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LEARNING VOCABULARY COMMUNICATIVELY IN EFL CLASSES THROUGH  
SITCOMS  
Bachelor's thesis

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## **PREFACE**

Nowadays, there are many sources and extra materials which can help students learn English, and one of them are sitcoms. Many people consider watching movies as a form of entertainment, while this can become one of the best ways to improve their language skills. Audiovisual material can become an integral part of the lesson and this bachelor's thesis will show how it can be used in order to achieve great results in learning English. The aim of the study is to analyze how watching sitcoms may help to improve vocabulary and communication skills and how sitcoms can become a part of the lesson in order to help students improve their language skills.

This research paper consists of an introduction, Chapter I "Sitcoms as a Learning Tool", Chapter II "How Sitcoms are Used in EFL classes in Ida-Virumaa Schools", and a conclusion. The introduction gives an overview of the importance of using sitcoms as a learning tool in the EFL class. Chapter I presents a variety of ideas of how to use sitcoms in order to enrich vocabulary and to improve oral communication skills. Chapter II presents the practical part of the research which includes questionnaire, held among Ida-Virumaa English teachers and its analysis. In Conclusion there is a summary of the main points and findings of the theoretical and practical research in relation to the research questions.

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## INTRODUCTION

### Three Main Reasons why Learning English Through Videos Works

English is an international language and it is used in every field: science, technology, business, education etc. Nowadays it has become a necessity to be able to talk in English. There is a variety of resources to learn English and one of them is learning through mass media: films, cartoons, news items, vlogs and sitcoms. In order to be able to use English a person must have these skills: reading, writing, listening and speaking. Two of the important skills which need more development are listening and speaking. (Munir, 2016: 14). Also, vocabulary plays an enormous role in developing those skills. If students have rich vocabulary, it might make it easier for them to master other language skills.

Many people consider watching movies and TV series as a form of entertainment while this can become one of the best ways to improve their language skills. What can be better than learning English and having fun at the same time? Baggio (2015) has brought three main reasons why learning English through video actually works. The first thing Baggio (2015) wanted to draw attention to is that it is a great opportunity to learn real English, not textbook English. The vocabulary that is used in English textbooks is not commonly used in real life. According to the author, such phrases as “nice weather we’re having” will practically never be heard on the streets of English-speaking countries. This is the reason why conversations in films help people to learn how to speak and pronounce words because it is natural English used there.

Baggio (2015) states that another good reason is learning new words in contexts. Watching a particular genre of films, for example crime films, will definitely help understand vocabulary that is used there, in what situations, and when particular words which are related to the crime are frequently used. At school students are given a list of words that must be learnt, they know the meaning, the translation, but how to use them in real life that is the problem that most people face. “For example, let’s say you learn the new word “detective.” From the dictionary, you’ll know what that it means “a person who investigates crimes”. But unless you use it, it can be easy to forget. It also doesn’t give you an idea where the word is used most frequently, and how it is used.” (Baggio, 2015: para 7).

Finally, a person who is learning English through films will hear how the words are spoken, and what kind of intonation is used in different situations. “The *how* is often more important than the *what* to English people” (Baggio, 2015: para 11). In films actors have a huge variety of emotions: sadness, happiness, anger, etc. While watching, our assignment as a learner, is to be very attentive

to how the intonation changes according to the emotions because the same phrase can be said very differently.

Using videos as a learning tool to learn foreign language has recently become very widespread, especially with the popularity of such platform as YouTube. Videos have been used by language teachers in their in-class work for many years and there are reasons for that (Donaghy, 2014: para 2). Teaching needs to be fun so that students would learn with pleasure. Especially children in elementary school like cartoons, and for them it is much easier to enrich vocabulary, to improve speaking and listening skills through this sort of media.

### **Subtitles**

According to Ghorbany (2011: 242), “Subtitles improve children’s foreign language acquisition.” Using subtitles while watching cartoons, films and comedy TV series helps to enrich vocabulary and to develop listening and speaking skills at the same time. It also develops attention and creativity which is very important in learning a foreign language. While watching and listening children make associations and it makes it easier for them to memorize certain words, phrases and sounds. Subtitles are a great pedagogical tool. According to Ghorbany (2011), subtitled audiovisual material provides students with immediate understanding of what it said, what is written and visual information that has the same message. But there might be some difficulties as well. Watching videos with subtitles requires developed attention because students need to balance the intake of audio, video and text at the same time. “It would be great to find English films with English subtitles. They make understanding the language easier as listening to authentic language is more difficult than seeing the expressions written, thus matching the words with pictures and voice” (Tafani, 2009: 88).

### **Teacher’s Role**

Without a teacher learning English may become very difficult. Students need to be guided and teacher’s role is one of the most important in learning a foreign language. Tafani (2009) states that teachers should persuade students to watch as many films, cartoons and sitcoms in English in their free time as possible. Teachers must be creative in order to design tasks using this sort of media. Usually watching sitcoms is a passive time spending, but teacher’s purpose is to turn this passive activity into an active one. “This can be done in variety ways as setting questions about the film, promoting discussions in small groups, asking the students to comment on various things, inviting criticism, etc. We may also stop the film from time to time and ask the students what has happened so far or guess what might happen next. Another way might be turning the sound down and asking

the students to imagine or make up dialogues” (Tafani, 2009: 88). Due to limited lesson time it is difficult to use full films in the classroom. According to the Tafani (2009) some parts of the film or moments can be used in the classroom when students can pay attention to the accent, body language, pronunciation, emotions or choosing some particular words or phrases that need to be learnt during this lesson. To make lessons more effective watching comedy TV series is not enough, in addition to this there need to be assignments for students in order to improve their language skills. To achieve great results in learning a foreign language student should be well motivated and part of this responsibility lies on the teacher, his/her behavior, his/her attitudes towards students, new methods of teaching and of course inclusiveness into the learning process.

### **Learning Vocabulary through Videos**

Vocabulary or word-stock is one of the most important aspects of any language, which student must acquire to be able to express his/her thoughts and ideas correctly. The lack of vocabulary makes communication inefficient and leads to misunderstanding between two people. Templeton (2004) states that there are two types of vocabulary: active and passive. Active vocabulary means that a student understands the meaning of the word, is able to pronounce it and use it in real life conversations. Passive vocabulary implies that a student can understand words by reading them or hearing other’s people talking but does not use those words by himself/herself in writing or speaking.

The importance of enriching student’s vocabulary is clear but how to do it with pleasure? One of the options is by using sitcoms in the EFL class. According to the Kurniaty (2014) using media makes the learning process more interesting and effective for students as they will acquire a necessary list of words used in particular situations. In elementary school teachers could use cartoons instead of sitcoms, because vocabulary that is used in sitcoms is not appropriate for children of this age. Cartoons would be especially interesting for children in elementary school and they would easily follow the story and memorise many new words used in contexts. What is more important, is not only knowing the word and its definition but also pronunciation. By listening to how native speakers talk the student will hear the correct pronunciation and will try to pronounce sounds correctly. Kurniaty (2014) states that through cartoons movies it is easier to learn many new words, for example names of objects, by seeing them and listening at the same time. Children will remember words as they will have associations connected with the cartoon.

## Overview of Previous Research

The topic of using media resources in the EFL classroom has recently become very popular among students and teachers. There are many research papers that have been written about it and it still remains one among other effective methods to teach and learn English at school or by yourself. There is no doubt that watching sitcoms is a great tool in order to learn a foreign language and as Markéta Hložková (2013) states in her research “Sitcoms as a Tool for English Language Teaching” sitcoms combine many aspects of learning English, there is a motivation power, humour, authentic and up-to-date English, cultural references to English speaking societies and real casual interactions between people. In other words, it gives students the opportunity to study while entertaining him/herself and to be aware of real English, real situations and learn English in context. The research includes 30 activities with guidelines that every teacher can use in his/her lessons to make English learning more efficient.

Research made by Inga Palu in 2016 “Developing Oral Communication in English through Sitcoms (The Big Bang Theory)” also suggests examples of activities based on the plot of the sitcom to use in EFL lessons. As Palu (2016) states, it is possible to learn not only vocabulary through sitcoms, but also grammar structures, phrasal verbs, the use of preposition, shortening and to develop student’s writing and speaking skills.

Based on these researches it can be said that many teachers are aware of the advantages of using sitcoms in their classes, but still many of them may not use them for some reasons. These may include a lack of time to create worksheets, finding required materials, combining it all together with the lesson’s topic. Theoretically it is easy, but practically many teachers may just avoid extra work.

The aim of the study is to analyze how watching sitcoms may help to improve vocabulary and communication skills and how sitcoms can become a part of the lesson in order to help students improve their language skills.

There are two research questions which I intend to study:

1. How can sitcoms be used to learn and teach vocabulary communicatively?
2. Do EFL teachers of Ida-Virumaa schools use sitcoms in their lessons to teach vocabulary communicatively and how?

## CHAPTER I. SITCOMS AS A LEARNING TOOL

### 1.1. What is a Sitcom?

This particular genre of TV shows has become very popular all around the world. There is no doubt that many people prefer to watch some films, soap operas, cartoons, drama series as a way to entertain or to relax themselves and after a hard day spent at work; this is one of the possible options to spend the evening. Sitcoms as a genre represents comedy TV series which are full of humor and are easy to understand. This genre combines almost everything in it; there is drama, love, comedy, crime, and this attracts people of different culture, age, ethnicity all around the world.

