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**DEVELOPING ORAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS IN ENGLISH THROUGH
SITCOMS (*THE BIG BANG THEORY*)**

Bachelor's thesis

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PREFACE

Oral communication skills in English have always been both a sign of mastery in English and an area for innovations and improvements in English language learning. Ways of using authentic video and TV programmes, sitcoms in particular, are a very promising field for researches. The aim of the present research is to consider ways of developing communication skills with the help of TV sitcoms, to analyse the variety of sitcoms in the context of communication skills development by the example of the comedian sitcom *The Big Bang Theory*.

This research paper consists of the Introduction, Chapter I “Sitcoms in Developing Communication Skills” and Chapter II “*The Big Bang Theory*: Practical Applications”, the Conclusion, References and the Summary in Estonian. The Introduction presents an overview of communication skills and ways of their development. Chapter I places comedian sitcoms in the context of communication skills development; Chapter II suggests ways, techniques and activities of using *The Big Bang Theory* and shows what might be done to increase the level of language mastery with the help of sitcoms.

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INTRODUCTION

People always want to speak a foreign language as well as they can speak their mother tongue. For reaching this aim, it is necessary to study hard. One has to learn grammar, word formation patterns, enrich vocabulary, and read books. But this is not enough. Without practice in oral communication, one will never finish his/her language study. Practice provides a great opportunity to increase the level of language mastery. Another question is how to do this? There are many ways to improve it. First of all, it is communication with native speakers. However, it might be hard to meet native speakers of the foreign language one studies in the place where he/she lives. So the next possibility of improving the level of spoken language is developing oral communication skills through exposure to authentic audio/video materials, such as TV sitcoms.

Communication Skills and Authentic Materials

Communication is the process of verbally and nonverbally sharing with another person or persons one's knowledge, interests, attitudes, opinions, feelings and ideas (Samovar 1999: 10). Samovar comments that people are social creatures who operate in a social world, and communication links them to that world. People's communication behaviour has influence on other people. That is why it is important to know how to communicate with different people.

Communication is an activity that produces a result. Communication ability – the ability to influence someone's environment in a way that benefits both her/him and the people he/she comes in contact with. Without communication skills, humans are isolated from one another, unable to share thoughts and feelings with family, friends, colleagues, and foes.

Communication is a dynamic interactive process that involves the effective transmission of facts, ideas, thoughts, feelings and values (Oluga, Adewusi and Babalola, 1998). By learning about communication students will be able to think critical, solve problems, socialize with new people around the world, adapt to social changes, and develop self-confidence, present ideas. Communication between people is unique for its extensive use of language. Successful communication is context dependent and therefore embedded in its particular discourse community (Bizzell, 1989). Oral communication requires understanding what to say and how to say something. It covers a wide area, ranging from formal presentations to participation in town meetings with different people.

Abdelkarim (2013: 2) claims that authentic videos play an important role in developing oral communication. They allocate students to overcome the difficulty of the native speakers' vocabulary (Abdelkarim 2013). Authentic materials are connected with many different themes such as science, literature, arts. It can be interesting for both student and teacher. Classes, where authentic videos are used, are more enjoyable for students and it may help to hold attention during the presentation in all oral courses.

Authentic materials are considered as spoken or written language information that has been created in the course of real communication, and not specifically written for purposes of language teaching (Nunan, 1999 / Abdelkarim 2013). Students will meet new words and constructions that they, apparently, have not ever seen in typical ESL materials. Authentic materials will no-doubt expose students to culture, so the teacher can actually take the context into consideration instead of just looking at how language is used (Chou 2016: para 17). American Institutes for Research indicates that authentic materials help students bridge the gap between the classroom and the outside world. Resources such as authentic materials could also increase students' inspiration for learning and better meet learner's needs. The aim of using authentic materials is to use language in real life similar to the way how native speakers of English use them. Such materials will teach students what they need to know to reach their goals. According to Chou (2016: para 19), visual and audio elements play an important role in comprehension. The visual element gives its own layer of understanding, which can influence the verbal messages in many different ways, highlighting, supplementing, contrasting with them or overriding them. The layer of sound and music brings its own messages, emphasizes verbal or visual messages or sometimes even interferes with them. Authentic materials work on intensifying and developing learner's second language motivation (M. Belaid 2015).

Idavoy (2012) gives the following examples of authentic video: TV commercials, public service announcements, movie shorts, full-length feature films, television dramas, sitcoms, documentaries, YouTube clips, music videos, news programming, even video games, and home movies. Some do argue that scripted programming, i.e., soap operas, are not authentic because they are scripted. However, given that they are written for and by native speakers, they are qualified as authentic in the context of this discussion (Idavoy, 2012).

TV Programmes in Development of Oral Communication

Nowadays the role of television in education has increased. Television is basically an entertainment oriented media. Television is adaptable and can be used through different methods and in different educational situations. It can be used for formal, non-formal and informal situations. Television, as an important mass media distributes education through formal and information approaches. It is a source of teaching etiquettes, language skills, environment, different hobbies, social relations and religious believes.

According to the researches from the Department of Human Ecology at the University of Texas, small children who watched educational programmes few times a week during two hours had much better results on academic tests than those who did not. The study's lead author Aletha C. Huston (2016) is the Pricilla Pond Flawn Regents Professor of Child Development at the University of Texas at Austin. She indicated that good educational programmes can provide endless benefits to children at any ages. It provides mass education opportunities. Television is widely used by teachers in educational purposes. It is so popular because of combination of use of video and positive emotions. These two things could motivate students for further learning. Television offers a unique combination of emotions, sights, sound and motion, which can give students a better understanding about the environment and the whole world. According to Idaho Public Television's Technology Tips for Teachers, students have deeper understanding about the theme when teachers use TV in the classroom. It is because they receive information not only by listening, but by watching too (different representative systems are used). They more actively enter the discussion about what they have seen recently and about the ideas of the material. Students can see historical events, study the solar system and novels which came true. Using video, watching TV, listening to original in language learning is a great opportunity to improve the level of language mastery.

According to Megan Wood (2016: para 5) (Features Editor, enhance TV) teachers use TV in the classroom to justify a variety of aims:

- To make other learning activities more useful;
- To satisfy to diversity of learning styles and methods;
- To enhance students' motivation in learning;
- To strengthen and develop studying content.

