



# The use of subtitled TV series as a didactic resource for the EFL class in Higher Education

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## ABSTRACT

Language teaching models are constantly changing. From learning based on a system of in-class, repetitive, grammar-oriented activities, we have moved to ubiquitous learning (u-learning), where the resources and tools used gain importance compared to elements such as time and space. In this scenario, TV series with integrated subtitles appear as a resource to improve listening, speaking and vocabulary skills among Spanish students of English as a Second Language (ESL). The main objective of this article is to present a case study that includes watching TV series as a continuous activity outside the classroom to motivate university students to achieve a real improvement in listening, speaking and vocabulary skills. This gives an additional boost to students' language competences and introduces an extra motivation factor for them to continue using English outside the academic environment.

*Keywords: EFL, u-learning, TV Series, Subtitles, Listening, Speaking, Vocabulary, Teaching.*

## 1. Introduction

Foreign language learning and the tools used in the associated educational processes have significantly changed over the past hundred years. Technological advances in teaching during the last century have brought about exponential improvement at all levels. The priority of this paper is to explore the use of TV series as a resource for learning English in college. According to Robinson *et al.* (2008), "Educational technology is the study and ethical practice of facilitating learning and improving performance by creating, using and managing appropriate technological processes and resources" (2008: 15). Thus, technological tools help people develop and enhance the language acquisition process. Learning, we assume, is based on four fundamental pillars: easiness, speed, precision and economic efficiency. These pillars have been a constant throughout the evolution of human beings, and this applies to the foreign language learning methodology (Molenda, 2008).

The tools used in education have changed dramatically since the appearance of the first blackboards in India in the 11<sup>th</sup> century (Al-Biruni, 1910). However, with the advent of the third millennium, these changes have become more significant and faster. From traditional face-to-face learning environments, where "teachers or their teaching materials are the only source of learning materials for students and without taking into account individual differences" (Liu, 2010: 256), and passing through the implementation of electronic learning (e-learning) which, according to the U.S. Department of Education, "is the learning and

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teaching activities mainly conducted through the Internet” (Liu, 2010: 256), modern learning processes have evolved into which is known as *Ubiquitous Learning* (u-learning).

U-learning scenarios use technology to facilitate students’ progress. This type of instruction creates an environment where students can learn continuously, no matter the moment or place (Yahya *et al.*, 2016). This benefits them as individuals in contrast to traditional teaching methodologies, in which programs were developed at the group level. U-learning has become a fundamental methodology when teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Thanks to that, learning goes beyond the walls of a classroom, as learners are encouraged to understand that any interaction with a foreign language is part of the learning process. Students are thus provided with a potentially unlimited amount of learning materials and resources. To implement u-learning and build up linguistic immersion, they can use ICTs (Information and Communication Technologies) and other audiovisual resources such as television series or cinema (Álvarez-Gil, 2022; Álvarez-Gil & Alonso-Almeida, 2017). Using them will require the development of digital competencies by teachers and students (Ortega Barrera, 2019).<sup>2</sup>

In EFL, learning is established around the development of four basic competences: reading, writing, listening and speaking. In the proposed experimentation, watching television series has been chosen as a didactic resource to improve students’ listening and speaking skills. The choice relies on the following premises:

1. Watching TV series is a very popular leisure activity among young people.
2. English is the language dominating the audiovisual medium.
3. Spanish regulations on digital competences of teachers include video as a teaching tool for educational purposes.<sup>3</sup>

In Spain, studying a foreign language is compulsory in primary and secondary education. It is possible to choose the foreign language one wishes to learn, and English is usually the first choice (Reichelt, 2006). Although it is common knowledge that Spanish and English are very different languages with distinctive phonological patterns, the traditional teaching of foreign languages in Spain has prioritised the memorisation of syntactic-grammatical structures to the detriment of the communicative use of the language. This is done by consigning the students to completing highly standardised written activities during most class sessions, which undermines oral competences. All this makes learning and using English a difficult and tedious task for many Spanish students, most of whom enter university with this background (Reichelt, 2006).