“Sitcoms are like drama series but funny” (Sherman, 2003: 38). The word “sitcom” deciphers as a situation comedy. Sherman (2000: 38) claims that “what makes people laugh often has to do with ‘in-knowledge’, with making quick connections and coming close to sensitive issues. We laugh because we are in the know when a brief cultural reference taps a pool of knowledge. We laugh when we suddenly see the hidden implications and can close the gap that the actors have set up for us. We laugh, perhaps out of a sense of protected shock, when we come dangerously close to taboos, like death and cruelty, or when we see incongruities created by juxtaposition”. Wamsler (2007) states that “A sitcom depends on traditional stereotypes and repeated happenings or jokes like running gags because the audience needs to identify with the characters and the show in order to follow it continuously.”

Each sitcom has its story, conflict, characters, romance and funny awkward moments. Every episode presents new plot but all of them are connected between each other, so that the viewer would understand the relationship and connection between the characters. According to Metz (2008) there are usually no more than four main characters: a hero, an anti-hero, a love interest and a buddy. Situation means that a setting and a group of characters makes up funny conflicts as much as possible (Stafford, 2004). According to Stafford (2004), the main features of sitcoms are:

- 1) lasts no longer than 30 minutes
- 2) limited sets/locations
- 3) limited number of characters
- 4) laughter.

In each sitcom series there is a main plot. Usually there are two storylines, one of which is the main one. Its purpose is to hold people's attention till the end of the season or even through the whole series. The other storyline is secondary, and it is supposed to make the show more interesting and comic.

In the beginning it was common to hear laugh track in sitcoms. Sitcoms were filmed in front of the audience and the laughter was real, but later the laughter was being taped. It is made with a purpose to make people laugh. Laughter is being put in scenes where is supposed to be a joke or a funny situation, in other words it tells the audience when to laugh, but in modern sitcom it appears more rarely. Another reason of using laughter in sitcoms according to Schwarz (2019) is to make people feel less lonely while watching comedy TV series. "It creates a sense of community, a collectivity" (Schwarz, Yoon, 2019: para 12).

Stafford (2004) states that limited location means that characters spend most of their time in one place, this could be for example home, where are presented situations between family members, domestic issues, relationship with children; work, where happen conflicts and funny moments, this could be an office or a factory; state institutions such as hospital, prison, school, university where can be presented characters' daily life with humor; leisure facilities such as cafes, restaurants, shops where we could also see comedy situations connected with workers.

There is also a line between realism and fantasy. Sitcoms present many everyday situations that can happen to anyone in real life, daily conversations, jokes and conflicts, but at the same time those jokes and conflicts are exaggerated, which means they are more intense. This is one of the reasons why sitcoms are so popular, because it is interesting for people to see and to watch how conflicts can turn into a funny comedy situation and how they can be resolved during the limited time.

## **1.2. The Advantages of Sitcoms**

Using audio visual materials (henceforth AVM) in the EFL class is gaining more popularity all over the world. Audio visual material includes films, cartoons, sitcoms, news, TV series, vlogs etc. Dike (1993) states that "Audio visual resources are those materials which do not depend solely upon reading to convey meaning and present information through the sense of hearing as audio resources or through a combination of both senses." To make it clear, AVM is a combination of audio materials and visual materials. "AVMs can contribute much to teaching and research by stimulating interest, providing valuable information and expanding the horizon of experience. "(Md. Ashikuzzaman, 2013: para 2) It is not surprising that people are attracted to this kind of

entertainment, but this is for sure can become an integral part of the lesson. The development of technology gives teachers an opportunity to improve their teaching skills and make EFL lessons more efficient. In comparison with typical teaching videos from “YouTube”, sitcoms have some benefits. According to Bilsborough (2009) teaching videos which are made specifically for the class lack real English and are way too banal. Moreover, teachers should not underestimate sitcoms. Even if a student has poor vocabulary or grammar knowledge it does not mean that the series will not be understood, because sitcoms have visual element. As Bilsborough (2009) states in most of the sitcoms a big amount of communication happens through mimics, gestures, which helps to understand feelings and emotions without words. “Sitcoms are full of unspoken innuendos” (Bilsborough, 2009: para 5).

Why use sitcoms instead of films? The answer is very simple. Due to the limited time of the lesson it is more appropriate to use sitcoms instead of the full-length films. Usually a film lasts not less than an hour and to prepare students to watch the film and then do some activities based on that a teacher needs at least two lessons. The main advantage of sitcoms is its short length.

Also, people like to meet the same characters again and again, to watch how the relationships between them are developing, and sitcoms provide us with this opportunity. “Students who watch more than one episode become familiar with the characters and their catchphrases. As students begin to predict how a character might behave in a particular circumstance, they will become more motivated and enjoy a sense of achievement” (Bilsborough, 2009: para 2).

Tudela (2013) mentions that in sitcoms often appear cultural references, some historical events or something related to the culture of the country. “Sitcoms provide a window into a country and culture which language learners may not otherwise be exposed to” (The TEFL Academy, 2019: para 5). This gives an overview of how people live in different countries, how they speak, what slang they use, what clothes they wear etc. In sitcoms is presented not only British and American culture, but also many other foreign cultures. By watching it learners can broaden their minds, learn new traditions and customs, be aware of cultural features.

Furthermore, learning with humor is much easier and joyful than just reading texts and writing down new words with translation. Humor and laughter are a large part of people’s life and learning with it is a pleasure. That does not mean that people should not take seriously other important activities in learning a language, sitcoms come as an additional source to support the learning environment. According to Hložková (2013) humor and laughter increase working capacity in our brain and improve our memory. As Leah (2014) states it has been concluded that “humor alleviates

stress and inhibition while fastening a positive learning environment, improving student/student/teacher rapport, raising learner' autonomy and interest.” But humor can be very different, and teacher's responsibility is to make sure that those jokes won't offend anyone, those jokes include “insulting the poor, ethnic communities, the ugly, women, the disabled or the elderly” (Hložková, 2013: 16). “The teacher should be careful when choosing the episode of the sitcom that would be suitable for his/her students; their age, beliefs, background and experience. While an episode may work in one group of learners, it does not have to be appropriate in another one” (Hložková, 2013: 16-17). In one word, humor creates a positive atmosphere which supports students in their learning and brings people together.

Finally, sitcoms give students the opportunity to learn real English, not textbook English. In sitcoms is presented real life with typical English conversations, phrases, slang, idioms. It is considered to be more useful to listen to the conversations and dialogues with picture included, to understand the situation as a whole. What is more, that there are also different accents and dialects, which sometimes are difficult to understand. What makes it more complex is the speech of the characters. It can be quite fast, and some words can be swallowed, which makes it even harder to hear. It is quite challenging for a student to be able to catch the main point if the accent has never been heard before, but at the same time it is a huge advantage because he/she will be familiar with it while travelling or speaking with native speakers.

### **1.3. How Sitcoms can be Used in EFL Lessons**

Language learning is impossible without learning basic skills. These basic components are reading, writing, speaking and listening. This is similar to a house foundation; it is impossible to build a house without a foundation. In acquiring foreign language, it is essential to know main principles in all of the components. According to Ramadan (2019) skills can be receptive and productive.

Receptive skills are listening and reading, which means that learners do not create or produce language, “they receive and understand it” (Ramadan, 2019: para 2). Productive skills, i.e. speaking and writing are the opposite, they require making up sentences, phrases, words, texts etc. in other words learners produce the language. There is no doubt that to achieve the highest level of English learners should acquire all four basic skills.

Sitcoms can be used in development of both skills: receptive and productive. Sitcoms can be used to practice listening, reading, writing, speaking skills and also in order to enrich vocabulary and to improve grammar.

As for receptive skills, sitcoms help to understand the main idea of the relevant topic through oral communication. Learners are able to distinguish between different accents, styles, intonations and also understand the meaning of new vocabulary from contexts. It is not necessary to know all the vocabulary used in the episode, since picture and sound are simultaneous and the main point will be still understood because the scene is presented as a whole. Reading can be improved by doing reading activities based on the plot, reading scripts or using subtitles while watching. This will cover reading and listening skills at the same time.

As for productive skills, where student should produce language, sitcoms can be a source of new ideas, thoughts and comments. One of the easiest assignments to practice productive skills is to describe. Learner can describe everything, from weather to people's appearance. Describing requires a good vocabulary, so that is a great opportunity to learn new words from the series and to know how to use them and in what situations it is more appropriate.

Moreover, sitcoms can be used to practice grammatical structures, collocations, phrasal verbs, and means for expressing functions, idiomatic expressions, lexical phrases and acronyms used in nowadays English (Leah, 2014).

One of the most important skills in acquiring foreign language is speaking or oral communication. This is known to be very challenging and difficult due to lack of vocabulary, grammar structure usage or even fear. Students are often afraid of making mistakes and they prefer not to talk or not to express their opinion. This happens as they do not want to show others so to say "weakness" because they are afraid of being judged. But this barrier needs to be overcome by practicing more whether in class or by him/herself. Pronunciation practicing is as important as speaking and here sitcoms play an enormous role, because in sitcoms students can listen to different accents or dialects. In this case subtitles are very useful, because the learner would read a word on the screen and at the same time hear how it is pronounced. The teacher decides if to watch with or without subtitles, but it all depends on the students' age, level of language and the sitcom itself. The teacher can offer many different activities on developing oral communications skills, for example role play, interviewing each other, expressing his/her ideas or thoughts. Sitcoms can be shown in a full length and it is also possible to choose some particular short fragment to support the studying.

