

THE APPLICATION OF TECHNOLOGY IN TEACHING GRAMMAR TO EFL LEARNERS: THE ROLE OF ANIMATED SITCOMS

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Abstract

Building upon previous research into the effectiveness of using videos for language teaching purposes, this study utilized an English animated situation comedy (sitcom) as an authentic type of multimedia to teach a particular grammatical structure, namely conditional sentences. This study also aimed at investigating the learners' attitudes toward this approach to grammar instruction. To achieve these purposes, 34 participants were selected and divided into two groups. In the control group (N=17) conditional sentences were taught through the explicit way of teaching grammar whereas the participants of the experimental group (N=17) learned about the conditional sentences through exposure to the animated sitcom. The results pointed to the effectiveness of using the aforementioned animated sitcom in teaching conditional sentences. Moreover, students showed a positive attitude to the animated sitcom as well as its use in teaching conditional sentences. The findings of this study have implications for L2 learners, encouraging them to change their view of grammar and looking at it from a more communicative perspective.

Keywords: multimedia; animated sitcom; grammar; grammar teaching; EFL learners

1. Introduction

Traditionally, it was a widely held assumption that grammar is equated with meaningless and decontextualized forms which were isolated from use. The emergence of Communicative Language Teaching approaches contributed to this myth and caused grammar to be more pushed out of the language learning scene. The proponents of CLT approaches made grammar instruction to be viewed as unhelpful and unnecessary. However, recent studies (Ellis, 1997; Ellis, 2008; Schmidt, 1990) in second language acquisition research have led to, as Nassaji

and Fotos (2004) put it, a resurgence of grammar teaching. They state the rationale for the reconsideration of grammar as a necessary component of language instruction is as follows:

1. The hypothesis that language can be learned without some degree of consciousness has been found theoretically problematic. According to Schmidt's (1990) noticing hypothesis conscious attention is a necessary condition to understand every aspect of L2 acquisition.
2. Another reason for the renewed interest in L2 grammar instruction comes from Pienemann's (1984) teachability hypothesis, which suggests that L2 learners pass through developmental sequences. This was supported by Lightbown (2000), who states that grammar instruction will be effective if it coincides with the learner's readiness to move to the next developmental stage of language proficiency.
3. Some research (Mitchell, 2000; Swain, 1985) refers to the inadequacy of teaching approaches focusing primarily on meaning without taking grammar into account as well as evidence for the positive effect of grammar instruction, indicating that grammar instruction has a significant impact on accuracy as well as language learning.

Despite its significance in language learning, grammar has tended to be problematic, demanding and even demotivating for both learners and teachers. In addition to decontextualization which is argued to be one of the major issues regarding the teaching and presentation of grammar, in most of the cases the grammar taught in the classroom is not successfully transferred to its actual use in the outside world, i.e. students might know a great deal of grammatical rules and structures, but this does not necessarily guarantee their capability in practically using them.

In relation to these shortcomings of effective grammar teaching, Larsen-Freeman (2003) states that "grammar teaching will be effective and useful when learners have also opportunities to encounter, process and use instructed forms in their various form-meaning relationships so that the forms become a part of their interlanguage behavior" (p. 53). In line with this view, Spada (1997) adds that when learners are confronted with communicative exposure to grammar points learned through formal instruction, their awareness of the forms as well as their accuracy in the use of the forms will improve and become longer-standing. Consequently, it is safe to suggest that grammar should be taught communicatively in the context where it actually happens in order to be effective. One of the ways to fulfill this goal is to use authentic audiovisual materials in teaching grammar.

Using videos which are a multidimensional text containing both visual and audio content would be very effective. Regarding the positive effect of these materials, Harmer (2001) mentions two reasons why video can add a special dimension to the language learning experience. First, by seeing language in use learners' comprehension will be greatly enhanced since meanings and moods are often conveyed through visual clues. Second, videos offer students opportunities to look at situations far beyond their classroom, thus raising their cultural awareness. Celce-Murcia (2002) suggests that using media in the classroom serves as an important motivator. It also lends authenticity to the classroom situation and exposes students to multiple input sources.

