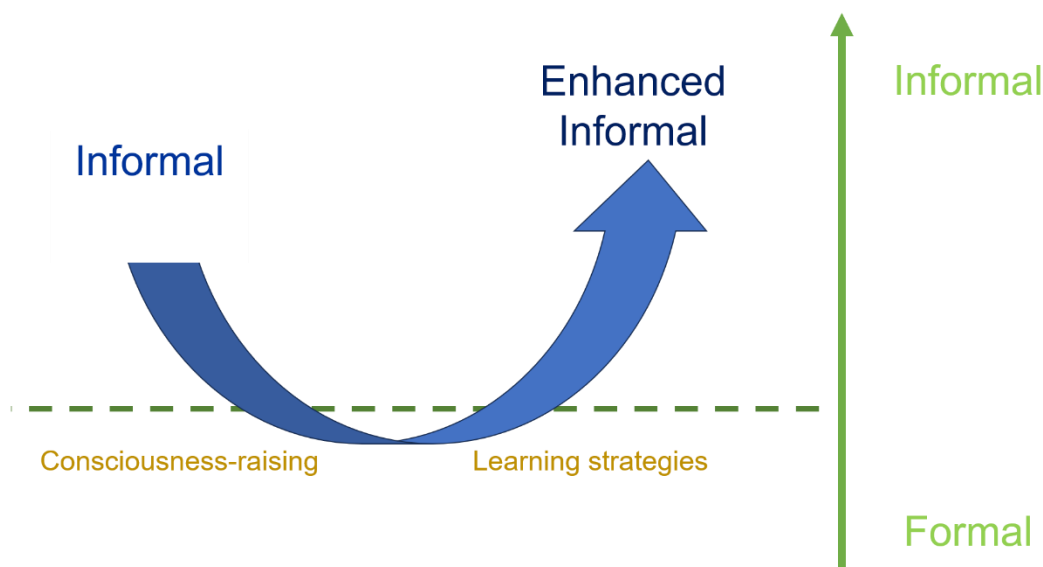


Figure 6 - Enhanced Informal Learning

From a methodological point of view, learning can become known to people through exchanges with a teacher, who asks questions that allow for retrospective awareness (Khasanzyanova, 2021; Schugurensky & Rieu, 2007). This is no easy task as it involves memory capacities and multiple experiences, but Schugurensky & Rieu (2007) suggest asking participants to illustrate what they are saying about their learning with stories, anecdotes and examples to help in the process.

In light of all the information above, we believe that metacognitive awareness is not only a means to enhance language learning, but is of central importance for reinforcing learning in informal contexts. Precise strategies are discussed in our final theoretical chapter (section 5.2).

2.2 The interaction among Levels and Dimensions

All things considered, a major theoretical framework for this thesis is the assumption that the ends of each continuum presented in the previous sections do not interact exclusively across levels. As it was illustrated in Figure 5, incidental learning can interact with implicit and explicit learning in both levels of understanding and knowledge. It is in opposition to the belief that naturalistic learning (in reference to Krashen's 1982 acquisition theory) interacts solely with implicit learning and that intentional learning necessarily generates explicit results.

Figure 7 summarizes the theoretical assumptions of this thesis, in terms of dimensions and levels. Two dimensions in learning and one level of consciousness were not represented in the diagram: Location, Locus of control and Noticing. Location was not included because it may be

controversial. Imagine a student who is at university (formal context) during her lunchbreak (informal context), watching a video on YouTube in English for fun. Could we place this practice anywhere other than in Informal learning? Adding location to the diagram would not cover the many situations such as this one. Locus of control was not incorporated because it has been argued that it is present in formal and informal contexts and research has not found any differences in terms of learning gains so far. Finally, noticing was not added for it is assumed that if learning happens, noticing occurred.

Figure 7 can be interpreted in three parts. The first one being the context and the decisions taken before learning takes place. The first question to be asked is whether learning was part of a syllabus or leading to certifications (Mangenot, 2011), in order to determine whether it constitutes informal or formal learning.

The second question is whether this learning is organized. Learning organized by someone else was omitted from the diagram for simplification purposes, as formal and nonformal learning are always organized by a third party. When it is planned by the learner, it is self-directed or self-directed naturalistic learning and if it is not planned, it is naturalistic.

The last question to be asked in this first part is whether there was an intention to learn what was learned. Naturalistic learning is considered to be incidental, whereas learning that is deliberate is intentional. As mentioned in section 2.2, the difference lies in the perspective chosen by the researcher: the context (naturalistic/self-directed) or the intention (incidental/intentional). Another reason why they were described separately in the diagram is that learning in formal contexts can include all levels of consciousness. Naturalistic and self-directed learning being part of informal learning, formal contexts can only be described as incidental/intentional. To illustrate, learners can learn incidentally in the classroom when they notice input that was not originally intended to (N. Ellis, 1995), and intentionally when the target aspect of the language was part of the syllabus.

The second part of the diagram accounts for internal processes: the implicit and explicit continuum. Although incidental learning is often studied with implicit learning (Reber, 1967; Rebuschat, 2013), it is important to take into account that people may become aware of things they do not intend to notice (Schmidt, 1990) and switch from implicit to explicit learning to analyze and better understand the language (Bell, 2012). Overall, it is commonly accepted that under incidental and intentional conditions, humans can learn language forms explicitly and/or implicitly whilst using language (Bell, 2012).

Levels and Dimensions in Language Learning

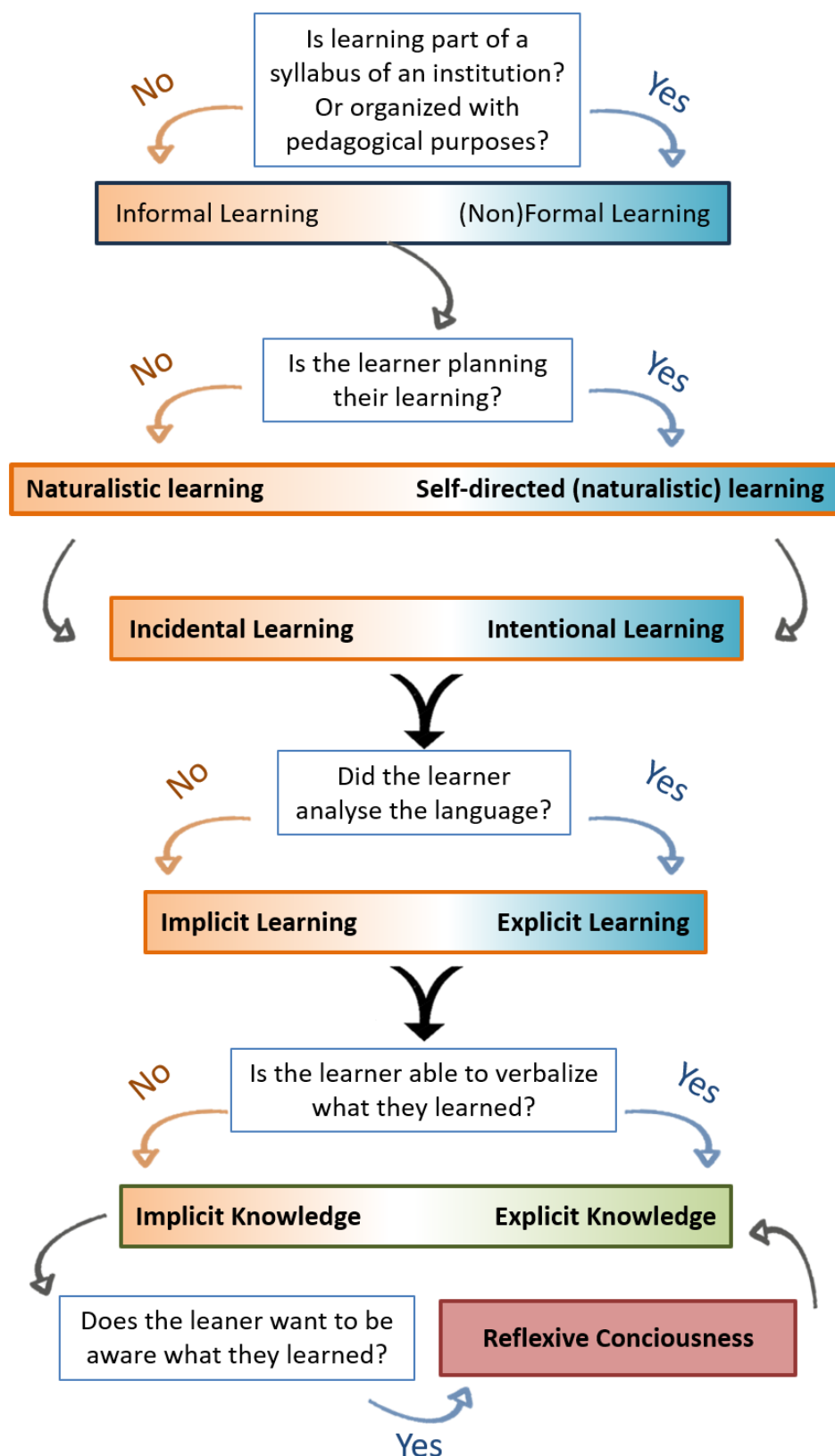


Figure 7 - Levels and dimensions in Language Learning

The third and final part of the diagram is related to external factors, or the results of learning. In the literature, there has been evidence of the association of incidental and implicit learning (Reber, 1967; Rebuschat, 2013) as well as incidental and explicit learning (Bell, 2015; Mathews et al., 1989). With regard to intentional learning, Schugurensky (2007) argues that in self-directed learning, the learner is aware of the results. However, it is important to take into account that learners' knowledge is more receptive than productive (van Zeeland & Schmitt, 2013): they are more easily able to recognize aspects of the language than to use them. In a test or interview, participants may not yet be able to use or explain what has been learned, even if at a receptive level they have learned the linguistic form. As Reber (1989) stated, "although much of what is acquired may eventually be made available to conscious expression, what is held or stored exceeds what can be expressed" (p. 229). In this case, learning that was originally intentional may result in implicit learning at the level of knowledge, if learners are unable to explain it verbally, as well as explicitly if they can verbalize the knowledge.

In other words, incidental and naturalistic learning should not be presumed to lead to implicit knowledge because noticing can induce explicit knowledge. Similarly, intentional and self-directed learning should not be deemed to lead to explicit knowledge because not everything that is intended is achieved. Anecdotal evidence for the latter is that intentional learning in the classroom does not necessarily generate explicit results: not everything that is learned (at a recognition level) can be verbalized or used.

Finally, consciousness-raising is an important pedagogical practice to consider. As far as informal learning is concerned, language gains are not always accessible to learners. Making gains visible to learners should bring benefits as they can help learners notice language and recall it, creating stronger memory connections for future use.

2.3 A case for Intentionality

"When you know what to look for, you can leverage it to your advantage."
(Cross, 2007, p. xx)

How can teachers guide learners who engage in Informal Learning? Why should they? This section is meant to shed some light and support the role of intentionality in language learning. Our first argument is that noticing is related to the natural or spontaneous discovery of aspects of the target language when an individual is in contact with it (Bergsleithner, 2009). That means that noticing is a consequence of attention that was inadvertently or deliberately directed to language. As Schmidt

& Frota (1986) concluded in their study, not everything that was present in the input was noticed by the learner, but what was noticed, whether through correction or repeated exposure, was learned. Mennim (2007) has also pointed out that focal attention (noticing) is necessary for learning, but conscious attention (intention) is not. Not needing conscious attention to learn does not mean that its presence is useless. In fact, when watching series, for instance, an individual cannot predict what they are going to notice, but they can create an environment that prepares the brain for learning.

The Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching & Applied Linguistics defines attention as the ability to concentrate on some aspects of the input, including “**alertness** (an overall readiness to deal with incoming stimuli), **orientation** (the direction of attentional resources to certain types of stimuli) and **detection** (cognitive registration of a particular stimulus” (Richards & Schmidt, 2010, p. 38). Being alert to the input and directing their attention to a certain aspect of language can increase their chances for noticing, detecting and learning. Therefore, directing attention can create more opportunities for noticing to happen because, as Nation (2017) has argued, intentional settings tend to be more efficient and effective than incidental ones because in incidental attention most attention is focused on something else.

In the previous chapter, the work of Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi on Flow (2009) was mentioned. Co-founder of the field of positive psychology, the researcher has written about the role of consciousness to achieve the state of optimal performance. In his book “Flow”, he explains the concept aiming to popularize science, in which he gives an example of attention that indirectly shows how noticing may work in the brain:

“Information enters consciousness either because we intend to focus attention on it or as a result of attentional habits based on biological or social instructions. For instance, driving down the highway, we pass hundreds of cars without actually being aware of them. Their shape and color might register for a fraction of a second, and then they are immediately forgotten. But occasionally we notice a particular vehicle, perhaps because it is swerving unsteadily between lanes, or because it is moving very slowly, or because of its unusual appearance. The image of the unusual car enters the focus of consciousness, and we become aware of it.” (Csikszentmihalyi, 2009, p. 30)

This argument makes an important contribution to the premise that it is when we notice an unusual element that it is registered in the brain (noticing the gap). Correspondingly, researchers in SLA have defended that learning happens when unknown language is noticed (Gass, 1997; Mennim, 2007; Schmidt & Frota, 1986; Schmidt, 1990) - we further discuss acquisition of unknown vocabulary in chapter three.

This chapter provides important theoretical background for three of our objectives, thus what is relevant to mention here about attention is that it is a complex mental operation that selects important bits of information to be processed. It takes effort to focus attention at will, but it may be

a powerful strategy for learning. According to Csikszentmihalyi (2009), it is related to larger goals and intentions that must be maneuvered if we wish to improve things which, in our case, is language proficiency.

As a reminder, the state of Flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 2009) may be achieved for people engaging in informal practices when the material is compelling to them (Krashen, 2013). These theories may justify why people spend countless hours playing games and watching series in a foreign language, for instance. These individuals become so absorbed by it that attention is concentrated on the relevant stimuli: they know why they are doing it but while doing it, they don't always need to know exactly what they will get out of it. Csikszentmihalyi (2009) asserts that such involvement becomes spontaneous and almost automatic, but it is not effortless. In his own words, "it often requires strenuous physical exertion, or highly disciplined mental activity" (p. 54).

"The reason it is possible to achieve such complete involvement in a flow experience is that goals are usually clear, and feedback immediate. A tennis player always knows what she has to do: return the ball into the opponent's court. ... The chess player's goals are equally obvious: to mate the opponent's king before his own is mated. With each move, he can calculate whether he has come closer to this objective. ... Certain activities require a very long time to accomplish, yet the components of goals and feedback are still extremely important to them. The goals of an activity are not always as clear as those of tennis, and the feedback is often more ambiguous than the simple 'I am not falling' information processed by the climber. Almost any kind of feedback can be enjoyable, provided it is logically related to a goal in which one has invested energy." (Csikszentmihalyi, 2009, pp. 54-55)

Thus, our second argument is that the number of hours spent in contact with informal language is very likely to help learners with language learning because of its compelling nature, and it has a considerable potential for enhanced learning with proper cognitive preparation.

Having explained dimensions and levels of learning, it should be clear by now the many facets of informal learning. In the next chapters we are going to explore empirical research on vocabulary learning and our methodology concerning the learning of idiomatic expressions by watching TV series. As explained in detail later on, this thesis's main hypothesis is that intention plays a bigger role in informal learning than is often assumed. Despite the fact that (or especially because) most research done in informal learning has looked into incidental learning and assumed implicit results, this thesis is set to investigate how intention can influence vocabulary learning through watching series.

All things considered thus far, adding intentionality to the process of informal learning does not mean formalizing it. While preserving its primary quality, which is the context of learning (any language learning activities that do not involve tests and any knowledge gained through hobbies or work – in section 1.2), a learner can develop their autonomy by being aware of the role intention and

goal setting can play in their learning process. Once again, this can be done by a tutor in the language center, by providing tools for planning, directing attention, reflexiveness, and explicitness of learning outcomes.

One important thing to bear in mind is that while advocating for intentionality we do not aim to discredit the value of incidental learning or other unconscious processes (Schmidt, 1990). As Sockett (2011) has already pointed out, the hegemony of the English Language in the lives of young adults provides a favorable environment for language learning that happens without the help of a teacher. Yet, students still seek the help of professionals to learn, despite the many informal activities they engage in every day. The time seems right for an in-depth discussion on how teachers can be of help and how they can take into consideration the new reality of language users and learners.

In 1999, Gass called our attention to how incidental learning may be more intentional than one may expect. For methodological reasons, it is still difficult to assess the level of intention in informal learning, but our assumption is that when engaging in such activities in a foreign language, users have some level of consciousness in terms of goals and intentions of learning, in different degrees. What we have suggested in this chapter is in accordance with the idea, supported by Majuddin & Siyanova-Chanturia (2021), that teachers should reflect on how language learners can optimize learning outside of the classroom.

Another hypothesis concerns the role of consciousness-raising. The arguments presented above show advantages of being active in learning, in terms of intentionality, and our thesis defends the implementation of strategies such as setting learning goals as a means of creating more opportunities for Flow and noticing to happen, in accordance with Schmidt's (1990) statement: "Those who notice most learn most, and it may be that those who notice most are those who pay attention most" (p. 144).

Csikszentmihalyi (2009) has argued for the potential of the combination between enjoyment and setting goals for learning new skills. In this thesis, we do not suggest bringing formal learning to informal contexts (such as making lists or doing comprehension activities), but rather provide cognitive strategies in a nonformal context (in a language center), such as consciousness raising, learning strategies and establishing goals, for an enhanced informal learning experience.

A reflection on why to guide learners has been provided by Rivens Mompean (2013), who, while arguing for the relevance of autonomous learning, underlies that valuing self-guided learning does not mean leaving learners alone, which can be demotivating and time-wasting (p. 151). In this thesis, we suggest that informal learning should be seen the same way, and teachers can play a role in helping learners enhance learning opportunities in informal contexts. Researchers have pointed out that teachers can help learners direct attention to linguistic forms, but they cannot account for the

quantity of vocabulary one must learn to achieve high proficiency (Dickinson & Carver, 1980; N. Ellis, 1994). Consciousness-raising is a way of equipping learners to take a more active role in their own learning.

A consciousness-raising process (or metacognitive awareness) involves teachers and mentors explaining to learners how to increase intention in informal practices, through techniques to shift attention to (socio-)linguistic forms in order to “extract potentially useful information from the L2 input, which will eventually help them produce more accurate and varied stretches of the target language” (Godfroid et al., 2010, p. 185).

All in all, it has been argued that individuals generally have little consciousness of what they learn in informal contexts (Khasanzanova, 2021; Polanyi, 1967; Schugurensky & Rieu, 2007) and researchers supported the idea that metacognitive awareness can bring benefits for language learning. Details of such advantages for vocabulary learning is given in the following chapters. Furthermore, it will be defended that consciousness at all levels is an asset to language learning considering the autonomy it can procure.

One final argument to consider is that, according to Csikszentmihalyi et al. (2005):

“In order for consciousness to be used for such positive ends, ... a person must learn to enjoy being conscious. People value in principle but seldom resort to free choice, reflection, and the weighing of alternatives. As Dostoevsky eloquently described in his tale of the Grand Inquisitor, it is much easier to act in terms of habit and convention, relying on genetic and cultural programs, than to decide in terms of one's own experience. This is in part due to the fact that the skills for being conscious need to be cultivated, or the task will seem too daunting and thus produce anxiety. Our schools are geared to teach cognitive skills, but these do not necessarily develop the skill for being conscious. A young person needs to exercise freedom in the allocation of attention, the pursuit of interests, and the mastering of challenges; only then will he or she begin to enjoy being conscious.” (p. 605)

In line with Csikszentmihalyi et al.'s (2005) above-mentioned argument and with Ryan & Deci's (2017) reflection on autonomy and competence as human basic needs, we argue that the ability to enjoy and master challenges is a necessary skill for language learning and, for that, support provided by language centers are of paramount importance for learners to become agents, responsible for their learning, and equipped to take advantage of informal opportunities.

“[L’agentivité (Bandura) ou l’apprenance] s’agit de comprendre en détail comment se développe chez l’individu la dynamique singulière de sa détermination et de sa régulation réflexive par lui-même, avec tout ce que cela implique de sa part : engagement et “proactivité” (Deci, Ryan), projection et anticipation (Tough, Knowles), sentiment de contrôle et d’auto-efficacité (Bandura, Carré), capacité métacognitive de retour critique sur ses résultats et ses propres modes de fonctionnement (Long).” (Albero, 2009, p. 10)

2.4 Summary

This chapter provided an overview of consciousness levels and their relation to Benson's dimensions (2011), presented in the previous chapter, given that many fundamental constructs in SLA needed to be clarified and sharpened. This issue is still topical because subsequent work to Schmidt's 1990's seminal article on the matter did not always clearly define the term and some have assumed correlations among levels that have not been empirically proven. As N. Ellis (1994) insisted: "It's important not to assume without independent evidence that either the process or the product of such learning is unconscious in any sense." (p. 2)

In an insightful literature review on noticing, Ünlü (2015) argued that such assumptions are understandable because of both the lack of unquestionable data and the difficulty of drawing a line between where unconscious processing ends and where conscious processing begins:

"Baddeley's (1976) proposal of consciousness as a continuum from an unconscious to highly conscious process might provide another explanation for the source of this challenge. Having clear boundaries between conscious and unconscious processes might not be possible as it has been claimed. ... What is important might be the degree the conscious and unconscious processes are involved in learning rather than an 'either or' situation." (p.263)

As such, it is important to apprehend the levels of consciousness mentioned in this chapter as a continuum, rather than a dichotomy.

Aside from that, Dressman (2020) has pointed out that "there is a broad range of technological advances in need of a definition that includes all the ways people are informally learning new languages in the early twenty-first century" (p.4). Hopefully clarifying the definitions will give future researchers a basis to rely on when defining their subject of study, especially in informal learning.

To lead to a more informed discussion, this chapter analyzed how conscious and unconscious knowledge is presented in SLA literature, mobilizing several other terms to better define the construct, such as noticing, incidental, intentional, implicit, explicit, planning and metacognitive awareness. They represent the six levels of consciousness identified by Schmidt (1990), reordered here for reasons of coherence.

The **first level** is noticing, a hypothesis formulated after the data analysis of two studies carried out by Schmidt (1983) and Schmidt & Frota (1986), who investigated the errors of a Japanese learner and Schmidt's learning of Portuguese, respectively. According to the noticing hypothesis, in order for input to be learned, it must be noticed. This can occur naturally or because attention was directed to an aspect of the language (Schmidt, 2001). Researchers in SLA have based their research on the

noticing hypothesis from cognitive perspectives (R. Ellis, 2009; Gass, 1997; Godfroid et al., 2010; Leow, 2000; Mennim, 2007; Robinson, 2015; Rosa & O'Neill, 1999; Schmidt, 2001) and interactionist approaches (Gass, 1997), providing evidence by using offline and online means.

The first published studies used online techniques such as diaries (e.g. Schmidt & Frota, 1986), note-taking (e.g. Izumi, 2002) and think-aloud protocols (e.g. Rosa & Leow, 2004), in which participants explain what they are doing while performing a task. The use of offline techniques are often present in the literature as well, accounting for data collected before and/or after the task has started/was completed. Examples are post exposure questionnaires (e.g. Rosa & Leow, 2004) and interviews (Williams, 2005). More recently, researchers have taken advantage of technological advances, such as Godfroid et al. (2010), who preferred to use eye tracking as a means of limiting interference in performance and behavior. According to the authors, participants' behavior during the task was more natural because the equipment does not involve a secondary task. This study also used vocabulary and content posttests as well as a stimulated recall (also in Mackey, 2006), a technique in which "learners are asked to recall their thought processes while viewing or hearing a stimulus such as a video of a language lesson to prompt their memory" (Richards & Schmidt, 2010, p. 486). All in all, using a combination of online and offline measures allows for a more complete picture of the process.

In this chapter, it was also declared that noticing, as the necessary condition for learning, occurs in all locations, contexts (formality), through any pedagogy (instruction and teaching), independently of who has the locus of control. It also happens whether the learner had the intention or not to learn, which refers to the second level: intentionality.

Incidental and intentional learning is the **second level** of consciousness. Intentional learning occurs, as the name indicates, when a learner intended to learn the language and the decision was taken before beginning the activity (Hulstijn, 2013). Conversely, incidental learning happens when the objective was not learning, but understanding or communicating (Schmidt, 1990; 1993). As far as Benson's pedagogy dimension is concerned, intention may be present in informal contexts, through self-directed (naturalistic) learning, as well as (non)formal settings.

From a methodological perspective, intentional or incidental learning is related to the expectation of a test (Hulstijn, 2013). To account for intentional learning, participants are told what they will be tested on. In incidental conditions, they are told about a comprehension test and not about a second test focusing on form (Richards & Schmidt, 2010; Nakamura, 2013; Montero Perez, 2020).

Therefore, discussions about incidental and intentional learning refer to the goals of the task, before one begins it (Bell, 2012). When researchers mean to investigate the internal processes while

learning, the terms implicit and explicit learning are employed, which was the third level discussed in this chapter.

Consciousness at the moment of learning is part of a continuum in which one may formulate and test hypothesis about the language in the course of learning (N. Ellis, 1994). This **third level** has, on the one hand, implicit learning that happens based on insight (Schmidt, 1990), intuition (Bialystok, 1978) and the learner does not know that they are learning (Bell, 2015). On the other hand, explicit learning accounts for consciousness that the language is being analyzed and processed, characterized by hypothesis formation, testing and the use strategies (Richards & Schmidt, 2010, p. 209).

Controversies in the field come from the broader theory of acquisition (Krashen, 1982) that describes acquisition as a natural assimilation that occurs implicitly. The connection can be made to Naturalistic learning, in which it is believed that learners "pick up" the language when having a conversation, reading a book or watching a film in a target language. Researchers have not been able to reach a consensus as to whether naturalistic learning leads exclusively to implicit learning. The very principle of noticing brings some researchers to consider the possibility of noticing happening in naturalistic contexts, which raises the possibility of explicit treatment in the brain.

Studies that were carried out to assess implicit learning often used artificial grammars (See Reber, 1993 for reviews) and pseudowords (Godfroid et al., 2010; Pellicer-Sánchez, 2016; Uchihara et al., 2019; S. Webb, 2008). To the best of our knowledge, implicit language learning has not been investigated empirically in natural settings for methodological limitations.

Depending on theoretical positions, implicit learning has not been undisputedly proven to exist, or, if it does, to what extent it interacts with explicit learning. Our thesis has adopted N. Ellis's view (1995) that human learning can take place implicitly, through communication using language, and explicitly, through selective learning.

The **fourth level** also concerns implicit and explicit learning, but as the result of the process. It is more commonly called implicit and explicit knowledge and they account for the ability of explaining or verbalizing what was learned. Indeed, people can show to possess implicit knowledge intuitively (by their behavior, their judgements about grammaticality, and so forth) but being unable to articulate, or explicitly, by verbalizing rules or meaning (Richards & Schmidt, 2010, p. 274).

At this level, offline measures have also proven to be limited. As a matter of fact, not every piece of knowledge that was internally analyzed (explicit learning) can be assessed in a test or verbalized in an interview (explicit knowledge). For this reason, researchers tend to find more consistent results when using an association of different techniques. Van Zeeland & Schmitt (2013), for instance, suggested the use of different pre and posttests to assess knowledge, arguing that

learners may have variable degrees of knowledge (more in chapter three). Finally, similarly to the level of understanding, most data collection is also done in the laboratory for methodological limitations (N. Ellis, 1995).

In this chapter we presented the idea that all pedagogies in informal learning may lead to implicit and explicit knowledge, contrary to what has been stated in the literature (Krashen, 2013; Schugurensky & Rieu, 2007). This thesis advocates for profound analysis and consideration of all the dynamics among the levels in future research.

The final sections of this chapter evoked consciousness from an external perspective, as both allow for direct interference of a third person: planning and reflexivity. The **fifth level** concerns the plan to learn. It was put forward that learning can occur in contexts of self-direction, in which learners set objectives and an action or plan, or simply decide to learn following the organizing circumstances, or the resources and opportunities available (Spear & Mocker, 1984), which would constitute self-directed learning.

The intention to study can also be less organized, as in the creation of functional [learning] situations (Bialystok, 1981): engaging in activities in the target language such as watching series or meeting people to speak the target language. In such cases the intention can be mainly to learn the language (self-directed learning) or shift to communicative purposes once the activity has started (self-directed naturalistic learning). Unconscious learning at this level means engaging in naturalistic language learning by accident. Chapter Five gives continuity to this topic.

Finally, the **sixth level** is reflexivity or consciousness-raising. It involves a conscious process of remembering a prior episodic experience (N. Ellis, 1994) and reflecting on what one has learned after this experience (Schmidt, 1990). It entails externalization of learning, usually by talking to someone about it. This process is believed to be a key component to support deep learning (Khalid et al., 2015).

Nowadays, the teacher's role has become increasingly complex: thanks to advances in technology, they are no longer the only information providers and, for that reason, they should take the role of guide and facilitators (Khalid et al., 2015). One way of doing this is through consciousness-raising (Khalid et al., 2015; Khasanzyanova, 2021; Rutherford & Smith, 1985; Schugurensky & Rieu, 2007; Smith, 1981; Thorpe, 2004).

Figure 6 illustrated the dynamics proposed by this thesis. It supports the dialogue between informal and nonformal learning, in which learners discuss their informal practices with a facilitator (e.g., a teacher, a researcher, a tutor) with the objective of reflecting on their learning gains. It entails acknowledgement of informal learning through a brief encounter with the nonformal context, by means of reflection and strategy learning, so that the learner will be better equipped to continue reflecting on their practices and to reinforce informal learning when they find it necessary.

In sequence, Figure 7 explains the possible connections among dimensions and levels of consciousness, with exception of location, because of its relativeness; locus of control, as it is believed to be part of nonformal and informal; and noticing, for it is considered omnipresent in learning. The diagram aims to support (1) the assumption that each level is a continuum, (2) the interaction among formality, pedagogy and the 6 levels of consciousness and (3) that consciousness-raising is a resourceful approach to making knowledge explicit to learners.

The definitions presented thus far show how different levels of consciousness can be studied and how terms can be misunderstood because of their relative vagueness. Our intentions were two-fold: First, to deconstruct the concept of consciousness to later establish this thesis' methodological positions and second, to provide theoretical bases as to how the levels can interact in order to encourage investigation of uncharted associations by empirical research.

This leads us to our thesis objectives. The first objective, mentioned at the end of the first chapter, is to uncover current practices in informal learning and the frequency to which university students engage in them. Our second, third and fifth objective are a continuation of it, as it aims to investigate the role of consciousness in informal learning. These three objectives are presented in our next theoretical chapters: Chapter three explores the role of intention prior to series viewing to answer the question: To what extent can having a goal in mind before watching foster vocabulary learning? The results are presented in section 7.3. Chapter four develops the reasons why people watch series to answer the question: What are the intentions behind watching series in a foreign language? The results can be found in section 7.2. And finally, in chapter five, we explore the role of images and captions in vocabulary learning (results in section 7.4) as well as pedagogical interventions in a nonformal context to help learners reflect on their viewing of sitcoms in English and different learning strategies that may enhance informal learning (results in section 7.5).

The next chapter is organized to provide a clear account of how vocabulary learning has been researched in SLA. Majuddin & Siyanova-Chanturia (2021) have pointed out that although intentional learning is often said to be more effective than incidental learning, there are few empirical studies that can support this claim because the majority of the studies focus on one type of learning (incidental or intentional), making it difficult for a comparison to be made. This issue is discussed in connection with our third thesis objective.

Chapter 3. Examining Notions in Vocabulary learning

Vocabulary learning is a well-established subfield in Applied Linguistics. Numerous books and articles have been published in the past 40 years²⁴, giving researchers a comprehensive picture of the processes involved in its learning and the evolution of theories, as well as extended literature about factors that affect learning, and how to assess vocabulary knowledge. The Common European Framework of Reference for languages (CEFR), created in 2001 (Council of Europe, 2001), has been a powerful tool in the change of paradigm in language teaching and learning, and two of these contributions are particularly used as common bases for the elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks and grounded in the practice of teachers and researchers. The first one is the six levels of proficiency: A1 and A2 that represent basic users, B1 and B2 for independent users, and C1 and C2 for proficient users. The second one is the descriptors of each level, reinforced by the Companion volume in 2020 (Europarat, 2020).

The CEFR has provided descriptions of expectations of knowledge at different levels and, particularly relevant to our research is the details they provide on the vocabulary knowledge suggested as necessary for achieving higher levels of proficiency. Within the CEFR, lexical competence is defined as the “knowledge of, and ability to use, the vocabulary of a language” (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 110). This includes lexical elements such as single-word forms and multiword expressions (sentential formulae, relict archaisms, phrasal idioms, fixed frames, phrasal verbs and fixed collocations). The ultimate vocabulary goal for second language learning (L2) is to have a good command of a very broad lexical repertoire including idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms, showing awareness of connotative levels of meaning (descriptive of the C2 level in Council of Europe, 2001, page 112).

This chapter provides an account of key variables which help vocabulary learning. It presents the most relevant discussions related to the acquisition and assessment of vocabulary and it provides keys to explain the methodological choices of this thesis. The first section summarizes issues related to input: how frequency, number of encounters, context and word salience may influence learning. The second section concerns intake: how memory plays a role in learning and the different degrees of vocabulary knowledge. The third section deals with uptake: how learned knowledge is used and demonstrated, as well as how it can be assessed. Finally, the fourth section outlines main findings regarding formulaic sequences, the subject in question in this thesis, borrowing definitions from the fields of Linguistics and Pragmatics.

²⁴ (Anderson & Freebody, 1979; Nation, 2017; Saragi et al., 1978; Schmitt, 2010; Webb, 2012).

3.1 Factors influencing vocabulary learning

As stated in chapter one, there is far too much to learn, and, in a classroom, there is not enough time to cover all language one must acquire to be a proficient user. It has also been argued, in chapter two, that noticing language, as a key factor for learning, is one of the first steps for language to be internalized both in and out of the classroom. This section provides arguments for the relevance of informal vocabulary learning and factors that influence the learning process.

The mainstream point of view in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) is that larger vocabulary gains can be obtained by increasing learning in informal contexts, outside of situations specifically devoted to learning new words²⁵. Extensive research on reading and listening practices, for instance, has provided evidence that such practices lead to substantial gains in vocabulary size²⁶. One of the earliest studies, conducted by Nagy & Herman (1985), estimated that native children learn vocabulary at a rate of 3,000 words per year between grades three and 12 and that the number of words covered in explicit vocabulary instruction is, at best, a few hundred a year. Hulstijn (2013) also pointed out that adolescent native speakers of English who have completed high school “have a receptive vocabulary of at least 20,000 base words (Nation, 2001). ... The accepted view is that they cannot have learned such a large number of words solely by means of explicit vocabulary instruction. Rather, they must have learned most words in an incremental way through repeated encounters through listening and reading” (p. 3). This implies that teaching specific words to learners does not contribute substantially to their overall vocabulary size, as teaching can only cover a small fraction of the words that students should be learning (Nagy & Herman, 1985).

This debate has been transposed to research in L2, and, similarly to L1 learning, evidence has shown that out-of-class practices can account for a large proportion of the vocabulary growth of learners²⁷. This immersion aspect of informal practices provides a vast range of possibilities when it is a long-term habit, fostering effective vocabulary learning. Nagy & Herman (1985) estimate that if learners were to spend 25 minutes a day reading, they would encounter between 15,000 to 30,000 unfamiliar words a year and if 1 in 20 of these words are learned, this would mean between 750 and 1,500 words a year. For them, “such a gain is substantial, considering the proportion of yearly vocabulary growth that is covered and the fact that it would be extremely difficult, if not impossible,

²⁵ (Nagy & Herman, 1985; Nation, 2017; Oxford & Scarcella, 1994; Schmidt & Frota, 1986; van Zeeland, 2013).

²⁶ (Krashen, 1982; Nagy & Herman, 1985; Nation, 2017; Peters et al., 2019; van Zeeland, 2013).

²⁷ Examples of empirical research: Brown et al., 2008; Montero Perez, 2020; Nagy & Herman, 1985; Nation, 2017; Schmidt & Frota, 1986; van Zeeland, 2013.

for any word-by-word approach to vocabulary instruction to cover the same number of words in the same amount of time” (p.18). Hence it is largely accepted that increasing learners’ motivation to learn new words independently, by reading and listening, will create the environment needed for them to encounter words in a variety of meaningful contexts.

Based on this theoretical viewpoint, a large body of research has examined vocabulary-related factors that influence learning, such as frequency, number of encounters, context and salience. The next subsections compile findings and explain these key concepts organized by the quantity and quality of such elements.

3.1.1 Frequency in the language

The first quantity factor that may influence vocabulary learning is the frequency of the word in the language. Researchers have analyzed existing corpora to estimate the proportion with which words and phrases appear in the English language. Traditionally, these words are separated into five categories, also called frequency bands, from most frequent to less frequent: 2000 level, 3000 level, 5000 level, University Word List, 10000 level (Nation, 1990). Based on previous research in SLA, Schmitt et al. (2001) declared that knowledge of the most frequent 2000 words provides the lexical resources for basic everyday oral communication; the 3000-level words provide additional material for spoken discourse; the 5000 level is the threshold to begin to read authentic texts, allowing learners to infer the meaning of many of the unknown words they encounter; and finally, a learner who knows the most frequent 10000 words is considered to have a wide vocabulary, and it is at this level that they can cope with the university study in an L2.

The importance of studying vocabulary levels is two-fold. The first one has classroom implications: there is an assumption that the overall frequency of words in the language can affect motivation and manageability of the task (Nation, 2017). Input loaded with low-frequency words are considered more difficult than input with more common words. Additionally, “the overall frequency of words can affect the usefulness of the words that are learned” (Nation, 2017, p. 2). That is, it is more useful for basic users (A1-A2) to learn words that they may encounter more often, than words with which they are not going to be faced frequently (Waring & Takaki, 2003). Finally, knowing the vocabulary size of learners can be used to identify possible lexical deficiencies which might need addressing (Schmitt et al., 2001).

The second reason is their relevance for research: studies in vocabulary acquisition value the context in which the words appear. Analyzing the words in the input can indicate how difficult the oral

or written text is, so that researchers can select appropriate documents for the target audience. Overall, more frequent items have had higher recognition rates than the less frequent items, indicating that they might be easier to learn (Waring & Takaki, 2003), possibly due to the number of times learners may have encountered them in their lives. For this reason, estimating the lexical size of learners may be useful for conducting studies.

A common way of testing vocabulary size in different frequency bands is to use Vocabulary Levels Tests (VLT), which was first developed by Nation (1990)²⁸. They are designed to give an estimate of vocabulary size for L2 learners of general and/or academic English, based on the rationale that vocabulary size is related to the ability to use English in various ways (Schmitt et al., 2001, p. 55). Each level tests the knowledge of words in a multi-item matching task (found in appendix A), with the objective of assessing the recognition of form and meaning. As Milton (2010) pointed out,

“[this] is quite a complex test, ... where success relies not just on a learner’s knowledge of the test words (on the left-hand side) but also on knowledge of the words in the explanations (on the right-hand side) and it is not completely clear which items are being tested.” (p. 222)

Other tests in the literature are (1) Meara and Milton’s (2003) orthographic vocabulary size test (XLex), and (2) the phonological vocabulary size test ALex (Milton & Hopkins, 2005), which is an aural version of XLex where words are heard instead of seen. In these tests, respondents must choose, on a list of words, which are real or made-up words. The advantage of this test is that it can assess a large number of items in a short space of time. Another test is (3) the VocabLab test, used by Peters (2018) to assess form and meaning via a multiple-choice test by testing the knowledge words from four frequency levels (from 2000 to 5000) and five options with definitions.

Other than the researchers mentioned thus far, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) has also mentioned the connection of proficiency levels and vocabulary size. Milton (2010) gave an analysis of what the CEFR says about vocabulary size and declared:

“While vocabulary knowledge and general linguistic performance are separable qualities, given that the number of words a learner knows is not the sole determiner of how good he or she is in communication, they are not entirely separate qualities. A learner’s vocabulary can be expected to become measurably larger and more sophisticated as communicative competence increases.” (p. 212)

²⁸ More information on the history and details of the Vocabulary levels test can be found in Schmitt et al. (2001).

According to the author, even though the CEFR remains holistic and applicable to all European languages, leaving vocabulary lists behind to avoid solely vocabulary centered instructions, vocabulary size tests would seem to capture most of what the CEFR terms Vocabulary range and Vocabulary control (p. 219).

More on learners' vocabulary size is discussed, together with their connection to difficulty of texts, in chapter four. What is relevant for us in this chapter is to know that learners with larger vocabulary size have proven to read and listen better, and are more likely to learn new words from context (Neuman & Koskinen, 1992; Noreillie et al., 2018; Schmitt et al., 2011).

3.1.2 Number of encounters

A second quantity factor is the number of encounters a learner must be faced with in order to learn a lexical item. Several researchers have attempted to measure the effect of repetition, but results have reached significantly different conclusions²⁹. In fact, earlier studies suggested that between six and ten encounters are needed to learn an unknown L2 word (Horst et al., 1998; Rott, 1999; Saragi et al., 1978). Later, in research in the 2000's, studies reported that it may take more than 20 encounters to learn the meaning of a word (Pigada & Schmitt, 2006; Waring & Takaki, 2003) or perhaps 50 or 100 repetitions are needed for listeners to develop the ability to remember a word's meaning (R. Brown et al., 2008).

It is clear that the lack of consensus and the moderate correlations between repetitions and learning found in the literature (Nation, 2001) cannot provide an empirical basis on which to establish the number of encounters that allows for adequate comprehension or word learning. Nevertheless, each of these studies made an important contribution to the evolution of the topic. Researchers now understand that meeting a word for the first time is a small and important step in eventual learning (Nation, 2017). As Nagy & Herman (1985) pointed out: "One should not underestimate the value of any meaningful encounter with a word even if the information gained from that one encounter is relatively small" (p. 20). So, even though a single encounter with a word in context may not produce very deep word knowledge, it is likely to add some kind of information to the reader's knowledge because it can change the quality of the mental processing of the word (Nation, 2017).

Nowadays, it is largely accepted that vocabulary gains vary according to, among other factors, the difficulty of the word (its frequency in the language), the quality of the input (discussed in subsection 3.1.3) and the way the researcher assesses these gains (in section 3.2). That means that, in

²⁹ (R. Brown et al., 2008; Horst et al., 1998; Rott, 1999; Saragi et al., 1978; Vidal, 2003; Waring & Takaki, 2003)

order to learn vocabulary, learners can benefit from being exposed repeatedly to the item (Vidal, 2011) as the more the word is encountered, the more, statistically, the gains increase (Nation, 2017; Vidal, 2003), but other factors should also be taken into account.

In the past 15 years, literature has discussed other factors in learning, mostly related to the quality of the encounter (Nation, 2017; van Zeeland, 2013; Webb, 2008). The first one is the type of repetition. Nation (2017) explained that repetitions can be verbatim or varied. Verbatim repetition accounts for encounters with the same word in the same form, context and circumstances, such as reading or listening to the same text/document again. According to Nation (2017), this is likely to be less enriching than more varied repetition, from different sources and means.

The second factor is the spacing of repetition. Spacing can be controlled within a task or learning session and between tasks, and it has positive effects in long-term retention. Early research suggested that the repetitions should be spaced (Cepeda et al., 2008; Vidal, 2003) or increasingly spaced (Baddeley, 1999), as in “distributed across a period of time rather than massed together: The space between exposures should become larger, with initial repetitions being closer in time and later repetitions much further apart” (Nation, 2017, p. 2). More recent research, however, suggests that evenly spaced repetitions may also have positive effects in learning (Nakata, 2015), and that it may depend on the type of study: Differently from the first studies in the field, Uchihara et al. (2019) and Pujadas (2019) used multiple videos to assess incidental learning (instead of using decontextualized language items). They found that learning through videos seems to be more effective with massed conditions, as word forms and meanings are more likely to be learned if they appeared in a single episode.

As results on quantity factors are in constant evolution and are still being studied, some researchers in vocabulary learning have focused more on quality factors that involve effort and deeper processing as some believe it to play a more important role for higher vocabulary gains (Vidal, 2003; Webb, 2008). It is the case of studies that focus on context and salience, presented in the subsections that follow.

3.1.3 Context and Salience

Context is another quality factor in vocabulary learning. Learning from context means that, in order to learn unknown words, one must infer meaning from the contextual information, which can also be beneficial in terms of syntactic structure and word formation knowledge (Gu & Johnson, 1996).

In learning from context, learners can also gain word knowledge drawing from common sense or from the background knowledge that they have developed in their own languages (Lau, 2018).

According to Oxford & Scarcella (1994), guessing from context is one of the most useful strategies for learning vocabulary, as it can be done in most encounters with words, in and out-of-class. They pinpointed that one may follow contextual clues for learning meaning and function of a word by ignoring part of the unknown words, paying attention to the frequency of words, their location in the sentence, their worth and desirability, their uses, their meaning and possible synonyms used in the context, as well as why they were used in that context (respectively temporal, spatial, value, functional, meaning and causal cues).

Laufer (1996) stressed, however, that there are L2 items that just cannot be inferred because there are non-existent, unusable, partial, and even misleading clues. That means that their lack of contextual transparency may be misleading and, as Webb (2008) pointed out, “if unknown words repeatedly appear in informative contexts, their meanings may be learned relatively quickly. However, if unknown words appear in less informative or misleading contexts, it may take learners much longer to gain knowledge of meaning” (p. 238).

The difficulty of the other words in the text should not be taken for granted either:

“The cues given ... can be differentially helpful ... depending upon a number of variables, including the location of the unknown word and of the cue in the text, and the complexity of the unknown word and surrounding text. If the learners cannot understand the surrounding text, it is unlikely that they will be able to use cues to figure out the meaning of a given word.” (Oxford & Scarcella, 1994, p. 236)

The complexity of the text, mentioned by Oxford & Scarcella (1994), refers to the number of words in a text that a learner must understand in order to learn unknown words, and it varies from written to aural supports. This issue is discussed in subsection 4.1.3 lexical coverage, in the next chapter. In general, that means that words can be an obstacle when their density is high: “If the number of unknown words in spoken or written text is too high, it increases its difficulty, decreasing opportunities for learning” (Richards & Schmidt, 2010, p. 112).

Furthermore, Hulstijn et al. (1996), based on previous research, indicated other reasons for which learners may not learn from context, some of which are:

“The contextual information may be so redundant that readers fail to connect the form of the unknown word to the meaning contained in the context. In other words, they may only pay attention to the meaning and ignore the unfamiliar word form. For learning to take place, however, attention must be focused not exclusively on the meaning of the target word, but also on the connection between the word’s form and meaning. Often, the meanings of unknown words are not inferable from the context. [Also,] readers tend

to pay more attention to words whose meanings they consider to be relevant to an understanding of the text than to words not perceived as relevant.” (p. 328)

It is amid these variables that learners may infer the meaning of unknown words. Inferring meanings relies on deeper elaboration (Hulstijn et al., 1996), which is when words are “related to other information and concepts in long term memory and connections are formed with existing concepts and schema” (Richards & Schmidt, 2010, p. 316). These meanings are retained slightly better than meanings given by glosses or dictionaries (Hulstijn et al., 1996). Hulstijn (1996) points out, however, that this advantage comes with a risk: it can turn into a disadvantage when readers infer a wrong meaning. This can be the case with lower-level learners, that may have the ability to read in the L2 but may not be able to successfully infer words from context (Webb & Chang, 2015). This is why learners can benefit from strategic training: learning to guess from context can help them reduce cognitive load of new and complex words.

“Certainly, ensuring that students encounter words frequently in a variety of contexts is a key to helping students to extend their knowledge of the meanings, functions, and grammatical properties of words. However, we also believe that other factors have a powerful effect on lexical development in a second language.” (Oxford & Scarcella, 1994)

Salience, another quality factor in vocabulary learning, is defined by the Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics as:

“The ease with which a linguistic item is perceived. ... For example, the salience of a spoken word may depend on: a) the position of a phoneme in the word; b) the emphasis given to the word in speech, i.e. whether it is stressed or unstressed; c) the position of the word in a sentence.” (Richards & Schmidt, 2010, p. 506)

Influential linguists such as Nick Ellis (2006) have discussed the importance of salience for learning grammatical forms. The third person singular ‘-s’, for instance, may be difficult for learners to learn because its low salience makes it difficult for noticing to happen. In this case, not noticing does not hamper understanding or communication, so they can continue listening, reading or interacting without this knowledge. Words that are short and low in stress are also difficult to perceive: in research on vocabulary acquisition from extensive reading, conducted by Pigada & Schmitt (2006), the authors analyzed the learning of high and low-frequency words, suggesting that low-frequency ones may have been learned because they were salient in the context. This issue is particularly relevant in the case of formulaic language, as it is further developed in section 3.3, because some formulaic sequences are prosodically more noticeable (more about it in subsection 5.1.2) and relevant to understanding the text³⁰.

³⁰ Vidal (2003, 2011) discussed the relevance of technical words in academic listening.

From this overview of quantity and quality factors in vocabulary learning, we can conclude that the complexity of the text at hand plays a large role in whether words and sequences can be learned. The next section develops another key aspect in vocabulary research: after analyzing frequency, encounters, context and salience, how can we assess learners' gains in an experiment?

3.2 Vocabulary Knowledge

Most research on vocabulary learning builds on existing theories of memory, having Craik & Lockhart's work (1972) as one of the strongest influences to researchers in SLA³¹. The authors formulated the Levels of Processing hypothesis, stating that the quality of the mental processing will determine what is remembered or not. Although some quantity and quality factors to learning were discussed in the previous section, Craik & Lockhart (1972) specially developed the quality related to the intention and the attention towards the input. This section develops the discussion initiated in subsections 2.1.1 and 2.1.2, evoking theories specific to vocabulary learning.

According to Craik & Lockhart (1972), intention may lead to word learning in two ways: when it is deliberate or not. On the one hand, incidental attention is at play when vocabulary learning occurs while attention is directed at meaning-focused use of the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing (Nation, 2017). On the other hand, deliberate attention occurs when the focus is on words as words, rather than as part of the message.

As for **noticing**, or the attention given to a word, Nation (2017) stated that "[noticing] does not involve recalling anything about the word or analyzing it in any way. Noticing occurs if we study a list of words and their meanings or if we meet an unknown word in a text. Often our first encounter with an unknown word involves noticing" (p. 6). That is, learning relies on effective initial meetings when guessing from context or noticing a gap when speaking or writing. Therefore, once again, the more frequent an item, the greater number of opportunities for noticing exist, since when a word appears frequently in the input, the likelihood that it will be noticed and integrated into the interlanguage system increases (Schmidt, 1990).

Other than intention, noticing and quantity/quality factors, there is a further point to be considered. Bruton (2007) pointed out that the acquisition of the meaning of new lexical items from input is almost always initially only partial (unless the word is a cognate in the learner's native language

³¹ Authors drawing from the theory: N. Ellis (1994); Hulstijn (2013); Nation (2001); Uchihara et al. (2019); Vidal (2011).

or highly salient in the input). That is, when a word is learned, it does not mean that (1) the learner necessarily knows all there is to know about the word or that (2) they have the word readily available for use. These are aspects to be taken into account when assessing learners' vocabulary knowledge or expecting them to explain words. For that reason, the following subsections shed some light on research on depth, breadth and strength of vocabulary knowledge, as well as how researchers have measured different degrees of knowledge.

3.2.1 Degrees of knowledge

“[The complexity of knowing a] L2 word involves not just the ability to recognize it when it is heard (what does it sound like?) and seen (what does it look like?), or to match it with its native language counterpart (what is its translation?). Knowing an L2 word also involves being able to use the word communicatively in the context of purposeful interaction. Just like grammar, vocabulary is not particularly useful when isolated and taken out of context; it is only useful when applied in real communication. Lexical knowledge includes knowledge of form (pronunciation, spelling, word derivations), position in grammatical constructions, collocations (co-occurring words), functions (frequency and appropriateness), and association (Nation, 1990; George, 1983³²).” (Oxford & Scarcella, 1994, p. 232)

To be able to assess vocabulary knowledge, one must bear in mind the many components of word learning and be aware of the degrees involved. As stated by Webb (2012), “measuring learning with a single test of form and meaning may only measure a fraction of what may be known about a word” (p. 1). That is why **depth of knowledge**, a term introduced by Anderson & Freebody (1979), is essential for researchers in the field. It refers to how completely these words are known (Milton, 2013; Webb, 2012), and depth is a continuum one navigates while encountering and using words in different contexts. It includes the understanding and the ability to use a word's spelling, pronunciation, derivations and inflections, meaning senses, semantic associations, collocations, and grammatical functions, and when it may be appropriate or inappropriate to use. These aspects are all required to fully know words (Nation, 2001; Oxford & Scarcella, 1994; Webb, 2012).

While depth of vocabulary is measured by the number of different categories an individual knows, **strength of knowledge** is the degree of knowledge of each category, varying from partial to full knowledge (Webb, 2012). For instance, knowing all nine categories mentioned above demonstrates great depth of knowledge (meaning, for instance), but only knowing one of the meanings of the word shows only relative strength of knowledge on meaning.

³² In Oxford & Scarcella (1994): George, H. V. (1983) Classification, communication, teaching and learning. Unpublished manuscript, English Language Institute, Victoria University of Wellington.

Finally, a third term associated with knowledge is **breadth**. It refers to how many words (their form-meaning connections) a person knows in the language, regardless of how well they are known, and according to Webb (2012), it is typically indicated by vocabulary size tests. According to Webb (2012):

“Breadth is usually determined by the degree to which learners are able to link form to meaning. Being able to link form to meaning is an important step in vocabulary development because it increases the likelihood that words may be understood and used. However, it does not ensure that these words will be understood and used correctly and this is why there is also a need for learners to develop vocabulary depth.” (p. 1)

It is important to note, however, that even native speakers will not know every facet of every word in their lexicon (Milton, 2013). As a consequence, in order to be proficient in a language, one must seek to know many words (breadth), many of their categories (depth) and have deep knowledge of each of these categories (strength), but they are not expected to know everything there is to know in a language.

As far as the CEFR is concerned, vocabulary range and vocabulary control are expected to expand as the language user progresses in learning. Comparing these different types of knowledge with the descriptions in the framework, Milton (2013) pointed out that even though there is not a full description of the terms, the wording of the descriptions indicates that *range* is related to vocabulary *size* and *control* appears to roughly correspond to vocabulary depth, as it is associated with accuracy and appropriateness in selection and use of words. In Milton's (2013) words:

“It is clear that what is anticipated is that learners will grow an increasingly large lexicon as they progress through the levels. The ‘basic vocabulary’ at A1 Level becomes ‘a very broad lexical repertoire’ at C2 level. It is implied that only at the most advanced levels will developments in vocabulary depth be relevant. At C1 level ‘Good command of idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms’ is expected, and at C2 level ‘awareness of connotative levels of meaning’ is added. The use of expressions like command in the descriptors also implies that learners have these items available for use and that vocabulary knowledge has progressed along the fluency dimension as well as the breadth and depth dimensions. Implicit within this framework, therefore, is the understanding that a requirement of making progress in communicating through foreign language is acquiring greater volumes of vocabulary and acquiring ever greater sophistication and control in the use of this vocabulary.” (p. 64)

Altogether, this subsection provided key definitions to research in vocabulary learning, highlighting that researchers must make decisions as to exactly what they want to measure, which could be any of the several facets mentioned above. The next subsection demonstrates how vocabulary knowledge has been assessed in SLA literature.

3.2.2 Receptive and productive knowledge

Before exploring the ways of assessing vocabulary knowledge (section 3.2.3), it is worth noting that research in SLA has considered the difference between **receptive and productive knowledge**. Respectively, they refer to the ability to recognize a word's meaning, and to use its correct form in context (Henriksen, 1999; Melka, 1997; Schmitt, 2010). Controversies surround the subject as to whether these are two different systems (Meara, 1990) or part of a continuum (Melka, 1997). This divergence in conceptualization relies, respectively, (1) in the belief that these two types of knowledge do not rely on identical types of information and correspond to different mental processes or (2) that receptive knowledge can gradually become productive mastery.

Meara (1990) theorized that receptive vocabulary only responds to external stimuli, and learners need to read or hear the words to be able to remember them. In his argument, these words are not readily available in the system and cannot be reached by other words when one is looking for them to produce language. For Meara, you can recognize passive vocabulary when you see/hear it, but you are unable to bring it to mind without external support. Conversely, productive vocabulary can be activated by other words in the system without external stimulus. In his own words:

“Active vocabulary may come in many shades of activity level - some words may be absolutely key words, central to the entire network of associations; others may be peripheral, activated only in the context of other closely related words. Active vocabulary clearly exists on a continuum of some sort; passive vocabulary, according to the view put forward here, is qualitatively different.” (p.153)

Finally, as passive vocabulary may already be strongly connected to active parts of the network, for it to become active one may deliberately practice associating more words with this passive vocabulary, so that their chances to be reached when needed will be higher. This view supports the idea that there is a gap between receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge and that their connection is not a gradual one.

Alternatively, Melka (1997) theorized that receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge is part of a continuum. Arguments for this view are based on findings that the first includes and extends the latter. To the best of our knowledge, roughly every study comparing passive and active knowledge found that gains for the receptive are higher than for the productive knowledge, for both written and aural means. To give a few examples, in Waring and Takaki's research (2003) on vocabulary learning through a graded reader, the score for passive (receptive) knowledge was 42.4% against 18.4% for active (productive) knowledge. In research conducted by Brown et al. (2008), in which they assessed

learning of 84 target words through reading, reading-while-listening, and listening to stories, participants scored, for receptive and productive knowledge respectively, 44.8% and 14.6% in reading, and 29.3% against 2% in listening³³.

This indicates that, in the process of acquisition, receptive knowledge precedes productive knowledge. In other words, recognition comes first, and words may eventually be retrieved at will, given that evidence shows that the opposite is not possible: one cannot recall something they are unable to recognize. Thus, it is believed that receptive knowledge can gradually become productive mastery, even though the amount of vocabulary required for one to become the other is not known (Oxford & Scarcella, 1994), and our thesis falls within the scope of this theory.

One cognitive factor related to receptive and productive knowledge is information retrieval, which is the process of bringing information back from memory (Richards & Schmidt, 2010, p. 282). For retrieval to be possible, one must have met the word or related words before, and have noticed that word – retrieval corresponds to the moment to which one tries to recall something that they have already noticed about the word. As Nation (2017) illustrated:

“For example, if we have looked up the meaning of a word in a dictionary, the next time we meet the word in listening or reading we can try to retrieve its meaning. Retrievals work best if they are spaced, and so listening and reading set up good conditions for retrieval because the occurrences a word do not occur immediately after each other but are spaced by other parts of the text.” (p. 6)

Receptive (or passive) retrieval means that the word was previously met while listening or reading (receptive) and then one tried to recall its meaning (retrieval) (Nation, 2017; Webb, 2012), whereas productive (or active) retrieval means that the appropriate word is needed for expressing ourselves in speaking or writing (Griffin & Harley, 1996). Therefore, when testing learners’ vocabulary knowledge, it is important to bear in mind that one may not be able to explain everything they have learned because not all knowledge can be actively retrieved. Thus, researchers have developed different methods to have access to receptive and productive knowledge. This topic is at the core of the next subsection.

³³ Examples of other studies: Brown et al., 2008; Oxford & Scarcella, 1994; van Zeeland & Schmitt, 2013; Waring & Takaki, 2003.

3.2.3 Assessing knowledge

As discussed thus far, vocabulary knowledge is a complex construct. It involves knowledge of various aspects of language (section 3.2.1) and, in order for it to be assessed, researchers must be aware of what exactly they want to measure. One must keep in mind that long before learners reach mastery of the word's form-meaning link, they may have acquired its spelling, use, nuances of meaning or form, but are not able to produce it or fully explain their meaning yet (van Zeeland & Schmitt, 2013). For that reason, researchers have used multiple vocabulary tests to provide insight into the knowledge components they want to investigate and have found that there are indeed varying degrees of knowledge. A careful reading of second language literature indicates that there are two distinct dimensions to take into account when assessing the degree to which a learner knows the meaning of a word: meaning recognition and meaning recall. We chose to dedicate this chapter to literature in the learning of lexical items in semantic terms for its close relation to the object at hand in this thesis, but it does not, in any way, mean that other features are less significant.

Meaning recognition is the ability to say whether or not a word (or other linguistic unit) has been encountered before or has a particular suggested meaning (Richards & Schmidt, 2010, p. 488). This is operationalized in research by closed multiple-choice and yes/no checklist tests (Uchihara et al., 2019). Multiple-choice select tests often provide four equivalent options (a key and three distractors) and a 'I do not know' option (Bruton, 2007; Montero Perez, 2022). To give a few recent examples in the literature, Webb (2008), Brown et al. (2008), Godfroid et al. (2010) and van Zeeland & Schmitt (2013) have used multiple-choice select posttests. To ensure that participants had no prior knowledge of the target words, to avoid pre-tests altogether (hence priming effects) and to account for frequency of encounters, they substituted the words for nonwords/pseudowords, carefully chosen to resemble words in the L2³⁴.

Alternatively, researchers investigating vocabulary learning in audiovisual contexts have often opted not to manipulate the input or the target items for reasons of ecological validity (Fievez et al., 2021; Frumuselu et al., 2015; Puimège & Peters, 2019). That is to say, the decision to use authentic material entailed assessing the learning of real words and, to be able to determine gains brought by the input, the methodology used required pre and posttests. Their work on learning through viewing is discussed in the next chapter.

One final aspect worth noting is that a number of problems in multiple-choice tests have been documented in the literature. For instance, the choices may be made by elimination, participants may

³⁴ Also done by Brown et al., 2008; Godfroid et al., 2010; Pellicer-Sánchez & Schmitt, 2010; van Zeeland & Schmitt, 2013; Waring & Takaki, 2003; Webb, 2008.

know the distractors, they may guess the answer or may lack knowledge of words in the options (Bruton, 2007). Those limitations must be taken into account by researchers when creating the test and interpreting the data.

Meaning recall is the ability to retrieve meaning from memory or the ability to bring a word that is stored in memory into awareness (Richards & Schmidt, 2010, p. 486), and evidence has shown that it requires deeper knowledge than meaning recognition (Nation, 2017). In studies, recall is measured through open (supply) tests that ask for translations, synonyms and/or have gap-filling questions (González Fernández & Schmitt, 2015; Montero Perez, 2022; Uchihara et al., 2019; Webb, 2012). The article “Incidental vocabulary acquisition through L2 listening: A dimensions approach” written by van Zeeland & Schmitt (2013) is a notable example of how research can account for recognition and recall uncovering different degrees of knowledge. The authors used multiple-choice tests to assess form and grammar (reception), together with a recall test to assess meaning of 24 pseudowords in listening passages (production). In their meaning recall test, they asked participants to write a translation, a synonym, an explanation, or anything else that demonstrated their knowledge. Such open questions were also used by Brown et al. (2008) and Webb (2012).

A similar recall test has been widely used in vocabulary research: The Vocabulary Knowledge Scale (VKS), created by Wesche & Paribakht in 1996. It is an instrument capable of measuring incremental knowledge, by means of self-assessment on a five-point scale. In this test, and its variations, the researcher provides the word to be tested and the learner can choose among:

- (1) I don't remember having seen this word before;
- (2) I have seen this word before, but I don't know what it means;
- (3) I have seen this word before, and I think it means _____;
- (4) I know this word. It means _____;
- (5) I can use this word in the sentence: _____.

Some of the advantages of using the VKS for meaning recall, is that it can assess knowledge about the word in a way that helps researchers identify movement along a continuum from partial to precise knowledge of the meaning (translation) and use (context) of the word (Milton, 2013). It is also a self-evaluation tool, because the learner rates the item from 1 to 5, and it allows for instructor verification of understanding via the open answers (Kusyk & Sockett, 2012). Nevertheless, Kusyk & Sockett (2012) pointed out some of its limitations:

“It is important to keep in mind that this indeed is only an estimation, and both learner self-evaluation and rater assessment can be subjective. Since the test is a snapshot of vocabulary knowledge at a given time, parameters such as degree of activation of certain terms in long-term memory, which varies according to context, may

affect results. Indeed, if the VKS were to be used as a diachronic tool, it is likely that repeated testing on the same terms would also have an impact on acquisition. In addition, although the scale is presented in a linear progression, it is not entirely so. According to the progression of the scale, level 5 would demonstrate the full acquisition of a word and the ability to use it in a sentence. However, the order in which a learner acquires a word may not advance in the linear manner that the scale suggests. For example, being able to use a word in a sentence is something one could do without necessarily knowing exactly what the word means – in this case, level 5 could be reached before levels 3 or 4.” (p. 5)

Taking into consideration the limits of the test, several authors have chosen to adapt the test in the past years. Vidal (2011), for instance, compared the effects of listening to lectures and reading of academic texts on the retention of vocabulary of university students by using a modified version of the VKS, test that was administered some days before the experiment took place:

- (1) Have you heard/seen this word before? If so, where/when?
- (2) Provide a full explanation (in Spanish or in English) of all the meanings of the word you know.
- (3) Provide a Spanish translation of the word.
- (4) Make a sentence in English using the word.

Kusyk & Sockett (2012) also adapted the VKS to measure knowledge of 42 commonly occurring word clusters in popular American television shows by aural means, changing ‘seen’ by ‘heard’ and deleting the fifth option of the test:

- (1) I don’t remember having heard this phrase (or a similar structure) before.
- (2) I have heard this phrase (or a similar structure) before, but I don’t know what it means.
- (3) I think I know what this phrase means. I think it means: _____(translation).
- (4) I am sure I know what this phrase means. It means: _____(translation).

In another publication, Montero Perez et al. (2014) examined how three captioning types can assist L2 learners in the acquisition of 20 French words in the comprehension of a L2 video. They also chose to keep only 4 options of the test as they estimated that it would be hard to determine objectively whether the sentence demonstrates knowledge of the word. Students were pre-tested on their knowledge of the target words one month prior to the learning session.

All things considered, measuring different types of knowledge of the target words is a way of acknowledging that learning is not an “all or nothing phenomenon” (Laufer et al., 2004, p. 209). To measure the knowledge of the meaning of the words, researchers can set a receptive knowledge test, such as multiple-choice questions and, to assess productive knowledge, a VKS, in which learners self-assess their knowledge on a scale from one to five, providing evidence in open questions. This is what we have also decided to do to test the knowledge of our target expressions. Our methodological choices concerning the topic is given in chapter six, and the following section describes and discusses the types of multi-word expressions that have been researched in SLA.

3.3 Multiword expressions

“Not all input is created equal.” (Gass, 1997a, p. 86)

Since the 1980's, researchers have paid particular attention to formulaic language (FL)³⁵, and in the past decade, research in vocabulary learning have especially dealt with the study of formulaic sequences (FS) through viewing³⁶. The term *Multiword expressions* is often used interchangeably with FL/FS, even though the latter also refers to single-word items. In a recent book dedicated to the topic, Siyanova-Chanturia & Pellicer-Sánchez (2018) defined multiword expressions as “string of language above word level” (p.2). They also explain that, despite some unanswered questions in the SLA literature, these sequences are believed to be prefabricated: stored and retrieved whole from memory at the time of use.

The storage of FL has been discussed by Conklin & Schmitt, influential researchers in SLA, who have published an article in 2012 that supports the position that native speakers process formulaic language holistically, while findings are inconclusive when it comes to language learners, who seem to process language in a word-by-word manner (specially less proficient speakers). In SLA, this theory is based on recent research that analyzed reading patterns of literal and figurative meanings of FSs, thanks to the use of eye-tracking technology (to be discussed in subsection 5.1.3).

Two notable examples are the studies of Underwood et al. (2004) and Siyanova-Chanturia et al. (2011), who have found that native speakers process FSs faster than non-formulaic language based on the observation that they fixated less on their terminal words seemingly because they have automatically estimated the words that would follow. For non-native speakers, this advantage was either partially shared (Underwood et al., 2004), or they read figurative meanings more slowly to try to understand them (Siyanova-Chanturia & Pellicer-Sánchez, 2018). Additionally, studies have shown that the comprehension process of FL is faster for more frequent phrases, supporting assumptions that “language users store frequency information that is represented in compositional strings of language” (Siyanova-Chanturia & Van Lancker Sidtis, 2018, p. 41) and indicating that extensive exposure is a key factor for the acquisition of FL (González Fernández & Schmitt, 2015).

It has been estimated that up to 50% of language may be formulaic in nature (Erman & Warren, 2000). Indeed, in 1997, Jackendoff published an analysis conducted on phrases used in the TV program *Wheel of Fortune*. On this game show, participants try to win prizes by guessing these phrases in a way such as the game *Hangman* is played. Around 600 of these phrases were collected over a few months and Jackendoff (1997) estimates that the show, which had been on

³⁵ (Hakuta, 1974; Jackendoff, 1997).

³⁶ (Kusyk & Sockett, 2012; Majuddin et al., 2021; Puimège et al., 2021a; Puimège & Peters, 2019).

for 10 years, have used around ten to 15,000 phrases, which led him to estimate that the number of these expressions “are of about the same order of magnitude as the single words of the vocabulary” (p. 156). As such, L2 learners would benefit from being able to appropriately use FS in both spoken and written discourse, considering their significance to reach high levels of proficiency in any natural language (González Fernández & Schmitt, 2015; Siyanova-Chanturia & Pellicer-Sánchez, 2018).

Therefore, it is accepted in the field of SLA that learning a language involves access to individual words and a vast array of FS, such as idioms, collocations, proverbs, common quotations, names, titles, slogans, clichés, conversation routines (Hillert & Swinney, 1999; Lin, 2018). Sinclair (1991) created the *idiom principle* to explain these patterns: a large number of semi-preconstructed phrases that constitute single choices are available to language users, even though they might appear to be analyzable into segments (p. 110). By knowing FS, learners are able to express themselves in a faster and more effective way, a necessary step to achieve native like competence, fluency, and idiomaticity³⁷. Empirical evidence suggests that FL allows for ease of language processing (Conklin & Schmitt, 2008), thereby promoting reading comprehension (Kremmel et al., 2015), fluency in communication (Schmitt et al., 2011), and improved performance on proficiency tests (Koosha & Jafarpour, 2006).

Another relevant characteristic of FS is that, even though some of them are highly frequent in the language, researchers have not found the same correlation between learning and their frequency in corpora as single words have (e.g. González Fernández & Schmitt, 2015). Siyanova-Chanturia & Pellicer-Sánchez (2018) pointed out that a number of low-frequency phrases are well familiar to speakers, such as *raining cats and dogs*, which shows that other factors may be of higher relevance in the acquisition of FS. Thus, quality factors, such as salience and context, are believed to play a bigger role in learning FS. Finally, one final factor mentioned by Siyanova-Chanturia & Pellicer-Sánchez (2018) is particularly important in our thesis: fixedness. Succinctly, it refers to instances with no or very few possible modifications without the phrase losing its meaning.

What follows details the importance of FS according to important studies and documents in SLA, discuss a special type of multiword expressions (highly fixed expressions) and how learners can acquire them.

Given the importance of formulaic sequences (FS) to achieve high levels of proficiency, this thesis seeks to measure learning one type of them. Even though the term **Fixed Expressions** is sometimes used in the literature as a synonym for FS, we chose the term to express one very important characteristic of the expressions in question: how fixed they are in the language in terms of

³⁷ (Boers et al., 2006; Council of Europe, 2001; N. C. Ellis, 2002; Jackendoff, 1997; Milton, 2010).

structure and meaning. The best definition for our expressions was found in Hillert & Swinney (1999), who defined them as “strings of words for which the interpretation is not (entirely) derived from the individual meanings of the words comprising the string (even if there can be seen some historical linkage of the literal words to the overall expression). Further, this non-literal interpretation has become 'fixed' in the language by use” (p. 2). In other words, their full meaning cannot be determined by adding up the meaning of the individual elements - fixed expressions can be considered as a whole unit (González Rey & López Díaz, 2005).

Expression	Source	Definition	Source	Translation
Get over it!	The Free Dictionary	Used by someone, when they are frustrated or angry, to ask someone to forget about something has made them unhappy. To move on and accept things the way they are; to stop being concerned by or with something that is in the past or can't be changed.	Word Reference	Passe à autre chose! Oublie! Ce n'est pas la fin du monde! Reprends-toi!
Good grief!	Oxford Idioms Dictionary	(informal) used for expressing surprise or disbelief (p. 148)	Word Reference	Bon sang! Ça alors!
	Cambridge Dictionary	used to emphasize how surprised, angry, shocked		
	The Free Dictionary	An expression of surprise or frustration.		
Hang in There!	Oxford Idioms Dictionary	(informal) used for encouraging sb to continue trying to achieve sth (p. 156)	Word Reference	Tiens bon! Accroche-toi! Courage!
	Cambridge Dictionary	used to tell someone to not give up, <u>despite difficulties</u>		
Knock it off!	Oxford Idioms Dictionary	(spoken) used to tell sb to stop making a noise, annoying you, etc (p. 196)	Word Reference	Arrête!
	Cambridge Dictionary	used to tell someone to stop doing something that annoys you	Our translation	Ça suffit!
You're on!	Oxford Idioms Dictionary	(informal) used for showing that you agree to sb's interesting suggestion / used for accepting a bet from sb (p.264)	Our translation	Ça marche! C'est parti!
	Word Reference	used to express agreement to something happening		
	The Free Dictionary	(informal) said by way of accepting a challenge or bet.		
Way to go!	Oxford Idioms Dictionary	(AmE, informal, spoken) used to tell sb that you are pleased about sth they have done (p.437)	Word Reference	Félicitations! Bravo! Bien joué!
	The free Dictionary	used to tell someone they have done well		

Table 1- Examples of Fixed Expressions

Table 1 shows a few examples of short fixed expressions with their definitions in English and translations in French. The vast number of multiword and fixed elements present in a language, and the variance in frequency they might have over the years make it difficult for dictionaries to compile

them all. As a growing field, phraseology³⁸ has influenced the appearance of dictionaries dedicated to these chunks of language, which is the case of Oxford Idioms Dictionary (Francis, 2009) and online dictionaries such as *The Free Dictionary of Idioms*³⁹, *Cambridge Dictionary*⁴⁰ and *Word Reference*⁴¹ that have included several multiword units for consultation. To the best of our knowledge, no dictionary has included all chunks in a language, that is why Table 1 contains definitions from different sources.

Another of their characteristics is their frequency in different corpora, available in Table 2. The raw count on this table refers to the frequency of their figurative meaning, isolated in the conversation, not being part of a longer sentence. The first of three is the *Corpus of Contemporary American English* (COCA) (Davies, 2008). The corpus contains more than one billion words of text from 1990 to 2019 from eight genres: spoken, fiction, popular magazines, newspapers, academic texts, TV and movies subtitles, blogs, and other web pages. The second is the TV corpus (Davies, 2019), which contains 325 million words of data in 75,000 TV episodes from the 1950s to today. Its online description pinpoints its importance as a resource to look at very informal language.

Expression	Frequency of figurative meaning in COCA	Frequency of figurative meaning in TV	Total frequency of figurative meanings	Total frequency of literal meanings	Proportion of figurative/literal meanings
Get over it!	210	837	1047	3417	1:3.26
Good grief!	182	422	604	0	-
Hang in There!	194	2105	2299	3871	1:1.72
Knock it off!	132	2373	2505	3375	1:1.34
You're on!	0	0	0	6523	-
Way to go!	301	2167	2468	5355	1:2.16

Table 2 - Fixed expressions in corpora

From a perspective from the field of Linguistics, we can analyze these sentences from two opposing principles in languages: phrases can have combinatorial freedom or be fixed (Jespersen, 1971). Gross's (1996) categories of fixed expressions are good examples to show how

³⁸ Bally (1951) is known as a major contributor to the development of the theory of phraseology. For more on the history of the field, read González Rey (2002).

³⁹ *The Free Dictionary of Idioms* (<https://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/>).

⁴⁰ *Cambridge Dictionary* (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/>).

⁴¹ *Word Reference* (<https://wordreference.com/>).

particular these expressions are. The characteristics that best explain the expressions in Table 1 are: (1) They are multi-word expressions and each word has an autonomous existence (p. 9), contrarily to affixes, for instance. (2) Their internal organization cannot change, that is, it is syntactically fixed, contrarily to the sentence *the child read a book*⁴², for example, that can be used in the passive voice, can be pronominalized, detached, extracted or relativized (p. 12). (3) They work as a chunk: they alone carry the full meaning of the expression and, with a few exceptions, they cannot be part of a larger phrase⁴³. (4) Their words can rarely be replaced by synonyms⁴⁴ while keeping the same meaning and implicatures⁴⁵. And (5) the insertion of new elements in the sequences is very limited⁴⁶.

Another very important characteristic, extensively discussed in the literature, is their semantic opacity, or non-transparency (González Rey, 2002; Gross, 1996). The expressions on Table 2 have both a literal and a figurative meaning, but one cannot guess their figurative meaning by knowing the meaning of the words that make them up (Gross, 1996, p. 10). The examples in Table 2 have literal meanings when uttered inside a larger sentence. For instance, when speaker A says: *Where's my book?* and speaker B replies: *You're on it*, meaning that the person is literally on top of the object. However, knowing the words *You + are + on* is not enough for knowing that, when uttering '*You're on!*', as an isolated phrase, the speaker is agreeing to a challenge. Thus, in many contexts, this sentence cannot be interpreted by their compositional reading.

Here are some examples of the use of *Way to go* retrieved from the TV corpus, to illustrate its figurative meaning (examples 1-3):

[1]

Speaker A: Oh my gosh, that was so awesome. *Way to go*, Justin, way to go!

[2]

Speaker B: Hey, Mike. I got her digits.

Speaker C: *Way to go*, bro. Exactly like you said it.

[3]

Speaker D: I 'm representing Themyscira at the global warming conference.

Speaker E: *Way to go*, man. Save the planet.

⁴² *the book was read by the child* (passive voice); *the child read it* (pronominalization); *the child, he read this book* (detachment); *this is the book the child read* (extraction); *the book the child read* (relativization).

⁴³ Exceptions: A few rare exceptions came up in the corpus analysis in which the expressions were part of a larger sentence, keeping their figurative meaning: *you have to/ need to/ got to + knock it off / get over it / hang in there / keep it up*.

⁴⁴ The only replacements found in corpora were for *Good Grief*: *Good Lord* (849 times); and *Good God* (171 times). Some replacements by pronouns were found: *Knock that off*; *get over her/him/this/that*.

⁴⁵ In pragmatics, *implicatures* are what is implied in a phrase. The term was introduced by Grice (1979), and it refers to the message behind a phrase. For instance, when one says *Cut to the chase*, it is implicit that the person with whom they are speaking is being prolix and that the listener feels like they are wasting their time.

⁴⁶ The only few exceptions found in corpora were the addition of swear words and a few adverbs of intensity.

This exemplifies the type of isolation in a context pertaining to all fixed expressions in Table 2: They can be found alone or be followed by a vocative, such as the name of the person, *dude/man* and such; and they may start with a capitalized letter or be preceded by vocatives or exclamations (Oh, Well).

In Table 2, there is also a column with the frequency of compositional meaning of the expressions, being part of a sentence. For instance, *way to go* was found in sentences such as in examples 4 and 5:

[4]

Speaker H: Disable [the system] one by one?

Speaker I: That's one *way to go*.

[5]

Speaker J: Begin your "good person" lessons. You got a long *way to go* to pull this off.

It seems, however, that frequency of occurrence in the language is not as strong a factor as it might be for single words (González Fernández & Schmitt, 2015; Schmitt & Redwood, 2011). This leads us to believe that the acquisition of formulaic language relies more on quality factors, such as salience and context. Taking into consideration the natural conversational contexts in which learners may find these fixed expressions, it is crucial to examine the settings in which they are found. One important aspect is their salience. According to Siyanova-Chanturia & Van Lancker Sidtis (2018) the more entrenched or fixed the expression is, the more strongly salient they generally are. A practical example, in line with arguments put forward by Simpson-Vlach & Ellis (2010), is sequences such as *on the other hand* and *at the same time*, which are not only highly fixed, but also psycholinguistically more salient than sequences such as *to do with the*, or *I think it was*. In their article, in which they analyzed academic formulas, they argued that "psycholinguistically salient sequences, ... like 'on the other hand', cohere much more than would be expected by chance; they are 'glued together' and thus measures of association, rather than raw frequency, are likely more relevant" (p. 490).

When analyzing these sequences from a perspective from the field of Pragmatics it is possible to identify two characteristics that may make all the expressions in Table 1 salient for learners. According to Searle's Speech acts (1979), these sequences may fall into the category of *Expressives*. Expressives are a window into psychological states of the utterer, and their most salient characteristics is that they are evaluated with respect to a context (Schlenker, 2007) and they express the speaker's attitudes towards a situation (Hess, 2018).

Additionally, Potts (2007) stresses the fact that expressives, when uttered, have “an immediate and powerful impact on the context. They are performative. They are revealing of the perspective from which the utterance is made, and they can have a dramatic impact on how current and future utterances are perceived” (p. 165). One of his categories is particularly relevant in our context: *Perspective dependence*.

“Almost invariably, a speaker’s expressives indicate that she is in a heightened emotional state. They can tell us that she is angry or elated, frustrated or at ease, powerful or subordinated. Sometimes the emotion is directed at a specific individual. ... Sometimes it is directed at some specific feature of the current state of affairs. And sometimes it is just general, undirected emotion.” (p. 173)

We have characterized the sequences in Table 2 as follows: In example 6 speaker A uses *Good Grief* to express their *frustration* that their excuse will have to be given again, to someone else (in example 6).

[6]

Speaker A: I'm sorry I had sex with you in the mailroom.

Speaker B: That wasn't me.

Speaker A: Oh **Good grief!** That's two awkward conversations I have to have today.

The other expressions in Table 2 also express emotions (in examples 7-11):

Annoyance

[7]

Speaker A: I'm just being realistic

Speaker B: Well, **knock it off!** You're supposed to be my friend.

Interest

[8]

Speaker A: I bet I can get all 50 before dinner.

Speaker B: Ok, but if you can't, no dinner!

Speaker A: **You're on!**

Irritability

[9]

Speaker A: It's not that bad

Speaker B: Not bad? It's horrible! I mean, you hear stories about this sort of thing, but you never think it'll happen to you.

Speaker A: So they steamed your dumplings. **Get over it!**

Encouragement and empathy

[10]

Speaker A: Assuming that everything you say is true, how does the biologically superior Homo Novus get to work tomorrow morning?

Speaker B: Homo Novus doesn't know

Speaker C: Well, **hang in there!** Maybe you'll evolve into something with wings.

Admiration and amazement

[11]

Speaker A: Marshall: I got the job at the NRDC!

...

Speaker B: Wow, NRDC! **Way to go**, Marshall.

All in all, this type of formulaic language may be favorable for language learning due to the emotional load they carry, which may engage attention and curiosity mechanisms following even brief exposures. Additionally, ignoring the message behind these expressions may lead to incomprehension of the essence of the conversation, cause misunderstanding in communication and/or confine non-native speakers to trivial conversations (González Rey, 2002).

Understanding these expressions go beyond their linguistic value. Learning them entails pragmatic competence, for one must learn the emotions they express (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 125). This competence encompasses understanding and articulating the message with exactitude or, as the CEFR names it, propositional precision: “[It is] the ability to pinpoint how to formulate what one wished to express. It concerns the extent to which the user/learner can communicate detail and shades of meaning, and can avoid compromising their ideally intended message” (p. 141). It also concerns the identification of irony, for instance. Without this competence, the listener may feel blocked when faced with the expression, due to their incapacity to establish a logical link between the expression and the concept conveyed by it.