There is no doubt that sitcoms can and should be used nowadays in EFL classes. Teachers should be the ones to show new opportunities and ways to learn English. The Internet is full of different videos, methods, online learning and all this can help not only students, but teachers as well. New

generation teachers should pay more attention to what students would love and to be with them on the same wavelength.

#### **1.4. Examples of Sitcoms that Can Be Used in English Lessons**

Today there is no problem to find any genre of sitcom on the Internet. Anyone can choose whatever he/she prefers depending on personal interests. There are different complexity sitcoms, different level of language and the audience it is made for. As the research paper focuses on EFL classes, there has been made a short list of sitcoms which are appropriate to use. But it does not necessarily mean that advanced level sitcoms cannot be used in teaching lower level students, because pre-work is important which is made with the teacher, and vice versa, intermediate level sitcoms can be used in higher level classes. It depends on the purpose of usage, on what topic the lesson is, if it is used for entertainment or for other reasons. There are two sitcoms from upper-intermediate to advanced level: “The Big Bang Theory” and “Brooklyn Nine-Nine”.

The Big Bang Theory is a 12 season sitcom about two geeky physicists - Sheldon Cooper, Leonard Hofstadter, engineer Howard Wolowitz, who thinks of himself as extremely attractive and astrophysicist Raj Koothrappali, who can't talk in the presence of women. Action happens when character Penny moves into the flat next to the Sheldon's and Leonard's. Penny is a typical girl who wants to be an actress and that is exactly why she moved to Los Angeles, to be more precise to Pasadena, California. Leonard falls in love with her and that when it all starts. Later to the group were included Howard's wife Bernadette Rostenkowski-Wolowitz and Sheldon's wife Amy Farrah Fowler. Comic situations happen due to difference between ordinary people and them, so to say geniuses. They are specialists in physics, but they hardly know how life works. The sitcom is full of comic situations which makes spectator to watch it more and more. This TV series will definitely be appropriate for a high-level learner, because the sentences and phrases are quite complex and there are a lot of terms connected with physics and science. Series can be used selectively to enrich vocabulary on a particular topic, to follow lives of the main characters and relationships between them, because every episode is connected with the next one. This TV series is great for learning slang, such as “What's up” that is very popular in America.

Brooklyn Nine-Nine is an 8-season sitcom about a talented N.Y.P. D detective in Brooklyn's 99th Precinct Jake Peralta, who has solved many cases, but his behavior is childish and carefree. The department's Captain is Raymond Holt, who is extremely serious, and it is hard to make him laugh. Under his command are well-built, muscular, but gentle inside Lieutenant Terry Jeffords, who raises his daughters and his passion is yoghurt. Detective Amy Santiago – nerdy, but very nice,

Jake's future wife. Detective Charles Boyle – despite being shy and insecure, he proves himself to be a loyal and hard-working part of the team. Detective Rosa Diaz, who can handle herself and make people afraid of her. There is also Gina Linetti – quirky Holt's assistant. Furthermore, there are two veteran officers - detectives Scully and Hitchcock who think only about food. This team is extremely diverse, but still each of them will protect and stand for each other. Action happens when they get a new boss – Raymond Holt and Jake Peralta is forced to follow his rules. This TV series is a good source for learning vocabulary on a particular topic connected with crime and investigation. This is also a great series to watch in order to understand American culture, to pick up some useful phrases, slang, which is used quite often there.

There are many other sitcoms which are available online for learning and supporting English, different genres, different levels of used language so that everyone could choose what is best for his/her study. What is presented here is only a tiny part based on my personal experience.

### **1.5. Sitcoms as a Vocabulary Learning Resource**

Today's media is full of opportunities for supporting English learners. Vocabulary is one of the main essential knowledges to be able to express yourself in a foreign language. Obviously, without having rich vocabulary in any language, person will not be completely involved into the dialogues, discussions, debates or will not be able to simply ask something. This plays a vital role in communication between each other. Even if a person has good listening skills, reading skills, writing skills and poor vocabulary, then in real life this person will definitely have difficulties while communicating, because vocabulary is a part of all those fundamental skills. Nowadays, there are plenty of possibilities for enriching vocabulary and one of them is via sitcoms. As it is known, sitcoms have audio and visual material at the same time which makes it more efficient in acquiring material. But why are sitcoms a good material to learn vocabulary?

It is not surprising that each episode of a sitcom can be compared to a small part of the day or even life. During those 30 minutes there is action, drama, humor and all this describes some situation that is happening. Language used in those situations is more likely to be everyday vocabulary. That is exactly what a learner needs. Everyday vocabulary includes colloquial expressions, slang, useful phrases, abbreviations, collocations, formal and informal language, contractions etc. This is not what the learner will often find in books or at school. These are two different languages being spoken at school and in real life or in real situations. Why is it important to study real life vocabulary? One of the main reasons is that the learner will probably be aware of how language works, it is not always grammatically correct, but that is how people use it. The same as in any

other language importance lies in an ability to add emotions into the spoken language even if it will not fit some grammar or any other aspect of language. But listening to everyday vocabulary is not enough, there needs to be practice. It is very easy after hearing some interesting phrase to make a pause and repeat it or to write it down. Also, it is important to notice how the character says it, what emotions he/she uses, what facial expressions he/she has, what intonation is being used and the learner's purpose is to understand on what circumstances he/she can use this phrase in the future. Imitation is a great way to practice it any time. According to the Encyclopedia of Britannica (2019) "Imitation, in psychology, the reproduction or performance of an act that is stimulated by the perception of a similar act by another animal or person. Essentially, it involves a model to which the attention and response of the imitator are directed." Imitation can be practiced through role plays or acting. This is a perfect solution for a teacher to organize a creative lesson. Also it is very important to make a list of phrases, words, expressions that are used more frequently.

Sitcoms are a very good source for learning vocabulary on a particular topic. Obviously, sitcom is a comedy TV series, but there is a certain genre. It can be connected with crime, medicine, science, school, music, art, government, business, travelling etc. Vocabulary is closely connected to what kind of genre is the sitcom. If the sitcom is about police, crime, investigations then vocabulary connected with crime will be used very often, also if the sitcom is about hospital, doctors – medical terminology will definitely be used there and so on. Learners will hear words that are commonly used in a particular environment. Also if a learner already has a good level of English, for him/her it will be a great way to practice familiar words, expressions, phrases to improve his/her study. Perhaps, special terminology is not used that frequently in real life, except for some particular situations, but it is never redundant to be able to use those words.

Furthermore, sitcom is a great opportunity to learn vocabulary in context. "Students must eventually know how to use the language forms they have learned in authentic communication situations." (Hadley, 1993: 125) This can be achieved through communicative contexts. Learning separate words and phrases is not enough in acquiring language. Students should understand and know how to use those words in a sentence, to be able to understand the main point. Most of the words, phrases, expressions have several meanings and there is no point in just memorizing them. The success is in ability of knowing on what circumstances and in what situations he/she could use some particular kind of vocabulary. "Normal linguistic behavior does not consist of the production of separate sentences but in the use of sentences for the creation of discourse." (Hadley, 1993: 125) Context is a very helpful tool in mastering reading skills. "The term context relates to

the parts directly before and after a word that influence its meaning. When readers do come across a new word the best method of discovering the meaning of that particular word is to note how the sentences and words, that surround the new word, relate to it” (Newman, 2013-2016: para 5). As Roell (2020) states, understanding of the vocabulary term can be easily done by using text around it – context. “By looking at the elements of a passage, an unknown vocabulary word reveals its meaning” (Roell, 2020: para 2). There is no need in memorization and drilling because a learner needs to know how to use surrounding text.” Take the word “acerbity”, for example. You might not understand this word on its own without a definition, but in a sentence, you have all the information you need: “The acerbity of the lemon caused the little girl to spit out the bite she had just taken.” The girl's reaction to the lemon, spitting it out, tells you that the taste was unpleasant. Knowing that lemons are sour/bitter, you can ascertain that it was the lemon's extreme sour/bitterness or acerbity that caused the little girl to spit it out” (Roell, 2020: para 3). Learning vocabulary through context has many advantages. First of all, learner knows how to use a new word, in what sentences, on what circumstances. Secondly, according to the Tran (2020), researches have proven the long-lasting effect of remembering new words. Explanation for this is simple – the more information about vocabulary term a person has the longer he/she will remember it. What is more, a person learns common phrases. English language improvement is almost impossible without knowing common phrases. Phrase is a group of words that usually comes together in a particular order. In addition, a person learns several meanings of the word. One word can be used in many different sentences and have different definitions. What is the most pleasant is that learning process happens in an active way. There can also be difficulties while using context clues. If the learner is not familiar with the surrounding text and all of the words are new to him/her then not only the vocabulary term stays unclear but the whole sentence.

According to the article written by Palm Beach State College in 2006 “Vocabulary in Context - Tutor Hints. “there are four types of context clues which can help to understand the meaning of the vocabulary term: example/description, synonyms/comparison, antonyms/contrast and general sense/knowledge.