Watching TV programmes, including films, TV shows, sitcoms and video plays a vital role in distance education, and can be used in everything starting from

narrowcast broadcasting to face-to-face videoconferencing. It gives an opportunity to study for people who cannot attend all classes. According to the project Middle School Online of Northwestern University in the United States, students have much more chances to keep their knowledge from different TV programmes and videos than from lectures only.

However, all of these kinds of television could play an important role not only in distance education, but also in classrooms. There are many advantages how to use it – you can use it whatever you want and in any way. For example, Scrivener (2005: 352) in his book “Learning Teaching” suggests three different categories of ideas:

- Before viewing activities – activities that could be done with the students before they watch the video to raise their interest and to clarify what students will see (examples of activities: predict what will happen next; focus on lexis, function or grammar; discussing the topic that is connected with the video theme);
- While viewing activities – activities you can do with the students, which require them to watch the video attentively (examples of activities: asking questions (What will happen next? Why they did it? Which of the following nouns does she use?); focusing on body language, facial expressions, gestures);
- After viewing activities – follow up activities that you can do with students after they have seen the video (examples of activities: discussion; interpretation; asking different question (about the meaning of the video or about grammar points); study of new phrases and words; role-play the scene; writing).

Viewing activities of different kinds based on authentic TV programmes, and sitcoms in particular, are very beneficial as they develop cultural awareness in the English language class, create authentic learning environment. *Sitcom* is defined as a humorous drama based on situations that might arise in day-to-day life (The Free Dictionary: para 5). That means that students will see daily situations, real dialogues and language, events. All like in real life.

The hypothesis of the present study is that *English sitcoms are an excellent way to support English language studies due to the creation of a positive, inspiring, exciting background for learning*. In other words, combination of positive emotions and authentic TV programmes is a great way for learning English.

CHAPTER I

SITCOMS IN DEVELOPING ORAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS

1.1. Sitcoms as a TV Genre: Variety and Features

Sitcom – is a comedy television serial with constant main characters connected by a common history, a place of action and, as a rule, complete story in each episode. It focuses on the comic side of everyday life, everyday problems and family situations. The main feature of a sitcom is humor. Sitcoms draw us into a more modest world, descended not from mythology, and day and night dreams, as science fiction, but from comedy of manners, vaudeville and our tacit perceptions of everyday life (Sanes n.d.).

According to the information placed with the site sitcom.ru (Ситком-ситуационная комедия 2016: para1) it is believed that the first format "sitcom" appeared in the 20s of the last century on the radio in the United States. In 1926 the WGN radio in Chicago aired the show "Sam and Henry", based on humorous comics. In 1928, the CBS released the show "Amos & Andy", which became the most popular sitcom of the twenties - thirties. Officially, the term "sitcom" appeared with the release of the television comedy "I Love Lucy" on the air in 1951. After this event the term "sitcom" was firmly established exclusively for television comedy. By the way, the term "sitcom" refers to a theatrical art form.

Traditionally sitcom format is 30 minutes (22 minutes of air time plus 8 minutes of advertising). Filming is made in the pavilion in front of a live audience, with the laughter behind the scenes taken from there, which has been the hallmark of sitcoms ranging from "I Love Lucy". Although the latest trend is the lack of laughter behind the scenes, filming is not limited by the pavilion. Examples of such sitcoms are: "The Simpsons", "My Name is Earl", "The Office", "Arrested Development", "Scrubs", "Kath and Kim", "Flight of the Conchords", "It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia", "Samantha Who?", "Worst Week", "testees", "Corner Gas", "the College Humor Show", "The Sarah Silverman Program".

Examples of sitcoms' topics are the following: the character who is "out of place", in an unusual situation (fish out of water); the contrast of the characters; children, a naive approach to the issue; mimicking the well-known standards, the characters, the show; the smart character, helping others; comic character, unusually responsive to what is happening; a favorite of the ladies, "womanizer", a ladies' man; ethnic differences.

Nowadays there can be selected the following types of sitcoms: a laugh track, without a laugh track, a parody of the documentary series (mockumentary) and animation.

The word *mockumentary* is formed from the English word ‘mock’ and ‘documentary’. A mockumentary is presented as a documentary serial, but in reality it is a fiction. One of the distinguishing features of a mockumentary is handling of actors, the characters, directly into the camera. Examples of mockumentary sitcoms are: ‘Parks and Recreation’, ‘Trailer Park Boys’, ‘The Office’ (ibid.).

There are not certain rules about sitcom classifications. However, the main feature is, of course, humor. Usually, they are somehow connected with different kinds of relationship: family, lovers, friends, colleagues, or just random people who need to do something together: it does not matter what it might be.

Sitcoms are connected with a lot of themes. Wood (ibid.) claims that popular television programmes and sitcoms as well could be very useful and educational for young viewers. Sometimes they are shy and for them it is too uncomfortable to discuss some topics with parents or teachers. A report from The National Women's Health Information Centre in the United States noted “a study appearing in the November issue of *Paediatrics*, in which researchers found that 65% of teens who watched an episode of the program *Friends* that dealt with the values of condoms in preventing pregnancy, later remembered that information” (Elber 2003). It could be useful for classroom discussions, because rather than listening to a boring talk about something, learners can watch the show in relaxed atmosphere and after that freely ask questions about issues raised during the programme. Despite the fact that sitcom is a comedy, it has a lot of serious situations which could be useful for students not only for language learning, but also for real life.

Due to the fact that sitcom is a comedy, it includes also positive emotions, which is very important in language learning.

1.2. Sitcoms and Positive Emotions in Language Learning

Emotions are not just the fuel that powers the psychological mechanism of a reasoning creature, they are parts, highly complex and messy parts, of this creature’s reasoning itself (Nussbaum 2001).