Moreover, knowing these expressions also involves sociolinguistic competences, which refer to “the sociocultural conditions of language use. Through its sensitivity to social conventions (rules of politeness, norms governing relations between generations, ...)” (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 13). This includes mastery of politeness conventions, appropriateness and the register of such expressions. By learning how to use these expressions, users will be able to react to their environment, expressing emotions themselves in an appropriate, short and precise way.

Considering these arguments, the question that arises is how a L2 learner can be in contact with these expressions. Sockett (2011) argued that “television series viewed by learners for reasons of personal interest offer situations in which it is easy to infer meaning due to knowledge of the characters and the repetitive dramatic structures of situation, disruption and resolution which predominate” (p. 5). As a matter of fact, all of the examples presented previously (1-6) are real dialogues from famous sitcoms: *How I Met Your Mother*, *Friends*, and *The Big Bang Theory*. With this in mind, in the next chapter, we delve into literature on learning through audiovisual input and analyze the transcript of four series to examine the frequency of our expressions in these audiovisual sources.

3.4 Summary and Second objective

The issues presented in this chapter have stimulated discussion along two lines. The first of these derives from the literature in linguistics which investigate quantity and quality factors for learning words and the assessment of those. The second corresponds to the learning of formulaic language, associated with these same factors and further fueled from a pragmatic perspective. This final section summarizes what has been said and explains the implications for this thesis.

For over 40 years, researchers have investigated vocabulary learning (Anderson & Freebody, 1979; Jackendoff, 1997; Nagy & Herman, 1985; Saragi et al., 1978). More recently, linguists such as (N. Ellis, 2002; Nation, 2017; S. Webb, 2008) have written about factors that affect language, such as frequency, number of encounters, context and salience, shedding light on cognitive knowledge of words and ways to assess it.

Knowing the lexicon of a language is considered to be one of the most important aspects of language learning and for it to be possible, researchers strongly encourage extensive informal practices (Hulstijn, 2013; Nagy & Herman, 1985; Nakanishi, 2015). The main reason is that classroom curricula is unlikely to account for the vast the number of words and phrases that would allow learners to become proficient in a language.

One of the factors analyzed in the Second Language Acquisition (SLA) literature is the frequency of words in a language. Through the analysis of existing corpora, studies have estimated that, in order to be a basic user (A1-A2), learners must know at least the 2000 most frequent words in the language (Schmitt et al., 2001), and to be able to understand authentic material (expected of independent users B1-B2), learners must know the 5000 most frequent words. It is at the 10000-word level that a learner is generally considered a proficient user (C1-C2). In 1990, Nation introduced the multiple-choice Vocabulary Levels Test (VLT) to assess learners' vocabulary size and it is still greatly used in research in Applied Linguistics (e.g. Puimège et al., 2021a; van Zeeland, 2013; Webb & Chang, 2012).

The minimum number of encounters in order to learn a language has also been discussed in the literature. Results vary from six (Horst et al., 1998; Rott, 1999; Saragi et al., 1978) to more than 20 (R. Brown et al., 2008; Pigada & Schmitt, 2006; Waring & Takaki, 2003). The lack of consensus led researchers to accept that every encounter with a word is a potential possibility for noticing, provoking incremental learning (Nation, 2017) and must be encouraged. This made researchers turn their attention to other factors such as context and salience.

The importance of context relies on the premise that, in order to learn unknown words, one must infer meaning from the contextual information (Gu & Johnson, 1996; Lau, 2018; Laufer, 1996; Oxford & Scarcella, 1994). According to Oxford & Scarcella (1994), guessing from context is one of the most useful strategies for learning vocabulary and it can be done in most encounters with words, in any location or context. Strategies for inferring meaning include paying attention to the words' location in the sentence, their worth and desirability, their uses, meaning and possible synonyms used in the context.

It has been noted, however, that learning from context has its limitations: some words just cannot be inferred because the context is unclear or misleading (Laufer, 1996) and sometimes the surrounding words are so difficult that impedes the learner to guess from context (Oxford & Scarcella, 1994). Another limitation is that some words are simply ignored because not knowing them does not hamper understanding (Hulstijn et al., 1996). This is the salience question.

Salience is considered to play a big role in learning of single words as well as formulaic language, the subject of this thesis. Their position in a sentence, stress, and importance in the context may determine their noticeability. Learning multiword sequences, in particular highly fixed expressions (those whose meaning has been fixed by usage and whose syntactic and lexical characteristics can barely change - Gross's, 1996) seems to be highly connected with their salience in the context.

The complexity of vocabulary knowledge raises key issues for assessment. Researchers must reflect on what exactly they want to test, which can include (1) depth of knowledge: understanding and the ability to use a word's spelling, pronunciation, derivations and inflections, meaning senses, semantic associations, collocations, and grammatical functions, and when it may be appropriate or inappropriate to use it (Nation, 2001; Oxford & Scarcella, 1994; Webb, 2012); (2) strength of knowledge: the degree of knowledge of each category, varying from partial to full knowledge (Webb, 2012); and/or (3) breadth: how many words a person knows in the language (their form-meaning connections), regardless of how well they are known (Webb, 2012).

It is also relevant to take into account that receptive and productive knowledge are different knowledge dimensions (van Zeeland & Schmitt, 2013). Being able to recognize the meaning of words is considered to be a first step in learning and it is often assessed through multiple-choice tests in which learners choose the best definition for the given item (Godfroid et al., 2010; Melka, 1997; Schmitt et al., 2001). It is believed that this receptive knowledge can gradually become productive mastery (Oxford & Scarcella, 1994), which is assessed through recall tests. To the best of our knowledge, the most used test is (adaptations of) the Vocabulary Knowledge Scale (VKS) in which

learners must self-assess their knowledge in a scale from one to five, providing evidence of the stage, via translations and definitions (e.g. in Kusyk & Sockett, 2012).

What is particular about the language we are investigating, is that not only are they fixed, but they express distinct emotions. We based our thesis on the assumption that the expressions *Good grief* and *Way to go*, for instance, are reasonably salient to learners because the psychological state it reveals may foster curiosity and noticing. As Potts (2007) pointed out, such sequences have an immediate and powerful impact on the context and on how current and future utterances are perceived. This entails that knowing such expressions means being able to also translate these emotional states.

Finally, this chapter mentioned that studies have not only stressed the importance of being in contact with authentic audiovisual sources in order to learn such informal language, such as series (Kusyk & Sockett, 2012), but have also found that watching series is a relevant part of learners' everyday life (Toffoli & Sockett, 2010). Albeit specifics on the choice of the material will only be given in the next chapter, one question can already be raised: to what extent can users learn expressive fixed expressions when watching series?

Thus, **the second objective of this thesis is to shed light on the impact of goal setting for learning fixed expressions prior to watching series in English.** More precisely, how aiming to learn expressions can influence the acquisition process when compared to subjects who watch just for entertainment. This issue is particularly relevant because (1) as Majuddin & Siyanova-Chanturia (2021) pointed out, “although intentional learning is often said to be more effective than incidental learning, there are few empirical studies that can support this claim because the majority of the studies focuses on one type of learning - incidental or intentional - making it difficult for a comparison to be made” (p. 832). Furthermore, (2) very few studies have investigated the learning of multiword units of English via series, even less so with sitcoms. And finally, (3) no research has been conducted, to the best of our knowledge, about these very specific expressive fixed expressions, despite their frequency and salience in such audiovisual materials. The findings related to this objective can be found in section 7.3.

The next chapter explores learning through authentic audiovisual support and the particularity of sitcoms.

*To be continued...*⁴⁷

⁴⁷ “To be continued” is a formulaic sequence often written at the end of an episode of a series (or film) to indicate that more of the story will come in the following episode. In our case, the topic is further discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 4. Learning through aural means

The field of language learning has increasingly explored the use of technology and the ways in which teachers and learners exploit tools that are not designed for language learning. This is true for media produced in English-speaking countries that have become more accessible thanks to the internet. At first, research focused on their use in the classroom, to support different teaching methodologies (Gilmore, 2007). For the past four decades, the use of authentic materials has been shown to increase learner's proficiency and motivation⁴⁸ as it promotes cognition and affection. In terms of cognition because authentic texts provide context for appropriately relating form to meaning (Bacon & Finnemann, 1990) and a large amount of language repetition (Vanderplank, 2016, p.30). As for affection, they create low filters, reducing anxiety and pressure, increasing motivation and the likelihood of learning the input (Vanderplank, 2016, p.30). More recently, with the growing interest in informal learning, researchers have focused on what users have been learning in out-of-class contexts (Kusyk & Sockett, 2012; Toffoli & Sockett, 2015; Yibokou, 2019).

Before addressing the use of media in informal language learning, it is relevant to point out that considerable discussion has been held in the literature concerning the definition of authentic materials. Even though at the beginning of the discussion some authors defined authentic materials as those that were produced by native speakers for native speakers (Porter & Roberts, 1981), others preferred a larger description such as Morrow (1977), who defined an authentic text as "a stretch of real language, produced by a real speaker ... for a real audience and designed to convey a real message of some sort" (p.13). In our globalized world, internet users are in contact with authentic content created to both native and non-native speakers, aiming at an audience that includes everyone who understands the language. Needless to say, we define authenticity by "language produced by a real speaker" (Gilmore, 2007) for a real audience, taken from real-world sources (Richards & Schmidt, 2002, p.42).

Research on informal language learning values authenticity (Sockett, 2011; Toffoli & Sockett, 2015a) not only when it comes to resources, but researchers also argue that in informal language use, students are positioned as authentic users of English and not only as learners of the language (Sockett & Toffoli, 2012). As authentic users, they are exposed to large amounts of input (Kusyk & Sockett, 2012; Toffoli & Sockett, 2015b; Yibokou, 2019) that is contextualized, providing higher chances of being noticed.

⁴⁸ Some authors who argue for the use of authentic materials in the classroom are Breen (1985), Rogers & Medley (1988), Morrison (1989), Gonzalez (1990), Peacock (1997), Weyers, (1999), Guariento & Morley (2001) and Gilmore (2008).

Therefore, authentic material is opposed to the material made for pedagogical purposes, which has been specially prepared to illustrate or practice specific teaching points. However, authenticity is also related to the form, or content, of the language. In this case, authentic speech comes from natural language produced in real day-to-day life, being content-rich samples of the target language (Weyers, 1999). However, this definition has generated another debate: What is natural language?

In an insightful analysis by Al-Surmi (2012), the author compares the definitions of natural and authentic conversation. For him, *natural conversation* is tightly connected to spontaneous dialogues in the speakers' speech community "in which the language they are using is the predominant" (p. 673), whereas *authentic conversations* include other less-spontaneous conversations such as scripted dialogues in television, "for the sake of reproducing, replicating, or mocking a real natural conversation" (p. 673). That means that all natural conversations are authentic but the opposite is not true. So, in order to determine whether a medium is not only authentic, but close to real, natural language, its language should be analyzed for natural speed, natural phonological phenomenon, high-frequency vocabulary, colloquialism, hesitations, backchannelling (e.g. nodding, uh-huh) or responses (e.g. Yes, I think so.) (Rost, 2011, p. 167).

This is what Al-Surmi (2012) did: he analyzed naturalness and appropriateness in different authentic media. For that to be possible, three corpora were examined (The *Longman Spoken and Written English Corpus* for natural conversations, the transcripts of the soap opera *The young and the restless*, and of the sitcom *Friends*), using a multidimensional analysis. Results revealed that the language in the sitcom is closer to natural conversation than soap operas are, when it comes to producing informative and affective language, as well as language related to argumentation, persuasion, abstract and non-abstract information.

Furthermore, TV dialogue reflects colloquial and informal language use and contains new expressions which reflect contemporary language use and related lexicogrammatical features (Bednarek, 2018).

This information is relevant for our thesis because our choice of studying learning through viewing sitcoms is directly connected to their authenticity and the affordances they provide (Gibson, 1986). The latter is a concept that has been recently discussed in SLA literature and was first introduced by Gibson (1966) in the study of perception. He argued that affordances are "simply what things furnish" (p. 285). According to the author:

"The child learns what things are manipulable and how they can be manipulated, what things are hurtful, what things are edible, what things can be put together with

other things or put inside other things - and so on without limit. He also learns what objects can be used as the means to obtain a goal... In short, the human observer learns to detect what have been called the values or meanings of things, perceiving their distinctive features, putting them into categories and subcategories, noticing their similarities and differences and even studying them for their own sakes, apart from learning what to do about them. All this discrimination, wonderful to say, has to be based entirely on the education of his attention to the subtleties of invariant stimulus information.” (Gibson, 1966, p. 285)

Thus, affordances are the possibilities that occur in the relationship between the subject's perception and the environment (Simonian, 2022). In informal language learning, that means that individuals obtain information about the environment, opportunities of interaction with it and what they can gain in being in contact with it.

As it is discussed in this chapter, media is rich in affordances. And as it will become clear, realistic and natural examples of language use in media can help independent and proficient language users, with levels B1 to C2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for languages (Council of Europe, 2001), to improve language skills. It is with this in mind that this chapter provides a review of what has been said about learning through aural means, pop culture and sitcoms, as well as features that can foster acquisition when viewing series.

4.1 Learning through reading and listening

Research that has compared vocabulary learning through reading and listening has constantly shown that reading is a more effective source of vocabulary acquisition (Brown et al., 2008; van Zeeland, 2013; Vidal, 2011). Two frequently cited studies conducted in the early 2000s, have compared reading and listening input in three different ways: Brown et al. (2008) assessed learning through reading, reading-while-listening and listening to stories, and Vidal (2011) determined the effects of academic listening and reading on the acquisition of vocabulary. Their findings are reported in the next paragraphs.

Brown et al. (2008) examined the acquisition of English vocabulary of 35 Japanese university students from reading, reading while simultaneously listening to an audio recording, and listening to teachers reading stories out-loud. Results indicated that new words could be learned in all 3 modes, even though they came to the conclusion that the gains were small in all cases, as most words were not learned. Subjects learned most words in the reading-while-listening mode (4.39 of 28 words), followed by the reading-only mode (4.10 of 28) and then the listening-only mode (0.56 of 28).

Another interesting finding is that learner's favored reading-while-listening, which was considered the most comfortable input mode, a minority preferred reading-only, and no one explicitly favored listening-only. This preference could possibly be explained by the appealing aspect of listening to the story being told as well as the rhythm of the spoken language, together with the aid provided by the written material in terms of word segmentation (being able to distinguish the different words in a chunk), according to informal interviews with some of the learners. Finally, they speculate that reading-while listening is especially useful for beginners and intermediate learners. They argue that the bottom-up processes⁴⁹ of word recognition for advanced listeners are automatized and, because they don't need the extra help, some tend to prefer listening only.

On the same line of comparison, Vidal (2011) analyzed the effects of academic listening and reading on the acquisition and retention of vocabulary of 230 Spanish university students: They either (a) read three academic texts, (b) watched three lectures, or (c) received no input at all and just completed the vocabulary tests. Again, their results confirmed Brown et al.'s findings (2008), indicating that although both reading and listening result in small vocabulary gains, reading subjects had higher vocabulary gains. According to their analysis, low-proficiency L2 listeners tend to experience special difficulty with speech segmentation and, thus, have difficulties coping with academic lectures that need real-time processing. They conclude that lower-proficiency listeners can profit more from written texts because they can have more control of them, dwelling upon words they cannot understand and backtracking if necessary.

Additionally, this study has somewhat supported Brown et al.'s hypothesis (2008) that the process for advanced learners seems to be different, as the difference in gains between the reading and listening conditions decreased as the students' proficiency increased. Results for vocabulary retention were similar between reading and listening for more proficient students, for which no significant difference was found between the listening and reading delayed posttest scores. According to the author, "most probably the students with higher proficiency had greater vocabulary knowledge and managed to split up the message more effectively; therefore, more vocabulary learning took place" (Vidal, 2011, p. 243).

Despite this understanding of vocabulary gains through reading and listening, two points could be made in what concerns vocabulary learning. The first one is that corpus analysis shows that "words beyond the 2000 most frequent are unlikely to be encountered in natural reading in sufficient numbers for consistent learning to occur" (Cobb, 2007, p.60), which makes us wonder about vocabulary learning and the role of extensive reading and listening. Nation (2015) argued that for

⁴⁹ Bottom-up processes correspond to using specific information from the input, such as phonetics and orthography, to understand the whole text (Richards & Schmidt, 2010, p. 603).

significant vocabulary learning to happen, learners must engage in regular and sustained reading, as large quantities of input provide considerable opportunities for repetition and varied meetings (Nation, 2017). This brings us to the second point, concerning the frequency of exposure to reading and listening: a careful reading of recent research in informal learning contexts shows the extent to which learners have been increasingly in contact with English online and studies are unanimous in showing that language users listen more than they read in English (Kusyk & Sockett, 2012; Peters, 2018; Toffoli & Sockett, 2015b; Yibokou, 2019). Could these newly accessible resources and users' recent preferences mean that learners are more in contact with audiovisual material and, thus, more used to learning from listening than before? The following sections provide arguments and evidence to the advantages of reading, listening and viewing, which will later support our methodological choices.

4.1.1 Extensive reading

It is well recommended that learners read in the foreign language⁵⁰, especially to acquire vocabulary incidentally. One of the first studies on the topic was conducted by Saragi et al. (1978), who asked adults to read a novel with Russian-based slang called *nadsat* and later tested them on 90 of these words. The study was replicated by other researchers who obtained more modest results (Horst et al., 1998; Pitts et al., 1989), but confirmed, nevertheless, that it is possible to have small but significant vocabulary gains through contextualized language in reading. The first 20 years of discussions on the topic have nearly all come to the conclusion that the vast majority of the words learners know have not been explicitly instructed, nor come from the use of dictionaries and, thus, most vocabulary is learned from context, especially from extensive reading (Sternberg, 1987).

As discussed in chapter three, frequency of occurrence is an important quantity factor in vocabulary learning. Nick Ellis (1994) has pointed out that moderate-to-low-frequency words appear much more often in reading than they do in common speech. According to the author, reading provides opportunity for the reader “to study the context, to form hypotheses at leisure and cross validate them, to have time to infer meanings. The word is frozen in time on the page, whereas in speech it passes ephemerally” (p. 40). Consequently, it has always been recommended that learners engage in extensive reading, making sure the texts are at the right difficulty level (Nation, 2015).

⁵⁰ For more information on learning vocabulary through reading: Nagy & Herman (1985), Pigada & Schmitt (2006), Brown et al. (2008), Vidal (2011), van Zeeland (2013), Nation (2015), Webb & Chang (2015), Nakanishi (2015), and Feng & Webb (2020).

Richards & Schmidt (2010) defined extensive reading as “reading in quantity and in order to gain a general understanding of what is read. It is intended to develop good reading habits, to build up knowledge of vocabulary and structure, and to encourage a liking for reading” (p. 212). Since the 1980s, studies have confirmed the relevance of extensive reading for language proficiency, and a valuable meta-analysis was published by Nakanishi in 2015. The author included 34 studies (two PhD dissertations and 32 research articles), with a total sample size of 3,942 participants, and came to the conclusion that, indeed, participants who were used to extensive reading yielded better outcomes than ones who were not. In another recent paper, Webb & Chang (2015) suggest that a possible reason for such consistent findings is that “familiarity with extensive reading may have supported comprehension and helped to keep interest high, leading to greater attention paid to unknown words in the text” (p. 679).

The idea that reading is a pleasurable activity and that it fosters language learning is not new. Krashen's compelling (1982) and pleasure hypotheses (1994) had already presented anecdotal evidence advocating for the benefits of reading outside of school. He argued that activities that are good for language acquisition are usually perceived by learners as pleasant or, more than that, compelling to the point that they forget it is in another language, which makes them pay close attention to what they are reading. Ever since, evidence has confirmed that extensive reading reflects interest and pleasure, and that the large quantity of meaning-focused input present in it improves linguistic competence (Grabe & Stoller, 2013; Nation, 2008; Pigada & Schmitt, 2006).

All things considered, the more a person reads, the more they will develop the habit of studying the context to form hypotheses and validate them, dwelling on the text, revisiting words and sentences, inferencing from context, and learning unknown words, including those that are less frequent in the language (van Zeeland, 2013; Vidal, 2011; S. Webb & Chang, 2015). Another relevant argument is that the more a learner reads texts, the more opportunities they will have to encounter the same patterns of letters, words, and collocations (Pigada & Schmitt, 2006). As Nakanishi (2015) puts it, “learners who enjoy reading read faster, read more, and eventually comprehend better. Nuttall (2005)⁵¹ calls this *the virtuous circle of the good reader*” (p. 127).

If it has once been advocated that teachers should actively encourage learners to read extensively in a foreign language to increase their enjoyment and proficiency (Day et al., 1998), recent research has shown that this is something high-school and university students do naturally in out-of-class contexts. In chapter one, we presented studies that show that internet use is part of this generation of learners and this is especially the case for listening and viewing. These are the topics of the following subsection.

⁵¹ Nuttall, C. (2005). Teaching reading skills in a foreign language. Oxford, England: Macmillan Education.

4.1.2 Extensive listening and viewing

In the past 15 years, researchers have inquired about learner's informal practices in English. For instance, in 2009, in a doctoral thesis, Sundqvist found that listening to music is the activity that 9th graders in Sweden spend the most time on, followed by playing video games, watching TV, watching films, surfing the Internet, reading books, and finally, reading newspapers/magazines (p. 36). Similar results were obtained in 2014 in a study with 4th graders, who preferred watching TV, whereas very little time is spent on reading newspapers and magazines. In France, Toffoli & Sockett found that around 25% of university students engage in reading in English online, while 50% declared that they listen to English at least once a week (2010), finding similar results in the duplication of their study in 2015, with an increased preference for series over films.

In the meantime, Kussyk & Sockett (2012) found that 68% of university students watch series sometimes or regularly. In 2013, Lindgren & Muñoz did a large-scale study with children from schools of seven different European countries and also found that they are exposed to recreational activities in English through listening to songs and viewing tv and movies, more than three times that of reading. In Belgium, Peters (2018) found that 98% of 19-year-old Dutch speaking learners listen to songs in English, and 57% watch subtitled TV programs, whereas 32% never read books in English, and half of them do it rarely. Finally, also in Belgium, De Wilde et al. (2020), in a large-scale study, found that primary school students (867 children from 38 schools) are also in contact with English on a daily basis. Their findings revealed that 97% of them listen to music every day, 80% watch English television with subtitles, 78% use social media and 75% play games. Once more, the least popular medium is print, with only 16% of the children reading in English.

Suffice to say, listening practices seem to take a much larger part in students' lives than ever. This constant contact with English through aural means has awakened the curiosity of researchers working on vocabulary learning around the 2007s, who investigated the benefits of extensive listening practice in terms of comprehension skills, pronunciation (Yibokou, 2019) and vocabulary knowledge (R. Brown et al., 2008; Feng & Webb, 2020; Kussyk & Sockett, 2012; Pavakanun & d'Ydewalle, 1992), as well as for extensive listening practice, autonomous listening strategies development, listening fluency development, access to native speak models and speaking fluency (Al-Surmi, 2012; Bednarek, 2018).

Studies that usefully bear on this issue have shown that learning unknown words from listening is not the easiest of tasks: L2 listeners may not recognize words in streams of speech (word segmentation), which means that they may fail at detecting word boundaries in connected speech

because of phonological and rhythmic differences between L1 and L2, such as speed, reductions, blending words and hesitations (R. Brown et al., 2008; S. Brown, 2011; Goh, 2023; Lund, 1991; van Zeeland, 2013), particularly when they have reduced knowledge of the probabilities of phoneme sequences and word structure (Cutler, 2002). They may also not be able to identify similar lexical units due to sound perception difficulties (van Zeeland, 2013), to elision and to reductions (Cutler, 2005). It may be difficult for nonnative listeners to interpret the message completely or to rely on their vocabulary and grammar knowledge to process the input (Goh, 2023). Listeners may also fixate on language that they did not understand, impeding them to follow the rest of the speech, and may have problems with concentrating on the input (Goh, 2023) as well as not having enough time to focus and recheck the context, dwell or revisit the language (van Zeeland, 2013; Vidal, 2011).

However, research indicates that the role of vocabulary knowledge in understanding audiovisual materials may be smaller in L2 listening than L2 reading (van Zeeland & Schmitt, 2012), as listeners know of the fleeting nature of spoken discourse and use different strategies to compensate for the challenge. Van Zeeland & Schmitt (2013b) pointed out three main characteristics of listening input discussed in the literature: the fact that spoken language tends to be less lexically dense, containing fillers, interactive markers and repetitions; thanks to non-verbal information, such as body language, gestures and facial expressions; and prosody, such as stress and intonation, that help in the interpretation and in the guessing of meaning of unknown words.

This is especially true in **extensive viewing** of YouTube videos, commercials, series, movies and other types of television programs⁵². The habit of watching audiovisual media regularly confers many benefits for learners, such as providing large amounts of L2 spoken input (Willoughby & Sell, 2024) and being powerful motivators for additional hours of contact with the language in other and various ways (Berk, 2009; Wang, 2012; S. Webb, 2015). This issue is further developed in the next section (4.2).

From this overview, the next questions to ask ourselves are: Who can benefit more from watching videos? To what extent can learners from different proficiency levels cope with watching authentic media? What's the relationship between proficiency and vocabulary learning?

Schmidt (2001) has pointed out that "beginning learners are cognitively overloaded, they cannot pay attention to [everything] ... at once. If they have not learned what is simple, they cannot learn what is complex. But as simpler routines are over-learned, they have more capacity to attend to details" (p. 7). Narcy-Combes (2005) has also explained the suppression phenomenon, in which the learner does not perceive certain data, eliminating what does not seem relevant to them (p. 48). These

⁵² More in: Fievez et al., 2020; Frumuselu et al., 2015; Kusyk & Sockett, 2012; Montero Perez et al., 2014; Nah et al., 2012; Perez & Rodgers, 2019; Peters & Webb, 2018; Pujadas & Muñoz, 2019; Rodgers & Webb, 2020; Vanderplank, 2020; Wang, 2012; Webb, 2010, 2011; Weyers, 1999; Yibokou, 2019.

cognitive strategies allow beginners to understand the main gist of videos, paying attention to what they do understand, instead of focusing on the many unknown words in the material. That gives us a clearer picture about the level of understanding expected from what the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR here forth) calls “Basic Users” of the language, which correspond to the A1 and A2 levels of proficiency (Council of Europe, 2001). Thus, it comes as no surprise that understanding authentic media is mentioned as an objective for independent (B1-B2) and proficient users (C1-C2).

The CEFR describes reception activities (oral comprehension) to cover “comprehension in live, face-to-face communication and its remote and/or recorded equivalent. It thus includes visuo-gestural and audiovocal modalities” (Europarat, 2020, p.48), including listening to public announcements, to media (radio, TV, recordings, cinema), listening as a member of a live audience, listening to overheard conversations, understanding interaction between native speakers, among others (p. 65). Users are expected to develop these skills at progressive degrees, with particular delivery speeds: from slow, clear standard usage to the ability to handle slang and idiomatic usage (p. 52).

When it comes to television viewing, for instance, users with a B1 level should be able to:

“understand a large part of many TV programmes on topics of personal interest such as interviews, short lectures and news reports when the delivery is relatively slow and clear, ... follow many films in which visuals and action carry much of the storyline, and which are delivered clearly in straightforward language, ... catch the main points in TV programmes on familiar topics when the delivery is relatively slow and clear.” (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 71)

On the other hand, B2 users should aim at more specialized media, on both familiar and unfamiliar topics, which contain less frequent vocabulary:

“Can understand most TV news and current affairs programmes. Can understand documentaries, live interviews, talk shows, plays and the majority of films in standard dialect. Can understand a large part of many TV programmes on topics of personal interest such as interviews, short lectures, and news reports when the delivery is relatively slow and clear” (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 71)

Proficient users (C1) are expected to “understand extended speech even when it is not clearly structured and when relationships are only implied and not signalled explicitly” (Europarat, 2020, p. 167), their nuances and implied meaning, as well as understand television programs and films without too much effort, including those with considerable degree of slang and idiomatic usage. In

order to be considered a proficient user, they must be able to “recognise a wide range of idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms” (p. 55).

As presented in the beginning of this subsection, viewing L2 television appears to be highly motivating for students. Their greatest challenge may be to choosing appropriate media to keep enthusiasm high and to make sure that they will not surrender to the facility of changing the language of the show. In the next subsection, we discuss how the level of difficulty of a medium can be assessed by teachers and researchers.

4.1.3 Lexical coverage

How can researchers know the difficulty of a medium to choose the most appropriate one for a study? One way is assessing text complexity: the number of words in a text a learner must understand in order to learn unknown words, which varies from written to aural supports (Oxford & Scarcella, 1994). In the early 2000's, researchers started looking into how much unknown vocabulary learners can deal with before it begins to hinder comprehension and they called it either 'text coverage' (Nation, 2006) or 'lexical coverage' (Adolphs & Schmitt, 2003; van Zeeland & Schmitt, 2012). Their research focused on the analysis of the number of word-families learners must know to understand a text while being able to guess the meaning of unknown words from context. By definition, a word-family is:

“[...] a base word and all its derived and inflected forms that can be understood by a learner without having to learn each form separately. So, watch, watches, watched, and watching may all be members of the same word family for a learner with a command of the inflectional suffixes of English. As a learner's knowledge of affixation develops, the size of the word family increases.” (Bauer & Nation, 1993, p. 253)

That is, when a learner knows the base of a word or one of its derived forms, it takes little or no extra effort to recognize other members of the family. According to Nagy et al. (1985), the English language contains around 88,500 of them, although this number is not completely relevant given that, as Goulden et al. (1990) argued, not even native speakers know all of the words in the language and the average for well-educated native speakers is around 20,000 word families: in university, first-year monolingual English speakers know around 10000 word-families (Hajiyeva, 2015) and, according to Nation (2006), “as a rule of thumb, one year of life equals 1,000 word-families up to the age of 20 or so” (p. 60).

It is not expected, however, that language learners achieve a vocabulary size equivalent to that of native speakers. Research has shown that non-native speakers do not need to know all words in a document to be able to understand it. As it is explained in detail below, the Vocabulary Levels Test (VLT), one of the most used by researchers to test vocabulary knowledge, has divided word knowledge in five levels (2000, 3000, 5000, University Word List and 10000⁵³), in which the words being tested are rarer as they advance in the test. As pointed out by (van Zeeland & Schmitt, 2012):

“Research has shown that it takes a relatively small group of frequent words in a language to cover a large proportion of the words in written and spoken discourse (Nation, 2001)⁵⁴. Of particular interest to the field of second language pedagogy is the percentage of words in written or spoken discourse which enables successful comprehension. This percentage of known words in a piece of discourse is referred to as lexical coverage (Adolphs & Schmitt, 2003)⁵⁵ or sometimes text coverage (Nation & Waring, 1997)⁵⁶. Lexical coverage is an essential measure, for it allows the calculation of estimates of the vocabulary size necessary for comprehension of written and spoken texts” (p.1).

As with most research in our field, studies on lexical coverage started by investigating lexical coverage in written texts. Nation (2015) pointed out that learners must know 98% of the words for good text comprehension. This figure indicates that no more than 2% of the word-families should be unfamiliar to learners when they are reading at the right level, especially because in the vast majority of novels, the number of repetitions of words are very low and about half of them occur only once (Nation, 2015, p. 140). It is also important to point out that to reach 98% coverage in authentic written text, learners must know the meaning of the most frequent 8,000 to 9,000 word-families, which results in a score of 70% in comprehension tests (Nation, 2006). Nation’s standard for lexical coverage has been adopted by most researchers in the past years, but a careful reading of less recent studies show that the ideal rate of success seems to be determined by the researcher. As an example, Laufer (1989) found that 95% of lexical coverage equated to acceptable 60% of success in comprehension questions, which require knowledge of 5,000 word-families.

Either one chooses to assess the knowledge of words in the 5,000 or in the 9,000 level in written texts, results reported that for listening comprehension, the numbers vary considerably from the ones mentioned above. Nagy & Herman (1985) put forward that written contexts are not usually as rich or helpful as oral context in providing information about the meanings of new words. Listening provides

⁵³ (<https://www.lexutor.ca/tests/vlt/>)

⁵⁴ **Nation, I. S. P. (2001).** *Learning Vocabulary in Another Language*. Cambridge University Press.

⁵⁵ **Adolphs, S. and Schmitt, N. (2003).** ‘Lexical coverage and spoken discourse,’ *Applied Linguistics* 24/4: 425–38

⁵⁶ **Nation, I. S. P. and Waring, R. (1997).** ‘Vocabulary size, text coverage and word lists’ in N. Schmitt and M. McCarthy (eds): *Vocabulary: Description, Acquisition and Pedagogy*. Cambridge University Press, pp. 6–19.

extra facilitating factors, such as top-down processing⁵⁷, prosody, and also visual clues in the case of audiovisual input (van Zeeland & Schmitt, 2012). As a consequence, learners need to know fewer words to learn from spoken text (Nation, 2006; Webb & Rodgers, 2009).

A relevant example is van Zeeland & Schmitt's study (2012) with 36 native and 40 non-native speakers, in which stories were read as naturally as possible, with the objective of exploring the degree to which lexical coverage affects comprehension. The passages had:

“[...] connected speech patterns (I'd, we're), fillers and interactive markers (you know, well), repetition, and redundancy (...I stayed incredibly calm. I was probably frozen with fear but I just remained calm), additive ordering (most sentences start with And..., or So...), prosodic devices to express his attitude (I thought that was INCREDIBLY sweet) and indicate salient parts (I later found out SHE was doing the EXACT SAME THING that I was)” (p. 465).

Results showed that the participants could equally comprehend the spoken texts with 90% of coverage, and at 95% coverage, natives and non-natives showed less variation. These findings are in accordance with what Laufer (1989) had found: 95% of coverage of vocabulary is required to adequate comprehension of television programs, which means 2,000 to 3,000 word-families, indicating that less vocabulary is sufficient for adequate listening comprehension, especially to understand TV programs, documentaries and movies (Feng & Webb, 2020; Noreillie et al., 2018; Rodgers, 2013; Webb & Rodgers, 2009).

To answer the question that opened this subsection, the knowledge of words in the 2000 to 3000 levels (95% of word coverage) seems necessary for media comprehension. To calculate the difficulty of a text, Lextutor (Cobb, n.d.), a free computer-based support program, was developed, helping researchers determine whether 95% of a text corresponds to the 2000 – 3000 levels required.

To illustrate what Lextutor can do, Figure 8 shows the lexical coverage of the first episode of the TV show *Friends* using one of its tests, the VocabProfile. After submitting the transcript of the episode, VocabProfile provides information on how many words the text contains from each frequency band (2000, 3000, ... 25000), which is determined by analyzing different corpora (COCA and BNC)⁵⁸. For reference, the 95% line is a good indicator of how difficult the text is. If this line is reached after the 1000 band, this is a fairly basic text and learners who know only 1000 word-families can understand the episode. In our analysis, the software estimated that with knowledge of the 2000 band (K-2), learners are able to understand 96.7% of the episode. This means that the episode is not suitable

⁵⁷ Top-down processing relies on knowledge of grammar, semantics, and pragmatics as well as previous existing knowledge of the world, including cultural and moral values, scripts, schemas, and literary genres (Richards & Schmidt, 2010, pp. 603, 604).

⁵⁸ The *Corpus of Contemporary American English* (COCA) and the *British National Corpus* (BNC)

for beginners, but likely to be appropriate for independent users of English. We can also see in the figure that knowledge of the first 4000 levels (K-4) allows for 98% of understanding.

Freq. Level	Families (%)	Types (%)	Tokens (%)	Cumul. token (%)
K-1 :	391 (76.2)	511 (79.60)	2545 (94.1)	94.1
K-2 :	54 (10.5)	55 (8.57)	70 (2.6)	96.7
Coverage 95 				
K-3 :	17 (3.3)	18 (2.80)	18 (0.7)	97.4
K-4 :	13 (2.5)	13 (2.02)	17 (0.6)	98.0
Coverage 98				
K-5 :	10 (1.9)	10 (1.56)	10 (0.4)	98.4
K-6 :	7 (1.4)	7 (1.09)	11 (0.4)	98.8
K-7 :	8 (1.6)	8 (1.25)	12 (0.4)	99.2
K-8 :	2 (0.4)	2 (0.31)	2 (0.1)	99.3
K-9 :	3 (0.6)	3 (0.47)	3 (0.1)	99.4
K-10 :	2 (0.4)	2 (0.31)	2 (0.1)	99.5
K-11 :	2 (0.4)	2 (0.31)	2 (0.1)	99.6
K-12 :	2 (0.4)	2 (0.31)	2 (0.1)	99.7
K-13 :				
K-14 :	1 (0.2)	1 (0.16)	1 (0.0)	
K-15 :				
K-16 :				
K-17 :	1 (0.2)	1 (0.16)	3 (0.1)	99.8
K-18 :				
K-19 :				

RELATED RATIOS & INDICES	
<i>Pertaining to whole text</i>	
Words in text (tokens):	2706
Different words (types):	642
Type-token ratio (TTR):	0.24
Tokens per type:	4.21
Lexical density (content [1251]/total [2706]):	0.46
<i>Pertaining to onlist only</i>	
Tokens:	2698
Types:	635
Families:	513
Tokens per Family :	5.26
Family/token ratio (FTR) :	0.19
Types per Family :	1.24
Singletons ratio Fams(n=1)[231] / total [513]	0.45

Figure 8 - Lexical Coverage of the first episode of Friends

To go further in the analysis and in correcting possible spelling mistakes, the software also shows which words correspond to more difficult bands: chalk, cherry, cleansing, dentist, intestine, pants, purse, stereo, turtle and whatsoever (k-5); aura, dough, honeymoon, kidding and lizards (k-6); beacon, cookie, fixating, gravy, hump, kittens, vanilla and whim (k-7); cafeteria and noodles (k-8); eyelashes, omelet and upbeat (k-9); aromatherapy and mittens (k-10); freaked and horny (k-11); albino and geeky (k-12); bluebells (k-14); nonwords such as 'brackety' (k-off-list); as well as characters' names ('Carol' in K-6 and 'Chandler' in K-17).

Another discussion that makes an important contribution to our study is the proficiency level that a student must have in order to reach this 95% comprehension threshold. To our knowledge, little research has been conducted to find correlations between the Common European Framework of Reference for languages' (CEFR) proficiency levels and the knowledge of word families. Milton & Alexiou's study (2009) has shed some light on the issue, correlating vocabulary size (knowledge of

words and idiomatic expressions) to the six levels of the CEFR by measuring participants knowledge of lemmas:

“A rather more useful definition of a word family, [...] is the lemma. A lemma includes a base form of a word and only the most frequent and regular inflections; related forms of a word which do not differ in part of speech from the base form. In English the lemma would include regular plurals and genitives in nouns, regular inflections -s, -ed, -ing and -en past participle forms in verbs, and comparative and superlative -er and -est endings in adjectives” (Milton 2010: 221).

In order to measure how many lemmas a learner knows, they used the XLex test, which assesses passive receptive vocabulary within a specified vocabulary range. The test is based on Yes/No questions in which learners have to indicate whether they know each of the real and false words. The difficulty in using this measure is that, instead of ranging from 2000 to 10000 levels (which is the case of the VLT), the XLex test estimates knowledge of the most frequent 5000 lemmatised words in a language and the test does not seem to be available online for researchers. Furthermore, no study seems to have compared the knowledge of word-families and lemmas from language learners.

Milton & Alexiou (2009) presented important results that could guide researchers in choosing the appropriate proficiency level for experiments. They concluded that to achieve 85% coverage, a learner must know the 3000 most frequent lemmas, which is equivalent to the B1 proficiency level. Even though they do not draw conclusions related to the 90% and 95% of coverage required for learning through listening, we can assume that below a B1 level, comprehension of television can be hampered.

Whilst these findings and tests provide valuable insight for research in language acquisition, it fails to take into consideration the formulaic meaning of sequences. As Lin (2014) pointed out, “knowing the meaning of individual single words never guarantees understanding of the FSs made up of these single words” (p. 173), either because their meaning is not transparent or because, as a formulaic sequence, they are not frequent in the language (contrarily to the frequency of the meaning of the single words that composes it). To the best of our knowledge, no test has yet assessed coverage of formulaic sequences for comprehension and vocabulary learning through authentic texts.

All things considered, the discussion in this subsection supported arguments advanced by Van Patten (1984) and Schmidt (1990). These authors, who have been reference to researchers in our field, put forward the idea that for vocabulary learning to happen, the processing for meaning should be automatic so that free cognitive resources can be devoted to language form. It is when the learner is somehow comfortable understanding the context that they may notice the gap in their interlanguage

and acquire new language from the input. It seems that when learners become independent users (B1-B2), they become great candidates for lexical learning from media, increasing in difficulty as they progress through the CEFR levels (Milton, 2010), and beginning to have a “good command of idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms” as well as understanding “connotative levels of meaning” (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 112).

4.2 Pop Culture and Vocabulary Learning

“TV and films provide rich resources for language learning with the added benefit of motivating content and familiarity with the medium. No teacher, no classroom, no textbook can provide the richness, range, and variety of language available in television and films”. (Vanderplank, 2020, p. 183)

Pop culture is a “broad range of texts that constitute the cultural landscape of a particular time and/or place, as well as the ways in which consumers engage with those texts and thus become producers of new negotiated meanings” (Maudlin & Sandlin, 2015, p.369, emphasis in original). It includes different *artifacts*, such as books, films, television shows, music, web sites, podcasts, among others. However, despite its pervasive nature and relevant role in language learning, Werner (2018) has pointed out that it has been understudied in applied linguistics and language education.

According to Werner & Tegge (2021), there are four main arguments for studying pop culture. The first two are its potential to engage learners, and to produce emotional experiences. The former argument means that pop culture serves to foster learners’ intrinsic motivation⁵⁹ (Deci & Moller, 2005; Gilmore, 2010; Liu & Lin, 2017), when they are perceived as enjoyable, authentic and personally meaningful to them. The latter is related to its emotional quality that may reduce stress and levels of anxiety (Dolean, 2016; R. W. Schmidt, 1990). This argument is largely accepted in SLA literature: learner’s emotional response to the medium and to the vocabulary can directly affect attention and retention, depending on how important and clear it is in the context, as well as how meaningful it is to the viewer (Oxford & Scarcella, 1994).

The third argument put forward by the authors is that pop culture artifacts are, in nature, rich in multimodality. The same way pop songs include music and lyrics, and comics include still images and text, series have moving images and text, all providing complementary information, facilitating the retention of content and language (p.7). Lastly, its authenticity is also beneficial, as it provides

⁵⁹ Intrinsic motivation is the enjoyment of language learning itself, whereas extrinsic motivation is driven by external factors such as parental pressure, societal expectations, academic requirements, or other sources of rewards and punishments (Richards & Schmidt, 2010, p. 378).

“opportunities for learners to observe analyze, and imitate pragmatic and social cultural discourse features” (p.15).

The format of a series is also something to take into consideration: their storylines are split into episodes with fixed length, with mostly the same characters throughout seasons, which can span across years. They are created to be enjoyable and motivating, with cliffhangers that drive viewers to continue watching them (Tóth-Király et al., 2017). Even though we still call them TV series, these programs are displayed on all types of screens (computers, telephones, tablets etc.). These new technologies allow viewers to be much more autonomous, as they choose where, when, how, how much, and what they want to watch. (Tóth-Király et al., 2017).

The next subsections examine what literature in mass communication, media use and language learning has evidenced throughout the years. Why do people watch series? What can they learn from them? What is special about sitcoms in language learning? Stay tuned⁶⁰.

4.2.1 Reasons for watching series

Research on Mass Communication and Media Use in the 1970s and 1980s delved into the individual motivations for media use and it can give invaluable insights to sitcom watching (in subsection 4.2.2). McQuail et al. (1972), in their article about television audiences, and, later, Rubin (1985), who investigated the day-time soap opera watching habits of 1,836 college students, have categorized some of these reasons. They have shown that series are an important aspect of popular culture and viewers experiences should not be dismissed as “one of mindless escapism, or irrelevant and barely attended trivia, [or a] banal experience of a passive and unintelligent mass” (Livingstone, 1988, pp. 55-56).

Behind their typologies is the theory that media offer valued rewards to the audience (the Uses and Gratifications approach in McQuail, 2010). In no particular order, the first motive they underpin is **diversion**, or the hope to escape from the constraints of routine or one’s problems. It is also related to entertainment, amusement, relaxation-seeking and emotional release. The second is **avoidance**, which is a way to release tension or consume time. **Personal identity** is the third motive, concerning the desire to relate to characters, the discovery of different realities and the reinforcement of their own values. This seems to be somehow related to Rubin’s *orientation* (1985): a reality-

⁶⁰ “Stay tuned” is a sentence used in multimedia before a break to ask the audience to keep watching the program (Stay Tuned. (n.d.) *Farlex Dictionary of Idioms*. (2015). Retrieved April 30 2024 from <https://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/stay+tuned>).

exploration, seeking to finding out how others think and act. The fourth motive is **surveillance**, or the intention of being informed about the world. And finally, **personal relationships**, seeking companionship, interaction and social utility.

One of the first studies to test this theory was conducted on the viewing of soap operas. Livingstone (1988) investigated British viewers' explanations for watching British soap operas, finding that the major categories were escapism (diversion), realism, relationship with characters (orientation), critical response, problem-solving, role in viewer's life (personal identity), emotional experience, and entertainment. Since then, other categories have emerged, such as hedonism, aesthetics and social interaction (Flayelle et al., 2019). The latter could be associated with Ryan & Deci's self-determination theory (2017), or the need to feel connected to others (discussion initiated in the introduction of this thesis).

The intention of relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2017, p.3) has been a topic of some controversy in the literature of media use. While some authors associate media use with social isolation (Bailyn, 1959; Maccoby, 1954) and addiction (Flayelle et al., 2019; Shim & Kim, 2018), literature has indicated that viewers often identify themselves or have a level of perceived connection with the characters and the content of the series they watch (Godlewski & Perse, 2010). This is especially the case in research on soap operas, indicating a strong emotional response from viewers and personal engagement with the content, generating intentionality of watching, as well as attention to the medium (Perse, 1990). However, this hypothesis has not been empirically supported (Flayelle et al., 2019) as "[it] has received various criticism in the media psychology literature as it falls short of charting the emotive complexity of media exposure" (p.27).

Notwithstanding, relatedness to media can be analyzed from the stand point of connection with real life. In fact, being a viewer depends on what is available online, our social milieu and life circumstances (McQuail, 2010). Thus, media use is partially governed by social expectations and norms. Sociability, relatedness and connection have been well attested: McQuail (2010) argues that media is often used to ease social interactions and used as a reference to talk about ongoing experiences (p. 363). It can also determine affiliation, showing "[the] dynamics of social relations in which people want to be, by turns, socially close to, or separate from. ... Affiliation is expressed by joining in the same spectatorship (e.g. a football match on TV) in varying degrees of participation" (p. 364). Finally, it can provide content for topics of conversation, and a non-intrusive basis of contact with strangers, promoting social exchange and attachment, such as in media fandom⁶¹.

⁶¹ Fandom is a group of fans of someone or something, especially very enthusiastic ones (Definition of fandom from the Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus © Cambridge University Press).

This communicative and interactional value of media has been taken into account in the field of Applied Linguistics (Rivens Mompean, 2010; Toffoli & Sockett, 2010, 2015; Cappellini et al., 2016). However, the analysis of goal setting prior series watching in a foreign language has rarely been studied directly and that is why in this thesis we aim to uncover more about the multiple reasons for watching series and, more precisely sitcoms. As McQuail (2010) pointed out, media choice is generally directed towards specific goals and satisfactions (p. 353). Viewers are aware of their individual and social needs and, according to the author, they are capable of voicing these affective and cognitive motivations. This reflection brought up a few questions: To what extent could series watching in English also be guided by an active and internal desire to learn the language? If media use depends on the viewer's perceived satisfactions, needs, wishes or motives (McQuail, 2010, p.352), could learning English be one of the individual or shared needs/goals behind the relatively high number of hours students in France spend watching series?

A few studies have focused on how learners engage in series viewing and its effects in language learning. One of them is Lin & Siyanova's (2014), who revealed the practices of two learners of English who had recently arrived in the UK. The first was Joyce, who, after watching the series *Prison Break*, found a passion for popular drama and began watching many others, joined a Facebook group of drama fans and became part of a community that meet online and face to face to talk about their common interest. The learner reported that this had an influence on her speech fluency, native-like accent and vocabulary knowledge, even though she was not particularly motivated to learn English, did not have learning goals when watching series, and simply continued to do so out of enjoyment and for promoting social connection. The second learner was Sam, who was frustrated by her performance in social situations. She started watching series and even though she judged them to be above her proficiency level, she insisted on watching them on a regular basis, using many strategies, such as adding subtitles and repeating dialogues. Her high motivation and academic inclination resulted in effortless series viewing and social integration.

The cases presented by Lin & Siyanova's (2014) show that English proficiency is achieved by learners with different strategies and intentions. It is an example that multiple motivations guide people in engaging in activities, a discussion initiated in the introduction of our thesis. Because we aim to shed some light on what drives learners' motivations for watching series in English, we dove into the literature on motivation to understand the role goals play in choice making and achievement.

The first notion to bear in mind is Flow. As developed in the introduction, Flow was a concept formulated by Csikszentmihalyi (1975) that describes what an optimal experience is and how to

achieve it. In his 1990 book, he draws a comprehensive picture including five components⁶². The first one is a focused concentration on what one is doing in the present moment. This attention is important to regulate the admission of various contents into consciousness. The second one is the loss of reflective self-consciousness (concerns for the self disappears), in which individuals temporarily forget all worries and representation of themselves, without, however, losing awareness that they exist, allowing themselves to dive into the universe of the activity. The third is a sense of control: when the individual feels capable of dealing with the situation because “one knows how to respond to whatever happens next” (Sherry, 2004, p.332) and judge their skills sufficient to reduce the margin of error to as close to zero as possible (Csikszentmihalyi, 2009, p. 60). The fourth one is the distortion of temporal experience, or a sense that time has passed faster than normal and finally, the fifth component is believing the activity is intrinsically rewarding, or “intrinsically motivating” as mentioned above (Sherry, 2004). Additionally, in his 2009 book, the author presents another three elements of Flow: chance of completing the activity, clear goals and immediate feedback. The following paragraphs develop the types of motivation and goal setting for optimal experience to resume the discussion started in chapter two and argue for the importance of setting goals in informal language learning.

Motivation is usually classified into intrinsic or extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation corresponds to a natural psychological process of engagement in physical and social environments of interest to the individual, based on their affective preferences, in the attempt to master aspects of their world. They are seen as rewarding and pleasurable (Schultheiss & Brunstein, 2005). It is a powerful type of motivation that encompasses relatedness and, most centrally, competence and autonomy (Deci & Moller, 2005, pp. 583-584). Intrinsic motivation is generated by our of personal interest and it represents an optimal challenge to the individual (Deci & Moller, 2005):

“Danner and Lonky (1981)⁶³ did a study in which children were free to choose from various activities that differed in terms of difficulty. The researchers had pretested the children for cognitive ability relevant to the task, and they found that when the children were free to select which tasks to work on, they went to the ones that were somewhat more difficult than their pretested skill levels. These tasks were also rated by the children as most interesting. Additional studies (e.g., Shapira, 1976)⁶⁴ found comparable results

⁶² The concept of Flow has been widely adopted by researchers in positive psychology and media consumption such as Bartsch (2012), Hall (2009), Huskey et al. (2018), Sherry (2004), Shim & Kim (2018) and Wissmath et al. (2009).

⁶³ Example given in Deci & Moller (2005) citing the work of Danner, F. W., & Lonky, E. (1981). A cognitive-developmental approach to the effects of rewards on intrinsic motivation. *Child Development*, 52(3), 1043–1052. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1129110>

⁶⁴ Example given in Deci & Moller (2005) citing the work of Shapira, Z. (1976). Expectancy determinants of intrinsically motivated behavior. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 34(6), 1235–1244. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.34.6.1235>

emphasizing the importance of optimal challenge for intrinsic motivation. It makes sense that intrinsic motivation, which is a manifestation of the natural growth tendency within humans, would be facilitated by exposure to tasks that are optimally challenging, because these are the ones that could provide stimulation for developing greater competence, thus satisfying the basic human need for competence.” (pp. 586-587)

In other words, for a person to be intrinsically motivated for something, the activity must interest the person and be somewhat challenging so that it will satisfy their individual need for competence. This motivation can be coupled with explicit motives⁶⁵, which are goals and expectations set by the individual, and may arise from the individual observing their own behavior (Schultheiss & Brunstein, 2005). The harmony between these two types of systems would enrich the experience, as put it by McClelland et al. (1989):

“People who pursue goals that match their implicit motives experience increases in emotional well-being when they make good progress in realizing their goals and thus have many opportunities to satisfy their motives, but people who pursue goals that are not backed up by their motives do not derive any emotional satisfaction from the goal’s successful realization. On the contrary, they even experience decreases in their well-being, because spending time on the pursuit of the motive-incongruent goals takes away time from the pursuit of motive-congruent goals, which leads to motive frustration. ... It seems reasonable to assume that individuals whose explicit motives are well aligned with their implicit motives, and who consistently choose and pursue motive-congruent goals, are more likely to experience stable and heightened well-being.” (p. 48)

Based on this line of argument, we started to wonder whether series watching in their original language could be part of this desirable challenge that would allow further enjoyment and language learning. Considering the quote above, it might be possible in self-directed situations, when an individual sets a learning objective when watching series. But according to the concept of Flow, this can also be true in naturalistic settings: Csikszentmihalyi et al. (2005) pointed out that it is commonly reported that a person can be at first indifferent or bored by an activity but when an opportunity for action becomes clear or they notice that their skills are improving with the activity, it begins to be interesting and enjoyable (p. 603). In this sense, language learning goals may not be part of the original reason for engagement but be, throughout time, an important factor that influences extensive and consistent exposure.

⁶⁵ Implicit and Explicit motives in self-determination theory should not be mistaken by intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in the SLA literature, which defines “intrinsic motivation [as the] enjoyment of language learning itself and extrinsic motivation, driven by external factors such as parental pressure, societal expectations, academic requirements, or other sources of rewards and punishments.” (Richards & Schmidt, 2010, p. 378)

One last point to consider about the theory of motivation is that this pleasure found in the process of learning can be implemented or automatic. In chapter three we developed arguments that explained one of our objectives, which is to assess intention to learn vocabulary prior to watching. This is related to what Gollwitzer & Bargh (2005) describe as “implementation intention” or “a temporary and strategic form by which one sets up intended actions in advance, so that they later unfold in an automatic fashion” (p. 624). The authors also bring to light an automatic motivation, or “a long-term, chronic form that develops out of extended experience” (p. 624), the type of motivation that is the foundation of this chapter and that will lead us to the formulation of our third objective. This refers to the intrinsic pleasure in the process of learning, regardless of a visible or verbalizable language outcome. The desire to learn, be it a first or secondary goal, is key to keeping a person “on task”, according to Zimmerman & Kitsantas (2005), and moving in thought and action toward the desired goal. In the SLA literature, this has been supported by Bergsleithner, Frota, & Yoshioka (2013) who stated that “subjective experiences that people phenomenologically are aware of as they are learning a language are what drive language learning” (p.7) and we seek to better understand to what extent knowing that one is learning also drives series watching in English.

Having outlined the motives empirically attributed to series watching, what follows in the coming subsections is a short and more precise account of research done on the outcomes from watching telenovelas, TV dramas and, most important to us, sitcoms, supported by recent empirical studies on their relevance in the lives of young adults learning English nowadays.

4.2.2 Media and language learning

Because the focus of our research is vocabulary learning through series, it is important to point out that a myriad of studies have been conducted in the past 20 years showing that series viewing is particularly useful for learning lower frequency words (S. Webb, 2011, 2015; Willoughby & Sell, 2024), may it be by watching one episode (Peters & Webb, 2018) or a sequence of them (Rodgers, 2013; Rodgers & Webb, 2020). As outlined in chapter one, a number of studies have revealed the strong presence of media in English in the lives of learners in out-of-classroom contexts⁶⁶ in Europe, be it through television, free streaming, or platforms such as Netflix.

Research has also confirmed that most media are adequate language learning materials as learners can choose those which (1) are familiar to them, (2) are interesting to the point they want to

⁶⁶ (Lindgren & Muñoz, 2013; Peters, 2018; Sundqvist, 2009; Toffoli & Sockett, 2010; Yibokou, 2019).

understand it, (3) are comprehensible because they are in accordance with learners' proficiency level, (4) are sources of new language, allowing users to learn English thanks to context clues, and (5) are available in large quantities (Nation, 2007). Also according to Nation (2007), the habit of viewing allows learners to gain knowledge or enjoyment or both from what they listen to and read (p. 2).

In 1999, Weyers published an influential article on the effect of authentic video on communicative competence. In his paper, he argues that the (1) interest it causes in the user plays a big role in learning, because it triggers background knowledge, and so does the (2) structure of the input, indicating that episodically organized material is more effective than discontinuous videos. The episode hypothesis was first presented by Taira (1993), who tested the use of a series of connected episodes of vignettes, to assess their efficacy when compared with short and disconnected conversations. This episodic organization is defined as having a structure in which each event or element has logical inferences and involves elements of risk, surprise or conflict. He concludes that continuous story lines generally result in more efficient and sociolinguistically richer language acquisition in the long term, making language easier to understand and to recall. With this in mind, novels or soap operas, according to the author, would be more adequate for language acquisition than a disjointed series of unrelated episodes (p. 310).

With this in mind, Weyers (1999) tested the use of episodes from a Mexican soap opera. Soap operas, or *telenovelas*, were one of the first types of TV series created, and can be described as a television program displaying the lives of recurring characters in a more or less repetitive way (Tóth-Király et al., 2017). Weyers (1999) argued that they are a good outlet for language learning because it provides nongraded linguistic samples they would encounter in the target culture. Its episodic nature also allows viewers to predict possible future events and language. In a recent paper, Ha (2022) analyzed vocabulary demands of informal spoken English and confirmed that soap operas are less lexically demanding when compared with TV programs and movies. He found that viewers need to know words from the 4,000 band (instead of 5,000 for Tv programs) to understand 98% of the words in soap operas. The author points out that the 1,000–2,000 word families difference could represent 2–4 years' worth of English learning or more.

TV series	Category on Wikipedia ⁶⁷	Sources
Dexter	Crime drama , Psychological thriller, Mystery, Dark comedy, Police procedural	(Kusyk & Sockett, 2012; Toffoli & Sockett, 2010)
House	Medical drama , Black comedy, Mystery	(Kusyk & Sockett, 2012; Yibokou, 2019)
The walking dead	Horror, Serial drama , Zombie apocalypse	(Kusyk & Sockett, 2012; Yibokou, 2019)
Breaking bad	Crime drama , Serial drama , Thriller, Neo-Western, Black comedy, Tragedy	(Kusyk & Sockett, 2012; Yibokou, 2019)
The Mentalist	Crime drama , Mystery thriller, Police procedural	(Kusyk & Sockett, 2012; Yibokou, 2019)
One tree hill	Drama , Coming-of-age, Sports drama , Romance	(Toffoli & Sockett, 2010)
Kyle XY	Science fiction, Teen drama	(Toffoli & Sockett, 2010)
The vampire diaries	Drama , Supernatural, Horror, Fantasy	(Yibokou, 2019)
Supernatural	Action, Adventure, Drama , Fantasy, Horror, Mystery	(Yibokou, 2019)
Shameless	Comedy drama , Satire, Family drama	(Yibokou, 2019)
Outlander	Historical fiction, Drama , Adventure, Fantasy, Romance	(Yibokou, 2019)
Once upon a time	Fantasy, Adventure, Drama , Romance	(Yibokou, 2019)
The flash	Superhero, Drama , Action	(Yibokou, 2019)
House of cards	Political drama , Political thriller	(Yibokou, 2019)
Greys anatomy	Medical drama , Romantic drama , Ensemble drama , Dark comedy	(Yibokou, 2019)
Prison Break	Serial drama , Crime drama , Action thriller	(Yibokou, 2019)
Sherlock	Crime, Mystery, Comedy drama	(Yibokou, 2019)
Game of thrones	Action, Adventure, Fantasy, Serial drama , Tragedy	(Yibokou, 2019)
Arrow	Superhero, Drama , Action, Crime, Mystery	(Yibokou, 2019)
Fringe	Science fiction, Supernatural drama	(Kusyk & Sockett, 2012)
Castle	Mystery, Police procedural, Crime, Comedy drama	(Kusyk & Sockett, 2012)
Desperate Housewives	Comedy-drama , Mystery, Soap opera	(Yibokou, 2019)
X-Files	Science fiction, Supernatural fiction, Horror, Mystery, Thriller	(Yibokou, 2019)
How I Met Your Mothe The Big Bang Theory Friends Seinfeld The Simpsons South Park The IT crowd	Sitcom	(Kusyk & Sockett, 2012; Toffoli & Sockett, 2010; Yibokou, 2019) (Kusyk & Sockett, 2012; Yibokou, 2019) (Yibokou, 2019) (Yibokou, 2019) (Yibokou, 2019) (Kusyk & Sockett, 2012) (Toffoli & Sockett, 2010)

Table 3 - Favorite TV series in Toffoli & Sockett (2010), Kusyk & Sockett (2012) and Yibokou (2019).

⁶⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page

It has also been argued that soap operas are a vehicle for messages of social realism concerning class, gender, work, morality and the family and, contrary to popular belief, they are taken very seriously by both viewers and program makers (S. M. Livingstone, 1988). Ever since the late 1980s, the popularity of soap operas waned, giving space to new genres, very often mixed with a touch of drama. This is especially true when we analyze the actual habits of media consumption of university students in France, the target population of our study. In articles published by Toffoli & Sockett (2010), Kusyk & Sockett (2012) and Yibokou (2019), when asked, in an open question, what series participants watch, most examples given were a mix of genres, often categorized as drama on Wikipedia, except *The X-files* (in Yibokou, 2019) and some sitcoms (Table 3).

Attracted by their story, their universe, the characters and the actors (Yibokou, 2019, p. 319), dramas attract many viewers. This also seems to be the case for sitcoms, sometimes labeled as drama (which is the case in Wang's study, 2012). The next subsection provides arguments and evidence of the advantages of watching sitcoms for language learning.

4.2.3 *The One with the Sitcoms*⁶⁸

“Consider the case of learning to play an instrument. For a beginner, the ease of creating a good tone on a piano (by simply pressing any key) offers an easy entrée to the instrument. On the other hand, many budding trumpet, tuba, or trombone players have been turned away by the difficulty of achieving a decent tone on brass instruments. As the piano player gains proficiency, there are almost endless challenges to greater technique or repertoire. A simplistic instrument like the kazoo offers easy entrée, but few challenges, thus preventing Flow state for most. Activities that are most likely to create the Flow state are those that ‘(1) have concrete goals with manageable rules; (2) make it possible to adjust opportunities for action to our capabilities, (3) provide clear information on how we are doing, and (4) screen out distraction and make concentration possible’ (Csikszentmihalyi, 1993, p. xiv).” (Sherry, 2004, pp. 332-333)

Little research has been done on the potential of sitcoms for language learning. One reason may be the considerable number of series genres to pick from, another could be due to mislabeling. For instance, in a study carried out by Wang (2012), the author called ‘television drama’ the sitcoms *How I Met Your Mother*, *The King of Queens*, and *Reba*. However, sitcoms do not seem to be just like any other genre and may have particular advantages over other types of series.

⁶⁸ The title of this sub-section is a reference to the sitcom *Friends*, whose episodes names always start with “The one where...” or “The one with...”.

As defined in the introduction, ‘sitcom’ is an abbreviation for Situation Comedy and, according to the dictionary Merriam-Webster, it is “a show that is on television regularly and that is about a group of characters who are involved in different funny situations”⁶⁹. It is organized around characters’ daily lives, at home, at work, in cafés, or outdoors, in shared spaces. Their limited number of main characters, which tend to avoid confusion and distraction (Berk, 2009), are often relatable as they find themselves in situations that are likely to happen in real life. The characters have fundamentally distinct personalities, and their reaction to things are rather emphatic (to exacerbate the character’s personality), providing expressive body language.

Another potential advantage of sitcoms is that they are relatively short, 20 to 30-minutes long, which is beneficial for language learning (S. Webb, 2015). They are very often composed of several sketches within one single episode. When cut, these short, interspersed scenes become short (2-6 minutes) full mini-episodes, containing a beginning, a middle and an end: their content and characters are not necessarily the same from one sketch to the other, or they are only slightly connected. That is also true from one episode to another: even though there is a dramatic storyline that reveals the characters’ personalities, routines, relationships and a few internal jokes, viewers can understand isolated episodes and still enjoy them. Finally, some of these sitcoms, which are mostly aimed at a teenage and young adult market (Toffoli & Sockett, 2010), have become so popular that they lasted for nearly a decade, which is the case of *The Big Bang Theory* and *Two and a Half Men* (12 years), *Modern Family* (11 years), *Friends* (10 years), *How I Met Your Mother* and *Seinfeld* (9 years), *Brooklyn 99* and *The Office* (8 years), among others.

In the study conducted by Wang (2012) (mentioned in the first paragraph of this section), focused on exploring language learning through sitcoms from the learners’ perspective, participants watched one episode of each of the three sitcoms and did an interview. Participants verbalized how these shows contained more daily life vocabulary than textbooks, allowing them to learn more idioms and colloquial words, for example. They mentioned that the plots, the events, and the characters’ emotions helped them to learn the target words. It is this involvement that helps cognitive processing and determines retention (Hulstijn, 2003): the more the viewer is interested in the sitcom and the more meaningful it is to them, the higher the chances of remembering scenes and language in the show. This compelling element of sitcoms, together with the fact that they can choose content that matches their personal interest and language level (Willoughby & Sell, 2024) are likely to induce

⁶⁹ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sitcom>. Retrieved in 27/04/2021.

viewers to enter in a state of Flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 2009) and learn the language (Krashen, 2013), provided that the level of difficulty is appropriate to the user's proficiency level (S. Webb, 2015).

Sitcoms have been shown to be especially useful for learning mid to low frequency words (S. Webb & Rodgers, 2009) that do not come in textbooks, music or longer TV dramas because their dialogues are very close to day-to-day conversations, reflecting the linguistic representation of natural life (Al-Surmi, 2012) and are relevant to achieve higher levels of proficiency. As seen in the evidence provided in subsection 4.1.3 and the work published by Al-Surmi (2012), sitcoms are enjoyable, have accessible language, and, to enter the experience, viewers do not need too much background information from previous episodes to understand the plot, making it a good entrée into the habit of extensive watching (Sherry, 2004).

If it is important to assess language difficulty in sitcoms, a further point should be considered and studied. Taking the first episode of *Friends* as example (given in subsection 4.1.3), even though 96% of the words are in the 2000 level, the software only analyzes them individually. Some of these words are, however, part of formulaic sequences and knowing the meaning of each word in isolation does not necessarily allow the viewer to know what the expression means (discussion in chapter three, section 3.3). This is the case of the phrases: *Give her a break!*⁷⁰, *That's when it hit me*⁷¹, *What're you up to tonight?*⁷², *You're on a roll!*⁷³, *What's with you?*⁷⁴, which have semantic opacity (are not transparent - González Rey, 2002; Gross, 1996), and have figurative meaning that cannot necessarily be detected by knowing the words that make them up (Gross, 1996).

As pointed out at the end of subsection 4.1.3, to our knowledge, no test and no software has been created to analyze the difficulty of such expressions and determine the word coverage of texts taking formulaic sequences (FS) into account. The few studies that have analyzed chunks of language in series have identified some commonly occurring phrases, such as the one carried out by Sockett (2011), who listed the most frequent 4-word clusters in the series *House*, *How I Met Your Mother*, *Lost*, *One Tree Hill* and *Desperate Housewives*. Some examples are *What are you doing*, *I want you to*, *You want me to*, and *What do you think*. These chunks were compared to French students' knowledge

⁷⁰ *Give her a break!* is an expression that is used to ask for someone else to stop criticizing or annoying someone and leave them alone. (<https://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/give+a+break>)

⁷¹ *That's when it hit me* means that a person suddenly realized something. (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/hit>)

⁷² *Be up to (tonight)* is used to ask what the person is doing (later) (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/up-to>)

⁷³ *Be on a roll* means that the person is experiencing a period of success or good luck (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/on-a-roll>)

⁷⁴ The question *What's with* (something/someone) is used to say that you do not understand something that is happening, or to ask for an explanation of something (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/what-s-with>)

of these sequences (Kusyk & Sockett, 2012), finding that students who watched English series more frequently had greater knowledge of these multiword combinations than students who watched television less often.

Therefore, we can see that words that reoccur more often in series are more likely to be learned (Rodgers & Webb, 2011). And what is more important, extensive viewing of sitcoms can help learners distinguish what is grammatically possible from what is more commonly used in the language (Wray & Perkins, 2000). In Sitcoms such as *Friends*, *How I Met Your Mother*, *The Big Bang Theory* and *Brooklyn 99*, expressions are often repeated. For instance, the expression *There you go*, used in an idiomatic way (meaning ‘to hand an object to someone else’, ‘to acknowledge a fact that cannot be changed’, or ‘to congratulate someone’⁷⁵) appears 69, 16, 36 and 24 times in all seasons of the above-mentioned sitcoms, respectively. Less frequent but also relevant fixed expressions are *Way to go*⁷⁶ (27 times in these sitcoms), *Hang in there*⁷⁷ (18 times) and *You’re on*⁷⁸ (17 times). This repetition gives more opportunities for learners to notice the language being used (Schmidt 1990) and provide extensive exposure to increase fixation.

To lead to a more informed discussion, more corpus analysis can be done to reveal how often fixed expressions appear in sitcoms, as well as their salience, importance and the role of multimodality in making them clearer in their context.

4.4 Summary and Third objective

Authentic materials can be a useful tool for learning languages, which has been shown in the Second Language Acquisition (SLA) literature, traditionally in classroom environments and more recently in informal contexts. Evidence supports the claim that these materials increase learners’ proficiency and motivation (Bacon & Finnemann, 1990; Gilmore, 2007; Vanderplank, 2016) and thanks to the direct access to the internet, their use for learning and for entertainment is a reality among non-native speakers of English (Kusyk & Sockett, 2012; Toffoli & Sockett, 2015; Yibokou, 2019).

Although research has indicated that reading is a more effective source of vocabulary learning than listening is (Brown et al., 2008; van Zeeland, 2013; Vidal, 2011), especially for intermediate learners (the target of our research), research has also demonstrated the relevance of listening for

⁷⁵ The uses of the expressions described in this paragraph were based on the examples available at <https://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/>

⁷⁶ *Way to go!* is used to congratulate someone.

⁷⁷ *Hang in there!* is used to tell someone not to give up, despite the difficulties.

⁷⁸ *You’re on!* is used to accept a challenge.

vocabulary learning. Studies have suggested that words beyond the 2000 most frequent are unlikely to be encountered in reading in sufficient numbers (Cobb, 2007), which would make it difficult to acquire the vocabulary needed for higher proficiency levels. If extensive contact to the target language is key for language learning, in our contemporary context, vocabulary seems to be more likely to be learned orally, since learners engage more often in extensive listening thanks to the access to music, films, series and other audio(visual) media online (Kusyk & Sockett, 2012; Peters, 2018; Toffoli & Sockett, 2015; Yibokou, 2019).

Extensive listening and viewing are sources of autonomous listening strategies development, listening fluency development, and speaking fluency (Al-Surmi, 2012; Bednarek, 2018) and should be encouraged. Even though listeners may encounter difficulties in terms of pronunciation and overall comprehension depending on their level, learning may be aided by the fact that the knowledge of fewer words is needed for listening comprehension than for L2 reading (van Zeeland & Schmitt, 2012) thanks to body language, gestures, facial expressions, stress and intonation.

When analyzing language level appropriateness, 'lexical coverage' is an important point to take into account. It is the calculation of the percentage of words one must know to be able to comprehend and learn from the L2 text. Studies estimate a required knowledge of 95% to 98% of the words for successful reading knowledge of 5,000 word-families (Laufer, 1989; Nation, 2015). Results from listening show, however, that only 90% to 95% is sufficient to be able to learn from audio(visual) supports - which represents 2,000 to 3,000 word-families (Laufer, 1989; Nation, 2006; van Zeeland & Schmitt, 2012; Webb & Rodgers, 2009). These percentages can be assessed by a Vocabulary Level Test (learners' lexical coverage), and a VocabProfile can be run using Lextutor (Cobb, n.d.) - to be able to estimate the difficulty of a text.

Coming back to authentic aural and written texts, among the various definitions given, we define them in this thesis as a stretch of real language that conveys a real message, for a real audience (Gilmore, 2007; Morrow, 1977; Richards & Schmidt, 2002, p. 42), without pedagogical purposes. This is the case of the dialogues in Sitcoms (series of comedy) that, in a careful analysis conducted by Al-Surmi (2012), showed similarities to natural conversation in terms of speed, phonology, hesitations and high-frequency vocabulary.

Needless to say, sitcoms seem to be a good example of pop culture that fosters vocabulary acquisition. As authentic and popular supports, they are likely to be engaging for learners, increasing their intrinsic motivation (Deci & Moller, 2005; Gilmore, 2010; Liu & Lin, 2017). They can also produce emotional experiences, reducing stress and levels of anxiety in learning (Dolean, 2016; Oxford & Scarcella, 1994; R. W. Schmidt, 1990). Furthermore, they are rich in multimodality (moving images and

text, through captions) and have a format that is attractive: they are short, with the same relatable characters across seasons.

Far from being “one of mindless escapism, or irrelevant and barely attended trivia, [or a] banal experience of a passive and unintelligent mass” (Livingstone, 1988, pp. 55-56), series watching provide various benefits for viewers. The ‘Uses and Gratifications approach’ in the study of mass communication shows that media provide emotional release, reinforcement of viewers’ values and companionship (McQuail, 2010). Altogether, series can fulfil people’s three basic needs: relatedness (companion and social utility), autonomy (access and control) and competence (learning from the media) (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

In this chapter, it was also discussed that most media are adequate language learning materials provided that they are interesting to the viewer to the point they want to understand it, are in accordance with learners’ proficiency level, and are available in large quantities (Nation, 2007). An advantage of series over other types of media is their episodic aspect that has been shown to be more effective than discontinuous videos (Taira, 1993; Weyers, 1999). Research has particularly looked into soap operas (Ha, 2022; Weyers, 1999), but recent evidence has shown that other types of drama (such as crime, medical and comedy drama) are more popular among the young generations nowadays (Kusyk & Sockett, 2012; Toffoli & Sockett, 2010; Yibokou, 2019), which demands further research.

As mentioned above, the focus of this thesis is sitcom watching (which is short for Situation Comedy), a type of series that is particularly popular among university students and has a unique format. They (1) depict every day, close to real life situations, (2) have a few quite relatable characters, with distinctive traits of personality and expressive nonverbal communication, (3) are short (20-30 minutes long), and (4) have a dramatic storyline but are mostly centered around short sketches with independent scenes. These shows are mostly seen by learners as enjoyable and rich in daily life vocabulary (Wang, 2012), and evidence has shown that they contain indeed many idioms and colloquial words (Al-Surmi, 2012). Evidence has shown that these elements help cognitive processing and retention of words (Hulstijn, 2003).

The importance of studying formulaic language in sitcoms is that (1) sitcoms have been understudied, considering their popularity, and (2) their difficulty has mainly been based on single words and not multi-word units. The example given in this chapter was the first episode of *Friends*, which 96% of the words were in the 2000 level, but some of these words are part of expressions. Although much work is still needed to account for this gap, any contribution to the field is a step closer to understanding their acquisition process.

To conclude, this chapter has offered a review of research and aimed to explore the gaps in the literature on language learning through aural means and through media. In view of the elements presented above, **this study furthers its agenda with a third objective, which is to explore the possible intentions guiding Sitcom viewing.** It seeks to develop a larger picture of learning through media by exploring the question: To what extent could series watching in English also be guided by an active and internal desire to learn the language? If media use depends on the viewer's perceived satisfactions, needs, wishes or motives (McQuail, 2010, p.352), could learning English be one of the individual or shared needs/goals behind the relatively high number of hours students in France spend watching series? Is learning just a beneficial side effect or can it be part of the motives guiding series watching?

It has been assumed in the literature that the upmost motive in the use of English in informal settings is socializing and to belong to a community (Cross, 2007; Toffoli & Sockett, 2010, 2015b) and that intention to learn plays little part in informal language learning. We will try to provide empirical evidence of this uncharted area by examining the reasons for such extensive engagement in series viewing. Knowing learners' goals when engaging with such resources will enable researchers to re-evaluate the notion of informality in relation to intentionality. Knowing the modalities of engagement as well as their general and specific intentions could confirm or refute the hypothesis that informal learning is mostly unconscious. The findings related to this objective can be found in section 7.2.

The following chapter presents the role that captions, images and prosody may play in language learning through audiovisual materials and discuss the place of language centers to help learners foster vocabulary learning when watching series.

Chapter 5. Factors that aid language learning

Series viewing in a foreign language can be challenging (S. Webb, 2015) and to be able to make sense of the input and make sure it will be a good experience for the viewer, awareness of the different factors that can aid watching can be a good tool. This chapter is dedicated to discussing multimodality, such as captions, prosody and non-verbal communication (in section 5.1) as well as how language centers can equip learners with tools to better make use of these facilitative factors that aid language learning (in section 5.2).

5.1 Multimodality

Multimodality is “the coordination of multiple different systems of signification to communicate a single, or at least a unified, message or meaning” (Dressman, 2020, p. 39). In his article *Multimodality and Language Learning*, Dressman (2020) gives the following example:

“A meteorologist on a nightly newscast stands before a map, explaining the progress of an oncoming band of thundershowers across a region, and gesturing to suggest its direction and speed via an overlay of color-coded radar images. In this case, spoken language combines with multiple visual images and arm movements to convey a very complex message about an imminent weather event's strength, duration, timing, and likely consequences” (p. 39).

In our case, when watching series, language users deal with incoming audio and images, that include sounds, gestures (Montero Perez, 2020b), facial expressions and, in some cases, written input. This chapter outlines factors that aid learning through media: (1) captions (subtitles in the same language as the audio), discussed in the following subsection (5.1.1), audio (in subsection 5.1.2) and images (in subsection 5.1.3).

5.1.1 Captions

Historically, the population in France came into contact with series through television, which are mostly dubbed into French, contrarily to countries such as Finland⁷⁹, the Netherlands and Sweden, in which television is watched in the original language, with subtitles in the local language (Sockett, 2011a). This difference has a far-reaching effect in viewers' level of listening comprehension in English (Vanderplank, 2010). However, thanks to the availability of series online through downloading and streaming, young French viewers have been acquiring a preference for watching in the original language⁸⁰ and, according to Sockett (2011), they have become dissatisfied with the experience of watching dubbed material, a finding supported by Yibokou's (2019) recent doctoral thesis, in which 97% of the participants preferred to watch series in the original language.

The various recent online streaming services and on-demand platforms provide the option of viewing in the original language with the option of adding captions and subtitles (Montero Perez, 2022). Captions, also called intra-lingual subtitles or closed-captions, refer to when both the audio and the video are in the target language (Richards & Schmidt, 2010, p. 572). They were first developed to aid the comprehension of hard-of-hearing people and, according to the EFHOH (2015)⁸¹, most countries have considerably improved their captioning provision ever since their first report in 2011 (Vanderplank, 2016, p. 16). On the other hand, (standard) subtitles refer to when the audio portion is in the original language and the text in the viewer's native language (Richards & Schmidt, 2010, p. 572). Furthermore, amateur captioning was intensified through fansubs (captions and subtitles produced by fans) in the 1970s and 1980s, thanks to the growing interest in *animes* (Japanese animated series) (Vanderplank, 2016, p.17). This widespread sharing culture was aided by the increase of the possibility of download, resulting in the circulation of numerous series internationally. A few recommendations regarding the format of these captions are shortly presented at the end of this subsection.

Researchers in SLA have been looking into captions since the 1980's, notably through the work of Vanderplank (1988, 1990, 1993, 1996) that sought to investigate whether captions were a support or a hindrance for language learning. According to Vanderplank (2016), at the time that he started

⁷⁹ In Vanderplank, R. (2016). Captioned media in foreign language learning and teaching: Subtitles for the deaf and hard-of-hearing as tools for language learning. Palgrave Macmillan.

⁸⁰ Evidence has been given by Sockett (2011), Toffoli & Sockett (2010), and Yibokou, 2019, as discussed in chapters one and four.

⁸¹ European Federation of Hard of Hearing People (2015). State of subtitling access in EU, 2015 Report. http://media.wix.com/ugd/c2e099_0921564404524507bed2ff3648781a3c.pdf.

studying the topic, many teachers and researchers were skeptical that captions could be anything else other than overwhelming for learners or a way of “cheating” when trying to understand a video (p. 144). He pointed out that other researchers such as Halliday (1989)⁸² were also advocating for captions at the time, arguing that with offering bi-modal input (image and video), learners would have the best of two worlds – which is beneficial when we take into account individual differences in learning styles: “some learn more through the ear, others through the eye” (p. 96). Vanderplank (2016) also reports a series of research that has shown that in a single episode, learners move between styles, “sometimes taking in more through the caption text, at other times listening carefully to the speech, sometimes using the text for support, at other times ‘chunking’ caption text rapidly before listening” (p. 144). This has been researched recently thanks to eye tracking technology and is discussed in subsection 5.1.3.

Research has also compared comprehension and language learning with or without captions. A highly cited paper by Huang & Eskey (1999) investigated the effects of captions on the listening comprehension and vocabulary learning of students who were placed into two groups, one with captions the other without, finding that the caption group scored significantly higher on vocabulary/phrase acquisition and comprehension. Rodgers (2013) and Montero Perez et al. (2014) also found significant positive relationships with learning and the use of captions. It came as no surprise that a meta-analysis carried out by Montero Perez et al. (2013), analyzing 18 papers that worked on listening comprehension and captions, showed that in most studies, the test scores comprehension were higher for the group(s) watching with captions when compared with those watching without. They came to the conclusion that captioned viewing may enhance vocabulary learning and video comprehension.

In section 4.1, the importance of extensive reading and viewing for vocabulary learning was presented. The combination of the two could be a good strategy for language learning and one way of adding written text to a viewing experience is by using captions. One considerable advantage of adding captions when watching is that it lowers learners’ affective filters, increasing motivation and positive attitudes towards the activity (Vanderplank, 2016, p. 53). In Vanderplank’s 2015 EURECAP project⁸³ (Vanderplank, 2016, p. 187), even though some learners felt guilty reading captions at first for considering it ‘cheating’, these negative feelings disappeared over time, as learners felt reassured for checking what they heard in the text and making sure they did not miss-hear or miss something important. This is what Mayer et al. (2020) calls ‘the subtitle principle’, stating that redundant

⁸² In Vanderplank (2016): Halliday, M. A. K. (1989). *Spoken and written language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

⁸³ EURECAP stands for European Research on Captioning (Vanderplank, 2016, p. 187).

information in the form of captions is helpful for L2 comprehension in contexts where learners have word identification problems. In psychological terms, this seems to be in coherence with Csikszentmihalyi's (2009) analysis of Flow, as caption text provide instant feedback to learners. As a result, Vanderplank (2016) concludes that caption produces growing confidence in learners' abilities and greater enjoyment in the activity, contributing to security, greater self-efficacy and a low affective filter, factors that encourage intake.

Another advantage of captions, as Vanderplank has argued since the beginning of his work on captions, is that their presence may ensure "conscious monitoring of the speech" (Vanderplank, 1988, p. 277). They can help shift the viewer's focus onto the language being spoken and raise their awareness of the language, especially for (in order of ranking) new words, idioms/slang, pronunciation, listening to Americans speaking with American friends, reading and other skills (Rose Zmoon's 1996 unpublished Master's dissertation in Vanderplank, 2016, p. 71). A clear illustration of this attention to language is Vanderplank's study (1988), in which he used the sitcom *Yes, Prime Minister*, with captions, with 15 highly-motivated European exchange students, who found captions useful and beneficial to their language development. Learners reported being aware of a great deal of the language from the captioned program, such as new words and phrases that they believed to be now able to use themselves. Vanderplank also points out that the presence of text with sound leads to conscious focusing of striking expressions and "helped [learners] develop a 'chunking' ability in both reading and listening, which, in turn, released spare capacity for conscious learning" (Vanderplank, 2016, p. 54).