- “Example/description – this clue gives the explanation or description of an unknown word or give an actual example of the word. Some words that may signal an example or description are *for example, for instance, including, meaning, such as.*” (Vocabulary in Context - Tutor Hints, 2006)
- “Synonyms/comparison - a synonym is a word with a similar or identical meaning. There is sometimes one word (or phrase) in the sentence that means the same or almost the same

as the unknown word. Words that sometimes signal a synonym are comparison transitions: *similar, just as, equally, the same as, like.*” (Vocabulary in Context - Tutor Hints, 2006)

- “Antonyms/contrast - an antonym is a word with an opposite meaning. Sometimes there is one word (or phrase) in the sentence that means the opposite of the unknown word. Some words that may signal an antonym/contrast are *yet, but, however, on the other hand, in contrast.*” (Vocabulary in Context - Tutor Hints, 2006)
- “General sense/knowledge - with these types of context clues, you will need to draw conclusions based on the information given and perhaps some personal experience or insight. “ (Vocabulary in Context - Tutor Hints, 2006)

### **1.6. What is vocabulary?**

It is well known that to communicate people need to share their ideas, thoughts and they express it in words. These words are a way of understanding each other. “Yet vocabulary is much more than just single words” (Lessard-Clouston, 2013: 1). “Vocabulary can be defined as the words of a language, including single items and phrases or chunks of several words which convey a particular meaning, the way individual words do. Vocabulary addresses single lexical items—words with specific meaning(s)—but it also includes lexical phrases or chunks” (Lessard-Clouston, 2013: 2). “Vocabulary (from the Latin for ‘name’, also called word-stock, lexicon, and lexis) refers to all the words in a language that are understood by a particular person or group of people” (Nordquist, 2019: para 1). As Steven Stahl (2005) puts it, “Vocabulary knowledge is knowledge; the knowledge of a word not only implies a definition, but also implies how that word fits into the world” (Diamond, Gutlohn, 2006: para 1). As the English language changes rapidly, it is impossible to know all of the words. “Vocabulary knowledge is not something that can ever be fully mastered; it is something that expands and deepens over the course of a lifetime. Instruction in vocabulary involves far more than looking up words in a dictionary and using the words in a sentence. Vocabulary is acquired incidentally through indirect exposure to words and intentionally through explicit instruction in specific words and word-learning strategies” (Diamond, Gutlohn, 2006: para 1).

There are two types of vocabulary: active and passive. According to Nordquist (2019) active vocabulary are words, phrases, expressions that person not only understands but also uses in his/her everyday language. In every language learner has many words that he/she knows the meaning of, when it is suitable to use whether in speaking or writing. Passive vocabulary, on the other hand, is understood by the learner but is not used in speaking or writing. As Kaufmann (2017)

suggests every day we hear many familiar words, phrases on TV or on the Internet, we recognize them, know their meaning but for some reason we cannot use them in our speech. That is a part of our passive vocabulary. As Vos n.d. states, our active and passive vocabulary is changing all the time while learning. Words that person hasn't used for a long time are easy to forget. "Words may move freely between your active and passive vocabularies as time goes on, but your passive vocabulary will always be much larger" (Vos: n.d. para 7). Huge passive vocabulary is very good in order to understand texts, movies, speeches, but still we need to learn to use them in real life by ourselves. It is very often, when we have a conversation with a foreigner, we completely understand him/her and when it is time to answer we are literally out of words. But how to turn passive vocabulary into the active one?

- Paraphrasing

Instead of using any difficult word in your speech try to paraphrase it, find a synonym, describe what it means using as many words as possible. This will make your language knowledge richer and more extensive. Thus this word will be in your long term memory.

- Writing in context

To practice new words and memorizing them for a lengthy writing is a great solution. It is no matter what are you writing about, this can be a short story, a diary, a blog, whatever. The main idea is in using as many new words as possible and trying to avoid repetitions. "Writing activity done collaboratively in pairs or small groups, will be accompanied by a good deal of talk – talk that is needed to get something done" (Byrne, 1986: 12).

- Reading

It is no surprise that reading expands vocabulary, but simply reading won't make you speak. To make it more efficient it is worth trying reading aloud with an expression. It is worth drawing attention to bilingual books. "Through reading the learners can also greatly expand their receptive knowledge of the language, especially in the often-neglected area of vocabulary" (Byrne, 1986: 12).

- Thinking in English

It can be quite challenging, especially for beginners, but it is very essential in order to start speaking. Stop translating every word before putting it in a sentence, it holds up the whole process.

- Using audiovisual materials

While watching sitcoms, movies, videos, vlogs, cartoons, TV news try to repeat some phrases, sentences imitating the character's pronunciation. This can be practiced alone or in a pair to make

it more efficient. Making up the dialogues, interpreting some scenes, role play – all this can help to use passive vocabulary that is hidden.

And most importantly, to start using passive vocabulary person needs to speak. That is extremely essential for improving language knowledge. While speaking there will be made a lot of mistakes, but this is not a reason to stop talking and keeping silence. Through mistakes people learn, develop and become more confident in him/herself.

### **1.7. Learning Vocabulary Communicatively**

Communication plays a tremendously important role in language acquisition. There are two types of communication: oral and written. We are focusing on oral or verbal communication, that requires speaking skills. “Oral communication is a two-way process between speaker and listener (or listeners) and involves the productive skill of speaking and the receptive skill of understanding (or listening with understanding).” (Byrne, 1986: 8) To start speaking learner has to have some basic skills and knowledge about language structure, how sentences are formed and also minimal vocabulary. According to the Byrne (1986) as it is in our mother language, we understand more than we produce, the same it is in a foreign language. To start using all the vocabulary, to make sentences correct, to support any dialogue and to be able to express yourself confidently there needs to be communication. Communication is a method of sharing thoughts, ideas, information from one person or a group to another one. Oral communication in English is a skill that develops only through speaking. “In contrast to the written language, where sentences are usually carefully structured and linked together, speech is often characterized by incomplete and sometimes ungrammatical utterances, and by frequent false starts and repetitions” (Byrne, 1986: 9). While speaking a person uses his/her active and passive vocabulary as much as possible and this helps him/her to memorize used vocabulary for a longer term. “When a student is involved with real life communication, which is also meaningful to them, they see value in their work. This can help a student to develop a natural approach to language learning and vocabulary acquisition moving forward, outside of the classroom” (LTC EASTBOURNE, 2018: para 4). “The communicative approach is not just limited to real life verbal communication. It is an approach to language learning in general” (LTC EASTBOURNE, 2018: para 5).

Learning vocabulary communicatively allows students to use it in real conversations. The main difference between standardized teaching and using communicative approach is that the teacher is not the main speaker in the class, he/she gives students the opportunity to take part in active

communication by organizing different sort of games, tasks and group works. This means that during limited time of the lesson students are actively involved in the process of communicating between each other, sharing their thoughts and ideas, which makes learning vocabulary more efficient than ever before. “The quality of Communicative Language Teaching is all dependent on the teacher. A teacher will need to make their material as motivating and as creative as they can, so that learners find their tasks meaningful, and see the value.” (LTC EASTBOURNE, 2018: para 9)

In a word, learning vocabulary communicatively means that you need to communicate with other people and to learn from them. During speaking with the teacher, classmates pay attention to how they use the language, do they use slang or phrases, what intonation do they use, how does their body language influence the speech, all this is what we learn from.

### **1.8. Activities to Learn English Vocabulary Communicatively through Sitcoms**

Activities below are taken from the books “Teaching Oral English” by Donn Byrne; “Video in Language Teaching” by Jack Lonergan; “Games for Language Learning” by Andrew Wright, David Betteridge and Michael Buckby; “Using Authentic Video in the Language Classroom” by Jane Sherman.

- **Worksheets**

Filling out a worksheet with listening, vocabulary or grammar exercise is a great way to learn English vocabulary through sitcoms. Worksheet by itself represents a sheet with different kinds of exercises. Choice of assignments depends on the aim of the study, on what learner needs to learn and develop by completing the exercises. Worksheets should be closely connected with the sitcom used in the lesson, because it is easier for the learner to perceive new information. Effectiveness of the worksheet depends on what kind of questions are used there, how it is designed. “Well-designed questions in worksheets can draw students’ interest when paired with proper teaching methods.” (Lee, 2014: 96) “Properly designed worksheets can help teachers overcome the problems of time demanding and enable teachers to enhance students’ acquisition of knowledge and skills.” (Lee, 2014: 96) Worksheets should be made according to the learners’ level of English to avoid problems with understanding and reading. “As an assessment tool, worksheets can be used by teachers to understand students’ previous knowledge, outcome of learning, and the process of learning; at the same time, they can be used to enable students to monitor the progress of their own learning” (Lee, 2014: 96).

- **Making up dialogues**

Dialogue is a conversation between two people, when each of them expresses his/her opinion, ideas, thoughts and they exchange it. Making up dialogues is improvising; the brain starts thinking about what to say, what to answer to the opponent and this is very useful in acquiring language. The conversation can be on any kind of a topic, what is important is to speak, to not be afraid of making mistakes, because we all learn from them. Sitcom clips could serve as a model for the dialogue. “The language produced by the learners will reflect both their own abilities, and the language they have seen presented to them in the video model” (Loneragan, 1984: 60). It is also important to note that teacher should give a particular topic, situation and a list of vocabulary for students to use and practice. Structure of the dialogue is essential because at first for students it can be difficult to make whole sentences, they do not know what to say, what to ask, that is why teacher can prepare a plan or a model of the dialogue.