Emotions are central components of humans' well-being and are thus critical in daily life and for research (C. Hall, Goetz 2013). Positive emotions are necessary for learning. In the midst of a large research on the role of emotions in eLearning, Professor Thissen, a Multimedia Didactics and Intercultural Communication professor at the University of Applied Sciences in Stuttgart, Germany, further explained that while negative emotions tend to make us clearly remember data including the minutest detail, positive emotions tend to help us remember more complex things (Gutierrez 2008). According to Hall and Goetz (2013: 28), numerous researches have demonstrated that students learn and remember the material which has positive and negative colors better, than just learning and memorizing neutral words. This means that such activity like watching sitcoms will be interesting for learners because of humor and always changing actions. Effective learning should induce positive emotions. Students will love learning, if they feel happy, safe and motivated during the lesson. One of the teachers' aims is to increase students' positive emotions in the classroom. Happiness has an influence on academic achievement. When learners do tasks because they are fun and interesting, they will continue doing it even if they do not get rewarded (Gutierrez 2008). A lot of people do not even suspect how important good emotions are and how big influence they have. Positive emotions also improve coping and produce well-being (Fredrickson 2012). The effect continues not only in the present, when learners feel pleasant, but also over the long term. It means that positive emotions have much more influence on our motivation and learning capacity than some people think. That is why learning has to be entertaining. In addition, negative thinking or depression can badly affect our health.

Positive emotions have a big influence on motivation, which plays an important role in learning. Motivation refers to psychological mechanisms that occur throughout the entire process of pursuing one's goals (Hall, Goetz 2013). The term motivation is derived from the verb to motivate and performs as the internal forces that move us in a direction of our purpose. Hall and Goetz (2013: 61) say that in educational context, the most obvious results of higher levels of motivation for learning and progress are when students start to do study tasks with high-quality performance which increases learning progress. Motivated students experience emotions that contribute to learning, students become more concentrated on action. Motivated learners do everything to reach their goals, they are capable of not being afraid of difficulties and they ask for help if it is

needed. Such learners choose challenging levels of difficulties that provide an optimal learning progress. Also they have lower propensity to loiter and delay.

All the facts considering, it can be said that sitcoms are good for studying languages: they give positive emotions and motivation, one is studying and entertaining at the same time, one can hear the right pronunciation and usage of popular words and phrases in communication.

1.3. Why the Sitcom *The Big Bang Theory* is so Special?

The Big Bang Theory was created by writer and producer Chuck Lorre and Bill Prady. *The Big Bang Theory* features physicists Sheldon Cooper and Leonard Hofstadter, whose geeky and introverted lives are changed when Penny, an attractive waitress and aspiring actress, moves into the apartment across from theirs. Penny quickly becomes a part of Sheldon and Leonard's social group, which includes the equally geeky engineer Howard Wolowitz, who thinks he is as sexy as he is brainy, and astrophysicist Raj Koothrappali, who suffers from an inability to speak in the presence of a woman, with Penny's common sense and social skills and the guys' geeky interests expanding each other's worlds. The newest additions to the group are Howard's wife Bernadette Rostenkowski-Wolowitz and Sheldon's girlfriend Amy Farrah Fowler.

The sitcom's actions take place in Pasadena, California and sitcom's main characters are English native speakers; the comedian sitcom gives to viewers many positive emotions and exposes them to everyday English of native speakers. Due to its plot, positive emotions and the exposure to the English of native speakers the sitcom presents a great opportunity to make English language learning in the class authentic and inspiring.

This sitcom is about physicists whose lives changed after they met loves of their lives. The physicists are really smart, especially Sheldon, who is a genius, and they know everything about the science of physics and how our world is arranged, but they know absolutely nothing about real life. They cannot even imagine how things might be, which is convincingly shown in the last series of the sitcom. To understand better what the whole story is about, learners should watch the film right from the first episode. Due to the fact that each episode contains a lot of new words and different "life" situations, it will be useful to watch it all. However, it could take a lot of time.

Despite this fact, students will be already interested in this sitcom, so, probably, they will continue watching it even without teacher`s tasks.

Learning the English language through *The Big Bang Theory* will be not appropriate for beginners because learners will have to be able to listen attentively, repeat and after that create their own questions, dialogues and sentences. This will be useful for people who need to improve their level of language (who already have a higher level than the beginner`s one). For example, it can be offered to high-school students. It will be not appropriate for primary school students because of the language of authentic video. Also some jokes and phrases from the sitcom can be unclear to young viewers. Moreover, in the light of the facts that in this sitcom relationships play an important role, some scenes will be not appropriate for young learners.

“This sitcom appeared after Bill Prady told me a story about his life in New York City when he worked as a programmer”, Chuck Lorre (2015) said in the interview presented at the site www.bigbangtv.ru. This story was about him and his friends, who were geniuses but absolutely incompetent in other spheres of life. Both Bill Prady and Chuck Lorre were amazed how much it was funny and they did not even suspect that *The Big Bang Theory* would become so successful. This was the starting point for the creation of such extraordinary characters who try to adjust to life. In this interview the actors said that they really liked the sitcom and their characters. They argued that in a sense, everyone can be a loser (like main characters of the sitcom). Simon Helberg (Howard Wolowitz) says that there is a connection between people and feeling yourself like an outsider. Everyone at least once felt this. Mayim Bialik (Amy Farrah Fowler) adds that this show is about quirks of smart people. This sitcom is about foolish antics and friendly relationships.

All themes of series are somehow connected with relationships, work and science. The tasks are devised on the basis of the first season; however, it can be any seasons and series to apply the classroom ideas discussed below. First of all, due to the nature of the devised tasks it is important to start watching the sitcom from the first episode, so in the future there will be no misunderstandings about what is happening in a scene. In the first episode Sheldon and Leonard meet their new neighbour – Penny. She is a beautiful stereotypical blond who is absolutely different from them. Despite the obvious fact that this situation is hopeless and Penny is not from his league, Leonard is completely smitten. This is how their acquaintance happens. Leonard invites Penny to have lunch with them, and after a while Penny tells them a story about her broken heart

and asks Leonard for a favor. Leonard wants to impress Penny and tries to help her. In the second episode Leonard agrees to help Penny with her furniture. Because of his and Sheldon`s physical training it was hard for them to pick up the heavy box with the furniture up several flights of stairs. When they come into the apartment Sheldon was shocked – there was mess everywhere. That night he cannot sleep and he decides to clean up there while Penny is sleeping. Against his better judgement, Leonard decides to help. However, when Penny wakes up she gets angry what sets back Leonard's plans for romantic bliss.

The first season of the sitcom offers a variety of topics to discuss in the most involving and exciting way. With the development of appropriate tasks to explore its content and language a teacher can both make his/her class educative and fun.