This paper presents a case study based on an EFL scenario at the University of Extremadura (UEx). Our goal is to motivate EFL students by using television series, a form of entertainment that is both fun and popular. The test subjects for this experimentation are the students who took the course English for Journalism 1 (“Inglés Periodístico 1”) in the academic year 2021-22. This subject is mandatory in both the degree in Journalism and the double degrees in Journalism and Audiovisual Communication and Journalism and Information and Documentation. First, the learning scenario is defined. Next, we analyse the current

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<sup>2</sup> The European Parliament defines digital competence as follows: “Digital competence involves the confident and critical use of Information Society Technology (IST) for work, leisure and communication. It is underpinned by basic skills in ICT: the use of computers to retrieve, assess, store, produce, present and exchange information, and to communicate and participate in collaborative networks via the Internet.” (The European Parliament and the Council of the European Union, 2006, p. 16)

<sup>3</sup> For more information, see the Common Framework for Digital Educational Competence, October 2017 (in Spanish) (Instituto Nacional de Tecnologías Educativas y Formación del Profesorado (INTEF), 2017)

popularity of television series as a massive cultural phenomenon and their use as a teaching resource. Then, the core activity of this case study is explained, followed by the discussion of the results obtained, and finally, the conclusions of the study are presented.

## **2. Learning Language Competences in Spain: Listening and Speaking**

English is a global communication language used in many environments, including academic ones. Crystal (2014) suggests that this is due to two main historical reasons: firstly, we find the incredible colonial power of the British Empire that reached its peak at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century; in addition, the swift rise of the United States as a world economic power during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Crystal (2006) also points out that there are between 1,400 and 1,500 million English speakers in the world, divided between native speakers of English (400 million), speakers of English as a second language (400 million) and speakers of English as a foreign language (600–700 million).

Ortega Barrera (2019) states that, in the case of Spain, however, the use of the English language presents specific issues. Even though English is the most studied foreign language in Spain, its use is strongly limited to the classroom. In this sense, many Spanish people claim to be unable to communicate fluently in English or understand a native speaker. Concerning this situation, it is possible to consider that Spanish people are not in continuous contact with English as a foreign language because they do not experience a constant need to use it. Thus, lacking communicative competences in English would mean a global communication problem for Spanish people.

Learning any language depends on the learners' purposes and motivation and the linguistic relation between their native language and the target one. The management of the four competences of a language represents the goal of any language acquisition process. Those competences are usually matched in pairs. First, there is written communication, which becomes effective when the student possesses efficient writing and reading skills. Nevertheless, this project aims to delve into the acquisition of the second pair: listening and speaking. According to Sadiku (2015), "these two skills are highly interrelated and work simultaneously in real-life situations. So, the integration of the two aims at fostering effective oral communication" (2015: 29).

Listening is a competence that goes one step further despite being directly related to the sense of hearing. In this regard, Sadiku (2015) states that "listening... is not merely hearing: it is a state of receptivity that permits understanding of what is heard and grants the listener full partnership in the communication process" (2015: 31). Then, a cooperative attitude from the listener combined with the appropriate use of pragmatic skills makes it possible to complete the communication process initiated by the speaker. A non-cooperative attitude, on the other hand, hinders the communication process and can even nullify it entirely. At the academic level, listening is prominent in the teaching-learning environment. Hence, students who develop listening skills in a relevant way will consequently experience improvement in their global learning capacity (Sadiku, 2015).

Listening is complemented by speaking, which is a somewhat unique ability since, to a certain extent, it evolves from the combination of the other three skills. When spoken concepts are combined with contexts where pragmatic skills are used, the result is a complete communication process (Sadiku, 2015). A receiver expects speakers to express themselves correctly and on the spot in a conversation. Moreover, neither a speaker nor a listener can alter, edit or review what someone is saying at any time, as each sequence within the communication process takes place in a few seconds (Bailey, 2003). Since "in English ... the average

speaking rate ranges from 152 words per minute to nearly 170 words per minute” (Jiahong *et al.*, 2006: 543), we may find outputs of between five and six syllables per second approximately. Therefore, the essential elements for good communication are correct pronunciation and an efficient combination of grammar, syntax and vocabulary. In the classroom scenario, if students cannot express themselves correctly, it will be difficult for them to interact, participate and ask questions within the classroom, and their ability to learn will consequently be significantly reduced. From the teachers’ point of view, speaking is even more critical since it impacts on the lectures’ success rate. That is, if students are unable to follow the lessons, the success rate is likely to drop.

Spanish EFL students typically do not use English outside the classroom regularly. In this sense, the only way to encourage them to use English is to create an artificial linguistic immersion situation since it is not a second language but falls into the category of EFL for them. They need a socio-communicative framework. Thus, improving listening, speaking, and vocabulary consolidation are the points to foster in this teaching proposal in order to help students enhance their oral, live communication.