- Creative writing

Writing is one of the fundamental skills to acquire language. For many people writing is challenging due to lack of vocabulary and grammatical structures. That is exactly why learners should write more, it can be a short text a day on a particular topic or keeping a diary. Teachers should practice creative writing with students. Creative means that students need to use their imagination and to try to write something interesting. After watching a clip from a sitcom, teacher, for example, can give students an assignment to write a text or a message using the vocabulary used in a sitcom.

- Retelling

Retelling means to tell the story, tale, movie etc. in his own words in a new way. Retelling requires good speaking skills and vocabulary knowledge. To improve speaking skills a person must talk otherwise this skill will not be developed enough to express him/herself in different situations. One of the options how to use in the lesson is to show to one of the students a situation or a dialogue in the sitcom and the student has to retell it to the class or to read a script of some particular situation/dialogue from the sitcom and retell it to the others using vocabulary from there.

- Prediction

Prediction is highly used while reading books, but it can also be useful while watching sitcoms. Prediction answers the question – “What will happen next?” Teacher should prepare a sitcom that he/she wants to use in the lesson and while watching her task is to stop from time to time. It is important to stop before action has begun, so that students could predict what will happen next. Details play a vital role here, because describing details can be difficult for lower level students. Teacher can write on the board clues as a question: what? when? who? why? where?

- Description

Description is a perfect way to practice new vocabulary. After watching the sitcom teacher gives students whether written or verbal assignment to describe something. It can be characters' appearance, weather, feelings, town, house etc. The main point is to practice new vocabulary not by separate words but in context.

- Vocabulary of the body and body movements

This activity helps students to learn to ask questions and to learn new words. One of the options to use in the lesson is that situation in a sitcom is being viewed with the sound off and students imitate actor's body language using mimics, gestures, but they can't say word, all this needs to be in a silence. At the same time others present questions in order to understand what is happening and student who imitates can only nod his/her head. It can be very funny and useful at the same time.

- Analysis and discussion of some situations

Analysis and discussion are activities to make students talk. Analysis is a rather written method while discussion is verbal. Discussion is an exchange of ideas, thoughts and opinions. It is important to do some pre-work before the discussion or analysis. While watching an extract from the sitcom it is useful to make notes, write down vocabulary, otherwise this activity can be disappointing due to lack of the vocabulary and students' ability to express themselves in a right way. Discussion or analysis can last for only a few minutes or even a whole lesson, this depends on the teacher. It can be organized in pairs or groups.

- Interview

This activity can be done in pairs or small groups. It suggests that one student is the interviewer and the other(s) is the interviewee. Interview means that the interviewer presents questions to the interviewee, so this activity requires preparation in making questions. This activity develops speaking skills, grammatical structure knowledge, vocabulary enrichment, pronunciation improvement, skill in making and answering questions, where are different types of the questions: closed-ended and open-ended.

- Making diagrams

Making diagrams based on the plot of the sitcom can be quite difficult because student needs to understand the connection between every character, their relationship, who is who and what he is like. Diagram based on the plot is similar to a short summary where every detail is important and with its help student can easily understand who is who, how each character connected with others. This activity needs to be guided by the teacher, so that he/she would explain students if they have missed something.

- Making notes

Making notes is very useful ability in everyday life in every field. “The first essential for good note-taking is knowing what to listen for: what is relevant (and should be noted), and what is peripheral (and may be ignored)” (Loneragan: 1984: 20). As Loneragan (1984) states, learners need guidance in making notes, for example video should be played several times before note-taking so that the student would be familiar with the language used there. It all depends on the learner’s language knowledge about how language works and what to expect in terms of language.

- Making sentences

Making sentences about a scene answering the questions what? or who? when? where? why? Teacher shows students an extract from the sitcom and asks students using vocabulary from the video to write sentences by answering those questions. This activity develops listening skills, writing skills, vocabulary, checks the level of grammar.

- Questionnaire

“Questionnaires are a simple way of giving the students meaningful question and answer practice.” (Byrne, 1986: 69) According to the Byrne (1986) questionnaires should be on a particular topic: food, likes and dislikes etc. “Answers should be either yes or no, or one of the frequency adverbs (never, hardly ever, sometimes, quite often, regularly).” (Byrne, 1986: 69) This activity can be made by the teacher in order to check how students understood the sitcom or give the students the opportunity to write their own questionnaire.

- Quiz

Quiz is similar to a questionnaire, but answers should be more informative than yes or no. Answers should involve knowledge.

- Writing down particular vocabulary

As we are focusing on learning vocabulary, sitcom is a great source for it. This activity is simple; it requires listening from the context and writing words down. As we know, every sitcom is on a particular genre, it can be connected with hospital, police or any other place. Teacher can use sitcom in order to enrich some particular field of vocabulary, for example the topic of the lesson is “Health” and while watching some video students should write down all the words connected with health.

- Vocabulary and grammar games (or other games based on the sitcom)

There are hundreds of games focused on the study. Games are aimed at learning while having fun. Students become motivated and interested in the language acquisition. “Games also help the teacher to create contexts in which the language is useful and meaningful” (Wright, Betteridge, Buckby, 1983: 1). Through games students can better understand and memorize useful phrases, words, sentences, questions, it means that while playing they develop their skills (reading, listening, writing, speaking). Sitcom can serve as a way of getting new information, new

vocabulary, new grammatical structures etc. and through different games in pair or in groups learners are able to practice it in an active way.

- Act out a scene or role-play

Acting out a scene from a sitcom is a highly creative exercise. It is similar to a drama class, but it is focused on the language learning. “Role-play, like other dramatic activities, involves an element of ‘let’s pretend’” (Byrne, 1986: 117). Students should distinguish characters among each other and make a parody of some particular scene from a sitcom. It requires them to write a script, decide who is who and what is his speech. This activity perfectly suitable for improving pronunciation, body language, mimics and gestures, vocabulary, speaking skills and of course it includes improvisational skills. Students should be completely into their roles, to know the characters’ characteristics and specularities. “Video is a resource rich in potential to fire the imagination of language learners” (Lonergan, 1984: 51). “Role play is generally an activity which takes place at the end of any particular teaching unit. The learners need to be sure of vocabulary and structures likely to be required, so that they can perform as fluently as possible” (Lonergan, 1984: 40).

- Listening for details

Listening for details means that a student should listen to specific things or language, to pay attention on a particular topic. They can be given a cue or a hint and they have to write down examples. For example: “As you watch the sequence, note down examples of agreement, disagreement, pessimism” (Lonergan, 1984:17).

- Summary

Summary writing is effective in order to check learners’ competence in the use of tenses, syntax and other written constructions. In a word, how learners are able to use the language and to produce it in a written form. Students can be asked to write a summary on the plot of the sitcom or on some extract from it, which means that he/she will need to make a brief detailed conclusion, explaining main points.

- Multiple choice questions

It is a list of questions with a set of alternative possible answers. It can be very useful in order to simplify the understanding of the language. After viewing to students a sitcom or an extract from it, give them a worksheet containing multiple choice questions, by answering it they will check their own knowledge of understanding.

- True/False questions

True/False questions are also aimed at examining of understanding of the main point. Student has a statement and he/she needs to decide whether it is true or false. Statements are based on the viewed sitcom containing also details. This activity develops mainly listening skill and vocabulary knowledge.

- Simple repetition

Simple repetition means that the learner should repeat what was just said, a phrase or a sentence. There is no need in paraphrasing or making up his/her own sentences. While watching a sitcom teacher pushes a pause button and asks one or more students to repeat. “Exact repetition of a given model is not really a communicative exercise. But learners need practice in articulation of new words, or sound groups, or of the intonation patterns of sentence groups” (Loneragan, 1984: 33).

- Projects

Projects are very informative and meaningful. They require a lot of time, guidance and monitoring by the teacher. It can be individual as well as group work. What is important is that students are given the opportunity to develop all kinds of skills through mastering them while making the project. Project needs to be interesting for student to make a research. Project includes research, which develops reading skills; making interview, which develops communication skills; holding discussions, meeting new people, which develops social skills.

- Mime

“Miming – performing actions without words” (Byrne, 1986: 116). This activity especially useful in order to know how to express yourself without words by using gestures, mimics, facial expressions, body language. “‘Wordless’ activities, then, lead quite naturally to ‘talk’” (Byrne, 1986: 116). One of the students shows some activity, for example eating something; watching something; listening to something etc. and others try to guess which makes them talk and to start asking questions.

- Board games

Board games are widely used in English language teaching, especially for elementary level. The biggest advantage is that any board game can be adapted for the English lesson. Board games are a good source to make students communicate with each other, learn new vocabulary, grammar, phrases etc. Board games can also be made based on the sitcom; it only takes creativity on behalf of the teacher.

## **CHAPTER II. HOW SITCOMS ARE USED IN EFL CLASSES IN IDA-VIRUMAA SCHOOLS**

### **2.1. Aims of the survey**

The present research aims to answer the following research questions in order to prove the usefulness of the sitcoms while learning vocabulary communicatively:

1. How can sitcoms be used to learn and teach vocabulary communicatively?
2. Do EFL teachers of Ida-Virumaa schools use sitcoms in their lessons to teach vocabulary communicatively and how?

The aim of the empirical research of the thesis is to discover whether EFL teachers of Ida-Virumaa schools use sitcoms in their lessons to teach vocabulary communicatively in particular and also for what other purposes sitcoms can be used in EFL lessons. The aim of the practical part is to discover Ida-Viru county EFL teachers' preferences towards activities that can be used to teach vocabulary through sitcoms. Firstly, it is necessary to find out whether EFL teachers of Ida-Virumaa schools use sitcoms in their lessons. Secondly, there is a need to find out which activities they use to teach vocabulary through sitcoms. In order to achieve these aims a survey was conducted.

