EXPLORING THE USE OF *THE BIG BANG THEORY* IN ESL TEACHING

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to the many people who have helped me along the way. I could have never made it this far without the love and support of my family, my friends, and my loving husband, Kyle. Thank you all!

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Abstract

This qualitative case study investigated how adult ESL students in a postsecondary English for academic purposes (EAP) program in the Southwest region of the United States experienced *The Big Bang Theory (TBBT)* television sitcom as a source of humorous authentic teaching materials. Krashen's (1982) affective filter hypothesis served as the theoretical framework to explore 12 participants' experiences in terms of the affective factors of anxiety, self-confidence, and motivation. Corpus linguistics analysis revealed that 3.96% of all words spoken on the pilot episode of *TBBT* occurred more frequently in the academic writing section of the Corpus of Contemporary American English database compared to only 0.25% on the words in the pilot episode of *Modern Family*. These findings suggested the potential suitability of *TBBT* for use in EAP contexts to expose students to target academic vocabulary and content in a low-filter environment. Semi-structured interviews, observations, and interview guides revealed that *TBBT* reduced students' affective filters due to its inclusion of humor, authentic language, different communication styles, and different personality types. In contrast, participants reported that *TBBT* could increase students' affective filters due the show's rapid speed of dialogue, inclusion of potentially inappropriate topics or humor, or its unfamiliar words and content. With proper excerpt selection and preparation, these findings suggested that *TBBT* could be used to reduce postsecondary EAP students' affective filters. Further research is needed to understand how the use of *TBBT* may influence learning outcomes in EAP contexts.

Chapter 1: Introduction

One of the challenges in education is presenting content in such a way that students are engaged and motivated to learn (Chakraborty, 2017; Diakou, 2015; Hsieh, 2014; Khan, Egbue, Palkie, & Madden, 2017). Student motivation has even been found by many studies to correlate strongly with learning achievement (Cudney & Ezzell, 2017), and the situation is no different when working with adult English as a second language (ESL) students in the foreign language classroom (Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Rostami, Ghanizadeh, & Ghonsooly, 2015). Influential and long-established theories in the field of second language acquisition and ESL teaching, such as Stephen Krashen's (1982) theory of second language acquisition and affective filter hypothesis, have been applied to both the development and testing of teaching materials and approaches for decades (Huang & Hwang, 2013; Mingzheng, 2012; Yuhui & Sen, 2015). The endurance of ideas such as Krashen's affective filter hypothesis speaks to the significance of affective factors like motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety in the second language acquisition process. The significance of these factors and ideas have spawned sweeping reforms and divisions in the field of ESL education over the past century (Deming, Kiyoung, Coussy, Yuan, & Zhiru, 2012). Using Krashen's ideas of affective factors, other researchers have also continued to study how students experience new content and approaches in terms of their motivational potential and effectiveness in the ESL classroom.

Many of these theories and ideas have more recently been applied to emergent directions within the field of ESL, such as English for academic purposes (EAP) teaching contexts (Eick, 2017). The emergence of these new directions within the field of ESL has given rise to new opportunities to advance existing understanding and explore the application of theory with new populations and contexts. On a local level in the Southwest region of the United States, the

problem sparking the need for this study was a lack of understanding of how adult students in a postsecondary EAP context at a specific institute of ESL experience teaching materials. This need has become more urgent due to a precipitous decline in enrollment at the specific institute over the past decade (F. Le Grand, personal communication, February 19, 2018). This decline has led to a pressing need for this study—to inductively advance understanding of students' experiences and to adjust teaching practices and policies accordingly (Patton, 2015).

In a broader sense, the need to understand how students experience ESL teaching materials and approaches is relevant in today's changing educational landscape (Cook, 2008). With ESL students currently numbering roughly 4.6 million nationally, or approximately 9.4% of all K-12 students, according to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2018), there is a need to better understand the unique experiences and perspectives of these student populations. The urgency to advance understanding of ESL students' experiences and to adjust teaching practices and policies accordingly is made even more apparent by current statistics on educational achievement for ESL students. According to the NCES (2015), the national high school graduation rate of ESL students only stands at 61.1%, compared to the national average of 81.4% for non-ESL students. This 20-point gap in graduation rates means that ESL students have the lowest high school completion rate of any student subgroup in the nation (NCES, 2015).

The national trend of increasing numbers of foreign-born students, or students born in the United States who speak a language other than English as their primary language, has led to vastly shifting student demographics and learning needs over the past decades (Cigdem, 2017). By 2050, it is even estimated by the Pew Research Center that roughly one in three students enrolled in public schools in the United States will be from immigrant families who speak a language other than English as a first language (López & Radford, 2017). This demographic

trend is contributing to the fact that ESL students are currently ranked as the fastest growing group of students in American public schools today (NCES, 2018). These statistics suggest that studies such as this one, seeking to advance understanding, practice, and policy in the field of ESL education, have the potential to impact a significant percentage of students who lag behind in academic achievement on a national scale.

Specifically, the purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine how a humorous authentic teaching material contributed to the affective factors of anxiety, self-confidence, and motivation of adult ESL students in a postsecondary EAP program in the Southwestern United States. With the aim of providing an in-depth and holistic understanding to inform teaching practice and policy in postsecondary EAP education, this case study hoped to benefit both students at a specific institute of ESL in the Southwest region of the United States, where the study was conducted, and more globally, by advancing theory, policy, and practice. *The Big Bang Theory* (*TBBT*) television sitcom served as the source of humorous authentic teaching materials for this study, selected for specific reasons to be discussed in the overview of theoretical framework and methodology sections below. This show is an American sitcom that first premiered on the CBS network on September 24, 2007. Written by Chuck Lorre and Bill Prady, the show launched its 11th season on September 25, 2017, and launched its 12th season on September 24, 2018. This show has been highly rated since first airing in 2007; the show consecutively ranked as one of the most popular regularly-scheduled television comedies in America by The Nielson Co. (2016). The show is of linguistic interest primarily because it focuses on scientific and academic themes that frequently use many academic register words not normally heard in spoken English. Certain characters also exhibit the use of super standard English (Bucholtz, 2001). Super standard English differs from standard American English in that

it contains more formal linguistic variables such as prescriptively standard grammar, carefully articulated phonological forms, and lexical formality (Bucholtz, 2001). The use of super standard English by certain characters on *TBBT* may provide a unique opportunity for ESL students to hear academic words in spoken language that would otherwise be seen almost exclusively in academic writing.

In this chapter, following a discussion of the background and contextualization of this qualitative instrumental case study, the problem statement, purpose statement, theoretical framework, and methodology are presented. Further, the research questions, assumptions, delimitations, and limitations of this study are addressed as well as the significance of the study. Finally, the definitions of terms, organization of the study, and chapter summary are presented.

Background and Contextualization

The background and context of the problem sparking the need for this study encompasses several aspects of second language education. This section introduces the problem stemming from the current state of theories and instructional practices being applied to EAP teaching contexts. Sufficient historical context is provided to introduce the reader to the problem and current state of several related aspects within the field. Further, background is provided about the need to advance understanding, policy, and practice to better serve niche postsecondary ESL populations like the one involved in this study.

The specific ESL teaching context of EAP is defined as “specialized English language teaching grounded in the social, cognitive and linguistic demands of academic target situations, providing focused instruction informed by an understanding or texts and constraints of academic contexts” (Hyland, 2006, p. 2). This specialized EAP context is seen as a subfield within English for specific purposes, English for occupational purposes, and English for professional purposes

(Gillett, 2011) and is a relatively new research field within the larger ESL umbrella (Hyland, 2006). Many of the core principles and features of EAP align almost one-to-one with those of communicative language teaching (Khan, Ayaz, & Saif, 2016), including the pragmatic and communicative goals of EAP instruction, and the use of needs analysis for EAP students (Gillett, 2011). Further, EAP focuses almost exclusively on the language development of adult learners in an academic environment, with learning objectives focusing on the development of students' intercultural awareness and knowledge for use in a target academic context (Gillett, 2011).

As a relatively new branch within ESL education, theories in this field have been described as "chaotic" (Li, 2017, p. 497), drawing on notions pertaining to everything from "linguistics, applied linguistics, sociolinguistics, communicative language teaching, writing across the curriculum, [and] learning theories" (Bensch, 2008, p. 4) as well as "register analysis, genre analysis, systematic functional linguistics, writing in discipline (WID), American second-language composition, critical theory, and new literacies" (Chazal, 2014; Flowerdew & Peacock, 2001; Hutchison & Waters, 1987; Li, 2017, p. 497). Because of the divergent nature of theories being applied to EAP teaching contexts, "its concepts and approaches at times appear to be too diverse for learners and practitioners to identify readily which course of action to follow" (Li, 2017, p. 503). As a result of this chaotic state of theory and practice in the field, decisions regarding instructional practices, materials development, and governing policy are currently more difficult to reach by professionals in the field (Li, 2017). This chaotic state of theoretical understanding in the field of EAP highlights the need for such studies focusing on the specific experiences and needs of postsecondary ESL students within this young research field.

Looking at ESL students more broadly, who now rank as the fastest growing group in American public schools today (NCES, 2018; Shin & Ortman, 2011), there is a greater need than

perhaps ever before for advancing understanding of this populations' unique experiences and perspectives. The Southwest region of the United States, the site of this study, currently contains the highest percentage of non-native English residents in the nation (Shin & Ortman, 2011; U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). According to 2018 NCES data, states within this region such as Texas, New Mexico, Nevada, Colorado, and California have the five highest percentages of ESL students enrolled in public schools nationally, making this region an ideal location for an ESL study such as this (NCES, 2018). In addition to such high percentages of ESL speakers, this region also contains some of the most diverse cities in the United States. Houston, Texas, for example, ranks first in the nation in terms of ethnic diversity (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011), containing substantial populations of the three most commonly spoken foreign languages by ESL students in the United States today: Spanish, Arabic, and Mandarin (Gambino, Acosta, & Grieco, 2014; NCES, 2018).

In terms of approaches to education, ESL methodology has evolved dramatically over the past century. This evolution is critical to understand in order to fully frame the historical and methodological contexts in which this study took place. English as a second language methodology has its origins rooted in the centuries-old methods of teaching Latin (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). The dominant approach to second language education in Europe and the United States during the 1800s and first half of the 1900s was based on these traditions of Latin teaching and was known as the grammar translation method (Khan et al., 2016). This method heavily emphasized the memorization of rules and facts about grammar, viewing the teacher as the absolute authority in the classroom, and striving to pass on the ability to read texts written in the target language. This approach, however, was based on no central theory and its methods were

not well anchored in the theoretical developments of linguistics, psychology, or education at the time (Khan et al., 2016).