CHAPTER II

THE BIG BANG THEORY: PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

2.1. *The Big Bang Theory: Ways to Explore*

The main purpose of language learning is to obtain the ability to communicate with different people in the target language. Studying through video could help understand better people from other countries. Knowing cultures and languages gives an opportunity to expand your understanding of other nations.

Harmer (2003: 282) writes that now video is a common feature of the study process and nowadays it is hard for a publisher to produce a course book without a video component added in.

Some people think that video is just a listening task “with a picture”. However, video can add a special, extra dimension to the learning experience. There are many different ways how to use it. Jeremy Harmer (2003) in his book “The Practice of English Language Teaching” writes about these opportunities. One of the first advantages is that students can not only just hear language, but they can also see it as well. Students can observe how information from what one person says is matched with his/her facial expression. The second point is that using video in studying allows students to have a look at situations far beyond their classroom. It broadens the knowledge of cultures, for example, what kinds of food people eat in other countries, and typical British “body language”. Also students can make their own videos which will make them think creative and it can help raise their motivation by doing something new. An opportunity to see language in use as well as hear it increases students’ level of interest.

Learning language is hard work on itself. The teacher’s aim is to make this process more interesting for learners, because motivated learners work harder. The harder the learner works the better the result will be, and the faster s/he will achieve his/her educational goal.

Sitcoms are interesting for viewers, because they contain ordinary situations with a lot of comic moments. Sitcoms make fun of people’s behaviour and everyday events. Everyone can recognize themselves in the characters of *The Big Bang Theory*. This is one of many reasons why learning English through *The Big Bang Theory* might be interesting for students.

Learning English through comedian sitcom includes much listening as well. The better our listening skill are the easier it is for us to speak. There are different

possibilities and ways of learning English by listening. Listening plays an important role in learning the English language. There are two different ways of listening: passive and selective.

Passive Listening

What we mean by passive listening is the absorption of a language without the conscious effort, which usually characterizes our attempts at boning, cramming, memorizing, drilling, and mastering a language (A. Nida. 1982: 43). We need to be more alert to the possibilities of better use latent abilities of our brain. Our brains work for us constantly, even when we are not conscious of such activity this is recognized by anyone who has gone to live in a foreign community. Eyes help our brains do with visual images, while our ears help our brains do with acoustic impressions.

Than more practice of listening we have, the easier it gets to recognize words and their meaning in a speech. We start to hear someone`s speech slower. Of course, people do not start to speak any slower; it is just that our brains have been assimilating those sounds. Even when we were not conscious of the process and did not put attention to it, our brain has begun the process of identifying and sorting sounds. Since the sounds are more familiar and hence more quickly recognized (even though imperfectly), the rate of speech seems to be slower (A. Nida. 1982: 44). Our brain is working all the time, taking in sounds and registering their peculiarities.

Our brain has many advantages of hidden resource; we should give our brains every opportunity to work at full efficiency. To do this we need to follow certain helpful techniques:

1. Offer the brain with plenty to listen to.
2. You have to be relaxed, enjoy the process
3. Do not create barriers to sounds.
4. Give the brain enough time for listening and learning
5. Let the brain work while you are doing something else, because the brain works all day long.

If you are sleeping it does not mean, that your brain does not work and sleeps too. You can assimilate an incredible amount of information in one`s sleep. Passive listening techniques to engage our brain in learning the language are most appropriate when authentic video materials, incl. sitcoms, become part of both in-class and out-of class activities.

Selective Listening

Selective listening is a listening technique that filters and summarizes to achieve comprehension (Mar 2013). Passive listening works with selective listening very well, we need to supplement passive listening with selective listening. Selective listening should not replace passive listening, but should be supplemental to it. We should employ both techniques. The only possible way in which we can become familiar with the acoustic form of language is to listen selectively first to one feature and then to another (A. Nida 1982: 46)

We need to follow an order which will help us to find the right way:

1. *Tone of the voice.* Intonation is a very important thing. Usually, people`s faulty intonation betray them as strangers.
2. *Strange sounds.* If a sound is quite frequent, it is a good advantage to concentrate on only that one sound. We have to hear the sounds or have them described in terms of other sounds with which we are familiar, because it`s easier to study something new, when a new study has connection with your previous knowledge. In addition, listening and speaking are very closely related processes, one cannot exist without another. The more we listen, the easier it gets to communicate with other people in a foreign language.
3. *Similar sounds.* At the first time we should listen selectively to strange sounds, then we should begin to direct our attention to sets of similar sounds. If we hear the sounds correctly, we can reproduce them correctly too.
4. *Words and phrases.* One of the most important phases of listening selectively is to try figure out the meaning from the context. As we go repeatedly through the same recordings, the number of known words and phrases increases and the number of unknown ones accordingly reduces.
5. *Grammatical forms.* In many instances, we are not able to remember what form we have to use, but we have a “feeling” that one form is correct and another incorrect.

Learning to speak language is very largely a task of learning to hear it. People very rarely have an opportunity to immerse completely in a foreign culture, so we may have incorrect opinion about the language and pronunciation. However, watching and listening to the right programmes (like the sitcom *The Big Bang Theory*) helps learners understand differences between cultures, speech patterns and pronunciation. The outstanding feature of video films is their ability to present complete communicative

situations (Lonergan 1990: 4). Picture of where the action is taking provide information about situations: the situation is very formal, or perhaps informal. By generating interest and motivation, video films can create a positive background for successful learning. The learner will want to watch video, even if understanding is limited, however, the material should be motivating. The learner should want to see more, to ask questions, to follow up ideas and suggestions.

There are a lot of different methods how to work with the sitcom in the classroom, which are described below.

2.2. Themes and Topics: Activities to Implement in the Class

Students have to have a belief that they are able to reach their learning goals. This means that teacher should help them by giving special exercises, and friendly atmosphere must be created. Each lesson should start with repeating the previous material. Teacher should give students an opportunity to connect previous experience with the new one. Also teachers should encourage their students. However, teachers should be sure that the learner has earned encouragement. Students need to know how far they have gone, and that they are not wasting their time. Also time-consuming tasks could overwhelm students. It is better to separate them into smaller parts. It will be easier for both students and teachers to control them and to do everything right.