It is then necessary to address how teaching these skills works in the average Spanish curricula. Reichelt (2006) concluded that the popularity of learning English in Spain in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century was growing. There are several reasons for such a renewed enthusiasm for learning English: curricular improvements in public and private education, the introduction of students to the language at an increasingly younger age, and a more consistent dominance of English as the language of globalised communication and leisure activities. Due to these factors, it was likely that learning English in Spain would improve consistently after that. However, Criado and Sánchez Pérez (2009) found out, through an analysis of different textbooks used in Spain for the teaching of English, that this improvement is not as substantial as Reichelt predicted. According to the former, this is so because, although language learning should focus on the more communicative aspects, the materials and the procedures of in-class teaching they analysed do not follow the principles established by the Communicative Language Teaching Method (CLT). Criado and Sánchez Pérez (2009) assume that this may be a consequence of the teachers’ experience, the different real teaching situations, and even their educational background. In this way, we face a profound dissonance in the teaching of a language in Spain: first, there are the official regulations, based on firm theoretical principles, which indicate how to proceed when teaching; and second, there is the need to adapt teaching to what the teacher finds in the actual classroom.

A decade later, the situation has hardly changed, and Spanish people rank very low among the European countries in terms of English proficiency. In November 2019, the Spanish newspaper *El País* published an article on the low-level competence in English among Spaniards. Moreover, the population aged between 25 and 34 has lagged far behind the level reached by the same age group in countries such as Portugal, Greece and Italy, which had an average English proficiency level similar to that of Spanish people ten years ago. Table 1 shows that the surveys carried out by Eurostat (European Statistical Office) do not appear to be encouraging for Spain.

Country	2007	2016
Spain	53,40%	54,20%
Portugal	49,00%	69,00%
Greece	57,00%	67,00%
Italy	62,00%	66,00%

Table 1. Population between 25 and 64 years of age who know at least one foreign language (Zafra, 2019).

Although the data is quite negative, it would be possible to reverse this trend by approaching the issue in a way that makes it easier for the teacher to connect with the students' learning needs and procure massive linguistic immersion. The current proposal resorts to one of the most popular products of mass media today: television series.

### 3. Television Series: Learning English in a New Way

TV series are popular among young people nowadays. Television production in the United States began the third millennium by reaching good numbers in screen share. However, from 2009 on, US television experienced stagnation accompanied by a progressive decline. Figure 1 shows how the television ratings in the USA during the 2010s first stagnated and then started to decline. However, if we go back to the 2000/2001 season, we will find out that the combined ratings of the 10 most watched television series reached 120 points. Since the average screen share in the United States ranges between 1.2 and 1.5 million inhabitants per point of share, the first season of the third millennium would have kept between 144 and 180 million people connected to the television.<sup>4</sup> Then, a plausible explanation exists for the results between 2009 and 2019 (see Figure 1). By researching further ahead, we can conclude that the popularity of television series increased thanks to a significant improvement in the Internet connection at a global level and, subsequently, the explosive emergence of streaming platforms. The popularity of American series is also reflected among Spanish audiences. In its 2017 report, Barlovento Comunicación (2017) stated that series from the United States accounted for 72% of the total number of series broadcast in Spain between September 2016 and August 2017. This represents an increase of 8% compared to 2007, when the percentage of American series broadcast in Spain was 64%.

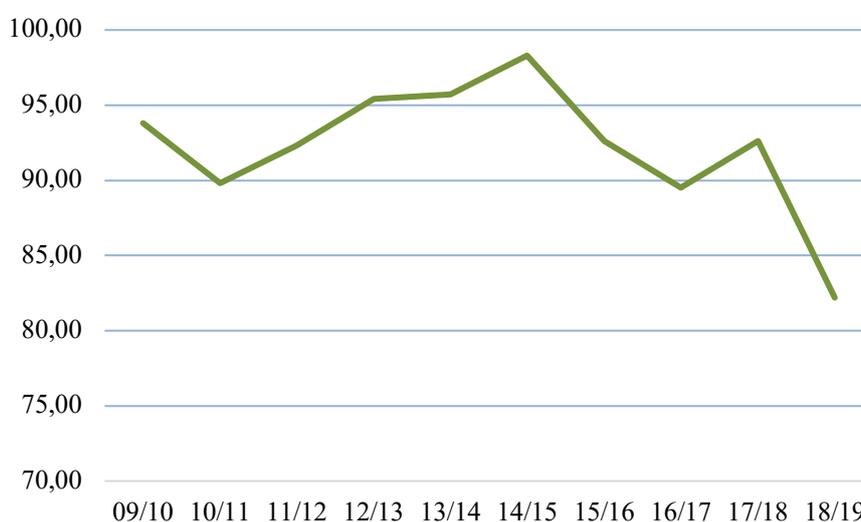


Figure 1. Progression of the combined ratings of the 10 most watched TV series during the last 10 years in the USA. Data extracted from Nielsen Media Research.