The 20th century, however, gave rise to a blossoming interest in curriculum reform with educators and theorists becoming concerned with making education more practical, engaging, and useful (Schiro, 2012). Just as behavioral psychology theories began to underpin the social efficiency ideology during the first half of the 20th century (Schiro, 2012), ESL education began to transform based on the same theories. This movement within ESL education was known as the Reform Movement (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Initially producing approaches such as the audiolingual method, based on both structuralist and behaviorist theories, this approach began to fall out of fashion along with its underpinning behaviorist theories (Xia, 2014).

Within the 20th century, Dewey's (1902; Dewey & Dewey, 1915) work, especially, began to shift thinking beyond the confines of tradition or behavioral psychology towards appreciating the social construction of knowledge through problem solving and authentic communication both with others and with one's environment. It was during this period in the 20th century of rich theoretical and ideological development within psychology, linguistics, and education that the linguist, Dell Hymes, first introduced his concept of communicative competence (Hymes & Gumperz, 1964). In contrast to Chomsky's (1957) notion that grammatical competence stemmed from a collective knowledge of language structures shared by all native speakers, Hymes drew on his own ethnographic research to argue that there were underlying differences in individual speakers' abilities to use those structures appropriately in various social contexts. Thus, communicative competence was coined to both describe and distinguish between the individual differences speakers had to communicate effectively and appropriately in a given social and contextual framework (Hymes & Gumperz, 1964). This

notion of communicative competence was later divided further by Canale and Swain (1980) to include the following concrete skills needed for true competency:

- linguistic competence: an innate sense of grammar;
- sociolinguistic competence: the ability to communicate appropriately based on time, place, and collocutor;
- discourse competence: the ability to make sense of incomplete or disordered language (incohesive and/or incoherent); and
- strategic competence: the ability to utilize different communication strategies such as avoidance, repetition, guessing, etc.

Hymes' concept of communicative competence became hugely influential within ESL education during the second half of the 20th century (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). His idea became a catalyst that initiated the formation of a new method known as communicative language teaching, which sought to focus more on the communicative and functional potential of language (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). This resulting movement gained momentum in the 1980s and continues to be a leading method in ESL education today (Khan et al., 2016). The theories that underpin the communicative language teaching movement also form the basis for modern approaches to language teaching, such as EAP (Wenzhong & Muchun, 2015). Among the ideas central to the communicative language teaching movement and EAP courses are the notions of using authentic teaching materials, promoting a positive classroom environment, emphasizing the world beyond the classroom, promoting a student-centered learning environment, showing concern with the student as an individual, having students engage in meaningful interactions to learn, and focusing on students' individual learning and communication needs (Khan et al., 2016). It is due in large part to the fact that EAP teaching approaches are based on many of the

same principles and theories as communicative language teaching that this study aligns. Further, because the field of EAP is a relatively new research field within the larger ESL spectrum, it is arguably at this forefront that the most potential for innovative studies currently exists (Eick, 2017; Nhongo, Madoda, Baba, & Sindiso, 2017).

In terms of ESL student motivation, what is widely accepted is that motivation is a significant factor in successful second language acquisition. Nedashkivska and Sivachenko (2017), for example, noted that many studies have demonstrated strong correlations between motivation and achievement in language learning. One well-known and cited study made the claim that motivation is even more important than natural aptitude in producing successful learning outcomes (Naiman, Frohlich, Stern, & Todesco, 1978). There are numerous models and definitions available to describe various forms of motivation, such as extrinsic, intrinsic, integrative, task, extended motivation, instrumental, and even foreign language learning motivation (Anghel, 2017; Collard, 2017; Gardner, 2007; Martin, 2007). Classroom learning motivation, as discussed by Gardner (2007), and task motivation (Poupore, 2016) are particularly important to this study because they focus primarily on students' immediate response to a classroom activity or task. It is this type of motivation, more so than perhaps any other, that educators can influence by selecting activities and materials that pique students' interest (Poupore, 2016). These concepts of motivations are discussed in greater depths in Chapter 2.

Based on what is known about student motivation in the field of ESL teaching and learning, several lines of research have emerged in recent years in an attempt to develop materials and approaches to positively influence student motivation and learning outcomes. One such line of research has focused on the use of humor in the foreign language classroom (Petraki & Nguyen, 2016). On a physical level alone, studies have shown how humor in education can

relax muscles, stimulate circulation, improve breathing, help control stress hormones, relieve tension, increase the immune system, and lower blood pressure (Chiang, Lee, & Wang, 2016). Psychologically, studies have also shown how humor in education can decrease anxiety, tension, and stress; improve self-confidence and morale; increase motivation, comprehension, retention, curiosity, and even perceived quality of life (Chiang et al., 2016; Garner, 2006; Philaretou, 2007; Stambor, 2006). Specific to using humor with adult student populations as in this study, Mingzheng (2012) reported that a majority of both teacher and student participants in China believed that humor was an important element in the ESL classroom for reducing stress, improving student/teacher relationships, and improving learning outcomes.

Despite the stated benefits of using humor in the foreign language classroom, previous studies have also noted that humor is still underused in this context (Liu, 2015). As discussed by Nadeem (2012), many teachers expect high seriousness from students, especially at advanced academic levels due to high-stakes testing and benchmarks. This expectation of seriousness often leads to students' perceiving the foreign language classroom as difficult and stressful (Park, 2014), which can lead to what is known as foreign language classroom anxiety (Horwitz, 2016). Another potential reason why so few recent studies could be found targeting the use of humorous materials in an ESL context is due to the culturally-specific nature of humor itself. Some researchers have even advocated caution when using certain types of humor in a multicultural, multilingual context, as it can potentially lead to misunderstandings or offense (Csajbok-Twerefou, 2011). This situation has led to the need for even more research to advance understanding of how specific ESL student populations experience humorous materials in the classroom in terms of the affective factors of motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety.

Another line of research that has emerged in recent years highlights the positive effects that authentic materials have on students' affective factor of motivation in an ESL teaching context (Rahman, 2014). Authentic materials in foreign language teaching have played a role in ESL contexts for many years and can be defined as materials of any kind created for the target language community and not for teaching or learning purposes (Rahman, 2014). Interest in authentic material usage in language teaching dates back as far as the 1890s, with Henry Sweet noting that authentic materials do justice to all features of the language, whereas contrived materials include artificial repetition of certain elements such as grammatical structures and lexis that are not representative of genuine communication (Sweet, 1899). Authentic materials have played an integral role in the influential communicative language teaching movement since the 1980s (Khan et al., 2016) and served as the basis of EAP curriculum; it is, therefore, not surprising that researchers have paid particular attention to this field of study for some time.

With the rise in more communicative teaching approaches also came an increased interest in using authentic materials in the classroom. As Lin (2004) noted, for example, from the 1980s "the importance of teaching authentic texts in culturally authentic contexts rather than texts designed pedagogically has been emphasized by communicative approaches" (p. 26). Researchers have cited numerous benefits to using authentic materials in the ESL classroom, including exposure to real discourse and language, creating a connection to the real world beyond the classroom, exposure to improper and real language interactions, and exposure to various styles and registers (Tamo, 2009). Some recent studies have also reported on the positive effects of using authentic materials in the form of video and television programs in the ESL classroom, similar to the form of authentic materials for this study. One of such studies found that video-based ESL activities contributed to students' overall learning motivation and the

enhancement of their pronunciation skills (McNulty & Lazarevic, 2012).

Specific to an ESL teaching context with adult students, authors have also noted that authentic materials play an integral role in EAP methodology (Safont & Esteve, 2004). Similar to the principles of communicative language teaching, learner needs are of particular importance in EAP courses, and these needs may not be fully met by materials published for teaching purposes (Safont & Esteve, 2004). In a review of literature on the use of authentic material in EAP courses, one study found that authentic materials are of critical importance for communicative purposes in that they simulate an authentic immersion environment (Benavent & Sanchez-Reyes Penamaria, 2011). Authentic materials can also be used by teachers to bridge the artificial and formal classroom environment and the target language community (Tamo, 2009). Ultimately, the consensus seems to be that within postsecondary EAP contexts, authentic materials "can increase students' motivation and expose them to real language and culture as well as to the different genres of the professional community to which they aspire" (Benavent & Sanchez-Reyes Penamaria, 2011, p. 90).

There are, however, many gaps in the existing literature. Pertaining specifically to authentic materials and motivation, "little research has focused on the material and methodology in relation to motivation, but there is evidence that authentic materials generate interest in the lesson" (Petrides, 2006, p. 3). Further, Zoltán Dörnyei (2006), one of the preeminent scholars in the field of motivation in linguistics today, noted nearly 15 years ago that ESL motivation and materials research is "certainly one of the most fruitful directions for future research" (p. 16). Surprisingly few studies, particularly in an EAP context, could be found focusing on this aspect of authentic materials and motivation, which further highlights the need for this study.

Problem Statement

Because ESL students are currently ranked as the fastest growing group of students in American public schools (NCES, 2018; Shin, & Ortman, 2011), there is a need to understand better how these populations experience different approaches and materials in the foreign language classroom to prepare them successfully for the academic demands of study in an English-speaking environment. Failing to tailor instructional practices, policies, and teaching materials to the actual experiences and needs of ESL students can lead to poor learning outcomes and a lack of engagement among these students (Qi & Steen, 2012; Taylor, & Parsons, 2011). The resulting effects of these poor learning outcomes are observable in national educational attainment statistics from ESL students. With the national high school graduation rate of ESL students currently ranked as the lowest of any subgroup, lagging some 20 points behind non-ESL students (NCES, 2015), there is a need to better serve these populations in order to improve their learning outcomes, increase their engagement, and improve their educational attainment rates.

The needs of these K-12 ESL students do not cease once they reach adulthood. Postsecondary ESL and EAP programs are not often bound by the same governing policies as the K-12 level of ESL education. According to the Education Commission of the States (2014), Texas, the largest state in the research region of this study, has no federal or state-level policies governing ESL education beyond Grade 12. As a result of this lack of unifying policy, individual ESL programs at the postsecondary level are often left to develop materials, methods, and to apply theory borrowed from other ESL contexts on their own, resulting in a lack of uniformity. Li (2017) has even described the current state of instructional practices and theory in EAP contexts as “chaotic” (p. 497), stating that “its concepts and approaches at times appear to be too

diverse for learners and practitioners to identify readily which course of action to follow" (p. 503).

The lack of understanding of students' experiences, the lack of specific theories developed for postsecondary EAP contexts, and the lack of unifying policies governing postsecondary ESL contexts are all problems that have led to the need for this study on a general level. Further, a recent report by the Modern Language Association indicates that 651 foreign-language programs offered by colleges in the United States closed between 2013 and 2016 (Johnson, 2019). The report cited declining enrollment and economic pressures on universities and students as contributing factors leading to the 15.3% decline in foreign-language programs over the past 10 years (2009-2019). The report further stated that the closure of so many foreign-language programs has caused concern over national security, as fewer foreign-language programs could lead to American citizens' decreased ability to communicate across languages in an increasingly globalized world (Johnson, 2019).