Here are some activities which are connected with the sitcom that could be used in the class:

2.2.1. Listening and Repetition

Learning English through comedian sitcoms include much listening as well. The better our listening skills are, the easier it is for us to speak. There are different possibilities and ways of learning English by listening. Listening plays an important role is learning the English language.

As one understands, listening plays an important role in English language learning; however, it is still not enough. Another important thing is repetition. Repetition provides language practice. For learners it is nonetheless important to be able to recognize what native speaker`s words are actually communicating (Lonergan 1990: 35).

So this is the suggested plan of the '*Listening and Repetition*' activity:

- Students watch the part of the sitcom and try to repeat the exact words;
- Repeating words will form the right English pronunciation;
- By doing this, students will remember new words and phrases;
- Also, it will help to memorize the right structure of sentence, so in the future it will be easier for them to study English grammar.

Table 1. Listening and Repetition activity.

Season 1 Episode 1. Scene 1. Situation in the bank.

It is the first situation from the first episode in *The Big Bang Theory* sitcom. It contains new phrases, words and useful grammar structures. This table will be given to students before the activity for review, because repeating without understanding is useless. Students should understand what the characters are talking about. Here is the table with new words and phrases together with their interpretations/meanings.

<i>New words</i>	<i>New phrases</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To observe – to notice or see; • Semipro – pro: a person who plays a sport as a job rather than as a hobby; • Offspring – a person's children; • Hostess – human who works on airplanes; • Toddler – a young child, especially one who is learning or has recently learned to walk. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before it is target; • What is your point? – What do you want to say?; • There is no point – nothing; • Hang on – wait; • If you <i>have to ask</i>, maybe you should not be here; • This is the place; • Take your time – do not hurry; • Oh, wait; • We are committing genetic fraud; • The same basic DNA mix; • A little extra money; • To get Fractional T1 bandwidth in the apartment; • Integral or a differential to solve for the area under a curve; • I would not; • Nice meeting you = nice to meet you.
<i>Grammar structures</i>	

Phrasal verbs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Fill these out;</i> • <i>Let`s try just walking out;</i> • <i>She winds up with a toddler;</i> • <i>We will be right back;</i> • <i>Directed through;</i> 	The use of prepositions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pin her hopes <i>on</i> something; • What is the protocol <i>for</i> leaving?; • I have never reneged <i>on</i> a proffer <i>of</i>.
To emphasize: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I <i>do</i> yearn for faster downloads; 	Shortening (mostly used in oral communication, not an academic style of writing): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wanna do = want to do.

2.2.2. Learning New Words and Phrases

A word is a unit which is a constituent at the phrase level and above (LinguaLinks Library 2004). The more words one knows, the richer his/her language is. To express an opinion freely a human should have a wide range of vocabulary. Due to the fact that each human has a different representative system, the teacher should use different teaching methods (watching, listening, and writing). It is not a secret that school English is different in comparison with native speakers' English. Due to the fact that the language of *The Big Bang Theory* is "an everyday language" and it is authentic material, students will enrich their vocabulary with phrases and words used by native speakers.

- Students watch the part of the sitcom and repeat what the actors have said;
- The next task is to write down unknown words and phrases;
- To better memorize new information the learners can use different techniques like mapping, brainstorming etc;
- After that they have to translate it (at home or during the class discussion) and learn.

Teacher should control how students have learned it by using different methods:

- The teacher asks students to write sentences or a story using these new words or phrases;
- Also the teacher can give to students an exercise where they will have to ask questions with these words or phrases and others should give answers;
- One of the exercises could be 'find the definition'. There are two columns where in one column words are written and in another one corresponding definitions

are written in a different order. Students have to find pairs – it is a matching word-definition exercise;

- Also the teacher can ask students to translate words or phrases from English into Russian/ Estonian or vice versa, which will be an excellent activity to connect three languages;

Table 2. Learning new words and phrases activity

Season 1 Episode 1. Scene 2. Meeting of a new neighbor.

Students will watch a little part of the episode where Leonard and Sheldon meet their new neighbour - Penny. Their task will be to listen attentively and write down new words. A teacher can play this episode several times. There will be also a list of new words suggested by the teacher (they are listed below). Students will have to fulfill their list of words by these ones. Also everyone in the classroom will have to share what new words they have written down. In the end everyone will have the same list of new words and phrases which they will interpret and after that learn.

Discussion	New words
Sheldon (S): you wanna hear an interesting thing about stairs? Leonard (L): not really. S: If the height of a step is off by as little as two millimeters most people will trip. L: I do not care... Two millimeters? That does not seem right. S: It is true. I did a series of experiments when I was 12. My father broke his clavicle. L: Is that why they sent you to boarding school? S: No. That was a result of my work with lasers. <i>Поднялись по лестнице до своей квартиры и увидели соседку</i> L: New neighbor? S: Evidently. L: Significant improvement over the old neighbor. S: Two-hundred pound transvestite with a skin condition? Yes, she is Penny (P): Oh, hi! L: Hi. S: Hi. P: Hi? L: We do not mean to interrupt. We live across the hall. P: Oh, That`s nice. L: No. We do not live together. I mean we live together, but in separate, heterosexual bedrooms. P: Okay, well, guess I am your new neighbor. Penny. L: Leonard. Sheldon.	Is off by as little; Trip; That does not seem right; Clavicle; Boarding school; Evidently; Significant improvement; Skin condition; We do not mean to interrupt/ across the hall; Heterosexual bedrooms;

