



Laughing at Moral Failings: A Qualitative Case Study of Character Strengths and Failures in *Friends*

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Abstract

Framed within the Values in Action (VIA) Classification framework, the present study investigated the pedagogical potential of sitcoms, a widely utilized form of authentic multimodal material, for supporting language learning while simultaneously serving as a vehicle for representing character strengths and failures. The study drew on the experiences and perspectives of 20 Iranian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers and learners through in-depth interviews, complemented by a Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) of character strengths and failures depicted in selected episodes of *Friends*. The findings indicated that both groups of participants recognized the influence of sitcoms across linguistic, cultural, and character-related domains, although the extent and durability of these effects varied. Moreover, the content analysis revealed that while *Friends* portrays instances of character strengths such as kindness and social intelligence, it predominantly depicts moral failings, including infidelity, poor self-regulation, and offensive humor. Despite its popularity in the Iranian language education context and its inclusion of certain positive character traits, the sitcom conveys Western cultural norms that sharply conflict with Islamic-Iranian values. These findings underscore the need for further scholarly inquiry into both the contributions and potential repercussions of authentic multimodal materials in shaping language learners' well-being and character development. The study offers practical implications for syllabus designers, EFL teachers, and learners by informing more critical, reflective, and culturally responsive selection and use of media in language education.

Keywords: character strengths, character failures, qualitative content analysis, English language learning, materials, positive education, sitcom, VIA classification

Character education, the intentional cultivation of moral, prosocial, and practical virtues that enable individuals to act ethically and responsibly in society, and flourish both personally and socially, has long been a valued mission across diverse educational traditions and cultures. In recent years, this objective has gained attention within the framework of Positive Education (PE), an approach to education that combines traditional academic learning with principles of Positive Psychology (PosPsy). It emphasizes creating supportive educational environments that

* Review History:

Received: 12/12/2025

Revised: 26/05/2026

Accepted: 08/06/2026

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How to cite this article:

Parsaiyan, S. F. and Esmacelzadeh, F. (2026). Laughing at Moral Failings: A Qualitative Case Study of Character Strengths and Failures in *Friends*. *Teaching English as a Second Language Quarterly*, 45(3), 91-116.
<https://doi.org/10.22099/tesl.2026.55179.3468>



foster psychological and moral well-being, personal growth, and flourishing ([Babic, 2024](#); [Padilla & Chen, 2025](#); [Seligman, 2011](#)).

Within this educational approach, *character strengths* play a crucial role in promoting eudaimonic well-being, a form of psychological well-being rooted in the pursuit of meaning, moral values, and virtues rather than mundane, hedonic, or pleasure-seeking happiness ([Padilla & Chen, 2025](#)). Character strengths, distinct from innate talents or abilities, are broadly conceptualized as positive traits—such as modesty, self-esteem, courage, or empathy—that are reflected in an individual's feelings, thoughts, and behaviors ([Peterson & Seligman, 2004](#)). Identifying, using, and cultivating these strengths can help individuals strive toward their full potential across various domains of life, including personal, social, emotional, psychological, and moral well-being ([Mercer, 2021](#); [Padilla & Chen, 2025](#)). Among the approaches to understanding character strengths, the Values in Action (VIA) Classification developed by [Peterson and Seligman \(2004\)](#) provides a comprehensive framework. It identifies 24 strengths, such as curiosity, gratitude, and kindness, organized under six core virtues: wisdom and knowledge, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence.

Relatedly, Positive Language Education (PLE), an emerging approach that seeks to enhance the psychological well-being of both language teachers and learners through the cultivation of their strengths, has attracted growing scholarly attention within the field of English Language Teaching (ELT) (e.g., [Dewaele & Li, 2020](#); [Miao et al., 2025](#); [Wang et al., 2021](#)). Within this framework, the integration of character strengths into foreign language education has been investigated across a range of cultural and geographical contexts. Existing research suggests that strength-based pedagogical practices (like exercising resilience, empathy, self-compassion, gratitude, etc.) can contribute to learners' engagement, foreign language enjoyment, motivation, and emotional regulation, although the magnitude and nature of these effects appear to vary across educational and socio-cultural settings ([Gregersen et al., 2021](#); [Güler, 2018](#); [Narafshan & Noori, 2018](#); [Shafiee Rad & Jafarpour, 2023](#)).

Parallel to the growing body of scholarship on "strength-based education" ([Lopez & Louis, 2009](#); [Padilla & Chen, 2025](#)), attention has increasingly focused on the role of instructional materials in fostering EFL learners' character strengths. This line of inquiry highlights the dual function of ELT materials, not only as tools for language development but also as vehicles for moral, ethical, and socio-emotional learning (e.g., [Widodo et al., 2018](#)). Consequently, researchers have examined the extent to which moral and ethical values are represented and integrated into ELT materials, including internationally distributed commercial textbooks and locally developed ones. Such investigations have been particularly prominent in Asian settings (e.g., [Deng & Wang, 2023](#); [Yang & Nie, 2026](#)) and in countries with Islamic cultural traditions (e.g., [Thongrin, 2018](#); [Van Canh, 2018](#)), including Iran (e.g., [Tusi Nasrabadi & Rahmani, 2025](#)). The findings of these studies underscore the need to develop culturally and morally responsive language-learning materials that not only promote learners' moral awareness, critical thinking,

character development, and psychological well-being, but also align with the socio-cultural, ideological, and religious values of teachers and learners in specific local contexts. However, as argued by [Van Canh \(2018, p. 112\)](#), "the literature on how moral values are presented in either internationally or locally produced ESL/EFL textbooks remains...scarce."

Recent scholarship has increasingly explored the potential of authentic multimodal materials in foreign language education, with *situational comedies/sitcoms* emerging as one such option ([Alamri, 2025](#)). Findings from various studies suggest that sitcoms may provide engaging input that could support the development of linguistic, pragmatic, and cultural competence, while potentially contributing to positive classroom atmospheres and offering psychological benefits, such as reduced anxiety and increased motivation in EFL contexts ([Leonhardt & Viebrock, 2025](#); [Valizadeh, 2022](#); [Rousseau, 2025](#)). Nevertheless, a small body of discourse-based research (e.g., [Alafita et al., 2012](#)) has warned that popular sitcoms frequently incorporate Western-oriented ideological values, even moral failings, which may not align with the cultural norms of non-Western societies.

As the literature indicates, despite an emerging body of research on character-strength interventions and a moderate examination of moral and values-based content in ELT materials, the character-educational dimensions of popular sitcoms used in foreign language education remain insufficiently explored. In particular, little is known about how sitcoms portray character strengths and character failures, understood as misapplication or violation of character strengths ([Niemic & Wedding, 2008](#)), and how they may function as resources for both language learning and character development. This gap is particularly significant in light of theoretical perspectives, such as Bandura's Social Learning Theory, positing that learning occurs through the observation and internalization of modeled behaviors within social contexts. From this viewpoint, repeated exposure to and engagement with the themes, characters, and behaviors depicted in sitcoms can serve as models for viewers, particularly young audiences, potentially shaping their attitudes and behaviors ([Bandura, 2001](#); [Niemic & Wedding, 2008](#)) and influencing their character development and psychological and moral well-being ([van der Wal et al., 2020](#)).