Similar to the closure of foreign-language programs discussed by Johnson (2019), the problem this study seeks to investigate is a decline in enrollment on a more local level at the research site and an observed lack of engagement and motivation among adult ESL students in EAP courses. A precipitous decline in enrollment has been observed in EAP courses at the institute from 2007 to 2017 (F. Le Grand, personal communication, February 19, 2018). As an independent department within a larger university system, the research site receives no funding from the university for its operations (F. Le Grand, personal communication, February 19, 2018). If the decline in enrollment at the research site is not reversed, the program runs the risk of permanently closing due to financial reasons. The closure of the department would leave the housing university with no formal program to meet the needs of its ESL students. With 52% of

the 14,265 enrolled students identified as Hispanic or international students, such a department closure could potentially impact a significant percentage of the student body (F. Le Grand, personal communication, November 6, 2018). Even if the department were not to close because of declining enrollment, failure to align instructional practices to the unique needs and experiences of its ESL students would continue to result in students being inadequately prepared for the academic English demands placed on them at the collegiate level. Based on data collected in the field, this case study has the potential to advance understanding and lead to the improvement of teaching practices, theory, and policies for this and other similar EAP populations (Yin, 2017).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine how a humorous authentic teaching material contributed to the affective factors of anxiety, self-confidence, and motivation of adult ESL students in a postsecondary EAP program in the Southwestern United States.

Overview of Theoretical Framework and Methodology

Serving as the basis for the theoretical framework of this case study is Krashen's (1982) affective filter hypothesis, as part of his influential theory of second language acquisition. In his seminal work, *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition*, Krashen (1982) first put forth a series of five interrelated hypotheses that later simply became referred to as his monitor model, or theory of second language acquisition. These five hypotheses include the input hypothesis, the acquisition–learning hypothesis, the monitor hypothesis, the natural order hypothesis, and the affective filter hypothesis (Krashen, 1982).

This theory was developed during a time of great interest in communicative approaches to language teaching in the 1970s and 1980s. During this time, Tracy Terrell (1977) first

introduced “a proposal for a ‘new’ philosophy of language teaching” (p. 121) calling it the natural approach. Partnering with Krashen to develop the theoretical rationale for the new approach, the two researchers published a book in 1983, drawing heavily on Krashen’s five hypotheses of second language acquisition to justify the new approach (Krashen & Terrell, 1983). Krashen and Terrell (1983) claimed that this new approach was “based on an empirically grounded theory of second language acquisition, which has been supported by a large number of scientific studies in a wide variety of language acquisition and learning contexts” (p. 9). The theory of second language acquisition to which they referred, in large part, was Krashen’s theory of second language acquisition itself.

Krashen and Terrell (1983) saw this approach to language teaching as a communicative one, stating that it was “similar to other communicative approaches being developed today” (p. 17). The two researchers saw their theory and approach as a rejection of the behavioristtheory-based audiolingual method. Thus, Krashen and Terrell emphasized the communicative potential of language over focus on linguistic structures, believed in delivering as much comprehensible input as possible within the lesson, emphasized subconscious acquisition over conscious learning, and stressed the delivery of content in a supportive environment without anxiety to encourage low affective filters among students (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

Of the five hypotheses in Krashen’s model, the affective filter hypothesis is of most relevance to the theoretical framework of this study. In Krashen’s (1982) own words, “The filter hypothesis explains why it is possible for an acquirer to obtain a great deal of comprehensible input and yet stop short . . . of the native speaker level” (p. 32). Put differently, it is possible for teachers to expose ESL students to content they are capable of understanding and processing, but due to stress factors such as low motivation, low self-confidence, and high anxiety, students filter

out the content and fail to acquire the targeted language competencies. The theoretical framework of numerous studies has been based on this notion of anxiety and other negative factors preventing students from achieving greater success in second language learning (Huang & Hwang, 2013; Lin, Chao, & Huang, 2015; Yuhui & Sen, 2015). Seen as "a source of ideas for research in second language acquisition" (Lightbown & Spada, 2006, p. 38), Krashen's hypotheses continue to inform studies of ESL teaching materials and approaches. Specific to EAP teaching contexts, while recent studies have maintained the relevance and applicability of Krashen's affective filter hypothesis in ESL generally, little research has been conducted in an EAP context on its implications (Wenzhong & Muchun, 2015).

Krashen's affective filter hypothesis is an appropriate basis for the theoretical framework of this study due to the fact that affective factors such as motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety were explored. This study sought to understand how ESL students experience a selected source of teaching material, *TBBT*, in terms of affective factors such as motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety. In addition, Krashen's overall theory of second language acquisition is appropriate for this study due to its close alignment with communicative approaches to language teaching (Krashen & Terrell, 1983). Methodology used in EAP courses at the research site is based heavily on the principles of communicative language teaching that are so aligned with Krashen's affective filter hypothesis (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

This study followed the traditions of a qualitative research design as discussed in depth by Creswell (2013). Qualitative research was described by Creswell (2013) as beginning with "assumptions and the use of interpretive/theoretical frameworks to inform the study of research problems addressing the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (p. 44). Creswell (2013) stated that the emergent, flexible design of qualitative research is often

conducted in a natural setting with the researcher collecting data over a prolonged period of time through interviews, conversations, observations, interview guides, and through the analysis of documents. Both inductive and deductive reasoning is often applied to the analysis of data in qualitative research with findings presented in a rich, descriptive final report to provide a holistic account of participants' meanings and experiences (Yin, 2017). Specific types of qualitative research include narrative research, grounded theory, ethnography, phenomenology, and case study designs (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

For this qualitative research study, the case study sub-design was selected. Qualitative case study research typically involves investigating a bounded case within a real-life context (Yin, 2017). According to Yin (2017), case study is a research design that can be used best when the following three criteria are met:

- a researcher is seeking an in-depth understanding of a contemporary event or issue within a real-world context,
- the research focuses on answering "how" or "why" type questions, and
- the researcher has little or no control over the behavioral events being studied.

With modern qualitative case study's origins dating back to the 1920s and 1930s in research conducted at University of Chicago and on the Trobriand Islands (Hamel, Dufour, & Fortin, 1993), this research methodology has a long, established tradition (Creswell, 2013). According to Creswell and Poth (2018), the common features of case study research include investigating a bounded case, utilizing multiple data sources for a holistic understanding of the case, and presenting findings using descriptive language in the form of themes, explanations, and assertions. Yin (2017) added that case study often focuses on distinct situations in which the number of variables may outnumber the individual data points, and that existing theoretical

frameworks are often used by case study researchers to help guide actions, procedures, and analysis.

Considering the purpose of this research study, to examine how a humorous authentic teaching material contributed to the affective factors of anxiety, self-confidence, and motivation of adult ESL students in a postsecondary EAP program in the Southwestern United States, an instrumental case study design was selected. According to Creswell (2013), such a design is best suited for research in which the issue being investigated is of more importance than the bounded case selected to illustrate the issue. In this study, former students who completed EAP courses at a particular institute were selected to help advance the understanding of how specific teaching materials are experienced. Former students at the institute were selected not because the particular site was of primary importance, but rather because the representative population of ESL speakers at the site could be instrumental in providing in-depth descriptions of their experiences. The researcher hoped that the experiences of these students at the particular research site would be representative of other adult ESL speakers in similar EAP contexts.

There were several benefits to conducting a qualitative case study, including the ability to gain a deeper understanding of participants' perspectives in terms of how they experienced humorous authentic materials (Yin, 2017). The flexible research design afforded by a case study approach also allowed for the organic emergence of new directions of inquiry (Creswell, 2013). When compared to quantitative research, the qualitative approach for this study also allowed the researcher to better account for the values, beliefs, and assumptions of the participants presented in a rich, descriptive final report (Choy, 2014). Instead of measuring specific variables, the approach allowed for more flexibility on the part of the researcher to describe what works, what does not work, and how it works from the perspective of the participants and the researcher

(Patton, 2015). This ability to focus on what works, in turn, aligned well with the pragmatic perspective guiding this overall study (Creswell, 2014). In short, a case study approach afforded the best opportunity to collect original and in-depth data to further understanding of how a specific population experienced a novel source of teaching materials. Such a case study approach also had the greatest potential of leading to the inductive generation of new knowledge in the field (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Mason, 2010).

Throughout this study, the researcher was the main instrument for data collection, as is common in qualitative studies (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As such, the researcher acted as the main nonparticipant observer and interviewer of the participants. In order to collect data, some methods were employed, including semi-structured interviews, interview guides, document analysis, and observations (Creswell & Poth, 2018). To analyze the data, coding took place to sort data into emergent categories (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). This coding helped determine trends and themes as well as signify the need for additional data collection sessions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The final steps involved interpreting findings and presenting them in the final report (Creswell, 2014).

Research Questions

The following theory-based central research question was explored in this study: How did *TBBT*, as a source of humorous authentic teaching material, contribute to the affective factors of anxiety, self-confidence, and motivation of adult ESL students in a postsecondary EAP program in the Southwestern region of the United States? This central research question was explored using the following three research sub-questions:

RQ1: How did *TBBT* contribute to the anxiety of adult ESL students in an EAP program?

RQ2: How did *TBBT* contribute to the self-confidence of adult ESL students in an EAP program?

RQ3: How did *TBBT* contribute to the motivation of adult ESL students in an EAP program?

Assumptions

Several assumptions were made for the purpose of this study. In terms of common assumptions for qualitative research, as discussed by Wargo (2015), the following were made:

1. It was assumed that all research participants answered all questions in a truthful manner.
2. It was assumed that all participants experienced the same phenomenon (*TBBT* as a humorous authentic ESL teaching material in an EAP context).
3. It was assumed that participants had an interest in taking part in this study for sincere reasons, and not due to any ulterior motives.

In addition to these common assumptions, in terms of the research problem, it was assumed that the overall population of ESL students in America is growing and will continue to grow in the future (Cigdem, 2017; López & Radford, 2017; NCES, 2018). It was also assumed that studies such as this study are necessary to advance current understanding of which approaches and materials work best in ESL teaching contexts, especially with niche populations where little research is available (Dörnyei, 2003; Li, 2017). It was further assumed that communicative language teaching approaches are effective at preparing ESL students for the real linguistic demands placed on them beyond the classroom (Mestre Mestre, 2011), and authentic materials are uniquely suited to help bridge the gap between the artificial classroom environment and the real world beyond (McNulty & Lazarevic, 2012; Rahman, 2014). It was also assumed

that humor in the classroom can help reduce classroom anxiety, reduce students' stress levels, and lead to a more positive learning experience and environment (Chiang et al., 2016; Petraki & Nguyen, 2016). Lastly, it was assumed that motivation is a key factor in producing positive learning outcomes with ESL students, and task motivation is something teachers can influence through the selection of engaging and enjoyable materials and activities (Nedashkivska & Sivachenko, 2017)

Methodological assumptions also included the general assumption that, despite being non-native English speakers, each participant's level of English proficiency was high enough to understand and respond to interview questions and/or survey questions in their own words. Additionally, it was assumed that no harm would be done to any participants through the observation, interviewing, or interview guide process (Vollmer & Howard, 2010). It was further assumed that the qualitative case study procedures discussed by Yin (2017) were best suited for producing the most in-depth understanding of how adult ESL students experience humorous authentic materials in this context. Lastly, it was assumed that a case study approach is both the best fit for answering the central and sub-questions of this study, and the dependability and credibility of the results were strengthened by using such a case study approach (Yin, 2017).