More importantly, authentic videos help students learn the language features in their real context. By creating a contextualized situation for presenting and practicing language forms, not only do language learners see how effectively and practically grammar points taught in the classroom are used in real life but also their negative perceptions and attitudes toward grammar will change. This is likely to result in students looking at grammar from a far more positive and practical perspective.

2. Literature review

2.1. Multimedia in language learning

There is no gainsaying the fact that technology has considerably affected our lives and brought about numerous changes in the past few decades. Language teaching/learning is one of the areas that have been feeling the impact of the changes afforded by technology. As Chapelle (2007) points it out, not only are these changes going to lessen, but also technology will continue to influence every aspect of the lives of language learners, including their formal as well as informal language learning experiences.

One of the aspects of the new technologies that have become prevalent in language learning contexts is the use of audiovisual materials. The ubiquity of audiovisual materials has never been more obvious than it is nowadays for the new generation of language learners (McNulty & Lazarevic, 2012). In today's world, which is filled with audiovisual programs, language learners and teachers are lucky enough to have access to a virtually unlimited storehouse of authentic language materials such as movies, series, cartoons, music videos, documentaries, etc. which they can exploit for the purposes of language learning. These materials have helped learners as well as teachers to make classroom language learning more effective and efficient than it used to be (Tschirner, 2001). However, the following questions arise at this point: Why has the use of multimedia and audiovisual materials in language

learning contexts earned so much interest in the recent years? What factors have contributed to the appeal of using these materials for language learning purposes?

One of the factors that has been mentioned throughout the literature in favor of the use of videos is the difference they make when compared with printed materials such as textbooks and dictionaries. According to McNulty and Lazarevic (2012), unlike printed materials, videos provide learners with the chance to see and hear simultaneous communication, speakers' gestures, facial expressions and other paralinguistic features. which can lead to improving second language learning.

Another factor relates to the kind of language that audiovisual materials supply language learners with. Baltova (1999) sees the value of videos in their recreating real-life experiences of language. In line with the same view, Shrosbree (2008) contends that videos expose learners to the language in its real context, drawing their attention to speakers' body language and other visual aids which enhance comprehension.

It has been argued that videos have a positive effect on learners' attitudes toward the target language and culture. Tschirner (2001) discussed that through providing a contextualized and situated version of language in which verbal and non-verbal features are observed and by allowing learners to perceive the target language speakers in their real cultural contexts, videos contribute to the learners' favorable attitudes towards the target language.

One of the notable advantages of multimedia is the multimodality that they provide. According to Guichon and Mc Lornan (2008), multimodality assists learners to process sensory information in diverse semiotic codes. It also helps them comprehend information via different channels. Multimodality is supported by Mayor's (2001) theory of multimedia learning, which presupposes that multimedia materials result in better learning outcomes since they provide learners with multiple channels of delivery.

2.2. Empirical findings on the effect of using videos

A large number of studies have been conducted to investigate the impact of multimedia on different aspects of language learning, revealing the fact that learners profit from exposure to authentic multimedia. Washang (2004) carried out a study to investigate the effect of English movies on Iranian students' development of idiomatic expressions. The results pointed to better performance of the experimental group. Yuksel (2009) reported that watching movie clips had a positive impact on learners' vocabulary knowledge. He attributed this

improvement to the contextual clues that movies can provide for learners and thus concluded that movies have the potential to facilitate incidental vocabulary learning.

Karakas and Saricoban (2012) sought to determine the impact of watching subtitled cartoons on incidental vocabulary learning through conducting a study with 42 first grade ELT students. However, the findings of their study did not support the assumption that the subtitle group would outperform the non-subtitle group.

More relevant to the current research is the study carried out by Ilin, Kutlu and Kutluay (2013), who aimed at investigating the effect of videos on teaching grammar in an ESP grammar class. The results revealed the positive impact of videos on teaching grammar. It was also found that the usage of videos motivated students to take part in the lessons as well as to learn grammar.

Another relevant study is the classroom-based research conducted by Mohammad (2013). She explored the effectiveness of subtitled videos on grammar learning. In this study she made use of the noticing hypothesis in order to investigate the effect of using enhanced subtitles and input flooding of a specific grammatical structure, the Past Perfect form, on learning. The findings of this study showed that students had a positive attitude toward this approach to teaching grammar. It also helped them better understand the context in which a particular grammatical structure was used.