Given the limited research on the pedagogical use of sitcoms in English language education in Iran and the absence of studies examining them through a character strengths framework, this qualitative study explored the perspectives of a purposively selected group of Iranian EFL teachers and learners, focusing on their views regarding the role of popular sitcoms in both language education and character education. In addition, drawing on [Peterson and Seligman's \(2004\)](#) VIA Classification framework and a culturally informed interpretive lens, the study analyzed a widely viewed sitcom (*Friends*) to examine how it portrays character strengths and failures. The following research questions guided the present study:

1. How do the Iranian EFL teachers and learners, participating in this study, perceive the role of sitcoms in English language learning?

2. How do the Iranian EFL teachers and learners reflect on the ways in which popular sitcoms depict—or fail to depict—character strengths and virtues?
3. In what ways does the selected popular sitcom (*Friends*) depict—or fail to depict—character strengths and virtues?

The present study contributes to the field of language education in several ways. Theoretically, it extends interdisciplinary scholarship on the integration of Positive Education into English language education. It also advances research on ELT materials and character education by focusing on authentic media. Pedagogically, the findings may enhance EFL teachers' and syllabus designers' critical awareness, particularly in non-Western contexts, of the implicit and explicit value orientations embedded in such media texts. Methodologically, the study offers an example of using the VIA Classification framework alongside a culturally situated interpretive lens for the content analysis of media texts, examining the presence of character strengths and the manifestation of character failures.

Review of Literature

Character Strengths and Virtues

Character strengths have been defined as positive traits reflected in individuals' thoughts, feelings, and behaviors ([Park & Peterson, 2006](#)). [Peterson and Seligman \(2004\)](#) contend that good character is developed through the cultivation of six core virtues and 24 corresponding character strengths. In this classification, *Wisdom and Knowledge* includes cognitive strengths of creativity, curiosity, judgment, love of learning, and perspective. *Courage* encompasses emotional strengths such as bravery, perseverance, honesty, and zest, enabling individuals to pursue goals despite challenges. *Humanity* involves interpersonal strengths such as love, kindness, and social intelligence that facilitate prosocial relationships. *Justice* refers to civic strengths, including teamwork, fairness, and leadership, that promote responsible citizenship. *Temperance* includes strengths that protect against excess, such as forgiveness, humility, prudence, and self-regulation. Eventually, *Transcendence* enables individuals to connect with something greater than themselves and to appreciate beauty, gratitude, hope, humor, and spirituality.

The VIA Classification framework has been extensively applied across various disciplines and a growing body of research has examined the effectiveness of strengths-based interventions in clinical and non-clinical settings. Moreover, in educational contexts, numerous studies have examined how integrating character strengths and virtues into formal curricula—through media such as films and literature—can enhance learners' awareness of virtues and foster their mental health, psychological and moral well-being, and prosocial behaviors (e.g., [Stolk et al., 2025](#)).

Despite its widespread use, the classification has been subject to criticism, including its grounding in Western moral traditions, conceptual ambiguities and overlaps, and limited

attention to the socio-economic, religious, ideological, and contextual factors that shape the development and expression of character strengths (e.g., [Christopher & Hickinbottom, 2008](#); [Padilla & Chen, 2025](#)). Notwithstanding these limitations, scholars (e.g., [Pezirkianidis et al., 2020](#)) have generally advocated a more moderate position—one that neither uncritically endorses nor rejects the VIA Classification outright. Instead, they argue for its use in conjunction with local and culturally situated perspectives to more adequately account for the religious, ideological, and socio-cultural dynamics of communities in the interpretation of virtues and character failures. This balanced position has been adopted in the present study.

Character Strengths and Virtues in ELT

In the field of ELT, the integration of character strengths and virtues into language curricula, despite their perceived potential ([Padilla & Chen, 2025](#)), remains underexplored compared to other psychological areas, and the findings present mixed results. For instance, [Güler \(2018\)](#) found that character strength exercises had little impact on EFL students' motivation and achievement perceptions, suggesting that the effectiveness of such interventions may vary. [Gregersen and MacIntyre \(2021\)](#) also observed mixed results in reducing writing anxiety through positive psychology interventions, highlighting the need for individualized approaches. Nevertheless, [Shafiee Rad and Jafarpour \(2023\)](#) observed that a grit-focused intervention significantly enhanced L2 learners' writing skills and well-being.

Parallel to the growing body of scholarship on "strength-based education" ([Lopez & Louis, 2009](#); [Padilla & Chen, 2025](#)), attention has increasingly focused on the role of instructional materials in presenting moral and ethical values ([Widodo et al., 2018](#)), particularly in non-Western contexts. For instance, [Tusi Nasrabadi and Rahmani \(2025\)](#) conducted a mixed-methods study comparing the representation of moral values in two English language teaching textbooks: *Vision 1* from Iran and *New Bridges 2e* from France. Their findings revealed that *Vision 1* places greater emphasis on national, social, and cultural values grounded in collectivist and religious perspectives, whereas *New Bridges 2e* foregrounds individual and global values associated with a secular belief system.

The findings of these studies (e.g., [Deng & Wang, 2023](#); [Thongrin, 2018](#); [Van Canh, 2018](#); [Yang & Nie, 2026](#)) largely underscore the need for the development of culturally and morally responsive language-learning materials that not only promote learners' character development as well as their psychological and moral well-being, but also align with the socio-cultural, ideological, and religious values of teachers and learners in diverse local contexts. Nevertheless, the majority of morality-focused studies have concentrated on textbooks, while authentic materials such as sitcoms, despite their popularity in language education, have received comparatively less attention.

Sitcoms—short, humorous narratives usually completed in half an hour and broadcast as part of a series of multiple episodes ([Niemic & Wedding, 2008](#))—have become increasingly

popular in EFL classrooms ([Konus, 2020](#); [Leonhardt & Viebrock, 2025](#)). Research has shown that the use of sitcoms in language classrooms can enhance language learners' motivation, support the development of communicative skills, facilitate vocabulary and pragmatic learning (e.g., [Alerwi & Alzahrani, 2020](#)), and promote cultural awareness (e.g., [Rousseau, 2025](#)).