### **2.2 Methodology and sample**

The methodology chosen for this study was a mixed method which combines qualitative and quantitative research. This type of method allows to use description and comments on the sample responses as well as collecting data statistically. The survey was in the form of an online questionnaire (Appendix 1) which was created in Google Forms. Online questionnaire allows to collect data from different places at a convenient time. The questionnaire consisted of five questions which included both closed-ended and open-ended questions on usage of audiovisual material, sitcoms in particular, and was sent to all Ida-Virumaa schools through a mailing list in February, March and April. In the questionnaire I explained that I am a student of Narva College and I need teachers' responses in order to write my bachelor's thesis. The teachers were asked to choose among possible given answers or to write their own answer. The survey was sent to all Ida-Virumaa EFL teachers and in total 50 teachers participated in it, who have different teaching experience and who teach in different grades.

### **2.3 Results**

As discussed above, vocabulary plays a vital role in language acquisition and sitcoms can be used in order to learn vocabulary communicatively. This survey was made to confirm or disprove if

EFL teachers of Ida-Virumaa schools use sitcoms in their lessons to teach and practice vocabulary communicatively, and if they do, then what activities they use or suggest to use.

The first question of the survey is about teachers' learning experience. As it is seen in the diagram, the majority of respondents have 10-20 years or more than 20 years of experience with just six per cent difference between the two. The lowest rate of responses (10%) only 5 teachers have 1-5 years of experience. Hence, the survey attracted more responses from more experienced teachers and may give a good overview of teachers' customary teaching practice.

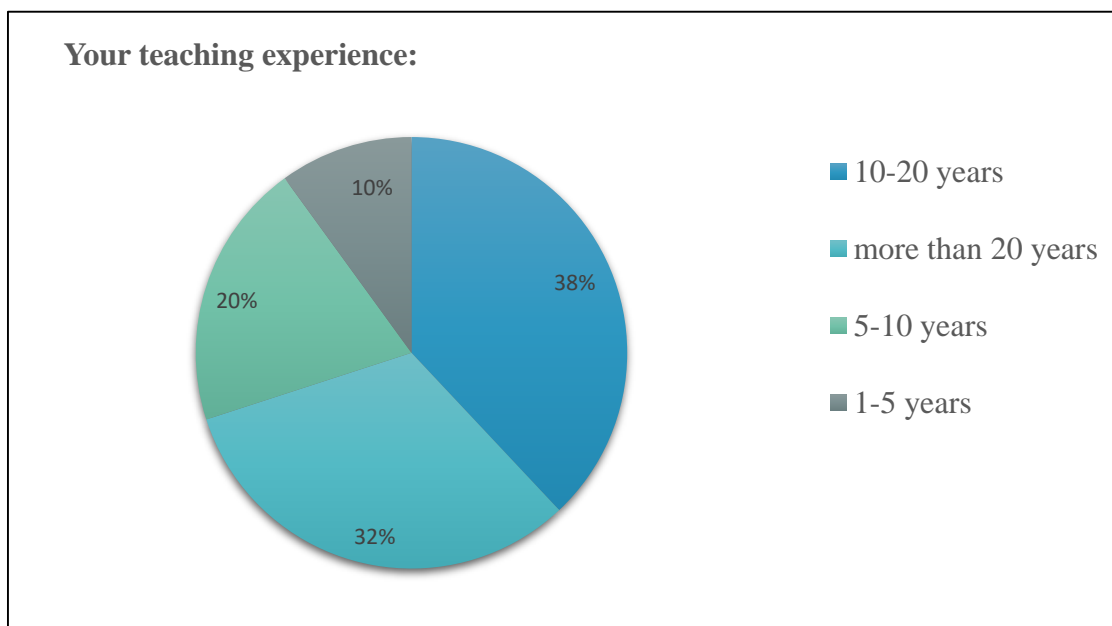
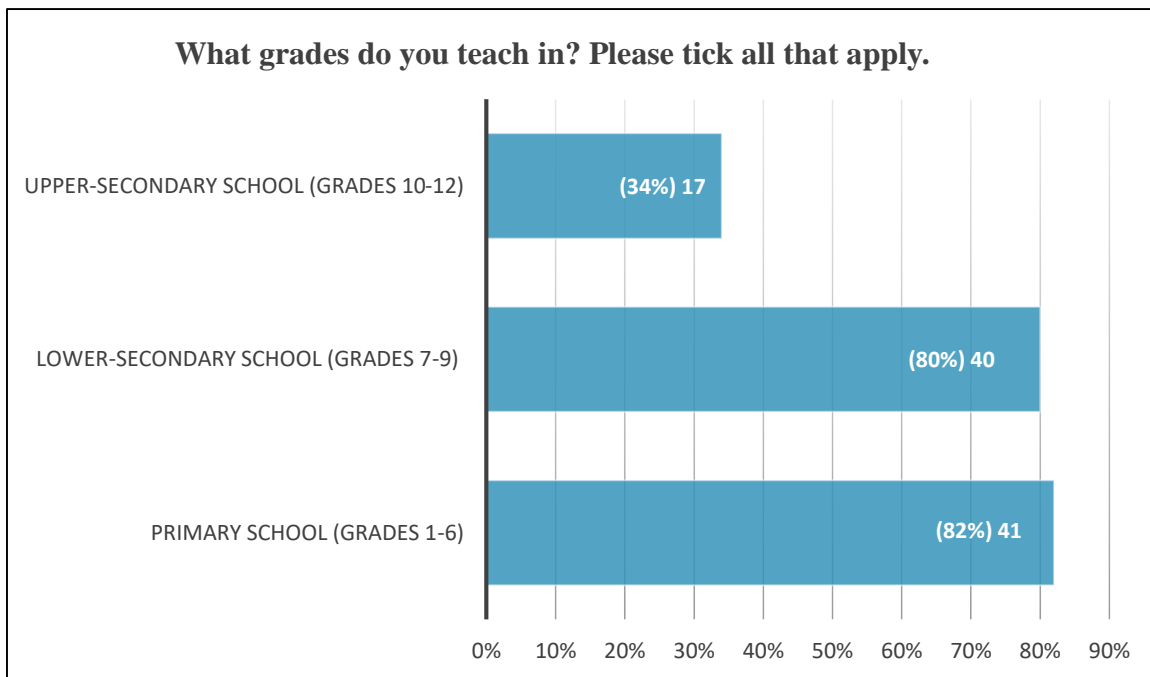


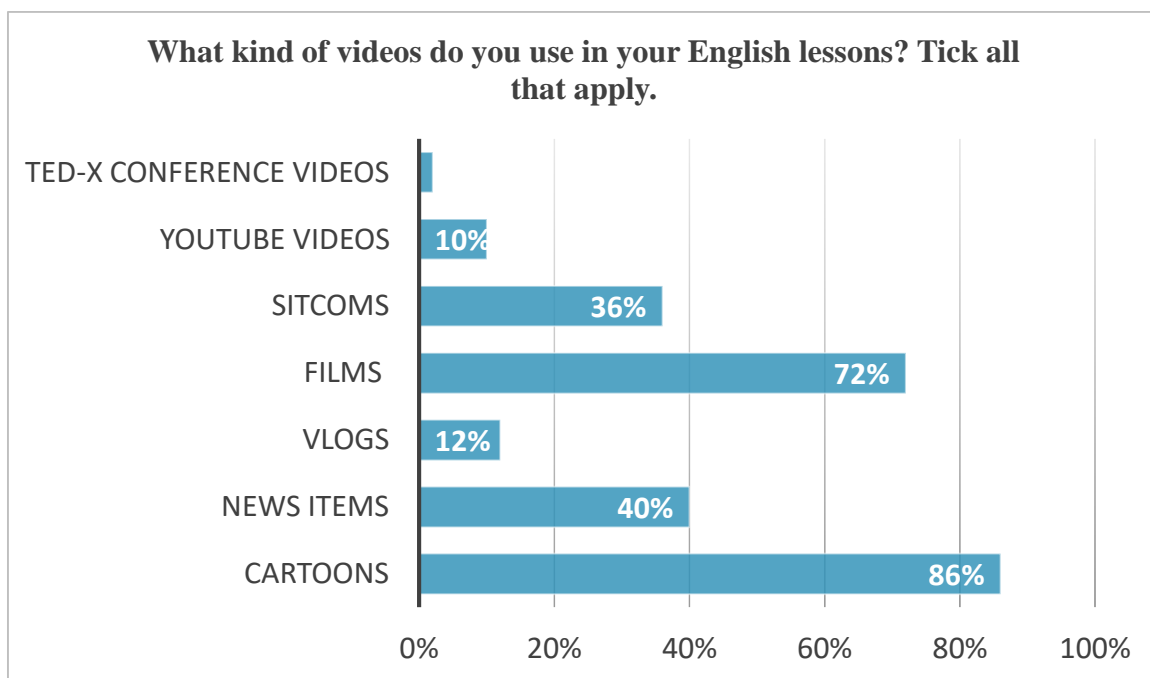
Figure 1. Teachers' teaching experience.