In recent years, several articles have been published analysing how the rise of streaming platforms affects the world in general and Spain in particular (Boronat *et al.*, 2018; Herrero Subías *et al.*, 2018; Martín-Quevedo *et al.*, 2019; Castro & Cascajosa, 2020). The Internet has changed how people consume television,

<sup>4</sup> Public data provided by Nielsen Media Research, the company in charge of television ratings in the United States (Nielsen Ratings, n.d.).  
*Revista de Lenguas para Fines Específicos 29*  
 ISSN: 2340-8561

as it reaches more users at an affordable cost. If we combine the universality of the Internet with the great development of digital devices in recent years (mobile phones, tablets, smart televisions, etc.), we will get a more critical consumer who does not worry about places or schedules when enjoying their favourite audiovisual products. Their consumption is a trend that has increased in popularity among the youngest sectors of the population, becoming one of the most common leisure activities among them. Moreover, although television series are top-rated among young people, they are the leading cause of less use of the traditional television consumption model (Araújo Vila *et al.*, 2019). Hence, it is clear that television series enjoy great popularity, and it is possible to use them as a resource for improving language learning and its different skills.

The employment of television series as a specific tool for learning a language is not a recent discovery. In the early 2000s, there were already publications on its use for language learning, such as Wan (2000), who used a children's show to improve the vocabulary, speaking and listening skills of students at the preschool level or children learning English as a second language. Recently, the use of television series and their relationship to language learning has been the subject of several academic works. Some authors, such as Hoyos (2018) or Scheffler *et al.* (2020), frame their studies within the field of preschool or primary education and focus on the process of vocabulary acquisition. Other scholars, such as Azaryad Shechter (2018) or Maniati (2020), leave aside the age factor and deal with the assimilation of English vocabulary and grammatical structures. In one recent publication close to the topic in this article, Tajgozari (2019) proposes the use of subtitles to improve the speaking skills of Iranian EFL students. In the conclusions, this researcher positively assesses his experiment and assures that it can be applied to other English skills. Frumuselu *et al.* (2015) present a case study using subtitled TV series for higher education students. Although their aims differ from this paper's, as they focus on informal language, their preliminary results confirm the advantages of using subtitled TV series to learn EFL. In the end, the use of television series (with and without subtitles) for learning ESL is widely accepted in the academic literature. It has been validated by authors such as Rupérez Micola *et al.* (2009), and De Wilde *et al.* (2020). Based on these positive assessments, this paper analyses the implementation of such methodology to teach EFL to university students specialising in Communication Studies. The four goals pursued by this particular activity are as follows:

- To boost students' motivation towards EFL through TV series, a form of entertainment that is both fun and popular.
- To enhance the assimilation of English pronunciation and intonation used in the series by being exposed to different accents, thus improving their speaking skills.
- To develop students' listening skills and vocabulary using two senses simultaneously (sight for subtitles and hearing for audio).
- To foster students' vocabulary acquisition and reading skills thanks to the use of subtitles.

#### 4. TV Series and Subtitles: Improving Speaking, Listening and Vocabulary Skills

##### 4.1. Context

The experimentation on which we base our case study has been carried out during an entire academic term of the course referred to as "Inglés Periodístico 1". It is a mandatory course taught in the second year of the degree in Journalism and the double degrees in Journalism and Audiovisual Communication and Journalism

and Information and Documentation at the University of Extremadura. The chosen academic year has been 2021-2022.

#### 4.2. Participants

The number of students participating in the study has been 30. According to the Spanish Ministry of Education (MEFP), the expected level of linguistic competence among these students at the beginning of the course should be at least an A2 level as described in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Nevertheless, their speaking, listening and, in some cases, vocabulary skills were below the minimum required for those levels, as a preliminary diagnosis test conducted, and described in detail in the research instruments section, consistently proves. There are two possible reasons for this. One is a direct consequence of “the low proficiency levels in English most Spanish undergraduates have when starting college” (Gómez-Calderón, 2021, p. 91). Another reason could be the general difficulties that Spanish students often have in acquiring the phonetic patterns of English. Spanish and English have differences that are challenging for Spanish speakers (Cenoz & Lecumberri, 1999; Uribe-Enciso *et al.*, 2019).

Considering these factors, it is possible to conclude that students need more extended exposition to real, natural, oral English. In addition, it would be helpful for them to broaden their contact with the foreign language in non-academic settings and integrate it into leisure activities. By doing so, it is possible to avoid the feeling of approaching English exclusively as just a course requirement. This would also mitigate frustration and anxiety because watching TV series, even in the classroom context, always introduces the factor of entertainment.