Although there is a large body of research on the effect of audiovisual materials in second language teaching and learning, not so many studies have yet investigated their effectiveness in grammar instruction. Using authentic videos in grammar teaching and learning is an interesting and motivating way to add a communicative sense to the classroom. By doing so, foreign and second language learners' passive command of grammatical knowledge can be lowered to a great extent. They also wake up to the fact that grammar is an essential component of successful language learning, which cannot be taken for granted.

The current study used animated sitcoms to try to overcome the abovementioned problems regarding grammar instruction in an EFL context. To this end, the following questions were formulated:

1. Does using animated sitcom have any significant effect on students' learning of conditional sentences?
2. What are the students' attitudes toward using animated sitcom in teaching conditional sentences?

3. The study

3.1. The aim of the research

The major purpose of this study was to make grammar instruction more communicative and interesting for EFL learners by utilizing an English animated sitcom entitled *The Looney Tunes Show* in a grammar class. This study also aimed at shedding light on the effectiveness of grammar in language learning to Iranian EFL learners, encouraging them to change their view of grammar to perceive it as one of the beneficial linguistic resources at their disposal. Furthermore, the current study attempted to determine the students' attitudes toward using animated sitcoms in an EFL grammar class.

3.2. Participants

To accomplish the purpose of the present study 34 English language learners from two institutional contexts (First Institute: Gheshm language institute in Ardebil, and Second Institute: Sharif language center in Tehran) were selected using the "convenience sampling" technique (Dornyei, 2007, p.98). A total of 23 EFL learners studying English at the first language institute were assigned to the control group. These students were all male, bilingual in Turkish and Persian, with their age ranging from 14 to 17. Based on the placement policy of the language institute, the selected participants were considered to be at the intermediate level of proficiency. However, in order to be assured of their language level, Nelson English Language proficiency test was administered. The results of this proficiency test helped the researchers to exclude 6 students who did not meet the required proficiency level. The remaining 17 students were selected to participate in the control group.

The participants of the experimental group were selected from the second language institute. Twenty one language learners, including both male and female and ranging in age from 14 to 18, participated in the study. These learners had enrolled in an intermediate English language course. The aforementioned proficiency test was administered in order to assure the researchers of the proficiency level of the participants. The results allowed the researchers to discard 4 students who were not within the required proficiency level. As a result, 17 students (five females and twelve males) took part in the experimental group of this study.

3.3. Instruments

3.3.1. *The Looney Tunes Show*

The main instrument of this study was the popular English animated sitcom, namely, “*The Looney Tunes Show*” which premiered May 3, 2011 on Cartoon Network. Three seasons of this animation have been produced and aired so far. The decision to use this animated sitcom was based on its popularity and attractiveness to English learners. Twelve episodes of this animated sitcom were shown to the participants during a six-session treatment. To help them better understand the content, the episodes were played with English subtitles (see Appendix for sample screenshots).

3.3.2. Nelson English Language Test

Prior to the treatment, a proficiency test, namely Nelson English Language Test 200 A, devised for the intermediate level, was employed in order to assure the researchers of the homogeneity of the groups. The Nelson test for the intermediate level contained 50 items, 14 of which were cloze tests and the other 36 were multiple-choice items.

3.3.3. The pretest and the posttest

After determining the homogeneity of the two classes involved in the Nelson English Language Test, a pretest consisted of 30 multiple choice items which tested conditional sentences was administered in order to determine the participants’ initial knowledge of the specified aspect of grammar. The pretest was extracted from Rezaei (2009). In his study, Rezaei conducted item analysis, discarded and modified the poor and incompatible items. The reliability index of the pretest was reported to be .78.

After the six-session treatment, a posttest of 30 multiple-choice items was given to students of both classes in an attempt to measure their gained grammatical knowledge and compare the two different approaches of teaching grammar, i.e. the traditional approach and the one which used the animated sitcom. Similarly to the pretest, the items for the posttest were also extracted from Rezaei (2009).