In his paper "Paying attention to the words", Vanderplank (1990) focused more on this issue and, through note-taking from students and tape-recorded discussions, he provided evidence that the degree of conscious attention paid to the language in TV programs contributed to accuracy and specificity in the language, as well as a richer command of the language in social interactions. Another interesting finding was published in his 1996 paper, in which he reports that students were more confident about viewing for study purposes when captions were added because captions help them keep focused on form and check understanding. He concludes that captions are the key to opening up language learning for non-native viewers.

In learning that captions attract viewers' attention and stimulate focus on the language, these studies contribute not only to Schmidt's noticing hypothesis (1990), as viewers will be more likely to visualize language and be aware of new words, but also supports Csikszentmihalyi's (2009) theory of Flow. Using captions allow viewers to measure their self-efficacy – the confidence they have that they can be successful carrying out the task – and give them control over what they will pay attention to, keeping or bringing back focus to the language (Vanderplank, 2016, p. 62). Additionally, it is a powerful

tool for developing self-directed learning, in which learners can become active viewers, increasing their learning gains (Mills et al., 2004).

It is relevant to notice, however, that the debate concerning whether using captions helps viewers become better at listening seems to still be open. Even though it has been argued that “captions can bridge the gap between the development of skills in reading comprehension and listening comprehension” (Garza, 1991, p. 246), meaning that viewers can learn language better by reading what they could not understand through aural means, viewers may not learn how to listen if they read to understand L2 aural texts - or *will* not learn, according to Vandergrift (2004). Vandergrift (2004) acknowledged that captions may be useful for developing word-recognition skills and for learning vocabulary, but that its potential to help learners listen better is questionable. According to him, to develop listening strategies to listen to real-time and authentic input, learners need to mostly rely on the acoustic signal and relevant contextual factors. In this case, captions would disrupt the development of compensatory strategies (p. 9-10).

Vandergrift's argument (2004) has been countered by Vanderplank (2016), who argues that even though learning to listen may not be a direct consequence of using captions, it does not mean that captions are distractions and that learners will always be dependent on them, jeopardizing their chances of being good at listening (p. 54). On the contrary, it can help them in the long term as “it increases the redundancy in the language, ... enrich the sound and images, thereby encouraging strong associations for retention and use of language” (p. 55). Nevertheless, Vanderplank (2016) acknowledges that although captions have a great potential for learning, they are not the “Holy Grail” of language learning (p. 48), and it takes more than a basic effort to obtain great learning gains.

Another issue to take into account when studying captions is that if the series is not in accordance with the viewer's proficiency level, captions may be unproductive (Price, 1983) and generate negative feelings in the viewers (Huang & Eskey, 1999). This is a key issue for lower-level learners or those with poor reading skills (Danan, 2004), as, according to Krashen's input hypothesis (1982:20), learning happens when the material is a little beyond the learner's usual level of comprehension. Thus, captions may not be helpful for basic users (A1-A2) that would find it hard to “simultaneously process the multiple modalities (images, audio, and captions) due to their limited capacities of working memory and cognitive load” (Aldukhayel, 2021). At the other end of the scale, Montero Perez et al.'s 2013 meta-analysis has not found a significant impact of captions for higher-level learners, but a large effect for intermediate-level learners. This might be due to the good listening comprehension skills proficient users possess.

To summarise, unless independent and proficient users (B1-C2) want to concentrate on listening, captions can be an invaluable tool for understanding series and noticing language, and teachers could help them be aware of it. As Zamoon's study (1996)⁸⁴ pointed out, "while lower-level students may make little use of captioned viewing at home initially, since they cannot really take advantage of them, they make steadily more use as their English improves and that, for the most part, even proficient students continue to watch with captions" (Vanderplank, 2016, p. 72).

As far as research is concerned, the level of difficulty of series episodes can be assessed using Lextutor (presented in subsection 4.1.3), to make sure that the material is neither too easy that viewers cannot learn new words from it, nor too difficult that it will be unproductive and demotivating. Moreover, another important point is the quality of captions. According to Vanderplank (2016), a frequent complaint is when captions are not verbatim replications of the language spoken (p. 9). For that reason, when conducting experiments, researchers should be attentive to the content and format of captions. When using entire episodes, captions can be relatively easy to find online, but if they are not faithful to the utterances, or when only extracts are to be used, it may be necessary to add captions manually.

Some of the recommendations Vanderplank (2016, p. 12) evokes in his book is that captions should allow adequate reading time, which should normally not exceed 140 words per minute, and not be longer than three lines of text, according to a guide published by the Independent Television Commission (ITC) in the UK (1999)⁸⁵. It should also attempt to match what is actually said in terms of timing, synchronization and complexity (avoiding simplification and censoring). Additionally, it should be placed in coherence with shot changes, avoiding leaving the caption on after the speaker uttered it and the image moved on to another.

5.1.2 Prosody

Other than captions, an essential topic in the study of multimodality in series viewing is audio. Spoken language can be analyzed in terms of connected speech, or as a continuous sequence⁸⁶ (Richards & Schmidt, 2010, p. 117) and this interaction of spoken words contains a large number of variations. This subsection briefly outlines research findings on what makes the study of prosody of

⁸⁴ Rose Zamoon's 1996 unpublished Master's dissertation in Vanderplank, 2016, p. 71.

⁸⁵ Independent Television Commission. (1999). ITC guidance on standards for subtitling London: Independent Television Commission. Retrieved from http://www.ofcom.org.uk/static/archive/itc/itc_publications/codes_guidance/standards_for_subtitling/index.asp.html (in Vanderplank, 2016:11)

⁸⁶ As opposed to the analysis of individual sounds or words in isolation.

formulaic language important in the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), and review some prosodic features that may help acquisition.

The first step to understanding the importance of prosody of **formulaic sequences (FS)** is to consider how such language is believed to be processed in the brain. As discussed in section 3.3, researchers have put forward the idea that formulaic language is processed holistically by native speakers (Conklin & Schmitt, 2012), whereas language learners tend to process language word by word (specially less proficient ones). A similar discussion was also held by Phoebe Lin (2018), but from a different angle. If research on reading **formulaic language (FL)** has been inconclusive so far, how can prosody play a role in learning these types of sequences in spoken discourse? As a relatively new sub-field in SLA, the number of studies on the prosody of FS in spoken speech is still small. It has been put forward, however, that FS might be subject to special prosodic rules (Lin, 2018), such as the intonational, temporal, phonemic, and stress aspects⁸⁷. In Lin's review (2010), the author describes findings that suggest that these utterances are pronounced as a single unit, with an unbroken intonation⁸⁸, and have “a ‘melody’ unique enough so that [they] can be recognized even if rather badly mumbled [by young children]” (Peters, 1977, p. 563)⁸⁹. As such, Lin (2010) suggests that FS might not only have a degree of lexical fixedness, but may be also somehow fixed at a phonological level. This should make FS prosodically salient in spoken input as they are articulated as an intonation unit, being acquired and produced holistically.

Lin's hypotheses (2018) have not had sufficient empirical support so far. Whereas it is true that native speakers profit of knowledge of FL's prosody to decrease demands on cognitive capacity, it seems that learners tend to focus on individual words, neglecting the holistic unit of FS (Conklin & Schmitt, 2012). So far, studies indicate that non-native speakers, even highly fluent ones, tend to have difficulties learning prosody of FL, or perceiving prosodic contrasts between idiomatic and literal readings of sentences, such as the one conducted Van Lancker-Sidtis (2003)⁹⁰, and results show that while native participants successfully differentiated between FS used figuratively and literally thanks to prosodic cues, even highly proficient nonnatives were unable to do so. According to Lin (2018), this might be due to the way non-native speakers process the L2 language: “the fact that these learners were unable to reproduce the formulaic responses intact means that they took an

⁸⁷ See Lin (2010) for review.

⁸⁸ Peters, A. M. (1983). *The units of language acquisition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

⁸⁹ In Lin (2010): Peters, A. M. (1977). *Language learning strategies: Does the whole equal the sum of the parts?* *Language*, 53 (3), 560–73.

⁹⁰ Study reported by Conklin & Schmitt (2012): Van Lancker-Sidtis, D. (2003). *Auditory recognition of idioms by first and second speakers of English*. *Applied Psycholinguistics*, 24, 45–57.

analytical (instead of holistic) approach when processing the spoken input. [This might be] indicative of their lack of attention to prosodic cues” (p. 89).

This converging evidence in the acquisition of formulaic language makes it an increasingly topic of interest. According to Lin (2010) “it is quite obvious that it is not only what is said that counts but also how it is said”, and research has shown that idiomatic sentences typically have shorter durations than their literal counterparts (Siyanova & Lin, 2017) and are also enclosed by pauses and/or falling tones⁹¹. At the same time, pauses are not usually found *within* multi-words units (Lin, 2010). These elements are relevant in language learning because meaning can be conveyed or understood based on such sound variations.

Alan Cruttenden (1997) in his influential book “Intonation”, proposed three prosodic features of spoken discourse: pitch, loudness and length. *Pitch* is related to the height of the voice over one or more syllables and is a crucial feature involved in intonation (pp. 2-3). Physiologically, pitch varies according to the vibration of the vocal cords within the larynx. In SLA, pitch is researched as the perceptual tone according to the listener’s judgment as to whether the sound is ‘high’ or ‘low’, or whether the voice is going ‘up’ or ‘down’ (p.3). A good illustration is the example the author gives about the word ‘nice’: “[it] might be said softly or loudly; it might be said with a pitch pattern which starts high and ends low, or with one which begins low and ends high; it might be said with a voice quality which is especially creaky or especially breathy” (Cruttenden, 1997:1).

The second and third acoustic components are *loudness* and *length*. The former is the main contributor to the perception of stress (Lin, 2018). It is related to the intensity or the amount of energy a speaker uses to say a word or a sequence of them, produced by variations in the pressure of air coming from the lungs (Cruttenden, 1997:3). Furthermore, Cruttenden (1997) pointed out that “loudness may be used for a variety of linguistic purposes, some of which apply to single syllables, and some to sequences of syllables. I may shout because I am angry or I may make my accented syllables much louder than my unaccented syllables as an emphatic device” (p.3). Length, on the other hand, concerns the duration of time a speaker produces a linguistic unit (Cruttenden, 1997:2).

The hypothesis that sound variations of FL may have an effect on learning is compelling, especially when analyzing the topic’s complexity. Conklin & Schmitt (2012) argue that FS are numerous and, while they may be salient, they may be more or less frequent, transparent or ambiguous, so more research is needed for a better understanding of the topic’s intricacies. Lin (2018), who is a new prominent researcher on the topic, has been advocating for the study of the prosody of FS:

⁹¹ In Lin (2010): Dechert, H. W. (1983). How a story is done in a second language. In C. Faerch & G. Kasper (Eds.), *Strategies in interlanguage communication* (pp. 175–95). London: Longman

“As Carter (personal communication, 2012) suggests, the proportion of spoken to written communication in an ordinary person’s daily linguistic encounter is believed to be 9:1. If first language (L1) speakers are nine times more likely to acquire and use FSs in speech than in written communication, then the phonological representation of formulaic language (FL) should be far more frequently activated than, say, its orthographic representation. This overwhelming frequency with which L1 speakers activate the phonological representation of FSs justifies why the phonological form of FSs deserves significant research attention. In fact, given that L1 FSs are acquired and accessed through the auditory channel during extensive exposure to spoken communication, a new perspective on FSs may be necessary in which FSs are reconceptualized (and redefined) as strings of sounds, rather than strings of words.” (p. 3-4)

As such, the author has highlighted the role of teachers in helping learners notice prosody, as well as the value of television in the exposure and potential gains of FL. Needless to say, we also aim to promote television for language learning of expressions and, for that reason, the next subsection highlights another advantage of viewing for learning: the “dramatic facial expressions” (Wang, 2012) and gestures that accompany the different tones of voice in series.

5.1.3 Non-verbal communication

“Et que dire des mains? Nous demandons, nous promettons, nous appelons, ... nous nous réjouissons, nous nous plaignons, ... nous nous écrivons, nous nous taisons... Que ne faisons-nous pas avec une variété aussi infinie que celle de la langue elle-même! Avec la tête nous convions, nous renvoyons, nous avouons, nous désavouons, nous démentons, nous souhaitons la bienvenue, ... nous rassurons, nous interrogeons... Et que dire des sourcils? des épaules? Il n’est pas de mouvement qui ne parle, c’est un langage intelligible sans qu’il soit enseigné, et c’est pourtant un langage public, ce qui fait que, quand on voit la variété des autres et l’usage spécifique qui en est fait, on est plutôt porté à penser que celui-ci est bien le propre de la nature humaine.” (Montaigne, 2008, pp. 162–163)

“I see what you mean”. This multi-word sequence is revealing of the value of facial expressions and gestures in communication. As mentioned throughout this chapter, audiovisual input compensates for the shortcomings in the experience of learning a second language, and it would not be different for formulaic sequences (FS). Series, as authentic material, provide naturalistic indications to the meaning and use of formulaic language (FL) and technological advances have supported a new level of quality and complexity in multimodality, allowing us to simultaneously process verbal (captions and sounds) and non-verbal information (movements, facial expressions, body language and gestures) (Montero Perez, 2022). This combination of modes may reinforce each other, fulfil

complementary roles (Montero Perez, 2022) and allow language learners to, with practice, fill in gaps with one channel or another (Vanderplank, 2016: 145). As Dressman (2020) puts it, “language and the image interact ... in our perception to produce a meaning that exceeds what either mode could have conveyed on its own” (p. 40).

One of the modes of multimodality is **facial expressions**. Facial expressions are mainly the combination of movements of facial skin and facial muscles, that create folds, lines, and wrinkles (Rinn, 1984), causing movements on the face: a mouth-opening, a smile, lips movement, as well as a raise or furrowing of the eyebrows. These external features help interlocutors interpret the speaker’s internal emotional state, clarify their verbal message (Svetleff & Anwar, 2017), and it is a window to understand what the speaker is thinking about (Sueyoshi & Hardison, 2005), despite their very short duration, that can endure for as little as 40 milliseconds (Ekman & Friesen, 1975).

Whether the universality of certain facial expressions is actually the case remains a matter of debate. Seminal work conducted by Ekman (1970) (also in Ekman, 1977; and Ekman & Oster, 1979), indicated that six facial expressions are not culturally bound, but shared across Western and Eastern countries (happiness, anger, disgust, sadness, fear and surprise). More recent work, however, counting with new technology (a computer graphics platform) has put this largely accepted belief into question (Jack et al., 2012), reopening the debate of whether or not culture shapes this basic behavior. What seems to be unquestionable is that facial expressions play a central role in the development of social and emotional communication (Rinn, 1984).

We have not found much research that reports the potential of facial expressions for language learning through authentic media, except for Sueyoshi & Hardison’s paper (2005) analyzing the benefits of lip movements in listening of a videotaped lecture of a native speaker of English. They found that they are a source of facial cues to speech for both low-intermediate and advanced L2 learners, as revealed by a multiple-choice comprehension task. According to the authors, the mainstream point of view supports that the process of listening becomes more active when accompanied by visual motions (Sueyoshi & Hardison, 2005) because they help the listener interpret an individual’s emotional state, feelings, intentions and the goal of the utterance (Matsumoto & Hwang, 2011).

After consideration of theoretical and empirical contributions on the role of facial expressions in learning, we hypothesize that the awareness of these non-verbal cues in scenes from series may aid the auditory receptors. And the same is true for **gestures**. In the past years, research carried out by Benjamin Holt on the potential of gestures in language teaching and learning (2020, 2024; Holt et al., 2015) shows that gestures participate in communication, allowing the speaker to organize their thoughts and the listener to decode meaning. The author argues that words and gestures are

inseparable and complementary, and points out a hypothesis advanced by Alibali et al. (2001), who found that people produce more gestures when they are visible to the interlocutor. Evidence can also be found in Graziano & Gullberg (2018) whose results show that “when speech stops, gesture stops”: speech and gesture form a tightly integrated system.

The majority of spontaneous hand gestures anticipate or end at the phonological peak of an utterance they are linked semantically, prosodically (McNeill, 1992) and pragmatically (Kelly et al., 1999). It has been argued that gestures are particularly useful when the intelligibility of the speech is reduced, as in noisy conditions (Sueyoshi & Hardison, 2005). Moreover, in Ekman & Friesen's work (1972), gestures have been categorized into *adaptors*, *emblems* and *illustrators*. In a few words, adaptors are mostly emitted in private, as part of an effort to satisfy self or body needs, or cope with emotions. Emblems are culturally anchored, known of most or all members of a community. Illustrators, on the other hand, should receive more of our attention (as it dialogues with our research questions). They are divided in eight different categories, all related to “a moment-to-moment basis with speech, with phrasing, content, voice contour, loudness, etc” (p. 358).

Illustrators usually augment what is being said verbally, or can be used to substitute for a word, and are often used with some level of intention. The categories of these movements are as it follows: batons (to emphasize a particular word or phrase), ideographs (to sketch the direction of thought), deictic movements (to point to an object, place, or event), spatial movements (to depict a spatial relationship), rhythmic movements (to depict the rhythm or pacing of an event), kinetographs (to depict a bodily action, or some non-human physical action), pictographs (to draw a picture in the air of the shape of the referent), and emblematic movements (emblems used to illustrate a verbal statement, either repeating or substituting for a word or phrase) (Ekman & Friesen, 1972, p. 360).

Extensive research has usefully borne on this topic. Recently, Holt (2020, 2024; Holt et al., 2015) studied gestures in language teaching and learning showing their importance in classroom interaction. Holt (2024) also reviews literature showing that gestures aid listening comprehension and reinforce vocabulary learning. In a literature review, Macedonia & Von Kriegstein (2012) have also pointed out that gestures “can reinforce the sensorimotor representation of a word or a phrase, making it resistant to decay” (p. 393) and, therefore, suggests the use of gesture as a tool that integrates body and mind to facilitate learning.

In a similar vein, Sherman & Nicoladis (2004) analyzed gestures, not of teachers, but of language learners. After watching cartoons, they were asked to retell the stories in both their native and L2 language (half of the participants were English, the other half Spanish-speakers) and they found that intermediate and advanced learners used more gestures in their second language, providing further evidence to previous research. In a more naturalistic setting, McCafferty (1998) examined the

use of gestures by two foreign students who had recently arrived in the U.S.A., via interviews, throughout 8 weeks. Interestingly, he found that the exposure to this naturalistic context had an effect on the use of specific gestures: the participants used them more and more often within the conversation, showing appropriation of these non-verbal forms of communication.

Although considerable research has been devoted to non-verbal communication in SLA, to the best of our knowledge, no research has covered attention to or the relationship between gestures and L2 learning through media. The study that comes closest to the subject is a study conducted by Alwehaibi (2015) comparing the understanding of a lecture by two groups that either listened and watched the video or just listened to it. The author found that the video group, which could see the speaker's facial expressions and body movements, had significantly higher scores than the listening-only group. Nevertheless, no further analysis was conducted to find evidence of what exactly could have aided learning.

5.1.4 Eye tracking

In our thesis, we aim to explore the presence of facial expressions and gestures when some formulaic sequences (FS) are uttered in series, thanks to the use of **eye-tracking** technology. In simple words, eye-tracking is “the study of eye movements using a device that tracks one’s gaze and response to the given stimuli” (Doherty & Krugger, 2018, p.48). Considered a window into the mind (Conklin & Pellicer-Sánchez, 2016), eyes can give access to where participants were looking at and provide clues to how vocabulary is gained through exposure to media. The advent of eye-tracking allowed researchers to assess learning in an online, more ‘natural’ way, avoiding a secondary task, such as note taking or think-aloud protocols, reducing test effects, facilitating closer-to-real-life experiments, and it does not carry the risk of interfering with participants’ cognitive processing (Godfroid et al., 2010). It allows researchers to explore the many factors that affect learning processes (Carrol & Conklin, 2014).

Fundamentally, research using eye-tracking relies on the assumption that the reader fixates on a word for as long as it is being processed (Conklin & Pellicer-Sánchez, 2016; B. Smith, 2012). That is why experiments record reading behavior by measuring eyes’ movements (saccades), stops (fixations) and movements back (regressions) (Conklin & Pellicer-Sánchez, 2016) and for it to be possible, participants merely have to look at a computer screen for the device to determine which part of the monitor they are looking at and for how long (Conklin & Schmitt, 2012). The two most used measures are fixation and saccades. A fixation is when the eye is relatively stationary on an area,

typically for 200-300 milliseconds, and can happen unintentionally (stimulus driven) or intentionally (viewer driven) (Doherty & Krugger, 2018). According to Smith (2012), higher fixation frequency can mean greater interest in the target or be a sign that the target is complex and more difficult to encode, indicating that it is more noticeable, or more important, to the viewer than other areas. Saccades, on the other hand, are the rapid movement of the eye between fixations (Doherty & Krugger, 2018). They can be recorded as a raw numerical count in the given area, as well as their length. In addition, a range of secondary measures remain available to investigate other aspects of visual attention and cognitive processing⁹².

When it comes to equipment, researchers can opt for an eye-tracker that provides a more ‘natural’ reading experience (not head mounted, no chin rest) and is more tolerant of head movements (Conklin & Pellicer-Sánchez, 2016), which could mean sacrificing precision in locating eye movements. These eye-trackers are non-intrusive and may be integrated into laptop computers and monitors. If better accuracy is more valuable for the study, then head supported systems would be more appropriate, together with higher sampling rates (more than 200Hz).

Studies on recognition of **formulaic sequences** (FS) in texts using **eye-tracking** started with Underwood, Schmitt, and Galpin (2004), measuring frequency and duration of fixation on the final words of idioms by native and non-native speakers. By comparing these data to measurements of nonformulaic language, they came to the conclusion that native speakers fixate less on the terminal words in FS because they are already familiar with the words in the sentence and can guess what would come next. Siyanova-Chanturia et al. (2011) also reported important findings based on their analyses of first-pass reading time, total reading time, and number of fixations, showing that native-speaking participants process idioms faster than nonformulaic language, contrarily to non-native speakers to whom reading figurative meanings may require more effort. These authors’ approach was to compare the reading times of the whole idiom (or its parts) to a control non-idiomatic phrase of same length and composability. These findings have contributed to the choice of recording the FS as a whole, instead of word by word, even though this can be reversed after the experiment for different analyses.

Conklin & Pellicer-Sánchez (2016) pointed out that in all eye-tracking studies, it is possible to record all possible values and measures, but this would entail an unmanageable amount of data. That is why the target areas to be examined must be clearly defined and controlled for appropriate analysis to be possible. These areas are called Areas of interest (AOIs), or Regions of interest (ROI), and researchers stipulate for how long the AOIs should be recorded (in milliseconds). In addition, these

⁹² For a more complete list, see the examples given by Doherty & Krugger (2018): gaze time, skipped subtitles, word fixation probability, etc.

areas can be as big and as many as needed, encompassing words, sentences, gestures or faces, for instance. As formulaic language (FL) is multi-word in nature, when using eye-tracking, researchers may need to re-evaluate what a 'word' is. In addition to the arguments given in section 3.3 concerning the holistic process of FS in the brain, Carrol & Conklin (2014) point out that as FS are believed to be accessed directly, they become a 'superlemma' that can become a single AOI, depending on what the study's research question.

As far as **media** is concerned, to be able to conduct research on media and language learning, researchers may need to analyze not only reading (when captions are available), but also images. As Doherty & Krugger (2018) pointed out, viewers engage in continuous and dynamic strategies, processing images and the auditory information of the soundtrack and this should be taken into account. This means that when creating AOIs, researchers must consider the time the caption is available, the time of utterance and the different shots of the scene (which may call the viewer's attention) (Carrol & Conklin, 2014; Vanderplank, 2016, p.13). Despite all the factors that need to be carefully studied, eye tracking is an invaluable tool that provides access to the allocation of visual attention by viewers and enables researchers to directly observe viewers' visual attention and make inferences about underlying cognitive processes (Doherty & Krugger, 2018, p. 48).

5.2 The role of Language Centers in vocabulary learning through authentic videos

The issues discussed in our theoretical chapters marshal arguments for considering intervention and intention in informal learning. One point debated was the reflection of how much informal learning should be included in more formal contexts. For Toffoli & Sockett (2010), an obvious integration of informal learning in a university context should involve "validating and encouraging this type of informal language learning in students" (p. 14). As suggested by Toffoli & Sockett (2015), we may call the teaching staff: teachers, trainers, tutors, or advisors when in a language center (LC). What is certain is the roles assigned to them: they should assume a position of facilitators, advisors and mediators (Rivens Mompean, 2013).

Researchers in SLA have argued that learners can be successful users of English with the help of teachers who continually deepen their understanding of the comprehension difficulties that language learners encounter at different stages of their language development, and who share pedagogical strategies to help learners tackle their comprehension problems and limitations (Goh, 2023, p. 2). With guidance, learners should soon not depend on teachers to make the most of

opportunities for life-long informal learning, using the useful tools learned to become more independent both inside and outside of class (Oxford & Scarcella, 1994). Therefore, one of the roles of a teacher in a LC is to prepare individuals to learn ((Zimmerman & Kitsantas, 2005), being able to mobilize skills such as taking a step back, reflecting on their learning, being critical of their methods, and being aware of obstacles, which are not innate skills (Brudermann & Pélissier, 2016).

The first way of providing assistance is by encouraging learners to engage in extensive informal activities (Montero Perez, 2022) and raising awareness to the benefits of such practices on language learning. The second one is psychological: in a welcoming environment, teachers have the key to promote a low-anxiety atmosphere, lowering their affect filters for a better language learning experience (Krashen, 1982). That is the best setting for helping learners acquire a taste for learning, the feeling of personal efficacy, the acceptance of risk and complexity, creativity, initiative in learning, self-understanding and acceptance of responsibility for learning (Rivens Mompean, 2013, p. 145). As Zimmerman & Kitsantas (2005) pointed out, a key point to be considered is that an individual's development requires more than basic talent and high-quality instruction. Little of any guiding is successful if it is not accompanied by self-motivational beliefs (Zimmerman & Kitsantas, 2005) and reflexiveness (Brougère & Bézille, 2007): one must first decide to do it, start the process, and then maintain the effort (Macré & Rivens Mompean, 2021). In the context of tutoring in a language center, both the learner and the facilitator should keep in mind that their function is temporary in the life of the user and it is limited.

The third way is by influencing attention and action (Zimmerman & Kitsantas, 2005), guiding learners as they navigate self-direction. If enjoyment is a strong drive in being exposed to entertainment in English, wanting to learn can be (and in some cases already is) a second goal, but learners do not always know what to do to switch from one to the other, or to create functional practices and to organize their learning (subsection 1.2.2). Accompanying learners in the process of autonomy can help them take charge of locus of control (initiating activities), level of intention (making decisions about what and how they want to learn) and the pedagogy appropriate for each learning opportunity (discussion held in section 1.2) (Dickinson & Carver, 1980). This issue is connected to self-reflection and reaction to their own learning. According to Zimmerman & Kitsantas (2005), cyclical self-reflexiveness is particularly valuable in informal language learning contexts, “where the goal is often a long-term continuing process of growth rather than a discrete outcome” (p. 514). This is the topic of the next subsection: the benefits of metacognition for language learning (subsection 5.2.1), followed by learning strategies (subsection 5.2.2) and workshops to encourage language use (subsection 5.2.3).

5.2.1 Metacognition

According to Rivens Mompean (2022), it seems essential to equip learners with metacognitive tools for them to become responsible actors, conscious of their actions. This means developing (1) autonomy and empowerment, (2) mechanisms of regulation and control of cognitive functioning (subsection 5.2.2), and (3) knowledge of the products of its processes (discussion held in subsection 2.1.5.2). Such training does not automatically ensures awareness or further learning, but helping learners to develop a reflective capacity will “equip them with the ability to engage in reflective practices [should they be exposed to future learning experiences]” (Khalid et al., 2015, p. 2161). Thus, consciousness-raising (or developing metacognitive awareness) is not a way of formalizing informal learning, but a way of formalizing the development of metacognitive skills (Macré & Rivens Mompean, 2021), fostering some “deconditioning” and stimulating questioning from learners, with the objective of finding more effective practices, linking the (non)formal and informal learning reality of university students (Macré & Rivens Mompean, 2021, p. 15).

Metacognitive skills involve learning to learn: we believe that learners should develop the ability to identify how they learn and their awareness about their own learning gains, problems and progress (Dickinson & Carver, 1980), they should think critically about their work, and to organize their journey by setting learning objectives, by finding suitable resources and by defining practical working methods (Holec, 1979). According to Gremmo (1995), it is through discussion that the learner will develop knowledge and skills (p. 35). That is to say, the development of awareness and metacognitive strategies rely on exchanges about learning, discussion of how different students go about particular learning tasks, their difficulties and how to overcome them (Dickinson & Carver, 1980), so that the learner will reflect on how they can control their own ‘spontaneous’ ways of handling tasks themselves (Schmidt, 2001). A tutor can help learners by asking them to provide information of what they noticed in a specific task or in their language use in daily life. This can be compared to what they show to have learned, or at least open a discussion about noticing, vocabulary knowledge and language use (Schmidt, 1990).

Furthermore, other than psychological aspects, learners can be guided through methodological preparation: how can they continue learning the language? How can they plan, monitor and evaluate learning? (Holec, 1981) And, more importantly for our thesis, what can be done in the language center to prepare learners for an enhanced informal experience? The next section discusses what literature has suggested in terms of learning strategies and the direction of attention.

5.2.2 Learning Strategies

“A learning goal is about mastering new things. The attention here is on finding strategies for learning. When things don't go well, this has nothing to do with the student's intellect. It simply means that the right strategies have not yet been found. Keep looking.” (Dweck, 2000, p. 16)

Learning to learn also involves being equipped with strategies that may be helpful when facing language challenges and when the desire for intentionally focus on language appear while engaging in informal practices. According to the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001), learning strategies “involve identifying the context and knowledge of the world relevant to it, activating in the process what are thought to be appropriate schemata” (p. 72). According to the document, strategy learning can be fostered by encouraging learners to intentionally focus on linguistic and non-linguistic cues in the context, and to make hypotheses. A teacher plays an important role in helping learners acquire these inferring skills, by asking questions, giving tips and confirming/rejecting the learner's hypotheses. Teachers can be particularly be of assistance when difficulty appears caused by “linguistic restrictions, difficult receptive conditions, lack of associated knowledge, or by assumed familiarity, obliqueness, understatement or phonetic reduction on the part of the speaker” (p. 72), so that hypotheses can be revised. By doing this, teachers are helping learners acquire skills expected in the B2 and C1 levels:

“C1 [users are] skilled at using contextual, grammatical and lexical cues to infer attitude, mood and intentions and anticipate what will come next. B2 [users] can use a variety of strategies to achieve comprehension, including listening for main points; checking comprehension by using contextual clues. B1 [users] can identify unfamiliar words from the context on topics related to his/her field and interests. Can extrapolate the meaning of occasional unknown words from the context and deduce sentence meaning provided the topic discussed is familiar.” (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 72)

This kind of training is particularly useful when aiming at learning formulaic language because, even though they are often salient and important in the context (and are, thus, likely to capture our attention), they are not always easy to decipher. Research has confirmed that unexpected events often capture our attention (James, 1890, p. 430), but may remain unconscious if they are uninterpretable at the time of utterance (Baars, 1983). That is why having specific learning goals when engaging in certain activities and knowing how to direct attention to specific language can be beneficial in order not to miss out valuable learning opportunities. Therefore, confirming and revising hypotheses with a teacher can be a tool for internalization of language, future recall of expressions and varied language use.

How can learners direct attention to language? Lin & Siyanova (2014) pointed out that learners are used to receiving explicit instructions in classroom environments, but that this guidance is not available to them when they watch series at home and they may not know how to proceed even if they desire to be more active in watching for learning. We advocate that the first step to prepare for this transition is awareness to the process of noticing. Not many learners seem to believe in the value of an encounter with a word and they may not know that setting a language objective before watching may have fruitful outcomes. One way of training learners to direct their attention to specific language features is by exercising preparatory attention. According to Schmidt (2001) this strategy is like “being ready to step on the gas when a traffic light turns green or waiting to applaud at the exact moment the last sound of a musical performance ends” (p. 16) and it fosters accuracy in perceptual judgment and speed. Furthermore, it requires little planning time. One way of training learners for that, is by repeating tasks and telling learners to pay attention to different features each time (Schmidt, 2001).

Another more autonomous way of practicing attention to language is encouraging learners to write a learning journal is a way of exercising attentiveness and keep tracking of things they have been noticing, and even going further by comparing the different encounters, looking for what they mean in extra sources or interacting with more advanced users to better understand the target items.

Learners engaged in a process of autonomy (such as journal keeping) may also be interested in more formal exercises. Considering that all new learning requires a foundation of prior knowledge (Brown et al., 2014), it may be useful to extract language information through other written and oral means before using the target material. This could be operationalized through discussions with predictions of formulaic sequences expected in the target medium, exercises on categories of formulaic language, pre-tests of several formulaic sequences etc. These strategies could allow learners to meet similar or previously met words in a new form or in a new context, as proposed by Nation (2017).

Vanderplank (2010) pointed out that occasional pausing, rewinding, re-playing, freeze-framing are also common strategies that learners can exploit on their own. In a later article, the author mentioned noting down/looking up unfamiliar vocabulary, rewatching difficult scenes, switching to English subtitles to check/boost comprehension, pausing to imitate pronunciation and intonation, or paying attention to structural information (Vanderplank, 2019). In the case of a group guidance, the CEFR gives some ideas that involve communication between learners, such as asking other learners what they have done and what they have learned, strategies that may involve translation, mediation and verbal negotiation (Council of Europe, 2001, pp. 15-16).

The association of different strategies is likely to help learners develop several study skills (Council of Europe, 2001), such as the ability to make effective use of the learning opportunities created by informal encounters, the ability to use available materials for independent learning, the ability to learn effectively (both linguistically and socioculturally) from direct observation, the ability to reflect on their own needs and language gaps, and the ability to organize their own strategies and procedures to pursue goals (pp. 107-108). Needless to say, the facilitator's goal should be that learners will be able to consciously choose the strategies adapted to their individual learning style and language tasks at hand (Lau, 2018).

To conclude, learners can be lost without support when they want to learn from their informal practices and teachers can be a source of effective guidance (Vanderplank, 2010). The strategies mentioned above can be supplemented by opportunities for learners to verbalize and use what they have been learning in autonomy. As presented above, an important step to learning is reflecting and sharing what they have noticed in informal contexts, to increasingly realize the importance of attention in the process of acquisition. This may even speed the rate of acquisition, raising ultimate levels of attainment (N. Ellis, 1995, p. 1). Finally, consciousness-raising can help them transform passive into active knowledge or at least encourage them to make a conscious effort to use what they have been learning. Once more, the language center is a place for such interaction and the next chapter briefly presents ideas of workshops to foster motivation, socialization and communication in English.

5.2.3 Workshops

The greatest benefit language centers (LC) can offer to learners is human support. This stance is clearly illustrated by Rivens Mompean (2014) and Toffoli & Sockett (2015), who consider the role of the LC as a place for (1) learning to learn, through formalization, advice on learning, mediation on language, individualized approaches and needs analysis (in the previous subsections), as well as (2) a place for oral interaction, through meetings, co-learning, round tables, language cafés, interactive speaking workshops and (tele-)tandems. The LC is, thus, a place that valorizes and supports informal learning by providing a space for authentic communication and creating a link between real life and the educational world (Rivens Mompean, 2014, p. 8-9).

Moreover, workshops are an essential constituent in the LC and should alternate between more or less didactic exchanges to support motivation and the desire to continue learning

(Delorme & Gaigeot, 2017). In line with work done by Brudermann (2015), teachers can call learners' attention to language, testing their L2 hypotheses, affording noticing opportunities, leading learners to pay attention to L2 forms that they are not yet able to use when processing input, and to question their mistakes in L2. Workshops can also be organized in a less controlled way, aiming at providing opportunities for free language use, in which learners have the chance to put into practice what they have been learning in informal settings, through "the implementation of real situations of interaction in L2 (collaborative tasks), for the learner to be able to negotiate meaning" (p.269).

According to Rivens Mompean (2014), these gatherings allow for interaction in a less formal setting than a classroom, but more secure than an ordinary conversation in a natural environment, which can be reassuring for many learners, and a transition for them to feel at ease in naturalistic contexts. Finally, it also gives the opportunity for learners to make rapid and frequent active use of the language they have been learning, to test their skills without being evaluated, to develop interaction strategies, to appropriate linguistic forms and communication skills (Delorme & Gaigeot, 2017).

A few ideas can be found in the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001): in a more controlled way, workshops can center around discussions on non-verbal communication and prosody of the language and, in a freer way, focus on productive activities, spoken interaction and mediation. When it comes to non-verbal communication and prosody, discussions can be held about how to react and interrupt, to use of gestures, facial expressions, postures, mimics, whisper, intonations and pauses for effective communication (pp. 88-89). As far as productive activities are concerned, workshops can focus on the preparation and presentation of reading a written text aloud, speaking from notes, acting out a rehearsed role, speaking spontaneously, and singing (p. 58), as well as giving public announcements and instructions, speeches, lectures and formal presentations (p. 95). As for spoken interaction, the CEFR suggests a range of activities: conversation, informal discussion, meetings, and goal-oriented co-operation.

Interactive activities seem to be in the center of language learning as it can promote relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2017) and its development is well-supported by researchers in SLA (Cappellini et al., 2016; Gass, 1997b; Macré & Rivens Mompean, 2021; Toffoli & Sockett, 2015b). Interactions allow language users to act alternately as a speaker and a listener and is a central point to being a social actor. For this reason, activities should focus on constructing conjointly a conversational discourse, through the negotiation of meaning. Activities include knowledge on turn taking and turn giving, proposing and evaluating solutions, recapping and summarizing the point reached, and mediating in a conflict. It can take form of a casual conversation, an informal discussion, a debate, an interview or co-planning (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 73).

From this overview of the role of language centers (LC), we can conclude that it is a place for enhancing motivation, learning about learning processes and needs, and a place for social interaction. To support informal learning, LC should be a place that prepares the learner for subsequent informal learning opportunities by encouraging them to engage in such activities, and equipping them with learning strategies, through metacognitive reflection, focus on learning to learn, and a space for language use. This way, LC are not there to integrate informal learning, but to provide a place to encourage, develop and complement its language gains.

5.3 Summary and final objectives

When investigating audiovisual supports for language learning, it is paramount to study multimodality. When watching series, language users deal with incoming audio and images, that include sounds, gestures (Montero Perez, 2020b), facial expressions and, in some cases, written input. Therefore, this chapter also brought definitions and evidence related to the use of captions, prosody (sound) and non-verbal communication (facial expressions and gestures).

The first factor that can foster learning when viewing is captions (when both the audio and the video are in the target language, Richards & Schmidt, 2010, p. 572). Even though viewers in France were first in contact with series through dubbed material, evidence has shown that university students have been acquiring a preference for watching in the original language (Sockett, 2011a; Yibokou, 2019). This shift is positive to language learning as learners become more exposed to the language (Vanderplank, 2010, 2016), and thanks to the various recent online streaming services and on-demand platforms, viewers can add captions and subtitles to help with comprehension (Montero Perez, 2022).

In the past, captions were seen as counterproductive by some teachers and researchers: they would overwhelm learners or interfere in learners' acquisition of listening skills (Vanderplank, 2016, p. 144). A contrary point of view started to appear, however, in the late 1980's, with Vanderplank (1988, 1990, 1993, 1996) and Halliday (1989)⁹³, who argued that bi-modal input (image and video) is beneficial as it takes into account learners' different learning styles. Ever since, empirical research has constantly shown that experimental groups viewing with captions outperform groups with no captions (Huang & Eskey, 1999; Montero Perez et al., 2014; Rodgers, 2013b), showing that captioned viewing may enhance vocabulary learning and video comprehension.

⁹³ Halliday, M. A. K. (1989). *Spoken and written language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Controversy still surrounds the topic as to whether viewers can learn how to listen if they read to understand L2 aural texts (Vandergrift, 2004; Vanderplank, 2016, p. 54) and whether lower and proficient viewers can also benefit from captions (Aldukhayel, 2021; Danan, 2004; Huang & Eskey, 1999; Montero Perez et al., 2013; Price, 1983). However, many advantages of using captions have been well supported in terms of lowering learners' affective filter, increasing intrinsic motivation and fostering positive attitudes towards the activity (Vanderplank, 2016, p. 53). Additionally, a very relevant point in our thesis, captions allow viewers to consciously monitor the language (Vanderplank, 1988), helping them notice (in order of ranking) new words, idioms/slang and pronunciation (Rose Zamoon's 1996 unpublished Master's dissertation in Vanderplank, 2016, p. 71).

Finally, central to our argument is that captions are valuable for independent L2 users (B1-B2) because they help in reassuring viewers in comprehension, give them control over media use and provide instant feedback to language level appropriateness – two important components of enjoyment and Flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 2009). Also, as mentioned before, it has also the potential of lowering the viewer's affective filter – which is essential for language acquisition (Krashen, 1982), and provide another mode for learners to notice the language (R. W. Schmidt, 1990), promoting self-directed learning (Mills et al., 2004).

An equally important topic is prosody. Lin (2010, 2014, 2018, 2021) has investigated how prosodic features, such as the intonational, temporal, phonemic, and stress aspects of spoken language can help the acquisition of Formulaic Language (FL), the subject of our research. In Lin's 2010 literature review, the author reports findings that suggest that formulaic sequences (FS) are pronounced as a single unit, and have unique melodies. As such, Lin (2010) suggests that FSs might not only have a degree of lexical fixedness, but also phonological fixedness, making them prosodically salient in spoken input. As a recent topic of research, this new hypothesis has gathered little empirical support. What has been largely suggested is that non-native speakers tend to have difficulties perceiving and learning these prosodic contrasts (Lin, 2018), even at higher proficiency levels. More research on the topic could help identify these prosodic elements to later suggest pedagogical support on recognizing pitch, loudness and length of FL.

Last but not least, non-verbal communication is also an inherent topic in language learning through media. When language is a little above learner's proficiency level, facial expressions and gestures can be a direct support to understanding, by complementing spoken language (Montero Perez, 2022) and filling in gaps with one channel or another (Vanderplank, 2016, p. 145). We argue that this is especially the case of formulaic language as we further analyze in the methodological section (chapter 5).

Facial expressions, such as a mouth opening, a smile, a lip's movement, or a raise or furrowing of the eyebrows (Rinn, 1984), can help viewers interpret the speaker's internal emotional state and clarify their verbal message (Matsumoto & Hwang, 2011; Rinn, 1984; Sueyoshi & Hardison, 2005; Svetleff & Anwar, 2017). In a similar vein, gestures participate in communication (Holt, 2020, 2024), allowing the speaker to organize their thoughts and the listener to decode meaning. Different types of gestures have been theorized, and they can be *adaptors*, *emblems* or *illustrators*. As far as our research is concerned, we aim to study how illustrators, which usually augment what is being said verbally (Ekman & Friesen, 1972), are present when selected formulaic sequences are uttered and their impact in language learning, since, to the best of our knowledge, no research has borne on language learning through gestures on authentic media.

Another subject discussed in this chapter was the use of eye-tracking to gauge eye movements and assess their impact in language learning. This technology allows for a more natural way of collecting data, avoiding secondary tasks, such as note taking or think-aloud protocols (Carrol & Conklin, 2014). Eye-tracking equipment, which can be more or less precise, and provide a more or less natural viewing experience, as well as their complementary computer programs can collect data on eyes' movements (saccades), stops (fixations) and regressions (Conklin & Pellicer-Sánchez, 2016). By creating Areas of Interest (AOIs), researchers are able to focus on specific language items to answer their research question and avoid unmanageable amount of data. In our case, we use the technology to learn more about multimodal input: captions, gestures and facial expressions, and their connection with the acquisition of formulaic sequences.

Section 5.2 underlined the important role that language centers (LC) have in encouraging and supporting informal learning. The objective was not to present a way of modifying or bringing informal learning to the classroom, but to raise awareness to its importance and to equip learners with (meta)cognitive strategies that can be used automatically or at will when in an informal context. For this reason, teachers (or tutors and advisors) should be in a position of guidance, facilitating learning and providing opportunities for learners to talk about, reflect on, and use the target language (Goh, 2023; Rivens Mompean, 2013; Zimmerman & Kitsantas, 2005).

A few ways to achieve this goal were presented. The first way is through discussion of the benefits of informal activities for language learning (Montero Perez, 2022). The second one is providing a low-filter environment, fostering an enjoyable language learning experience (Krashen, 1982), and developing psychological aspects that are positive for learning, such as the feeling of personal efficacy, creativity, initiative in learning, self-understanding and acceptance of responsibility for learning (Rivens Mompean, 2013, p. 145). The third is influencing action by

accompanying learners in a process of autonomy and self-direction (Dickinson & Carver, 1980; Rivens Mompean, 2022; Zimmerman & Kitsantas, 2005). Finally, a LC is also a place for using the language that is being learned out of class.

The subsections that followed developed some of these roles of language centers. Metacognitive skill development can be operationalized through discussions and meetings to foster autonomy by raising awareness about ways of thinking and habits that are not in accordance with learner's needs, as well as to encourage responsibility in the learning process (Macré & Rivens Mompean, 2021). In the SLA literature, this is called 'learning to learn' and it is centered in consciousness-raising (metacognitive awareness) about their own learning gains, problems and progress (Dickinson & Carver, 1980), critical thinking about their work, as well as reflecting on how to organize their journey by setting learning objectives, by finding suitable resources and by defining practical working methods (Holec, 1979).

Learning strategies, on the other hand, focus on cognitive skills to face language challenges when engaging in informal practices. Through individual or group meetings with a teacher, learners can train for focusing on language, non-linguistic clues, making hypothesis and, with the help of the facilitator, exercises can be done and hypotheses can be validated. We discussed in this subsection the importance of cognitive strategies for learning more advanced language, such as formulaic language (knowledge expected at the B2, C1 and C2 levels of the CEFR, Council of Europe, 2001), because even though they are often salient in context (Siyanova-Chanturia & Van Lancker Sidtis, 2018), they are not always easy to interpret.

Furthermore, we emphasized the importance of directing attention to language as a means to foster more noticing (Lin & Siyanova, 2014; R. W. Schmidt, 1990). As any encounter with a word can add to the learner's knowledge of it, teachers can organize sessions to show students different aspects of a word that can be learned (depth and strength of knowledge) by exercising preparatory attention. Engaged in a process of autonomy, the learner can later use these strategies at home (and keep a learning journal if it suits them, to keep track of these learning traces).

More formal exercises are also an option, through discussions and predictions of formulaic sequences expected in the target medium, exercises on categories of formulaic language, pre-tests of several formulaic sequences etc. These strategies could allow learners to meet similar or previously met words in a new form or in a new context, as proposed by Nation (2017). Occasional pausing, rewinding, re-playing, freeze-framing, noting down/looking up unfamiliar vocabulary, rewatching difficult scenes, switching to English subtitles to check/boost comprehension, pausing to imitate pronunciation and intonation, or paying attention to structural information are also common strategies that learners can exploit on their own (Vanderplank, 2010, 2019).

A final and key point to consider is the role of LC in contributing to action, interaction and language use. The language center is not only a place for learning to learn but also for oral interaction, through meetings, co-learning, round tables, language cafés, interactive speaking workshops and (tele-) tandems. Therefore, workshops in the LC can be more or less controlled by the teacher: it can be organized around reflection on language and preparation for learning in informal contexts, or be a place that offers opportunities for free use of the language, in which learners have the chance to put into practice what they have been learning in informal settings.

Subsection 5.2.3 gathered a few language activities proposed by the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) to foster motivation, socialization and communication in English, thanks to the human support language centers can offer (Rivens Mompean, 2014b; Toffoli & Sockett, 2015b): workshops can center around discussions on non-verbal communication and prosody of the language, as well as focus on productive activities and spoken interaction. Sessions can be aimed to discuss how to react and interrupt, how to use gestures, facial expressions, postures, mimics, whisper, intonations and pauses for effective communication (Council of Europe, 2001, pp. 88–89). It can focus on the preparation and presentation of reading a written text aloud, speaking from notes, acting out a rehearsed role, speaking spontaneously, singing (p. 58), as well as giving public announcements and instructions, speeches, lectures and formal presentations (p. 95). And finally, activities can involve knowledge on turn taking and turn giving, proposing and evaluating solutions, recapping and summarizing the point reached, and mediating in a conflict (p. 73).

In light of the propositions made by literature on multimodality and language centers, our study furthers its agenda with two final objectives. The first is **to shed light on the function that images and captions serve in language learning**. We aim to explore learners' gaze while watching sitcoms to analyze the role that attention to captions and non-verbal language play in vocabulary learning. The second is **to explore pedagogical interventions to help learners reflect on their viewing of sitcoms in English**.

The following chapter presents our methodological reasoning and choices. It is organized according to the other of the five objectives presented in our theoretical chapters, and it describes all language, material, equipment and procedures to explore the different levels of intention at play when viewing sitcoms, their impact in learning formulaic sequences and the different factors that may influence their acquisition.

PART II. Methodological considerations, results and discussion

Having discussed the theoretical framework of our study in the previous chapters, the second part of our thesis is dedicated to the employed methodology, the results it has obtained and a discussion of the findings. Chapter six explains our epistemological positions and details the three phases of our study, which are tightly connected to each of our five objectives. In each phase, the objectives are recalled in order to explain our choices for data collection. All procedures, reflections, instruments and previous analyses are listed. In chapter seven we present our findings and dialogue with the previous literature.

Chapter 6. Data collection and epistemological positions

This thesis seeks to investigate informal learning through the lens of internal motivations, intention that precedes learning, the factors that aid it, the results it produces, as well as the added value of pedagogical interventions. Our research falls within the scope of Applied Linguistics and, as an interdisciplinary field, our branch of work is at the intersection of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), and English Psycholinguistics. For this reason, in order to answer the question **to what extent different levels of intention impact the learning of fixed expressions while watching sitcoms**, we had to take into account the complexity to which we were exposed. The procedures adopted were divided in three phases.

Our data collection was developed with the belief that people share common motives for watching sitcoms and that the consequences of series viewing as a learning tool can be identified by science. Therefore, we aim to gather complementary data about learning English through media and introduce preliminary findings to understand three main pillars: the role of intention, multimodality and pedagogical interventions. We hope to provide a broad framework that tackles different aspects of informal language learning, to guide action and intervention to support learning in real-world settings. As an exploratory study on many levels, our goal is to, above all, demonstrate the utility of these three pillars for further research.

The phases to be described and explained in this chapter are a combination of methods, carefully considered as a way of grasping the subjective meanings of people's actions and the results they may produce. As Demaizière & Narcy-Combes (2007) underlined, research in the field of human sciences can rarely rely on a single method: in order to construct a relevant protocol to include the various parameters involved in learning, quantitative and qualitative data become complementary

and their combination should not only provide us with some universalizing data (the questionnaire), but also allow us to look at details at a more local level (the experiment). This degree of flexibility is vital to answer our research question in a comprehensive approach (Mucchielli, 2009, p.24), in which we try to understand the experience of students in order to progressively formulate a valid interpretation of our core subject: informal and nonformal learning.

Through our research, we seek to better understand series viewing through the interpretation of various data from three main perspectives: the learners' experiences in informal contexts, a quasi-experimental procedure on cognitive factors, and a pedagogical intervention. These central viewpoints were divided in five objectives, explained in the three phases of our thesis.

The first phase of our research (section 6.1) consists of collecting data related to university students' informal practices in English and the reasons why they engage in such activities. Our means of attempting this is via a questionnaire. At this phase, respondents' experiences and perspectives as *language users* will help us explore informal learning, a relatively new branch of Second Language Acquisition. For this to be possible, an inductive approach will be preferred, gathering data on the phenomenon to construct a theory based on the findings. The theoretical basis for our questioning was discussed in chapters one, two and four and it defined two of our objectives: to uncover current practices in informal learning and the frequency with which university students engage in them (whose results are to be given in section 7.1) and to shed light on the impact of goal setting prior to series watching in English (results in section 7.2).

The second phase (section 6.2) was conceived to assess prior knowledge and language gains through viewing by way of a quasi-experiment (experiment henceforth). Volunteers in this phase will contribute to our research from a different viewpoint: *as university students*, in a nonformal environment (a language center), testing their knowledge so as to obtain quantitative data related to language gains thanks to media. Careful considerations had to be taken regarding the trade-off between maintaining authenticity in series viewing, and using it in experimental contexts. Kussyk (2015) has also faced this dilemma and pointed out that an "authentic" approach to viewing would likely require an invitation to learners' privacy. For that reason, studies carried out on informal learning practices are certainly not unfeasible, but a number of factors will need to be taken into consideration.

Our decision was made after careful reflection: even though informal learning takes place in the private sphere, university students are also enrolled in English classes at university, a fact that leads us to many questions about the possible overlap between students' formal and informal worlds (Kussyk, 2015, p. 29). By choosing what we consider to be a nonformal context, students will be in an in-between environment, in which they can navigate learning in a freer way, while being able to count

with the researcher for support and guidance. After long consideration on this thorny issue, we found in our choice of experiment in a language center a certain degree of authenticity in the fact that tutors in language centers are trained to provide such guidance. In this phase, students occupy the role of participants in academic research, a role that is adjusted in the following phases of the study.

During the experiment, participants will watch scenes from sitcoms and vocabulary learning outcomes will be tested. Given that vocabulary learning is not a new branch of SLA, we will draw on many scientific findings for our methodological choices and theoretical views, presented in chapters two and three. Based on extensive literature findings, we have used a deductive method to verify the hypothesis that intentional learning fosters more vocabulary gains than incidental learning. The objective of this phase is to investigate the role of intention in learning fixed expressions when watching series. Results are presented in section 7.3.

While viewing the scenes, participants' eye gaze will be collected via a remote eye tracker, placed below the computer screen. These data should lead us to a more informed discussion on the role of attention to images and captions, and allow us to examine an underexplored territory in series viewing, leading our research through its second inductive stage (subsection 6.2.2). This phase was organized to provide complementary information on how learners engage in viewing and the effect of multimodality in learning. It is important, however, to recognize the limitations of psycholinguistic measures in our field, as they can only give partial answers as to the experience of learners. Narcy-Combes (2005) marshaled arguments to explain how laboratory conditions do not correspond to the "disorderly conditions of real life" but can, nevertheless, be an initial means for researchers to measure some aspects of the phenomena, thereby leading us to construct action pathways to accompany learning (p. 71). Findings are described in section 7.4.

As a means of testing an action plan, **the third and final phase** of this research (section 6.3) involves a pedagogical intervention. It is composed of a sequence of procedures that consists of an interview, a self-confrontation stage by analyzing their posttests together, and a conversation about the target expressions and the viewed scenes. We aimed to focus on attention and to explore the effects of different degrees of intentionality for us to suggest more avenues for action.

An important point to be considered is that even though the questionnaire took place after the experiment, it is presented first for discussion purposes: to better explain the results obtained, we discuss the data starting from what people watch, and why they do it, to later describe our findings on language learning through media. We started our project with the assumption, based on previous research, that watching series was a current informal practice and the results from the questionnaire were unlikely to change the focus of our research. The preference and frequency of the practice would rather serve to confirm our priors or to open further discussion on the subject. Furthermore, the

analysis of the motives for engaging in informal learning was not a pre-requisite for the application and analysis of the other phases.

The present chapter is divided according to the three phases of data collection, and each section presents our methodological choices and the beliefs that guided them, including deontological and logistical considerations. They also detail the context in which the data collection took place, describing the participants and instruments. What all phases have in common is that the data collected are from different universities in the city of Lille, in Northern France, where the researcher was completing her doctoral studies with a temporary contract as a teacher and researcher (ATER). Furthermore, the sections report, as rigorously as possible, how these data are to be analyzed. This should provide an anchoring framework for its subsequent analysis.

6.1 Phase I - Which informal practices and intentions?

The first phase of our research was to collect answers using a questionnaire to learn about the informal practices in English of university students. One of our hypotheses is that motivation is key to learning and individuals must actively engage in real-world activities to learn. The questionnaire, in appendix A, was designed to collect information on practices in English that respondents do in their free time, in out-of-class contexts, unrelated to university requirements and in which students themselves were the decision makers. These practices can be organized by users or not, be organized or not, and can be either intentional or unintentional - this is why, in Figure 9, the dimensions *organization* and *intentionality* appear as a zone, rather than at a precise end of the scale. The objective was to explore which activities are more popular and more frequently done, as well as students' inner motives for engaging in such practices.

For that to be possible, the questionnaire involved open and close questions to collect data on students' proficiency level in English, university, majors, the frequency of different informal activities in English, their series viewing habits and preferences, as well as their reasons for watching series and for learning English⁹⁴ (see appendix A).

⁹⁴ The profile of the respondents is detailed in subsection 7.1.1.

Methodology – Phase I

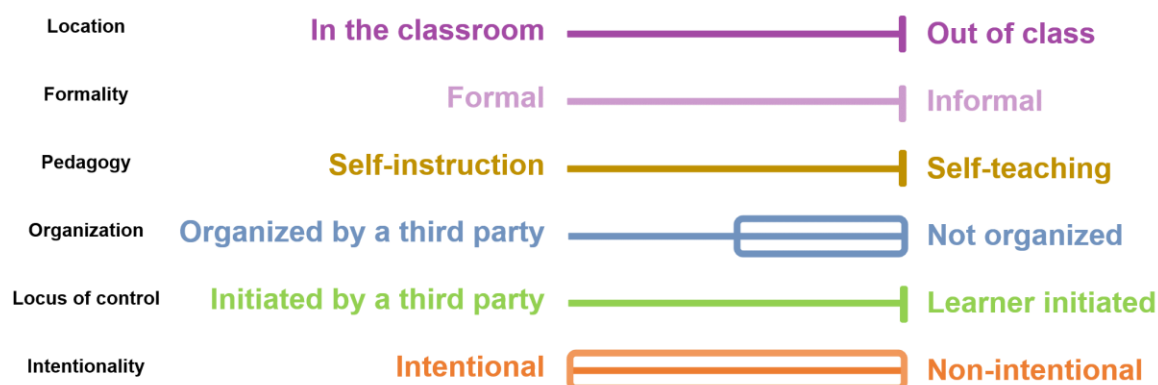


Figure 9 - Context of phase I

At this phase of our study, the respondents' perception as language users will be collected as a window on their out-of-class activities that are not organized or initiated by themselves (organization), so as to better understand the role intentionality plays in such contexts – could learning be one of their intentions? (Figure 9). This phase is concerned with the subjective product of informal activities: As language users, how do they experience informal practices? The data will be collected and analyzed from the perspective of phenomenography. Because "if there is no someone to think and something to think about, there is no cognitive activity" (Mucchielli, 2009, p.182), their answers to the questionnaire are expected to be of a second-order, constructed by the language user in context. Phenomenography posits that first-order reality exists only in theory and experience can only be explained through a filter. Their answers should provide us with real and natural results that are transferable and that can be observable by the researcher or by the participants themselves.

In order to invite students to answer the questionnaire, posters with a QR code leading to a Google Forms page were displayed at four university libraries and two Language Centers on two different campuses at the University of Lille: the *Bibliothèque universitaire Sciences Humaines et Sociales*; the *Bibliothèque Études germaniques, néerlandaises et scandinaves*; the *Bibliothèque Études romanes, slaves et orientales*; the *Bibliothèque de Sciences de l'Education et de la Formation*; the *Centre de documentation de la Faculté des sciences économiques, sociales et des territoires*; In the *Centres de Ressources en Langues* on two campuses (Social Sciences and Humanities, and Science and Technology); as well as on various information boards around both campuses. There are 30.078

students in these two campuses⁹⁵, *Pont de Bois* and *Cité Scientifique*, 24727 of which were enrolled in English classes in the year 2022-2023 (82.2%)⁹⁶. The posters were displayed from March 9 to March 30, 2023.

Careful attention was paid to ensure that the participants were informed of the context of the data collection. For this, the beginning of the online form provided a brief description of the context and the academic email of the researcher in case of need (see appendix A). Furthermore, the questionnaire did not collect any information that could identify the respondents.

The 18 questions on the first page and three questions on the second page of the questionnaire (see appendix A) concerned the frequency of different types of activities. The second page contained 10 questions related to how and why they watch series. We deactivated the link to the questionnaire on March 30, 2023 when we started the analysis. Their answers were analyzed with statistical measurements to explore the relationship between different practices and their proficiency levels and preferences, and to uncover reasons for watching series. Questions about intentions were placed in different pages of the questionnaire to avoid the Halo effect (in our case, the possible interpretation of the goal of the questionnaire influencing their answers)⁹⁷.

6.2 Phase II - What vocabulary gains?

This section details the second phase of our research, which aims to test vocabulary learning through media, by carrying out an experiment. Subsection 6.2.1 outlines how we collected data regarding their knowledge before the experiment. Subsection 6.2.2 details how the target sequences and scenes were selected, and the procedures of the experiment.

6.2.1 Prior knowledge

Data concerning learners' vocabulary knowledge was obtained thanks to 15 English teachers, working in various departments at the University of Lille, researcher included, who volunteered to allocate 40 minutes at the end of one of their classes in the beginning of the 2022-2023 academic year

⁹⁵ These data were obtained in the university's official website: <https://www.univ-lille.fr/composantes-et-etablissements-composantes>

⁹⁶ This information was provided by the departments.

⁹⁷ The halo effect is "the effect of a feature that is not being tested, but that changes or influences the results" (Richards & Schmidt, 2010, p. 258).

for students to take three vocabulary tests (described in the following subsections). Our objective was to gauge students' prior knowledge of the target items before the experiment and their proficiency level in English. In total, 387 university students took the tests.

Different from the first phase of the study, this testing part of phase two happened in a formal context. Students were in the presence of their teacher, in a classroom, doing a task organized and suggested by a third party. Nevertheless, the combination of different environments is not dissonant: a testing phase was unlikely to occur in an informal context and the incorporation of various settings is reasonably in accordance with students' real-life learning experiences (as users and learners of English). We did, however, reflect on how to respect students' self-determination.

Careful ethical reflections were considered in planning the procedures of this phase: we insisted on involving people who wished to participate in the research. Attentive reading of Cohen et al.'s ethical dilemmas (2007, pp. 62-63) helped us prepare our research protocol to ensure that students would not be coerced to participate or be exposed to mental stress, and to ensure that the true nature of the research would be shared. As we wished to collect answers from volunteers, students could choose to take the tests or leave class earlier. They were informed that the tests were part of a research project and that they could stop at any time, for any reason, or contact the researcher by email after the test if they regretted giving permission for the analysis, without the need to justify their decision. Students were also given the possibility of taking the test and subsequently not giving permission for the analysis of their tests for research. We explained that they would not suffer any prejudice for their decision. Furthermore, it was made clear to the students that the tests were not part of the course requirements and, therefore, would have no impact on their academic record.

Additionally, a consent sheet was given to students in order to present the researcher, data collection and analysis (see appendix D). Oral information was also given concerning the nature of the three written vocabulary tests, the amount of time needed for completion, and that their answers and proficiency level information would be subject to statistical analysis. Furthermore, the teachers who agreed to dedicate a part of their lesson to taking the test were asked to emphasize that even though they were nominative, the resulting data would be strictly confidential and used for research purposes only.

Despite our active efforts to respect students' freedom and privacy, we did face an ethical dilemma: Should students be informed of the precise object of study? Should they know that their proficiency level would determine whether they would be contacted for a second phase of the experiment?

For the first question we chose *not* to reveal that the answers related to the fixed expressions were the focus of our study because it would have called more the attention to the target expressions, introducing a strong bias in the experiment to be later conducted. We decided to inform them of a broader goal, which was vocabulary learning. Teachers were asked not to give the answers at any moment nor teach them the expressions that academic year, but students were informed that they would receive the answer sheets at the end of the academic year so that they would all have access to the answers as a contribution to their formative experience.

The second question concerns the respect for students' information and the honesty of the investigator (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 57). We chose not to tell students that they may be contacted afterwards to not create stress or bias: Would they have taken the test differently if they expected an individual follow-up? Would their level of stress have increased? Would they have answered the test honestly without consulting the internet or sharing their answers with others in class? After reflection, we asked teachers to inform students that they were not obliged to add their email, and that if they wished to do so, they should write their academic address.

The following subsections present the instruments used and the procedures in this phase.

6.2.1.1 The *ELAO* test

At the University at Lille, students are asked to take the *ELAO*⁹⁸ level test at the beginning of each academic year. This is an online tool paid for the university that is available, upon request, to learners and teachers, and can be done online at home or at the language center. The test lasts approximately 30 minutes.

The day of our data collection (the vocabulary tests), we asked students to write their proficiency level in English at the beginning of the VLT test (see appendix B). Most of the students had taken the test prior to the first day of class, and those who had not done so were to estimate their level. Students who accepted to take part in the second part of the experiment were asked to take the test if it had not yet been done, and to provide a screenshot of their results by email.

6.2.1.2 Vocabulary Levels Test

As presented in subsection 3.1.1, the Vocabulary Levels Test (VLT) was first developed by Nation (1990) and is a common way of testing vocabulary size in different frequency bands. Each level

⁹⁸ Description available at <https://www.elao-test.com/>

tests the knowledge of words in a multi-item matching task (see appendix B), with the objective of assessing recognition of form and meaning. The test is available at the website Lexical Tutor⁹⁹ and was used to check learners' lexical profile.

We used items from four frequency bands (2000, 3000, 5000, and 10000) to measure receptive knowledge, to be able to analyze whether students could cope with the difficulty of the scenes chosen. We did not ask students to complete the University Word list to shorten the test time and because it was not relevant for the task, as we aimed to check their level in the first two frequency bands and since they would not encounter academic words in our scenes. To ensure understanding, the day of the data collection, teachers were instructed to write the example in Figure 10 on the board, and answer it with students.

1. Teacher		
2. Pencil	☐	Not expensive
3. Computer	☐	Professor
4. Good	☐	Pen
5. Cheap		
6. Afraid		

Figure 10 - Example to be given to students by teachers (VLT)

The tests were handed out in two different sets: students were asked to complete (1) a first sheet containing two frequency bands (2000 and 3000) and the Vocabulary knowledge test (subsection 6.2.1.3). As each student finished the test, their teacher would collect this first set and would hand out the second; (2) The multiple-choice test (subsection 6.2.1.4) and the second part of the VLT test, containing the 5000 and 10000 frequency bands. This was done to minimize the chances of students remembering the expressions in the multiple-choice test after the session. The VLT was only present in the pre-test.

⁹⁹ Available at <https://www.lextutor.ca/tests/vlt/>

6.2.1.3 Vocabulary Knowledge Scale

In order to assess knowledge of six target expressions¹⁰⁰, a Vocabulary Knowledge Scale (VKS) was used. The test was created by Wesche & Paribakht in 1996, and it serves to assess meaning recall, or the ability to retrieve meaning from memory (discussion in subsection 3.2.3). It is a self-assessment tool with a five-point scale in which participants give translations, synonyms and/or explanations to show knowledge of a vocabulary item. Over the years, this test has been adapted by authors to correspond to their experiment design (Kusyk, 2015; Kusyk & Sockett, 2012; Montero Perez et al., 2014; Vidal, 2011).

In our pre-test, learners would choose between five options to assess their knowledge of 6 target expressions and 6 distractors (see appendix C). The translations of our options were (in French for the students):

- (1) I don't remember having seen or heard this expression before;
- (2) I have heard this expression before, but I don't remember what it means;
- (3) I have seen this expression before, and I think it means _____;
- (4) I know this word. It means _____ and I can use it in context: _____.

We slightly modified the options from the original test to encourage students to try a translation, description or synonym even if they were not completely sure of it. The small adjustment we made was to merge options 4 and 5, meaning that students were to give context to the use of the expression when choosing option four. Because the target item is a fixed expression, learners could not use it in a sentence, so we changed the word to 'context' on the test. To ensure understanding, the day of the data collection, teachers were instructed to give the example "Time's up" and the context: "A: Can I have 5 more minutes? / B: No, I'm sorry, time's up" and instruct students to write a two-line dialogue to contextualize the use of the expression. With this, we expected students to be able to demonstrate knowledge of meaning *and* use in context. Furthermore, while the context of use (option 4 in the test) was open to imagination. The meaning and use of each expression is explained in subsection 6.2.2.1.1.

The VKS was given to students in the pre and posttests so that we could compare the data and assess knowledge gained during the experiment. In the posttest (see appendix C), three items were added: (1) I did not see this expression in the scenes from the experiment; (2) I think I saw the expressions in the scenes; and (3) I saw this expression in this scene: _____.

As far as scoring is concerned, our initial aim was to use partial knowledge scoring to take into account different levels of knowledge (1-4). However, we opted for a binary scoring of 0 (completely

¹⁰⁰ The choice of the target expressions is further discussed in subsection 6.2.2.1

unknown) or 1 (correct translation or definition) to be able to compare productive and receptive knowledge¹⁰¹. In our future analysis, the differentiation between *known*, *not known* and *learned* is made: *known* if the answer was known in the pre-test, *not known* if the answer was not correct in the pre-test, and *learned* if the participant answered incorrectly in the pre-test but correctly in the posttest (Fievez et al., 2020). This was a way of knowing how much vocabulary could be learned in the experiment and also of discounting knowledge what was already known beforehand.

6.2.1.4 Multiple-choice test

Other than the VKS test, students were asked to answer a multiple-choice test (MCT) with the same target items and distractors present in the VKS. Participants would choose the *use* of an expression in a list with five options, of which one was “I don’t know” (see appendix C). The choice of *use* over *meaning* in the test was due to the definitions found in the dictionary, further discussed in subsection 6.2.2.1.1 (selection of target items). In addition, we were careful not to use low-frequency words in the options of the multiple-choice test. We used the shortest possible definition to account for any possible partial knowledge. Identical MCTs were used in the pre-test and the posttest.

Table 4 and Table 5 show how the multiple-choice test was created. In order to give realistic alternatives, the incorrect option made reference to other expressions or phrasal verbs, found in different dictionaries¹⁰². For instance, the incorrect options for *Knock it off* are references to the meanings of *To knock around*, *Knock ‘em dead!* and *To knock down*. The target expressions are further explained later in subsection 6.2.2.1.1.

The importance of having two types of tests has been discussed in chapter three. We hoped to tap into different aspects of word knowledge and, thus, detect partial knowledge: the VKS should enable us to detect recall knowledge (being able to use the expression), whereas the MCT should provide data on recognition (being able to *identify* the use of the expressions).

Teachers were instructed to collect the VLT and the VKS tests as students finished them, and to hand out the MCT, together with the second part of the VLT. This order was carefully chosen so that the MCT would not affect performance on the VKS, and the VKS was collected so that students would not alter it after seeing the options in the MCT test.

¹⁰¹ A similar decision was made by Fievez et al. (2020) and Montero Perez (2020)

¹⁰² Definitions were adapted from **The Oxford dictionary of idioms** (Francis, B. (Ed.). (2009). Oxford idioms: Dictionary for learners of English (Nachdr.). Oxford Univ. Press.); **The Cambridge Dictionary Online** (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/>); **Word Reference** (<https://www.wordreference.com/fr/>); and **The Free Dictionary** (<https://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/>).

Options in the MCT	Expressions of reference
Way to go! a) pour demander quelqu'un de trouver une façon de traiter ou d'éviter un problème b) pour répondre à la phrase incrédule "No way!" c) pour féliciter quelqu'un d) pour demander quelqu'un de partir e) Je ne sais pas	a) A way round b) Way! c) Way to go! d) Be on your way
Hang in there! a) pour dire à quelqu'un de ne pas abandonner, malgré les difficultés b) pour demander à quelqu'un d'attendre un peu c) pour demander quelqu'un passer un moment de détente d) pour demander quelqu'un d'attendre à un endroit, souvent sans raison particulière e) Je ne sais pas	a) Hang in there b) Hang on c) To hang d) To hang around
Good grief! a) pour dire que vous êtes profondément bouleversé par la mort de quelqu'un b) pour dire à quelqu'un qu'il a échoué c) pour souligner votre surprise, colère, choque ou frustration d) pour refuser de continuer à travailler e) Je ne sais pas	a) To be mad with grief b) To come to grief c) Good grief! d) Be on a strike
Knock it off! a) pour dire à quelqu'un d'arrêter de faire quelque chose qui vous ennuie b) pour encourager quelqu'un de passer du temps à se détendre et à faire très peu c) pour dire à quelqu'un de jouer aussi bien que possible d) pour dire à quelqu'un de frapper une autre personne e) Je ne sais pas	a) Knock it off! b) To knock around c) Knock 'em dead! d) To knock down
You're on! a) pour dire à quelqu'un qu'il a un comportement qui est déraisonnable b) pour dire à quelqu'un qu'il est une personne attirante c) pour dire que la personne est commune et/ou de très peu de valeur d) pour exprimer son accord à un défi e) Je ne sais pas	a) To be a bit much b) To be a bit of all right c) To be a dime a dozen d) You're on!
Get over it! a) pour dire à quelqu'un d'arrêter de penser qu'il est plus important que les autres b) pour demander à quelqu'un de passer à autre chose et accepter quelque chose qui ne peut pas être changé c) pour dire grossièrement à quelqu'un d'arrêter de bloquer le chemin d) pour dire à quelqu'un, d'une façon colérique, de s'en aller e) Je ne sais pas	a) Get over yourself! b) Get over it! c) Get out of the road! d) Get out of my sight!

Table 4 – Rationale of the options in the Multiple-Choice Test (target words)

Our precautions notwithstanding, our approach is not free from bias. Far from looking for a perfect methodology to find a scientific truth, we seek suitable ways to reach the purposes of our research, aiming for exploratory results of a difficult-to-observe phenomenon (Mucchielli, 2009, p. 32). Despite prudence regarding the instructions, the time from the test to the experiment (4 to 7 weeks), and the elevated number of tests covering different vocabulary items, we did not use pseudowords, which would avoid any type of testing effects. Our choice of using authentic material was a way of bridging the gap between nonformal and informal contexts, which is of great ideological importance to this research. It is possible that at some level, students may remember seeing an expression they notice in the scenes. We take this possibility into account in our analysis.

Options in the MCT (distractors)	Expressions of reference
Keep it up! a) pour encourager quelqu'un à rester honnête, authentique et fidèle à soi-même. b) pour encourager quelqu'un à continuer à faire quelque chose c) pour demander à quelqu'un de parler plus fort d) pour demander à quelqu'un de s'empêcher de faire quelque chose e) Je ne sais pas	a) Keep it real! b) Keep it up! c) Speak up! d) Keep from doing
It's on me! a) pour dire que vous payez pour quelque chose b) pour dire que vous êtes le seul à pouvoir faire quelque chose c) pour dire que vous êtes très spécial d) pour être d'accord avec quelque chose/ quelqu'un e) Je ne sais pas	a) It's on me b) The only one c) To be one of a kind d) To be at one
Cut to the chase! a) pour demander à quelqu'un de parler des parties importantes d'un sujet b) pour inviter quelqu'un à danser c) pour reconforter quelqu'un que n'est pas en mesure de traiter ses problèmes de manière satisfaisante d) pour encourager quelqu'un à réaliser ou de trouver quelque chose réel et utile e) Je ne sais pas	a) Cut to the chase b) To cut a rug c) Can't cut it d) To chase shadows
Bottoms up! a) pour encourager quelqu'un après qu'il ait atteint le point le plus bas dans une situation b) pour demander quelqu'un de résoudre un mystère c) pour trinquer avant de prendre une boisson alcoolisée d) pour attirer l'attention de quelqu'un avant d'indiquer le profit ou la perte total qui a été réalisé e) Je ne sais pas	a) To bottom-out b) To get to the bottom of c) Bottoms up! d) The bottom line
Shotgun! a) pour donner l'ordre de tirer sur quelqu'un et le tuer ou le blesser gravement b) pour encourager quelqu'un à faire un grand effort pour gagner ou obtenir quelque chose c) pour donner l'ordre de faire quelque chose plus vite d) pour réclamer le siège du passager avant dans une voiture e) Je ne sais pas	a) To gun down b) Gun for it! c) To gun d) Shot gun!
It's a tie! a) pour demander quelqu'un d'expliquer quelque chose clairement b) pour féliciter quelqu'un qui va se marier c) pour dire que l'on a marqué le même nombre de points dans une compétition d) pour forcer quelqu'un à rester dans un endroit e) Je ne sais pas	a) To tie someone in knots b) To tie the knot c) It's a tie d) To tie someone

Table 5 - Rationale of the options in the Multiple-Choice Test (distractors)

6.2.2 The quasi-experiment

Based on the theoretical belief that learning is enhanced through meaningful contexts (Bacon & Finnemann, 1990; Nagy et al., 1985; Oxford & Scarcella, 1994), our methodology focuses on the creation of meaning from real activities of daily life, by using scenes from real sitcoms to expose participants to salient and contextualized chunks of language. For that, we conducted a quasi-experiment as a means of pursuing the final three research objectives: to investigate the role of intention in learning fixed expressions when watching sitcoms (phase II); to examine the function that

images and captions serve in language learning (phase II); and to explore the role of facilitators in view of enhanced informal opportunities (phase III). It combines quantitative and qualitative measures, and presents methodological innovations it is based on individual testing sessions to collect data from online and offline measures, namely a questionnaire, pretests and posttests, viewing of scenes from different sitcoms with the use of an eye-tracker, and is followed by a short interview. The various layers of data collection should inform about the different levels of learning for each individual and reveal tendencies in vocabulary learning.

Our mixed-method design was based on the need to examine multi-level perspectives of a real-life phenomenon: the practice of activities in an informal context (as explained in phase one), cognitive elements related to attention (phase two), and the role of pedagogical intervention (phase three). In phase two we aim to examine intention prior to learning. At this stage, we turn our attention to a nonformal context (formality), in which students/users of the language become participants in an experiment in the language center (location), and the researcher organizes the learning and has the locus of control, determining whether the focus should be on the language (an intentional group) or on the story of the scenes (in an incidental group)¹⁰³. This is a self-teaching scenario, in which language gains should be a result of noticing the language in the authentic material (Figure 11).

While the first phase should give us indications of intention of learning at a global level, the quasi-experiment will allow us to see in practice the effects it may have. This quantitative stage of our research is a way of verifying the efficacy of students' preferences in informal contexts. This was the way we chose to surmount some of the obstacles found in comprehending informal practices (Demaizière & Narcy-Combes, 2007): by testing learning in a different context that contains elements of viewing in informal learning (self-teaching and intention) or close to it (location and formality). We will compare participants in incidental and intentional conditions, to validate or discuss the invalidation of the hypothesis that choosing a language goal plays an important role in language learning.

¹⁰³ The different experimental groups are detailed in subsection 6.2.2.2.2 - Participants.

Methodology – The quasi-experiment

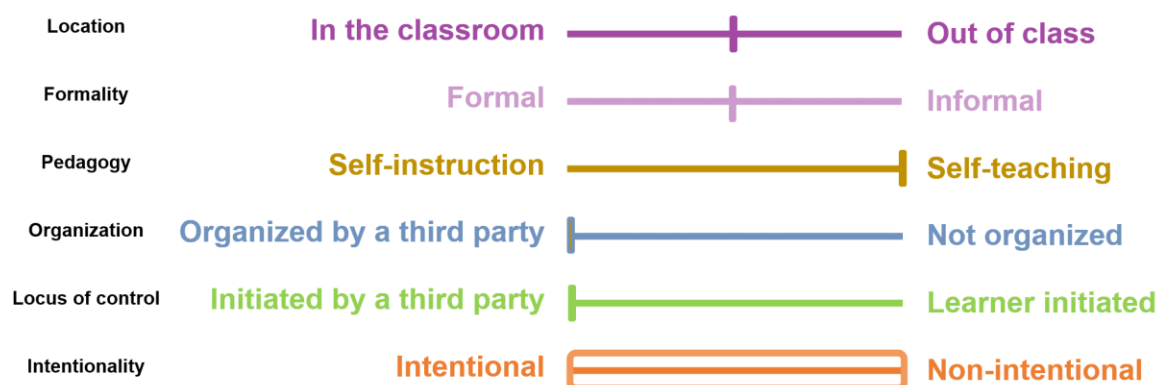


Figure 11 - Context of phases II (the quasi-experiment) and III

The choice of a quasi-experiment was based on the impossibility of random assignment. That means that because the first phase of the project depended on different teachers' availability, the number of different profiles of participants was limited (nine different majors), impeding a random pre-selection process. In addition, the number of potential students that could take part in the second phase is also limited due to their proficiency level, which interferes with the strength of statistical analysis (Giroux & Tremblay, 2009, p. 100). Hence why the quantitative data collected in our experiment do not intend to represent the university population, but rather to give us indications about learning to be cross-referenced with qualitative data in a comprehensive approach.

Nevertheless, this limitation is not foreign to research in educational experiments. Pre-selection and randomization of groups is often difficult, as well as taking into account all pre-existing variables. In our experiment, we could arbitrarily divide students in the different groups by proficiency level. The division was done, therefore, for practical reasons, with the intention of distributing the levels equally, which could still be useful for generating reliable results in our statistical analysis.

Albeit such limitations, some measures were implemented in order to reduce analytical constraints and biases. We were careful not to mention the experimental phase during the pre-test so that students would not feel the need to memorize items. We also made clear that the tests would *not* be part of their evaluation, so they would not feel frustrated for not knowing a vocabulary item, leading them to memorize items for later research. We also waited two weeks before contacting the students with an invitation to the second part of the experiment.

As presented in chapter four, evidence suggests that learners must understand at least 90% of the words in a video to be able to learn unknown words, which means a lexical coverage of 2,000 to 3,000 word-families (Laufer, 1989; Nation, 2006; van Zeeland & Schmitt, 2012; Webb & Rodgers, 2009). For that reason, following the test correction, we contacted 146 students by email (who had high scores in the 2k and 3k band of the VLT test), which meant 37.7% of the initial potential participants. The email (see appendix L) thanked them for their participation and permission to analyze the data from the tests, inviting them to another experiment that consisted of a 2-hour appointment for data collection on the viewing of series with an eye-tracker, comprehension questions (see appendix F) and an interview (information present in the consent sheet in appendix D). They could choose from various 2-hour time slots within a 3-week period.

Needless to say, our quantitative results are likely not to stand up to rigorous statistical scrutiny because not all factors were controlled in the experiment. These data were collected to give us an overview and be later supported by qualitative data to better understand the underlying reasons for the results obtained.

6.2.2.1 Instruments

In this subsection, we will describe and explain the reasons for our choices of scenes and fixed expressions for the experiment.

6.2.2.1.1 Selection of target items

In order to select target vocabulary items for the experiment, the Oxford Idioms Dictionary for learners of English was used in the making of a list of fixed expressions. In a first selection, 135 of them were chosen according to their form: short expressions whose meanings were not transparent. A second selection was made to remove expressions that could be used as part of a larger sentence, such as *to call dibs*, *to bide your time*, *up the ante*, *cut me some slack*, *cut to the chase*, *roll with the punches*, *call it quits*, *be quits*, *don't give me that*, *bang goes*, *in a rut*, *on a roll*, *bully for*, *raring to go*, *a piece of cake*, etc. A third step was to remove expressions that were too frequent in the language, by looking at the number of occurrences at the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA). Some expressions were too frequent in the language and likely to be known to many independent users (B1-B2). Finally, we verified which expressions of our list were present in the selected sitcoms (detailed in the next subsections).

After choosing the sitcoms, the number of occurrences of each expression in each series was counted. The expressions found in at least two sitcoms are presented in Table 6.