#### 4.3. Procedure

The first step was to evaluate the students’ general linguistic proficiency concerning their speaking and listening skills, and their vocabulary acquisition. The first in-class activity was watching a scene from a television series, specifically from the first episode of *Friends* (NBC, 1994–2004). The duration of the clip is 6 minutes. First, the scene was projected without subtitles, and students were asked about its content randomly to check their understanding. It was then projected again, this time with English subtitles, asking the students to write down the vocabulary that was unfamiliar to them. Then, the students received a full explanation of the procedure. The teacher proposed three television series, all of which share a common denominator: the sitcom genre. This genre was chosen because most sitcoms’ episodes are usually 20-minutes-long, self-contained narratives, which may prevent students from finding the activity tedious. In addition, their topics are relatable, which would ensure the students’ liking and positive reception.

*Friends* was chosen because of its tremendous popularity (all the students had at least heard of it) and its classic sitcom plot. Even though it is an old series, there has been a renewed interest in it with the airing of “The Reunion” episode in 2021, almost 15 years after the end of the original series. After *Friends*, the second choice was *Modern Family* (ABC, 2009–2020), a popular series although not a classic yet. The interesting thing about this series is that it complicates the development of listening skills. The characters speak fairly quickly, making it challenging for non-native speakers to understand the dialogues. On the other hand, one of the characters, Gloria, played by Colombian actress Sofia Vergara, has a thick Spanish accent and often makes mistakes in English, so students can sympathise with her. Finally, the last series chosen was *After*

*Life* (Netflix, 2019–2022), a product unknown to almost all the students. This series is framed in the field of journalism and includes specific vocabulary related to the course syllabus, which may be useful.

Students should not spend more than 30 minutes per session (at home) for correct activity development. Since each episode lasts approximately 20 minutes, it would be convenient to have a margin of about 10 minutes for any issue the students may encounter, such as replaying some dialogues they do not understand or looking up new vocabulary in the dictionary. Thus, each day the learners would watch one episode of a series at home, outside the classroom. The audio of the episodes must be in English, and they must include English subtitles too. To complete the activity, students were asked to watch at least the whole first season of both *Friends* and *Modern Family* (48 episodes in total), plus all the episodes of *After Life* (18 episodes). The European curricula assume 25-30 hours of independent student work per ECTS credit (European Commission, 2017). Thus, this task would mean approximately two months of daily independent work for the students. Ideally, however, it should be continued throughout the term.

Once the main task was established, the next step was to track its development and assess the students' progress. In order to do this, at the beginning of any of the class sessions, the teacher randomly chose one of the students who, in 5 minutes, had to summarise the plot of the episode he or she had watched the previous day orally. This explanation also served as an in-class warm-up activity. Classmates were then free to ask questions or offer comments. This activity was regularly developed during the course, and all students could participate twice. The first weeks did not show substantial changes: there was no apparent improvement among the students since they were shy to participate. Nevertheless, as the weeks went by, the quality of the students' summaries of the episodes improved significantly, and they even generated entertaining discussions.

#### 4.4. Research Instruments

At the beginning of the term, students took an initial placement test available on the Cambridge website. Its purpose was to enable the teacher to make an accurate assessment of the learners' level. The model used corresponded to that of a Cambridge A2 exam, covering all four skills. This test model was used because, theoretically, all students should be able to show an A2 level of English. However, some complications were noted. There were not many problems in the reading and writing skills, although it should be pointed out that the vocabulary used was basic and repetitive on many occasions. On the other hand, the level demonstrated by the students concerning the listening and speaking skills proved to be lower than the other two, being the speaking skill the worst graded of the four. In the end, 70% of the students passed the initial exam.

Once the term ended, the students filled out an anonymous questionnaire. It consisted of five items that allowed the teacher to collect data on the learners' interest in the activity and their self-assessment in the different language competences. Question 1 was "Do you usually watch TV series in their original version?" It referred to the frequency with which they consumed TV series in their original version. Question 2 was "Was the proposed activity enjoyable and/or motivating for you?" It dealt with their motivation and enjoyment regarding the proposed activity. Questions 3-5 were "Do you think you have managed to improve your listening skills?" "Do you think you have managed to improve your speaking skills?" and "Do you think you have managed to improve your specific vocabulary?" respectively. They were the critical part of the questionnaire and were intended to collect data on students' self-awareness on their advance in listening, speaking and vocabulary. All the questions in the questionnaire are yes/no questions (Dörnyei &

Dewaele, 2022). We considered it appropriate to use only five closed questions for the sake of clarity and concreteness.

During the examination period, a final test was held to study the correspondence between students' perception and measurable linguistic improvement. The model used was written by the teacher and contained questions related to all four skills. The questions were themed around English for journalism. This exam was used to determine whether or not the students passed the course.