The second question was about what grades teachers teach in. There were given three possible options: primary school (grades 1-6), lower-secondary school (grades 7-9) and upper-secondary school (grades 10-12). The table below shows that more than a half of participants (27) teach in primary and lower-secondary schools at the same time. Only 3 teachers teach only in upper-secondary school took part in the survey. In total the majority of the teachers teach in primary and lower-secondary school, with just two per cent difference between the two. Nearly a third of participants teach in upper-secondary school.



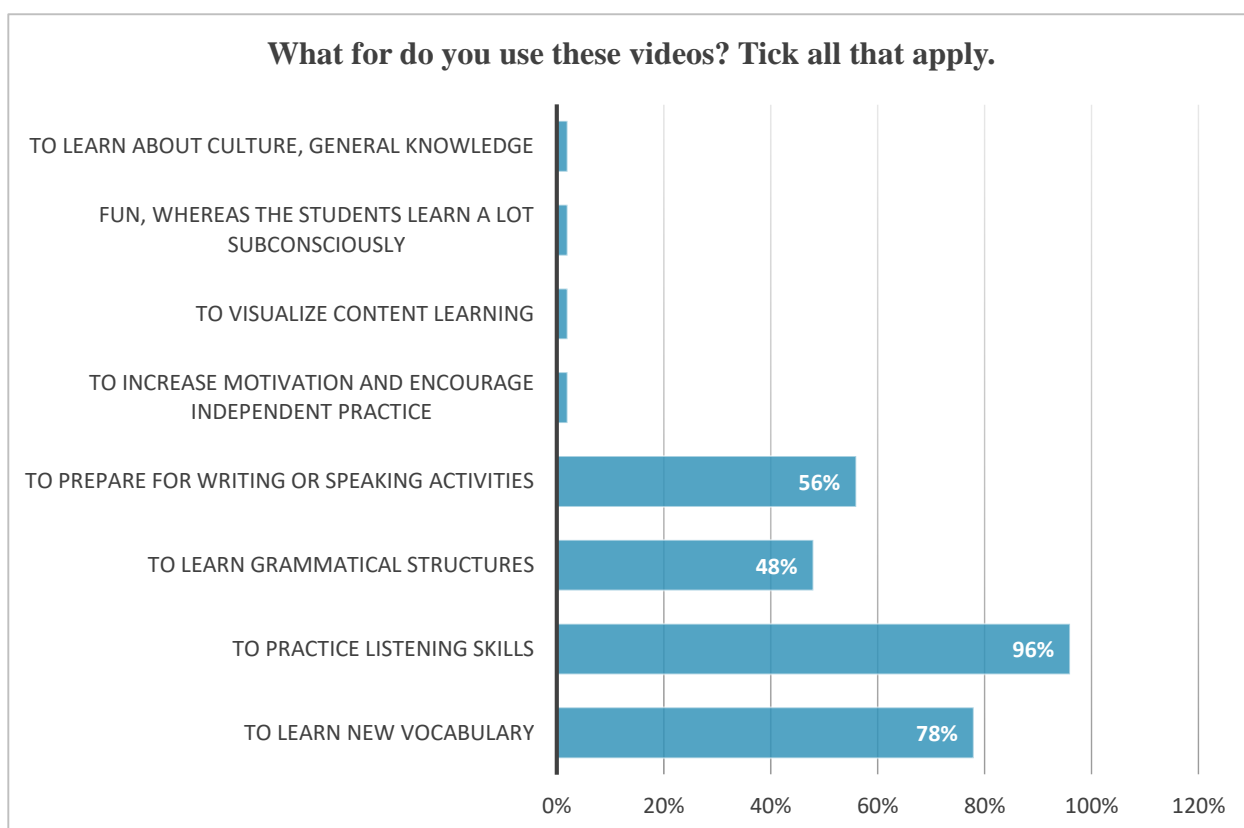
*Table 1. Grades that the respondents teach in.*

The third question was related to what kind of videos teachers use in their lessons. Possible answers were: cartoons, news items, vlogs, films and sitcoms. The majority of the respondents (43) use cartoons and more than a half (36) prefer using films to teach English. News items are used more frequently than sitcoms, with just two per cent difference between the two. The minority of the teachers (6) use vlogs in their lessons. 5 teachers also suggested using Youtube videos for different purposes, such as grammar explanation, vocabulary/grammas quiz, logic tasks, video clips, documentaries. Only 1 teacher suggested using TED-X conference videos.



*Table 2. Types of videos that the respondents use in their lessons.*

The fourth question was aimed to find out for what purposes teachers use these videos. Possible answers were: to learn new vocabulary, to practice listening skills, to learn grammatical structures, to prepare for writing or speaking activities. Teachers could also add their own option. Nearly all of the teachers (48) use videos to practice listening skills. Also a high percentage of respondents (78%) use videos to learn new vocabulary. Nearly a half of the teachers (24) use videos to learn grammatical structures and more than a half (28) – to prepare for writing or speaking activities. Four of the teachers suggested their own variants, among them are increased motivation; to encourage independent practice; for fun, whereas the students learn a lot subconsciously; to visualize content learning; to learn about culture, general knowledge.



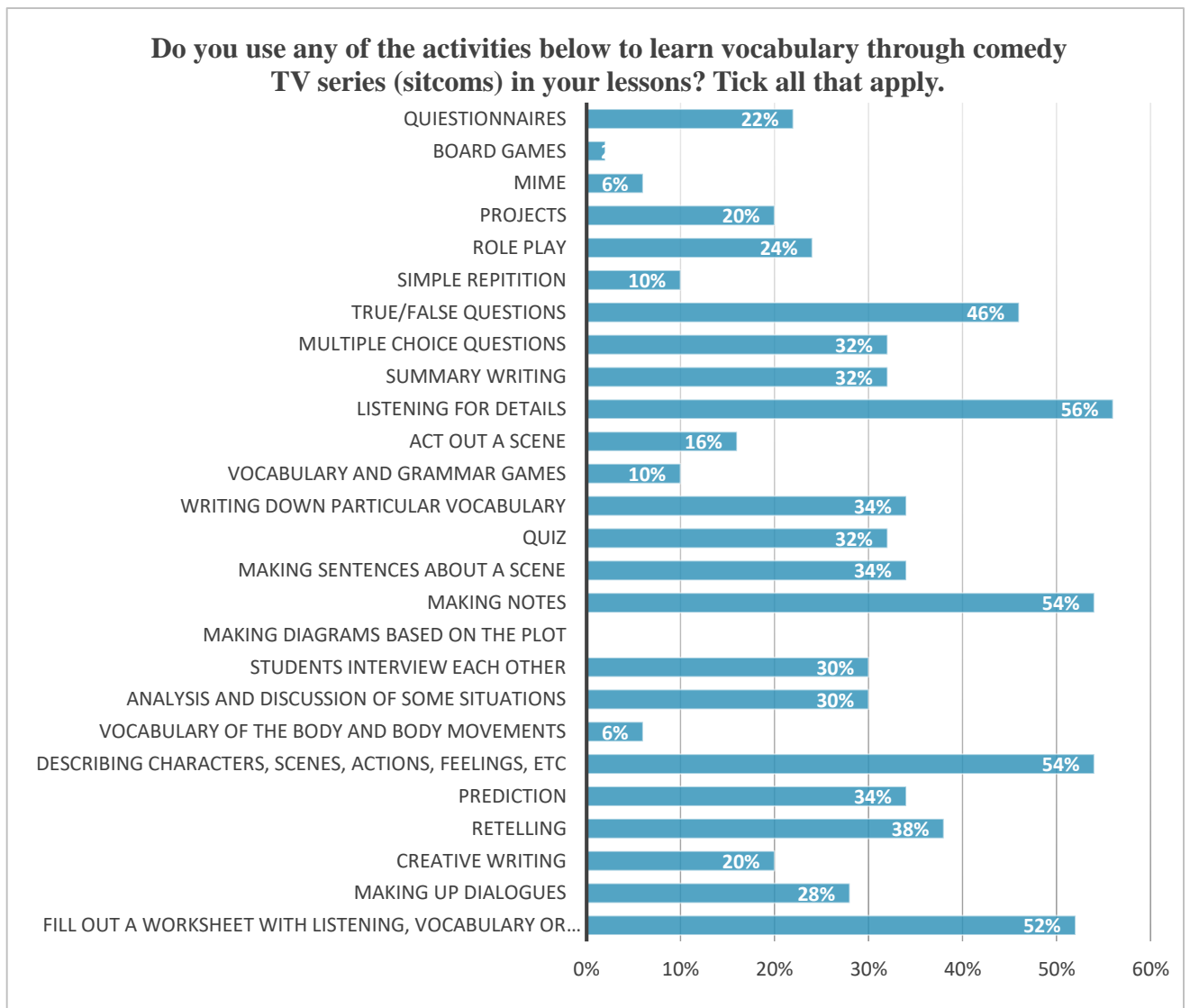
*Table 3. Purposes of using different videos.*

The last question refers to the list of activities that teachers use in their lessons to learn vocabulary through sitcoms. They needed to tick all the activities that they prefer to use and could also add their own ones. The list included 26 activities discussed in Chapter I:

- Filling out a worksheet with listening, vocabulary or grammar exercises
- Making up dialogues
- Creative writing
- Retelling
- Prediction. What will happen next?
- Describing characters, scenes, actions, feelings, etc.