For instance, [Konus \(2020\)](#) reported that naturally occurring, unscripted conversations in sitcoms help promote a communicative classroom atmosphere and support the development of listening and speaking skills. Similarly, [Webb \(2010\)](#) found that sitcoms like *The IT Crowd*, a British sitcom, could be effectively used to teach colloquial and idiomatic expressions. Additionally, sitcoms were reported to support the development of pragmatic competence by exposing learners to speech acts, such as politeness strategies and implicature (e.g., [Alerwi & Alzahrani, 2020](#); [Washburn, 2001](#)). Further studies have investigated the sitcom use in enhancing EFL learners' cultural awareness (e.g., [Lee, 2016](#); [Rousseau, 2025](#)). Nevertheless, a small body of discourse-based research (e.g., [Alafita et al., 2012](#)) has warned that popular sitcoms frequently incorporate Western-oriented ideological values that may not align with the cultural norms of other societies and may depict moral failings. For instance, [Alafita et al. \(2012\)](#) analyzed ideological messages in *Modern Family* and noted the influence of American values on Mexican viewers.

Despite a large number of studies, to the best of our knowledge, no study has examined Iranian EFL teachers' and learners' perspectives on the role of sitcoms in both English language learning and character education. Moreover, no study has examined sitcoms popular among EFL learners through the lens of character education, specifically focusing on the character strengths and failures depicted in them. The present study seeks to address these gaps.

Method

Design

This study primarily aimed to explore the perspectives of Iranian English language teachers and learners regarding the role of sitcoms in both language learning and character education. A secondary objective was to examine the depiction of character strengths (or their failures) in a popular sitcom, widely used by Iranian language teachers and learners for language teaching and learning. To achieve these objectives, a descriptive qualitative approach was employed. As explained by [Tisdell et al. \(2025\)](#), qualitative researchers conducting a descriptive study seek to describe: "(1) how people interpret their experiences, (2) how they construct their worlds, and (3) what meaning they attribute to their experiences. The overall purpose is to *understand* and *describe* how people make sense of their lives and their experiences" (p. 29). This design was particularly appropriate for the present study because it enabled an in-depth exploration of how the English teachers and learners participating in this study interpreted their experiences with sitcoms in language education and how they perceived the portrayal of character strengths (or failures) in them.

To complement participants' accounts and gain a more direct, nuanced understanding of how character strengths are represented in a popular sitcom, the study incorporated a case study component focusing on selected scenes from *Friends*. Case studies are particularly valuable for providing an in-depth examination of a "bounded system" and generating rich contextual insights that may not be accessible through participant self-reports alone ([Merriam & Grenier, 2019](#)). To analyze these scenes, Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) was employed. QCA facilitated the rigorous examination of textual and visual data, allowing the researchers to identify recurring patterns in the portrayal of character strengths and interpret them.

Participants and Materials

Purposive sampling was used to select interview participants with certain characteristics ([Tisdell et al. 2025](#)), specifically those with moderate to extensive experience watching English sitcoms, as they were more likely to provide valuable insights into the study's topic. Participants included ten EFL teachers (male and female in their twenties and thirties) and ten English learners (male and female in their early twenties), who were conveniently selected from two language institutes in Tehran, all with experience using sitcoms for language teaching or learning. The sample size was guided by the principle of thematic saturation, in which data collection continued until no new themes or insights emerged from the interviews. This was facilitated by the relatively focused scope of the study and the shared experiential background of the participants in engaging with sitcom-based learning. The decision to include learner participants in their twenties was made to maintain relative homogeneity in age-related factors that may shape media preferences, viewing practices, and engagement with sitcoms. The learners were at an intermediate proficiency level, the minimum required for using sitcoms as a learning tool. The teachers also had over two years of experience using sitcoms in language teaching.

The second data source in this study consisted of selected scenes from the popular sitcom *Friends*. The sitcom was ranked first in an online survey administered to a sample of Iranian teachers and learners prior to the main phase of the study. *Friends* is an American sitcom created by David Crane and Marta Kauffman, which aired on NBC from the 1990s to the early 2000s. The show consists of 10 seasons with a total of 236 episodes, each lasting about 22 minutes. The plot revolves around six friends as they navigate their personal and professional lives. The show has received numerous accolades, including six Primetime Emmy Awards (Wikipedia).

Data Collection and Procedure

The primary data for this study were collected through semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with language teachers and learners, each lasting approximately 30 minutes. The interview guides were specifically developed by the researchers to align with the study's objectives, and were reviewed by an Applied Linguistics professor and a Positive Psychology

expert for relevance and clarity. Learner interviews explored students' perceptions of sitcoms as language learning tools and their views on the moral traits represented by leading characters in their favorite sitcoms, whereas teacher interviews addressed the pedagogical values of sitcoms, the criteria used by them for sitcom selection, and their potential influence on adolescents' character development (Appendices B & C).

To facilitate participants' comfort and ensure accurate comprehension, learner interviews were conducted in Persian, their native language, while teacher interviews were conducted in English, as preferred by them, with occasional code-switching. All interviews were conducted by one of the researchers, who served as an English instructor at the selected institutes and was therefore fairly familiar with the teachers and students. This acquaintance facilitated access to the participants by securing institutional permissions and establishing rapport with them.

Before each interview, the researcher explained the purpose of the study and described the measures taken to protect their anonymity, including safeguards for personal information and the use of pseudonyms in all reports. Although no sensitive questions were raised in the interviews, participants were informed of their right to decline to answer any challenging questions; however, no participant exercised this right. With participants' consent, all interviews were audio-recorded, fully transcribed verbatim, translated, and subsequently rechecked by both researchers for accuracy.

To complement the interview data and enhance data triangulation ([Merriam & Grenier, 2019](#)), the researchers also conducted a content analysis of a popular sitcom widely used by Iranian language learners. To select the sitcom, an online survey was distributed to over 200 Iranian English teachers and learners, yielding 134 responses. The respondents rated several well-known sitcoms from the 1990s onward, including *Friends*, *The Office*, *The Big Bang Theory*, and *Modern Family*. The results identified *Friends* as the most popular choice (Appendix A).

Prior to content analysis, one of the researchers watched the entire *Friends* series multiple times to gain a thorough understanding of its plot, characters, and key events. To examine the portrayal of character strengths (or failures), the first episode of each season (ten episodes, approximately 230 minutes in total) was then selected as the sample. The choice of season premieres was intentional, as these episodes often establish character trajectories and set the narrative directions the series pursues throughout the season ([Newman & Levine, 2012](#)). While this sampling method had certain limitations, such as the potential to exclude critical episodes or events and the possibility of sampling bias, it was well-suited to the study's qualitative-descriptive, illustrative approach, which aimed to identify and interpret patterns in character portrayal rather than produce statistically generalizable findings.

Data Analysis

Following [Braun and Clarke's \(2006\)](#) reflexive thematic analysis, which emphasizes an iterative movement between data, codes, and emerging themes, the interview analysis began with multiple readings of the interview transcripts to achieve familiarization with the data. This was followed by assigning codes to specific segments, comparative analysis of these codes, and conceptualizing and categorizing recurring codes into sub-themes. This iterative process ultimately facilitated the identification of overarching themes ([Merriam & Grenier, 2019](#)).