One selection criterion was the number of occurrences in the selected sitcoms. Subsequently, we examined which expressions were likely to cause confusion because of their similarity or ambiguity. For instance, *There you go* can be used in at least three different contexts, notably to hand an object to someone else, to acknowledge a fact that cannot be changed, or to congratulate someone¹⁰⁴ - the latter is similar to the use of *Way to go*. *You're on* and *It is on* were also found in very similar contexts in the episodes: the first is used to accept a challenge and the second to express readiness or anticipation for something, especially a competition.

We also preferred to use expressions present in at least three of the sitcoms, which is not the case of *It's a tie* and *Bottom's up*. Because the experiment concerns authentic material, it would be impossible to assess knowledge through number of encounters because it would not be possible to otherwise control the number of times participants have encountered the target expressions in natural environments. However, to facilitate noticing, we decided on a minimum of 3 exposures of each expression. Frequency of occurrence is, therefore, a parameter that we took into account in our scene selection but is not a variable in our analysis.

Expressions	Friends	HIMYM	TBBT	Brooklyn 99	Total
There you go	69	16	36	24	145
Way to go	10	2	3	10	27
Hang in there	9	2	7	-	18
You're on	9	4	-	2	17
Get over it	5	1	6	1	13
It is on	-	8	2	3	13
Shotgun	1	4	3	2	10
Darn it	1	-	7	1	9
Good grief	-	1	5	1	8
It's up to you	2	-	4	2	8
It's on me	-	4	-	4	8
You said it	2	-	2	3	7
Knock it off	1	1	2	1	6
It's a tie	2	4	-	-	6
No strings attached	3	1	1	-	5
Keep it up	-	1	2	2	5
Cut to the chase	2	2	1	-	5
Bottoms up	-	2	-	2	4

Table 6 - Frequency of expressions in the sitcoms

¹⁰⁴ The uses of the expressions described in this paragraph were based on the examples available at <https://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/>

After watching the episodes with these expressions, we chose **Way to go**, **Hang in there**, **You're on**, **Get over it**, **Good grief** and **Knock it off** to be part of the experiment. Once the expressions were selected, we rewatched the episodes and chose those in which the context of the expression seemed most clear, either thanks to nonverbal clues or to the dialogue that preceded it. We also give their translations so that we know what to expect in the answers given in the pre and posttests.

The first expression, *Way to go*, is used to tell someone they have done well (The free dictionary), to congratulate them. In French, it can be translated as *Félicitations*, *Bravo*, and *Bien joué* (Word Reference). In Table 7 there are examples of use found in the dictionary and in the videos from the experiment. In the sitcoms *Friends*, *The Big Bang Theory* (TBBT), *How I Met Your Mother* (HIMYM), and *Brooklyn 99*, the characters congratulate (1) Ben, for getting an audition; (2) Marshall, for getting a new job; (3) Terry, for improving himself; and (4) Priya, for managing to convince Leonard to buy grown-up clothes.

Cambridge	I <u>heard</u> you <u>girls</u> <u>won</u> the <u>contest</u> . <u>Way to go</u> !
The Free Dictionary	- I just found out I got into Harvard! - Wow, <u>way to go</u> !
Friends	Joey: Ben takes one lousy walk in the park and gets an audition!! (Ross and Carol stare at him, then Joey realizes what he just said) I mean, <u>way to go</u> , Ben!
HIMYM	Robin (to Marshall for getting a new job): Wow, NRDC! <u>Way to go</u> , Marshall!
Brooklyn	Terry: Little Terry got emotionally healthy. Peralta: Yeah, and ja-a-acked. Terry: You know what? He did get jacked. <u>Way to go</u> , Little Terry!
TBBT	Penny (to Priya, Leonard's boyfriend that bought him new clothes): Hey! Look at Leonard in his fancy-ass grownup clothes. <u>Way to go</u> , Priya! For once, he doesn't look like a mannequin in the boys' department.

Table 7 - Examples of use of **Way to go** found in the dictionary and in the videos from the experiment

The expression *Knock it off*! is used to tell someone to stop doing something that annoys you (Cambridge). It means *Arrête!* in French (Word Reference), or *Ça suffit!* (examples in Table 8). In the series, (1) Joey tells Ross to stop judging him; (2) Ted tells Gary to stop hitting on the girl; (3) Gina asks Charles to stop staring at her pregnant belly; and (4) Raj asks Howard to stop bothering Amy (even if he was actually the one annoying her).

Cambridge	Oh, <u>knock it off</u> , Alex! I'm really not in the <u>mood</u> for <u>your jokes</u> .
Word Reference	<u>Knock it off!</u> Go and play somewhere else--I'm trying to do some work!
The Free Dictionary	<u>Knock it off</u> , you two! I don't want to see any more fighting.
Friends	Joey: Hey, look, I don't need you getting all judgmental and condescending and pedantic [...] Ross: Look, I'm not being any of those things, ok, I'm just being realistic. Joey: Well, <u>knock it off!</u> You're supposed to be my friend.
HIMYM	Ted (to Gary, who's hitting on a girl Ted had been talking to): Dude, <u>knock it off!</u> Gary: Knock what off, bro? Ted: This is my apartment, my Teddy Roosevelt conversation, I get the girl.
Brooklyn	Gina: How many times have I smacked you in your face? Charles: Lost count. Gina: And you still have no fear of me. Charles: I'm trying to read your womb vibe. Gina: Exactly. <u>Knock it off!</u>
TBBT	Raj: And does Sheldon know you're dating Sheldon? Amy: I'm sorry. Who are you dating? Raj (to Howard who hadn't said anything): Yeah, <u>knock it off</u> , Howard!

Table 8 - Examples of use of **Knock it off** found in the dictionary and in the videos from the experiment

Hang in there! is used to tell someone to not give up, despite difficulties (Cambridge). In French it means: *Tiens bon*, *Accroche-toi* and *Courage* (WordReference). Examples are available in Table 9. In the sitcoms, they are used by (1) Joey, telling Ross what he should be saying to be supportive; (2) Marshall, telling Scooter not to lose hope; and (3) Leonard, ironically telling Sheldon to have hope.

Cambridge	Work can get <u>tough</u> in the <u>middle</u> of a <u>term</u> but <u>hang in there</u> , and it'll be OK.
Word Reference	<u>Hang in there</u> , John, you've almost made it!
The Free Dictionary	I know you're worried, <u>but hang in there!</u> —the doctor will call soon.
Friends	Ross: I am your friend. Joey: Well then tell me things like, 'Joey, you'll be fine!' and, ' <u>Hang in there!</u> ' and, and, 'Somethin' big's gonna come along, I know it.'
HIMYM	Lilly (to Scooter): Listen, I don't want to be with you. Marshall (pitting Scooter): Right now. <u>Hang in there</u> , Scoots! I'm not gonna live forever.
TBBT	Leonard (to Sheldon, who thinks he's too evolved for driving): Fine. Assuming that everything you say is true, how does the biologically superior Homo Novus get to work tomorrow morning? Sheldon: Homo Novus doesn't know. Leonard: Well, <u>hang in there!</u> maybe you'll evolve into something with wings.

Table 9 - Examples of use of **Hang in there** found in the dictionary and in the videos from the experiment

You're on! is used to express agreement to something happening (WordReference), often a challenge or a bet (The Free dictionary). A possible translation in French would be "Ça marche!" or "C'est parti!" (examples in Table 10). In the scenes, the expression is used by characters to accept the challenge of (1) listing all the American states; (2) sleeping at a bad hotel until the morning; and (3) cutting the turkey better. In the scene, they all lose the bet.

The Free Dictionary	A: Want to see who can run to the end of the road the fastest? B: <u>You're on!</u>
Friends	Ross: This-this is crazy! I can do this! All right, uhh, I bet I can get all 50 before dinner. Chandler: Okay, but if you can't...no dinner! Ross: <u>You're on!</u>
HIMYM	Ted: If you can last until sunrise in your precious Arcadian, I'll join your side. Zoey: <u>You're on!</u>
Brooklyn 99	Peralta : Yes, thank goodness for the second turkey, a very normal thing to have brought. Victor (to Roger): This is actually very good because now everybody could see who cuts the turkey better. Roger: <u>You're on!</u>

Table 10 - Examples of use of **You're on** found in the dictionary and in the videos from the experiment

Good grief! is used to emphasize how surprised, angry, shocked (Cambridge) or frustrated (The free dictionary) you are. In French it can be translated as: *Bon sang!* (WordReference). Examples can be found in Table 11. In the sitcoms, the characters are frustrated: (1) Jenkins, because she will have to apologize to someone else; (2) Holt, because Terry had yet another idea that will take up more time in a task; and (3) Sheldon, because he has to explain a word to Penny.

Word Reference	" <u>Good grief!</u> Ben's finally managed to pass his driving test!"
The Free Dictionary	Oh, <u>good grief</u> —my car won't start again.
HIMYM	Jenkins: I'm so sorry I kissed you yesterday. Marshall: That's okay. Jenkins: And I'm sorry I had sex with you in the mailroom. Marshall: That wasn't me. Jenkins: <u>Good grief!</u> That's two awkward conversations I have to have today.
Brooklyn 99	Terry (about improving a PowerPoint presentation): I'm definitely all done, but I'm worried, if you're going up against Jeffrey, will color be enough? I was thinking, slide transitions. Holt: Oh, <u>good grief!</u> Very well. You may add cross dissolves.
TBBT	Sheldon (on the telephone): I need you to understand that this onetime grant of access does not create a permanent easement. Easement. It's a legal right of access. <u>Good grief!</u>

Table 11 - Examples of use of **Good grief** found in the dictionary and in the videos from the experiment

Finally, as in the examples found in Table 12, *Get over it!* is an expression used by someone when they are frustrated or angry, to ask someone to forget about something has made them unhappy. To move on and accept things the way they are; to stop being concerned by or with something that is in the past or can't be changed (The Free Dictionary). In French, it means *Passe à autre chose, Ce n'est pas la fin du monde, Reprends-toi* and *Oublie* (Word reference). The characters in the scenes were angry or frustrated because (1) The guy did not understand the message Phoebe wanted to put across; (2) Marshall could not stop talking about how they did not rent a Station Wagon; (3) Holt would not stop talking about the heist; and (4) Sheldon kept complaining about how his food was prepared.

Word Reference	So he left you. <u>Get over it!</u> There are plenty of better men out there anyway.
The Free Dictionary	Look, I'm going to marry him whether you want me to or not. <u>Get over it!</u>
Friends	Phoebe (giving advice to a man who's in love with her sister, without being loved back): Wait, you know what, I got a little story. When I was in Junior High School I went through this period where I thought I was a witch. And there was this guidance counselor who said something to me, that I think will help you a lot. He said okay, 'you're not a witch you're just an average student.' See what I'm saying? Guy: Not really. Phoebe: Um, well, <u>get over it!</u> So, I mean you, you just seem to be a really nice guy, you know. Don't be so hard on yourself okay.
HIMYM	Lilly (tired of people complaining about things): Okay, you know what, everyone stop! Alan Thicke, shut up! Marshall, it's a station wagon, <u>get over it!</u> Ted, stop talking about porn! And for the love of God, somebody get the Stormtrooper some pizza!
Brooklyn 99	Holt (insisting that nobody won the competition): Congratulations. I'm so happy you two are getting married. Peralta: We're getting married! [...] Holt: And no one won the heist. ALL: Captain! [CLAMORING.] Peralta: <u>Get over it</u> , ya jag!
TBBT	Leonard: Sheldon, it's not that bad. Sheldon: Not bad? It's horrible. I mean, you hear stories about this sort of thing, but you never think it'll happen to you. Leonard: So they steamed your dumplings. <u>Get over it!</u> New topic, please.

Table 12 - Examples of use of **Get over it** found in the dictionary and in the videos from the experiment

As discussed in chapter three, we have examined the frequency of the chosen expressions in spoken corpora. Table 13 shows a comparison among all three corpora and our analysis of the sitcoms chosen for the experiment.

Expression	Frequency of figurative meaning in COCA	Frequency of figurative meaning in the TV Corpus	Selected Sitcoms
Get over it!	210	837	13
Good grief!	182	422	8
Hang in There!	194	2105	18
Knock it off!	132	2373	6
You're on!	0	0	17
Way to go!	301	2167	27

Table 13 - Frequency of expressions in spoken corpora

Further analysis of the expressions was presented in chapter three, section 3.3. In summary, these expressions are short, non-transparent and are often said in isolation: they cannot be used in a larger sentence, except for the addition vocatives (*Peter, knock it off!*), fillers (*Well, hang in there!*) and exclamations (*Oh, good grief, no!*). Finally, when analyzed from a Pragmatics point of view, they fall into the category of *Expressives* (Schlenker, 2007), as they express the speaker's attitudes towards a situation (Hess, 2018). They can have a dramatic impact on how current and future utterances are perceived (Potts, 2007). They express frustration (*Good Grief*), annoyance (*Knock it off*), interest (*You're on*), irritability (*Get over it*), encouragement and empathy (*Hang in there*), as well as admiration and amazement (*Way to go*).

Finally, to reduce the chances of memorizing the target items, six other expressions from the list in Table 6 were added to the test as distractors. They were in the pretests and posttests, but not in the scenes watched by the participants. They were: *Shotgun*, *Keep it up*, *Cut to the chase*, *It's on me*, *It's a tie*, and *Bottoms up*.

Keep it up is an expression to [encourage](#) someone to [continue](#) doing something (Cambridge). In French it can be translated as "Continue comme ça" (Word Reference). *Bottoms up* is a cheerful phrase or toast said before taking an alcoholic drink (Word Reference). It means "Santé!", "Tchin-tchin!", or "À la tienne" in French (idioms). *It's on me* is used to say that the person is paying for something (Word Reference). *Shotgun* is said by someone claiming the front passenger seat in a car. Word Reference translates in as "Devant!" in French. *Cut to the chase* is used to ask someone to get to the point (Word Reference), and talk about the important parts of a subject and not waste time with things that are not important (Cambridge). In French it means "Va droit au but!" (Word Reference). Finally, *It's a tie* means to be even (Word Reference), to finish at the same time or score the same number of points, etc. in a competition as someone or something else (Cambridge). It means "faire match nul", "être à égalité" or "arriver/finir ex æquo" in French (word reference).

6.2.2.1.2 Selection of sitcoms

As mentioned in chapter four, situation comedies (sitcoms) are series that depict real language in real life situations and have relatable characters (Al-Surmi, 2012; Vanderplank, 2020). In this authentic material, several expressions are repeated numerous times, which increases the likelihood of noticing and learning (Nation, 2017; Vidal, 2003). To investigate learning incidentally and intentionally, we chose four sitcoms after a pilot test run in April, 2022 with 30 third-year students majoring in Psychology. In a short interview, they claimed to watch *Friends* (1994-2004), *How I Met Your Mother* (2005-2014), *The Big Bang Theory* (2007-2019) *Brooklyn 99* (2013-2021), and *The Office* (2005-2013). These series are easily accessible on the internet, and their transcripts are available on fandoms¹⁰⁵. This makes it not only a readily-available corpus to examine, but also readily available for language learners to find and use. After analyzing their transcripts in search of the target items, *The Office* was crossed off the list.

Research in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) has focused on viewing single episodes (Peters & Webb, 2018) or a sequence of them (Rodgers, 2013), but from a single series. We chose to use different sitcoms to contribute to the literature and to reflect informal learning practices, in which language users are exposed to vocabulary in different contexts, thanks to different characters. Our choice aims to reflect an ecologically valid extensive viewing situation. We also assume that, if gains made through reading multiple texts are higher than those from reading a single one (Horst et al., 2010; Schmitt, 2010), then this advantage is likely to be true for viewing as well.

6.2.2.1.3 Description of scenes

As far as the episodes are concerned, they were cut in a way that the final videos would be from 1 to 3-minutes long and the story would keep its beginning, middle and end (available in appendix M). These cut episodes will be referred to as *scenes* henceforth. It is worth noting that an episode of a sitcom is generally composed of two to four short sketches that together run for 20 to 23 minutes. When separated, they constitute 5-minute independent stories. This is less the case of *Brooklyn 99*, in which some sketches are longer and can take up the whole episode. Another

¹⁰⁵ The transcripts of *Friends* was found in <https://fangj.github.io/friends/>; *HIMYM*'s at https://www.springfieldspringfield.co.uk/view_episode_scripts.php?tv-show=how-i-met-your-mother&episode=s01e01; *TBBT*'s at <https://transcripts.foreverdreaming.org/viewforum.php?f=159> and *Brooklyn 99* at <https://transcripts.foreverdreaming.org/viewforum.php?f=429>.

particularity of this series is the lack of pre-recorded laughter (or laughtrack), something that the participants in the pilot test particularly appreciated.

Participants watched the scenes per sitcom. Each sitcom ran approximately 10 minutes, and each one was followed by a break. We chose to group the scenes by sitcom and not by expression after feedback from participants in the pilot test, who declared that switching from one sitcom to another every two minutes was tiresome. Grouping them by sitcom would also allow participants to get acquainted with the characters, as the scenes were kept in the order they appear in the seasons of the sitcom. Therefore, the order of appearance of each expression is different from one series to another.

It is also important to mention that no expression appeared more than once in a sitcom, each one appearing three or four times in the experiment, but in different series (see tables Table 14 to Table 17). We have also reflected on the fact that the spacing of repetition (1) is a reality in informal learning (as viewers cannot know when a vocabulary item will appear) and (2) has been researched in SLA, but has offered no conclusive evidence – some arguing for the advantage of (evenly) spaced repetition (Nakata, 2015; Nation, 2017, p. 2), and others for massed conditions (Pujadas, 2019; Uchihara et al., 2019)¹⁰⁶. Furthermore, every participant watched the series in the same order for practical reasons: after each sitcom, participants answered one comprehension question on a Google forms page (see appendix F). The order was established according to the year each sitcom was first aired.

Friends			
	Season / Episode	Expression	Total minutes
Scene 1	S02E19	Knock it off Hang in there	2'43''
Scene 2	S03E03	Get over it	2'03''
Scene 3	S05e18	Way to go	2'20''
Scene 4	S07e08	You're on	2'20''
Total minutes	9'26''		

Table 14 - Episodes, expressions and the length of the videos from Friends

¹⁰⁶ Discussion held in subsection 3.1.2 – Number of encounters

How I Met Your Mother			
	Season / Episode	Expression	Total minutes
Scene 1	S03e06	Way to go	1'42''
Scene 2	S05e07	Get over it	2'36''
Scene 3	S05e13	Good grief	2'55''
Scene 4	S05e16	Hang in there	1'18''
Scene 5	S06e22	You're on	1'58
Scene 6	S09e21	Knock it off	2'18''
Total minutes	13'30''		

Table 15 - Episodes, expressions and the length of the videos from *How I Met Your Mother*

The Big Bang Theory			
	Season / Episode	Expression	Total minutes
Scene 1	S2e05	Hang in there	2'53''
Scene 2	S2e17	Good grief	1'19''
Scene 3	S2e19	Get over it	2'26''
Scene 4	S4e18	Way to go	1'59''
Scene 5	S7e13	Knock it off	1'53''
Total minutes	10'50''		

Table 16 - Episodes, expressions and the length of the videos from *The Big Bang Theory*

Brooklyn 99			
	Season / Episode	Expression	Total minutes
Scene 1	S4e08	Way to go	2'00''
Scene 2	S4e17	Good grief	3'13''
Scene 3	S4e21	Knock it off	2'00''
Scene 4	S5e04	Get over it	2'40''
Scene 5	S5e07	You're on	3'00''
Total minutes	12'53''		

Table 17 - Episodes, expressions and the length of the videos from *Brooklyn 99*

The vocabulary profile of the scenes we chose was calculated using Lextutor's Compleat Web VP¹⁰⁷. This tool allows us to copy the text from which we need an analysis and it matches the words of the text to the words of a corpus-based frequency list (COCA)¹⁰⁸. Figures Figure 12 to Figure 15 show that 95% of coverage is achieved by knowing the 2k and 3k band, in accordance with what the bulk of research has found (Feng & Webb, 2020; Laufer, 1989; Rodgers, 2013). Figure 12 shows that to know 95% (coverage 95 in the image) of the scenes from *Friends* and thus be able to understand the story,

¹⁰⁷ Available at <https://www.lexutor.ca/vp/comp/>

¹⁰⁸ The *Corpus of Contemporary American English* (COCA).

participants need to know the 2,000 most frequent words in the language. Some of the less frequent words that appear in the scenes at least twice are *witch* (k-5), *audition* (K-6), *noodle* (k-8) and *dingus* (k-23). There were 15 unrepeated words above the 3k level: *cab*, *condescend*, *cute*, *disgrace*, *globe*, *impulse*, *lousy*, *parrot*, *pedant*, *porcelain*, *safari*, *sane*, *stalk*, and *visa*.

Freq. Level	Families (%)	Types (%)	Tokens (%)	Cumul. token (%)	RELATED RATIOS & INDICES	
					<i>Pertaining to whole text</i>	
K-1 :	242 (82.6)	300 (82.87)	1214 (92.5)	92.5	Words in text (tokens):	1313
K-2 :	27 (9.2)	28 (7.73)	49 (3.7)	96.2	Different words (types):	362
Coverage 95 					Type-token ratio (TTR):	0.28
					Tokens per type:	3.63
					Lexical density (content [623]/total [1313]):	0.47
K-3 :	4 (1.4)	4 (1.10)	4 (0.3)	96.5	<i>Pertaining to onlist only</i>	
K-4 :	3 (1.0)	3 (0.83)	3 (0.2)	96.7	Tokens:	1304
K-5 :	5 (1.7)	5 (1.38)	6 (0.5)	97.2	Types:	353
K-6 :	3 (1.0)	4 (1.10)	10 (0.8)	98.0	Families:	293
Coverage 98					Tokens per Family :	4.45
K-7 :	1 (0.3)	1 (0.28)	1 (0.1)	98.1	Family/token ratio (FTR) :	0.22
K-8 :	3 (1.0)	3 (0.83)	8 (0.6)	98.7	Types per Family :	1.20
K-9 :	1 (0.3)	1 (0.28)	4 (0.3)	99.0	Singletons ratio Fams(n=1)[138] / total [293]	0.47
K-10 :	1 (0.3)	1 (0.28)	1 (0.1)	99.1		

Figure 12 - Vocabulary profile of Friends

Similarly, to have 95% coverage for How I Met Your Mother (HIMYM), learners must know words from the 2,000 level (Figure 13). Words above this level that appear at least twice are: *celebrate*, *damn*, *stake* (k-3); *biography*, *congratulate*, *robot*, *wagon* (k-4); *jealous* (k-5); *buddy*, *pornography* (k-6); and *hilarious* (k7). There were 34 unrepeated words above the 3k level in the scenes: *adore*, *archetype*, *bizarre*, *cockroach*, *confederate*, *cringe*, *cute*, *demolition*, *dip*, *distract*, *doppelganger*, *dude*, *fever*, *grief*, *honeymoon*, *hug*, *incumbent*, *inn*, *magnificent*, *megaphone*, *navigate*, *pillow*, *pizza*, *precious*, *renovate*, *scoot*, *skinny*, *standoff*, *stricken*, *tater*, *tot*, *trek*, *tropics*, and *unicorn*.

Freq. Level	Families (%)	Types (%)	Tokens (%)	Cumul. token (%)	RELATED RATIOS & INDICES	
K-1 :	334 (75.2)	416 (77.32)	1710 (91.6)	91.6	<i>Pertaining to whole text</i>	
K-2 :	50 (11.3)	52 (9.67)	63 (3.4)	95.0	Words in text (tokens):	1866
Coverage 95 					Different words (types):	538
K-3 :	16 (3.6)	16 (2.97)	19 (1.0)	96.0	Type-token ratio (TTR):	0.29
K-4 :	16 (3.6)	16 (2.97)	23 (1.2)	97.2	Tokens per type:	3.47
K-5 :	7 (1.6)	7 (1.30)	11 (0.6)	97.8	Lexical density (content [875]/total [1866]):	0.47
Coverage 98					<i>Pertaining to onlist only</i>	
K-6 :	6 (1.4)	7 (1.30)	13 (0.7)	98.5	Tokens:	1857
K-7 :	3 (0.7)	3 (0.56)	4 (0.2)	98.7	Types:	529
K-8 :	4 (0.9)	4 (0.74)	4 (0.2)	98.9	Families:	444
K-9 :	2 (0.5)	2 (0.37)	2 (0.1)	99.0	Tokens per Family :	4.18
K-10 :	1 (0.2)	1 (0.19)	1 (0.1)	99.1	Family/token ratio (FTR) :	0.24
					Types per Family :	1.19
					Singletons ratio Fams(n=1)[216] / total [444]	0.49

Figure 13 - Vocabulary profile of HIMYM

Correspondingly, to have 95% coverage in the scenes from The Big Bang Theory (TBBT), participants also had to know the 2,000 most frequent words in English (Figure 14). Words above this level that appeared at least twice in the scenes are: *evolve, horror, panel, prize* (k-3); *click, geology, homosexual, lesbian* (k-4); *kidding* (k-6); *dresser, millimeter* (k-7); *quartz* (k-9); *easement* (k-11); and *novus* (k-20). There were 28 unrepeated words above the 3k level: *alley, alphabet, anthropology, arachnid, ass, brute, compassion, condom, cord, curry, diamond, diva, dumpling, ex, gigantic, grief, hoodie, novelty, offspring, pedestrian, pirate, purse, ravish, spider, stomp, stray, and uterus*.

Freq. Level	Families (%)	Types (%)	Tokens (%)	Cumul. token (%)	RELATED RATIOS & INDICES	
K-1 :	285 (72.0)	352 (73.18)	1485 (90.6)	90.6	<i>Pertaining to whole text</i>	
K-2 :	56 (14.1)	58 (12.06)	70 (4.3)	94.9	Words in text (tokens):	1639
Coverage 95 					Different words (types):	481
K-3 :	17 (4.3)	18 (3.74)	21 (1.3)	96.2	Type-token ratio (TTR):	0.29
K-4 :	10 (2.5)	11 (2.29)	15 (0.9)	97.1	Tokens per type:	3.41
K-5 :	10 (2.5)	10 (2.08)	10 (0.6)	97.7	Lexical density (content [760]/total [1639]):	0.46
K-6 :	5 (1.3)	5 (1.04)	6 (0.4)	98.1	<i>Pertaining to onlist only</i>	
Coverage 98					Tokens:	1626
K-7 :	2 (0.5)	3 (0.62)	4 (0.2)	98.3	Types:	468
K-8 :	2 (0.5)	2 (0.42)	2 (0.1)	98.4	Families:	396
K-9 :	2 (0.5)	2 (0.42)	3 (0.2)	98.6	Tokens per Family :	4.11
K-10 :	1 (0.3)	1 (0.21)	1 (0.1)	98.7	Family/token ratio (FTR) :	0.24
					Types per Family :	1.18
					Singletons ratio Fams(n=1)[205] / total [396]	0.52

Figure 14 - Vocabulary profile of TBBT

Different from the scenes from the first three sitcoms, to have 95% coverage for Brooklyn 99 (Brooklyn), participants must know the 3,000 most known words in the language (Figure 15). Words in the 3-k that appear frequently are *carve* (4), *compete* (3), *consequence* (2) and *convention* (2). Other words above the 4k level that appear more than twice in the scenes are: *congratulate*, *graph*, *hug*, *lap*, *mid*, *publicity*, *sergeant*, *stuffed*, *thumb*, *tick* (k-4); *inscription* (k-6); *precinct* (k-7); *turkey* (k-10); *heist* (k-14); and *cummerbund* (k-17). There were 35 unrepeated words above the 3k level: *augment*, *babe*, *buddy*, *bummer*, *caffeine*, *chronicle*, *debase*, *deed*, *dissolve*, *dude*, *dweeb*, *elegant*, *embody*, *ex*, *expo*, *frig*, *genius*, *grief*, *Halloween*, *hangover*, *jacked*, *jazz*, *jeopardy*, *kidding*, *megabyte*, *ole*, *overweight*, *pec*, *psychotic*, *recoil*, *regal*, *sane*, *smack*, *stunt*, and *vibe*.

Freq. Level	Families (%)	Types (%)	Tokens (%)	Cumul. token (%)	RELATED RATIOS & INDICES	
K-1 :	354 (74.5)	454 (75.42)	1944 (90.3)	90.3	<i>Pertaining to whole text</i>	
K-2 :	52 (10.9)	55 (9.14)	79 (3.7)	94.0	Words in text (tokens):	2154
K-3 :	19 (4.0)	21 (3.49)	26 (1.2)	95.2	Different words (types):	602
Coverage 95 					Type-token ratio (TTR):	0.28
K-4 :	18 (3.8)	19 (3.16)	34 (1.6)	96.8	Tokens per type:	3.58
K-5 :	4 (0.8)	4 (0.66)	4 (0.2)	97.0	Lexical density (content [1014]/total [2154]):	0.47
K-6 :	6 (1.3)	6 (1.00)	9 (0.4)	97.4	<i>Pertaining to onlist only</i>	
K-7 :	5 (1.1)	5 (0.83)	6 (0.3)	97.7	Tokens:	2128
K-8 :	8 (1.7)	8 (1.33)	8 (0.4)	98.1	Types:	581
Coverage 98					Families:	475
K-9 :					Tokens per Family :	4.48
K-10 :	3 (0.6)	3 (0.50)	4 (0.2)	98.3	Family/token ratio (FTR) :	0.22
					Types per Family :	1.22
					Singletons ratio	
					Fams(n=1)[234] / total [475]	0.49

Figure 15 - Vocabulary profile of Brooklyn

All things considered, in order to understand the selected scenes from Friends, HIMYM and TBBT (to have 95% coverage), participants must be able to understand the first 2,000 most frequent words in English. Brooklyn is slightly more difficult, with the first 3,000 words being necessary. Brooklyn is considered to be more difficult also because in order to have 98% coverage, participants must know words from the 8k level, whereas they only need to know words from the 6k level for the other series (Table 18).

	K-1	K-2	K-3	K-4	K-5	K-6	K-7	K-8
Friends	92.5	96.2	96.5	96.7	97.2	98.0	98.1	98.7
HIMYM	91.6	95.0	96.0	97.2	97.8	98.5	98.7	98.9
TBBT	90.6	94.9	96.2	97.1	97.7	98.1	98.3	98.4
BROOKLYN	90.3	94.0	95.2	96.8	97.0	97.4	97.7	98.1

Table 18 – Lexical coverage of selected scenes

We do not intend to assume the difficulty of the entire series based on the vocabulary profile of the selected scenes. We found it important to construct a profile of the vocabulary to be able to analyze if participants could cope with the language. The lexical coverage of the scenes was one aspect taken into account but we have also analyzed the context in which each expression was said. The scenes chosen had comparable contexts for each expression (all transcriptions are available in appendix H). Table 19 shows the scene in which a character says each expression.

The first expression, *Way to go*, appeared in all four sitcoms. In **Friends**, Ross's son, Ben, was invited to an audition, which made Joey, a struggling actor, jealous. He says out loud how frustrated he is that Ben had an invitation while Joey himself never does, and when realizing what he has said, he looks at Ben and congratulates him by saying *Way to go, Ben!*, raising his thumbs up and smiling. In **HIMYM**, Robin was in an embarrassing conversation with Ted when she remembers that she has not congratulated Marshall for his new job and says *Wow NYDC, way to go, Marshall!* with a smile. In **TBBT**, Penny is impressed by how well Leonard has been dressing since he started dating Priya. For that reason, Penny congratulates her managing to make him buy new clothes, saying *Way to go, Priya!* with a smile. Finally, in **Brooklyn**, Terry is happy with his physical change from when he was a chubby little boy and says to himself with a smile *Way to go, little Terry!*, by raising his eyebrows. The slight difference between them is that in the first scene, Joey is not being sincere, pretending to be proud of Ben; in the second one, Robin is proud, but uses the expression as an excuse to change the conversation; in the third, Penny is showing how impressed she is; and in the fourth scene, Terry is proud of himself.

The expression *Knock it off* also appeared in all four sitcoms. In **Friends**, Joey is annoyed by Ross's judgement over Joey's Visa bill. So, he asks his friend to stop, saying *Knock it off! You're supposed to be my friend*. In **HIMYM**, Ted is annoyed by Gary's behavior, flirting with the girl with whom he is trying to have a conversation. For that, he says *Dude, knock it off! ... This is my apartment, my Teddy Roosevelt conversation, I get the girl*. In **TBBT**, Raj is teasing Amy for dating Sheldon. When she replies in a way that leaves Raj embarrassed, Raj says *Yeah, knock it off, Howard!*, pretending that Howard was the one provoking Amy. Lastly, in **Brooklyn**, Charles is overexcited by the fact that Gina is pregnant and cannot stop looking at her belly. Annoyed with his behavior, she says *Knock it off*. The contexts of this expression are quite homogeneous across the scenes, except for the third one, which is unfairly directed to someone else who is not responsible for the annoying behavior. All characters frowned when saying the expression, except for Gina, in Brooklyn, whose character does not bear many dramatic facial expressions.

The expression *Hang in there* appears in three scenes. In **Friends**, Joey is tired of Ross's judgement over his Visa bill and says that he should be saying *things like, 'Joey you'll be fine,' and, 'Hang in there'* to show support and empathy. In **HIMYM**, Marshall feels sorry for Scooter, who has long been in love with Marshall's wife. When seeing his face, Marshall says *Hang in there, Scoots! I'm not gonna live forever*, showing empathy not only with his words, but with his furrowed eyebrows. In **TBBT**, Leonard uses this same expression to ironically show support to Sheldon, who thinks he is superior to others, but cannot drive to work: *Well, hang in there, maybe you'll evolve into something with wings*.

The expression **You're on** is said as a affirmative response to a challenge: In **Friends**, to accept the challenge of listing all American states before dinner; in **HIMYM** to take on the challenge of sleeping in a rundown hotel; and in **Brooklyn** to bet on who can cut the Thanksgiving turkey better. The characters raise their eyebrows when saying the expression and, in **HIMYM**, it is accompanied by a handshake.

Good grief expresses frustration. In **HIMYM**, Jenkins used the expression, arching one eyebrow, when she realized that she had apologized to the wrong person and she would have to do it again. In **TBBT**, it is used by Sheldon, raising his eyebrows, after having to explain the meaning of a word to Penny. In **Brooklyn**, it is Holt who says it, rolling his eyes, when he realizes that Terry had not finished his presentation and was asking to add more details.

Finally, *Get over it* is used in a context in which the characters are irritated. In **Friends**, Phoebe says it to a man who was in a case of unrequited love for her sister. She tried to explain that he should forget about her through a metaphor that he did not understand. This is why she raises her arms and says *Hm, well, Get over it*. In **HIMYM**, Lily is upset because people have been arguing about unimportant things when they should be concentrating on their mission. Marshall, for instance, has been grumbling about the fact that they did not rent a stake out car, instead of a van, so Lily says *Marshall, it's a station wagon, get over it!*, raising her eyebrows. In **TBBT**, Sheldon is also complaining about a horrible situation he was going through when Leonard runs out of patience and, with an irritated face, says *So they steamed your dumplings, get over it*. Lastly, in **Brooklyn**, while people were celebrating a marriage proposal, Holt was repeatedly saying that nobody won the competition they had been participating in. This is when Jake loses all patience and says *Get over it, you jag*.

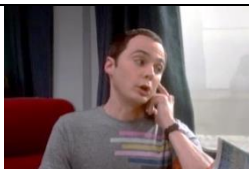
Expression/ Translation	Friends	HIMYM	TBBT	Brooklyn 99
Way to go! Félicitations ! Bravo ! Bien joué !				
Knock it off! Arrête!				
Hang in there! Tiens bon! Accroche-toi! Courage!				There was no scene in Brooklyn 99 with the expression <i>Hang in there</i>
You're on! Ça marche! Paris accepté!			There was no scene in TBBT with the expression <i>You're on</i>	
Good grief! Bon sang! Bon Dieu!	There was no scene in Friends with the expression <i>Good grief</i>			
Get over it! Passe à autre chose! Oublie ça!				

Table 19 - Images of the utterer of the expressions

This phase is enriched by an eye-tracker, with the objective of shedding light on the function that images and captions serve in language learning. We will examine the quantitative data of the pre-tests in light of the eye tracking data and a corpus analysis of the videos (captions and images).

6.2.2.1.4 Captions

The English captions used in our scenes were manually added verbatim. Following Vanderplank's recommendations (2016, p. 12), captions corresponded to the utterances as closely as possible, accounting for both slower and faster speech and, in a few cases, they stayed one second longer to ensure they would be on the screen long enough to allow adequate time to read and would not be longer than two lines of text.

6.2.2.1.5 Eye tracking

The Research Federation FR CNRS 2052 Visual Sciences and Cultures, in partnership with the University of Lille for project development, helped in this experiment by lending their SMI RED 250 eye-tracker, a screen-based tool that combines high-speed capabilities at 250 Hz. The use of this equipment was of great importance as it recorded participants' total reading time of Areas Of Interest (AOI) in the captions and images.

The preparation of the AOIs and analysis were done with the applications Begaze, Experiment Center and Viewred. Our AOIs for both captions and images lasted 1.8 seconds, exactly the time the target expressions were displayed in the captions. All images' areas measured 1.440.000 px, which is 9 times larger than the captions that measured 160.000 px (see figures Figure 16 to Figure 19).

Our data analysis will be carried out through the analysis of total fixation time for each caption and image. Nevertheless, captions and images will not be compared due to their differing sizes. Data will be organized in a spreadsheet and a careful examination will be conducted to identify missing data points and makes repairs when possible.

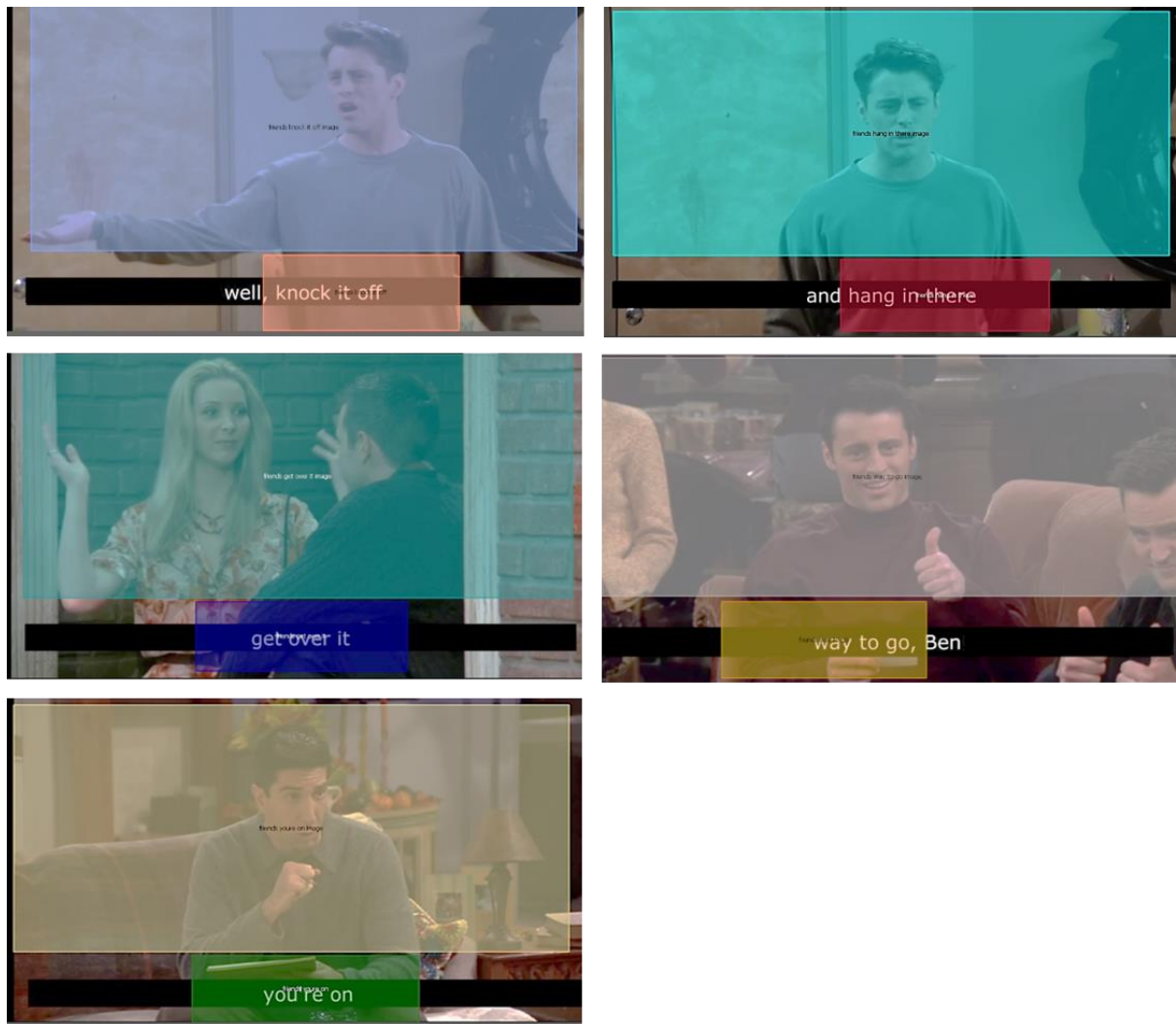


Figure 16 - AOIS in Friends

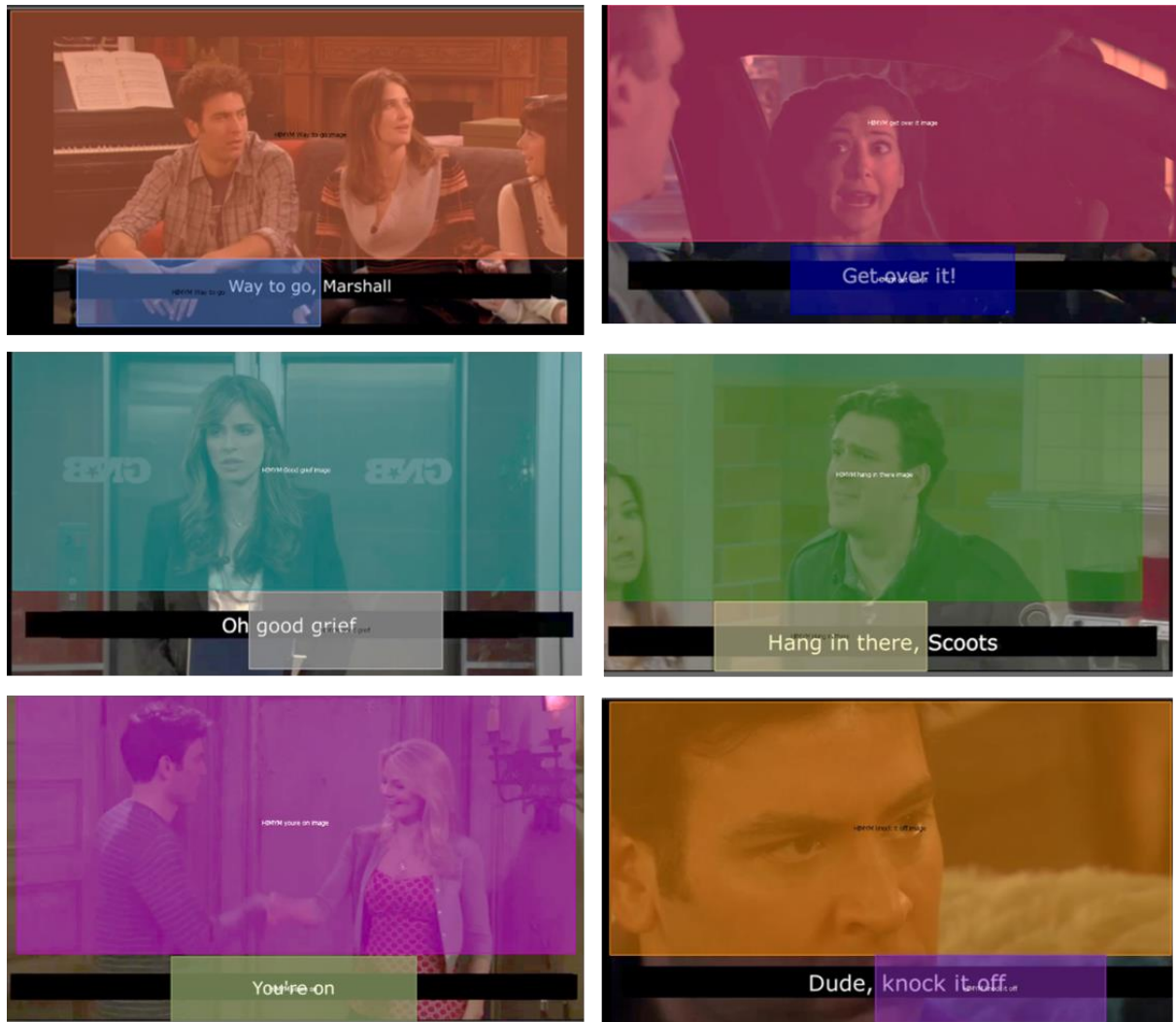


Figure 17 - AOIS in HIMYM



Figure 18 - AOIS in TBBT

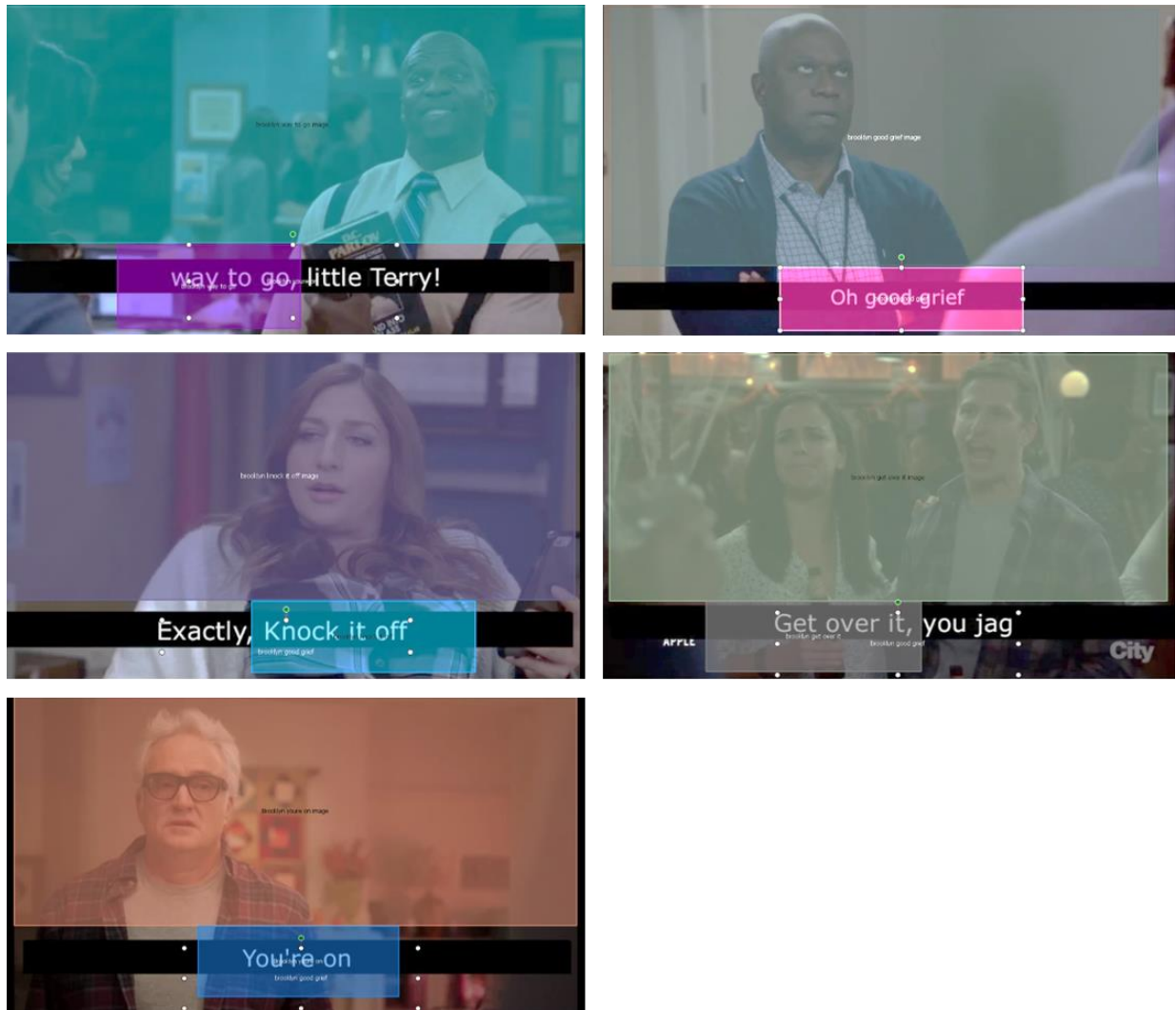


Figure 19 - AOIS in Brooklyn

6.2.2.2 Procedures

This subsection will detail how the pilot tests were carried out for the tests and scenes, as well as give information about the participants and the instructions given the day of the experiment.

6.2.2.2.1 Pilot tests

In January 2022, three native speakers of English answered the recognition test to make sure there were no mistakes or ambiguous definitions. Thanks to their feedback, typos were corrected, one of the options for *Good grief* was changed and another word was added, and one word was modified in the definition of *Get over it*.

In April 2022, the experiment was piloted with 30 third-year Psychology students with B1 and B2 levels to make sure the tests were correct and appropriate, to conduct a preliminary interview, and also to test the equipment. This allowed us to determine how much time they would need to finish the tests, the order of the questions in the interview and the order of the videos. It was also in the pilot test that we learned that Brooklyn 99 is a relevant sitcom for their generation.

6.2.2.2.2 Data collection

Forty-five students took part in our experiment¹⁰⁹. Two days before the interview, an email was sent with a link to our questionnaire (see appendix A), which had the exact same questions as the one in the poster that was later displayed in the university, but here it was nominative so that some of their answers could be discussed the day of the experiment. The use of the questionnaire was intended to give participants time to freely think without the supervision of the researcher (Khasanzyanova, 2021). Their answers will offer the possibility of further addressing points related to our research objectives.

The day of the experiment, students went to the language center they had chosen for a 2-hour appointment which we started by presenting ourselves and by thanking them for accepting the invitation. The researcher had a short informal conversation in French about the series they like to watch and their contact with our four selected sitcoms, in order to make them comfortable. She continued by explaining that they would watch approximately 10 minutes of Friends and answer one comprehension question (see appendix F), and that the same would be done for the other sitcoms. This test was developed to encourage participants to watch for comprehension as they would do at home (Fievez et al., 2020; Montero Perez et al., 2014) and consisted of a question in which participants had to describe one of the scenes (chosen by us) in a few words (see appendix F).

Based on their proficiency level and the number of participants already in each experimental group, the participant was placed in either the incidental group, whose only task was the comprehension question, or in the intentional group, who were informed of the questions and were asked to pay attention to short familiar expressions in the scenes (the researcher asked for examples of expressions they knew to check the instruction was clear). In total, there were 24 participants in the incidental condition (12 B1 and 12 B2), and 21 in the intentional condition (12 B1 and 9 B2).

After the initial conversation, the researcher showed where the eye-tracker was (below the computer screen) and asked participants to choose a comfortable position to test the equipment. This

¹⁰⁹ Information on the participants in the experiment is given in section 7.3.

helped participants see that they could move when viewing, but that the eye-tracker lost their gaze if they looked away or slid on their chairs. They were reminded that they could stop at any moment if they felt uncomfortable.

After watching the first sitcom, the researcher started a short informal conversation about the sitcom – whether they liked the scenes, and whether they had a favorite. The participant was then asked to go to another computer to answer the comprehension question. For participants in the intentional group, the researcher reminded them that they should not forget to pay attention to the expressions so that they could discuss whether or not they were frequent.

When the four comprehension questions were answered, the researcher gave them the consent sheet and answered questions as needed. To continue the appointment, she asked their permission to record their voice and asked further questions about the use of subtitles and captions, as well as vocabulary learning practices. As a transition to the posttest, the researcher talked about what the present expressions are like in this type of series and asked the participants whether or not they had noticed any in the scenes (if so, which ones). They were also asked whether they noticed expressions that were in the test they had done with their teachers (to account for possible biases). Following this conversation, they were asked to take the posttests (there was no vocabulary test announcement before watching to minimize bias).

Finally, 10 students who had taken the pre-test accepted to retake the task in the classroom a month after. This acted as our control group (6 B1 and 4 B2).

The next section will give more information about the quasi-experiment, by highlighting important details on captions and the eye-tracking equipment: What helped participants in learning our target expressions?

6.3 Phase III - Which pedagogical implications?

The final phase of our methodology was put in place to explore the role of facilitators in view of enhanced informal opportunities by accompanying learners through the discovery of meaning. After the posttest, the researcher opened a conversation about how the participant felt taking the posttest: what difficulties were found, new insights they had in answering the questions and what they thought their results would be compared to the pre-test. Our guiding thoughts were: How can a conversation help learners become aware of what they have learned? As facilitators, how can we help them reflect more, on what a formulaic sequence means, without giving the answer? Does rewatching scenes together play a role?

As discussed in section 5.2, it is essential to equip learners with metacognitive tools that allow for the development of autonomy, mechanisms of control of cognitive functioning, and knowledge of its products (Rivens Mompean, 2022). For this reason, the interview was semi-structured in the sense that it was neither entirely open-ended, nor channeled through a large number of precise questions (Zagre, 2013). The importance of this interaction between participant and researcher relies on what Mucchielli (2009) calls the “teleogenic principle”, in which developing awareness of learning results is the goal, so that the person will reflect on which experiences to repeat and which to avoid (p. 33).

Another reason for a discussion between researcher and learner is that, although vocabulary tests are very informative, they are limited to only measuring knowledge out of context (van Zeeland, 2013). A more interactionist approach, taking the context of the target expressions into account should provide complementary information on learners’ vocabulary knowledge and gains. This was operationalized by a confrontation part, in which the participant and the researcher ran through the pre and post multiple-choice test (MCT), recording their exchange. For the participant, this should facilitate the recall of cognitive processes and strategies that they put in place when viewing and answering the tests, helping them to remember valuable information about the encounters with the target expressions. For the researcher, as Godfroid et al. (2010) indicated, this stimulated recall protocol provides qualitative information that can give insight into participants’ mental elaboration processes and enrich the quantitative data collected. During the verbal exchange, the researcher would have the opportunity to deepen the conversation and react to what participants said to bring out the less conscious, more hidden learning processes (Khasanzyanova, 2021).

The decision to compare the tests was inspired by Schugurensky & Rieu's experiment (2007) that aimed to reveal “submerged and invisible” learning. They started their interview with open-ended questions about the interviewees’ lives and experiences with the subject at hand, followed by a more structured part with a list of potential learning gains that could result from their involvement. For each item, they asked participants to evaluate their level on a Likert scale, comprising five degrees, at two different times: before their involvement in the experiment and at the time of the interview. When respondents indicated a change on the value scale, the researchers asked them to explain how they knew a change had occurred and encouraged them to tell their story and give concrete examples. This strategy was reported as successful in encouraging personal reflection on informal learning and in highlighting implicit knowledge.

The second part of the interview aimed to raise participants’ awareness of the process of noticing. For that, they were asked to rewatch three shortened scenes from HIMYM (30 to 40 seconds of the dialogue in which the expression appears) (see transcripts in appendix G) and direct their attention to the expressions (Schmidt, 2001). They were invited to watch the scenes, this time without

the eye tracker, as naturally as possible and were allowed to pause and re-play the scenes (Vanderplank, 2010). Participants were again divided in two groups: Group 1 rewatched the scenes that contained *Way to go*, *Get over it* and *Good grief*; Group 2 rewatched scenes with *Hang in there*, *You're on* and *Knock it off*. The decision to place participants in each group was based on their scores in the MCT: they rewatched scenes with the expressions they already knew, when possible, so that they could learn the other expressions in the third part of the interview. We also strived to balance the number of participants in each group. A short discussion was held about the expressions they noticed and if they could guess their meaning from the context. This encouraged participants to intentionally focus on linguistic and non-linguistic cues in the context, and to make hypotheses. The researcher supported them by asking questions and giving tips, without, nevertheless, confirming or rejecting the learner's hypotheses at first (Council of Europe, 2001).

Finally, the third part of the experiment consisted of asking participants to rewatch all six scenes from HIMYM and, this time, the scene would be cut just before an expression was said. They were given a simple list with the 12 items from the tests (distractors included) and asked to complete the scenes with one of them, explaining why. With this, we expected to know if they could orally recall the expression, using it in context. The different groups helped us determine whether rewatching played a large role in learning, as well as the effect of the pre-tests and the exchange with the researcher in their language gains.

The transcriptions of the interview were done by the artificial intelligence SONIX, financed by our laboratory (available in appendix J). We checked all the transcriptions manually to correct mistakes and translate words in English that were not captured by the app.

6.4 Conclusion of the chapter

This chapter has described the methods used in this investigation, trying to associate what has been studied separately in SLA literature. To answer the research question “**To what extent can different levels of intention impact the learning of fixed expressions while watching Sitcoms in English?**”, we designed three different phases (Figure 20), mixing qualitative and quantitative methods, aiming to have a broad panorama of the role of intention in informal and nonformal contexts.

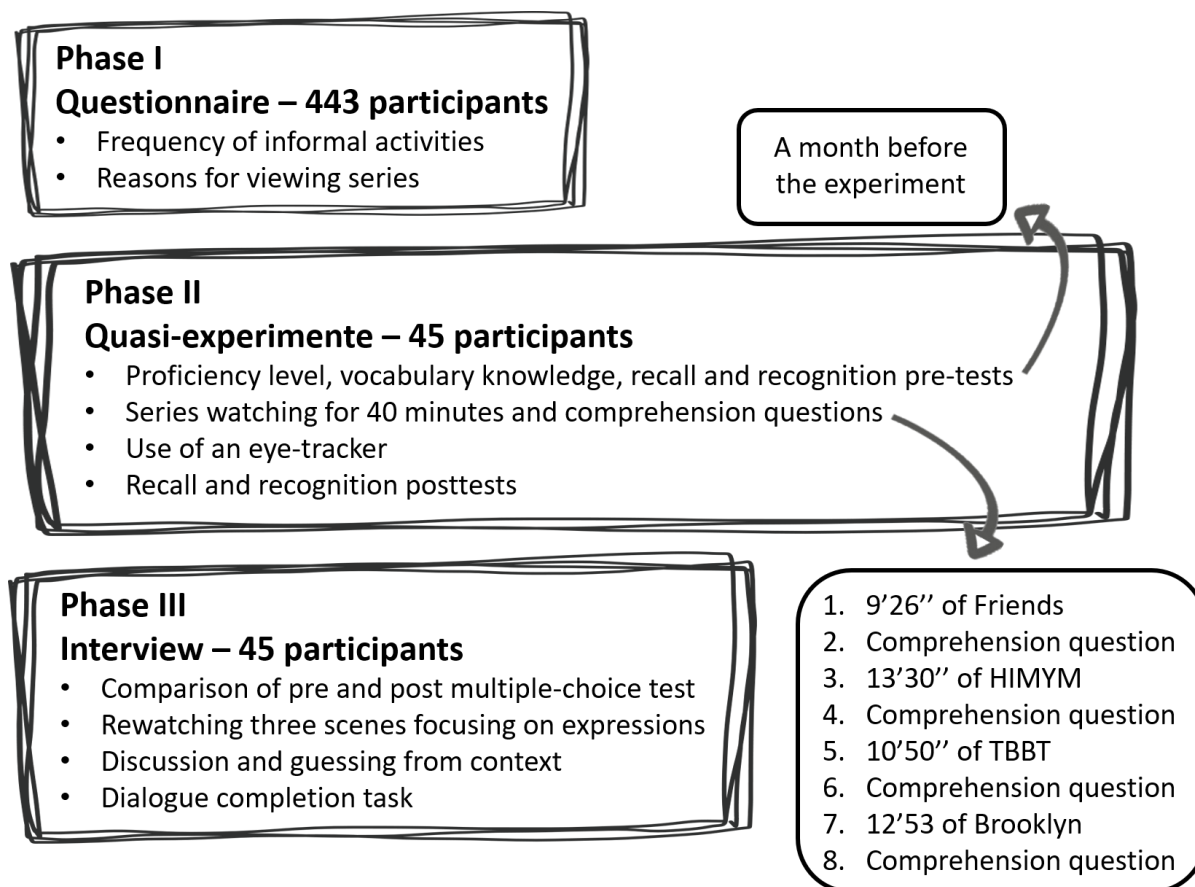


Figure 20 - Summary of phases

The first phase aimed to further understand the context of informal practices in English of university students. Through a questionnaire, we collected data about habits in an out-of-class context, unrelated to university requirements, in which the respondents are the decision makers. These practices can be organized by users themselves or not be organized and can be intentional or unintentional. The questions asked information about their proficiency level in English, university, major, the frequency of different informal activities in English, their series viewing habits and preferences (our first objective), as well as reasons for watching series and for learning English (our second objective) (see appendix A).

The second phase's objective was to measure the impact of goal setting prior to series watching in English and it was assessed by using pre and posttests (our third objective). Its first part consisted of collecting the data of potential participants in a quasi-experiment: their proficiency level, vocabulary knowledge, as well as the recall and recognition of our target expressions. A month after the test, the second part of the experiment began, involving a quasi-experiment with 45 participants with B1 and B2 proficiency levels in English. They watched 40 minutes of selected scenes from four sitcoms (Friends, How I Met Your Mother, The Big Bang Theory and Brooklyn 99) with an eye tracker and answered a comprehension question after each sitcom: *What happened in this scene?* (see

appendix F). This was followed by recall and recognition posttests (see appendix C). The data collected with the eye tracker allowed us to investigate the function that images and captions serve in vocabulary learning (our fourth objective).

Finally, the third phase consisted of an interview with a pedagogical intervention. Through discussion, both participant and researcher compared their answers in the pre and post multiple-choice test, rewatched three scenes focusing on the expressions, formulated hypotheses about the meaning and use of the identified expressions and completed a task to assess the oral recall of the target language. These procedures helped us to investigate **the role of teacher intervention in promoting metacognitive awareness**.

Through the combination of these several data collection techniques, we were able to verify the accuracy and stability of the results produced. As Mucchielli (2009) put it, the triangulation of our data described our state of mind as a researcher, who actively and consciously attempts to support, recover and corroborate the results of one's study, as "no single data collection technique will be able to capture the richness of human phenomena" and this would allow us to achieve "the richest possible understanding and interpretation of the phenomenon studied" (Mucchielli, 2009, p. 285). This can be observed in our next chapter, in which we report the results of our investigation.

Chapter 7. Results and Discussion

The data analysis in this chapter has enabled a deeper understanding of three aspects of language learning: Informality, intentionality and explicitness. Data was collected using multiple methods, as a way of accounting for the different objectives of this thesis and as a means of assuring the validity of this research (Figure 21). The first objective is connected to informality: through a questionnaire, we were able to measure students' informal learning habits and uncovered the different reasons students gave for using subtitles and captions. The findings are detailed in section 7.1. The second objective was to tackle intention as a global goal. We were able to examine why university students learn English, why they watch series and how these two intentions are connected. Findings can be found in section 7.2.

In section 7.3, we measure intentionality as the effort to learn. This was operationalized through an experiment involving scenes from four sitcoms in which the target expressions appeared. Through descriptive and inferential statistical analysis of pre and posttests, we were able to compare both an intentional and an incidental group. This experiment also allowed us to investigate eye gaze and the effect of multimodality in learning via series, thanks to an eye-tracker. Our analysis can be found in section 7.4. Furthermore, section 7.5 discusses pedagogical implications, which were briefly implemented on a recorded interview. Finally, section 7.6 is followed by a summary of these findings. Each section is followed by a short discussion.

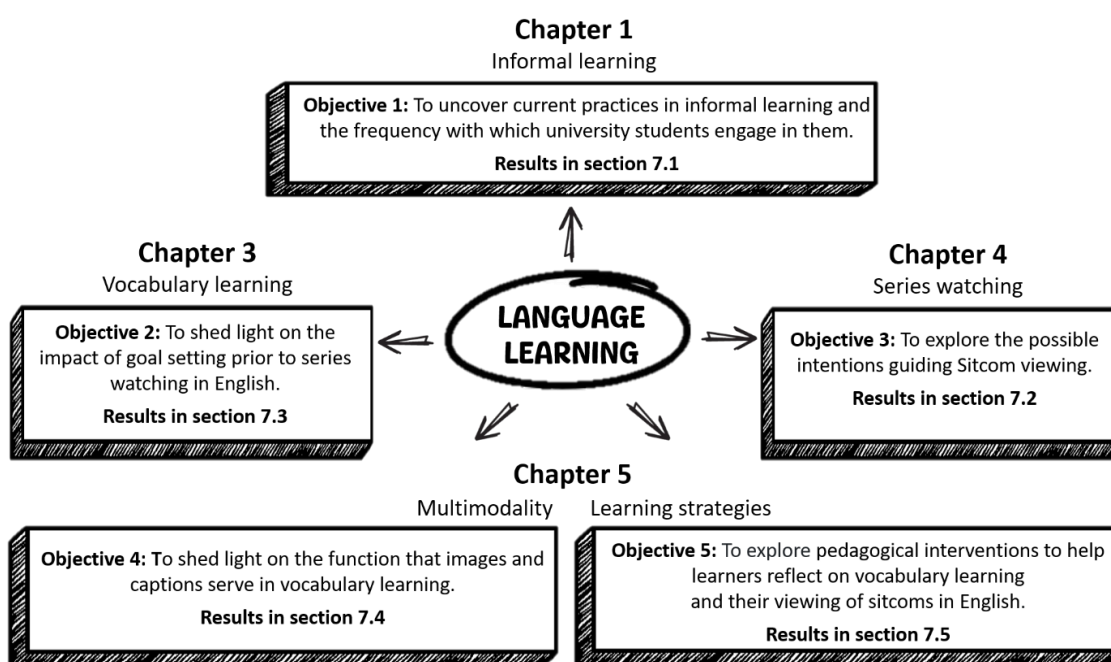


Figure 21 - Thesis objectives and where to find the results

7.1 Practice of informal learning of English

To study the role of intentionality in vocabulary learning through series, it was important to first map informal learning and the frequency of different practices. In order to have a better understanding of the informal activities that university students engage in; we collected data with three goals in mind. The first goal was to learn about the types of activities they undertake and their frequency. The second was to explore students' exposure to series. Finally, we aimed to show how these practices have evolved in the past decade to highlight the importance of this research.

As a reminder, the results presented in this chapter were possible thanks to an anonymous online questionnaire for which the QR code was displayed on a poster in the libraries and language centers of the University of Lille, northern France, calling for participation in a 15 minute-online questionnaire, aimed at university students, about informal practices in English. The 18 questions in the first page of the questionnaire (in appendix A) enabled this analysis, as well as three other questions in the second page: "How many hours do you spend each week watching series (regardless of language)?", "Which are your favorite series (give one to five examples)", and "Click on the Sitcoms (comedy series) that you have already watched at least two episodes (several answers possible)". This is briefly recapped in Figure 22.

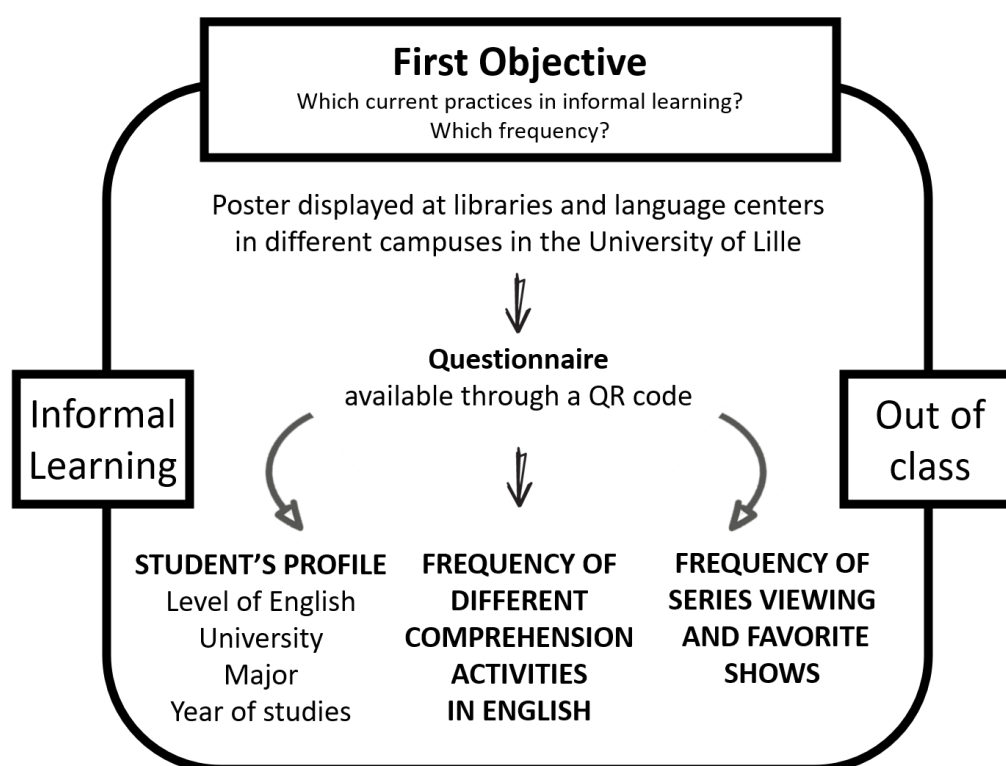


Figure 22 - First objective and data collection

The subsections below will show the results related to the profile of the respondents (7.1.1), the frequency of informal learning practices (7.1.2) and to their viewing habits (7.1.3), followed by a dialogue with the literature presented in chapter one (7.1.4) and a short summary of the section.

7.1.1 Profile of the respondents

We obtained 443 answers to the questionnaire. They were all students from various universities in Lille: 413 from the University of Lille, 15 from the *Université Catholique de Lille* and 15 from the *IMT Nord-Europe*. They were mostly students from Humanities and Social Sciences (56%), followed by Economics, Social and Territorial Sciences (21%) and Science and Technology (18%). The remaining 5% were either studying Architecture, Medicine or were in preparatory classes. For the most part they were third year students (32%) followed by second-year students (23%), as can be seen in Figure 23. This shows a certain diversity of profiles, even though there is an over-representation of students in Humanities and Social Sciences.

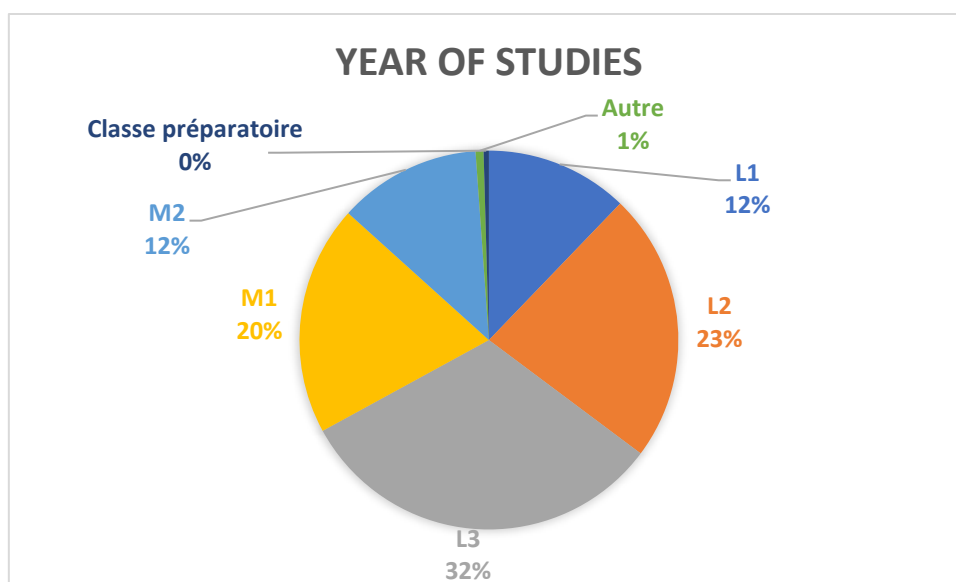


Figure 23 - Year of studies of respondents

As the quasi-experiment (to be explained in section 7.3) was conducted with independent users (B1-B2), we thought it was important to know the proficiency level of the students answering the questionnaire. As shown in Figure 24, independent users correspond to 62% of all respondents (N=276), followed by 23% of proficient users and 14% of basic users.

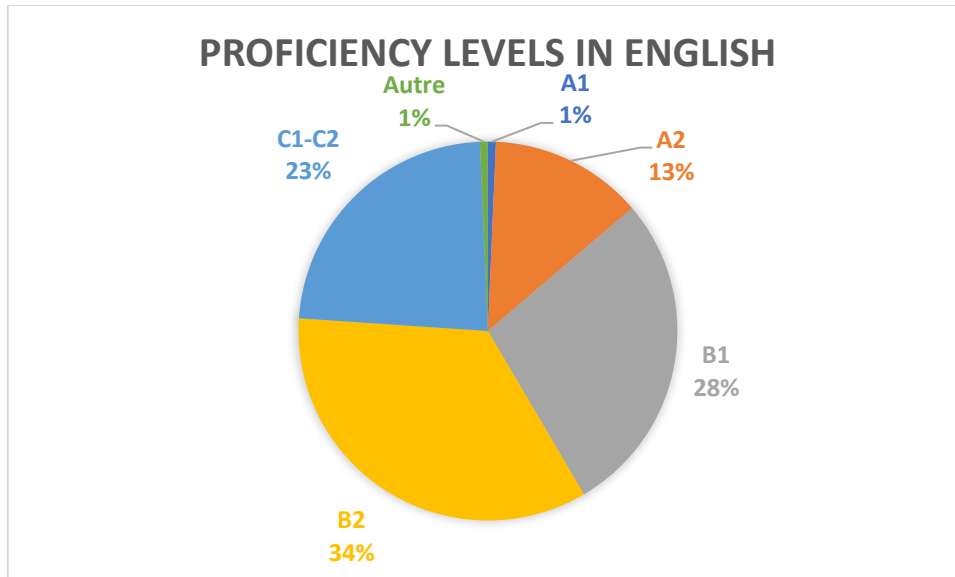


Figure 24 - Respondents' Level of English (N=443)

7.1.2 Frequency of Informal Learning

A first step to understanding Informal Learning of English by university students was to identify the activities they undertake and measure their frequency. Figure 25 shows that a great number of students engage in informal learning activities in English. Music seems to be the activity undertaken by a greater number of students: 98.2% of respondents said that they listen to music in English at least once a month. Other popular practices are reading articles on social media, on the internet in general, the news and blogs (93.9% of respondents), followed by audiovisual sources such as YouTube (92.5%), series (91.6%) and films (87.5%).

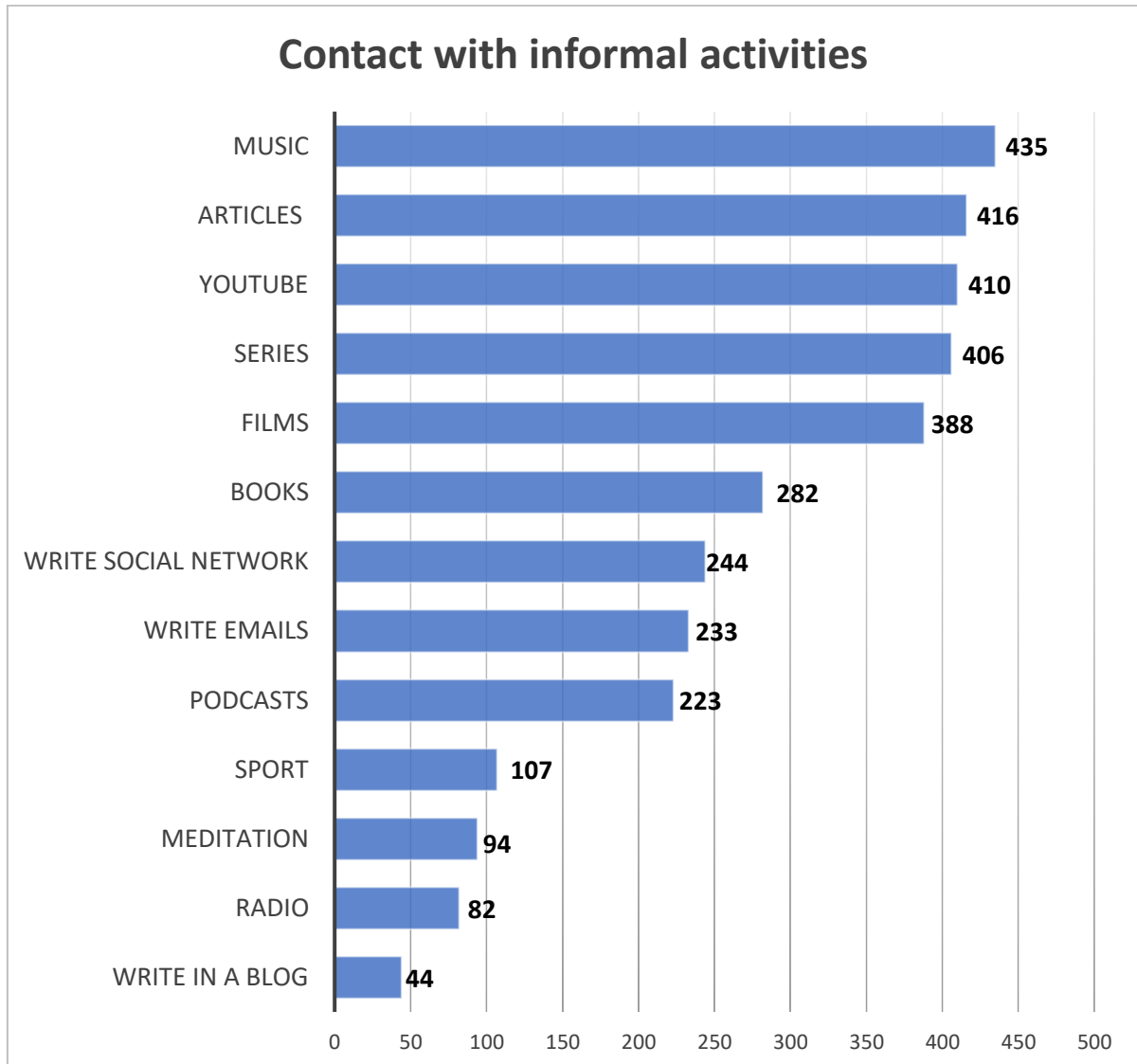


Figure 25 - Number of students who engage in informal activities (N= 443)

An equally interesting finding is the time they spend on these activities on a weekly basis. Since this thesis will further investigate learning through series, we found it important to analyze in detail and compare the data from audio(visual) activities. As illustrated by Figure 26, 41.5% of students listen to over 10 hours of music a week, followed by 10.5% watching YouTube videos and 8.9% watching series. *This percentage only takes into account the respondents who declared that they did the activity.* When looking into the most frequent activities, in which students do at least 1 hour a week, music leads with 92%, followed by series (66%), YouTube (52%) and Films (48%).

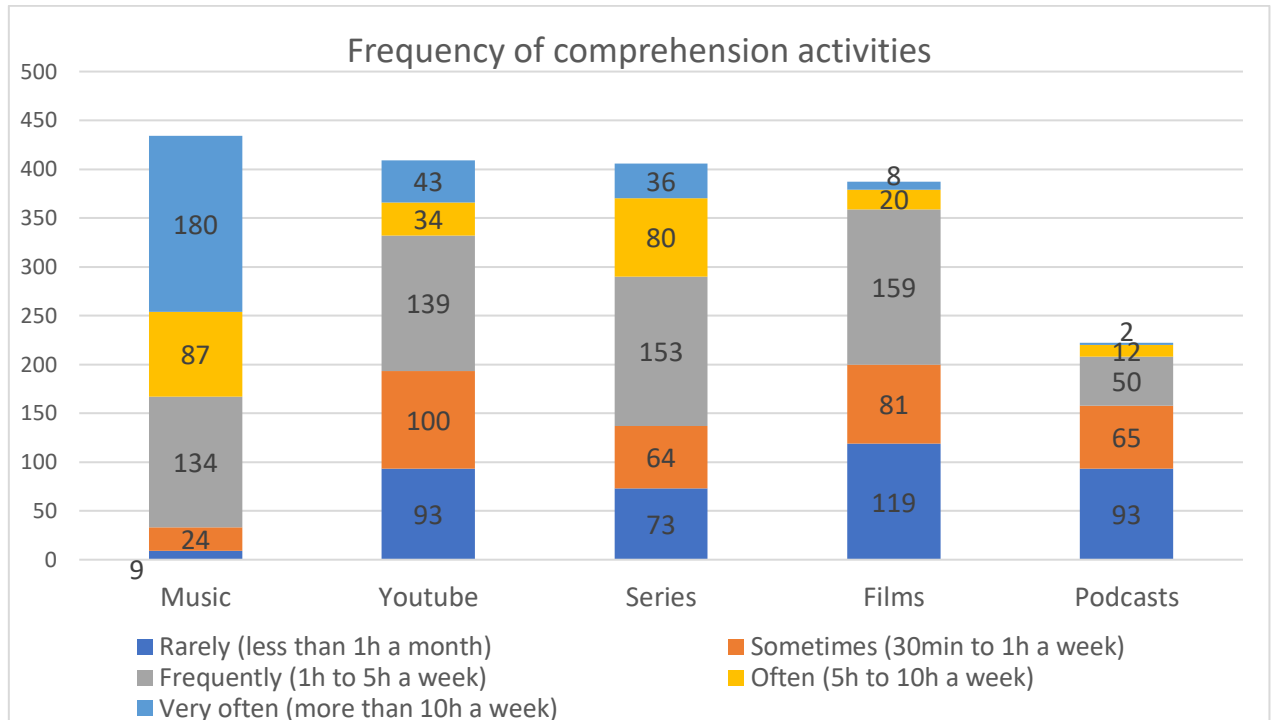


Figure 26 - Frequency of comprehension activities (N= 443)

Because some of the questions addressed in this thesis explore the learning of independent users of English (B1-B2), we found it important to isolate data from students with B1-B2 levels. As shown in Figure 27, results are relatively proportional.