3.3.4. The interview session

At the final stage of the study, the participants of the experimental group attended an interview session so as to inform the researchers of their attitudes toward using animated sitcoms in grammar teaching. The interview session was recorded and the students’ responses to the questions regarding the use of the animated sitcom were transcribed to determine their attitude. In order to help students better understand the questions and avoid any misunderstanding, they were also asked in Persian. It is to be noted that one of the

researchers, other than the participants' teachers, took charge of the interview session. The participants responded to the following questions:

1. Do you have past experiences of watching videos in the class? If so, for what purpose?
2. Did you like the idea of watching authentic videos (like the one used in this study) in teaching grammar?
3. Did you like the animated sitcom *The Looney Tunes Show* used in the class?
4. What did you like/dislike about the use of animated sitcom in the class?
5. Was the use of animated sitcom effective in learning conditional sentences?
6. Do you like to watch videos (like the one used in this study) again in the future to learn grammar?

3.4. Design and procedure

This study employed a pretest/posttest design and was concerned with learning one specific grammar construction i.e. conditional sentences. It aimed at comparing the performance of two groups of learners exposed to two different approaches of teaching conditional sentences. The data collection of this study took place in five stages.

3.4.1. Stage 1

A total of 44 EFL learners from two institutional contexts who had signed up for intermediate English courses were selected to take part in this study. In order to assure the researchers of the homogeneity of the participants as well as to exclude those who were not within the required proficiency level for this study, Nelson English Language Test was administered. The results led the researchers to exclude 10 students. The remaining 34 students, divided into control (N=17) and experimental groups (N=17), constituted the main participants of the current study.

Table 3.1. The results of the Nelson English Language Test.

Groups	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Control	23	26	42	36.40	4.12
Experimental	21	29	43	37.28	3.53

3.4.2. Stage 2

At the second stage of the study, participants of both groups were required to take a pretest. The pretest, consisted of 30 items, intended to determine the participants' initial knowledge of the conditional sentences.

3.4.3. Stage 3

Participants attending the control group (without video) were exposed to explicit instruction. The teacher devoted 20 minutes of the class time to teaching conditional sentences. The teaching of grammar in this group was done deductively: the teacher explained conditional sentences to the students and provided them with a number of examples. Afterwards, students were required to practice using conditional sentences. It needs to be mentioned that each type of conditional sentences was taught in two sessions. The grammar instruction used for the control group lasted for 6 sessions, extending over a period of two weeks.

On the other hand, the participants of the experimental group (with video) were exposed to a different approach towards teaching grammar. In this group, conditional sentences were taught by utilizing an animated sitcom entitled *The Looney Tunes Show*. During the treatment which lasted for 6 sessions (a period of two weeks), the participants of this group watched 12 episodes of the specified sitcom. In order to make comprehension of the animated sitcom easier and to make the targeted conditional sentences more tangible for the participants, it was shown with English subtitles. Every time a conditional sentence was used by one of the characters in the sitcom, the teacher paused and replayed it, trying to draw the participants' attention to that particular conditional sentence. This was followed by having students practice and produce sentences using conditionals. This routine was repeated after the emergence of every conditional sentence. In order to avoid overwhelming students with an abundance of unfamiliar information on the one hand, and so as to help them focus more on the conditional sentences on the other hand, the researcher, inspired by Swaffar and Vlatten (1997), decided not to play the entire episodes. Instead, shorter segments of each episode were shown to the students.

It is important to point out that this way of teaching grammar was in line with two theories – Focus on Form (Long, 2000) and Consciousness-raising (Ellis, 2008; Thornbury, 1999). Both of these approaches refer to any attempt which directs learners' attention to the formal properties of the target language. This study provided students with authentic and contextualized instances of the use of conditional sentences through exposing them to an authentic type of multimedia in their class. By doing so, the attention of the participants of the experimental group was drawn to the conditional sentences.

3.4.4. Stage 4

After the treatment, the participants in both groups sat the posttest. This posttest was administered for two purposes: first, to assess the participants' knowledge of conditional sentences as a result of the treatment. Second, since the groups involved in this study were exposed to different approaches towards grammar teaching, the posttest aimed at comparing their performance regarding the learning of conditional sentences. It was supposed to indicate whether there was any statistically significant difference between the control group and the experimental one.