The sitcom analysis involved a rigorous qualitative content analysis of the selected ten episodes. In this phase, each episode was segmented into analytically meaningful units based on the major themes evident in the progression of the events. This was followed by re-watching the scenes, meticulously reviewing the movie script or subtitles, and taking interpretive notes by both researchers. The identification and categorization of character strengths were conducted deductively, chiefly guided by the pre-determined VIA categories for strengths and virtues. Employing this framework facilitated the examination of positive character traits across the episodes.

The analysis of character failures, however, required a different approach. As the VIA model focuses exclusively on strengths and virtues and does not explicitly define their opposites, the identified instances of character failures were coded inductively by the researchers through adopting a cultural perspective. Instances of character failure were therefore identified as actions or attitudes that violated, undermined, or contradicted particular strengths and virtues within the Iranian cultural, moral, or ideological value system. This inductive and context-sensitive approach enabled the researchers to capture negative manifestations of characters without forcing them into pre-determined categories. This decision was also informed by critiques of the VIA Classification that highlight its limited attention to cultural, religious, and ideological variations in how virtues and undesirable traits are understood and evaluated ([Padilla & Chen, 2025](#)). To enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, the coding procedures and interpretations were reviewed by a Positive Psychology expert and her suggestions and feedback were taken into consideration.

It should be mentioned that although independent coding and the calculation of inter-coder reliability were initially considered, these procedures were ultimately replaced by a consensus-based approach. The identification of coding units proved to be a highly interpretive rather than mechanical process. Many conversational exchanges and behavioral incidents reflected multiple overlapping strengths and failures or simultaneously embodied several VIA-related dimensions. Consequently, coding decisions often required extensive discussion, comparison of interpretations, and collaborative refinement between the researchers. Through this process of negotiation and consensus-building, the researchers sought agreement on coding, category assignments, and thematic interpretations.

Results

Research Question 1: Teachers' Perceptions of the Role of Sitcoms

Affordances

The analysis of interviews with language teachers revealed a generally positive orientation toward incorporating sitcoms into language instruction. A prominent theme that emerged was the Pedagogical Affordances of sitcoms, encompassing several interrelated sub-themes. These included *authentic language exposure, practice of language skills and components, enhanced learner engagement, cultural learning and intercultural awareness, and promotion of critical thinking*. Each of these sub-themes is briefly explained below:

The teachers collectively highlighted the merits of using sitcoms, noting their effectiveness in teaching everyday expressions and informal English, and in providing authentic language exposure in a lively, relatable context. For example, Bahar, an avid fan of sitcoms herself, mentioned that students find the language used in sitcoms "more real" than in textbooks, and that "the joy of understanding real language" can be very motivating for them. Several other teachers highlighted the role of sitcoms in contextualizing "everyday conversations" and delivering authentic materials that "expose language learners to natural language and culture".

From a pedagogical perspective, the teachers believed that sitcoms can offer other benefits. Several interviewees mentioned using sitcoms to practice grammatical structures, lexical items, and idiomatic expressions, as well as to enhance their students' pronunciation, listening, and speaking skills. For instance, Sara shared her strategy of reviewing grammatical points via using episodes from sitcoms:

We watched a scene from Friends where Chandler says, "Was that place the sun?" I then asked the students to explain why "the sun" is used in this context. I paused the clip to analyze and discuss the grammar in more detail.

Moreover, some teachers noted that they regularly employed sitcoms to stimulate classroom participation and encourage critical thinking through discussions of cultural and controversial issues. For instance, Niloofar explained that she used selected episodes from sitcoms as a springboard for discussions, to stimulate active participation and deeper cultural awareness among students. She added: "the controversial topics in sitcoms often provoke disagreements, encouraging students to debate and exchange ideas more enthusiastically".

Challenges

Despite recognizing Pedagogical Affordances, the teachers also highlighted several notable Challenges associated with the use of sitcoms in language instruction. These challenges included the *need for careful materials selection, linguistic complexity, the risk of diminished learner confidence, and cultural and ethical considerations*. These sub-themes are briefly elaborated on below:

The majority of the teachers emphasized that sitcoms, as authentic "ungraded sources" of language, require meticulous evaluation before being played in classrooms, and that selecting and preparing these materials can be time-intensive and laborious. For example, Kiana, referring to the necessity of carefully selecting content which is linguistically, affectively, and culturally appropriate, noted:

Using sitcoms in the classroom demands additional preparation time from the teacher. It can be challenging to find appropriate media that that aligns with both the language proficiency and interests of the students. Sitcoms may present linguistic difficulties, contain controversial or inappropriate content, or raise cultural sensitivities that require careful consideration. Furthermore, the pace of talking in sitcoms could be frustrating for some students.

While sitcoms were acknowledged by the majority of teachers as a way to boost learners' motivation, Babak, a teacher with over 13 years of experience, argued that they can also be counterproductive "if not selected carefully". He explained: "If the sitcom is not understandable for the learners, it could lower their confidence, which I believe would negatively impact the learning process."

Two other teachers further emphasized the importance of "cultural sensitivity" when choosing sitcoms and the necessity of considering the learners' cultural backgrounds. One of them further exemplified that the cultural norms portrayed in certain sitcoms "may encourage students to oppose or defy their parents or the authorities," which could lead to unintended consequences.

Learners' Perceptions of the Role of Sitcoms

Affordances

Consistent with the teachers' perspectives, the majority of interviewed learners expressed positive views regarding the use of sitcoms as a tool for foreign language learning. A prominent theme that emerged was the Pedagogical Affordances of sitcoms, which encompassed multiple interrelated sub-themes, largely aligned with those identified in the teachers' interviews. These sub-themes included *authentic language exposure, cultural learning, practice of language skills and components, and enhanced learner engagement*.

From a pedagogical perspective, the students highlighted multiple ways in which sitcoms contribute to their foreign language learning. The reasons frequently cited for the appeal of sitcoms included their portrayal of real-life situations and their portrayal of the culture of foreign speakers. They reported that sitcoms help them to learn "daily practical vocabulary," familiarize them with "different accents and pronunciations," engage them in "day-to-day conversations that happen in real life," teach them "the appropriate use of English in different

contexts," and provide them with opportunities to share their opinions about daily topics. In this regard, Kamran and Shamim, respectively, explained:

Sitcoms can be used as a useful means for learning English. They can have various benefits such as illustrating diverse situations and appropriate use of English in each one. Overall, I think it's a great tool for learners to improve their understanding of different accents and distinctive way that each person speaks or pronounces words. It also helps learners to become more familiar with day-to-day conversations that happen in real life which might be slightly different from what is taught in textbooks.