<p>P: Hi! L: Hi S: Hi P: Hi L: Hi. Well. Oh, welcome to the building. P: Oh, thank you. Maybe we can have coffee sometime. L: Oh, great. P: Great. S: Great. L: Great. Well, bye. P: Bye. S: Bye. L: Bye. Should we have invited her for lunch? S: No. we are gonna start season two of Battlestar Galactica. L: We already watcher the season two DVDs. S: Not with commentary. L: I think we should be good neighbors. Invite her over, make her feel welcome. S: We never invited Louie/ Louise over. L: Well, and that was wrong of us. We need to widen our circle. S: I have a very wide circle. I have 212 friends on MySpace. L: Yes, and you have never met one of them. S: That is the beauty of it. L: I am gonna invite her over. We will have nice meal and chat. S: Chat? We do not chat at least not off-line. L: Well, it is not difficult. You just listen to what she says and then you say something appropriate in response. S: To what end? L: Hi. Again. P: Hi. S: Hi. L: Hi. P: Hi. L: Anyway we brought home Indian food and I know that moving can be stressful and I find that when I am undergoing stress that good food and company can have a comforting effect. Also, curry is a natural laxative and I do not have to tell you that, you know, a clean colon is a just one less thing to worry about. S: Leonard. I am no expert, but in the context of a lunch invitation you might skip the reference to bowel movements. P: Oh, you are inviting me over to eat? L: Yes. P: Oh, that is so nice. I would love to. L: Great. P: So, what do you guys do for fun around here? S: Well, today we tried masturbating for money.</p>	<p>Welcome to the building; We can have coffee; Should we have invited; To invite somebody over; To make somebody feel welcome; That was wrong of us/ to widen our circle; That is the beauty of it; Nice meal; Chat; In response; Moving/ someone is undergoing stress; Comforting effect/ natural laxative; Clean colon/ a just one less thing to worry about/ in the context of a lunch invitation/ reference/ bowel movements; To do something for fun;</p>
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2.2.3. Discussion

The main idea in class discussions is to try to express personal opinion and to get known what other people think. Cavanaugh (2001: para 3) argues that discussion is a way of testing and exploring new ideas. Also she says that by doing this activity student becomes connected with the topic. Discussion in class will give an opportunity to communicate and ask questions to each other. Thus students will be less confused when someone asks them a question in the street. Arguing an idea will show not only learners` knowledge, but also it will let their personality show. During discussion students learn how to work together and communicate with each other. Class discussions have a huge impact on developing of communication skills. According to University of Pittsburg, class discussions offer students opportunities to test their ideas and opinions against the ideas and opinions of their classmates.

- Discussion will be in groups or pairs;
- Students will have to discuss what they have seen or to predict what will happen next (see *Exercise 1 below*);

Exercise 1. Prediction

Students will have to discuss what they have seen or to predict what will happen next. Such activity will make them use their imagination and creativity. Students will watch season 1, episode 1, scene 3, where the action takes place in Leonard and Sheldon`s apartment, till the end of the scene and after that try to predict what will happen next.

For example, students can try to answer the question *‘What was the favour that Penny asked Leonard for?’*.

Students will have to use new words, phrases, and grammar constructions to express their opinion or to ask questions (see *Table 3*);

Table 3. Discussion activity

Season 1. Episode 1. Scene 3. In Leonard and Sheldon`s apartment.

In the table below there are sample words and structures that can support discussions in the classroom. Using these words and phrases during the discussion will help to learn them. The table is divided into common words, phrases, specific terminology, and grammar structures. Students will have to use all of these to express their opinion or to ask questions.

New phrases	New words
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You are very welcome; • Beautiful mind genius guys – very smart guys; • Holy smokes!; • That is the point; • Here we go; • I think I have made my point; • Serious stuff; • Do you mind if I start?; • Point taken – I have understood you; • Carve turkey; • The mass cultural delusion; • Affect your personality; • It has been some time; • I am not gonna engage in hypotheticals here; • How so? – What do you mean; • Wait till you see this; • To back in town; • To get it to switch; • To ask a favor/ to do a favor for somebody; • There it goes – ready; • It sticks; • Carnal relationship; • Derivative restatement of the stuff; • Cross breeze; • Negative social implication; • Lactose intolerant; • Cheating guts; • However briefly. 	<p>Nouns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spoof – a funny and silly piece of writing, music, theatre, etc. that copies the style of an original work; • Angle – the corner of a building, table, or anything with straight sides; • Screenplay – the text for a film, including the words to be spoken by the actors and instructions for the cameras; • Jerk – a stupid person, usually a man; • Trick – an action that is intended to deceive, either as a way of cheating someone, or as a joke or form of entertainment; • Tub – a long plastic, metal, or ceramic container that is filled with water so that you can sit or lie in it to wash your whole body; • Approximation – to be not completely accurate but close; • Dimensions – a measurement of something in a particular direction, especially its height, length, or width; • Mess – a person whose life is full of problems they cannot deal with; • Perspiration – the process when liquid is passing through the skin.
	<p>Adjectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creepy – strange or unnatural and making you feel frightened; • Gross – extremely unpleasant; • Pathetic – sad; • Occasional – from time to time
	<p>Object:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anticipating – imagining or expecting that something will happen. • Separated – something divided into parts.
Specific terminology	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quantum mechanics; • String theory; • Parallax distortion; • The match come out; • Sun`s position relative to arbitrary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Differential; • Particles.

constellations at the time of your births.	
Grammar constructions	
Phrasal verbs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To rip eyes <i>out</i>; • He has a lady <i>over</i>; • I could go <i>on</i>; • Scribbled <i>on</i> the wall; • You want us <i>out</i>; • Right <i>down</i> the hall; • <i>On</i> top <i>of</i> everything; • Make yourself <i>at</i> home. 	Passive voice: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will be hindered.

- Each group or pair have to listen to others and after that ask questions about what they have heard;
- The next step is writing comprehension questions. Students write questions about the sitcom and after that ask them in the classroom. Students will have to ask follow up questions. This will show students' knowledge about the studying material and allow preparing more at home. Each student has his/her own speed of learning, so a chance to repeat the material again at home will motivate them (*see Table 4*).

Table 4. Writing comprehension questions

One of the discussion exercises is writing comprehension questions and asking them in the classroom.