Delimitations and Limitations of the Study

This study has some delimitations and limitations. These delimitations are related to the researcher's choice of participants, the use of humorous authentic materials, and the methodology whereas the limitations are related to the researcher as a research instrument and the language capabilities of the participants. These delimitations and limitations are explored in detail in the upcoming sections.

Delimitations. Delimitations in this study are the bounds set by the researcher in order to narrow the scope and focus of the research, but that may also reduce the generalizability of findings (Simon, 2011). The delimitations of this study include the deliberate narrowing of the research field to focus specifically on the experiences of ESL students in an EAP context at a postsecondary institute of ESL in the Southwest region of the United States. This decision was made for a few reasons. Because this institute specializes in postsecondary ESL and EAP education, it provided access for the researcher to a representative population of EAP students for the advancement of understanding (F. Le Grand, personal communication, February 19, 2018). The source of humorous authentic materials also lends itself well to postsecondary EAP courses where academic vocabulary acquisition is a primary objective (O'Keefe, McCarthy, & Carter, 2007; Rahman, 2014). Due to the limited number of available studies focusing on materials for postsecondary EAP programs, especially of a humorous nature (Liu, 2015), and because this demographic is one with which the researcher has the most experience and background, the decision was made to focus specifically on this demographic.

Further, the decision was made to limit the initial study to strictly qualitative data. The need for depth of understanding in terms of students' experiences outweighed the immediate need to combine the initial findings with quantitative data pertaining to humorous authentic materials' influence on learning outcomes (Creswell, 2014). Once the central question could be answered in depth, this could be used to underpin a later quantitative or mixed methods design to further investigate the issue. As a result of these delimitations, however, the findings of this study may be less generalizable to other populations.

Limitations. Limitations in this study are factors in the research design beyond the control of the researcher that may significantly affect the study and its findings. The limitations

of the study include the fact that the central research instrument was the researcher. This can lead to biased results (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2017). Steps were taken, however, to ensure that this risk was mitigated as much as possible. The steps taken to reduce the risk of biased results included the full and transparent disclosure of researcher positionality and the use of other instructors at the research site to check findings (Creswell, 2013). Other limitations include the possibility that some ESL students were not able to express their experiences fluently in English in their own words, leading to unclear data. To avoid this language barrier, semi-structured interview questions were used leaving room for the rewording of prompt questions if they were not initially understood. In addition, interview guides were used to ask the same questions as in the interviews providing participants the best opportunity to express themselves (Griffee, 2012). Data triangulation techniques were then used to ensure similar information gathered from different sources was compared to confirm or refute findings that might have been skewed from one source due to a language barrier (Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, & Fontenot, 2013; Patton, 2015).

Significance of the Research

There are several reasons why this study has value and a high potential to be of significance in the field of applied linguistics and ESL education. The significance of this study is discussed in three ways below. First, the findings of this study contribute to the body of scholarly research and literature in the field. Second, this study has the potential to improve practice in the field. Finally, this study has the potential to improve policy and decision making in the field.

This study has the potential to contribute to the body of scholarly research and literature in the field of EAP in four ways. First, this research can serve to advance the application of

Krashen's affective filter hypothesis to modern teaching contexts such as EAP teaching. As Wenzhong and Muchun (2015) noted, despite the wide acceptance of Krashen's affective filter hypothesis in ESL teaching generally, little research has been conducted within an EAP context on its implications. Second, this study can specifically advance understanding by using Krashen's established affective filter hypothesis to explore the use of new teaching materials like *TBBT*. In conducting the literature review for this study, the researcher was unable to locate any studies exploring the viability of *TBBT* as a potential teaching material for ESL or EAP contexts. Third, this study has the potential to combine advances in three research fields that have not yet merged within an EAP context: the stated benefits of corpus linguistics and register analysis techniques (Hyland, 2008; Jaworska, 2015; Krishnamurthy & Kosem, 2007), the stated benefits of the use of humor in ESL teaching (Chiang et al., 2016; Garner, 2006; Philaretou, 2007; Stambor, 2006), and the stated benefits of using authentic materials in ESL teaching (Deane & O'Neill, 2011; Dudley-Evans, 2001; Gillett, 2011; Li, 2017; Wingate, 2015). By bringing together these divergent research fields within ESL research through the lens of Krashen's affective filter hypothesis, this study can advance understanding and address an identified gap in existing literature (Wenzhong & Muchun, 2015). Finally, and perhaps most importantly, this study also has the potential to advance our understanding of the applicability of many borrowed theories currently being applied to EAP teaching contexts. As discussed, theories in this relatively new branch of EAP have been described as "chaotic" (Li, 2017, p. 497), drawing on numerous theories and notions that were developed within other contexts (Bensch, 2008; Chazal, 2014; Flowerdew & Peacock, 2001; Hutchison & Waters, 1987; Li, 2017). By focusing specifically on postsecondary EAP contexts, this study can help provide practitioners with a

more solid foundation of understanding, inductively advanced from within the field of EAP itself (Li, 2017).

This study also has the potential to improve teaching practices in at least three ways. First, this study has identified a problem in terms of declining enrollment at a specific postsecondary ESL institute (F. Le Grand, personal communication, February 19, 2018). By conducting this study, the researcher hopes to refine teaching practices and materials at the research site that can reduce students' affective factors while increasing student engagement and motivation. Teaching practices can be adjusted based on the findings of this study to hopefully reverse declining enrollment and improve instructional practices. Second, the potential for improving teaching practices based on this study's findings is not limited to the research site alone. By potentially advancing the field's theoretical understanding of ESL students' experiences in EAP contexts, there is also significant potential for advancing teaching practices at the state and national level. As will be discussed in the Literature Review section, foreign language classroom anxiety is often a phenomenon observed in the ESL classroom when students experience high pressure in a serious language learning environment (Horwitz, 2016).

Many studies suggest that students become incapable of absorbing target language content when they are under stress (Huang & Hwang, 2013; Lin et al., 2015; Yuhui & Sen, 2015), such as is suggested by Krashen's (1982) affective filter hypothesis. Should it be found that the use of humorous authentic materials like *TBBT* reduce students' affective factors, EAP teaching practices at a state, national, or even international level can be modified to incorporate more humorous authentic materials. Third, it is this researcher's hope that other instructors and researchers interested in EAP will apply the methods of this study to explore the use of other sources of humorous authentic materials. The register analysis and corpus linguistics techniques

to be discussed in more detail in Chapters 2 and 3 of this study can be used to evaluate the applicability of many more sources of humorous authentic materials given the learning needs of each individual EAP context (O'Keefe et al., 2007).

The last area of potential significance of this study is in terms of its contributions to policy and decision making. This study has the potential to improve policy and decision making in three ways. First, unlike at the K-12 level of ESL education, postsecondary EAP programs are not often bound by the same governing policies. According to the Education Commission of the States (2014), Texas, the largest state in the research region of this study, has no federal or state-level policies governing ESL education beyond Grade 12. This lack of overarching state or federal policy for postsecondary ESL and EAP programs means that universities frequently only develop policies governing language proficiency requirements for admissions but not for any university-associated or provided ESL programs (Texas A & M University, 2018). By exploring ESL students' experiences in EAP courses, this study has the potential to inform the development of unifying policies overseeing the curriculum of these courses, at the very least at the research site if not on a larger scale. Second, this study has the potential to inform decisions made regarding curriculum and instruction for EAP courses. Finally, the findings of this study can be used to inform decisions that can potentially reverse the declining enrollment at the research site while leading to improved student learning experiences. By mandating that students' experiences be considered when selecting teaching materials and activities for EAP courses at the research site, this study can potentially lead to improved policies and decisions.

In conclusion, by improving understanding, instructional practice, and policies, there is also a potential to improve students' learning outcomes. The implications of improving students' learning outcomes are far reaching, including greater earning potential, social mobility, and

greater access to a target language community (Cook, 2008). As discussed, according to the NCES (2015), the national high school graduation rate of ESL students only stands at 61.1%, compared to 81.4% for non-ESL students. This ESL student graduation rate is the lowest of all student subgroups in the nation (NCES, 2015). By better understanding the experiences of certain groups of ESL students, practitioners have the potential to shift towards creating a more positive and enjoyable learning environment that, in turn, can lead to improved learning outcomes. The numerous possibilities these ESL students might have as a result of their increased language knowledge and competencies are difficult to quantify but are likely many. Such a shift has the potential to impact 15.5% of all public K-12 students in the largest Southwest state of Texas alone or 4.6 million students nationally (NCES, 2018).

Definitions of Terms

This section provides definitions of the terms and concepts referenced throughout this study. Although not exhaustive, this section discusses the major terms and concepts that may be unfamiliar to readers outside of the fields of ESL and EAP education in the United States. Additional definitions are provided throughout the study report for any terms not included in this list.

Authentic materials. In an ESL teaching context, the term is defined as materials of any kind created for the target language community and not for teaching or learning purposes (Rahman, 2014). These materials can include anything from a sales receipt to books, magazines, newspapers, interviews, recordings, and movies, as long as they have not been altered or produced for ESL teaching or learning purposes.

The Common European Framework. This term refers to a 6-tier classification system used to identify language learners according to ability levels. According to Wisniewsk (2017),

the six classification levels of the framework are A1/beginner, A2/elementary, B1/intermediate, B2/upper intermediate, C1/effective operation proficiency, and C2/mastery. Each of the six identification levels is associated with defined knowledge and skills expected of language learners at each level, broken down further by skills in reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

Communicative language teaching. This term refers to a specific approach to teaching a foreign language in which the development of students' communicative competencies is the most important objective (Khan et al., 2016). This approach became popular in the 1980s and remains influential today. This approach also emphasizes the use of authentic materials in teaching and often forms the basis for modern English for academic purposes courses due to their focus on students' needs beyond the classroom and in the target language community.

English as a second language (ESL). This term encompasses any teaching or learning context in which nonnative speakers aim to increase their knowledge of or fluency in the English language (Nhongo et al., 2017).

English for academic purposes (EAP). This term refers to a specific branch of ESL teaching where greater emphasis is placed on academic vocabulary or skills needed for success in an English-speaking academic environment (Eick, 2017).

Krashen's affective filter hypothesis. This hypothesis was first put forth in 1982 and states that it is possible for teachers to expose ESL students to content they are capable of understanding and processing, but due to stress factors such as low motivation, low self-confidence, and high anxiety, students filter out the content and fail to acquire the targeted language competencies (Krashen, 1982).