The pleasant and entertaining nature of sitcom content, along with the short episode length, which allows viewers to "quickly finish one episode in short breaks" or even "during a class," were identified as other key affordances. Several learners reported that, particularly in otherwise monotonous classes, using sitcom episodes can enhance the learning environment by making it more enjoyable and engaging. As Sasan remarked, "Our teachers sometimes used sitcoms. It was fun for a bit, and being fun makes it easier to learn a language."

Challenges

Despite acknowledging the Pedagogical Affordances of sitcoms, the interviewees articulated nuanced perspectives regarding their limitations, describing them metaphorically as "double-edged swords." These challenges primarily align with the subcategories of *risk of overabsorption* in sitcoms and *linguistic and cultural content-related difficulties*. These two subcategories are briefly explained below:

Several students acknowledged that the engaging and entertaining nature of sitcoms can effectively capture learners' attention and help them sustain their focus during language-learning activities. As one participant noted, "Sitcoms can be entertaining and help keep students focused." However, believing that excessive absorption in the storyline might divert language learners from the primary educational intent, the same participant cautioned: "if students become too absorbed and get carried away with the story, they might lose interest in the actual process of learning." In addition, a few learners argued that sitcoms might undermine classroom seriousness through diverting attention to humor. In this regard, Zahra stated: "Typically, sitcoms can reduce the seriousness of a classroom to an insufficient level."

Furthermore, more than half of the interviewees highlighted the potential cognitive challenges language learners may confront when processing the linguistic and culturally embedded language typical of sitcoms, which may exceed learners' linguistic competence. They argued that grappling with complex linguistic nuances could cause confusion or "discouragement," particularly among less proficient learners. As Sina explained, "Some students get discouraged or frustrated when they feel that they're not catching on to some linguistic or cultural stuff or fully grasping them."

Teachers' Perceptions of Portrayal of Characters' Strengths (or Failures) in Sitcoms

Another issue explored with the teachers concerned the representation of character strengths and character failures in popular sitcoms and their potential influence on learners. This theme encompassed several interrelated sub-themes, reflecting the teachers' nuanced perspectives on learners' engagement with sitcoms. These included mixed views regarding *exposure to positive character strengths and virtues*, occasional *modeling of linguistic and behavioral patterns through imitation of fictional characters*, the possibility of *character identification*, and concerns about learners' *exposure to moral shortcomings, character flaws*, and culturally sensitive content in sitcoms. The most salient sub-themes emerging from the data are briefly summarized below.

While arguing that the virtues portrayed differed across sitcoms, most teachers identified character strengths such as friendship, kindness, love, perseverance, hope, and humor as central themes. For instance, in discussing *Friends*, Babak said:

Well, obviously, as the name suggests, at least in Friends, friendship is really important. The characters' ...staying together when things get hard is something that I think is really underrated in human relationships. If students can pick up on that attribute..., I think it would be really beneficial for them.

Niloofer further highlighted how these values are often demonstrated through "the ways the characters in *Friends* solve each other's problems". Bahareh referring to "self-acceptance" as an essential character strength, added:

Some characters like Phoebe in Friends...can teach people that they can be different but they shouldn't feel left out and that it's normal to not be like others.

Nevertheless, the teachers held mixed views regarding the extent to which the presence or absence of such virtues could shape the character development of their learners, particularly adolescents. A couple of interviewees, like Babak, were skeptical about whether these virtues "were even noticed," remarking, "I know that they will mostly watch the sitcom for the humor, for the comedy, but to learn from it...I am not sure." In contrast, a subset of teachers was of the opinion that specific characters in popular sitcoms could exert a "transient influence" on the "linguistic production" of their language learners. This influence manifested in the adoption of particular linguistic expressions and structures, and the emulation of gestures and body language. Notably, references were made to Joey in *Friends* sitcom with his "How you doin'?" line, and Sheldon Cooper's iconic three-knock in *The Big Bang Theory*. Niloofer explained that she had noticed her students "mimicking" the language and humor from the popular sitcoms, suggesting that the shows influenced their vocabulary and communication styles.

Several other teachers believed that sitcoms offer more than mere entertainment, as their portrayal of character strengths and virtues has "the potential" to influence students' character

development; nevertheless, they noted that the recognition of these strengths or failures of character may vary based on factors such as learners' age, maturity, capacity for moral reasoning or ethical-decision making, and the degree to which learners relate to the characters. Some of the teachers, drawing on their personal observations, reported noticing their students fostering "emotional connections" and "engagement" with certain characters in popular sitcoms, identifying with them as relatable role models and, in some cases, emulating their manners. To them, such tendencies may indicate processes of social, emotional, and moral learning and internalization. Atefeh explained:

I've heard so many times from my students calling themselves 'a Phoebe, a Ross, or a Monica' or other characters from Friends sitcom. This goes to show that they have been able to identify not only the virtues, but also the flaws of the characters. That's why they feel for them.

Yasaman also explained that she had noticed her adolescent students paying attention to virtues such as "kindness," "hope," and "perseverance" in the *Two Broke Girls* sitcom, which portrays two young women striving to build an independent business. This inspired her students to pursue their own vocational dreams and to appreciate values such as friendship, hard work, and independence. She said: "When I show *Two Broke Girls* to my high school students, they are very excited about it. And they all say that they want to make a business when they're 18. ... So I think it gives them a sort of role model to be independent".

Nevertheless, a few teachers expressed concerns that some sitcoms frequently portray character failures—such as rudeness, dishonesty, or selfishness—as comedic devices, which may undermine their educational value. Alarmingly, Niloofar mentioned that while Barney, a character in *How I Met Your Mother*, acts "naughty" and "disrespectful" to women, he is still popular among her students and they find him "funny". Similarly, Yasaman acknowledged the negative aspects of certain sitcom characters, arguing that "some characters in sitcoms despite portraying good traits, display moral failings like having out-of-marriage relationship with multiple partners." She pointed out that the *normalization* of such "immoral manners," even when presented humorously, could have a potentially harmful influence on learners, as it conflicts with the Iranian cultural values and religious moral teachings.

Learners' Perceptions of Portrayal of Characters' Strengths (or Failures) in Sitcoms

The learners also articulated their perspectives on the representation of character strengths (or failures) in the sitcoms they frequently watched. This theme encompassed several interrelated sub-themes that captured the nuanced ways in which learners engaged with sitcom content, including their recognition of *portrayed virtues and positive character strengths*, their varied stances toward influence, ranging from *claiming no behavioral impact* to *selectively adopting or modeling certain actions*, and their subtle attention to *characters' flaws and*

negative values. Together, these sub-themes highlight the complexity of the learners' interpretive engagement. Below is a brief description of these categories:

The majority of the interviewees mentioned that the sitcoms they watched portrayed positive traits such as friendship, love, honesty, humor, kindness, and positive human relationships. Participants perceived these virtues not merely as entertainment elements but as moral messages embedded within the narratives. Kamran, for example, drew attention to the sitcom *Modern Family*'s emphasis on familial bonds, highlighting its emotional and affective appeal to him. He remarked, "I always want to thank *Modern Family* characters for making me laugh a lot, showing me beautiful scenes, making me experience different emotions, and watching a beautiful family. It has a special place in my heart."