3.4.5. Stage 5

At the final stage of the study, the participants of the experimental group who were exposed to *The Looney Tunes Show* in their class attended an interview session during they were asked to respond to a number of questions regarding their attitudes toward using the animated sitcom in teaching conditional sentences.

3.5. Findings

In order to answer the first research question of this study “*Does using animated sitcom have any significant effect on students' learning of conditional sentences?*” the descriptive statistics of the performance of both control and experimental groups in the pre-test as well as the post-test were computed (see Table 3.2).

Table 3.2. Descriptive statistics of the performance of control and experimental groups.

Groups	N	Pre-test		Post-test	
		M	SD	M	SD
Control	17	16.82	1.74	17	1.5
Experimental	17	17.41	1.54	18.17	1.59

The mean score of the participants of the control group in the pretest was 16.8 and it increased to 17 in the posttest. On the other hand, the participants of the experimental group to whom conditional sentences were taught with an animated sitcom scored a mean of 17.41 in their pretest, which increased to 18.17 in the posttest. It is important to point out that the maximum number of the scores was 30. Since the descriptive statistics only cannot help one decide whether the treatment has been effective and whether the differences between the

mean scores of the control group and experimental group are statistically significant, a paired-samples t-test as well as an independent sample t-test were computed. The results of these two tests are reported in Table 3.3 and Table 3.4.

Table 3.3. Paired-samples t-test results for both groups.

	<i>Df</i>	T	<i>Sig.</i>
Control	16	1.37	.18
Experimental	16	3.49	.003

As demonstrated in Table 3.1 demonstrates, the participants of the experimental group improved from a mean score of 17.41 in their pretest to a mean score of 18.17 in their posttest, i.e. they underwent a mean difference of .76. The results reported in Table 3.3 indicate that this difference in mean scores from the pretest to the posttest is statistically significant ($p = .003$). The participants of the control group experienced a slight increase from the pretest to the posttest, but this improvement, as reported in Table 3.3, was not statistically significant ($p = .18$).

Table 3.4. Independent sample t-test results for pre-test and post-test.

	<i>Df</i>	T	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Pre-test	32	1.43	.32	.30
Post-test	32	2.21	.01	.03

Furthermore, as demonstrated in Table 3.2, there was a mean difference of .59 between the performance of the control and experimental groups in the pretest. However, this difference was found to be non-significant ($p = .30$). Regarding the performance of the participating groups in the posttest, a mean difference of 1.17 was reported, which turned out to be statistically significant ($p = .03$ – see Table 3.4).

In order to answer the second research question, the students' attitudes regarding the use of the animated sitcom in teaching conditional sentences were surveyed during an interview session. The participants of the experimental group who were exposed to the animated sitcom attended this interview session and provided their responses to the related questions. The first question of the interview dealt with the students' past experiences of using videos and aimed at determining the purposes for which they had used videos in their English classes. The responses to this question showed that the majority of the students

(N=11) were familiar with using videos. The purposes varied from using videos for clarifying some particular grammar points to using them in teaching vocabulary items and listening activities.

The next three questions aimed at eliciting the students' attitudes toward using *The Looney Tunes Show* in this study. The second question of the interview was '*Did you like the idea of using authentic videos (like the one used in this study) in teaching grammar?*' 15 interviewees responded affirmatively to this question, reporting that they liked using the animated sitcom in their class. Below is one of the interviewees' opinions:

Yes. In my opinion it was useful for learning grammar and vocabulary because we saw their use in real contexts.

However, two of the interviewees did not hold the same view and regarded the use of authentic videos for grammar instruction as a waste of class time. The high frequency of positive responses to this question indicates that students are aware of the benefits that authentic videos can bring for them such as giving them the opportunities to see various grammar constructions and vocabulary items in context.

Another question related to the participants' views of the animated sitcom was '*Did you like the animated sitcom used in this study?*' All but one interviewees expressed their positive attitudes toward *The Looney Tunes Show*, viewing it as fun, entertaining, and useful for language learning purposes. In responding to this question two of the participants said:

Yes I liked it very much. It was good. It was fun and it helped me improve some English skills.

Yes I liked it because it was useful and it was a new way to teach grammar.

In addition, one of the students who were interested in the idea of using animated sitcoms suggested that there are other good animated sitcoms, such as *Kungfu Panda*, which can be used in English classes.