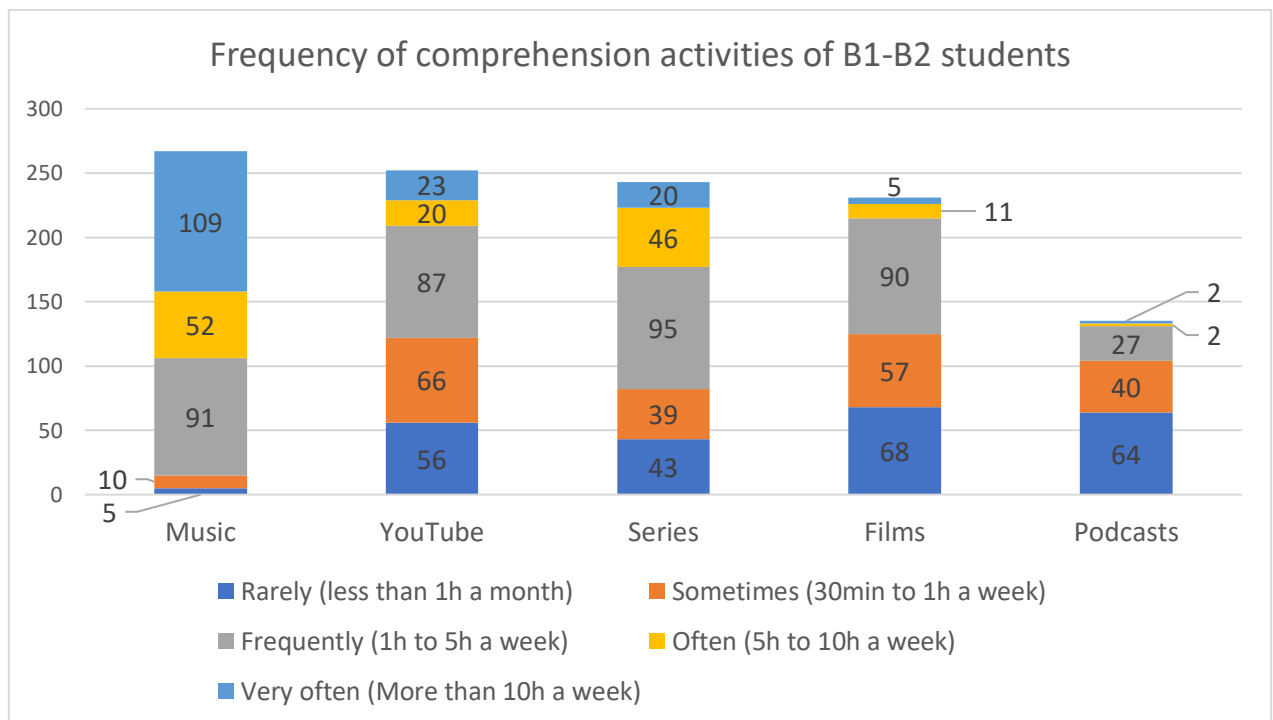


Figure 27 - Frequency of comprehension activities of B1-B2 students (N=272)

These data show that music is the most popular practice adopted by university students in Lille. Evidence has suggested, however, that merely listening to music is unlikely to lead to significant change in listening comprehension outcomes (Lindgren & Muñoz, 2013; Toffoli & Sockett, 2010). Other sources of listening practice seem to offer more contextual clues to meaning and are easier at a phonetic level due to rhythm and background noise (Lindgren & Muñoz, 2013). Although research in the field of informal learning has been growing in the past decade, little has been done to assess language acquisition through music. Our field would also benefit from research that investigates these other frequent audio(visual) activities to understand their role in learning English. This thesis will further investigate the viewing of series, the relevance of which is confirmed as it is the audiovisual practice for university students that continues to grow the most.

7.1.3 The viewing of series

This thesis investigated learning while watching series. We have found that more than half of the respondents (of all levels) watch series in English either frequently or often: 37.7% of students watch between 1 to 5 hours a week and 19.7% from 5 to 10 hours.

When analyzing viewing data in detail, the two extremes represent 8.3% of respondents who declared that they do not watch series, and 8.1% watch more than 10 hours a week. Most participants (67.1%) watch series from 1 hour to 10 hours a week (Figure 28). The proportions are relatively similar when only the data from independent users are considered (N= 243): 11% declared that they do not watch series (N=28), 8% watch more than 10 hours a week (N= 20), 39% watch from 1 to 5 hours (N=95) and 19% watch from 5 to 10 hours (N=46).

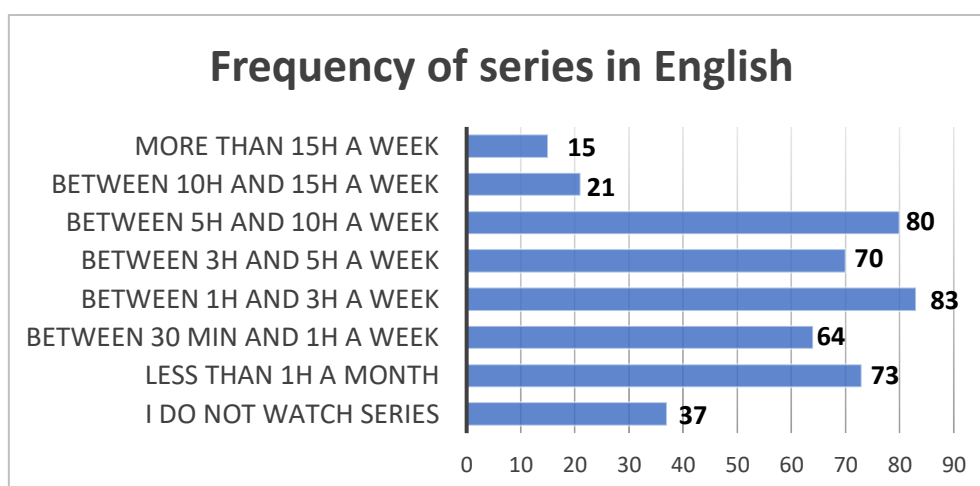


Figure 28 - Frequency of series

Another question asked in the second part of the questionnaire can help us see the bigger picture: “How many hours do you spend each week watching series (regardless of language)?”. When we compare the answers to the answers on watching series in English, we can see that most viewing is done in English (Figure 29): 24 respondents that had declared that they do not watch series in English, watch in other languages and there was an increase of 15% in frequent series viewing (30 minutes to 10 hours a week) when the language is not taken into account.

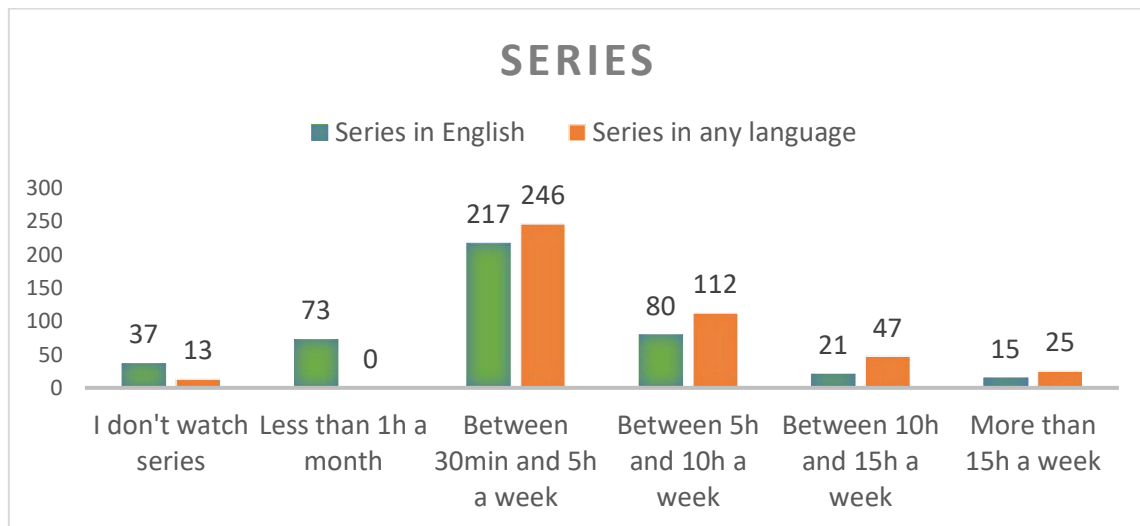


Figure 29 - Frequency of watching series in English and in other languages

The questionnaire also gathered information on which series they watch. For the question “Which are your favorite series (give one to five examples)”, respondents could answer freely. The most mentioned series are shown in Table 20.

As we can see, sitcoms are an appreciated genre of series, accounting for 5 of the top 10 favorite series of respondents. These findings supported our choices of sitcoms for the experiment, as *Friends*, *Brooklyn 99*, *How I Met Your Mother* and *The Big Bang Theory* were in the top 8 favorite series. They had also been seen by a great number of respondents: in a similar question, we asked students which sitcoms they had seen at least two episodes of (Figure 30). They could click on multiple answers and add their own. *Friends* ranked first, chosen by 61.8% of respondents, followed by *The Big Bang Theory* (43.6%) and *Brooklyn 99* (35.9%). *How I Met Your Mother* came in 6th place, selected by 31.6% of respondents.

Place	Series	Mentions	Genre	Country of origin
1 st	Friends	51	Sitcom	USA
2 nd	<i>Game of Thrones</i>	50	Fantasy drama	USA
3 rd	<i>The Office</i>	35	Sitcom	USA
	Brooklyn 99		Sitcom	USA
4 th	<i>Stranger Things</i>	28	Horror drama	USA
5 th	<i>You</i>	25	Psychological thriller	USA
6 th	<i>Peaky Blinders</i>	24	Period crime drama	UK
7 th	How I Met Your Mother	22	Sitcom	USA
	<i>Prison Break</i>		Serial drama	USA
8 th	The Big Bang Theory	20	Sitcom	USA
	<i>Bridgerton</i>		Historical fiction-romance	USA
9 th	<i>Lucifer</i>	18	Urban fantasy	USA
10 th	<i>Gossip Girl</i>	17	Teen drama	USA
11 th	<i>Money Heist</i>	16	Heist crime drama	Spain
	<i>The Last of us</i>		Post-apocalyptic	USA
	<i>Outer Banks</i>		Action-adventure mystery teen drama	USA
12 th	<i>Desperate Housewives</i>	15	Comedy-drama	USA
	<i>Vampire diaries</i>		Supernatural teen drama	USA
13 th	<i>Alice in Borderland</i>	14	Science fiction thriller drama	Japan
	<i>Grey's anatomy</i>		Medical drama	USA
14 th	<i>Modern Family</i>	13	Sitcom	USA
	<i>The Crown</i>		Historical drama	UK and USA
	<i>The walking dead</i>		Post-apocalyptic horror drama	USA
	<i>Wednesday</i>		Comedy horror	USA
	<i>Sense 8</i>		Science fiction drama	USA
15 th	<i>Doctor Who</i>	12	Science fiction	UK

Table 20 - Favorite series of respondents

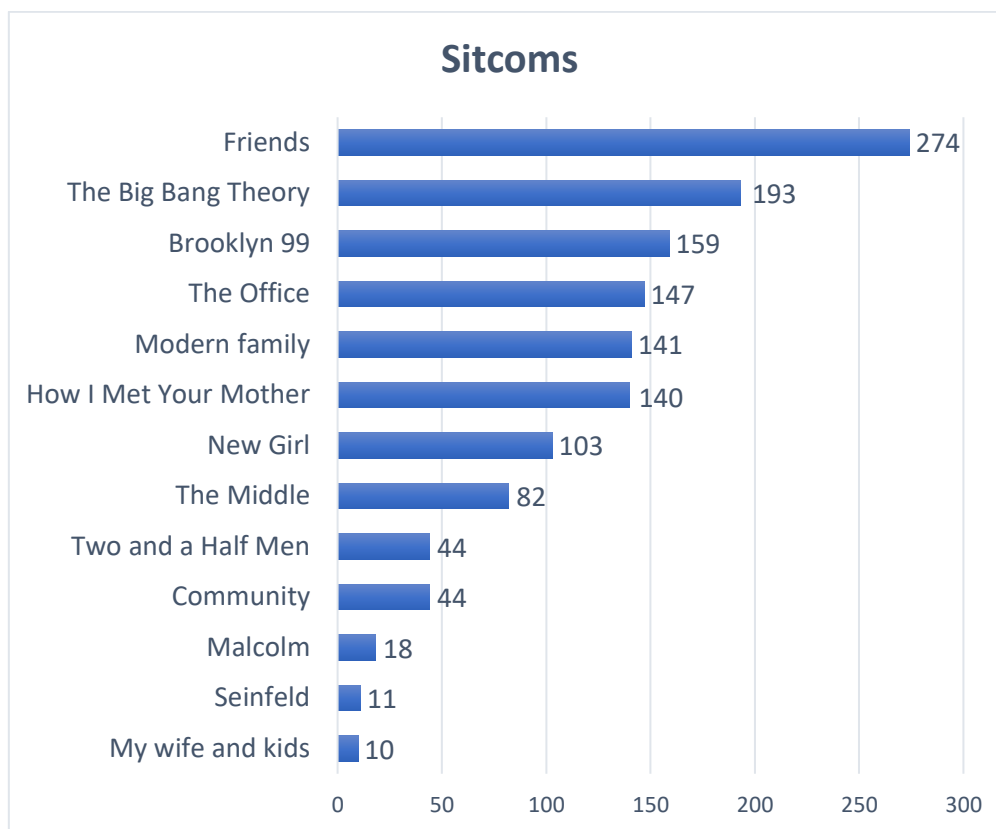


Figure 30 - Sitcoms known to respondents

7.1.4 The evolution of informal learning

The lifespan of certain informal learning practices has been questioned by Toffoli & Sockett (2010), further discussed by Kusyk & Sockett (2012) and proved to be more perennial than anticipated when Toffoli and Sockett replicated their study in 2015. We cannot help but wonder, what is its current state in 2023?

Overall, our research has confirmed previous findings showing that students have easy access to English in their daily lives and that they are immersed in informal learning practiced in English. The evidence, provided thus far, dissipates Toffoli & Sockett's (2015) concerns about the possibility of informal learning being an ephemeral phenomenon. It also speaks the question that relates to the uncertainty of access to series after the closure of megaupload.com and the possible impact this could in the frequency of viewing.

Indeed, far from abating, students' favorite activity continues to be audiovisual material. Equally to evidence provided by Toffoli & Sockett in 2010, students continue to listen more than they read and write. Furthermore, the results indicate a slight evolution in practices, although this was not tested for significance and occurred with participants from a different region in France: In the present

study, 98.2% of students listen to English at least once a month (mostly music, followed by YouTube, series and films), whereas in Toffoli & Sockett's study (2010), the percentage was 90%.

In order to present the subsequent findings, it is important to mention that the questionnaires from the present study measured informal practices differently than the survey carried out by Toffoli and Sockett (2010, 2015) and Kusiak and Sockett (2012) and, thus, must be compared with precaution. Their questions were based on weekly frequencies (weekly or more, monthly to weekly, less than once a month, never), while our study asked groups of hours (never, less than 1 hour a month; from 30 minutes to 1 hour a week; 1 to 3 hours; 3 to 5 hours; 5 to 10 hours; 10 to 15 hours; more than 15 hours). By means of comparison, we chose “weekly or more” to represent data from respondents who declared that they do the activity over 1 hour a week; and “monthly to weekly” for practices of from 30 to 1 hour a week and less than 1 hour a month.

When analyzing the data, we noticed a progression related to frequent users: 92% of respondents **listen to music** at least 1 hour a week, 66% watch series, 52% YouTube and 48% films. Toffoli & Sockett (2010) found that 50% of students listened to English at least once a week and the percentage had risen to 54% in 2015. We chose to only include data from respondents who watch at least one hour a week to compare the results, but if we take into account those who listen to English at least 30 minutes a week (a few songs or an episode), the percentage increases to 95.9% who listen to music, 83.5% who watch series, 79% who watch videos on YouTube, and 73% who watch films. This is still lower than what was found by Peters' 2018 study with Belgian learners, in which 98% declared that they listen to songs in English.

When Toffoli and Sockett compared their studies from 2010 and 2015, they noticed a shift in preference from films to series. They found that the number of students who watched films dropped 2.4%, while those who watch series increased 18.4%. These numbers have rocketed ever since. In 2010, 2015 and 2023 (our study), respectively, 30%, 27.6% and 87% of respondents declared that they watch films. When it comes to watching series, the proportion is 21.5%, 39.9% and 91.6% respectively. Even if we only consider respondents who watch over 1 hour a week, the percentages are 42.2% for films and 60.7% for series.

Looking closely at the data about series, Kusiak & Sockett (2012) found that 44% of respondents claimed to watch series in English regularly – more than once a week, whereas in our research, 60.7% of them are frequent users (more than 1 hour a week). The percentage of those who never watch series remained relatively stable: from 6% in 2012 to 8.3% in 2023. These findings also show that university students in France (+18 years old) are more exposed to films and series than 19-year older learners in Belgium, who affirmed to be exposed to TV programs with (57%) and without subtitles (38%). Further research could be conducted to compare university students of all ages in these neighboring countries.

In addition, new platforms partially replaced streaming websites. With the arrival of Netflix in 2013, people have invested money in monthly subscriptions to have unlimited access to series and films available on these platforms. In answer to the question “Which platforms do you use most often? (many possible responses)” in Appendix A, respondents declared that they watch series mostly on Netflix (87.8%), Amazon Prime (45.1%), Disney Plus (43.1%), various streaming platforms (41.7%) and Canal Plus (15.8%). Other platforms that were mentioned were HBO Max, YouTube, DVDs, or through downloading (Figure 31). This shows that habits changed after MegaUpload closed in 2012, giving momentum to subscription-based platforms, that later became the main way to watch tv shows.

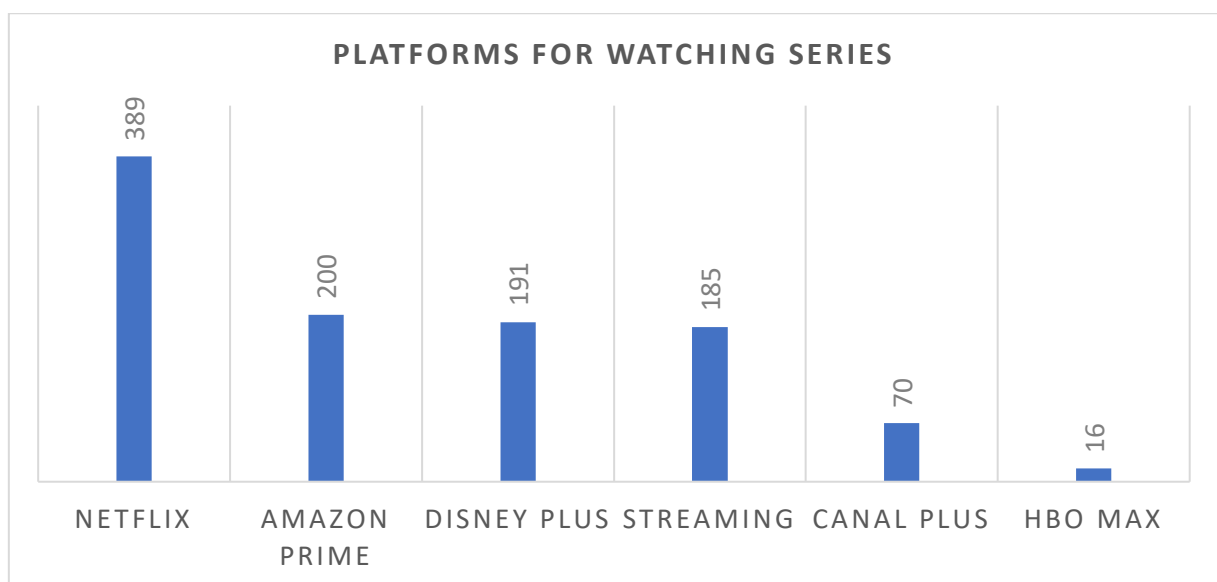


Figure 31 - Platforms for watching series

Furthermore, the names of a few series were mentioned in the previous studies. In Toffoli and Sockett's first investigation (2010), respondents said to particularly like sitcoms and drama from the United States, aimed at a teenage and young adult market. They indicated the series *Dexter*, *Kyle XY*, *The IT Crowd*, *One Tree Hill*, and *How I Met Your Mother*. Other series were mentioned in Kusyk & Sockett's survey (2012), such as *The Walking Dead*, *How I Met Your Mother*, *The Big Bang Theory*, *Fringe*, *House*, *Breaking Bad*, *South Park*, *the Mentalist*, *Castle*, and *Dexter*. From these, as shown in Table 20, *How I Met Your Mother*, *The Big Bang Theory*, *The Walking Dead* and *Breaking Bad* are still quite popular in 2023.

As far as **reading** is concerned, we observed an increase compared to previous research. Reading is the second most undertaken practice, after listening to music, accounting for 93.9% of respondents and the second most frequent activity (Figure 32). However, we are unable to compare these results to previous research due to the limitations of our question. In fact, we do not know the

extent to which respondents thought of academic articles when they chose an option to the statement “I read articles in English (social networks/internet in general/news websites/blogs/...)”, and further discussion could be carried out to discuss to what extent they correspond to an informal practice, as such reading practice is likely to have been required by teachers in university. Also, we cannot infer the type of reading they do (short memes on social media to long news articles), whether it is part of an interaction (forums, blogs, chats, SMS) and we do not know where they access this information (social media, apps, news websites, google search).

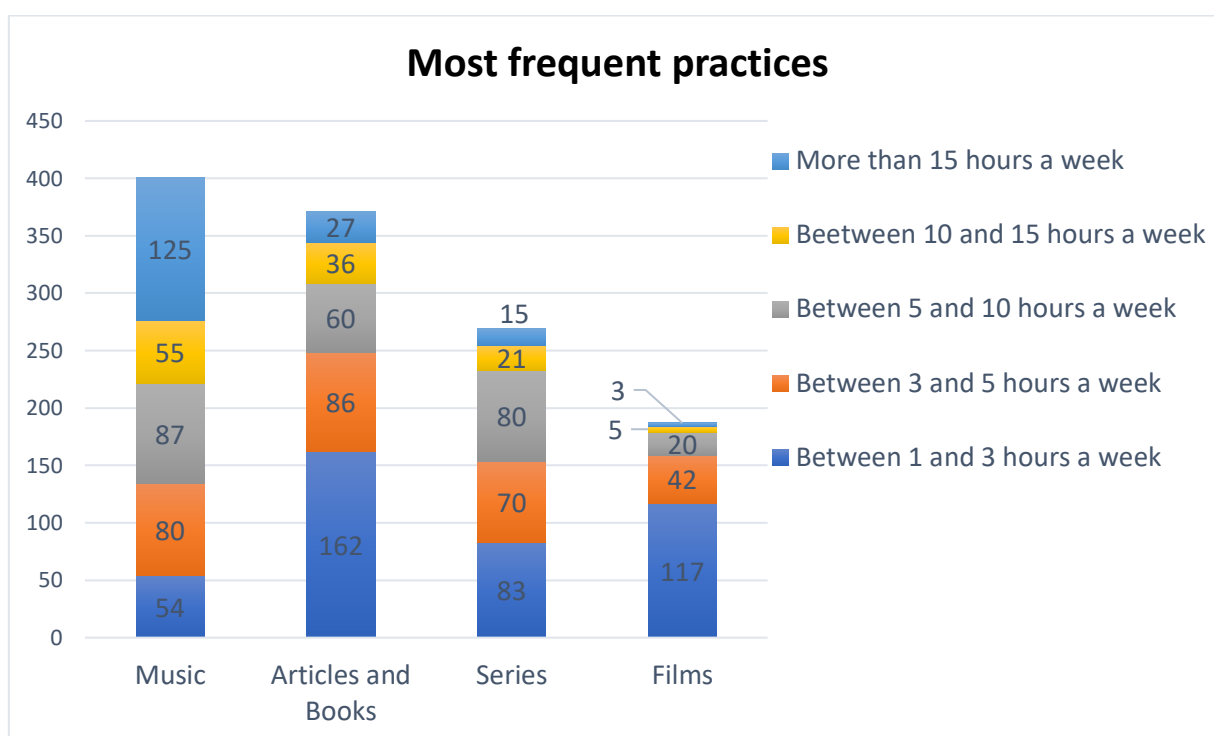


Figure 32 - Most frequent practices

Our findings also suggest that **writing** is not an often-practiced skill, in accordance with what Toffoli & Sockett remarked in 2010 and 2015. The authors found that students write relatively little in English online, and it represents mostly short sentences, focusing on interactions with private and/or personal content, such as in blogs (commenting on others' writings), instant messaging, social networks and emails (Toffoli & Sockett, 2010). They also noticed that “writing is rarely informative (participating in thematic forums for example) and occurs primarily in contexts where the writer's real name is used (e-mails and social networks) as opposed to those in which the writer's true identity is hidden by a pseudonym or avatar (forums and virtual worlds)” (p. 12). In our findings, the average of respondents who do not have certain writing practices is remarkably high: 90.3% never write in blogs, 47.6% never write emails and 45.1% never write on social networks (Figure 33).

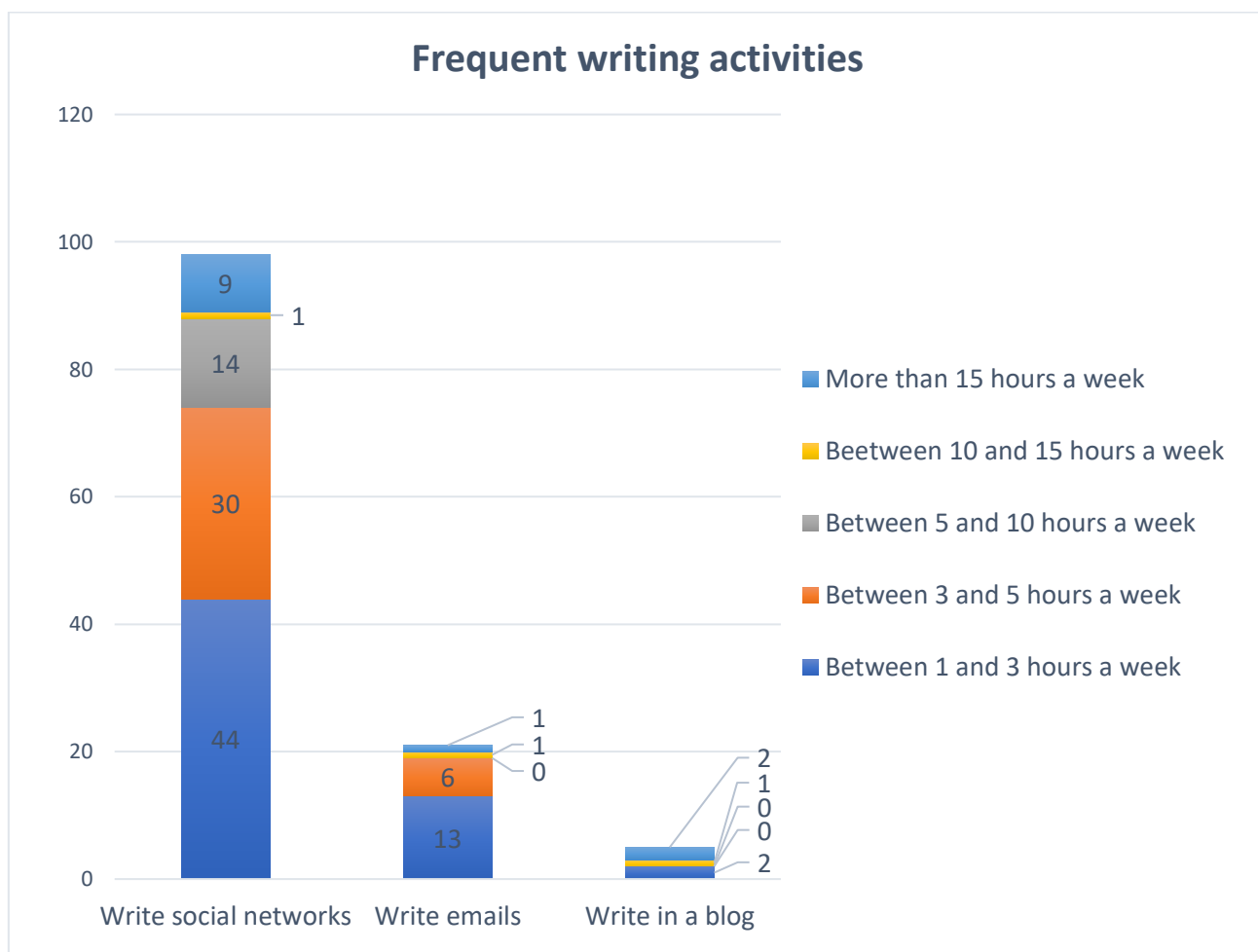


Figure 33 - Frequent writing activities (N= 443)

As this thesis did not focus on writing skills, we did not collect details about these practices, but researchers in the field would benefit from learning more about how, what and where learners write. As demonstrated in Figure 33, 22.1% of respondents declared that they write on social networks. Also, we found that 27 respondents added other practices to the list: Instant messaging (N= 14), commenting on photos and videos published on social networks and YouTube (N= 3), as well as a few offline practices such as writing to-do lists, songs and short stories (N= 9). As these were not options in the multiple-choice questions, the number of students who engage in such activities may be higher. We also do not know the frequency with which they engage in these activities.

Speaking was the skill respondents practiced the least in Toffoli and Sockett's studies (2010, 2015). Speaking online involved VOIP technologies (Voice over Internet Protocol), which allow people to call using an internet connection instead of a telephone line, such as Skype. Nevertheless, 70% of surveyed students said they never use such services in English (Toffoli & Sockett, 2010). In 2015, the authors mentioned another online practice: there was a small increase of respondents who played

games online (from 14% to 27%), such as World of Warcraft, The Sims and Second Life. Based on these low numbers, we decided not to add oral production and interaction to our questionnaire. However, respondents were free to include other practices in their answers. After excluding all answers related to classroom environments, we counted 122 answers of respondents who speak in English in their free time. That accounts for 27.5% of respondents taking the initiative to inform us of these practices.

The majority of these respondents (N= 78) said that they have conversations with people they know: mostly friends and family, but also colleagues and Tandems. Our data suggest that these exchanges happen mostly face to face, and sometimes through vocal messages and telephone calls (N= 11). Those who declared that they speak online (N= 10) reported most exchanges through gaming platforms, Tele-Tandems, Zoom and to produce language orally through content creation for social media (TikTok, YouTube, and stories on Instagram). Two students mentioned events organized by the university such as *Café Langues* and speaking workshops in Language Centers.

Finally, an interesting finding was the large number of new activities that emerged in our study. Even though we do not have details about them, we discovered that 92.3% of respondents watch YouTube videos in English, 63.4% read books, 50.1% listen to Podcasts, 23.9% do sports and 20.9% do guided meditation, even if it is with a low frequency (Figure 34). These activities had not been mentioned in the previously mentioned research from a decade ago. When given the chance to freely report their informal practices, 43 respondents play video games online, or on their mobile telephones, in English. In addition, 24 use learning apps such as Duolingo, Babel and Flowchase (a paid app to practice English pronunciation available to students in the University of Lille from 2022 to 2024), have changed their telephone or computer settings to English, or use apps such as Twitter (reading), Tinder (oral and written production and interaction), TikTok and Instagram (writing, reading, oral production and interaction), follow anglophone celebrities on social media and do Google searches.

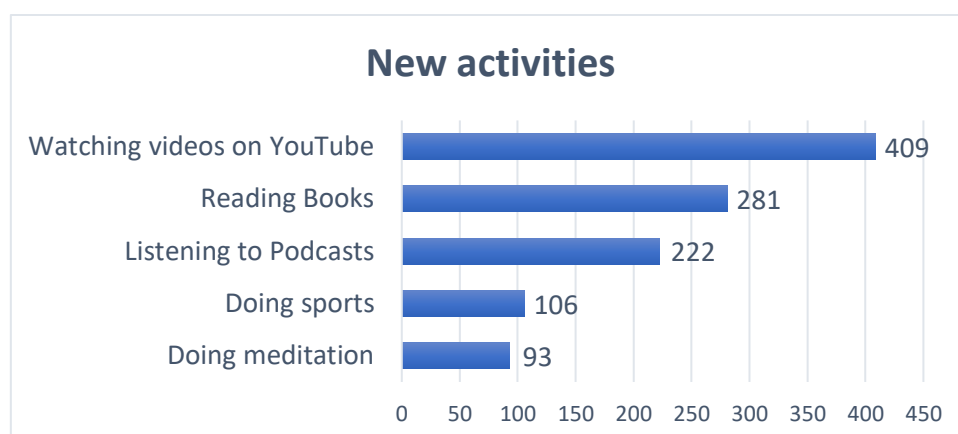


Figure 34 – Activities not mentioned in Toffoli & Sockett (2010, 2015) (N = 443)

Another unexpected finding was reports on singing songs and Karaoke in English (N= 16). Additionally, 10 people stated that they have other sorts of listening practices such as watching (E)sports, interviews, listening to sleep stories, to ASMR (autonomous sensory meridian response) and listening to the news. Also, 9 respondents said that they often think in English or “talk to themselves”, 6 use the language at work, 4 travel regularly and others do leisure activities such as cooking and following sewing patterns (N= 6) or engaging in mediation (N= 4) such as using English to help in communication and to do written or oral translations. Therefore, these findings highlight the variety of practices available to learners and call for specialized research on them.

7.1.5 Summary and conclusions

In order to better understand the role of intentionality in vocabulary learning through series, it was important to map informal learning and the frequency of different practices. Our initial hypothesis was confirmed: a considerable number of university students receive a great deal of input in English in their day to day lives. Not only practices such as listening to music and watching series have proven to be more perennial than anticipated, but new ones have emerged in the past decade due to the advances in technology and the increase in accessibility.

The evidence provided in this section was based on data collected from 443 volunteer university students, mostly from the University of Lille, 62% of whom were independent users (B1-B2). Students’ engagement in informal learning activities in English varied from music (98.2%), reading on social networks (93.9%) and various audiovisual sources such as YouTube videos (92.5%), series (91.6%) and films (87.5%). To understand the place that series have in learning, we looked closer at the frequency of audio-visual practices, finding that 92% of the respondents listen to at least 1 hour of music per week, 66% watch series, 52% watch YouTube videos and 48% watch films.

According to our findings, watching series is the most frequent audio-visual activity undertaken by university students. In fact, 153 respondents watch series 1 to 5 hours a week in English, 80 watch them from 5 to 10 hours a week and 36 watch more than 10 hours a week. Only 37 never watch series in their free time.

Results on the most watched sitcoms corresponded to our choices for the experiment: *Friends* came in first place, watched by 61.8% of respondents, *The Big Bang Theory* in second (43.6%), *Brooklyn 99* in third (35.9%) and *How I Met Your Mother* in sixth (31.6%). Although this does not mean that these are the most watched Sitcoms, it gives evidence that they are widespread and that respondents have already been in contact with this study’s chosen sitcoms’ scenarios and characters.

Finally, the evidence presented in this section shows that most informal practices are still topical since the studies conducted by Toffoli & Sockett (2010, 2015) and Kusyk & Sockett (2012), and also highlights the evolution of some. As far as listening is concerned, audio(visual) practices remain the most frequent for students. Not only do students continue to listen more than they read and write, but more and more of them engage in listening to music and watching YouTube, series and films (90% of respondents in 2010 and 98.2% in the present study). Findings also show that it happens more often than before: Toffoli & Sockett found that 50% of students listened to English at least once a week in their 2010's study, and 54% in 2015. This study found that 92% of respondents listen to music at least 1 hour a week, 66% watch series, 52% YouTube and 48% films.

Another interesting finding is that, in 2010, series were starting to become more popular than watching films. The tendency continued to grow and in 2010, 2015 and 2023 (our data), respectively, 21.5%, 39.9% and 91.6% of respondents watch series. Even if we only consider respondents who watch them for over 1 hour a week, the percentage is 60.7%. We are inclined to believe that this was partially due to the new economic model in which people can pay relatively affordable monthly subscriptions to watch an illimited number of series, as demonstrated by the number of respondents who watch series on Netflix (87.8%), Amazon Prime (45.1%), Disney Plus (43.1%), and Canal Plus (15.8%), in addition to the various streaming platforms (41.7%).

Practices involving reading have increased, as 93.9% of respondents claimed to read especially on social media. Writing, on the contrary, continues to be limited to short sentences focusing on interactions such as instant messaging and commenting on social media (Toffoli & Sockett, 2010). Speaking was not investigated in detail in our study, but respondents took the initiative to inform us that they engage in conversations with friends and family (N= 78), mostly face to face, and sometimes through vocal messages and phone calls (N= 11). Not many respondents mentioned speaking online, and most of them who do so are gamers. This had already been observed by Toffoli & Sockett in 2010 and 2015.

Finally, new activities emerged, as 92.3% of respondents watch YouTube videos in English, 63.4% read books, and sometimes listen to Podcasts (50.1%), do sports (23.9%) and do guided meditation (20.9%). Gaming, using apps, singing, watching E-sports and thinking to themselves were also reported as occasional practices.

Having the confirmation that learners engage in informal activities and that series are still a topical issue encourage us to proceed in our research to understand these practices. As Toffoli & Sockett (2015) pointed out, while new activities emerge, some trends stay the same, such as the predominance of listening as a language activity and a preference for interaction rather than reading or writing. This reflection led us to investigate in detail why series are becoming more and more

popular as well as why learners put hours and passion into them. The next section will discuss findings on the motives for language learning and for their engagement in informal practices, followed by a discussion on the connection between the two.

7.2 General Intentions for learning and watching

One way of discussing the role of consciousness in language learning is looking into the degree of intention with which learners engage in informal activities in English. By intention, in this result section, we mean having the desire to accomplish something as an overall objective (Csikszentmihalyi, 2009). The results reported in section 7.1 shed light on the fact that university students engage in various informal activities in English, with a relatively high frequency. This section will explore the reasons for their engagement, based on the hypothesis that students' main motives are socializing (Cross, 2007; Toffoli & Sockett, 2010), entertainment (Csikszentmihalyi, 2009) and language learning.

In view of our focus on series, we considered the hypothesis from two angles (Figure 35). The first one was their motives for learning English in general. The second was their reasons for watching sitcoms, restraining the type of series to sitcoms to encourage them to write precise answers. Our assumption was that there would be a connection between informal practices and learning.

Ten questions in our questionnaire allowed us to collect data on their intentions (Appendix A). On the second page, three questions gathered data on series and sitcoms:

- What are your favorite series? (Write between 1 and 5 examples)
- Click on the Sitcoms (comedy series) that you have already watched at least two episodes (multiple answers possible)
- What do you think of sitcoms (comedy series) in general?

We also asked five questions about viewing in the original language, as well as the use of captions and subtitles:

- Do you watch more English-speaking series (in general) in the original version or a version dubbed in French? (Scale)
- Do you use subtitles/captions? (many possible responses)
- What subtitles/captions do you use the most when watching your series?
- Why did you make these choices (of language and subtitles)
- Do you have the intention to learn English when you watch series in English (VO)?

Finally, in the third page, two questions concerned intentions in learning English and, again, in watching series:

- What are your intentions (your "final" goals) in learning English? (many possible responses)
- Do you watch series in English for entertainment (original version and/or subtitles)?

Our findings are presented in the next subsections.

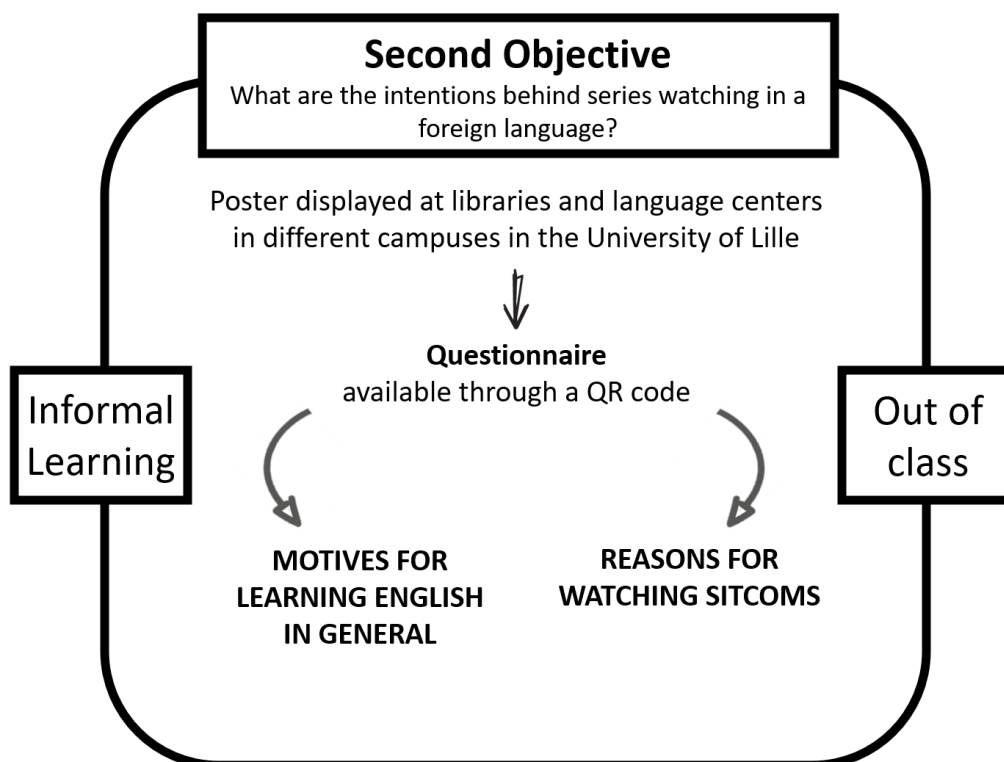


Figure 35 - Second objective and data collection

7.2.1 Motives for learning English

To uncover the motives for learning English, our first question (in appendix A), as shown in Figure 36, was "What are your intentions ("final" goals) in learning English? (several possible answers)". More than half of the respondents chose "to communicate abroad" (86.9%), "to be able to watch series without subtitles" (60.2%), "to feel at ease to read in English" (59.8%), "to be able to communicate with foreigners in my country" (57.1%), "to be able to communicate in my professional environment" (51.7%) and "to feel at ease to do leisure activities in English" (51%). Other reasons mentioned freely by respondents are to live abroad, to make friends, to better understand emotions, humor and irony,

to be bilingual, to start learning another language, to be funny in a foreign language, to take a proficiency test, and to be able to express oneself in more sustained and specialized English.

Our findings corroborate the assumption that communication is a key reason why people learn English in general, as at least 385 respondents (86.9%) declared that they learn English to communicate with others. It is important to note, however, that these answers only provide an initial indication for students' communicative motives. Given that our thesis did not aim to explore intentions from a socio-constructivist perspective, our question had limitations concerning how respondents understand communication. Further research could be done to explore the extent to which these intentions are in line with Cross (2007) and Toffoli & Sockett (2010): Do they participate in informal learning with a goal to communicate to fulfill a need of acceptance in a community and to participate successfully in life, at work, and in groups? This refers to the agency question, learning as action in a social environment. The second approach to communication refers to the communicative competence: to what extent does this communication entail interactions and exchanges with others for intrapersonal and individual needs, such as being able to ask for information when traveling? These are suggestions for future studies.

Another aspect revealed by Figure 36 is what this thesis sought to investigate: the connection between entertainment and learning English. Apart from communicating abroad, answers for communication and informal practices are roughly similar. This shows that being able to partake in leisure activities in a foreign language is a goal in itself. If learners learn English to be able to watch series, is the opposite also true? Do students watch series to learn English?

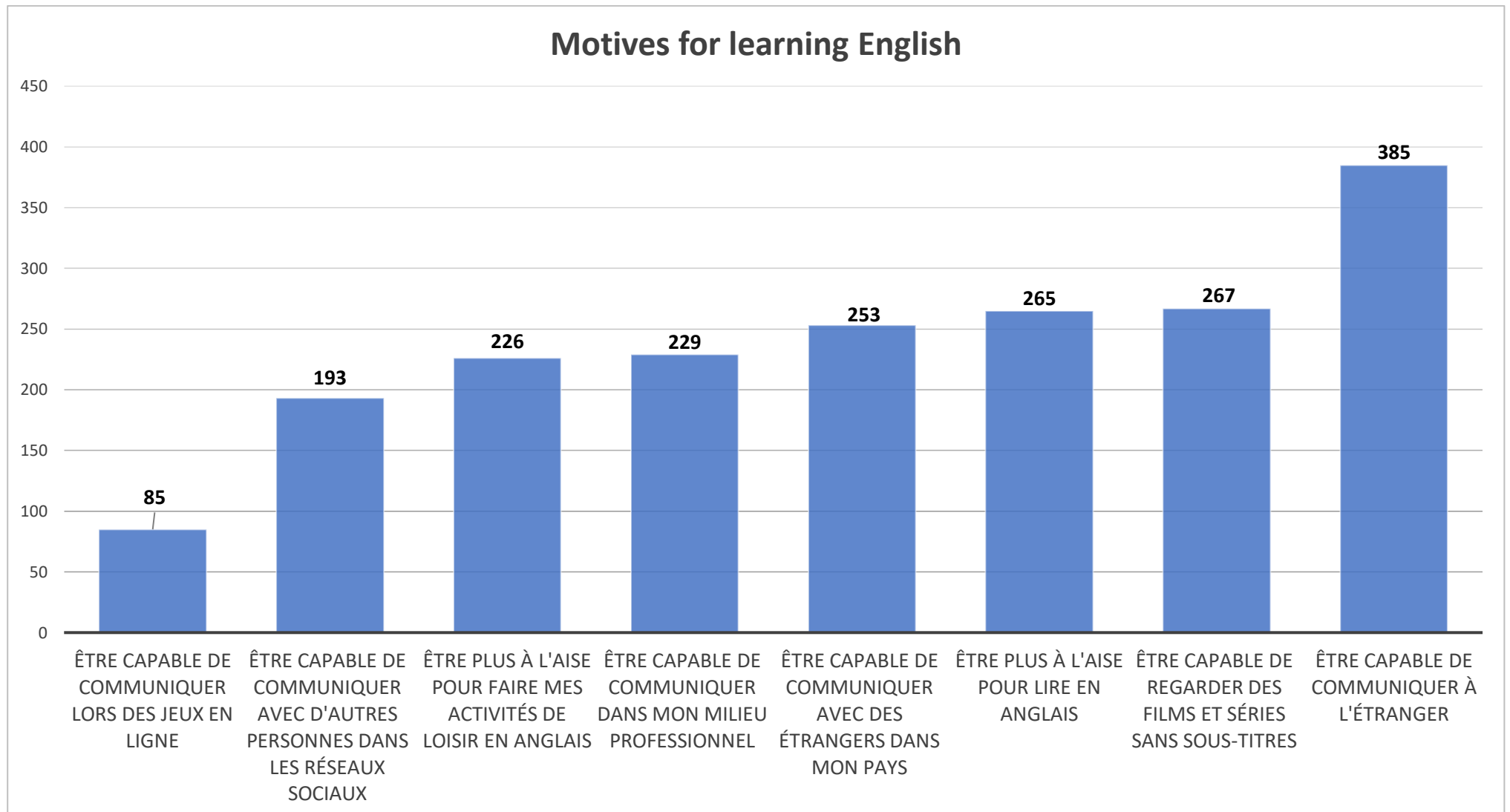


Figure 36 - Motives for learning English

7.2.2 Reasons for watching series

“Je ne sais pas vraiment... c'est devenu comme un réflexe pour moi d'associer fiction/divertissement et l'anglais” (Respondent in the questionnaire).

At this point we have evidence that, in learning English, there is a broader desire to be able to watch series with the original soundtrack. In a similar vein, we questioned the extent to which students have any consciousness that they can learn the language by watching series in English and whether learning is a significant part of their objectives when they engage in viewing. Answers from two questions in the questionnaire provided data for this discussion. The first was “Do you watch English-language series *for entertainment* (in original version, with or without subtitles/captions)?”. Respondents had to choose a number from a scale ranging from 1 to 10, in which 1 is “I totally disagree” and 10 is “I totally agree”. 78.5% of respondents chose options 7 – 10 and 21.4% chose 1 - 6. The second question was “Do you intend to *learn English* when you watch series in English (in original version, with or without subtitles/captions)?”. For this question, 58.9% of respondents chose the highest scores and 41% chose the lowest options.

Figure 37 illustrates their answers and raises three relevant points which will be of great value for our discussion in chapter eight. The first is that almost half of the respondents chose the highest score (10) for entertainment (215 respondents), which gives further evidence to the theory that watching series provides enjoyment. Furthermore, number 10 had the most votes for learning (97), with a fourth of the respondents voting for it. Even though learning had fewer votes than for entertainment, this is an indication that intentionality of learning is part of their informal learning processes. A possible explanation for such results is that when users watch series in the original version the main reason is entertainment (and all the sensations that come with it), but learning may often act as a secondary objective.

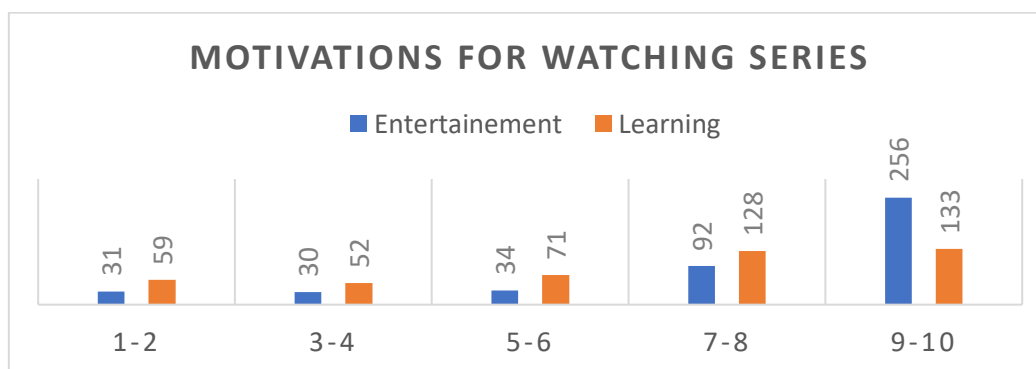


Figure 37 - Motivation for watching series

7.2.3 The use of subtitles and captions

Although choosing to watch series seems to be mainly motivated by the possibility of enjoyment, in which learning can be a secondary goal, the choice of subtitles or captions is likely to be influenced by their desire to learn. Answers to three questions in the questionnaire gave us indications to this assumption: (1) Do you use subtitles and captions? (2) Which type of subtitles do you use the most? (3) Why do you choose to do so? Evidence for the last question was provided by means of an open question and discussion during the interview in the experiment (appendix J). This subsection will provide an analysis of the results.

The first question revealed that most respondents watch series with captions in English but this is not necessarily exclusive. From the 443 answers, 125 respondents watch uniquely with captions, 82 respondents watch only with subtitles in French, 121 declared that they watch with captions or subtitles, depending on the series, and 8 use subtitles in other languages (more details in Figure 38).

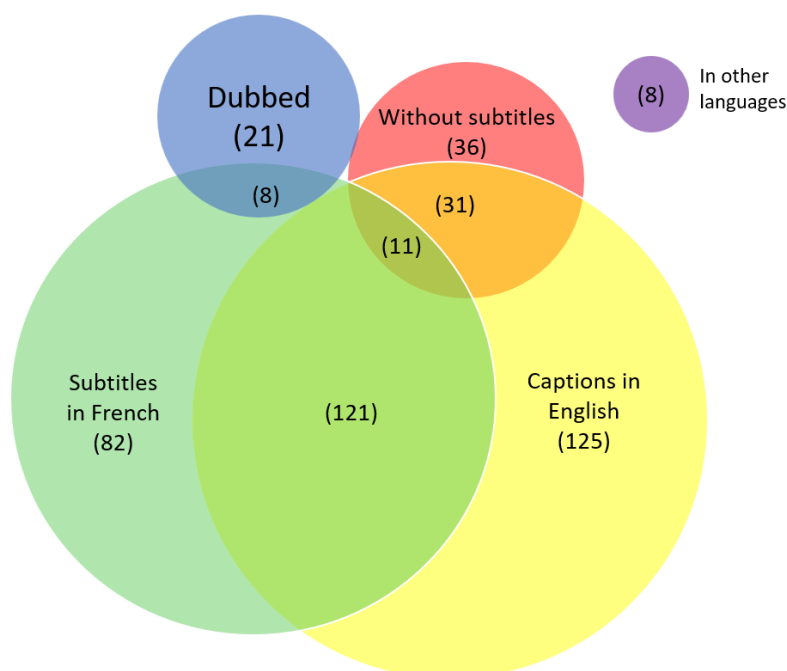


Figure 38 - Do you use subtitles? (multiple answers possible) (N= 443)

Figure 38 also shows that most respondents watch English-speaking series in English, rather than their **dubbed versions**. Seven of those have an A2 level in English and they explained that they watch series in their L1 as it is too difficult to understand, they cannot completely relax when watching

in English (N= 2), they multitask when they watch series (N= 1), or they find it simpler or easier (N= 2). 11 of them are at a B1 level in English and they mostly watched dubbed version out of habit, because they do not have the courage to do it in English or for the reasons already mentioned above. The other three more advanced learners chose dubbed versions because of difficult accents or because they watch series with other people.

Even if all three modalities of subtitles coexist in the lives of the respondents, 46% of them use mostly captions, 41% use mostly subtitles and 13% watch mostly series without subtitles. This shows a slight evolution from Kusyk & Sockett's 2012 article in which respondents preferred subtitles (59%) to captions (28%). Our survey has verified that university students still prefer watching series in the original version. If the series is in English, respondents claimed to hardly ever watch it dubbed to be able to hear the real voice of actors, affirming that it helps to connect with the characters and their emotions, as well as to preserve the subtleties of the dialogues, as demonstrated by some of the answers provided by respondents:

Why did you make these choices (of language and subtitles)?

“Pour entendre les vraies voix des acteurs”.

“Je préfère entendre la voix des acteurs pour que leur ‘acting’ soit complet”.

“Je préfère entendre la voix de l'acteur qui joue directement la scène, je trouve ça plus cohérent et la VF me coupe et me sors de l'ambiance”.

“La série est plus agréable quand c'est en VO”.

“Je regarde toujours en VO que ce soit en anglais ou non car je n'aime pas le décalage entre les mouvements des lèvres et l'audio”.

“Les voix originales sont meilleurs pour la compréhension et j'adhère plus aux personnages”.

“Parce que l'audio doublé en français est mal fait”.

“En VO on ressent mieux les émotions”.

“Je n'aime pas regarder des séries lorsqu'elles sont doublées car je trouve que les émotions sont moins bien transmises, tout est plus surjoué qu'avec les VO”.

“Parce que je veux comprendre mieux l'esprit de la série”.

“Pour garder le côté authentique d'une série anglophone”.

“Je privilégie la langue d'origine des séries car c'est leur langue de conception et d'imagination donc on garde l'essence et la créativité des écrivains de la série. Les versions doublées peuvent être de bonne qualité mais il y aura toujours des écarts de langage, des subtilités et des jeux de mots qui seront perdus par rapport à la VO”.

Respondents declared that they add subtitles and captions to facilitate comprehension, to learn English and for other practical reasons (Figure 39).

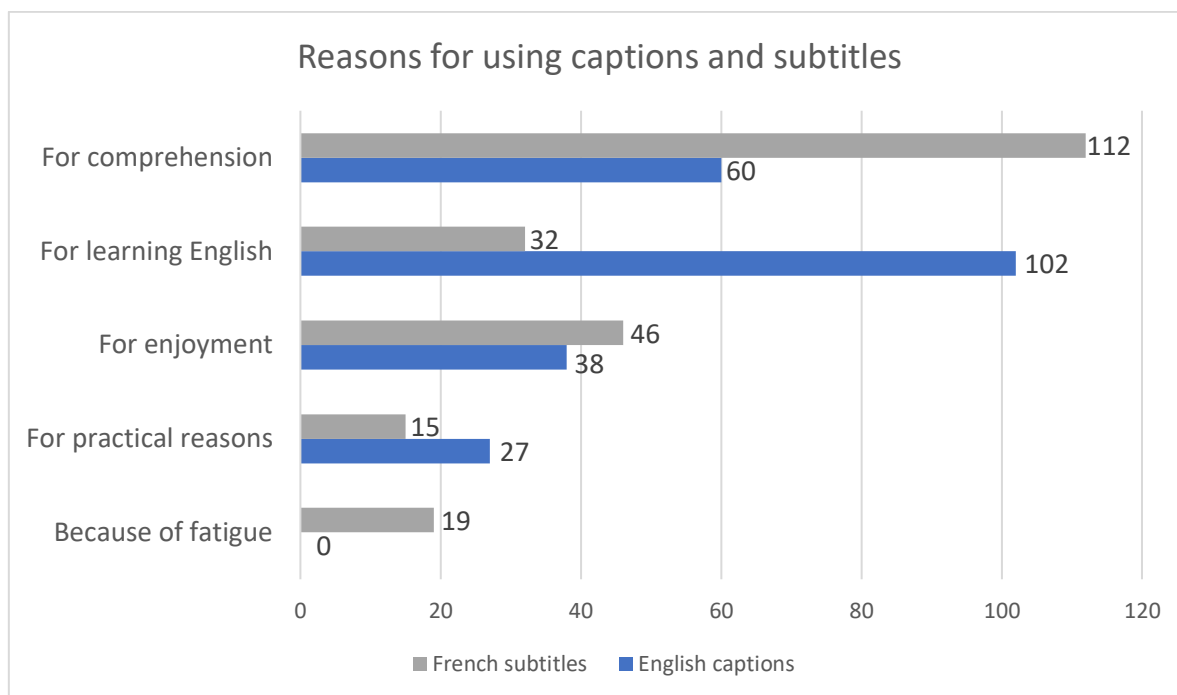


Figure 39 - Reasons for using captions and subtitles

When looking closely at their reasons, we noticed that low levels of proficiency were highly connected with their choice of using **subtitles in French**:

“Parfois sans sous-titres [en français] je n'arrive pas à comprendre car certains contextes de séries sont trop complexes pour ma compréhension”.

“Je préfère mettre des sous-titres car je ne comprends pas tout sans”.

“[Je mets les sous-titres en français] au cas où si je [ne] connais pas un mot je sais ce qu'il veut dire en français”.

This fact has been quantified and can be verified in Figure 40. The lower the proficiency level is, the more learners use subtitles in French: 74.3% of A2 learners, 39.4% of B1, 25.3% of B2 and 20% of C1 and C2.

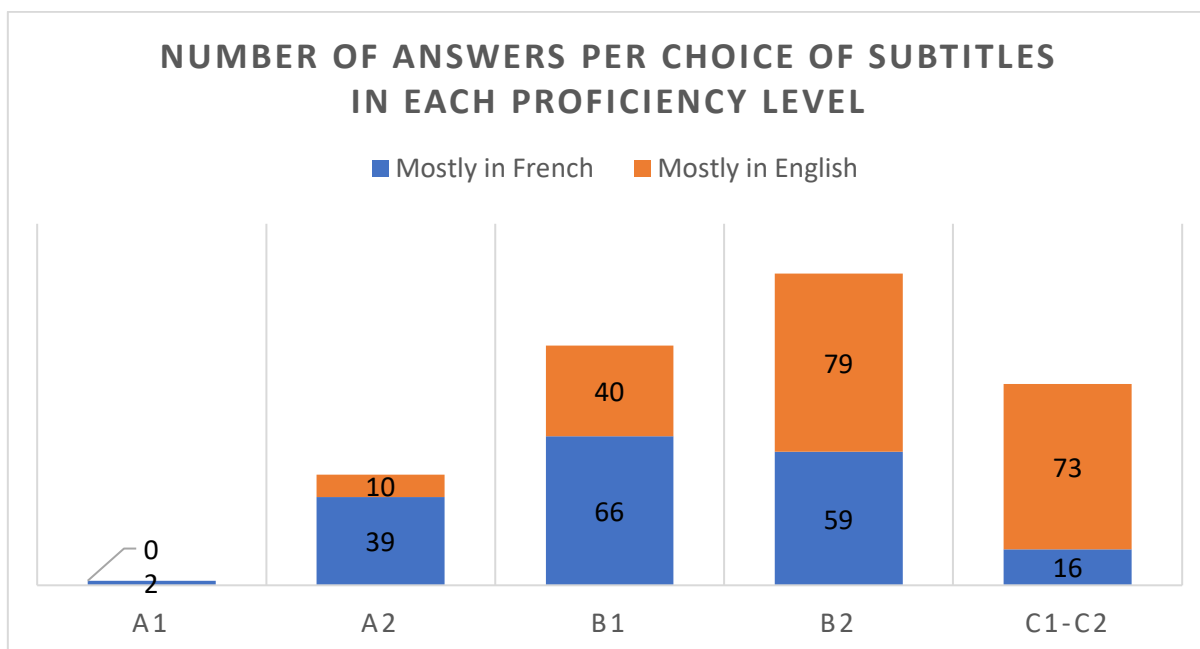


Figure 40 - Number of answers per choice of subtitles in each proficiency level

Those who feel able to watch with captions, often decide to do so with the aim of learning:

“Pour apprendre un minimum”.

“Cela permet de faire travailler son anglais tout en regardant quelque chose que l’on aime”.

“Pour améliorer mon anglais, on apprend mieux en étant complètement immergé”.

“Je mets des sous titres pour gagner du vocabulaire et améliorer ma compréhension”.

“Ma volonté de faire mon niveau d'anglais”.

“Je mets en anglais pour pouvoir apprendre du vocabulaire et les différents accents”.

“Car cela me permet d’améliorer mon anglais”.

“Pour pratiquer ou confirmer ce que je pense avoir entendu”.

“Pour lier la prononciation à l'orthographe”.

“Pour les sous-titres, en anglais lire des mots ou des expressions que je ne connais pas permet de mieux les identifier pour chercher leur signification”.

This has also been supported in data collected during our interviews (extract 12):

[12]

ED: [J’ajoute les sous-titres en anglais] parce que je pense que j'arriverais à mieux enregistrer du vocabulaire ou des expressions ou de la grammaire, voire comment ils construisent leurs phrases. Visuellement, c'est plus parlant.

Captions are also chosen to help with comprehension, to make sure they do not miss anything from the dialogue:

- “Les sous titres [en anglais] me rassurent dans ma compréhension orale, même si j'ai parfaitement compris ce que j'entends, voir l'écrit en dessous m'assure la compréhension”.
- “J'aime entendre la voix originale mais j'ai encore besoin de sous-titres [en anglais] parfois, cela dit je comprends tout en anglais”.
- “Quand je suis seule et que je comprends bien je mets les sous-titres en anglais pour me rassurer”.
- “Parfois je n'entends pas forcément ce qu'ils se disent à l'écran ainsi les sous titres [en anglais] me permettent de capter davantage ce qui se passe dans la série”.
- “Pour comprendre même les chuchotements”.
- “Je préfère les sous-titres en anglais pour mieux comprendre certaines phrases, ou s'il y a du bruit autour pour pouvoir lire plutôt qu'écouter”.
- “Dans le cas où je comprends pas ce que les personnes disent oralement”.
- “[Je mets les sous-titres] quand manger m'empêche d'entendre les dialogues”.

Reasons for adding captions were also given by students during the interview, illustrated in extract 13:

[13]

ML: ... Quand je regarde, j'ai pas forcément d'objectif d'apprentissage, juste de me dire ok, j'ai regardé ça. Est-ce que j'ai bien compris? Est-ce qu'il y a des choses qui m'ont posé problème? Par exemple, il y a des mots que je ne comprends pas, je vais aller regarder sur internet ce que ça veut dire, et cetera et possiblement après quand je le revoit une autre fois, je me dis ah celui-là je l'ai vu. Et du coup le but c'est de mieux comprendre à chaque fois, de me dire ah ok, ça j'ai tout compris.

Their choices also seem to depend on the series. When the accent becomes a barrier, or the vocabulary seems too advanced, some respondents prefer to add captions:

- “J'évite [les sous titres], à moins qu'il y ait un accent particulier où une diction rapide”.
- “[Je les ajoute] lorsque l'accent est trop prononcé (sous-titres anglais)”.
- “Ça dépend des moments et de la difficultés des accents (irlandais, nord de l'Angleterre par exemple)”.
- “Cela dépend du type de série, parfois les sous titres anglais pour des séries de fictions par exemple, car elles sont compliquées pour moi à comprendre. Ou série spécialisée, dans des hôpitaux par exemple (avec beaucoup de vocabulaire que je ne connais pas), ça permet de voir l'orthographe de certains mots”.
- “Ça dépend des séries. Quand il y a beaucoup de vocabulaire très spécifique je préfère mettre les sous-titres en français”.

Evidence for this has also been found in the interview [extract 14]:

[14]

ED: [Je n'ai mets les sous-titres] en français ou en anglais, ça dépend. Par exemple, quand c'est une série que je pense pouvoir comprendre facilement, je regarde avec les sous-titres en anglais, mais par exemple je regarde aussi Mind Hunter et comme c'est spécialisé dans le domaine criminologie et psychologie, je me suis dit "je vais

regarder avec les sous-titres en français parce que ce sera sûrement plus facile pour comprendre".

Choosing subtitles or captions also relies on practical reasons, such as fatigue and easiness in finding them online:

"Ça dépend de mes humeurs".

"[Je mets des sous titres en français] par paresse".

"[Je mets des sous titres en anglais] parce que sans sous titres ça épuise ma concentration trop vite sinon je regarderais sans".

"Je préfère regarder [avec] les sous titres anglais pour ne pas à avoir à être concentrée à 100% tout le temps".

"Car je n'aime pas mélanger l'audio anglais avec la lecture en français".

"Je n'arrive pas trop à conjuguer deux langues donc je préfère avoir le son et le texte dans la même langue".

"Je préfère avoir les sous titres dans la langue que j'écoute".

"Les différences entre la langue parlée et la langue des sous titres me distrait donc je regarde avec les sous titres de la VO. La plupart du temps j'ignore les sous titres mais dans certains cas l'audio est mal mixé ou l'accent m'est trop inconnu".

"C'est plus facile d'écouter ce que l'on lit plutôt que de lire la traduction de ce qu'on écoute".

"Je préfère regarder en VO, et lorsque les sous-titres sont en français j'ai du mal à suivre l'histoire".

"Les sous-titres anglais sont correctement faits, plus riches".

"Because English is more easy to read, English words are shorter than French words".

"C'est aussi les sous titres les plus facilement trouvables sur internet".

When it comes to watching series in other languages, some prefer to have subtitles in their native language, while others to use captions in English, which are easier to find. In some cases, the only subtitles available are in English:

"Ça dépend trop de la langue de fond. Audio Japonais / Koreén-> ST Français ; Anglais-> anglais".

"Des sous-titres en anglais quand la série est en anglais et des sous-titres en français quand la série est dans une autre langue".

"Quand je regarde une série en VO anglais, c'est moins perturbant de mettre des sous-titres en français car ceux en anglais ne matchent pas toujours l'audio. Si la série est dans une autre langue je peux mettre des sous-titres en anglais si ceux en français ne sont pas disponibles".

"En français généralement mais j'utilise ceux en anglais lorsqu'ils ne sont pas disponibles".

"Souvent les séries que je regarde n'ont pas de sous-titre français disponibles et ne sont pas en anglais".

"Je suis plus série en français mais les sous titres c'est quand je regarde des animé qui sont du coup en japonais ou en mandarin, et en fonction de ce qui sort en premier j'ai plus l'habitude de prendre les sous titres en anglais".

"Les séries que je regarde prennent trop de temps à être disponibles en français d'où les sous titres en anglais. De plus les sites sur lequel je regarde sont des sites anglais (vive les kdramas)".

“Cela dépend évidemment de la langue, s’il s’agit d’une langue que je ne parle pas je vais plus souvent regarder avec des sous-titres français mais la plupart du temps les sous-titres seront en anglais”.

“Je regarde beaucoup de séries asiatiques avec sous-titres anglais”.

“Je regarde souvent des séries dans des langues étrangères (sans compter l’anglais) et j’ai donc pris l’habitude de mettre tout le temps des sous titres en anglais”.

These data culminate in the finding that the choice of subtitles may vary according to the difficulty of the series and fatigue, but as learners become more proficient, they will opt to substitute subtitles for captions, aiming at watching series without captions one day. This analysis confirms Vanderplank's 1996 observation that captions foster conscious monitoring of language and the choice of adding them relates to learning intentions. It also supports Price's conclusion (1983) that using captions is less productive for lower proficiency levels and can generate negative feelings towards the activity, which explains the choices of our respondents (Huang & Eskey, 1999). As for proficient users, they alternate their use of captions or no captions according to the series and to their objectives during the viewing (Vanderplank, 2016, p. 72).

We should also consider the contribution that these data give in terms of Flow. Our hypothesis is that language learning is part of series viewing at different levels and many viewers adapt their strategies according to their proficiency level, which is operationalized in the use of subtitles and captions. If a difficulty in understanding the message would impede Flow (Sherry, 2004), it is fair to assume that learners adjust their choices according to the media and throughout time. Adding captions is also a way of having control (Csikszentmihalyi et al., 2005) and fulfilling the need for autonomy (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

In the interview, a few students mentioned that, at first, they watched with subtitles, but they soon switched to captions so they would make an effort to understand what was said in English as well as practice written comprehension (participants LC, FT and VP in appendix J), illustrated in exchange 15.

[15]

LC: [Aujourd’hui] j’étais attiré par les sous-titres en fait.

Researcher: Et c'est quelque chose que tu fais aussi quand tu regardes des films et des séries à la maison?

LC: Oui, je me rends compte que plus l'épisode dure et moins j'arrive à faire cet effort de... Je regarde la scène, j'essaie de comprendre et si jamais je [ne] comprends pas, je regarde les sous-titres. Et du coup, plus ça dure et moins j'ai cette capacité à faire l'effort de... Je regarde le[s] sous-titres en dernier recours en fait. ... Pour essayer de... D'apprendre... de me rendre compte si j'arrive à comprendre sans les sous-titres. Voilà.

This seems to be a technique of progression chosen by learners demonstrated in Figure 40 and in a few comments left by respondents, who said that in order “to continue their learning journey” they either try to not to look at them as much, otherwise some have the aim of “getting used to the English captions with the intention to switch to no captions”, or to have already been doing that.

Evidence to this claim was also found in answers in the questionnaire. All 36 respondents who declared not to add subtitles or captions indicated that they choose to do it to learn the language. Three of them (8%) have an A2 level:

“Cela me permet de progresser dans mon apprentissage”

“Pour améliorer la compréhension”

“Écouter en VO avec les sous-titres est une expérience plus authentique concernant la série, mais il est plus difficile de se plonger dans cette dernière lorsqu'il faut se concentrer à la fois sur la lecture, l'image et le son.”

Six of them (16.6%) have a B1 level and they do not add captions either because they want to work on listening and focus on the images, or because they do not appreciate the fact that some captions are not identical to what the actor is saying. 11 respondents (30.5%) were B2 and declared that they add captions to practice listening (N= 2) or that they do not need captions anymore because they understand everything (N= 3). The same arguments were given by 15 respondents with C1-C2 levels (41.6%):

“Parce que j'ai les capacités à comprendre la VO et maintenant j'ai du mal à mettre les doublages, je les trouve horribles.”

“Je connais assez bien l'anglais, ça évite de me distraire de l'image. Des fois je mets en anglais s'il y a un accent difficile à comprendre. ”

“Regarder sans sous titres me permet de me concentrer sur l'action au lieu de lire l'écran.”

“Au début, des sous titres en anglais pour m'aider à percevoir plus exactement ce qui était dit mais je n'ai plus besoin de sous-titres dorénavant car je suis capable de comprendre ce qui est dit.”

The other two respondents were native speakers.

All in all, given the number of people who watch series with English captions, it is fair to assume that the desire to learn, manifested in the choice of caption, is proof of intentionality.

7.2.4 Appreciation of sitcoms

One of our hypotheses was that watching sitcoms could lead students to a state of Flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 2009). We asked students to give their opinions about sitcoms in general to know more about what they think about sitcoms and how they feel when viewing. To that question, respondents gave mostly positive answers (315), as shown in Figure 41: 54% declared that they like or love them, 13% like them with exceptions or reservations, and 6% rather emphasized their advantages for learning.

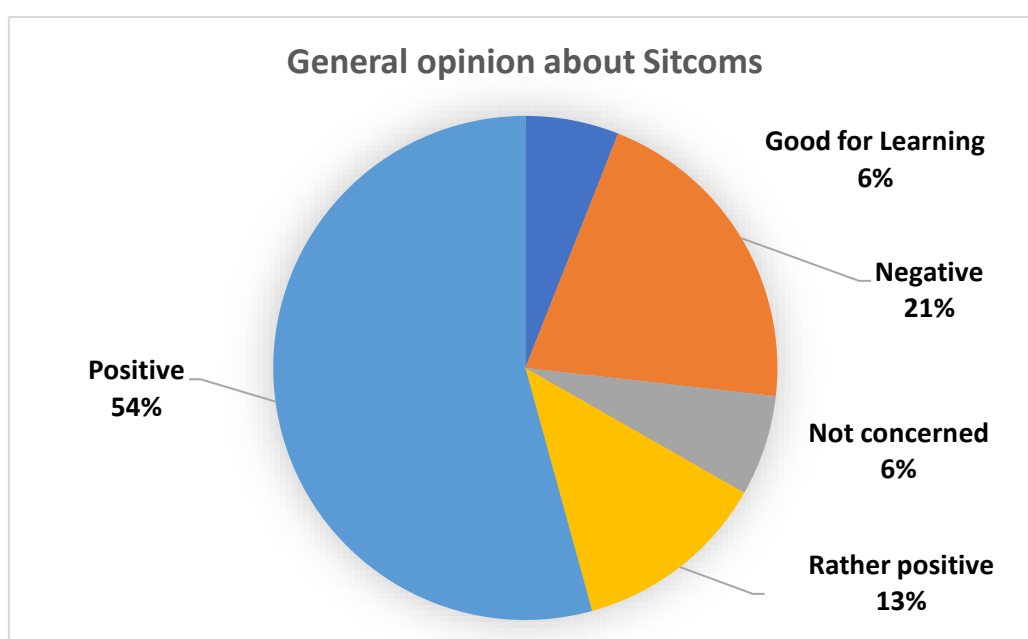


Figure 41 - General opinion about Sitcoms

Most of the responders who gave positive feedback (see appendix K) *like* sitcoms (109) or *love* them (69), using phrases such as *c'est bien*, *divertissant*, *sympa*, *intéressant*, *amusant*, *agréable* and *plaisant*, for the first; and *j'aime beaucoup*, *j'adore*, *c'est super*, *genial*, *excellent*, *super*, *top*, *trop bien*, *vraiment cool*, *incroyable* and *le meilleur* for the second (in orange in Figure 42). We decided to ask in detail the reasons why students watch sitcoms to have a better picture before conducting the experiment that is explored in section 8.3. Three categories emerged from their answers: *enjoyment*, *format* and *learning*.

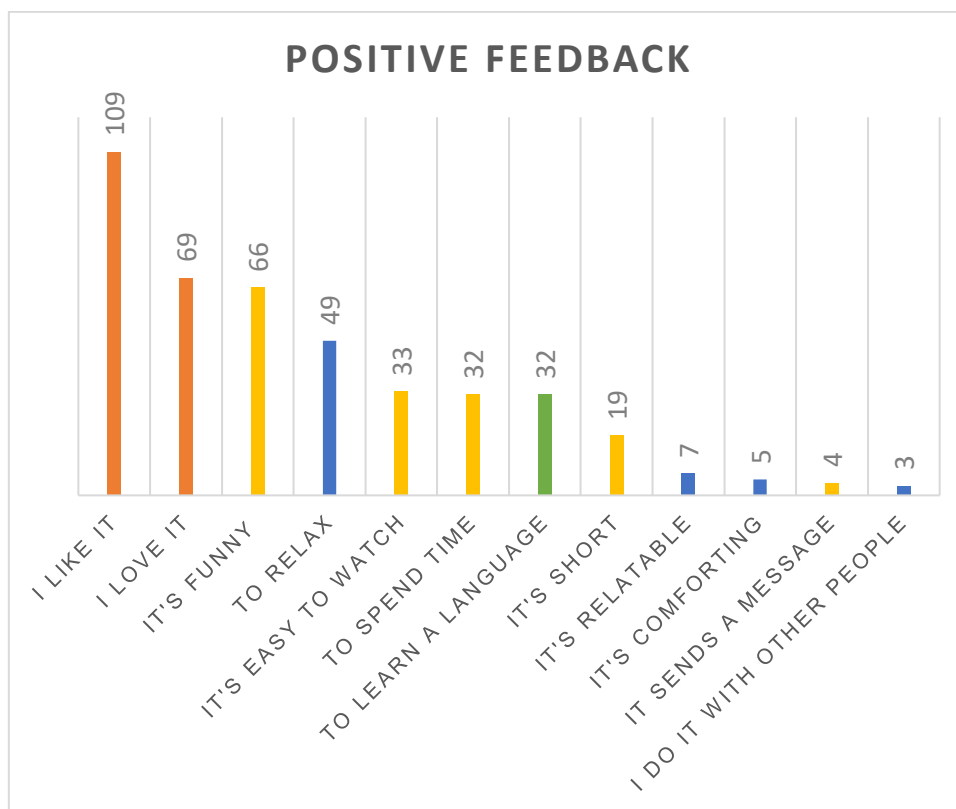


Figure 42 - Positive feedback

The first one is **enjoyment**: the feelings and sensations provided by series (in blue in Figure 42). 49 people wrote that Sitcoms are perfect for **relaxing**. They used words such as *relaxer, reposer l'esprit, décompresser, détente, apaisant* and *sans prise de tête*. Other commentaries are closely related to the feeling of **comfort** (*confort, rassurant, réconfortant*). One respondent wrote “C'est ce que tu regardes en mangeant des cookies et un chocolat chaud sous un plaid en mode larve”. Respondents also declared that they feel like they know the characters, that they can **relate** to them (N=2), that they learn to “understand their choices” and that they “get attached to them” (N= 4). Respondents said that they know what to expect from the characters because they are “immutable” (N= 3), some reactions are repeated throughout the seasons and the scenes depict **real life/** every-day situations (N= 13). The social aspect was also mentioned by three people, who watch sitcoms with their family.

The second category: the **format** plays a role in their choice to watch Sitcoms (in yellow in Figure 42). 30 people indicated that sitcoms are easy to watch and to understand, describing their content as “**light**” and “**positive**”, “perfect for every type of person”, which seems to be a good option “**after a long day of work**” or “when we are tired”. This aspect is connected to the previous category as relaxation and comfort can be linked with the lightness of the scenarios and the exchanges among characters.

Another facet of sitcoms is that they are **short** (19 mentions) lasting between 20 and 30 minutes, great for spending time “in between classes” and “**while eating**” (7 answers). They also mentioned that the episodes are not necessarily linked to each other, so we “don't need to have seen the previous episodes to get caught up in the story”. 22 people wrote that sitcoms are perfect to pass the time, especially because they are easy, light and short, using words such as *passer le temps*, *se distraire*, *évasion*, *se changer les idées* and *faire une pause*. Six other people play them without paying much attention, when doing chores or as background noise so that they “won't feel alone”.

During the final interview, some participants also highlighted positive feelings towards sitcoms, such as in extracts 16 and 17:

[16]

JM: [...] Je pense que les comédies, disons que souvent c'est des épisodes qui sont assez courts et il n'y a pas énormément de... Enfin c'est pas qu'il n'y a pas énormément de dialogues, mais il y a peut être moins de... Les textes sont peut être un peu moins longs. Donc j'ai quand même compris. Mais je pense que sur des longues séries... par exemple, en ce moment je regarde Sherlock Holmes et en fait c'est des épisodes d'une heure trente. Donc là à mon avis, ce serait compliqué de regarder qu'en anglais.

[17]

PH: J'ai trouvé [ces sitcoms] plus simples par rapport à "The crown" parce que c'est plus... enfin, c'est moins formel, c'est... J'ai l'impression, c'est plus de l'improvisation ou c'est comme si c'était une vraie conversation entre acteurs et... moi j'ai trouvé ça légèrement plus simple, par exemple pour "Friends" et pour la dernière, c'était plus simple de suivre parce que ça ressemblait par exemple à une vraie situation plutôt qu'à un film où on avait vraiment l'impression que... Que c'est plus... que c'est moins réel je trouve.

Another key interest of sitcoms is their **humor**. 60 people wrote that sitcoms are funny (*drôle*, *marrant*, *comédie*, *humour*, *rire*), and that often they send a message, as represented in the following quotes:

« C'est intéressant quand elles arrivent à faire passer des messages »
 « Ils véhiculent des messages et des façons de voir les choses intéressantes et avec humour »
 « [Elles sont] divertissantes et permettent parfois de parler de sujets importants de manière légère »
 « C'est drôle et pour la plupart elles sont différentes permet de traiter des sujets sociaux de façon humoristique (permet la réflexion plus facilement peut-être) »

Finally, 22 people made a reference to **learning**, mostly connected to everyday vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, English or languages, culture and humor, as well as developing skills in English (in green in Figure 42). This confirms that some users are aware of the added value for language

learning. Some learners choose to watch in English based on the belief that it will improve their language proficiency, whether they put effort into learning or not. This awareness of the possibility of learning and the conscious choice to watch in the target language might be an indication of intentionality. Some examples can be found in extracts 18 and 19:

[18]

JW: En fait, je choisis en français par habitude. Anglais, c'est si vraiment je veux travailler mon anglais. Mais sinon français, c'est mon habitude.

[19]

ML : [Je mets] les sous-titres en anglais. Comme ils parlent vite, etc. Je préfère garder les sous-titres en anglais pour m'entraîner à comprendre.

Despite the largely favorable feedback received, 21% of respondents declared that they do not watch or like sitcoms. Most of them simply wrote that they do not like them much (*je n'aime pas / pas trop / pas beaucoup / pas forcément / plus, ce n'est pas mon genre / mon style / mon truc, ce n'est pas la meilleure chose/ ma tasse de thé / ce qui m'intéresse / ce que m'attire le plus, je n'adhère pas à / je n'apprécie pas ce genre, je ne suis pas très fan, ce n'accroche pas souvent*) or that except for one sitcom, they do not watch other sitcoms. The reason why some respondents do not to watch sitcoms (and some mentioned reservations towards them) is the pre-recorded laughter old sitcoms play after a joke (26 answers). Some other remarks made by people who don't like sitcoms is the fact that they do not find it funny (21 answers), there are too many seasons or too many episodes (10), that they are repetitive (7), annoying (5) or not interesting (3).

Overall, the general feedback concerning sitcoms is positive, supporting the assumption that it is compelling for many students. The enjoyment it may provide, reported by respondents, reinforces our hypothesis that sitcoms can stimulate Flow. Figure 43 shows the most frequent words used by respondents who watch sitcoms¹¹⁰. Many students who choose to watch sitcoms in English during their free time, consider it to be “great fun”, “the best”, “my favorite type of series” and “the basis”, highlighting the enjoyment they find and the many reasons why they do it. The pleasure described suggests that they often enter into a state of Flow, in which they “empty their minds”, “forget about everything else” and “escape from reality”, as they claimed. According to their answers, many of them become absorbed and only the stimuli matters (Csikszentmihalyi, 2009).

¹¹⁰ Data available in the answers to the question “Que pensez-vous des sitcoms (séries de comédie) en général?” in appendix K.

and interaction have a relevant place in learning. It also reveals that informal practices can be a goal: people may learn English to broaden their access to their leisure activities.

It has been established that students want to become fairly proficient in order to engage in leisure activities in English. Interestingly, evidence shows that to achieve such proficiency, students engage in hours of practice of English informally. One of the preferred practices is watching series, and when questioned why they watch sitcoms, precisely, they reported that the enjoyment they feel and the learning opportunities are closely associated, despite the fact that the answers to the questionnaire were unable to provide information as to how these motives interact.

Sitcoms are particularly relevant for learning and for enjoyment because of the format: they are short, so students can watch them frequently; easy to understand, so students do not need to be proficient users to enjoy them; simple, so students do not need to make too much effort and concentration to understand the story; they are also funny, so students can unwind. This compelling activity (Krashen, 1982) and pleasant state is likely to conduct the person to a state of Flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 2009), which is believed to foster learning.

As far as captions are concerned, we found that choosing to watch series seems to be mainly motivated by the possibility of enjoyment, in which learning could be a secondary goal, the choice of subtitles or captions is likely to be mostly influenced by their desire to learn. First of all, 95.2% of respondents watch English-speaking series in English, rather than their dubbed versions. Secondly, most respondents watch series with captions in English, but this is not necessarily exclusive. From the 443 answers, 125 respondents watch solely with captions, 82 respondents watch only with subtitles in French, 121 stated they watch with captions or subtitles, depending on the series, and 8 use subtitles in other languages.

Respondents declared that they add subtitles and captions to facilitate comprehension, to learn English and for other practical reasons (such as availability their online). Their choices also seem to depend on the series. When the accent becomes a barrier, or the vocabulary seems too advanced, some respondents prefer to add captions or subtitles. When looking closely at their answers, we noticed that low levels of proficiency were highly connected with their choice of using subtitles in French: The lower the proficiency level is, the more learners use subtitles in French: 74.3% of A2 learners, 39.4% of B1, 25.3% of B2 and 20% of C1 and C2.