## 5. Results of the Experimentation

Table 2 shows very interesting results. Regarding question 1, only half of the students had previously consumed TV series in English. The percentage may seem worrying in a world dominated by online TV platforms. Question 2, however, offers more positive results. Most students (over 90%) enjoyed the proposed activity. This percentage may be motivated by several reasons. Firstly, the activity is designed to complement the course. In this sense, doing it away from the classroom may remove the feeling of obligation and at the same time increase the sense of enjoyment. On the other hand, the activity offers students the chance to improve their English in a completely different way to the traditional lessons with which they are familiar. Thus, a fresh approach is more likely to increase students' curiosity and interest. Question 2 proved a success for students and teachers, but it is also essential to consider the negative answers. They may be due to the fact that, on the one hand, some students still consider this activity as a compulsory part of the course and therefore show their rejection of it. In addition, it is important to take into account that not everyone likes to watch TV series despite their growing popularity. If we add to this the fact that the activity is in a language other than the native one, we may find that learners do not enjoy it. Nevertheless, while a negative appreciation of this activity on the part of some students was a possibility at the beginning, the high ratio of positive responses was reassuring. Questions 3-5 show that students were more positive regarding vocabulary. Almost 90% of the participants considered that they had enhanced their lexicon, as shown in Question 5. This is probably because Spanish students of EFL see vocabulary acquisition as the most attainable goal. In addition, in the case of *After Life*, using a television series with topic-specific journalism vocabulary has been useful regarding the course syllabus. Then, more than 80% of the students confirmed their improvement in listening skills. Finally, this optimism was reduced when it came to self-assessment of speaking skills, with a mere 72.41%. They claimed that their shyness and lack of confidence were still serious hindrances.

Question	Yes	No
1. Do you usually watch TV series in their <i>original version</i> ?	51.72%	48.28%
2. Was the proposed activity <i>enjoyable</i> and/or <i>motivating</i> for you?	93.10%	6.90%
3. Do you think you have managed to improve your <i>listening</i> skills?	82.75%	17.25%
4. Do you think you have managed to improve your <i>speaking</i> skills?	72.41%	27.59%
5. Do you think you have managed to improve your <i>specific vocabulary</i> ?	89.65%	10.35%

Table 2. Results of the questionnaire.

A test on each competence was carried out before and after the activity to study the concordance between students' perception and measurable linguistic improvement. Figures 2-4 compare students' self-perception with their actual performance. The percentage of students who managed to improve (higher marks after the activity) is shown in green, and those who did not (lower or equal marks after the exercise) are shown in red. In the case of specific vocabulary acquisition, the self-perception of students who answered

negatively was very accurate, as none of them improved. However, among those who responded positively, only 58% managed to improve (see Figure 2). On the other hand, in the case of Speaking, 76% of the students who perceived an improvement managed to demonstrate it (see Figure 3). Finally, regarding Listening, the learning perception does not correspond to the results expected in the exam, as there is no substantial difference between the two columns (see Figure 4). Furthermore, unlike the exam, the proposed activity allowed students a self-regulated learning pace, as they could watch the episode several times if they had not understood something.