The final question that attempted to determine the students' views about the animated sitcom was '*What did you like/dislike about the use of the animated sitcom in the class?*' The answers to this question varied to some extent. Although the participants generally liked the use of the animated sitcom and agreed upon its effectiveness for grammar learning, some of

the participants expressed concerns with regard to utilizing these materials in class. Two of the students believed that the characters were speaking very fast, which made it difficult for them to understand what was happening. It was for this reason that the animated sitcom was shown with English subtitles so that the students would find it easier to understand. Moreover, some other students suggested that the episodes which were shown be short. This indicates that students do not want to be overwhelmed by a multitude of irrelevant information in the input and like to concentrate more on those parts of the input they are going to learn about.

The fifth question of the interview was ‘*Was the use of the animated sitcom effective in learning conditional sentences?*’ Nearly all the students (N=15) perceived the exposure to the animated sitcom as useful and effective in learning conditional sentences, and suggested that the same approach should also be used to teach other grammatical structures.

The final question of the interview focused on determining whether the students would like to use animated sitcoms and other authentic videos to learn grammar in the future. Overall, students demonstrated a favorable attitude to using such authentic videos in their future English learning programs. This suggests that students were satisfied with the grammar learning experience that they experienced in this study. Below are the responses of two of the students.

Yes. This method of teaching grammar was helpful in associating what we learnt traditionally, like what we learnt in our schools, to an authentic learning. Watching native speakers using conditional sentences made me motivated and helped me in better grasping the subject.

Yes, I think watching native people using grammar can be very helpful for us to learn practical grammar not just to learn it for passing our tests.

4. Discussion

4.1. The use of the animated sitcom in learning conditional sentences

As regards the first research question, “*Does using animated sitcom have any significant effect on students’ learning of conditional sentences?*”, the results of the posttest suggest that the overall learning of the conditional sentences by the participants of the experimental group improved significantly ($p = .003$) and they showed a gain in knowledge as a result of being exposed to the animated sitcom employed in this study. In addition, the results indicate that

the participants of the experimental group outperformed those of the control group in the posttest, i.e. the difference between their performance was found to be statistically significant ($p = .03$). This points to the effectiveness of the animated sitcom which was utilized in teaching conditional sentences to the experimental group. These findings are consistent with the findings of earlier studies (Dikilitas & Duvenci, 2009; Mohebbi, 2013; Washang, 2004; Yuksel, 2009), which have investigated videos and supported their effectiveness for language teaching and language learning. The findings confirm previous research (Ilin, Kutlu & Kutluay, 2013; Mohammad, 2013) in that exposure to authentic videos has a favorable effect on L2 learners' grammar learning and help them better understand grammatical structures.

The results achieved for the first research question of this study can be interpreted through the characteristics of multimedia and authentic videos and sitcoms in particular, and the advantages that they afford for language learners. One of the features of the videos that distinguishes them from other materials can be the opportunity to simultaneously hear and see the language being used. In addition, they have been argued to recreate real-life language use and equip learners with additional sources of information that cannot be materialized by using other language materials such as textbooks (Baltova, 1999). These features of videos accompanied by their presentation of paralinguistic aspects of language use, as stated by McNulty and Lazarevic (2012), can lead to better learning.

Another important feature of videos is their provision of rich input environments which are conducive for language learning. They expose learners to context-rich samples of the target language and help them perceive the language in its real context (Shrosbree, 2008). This, in turn, will enhance their understanding and render the input more comprehensible for them.

To add to the above features it can be said that authentic videos enhance language learning and contribute to the learners' involvement in the English learning process (Swaffar & Vlatten, 1999). They also have a positive effect on the students' self-confidence and have the potential to lower their inhibition regarding using the target language (Terrel, 1993).

Being characterized by the above features, the animated sitcom used in this study introduced the students to a new dimension of language learning and they were provided with opportunities to observe and notice the use of conditional sentences in the real context. By confronting learners with authentic and contextualized instances of the target language use, the animated sitcom constituted high-quality input for students which is one of the essential conditions for successful language learning. It also contained simpler language and more repetitions, which resulted in directing students' attention more effectively to conditional

sentences. Additionally, by availing learners of both linguistic and non-linguistic information and presenting context-rich input, it helped participants of the experimental group to learn conditional sentences in an effective manner and do well in the posttest.