Similarly, Mohammad referred to messages of loyalty and friendship observed in *The Big Bang Theory*. He explained: "In *Big Bang Theory*, you see how smart people, who cannot have many friends, still stick to their friendship. They stick to their group." Sina also viewed sitcoms as vehicles for communicating socially desirable values. As he explained, "TV shows need to advertise some good values, some virtues within communities. So sitcoms, like other shows, most of the time show the importance of love, forgiveness, and relationships. And *Friends* and *Big Bang Theory* kind of follow that."

The interviewees were also prompted to reflect on whether the sitcoms served any functions related to character education—such as modeling virtues or character strengths—and whether these portrayals had influenced their personal development, values, or everyday behaviors. Responses to this question revealed a spectrum of perspectives. More than half of the participants reported difficulty recalling specific instances and generally expressed disagreement with the sitcoms' influence on their character development. They tended to distinguish between entertainment and real-life behavioral modeling, suggesting that while sitcoms may offer brief emotional or cognitive engagement, they do not necessarily lead to meaningful personal transformation. For example, Sajad, commented: "I'd say no, you know. Personally, I'd rather not take any habits or behavior from a fictional character." Besides, they believed that the behavioral effects of sitcoms might vary depending on learners' age and level of maturity. They noted that while younger audiences are more likely to "get influenced by sitcoms and adapt to their style of living," older or more mature learners may be less susceptible to such influence.

In contrast, a subset of participants primarily referred to the "lessons" they had internalized from the sitcoms, and a few cited figures from various sitcoms as having influenced their character. For instance, one interviewee, Amir, while discussing the dual role of sitcoms as both a source of entertainment and a medium for informal education, reflected on the emotional and moral lessons such as love, loyalty, and genuine kindness, he had learned from the characters in the sitcom *How I Met Your Mother*. He explained:

This series, How I Met Your Mother, is very good. I'm learning new lessons about relationships and how to deal with life. In my opinion, sitcom series at least have educational things in terms of how to live. For example, I learned if you want to be like Ted Mosby, forget everything and stick to your Robin!

Another interviewee, Reza, mentioned that the Ghosts sitcom had inspired him to be more devoted in his marriage. Mentioning how he had observed virtues like love, steadfast loyalty, and genuine kindness within the context of a marital relationship in the sitcom, he explained:

In Ghosts, one value that I have noticed is that how the husband leaves everything for his wife and comes to live with her, so it's obviously advertising love and loyalty and kindness. And that inspires me to be like that when I get married.

Similarly, a few other interviewees shared reflections on being cognitively or emotionally inspired by sitcoms. For instance, Hasan cited a scene from the sitcom *Frasier* in which the main character comes to a belated realization about the importance of human connection. For him, this moment underscored the significance of acting quickly to build meaningful relationships before it is too late. Elham recalled a particularly memorable episode of *Friends* in which one of the characters, Rachel, attempts to become economically independent of her parents. Despite the comedic framing, Elham found the moment inspiring. She said, "It made me admire her and want to be independent." These remarks suggest that, for certain language learners, sitcom characters and content serve a deeper purpose than light-hearted amusement by providing emotional and intellectual points of connection, as well as goals and values that might resonate with their evolving sense of character development.

While nearly all the interviewed learners recalled instances of positive values portrayed in their favorite sitcoms and discussed them in detail, one participant noted that some sitcoms, although entertaining, may not consistently model desirable behaviors. Sasan, a language learner in his twenties, explained: "I guess some sitcoms portray negative values too. Like *The Office*. It has a lot of pranks... offending phrases, and sometimes they're fun, sometimes they're not..."

The Portrayal of Character Strengths and Failures in Selected Episodes of *Friends*

The third research question of the study aimed to explore how the selected popular sitcom (*Friends*) depicts or fails to depict character strengths. The subsequent section offers a brief analysis of the salient character strengths and notable failures identified in the dataset.

Character Strengths

Kindness. The strength of kindness, defined as "doing favors and good deeds for others" ([Park & Peterson, 2006, p. 894](#)) appeared to be one of the most notable strengths in the selected

episodes of *Friends*. Kindness is categorized under the Humanity virtue in the VIA Classification, alongside the strengths of love and social intelligence. The analysis revealed several moments in which the characters displayed support, compassion, warmth, and prosocial behaviors. For instance, in S1E1², Rachel arrives at Central Perk in a distressed state, wearing a wedding dress after fleeing her own wedding. Monica and others immediately reassure her by welcoming her kindly into the group, offering her a place to stay, and encouraging her decision to start anew. In S2E1, Monica faces financial difficulties after losing her job. Ross, recognizing her situation, generously hands her a check, saying: "Here you go. You can pay me back whenever you like." Such acts of kindness may be closely connected to the strength of social intelligence, as explained below.

Social Intelligence. The strength of social intelligence, defined as "*being aware of the motives and feelings of oneself and others*" (Park & Peterson, 2006, p. 894), emerged as another recurrent character strength. Similar to kindness, this strength is often displayed in moments where characters demonstrate sensitivity to the emotional states, adapt their responses accordingly, and extend care and empathy to themselves and others. For instance, in S6E1, Monica decides to leave a job where she is mistreated by a boss, possibly reflecting her awareness of the importance of protecting her emotional well-being. In S3E1, Phebe sympathetically attempts to help Monica, who is emotionally restless after several sleepless nights, relax and fall asleep. In the same episode, Monica's father, having learned about her fragile emotional state, visits her in person to comfort her. Such supportive presence and responses may indicate the characters' attention to others' feelings. In S4E1, Phoebe meets her birth mother, who had departed her, for the first time. The friends encourage her to talk about her feelings and get things off her chest, rather than withdrawing. Joey, for example, gently intervenes when she tries to leave the conversation: "Wait, Pheebs! Don't you wanna stay here and talk about it?" This empathetic recognition of other people's emotions may demonstrate dimensions of intrapersonal and interpersonal social intelligence.

Forgiveness. Though observed considerably less than the other two strengths, "forgiving those who have done wrong" (Park & Peterson, 2006, p. 894) was observed several times in the chosen episodes. For instance, in S4E1, Phebe demonstrates forgiveness after meeting her birth mother, who had abandoned her years earlier. She attempts to let go of her initial resentment and begins talking with her about issues they have in common. Or in S2E1, Monica asks Phoebe to cut her hair, but the result is a disastrous style due to Phoebe's mistake. While upset at first, Monica forgives Phoebe and takes her haircut mishap lightly.

² 'S' stands for Season and 'E' for Episode.