These data culminate in the finding that the choice of subtitles may vary according to the difficulty of the series and fatigue, but as the learners become proficient, they will opt to substitute subtitles for captions, aiming at one day watching series without captions one day. This analysis confirms Vanderplank's 1996 observation that captions foster conscious monitoring of language and the choice of adding them are connected with learning intentions. It also supports Price's conclusions (1983) that using captions is less productive for lower proficiency levels and can generate negative

feelings towards the activity, which explains the choices of our respondents (Huang & Eskey, 1999). As for proficient users, they alternate their use of captions or no captions according to the series and to their objectives in viewing (Vanderplank, 2016, p. 72).

All things considered, enjoyment is a key element to why students engage in viewing in English. This feeling can lead to a state of Flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 2009), which may make students allocate substantial hours to these activities, creating immersion conditions. Thus, this corresponds to an ideal situation for learning (Donohoe, 2022; Krashen, 1982; Sanz, 2014; Yang, 2016), and our study provided evidence that many respondents were aware of the possible learning effects of watching series in English and they seem to have learning as one of the goals when engaging in informal activities.

It is reasonable to say that while communication and enjoyment are important reasons for engaging in informal learning, they are not the only ones. We can now postulate that there is consciousness as a global intention of learning in informal situations. How does this overall objective translate into action? The next section will analyze data from consciousness as an intention in a more specific scenario: intentionality before engaging in a particular activity and its role in vocabulary learning.

7.3 Vocabulary learning

This section will present the main findings related to the third objective of this thesis which was to investigate the role of intention in learning *expressive* fixed expressions when watching sitcoms. More precisely, how aiming to learn expressions can influence the acquisition process when compared to subjects who watch just for entertainment.

The participants in this phase were volunteers from the University of Lille who, during their weekly English class, were *invited* to take part in the experiment. In class, they could choose between either taking three tests (the VLT, the VKS and the multiple-choice test, MCT, for 40 minutes) or leaving class earlier and not participate in the experiment. Participants were asked to estimate their level in English (in appendix B) and had the option of providing their university email address to be contacted by the researcher (in appendix D).

In total, 387 students agreed to take the tests. Following the test correction of all students who claimed to have a B1-B2 level in English, 146 (B1-B2) were contacted by email, which meant 37.7% of the initial potential participants. In this email (in section 6.2), the researcher invited them to a quasi-experiment (experiment henceforth) which was a 2-hour appointment for data collection on the

viewing of series with an eye-tracker, comprehension questions and an interview. They could choose from various 2-hour time slots within a 3-week period.

Forty-five students chose a time slot and a language center (out of three). They were majors in Cinema (N= 1), Marketing (N= 1), Book trade (N= 1), Economy (N= 2), Sociology (N= 2), Theater (N= 2), Mathematics (N = 7), Psychology (N= 15), and Language Studies (N= 14). Before the appointment, they were asked to send the results of their ELAO test that they had done at the beginning of the year. Those who had not taken the test were given a code and asked to take it before the meeting.

The aim of this first part of the experiment was to provide evidence to permit the answering of the question 'To what extent can having a goal in mind help foster vocabulary learning? So, in the language center, participants watched 40 minutes of the selected scenes from sitcoms, followed by the two posttests (Figure 44).

The subsections below will detail results from the tests (VLT, comprehension questions, VKS and multiple-choice), discuss particularities of the expressions that may have played a role in learning, as well as a reflection on the role of intentionality based on our findings.

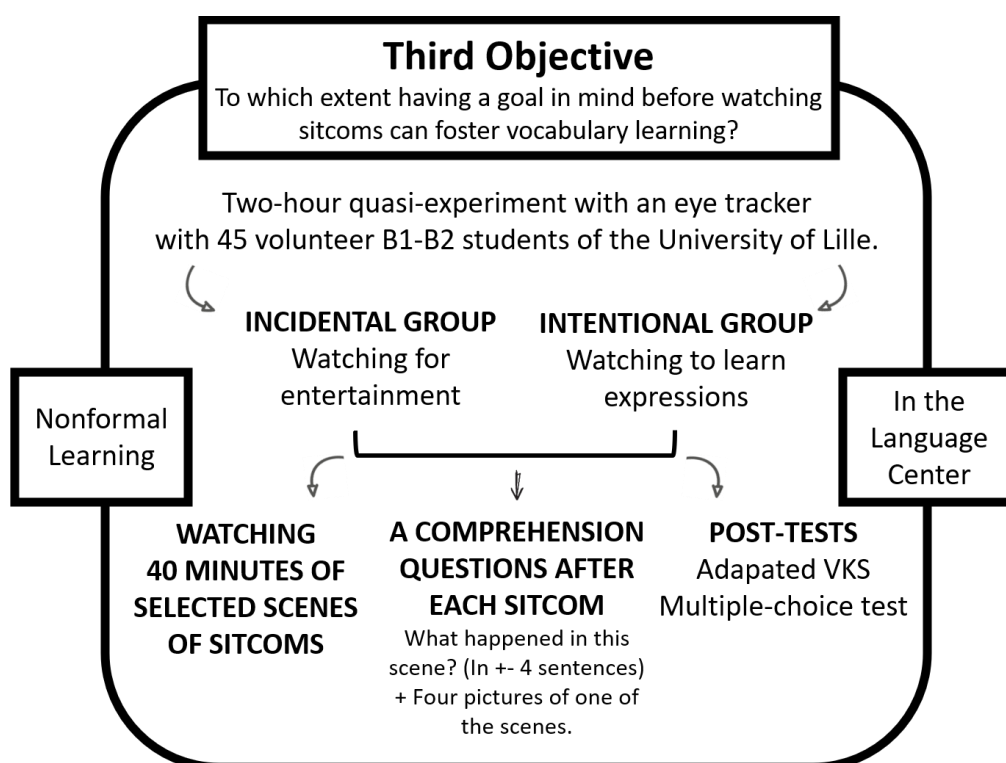


Figure 44 - Third objective and data collection

7.3.1 Results of the Vocabulary Level Test

The correction of the Vocabulary Level Test (VLT) done by of the 45 volunteers showed that participants who were at a B2 level had slightly higher scores in all vocabulary levels, but all participants, across the board, scored at least 13 points out of 18 in the 2k and 3k levels (Figure 45).

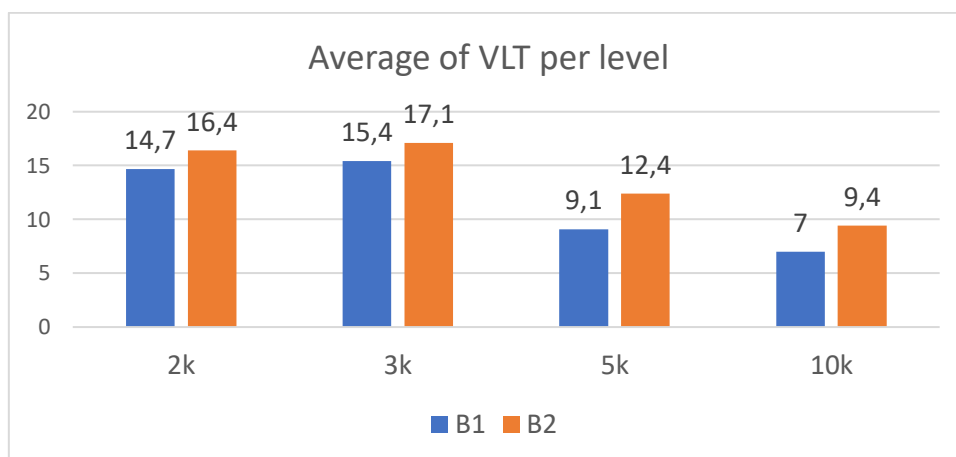


Figure 45 - Average pf VLT per level (18 points per level)

The scores in the incidental and the intentional group were similar (Table 21Table 21 - Mean and Median in Incidental and Intentional groups), meaning that the scores of one group were not significantly better than the other.

	2k	3k	5k	10k
Mean μ Incidental	15,5	16	11	8,4
Mean μ Intentional	16	16.5	11.4	8.6
Median x Incidental	16	17	10.5	8.5
Median x Intentional	17	17	12	9

Table 21 - Mean and Median in Incidental and Intentional groups

As seen in section 4.1.3, coverage of the 2k and 3k band is expected from participants to learn from viewing (Laufer, 1989; Nation, 2006; van Zeeland & Schmitt, 2012; Webb & Rodgers, 2009), for our experiment, that counted scenes with a low difficulty level (95% could be understood with knowledge of the 2k – 3k level), as attested to in subsection 6.2.2.1.4 Description of scenes.

7.3.2 Initial knowledge of expressions

The results of the pre-tests were analyzed so that we could identify which expressions were already known to the participants. In the recall test (appendix C), students could assess their own knowledge on a 5-point scale so that they would feel more comfortable trying to give a definition/description/translation even if they were not completely sure or if they were afraid of making mistakes (by choosing option 4 instead of 5). Contrary to what literature has suggested until now, we decided to grade the tests 0 for those who couldn't provide the meaning of the expression (translation, description, and eventually its use, the context) and 1 for those who could, so that the scores from the recognition and recall tests could be compared in a binary system.

As shown in Figure 46, *Get over it* was the only expression that most participants could explain (meaning recall).

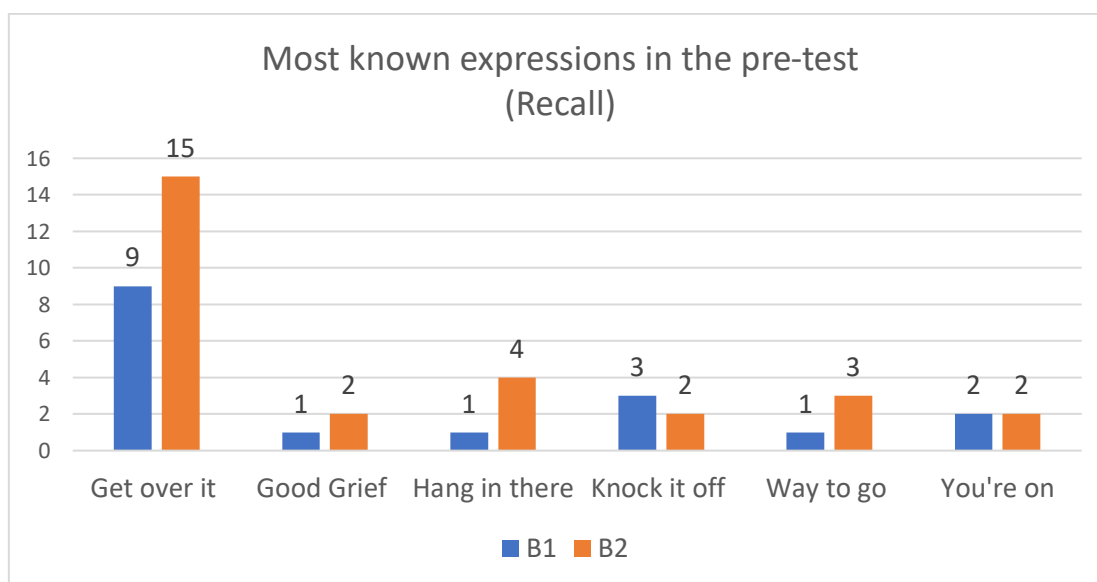


Figure 46 - Most known expressions in the pre-test (recall)

Among the 45 participants, a few incorrect definitions were given for the expressions in the recall test, resulting in a score of 0. For **Way to go**, some participants (N= 15) chose options 4 or 5 and gave a translation based on the word 'way', such as *c'est une façon de faire* (N= 2), *c'est ce qu'il faut faire* (N= 2), *un long chemin à parcourir* (N= 2), *c'est le bon chemin/voie* (N= 2) or 'go', such as *être en train de partir* (N= 1), *c'est le moment de partir* (N= 1), *allons-y* (N= 4), *il faut aller dans cette direction* (N= 1). For the expression **Knock it off**, incorrect answers (N= 6) were closely related to the meaning of the word 'knock', such as *hit*, *écrase*, *balance-le* (N= 3). Other translations given were *achever une tâche* (N= 1), *sortir se divertir* (N= 1) and *tu vas y arriver* (N= 1).

For **Hang in there**, translations also were given based on the meaning of the verb, such as *reste/attend là* (N= 7), *met toi là-bas* (N= 2), *se balancer* (N= 1), *accroche-toi* (N= 1) and *laisse-le là* (N= 2), or for its resemblance with phrasal verbs such as hang out or hang on: *sortir dans un lieu* (N= 1), *nous partons* (N= 1) and *l'll come in a second* (N= 1). One learner translated it as *pour décrocher ou pour se garer* (N= 1). **You're on** was translated as *tu es dans la bonne direction/voie* (N= 7), *tu y es* (encouragement) (N= 2), *tu as compris* (N= 1), *stunning* (N= 1), *on va le faire* (N= 1), or confused with the expressions you're up, you're in or there you are: *c'est à toi* (N= 3), *tu es dans l'équipe* (N= 2), *tu es là* (N= 3), respectively. The translations for **Good grief** (N= 5) was often based on the adjective: *bonne pêche*, *bon argument*, *bon deuil*, *bon écrit* or *to be talented*. Finally, three incorrect translations were given to **Get over it**: *Sors de là*, *cela ne te regarde pas*, *fini-le*.

When it comes to the recognition test, *Get over it* (N= 28), *Knock it off* (N=16), and *You're on* (N= 16) were the most recognized expressions before the experiment began (Figure 47). The fact that these learners recalled or recognized the expressions in the pre-test was taken into consideration when analyzing the subsequent data.

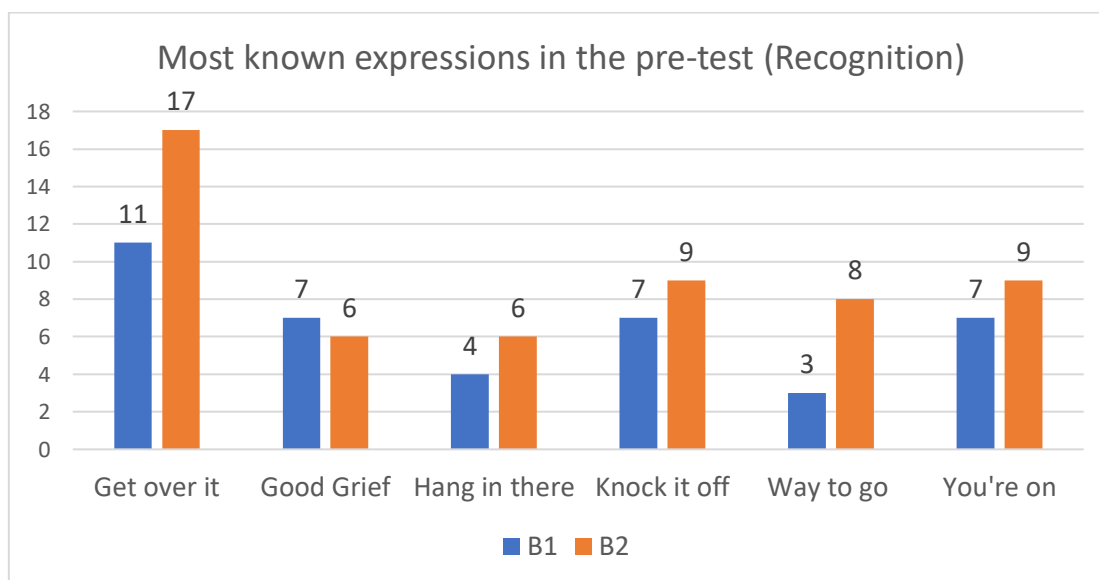


Figure 47 - Most known expressions in the pre-test (recognition)

To better understand their knowledge of the target expressions, we analyzed two corpora and compared their frequency with the initial knowledge in the pre-tests. We sought to investigate to what extent the frequent use of the target sequences in real life (COCA) or in TV (TV corpus) could be correlated to their knowledge before the experiment (Table 22).

Expression	Frequency of figurative meaning in COCA	Frequency of figurative meaning in the TV corpus	Total frequency of figurative meanings	Initial knowledge in recognition	Initial knowledge in recall
Way to go!	301	2167	2468	8	3
You're on!	0	0	0	12	2
Hang in There!	194	2105	2299	5	3
Knock it off!	132	2373	2505	14	4
Get over it!	210	837	1047	27	21
Good grief!	182	422	604	8	2

Table 22 - Frequency of target expressions in corpora and results of the pre-test

One could expect that the frequency in corpora would have an effect on the knowledge of the fixed expressions, but the most recognized and recalled expression in the pre-tests (*Get over it*) is one of the least frequent in both COCA and the TV corpus. The same is true for *You're on*. Conversely, *Hang in there* was not recalled or recognized by many learners in the pre-test, but it is quite frequent in corpora. A particularity of *Knock it off* is that it is the most frequent in the TV corpus and it was the most recognized expression. However, no important correlation or reasonable conclusion can be drawn from these observations. Other factors could have had a bigger impact on the acquisition of these items than its frequency in corpora. The importance of number of encounters should not be disregarded. According to Peters & Webb (2018), when a word occurs more frequently, it is more likely to be noticed and to become familiar, and evidence has shown that frequency positively impacted learning gains (Fievez et al., 2021). It is likely that frequency in corpora is less significant to learning than the constant exposure to certain types of media or interaction with particular communities that use these expressions more often.

7.3.3 Vocabulary gains

The three weeks in which the experiment took place, as the volunteers came to the appointment, they were placed either in the incidental group (INC), who watched for entertainment, or in the intentional group (INT) who were asked to pay attention and try to learn expressions, according to their proficiency level, to ensure a balance the number of participants with each level within the two experimental groups. None of the participants were aware that they were part of a specific group, neither did they know that there would be a vocabulary test at the end.

Participants from both groups were asked to answer an open question after watching about 10 minutes of scenes from each sitcom, in which they had to describe one of the scenes (chosen by us) in a few words. Their answers showed that they at least understood the gist of the scene (answers in appendix I). After watching all the scenes, participants were asked to answer the posttests (VKS and MCT).

By the day of the experiment, about half of the participants had sent the confirmation of their level of English through the results of the ELAO test. However, in a few cases, the ELAO test was sent after the experiment and only then we learned that their level was lower or higher than expected. For this reason, in the quantitative analysis, data from some participants were not included.

7.3.3.1 Recall

The comparison between the VKS pre and posttests allowed us to assess the effect of intentionality on participants' recall of the target expressions, i.e., whether they could remember hearing/reading the expression when watching the sitcoms.

7.3.3.1.1 Analysis of the initial knowledge

In the analysis of the initial knowledge in the pre-test, participants showed more knowledge of the expression *Get over it*, for which 22 participants recalled its meaning, contrary to the other expressions, for which only 2 to 6 people could give a definition, description or translation. Therefore, as shown in Figure 48, the potential for learning is considerable, as most of the expressions were not recalled in the beginning of the experiment.

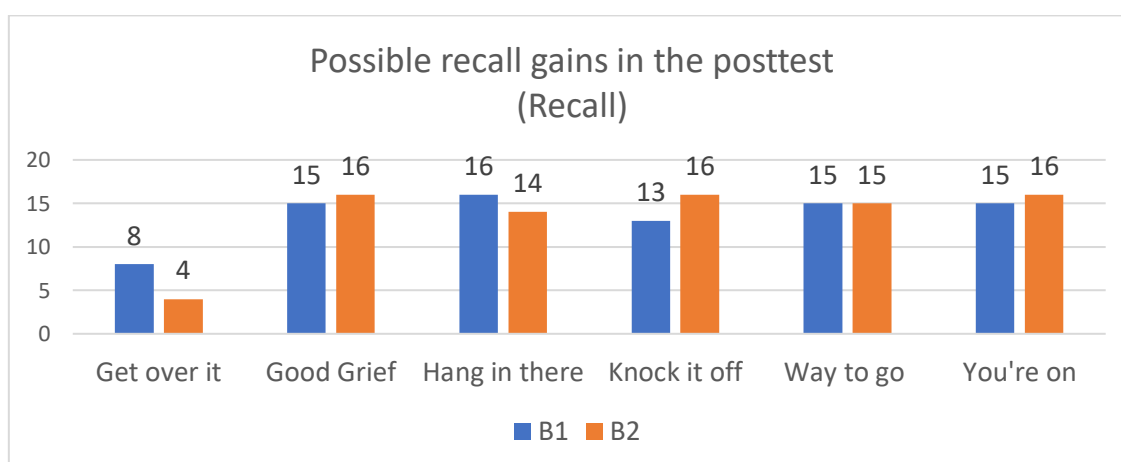


Figure 48 - Possible recall gains in the posttest (N= 33)

7.3.3.1.2 Total gains of each expression

Results from the recall test indicated that all expressions were learned by at least one learner. Proportionally, *Get over it* was the most recalled expression (33.3% of possible learning gains), followed by *Knock it off* (24.1%), *Good Grief* (16.1%), *Way to go* (13.3%), *You're on* (6.4%) and *Hang in there* (3.3%) as shown in Figure 49.

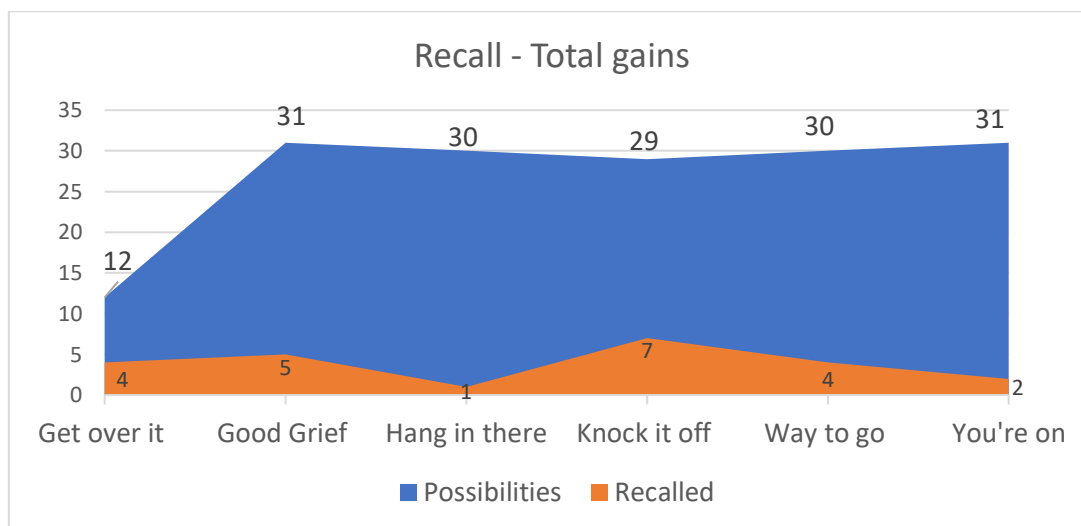


Figure 49 - Total scores of recall of expressions (N= 33)

To assess whether there was a difference between before and after viewing, we used the statistical test McNemar, which is used to compare two tests done by a group in two different moments. The conclusions of the tests were made at alpha risk (α) = 5%, taking into consideration the threshold preferred in the SLA literature (Montero Perez et al., 2014; Puimège et al., 2021a; Yibokou, 2019). This means that a p-value above 0.10 is considered **nonsignificant ($p > 0.1$)**, between 0.05 and 0.10 is considered **weakly significant ($0.05 < p < 0.10$)** and below 0.05 it is **significant ($p < 0.05$)**.

Considering the effect of sitcoms in the recall of the target expressions, we found it to be statistically significant ($p = 0.0003$). However, there is a considerable difference in learning each expression, which is why it is more important to calculate the values for each expression individually. In further analysis, we found an effect of the scenes on the recall of *Knock it off* ($p = 0.015$) and a suggestive effect on the recall of *Good grief* ($p = 0.062$). That means that for *Good grief* there was some indication of an effect, but the evidence is not strong enough to be considered statistically significant, unless the alpha risk is increased to 10%. The effect of the scenes in learning *Way to go* ($p = 0.12$), *Get over it* ($p = 0.68$), *Hang in there* ($p = 1.0$) and *You're on* ($p = 1.0$) were nonsignificant.

7.3.3.1.3 Learning per level

To what extent does proficiency level influence the recall of the expressions?

To be able to compare learning on the recall of the two proficiency groups, we ran the Boschloo test, which is used to compare the proportion of success of two different groups. The only significant difference was for *Hang in there*, in which five B2 participants recalled it, whereas 0 participants with a B1 level recalled ($p = 0.026$). For the other expressions, there was no significant difference between levels: *Way to go* ($p = 0.17$), *You're on* ($p = 0.22$), *Get over it* ($p = 0.35$), *Good grief* ($p = 0.58$), *Knock it off* ($p = 0.69$), which means that the effect of level in recalling the expressions were irrelevant.

7.3.3.1.4 Comparison between incidental and intentional

We also compared recall of the two experimental groups (Incidental and Intentional) using the Boschloo test, but the differences between them were statistically nonsignificant ($p < 0,05$): *Good grief* ($p = 0.35$), *Way to go* ($p = 0.58$), *You're on* ($p = 0.58$), *Hang in there* ($p = 0.79$), *Knock it off* ($p = 0.84$) and *Get over it* ($p = 0.90$).

7.3.3.2 Recognition

What is the effect of intentionality on participants' recognition of the target expressions?

7.3.3.2.1 Analysis of the initial knowledge

Overall, in the pre-test, participants showed more knowledge of the expression *Get over it*, for which 27 participants (out of 33) recognized its meaning, in comparison to the other expressions, for which only 5 to 14 people could give a definition, description or translation, depending on the expression. Therefore, as shown in Figure 50, there was potential for learning, as many of the expressions were not recognized in the beginning of the experiment.

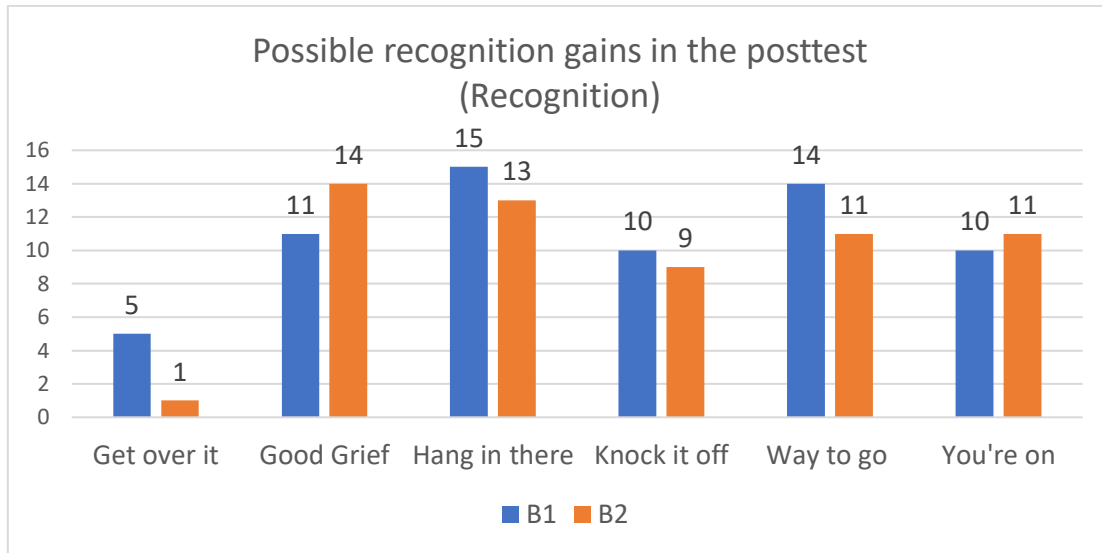


Figure 50 - Possible recognition gains in the posttest (N= 33)

7.3.3.2.2 Total gains of each expression

Results from the recognition test indicated that all expressions were learned by at least one learner. Proportionally, *Knock it off* was the most recognized expression (73.7%), followed by *Good grief* (52%), *Get over it* (50%), *You're on* (47.6%), *Way to go* (24%) and *Hang in there* (21.4%) as shown in Figure 51.

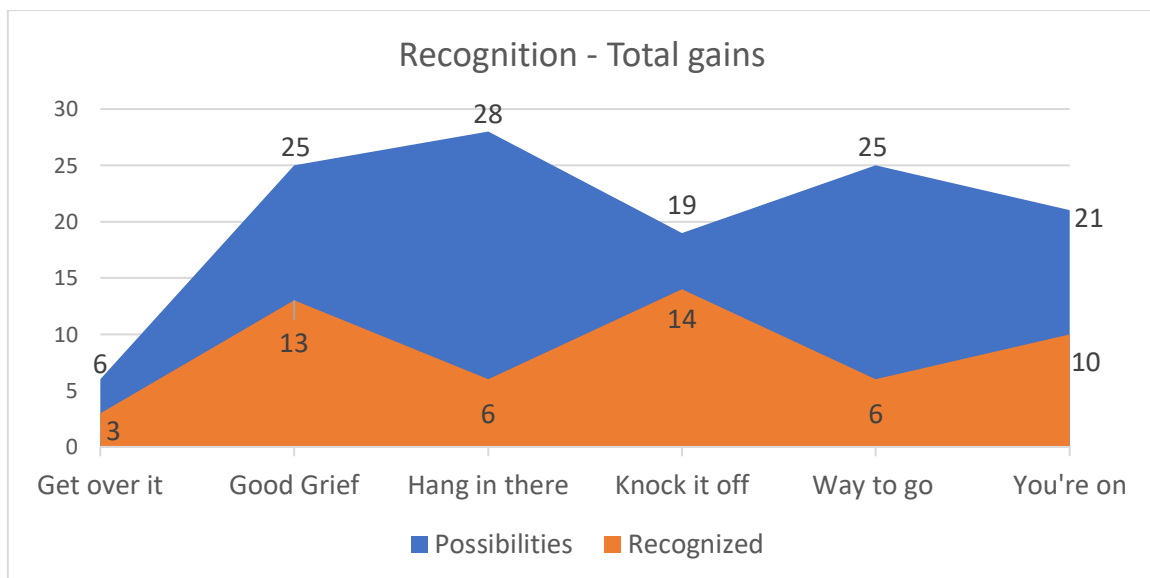


Figure 51 - Total scores of recognition of expressions

Once more, the conclusions of the tests were made at alpha risk (α) = 5%. This means that a p-value above 0.10 is considered **nonsignificant ($p > 0.1$)**, between 0.05 and 0.10 is considered **weakly significant ($0.05 < p < 0.10$)** and below 0.05 it is **significant ($p < 0.05$)**. To assess the influence of the scenes in the recognition of the expressions (calculating the difference of knowledge before and after viewing), we ran the test McNemar, used to compare two tests done by a group in two different moments. Because of the considerable difference in learning among expressions, we were unable to answer whether there is an impact on learning fixed expressions through sitcoms in general. When calculating the values for each expression individually, we found a significant effect of the scenes on the recognition of two expressions: *Knock it off* ($p = 0.0009$) and *Good grief* ($p = 0.049$). There is a weakly significant difference for *You're on* ($p = 0.09$), and no statistical difference for *Get over it* ($p = 0.25$), *Way to go* ($p = 0.28$) and *Hang in there* ($p = 0.75$).

7.3.3.2.3 Learning per level

To what extent does proficiency level influence the recognition of the expressions?

Similarly to the recall of expressions, there was no significant difference between proficiency levels. The Boschloo test indicated the following p-values: *Knock it off* ($p = 0.13$), *Way to go* ($p = 0.17$), *You're on* ($p = 0.43$), *Get over it* ($p = 0.58$), *Good grief* ($p = 0.84$), and *Hang in there* ($p = 0.84$). Therefore, their proficiency level did not seem to have influenced the recognition of expressions.

7.3.3.2.4 Comparison between incidental and intentional

Using the Boschloo test, we found a significant difference between the two groups in the recognition of *You're on*, in which the participants in the intentional group learned more ($p = 0.049$ using the Barnard test, which is used to compare the proportion of success of two different groups). Interestingly, the difference between the groups was weakly significant for *Good grief* ($p = 0.07$), in which the incidental group learned more. Results were nonsignificant for the other expressions: *Way to go* ($p = 0.17$), *Knock it off* ($p = 0.58$), *Get over it* ($p = 0.58$), and *Hang in there* ($p = 0.80$). The lack of contrast in results for the groups is discussed in subsection 7.3.6.

7.3.4 Summary and conclusions

This section presented the main findings related to the third objective of this thesis which was to investigate the role of intention in learning expressive fixed expressions when watching sitcoms. 387 participants, from the University of Lille, took a series of pre-tests: the VLT, the VKS and the multiple-choice test (see appendices A, B and C) and 146 of them, who estimated their proficiency level in English to be B1 or B2 were contacted by email with an invitation to a quasi-experiment for data collection on the viewing of series, using an eye-tracker, followed by comprehension questions and an interview. In the end, 45 students from nine different majors agreed to participate.

The first results concern the Vocabulary Level Test (VLT): participants who were B2 had slightly higher scores in all vocabulary levels. In the 2k band, the average of correct answers was 14,7 (for B1) and 16,4 (for B2) out of 18 items. In the 3k band, the average was 15,4 and 17,1. Knowledge of the 2k and 3k band was expected from participants to learn from viewing (Laufer, 1989; Nation, 2006; van Zeeland & Schmitt, 2012; Webb & Rodgers, 2009). Participants were later divided into two experimental groups (incidental and intentional), and the average scores were similar, meaning that the scores of one group was not significantly better than the other.

Results from the VKS (recall) and multiple choice (recognition) tests showed which expressions were already known to the participants. In the recall test, 24 participants (out of 45) knew the definition, description or translation of *Get over it*. Only 3 to 5 participants knew each of the other expressions. In the recognition test, the highest scores were for *Get over it*, known to 28 participants, and 16 knew *Knock it off* and *You're on*. The fact that these learners recalled or recognized the expressions in the pre-test was taken into consideration when analyzing the data.

We found no correlations between the frequency of these expressions in corpora (COCA and the TV corpus) and the initial knowledge in recognition and recall in the pre-tests. We concluded that other factors should have had a bigger impact on the acquisition of these items. It is likely that frequency in corpora is less significant to learning than the constant exposure to certain types of media or interaction with certain communities that use these expressions more often.

The day of the experiment in the language center, participants were assigned to one of the experimental groups, they were then asked to watch approximately 10 minutes of scenes from the sitcom *Friends* and answer an open comprehension question, in which they had to describe one of the scenes (chosen by us) in a few words. The same was done for *How I Met Your Mother*, *The Big Bang Theory* and *Brooklyn 99*. Their answers showed that they at least understood the gist of the scene (answers in appendix I). We did not analyze their answers in detail as it was not the focus of our investigation. They were later asked to answer the posttests (VKS and MCT).

The comparison between the VKS pre and posttests allowed us to assess the effect of intentionality on participants' recall of the target expressions. Because meaning recall, or the ability to retrieve meaning from memory requires deeper knowledge than meaning recognition (Nation, 2017), led us to expect marginal recall gains. Results from the recall test indicated that all expressions were learned by at least one learner. Proportionally, *Get over it* was the most recalled expression (33.3% of possible learning gains), followed by *Knock it off* (24.1%), *Good Grief* (16.1%), *Way to go* (13.3%), *You're on* (6.4%) and *Hang in there* (3.3%). The statistical test McNemar was used to compare the results of the pre and post VKS test with an alpha risk of 5%. The test confirmed that, generally, there was an effect of sitcoms in the recall of target expressions ($p = 0.0003$), but there was a considerable difference in learning each expression. Calculating the values for each expression individually, we found an effect of the scenes on the recall of *Knock it off* ($p = 0.015$) and a suggestive effect on the recall of *Good grief* ($p = 0.062$). The effect of the scenes in learning *Way to go* ($p = 0.12$), *Get over it* ($p = 0.68$), *Hang in there* ($p = 1.0$) and *You're on* ($p = 1.0$) were nonsignificant.

We ran the Boschloo test to investigate to what extent proficiency level influences the recall of the expressions and only found significant difference for the *Hang in there*, in which five B2 participants recalled, whereas 0 participants with a B1 level learned ($p = 0.026$). For the other expressions, there was no significant difference between levels. The Boschloo test was also used to compare recall gains of the two experimental groups (Incidental and Intentional), but the difference between them were statistically nonsignificant.

Scores from the recognition test were bigger than for recall, confirming previous studies that indicated that meaning recognition scores are always higher than for meaning recall, indicating that the first precedes the second (van Zeeland & Schmitt, 2013). Our findings showed that all expressions were learned by at least one learner. Proportionally, *Knock it off* was the most recognized expression (73.7%), followed by *Good grief* (52%), *Get over it* (50%), *You're on* (47.6%), *Way to go* (24%) and *Hang in there* (21.4%). Once more, we ran the statistical test McNemar at an alpha risk of 5%. When calculating the values for each expression individually, we found a significant effect of the scenes on the recognition of two expressions: *Knock it off* ($p = 0.0009$) and *Good grief* ($p = 0.049$). There is a weakly significant difference for *You're on* ($p = 0.09$), and no statistical difference for *Get over it* ($p = 0.25$), *Way to go* ($p = 0.28$) and *Hang in there* ($p = 0.75$).

Similarly to the recall of expressions, there was no significant difference between proficiency levels. The Boschloo test indicated the following p-values: *Knock it off* ($p = 0.13$), *Way to go* ($p = 0.17$), *You're on* ($p = 0.43$), *Get over it* ($p = 0.58$), *Good grief* ($p = 0.84$), and *Hang in there* ($p = 0.84$). Therefore, their proficiency level did not seem to have influenced the recognition of expressions. Furthermore, we used the Boschloo test to compare the recognition gains of the two experimental groups (Incidental and Intentional) and found a significant difference in the recognition of *You're on*, in which the

participants in the intentional group learned more ($p = 0.049$ using the Barnard test). Conversely, the incidental group recognized *Good grief* more (weakly significant, $p = 0.07$). Results were nonsignificant for the other expressions: *Way to go* ($p = 0.17$), *Knock it off* ($p = 0.58$), *Get over it* ($p = 0.58$), and *Hang in there* ($p = 0.80$).

The inconsistency in the data may be due to quality factors in learning. One of them is the difficulty of the scenes in terms of formulaic language. As pointed out in section 6.2.2.1.3 (description of scenes), the difficulty of our scenes was appropriate for independent users but, as argued in section 4.1.3, available tools for examining text coverage does not take into account the formulaic meaning of sequences. We found many other formulaic sequences in the selected videos, such as: *Suck it up*, *So what*, *With time to spare*, *Time's up*, *It's up to you*, *Hold on*, *I'll take it*, *That's it*, *You're up* (in *Friends*), *There you are*, *for Pete's sake*, *Climb on in*, *By the way*, *Good for it*, *Here we are*, *How dare you* (in *HIMYM*), *Here you go*, *Hang on*, *Boot it up*, *Watch out*, *No kidding*, *Good for you*, *Hang on*, *There it is* (in *TBBT*), and *There we go*, *What a dweeb*, *Here it goes*, and *Top them off* (in *Brooklyn*). Other than the difficulty of the text that such expressions may have increased, participants may have noticed similar expressions or phrasal verbs and mistaken them with our target expressions when taking the posttests: (1) *Hang on*, *hang up* and *hang out* may have affected the acquisition of *Hang in there*. (2) *You're up* may have interfered in learning *You're on*. When cutting the scenes, we could not delete these expressions without hampering comprehension of the story. We were careful not to include them in the pre and posttests to avoid confusion.

Another unexpected finding that should be discussed is the contradictory results concerning intention. We found no significant difference between the two groups, despite what literature has been indicating about the better performance of intentional groups (Majuddin & Siyanova-Chanturia, 2021). This may be due to a possible increase of intention in the incidental group for being in a language center. As we had anticipated in section 1.3, we do not know to what extent the incidental group could be devoid of intention when being in such a nonformal context, in which students mostly often engage in self-directed (naturalistic) learning.

This suggests that vocabulary learning in our study may not have been purely incidental and that we had two different types of intentional groups: one in which learning was self-initiated (the 'incidental' group) and the other initiated by the researcher (the 'intentional' group). By having a specific vocabulary goal, the second group were likely to have decided to look more often to the captions (hypothesis confirmed in our data on captions in subsection 7.4.2) and have missed key nonverbal clues in the images. It is possible that the 'incidental' group, even having a general intention to learn (as they are likely to in an informal context), were freer to navigate the different options. These

findings confirm, nevertheless, that both general intention and intention prior to viewing foster learning, but further research should be carried out to investigate whether having a self-initiated vocabulary goal would change the results.

All in all, frequency in the language, proficiency level and intention are not the only factors that affect word acquisition. The target expressions could have been easier to learn because of nonverbal clues in the scenes. The next section will analyze other variables that may play a more substantial role in the recognition and recall of our target expressions, namely captions, nonverbal communication and prosody.

7.4 Multimodality

The fourth objective of this thesis was to shed light on the function that images and captions serve in vocabulary learning (Figure 52). By using an eye tracker, we were able to collect data on learners' gaze while they watched the sitcoms in the experiment. Our aim was to study what participants paid attention to (captions and images), and for how long, to try to draw conclusions on its impact in learning the target fixed expressions.

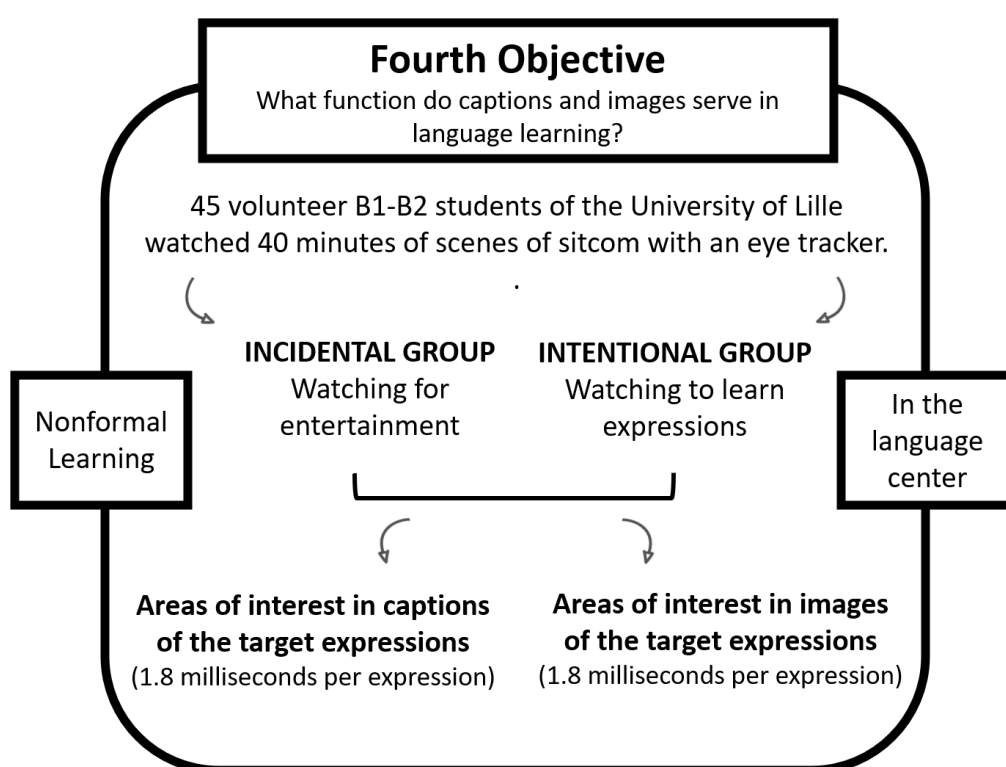


Figure 52 - Fourth objective and data collection

7.4.1 Sitcoms

Participants looked more at the captions from *Friends*, followed by *The Big Bang Theory*, *How I Met Your Mother* and *Brooklyn 99* (*Friends*, *TBBT*, *HIMYM* and *Brooklyn* henceforth), as shown in Figure 53 (these data can be comparable because each caption was on screen for 1.8 milliseconds). This may be partially due to the order of presentation of the series. As explained in the methodology, for practical reasons, the series were presented in the same order for every student: *Friends*, *HIMYM*, *TBBT* and *Brooklyn*. It is possible that participants looked more at the captions in the beginning of the experiment for assuming that they were using eye tracker to measure their gaze at subtitles, as illustrated in the extract 20.

[20]

LC : "... Je portais mon attention sur ... Je lisais parfois les sous-titres de façon intentionnelle. Mais je savais aussi que... Enfin je me suis dit qu'il ne fallait pas que je regarde uniquement les sous-titres puisqu'il devait y avoir des détails dans les scènes. ... Euh voilà, je pensais que je devais retenir certaines informations visuelles en fait. Donc j'ai essayé de prêter attention aux images, mais aussi aux sous-titres. ... Et sinon, j'ai remarqué qu'au fur et à mesure de l'expérience, je lisais de plus en plus naturellement en fait. Comme si la fatigue ou..."

It was expected that participants would watch more naturally from one sitcom to another, as they would feel more comfortable with the experiment and would feel less of a need to control what they were doing. Figure 53 shows that this was partially what happened, except for the inversion between *TBBT* and *HIMYM*, that may have been due to the common belief that the words in *TBBT* are more difficult and scientific (as illustrated in extract 21), even though the scenes chosen for the experiment did not contain specialized vocabulary. In fact, subsection 6.2.2.1.4 in our methodology showed that the lexical coverage of all four sitcoms is equivalent (ranging from 2k to 3k for 95% coverage). To confirm the hypothesis that *TBBT* is more difficult than other similar sitcoms, a careful corpus analysis should be done to analyze the language of all its 279 episodes.

[21]

CB : "[Les expressions qui ont posé difficulté étaient] surtout [celles de] *The Big Bang Theory* vu que c'était des expressions un peu métaphoriques et c'était un peu plus compliqué à comprendre parce que du coup je ne connais pas vraiment cette série-là, du coup tout ce qui est scientifique, je ne sais pas trop... ce [n]'est pas trop simple. Et quand ils sortent des expressions compliquées, et en anglais en plus... Déjà qu'en français ça peut être compliqué, mais du coup en anglais si on [ne] connaît pas c'est difficile."

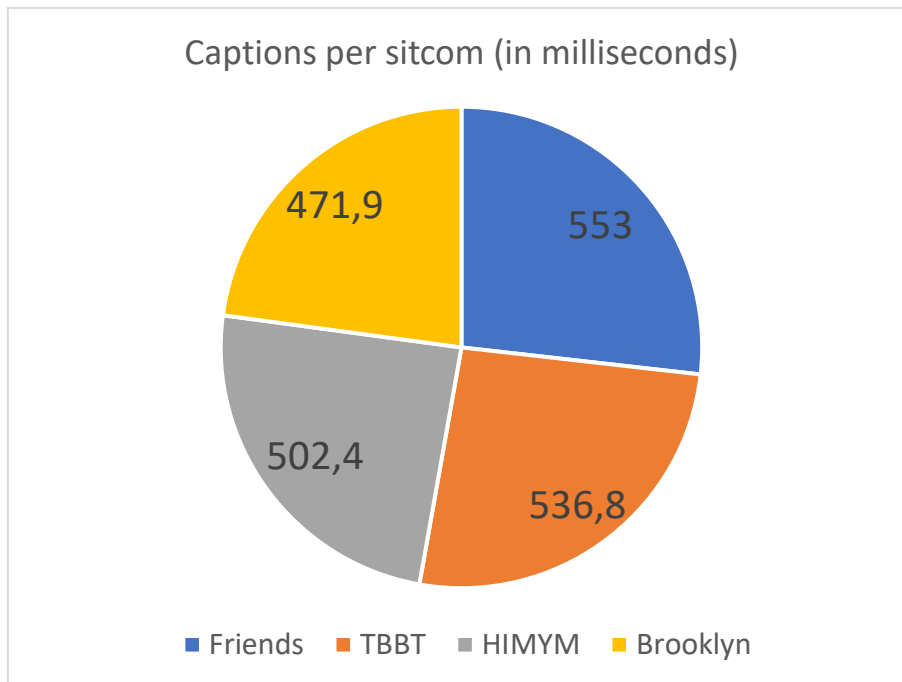


Figure 53 - Mean: time spent on caption per sitcom (in milliseconds)

As we can see in Figure 54, more time was spent on the images of TBBT compared to the other sitcoms.

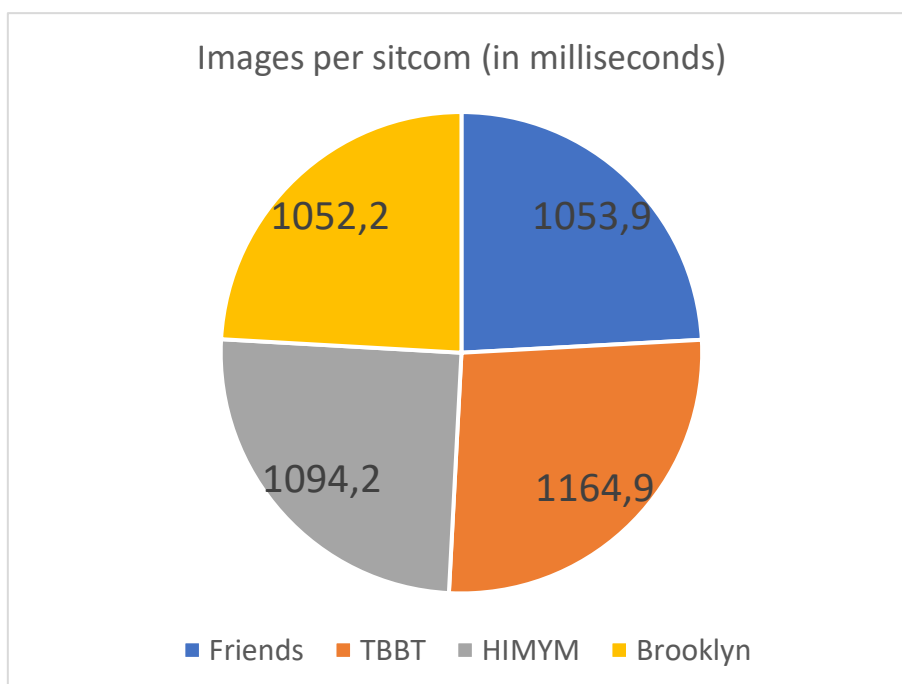


Figure 54 - Mean: time spent on image per sitcom (in milliseconds)

7.4.2 Captions

"...dans mon niveau d'anglais, niveau grammaire et cetera, ça va. Mais je dirais que ce qui me pose problème [pour la compréhension des séries], c'est les mots et des expressions qui ne sont pas forcément similaires en français [...]. Les trucs qui [ne] sonnent pas forcément intuitif. Là, j'ai besoin de regarder [les sous-titres] parce que je [ne] comprends pas vraiment ce que ça veut dire comme ça" (LC, in the interview).

As discussed in section 5.1.3, literature indicates that more time seems to be spent on subtitles or captions when the words are unknown (Pellicer-Sánchez, 2016). After analysis of our data, what particularly caught our attention was that more time was spent on captions of *Hang in there*, as shown in Figure 55, the expression that was less known initially (subsection 7.3.2), and less learned in the experiment (recalled by 3.3% of the cases and recognized by 21.4% - in subsection 7.3.3).

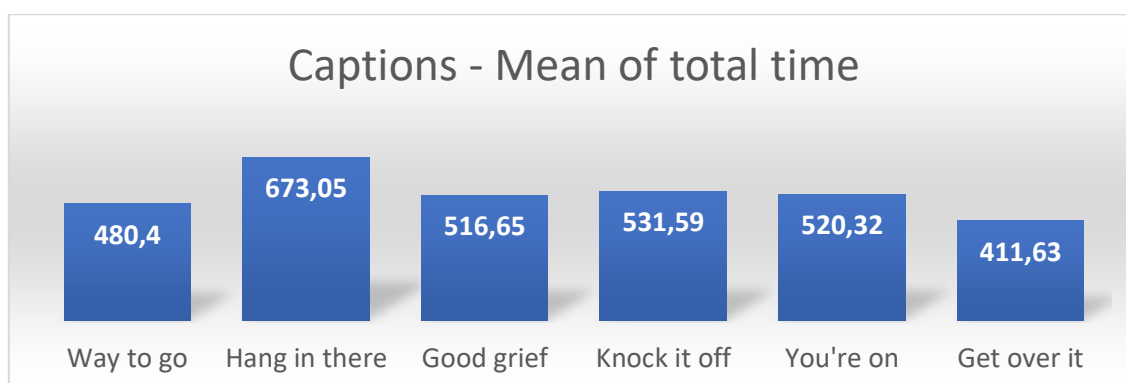


Figure 55 - Captions - Mean of total time per expression (in milliseconds)

We also isolated the data from the participants who learned each expression. Our objective was to examine whether looking more at captions or images helped them in the learning process. Figure 56 shows the average time, in milliseconds, spent by participants who *recalled* each expression. More time was spent on the captions of *Get over it* and *Knock it off*, which were the most recalled expressions (33.3% and 24.1% recall gains, respectively).

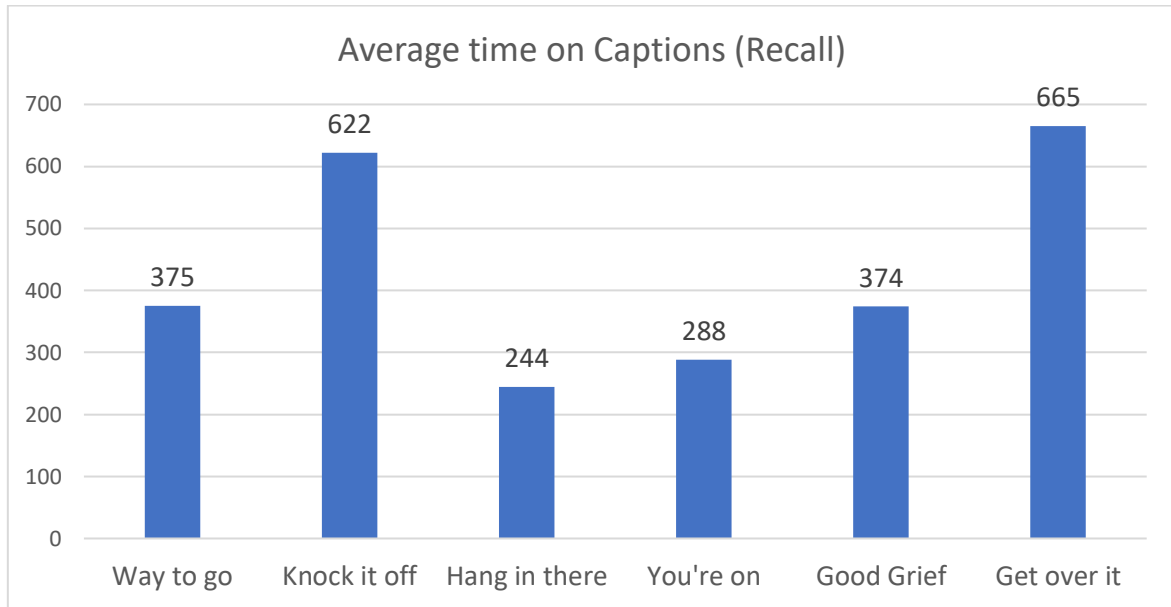


Figure 56 – Average time (ms) spent on the captions by those who gained recall knowledge

Data from the participants who *recognized* each expression (Figure 57) shows that participants who gained recognition knowledge spent more time on the captions of *Hang in there* and *Get over it*. Nevertheless, these expressions were not necessarily the most recognized in the posttest (*Hang in there* was the least recognized with 21.4% and *Get over it* the third most recognized with 50%).

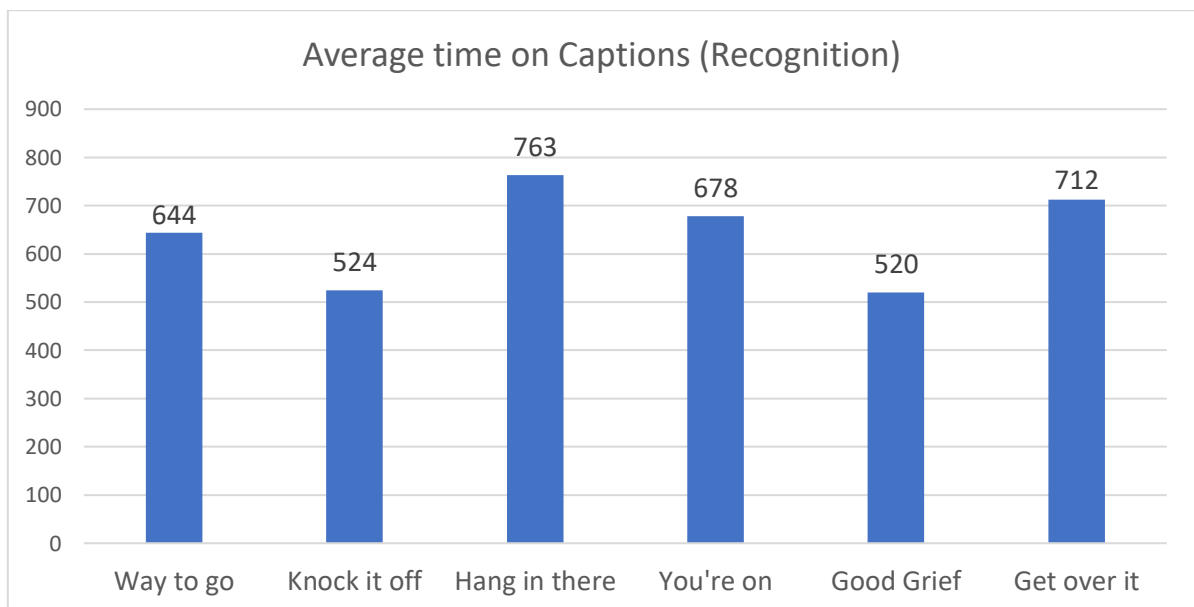


Figure 57 - Average time (ms) spent on the captions by those who gained recognition knowledge

We also analyzed the time spent on captions by proficiency level and the evidence is compelling: participants with a B1 level looked considerably more at the captions rather than the images. Using Student's t-test (and validated by Levenne's and Bartlett's test), the difference is confirmed with a p-value of 0.0004 for *You're on*, 0.0006 for *Get over it*, 0.0009 for *Hang in there*, 0.004 for *Way to go*, 0.01 for *Knock it off*, and 0.04 for *Good grief*. The results indicate that, less proficient learners rely more on the written information than B2 learners.

7.4.3 Images

When it comes to images, our data revealed that, generally, more time was spent on the images of *Good grief* and *Get over it*, as shown in Figure 58. These expressions were not necessarily the least known initially (subsection 7.3.2). Nevertheless, they were the most learned in the experiment (together with *Knock it off*): respectively they were recalled in 16.1% and 33.3% of the cases, and recognized 52% and 50% of the time (*Knock it off* was recalled 24.1% and recognized in 73.3% of the cases).

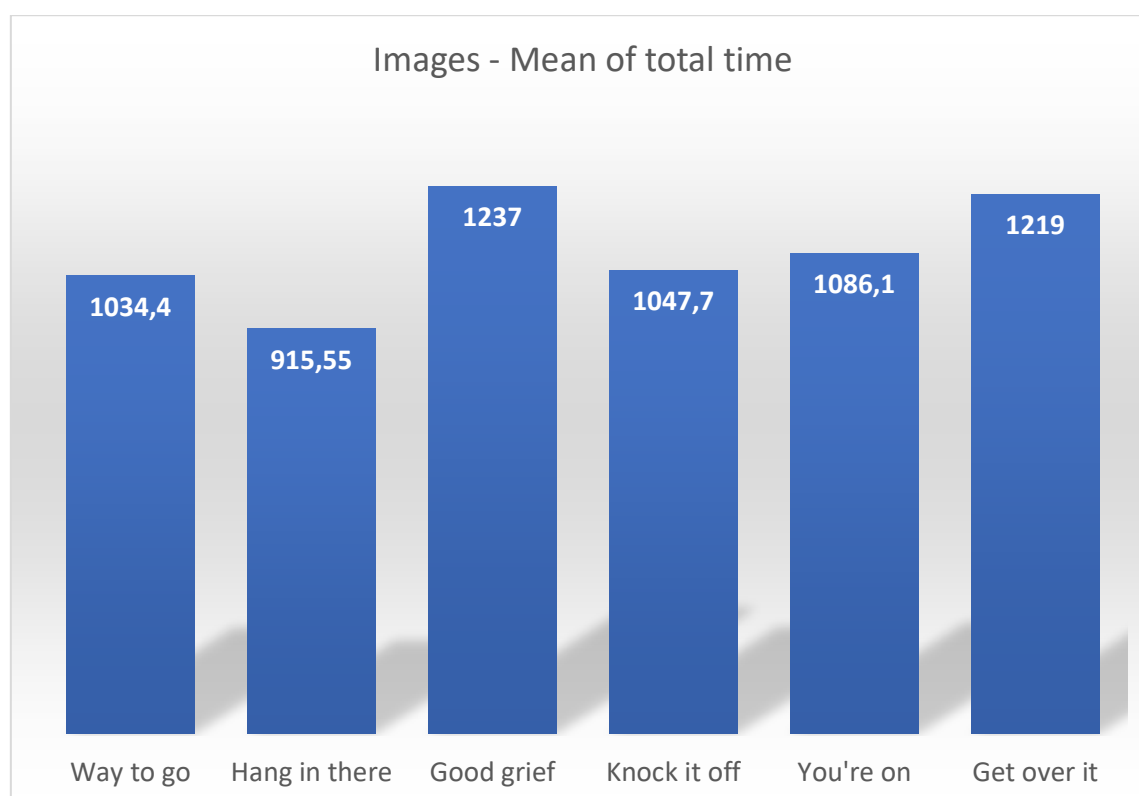


Figure 58 - Images - Mean of total time

Data from the participants who recalled each expression was isolated for further analysis, as shown in Figure 59. It shows the average time, in milliseconds, spent by participants on images. Participants spent more time on the images of *Good grief* and *Way to go*, but these were not necessarily the most recalled expressions¹¹¹.

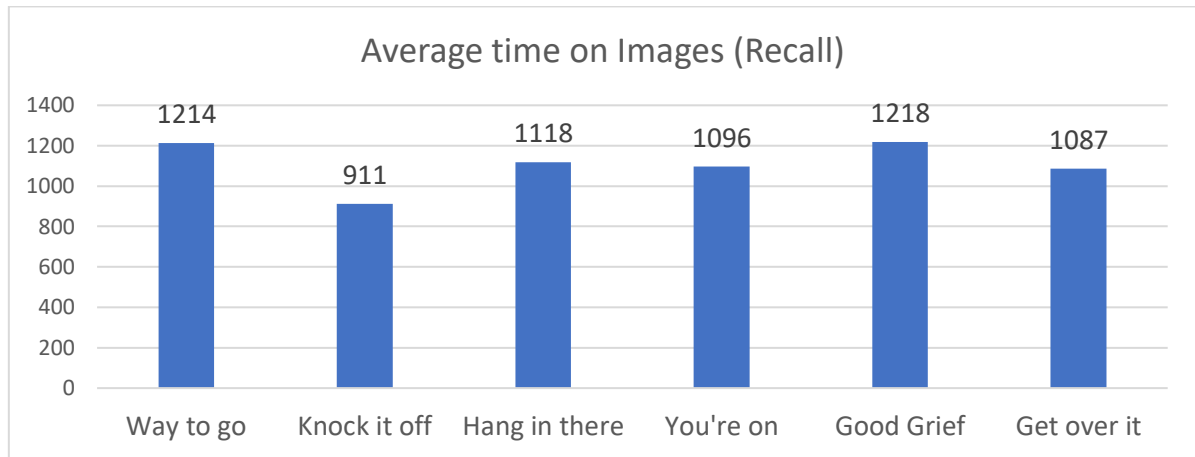


Figure 59 - Average time (ms) spent on the captions by those who gained recall knowledge

As far as *recognition* is concerned, Figure 60 shows that the time spent on the images of *Good Grief* (1145ms) and *Knock it off* (980ms), is higher than for the other expressions. Interestingly, and conversely, the two least recognized expressions *Way to go* and *Hang in there* were the ones whose images caught the attention of the viewer the least (799ms and 728ms, respectively).

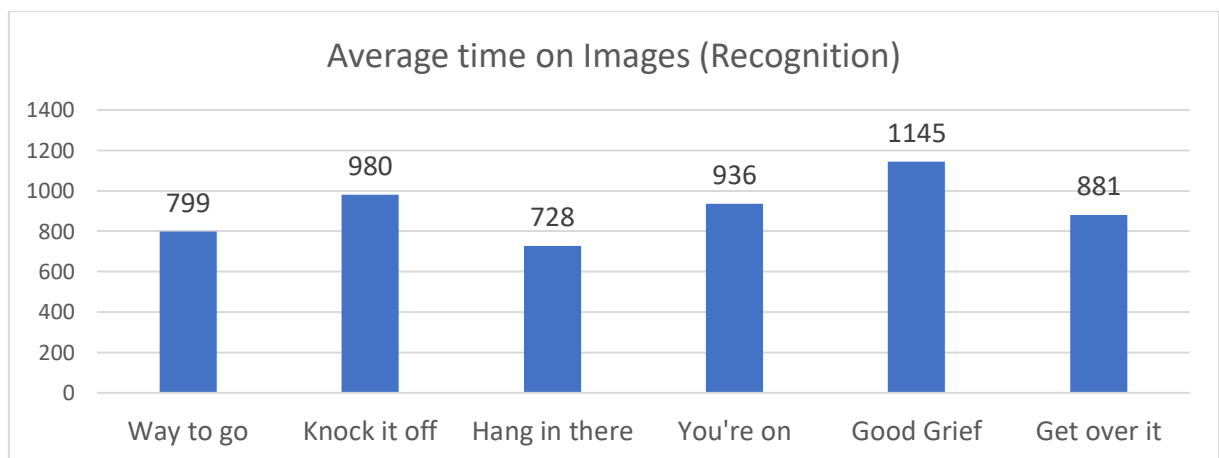


Figure 60 - Average time (ms) spent on images by participants who gained recognition knowledge

¹¹¹ The most recalled expressions were *Get over it* (33.3%) > *Knock it off* (24.1%) > *Good grief* (16.1%) > *Way to go* (13.3%) > *You're on* (6.4%) > *Hang in there* (3.3%).

Finally, we also analyzed the time spent on images by B1 and B2 students. Once again, evidence is unequivocal: participants with a B2 level looked considerably more to images than to captions. Using Student's t-test (and validated by Levenne's and Bartlett's test), the difference is confirmed with a p-value of 0.0008 for *Get over it*, 0.002 for *Hang in there*, 0.003 for *Way to go*, 0.005 for *Knock it off*, 0.005 for *You're on*, and 0.008 for *Good grief*. This indicates that, beyond any possible testing effects that might have induced learners to look more or less to images, participants in the B2 group seem to have felt more at ease to look at images and still have higher learning gains.

7.4.4 Intentionality

Overall, the intentional group spent slightly more time on captions than the incidental group (Figure 61). This was expected given that (1) Vanderplank (1988) had already pointed out that captions tend to shift the viewer's focus onto the language, especially of striking expressions and (2) viewers may intentionally read the captions when they have a language learning objective (Vanderplank, 1996). Conversely, the incidental group paid more attention to images.

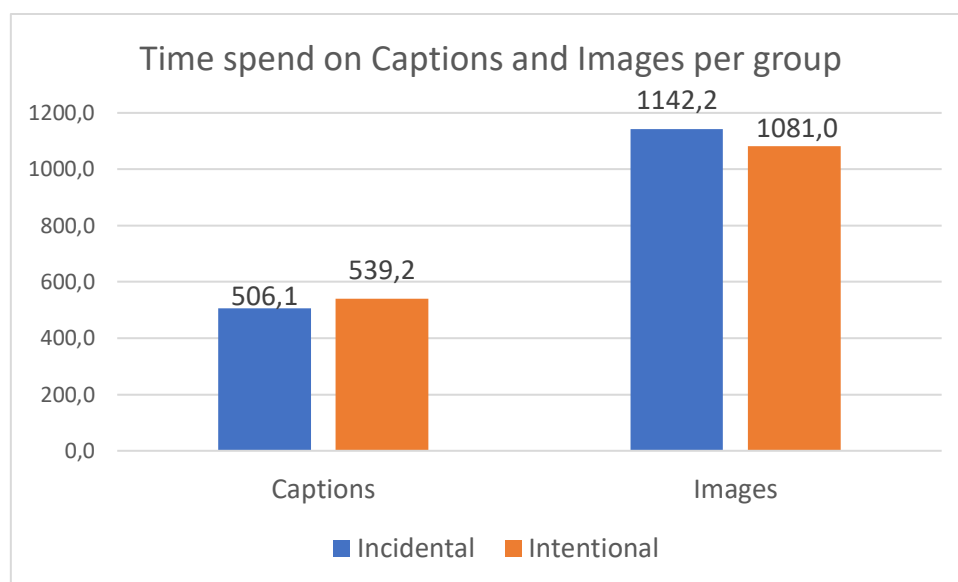


Figure 61 - Time spend on captions and images per group (incidental and intentional)

When analyzing this information per expression, data shows that participants in the intentional group looked more to captions in general, except for *You're on* and *Good grief* (Figure 62). A possible explanation is that participants in the intentional group focused more on the captions, but the images (the body movement of actors) became more attractive when the expressions appeared, especially for

the scene of HIMYM, when the character uttered *You're on* and shook the other character's hand (average of 1406 ms, compared to 963,7 ms in Friends and 889,5 in Brooklyn). The same may be true for *Good grief*, when 1446,5 ms was spent on the image of TBBT (the character made a noticeable head movement to look at the other character and raised his eyebrows showing desperation), whereas 1191,8 ms was spent in Brooklyn (raising eyes) and 1072,5 ms in HIMYM (frown).

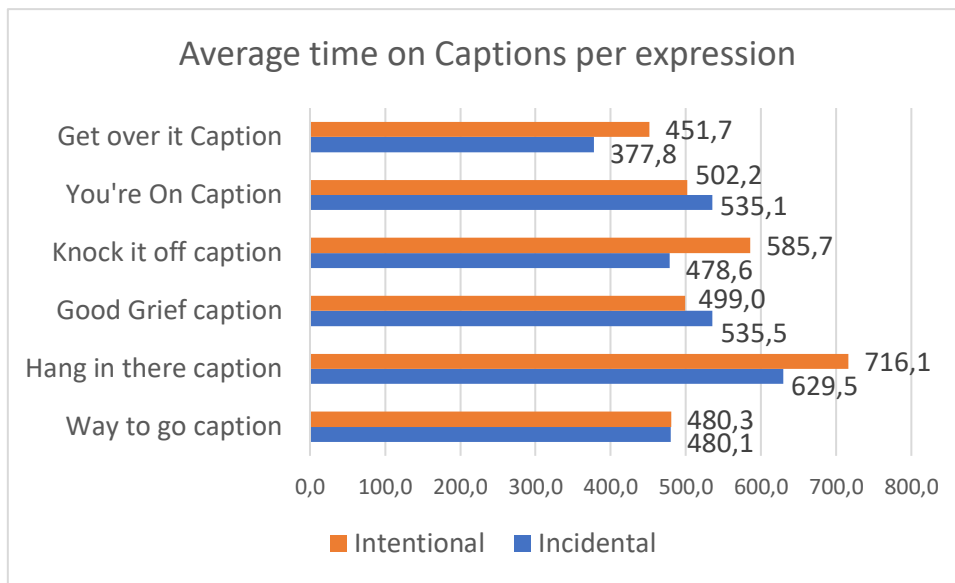


Figure 62 - Average time of caption per expression (in milliseconds)

Figure 63 shows that participants in the incidental group looked more at images for every expression, with no exceptions.

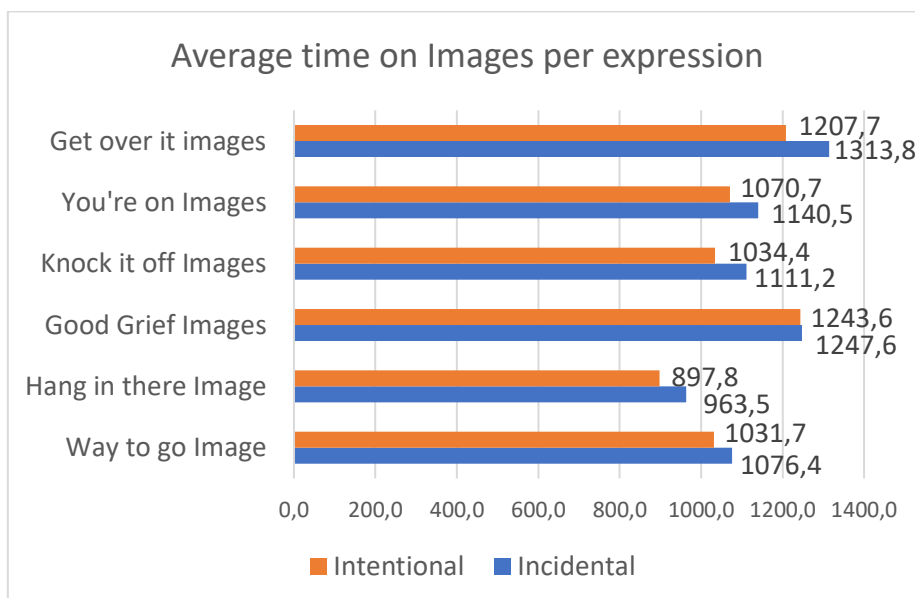


Figure 63 - Average time of image per expression (in milliseconds)

7.4.5 Context of scenes

We conducted an exploratory qualitative analysis on the context of each scene to investigate possible variables that may have facilitated or hindered the acquisition of our target expression. The first step was to check whether the scenes from a specific sitcom were seen more than the others, but we have found no significative difference. The second step was to calculate the time spent on images of each expression. Figure 64 shows that more time, on average, was spent on the images when the expressions *Get over it* and *Good Grief* were uttered. These expressions were the most recalled and the most recognized in the posttest (together with *Knock it off*).

However, attention to each expression was not unfluctuating. Depending on the scene, different expressions caught the participants' attention more. Table 23, Table 24 and Table 25 show the average time spent on the most, second most and least seen images (N= 21). As far as gestures are concerned, we could not identify a pattern. The nine most seen images show a shake of hand, big hand and arms movement, and a thumbs up and the nine second most seen images contain a raise of hands, and a tap on the shoulder. Most of them contained a slight head, arm or body movements (N= 8) and ten of them did not contain any particular gesture at the moment the character uttered the target expression. This analysis does not assume that gestures do not contribute to learning expressions through media, but our scenes were not chosen because of a specific type of gesture for us to be able to investigate their effect in language learning.

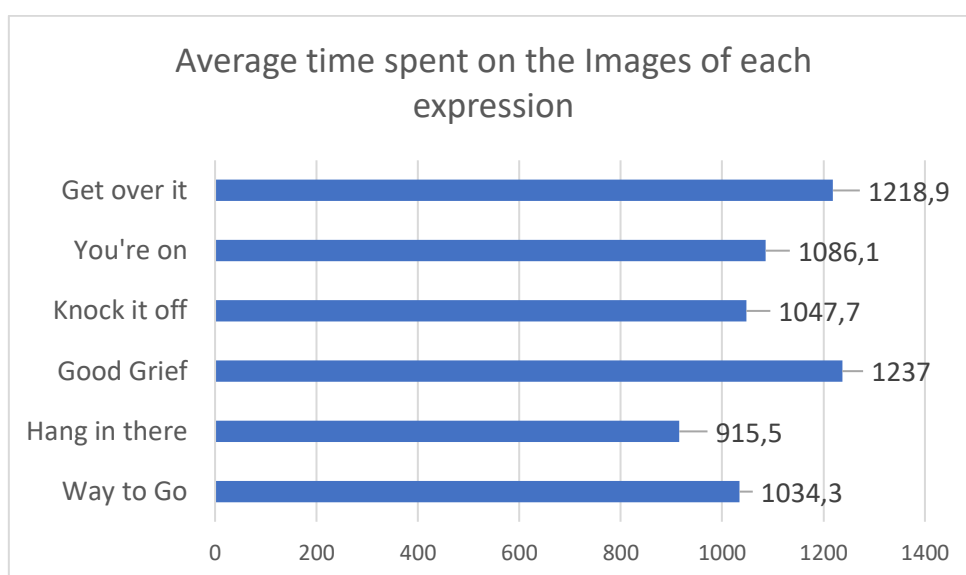


Figure 64 - Average time spent on the images of each expression (in milliseconds)

As for facial expressions, it seems that more expressive ones caught the attention of participants the most. The most viewed images (in Table 23) all have strong expressions, such as a raise of eyebrow or eyes, a broad smile, an upset face, an ironic or awkward smile, a mouth wide open or a concentrated look, whereas in the second most viewed images (in Table 24), most facial expressions only included slight frowns (N= 5) and shy smiles (N= 2).

Most of the target expressions were uttered with either a high or raising pitch (N= 11) or a low or falling pitch (N= 8), well distributed in all three tables. Potentially what played a more significant role is the pace with which they were uttered: in the most seen images, characters uttered the expressions with a slow pace (N= 6). In the second most seen, characters used a slow pace twice and a fast pace three times, which may have led participants to read the captions.

Furthermore, the change of shots before the expression was uttered is unlikely to have affected attention to images given that in Table 23, there were six changes (out of nine) and in Table 24 there were eight changes.

After the posttests we collected participants' perceptions related to what caught their attention to and what occurred in order for them to learn new words. Some of them seemed aware of the importance of context, such as participant CB, who mentioned that she did not know what the word 'turkey' meant, until she saw the food on the screen and declared that generally, context and image helped understanding: "j'ai pas eu trop de difficulté en voyant avec le contexte et les images, c'était plus simple" (in Appendix J). This example is not an illustration for learning our target expressions, as they were not connected to an object in the scene. However, images still seem to have helped, as in the case of MF who said that the characters' facial expressions when saying "Good Grief" made her understand that it showed negative feelings towards the situation. Another participant, AM, also stated that she looked for clues in the images. She commented (in extract 22):

[22]

AM: "... En fait, [au moment de choisir la réponse pour 'Way to go'] j'ai hésité avec le "pour féliciter quelqu'un". J'ai hésité entre ces deux-là, mais en fait j'essaie de me souvenir par rapport à l'intonation que j'ai entendue. En fait de savoir à quel contexte raccrocher ça. J'ai retenu que c'était très expressif."

Finally, participant AC also described what caught his attention when watching series (in extract 23):

[23]

AC: "Je ne sais pas, c'est... Je ne saurais pas dire si c'est... Peut-être un mot qui est dit plus fort à un moment qui fait qu'il ressort et ils le redisent plusieurs fois dans la série, ce qui fait... Ben forcément les insultes c'est-ce qui ressort le plus, mais il y en a d'autres aussi qui peuvent être... Du genre ceux qui sont des mots peut être un peu plus solennel par rapport à d'autres, qui sont plus importants, notamment dans les excuses ... Ou même dans des phrases de tous les jours, il y a des mots, des phrases, des expressions qui peuvent ressortir. Du genre qu'on écrit "Hang on! hang on!". Enfin ça peut être ça. "Attendez! Attendez!", justement, il y a... ça peut ressortir, donc ça peut nous aider à comprendre."

Another important point to be considered is the role of emotions. Quantitative evidence shows that the most recalled and recognized expressions represented emotions that can be perceived as negative: *Good grief* (frustration), *Knock it off* (annoyance) and *Get over it* (irritability), contrarily to the expressions expressing amazement (*Way to go*), interest (*You're on*) and encouragement (*Hang in there*). We also observed that the attention to their images was high, suggesting that the nonverbal elements called their attention and may have positively impacted their learning.

Our qualitative data also seems to support this hypothesis: in the questionnaire, a participant mentioned that they learn English to better understand people's emotions in different cultures (this idea could have been corroborated by other respondents if the option was given). The fact that 91.6% only watch series in the original version because "hearing the real voice of actors helps to connect with the characters and their emotions" (in section 7.2.3) is also an indication of the appeal of emotions in series watching and language learning. This is an initial contribution to the topic of the relevance of emotions in vocabulary language learning through series.

Expression/ sitcom/ average time spent	Image	Gesture	Facial expression	Prosody	Emotion	Pauses and scene shot
1. Good Grief TBBT 1446,5 ms		No change of gesture Head movement to look to another character	Raise of eyebrows	Low pitch Neutral volume Slow pace	Frustration	No change of shot before the utterance Change of shot after the utterance
2. You're on HIMYM 1406 ms		The two characters shake hands Slight head movement downwards	Broad smile	Raising pitch Neutral volume Regular pace	Interest	Quick change of shot before the utterance No change of shot after the utterance
3. Get over it TBBT 1384,8 ms		No change of gestures	Slight frown Upset face	Slightly high pitch Slightly high volume Slow pace	Irritability	No change of shot before the utterance Change of shot after the utterance
4. Get over it Friends 1327,6 ms		Big hand and arms movement upwards Head and hair movement	Irony smile	Raising pitch Neutral volume Regular pace	<i>Irony</i>	Change of shot 2 seconds before the utterance Change of shot after the utterance
5. Way to go Friends 1202,1 ms		Thumbs up with his left hand	Awkward smile Slight frown	High pitch High volume Slow pace	Irony	No change of shot before the utterance Change of shot one second after the utterance

6. Get over it Brooklyn 1194 ms		No change of gesture	Mouth wide open	Normal pitch Very high volume Regular pace	Irritability	Change of shot before the utterance No change of shot after the utterance
7. Good Grief Brooklyn 1191,8 ms		Arms crossed Short side to side head movement	Eyes raising	Low pitch Neutral volume Slow pace	Frustration	Change of shot before the utterance Quick change of shot after the utterance
8. Knock it off Brooklyn 1148,9 ms		No change of gesture	Neutral facial expression	Low pitch Neutral volume Slow pace	Annoyance	Quick change of shot before the utterance No change of shot after the utterance
9. Knock it off HIMYM 1097,7 ms		No change of gesture	Quick close up on character's face Radical change of expression Slight frown Concentrated look	Low pitch Low volume Slow pace	Anger	Change of shot one second before the utterance Quick change of shot after the utterance

Table 23 - Average time spent on the most seen images (in milliseconds)

Expression/ sitcom/ average time spent	Image	Gesture	Facial expression	Prosody	Emotion	Pauses and scene shot
10.Way to go TBBT 1085 ms		No change in gestures Moves her head shortly towards Leonard	Thin smile	Raising pitch Neutral volume Regular pace	Amazement	Change of shot one second before the utterance No change of shot after the utterance
11.Good Grief HIMYM 1072 ms		Short head movements	Frown	Falling pitch Neutral volume Fast pace	Frustration	Quick change of shot before the utterance No change of shot after the utterance
12.Way to go HIMYM 1013,6 ms		No change in gestures	Warm smile	Raising pitch Neutral volume Regular pace	Admiration	No change of shot before the utterance Change of shot after the utterance
13. Hang in there HIMYM 1005,8 ms		Side to side head movement	Frown	Falling pitch Neutral volume Regular pace	Empathy	Quick changes of shot before, during and after the utterance

14. Knock it off Friends 984,4 ms		Raises his right hand and arm forward and sideways Small head movements	Frown Tight lips	Raising pitch High volume Regular pace	Annoyance	Change of shot just before the utterance No change of shot after the utterance
15. Get over it HIMYM 969,3 ms		No change of gestures	Raise of eyebrows	Raising pitch High volume Fast pace	Irritability	Quick change of shot before the utterance Quick change of shot after the utterance
16. You're on Friends 962,7 ms		Short head movements Head and hand downwards	Frown	Low pitch Neutral volume Slow pace	Interest	Change of shot before the utterance Change of shot after the utterance
17. Knock it off TBBT 959,6 ms		Slight movement of the elbow Moves his head to look to Howard	Frown	Raising pitch Slightly louder Fast pace	<i>Humor</i>	Change of shot one second before the utterance Change of shot one second after the utterance
18. Hang in there TBBT 948,3 ms		Taps Sheldon's shoulder	No change in facial expression	Neutral pitch Neutral volume Slow pace	Fake encouragement	Change of shot one second before the utterance No change of shot after the utterance

Table 24 - Average time spent on the second most seen images (in milliseconds)

Expression/ sitcom/ average time spent	Image	Gesture	Facial expression	Prosody	Emotion	Pauses and scene shot
19.You're on Brooklyn 889,5 ms		No change of gesture	Neutral face	Low pitch Neutral volume Slow pace	Fake interest	Quick change of shot before the utterance Quick change of shot after the utterance
20.Way to go Brooklyn 836,6 ms		Short forward and upward body movements	Happy smile Raise of eyebrows	High pitch High volume Regular pace	Excitement	No change of shot before the utterance No change of shot after the utterance
21.Hang in there Friends 792,4 ms		Short right hand and arm movement	Frown	Raising pitch Neutral volume Emphasis on the preposition	<i>Encouragement</i>	No change of shot before the utterance No change of shot after the utterance

Table 25 - Average time spent on the least seen images (in milliseconds)

7.4.6 Summary and conclusions

Some observations can be made by comparing our results and the first one concerns captions. As a reminder, the most recalled and recognized expressions were *Get over it*, *Knock it off* and *Good grief* (without a precise order). Figure 55 shows that, generally, considerable time was also spent on the captions of ***Hang in there, but does not seem to have helped participants recall or recognize it in the posttest***. In this case, it is likely that learners were more attracted to the captions because the images of *Hang in there* did not contain compelling features: they had very small movements, neutral voice tones, and shy facial expressions (only frowns).