Better performance of the experimental group in the posttest in comparison with their pretest performance can also be attributed to another feature of animated sitcoms. These types of authentic videos, apart from being a source of real language, are also a source of entertainment and enjoyment for L2 learners and have a positive effect on their motivation to language learning (Weyers, 1999). This characteristic feature of animated sitcoms turned out to be effective and beneficial for the participants of the experimental group and rendered their efforts to learn conditional sentences more fruitful.

Another factor that can be used to interpret the results of this study is the multimodality of videos. That is, they aid learners to process and comprehend information from different channels. This multimodality is in line with the multimedia learning theory (Mayor, 2001), according to which multimedia materials lead to higher cognitive activity and more efficient learning by providing multiple channels of delivery and simultaneous activation of visual as well as cognitive processing. Based on this theory, it can be argued that the animated sitcom which students of the experimental group were exposed to facilitated their cognitive and visual processing of the input and promoted their awareness of conditional sentences, which consequently led to their higher performance in the posttest. Furthermore, by providing information for learners via different channels of delivery as well as exposing them to context-rich and high-quality input, the animated sitcom helped students to build form-meaning relationships more effectively.

Motivation is a very important part of language learning. It can be said that the more motivated learners are, the more successful they are likely to be in learning an L2 (Samimy & Tabuse, 1991). The authentic videos used in this study offered students a chance to perceive the real language, allowing them to both hear and see how conditional sentences can be used in their actual context.

These findings can also be interpreted from another perspective. Larsen-Freeman (2014, p. 257) states that “grammar is not a static system of rules; grammar is a dynamic system.” In order to exploit the dynamism of grammar it needs to be taught in meaningful and psychologically authentic ways, otherwise, students will be at a loss when they attempt to make use of grammar in their communication. In order to achieve this goal, Larsen-Freeman (2003) proposed a three-dimensional grammar framework, in which form, meaning, and use are interrelated. The form dimension, according to Larsen-Freeman (2003), is related to

lexicogrammatical and morphosyntactic forms and indicates how these combine to formulate a particular construction. The meaning dimension deals with the sense of a particular grammar construction, and finally, the use dimension shows how a grammar construction is used in context. The animated sitcom that was utilized in the experimental group introduced students to all the three dimensions of conditional sentences. The English subtitles shown while playing *The Looney Tunes Show* familiarized students with the form dimension of conditional sentences and the way they are constructed. On the other hand, they provided opportunities for students to both hear and see the use of conditional sentences. By showing their actual use in a number of different contexts and situations, showing subtitled videos assisted students in finding out about the meaning as well as the use dimensions of conditional sentences. The explicit approach applied in the control group was useful in teaching the form dimension to the students. However, it was not equally useful and effective with regard to the other two dimensions.

As for the treatment in the experimental group, one can argue that seeing conditional sentences in the animated sitcom accompanied by the teacher's attempts to draw the students' attention to their use triggered noticing on the part of the students and activated what they might have already known about conditional sentences.

4.2. Students' attitudes regarding the use of the animated sitcom in grammar teaching

In relation to the second research question, "*What are the students' attitudes toward using animated sitcom in teaching conditional sentences?*", the findings of this study revealed the positive attitudes of the majority of the students regarding the grammar learning that they experienced in the experimental group. It was also found that the students held favorable attitudes to the animated sitcom to which they were exposed, seeing it as an effective and helpful resource in their learning of conditional sentences. The students' positive attitudes toward the use of authentic videos in this study affirm the previous studies of Tschirner (2001) and Weyers (1999), who have pointed to the fact that videos contribute to the learners' favorable attitudes towards the target language. By providing them with authentic and contextualized versions of the target language and offering opportunities to perceive the target language in its real context, videos also have a positive impact on learners' motivation.

Furthermore, the findings pointed to the fun and entertaining aspects of utilizing videos and animated sitcoms. Berk (2009) argued that videos generate interest in the class and make language learning fun, which can lead to improving learners' motivation and their attitudes toward both content and learning.