Organization of the Study

This study is organized into five major chapters. The names of all five chapters and their respective contents are detailed in the following paragraphs. These five chapters are prefaced by a title page, a signature page, a dedication page, an acknowledgement page, an abstract, a table of contents, a list of tables, and a list of figures. Following the five major chapters, all cited references are listed as well as all appendices.

Chapter 1 provides the reader with a general overview of the study. This chapter begins with an introduction to the fields of ESL and EAP education, including advances in knowledge in the use of humor and authentic materials in these contexts to reduce students' affective factors of anxiety, self-confidence, and motivation. The problems leading to the need for this study are then introduced, including the growing ESL population in the United States, the decline in language programs offered by universities throughout the United States, the need to advance understanding, policy, and practice in adult ESL and EAP contexts, and the declining enrollment of EAP courses specifically at the research site. The purpose statement of the study is then presented, which was to examine how a humorous authentic teaching material contributed to the affective factors of anxiety, self-confidence, and motivation of adult ESL students in a postsecondary EAP program. The specific methodology of qualitative case study is then introduced along with the theoretical framework of Krashen's affective filter hypothesis and how this framework aligns with the central and three research sub-questions of the study. Finally, this chapter outlines the assumptions, delimitation and limitations, significance of the study, and definition of terms pertaining specifically to postsecondary EAP teaching.

Chapter 2 includes a review of literature pertaining to all pertinent research fields related to this study. This chapter is divided into the following three subsections: background and

context, rationale for the selection of *TBBT,* and the theoretical framework. The background and context section of Chapter 2 focuses on providing a review of literature relative to ESL methodology and EAP. The rationale for selecting *TBBT* includes a review of literature pertaining to the following topics: authentic materials, corpus linguistics and register analysis, humor in ESL teaching, and the affective factors of anxiety, self-confidence, and motivation. The theoretical framework section of Chapter 2 focuses on Krashen's affective filter hypothesis. Discussed in this section is an introduction to the hypothesis, its historical context, reaction to the hypothesis, studies based on the hypothesis as well as how and why this hypothesis will serve as the theoretical framework for this study.

Chapter 3 describes the procedures and methods used in this qualitative case study. This chapter includes the following sections: an introduction, an overview of the research design, details about the site selection in the Southwest region of the United States, the participants and the participant selection and purposeful sampling procedures used, details about the participants in the study at the research site as well as ethical issues and permissions obtained for this research. This chapter then discusses the data sources, protocols and instruments, data collection procedures, the researcher positionality, trustworthiness and rigor of the study, data analysis procedures, and a description of how findings will be presented.

Chapter 4 highlights the findings of the study of how *TBBT* contributed to the affective factors of participants in the selected EAP context. This chapter includes an introduction, a detailed description of the 12 adult ESL participants, a presentation of all findings organized by research question, and an analysis of the findings. This chapter also provides the most detail of participants' experiences with *TBBT* in the research context in their own words.

Chapter 5 includes the summary, conclusion, and suggestions for future research chapter. This section includes a summary of the major findings, a presentation of all concussions and assertions, an interpretation of the findings, implication, suggestions for future research, and a section on limitations and reflexivity. This chapter also presents a graphic representation of the major findings on how *TBBT* contributed to the affective factors for participants in this study.

Chapter Summary

This chapter introduced a qualitative instrumental case study that sought to understand how ESL students experience *TBBT* as a source of humorous authentic teaching materials in terms of the affective factors of motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety. This chapter also introduced the background and context of the study, including the specific postsecondary institute of ESL in the Southwest region of the United States used to advance understanding. The problem this study sought to address stems from both a lack of scholarly writing on how ESL students experience humorous authentic materials in an EAP context and from a decline in enrollment in EAP courses at a selected institute of ESL in the Southwest region of the United States. Using Krashen's affective filter hypothesis as a theoretical framework, this chapter then detailed the research questions as they relate to the purpose, problem, and theoretical framework of the study. This chapter also provided an overview of the qualitative instrumental case study design this research followed; this design was selected for its ability to allow the researcher to gain an in-depth and holistic understanding of participants' experiences. Finally, this chapter provided an overview of the study's overall structure including the later conclusion and implication chapters that are supported by the framework and findings of the study.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

The purpose of this chapter is to provide sufficient background about the state of research in areas pertaining to a study investigating how adult ESL students experience humorous authentic materials in an EAP context. It is essential to provide a review of these areas of ESL and EAP as they form the entire context of this study and provide alignment and context for the research questions and purpose. As Creswell (2014) discussed, the literature review of a study serves several functions. First, it can share the results of previous research that are similar to the current study. Second, the literature review can be useful in providing context for a study to readers who are unfamiliar with its concepts. Third, reviewing literature can help the researcher identify gaps in knowledge in the field that might need to be filled. Finally, the literature review can act as a source of inspiration and rationale for a researcher to identify ideas worth advancing, questions worth asking, and populations worth sampling (Marshall & Rossman, 2014; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The intention behind conducting a literature review for this study was to accomplish all of these stated purposes.

Conducting a literature review for this instrumental case study is essential because many of the theories and concepts central to ESL teaching were established long before the emergence of new directions within the field such as EAP (Eick, 2017; Li, 2017). As a relatively new branch within ESL education, theories in this field have been described as “chaotic” (Li, 2017, p. 497). This field draws on theories pertaining to everything from “linguistics, applied linguistics, sociolinguistics, communicative language teaching, writing across the curriculum, [and] learning theories” (Bensch, 2008, p. 4) as well as “register analysis, genre analysis, systematic functional linguistics, writing in discipline (WID), American second-language composition, critical theory, and new literacies” (Li, 2017, p. 497). Because of the divergent nature of theories currently being

applied to English for academic purposes teaching contexts, “its concepts and approaches at times appear to be too diverse for learners and practitioners to identify readily which course of action to follow” (Li, 2017, p. 503). This chaotic state of theories within the field calls for studies seeking to advance existing theories specific to this context by better understanding students’ experiences. In order to advance theory and understanding, however, a literature review is first needed to understand where we have come from in the field, where we are, and where we want to go.

The Big Bang Theory show is an American sitcom that first premiered on the CBS network on September 24, 2007. Written by Bill Prady and Chuck Lorre, the show launched its 11th season on September 25, 2017, and launched its twelfth season on September 24, 2018. This show has been highly rated since first airing in 2007; the show has ranked consecutively as one of the most popular regularly-scheduled television comedies in America by The Nielson Co. (2016). The show is of linguistic interest primarily because it focuses on scientific and academic themes that frequently use many academic register words not normally heard in spoken English. Certain characters also exhibit the use of super standard English (Bucholtz, 2001). Super standard English differs from standard American English in that it contains more formal linguistic variables such as prescriptively standard grammar, carefully articulated phonological forms, and lexical formality (Bucholtz, 2001). The use of super standard English by certain characters on *TBBT* may provide a unique opportunity for ESL students to hear academic words in spoken language that would otherwise almost exclusively be seen in academic writing.

More specifically, this study sought to understand how students experienced a deliberately-selected source of teaching material, namely *TBBT*, in terms of the affective factors of motivation, anxiety, and self-confidence. This source of humorous authentic material was not

chosen haphazardly. As a long-running and highly-rated American sitcom (The Nielson Co., 2016), *TBBT* focuses on academic themes and contains more formal linguistic variables such as formal lexical, careful articulation of words, and standard grammar associated with what Bucholtz (2001) describes as super standard English. The use of super standard English on *TBBT* may provide an opportunity for EAP students to hear academic words in spoken language when they could otherwise only be able experience such language in inauthentic texts in an EAP context. The selection of *TBBT* was due to these features and based on existing knowledge and theories in the field, including humor in ESL teaching, authentic materials in ESL teaching, advances in corpus linguistics and language register analysis techniques, ESL methodology, motivation, and Krashen's affective filter hypothesis. These concepts provided a broad rationale for the selection of the teaching material used in this study as well as a theoretical framework for the interpretation of findings. This literature review provides a thorough introduction to these concepts in order for readers to understand the rationale behind the choices made for this study.

In short, this study should be seen within a larger context containing several theories and research fields. The literature pertaining to each of these abovementioned topics is presented by category in three organizing sections within this chapter. These three overarching sections, including background and context, rationale for selecting *TBBT*, and theoretical framework, are structured in this chapter as described in the following paragraph.

The background and context section reviews literature pertaining to ESL methodology and EAP methodology. Included in this section is also a discussion of the historical background and evolution of these two fields of education. The second section, rationale for selecting *TBBT*, reviews literature pertaining to authentic materials in language teaching, corpus linguistics and register analysis, the use of humor in ESL teaching, and motivation. The final section in this

chapter, theoretical framework, details Krashen's affective filter hypothesis, as part of his theory of second language acquisition. The discussion in this section focuses on the theorist, the context in which the theory was developed, refinements to the theory over time, the constructs of the theory, the specific aspect of the theory serving as the theoretical framework for this study, its strengths and weaknesses, and justification for the selection of this theory.

Background and Context

This section of the chapter provides background and context to the current study. This section focuses specifically on the areas of ESL methodology and EAP. Sufficient historical background is provided in each section to orient the reader with the overall context in which the study takes place.

English as a second language methodology. In terms of approaches to education, ESL methodology has evolved dramatically over the past century. This evolution is critical to understand in order to fully frame the historical and methodological context in which this study took place. English as a second language methodology has its origins rooted in the centuries-old methods of teaching Latin. The dominant approach to second language education in the United States and Europe during the 19th and first half of the 20th century was based on these traditions and known as the grammar translation method (Khan et al., 2016). This method heavily emphasized the memorization of rules and facts about grammar, saw the teacher as the absolute authority in the classroom, and strove to pass on the ability to read texts written in the target language. This approach, however, was based on no central theory, and its methods were not well anchored in the theoretical developments of linguistics, psychology, or education at the time (Khan et al., 2016).

The 20th century, however, gave rise to a blossoming interest in curriculum reform, with educators and theorists becoming concerned with making education more practical, engaging, and useful (Schiro, 2012). Just as behavioral psychology theories began to underpin the social efficiency ideology during the first half of the 20th century (Schiro, 2012), ESL education began to transform based on the same theories. This movement within ESL education was known as the reform movement (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Initially producing approaches such as the audiolingual method, based on both structuralist and behaviorist theories (Xia, 2014), this approach began to fall out of fashion along with its underpinning behaviorist theories (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

Within the 20th century, Dewey's (1902; Dewey & Dewey, 1915) work began to shift thinking beyond the confines of traditional or behavioral psychology towards appreciating the social construction of knowledge through problem solving and authentic communication, both with others and with one's environment. It was during this period in the 20th century of rich theoretical and ideological development within psychology, linguistics, and education that the linguist, Dell Hymes, first introduced his concept of communicative competence (Hymes & Gumperz, 1964). In contrast to Noam Chomsky's (1957) notion that grammatical competence stems from a collective knowledge of language structures shared by all native speakers, Hymes drew on his own ethnographic research to argue that there are underlying differences in individual speakers' abilities to use those structures appropriately in various social contexts. Thus, communicative competence was coined to both describe and distinguish between the individual differences speakers had to communicate effectively and appropriately in a given social and contextual framework (Hymes & Gumperz, 1964). This notion of communicative

competence was later divided further by Canale and Swain (1980) to include the following concrete skills needed for true competency:

- linguistic competence: an innate sense of grammar;
- sociolinguistic competence: the ability to communicate appropriately based on time, place, and collocutor;
- discourse competence: the ability to make sense of incomplete or disordered language (incohesive and/or incoherent); and
- strategic competence: the ability to utilize different communication strategies such as avoidance, repetition, guessing, etc.