Furthermore, a few instances of maintaining "hope," "bravery," and "persistence" were identified in the season premieres; however, due to their scarcity, they are not discussed in detail.

Character Failures

Infidelity. A recurrent character failure in the sitcom is the *normalization* of infidelity and the absence of sustained commitment, which stands in sharp contrast to the VIA character strength of love. Within the VIA framework, love refers to valuing close relationships, maintaining loyalty, and investing in long-term commitment. The sitcom, however, repeatedly subverts these values by depicting the protagonists engaging in out-of-marriage, premarital, and extramarital relationships, even resulting in childbirth, as well as in manipulation, betrayal, and breaches of marital loyalty. For instance, in S1E1, Rachel flees her wedding impulsively without considering the consequences. Ross also reveals that his lesbian wife has left him because she has fallen in love with a woman. In S3E1, Chandler is shown having relations with a woman who is still legally married to another man, thus portraying extramarital entanglement and implicitly trivializing the gravity of adultery. In S5E1 too, Ross, who has just married Emily, invites Rachel—his former lover—to accompany him on his honeymoon as Emily fails to show before the trip. Though wrapped with moments of laughter, the scenes indicate blurred boundaries and the erosion of steadfastness in marital commitment. In S8E1, Rachel hides her premarital pregnancy and frames motherhood as humorous. In S6E1, Ross and Rachel impulsively marry while drunk in Las Vegas, a reckless decision that trivializes the institution and sanctity of marriage. These conduct also connect to deficits in the virtue of *temperance*, which will be discussed in the subsequent section.

Lack of Self-regulation. Lack of self-regulation, which is a facet of temperance, appears to be another recurrent failure of character in the observed episodes. Self-regulation refers to the ability to control desires, emotions, impulses, and to protect the self "against excesses" ([Park & Peterson, 2006](#), p. 894). Yet, throughout the series, the characters frequently display a lack of restraint, indulge in mundane desires, and have emotional outbursts, though often presented humorously. For instance, in S2E1, Rachel's jealousy makes her act impulsively by having a relationship with Paolo, a guy she does not like. In S3E1, Chandler's overeating after giving up smoking signals difficulty in regulating impulses. In S5E, the plot largely revolves around Chandler and Monica attempting to have secret affairs, which evidently represent indulgence and a lack of restraint in desires and self-control.

Offensive Humor. As expected within the sitcom genre, humor, defined as "liking to laugh and tease; bringing smiles to other people" ([Park & Peterson, 2006](#), p. 894), emerged as a prominent theme. Accordingly, the characters persistently use playful jokes to diffuse tension

and uplift the mood. Nonetheless, a closer examination revealed that, on many occasions, humor extended beyond harmless amusement, overlapping with biting sarcasm, mockery, offensive remarks, bodily humor, flirtatious banter, lewd and disrespectful comments, and sexual innuendo. From the perspective of Iranian social and cultural norms, where modesty, interpersonal decorum, and decency are valued, these so-called humorous instances no longer function solely as sources of joy but rather reflect character shortcomings and moral lapses. For instance, in S1E1, Joey and Chandler make indirect yet cutting jokes about Monica by saying, "you're going out with the guy—there must be something wrong with him," implying that any man willing to date her must himself be defective. Or in S2E1, Joey makes a joke about Chandler's ex-girlfriend, reducing her identity to physical attractiveness.

Lack of Authenticity. Authenticity, which is a dimension of the virtue of courage, is defined as "speaking the truth and presenting oneself in a genuine way" ([Park & Peterson, 2006](#), p. 894), acting in a sincere way; being without pretense; and taking responsibility for one's feelings and actions ([Peterson & Seligman, 2004](#)). The analysis of the chosen episodes revealed multiple cases of lack of authenticity. The characters lie to each other or to themselves for various reasons, such as avoiding conflict or escaping responsibility. For example, in S4E1, Ross pretends to have finished reading Rachel's eighteen-page-long letter, and when confronted, he falsely insists: "I wanted to read every word carefully. Twice." In S6E1, Ross lies to Rachel about a serious matter by telling her he has already taken care of the annulment, even though he has not filed anything. He continues to deceive her in the next episode to avoid confronting the consequences of yet another failed marriage. Though presented comically, these behaviors demonstrate failures in the virtue of courage.

Discussion

This study explored the pedagogical and character-development potential of sitcoms by drawing on the perspectives of Iranian EFL teachers and learners, alongside a content analysis of selected episodes of the *Friends* sitcom. Both groups of participants consistently underscored the multifaceted pedagogic affordances of sitcoms, noting their capacity to offer opportunities to encounter naturally occurring conversational patterns, idiomatic expressions, and meaningful, comprehensible input within concise, humorous, and entertaining narratives. Teachers also valued sitcoms for practicing a wide range of linguistic competencies, including grammatical structures, lexical items, pronunciation, listening comprehension, and speaking skills. Beyond linguistic benefits, the participants highlighted sitcoms' role in situating language within cultural socio-cultural contexts. This, they believed, provides language teachers and learners with opportunities to observe and discuss socio-cultural practices and norms. These positive perspectives align with prior research documenting the linguistic, pedagogical, and

affective affordances of sitcoms (e.g., [Valizadeh, 2022](#)) and their potential to foster cultural and intercultural awareness (e.g., [Rousseau, 2025](#)).

Furthermore, a few but critical concerns were raised regarding the ideological dimensions of popular sitcoms, with some teachers noting their potential to transfer norms and values (particularly Western ones) that conflict with local socio-cultural norms. This observation resonates with a limited yet significant body of research (e.g., [Alafita et al., 2012](#)) that has examined the value-laden dimensions of sitcoms, highlighting the ways these comic narratives represent broader socio-cultural discourses and promote particular worldviews. Regarding character education, both teachers and learners acknowledged the potential of sitcoms to depict and promote character strengths and virtues, such as friendship, kindness, love, perseverance, hope, and humor. As argued, these positive portrayals may contribute to adolescents' character development and socio-emotional learning, as learners often form attachments to characters and, in some cases, emulate their behavior. Nonetheless, the effectiveness of such portrayals and learners' responses to them varied depending on learners' age, maturity, and reasoning capacity. These views might partially resonate with the Differential Susceptibility to Media Effects Model (DSMM), which posits that individuals' susceptibility to media influence is shaped by "dispositional," "developmental," and "social susceptibility" factors that jointly determine the extent and nature of media effects ([Valkenburg & Peter, 2013](#)).

The qualitative content analysis of selected Friends episodes through the lens of character strengths and failures revealed more nuanced details. The results showed that certain character strengths were more prevalent than others, while certain virtues were notably absent. The most prominently portrayed character strengths included kindness and social intelligence, which both groups of interviewees also cited. This may suggest that these character strengths align with viewers' preferences and expectations and contribute to the show's appeal and popularity. However, certain character strengths (such as prudence and spirituality) were virtually absent; a finding that may be explained by the genre's reliance on comedy, sarcasm, and exaggeration.