For example:

Questions	Answers	Follow up questions
Why is the Shelton's spot on the divan so special?	Sheldon's spot is special because in winter that seat is close enough to the radiator to remain warm and yet not so close as to cause perspiration, in summer, it is in a cross breeze created by opening windows and, also, it faces the television at the angle that is neither direct, discouraging conversation and nor so far wide as to create a parallax distortion	Do you have something that plays such important role as Sheldon's spot for him?
What did Penny ask Leonard about?	She asked him for a favor.	How often do you do something for other people?
What was the irony in Penny's screenplay?	The irony was that Penny did not realize that her screenplay	Have you ever been in such situation?

	was about her life.	
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2.2.4. Role-play

The main idea is to make students use new words and phrases in an unusual way. For most of students it is hard to just seat at home and to learn by rote the material. It is much easier to do it in a new different way. Such activity supposes the knowledge of the study material, so students will learn it anyway. As well, learning in such way will give them positive emotions, so students will study with pleasure. The learners will study without noticing it. There are two different steps in this activity:

- 1) The first step is easy and supposes only students` wish and the knowledge of the material. Students will choose by themselves or the teacher will choose one scene from the sitcom. The task will be to repeat this scene in the classroom. Such activity involves various representational systems (visual, auditory, kinesthetic). The idea is to encourage students to learn the material, because in the other way their play will not be successful. The educational aim is to teach the students how to use new phrases and how to pronounce them in the right way. The others will have to control carefully someone`s play and mark mistakes, thus everyone in the classroom will have their own task. Vocabulary and the right pronunciation are very important in language learning; especially, in oral communication. By using this activity learner will know situations where they can use gained knowledge and how they can do it. It is much more motivating to know that the material is useful in real life and you are not wasting your time (*see Table 5*).
- 2) The second step will require from students` creativity. Students will have to invent their own development of events. The aim of this step is to make students create their own situations and own dialogues. Also all discussions about the ideas should be in English. The idea is to create a situation where students will have to communicate with each other in the English language.

Table 5. Role-play activity

Season 1. Episode 2. Scene 3. Cleaning in Penny`s apartment.

The main idea is to make students use new words and phrases in an unusual way. Role-play gives such opportunity because it requires from students to go through the situation. Such activity assumes the knowledge of the study material. For the role-play a funny situation in Penny's apartment is chosen. The task will be to act out this scene in the classroom. The comedy situation will give students positive emotions, so students will study with pleasure. The process of learning will be natural. The aim is to encourage students to learn the material, to teach the students how to use new phrases, and how to pronounce them in the right way.

Suggested dialogue from the scene	Pronunciation (transcription of some words)
L: Sheldon?	
S: Shhh! Penny is sleeping.	
L: Are you insane? You cannot break into a woman's apartment in the middle of the night and clean.	/ɪn'seɪn/ /'kæn.ɒt/ /breɪk/ /'m.tu:/ /'wʊm.ən/s /ə'pɑ:t.mənt/ /ði:/ /'mɪd.əl/ /naɪt/ /ænd/ /kli:n/.
S: I had no choice. I could not sleep knowing that just outside my bedroom was our living room and just outside our living room was that hallway and immediately adjacent to that hallway was this.	/tʃɔɪs/ /'nəʊ.ɪŋ/ /,aʊt'saɪd/ /'bed.ru:m/ /'lɪv.ɪŋ/ /rʊm/ /'hɔ:l.weɪ/ /'ɪ.mi:.di.ət.li/ /ə'dʒeɪ.sənt/
L: Do you realize that if Penny wakes up there is no reasonable explanation as to why we are here?	/'rɪ.ə.laɪz/ /'ri:.zən.ə.bəl/ /,ek.splə'neɪ.ʃən/
S: I just gave you a reasonable explanation	/geɪv/
L: No, no. You gave me an explanation. It's reasonableness will be determined by a jury of our peers.	/'ri:.zən.ə.bəl.nəs/ /dɪ'tɜ:.mɪnd/ /'dʒʊə.ri/ /'piərs/
S: Do not be ridiculous. I have no peers.	/'rɪ'dɪk.jələs/
L: Sheldon, we have to get out of here.	/hɪər/
S: You might want to speak in a lower register.	/'ləʊ.ər/ /'redʒ.ɪ.stər/
L: What?	
S: Evolution has made women sensitive to high-pitch noises while they are sleep so that they will be roused by a crying baby. If you want to avoid waking her, speak in a lower register.	/,ɪ.və'lju:ʃən/ /'wɪm.ɪn/ /'sen.sɪ.tɪv/ /,hɑɪ'pɪtʃ/ /raʊz/ /'kraɪ.ɪŋ/ /ə'vɔɪd/ /'weɪ.kɪŋ/
L: That is ridiculous!	/ðæt/
(IN DEEP VOICE) S: No, that is ridiculous.	
(IN DEEP VOICE) L: Fine. I accept your premise. Now, please let's go.	/faɪn/ /ək'sept/ /'prem.ɪs/
S: I am not leaving until I am done.	/dʌn/
L: Oh, no.	
S: If you have time to lean, you have time to clean.	/li:n/ /kli:n/
L: Oh, what the hell. (HE STARTED CLEANING)	/hel/

Situations that are presented in the tasks are from the first and the second episodes of the first season. All of the situations have a humor background, because of the strangeness of the guys. The funniest is that they try to be normal and act like 'normal people' do, but they do not know how it is. For example, in the first situation they were confused because in Sheldon's opinion they were committing a generic crime. The next situation is about meeting a new beautiful neighbour. Probably, most of people once or twice were in such situation like Leonard was, so it will be not only funny for viewers, but also close to their own experience. Leonard's attempts to please Penny look amusingly. What is more amusingly that this is the next situation where Sheldon decides to clean up in Penny's apartment when she was sleeping. It was not hard to predict how she will react to this when she wakes up.

All of the situations are full of funny moments and they might be familiar to viewers, so situations chosen for the tasks will catch learners' attention, thus, they keep their interest and involve them in positive and creative learning of how to communicate in English. The suggested activities have a particular focus on the development of communicative skills where students learn authentic language patterns and practice them by creating their own interpretations of sitcom episodes. Starting with listening and repetition activities students will end up with discussion and role play tasks, i.e. tasks with a very high communicative value potential.

CONCLUSION

Nowadays learning languages plays an important role in everyday life. Knowing languages widens people's opportunities and gives a lot of advantages. Studying a language consists of many things (e.g. grammar, listening, writing, oral communication). The paper analyses the place of the sitcom *The Big Bang Theory* in the development of oral communication in English language.

Oral communication skills give people an opportunity to communicate with different people from other countries. Without communication skills people are isolated from one another. Such skill requires understanding what to say and how to say something to other people. The problem is that special studying materials do not prepare learners for communicating with native speakers in real life. According to Abdelkarim (2013: page 2) authentic materials (video) play an important role in developing oral communication.