Hymes' concept of communicative competence became hugely influential within ESL education during the second half of the 20th century. His idea became a catalyst that initiated the formation of a new method known as communicative language teaching, which sought to focus more on the communicative and functional potential of language (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). This resulting movement gained substantial momentum in the 1980s and continues to be a leading method in ESL education today (Khan et al., 2016). Among these ideas central to the communicative language teaching movement are the notions of using authentic teaching materials, promoting a positive classroom environment, emphasizing the world beyond the classroom, promoting a student-centered learning environment, showing concern for the student as an individual, having students engage in meaningful interactions to learn, and focusing on students' individual learning and communication needs (Gillett, 2011; Karimkhanlui, 2005; Khan et al., 2016). In addition, techniques of implicit teaching (having students learn by doing) as opposed to traditional explicit teaching (teaching about language features) are core to communicative language teaching (Ellis, 1994). These implicit teaching techniques have been

shown to improve learning outcomes by producing more native-like proficiency (Batterink & Neville, 2013) as well as by increasing recall (Morgan-Short, Faretta-Stutenberg, Brill-Schuetz, Carpenter, & Wong, 2014).

The modern age in ESL education has been described as a "post-methods era" (Morgan-Short et al., 2014, p. 39) in which greater emphasis is placed on students' needs than on following a prescriptive approach to instruction. Nevertheless, the principles core to communicative language teaching form the basis for such emergent sub-fields within ESL as EAP (Gillett, 2011; Karimkhanlui, 2005; Khan et al., 2016). These overlaps are discussed at greater lengths in the next section. However, because the field of EAP is a relatively new research field within the larger ESL spectrum, it is arguably at this forefront that the most potential for innovative studies currently exists (Eick, 2017; Nhongo et al., 2017).

English for academic purposes. The specific ESL teaching context of this study is EAP. Seen as a specialized subfield within English for specific purposes, English for professional purposes, and English for occupational purposes (Gillett, 2011), EAP is defined as "specialized English language teaching grounded in the social, cognitive and linguistic demands of academic target situations, providing focused instruction informed by an understanding or texts and constraints of academic contexts" (Hyland, 2006, p. 2). Despite the divergent nature of borrowed theories currently influencing the field of EAP, some of the core principles and features of the field align nearly one-to-one with those of communicative language teaching (Khan et al., 2016). The core features specific to EAP, according to (Gillett, 2011), are as follows:

- EAP is a pragmatic, goal-oriented approach to teaching and setting learning objectives based on the communication needs of students in their target academic contexts beyond the classroom.

- EAP curriculum is based on needs analysis of students with authentic teaching materials being used to develop specific skills as much as possible.
- EAP students are almost always adults who wish to continue their education or academic careers in contexts where English is the lingua franca.
- EAP objectives are frequently divided into four categories: to provide students with knowledge about the target academic language, to provide students with knowledge about the target academic culture, to train students on how to use the language in specific academic contexts, and to develop students' intercultural awareness.

Scholars have noted that while there have been significant advances in general ESL teaching methodology in the current post-methods era, these advances have been slow to find their way into EAP contexts and methodologies (Kashef, Pandian, & Khameneh, 2014). This delay may be partly due to the divergent theories adopted from other fields currently being applied to the context, or to the fact that within the field itself there are various perspectives on what the emphasis should be within the classroom. These perspectives include everything from Traditionalism, Progressivism, Criticalism (Bingham & Biesta, 2010), to Digitalism (Walker, 2014), and even Humanism (Li, 2017). It is this researcher's view that perhaps all of these perspectives have their place, depending on which facet of EAP is being addressed. Concepts within digitalism, for example promoting students' computer literacy (Walker, 2014), should most certainly be applied if needs analysis in a given context deems these learning objectives relevant to a group of EAP students.

The perspectives of progressivism and cultural literacy are arguably most relevant to this study's context based largely on the EAP objectives and practices of the research site at which this research was conducted. As other educational philosophers have noted, "The progressive

orientation shares the desire to create a common body of knowledge that will enable the communication of citizens in the public sphere" (Bingham & Biesta, 2010, p. 377). While some authors have noted the overwhelming emphasis on the development of text-oriented language skills of reading and writing within EAP (Hyland, 2008; Kashef et al., 2014; Li, 2017), this study finds itself within a context in which the development of the communicative and sociocultural competencies of students is emphasized. This aligns with the progressivist perspective other scholars in the field have taken, such as Rancière, Bingham and Biesta, and Wingate (Li, 2017). For example, Wingate (2015) emphasized the need for developing students' awareness of the target sociocultural context so that students could develop the ability to converse effectively with members of the target academic language culture to which they aspire.

To achieve this communicative competence within an EAP context, Hyland (2006) advocated the use of highly specialized sources of target language and interactions unique to each discipline within EAP teaching. Many researchers from the progressivist and cultural literacy perspective within the field even insist on the use of authentic documents and examples of interactions to promote students' communicative competencies based on the academic culture they seek to join (Deane & O'Neill, 2011; Dudley-Evans, 2001; Gillett, 2011; Li, 2017; Wingate, 2015). Hyland (2006) saw the development of students' identities as being framed within a social and cultural context, based on cultural literacy theory, or that "the development of identity is a result of interactions in social settings" (Clark & Flores, 2007, p. 10). This development of identity within an EAP context thus requires a focus not on the development of language skills to be used in isolation, but rather to be used to interact with others within a larger sociocultural network (Gillett, 2011; Li, 2017). These notions align directly with communicative language teaching (Khan et al., 2016), Hymes' (Hymes & Gumperz, 1964) communicative competence,

and even Dewey's (1902; Dewey & Dewey, 1915) philosophies of progressivism and pragmatism. It is within this EAP framework of emphasis on developing students' communicative competence and cultural literacy that this study took place.

Rationale for Selecting *TBBT*

This section of the chapter introduces the areas of study that are being cited as providing rationale for the selection of *TBBT* for use as a source of humorous authentic material in an EAP context. Included in this section is a review of literature pertaining to authentic materials in language teaching, corpus linguistics and register analysis, humor in ESL teaching, and the affective factors of motivation, anxiety, and self-confidence. This section also provides enough historical context for each of these areas to orient the reader within the context of the study.

Authentic materials. Within this wider context of ESL and EAP methodologies, one fruitful line of research has focused on the use of authentic materials in the language classroom (Rahman, 2014). To explain the reasoning behind the selection of authentic materials for use in this study, both historical and recent findings in the field are presented in this section. There is a range or meanings associated with authenticity in teaching materials and some debate as to its exact definition. In reviewing the relevant literature, Gilmore (2007) provided a succinct overview of the overlapping meanings associated with authenticity by various authors. These relate to the following:

- the language used in a language community between native speakers (Little, Devitt, & Singleton, 1989; Porter & Roberts, 1981);
- written or spoken language delivering a genuine message (Benson & Voller, 1997; Morrow, 1977; Porter & Roberts, 1981; Swaffer, 1985);

- a quality of authenticity attributed to a message by a reader or listener but not inherent in the message otherwise (Breen, 1985; Widdowson, 1978);
- communication between teachers and students (van Lier, 1996);
- tasks chosen within the language classroom (Bachman, 1991; Benson & Voller, 1997; Breen, 1985; Guariento & Morley, 2001; Lewkowicz, 2000; van Lier, 1996);
- the social context of the learning environment (Arnold, 1991; Breen, 1985; Guariento & Morley, 2001; Lee, 1995; Rost, 2002);
- the authenticity of assessment (Bachman, 1991; Bachman & Palmer, 1996; Lewkowicz, 2000); and
- the ability to be accepted by a target language culture (Kramsch, 1993).

The above list indicates that a great range of meanings has been linked with authenticity for some time. The authors above situate the concept of authenticity "in either the text itself, in the participants, in the social or cultural situation and purpose of the communicative act, or some combination of these" (Gilmore, 2007, p. 98). Still, these descriptions of authentic materials are similar enough to extract a single definition for the purpose of this study. More succinctly, scholars have described authentic materials as anything having been created "to fulfil some social purpose in the language community . . . that is, materials not produced for second language learners" (Peacock, 1997, p. 146), or as any example of language "produced by a real speaker or writer for a real audience and designed to convey a real message" (Morrow, 1977, p. 13). For the purpose of this study, then, authentic materials are defined as materials of any kind created by and for the target language community and not for teaching or learning purposes (Rahman, 2014). By adopting this definition, the list of potential authentic material sources is virtually limitless provided that they have not been designed or altered for language teaching

purposes. Some common sources of authentic materials, according to Tamo (2009), include "newspapers, TV programs, menus, magazines, the internet, movies, songs, brochures, comics, literature (novels, poems and short stories), advertisements for events, course catalogues from schools and so forth" (p. 75).

Interest in using authentic materials in the language classroom dates back as far as the 1890s, with Henry Sweet (1899) noting that authentic materials do justice to all features of the language, whereas contrived materials include artificial repetition of certain elements such as grammatical structures and lexis that are not representative of genuine communication. Authentic materials began to play an integral role in the influential communicative language teaching movement beginning in the 1980s (Khan et al., 2016). As Lin (2004) noted, from the 1980s, "The importance of teaching authentic texts in culturally authentic contexts rather than texts designed pedagogically has been emphasized by communicative approaches" (p. 26). Within EAP contexts, great emphasis has been placed on the use of authentic materials in order to best prepare students for success in their target academic language communities (Deane & O'Neill, 2011; Dudley-Evans, 2001; Gillett, 2011; Li, 2017; Wingate, 2015).

For some time, researchers have cited numerous benefits to using authentic materials in the ESL classroom, including exposure to real discourse and language, creating a connection to the real world beyond the classroom, exposure to improper and real language interactions, and exposure to various styles and registers (Tamo, 2009). Authentic materials can also be used by teachers to bridge the artificial and formal classroom environment and the target language community (Li, 2017; Tamo, 2009; Wingate, 2015). In addition, it has been widely reported that the use of authentic materials can help increase motivation especially for students who have integrative motivation to join a target language community (Benavent & Sanchez-Reyes

Penamaria, 2011; Ghanbari, Esmaili, & Shamsaddini, 2015; Karimi & Dolatabadi, 2014; Marzban & Davaji, 2015). Ultimately, the consensus seems to be that within EAP contexts, authentic materials "can increase students' motivation and expose them to real language and culture as well as to the different genres of the professional community to which they aspire" (Benavent & Sanchez-Reyes Penamaria, 2011, p. 90).