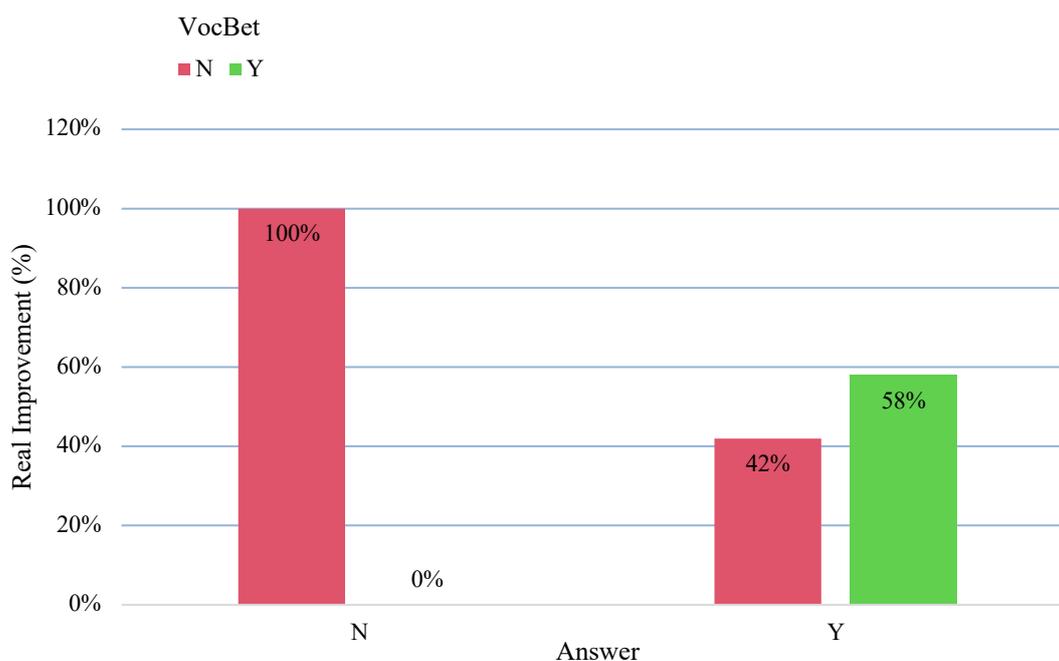


Figure 2. Relationship between perceived improvement and actual improvement regarding acquisition of specific vocabulary.

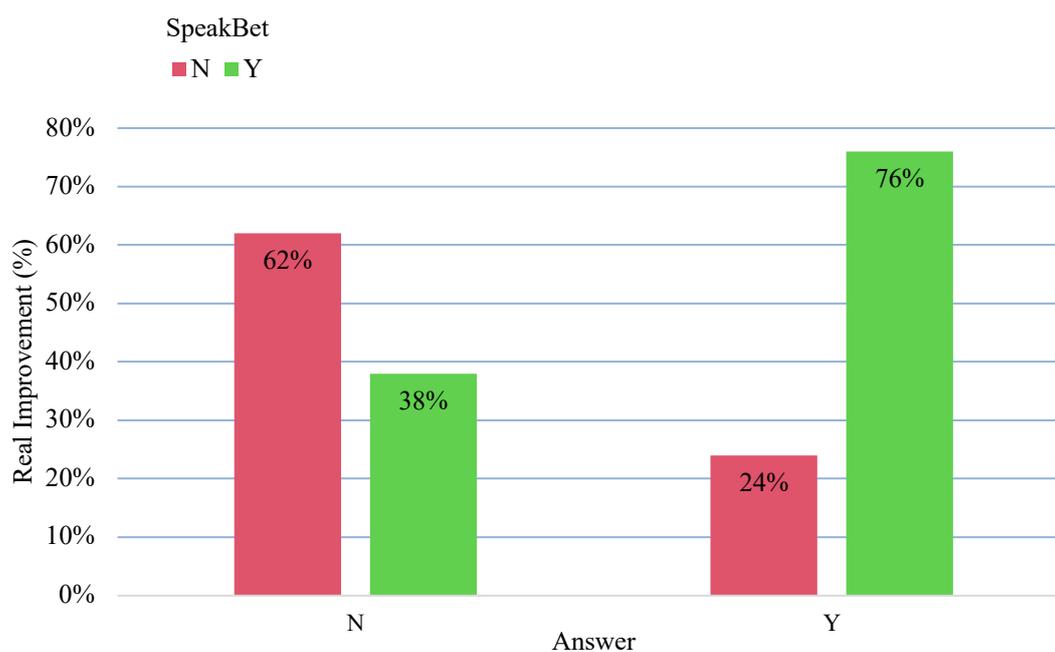


Figure 3. Relationship between perceived improvement and actual improvement regarding speaking skills.