Sitcom is a comedian serial with constant main characters connected by a common story. It focuses on the comic side of daily life, and the main feature is humor. Sitcom is an authentic video material with English native speakers. Authentic material is written or spoken material that was not specially created for language teaching. This material was created in the course of real communication and that is why such material has a special value for language learning.

The Big Bang Theory is an American comedian serial which takes place in California. Main characters are English native speakers. This sitcom features physicists whose lives changed after they met their new neighbor Penny. These are genius guys who absolutely do not know about the real life and "how to be a normal". This serial is special because each episode contains a lot of funny moments and situations from everyday life. Due to the fact that it is authentic material, each episode has a lot of new words and phrases that will be useful for learners in conversation. Watching this serial will give to viewers positive emotions which are important in studying.

Positive emotions are important and effective learning should include them. According to Hall and Goetz (2013: 28), numerous researches have demonstrated that students learn and remember the material which has positive and negative colors better, than just learning and memorizing neutral words. This is the reason *why The Big Bang Theory* will be interesting for learners. Humor and always changing actions will catch their attention. Students learn better when they do not realize that they are learning. Doing something interesting will give them positive emotions which have big influence

on motivation. Motivated students will learn more and educational goal achieving will be faster.

In the paper numerous of studies on the topics such as positive emotions and their influence on learning have been analyzed. Also, the study has considered what communication skill is and how it could be developed. The answers to the questions ‘What is sitcom?’ and ‘Why the sitcom *The Big Bang Theory* is so special? Have been discussed and summarized.

To conclude, the present study suggests and proves that the development of oral communication skills through *The Big Bang Theory* sitcom has a lot of benefits and opportunities; it could be easily used in the ELT class. Combination of studying and positive emotions will help learners study better and study with pleasure. Learners will be motivated to continue their study with the help and support received during their classes with the inclusion of the activities devised by the author for *The Big Bang Theory* sitcom.

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SUMMARY IN ESTONIAN

Selle töö teema on „Suhtlemisoskuse Arendamine Situatsioonikomöödia kaudu (*The Big Bang Theory*). Tänapäeval on keelte õppimisel väga oluline roll inimeste igapäevaelus. Keelteoskus laiendab inimeste võimalusi ja annab palju eeliseid. Keele õppimine koosneb paljudest etappidest (nt grammatika, kuulamine, kirjutamine, suhtlemine). Uurimistöös analüüsitakse, kuidas situatsioonikomöödia *The Big Bang Theory* arendab suulist suhtlust inglise keeles.

Suulise suhtluse oskus annab inimestele võimaluse suhelda erinevate inimestega teistest riikidest. Suhtlemisoskuseta inimene on teistest inimestest eraldatud. Suhtlusoskus eeldab mõistmist, mida ja kuidas öelda teistele inimestele. Probleem on selles, et õppematerjalid ei valmista õppijaid ette suhtlemiseks reaalses elus. Vastavalt Abdelkarimile (2013: 2) mängivad autentset materjalid (video) olulist rolli suulise kommunikatsiooni arendamisel.

Situatsioonikomöödia on koomiline seriaal, kus alalised peategelased on ühendatud ühise ajaloo ja sündmused keskenduvad igapäevaelu koomilisele küljele ning peamine funktsioon on huumor. Situatsioonikomöödia on inglise keele õppimiseks autentne videomaterjal. Autentne materjal on kas kirjalikus või suulises vormis materjal, mis ei ole spetsiaalselt loodud keeleõppeks. Sellisel materjalil on reaalne side igapäevaeluga ja see on põhjus, miks selline materjal on erilise väärtusega keeleõppe jaoks.

The Big Bang Theory on ameerika koomiline seriaal, mille tegevus toimub Californias. Peategelaste emakeel on inglise keel. Selles situatsioonikomöödias kujutatakse füüsikuid, kelle elu muutus pärast seda, kui nad kohtusid oma uue naabri Pennyga. Need poisid on geeniused, kes absoluutselt ei tea, milline on tegelik elu ja "kuidas olla normaalne". See komöödia on eriline, sest igas episoodis on väga palju naljakaid hetki ja olukordi igapäevaelust. Tulenevalt asjaolust, et see on autentne materjal, on igas episoodis palju uusi sõnu ja väljendeid, mis on õppijate jaoks vestluses kasulik. Vaadates seda seriaali, saab vaataja positiivseid emotsioone, mis on õppimise käigus tähtsad.

Positiivsed emotsioonid on olulised ja tõhus õppimisprotsess peaks neid ka pakkuma. Vastavalt Hallile ja Goetzile (2013: 28) on mitmed uuringud näidanud, et õpilased õpivad ja mäletavad positiivse ja negatiivse värvinguga materjali paremini, kui lihtsalt õppida ja meelde jätta neutraalseid sõnu. See on põhjus, miks situatsioonikomöödia *The Big Bang Theory* on õppijatele huvitav. Huumor ja alati

muutuv tegevus püüab õppijate tähelepanu. Õpilased õpivad paremini, kui nad ei saa aru, et nad tegelikult õpivad. Tegelemine millegi huvitavaga annab neile positiivseid emotsioone, mis mõjutavad väga tugevalt motivatsiooni. Motiveeritud õpilased õpivad rohkem ja haridusliku eesmärgi saavutamine toimub kiiremini.

Käesolevas uuringus analüüsiti mitmete uuringute teemasid nagu positiivsed emotsioonid ja selle mõju õppimisele. Samuti uuriti, milline on suhtlemisoskus ja kuidas seda arendada. Leiti vastused küsimustele "Mis on situatsioonikomöödia?" ja "Miks situatsioonikomöödia *The Big Bang Theory* on nii eriline?".

Kokkuvõtteks käesolev uuring näitab ja tõestab, et suhtlemisoskuse arendamisel situatsioonikomöödia „*The Big Bang Theory*“ kaudu on palju eeliseid ja võimalusi; seda võib kergesti kasutada ELT klassis. Kombinatsioon õppimisest ja positiivsetest emotsioonidest aitab õppijatel paremini ja naudinguga õppida. Õppurid on motiveeritud jätkama oma õpinguid, sest said abi ja toetust tundidesse tegevustest, mis autor on välja töötanud/kavandanud „*The Big Bang Theory*“ situatsioonikomöödia jaoks.

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