- Vocabulary of the body and body movements
- Analysis and discussion of some situations
- Students interview each other
- Making diagrams based on the plot
- Making notes
- Making sentences about a scene
- Quiz
- Writing down particular vocabulary
- Vocabulary and grammar games
- Act out a scene
- Listening for details
- Summary writing
- Multiple choice questions
- True/False questions
- Simple repetition
- Role play
- Projects
- Mime
- Board games
- Questionnaires

The majority of the respondents use sitcoms to practice listening for details, describing characters, scenes, actions, feelings etc., making notes and filling out a worksheet. Nearly a half prefers to use true/false questions. Nearly a third uses sitcoms to practice making up dialogues, retelling, prediction, analysis and discussion, interviewing each other, making sentences about a scene, quiz, writing down particular vocabulary, summary writing and multiple choice questions. Less than a third uses creative writing, role play, projects, acting out a scene and questionnaires to learn vocabulary through sitcoms. 10% of the participants use simple repetition and vocabulary/grammar games. Less than 10% of the teachers use mime and vocabulary of the body and body movements. Only one teacher uses board games. Four teachers do not use sitcoms to learn vocabulary, they prefer doing these activities after watching films or cartoons.



*Table 4. Activities that the respondents use to learn vocabulary through comedy TV series.*

## 2.4 Discussion

The aim of the research was to investigate if EFL teachers of Ida-Virumaa schools use sitcoms to teach vocabulary communicatively and how. According to the respondents' responses to the questionnaire, sitcoms are not used that frequently to learn and teach vocabulary communicatively; instead the respondents prefer to use films or cartoons. The research has shown that the surveyed EFL teachers use various activities to make their lessons more interesting, in particular sitcoms are used for practicing listening for details. Only a few of the teachers do not use proposed activities to teach vocabulary through sitcoms in their lessons. Most importantly, teachers create opportunities for students to learn vocabulary by using not only course books but also prepare for them different creative tasks and assignments, which increases students' motivation in language acquisition. In conclusion it may be said that teachers are aware of different possibilities to diversify EFL lessons and they use them. The responses are different, and conclusions are based on the majority of the answers received.

## CONCLUSION

To sum up the results of the current research, a general conclusion has to be made. One of the most important fundamental aspects in English language learning is learning vocabulary. As it was discovered, vocabulary expands all the time, new words constantly appear, and even native speakers do not know all of the words. This means that vocabulary learning and teaching is essential in order to be able to express yourself in a foreign language. Even though a person might not know grammar structures, he/she will be able to provide the main idea of the sentence by using appropriate vocabulary. Undoubtedly, it does not mean that other skills should be less developed, all of them are interconnected. In order to expand vocabulary teachers should use as many different methods as possible apart from school textbooks.

The main purpose of the present research was to investigate how sitcoms can be used to learn and teach vocabulary communicatively and if EFL teachers of Ida-Virumaa schools use sitcoms in their lesson to teach vocabulary communicatively and how. The theoretical part of the research provides information collected from various online and printed resources, which include different activities to learn vocabulary through sitcoms communicatively. In total there are 26 vocabulary learning activities through sitcoms to support the study. This part also includes an analysis of the notion 'sitcom' itself, its advantages and how sitcoms can be a source of vocabulary and why they are efficient to use in EFL lessons. The theoretical part also discussed learning vocabulary communicatively and through context, which means that students are allowed to speak more than a teacher, to practice their oral communication skills. What is more, by overcoming a fear of speaking students will become more confident in language learning and will use not only active vocabulary but passive as well.

The practical part of the research presents the results of an empirical research into teaching practice of EFL teachers of Ida-Virumaa schools. The research was based on an online questionnaire sent to all Ida-Virumaa EFL teachers through a mailing list to collect data on their teaching practice when it comes to using audiovisual resources and using sitcoms to teach vocabulary in particular. 50 teachers in total participated in the survey. The results indicate that less than a half of the respondents with different teaching experience use sitcoms to support vocabulary study in their lessons. The results show that sitcoms are not as popular as films and cartoons or YouTube videos on a particular topic. The empirical part of the thesis also shows that the majority of the surveyed teachers use various methods and activities to learn and teach vocabulary, which allows students to take an active part in the lessons.

Summing up, it can be said that all of the aims of the bachelor's thesis were achieved, and the research questions were answered. From the results of the survey it is clear that those EFL teachers working in Ida-Viru schools who participated in the survey are aware of different methods and they actively use them in their lessons.

## SUMMARY IN ESTONIAN

Tänapäeval on olemas väga palju võimalusi ja lisamaterjale mis toetavad inglise keele õppimist. Üks neist on läbi sitkomi. Sitkom on komöödia TV žanr, mis kestab mitte rohkem kui 30 minutit. Selle kaudu saab praktiseerida oma inglise keele oskusi, laiendada sõnavara, õppida grammatikat ning palju muud.

Käesolev bakalaurusetöö põhineb sõnavara õppimise läbi sitkomi Ida-Virumaa koolides. Uurimisobjektiks on sõnavara laiendamine kommunikatiivselt, erinevate meetodite valik ja selle efektiivsus. Töö eesmärk on analüüsida kuidas sitkomid võivad aidata laiendada sõnavara ja suhtlemisoskusi ning millistele aspektidele see mõjutab kõige rohkem. Samuti kuidas sitkomi saab kasutada võõrkeele tundides selleks, et arendada lastel keele oskusi. Töö autor püüab vastata kahele uurimusküsimusele:

1. Kuidas sitkomid võivad olla kasutatud selleks, et õppida ja õpetada sõnavarat kommunikatiivselt?
2. Kas Ida-Virumaa võõrkeele õpetajad kasutavad sitkomi oma tundides sõnavara õpetamiseks ja kuidas?

Bakalaurusetöö koosneb sissejuhatausest, kahest peatükist ja kokkuvõttest.

Sissejuhatus annab üldist informatsiooni video kasutamisest võõrkeele tundides. Samuti räägitakse õpetaja rollist, kuidas saab laiendada sõnavara video kaudu, kuidas kasutatakse subtiitri ja väike ülevaade eelmistest töödest selles teemas.

Esimene peatükk – teoreetiline. See annab teoreetilist informatsiooni sõnavarast, sitkomist, kuidas neid saab integreerida tundidesse, ideede ja erinevate meetodite valik, mida õpetajad saavad kasutada oma tundide mitmekesistamiseks.

Teine peatükk – praktiline. Selles peatükis on esindatud uurimine, mis koosned online küsitlusest mõeldud õpetajatele ja selle analüüs. Saadud tulemused näitasid, et sitkomid pole eriti populaarsed Ida-Virumaa võõrkeele tundides, õpetajad kasutavad rohkem filme ja multfilme. Oluline on see, et õpetajad organiseerivad oma tundi kasutades erinevad aktiivsed meetodid. Need õpetajad, kes kasutavad sitkomid oma tundides, teevad seda, et praktiseerida õpilaste kuulamisoskusi.

Kokkuvõttes antakse ülevaade terve töö tulemustest, eesmärkidest ja uurimisküsimustest.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1. Questionnaire



## LEARNING VOCABULARY COMMUNICATIVELY AT SECONDARY SCHOOL THROUGH SITCOMS

Dear respondent,

I am a student at Narva College of the University of Tartu, and I am conducting a research among

teachers of English as a foreign language to find out if and how they use video resources and sitcoms

(comedy TV series) in particular to teach vocabulary in their lessons. I would be very grateful if you could find a couple of minutes to provide your response to the five questions in this questionnaire –it should take no more than 5 minutes to fill in.

Thank you very much for your help with my research!

\* **Обязательно**

Your teaching experience: \*

- 1-5 years
- 5-10 years
- 10-20 years
- more than 20 years of experience

What grades do you teach in? Please tick all that apply. \*

- Primary school (grades 1-6)
- Lower-secondary school (grades 7-9)
- Upper-secondary school (grades 10-12)

What kind of videos do you use in your English lessons? Tick all that apply. \*

- Cartoons
- News items
- Vlogs
- Films
- Sitcoms (comedy TV series)
- Другое: \_\_\_\_\_

What for do you use these videos? Tick all that apply. \*

- To learn new vocabulary
- To practice listening skills
- To learn grammatical structures
- To prepare for writing or speaking activities
- Другое: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you use any of the activities below to learn vocabulary through comedy TV series (sitcoms) in your lessons? Tick all that apply. \*

- Fill out a worksheet with listening, vocabulary or grammar exercises
- Making up dialogues
- Creative writing (e.g. to write a text or a message using the vocabulary used in a sitcom)
- Retelling (to show to one of the students a situation or a dialogue in the sitcom and the student has to retell it to the class)
- Prediction. What will happen next?
- Describing characters, scenes, actions, feelings, etc.
- Vocabulary of the body and body movements (situation in a sitcom is being viewed with the sound off and students imitate actor's body language and write down what the person does.)
- Analysis and discussion of some situations
- Students interview each other
- Making diagrams based on the plot
- Making notes (useful phrases/words/sentences)
- Making sentences about a scene (what? or who?, where?, when? why?)
- Quiz
- Writing down particular vocabulary (clothes, crime, people, travelling, sport etc)
- Vocabulary and grammar games (or other games based on the sitcom)
- Act out a scene
- Listening for details
- Summary writing
- Multiple choice questions
- True/False questions
- Simple repetition (e.g. repetition of lines and dialogues told by the characters)
- Role play
- Projects
- Mime
- Board games
- Questionnaires
- Другое: \_\_\_\_\_

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LEARNING VOCABULARY COMMUNICATIVELY IN EFL CLASSES THROUGH SITCOMS

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