As far as *recall* is concerned, we observed that participants who learned the most recalled expressions, ***Get over it (33.3% of recall)*** and ***Knock it off (24.1% of recall)*** (see Figure 56), spent more time on their captions. Therefore, we believe that captions may have played an important role in the *recall* of these two expressions, but we cannot draw any conclusions as to why. Some hypotheses are that (1) the gap in understanding the pronunciation of these sentences made participants look at the captions and/or that (2) the high pitch and volume at the utterance made the expression salient in the ear and drew participants' attention to their form. We could not draw conclusions about the connection between recognition gains and captions.

Furthermore, participants with a B1 level looked considerably more at the captions than the images. These data supports the assumption that less proficient learners rely more on the written information than B2 learners (Mayer et al., 2020).

Some implications could be explored for the *recall* of the expression *Good grief*. Generally, considerable time was spent on the images related to the expression (see Figure 58) and a possible explanation of participants gazing more intently at the images can be due to the facial expressions (eyes raising, raise of eyebrows or frown), which may have induced participants to look to the face of the speaker. Figure 59, concerning only participants who recalled the expression in the posttest, also suggests that the images had an important effect in the recall of *Good grief*.

Moreover, participants with a B2 level looked considerably more at images rather than captions. This indicates that participants in the B2 group seem to have felt more at ease looking at images and still have higher learning gains.

Consequently, some correlations were found between images/captions and the recalled expressions: Captions seem to have helped the *recall* of *Get over it* and *Knock it off* (Figure 56), whereas images seem to have helped the *recall* of *Good grief* (Figure 64). Moreover, we could not draw any conclusions for the recall of *You're on* and *Way to go*. Overall, findings suggest that images aided the recognition of the target expressions: When Figures Figure 57 and Figure 60 are compared, we can see

that the most recognized expressions (*Knock it off*, *Good grief* and *Get over it*) were not necessarily the most read (Figure 57) but were, generally, viewed highly on the images (Figure 60). Unfortunately, one of the factors that may have influenced recall and recognition could be voice, but our methodology was unable to measure attention to prosody.

In subsection 7.3.4 we pointed out that the learning gains between the two groups were not significantly different possibly because all groups may have had a level of intention. However, we have evidence (in subsection 7.4.4) that there was a slight difference in behavior between the two groups: when the learning intentions are clear (in the intentional group), the attention focus shifted to language by looking more to captions. The exception was the viewing of *Good grief* and *You're on*, which were the first most viewed images, in Table 23, possibly due to the characters' body movement, which called the learners' attention.

In order to better understand the results of our quantitative analysis, we examined the context of each scene. Our most important findings were that the images of the most recalled and recognized expressions were highly seen (*Get over it*, *Good Grief* and *Knock it off*) and this could be due to the facial expressions of the actors when the expression was uttered. This conclusion was drawn by the fact that strong changes in the eyebrows, eyes and mouth accompanied these three most learned fixed expressions, compared to the other three (*Way to go*, *You're on* and *Hang in there*), that mostly had frowns.

Two other factors that may have influenced learning is voice and emotion. The first observation is that our target expressions were pronounced with distinctive high or low pitch and, in the most viewed images, characters uttered the expressions slowly (N= 6). The second observation is that the most learned expressions conveyed emotions that can be perceived as negative *Good grief* (frustration), *Knock it off* (annoyance) and *Get over it* (irritability), contrarily to the less learned expressions that express amazement (*Way to go*), interest (*You're on*) and encouragement (*Hang in there*). Nevertheless, our methodology was not able to provide conclusive empirical evidence that these two factors effectively played an important role in acquisition.

7.5 Consciousness raising

This section will examine the final part of the experiment. It consisted of finding a way for participants to reflect on language gains by comparing the pre and post multiple-choice tests, rewatching three scenes from *How I Met Your Mother* (HIMYM) for hypothesis formulation and an oral task in which they had to complete all six scenes from HIMYM with one of the 12 expressions in the

posttest (Figure 65). This part of the experiment gives suggestions as to how to guide learners to pay attention to language when watching series. The steps taken have their value for training purposes and they can have an impact in informal contexts by influencing learners' mindsets when watching sitcoms at home through establishing prior learning goals and being active agents in the process.

In subsections 7.5.1 and 7.5.2, we will discuss what was done in the interview to help participants learn the expressions, giving ideas as to how facilitators can act like guides in the learning process. Subsequently, subsection 7.5.3 will answer our research question by triangulating the results of our data collection. The final subsection (7.5.4) will summarize the findings of this section.

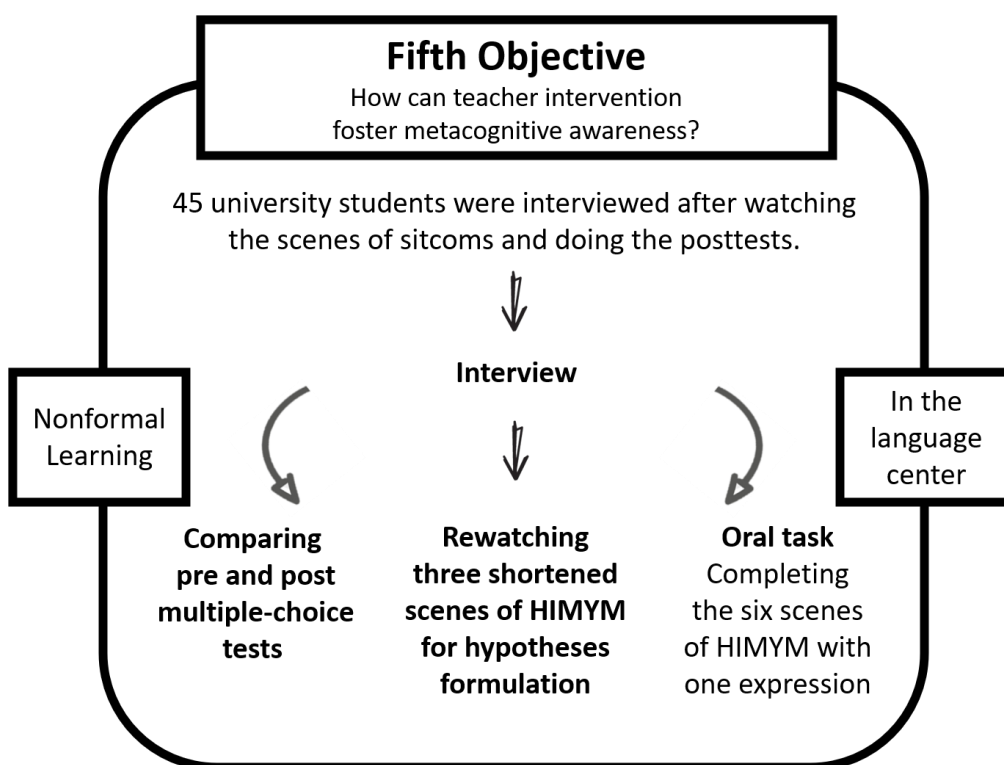


Figure 65 - Fifth objective and data collection

The interview following the posttest started with questions about the expressions. To what degree did they know the expressions before the experiment? Were participants more confident in answering the test this time? A first finding was that some expressions were already known to participants thanks to informal contact with the language. In the case of participant LM, for instance, *Knock it off* was declared to have already been seen before in the series *The Boys* (in extract 24):

[24]

Researcher: Quand tu regardes [des séries] soit en anglais, soit sous-titrés français, ou sous-titrés anglais, est-ce qu'il y a des mots, des phrases qui tu crois avoir appris ?

LM: Ouais ben en fait il y a pas mal de l'expression qui ressortent ou même... Bah là le test que la prof nous avait passé. Je ne sais plus ce que c'était. Je crois que c'était "Knock it off" ou un truc comme ça. Et après à la fin je me suis dit "ah mais c'est dans The Boys j'aurais dû calculer" et tout. Il y a quand même des expressions qui reviennent souvent. Surtout dans les sitcoms, parce qu'il y a certains personnages qui vont avoir, comment dire, des expressions qu'ils gardent tout le temps ou des trucs comme ça. Donc au bout d'un moment ça rentre.

MC declared that she knows the expression thanks to a telephone app called *Episode*¹¹² (in extract 25):

[25]

MC: "Je ne sais pas si vous connaissez l'application épisode? C'est un jeu d'histoires interactives sur téléphone, mais il existe qu'en anglais. ... J'ai commencé à y jouer quand j'étais en seconde et c'est beaucoup cette application [et] c'est beaucoup de lecture en anglais qui m'ont appris des expressions. Et [Knock it off], je suis certaine que je l'ai appris dans une des histoires que j'ai pu voir."

ELT also remembered having seen/heard the expression in the movie *Breakfast Club* (in extract 26):

[26]

ELT: "[Knock it off] veut dire 'lâche' ... En réalité ... En fait *Knock it off* je me rappelle dans *Breakfast Club* où ... il y a le prof qui n'arrête pas d'essayer de faire en sorte que le rebelle ... lui réponde et du coup aie plus de problème etc. Et du coup à un moment il y a la princesse qui se retourne et qui fait *Knock it off*. 'Arrête de...' du coup."

Similarly, participant LC remembered the first time he encountered the expression *Good grief*, in a comic book (in extract 27):

[27]

LC: "En fait quand j'étais au collège, j'avais pris un livre, c'était Snoopy et le titre c'était 'Good grief' et en fait j'ai pris ce livre parce que je [ne] comprenais pas le titre et je me suis dit je vais essayer de comprendre. Et ben moi, pour moi ça veut dire 'il est chiant' quoi. Enfin 'ça m'exaspère' ... Comme *boring* quoi. Je le comprends comme ça."

¹¹² The Episode app is a mobile storytelling platform in which the user decides the path of the story. It was created by Pocket Gems in 2013 and it is available on Google play and Apple Store.

Additionally, MC declared that she had seen expressions such as *It's on me*, as well as *Get over it* on several occasions because they are often uttered in convivial contexts, when people are at the bar or in the context of a breakup, scenarios that are recurrent in series, according to her.

These examples show a level of awareness and memory, while also giving evidence to the premise that compelling materials play an important role in learning. One participant in the experiment (SK) asked us to add a comment at the end of the interview:

[28]

SK: "au bout d'un moment et là je ne pense plus à un jeu vidéo auquel je joue, mais surtout les parties vidéo [e-sports] où pour le coup c'est un peu comme si c'était une vidéo ou une série. En fait, certaines expressions ou mots vont revenir et puis parfois je vais y rejouer et je vais revoir et revoir. Et en fait, je me retrouvais à plus ou moins consciemment comparer ce qui était dit en anglais ... Comme quand je commençais à pouvoir attraper quelques expressions, les comparer avec les traductions qu'il y avait dans les sous-titres. Et je pense que ça, ça a aidé aussi pas mal pour l'apprentissage, mais là encore faut pouvoir être, faut pouvoir comprendre, comprendre ce qui est dit, ce qui est dit en anglais, parce que sinon ça [ne] sert à rien quoi."

SK's comment resonated with our reflection on how to help learners in their journey through language learning. As argued in chapters one and three, the more learners engage in informal practices, the more likely they are to encounter expressions repeatedly, and the more their chances of learning them increase. So how can they make the most of it?

7.5.1 Comparing pretests and posttests

"Trying to solve a problem before being taught the solution leads to better learning, even when errors are made in the attempt." (Brown et al., 2014, p. 4)

Three steps were followed to help participants reflect on the meaning and use of the target vocabulary. The first step was to compare the pre and post multiple-choice tests so that participants could reflect on their choices through a stimulated recall. According to Brown et al. (2014), the use of testing can be a tool for learning (p.19), as it can strengthen memory. First, because realizing what you do not know can give you a direction to what can still be learned and second, recalling what you have learned can help consolidate that information in memory, making it easier to be recalled in the future (p. 20).

Comparing the tests seemed to have helped some participants to (1) verbalize their knowledge and retrieve the meaning of the expression for later use, and (2) reflect on what happened between the tests, raising awareness to what may have affected learning. For instance, when asked why they changed answers for *Good grief* from one test to the other, participants ED et LM recalled one of the scenes from Brooklyn 99 and explained how it was connected to her answer in the recognition test (in extracts 29 and 30).

[29]

Researcher: [Tu as changé ta réponse pour] "Good grief - C - pour souligner votre surprise, colère, choc ou frustration".

ED: Oui, ça je l'ai vu aussi. Mais là, je me souviens bien de la scène. C'est dans Brooklyn 99, quand ils doivent faire la présentation et qu'il lui dit que finalement il va changer, enfin il veut mettre des transitions je pense. Du coup... enfin il dit ça, le chef dit ça, et du coup j'ai retenu donc je pense que c'est pour ça.

[30]

Researcher: [Tu avais mis E pour "Good grief" et aujourd'hui tu as mis "C - pour souligner votre surprise, colère, choc ou frustration".

LM: Oui. Donc je l'ai vu dans Brooklyn 99 donc ça m'a... J'ai fait "Ah oui, d'accord, ok". Ouais, je me doutais que c'était un truc comme ça, mais c'est à dire que "Good grief", vu que "grief", je savais ce que ça voulait dire, je me suis dit "bah non, ce serait quand même bizarre de dire genre *bon deuil*" ou un truc comme ça pour de manière random un peu...

MS also took the time to explain what she had noticed in the scenes: as she described, *Hang in there* sounded like reassuring someone, a clue she did not have when answering the first test (in extract 31):

[31]

Researcher: Qu'est-ce qui t'a fait changer de réponse [...]?

MS: Ben... Je sais [ne] pas trop. Je trouvais que c'était plus amical et dans le sens pour vraiment rassurer quelqu'un et lui dire qu'on est là. Je [ne] sais pas, ça me donnait plus cette impression-là. Après je [ne] sais pas si c'est bon ou pas bon.

These testimonies are indications that they noticed the expressions, most likely accidentally (even though traces of the pre-test may have activated their memory) and that this noticing can result in verbalization. Given that these three participants were in the incidental group, these findings suggest that intention that is learner initiated can foster vocabulary learning.

Taken together, this first step suggests that facilitators can, in nonformal contexts, prepare viewers to learn fixed expressions through series by employing testing techniques for noticing

purposes and encouraging learners to pay attention and notice them later in an informal context, augmenting awareness and making learners more ready for the encounter and for context analysis. These encounters spaced through extended exposure should be beneficial to increase chances of retrieval in future opportunities of interaction.

7.5.2 Oral recall

The second step of our interview involved rewatching three shortened scenes from HIMYM (up to 40 seconds each) and participants were instructed to try to learn the expressions of the scenes through context. They could rewatch or pause as they wanted (which a few participants did). Group 1 rewatched scenes with *Get over it*, *Good Grief* and *Way to go*. Group 2 rewatched the scenes with *You're on*, *Hang in there* and *Knock it off*. Right after watching the scenes, they were given a simple list with all 12 expressions from the posttest and were given a task: to watch all six scenes from HIMYM (in a different order) up to the moment the character is about to say an expression and complete it with one. We found in this task a more controlled method of retrieval, given that speaking freely could not necessarily reveal knowledge of expressions. Through a think out-loud protocol, students were asked to share their thoughts and comment their choices.

The objective of this final exchange was to try a more explicit technique to help students learn the expressions by themselves. By rewatching some of the scenes and encouraging them to guess from context, the researcher acted as a guide, not giving the answers right away, but showing that through selective attention and looking for context clues, they could retrieve the meaning of the expression for use.

The data was analyzed by comparing the results from the recall posttest (the VKS) and the final task during the interview. The objective was to help students verbalize what they could guess from rewatching the scenes and for us to determine learning gains. Results show that all expressions were learned by at least one participant. As expected, the groups recalled the expressions they had entirely rewatched more (Figure 66 and Figure 67), certainly thanks to memory. These data are still valuable because for an expression to be considered as learned, participants had to correctly explain why it was used in that scene, which is evidence that guessing from context is a powerful tool for learning vocabulary. For that, a teacher guidance can be an additional help for metacognitive awareness and strategy training.

For instance, in extract 14, LR, who was in the second group of the oral task, rewatched the scene containing *Knock it off*, an expression that she did not know in the posttest, and was able to

explain it orally after seeing it in the scenes again. Her reflection during the interview gave indication to the process of learning from context.

[32]

Comparing pre et posttests

Researcher: [Tu as écrit que tu as vu] *Knock it off* ... dans plusieurs scènes mais que tu ne sais pas exactement expliquer ce que ça veut dire.

LR: C'est ça. ... En fait, à chaque fois je le vois dans la scène, à chaque fois je me suis demandée ce que ça voulait dire exactement. Et du coup j'étais perplexe. Et du coup je l'ai retenu et je me suis dit il va falloir que je cherche ce que ça veut dire parce que ça a l'air important.

Researcher: ... Ici tu as [écrit]... "Pour dire à quelqu'un d'arrêter de faire quelque chose qui vous ennuie".

LR: Oui. J'hésite entre celle-là et la B [pour encourager quelqu'un de passer du temps à se détendre et à faire très peu]. J'avoue. Mais à chaque fois c'était pour dire à quelqu'un de partir. Donc il me semble que ça doit être quelque chose comme ça.

Rewatching the scenes

HIMYM: In a way, he was the archetype of the modern politician! Dude,

LR: "Knock it off" [...]

Researcher: ... Peux-tu me décrire un peu le contexte ?

LR: Je pense qu'il doit lui demander de partir. Parce que dans le contexte du coup, il voulait juste être seul avec cette fille et discuter avec elle, et plus après. Et du coup, pas que ce mec s'incruste entre deux et que puisque c'était... Enfin après, il est en mode "ouais c'est chez moi, c'est mon livre" et cetera et cetera. Du coup oui, peut être quelque chose comme "abandonne", "part loin", "juste part là, c'est tranquille."

Asking questions to the learner to make them reflect on their analysis of the scene also helped three participants (extracts 33-35).

[33]

HIMYM: Everyone stop! Alan Thicke, shut up! Marshall, it's a station wagon,

Researcher: Qu'est-ce qu'elle dit à Marshall? Qu'est-ce qui se passe dans cette scène?

LV: Ils sont en train de se disputer par rapport à Robin. C'est un rendez-vous qu'elle a. Ils sont en train de l'observer et, je ne sais pas, ils montent tout un stratagème pour... parce qu'à la fin elle demande... Lilly elle demande pourquoi ils s'embrassent alors que normalement ils ne devraient pas s'embrasser.

Researcher: Et en particulier sa conversation avec Marshall dans la voiture... Est-ce que tu te souviens? Tu peux répéter cette scène si tu veux. Essaie de comprendre le contexte, ça peut aider.

HIMYM: Everyone stop! Alan Thicke, shut up! Marshall, it's a station wagon,

LV: Ils se disputent par rapport à... Au lieu du restaurant. Enfin je suppose ce que c'est un restaurant. Peut être "Get over it".

Researcher: Pourquoi?

LV: Pour lui dire d'arrêter de... parce qu'il n'arrête pas de répéter "Wagon station". Il ne comprend pas pourquoi et elle lui dit "Bah vas y, passe à autre chose" (rires).

[34]

HIMYM: Everyone stop! Alan Thicke, shut up! Marshall, it's a station wagon,

Researcher: Est-ce que tu as compris de la scène?

ML: Celle là, c'est celle que j'ai un peu moins compris de toutes je pense.

Researcher: Elle était très... Elle est... En général les étudiants disent que c'est un peu compliqué, mais dit moi ce que tu as compris.

ML: D'après ce que j'ai compris, c'est des gens qui veulent, qui veulent que... Donc leur ami il voit une autre fille dans le restaurant et il voulait avoir un gros van. Mais au final ils sont tous dans une petite voiture à espionner mais c'est pas très discret quoi.

Researcher: Et du coup, pourquoi elle...? De quoi elle parle quand elle...? Tu peux répéter la scène si tu veux, revoir pour essayer de comprendre ce que elle dirait dans cette situation. Genre quel type de message en tout cas elle veut passer.

ML: Est-ce qu'on peut voir la scène?

HIMYM: Everyone stop! Alan Thicke, shut up! Marshall, it's a station wagon,

Researcher: Quel est le message qu'elle veut passer à Marshall? Pour cette histoire de station wagon.

ML: Qu'il faut se contenter de ce qu'on a.

Researcher: Ok. Est-ce qu'il y a une expression qui matche un peu?

ML: Je pense que j'aurais dit "Get over it" mais je ne pense pas que ce soit ça qu'elle dit après.

[35]

HIMYM: In a way, he was the archetype of the modern politician! Dude,

Researcher: Qu'est-ce qu'elle dirait?

LM: "Dude"...

Researcher: Il y a aussi l'option "Je ne sais pas" si tu...

LM: Hum. "Dude"... J'hésite entre "Get over it" et "Hang in there". Mais vu que je sais pas ce que ça veut dire exactement "Hang in there" je ne suis pas sûre.

Researcher: Est-ce que je peux m'expliquer un peu le contexte.

LM: De la scène?

Researcher: Oui.

LM: Euh. Bah du coup, ça fait genre depuis le début d'une soirée qu'ils essayent de draguer la même fille parce qu'ils ont tous les trois lu la biographie de Roosevelt. Et du coup là ils sont en train de... En gros de faire un duel pour savoir qui va coucher avec cette fille. Et bah Ted il commence un peu à s'énerver. Euh...

Researcher: Donc quand il utilise une expression à ce moment là, ça serait avec quel objectif? Quel serait le message de cette expression?

LM: Ah ben là c'est genre vraiment lui dire d'arrêter quoi. Ou de s'en aller. Enfin. Mais pas de manière sympa.

Researcher: Et Est-ce qu'il y a une expression qui correspond à ce message dans la liste?

LM: Bah du coup j'aurais envie de dire "Knock it off". Ouais. Ou "Get over it" mais "Get over it" il est utilisé quand même de manière assez différente... Non je dirais "Knock it off". Je pense que c'est... Oui.

Looking at the big picture, group 1, who rewatched scenes with *Get over it*, *Good Grief* and *Way to go* and five, five and seven participants learned them, respectively. They also learned the expressions *Knock it off* (N= 3), *Hang in there* (N= 2) and *You're on* (8). Figure 66 shows that

proportionally (based on the number of participants that did not know it before the interview), *You're on* was the most learned expression from the three they had not rewatched.

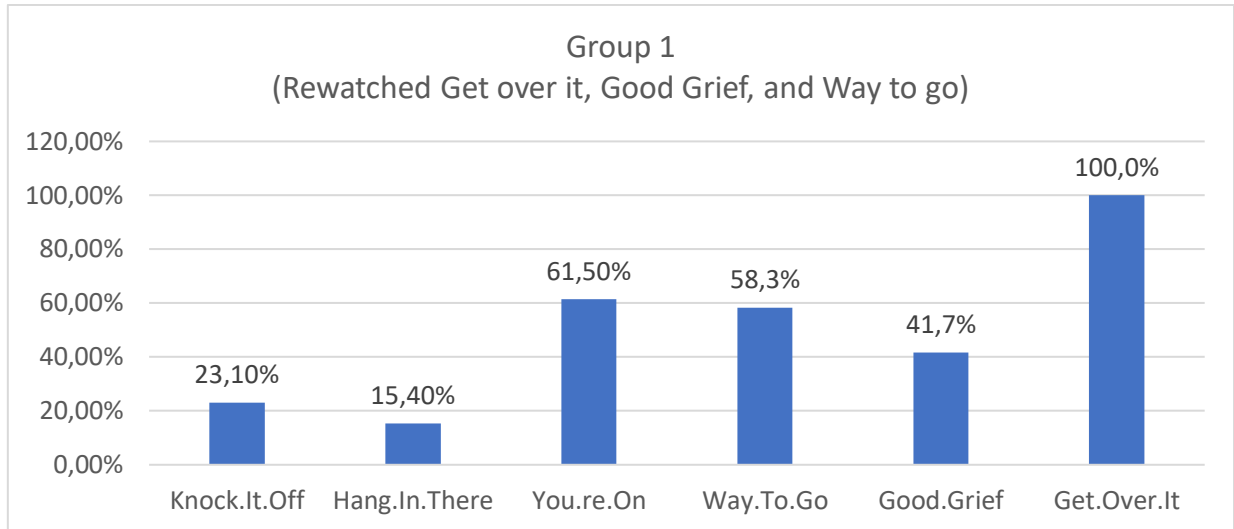


Figure 66 - Orally recalled expressions in Group 1, who rewatched *Get over it*, *Good Grief* and *Way to go*

Group 2 rewatched the scenes with *You're on*, *Hang in there* and *Knock it off*. As expected, scores were proportionally much higher for the expressions they had rewatched (Figure 67), in which 14, 10 and 9 participants learned them, respectively. Five participants learned *Good Grief*, two learned *Way to go* and one learned *Get over it*.

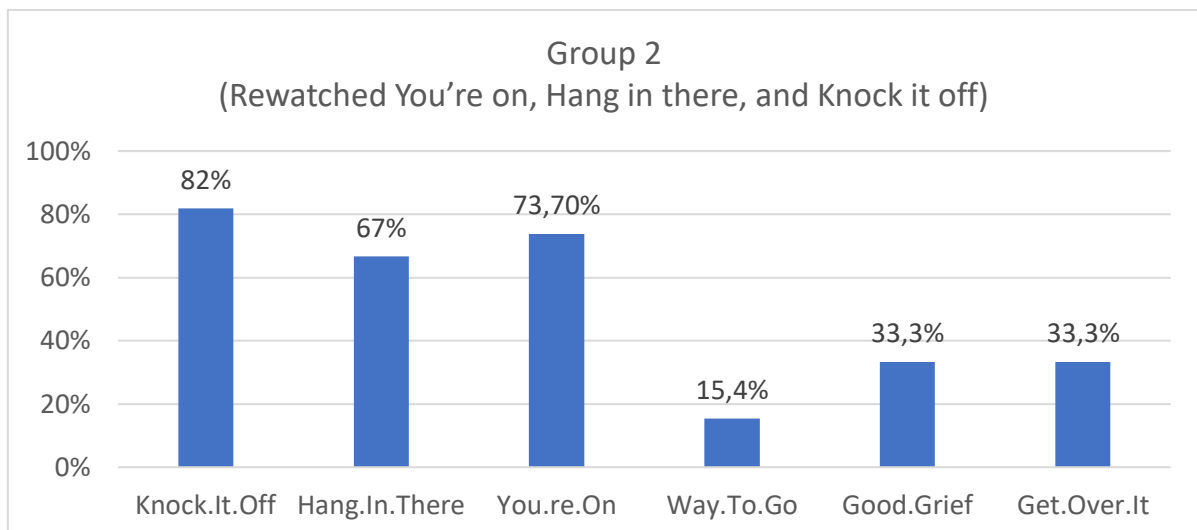


Figure 67 - Orally recalled expressions in Group 2, who rewatched *You're on*, *Hang in there* and *Knock it off*

A point to be considered is that, as we aimed to share strategies for vocabulary learning through media, it was paramount to give participants feedback at the end of the interview. We decided to delay the feedback briefly so that participants could reflect as much as they could, through different techniques: on their own and with guidance, as this has been shown to produce better long-term learning than immediate feedback (Brown et al., 2014). This final stage is not to be taken for granted, so that learners do not leave with the wrong interpretation of the vocabulary items, and because feedback itself strengthens retention more than testing alone does (P. C. Brown et al., 2014).

Unfortunately, this meant that we could not do a delayed posttest to assess long-term retention. As Vidal (2011) pointed out, we also believe that extended exposure over time provides opportunities for encountering these expressions again and we hope that through the different workshops available at their local language center, they will be able to rehearse using these newly acquired expressions.

7.5.3 The role of intention

A challenge encountered during the methodology phase of this study was trying to anticipate the level of intention that could be unconsciously added to the experience of the participants by asking them to come to a language center. We later discovered that what could have been seen as a bias can actually be a strength of our data collection design: one participant, AMC, acknowledged being more concentrated during the experiment than she normally is at home (in extract 36):

[36]

AMC: “Je suis beaucoup moins concentré d'habitude : je prends mon téléphone, si je loupe un moment, je me dis ce n'est pas grave, je regarde là, je me lève, je vais chercher à manger. là pas du tout. Donc au niveau de l'attention, j'ai beaucoup plus regardé.”

This can be seen as evidence that in a nonformal context, students learning intentions increase, which can be useful for teachers to show learners how to concentrate on language. It also raises the question as to how prepared learners actually are of taking conscious steps towards intentional learning on their own. One important hypothesis is the possibility that the lack of difference between the incidental and intentional groups in phase two (subsection 7.3) is the absence of practice. When asked to pay attention to expressions, participants may have got distracted viewing the scenes, for not being used to consciously directing attention to language or not knowing when to do it or how to sustain it.

“To what extent can different levels of intention impact the learning of fixed expressions while watching Sitcoms in English?”, was asked in the introduction of this thesis. Culminating findings presented in this result section have provided evidence that intention contributes to vocabulary learning. As shown in Figure 68, the number of gains for each expression in the posttest (in blue), gains for the three expressions that were not rewatched entirely (in orange), and gains for those who rewatched three scenes before trying to recall the expressions are evidence of the benefits of different levels of intention.

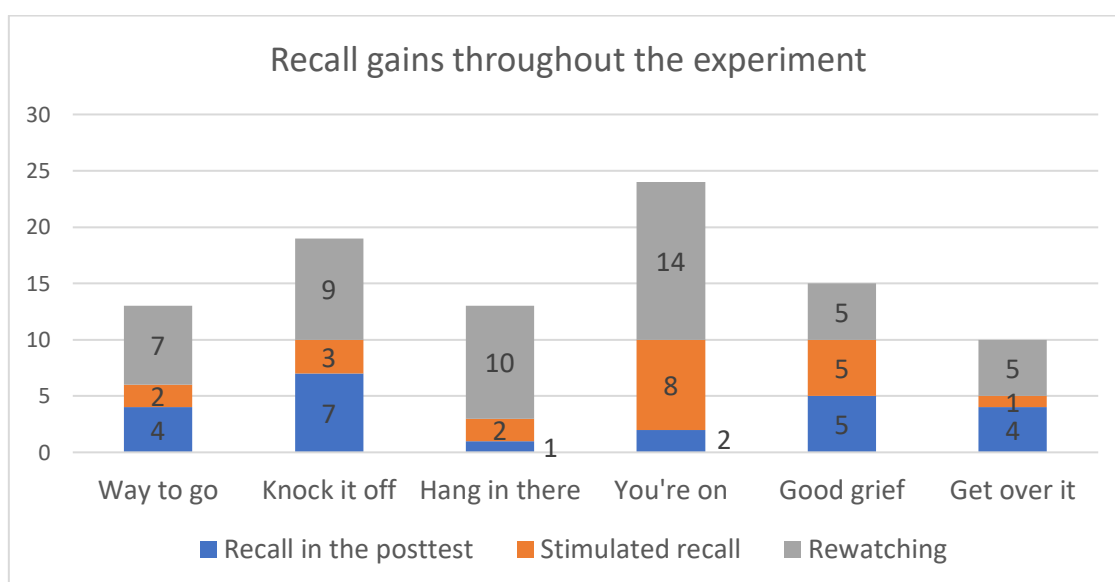


Figure 68 - Recall gains throughout the experiment

In other words, having low or no intention to learn prior to watching, either initiated by the learner (incidental condition) or by the researcher (intentional condition) fostered recall gains in the posttest (being able to translate, explain or define), even though research has constantly shown these gains to be generally modest (Brown et al., 2008; Horst et al., 1998; Pitts et al., 1989; Vidal, 2011). Being encouraged by the researcher to watch part of the scenes again and verbalize their hypothesis (for the non-rewatched words), brought additional learning gains. Furthermore, being asked to rewatch three scenes to learn the expressions from context facilitated substantial vocabulary learning progress.

As we have argued in chapter two, it takes effort to focus attention at will, but it may a powerful strategy for learning. Taking into consideration the substantial gains obtained in the final task, wherein the researcher closely helped participants to direct attention to the learning objective, it is fair to conclude that training can help learners both in process and later in informal practices.

7.5.4 Summary and conclusions

This section brought to light evidence on the role of metacognitive awareness for vocabulary learning. In an era in which language learning is largely gained and influenced by informal practices, it is important to reflect on how teachers can help learners be more aware of the outcomes of these practices and become responsible for their own learning, providing useful training for a more effective learning experience.

The exchanges in the interviews revealed that language from informal practices leaves a trace in the memory and can eventually be remembered by participants. This was the case for *Knock it off*, *Good grief* and *Get over it* in apps, books, films and series. However, remembering it is one thing, another is to recognize what the expressions mean or even to be able to retrieve their meaning for use. This is why further discussion was held with participants, with the objective of discussing their answers in the tests and analyzing the context of the scenes to look for clues of what the expressions meant through stimulated recall and a think out-loud protocol.

The first step was to compare the pre and posttests. Stimulated recall helped students verbalize the knowledge they had and reflect on what may have helped recognition in the posttest. In the interview, some participants recalled scenes from the series to illustrate the use of the expressions.

The second step consisted of rewatching three scenes from *How I Met Your Mother* for hypotheses formation and all 6 scenes up to the moment before a character said one of the expressions. This helped participants focus on context and look for clues. Through a think out-loud protocol, students exteriorized their thoughts and analysis of the scenes, confirming or readjusting their hypothesis with some guidance as needed. Findings show that the exchanges between researcher and participants helped all participants learn at least one of the expressions.

The results of this final part raised the question as to how learners are actually prepared to experience informal learning with intention and whether asking them to pay attention to expressions was likely to affect learning. The difference in gains between just asking participants to pay attention (in section 7.3) and the results in the final task (in section 7.5) is flagrant, indicating that different degrees of attention can change learning outcomes.

The way of guiding learners depends on the needs of each and their knowledge of each target expression. Some of the questions asked in the interview were not premeditated, and their benefits only appeared in our analysis: they are closely connected to the context of each conversation. This guidance can be perfected and used in other contexts, in individual and group guidance, coupled with other awareness-raising techniques.

Needless to say, our findings are only preliminary. As Hulstijn (2013) pointed out, learning a new word involves encountering it in different contexts and processing it in various forms. This diversity strengthens links with other words in the mental lexicon and gradually becomes available for retrieval. Thus, incidental and intentional encounters, metalinguistic analysis, and different attempts to use such expressions are precious tools for learning and recall as they require different efforts, thereby adding to the process of consolidation, and strengthening connections in the brain. More importantly, rewatching, pausing, guessing from context, keeping track of the knowledge gains, and trying to use these newly acquired expressions are some things that can be done in informal contexts without a facilitator. Our goal as guides should always be to prepare learners to become more active in informal learning when they feel the need and the willingness to do so.

Chapter 8. General Discussion

Learning a language involves a multitude of variables and there is certainly a social aspect that motivates people to engage in informal practices in English. This line of research, developed by Toffoli (2008); Rovens Mompean (2010); Sockett (2012); Kusyk (2015); Cappellini et al. (2016), investigates learning from an important social angle and must continue to be studied in the literature in the field of Second Language Acquisition. It is undeniable, however, that two of the most powerful driving forces of watching series in English, the object of study in this thesis, are enjoyment and language learning. In our findings, many language users watch series as a pleasant strategic way of achieving language proficiency. For others, learning English is a desirable secondary goal. In both cases, language users will put more or less effort to the task, depending on the situation, in hopes that learning will take place as a result.

Some may argue that it does not matter whether someone has or does not have the intention to learn when engaging in informal learning (Dressman, 2020a; Hulstijn, 2003). However, this remains open to debate. As language researchers and teachers, taking into account learners' objectives in informal learning is important to help learners progress and stay motivated. We also believe that it is through reflection that learners can enhance their chances of reaching their proficiency goals. Finally, although informal learning should remain informal, it is important to acknowledge learners' informal practices so that they are not left to their own abilities.

In light of the questions asked in the first chapters and the results obtained in this thesis, we will discuss three main topics in this final chapter, which concern language learners, researchers and teachers: (1) For learners, what does it mean to engage in informal series viewing in English and what knowledge can be gained through this extended exposure? (2) For researchers, why should we consider intentionality in the learning process? And (3) for teachers, what can be done to help students enhance their informal learning opportunities? The following sections will discuss possible answers to these questions.

8.1 What are the contributions for learners?

"For I was conscious that I knew practically nothing..." (Plato, 1997)

Improvement is the principle of learning. As human beings, we intrinsically seek to progress in whatever we do (Ryan & Deci, 2017). When deciding to watch series in English, managing to finish an episode having understood it, there is often a feeling of accomplishment, more or less special, even if nobody is there to congratulate them. This simple achievement still provides enjoyment and drives the language user to continue, and repetition helps them get better at it. This process is for personal gain, not for someone else. Our results have provided preliminary evidence on language users' intentions when viewing series. The present section will discuss our findings that suggest that language learning may be part of the process of enjoyment.

Enjoyment and challenge have been studied together in the theory of Flow. In chapters one and two we have discussed how informal practices in English provide enjoyment to language users and the challenges involved can be related to learning the language. When engaging in informal activities, learning is often a secondary goal for language learners – they aim to master new things, without necessarily seeking performance or measuring abilities (Dweck, 2000, p.16).

Engaging in informal learning seems to be connected to the desire to increase competence for some people. In some of the answers from our interviews, participants referred to their habits of watching YouTube in English (in appendix J). MF, for instance, indicated that she watches videos on how to sew because it is a topic that she enjoys, and it is easy to find videos in English related to sewing. KT also searches for statistics related content on YouTube and most of the (more precise) search results are in English. Both of them recognized that this habit, whose focus is enjoyment and learning, results in adding to their linguistic knowledge, which is often a secondary or tertiary goal. This fact is also highlighted during the interview session with SK (extract 37):

[37]

SK: "... Pour tout ce qui est histoire de la mode, tous les termes qui sont liés soit à la couture ou à certaines pièces de vêtement, ... il y a certains termes où je finis par comprendre avec le contexte ce qui fait que finalement je [ne] pourrais même pas les traduire en français. ... Enfin, je [ne] regarde pas de contenu comme ça en français. Ce qui fait que certaines choses finalement je ne saurais pas le terme technique en français, mais je connais à peu près le terme technique en anglais à force de l'entendre dans les contextes."

The habit of consuming content in English aids in comprehension of language in other informal activities, especially for frequently occurring words. Some participants even seemed to be aware of it. For instance, CB stated that she reads a fair number of books and their fanfictions (over a hundred) in English. She was convinced that because she was very interested in the topic, it was easier for her to understand it. She has noticed that, because the context is quite similar from one text to the other, vocabulary is often repeated and she stated that this helps with comprehending the text. She also mentioned that when watching series, she often encounters expressions that she had noticed in her readings, and thereby affirms that, for that reason, watching becomes an easier task (in appendix J).

When asked about their series-watching habits, some learners claimed to watch in English when they have the goal of learning the language (e.g., KT in appendix J). Others watch series in the original language without setting language-learning goals, but showed awareness of the language gains this can bring in the long term (extract 38):

[38]

MF: “Je pense [que j’apprends l’anglais en regardant les séries]. Après je ne sais pas si je m’en rends compte vraiment concrètement, mais je remarque que ma petite sœur qui regarde aussi énormément comme moi des séries en anglais avec les sous-titres en français, on est beaucoup meilleurs en anglais que des amis qui [n’]ont jamais regardé, qui regardent tout en français. Et je pense quand même qu’en regardant ça rentre, mine de rien, et on s’exprime beaucoup mieux.”

MF’s intuition is in accordance with scientific findings. From a constructivist perspective, knowledge comes from our interaction with the world (Saccol, 2009). When we encounter new situations, new information and, in our case, new language, our brain interprets their meanings, use and messages. Through extended exposure, connections are made between what we already know, and the new information we are faced with. This happens every day in our mother tongue or in a foreign language, as evidence in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) has shown over the years (discussion in chapter three).

The examples given thus far in this thesis show that the attractiveness and active engagement in informal practices, has a strong connection with enjoyment and learning. This is not surprising, as Csikszentmihalyi (2009) has already pointed out that when people enjoy what they are doing, they may enter a state of Flow, in which people get so involved with the activity that nothing else matters (Csikszentmihalyi, 2009, p. 4). The theory holds that finding great enjoyment in an activity, involves having a clear goal, and learning is often one of them. This is also supported by Dweck (2000), who found evidence that when the goal is to improve, failure is likely to provoke continued effort (p.17).

This seems to be the case of many of the university students in our study, considering the many hours devoted to series viewing and the progressive use of different subtitles.

Flow is in itself an intrinsically rewarding experience (Vrooman et al., 2022). In this thesis, through a series of procedures, we have investigated how watching series in English is rooted in students' routines and the reasons for watching. In our analysis, we found that whilst enjoyment seems to be a key factor for watching, learning often acts as a secondary goal, with both being necessary for Flow. Learning seems to take many forms when it comes to watching videos on YouTube (to learn about hobbies or for academic purposes), but in the case of series, learning is tightly connected to language, largely manifested in the choice of subtitles (section 7.2). The more learners become and want to become proficient, the more they dare to add captions instead. This seems to be a direction taken by many students, in which moving from dubbed series to subtitles, and then to captions, to later watch series without captions is a way of verifying that proficiency stages are being reached. The quantitative data and testimonies collected in this thesis led us to consider the possibility that fatigue, difficulty of the series and hardship in finding subtitles or captions are momentary factors that lose in importance on route to proficiency.

In light of Csikszentmihalyi's work (2009) on the importance of having goals, a parallel can be drawn between their example of a tennis player who knows what they have to do, a climber that aims to reach the top of a cliffside without falling and the language learner, who wants to be proficient. They all have specific objectives and they instinctively look for clues to estimate the attainment of their objectives: the score panel, the distance covered, and the modalities of watching, respectively. As time passes, they receive information that they are meeting that basic goal (p. 54).

“The goals of an activity are not always as clear as those of tennis, and the feedback is often more ambiguous than the simple ‘I am not falling’ information processed by the climber. Almost any kind of feedback can be enjoyable, provided it is logically related to a goal in which one has invested energy.” (Csikszentmihalyi, 2009, p. 55)

With these arguments in mind, our theory is two-fold: (1) students enjoy watching series in English partially because there is the challenge of the language and (2) students learn the language to be able to feel more at ease when engaging in their favorite informal practices in English. This conclusion was reached in light of Deci & Moller's theory (2005, p. 581), which holds that learning is a crucial motive for human behavior and mastery is attained over time, requiring directed, selective, and persistent activity. Thus, learners may seek to develop language skills to cope with difficulties faced in watching series and may find in them a way of achieving higher levels of proficiency over time.

“[Je cherche des vidéos YouTube] pour m'informer. Je dirais [que j'apprends de l'anglais] quand même, sans avoir l'objectif. Bon, c'est vrai que si je fais un peu plus attention, c'est mieux. Mais même sans avoir l'objectif, je pense que je... Il y a des petits trucs que j'apprends quand même sans en avoir l'objectif. Mais je pense que j'apprendrais plus si j'avais l'objectif de faire attention à ce que j'écoute.” (KT in appendix J)

8.1.1 *Watching series to learn English*

Evidence in subsection 7.2.2 has showed that learners watch series in English because it is enjoyable and as a means to learn the language. A parallel has been drawn between our findings and Csikszentmihalyi's work (2009), based on the theory that goal setting, which can be learning English, is essential to reach full enjoyment, which he calls *Flow*. Csikszentmihalyi (2009) states that:

“If one chooses a trivial goal, success in it does not provide enjoyment. If I set as my goal to remain alive while sitting on the living-room sofa, I also could spend days knowing that I was achieving it, just as the rock climber does. But this realization would not make me particularly happy, whereas the climber's knowledge brings exhilaration to his dangerous ascent.” (pp. 54-55)

It is important to note that Flow is an ephemeral state. Viewers will not always be in Flow, but evidence in subsection 7.2.4 indicates that this is the state they are mostly looking for when watching sitcoms: to relax, to forget themselves in the activity, and other components to be shown below. According to studies carried out by Csikszentmihalyi (2009), the phenomenology of enjoyment has eight major components. The paragraphs that follow will describe them, giving evidence found in our analysis.

The first three components are related to how one feels in Flow.

The **first** is “a deep but effortless involvement that removes from awareness the worries and frustrations of everyday life” (p. 49). This evidence was provided by respondents in our questionnaire, who expressed the relaxing aspect of the activity (N=49): they find comfort in watching and describe it as a good way of calming the mind, escaping, taking their mind off things, and taking a break (N= 16). Answers also revealed that sitcoms, specifically, were qualified as *light* and *positive*, or a great option for anyone at the end of a long day of work.

The **second** component is connected to the loss of self-consciousness. Csikszentmihalyi (2009) explained that the loss of self-consciousness “does not involve a loss of self, and certainly not a loss of consciousness. ... What slips below the threshold of awareness is the concept of self, the information we use to represent to ourselves who we are. And being able to forget temporarily who we are seems

to be very enjoyable” (p. 64). That is to say that being in Flow is not about being unaware of what happens in our body or mind, for which Csikszentmihalyi's (2009) example of a climber is a good illustration: they focus all their attention on the small irregularities of the rock wall that will have to support their body. The same can be true for learners when watching sitcoms when they lose the sense of self and are united with the series' environment by relating to the characters and the universe of the series (N= 6), or being projected to their reality which is often close to what could happen in real life (N= 13).

The **third** component of flow is the alteration of the sense of duration of time: the sensation that hours pass by in minutes. One indication of this element is the data in subsection 7.1.3, that shows the considerable number of hours spent watching series: out of 443 respondents, 116 declared that they watch at least 5 hours a week. Five hours a week represents on average ten episodes of 30 minutes, whereas 15 hours is equivalent to 30 episodes a week (N=15). Suffice to say, one episode seems to call for a second episode and so on, which is a considerable number of hours of a students' week.

The **fourth** component is the sense of control over their actions. In activities that produce Flow experiences, the person has sufficient skills to reduce the margin of error to as close to zero as possible (Csikszentmihalyi, 2009, p. 60). In our case, when watching series in English, the stakes are related to whether they understand the story and are able to learn from context. If they reach a level of comfort in the language, the theory holds that worries will tend to disappear, including those of failure. This is supported by testimonies in subsection 7.2.4, in which students describe their well-being, as well as the control in their choice of language, subtitles and captions, which can be adapted at will thanks to different streaming platforms and downloading.

Together with the previous component, the **fifth** is related to the psychological aspects of Flow. Being in Flow means that the person is doing an activity they believe to have a chance of completing. We found evidence that lower-level students tend to choose to watch dubbed versions because doing this in English would prevent them from understanding the episode. As they feel more capable of coping with the language, they start watching in the original version, which 95.2% prefer, whether using subtitles, captions or no written support at all. This exemplifies their choice according to the possibility of completion. Luckily, viewers often have the choice to adapt the challenge to match their skills, especially on Netflix, used by 87.8% of respondents.

The **sixth** component is the feedback viewers receive when watching series: this can be obtained immediately, from the realization that one can understand the plot, or that new words are being noticed and learned in the process. This means that, when understanding series in their original version is a goal, the feedback can be immediate. However, even goals that require a very long time to accomplish can be enjoyable. As Csikszentmihalyi (2009) points out, “the goals of an activity are not

always as clear as those of tennis, and the feedback is often more ambiguous than the simple ‘I am not falling’ information processed by the climber. Almost any kind of feedback can be enjoyable, provided it is logically related to a goal in which one has invested energy” (p. 55). He gives an example of an interviewee who lived in the Alps whose most enjoyable experiences were taking care of her orchard: it is long-term goal that involves patient waiting, but living this process provides special satisfaction and powerful feedback (p. 55). A parallel can be drawn with language learners who watch series in English hoping that the language gains will culminate in a greater proficiency level.

The next components have cognitive implications. The **seventh** relies on concentration. This justifies our plea for the importance of intention, as “the deep enjoyment [Flow] provides requires an equal degree of disciplined concentration” (Csikszentmihalyi, 2009, p. 49). This attention regulates states of consciousness “by admitting or denying admission to various contents into consciousness” (Csikszentmihalyi, 2014, p. 3). Concentration directed at the plot or at the characters, for instance, as seen in chapter two, is vital for vocabulary learning to happen (Krashen, 2013). It is attention that will allow the viewer to notice unknown words and look for clues in the context. Teachers have an important role to play in helping learners achieve this sixth component more often, through training them on how to direct attention to language. This is an effortful task for lower-level users who, hoping or aiming to learn English with series, still need to handle the cognitive load of watching in an L2. This can also be a challenge for independent users (B1-B2) who are not used to focusing attention on language (discussion held in section 7.5.3).

Teachers also have a role to play in goal setting, the **eighth** component. Answers in our questionnaire indicated that students watch series in English for the enjoyment they bring, and their willingness to learn language in the process. These two goals are likely to shift temporarily from primary to secondary goal in informal contexts, when the viewer detects language that they judge important to understand¹¹³. More than setting general learning goals, this thesis has advocated for the advantages of setting *specific language* goals, such as focusing on formulaic sequences (results in section 7.3), and has presented evidence as to how different levels of intentionality can facilitate the learning of fixed expressions (in section 7.5). Considering this evidence and our arguments, an important contribution teachers can give to enhance the process of informal learning is to help learners develop metacognitive control (decision making and strategy use).

It is fair to conclude that the great amount of time already put into watching series, combined with effort directed at language can be a relatively difficult task, but it may provide considerable enjoyment and learning rewards. Our argument is that raising awareness to the effects of setting goals

¹¹³ Godfroid et al. (2010) proposed a similar interaction between incidental and intentional learning, in which learners switch their focus from general comprehension to language according to what they notice.

and helping learners establish them according to their needs is an important role of teachers who want to guide learners through informal learning. In a process of autonomy, students can take the initiative to seek training and guidance, which can be found in their local university language centers.

All things considered, Flow can be part of informal learning not only because it can bring deep enjoyment, but also because viewers have a will to learn in a process that drives them to be immersed in the activity and spend energy and countless hours simply to feel Flow. As discussed in chapter one and in our analysis in subsection 7.2.1, the cultural hegemony of English (Sockett, 2011a) encourages students to learn the language to be able to communicate abroad and to have access to a larger range of activities in their free time, specially online. As a consequence of this frequent contact with compelling material, their chances of learning the language increases (Krashen, 1994). Comparing these findings, it appears that while students watch series to learn English, they in turn learn English, in its various forms, to feel more comfortable to watch series. This complexity is discussed in the following subsection.

8.1.2 Learning English to watch series

If a number of English users watch series to learn English, the opposite also seems to be true. Subsection 7.2.1 shows evidence that from all informal learning goals, being able to feel more at ease when watching series in English is the second biggest reason for learning the language. In addition, in subsection 7.2.2, we came to the conclusion that subtitles and captions are steps to reach the ultimate goal of watching series without subtitles. Also, in subsection 8.1.1 we discussed in more details why feeling confident when watching series is a relevant goal, as it increases the chances and frequency of Flow, the state that drives people to watch series frequently and for countless hours: to relax and to forget themselves in the activity.

When learners are not as proficient in the language, it is not as easy to be relaxed, concentrated and not to judge failure when watching series. Consequently, for them, watching series in an L2 does not provide much enjoyment. This is likely to discourage learners to keep facing the challenge. What AC, a B1 student in our experiment, said is an indication of this phenomenon (full dialogue in appendix J):

[39]

AC: “En fait, ce qui s'est passé c'est qu'il y a quatre cinq ans je pense que j'avais un meilleur niveau d'anglais et du coup je regardais des séries en anglais sous-titré anglais et ça passait sans problème. Et je pense que je comprenais tout. Du moins la majeure partie. Et du coup, ça allait. Après, j'ai fait une pause, j'ai moins regardé de séries,

je faisais moins d'anglais aussi en général. Et quand je regardais de l'anglais sous-titré anglais, c'était plus compliqué pour moi. Donc je suis repassé à l'anglais sous-titré français. Et je n'ai pas changé depuis parce que j'ai pas forcément plus pratiqué mon anglais que ça. Donc petit à petit, j'ai un peu perdu du niveau que j'avais."

Based on the theory of Flow and the lexical coverage needed to understand series, our hypothesis is that being proficient in English is a way of accessing a wider world of content, and to feel Flow. The more proficient a student is, the more they will have options and chances of full enjoyment because they will be more relaxed and less self-conscious, have an altered sense of duration, more control of their actions and more chances of completion of the activity, as well as be more autonomous in automatically using strategies for concentration, setting goals and obtaining feedback.

In conclusion, this section presented the combination of two theories: Csikszentmihalyi's theory of Flow (2009) and Krashen's compelling hypothesis (2013). Series are so compelling and enjoyable that they may lead the viewer to Flow, providing a favorable environment for language learning to take place. As viewers learn, they increase proficiency, which, in return, leads them to enter more easily and frequently in a state of Flow. In this setting, intentionality plays a key role in enhancing opportunities for Flow and, consequently, for language learning.

The contributions of this study to learners, is the finding that engaging in informal series viewing in English is a way of learning through Flow, a state of enjoyment that one can get into frequently. In addition, it is a sustainable way to continue the long-term task of achieving proficiency in a foreign language.

Needless to say, it seems that we watch to learn, and learn to watch. As briefly mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, Aristotle (384–322 BC) had already promoted learning through reason and habits: in order to learn rhetoric, one must perform speeches regularly (Mares, 2018). We now have evidence that to be at ease when watching series, one must continue to watch series. Our advice, based on this maxim, as well as on Schmidt's work (2010), and evidence provided in our thesis, is that to increase language gains, it is important to attend to language. This reinforces our argument for intentionality, considering that, through consciousness, noticing and learning will happen more often, and language will be more easily available for use, a discussion for the next chapter.

8.2 Why should researchers consider intentionality?

“Intentions act as magnetic fields [whenever a person is aware of desiring something or wanting to accomplish something], moving attention toward some objects and away from others, keeping our mind focused on some stimuli in preference to others.” (Csikszentmihalyi, 2009, p. 27)

According to Ryan & Deci's self-determination theory (2017), people need autonomy, competence and relatedness to be fulfilled in life. Our thesis seeks to make a contribution to the field of Second Language Learning taking these aspects into consideration. Autonomy can be included in informal learning if the learner is the one taking the initiative to participate in these activities (though there is continuing debate as to the extent to which a teacher should encourage learners to be involved in informal learning and to keep track of these practices). As far as competence is concerned, evidence in chapter seven indicates that intention is a powerful source of learning. The higher the intention is, the more benefits one is likely to reap: having general motives for learning seems to be true for most practices in L2 (section 7.2), having a prior intention before an activity leads to vocabulary gains (section 7.3), and applying learning strategies increases learning outcomes (section 7.5). Finally, the need for relatedness can be a strong motivation for adding further *learning* intentions to these *autonomous* informal practices.

Therefore, the contribution we aspire to make to the field is threefold. Central to our position is that informal learning entails different levels of consciousness and its expansion relies on three axes: Intention, Autonomy, and Human Exchange. These axes can be developed by some learners intuitively, but teachers have an important role to play for them to be enhanced, as argued in the different sections of chapter seven. The first axis is intention¹¹⁴: knowing what one needs and wants to learn. The second axis is Autonomy: reflecting on why one engages in informal activities, as well as when and where one does/can/should do them. The third axis is Human Exchange: developing metacognitive awareness, learning strategies through discussion and practice, as well as engaging in language use. As shown in Figure 69, we believe that the combination of these three axes should foster optimal learning in informal contexts.

¹¹⁴ Consciousness as intention was discussed in subsection 2.1.2.

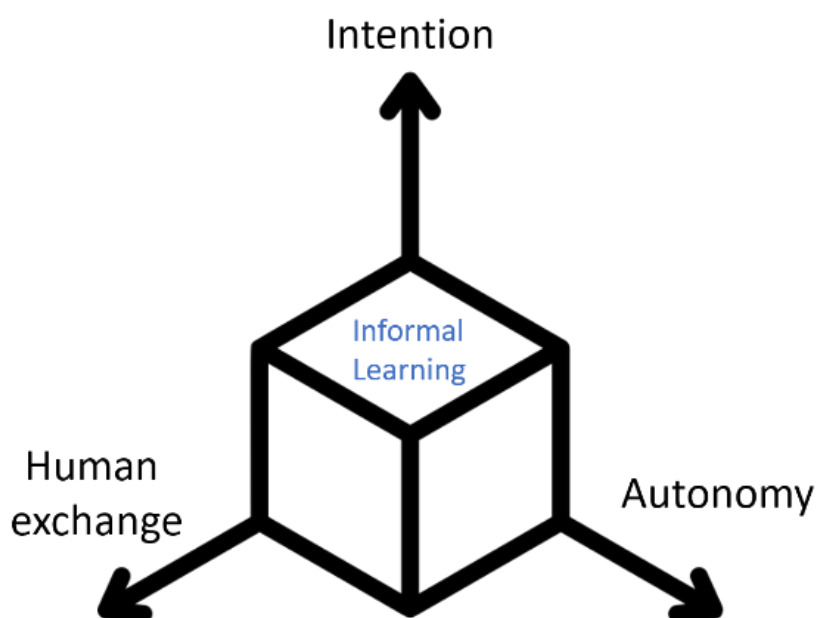


Figure 69 - The three axes of Informal Learning: Intention, Autonomy and Human exchange

The results from our research attest that language centers are an ideal place for interventions that help students develop these three axes (Autonomy, Intention and Human Exchange) to prepare learners for an enhanced informal learning experience. Thus, research should be applied to teaching in order to create the conditions for a good interrelation between the spheres that learners navigate, namely formal, nonformal and informal contexts.

8.3 What are the implications for teachers?

The arguments presented in the previous section (8.2) justify the claim that language centers can be an intersecting place for Autonomy, Competence and Human Exchange. In this context, teachers can make key contributions to learners' informal learning experience. The first step is understanding the reasons why learners engage in certain activities in English. The second is being an attentive contributor to help learners understand their own motivations and discover ways to guide them through the learning process.

If the role of teachers is changing from “transmitter of knowledge” to “guide”, what Brudermann & Pélissier (2016) recommend is that teachers support a social environment conducive to the development of the cognitive functions of each participant, starting by what learners know how to do alone and by setting up tasks that involves human exchange, the aim being to awaken cognitive

processes which could not have been envisaged without the help of third parties (peers or educational support).

Within this perspective, one thing teachers can do is to raise learners' awareness of the valuable sources of language learning that sitcoms provide. Learners might know this at some level, but holding a conversation about it should make them verbalize their practices and become interested in ways of taking advantage of these opportunities more. It can also increase intention when learners are doing the activity in an informal setting. Another element to consider, presented in section 8.1 is that many learners watch series in the original language to achieve Flow. Teachers can assist learners in revealing the component of challenge that makes this enjoyment possible (which can be language learning) and how to tune into it.

A further point to be aware of is that learning English is a long process. As Dweck (2000) points out, when viewing series in English does not help to increase knowledge of the language, it has nothing to do with the student's intellect, but rather with their way of attaching value and undertaking the activity (p. 16). A teacher can be of great importance in navigating these issues and suggesting strategies, such as directing attention to captions, images and establishing learning goals. This valuable interaction between teachers and learners may help strengthen learners' motivation to keep on being constantly exposed to the target language by watching series.

Finally, an example of articulation between (non)formal and informal contexts is the DIAL4U¹¹⁵ project, which aimed to facilitate the recognition, valorization and validation of informal activities through the use of open badges and blockchains. The project, in which we were able to participate with the team in charge of the Intellectual Output 4, carried out reflections and created a system in which learners can inform themselves and reflect on the informal activities they do, obtaining different badges for them. This can be used by teachers in combination with logbooks or other tools for developing learner autonomy, which can facilitate an increase in intention in learners, giving them more active control of their learning. This project is an illustration of one of the latest trends that show the interest of researchers in the topic.

“It is perhaps less obvious that the focusing of attention required for superior achievement must also be voluntary; only when a person chooses to get involved in an activity will he be motivated to sustain concentration long enough to bring it to fruition. It is an interesting fact that people can be forced to do practically anything.” (Csikszentmihalyi, 2014, p. 9)

¹¹⁵ <https://www.dial4u-uni.eu/intellectual-outputs/io4-recognition-and-validation-of-non-formal-and-informal-language-learning-process>

8.4 Looking deeper and looking ahead

We hope that our thesis has filled the multiple gaps identified in the understanding of series viewing, albeit in a preliminary manner. We gathered information on students' informal learning practices to examine the relevance of studying series viewing. Another objective of our study was to lead a more informed discussion on the reasons why students watch series, whether intention prior to watching leads to increased vocabulary learning, the role captions and images play in the process and, finally, what can be done to enhance informal learning.

We believe that the next necessary step that we could not cover in this thesis is twofold. Firstly, more opportunities for conversations on metacognition can be set up to help learners change practices and representations related to language learning, in line with work done by Macré & Rivens Mompean (2021) and Rivens Mompean & Eisenbeis (2022). These meetings offer favorable environments for learners to critically think about their work, track their progress by setting learning objectives when viewing series at home, and to eventually self-evaluate the progress made (Holec, 1979).

Secondly, workshops can be developed to encourage reflection of the language being learned in informal contexts, as well as language use (Kusyk, 2015). This can take place in the form of tutoring sessions and speaking workshops to bridge vocabulary recognition and recall (knowing the language and being able to use it). As Kusyk (2015) suggested, teachers can organize activities that would be complementary to informal activities that learners are engaged in, such as analyzing language register, meaning, form and use. As learners do not seem to participate in many oral production activities (Toffoli & Sockett, 2010, 2015), teachers could be the ones to provide opportunities for such activities. Practicing retrieval requires cognitive effort but is an important way to making vocabulary easier to use in the future as it strengthens memory (Brown et al., 2014), and should be practiced over and over, in spaced out sessions for it to become recall knowledge, rather than mindless recitation.

“Après, c'est aussi dans la répétition et l'habitude et dans le contexte [que j'apprendre des mots], c'est surtout le contexte. Après je ne sais pas si j'ai réutilisé des mots parce que je ne parle pas beaucoup anglais. Mais j'ai mémorisé des petites expressions. Et puis surtout le fait d'entendre le vocabulaire qu'ils utilisent au quotidien, ça me met un contexte. Parce que moi sinon, j'utilise pas trop l'anglais quoi” (VP in the interview, available in appedix J)

Conclusion

This body of work represents an ongoing journey rather than a definitive conclusion, marking the beginning of a continuing academic journey. If the myriad of possibilities that series viewing offers had generated great enthusiasm in us since before our doctoral studies, our discoveries have provided clues for further investigation and action.

The first of five of our objectives was to better understand the current context of exposure and use of English of French university students in informal learning contexts. Our hypothesis that a considerable number of them receive a substantial amount of input in English was confirmed, in which series viewing is the favorite audiovisual activity they undertake: 91.6% of the respondents declared that they watch series, 66% of whom do it at least 1 hour per week. Findings also corroborated the assumption that sitcoms are often watched, as four of the most mentioned series fell into this category.

Why are sitcoms so popular? Why do language users of English put hours and passion into watching them? With these questions in mind, our second objective was to investigate students' inner motives for watching sitcoms in English. Results indicated that the enjoyment sitcoms bring is an underlying reason, together with the intention to learn the language. As a short and easy-to-understand type of media, sitcoms are compelling to viewers and often conduct them to a state of Flow, in which they are so immersed in the activity that they forget it is in English. This condition is believed to be ideal for learning the language. Our findings also suggest that users of English are aware of the language learning potential this medium offers.

Our third objective was to know whether this awareness of learning gains could be operationalized by setting language learning goals before watching. To examine this point, we selected four sitcoms to conduct an experiment (*Friends*, *How I Met Your Mother*, *The Big Bang Theory* and *Brooklyn 99*) and invited students to watch them at the local language center. Every expression was learned by at least one student, but our statistical analyses were inconclusive as to whether watching to learn brought more benefits to learners compared to when they watch just for fun. As a consequence, we analyzed the data collected quantitatively and qualitatively to investigate the inconsistency in the results.

One way of delving into this matter was exploring the function that images and captions serve in vocabulary learning (our fourth objective). Data from an eye tracker allowed us to look deeper into the time spent on our target expressions, as well as on the nonverbal language that accompanied them. We found that attention to the captions of the expressions *Get over it* and *Knock it off*, seem to have helped participants to explain what they mean in a posttest. Conversely, the considerable

attention to the images of *Good grief*, also a highly learned expression, seems to have helped participants learn it. A possible explanation is the nonverbal clues in expressive facial movements (eyes raising, raise of eyebrows or frown). Another type of learning was also tested in our experiment: the ability to recognize the meaning of an expression from a list of options. For this type of knowledge, which is demonstrated by research to be easier for learners, the attention to the images is likely to have played a positive role. Those who were focused on the images were able to recognize *Knock it off*, *Good Grief* and *Get over it*. It is possible that these results indicate the high value of nonverbal language for recognizing formulaic sequences (meaning recognition), and the added value of captions for further recall and use (meaning recall). More research needs to be conducted to support these findings as our results could not be extrapolated to all expressions of the experiment.

These results do not rule out the influence of other factors in learning, namely voice and emotion. In examining the context of our selected scenes, we observed that our target expressions were pronounced with distinctive high or low pitch, and with a slow pace. The second observation is that the most learned expressions conveyed emotions that can be perceived as negative *Good grief* (frustration), *Knock it off* (annoyance) and *Get over it* (irritability), contrarily to the less learned expressions that express amazement (*Way to go*), interest (*You're on*) and encouragement (*Hang in there*). Nevertheless, our methodology was not able to provide conclusive empirical evidence that these two factors effectively played an important role in acquisition.

Considering that many factors affect language learning, our thesis furthered its agenda with a final objective: to investigate the role of teacher intervention in promoting metacognitive awareness and vocabulary learning. Our findings raised the question as to how learners are prepared to enhance informal learning. If they seem to know the affordances (Gibson, 1986) of series watching and the importance of reflexivity, they do not seem to know how to be more active in learning when they hold learning as a goal. Results show a considerable difference in gains between just asking participants to pay attention to the language and helping them direct attention to it, through strategy training. This indicates that different degrees of intention can change learning outcomes. Results suggest that through oral exchanges between a learner and a guide, much can be done to raise awareness to the potential of series viewing for learning English and to help learners retrieve the meaning of formulaic sequences for future use. It is important to consider, however, that the way of guiding learners depends on the need of each of them and knowledge of each target expression. A possible intervention could be the confrontation of their knowledge in tests, as well as the analysis of scenes from series for the formulation of hypothesis.

After examination of the objectives attained, we can provide an answer to our research question: to what extent can different levels of intention impact the learning of fixed expressions while

watching Sitcoms in English? Considering that a difference in behavior was observed between our two experimental groups, we can conclude that when the learning intentions are clear (in the intentional group), mechanisms are (un)consciously put in place for achieving learning goals. This was observed through the attention that individuals in the intentional group put into language by looking more at captions than the non-intentional group. Although the effectiveness of such strategy still needs empirical support, facilitators play an important role in talking to learners about what they are accustomed to doing when viewing in informal contexts, in discussing the efficacy of such methods, and in creating an opening to different ways to make the most of viewing opportunities for learning.

Although considerable research has been devoted to understanding informal learning, less attention has been paid to how intention can be a support for learning vocabulary in such contexts. We believe this study to be the first to investigate different levels of intentionality in vocabulary learning through series viewing. Although humble, our contribution is consistent with our goal of uncovering current informal learning practices, investigating the role of intention and exploring pedagogical ways of helping learners gain vocabulary through series viewing.

We hope our thesis has made a number of significant contributions to learners, researchers and teachers. Our findings suggest that learners can gain from reflecting on their learning practices, increasing their autonomy. By investigating how to include intention in series viewing, researchers may contribute to enhancing informal language learning gains. Finally, teachers are keys to helping learners improve autonomy and competence, not only for their expertise, but also for the human exchange, another basic need all learners have.

All of the findings above must be interpreted in light of the inevitable limitations of this study. The small sample that restrains the analysis in many quantitative studies in Applied Linguistics has also been an obstacle in our research. The limited number of participants in each group (intentional and incidental) and subgroup (B1 and B2) restricted our statistical analysis, keeping us from drawing more precise conclusions on the effect of intention on language learning.

Moreover, because we used real words in an authentic video, we were constrained to apply a pre-test. Although we took precautions in terms of time between the pre-tests and the experiment, as well as how they were presented to learners, the subjects may have been primed for our target expressions by the pre-test, making it difficult to assess to what extent our scenes were the only source of knowledge of meaning. Future research can assess long-term knowledge of these expressions. Therefore, we consider our quantitative results to constitute a tentative rather than a definitive answer.

Despite these limitations, we feel that our study still provides useful insights into learning fixed expressions in English through sitcoms, and reveal possible trends worth examining in further research. For instance, we have found that music is the activity that most language users engage in, and future

investigation into music lyrics might extend our knowledge on the vocabulary knowledge of university students. Future studies could also fruitfully explore reading in informal contexts: do students read more for fun (especially on social media) or for academic purposes, and what kind of language have they been learning with this exposure? Furthermore, our findings show that there is a large number of new informal activities that have not been (largely) studied by the literature in Second Language Acquisition: watching YouTube videos, listening to Podcasts, doing sports through videos online, doing guided meditation, and using apps such as Twitter, Tinder, TikTok and Instagram in English. This provides a good starting point for discussion and further research.

As far as intention is concerned, we found evidence that language learning may be one of the components that composes Flow in series viewing. This assumption might be addressed in future studies. Moreover, our study confirmed the role of audiovisual materials at providing motivating and contextualized language, thus, future studies could continue to investigate intention in extensive viewing conditions, such as in (self-directed) naturalistic learning environments.

Future investigations are also necessary to validate some conclusions about multimodality that can be drawn from our study. We believe that the analysis of gestures, facial expressions, voice and emotions should be done individually to tackle the impact of these factors in language learning through authentic media. These visual and emotional elements, as well as the difficulty of different types of media can also be analyzed through careful corpus analysis.

Another object for future research is the learning outcomes generated by pedagogical interventions related to intention. Subsequent to training in nonformal contexts, do learners change their mindsets when watching in informal settings? Research could be done to analyze learning journals and the learning goals learners set themselves. To what extent do learners often follow organizing circumstances because they prefer it or because they do not know how to do it differently? More studies can be conducted to collect students' perceptions of different ways of organizing their learning.

Future research can also be devoted to the development of different strategies shared in nonformal contexts to accommodate informal learning. This could be done through the development of workshops to encourage reflection about the language being learned in informal contexts and the organization of activities that would be complementary to informal practices, in which learners can analyze language register, meaning, form and use with a facilitator. Finally, future research could examine how speaking workshops can bridge vocabulary recognition and recall (knowing the language and being able to use it). As learners do not seem to participate in many oral production activities, teachers could be the ones to provide such opportunities.

All things considered, by investigating the role of intention in language learning, we hope that we gave keys to the actors involved in second language acquisition (learners, teachers and researchers) to interact with students by aiming to foster critical thinking and the search for learning, as well as to help individuals self-educate and reflect independently. This way, following the teaching of Socrates, we can all play our role in the exercise of power to direct ourselves in our never-ending quest for wisdom and in our life-long language learning journey.

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Summary in French

Introduction

La réflexion et la curiosité sont au centre de cette recherche doctorale pour deux raisons. Premièrement, nous avons été inspirés par le style de questionnement distinctif de Socrate et, par conséquent, tout au long de cette thèse, nous posons des questions pour illustrer et soutenir nos points de vue théoriques et notre raisonnement : (1) pour certains d'entre eux, nous avons trouvé des réponses dans la littérature, (2) d'autres trouveront une réponse grâce à notre étude, (3) d'autres enfin sont destinées à susciter la réflexion. En outre, et surtout, la plupart de nos résultats ont générés d'autres questions pertinentes, détaillées dans notre conclusion. La deuxième raison est que notre question de recherche, qui sera présentée à la fin de cette introduction, est née d'une interrogation sur les raisons pour lesquelles les gens s'engagent dans des pratiques d'apprentissage informel, ainsi que sur comment est ce qu'il est possible d'apprendre dans tels contextes. Il va sans dire que l'approche adoptée dans les pages suivantes repose sur la tentative de contribuer aux débats en didactique des langues avec humilité intellectuelle, rigueur et ouverture d'esprit (Baehr, 2011).

L'un des principaux sujets d'intérêt de cette thèse est le nombre apparemment illimité d'activités que le Web 2.0 offre. Les internautes peuvent l'exploiter à des fins de divertissement, d'information, de communication, de socialisation, de formation et, ce qui nous intéresse le plus dans cette thèse, d'apprentissage des langues. Cette myriade de possibilités a suscité un enthousiasme croissant chez certains chercheurs en didactique, qui ont toujours été intrigués par les applications pratiques de la linguistique et des théories du langage (Richards & Schmidt, 2010, p. vi) et étudient désormais comment l'apprentissage des langues se déroule dans de tels environnements virtuels. Ainsi, **notre premier objectif est de comprendre le contexte actuel d'exposition et d'utilisation de l'anglais des étudiants universitaires en dehors des cours.**

Cette thèse cherche aussi à découvrir les raisons pour lesquelles les apprenants s'engagent dans de telles pratiques. Les recherches récentes dont la base théorique s'inspire du constructivisme (Kusyk, 2015) ont généralement collecté et analysé des données dans une perspective sociale, en partant du principe que la langue s'apprend par l'interaction et la réaction à leur environnement (Martinez, 1989). Ces études dialoguent avec des théories psychologiques s'intéressant à la manière dont les facteurs socio-contextuels soutiennent ou contrecarrent l'épanouissement des personnes par la satisfaction de leur besoin psychologique fondamental d'appartenance (Ryan & Deci, 2017, p. 3). Compte tenu de la contribution apportée par des études menées par Rivens Mompean (2010), Toffoli

& Sockett (2010, 2015) and Cappellini et al. (2016), sur l'interaction dans des forums, des blogs et sur les réseaux sociaux, cette thèse vise à étudier deux autres besoins psychologiques humains primordiaux : la compétence et l'autonomie.

La théorie de l'autodétermination de Ryan et Deci (1985) formule le principe selon lequel les motivations de vie des individus découlent de trois besoins psychologiques fondamentaux : l'appartenance, la compétence et l'autonomie (Ryan et Deci, 2017, p. 3), des besoins qui sont essentiels pour une motivation optimale et pour le bien-être. Dans cette thèse, nous soutenons qu'en plus de se sentir socialement connectés, les individus s'engagent dans des pratiques informelles en anglais (activités hors classe) également pour acquérir des compétences, qui sont notre besoin fondamental de maîtrise (Ryan & Deci, 2017, p. 11). Selon cette théorie, le développement des compétences et des capacités est un motif crucial du comportement humain et cette maîtrise s'acquiert au fil du temps, nécessitant une activité dirigée, sélective et persistante (Deci & Moller, 2005, p. 581). Ryan & Deci (2017) ont déclaré que ce désir de compétence « dynamise une myriade de comportements, qui va des personnes jouant à des jeux vidéo mobiles pendant leurs loisirs jusqu'aux scientifiques découvrant les lois de l'univers » (p. 11). Par conséquent, les activités qui contribuent à l'acquisition de compétences constituent une grande incitation à la fréquence de l'engagement, conduisant les individus à des états affectifs agréables (Schultheiss et Brunstein, 2005).

Que ressentent les individus lorsqu'ils apprécient profondément une activité ? En 1975, le chercheur Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi a développé le concept de *Flow* en étudiant ce que les personnes interrogées rapportaient d'une expérience qu'elles avaient beaucoup appréciée (Csikszentmihalyi et al., 2005, p. 600). Le *Flow* a été théorisé pour représenter le sentiment de plein plaisir dans lequel l'individu oublie tout le reste et l'expérience est sa propre récompense, activité que se déroulaient tel qu'un courant qui les entraînait sans effort (Csikszentmihalyi, 2014, p. 183). Pour que les individus puissent accéder au *Flow*, certaines conditions doivent être remplies. Traditionnellement, trois éléments sont considérés comme primordiaux : la définition d'objectifs, les chances d'achèvement et le retour instantané. Selon Csikszentmihalyi et al. (2005), le *Flow* se produit lorsqu'une activité contient un ensemble clair d'objectifs, car elle ajoute une direction et un but au comportement. Il doit également y avoir un équilibre entre les défis perçus et les compétences perçues : il faut se sentir capable d'accomplir la tâche pour que l'individu se sente absorbé par celle-ci. Csikszentmihalyi (2009) explique qu'il s'agit d'un équilibre fragile étant donné que si l'activité devient trop difficile ou trop facile, l'individu peut respectivement devenir anxieux ou s'ennuyer.

Notre recherche vise à examiner ce que vivent les étudiants universitaires lorsqu'ils regardent un type spécifique de programme en anglais : les sitcoms. Sitcom, abréviation de *Situation Comedy*,

est une catégorie de séries courtes, drôles et qui abordent la vie quotidienne. Partant du postulat que les humains naissent avec un besoin interne de s'améliorer (Ryan & Deci, 2017), et compte tenu du message facile véhiculé par les sitcoms, l'apprentissage de l'anglais pourrait-il être *le* défi qui guide les étudiants en France à les regarder ?

Étant donné le peu d'attention qui est accordée aux intentions des apprenants dans notre domaine, nous pensons qu'une partie de l'apprentissage qui se produit dans les pratiques informelles peut être autodirigé, avec l'intention d'apprendre la langue. C'est pourquoi **notre deuxième objectif est d'explorer des intentions qui guident le visionnage des sitcoms**. Notre hypothèse est que l'intention d'apprendre l'anglais est l'une des raisons qui incitent les gens à poursuivre l'effort requis pour regarder dans une langue étrangère et que la compétence est une force motrice pour cette pratique d'apprentissage informel.

En plus d'explorer l'intention générale qui influence le visionnage de séries en anglais, nous cherchons également à contribuer à la recherche en évaluant le rôle de l'intention immédiatement avant le visionnage. Cette question est pertinente car, depuis plus de vingt ans, les chercheurs s'interrogent sur le rôle que les apprenants devraient jouer dans leur apprentissage des langues, plaidant pour le développement de l'autonomie, de la réflexivité, de l'action, de l'apprenance et de l'auto-direction. Ainsi, nous émettons l'hypothèse qu'encourager les apprenants à se fixer des objectifs d'apprentissage du vocabulaire tout en regardant des sitcoms pourrait favoriser davantage d'apprentissage.

Puisque les spectateurs doivent avoir au moins un niveau intermédiaire de maîtrise de l'anglais pour faire face aux mots inconnus dans le média (Milton, 2010 ; Nation, 1990; vanZeeland & Schmitt, 2012), et que les expressions familières et idiomatiques sont d'une importance majeure pour atteindre un niveau élevé de maîtrise d'une langue étrangère (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 27) nous visons à mettre en lumière un type fréquent de langage formel que l'on retrouve dans les sitcoms : les expressions figées (expliquées dans le chapitre trois). Nous supposons que regarder des sitcoms donne aux spectateurs un avantage significatif pour apprendre un langage courant et utile. **Notre troisième objectif est de mesurer l'impact de l'établissement d'un objectif langagier (l'apprentissage d'expressions figées) avant le visionnage de sitcoms**. Notre hypothèse est que regarder dans le but d'apprendre des expressions fixes entraîne de meilleurs gains de vocabulaire que regarder simplement pour se divertir.

D'autres questions ont surgi au cours de notre enquête. Si notre hypothèse selon laquelle les étudiants universitaires regardent des séries pendant leur temps libre se confirme (premier objectif), qu'une de leurs motivations est l'apprentissage des langues (deuxième objectif) et qu'il est possible d'apprendre des expressions figées en regardant des sitcoms (troisième objectif), la question évidente

qui en découle est de savoir comment cela se produit. Ainsi, notre étude explore plus en détail la notion d'apprentissage du vocabulaire, en explorant les facteurs qui affectent l'acquisition du vocabulaire, comme l'importance de la multimodalité (images et sous-titres) dans l'apprentissage (Dressman, 2020b ; Montero Perez, 2020b).

Compte tenu des recherches qui montrent la supériorité de la lecture sur l'écoute dans l'apprentissage du vocabulaire (R. Brown et al., 2008 ; van Zeeland & Schmitt, 2012), il n'était pas surprenant que les recherches indiquent que les sous-titres dans la langue cible facilitent l'apprentissage du vocabulaire (Fievez et al., 2020 ; Montero Perez et al., 2013, 2014). Cependant, on sait peu sur la manière dont l'attention portée aux sous-titres, par rapport à l'attention portée aux images, affecte l'apprentissage. Ainsi, **nous visons à contribuer à une meilleure compréhension de l'attention portée aux sous-titres en L2 et aux images lors du visionnage de sitcoms.**

Enfin, notre étude a un cinquième objectif, qui concerne le rôle des enseignants dans l'apprentissage informel : **nous étudions le rôle de l'intervention des enseignants dans la promotion de la métacognition et le développement de stratégies.** Étant donné que l'autonomie est le besoin d'autoréguler ses expériences et ses actions (Ryan & Deci, 2017, p. 10), dans le chapitre cinq, nous explorerons l'importance de la réflexivité pour promouvoir le développement de la métacognition et de l'action pour une expérience en contexte informel enrichi. Notre objectif est d'encourager la réflexivité dans l'apprentissage informel en bénéficiant de contextes non formels, comme une rencontre dans un centre de langues, pour amener l'individu un peu plus loin dans le processus de réflexion et développer des stratégies d'apprentissage.

En vue d'une contribution académique et professionnelle sur comment soutenir l'apprentissage informel, notre question de recherche est la suivante : **dans quelle mesure différents niveaux d'intention peuvent-ils avoir un impact sur l'apprentissage d'expressions figées lors du visionnage de sitcoms en anglais ?** Les enjeux d'une telle question ne sont pas anodins. Explorer le rôle de l'intentionnalité dans l'apprentissage peut apporter des contributions clés aux apprenants dans leur quête de compétence, aux enseignants qui cherchent à mieux aider les apprenants à devenir plus autonomes et aux chercheurs travaillant sur différents types d'apprentissage des langues. Pour cette raison, cette thèse explorera (1) les différentes dimensions de l'apprentissage d'une langue seconde en dehors des cours, (2) les différents niveaux de conscience dans l'apprentissage, (3) l'apprentissage d'expressions figées, (4) l'apprentissage par des séries, et (5) l'apprentissage en autonomie, respectivement dans nos chapitres théoriques.