Authors of specific empirical studies have reported on various positive findings when investigating the use of authentic materials in ESL teaching for various purposes. For example, several recent studies have reported on the positive effects of using authentic materials in the form of video and television programs in the ESL classroom, contributing to an improvement in students' vocabulary acquisition and pronunciation skills (McNulty & Lazarevic, 2012; Webb & Rodgers, 2009). Other studies have demonstrated the benefits of using authentic materials for vocabulary learning (Ghanbari et al., 2015), for increasing listening comprehension (Karimi & Dolatabadi, 2014), and for improving reading comprehension (Marzban & Davaji, 2015). All these authors have also reported an improvement in student motivation when authentic materials were used. There are, however, still many gaps in the existing literature. Pertaining specifically to authentic materials and motivation, "little research has focused on the material and methodology in relation to motivation, but there is evidence that authentic materials generate interest in the lesson" (Petrides, 2006, p. 3).

Other authors, however, have also noted the potential disadvantages of using authentic materials, especially with less advanced students. The following is a concise list, according to Tamo (2009), of some of the disadvantages to using authentic materials:

- might be culturally biased or difficult to grasp outside linguistic community,
- contain vocabulary that is not needed in students' lives beyond the classroom,

- may contain too many mixed structures for lower levels,
- might require special preparation,
- different accents can cause confusion,
- quickly outdated (such as news articles), and
- may require good knowledge of the cultural background. (pp. 75-76)

In terms of the disadvantages, while it is arguable that the use of authentic material might expose weaker students to language that is too advanced for them to fully grasp, Harmer (2001) stated that "it is vital for students to get practice in dealing with writing and speech where they miss quite a few words but are still able to extract the general meaning" (p. 273). Indeed, many recent studies seem to agree that authentic materials can provide a benefit for students in terms of increased motivation and learning outcomes, provided materials are selected with care and with students' learning needs in mind (Gillett, 2011). Still, many teachers are reluctant to use authentic materials in the classroom for fear of sophisticated language, randomness, complex grammatical forms, and challenging lexis (Taghavi & Aladini, 2018). This situation signifies the need for advancement of understanding in the field so that educators are more informed about the potential benefits of using authentic materials and, more importantly, how these materials are experienced by ESL student populations.

Corpus linguistics and register analysis. In order to ensure the relevance of selected authentic texts and discourses for use in EAP teaching, many recent studies have begun to utilize corpus linguistics techniques. Corpus linguistics is a methodology whereby large bodies of text or spoken examples of language are amassed for analysis for a variety of applications (Lindquist, 2009). Although the idea and practice of analyzing collections of real-world language is not new, modern corpus linguistics began to develop rapidly in the 1960s with such publications as

Kučera and Francis' (1967) *Computational Analysis of Present-Day American English*. Here, the authors analyzed Brown University's now-well-known Standard Corpus of Present-Day American English, to which they contributed substantially (Francis & Kučera, 1964). Corpus linguistics techniques and applications began to make significant advances in tandem with computer technologies beginning in the 1980s (Giménez-Moreno & Skorczynska, 2013). Over the past decade, corpus linguistics has become quite widespread within EAP, with numerous studies providing empirical evidence based on corpus analysis, of the use, frequency, and function of various linguistic features in academic contexts (Hyland, 2008; Jaworska, 2015; Krishnamurthy & Kosem, 2007).

The application of corpus linguistics' techniques in EAP is based largely on the notion that students need to master communication in a specific genre and language register shared by a target language community (Li, 2017). The term register was first coined by Thomas Reid (1956) based on the notion that "the language we speak or write varies according to the type of situation" (Halliday, 1978, p. 32). Although the concept of register was initially only divided into three registers of formal, neutral, and informal registers (Giménez-Moreno & Skorczynska, 2013), many academic and other registers are now recognized. The COCA, for example, one of the most comprehensive corpora available, containing over 450 million words, allows scholars and practitioners to search for academic and spoken register words to explore the frequency of occurrence of lexis and other linguistic elements (Davies, 2010).

Due to the many corpus-based studies that have been conducted in English for academic purposes in recent years, there are now substantial corpora specific to academic English containing a range of text types, sources, academic disciplines, and registers (Jaworska, 2015; Krishnamurthy & Kosem, 2007). This development has been beneficial to the field of EAP as it

has allowed for the creation and examination of highly specialized teaching materials containing targeted academic register words (Ellis, Simpson-Vlach, & Maynard, 2008; Jaworska, 2015; Paquot, 2010). These developments in corpus linguistics have also allowed for the register variation analysis of potential sources of teaching materials, such as *TBBT*, to determine the frequency of academic register words (Giménez-Moreno & Skorczynska, 2013) and to gauge their potential suitability for use in EAP contexts.

The number of recent studies using corpus analysis techniques within EAP is substantial. Such studies have been used primarily to identify language features that would otherwise be difficult to observe both in teaching materials and in student-generated language output (Agathopoulou, 2010). These studies have focused on linguistic features in academic English such as rhetorical structures (Pho, 2010), collocations (Ward, 2007), lexical bundles (Hyland, 2008; Wood, 2010), word frequencies (Martínez, Beck, & Panza, 2009), and features of student errors and language output patterns (Granger, 2009; Hyland, 2009; Martínez, 2005). Despite these studies, Agathopoulou (2010) noted that very few authors have made specific recommendations to classroom activities, approaches, or materials based on their findings. This situation further highlights the need for studies in an EAP context that not only utilize modern corpus linguistics techniques for language analysis in isolation but that also apply these findings to the advancement of policies and teaching practices within the field.

Humor in ESL teaching. Several lines of research have emerged in recent years in an attempt to understand how materials and approaches influence students' experiences and learning outcomes in the language classroom. One such line of research has focused on the use of humor in foreign language teaching (Petraki & Nguyen, 2016; Rucynski, 2017). Humor has been described as "the comic, absurd or incongruous quality that causes amusement" (Zabidin,

2015, p. 105). This definition of humor is based in part on incongruity theory (Perks, 2012; Kozbelt & Nishioka, 2010), or the idea that amusement "derives from the unexpected or surprise that contradicts with past experience, cognitive frameworks and expectations" (Zabidin, 2015, p. 105). As discussed by Green (2016), novel learning situations that incorporate these unexpected or incongruent elements have been shown to release dopamine in the brain, a chemical that has been linked both with reward (Baudonnat, Huber, David, & Walton, 2013) and improved learning in an ESL context (Wong, Morgan-Short, Ettlinger, & Zhen, 2012; Wong, Ettlinger, & Zheng, 2013). Researchers who have sought to apply this idea of novelty in an ESL context have reported improvements in student motivation, such as when songs are used (Jedynak, Simpson, & Stieve, 2000), karaoke (Erten, 2015), or television and sitcoms (Kozhevnikova, 2013).

Some other studies investigating the use of humor in teaching, for example, have also reported on its positive effects. On a physical level alone, studies have shown how humor in education can relax muscles, stimulate circulation, improve breathing, help control stress hormones, relieve tension, increase immunity, and lower blood pressure (Chiang et al., 2016). Psychologically, studies have also shown how humor in education can decrease anxiety, tension, and stress, improve self-confidence and morale, increase motivation, comprehension, retention, curiosity, and even perceived quality of life (Chiang et al., 2016; Garner, 2006; Philaretou, 2007; Stambor, 2006). Specific to the language classroom, studies have demonstrated a strong correlation between the use of humor and students' increased retention of information (Carlson, 2011; Garner, 2006; Matthews, 2011), sense of enjoyment and motivation (Bell, 2009; Zabidin, 2015) as well as their linguistic development and improved cultural awareness (Wagner & Urios-Aparisi, 2011). Specific to using humor in an EAP context, Mingzheng (2012) also reported on

the reduction of stress, improvement of student/teacher relationships, and the increase of learning outcomes through the use of humor.

In his recent book, *New Ways in Teaching with Humor*, Rucynski (2017) provided over 100 well developed plans for incorporating humor in the ESL classroom. Rucynski claimed that humor is a vital tool that ESL teachers can use to combat the seriousness, anxiety, and stress of the language classroom. He also noted, as others, that an understanding of humor is also vital for students to develop in order to become part of a target language community (Bell, 2007; Lems, 2013; Rucynski, 2017). Scholars have also noted that humor can be used in combination with any language teaching method and approach in EAP contexts, general English courses, and in virtually any teaching context (Rucynski, 2017; Schmitz, 2002). Claiming that the use of humor can offer invaluable insights into a target language community (Gardner, 2008), Rucynski (2017) specifically noted that the use of movies and sitcoms as sources of humor in the classroom "not only offer a glimpse into daily life in the English-speaking world, but also provide valuable clues into how humor is used and what people find funny in the respective culture" (p. xiii). This approach to using humor ties in well with communicative language teaching (Ellis, 1994; Gillett, 2011; Karimkhanlui, 2005; Khan et al., 2016), the progressivist perspective in EAP discussed earlier (Gillett, 2011; Kashef et al., 2014) as well as with a desire to cultivate students' sociocultural understanding within EAP contexts (Clark & Flores, 2007; Wingate, 2015).

Despite the stated benefits of using humor, previous studies have also noted that humor is still underused in the foreign language classroom (Liu, 2015). As discussed by Nadeem (2012), many teachers expect high seriousness from students especially at advanced academic levels due to high-stakes testing and benchmarks. This expectation of seriousness often leads to students perceiving the foreign language classroom as difficult and stressful (Park, 2014), which can lead

to what is known as foreign language classroom anxiety (Horwitz, 2016). In addition, researchers have noted the extreme complexity and nuanced nature of humor for ESL students (Bell, 2009; Norrick, 2003), confounded by humor researchers' failure to account for these complexities or make suggestions for effectively using humor in the classroom (Bell, 2009; Schmitz, 2002). Humorous materials' culturally-specific and complex nature can also make it challenging to include in an ESL context. Indeed, some researchers advocate caution when using certain types of humor in a multicultural, multilingual context, as their use can potentially lead to misunderstandings or offense (Csajbok-Twerefou, 2011). This situation has led to a situation in which research is arguably even more needed to better understand how specific ESL student populations experience humorous materials in the classroom.