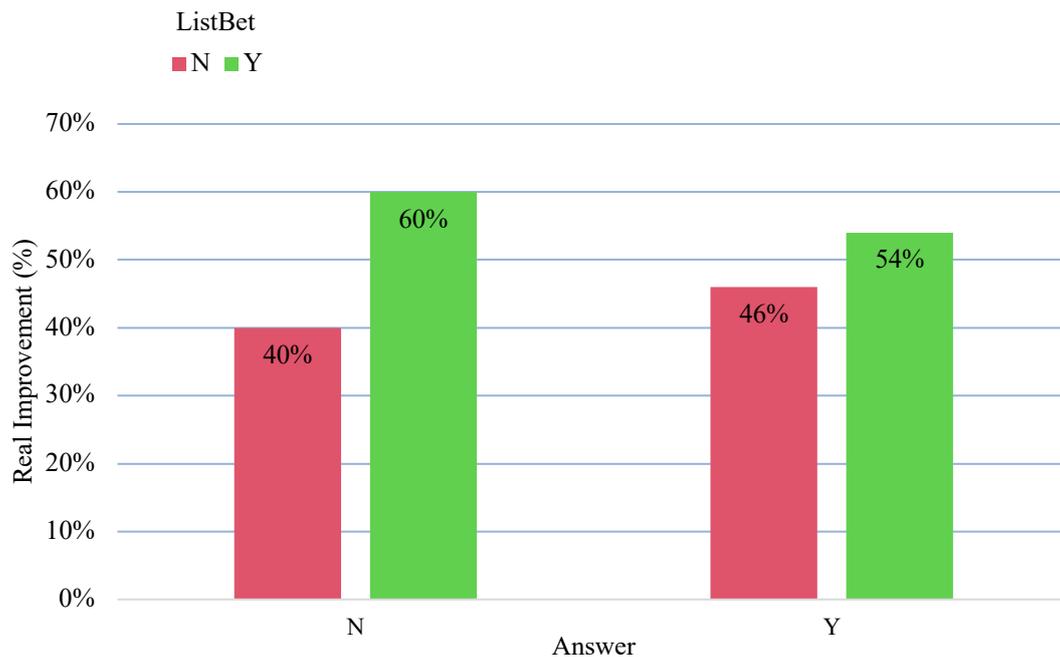


Figure 4. Relationship between perceived improvement and actual improvement regarding listening skills.

The learning results shown above had their impact on the final exam grades too:

	Pass	Fail
1. <i>Full Exam</i>	79,31%	20,69%
2. <i>Listening Skill</i> (included in the exam)	75,86%	24,14%
3. <i>Speaking Skill</i> (included in the exam)	68,96%	31,04%
4. <i>Specific vocabulary</i> (included in the exam)	79,31%	20,69%

Table 3. Results of the students' exam.

The data would confirm the overall success of the experimentation. The percentage of students who passed the final exam is almost 80% (compared to 70% who passed the initial exam). In addition, the percentage of students who succeeded in the parts of the exam intended to assess listening and speaking skills was close to 80%. Thus, it is possible to conclude that the activity was successful and validated by the group.

Regarding the exam results, Table 4 shows that, in the case of students who did not get a passing grade, the highest percentage answered that they had not improved in any competence. In contrast, positive responses are found mostly among students who finally passed the test. Furthermore, it is observed that among the students who passed the exam, the majority (over 50%) showed effective improvement in all the three skills involved. Finally, the results shown in Table 4 offer a very interesting conclusion. Despite the low level of self-satisfaction among the students who did not pass the final exam (most of them answered negatively to the questionnaire), there were indeed students who improved in both the listening and speaking sections (50% and 33.33% respectively).

Do not pass the exam (21%)						
Real Improvement	Listening		Speaking		Vocabulary	
	Answered N	Answered Y	Answered N	Answered Y	Answered N	Answered Y
N	33,33	16,67	66,67	0,00	50,00	33,33
Y	50,00	0,00	33,33	0,00	0,00	16,67
Do pass the exam (79%)						
Real Improvement	Listening		Speaking		Vocabulary	
	Answered N	Answered Y	Answered N	Answered Y	Answered N	Answered Y
N	0,00	43,48	4,35	21,74	0,00	39,13
Y	0,00	56,52	4,35	69,57	0,00	60,87

Table 4. The proportion of students who improve each competency depending on their response to the questionnaire as well as whether or not they pass or fail the final exam.

## 6. Conclusions

This study highlights the benefits of using television series in English with integrated English subtitles as a learning tool in the EFL class for young adults. The proposal aligns with current u-learning models so that students achieve a significant linguistic improvement in the proposed oral skills in parallel with their working time in the classroom. In this experimentation, the flexible nature of the proposed activity allowed learners to choose how, when and where to carry it out. In this way, they worked independently outside the classroom. This strategy motivated students (93.10% answered YES to the question on motivation in the questionnaire), offering them the chance to immerse themselves in an amusing, communicative experience, as it comprised both exposure to real English and the possibility of sharing opinions with the class group in the foreign language too. The activity's goal was to avoid the boredom and frustration many students associate with the traditional listening and speaking exercises, as well as to improve both listening and speaking skills and vocabulary acquisition. The data obtained reinforces this improvement, as 75.86% of the students passed the listening section in the final exam, 68.96% passed the speaking section, and 79.31% passed the specific vocabulary section.

From the teacher's perspective, doubts about whether the proposed activity would significantly improve the skills involved disappeared. In this sense, the questionnaire completed at the end of the course and the results of the final exam have demonstrated the students' positive acceptance of the activity and a significant change in their attitude towards EFL. From a pass rate of 70% in the initial exam, we have moved to a pass rate of almost 80% in the final exam. Attending to this group's performance, we must say that the experimentation achieved a satisfactory outcome. The students' positive reaction to this engaging way of practising their oral skills encourages us to include it in future courses.

## Declaration of conflicting interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

## Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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