In addition to these findings, it must be added that the responses of the students to the interview questions indicated their awareness of the overwhelming effects of making use of videos. As reported by Swaffar and Vlatten (1997), cognitive overload and excessive amount of information to process at the same time in the working memory is a problem that L2 learners encounter when being exposed to videos. They further suggested that the most straightforward solution to this problem could be to present brief and short segments of longer videos so as to avoid being overwhelmed with too much unfamiliar information.

One limitation of the study that needs to be mentioned is connected with the sample of this study. Even though the participants of the control and experimental groups were fairly different in terms of their background, this difference did not affect the findings of the current study. The results of the proficiency test as well as the pretest administered at the beginning of the study revealed that there was no significant difference between the participants with regard to their English proficiency, neither was there any difference related to their initial knowledge of conditional sentences.

5. Conclusion

Having been inspired by the previous research into the effect of utilizing authentic multimedia and audiovisual programs for language teaching and learning (Baltova, 1999; Harmer, 2001; McNulty & Lazarevic, 2012; Mayor, 2001; Shrosbree, 2008; Swaffar & Vlatten, 1997; Tschirner, 2001; Weyers, 1999), the present research aimed at investigating the effect of exposing students to an English animated sitcom as an authentic type of multimedia in learning conditional sentences. Furthermore, this study investigated the students' attitudes in relation to using such authentic multimedia in English classes and particularly for the purpose of teaching grammar. The results pointed to the effectiveness of the animated sitcom in teaching conditional sentences, supporting their usefulness for language teaching purposes. Also, the results of the interview showed the participants' favorable attitudes toward using animated sitcoms in their English classes.

The findings of this study have implications for both learners and teachers. It can be stated that grammar has always been one of the most demanding and challenging aspects of learning a second language for L2 learners. The way that grammar is taught at schools and language institutes adds to this unpleasant perception by L2 learners. Quite often they memorize a number of grammatical rules being taught to them, but these memorized rules do not seem to be of much help when they attempt to communicate their messages. Using authentic videos, such as the animated sitcom utilized in the current study, can bring

considerable benefits for EFL learners. Due to the characteristics that they possess and the advantages that they provide for their users, including the presentation of real language, provision of context-rich input, assistance in processing information via multiple channels of delivery, etc., authentic videos have the potential to make the journey of language learning and particularly grammar learning more enjoyable, entertaining, and productive for L2 learners. Seeing how different grammatical structures are used in authentic videos by native English speakers can encourage L2 learners to change their view of grammar and recognize its usefulness in speaking. Rather than perceiving it as something that stands in their way of speaking fluently, they come to see it as a communicative resource that alongside with lexis and phonology can be taken advantage of to both comprehend and produce language in accurate and fluent ways. Moreover, using these kinds of videos will have a positive impact on learners' motivation to learn grammar and thus, will prod them into putting more effort in the process of grammar learning as well as English learning.

Animated sitcoms can also be beneficial in another way. The variety of contexts and situations they provide will help L2 learners to better understand the three dimensions of grammar instruction such as form, meaning, and use.

Likewise L2 learners, language teachers can also benefit from using these kinds of videos. Exploiting animated sitcoms and other videos will help teachers make their grammar instruction more effective and fruitful. In addition, by directing their students' attention to the use of a particular grammar construction in the animated sitcoms they can add a more communicative sense to their grammar lessons.

This study focused on one particular grammar structure which was conditional sentences. Future studies can turn their attention to other grammatical structures and investigate how authentic videos will influence their learning. Moreover, future research could focus on designing tasks and activities and concentrate on the effect of authentic videos on L2 learners' oral production as well as writing performance.

This study investigated the effect of using an English animated sitcom as a type of authentic multimedia in teaching grammar. Focusing on conditional sentences as an aspect of grammar to work on is considered to be one of the limitations of this study. The present study was also subject to another limitation, which was the employment of a rather small convenience sample. The researcher's inability to select the participants randomly was due to the institutional constraints. One final limitation was related to the use of a discrete-point grammar test to assess the participants' obtained grammar knowledge. This was due to the

fact that the current study was focused on learner's explicit knowledge and did not investigate their implicit knowledge.

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Appendix. Screen Shots of the Animated Sitcom