Nevertheless, alongside these strengths, the analysis revealed frequent violations of core virtues without subsequent repentance or reflection. In particular, infidelity and a lack of commitment stood as recurrent failures, starkly contrasting with the VIA character strength of love, which emphasizes loyalty and long-term commitment. Furthermore, from the perspective of Iranian-Islamic religious and socio-cultural norms, in which chastity, fidelity, and the sanctity of marriage are foundational ([Javadi Amoli, 2009](#)), such portrayals normalize and trivialize moral failings such as premarital and extramarital relationships, adultery, homosexuality, and casual divorce, all of which are regarded as serious moral failings. Similarly, a lack of self-regulation was evident throughout the episodes, as evidenced by impulsive decisions (such as secret affairs and emotional outbursts). Inauthentic behaviors (evidenced by consistent lying, deception, or the hiding of feelings) further reflected character failures. Moreover, while humor was the most visible strength, its use often slipped into

offensive humor, including sarcasm, mockery, sexual innuendo, and disrespectful jokes. Overall, the sitcom's narrative and humor appear to be mainly dependent on *moral failings*.

From the standpoint of character education and PLE, these narratives, which foreground hedonic and pleasure-seeking lifestyles, rather than eudaimonic and values-oriented forms of well-being, raise noteworthy concerns as exposure to them by EFL learners (Iranian-Muslim ones in this study) may undermine their beliefs, sense of identity, and moral well-being ([Mercer et al., 2021](#)). Although the language learners did not explicitly acknowledge these character failures during the interviews, and were only marginally recognized by a subset of the teachers, the existing literature suggests that media content of this kind can influence adolescents' perceptions of gender roles, their acceptance of norm-violating behaviors, and their susceptibility to moral disengagement (e.g., [Bleakley et al., 2008](#); [van der Wal et al., 2020](#)). Collectively, these findings underscore the need for a critical, context-sensitive approach to media integration in language education; one that aligns with pedagogical objectives and the ethical norms of learners' socio-cultural environments ([Widodo et al., 2018](#)). They also point to a key pedagogical requirement: language learners need greater guidance and scaffolding to navigate the cognitive, linguistic, cultural, and moral complexities inherent in authentic audiovisual materials ([Alamri, 2025](#)).

Conclusion

The study offers implications for English language teachers, course developers, and syllabus designers by underscoring the significance of cultural and moral considerations in selecting media for classroom use. Furthermore, for researchers interested in examining the role of media and character strengths in language learning and well-being, the study offers a multi-method approach that integrates surveys, interviews, and content analysis, alongside the use of the VIA Classification and culturally situated perspectives as complementary analytical tools.

Despite its contributions, the study is constrained by several limitations. These include the small, purposively selected sample of participants and materials, its reliance on a limited number of scenes drawn from a single sitcom, and the inherent restrictions of the VIA framework, which does not fully capture culturally specific virtues and vices. Future research should address these limitations by including learners and teachers from diverse backgrounds, examining a wider range of sitcoms, and employing additional analytical tools. Moreover, the influence of media, particularly sitcoms, on shaping language learners' moral and psychological well-being remains an underexplored area that warrants scholarly attention and longitudinal research.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank the editorial team of TESL Quarterly for granting us the opportunity to submit and publish the current synthesis. We would also like to express our

appreciation to the anonymous reviewers for their careful, detailed reading of our manuscript and their many insightful comments and suggestions. We also acknowledge all the participants who took part in this study.

Declaration of conflicting interests

The authors declare no potential conflicts of interest concerning the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The authors received no financial support for this article's research, authorship, and/or publication.

AI use

AI tools (ChatGPT4) have been moderately used to edit grammatical inaccuracies in the manuscript and improve the language.

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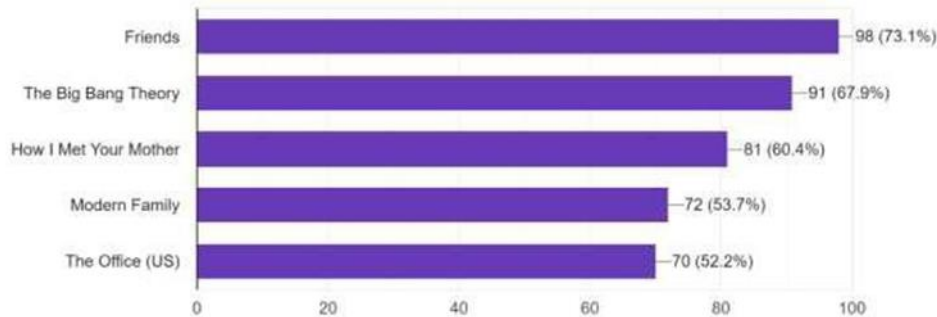
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Appendices

Appendix A

Percentages of sitcoms watched frequently by the respondents



Appendix B

Teachers' Interview Guide

- Could you please introduce yourself and describe your experience of using sitcoms in the EFL classroom? How frequently do you incorporate sitcoms into your teaching, and which sitcoms do you find most useful or popular for instructional purposes?
- How do your learners generally react to sitcoms in class? To what extent do they engage with or relate to the characters and situations?
- How do you perceive the use of sitcoms in EFL instruction? What do you consider to be the main advantages and limitations of using sitcoms in language teaching?
- On what basis do you select sitcoms and specific episodes for classroom use? What criteria or considerations guide your selection process?
- What kinds of positive or negative traits (e.g., moral values, virtues, or immoral behaviors) have you observed in sitcom characters? Do you address these aspects in your teaching, and if so, how do you evaluate the moral appropriateness of the content?
- In your view, have any sitcom characters, scenes, or narratives influenced your learners' behavior? If so, could you provide examples and explain how this influence occurs?
- How do you think sitcom characters and their behaviors may influence language learners, particularly adolescents? In what ways might they contribute to—or hinder—the development of learners' personal strengths and capacities?

Appendix C

Learners' Interview Guide

- Could you please introduce yourself?
- What is your general opinion of English-language sitcoms?
- Do your teachers use sitcoms in English classes? If yes, how often and which sitcoms are used? For what purposes are they used?
- How often do you personally watch English-language sitcoms? Which ones do you usually watch?
- What is your opinion on using sitcoms as a tool for English language learning or in English classes? What do you consider to be the advantages and disadvantages of using sitcoms in this context?
- When watching English-language sitcoms, what do you tend to focus on more: linguistic aspects (such as vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation) or non-linguistic aspects (such as culture, values, and lifestyle)? Please explain.
- What positive or negative traits (e.g., moral values, virtues, or immoral behaviors) have you noticed in the main characters of sitcoms you watch?
- Do you think the characters or their behaviors in your favorite sitcom have influenced your own behavior in any way? If so, please explain how and provide examples.