PARTIE I. Le contexte de la recherche et les types d'apprentissage

L'anglais langue seconde désigne l'anglais comme la deuxième langue de toute personne qui l'apprend après avoir appris sa première langue dans la petite enfance à la maison (Richards & Schmidt, 2010, p. 192) et, depuis les années 1980, l'intérêt de comprendre l'acquisition de cette seconde langue s'est intensifiée chez les chercheurs. Stephen Krashen (1982) est un chercheur particulièrement important dans ce domaine et ses théories sur l'acquisition et l'apprentissage du langage ont eu une grande influence sur les recherches ultérieures. Krashen avance l'idée que, d'une part, l'apprentissage des langues est un processus qui nécessite un effort intellectuel : c'est l'acte d'apprendre en essayant d'apprendre, d'être capable de parler de ce qui a été appris, notamment dans un contexte de classe, et cela implique l'étude de règles explicites du langage (Krashen, 2013). D'un autre côté, l'acquisition fait référence à un processus dans lequel on intériorise la langue lorsqu'on y est exposé, en «captant» la langue lorsqu'on se concentre sur le sens plutôt que sur la forme. L'utilisateur de la langue ne sait pas que cela se produit et n'a pas conscience des règles qu'il a acquises (Krashen, 1982).

Des recherches plus récentes ont toutefois adopté des terminologies différentes pour décrire le processus d'apprentissage/acquisition. Les chercheurs ont utilisé des termes plus précis pour se concentrer sur (1) le contexte de l'apprentissage (que ce soit dans ou hors d'une salle de cours), (2) les intentions des individus (apprendre en essayant d'apprendre ou pas), (3) le fonctionnement interne (l'étude des règles ou « en captant » la langue) et (4) les résultats de l'apprentissage (être capable de parler de ce qui a été appris). Ces concepts sont souvent liés et dialoguent de différentes manières. Pour cette raison, les mots « apprentissage » et « acquisition » seront utilisés de manière interchangeable dans cette thèse, et non comme opposés. Notre objectif est d'étudier comment ces termes alternatifs ont été employés dans la littérature, d'en clarifier le sens, de mettre en lumière les continuums impliqués dans le sujet et d'examiner comment ils peuvent être associés.

Chapitre 1. Un recadrage des définitions sur l'apprentissage d'une langue seconde

La littérature de l'anglais langue seconde (ALS) indique que l'immersion offre des conditions favorables au développement du langage (Donohoe, 2022 ; Sanz, 2014 ; Yang, 2016). Grâce aux progrès technologiques, l'anglais est devenu facilement accessible, rendant possible d'atteindre des niveaux de compétence élevés sans avoir besoin de partir à l'étranger (Mangenot, 2011). Les jeux, les films, les séries et la musique sont des exemples d'utilisation authentiques dans la langue cible, disponibles sur

Internet, et qui peuvent être appropriés par les utilisateurs pour l'apprentissage des langues (Sockett, 2011a ; Toffoli & Sockett, 2015b).

Cependant, la littérature nomme ces activités de manières différentes. Dans cette thèse, nous nous sommes basés sur l'approche de Benson (2011), qui propose des différentes dimensions impliquées dans l'apprentissage au-delà de la salle de classe. Il définit l'apprentissage informel comme le contexte de l'apprentissage : les connaissances acquises grâce aux loisirs ou au travail. Il explique également d'autres dimensions qui y sont directement liées telles que la localisation, le contrôle (qui initie l'apprentissage) et la pédagogie (qui organise l'activité). Dans la littérature en didactique, la définition de l'informel est très souvent liée à ce que Benson appelle l'apprentissage naturel : fortement lié aux loisirs, sans aucune instruction, sans matériel spécialement conçu et sans intention d'apprendre. Dans notre étude, nous souhaitons explorer la possibilité de la présence de l'intention dans le visionnage des séries, en espérant que cela encouragera de futures recherches à la reconsidérer la définition des termes « naturel » et « informel » dans notre domaine.

Le sujet principal de ce chapitre, qui nous amène à notre premier objectif de recherche concerne les pratiques informelles d'étudiants universitaires en France, le public de notre recherche. Les résultats obtenus dans les recherches menées par Toffoli & Sockett (2010, 2015) montrent que les étudiants s'engagent dans des activités informelles en anglais dans leur vie quotidienne, notamment à travers des pratiques de compréhension, telles que la lecture sur les réseaux sociaux, l'écoute de musique, ainsi que le visionnage de films et de séries en anglais. Dans cette optique, nous souhaitons étudier quel est l'état actuel de ces pratiques en 2023. Notre premier objectif est donc de découvrir les pratiques actuelles en matière d'apprentissage informel et la fréquence de cet engagement (les résultats liés à cet objectif sont décrits dans la section 7.1).

Chapitre 2. La conscience dans l'apprentissage des langues

Suite à la discussion sur la définition de l'informalité au premier chapitre, nous approfondissons le sujet lié à la conscience, examiné par le prisme du travail séminal de Schmidt (1990). Son raisonnement repose sur l'hypothèse que l'apprentissage implique des processus conscients et inconscients. Distinguer tous les sens que la conscience peut avoir dans ce domaine est utile car cela relie de nombreux concepts connexes qui ne sont souvent pas définis avec précision, tels que l'attention, l'intention, la compréhension, la connaissance et la réflexivité. Schmidt affirmait que « même si ces ambiguïtés ne peuvent pas toujours être évitées, il devrait maintenant être clair que la question de savoir si l'apprentissage d'une langue seconde est conscient ou inconscient n'est pas une seule question, mais peut refléter plusieurs contrastes différents » (p. 134).

Une des significations du terme « conscience » dans la littérature est celui du « *noticing* ». Selon son hypothèse, pour que l'*input* soit appris, il doit être remarquée par l'apprenant. Cela peut se produire naturellement ou parce que l'attention était portée sur un aspect de la langue (Schmidt, 2001). En tant que condition pour l'apprentissage, ce type de conscience se produit dans tous les lieux (location), contextes (formalité), à travers toute pédagogie (instruction et enseignement), indépendamment de celui qui est à l'initiative de l'activité (contrôle). Cela se produit également si l'apprenant avait l'intention ou non d'apprendre, ce qui fait référence au deuxième niveau : l'intentionnalité.

Les termes « incident » et « intentionnel » font aussi référence au niveau de conscience de l'apprenant. L'apprentissage intentionnel se produit, comme son nom l'indique, lorsqu'un apprenant a l'intention d'apprendre la langue et que la décision a été prise avant de commencer l'activité (Hulstijn, 2013). À l'inverse, l'apprentissage incident se produit lorsque l'objectif n'est pas d'apprendre mais de comprendre ou de communiquer (Schmidt, 1990 ; 1993). En ce qui concerne la dimension pédagogique de Benson, l'intention peut être présente dans des contextes informels, à travers un apprentissage autodirigé, ainsi que dans des contextes (non) formels. Par conséquent, être « conscient » quand il s'agit des apprentissages incidents et intentionnels fait référence aux objectifs de l'activité, avant de la commencer (Bell, 2012).

Lorsque les chercheurs souhaitent étudier les processus internes de l'apprentissage, les termes apprentissage « implicite » et « explicite » sont utilisés, ce qui constitue le troisième niveau de la conscience. Elle fait partie d'un continuum dans lequel on peut formuler et tester des hypothèses sur la langue au cours de l'apprentissage (N. Ellis, 1994). Ce troisième niveau a, d'une part, un apprentissage implicite qui se produit sur la base de l'intuition (Bialystok, 1978) et l'apprenant ne sait pas qu'il est en train d'apprendre (Bell, 2015). D'autre part, dans l'apprentissage explicite, la langue est analysée et traitée, et l'apprenant forme des hypothèses sur sa signification et utilisation (Richards & Schmidt, 2010, p. 209).

Le quatrième niveau de conscience est parfois également appelé « apprentissages implicites et explicites », mais il fait référence aux résultats du processus. A ce niveau, l'apprentissage conscient concerne la capacité d'expliquer ou de verbaliser ce qui a été appris et dans l'inconscient, les apprenants peuvent montrer qu'ils possèdent intuitivement des connaissances implicites (par leur utilisation, leurs jugements sur la grammaticalité de phrases, etc.) mais sont incapables d'expliquer des règles (Richards & Schmidt, 2010, p. 274).

Le cinquième niveau concerne le projet d'apprendre. Il a été avancé que l'apprentissage peut se produire dans des contextes d'auto-direction, dans lesquels les apprenants soit fixent des objectifs et un plan d'action (conscient), soit décident simplement d'apprendre en fonction des ressources et opportunités disponibles (inconscient) (Spear & Mocker, 1984).

Enfin, le sixième niveau est la réflexivité ou la prise de conscience. Cela implique une réflexion sur ce que l'on a appris dans une expérience (Schmidt, 1990) et l'externalisation de l'apprentissage, généralement en en parlant à quelqu'un. Ce processus est considéré comme un élément clé pour approfondir les apprentissages (Khalid et al., 2015), pour qu'elles ne restent pas inconscientes à jamais (Schugurensky & Rieu, 2007). Cette prise de conscience fait écho au nouveau rôle de l'enseignant, qui doit assumer le rôle de guide et de facilitateur (Khalid et al., 2015 ; Khasanzyanova, 2021 ; Rutherford et Smith, 1985 ; Schugurensky et Rieu, 2007 ; Smith, 1981 ; Thorpe, 2004). Telle conception de l'enseignement promeut la reconnaissance de l'apprentissage informel à travers une brève rencontre avec le contexte (non)formel, par un apprentissage réfléchi et stratégique, afin que l'apprenant soit mieux équipé pour continuer à réfléchir sur ses pratiques et à renforcer l'apprentissage informel lorsqu'il le juge nécessaire.

Ces définitions montrent comment différents niveaux de conscience peuvent être étudiés et comment les termes peuvent être mal interprétés en raison de leur relative imprécision. Elles nous amènent aussi aux objectifs de notre thèse, visant à étudier le rôle de la conscience dans l'apprentissage informel. Ces trois objectifs seront présentés dans nos prochains chapitres théoriques : Le chapitre trois explore le rôle de l'intention avant le visionnage d'une série, le chapitre quatre développera les raisons pour lesquelles les individus regardent des séries pour répondre à la question et, enfin, dans le chapitre cinq, nous explorerons la place d'interventions pédagogiques dans un contexte non formel pour aider les apprenants à réfléchir sur leur visionnage des sitcoms en anglais, ainsi que les différentes stratégies d'apprentissage qui peuvent enrichir l'apprentissage informel.

Chapitre 3. Des notions dans l'apprentissage du vocabulaire

Connaître le lexique d'une langue est considéré comme l'un des aspects les plus importants de l'apprentissage des langues et pour que cela soit possible, les chercheurs encouragent un contact informel fréquent et varié avec la langue cible (Hulstijn, 2013 ; Nagy & Herman, 1985 ; Nakanishi, 2015). La raison principale est qu'il est peu probable que les programmes scolaires prennent en compte le grand nombre de mots et d'expressions qui permettraient aux apprenants de maîtriser une langue.

L'un des facteurs analysés dans la littérature sur l'acquisition d'une langue seconde (ALS) est la fréquence des mots dans une langue. A travers l'analyse de corpus existants, des études ont estimé que pour être un utilisateur élémentaire (A1-A2), les apprenants doivent connaître au moins les 2000 mots les plus fréquents de la langue (Schmitt et al., 2001). Il est attendu des utilisateurs indépendants (B1-B2) de comprendre des documents authentiques et pour cela, il est estimé que la connaissance des 5000 mots les plus fréquents sont nécessaires. C'est en connaissant les 10 000 mots les plus

fréquents de la langue qu'un apprenant est généralement considéré comme un utilisateur expérimenté (C1 C2). Pour évaluer ces connaissances, Nation (1990) a créé un test de niveaux de vocabulaire (VLT), test largement utilisé dans la recherche en didactique (Puimège et al., 2021a; van Zeeland, 2013; Webb & Chang, 2012).

Le nombre minimum de rencontres avec un mot pour pouvoir l'apprendre a également été discuté dans la littérature. Les résultats varient de six (Horst et al., 1998 ; Rott, 1999 ; Saragi et al., 1978) à plus de vingt (R. Brown et al., 2008 ; Pigada et Schmitt, 2006 ; Waring et Takaki, 2003). L'absence de consensus a conduit les chercheurs à accepter que chaque rencontre avec un mot est une possibilité potentielle de le remarquer, provoquant un apprentissage progressif (Nation, 2017). Cela a aussi incité des chercheurs à porter leur attention sur d'autres facteurs qui impactent l'apprentissage tels que le contexte et importance des mots dans un texte.

En ce qui concerne le contexte, son importance repose sur le principe selon lequel, pour apprendre des mots inconnus, il faut déduire leur sens à partir des informations contextuelles (Gu & Johnson, 1996 ; Lau, 2018 ; Laufer, 1996 ; Oxford & Scarcella, 1994). Selon Oxford et Scarcella (1994), analyser le contexte est l'une des stratégies les plus utiles pour apprendre le vocabulaire et cela peut être fait dans la plupart des rencontres avec des mots, dans n'importe quel endroit ou contexte. Les stratégies pour déduire le sens consistent à prêter attention à l'emplacement des mots dans la phrase, à leur valeur, à leurs utilisations, à leur signification et aux synonymes possibles utilisés dans le contexte.

Cependant, l'apprentissage à partir du contexte a ses limites : certains mots ne peuvent tout simplement pas être déduits parce que le contexte est peu clair ou trompeur (Laufer, 1996) et parfois les mots environnants sont si difficiles qu'ils empêchent l'apprenant de deviner à partir du contexte (Oxford et Scarcella, 1994). Une autre limite est que certains mots sont simplement ignorés car ne pas les connaître n'entrave pas la compréhension (Hulstijn et al., 1996). Il y a aussi la possibilité qu'elles ne soient pas fortement importantes ou remarquables dans le contexte. Leur position dans une phrase, leur accentuation et leur importance dans le contexte peuvent déterminer leur saillance.

En outre, il est également pertinent de prendre en compte le fait que les connaissances réceptives et productives sont des dimensions de connaissances différentes (van Zeeland & Schmitt, 2013). Être capable de *reconnaître* le sens des mots est considéré comme une première étape dans l'apprentissage et est souvent évalué à travers de tests à choix multiples dans lesquels les apprenants choisissent la meilleure définition pour l'expression figée donnée (Godfroid et al., 2010 ; Melka, 1997 ; Schmitt et al., 2001). Ces connaissances réceptives peuvent progressivement devenir une *maîtrise productive* (Oxford & Scarcella, 1994), qui est évaluée par des tests de rappel. À notre connaissance, le test le plus utilisé est le *Vocabulary Knowledge Scale* (VKS) dans laquelle les apprenants doivent

auto-évaluer leurs connaissances sur une échelle d'un à cinq, l'attestant via des traductions et des définitions.

Les expressions cibles que nous étudions dans cette thèse ont la particularité d'être figées et aussi d'exprimer des émotions distinctes. Nous avons basé notre thèse sur l'hypothèse que les expressions *Good Grief* et *Way to go*, par exemple, sont raisonnablement importantes pour les apprenants car l'état psychologique qu'ils révèlent peut favoriser la curiosité et l'attention (des détails sur les expressions choisies sont donnés dans le chapitre six). Comme l'a souligné Potts (2007), de telles séquences peuvent avoir un impact immédiat et puissant sur le contexte et sur la façon dont les énoncés actuels et futurs sont perçus. Cela implique que connaître de telles expressions signifie également être capable de traduire ces états émotionnels.

Ces expressions, qui semblent être remarquables et importantes dans leur contexte, sont-elles apprises par des apprenants de langue lors du visionnage de séries ? Ainsi, le deuxième objectif de cette thèse est de mettre en lumière l'impact de l'établissement d'objectifs d'apprentissage en amont du visionnage des séries en anglais. Plus précisément, comment avoir l'intention d'apprendre des expressions peut influencer le processus d'acquisition par rapport aux sujets qui regardent uniquement pour se divertir. Cette question est particulièrement pertinente car (1) comme l'ont souligné Majuddin & Siyanova-Chanturia (2021), « même si l'on dit souvent que l'apprentissage intentionnel est plus efficace que l'apprentissage incident, il existe peu d'études empiriques qui peuvent étayer cette affirmation car la majorité des études se concentrent sur un seul type d'apprentissage – incident ou intentionnel – ce qui rend difficile toute comparaison » (p. 832). De plus, (2) très peu d'études ont étudié l'apprentissage d'expressions en anglais via des séries, encore moins via les sitcoms. Et enfin (3) aucune recherche n'a été menée, à notre connaissance, sur ces expressions figées très spécifiques, malgré leur fréquence et leur importance dans de tels supports audiovisuels.

Chapitre 4. L'apprentissage par le visionnage de séries

Les textes authentiques peuvent être un outil utile pour l'apprentissage de langues. Cela a été démontré dans la littérature sur l'acquisition d'une langue seconde (ALS), traditionnellement dans des environnements de classe et plus récemment dans des contextes informels. Des résultats d'études soutiennent l'affirmation selon laquelle ces textes augmentent les compétences et la motivation de l'apprenant (Bacon & Finnemann, 1990 ; Gilmore, 2007 ; Vanderplank, 2016) et que grâce à l'accès direct à l'internet, des utilisateurs non-natifs peuvent les utiliser à des fins de divertissement et d'apprentissage (Kusyk & Sockett, 2012 ; Toffoli & Sockett, 2015 ; Yibokou, 2019).

Bien que des recherches aient indiqué que la lecture est une source d'apprentissage du vocabulaire plus efficace que l'écoute (Brown et al., 2008 ; van Zeeland, 2013 ; Vidal, 2011), en particulier pour les apprenants indépendants (cible de notre recherche), les recherches ont démontré la pertinence de l'écoute pour l'apprentissage du vocabulaire. Des études ont suggéré qu'il est peu probable que les mots au-delà des 2 000 les plus fréquents soient rencontrés en forme de texte écrit en nombre suffisant (Cobb, 2007), ce qui rendrait difficile l'acquisition du vocabulaire nécessaire pour des niveaux de compétence plus élevés. Si un contact fréquent avec la langue cible est essentiel pour l'apprentissage des langues, dans notre contexte contemporain, le vocabulaire semble plus susceptible d'être appris à l'oral, puisque les apprenants s'engagent plus souvent dans des activités de support audio(visuel) grâce à l'accès à la musique, aux films et aux séries en ligne (Kusyk & Sockett, 2012 ; Peters, 2018 ; Toffoli & Sockett, 2015 ; Yibokou, 2019).

En effet, l'écoute et le visionnage extensifs sont des sources de développement autonome de stratégies, de développement de la fluidité de l'écoute et de la maîtrise de l'expression orale (Al-Surmi, 2012 ; Bednarek, 2018) et doivent être encouragés. Même si les auditeurs peuvent rencontrer des difficultés en termes de prononciation et de compréhension globale selon leur niveau, l'apprentissage peut être facilité par le fait que la connaissance de moins de mots est nécessaire pour la compréhension orale que pour la lecture en L2 (van Zeeland & Schmitt, 2012) grâce au langage corporel, aux gestes, aux expressions faciales et à l'intonation.

En analysant l'adéquation du niveau de langue, la « couverture lexicale » est un point important à prendre en compte. C'est le calcul du pourcentage de mots connus nécessaires pour pouvoir comprendre un texte et apprendre du nouveau vocabulaire. Des études estiment la connaissance de 95 % à 98 % des mots pour une lecture réussie – connaissance de 5 000 familles de mots (Laufer, 1989 ; Nation, 2015) et de 90% à 95 % pour pouvoir apprendre à partir de supports audio(visuels), ce qui signifie 2 000 à 3 000 familles de mots (Laufer, 1989 ; Nation, 2006 ; van Zeeland & Schmitt, 2012 ; Webb et Rodgers, 2009). Ces pourcentages peuvent être évalués par un test de niveau de vocabulaire (couverture lexicale des apprenants), et un VocabProfile du support audio(visuel) peut être exécuté à l'aide de Lextutor (Cobb, s.d.) - pour pouvoir estimer la difficulté du texte.

En ce qui concerne les dialogues des sitcoms (séries de comédie), dans une analyse menée par Al-Surmi (2012), l'auteur a trouvé des similitudes entre leurs dialogues et ceux de conversations naturelles en termes de vitesse, de phonologie, d'hésitations et de vocabulaire de haute fréquence. Par corollaire, les sitcoms semblent être un bon exemple de culture pop qui favorise l'acquisition du vocabulaire. En tant que supports authentiques et populaires, ils sont susceptibles d'intéresser les apprenants, augmentant ainsi leur motivation intrinsèque (Deci & Moller, 2005 ; Gilmore, 2010 ; Liu &

Lin, 2017). Les sitcoms peuvent également produire des expériences émotionnelles positives, réduisant ainsi le stress et les niveaux d'anxiété lors de l'apprentissage (Dolean, 2016 ; Oxford & Scarcella, 1994 ; Schmidt, 1990). De plus, ils sont riches en multimodalité (images et sous-titres) et ont un format attractif : ils sont courts, avec les mêmes personnages identifiables au fil des saisons.

Au vu des éléments présentés ci-dessus, notre étude a un troisième objectif, qui est d'explorer les intentions qui guident le visionnage des sitcoms en anglais. Il cherche à développer une vision plus large de l'apprentissage à travers les médias en explorant la question suivante : dans quelle mesure le visionnage de séries en anglais pourrait-il également être guidé par un désir actif et interne d'apprendre la langue ? Si l'utilisation des médias dépend des satisfactions, des besoins, des souhaits ou des motivations perçus du spectateur (McQuail, 2010, p.352), l'apprentissage de l'anglais pourrait-il être l'un des besoins/objectifs individuels ou partagés derrière le nombre relativement élevé d'heures que les étudiants en France passent regarder des séries ? L'apprentissage n'est-il qu'un effet secondaire bénéfique ou peut-il faire partie des motivations qui guident le visionnage des séries ?

Il a été supposé dans la littérature que la motivation principale de l'utilisation de l'anglais dans un cadre informel est la socialisation et l'appartenance à une communauté (Cross, 2007 ; Toffoli & Sockett, 2010, 2015b) et que l'intention joue peu de rôle dans l'apprentissage informel des langues. Nous tenterons d'apporter des preuves empiriques de ce sujet peu exploré en examinant les raisons de l'engagement dans le visionnage de séries. Connaître les objectifs des apprenants lorsqu'ils utilisent de telles ressources permettra aux chercheurs de réévaluer la notion d'informalité par rapport à l'intentionnalité. Connaître les modalités d'engagement ainsi que leurs intentions générales et spécifiques pourrait confirmer ou contester l'hypothèse selon laquelle l'apprentissage informel est majoritairement inconscient. Les résultats liés à cet objectif se retrouvent dans la section 7.2.

Chapitre 5. Facteurs qui facilitent l'apprentissage des langues

Lorsqu'on étudie les supports audiovisuels pour l'apprentissage des langues, il est primordial d'étudier la multimodalité. En regardant des séries, les spectateurs gèrent des sons, des gestes (Montero Perez, 2020), des expressions faciales et, dans certains cas, des entrées écrites. Par conséquent, ce chapitre apporte des définitions et des preuves liées à l'utilisation de sous-titres, de la prosodie (son) et de communication non verbale (expressions faciales et gestes).

Le premier facteur qui peut favoriser l'apprentissage lors du visionnage sont les sous-titres intra-lingues (lorsque l'audio et la vidéo sont tous deux dans la langue cible, Richards & Schmidt, 2010, p. 572). Même si les téléspectateurs français ont d'abord été en contact avec les séries par le biais de documents doublés, il a été démontré que les étudiants universitaires ont acquis une préférence pour

les regarder dans la langue originale (Sockett, 2011a ; Yibokou, 2019). Ce changement est positif pour l'apprentissage, car les apprenants sont plus exposés à la langue (Vanderplank, 2010, 2016), et grâce aux divers services de streaming en ligne récents et aux plateformes à la demande, les téléspectateurs peuvent ajouter des sous-titres pour faciliter la compréhension (Montero Perez, 2022).

Dans le passé, les sous-titres étaient considérés comme contre-productifs par certains enseignants et chercheurs : ils confondraient les apprenants ou interféreraient avec l'acquisition de compétences d'écoute par les apprenants (Vanderplank, 2016, p. 44). Un point de vue contraire a cependant commencé à apparaître à la fin des années 1980, avec Vanderplank (1988, 1990, 1993, 1996) et Halliday (1989), qui soutenaient que l'entrée bimodale (image et vidéo) était bénéfique dans la mesure où elle en prend en compte les différents styles d'apprentissage des apprenants. Depuis, des recherches empiriques ont constamment montré que les groupes expérimentaux visionnant avec des sous-titres ont constamment des résultats plus élevés que ceux des groupes sans sous-titres (Huang & Eskey, 1999 ; Rodgers, 2013 et dans une méta-analyse menée par Montero Perez et al., 2014), montrant que le visionnage avec des sous-titrés peut améliorer l'apprentissage du vocabulaire et la compréhension de la vidéo.

Un point central de notre argument est que les sous-titres sont précieux pour les utilisateurs indépendants d'une L2 (B1-B2) car ils aident à rassurer les spectateurs dans leur compréhension, leur donnent le contrôle sur l'utilisation des médias en langue étrangère et fournissent un retour instantané sur l'adéquation du niveau de langue - deux éléments importants pour entrer dans un état de *Flow* (Csikszentmihalyi, 2009).

Un sujet tout aussi important est la prosodie. Lin (2010, 2014, 2018, 2021) a étudié comment les caractéristiques prosodiques, telles que les aspects intonatifs, temporels et phonémiques du langage parlé, peuvent aider à l'acquisition d'expressions figées (EF), le sujet de notre recherche. Dans une revue de la littérature fait par Lin en 2010, l'auteur rapporte des résultats suggérant que les EF sont prononcées comme une seule unité et ont des mélodies uniques. En tant que tel, Lin (2010) suggère que les EF pourraient avoir non seulement un certain degré de fixité lexicale, mais aussi phonologique, ce qui les rendrait prosodiquement saillants dans le discours oral. Des recherches plus approfondies sur le sujet pourraient aider à identifier ces éléments prosodiques pour suggérer ultérieurement un soutien pédagogique pour leur apprentissage.

Enfin, la communication non verbale est également un sujet inhérent à l'apprentissage des langues à travers les médias. Lorsque le niveau de la langue est légèrement supérieur au niveau de compétence de l'apprenant, les expressions faciales et les gestes peuvent être un soutien direct à la compréhension, car elle peut compléter la langue parlée (Montero Perez, 2022) et combler les lacunes d'un canal ou d'un autre (Vanderplank, 2016, p. 145).

Les expressions faciales, telles qu'une bouche ouverte, un sourire, un mouvement des lèvres ou une hausse ou un froncement des sourcils (Rinn, 1984), peuvent aider les spectateurs à interpréter l'état émotionnel de celui qui parle et à clarifier son message verbal (Matsumoto et Hwang, 2011 ; Rinn, 1984 ; Sueyoshi et Hardison, 2005). Dans le même ordre d'idées, les gestes participent à la communication (Holt, 2020, 2024), permettant au locuteur d'organiser sa pensée et à l'auditeur de décoder le sens.

L'oculométrie est un outil important utilisé pour mesurer le visionnage des sous-titres et l'attention portée au langage non-verbal. En effet, ce système permet l'enregistrement de mouvements oculaires et a été utilisé par des didacticiens pour évaluer leur impact sur l'apprentissage des langues. Cette technologie permet une manière plus naturelle de collecter des données, en évitant les tâches secondaires, telles que la prise de notes ou les protocoles de réflexion à voix haute (Carrol & Conklin, 2014). Les équipements d'oculométrie, qui peuvent être plus ou moins précis et offrir une expérience visuelle plus ou moins naturelle, ainsi que leurs programmes informatiques complémentaires, peuvent collecter des données sur les mouvements (saccades), les arrêts (fixations) et les mouvements en arrière (régressions) des yeux (Conklin et Pellicer-Sánchez, 2016). En créant des domaines d'intérêt (AOI), les chercheurs peuvent se concentrer sur des éléments linguistiques spécifiques pour répondre à leur question de recherche et éviter une quantité de données ingérable. Dans notre cas, nous l'avons utilisé pour en savoir plus sur les sous-titres, les gestes et les expressions faciales, et leur lien avec l'acquisition des expressions figées.

Le dernier sujet d'intérêt dans ce chapitre est le rôle que les centres de langues (CL) jouent pour encourager et soutenir l'apprentissage informel. L'objectif n'était pas de présenter un moyen de modifier ou d'introduire l'apprentissage informel en classe, mais de sensibiliser à son importance et de doter les apprenants de stratégies (méta)cognitives qui peuvent être utilisées automatiquement ou à volonté dans un contexte informel. Pour cette raison, les enseignants (ou tuteurs et conseillers) devraient être dans une position d'orientation et de facilitateur d'apprentissage, offrant aux apprenants des opportunités de réfléchir et d'utiliser la langue cible (Goh, 2023 ; Rivens Mompean, 2013 ; Zimmerman & Kitsantas, 2005).

Plusieurs moyens ont été mis en avant pour atteindre cet objectif. La première consiste à discuter des avantages des activités informelles pour l'apprentissage des langues (Montero Perez, 2022). La seconde consiste à fournir un environnement favorisant une expérience agréable d'apprentissage des langues (Krashen, 1982) et développant des aspects psychologiques positifs pour l'apprentissage, tels que le sentiment d'efficacité personnelle, la créativité, l'initiative dans l'apprentissage (Rivens Mompean, 2013, p.145). La troisième consiste à influencer l'action en accompagnant les apprenants dans un processus d'autonomie et d'auto-direction (Dickinson & Carver,

1980 ; Rivens Mompean, 2022 ; Zimmerman & Kitsantas, 2005). Enfin, les CL sont aussi un lieu d'utilisation de la langue qui s'apprend en autonomie.

À la lumière des propositions faites par la littérature sur la multimodalité et les centres de langues, notre étude a deux objectifs finaux. Le premier consiste à mettre en lumière la fonction que jouent les images et les sous-titre dans l'apprentissage du vocabulaire. Notre objectif est d'explorer le regard des apprenants lorsqu'ils regardent des sitcoms pour analyser le rôle joué par l'attention portée aux sous-titres et au langage non verbal dans l'apprentissage du vocabulaire. La seconde consiste à explorer des interventions pédagogiques pour aider les apprenants à réfléchir sur leur visionnage des sitcoms en anglais et acquérir du vocabulaire.

PARTIE II. Considérations méthodologiques, résultats et discussion

Suite à la discussion des thématiques fondamentales, bases de notre étude, la deuxième partie de cette thèse est consacrée à la méthodologie mise en place, aux résultats qu'elle a obtenus et à des discussions.

Chapitre 6. Collecte de données et positions épistémologiques

Cette thèse cherche à étudier l'apprentissage informel par le prisme des motivations internes, de l'intention qui précède l'apprentissage, des facteurs qui le favorisent, des résultats qu'il produit, ainsi que de la valeur ajoutée des interventions pédagogiques. Notre recherche s'inscrit dans le cadre de la didactique de l'anglais et, en tant que domaine interdisciplinaire, notre branche de travail se situe à l'intersection de l'acquisition d'une langue seconde et de la psycholinguistique anglaise. Pour cette raison, afin de répondre à la question « **dans quelle mesure différents niveaux d'intention impactent l'apprentissage d'expressions figées en regardant des sitcoms ?** », nous avons dû prendre en compte la complexité à laquelle nous étions exposés, en divisant les procédures en trois étapes.

Notre collecte de données a été développée avec la conviction que les individus partagent des motivations communes pour regarder des sitcoms et que les conséquences du visionnage de séries peuvent être identifiées par la science. Par conséquent, nous visons à rassembler des données complémentaires sur l'apprentissage de l'anglais à travers les médias et à présenter des résultats préliminaires pour comprendre trois piliers principaux : le rôle de l'intention, de la multimodalité et des interventions pédagogiques. Nous avons l'intention de fournir un cadre général qui aborde différents aspects de l'apprentissage informel des langues, afin de guider l'action et l'intervention pour soutenir l'apprentissage dans des contextes du monde réel. En tant qu'étude exploratoire à plusieurs

niveaux, notre objectif est avant tout de démontrer l'utilité de ces trois piliers pour des recherches ultérieures.

Les phases qui seront décrites et expliquées dans ce chapitre sont une combinaison de méthodes, soigneusement pensées comme un moyen de saisir les significations subjectives des actions des personnes et les résultats qu'elles peuvent produire. Comme le soulignent Demaizière & Narcy-Combes (2007), les recherches dans le domaine des sciences humaines peuvent rarement s'appuyer sur une seule méthode : pour construire un protocole pertinent intégrant les différents paramètres intervenant dans l'apprentissage, les données quantitatives et qualitatives deviennent complémentaires et leur combinaison doit non seulement nous fournir des données universalisantes (le questionnaire), mais aussi nous permettre d'examiner les détails à un niveau plus local (l'expérience). Ce degré de flexibilité est essentiel pour répondre à notre question de recherche à partir d'une approche globale (Mucchielli, 2009, p.24), dans laquelle nous essayons de comprendre l'expérience des étudiants afin de formuler progressivement une interprétation valable de notre sujet, l'apprentissage informel.

La **première phase** de notre recherche consiste à recueillir des données relatives aux pratiques informelles des étudiants universitaires en anglais et aux raisons pour lesquelles ils s'engagent dans de telles activités. Cela devrait être possible via un questionnaire. Dans cette phase, les expériences et les perspectives des répondants en tant qu'utilisateurs de la langue nous aideront à explorer l'apprentissage informel, une branche relativement nouvelle de l'acquisition d'une langue seconde. Pour que cela soit possible, une approche inductive sera privilégiée, rassemblant des données sur le phénomène pour construire une théorie basée sur les résultats. La base théorique de notre questionnement a été abordée dans les chapitres un, deux et quatre et a défini deux de nos objectifs : (1) découvrir les pratiques actuelles en matière d'apprentissage informel et la fréquence avec laquelle les étudiants universitaires s'y engagent (dont les résultats seront donnés dans la section 7.1) et (2) explorer l'impact de l'établissement d'objectifs en amont du visionnage de séries en anglais (résultats présents dans la section 7.2).

La **deuxième phase** a été pensée pour évaluer les connaissances préalables et les acquis linguistiques par le visionnage grâce à une méthode quasi-expérimentale (désormais *expérience*). Les volontaires dans cette phase ont contribué à notre recherche d'un point de vue différent : en tant qu'étudiants universitaires, dans un environnement non formel (un centre de langues), ils ont testé leurs connaissances afin d'obtenir des données quantitatives liées aux gains linguistiques grâce aux médias. Il a fallu soigneusement réfléchir au compromis entre le maintien de l'authenticité du visionnage des séries et son utilisation dans des contextes expérimentaux. Kussyk (2015) a également été confronté à ce dilemme et a souligné qu'une approche « authentique » du visionnage nécessiterait

probablement une invitation à la vie privée des apprenants. Pour cette raison, les études menées sur les pratiques d'apprentissage informel ne sont certainement pas *irréalisables*, mais un certain nombre de facteurs devront être pris en considération.

Notre décision a été prise après longue réflexion : même si l'apprentissage informel a lieu dans la sphère privée, les étudiants universitaires sont également inscrits à des cours d'anglais à l'université, ce qui nous amène à de nombreuses questions sur l'éventuelle superposition entre les mondes formels et informels des étudiants (Kusyk , 2015, p.29). En choisissant ce que nous considérons comme un contexte non formel, les étudiants se sont trouvés dans un environnement intermédiaire, dans lequel ils peuvent naviguer l'apprentissage de manière plus libre, en pouvant compter sur le soutien et l'orientation du chercheur. Après une réflexion approfondie sur cette épineuse question, nous avons trouvé dans notre choix d'une expérience dans un centre de langues un certain degré d'authenticité dans le fait que les tuteurs des centres de langues sont formés pour fournir un tel accompagnement. A cette phase, les étudiants occupent le rôle de participants à une recherche académique, rôle qui sera ajusté dans les phases suivantes de l'étude.

Au cours de l'expérience, les participants ont regardé des scènes des sitcoms *Friends*, *How I Met Your Mother*, *The Big Bang Theory* et *Brooklyn 99*. Nous avons testé leur connaissance de six expressions figées : *Way to go*, *Hang in there*, *Knock it off*, *Get over it*, *You're on* et *Goodgrief*. Étant donné que l'apprentissage du vocabulaire n'est pas une branche nouvelle du SLA, nous nous sommes appuyés sur de nombreuses découvertes scientifiques pour nos choix méthodologiques, présentées dans les chapitres deux et trois. Sur la base de nombreux résultats de la littérature, nous avons utilisé une méthode déductive pour vérifier l'hypothèse selon laquelle l'apprentissage intentionnel favorise davantage les gains de vocabulaire que l'apprentissage incident (non-intentionnel). L'objectif de cette phase a été d'étudier le rôle de l'intention dans l'apprentissage d'expressions figées lors du visionnage de séries. Les résultats sont présentés dans la section 7.3.

Lors du visionnage des scènes, le regard des participants a été collecté grâce à l'équipement d'oculométrie, placé sous l'écran de l'ordinateur. Ces données nous ont conduit à une discussion plus éclairée sur le rôle de l'attention portée aux images et aux sous-titres, et nous ont permis d'examiner un territoire sous-exploré dans le visionnage de séries, menant notre recherche à travers une deuxième étape inductive. Cette phase a été organisée pour fournir des informations complémentaires sur la manière dont les apprenants s'engagent dans le visionnage et sur l'effet de la multimodalité dans l'apprentissage. Il est important cependant de reconnaître les limites des mesures psycholinguistiques dans notre domaine, car elles ne peuvent apporter que des réponses partielles quant à l'expérience des apprenants. Narcy Combes (2005) argumente que les conditions en laboratoire ne correspondent pas aux «conditions désordonnées de la vie réelle » mais peuvent

néanmoins être un premier moyen pour les chercheurs de mesurer certains aspects des phénomènes, conduisant à une construction de l'action (p. 71). Les résultats sont décrits dans la section 7.4.

Afin de tester un plan d'action, la troisième et dernière phase de cette recherche concernait une intervention pédagogique. Elle est composée d'une séquence de procédures qui comprend un entretien, une étape d'auto-confrontation en analysant ensemble leurs pre et post-tests et une conversation sur les expressions cibles et les scènes visionnées. Notre objectif était de mener l'apprenant à une réflexion et d'explorer les effets de différents degrés d'intentionnalité afin de suggérer davantage de pistes d'action.

Chapitre 7. Résultats et discussions

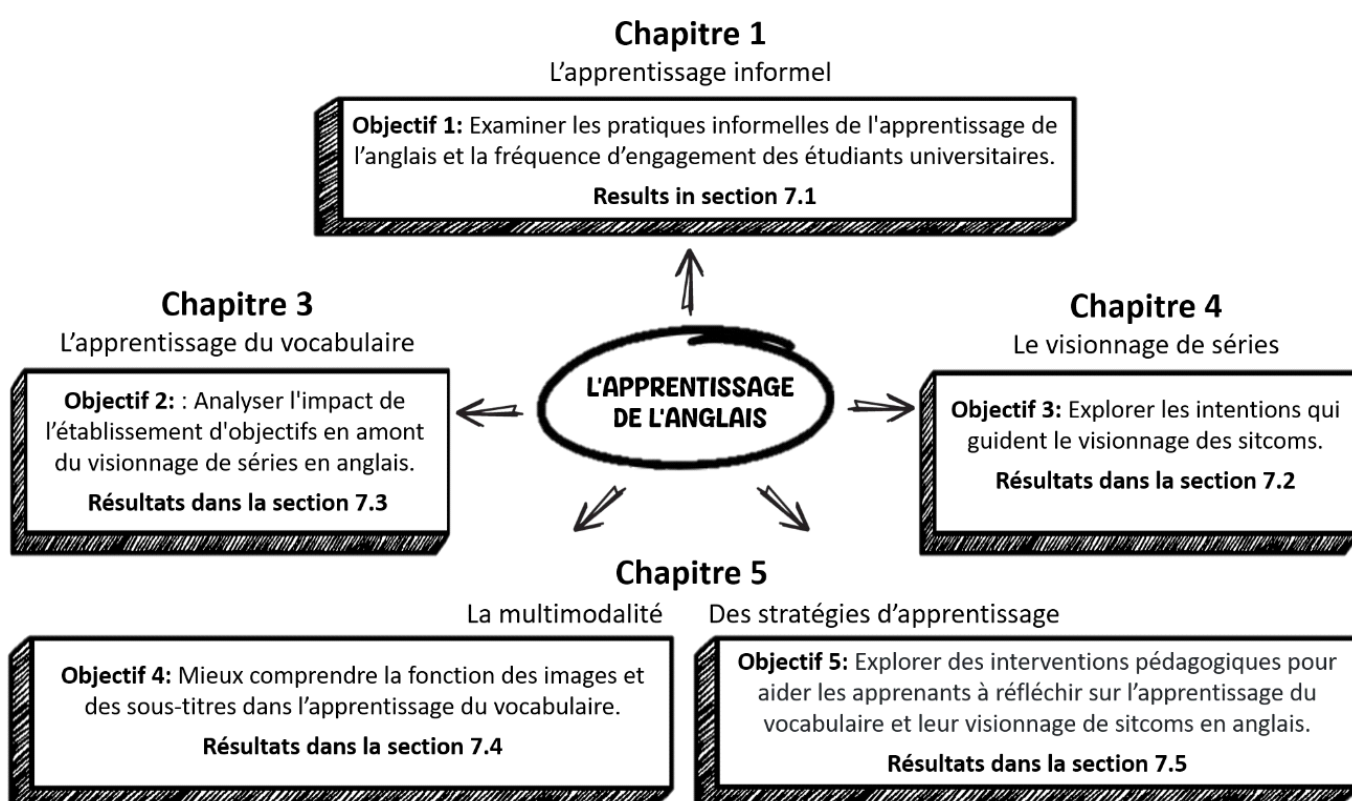


Figure 70 - Objectifs de notre thèse et orientation vers des résultats (traduction de la figure dans le chapitre 6).

7.1 De l'apprentissage informel de l'anglais

Les résultats présentés ci-dessous ont été possibles grâce à un questionnaire anonyme en ligne dont le lien était sur une affiche dans des bibliothèques et centres de langues de l'Université de Lille, dans le nord de la France. Les 443 réponses recueillies nous ont aidé à confirmer notre hypothèse de

départ : un nombre considérable d'étudiants universitaires bénéficient d'un apport important en anglais dans leur vie quotidienne. Non seulement des pratiques telles qu'écouter de la musique et regarder des séries se sont révélées les plus fréquentes, mais de nouvelles pratiques ont émergé au cours de la dernière décennie en raison des progrès technologiques et de leur accessibilité, tel que le visionnage de vidéos YouTube et l'écoute de Podcasts.

En effet, 98.2% des répondants ont déclaré écouter de la musique en anglais, 93.9% lisent sur les réseaux sociaux, 92.5% regardent des vidéos YouTube, 91.6% regardent des séries et 87% regardent des films. Afin de comprendre la place des séries dans l'apprentissage, nous avons étudié de plus près la *fréquence* des pratiques audiovisuelles, constatant que 92% des sondés écoutent au moins 1 heure de musique par semaine, 66% regardent des séries, 52% regardent des vidéos YouTube et 48% regardent des films. En outre, le visionnage de séries constitue la première activité audiovisuelle la plus fréquemment pratiquée par les étudiants universitaires. En effet, 153 personnes interrogées ont déclaré regarder des séries en anglais de 1 à 5 heures par semaine, 80 les regardent de 5 à 10 heures par semaine et 36 les regardent plus de 10 heures par semaine. Seuls 37 ont déclaré ne jamais regarder de séries pendant leur temps libre.

Avoir la confirmation que les apprenants s'engagent dans des activités informelles, surtout le visionnage de séries, nous encourage à poursuivre nos recherches pour comprendre ces pratiques. Comme le soulignent Toffoli & Sockett (2015), parallèlement à l'émergence de nouvelles activités, certaines tendances restent les mêmes, comme la prédominance de l'écoute comme activité langagière et une préférence pour l'interaction plutôt que la lecture ou l'écriture pure. Cette réflexion nous a amené à étudier plus en détail pourquoi les séries deviennent de plus en plus populaires ainsi que pourquoi les apprenants y consacrent des heures et de la passion.

7.2 De l'intention liée à l'apprentissage et au visionnage de sitcoms

Une façon d'aborder le rôle de la conscience dans l'apprentissage des langues consiste à examiner le degré d'intention avec lequel les apprenants s'engagent dans des activités informelles en anglais. Par intention, dans cette section de résultats, nous entendons avoir le désir d'accomplir quelque chose comme objectif global (Csikszentmihalyi, 2009). La présente section vise à discuter des raisons de leur engagement, en partant de l'hypothèse que les principales motivations des étudiants sont la socialisation (Cross, 2007 ; Toffoli & Sockett, 2010), le divertissement (Csikszentmihalyi, 2009) et l'apprentissage de l'anglais.

L'analyse des données du questionnaire a fourni des preuves supplémentaires de la présence de la conscience en tant qu'intention dans l'apprentissage informel. En effet, plus de la moitié des

répondants ont déclaré apprendre l'anglais pour communiquer à l'étranger, avec des étrangers dans leur pays, dans leur environnement professionnel, mais aussi pour se sentir à l'aise en regardant des séries sans sous-titres. Ces résultats soutiennent l'affirmation selon laquelle la communication et l'interaction ont une place pertinente dans l'apprentissage. Elle révèle également que les pratiques informelles peuvent être un objectif : les individus apprennent l'anglais aussi pour élargir leur accès à des activités de loisir.

Il est intéressant de noter que pour atteindre une telle maîtrise, les étudiants s'engagent dans des heures de pratique informelle de l'anglais. L'une des pratiques privilégiées est le visionnage de séries : les répondants ont déclaré que le plaisir qu'ils ressentent et les affordances d'apprentissage (Gibson, 1986) sont la raison pour laquelle ils regardent des sitcoms.

Si le choix de regarder des séries semble être principalement motivé par le plaisir, dans lequel l'apprentissage pourrait être un objectif secondaire, le choix des sous-titres est susceptible d'être majoritairement influencé par leur désir d'apprendre. Tout d'abord, 95,2% des sondés regardent les séries anglophones en anglais, plutôt que leurs versions doublées. Deuxièmement, la plupart des personnes interrogées regardent des séries avec des sous-titres en anglais, mais cela n'est pas nécessairement exclusif. Sur les 443 réponses, 125 personnes interrogées regardent uniquement avec des sous-titres en anglais, 82 personnes regardent uniquement avec des sous-titres en français, 121 ont déclaré varier les sous-titres selon la série.

En examinant attentivement leurs réponses, nous avons remarqué que 74.3% des apprenants de niveau A2 préfèrent utiliser des sous-titres en français, 39.4% des B1, 25.3% des B2 et 20% des C1 et C2. Ces données permettent de constater que le choix des sous-titres varie souvent en fonction de la difficulté de la série et de la fatigue, mais que plus les apprenants deviennent compétents, plus ils choisiront de substituer la langue des sous-titres, dans le but de regarder des séries sans sous-titres un jour. Cette analyse confirme l'observation de Vanderplank (1996) selon laquelle les sous-titres favorisent une surveillance consciente de la langue et le choix de les ajouter est lié aux intentions d'apprentissage.

En conclusion, le plaisir est un élément clé qui explique pourquoi les étudiants s'engagent à regarder des séries en anglais. Ce sentiment peut conduire à un état de *Flow* (Csikszentmihalyi, 2009), qui peut amener les étudiants à consacrer des heures substantielles à ces activités, créant ainsi des conditions d'immersion. Cela correspond donc à une situation idéale d'apprentissage (Donohoe, 2022 ; Krashen, 1982 ; Sanz, 2014 ; Yang, 2016), et notre étude a démontré que de nombreux répondants étaient conscients des effets possibles sur l'apprentissage du visionnage de séries en anglais, qu'ils choisissent la langue des sous-titres certes, selon leur niveau de langue, mais avec l'objectif de lire en

anglais pour augmenter leurs chances d'apprentissage. Cela démontre que l'apprentissage est l'un des objectifs qui guide leur engagement.

7.3 De l'apprentissage du vocabulaire

Quel est le rôle de l'intention dans l'apprentissage d'expressions figées lors du visionnage de sitcoms ?

Trois semaines avant une expérience dans le centre de langues de l'Université de Lille, 387 étudiants ont accepté de passer de tests de vocabulaire : un test de rappel, qui consistait à traduire, décrire ou expliquer 12 expressions figées, et un test de reconnaissance, dans lequel les participants choisissaient le contexte d'utilisation de ces mêmes expressions dans une liste. Le jour de l'expérience, quarante-cinq étudiants ont participé à l'expérience, répartis dans l'un des groupes expérimentaux (intentionnel ou non-intentionnel), et ont regardé 40 minutes de scènes de sitcoms, suivi par de post-tests (annexe C).

Les résultats du test de rappel ont indiqué que toutes les expressions ont été apprises par au moins un participant. Proportionnellement, *Get over it* était l'expression la plus rappelée (33.3%), suivie de *Knock it off* (24.1%), *Good Grief* (16.1%), *Way to go* (13.3%), *You're on* (6.4%) et *Hang in There* (3.3%). Le test statistique de McNemar a été utilisé pour comparer les résultats des pré et post tests avec un risque alpha de 5%. Le test a confirmé qu'il y avait généralement un effet des sitcoms sur le rappel des expressions cibles ($p = 0,0003$), mais nous avons trouvé une différence considérable dans l'apprentissage de chaque expression. En calculant leurs valeurs individuellement, nous avons trouvé un effet des scènes sur le rappel de *Knock it off* ($p=0,015$) et un effet suggestif sur le rappel de *Good grief* ($p= 0,062$). L'effet des scènes d'apprentissage sur *Way to go* ($p= 0,12$), *Get over it* ($p= 0,68$), *Hang in There* ($p= 1,0$) et *You're on* ($p= 1,0$) n'était pas significatif.

Les résultats du test de reconnaissance étaient plus élevés que ceux de rappel, confirmant des études antérieures qui indiquaient que la capacité de reconnaître le sens d'un mot est toujours plus élevée que ceux du rappel de sens, indiquant que le premier précède le second (van Zeeland & Schmitt, 2013). Nos résultats indiquent que toutes les expressions ont été apprises par au moins un apprenant. Proportionnellement, *Knock it off* était l'expression la plus reconnue (73.7%), suivie de *Good grief* (52%), *Get over it* (50%), *You're on* (47.6%), *Waytogo* (24%) et *Hang in there* (21.4%). Nous avons à nouveau effectué le test statistique de McNemar avec un risque alpha de 5% et, en calculant les valeurs de chaque expression individuellement, nous avons trouvé un effet significatif des scènes sur la reconnaissance de deux expressions : *Knock it off* ($p= 0,0009$) et *Good grief* ($p= 0,049$). Il y a une

différence faiblement significative pour *You're on* ($p= 0,09$), et aucune différence significative pour *Getoverit* ($p= 0,25$), *Way to go* ($p= 0,28$) et *Hang in there* ($p= 0,75$).

Nous avons effectué le test de Boschloo pour déterminer dans quelle mesure le niveau de compétence influence le rappel et la reconnaissance des expressions et n'avons trouvé qu'une différence significative que pour le *rappel* de *Hang in There* ($p = 0,026$). Le test de Boschloo a également été utilisé pour comparer les gains de rappel et de reconnaissance des deux groupes expérimentaux (incident et intentionnel), mais la différence entre eux était statistiquement non significative, sauf pour la *reconnaissance* de *You're on*, dans laquelle les participants du groupe intentionnel ont appris davantage ($p=0,049$ en utilisant le test de Barnard) et *Good grief* (faiblement significatif, $p = 0,07$) que, à l'inverse, le groupe incident a reconnu davantage.

Notre hypothèse que le groupe intentionnel aurait des résultats plus élevés n'ont pas été confirmés par notre étude. Ces résultats contradictoires concernant l'intention peuvent être dû à une éventuelle augmentation de l'intention du groupe incident par le fait de fréquenter un centre de langues au moment de l'expérience. Comme nous l'avions prévu dans la section 1.3, nous ne savons pas dans quelle mesure le groupe incident pourrait être dénué d'intention lorsqu'il se trouve dans un tel contexte non formel, dans lequel les étudiants s'engagent le plus souvent dans un apprentissage autodirigé. Cela suggère que l'apprentissage du vocabulaire dans notre étude n'a peut-être pas été purement incident et que nous avons des types de groupes intentionnels différents : l'un dans lequel l'apprentissage était auto-initié (le groupe incident) et l'autre initié par le chercheur (le groupe intentionnel). En ayant un objectif de vocabulaire spécifique, le deuxième groupe aurait probablement décidé de consulter plus souvent les sous-titres (hypothèse confirmée dans nos données) et aurait manqué des indices non verbaux clés dans les images. Il est possible que le groupe incident, même ayant une intention générale d'apprendre (comme c'est possiblement le cas dans un contexte informel), ait été plus libre de naviguer entre les différentes options. Ces résultats confirment néanmoins que l'intention générale et l'intention préalable au visionnage favorisent l'apprentissage, mais des recherches plus approfondies devraient être menées pour déterminer si le fait d'avoir un objectif de vocabulaire auto-initié modifierait les résultats.

7.4 De la multimodalité

Le quatrième objectif de cette thèse était de mettre en lumière la fonction que les images et les sous-titres jouent dans l'apprentissage du vocabulaire, grâce à l'oculométrie. Quelques observations ont pu être faites en analysant nos données dont la première concerne les sous-titres. Nous avons observé que les participants ont passé plus de temps dans les sous-titres des expressions

Get over it et *Knock it off* (les expressions plus apprises dans l'expérience). Ce résultat est un indice que les sous-titres ont pu jouer un rôle important dans le rappel de ces deux expressions, mais nous ne pouvons tirer aucune conclusion quant à la raison. Certaines hypothèses sont que (1) le manque de compréhension de la prononciation de ces phrases a incité les participants à regarder les légendes et/ou que (2) le ton aigu et le volume de l'énoncé ont rendu l'expression saillante à l'oreille et ont attiré l'attention des participants sur leur forme.

Une autre observation importante concerne l'expression *Good grief* : plus de temps a été consacré aux images de cette expression et une explication possible de l'attrait de ses images grâce aux expressions faciales très expressives (lever les yeux, hausser ou froncer les sourcils), qui peuvent avoir incité les participants à regarder au visage de l'orateur. Cette attention à l'image est un indicateur de son effet sur le rappel et la reconnaissance de l'expression.

De plus, les participants ayant un niveau B1 se sont beaucoup plus tournés vers les sous-titres que vers les images. Ces données appuient l'hypothèse selon laquelle les apprenants de niveau B1 s'appuient davantage sur les informations écrites que les apprenants B2 (Mayer et al., 2020). À l'inverse, les participants de niveau B2 ont plus regardé les images. Cela indique que ces participants semblent se sentir plus à l'aise pour regarder des images, ce qui les ont aidé à apprendre davantage.

En résumé, certaines corrélations ont été trouvées entre les images/sous-titres et les rappel des expressions : les sous-titres semblent avoir aidé le rappel de *Get over it* et *Knock it off*, alors que les images semblent avoir aidé au rappel de *Good grief*. Dans l'ensemble, les résultats suggèrent que les images ont facilité la *reconnaissance* des expressions cibles : les expressions les plus reconnues (*Knock it off*, *Good grief* et *Get over it*) n'étaient pas nécessairement les plus lues, mais étaient, en général, très visionnées sur les images. Malheureusement, l'un des facteurs pouvant avoir influencé le rappel et la reconnaissance pourrait être la voix, mais notre méthodologie n'a pas pu mesurer l'attention portée à la prosodie.

Afin de mieux comprendre les résultats de notre analyse quantitative, nous avons examiné le contexte de chaque scène. Nos conclusions les plus importantes sont que les images des expressions les plus rappelées et reconnues étaient très visualisées (*Get over it*, *Good Grief* et *Knock it off*) et cela pourrait être dû aux expressions faciales des acteurs lorsque l'expression était prononcée. Cette conclusion a été tirée du fait que des mouvements remarquables au niveau des sourcils, des yeux et de la bouche accompagnaient ces trois expressions, par rapport aux trois autres (*Way to go*, *You're on* et *Hang in there*), qui avaient des froncement de sourcils.

Deux autres facteurs qui peuvent avoir influencé l'apprentissage sont la voix et les émotions. La première observation est que nos expressions cibles étaient prononcées avec un ton aigu ou grave distinctif et que, dans les images les plus visionnées, les personnages prononçaient les expressions à

un rythme lent (N = 6). Le deuxième constat est que les expressions les plus apprises véhiculent des émotions qui peuvent être perçues comme négatives : *Good grief* (frustration), *Knock it off* (agacement) et *Get over it* (irritabilité), contrairement aux expressions moins apprises qui expriment l'étonnement (*Way to go*), l'intérêt (*You're on*) et l'encouragement (*Hang in there*). Néanmoins, notre méthodologie n'a pas été en mesure de fournir des preuves empiriques concluantes démontrant que ces deux facteurs ont effectivement joué un rôle important dans l'acquisition.

7.5 De la prise de conscience et des stratégies d'apprentissage

Cette section examine la dernière partie de l'expérience. Il s'agissait de trouver un moyen pour les participants de réfléchir sur les acquis linguistiques en comparant leurs pre et post tests, de revoir trois scènes de *How I Met Your Mother* pour la formulation d'hypothèses et d'une tâche orale dans laquelle ils devaient compléter les six scènes du sitcom avec une des douze expressions du post-test. Cette partie de l'expérience a donné des indications sur la manière d'amener les apprenants à prêter attention à la langue lorsqu'ils regardent des séries. Les interventions pédagogiques peuvent avoir un impact dans des contextes informels en influençant l'état d'esprit des apprenants lorsqu'ils regardent des sitcoms à la maison, en établissant des objectifs d'apprentissage au préalable, pour qu'ils puissent être des acteurs actifs dans le processus.

Disponible dans l'annexe J, les entretiens ont aidé les étudiants à verbaliser les connaissances qu'ils possédaient sur les expressions cibles et à réfléchir à ce qui aurait pu contribuer à la reconnaissance lors du post-test. La deuxième étape a aidé les participants à se concentrer sur le contexte et à y chercher des indices. Grâce à un protocole de réflexion à voix haute, les élèves ont extériorisé leurs pensées et leur analyse des scènes, confirmant ou réajustant leur hypothèse avec quelques conseils si nécessaire. Les résultats montrent que les échanges entre le chercheur et les participants ont aidé tous les participants à apprendre au moins une des expressions.

La Figure 71 montre l'évolution de leur capacité à expliquer, définir et/ou traduire les expressions lors de l'expérience. En bleu se trouvent les apprentissages acquis avec les scènes, en orange ceux acquis grâce à la tâche orale dans laquelle les apprenants ont essayé d'utiliser les expressions cibles en contexte, et en gris les apprentissages suite au re-visionnage des scènes.

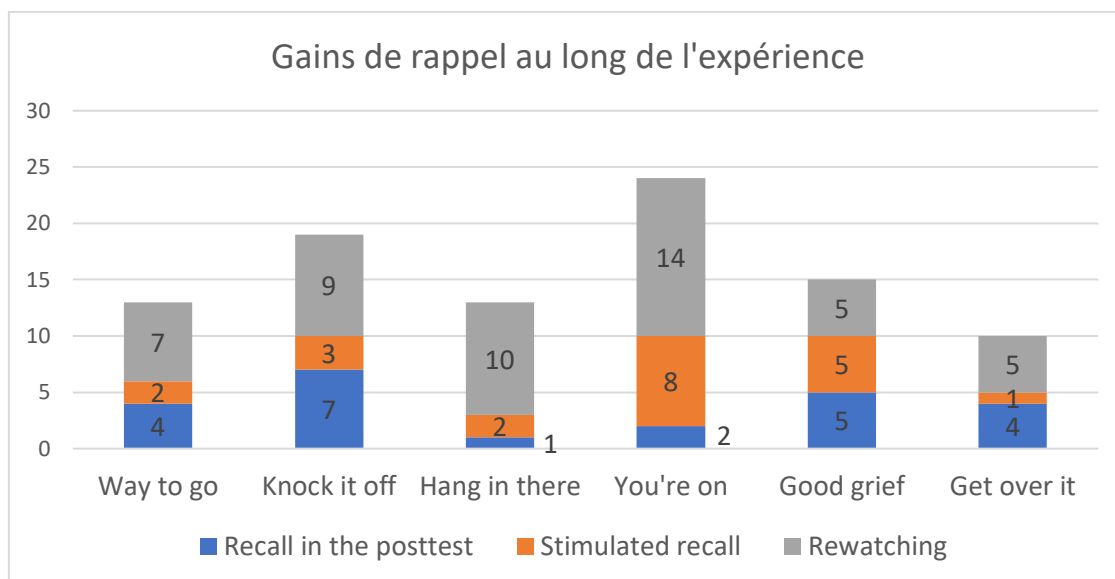


Figure 71 - L'évolution de l'apprentissage (graphique dans la section 7.5.3)

Les résultats de cette dernière partie ont soulevé la question de savoir à quel point les apprenants sont réellement préparés à avoir une posture d'intentionnalité dans des contextes informels et si simplement vouloir être attentif à la langue suffit pour l'apprendre. La différence de gains entre le simple fait de demander aux participants d'être attentifs et les résultats de la tâche finale est flagrante, ce qui indique que de différents degrés d'attention peuvent modifier les résultats d'apprentissage. Nous concluons que l'intervention des enseignants pour orienter des étudiants est une plus-value pour un apprentissage informel enrichi.

Il va sans dire que nos conclusions ne sont que préliminaires. Comme l'a souligné Hulstijn (2013), apprendre un nouveau mot implique de le rencontrer dans différents contextes et de le traiter sous diverses formes. Cette diversité renforce les liens avec d'autres mots et devient progressivement disponible pour utilisation. Ainsi, les rencontres incidentes et intentionnelles, l'analyse métalinguistique et l'utilisation de telles expressions dans des conversations sont des outils précieux d'apprentissage. Plus important encore, revoir, faire des pauses, analyser le contexte, avoir des traces des connaissances acquises, essayer d'utiliser ces expressions nouvellement acquises peuvent être fait dans des contextes informels sans l'aide d'un facilitateur. Notre objectif en tant que guides doit être de préparer les apprenants à devenir plus actifs dans l'apprentissage informel lorsqu'ils en ressentent le besoin et la volonté de l'être.

Chapitre 8. Discussion finale

L'apprentissage d'une langue implique de multiples variables et il existe certainement un aspect social qui motive les gens à s'engager dans des pratiques informelles en anglais. Cependant, il est indéniable que deux des plus puissants moteurs du visionnage de séries en anglais, qui ont fait l'objet d'étude dans cette thèse, sont le plaisir et l'apprentissage de la langue. D'après nos conclusions, de nombreux locuteurs de langues regardent les séries comme un moyen stratégique et agréable d'acquérir des compétences linguistiques. Pour d'autres, apprendre l'anglais est un objectif secondaire souhaitable. Dans les deux cas, les locuteurs de la langue mettront plus ou moins d'efforts dans l'activité, selon les situations, en espérant qu'un apprentissage en résultera.

En tant que chercheurs et enseignants en langues, il est important de prendre en compte les objectifs des apprenants dans l'apprentissage informel pour les aider à progresser, à se rendre compte de ses apprentissages et à rester motivés. Nous pensons également que c'est par la réflexion que les apprenants peuvent améliorer leurs chances d'atteindre leurs objectifs de compétence. Enfin, même si l'apprentissage informel doit rester informel, il est important de reconnaître les pratiques informelles des apprenants afin qu'ils ne soient pas abandonnés à leurs propres capacités.

Interrogés sur leurs habitudes de visionnage de séries, certains apprenants déclarent regarder en anglais alors qu'ils ont pour objectif d'apprendre la langue (ex. KT en annexe J). D'autres regardent des séries en langue originale sans se fixer d'objectifs d'apprentissage linguistique, mais se montrent conscients des gains linguistiques qu'elles peuvent apporter à long terme (ex. MF en annexe J). Cela n'est pas surprenant : Csikszentmihalyi (2009) a déjà souligné que lorsque les individus aiment ce qu'ils font, ils peuvent entrer dans un état de *Flow*, théorie qui soutient que trouver un grand plaisir dans une activité implique d'avoir un objectif, et l'apprentissage en fait souvent partie. Ceci est également soutenu par Dweck (2000), qui a constaté que lorsque l'objectif est de s'améliorer, l'échec est susceptible de provoquer un effort continu (p. 17). Cela semble être le cas de nombreux étudiants universitaires de notre étude, compte tenu des nombreuses heures consacrées au visionnage de séries et de l'utilisation progressive de différents sous-titres. Par conséquent, l'état de *Flow* peut faire partie de l'apprentissage informel non seulement parce qu'il peut apporter un profond plaisir, mais aussi parce que les spectateurs ont une volonté d'apprendre dans le processus, ce qui les pousse à s'immerger dans l'activité et à dépenser de l'énergie et d'innombrables heures simplement pour la ressentir.

Cette découverte s'ajoute aux résultats dans la section 7.2 qui montre qu'une des motivations pour apprendre la langue anglaise est la volonté de se sentir à l'aise en regardant des séries sans sous-

titres. En vue de ces éléments, il apparaît qu'en même temps que les étudiants regardent des séries pour apprendre l'anglais, ils apprennent l'anglais pour se sentir plus à l'aise pour regarder davantage de séries.

La contribution que nous aspirons à apporter dans ce domaine est triple. Au cœur de notre position est que l'apprentissage informel implique différents niveaux de conscience et que son expansion repose sur trois axes : l'intention, l'autonomie et l'échange humain. Ces axes peuvent être développés intuitivement par certains apprenants, mais les enseignants ont un rôle important à jouer pour les améliorer, comme le soutiennent les différentes sections du chapitre sept. Le premier axe est l'intention : savoir ce dont on a besoin et ce qu'on veut apprendre. Le deuxième axe est l'autonomie : réfléchir aux raisons pour lesquelles on s'engage dans des activités informelles. Le troisième axe est l'échange humain : développer la conscience métacognitive, apprendre des stratégies par la discussion et la pratique, ainsi que s'engager dans l'utilisation de la langue. Comme le montre la Figure 72, nous pensons que la combinaison de ces trois axes devrait favoriser un apprentissage optimal dans des contextes informels.

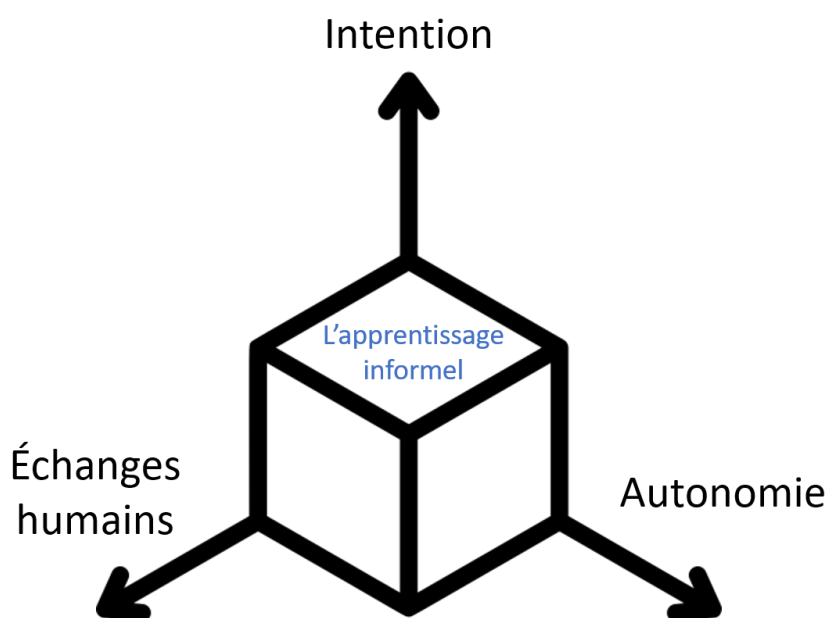


Figure 72 - Les trois axes de l'apprentissage informel : Intention, Autonomie et Échanges humains (traduction de la figure 69 dans la section 8.2)

En outre, les arguments ci-dessus justifient l'affirmation selon laquelle les centres de langues peuvent être un lieu d'intersection de l'autonomie, de la compétence et de l'échange humain. Dans ce contexte, les enseignants peuvent apporter une contribution essentielle à l'expérience

d'apprentissage informel des apprenants. La première étape consiste à comprendre les raisons pour lesquelles les apprenants s'engagent dans certaines activités en anglais. La deuxième étape consiste à contribuer attentivement à aider les apprenants à comprendre leurs propres motivations et à découvrir des moyens de les guider tout au long du processus d'apprentissage.

L'une des recommandations est de sensibiliser les apprenants aux précieuses sources d'apprentissage des langues qu'offrent les sitcoms. Les apprenants le savent peut-être à un certain niveau, mais en discuter devrait les amener à verbaliser leurs pratiques et à s'intéresser aux moyens de tirer davantage parti de ces opportunités. Cela peut également accroître l'intention lorsque les apprenants réalisent l'activité dans un cadre informel.

Un autre point à prendre en compte est que l'apprentissage de l'anglais est un long processus. Comme le souligne Dweck (2000), lorsque regarder des séries en anglais ne contribue pas à accroître la connaissance de la langue, cela n'a rien à voir avec l'intellect de l'élève, mais plutôt avec sa manière de valoriser et d'entreprendre l'activité (p. 16). Un enseignant peut jouer un rôle très important en abordant ces questions et en suggérant des stratégies, comme attirer l'attention sur les sous-titres, les images et établir des objectifs d'apprentissage. Cette interaction précieuse entre enseignants et apprenants peut contribuer à renforcer la motivation des apprenants à continuer d'être constamment exposés à la langue cible en regardant des séries.

En conclusion, nous espérons que notre thèse a comblé, quoique de manière préliminaire, les multiples lacunes identifiées dans la compréhension de la pratique du visionnage des séries en L2. Nous avons recueilli des informations sur les pratiques d'apprentissage informel des étudiants pour examiner la pertinence d'étudier le visionnage de séries. Un autre objectif de notre étude était de mener une discussion plus éclairée sur les raisons pour lesquelles les étudiants regardent des séries, si l'intention préalable au visionnage conduit à l'apprentissage du vocabulaire, le rôle que jouent les sous-titres et les images dans le processus et, enfin, ce qui peut être fait pour enrichir l'apprentissage informelle.

Nous pensons que deux étapes sont nécessaires pour donner une suite pratique à nos découvertes. La première consiste à multiplier les opportunités de conversations sur la métacognition pour aider les apprenants à changer les pratiques et les représentations liées à l'apprentissage des langues, dans la lignée des travaux menés par Macré & Rivens Mompean (2021) et Rivens Mompean & Eisenbeis (2022). Ces rencontres offrent des environnements favorables aux apprenants pour réfléchir de manière critique sur leur travail, suivre leurs progrès en se fixant des objectifs d'apprentissage lors du visionnage des séries à la maison et éventuellement s'auto-évaluer les progrès réalisés (Holec, 1979).

La deuxième est le développement d'ateliers pour encourager la réflexion sur la langue apprise dans des contextes informels, ainsi que sur l'utilisation de la langue (Kusyk, 2015). Il peut se dérouler sous forme de séances de réflexion et d'ateliers de prise de parole pour faire le pont entre la reconnaissance et le rappel du vocabulaire (connaître la langue et être capable de l'utiliser). Comme Kusyk (2015) l'a suggéré, les enseignants peuvent organiser des activités qui seraient complémentaires aux activités informelles auxquelles participent les apprenants, telles que l'analyse du registre, du sens, de la forme et de l'usage de la langue. Comme les apprenants ne semblent pas participer à de nombreuses activités de production orale (Toffoli & Sockett, 2010, 2015), ce sont les enseignants qui pourraient leur offrir des occasions pour de telles activités. La pratique d'utilisation du vocabulaire récemment acquis nécessite un effort cognitif, mais constitue un moyen important de rendre le vocabulaire plus facile à utiliser car elle renforce la mémoire (Brown et al., 2014).

Conclusion

L'ensemble de nos travaux représente un voyage en cours plutôt qu'une conclusion définitive, marquant le début d'un parcours académique continu. Si la myriade de possibilités offertes par le visionnage des séries avait suscité chez nous un grand enthousiasme dès avant nos études doctorales, nos découvertes ont donné des pistes pour approfondir nos recherches et pour agir.

Le premier de cinq de nos objectifs était de mieux comprendre le contexte actuel d'exposition et d'utilisation de l'anglais des étudiants universitaires français dans des contextes d'apprentissage informels. Notre hypothèse selon laquelle un nombre considérable d'entre eux reçoivent un apport important en anglais s'est confirmée, dans laquelle le visionnage de séries est l'activité audiovisuelle préférée qu'ils pratiquent : 91.6% des répondants déclarent regarder des séries, dont 66% le font à au moins 1 heure par semaine. Les résultats ont également corroboré l'hypothèse selon laquelle les sitcoms sont souvent regardées, puisque quatre des séries les plus mentionnées entrent dans cette catégorie.

Pourquoi les sitcoms sont-elles si populaires ? Pourquoi les utilisateurs de langue anglaise consacrent-ils des heures et de la passion à les regarder ? Ces questions ont dirigé notre deuxième objectif d'enquêter sur les motivations intérieures des étudiants qui regardent des sitcoms en anglais. Les résultats ont indiqué que le plaisir apporté par les sitcoms est une des raisons, ainsi que l'intention d'apprendre la langue. En tant que type de média court et facile à comprendre, les sitcoms séduisent les spectateurs et les conduisent souvent à un état de *Flow*, dans lequel ils sont tellement immergés dans l'activité qu'ils oublient que c'est en anglais. Cette condition est considérée comme idéale pour

apprendre la langue. Nos résultats suggèrent également que les utilisateurs de l'anglais sont conscients du potentiel d'apprentissage des langues qu'offre ce média.

Notre troisième objectif était de savoir si cette prise de conscience des acquis de l'apprentissage pouvait être opérationnalisée en établissant des objectifs d'apprentissage de la langue avant le visionnage. Pour examiner ce point, nous avons sélectionné quatre sitcoms pour mener une expérience (*Friends*, *How I Met Your Mother*, *The Big Bang Theory* et *Brooklyn 99*) et avons invité les étudiants à les regarder dans le centre de langue local. Chacune des expressions a été apprise par au moins un élève (*Knock it off*, *Hang in there*, *You're on*, *Good grief*, *Way to go* et *Get over it*), mais nos analyses statistiques n'ont pas été concluantes quant à savoir si regarder pour apprendre apportait plus d'avantages aux apprenants que lorsqu'ils regardaient simplement pour s'amuser. En conséquence, nous avons analysé les données collectées quantitativement et qualitativement pour enquêter sur l'incohérence des résultats.

Une façon d'approfondir cette question consistait à explorer la fonction que les images et les sous-titres en anglais jouent dans l'apprentissage du vocabulaire (notre quatrième objectif). Les données d'un oculomètre nous ont permis d'analyser le temps passé sur nos expressions cibles, ainsi que sur le langage non verbal qui les accompagnait. Nous avons constaté que l'attention portée aux sous-titres des expressions *Get over it* et *Knock it off* semble avoir aidé les participants à expliquer ce qu'elles signifient dans un post-test (test de rappel de sens). À l'inverse, l'attention considérable portée aux images de *Good grief* semble avoir aidé les participants à l'apprendre. Une explication possible réside dans les indices non verbaux présents dans les expressions faciales très expressives (lever les yeux, hausser ou froncer les sourcils).

Un autre type d'apprentissage a également été testé dans notre expérience : la capacité à reconnaître le sens d'une expression parmi une liste d'options. Pour ce type de connaissances, dont la recherche démontre qu'elles sont plus faciles pour les apprenants, l'attention portée aux images a probablement joué un rôle positif. Ceux qui étaient concentrés sur les images ont pu reconnaître *Knock it off*, *Good Grief* et *Get over it* le plus. Il est possible que ces résultats indiquent la grande valeur du langage non verbal pour la reconnaissance d'expressions figées et la valeur ajoutée des sous-titres pour le rappel et une utilisation ultérieure. Des recherches supplémentaires doivent être menées pour étayer ces résultats, car nos résultats ne peuvent pas être extrapolés à toutes les expressions de l'expérience.

Étant donné que de nombreux facteurs affectent l'apprentissage des langues, notre thèse a eu un objectif final : étudier le rôle de l'intervention de l'enseignant dans la promotion de la conscience métacognitive et de l'apprentissage du vocabulaire. Nos résultats ont soulevé la question de savoir comment les apprenants sont préparés à enrichir leurs apprentissages informels. Les résultats montrent une différence considérable dans les gains entre simplement demander aux participants de

prêter attention à la langue et les aider à y attirer leur attention, grâce à une formation stratégique. Par conséquent, les échanges oraux entre un apprenant et un guide peut sensibiliser au potentiel du visionnage de séries pour l'apprentissage de l'anglais et pour aider les apprenants à apprendre du vocabulaire.

Après examen des objectifs atteints, nous pouvons apporter une réponse à notre question de recherche : **dans quelle mesure de différents niveaux d'intention peuvent impacter l'apprentissage d'expressions figées lors du visionnage de sitcoms en anglais ?** Considérant qu'une différence de comportement a été observée entre nos deux groupes expérimentaux, nous pouvons conclure que lorsque les intentions d'apprentissage sont claires (dans le groupe intentionnel), des mécanismes sont (in)consciemment mis en place pour atteindre les objectifs d'apprentissage. Cela a été observé à travers l'attention que les individus du groupe intentionnel accordent au langage en s'intéressant davantage aux sous-titres que le groupe non intentionnel. Bien que l'efficacité d'une telle stratégie ait encore besoin d'un soutien empirique, les enseignants jouent un rôle important en discutant avec les apprenants de ce qu'ils sont habitués à faire dans des contextes informels, en discutant de l'efficacité de ces méthodes et en créant une ouverture sur différentes manières d'apprendre pour tirer le meilleur parti des opportunités de visionnage pour apprendre.

Bien que des recherches considérables aient été consacrées à la compréhension de l'apprentissage informel, moins d'attention a été accordée à la manière dont l'intention peut servir de support à l'apprentissage du vocabulaire dans de tels contextes. Nous pensons que cette étude est la première à étudier différents niveaux d'intentionnalité dans l'apprentissage du vocabulaire à travers le visionnage de séries. Bien qu'humble, notre contribution est cohérente avec notre objectif de découvrir les pratiques actuelles d'apprentissage informel, d'étudier le rôle de l'intention et d'explorer des moyens pédagogiques pour aider les apprenants à acquérir du vocabulaire grâce au visionnage de séries.

Nous espérons que notre thèse a apporté un certain nombre de contributions significatives aux apprenants, aux chercheurs et aux enseignants. Nos résultats suggèrent que les apprenants peuvent gagner à réfléchir sur leurs pratiques d'apprentissage, augmentant ainsi leur autonomie. En étudiant comment inclure l'intention dans le visionnage des séries, les chercheurs pourraient contribuer à enrichir les acquis de l'apprentissage linguistique informel. Enfin, les enseignants sont essentiels pour aider les apprenants à accroître leur autonomie et leurs compétences, non seulement pour leur expertise, mais aussi pour l'échange humain, un autre besoin fondamental de tous les apprenants.

Tous les résultats ci-dessus doivent être interprétés à la lumière des inévitables limites de cette étude. Le petit échantillon qui restreint l'analyse dans de nombreuses études quantitatives en didactique a également été un obstacle à notre recherche. Le nombre limité de participants dans

chaque groupe (intentionnel et accidentel) et sous-groupe (B1 et B2) a restreint notre analyse statistique, nous empêchant de tirer des conclusions plus précises sur l'effet de l'intention sur l'apprentissage des langues.

De plus, comme nous utilisons de vrais mots dans une vidéo authentique, nous avons été contraints d'appliquer un pré-test. Bien que nous ayons pris des précautions en termes de temps entre les pré-tests et l'expérience, ainsi que sur la manière dont ils ont été présentés aux apprenants, le pré-test a pu fournir un premier contact à nos expressions cibles, ce qui rend difficile d'évaluer dans quelle mesure nos scènes étaient la seule source de connaissance des expressions. Par conséquent, nous considérons que nos résultats quantitatifs constituent une réponse provisoire plutôt que définitive.

Malgré ces limites, nous pensons que notre étude fournit des informations utiles sur l'apprentissage d'expressions figées en anglais à travers des sitcoms et révèle des tendances possibles qui méritent d'être examinées dans des recherches plus approfondies. Par exemple, nous avons découvert que la musique est l'activité à laquelle la plupart des étudiants s'engagent, et de futures recherches sur les paroles de musique pourraient élargir nos connaissances sur le vocabulaire des étudiants universitaires. De futures études pourraient également explorer la lecture dans des contextes informels : les élèves lisent-ils davantage pour le plaisir (en particulier sur les réseaux sociaux) ou à des fins académiques, et quel type de langue ont-ils appris grâce à cette exposition ? De plus, nos résultats montrent qu'il existe un grand nombre de nouvelles activités informelles qui n'ont pas été (largement) étudiées par la littérature sur l'acquisition d'une langue seconde : regarder des vidéos YouTube, écouter des podcasts, faire du sport via des vidéos en ligne, faire de la méditation guidée et utiliser des applications telles que Twitter, Tinder, TikTok et Instagram en anglais. Cela constitue un bon point de départ pour une discussion et des recherches plus approfondies.

En ce qui concerne l'intention, nous avons trouvé des preuves que l'apprentissage d'une langue peut être l'une des composantes qui composent le *Flow* du visionnage de séries. Cette hypothèse pourrait être abordée dans des études futures. De futures investigations sont également nécessaires pour valider certaines conclusions sur la multimodalité qui peuvent être tirées de notre étude. Nous pensons que l'analyse des gestes, des expressions faciales, de la voix et des émotions doit être effectuée individuellement pour aborder l'impact de ces facteurs dans l'apprentissage des langues à travers des médias authentiques. Ces éléments visuels et émotionnels, ainsi que la difficulté des différents types de médias peuvent également être analysés grâce à une analyse minutieuse de corpus.

Un autre objet de recherche future concerne les résultats d'apprentissage générés par les interventions pédagogiques liées à l'intention. Suite à des rencontres au centre de langues, les apprenants changent-ils d'état d'esprit lorsqu'ils regardent des séries dans des contextes informels ? Des recherches pourraient être menées pour analyser leurs journaux d'apprentissage et les objectifs d'apprentissage que les apprenants se fixent. Dans quelle mesure les apprenants suivent-ils les

« circonstances organisantes » (Spear & Mocker, 1984) parce qu'ils les préfèrent ou parce qu'ils ne savent pas comment procéder différemment ? D'autres études pourraient être menées pour recueillir les perceptions des étudiants sur les différentes manières d'organiser leur apprentissage.

Enfin, les recherches futures pourraient également être consacrées au développement de différentes stratégies dans des contextes non formels. Cela pourrait se faire à travers le développement d'ateliers pour encourager la réflexion sur la langue apprise dans des contextes informels et l'organisation d'activités complémentaires à ces pratiques, dans lesquelles les apprenants peuvent analyser le registre, le sens, la forme et l'utilisation de la langue avec un tuteur. Des recherches futures pourraient examiner comment des ateliers centrés sur la production et l'interaction orale peuvent relier la reconnaissance et le rappel du vocabulaire (connaître la langue et être capable de l'utiliser). Comme les apprenants ne semblent pas participer à de nombreuses activités de production orale, les enseignants pourraient être ceux qui leur offrent de telles opportunités.

En étudiant le rôle de l'intention dans l'apprentissage des langues, nous espérons avoir donné des clés aux acteurs impliqués dans l'acquisition d'une langue seconde (apprenants, enseignants et chercheurs) pour interagir avec des étudiants dans le but de favoriser la pensée critique et la recherche d'apprentissage, ainsi que d'aider les individus à s'auto-éduquer et à réfléchir de manière indépendante. De cette façon, en suivant les enseignements de Socrate, nous pouvons tous jouer notre rôle dans l'exercice du pouvoir pour nous auto-diriger dans notre quête de sagesse et dans notre parcours d'apprentissage des langues tout au long de notre vie.