Affective factors of motivation, anxiety, and self-confidence. Of particular interest to this study is the understanding of how students experience the use of specific materials in a motivating way within an EAP context. For this reason, it is important to frame what is meant by motivation within ESL. There are numerous models and definitions available to describe various forms of motivation. While a brief overview of these definitions is presented here, it is not necessary nor the intent of this literature review to unify the cacophonous perspectives on motivation within this context. According to Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011), motivation comes "from the Latin word 'movere' meaning 'to move'; what moves a person to make certain choices, engage in action, expand effort and persist in action" (p. 61). Another prominent scholar in the field, Gardner (2006), stated that motivation is a complex phenomenon that is difficult to pin down with a single definition. Nevertheless, some of the more established individual viewpoints on motivation within the field include the following:

- extrinsic motivation, or “anticipation of reward” within the behavioristic perspective (Brown, 2000, p. 160);
- the degree of effort to accomplish a goal within the cognitivist perspective (Keller, 1983, p. 389);
- intrinsic motivation, or a learner’s innate and deeply rooted drive to learn (Skehan, 1991);
- resultative motivation that can be influenced positively or negatively by a learner’s past success or failure (Ghani & Azhar, 2017);
- integrative motivation, or a learner’s desire to become part of a target language community (Gardner, 1985);
- instrumental motivation, or a desire to learn in order to achieve a secondary goal such as to make more money or receive a promotion (Gardner, 1985);
- task motivation, or a student’s desire to engage in a specific learning activity or task (Dörnyei, 1998; Poupore, 2016); and
- foreign language learning motivation, or a student’s desire to learn a foreign language (Gardner, 2007).

Trends in thinking within the field of motivation in ESL now favor a view that motivation is “a complex dynamic system that is constantly in flux and different for all individuals” (Green, 2016, p. 70). What is generally accepted, despite the differences in models and perspectives mentioned above, is that motivation is important to the language learning process. For example, Dörnyei (1998) stated, “Motivation has been widely accepted by both teachers and researchers as one of the key factors that influence the rate and success of second/foreign language (L2) learning” (p. 15). Research into motivation within language learning and teaching has been

established for more than 60 years, with many prominent voices having continued to publish within the last few years (Dörnyei, Henry, & MacIntyre, 2014; Gardner, 2007; Green, 2016). Nedashkivska and Sivachenko (2017) noted that many studies have demonstrated strong correlations between motivation and achievement in language learning. One well-known and cited study made the claim 40 years ago that motivation was even more important than natural aptitude in producing successful learning outcomes (Naiman et al., 1978). This sentiment continues to be confirmed and repeated by this generation of motivation researchers (Dörnyei et al., 2014; Ghani & Azhar, 2017). Arguably, of particular importance for curriculum developers and practitioners within the field of ESL are the more transitive forms of motivation that can be influenced by external factors, as opposed to other forms of motivation such as intrinsic motivation that may be more difficult to influence in the immediate (Ghani & Azhar, 2017). Studies have demonstrated that intrinsic motivational drivers are less effective than extrinsic motivational drivers for influencing learning outcomes in ESL contexts (Lee, Cheung, & Chen, 2005; Wong et al., 2012). For this reason, task motivation, a form of extrinsic motivation, is of particular importance to this study as it focuses primarily on students' immediate response to a classroom activity or task (Dörnyei et al., 2014; Poupore, 2016). It is this type of motivation, more so than perhaps any other that educators can most easily influence by selecting activities and materials that pique students' interests. Although this is not always stated by researchers when they refer simply to "motivation" in their findings, it is arguable that an influence on task motivation is what they are observing (Dörnyei et al., 2014).

In the studies mentioned above, researchers have selected a particular piece of authentic material or humor, designed a lesson or task around that material, and reported increased motivation (Chiang et al., 2016; Gardner, 2006; Ghanbari et al., 2015; Karimi & Dolatabadi,

2014; Marzban & Davaji, 2015; McNulty & Lazarevic, 2012; Philaretou, 2007; Stambor, 2006; Webb & Rodgers, 2009). Even critics of the importance of motivation, such as Green (2016), have bolstered the claim that task motivation is essential to consider for ESL practitioners, stating that "for classes of students with low motivation, teachers are better to create engaging, fun activities that repeat common linguistic structures than to try to do something about their low motivation *per se*" (p. 73). Studies that have sought to understand the motivational potential of selected materials, tasks, and activities have recently gained popularity in ESL research, forming a field that is "certainly one of the most fruitful directions for future research" (Dörnyei, 2003, p. 16).

Although this study focused more attention on how ESL students experience *TBBT* in terms of motivation, especially task motivation as discussed by Poupore (2016), this study also sought to understand students' experiences in terms of Krashen's other affective factors of anxiety and self-confidence. Anxiety has been defined as "the subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with an arousal of the autonomic nervous system" (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986, p. 125). Anxiety has also been described as a key factor in helping or hindering success in the foreign language classroom, with Arnold and Brown (1999) stating that "anxiety is quite possibly the affective factor that most pervasively obstructs the learning process" and that "it is associated with negative feelings such as uneasiness, frustration, self-doubt, apprehension and tension" (p. 8). Foreign language learning anxiety, as discussed by Horwitz (2016), may result from students feeling pressure and anxiety due to fear of performing incorrectly in the foreign language, embarrassing themselves, or failing to understand what is taking place because of a language barrier. Many recent studies have suggested that students may become incapable of absorbing target language content when they

experience this type of anxiety in the language classroom (Huang & Hwang, 2013; Lin et al., 2015; Yuhui & Sen, 2015). As discussed above, of most interest to this study are findings that have consistently suggested that humor can be an effective tool for combating anxiety in the foreign language classroom (Bell, 2007; Lems, 2013; Rucynski, 2017). Still, as Lin et al. (2015) discussed, the difficulty in reliably measuring students' anxiety in the foreign language classroom means that the "relationship between learning anxiety and foreign language learning has not been extensively studied" (p. 730). To add to the body of knowledge on student's anxiety in the foreign language classroom, questions seeking to identify exactly how ESL students define anxiety, and how they experience *TBBT* in terms of this key affective factor have been deliberately included.

Krashen's third affective factor of self-confidence, which is closely related to anxiety and motivation, was also of interest in this study. Self-confidence has been described as perceiving oneself as worthy of praise and competent to successfully manage challenges in life or in a given situation (Branden, 1969; Mandokhail, Khan, & Malghani, 2018). Brown and Lee (1994) maintained that both intrinsic and extrinsic factors can influence a student' sense of self-confidence in the learning environment with more recent studies maintaining that self-confidence is "a significant predictor of language proficiency" (Edwards & Roger, 2015, p. 3). Brown and Lee (1994) also provided three classifications of self-confidence: global (developed over time from interactions with others and the external world), specific/situational (pertaining to one's self-confidence in more specific situations or interactions), and task (one's assessment of their ability to accomplish a specific task).

More specific to the foreign language classroom context in which this study took place, other scholars have attempted to define and assess self-confidence. The term L2 (second

language) self-confidence has been defined as the "overall belief in being able to communicate in the L2 in an adaptive and efficient manner" (MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei, & Noels, 1998, p. 551). Defined as having a cognitive element (one's own assessment of their foreign language skills) and an affective element (fear or anxiety associated with communicating in the foreign language), researchers have maintained that second language self-confidence is a critical predictor of foreign language fluency (Clément, 1986; Edwards & Roger, 2015; MacIntyre et al., 1998).

Researchers such as Krashen (1982), MacIntyre et al. (1998), Clément (1986), Brown and Lee (1994), and Edwards and Roger (2015) have maintained that self-confidence is important in the foreign language learning process. It is, therefore, critical to understand how students experience materials like *TBBT* in terms of this critical affective factor. For the purpose of this study, however, it is less important to define self-confidence as a parameter than it is understand how students define self-confidence for themselves in an EAP context as well as how they experience *TBBT* in terms of this definition.

Conclusion of rationale section. In summary, the rationale behind the selection of *TBBT* for use in an EAP context draws from various sources discussed in this section. First, advances in corpus linguistics and language register analysis techniques have been demonstrated by other similar studies to be useful in selecting materials with desired linguistic elements for a given teaching context (Giménez-Moreno & Skorczynska, 2013; Hyland, 2008; Jaworska, 2015; Krishnamurthy & Kosem, 2007). Second, other studies have demonstrated the positive effects of using humor in the classroom with effects on anxiety and motivation (Chiang et al., 2016; Garner, 2006; Philaretou, 2007; Rucynski, 2017; Stambor, 2006). Other studies have demonstrated the benefits of using novel teaching materials and experiences (Green, 2016;

Sousa, 2011; Tokuhama-Espinosa, 2009). Still others have reported on the advantages of using authentic materials in an EAP context to promote language learning and cultural literacy (Li, 2017; Marzban & Davaji, 2015; McNulty & Lazarevic, 2012; Webb & Rodgers, 2009; Wingate, 2015). Arguably, *TBBT* contains many elements that tie it with the cited findings in this section. Specifically, *TBBT* is humorous, it is arguably a novel source of material for use in an EAP context, it is a source of authentic material (corpus linguistics techniques were applied to analyze its linguistic features), and it has the potential to be motivating due to its extrinsic, task motivational properties.

Theoretical Framework

This section of the chapter reviews literature and provides background about the theoretical framework of Krashen's affective filter hypothesis. Included in this section is a discussion of the theorist, the context of the theory, the constructs of the theory, studies based on the theory, its use as a framework for the present study, and reactions to the theory by other scholars. This section also includes discussion of the ways in which the chosen theoretical framework aligns with the problem, purpose, and research questions of the current study.

Theorist. The theoretical framework for this study is based on Krashen's (1982) affective filter hypothesis as part of his influential theory of second language acquisition. As one of the pioneering voices in the field of second language acquisition and applied linguistics, Krashen is responsible for having provided or advanced several influential theories that remain relevant today (Liu, 2015). Seen as "a source of ideas for research in second language acquisition" (Lightbown & Spada, 2006, p. 38), Krashen is a respected and extensively-cited scholar in the field of second language acquisition. According to his faculty profile at University of Southern California, where he currently serves as an Emeritus Professor of Education, Krashen (2018)

earned his doctorate in linguistics at the University of California, Los Angeles in 1972. Krashen has published over 250 books and articles on bilingual education, second language acquisition, literacy, and neurolinguistics as well as received numerous awards and honors in these fields (Krashen, 2018).

Context. Krashen's most influential theory is arguably his theory of second language acquisition, first put forth in 1982, and consisting of five interrelated hypotheses. Krashen's theory was introduced at a time of significant developments within the field of second language acquisition and language teaching around the middle of the 20th century, as discussed in the English as a second language methodology section above. Hymes' concept of communicative competence became hugely influential within ESL education during the second half of the 20th century (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). This concept of communicative competence became a catalyst that initiated the formation of a new method known as communicative language teaching, which sought to focus more on the communicative and functional potential of language (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). This resulting movement gained substantial momentum in the 1980s and continues to be a leading methodology in ESL education today including as a basis for more modern approaches such as EAP (Wenzhong & Muchun, 2015).

It was during this time of great interest in communicative approaches to language teaching that Terrell (1977) first introduced "a proposal for a 'new' philosophy of language teaching" calling it the natural approach (p. 121). Partnering with Krashen to develop the theoretical rationale for the new approach, the two published a book in 1983, drawing heavily on Krashen's abovementioned 5 hypotheses of second language actuation to justify the new approach (Krashen & Terrell, 1983). Krashen and Terrell (1983) saw this approach as a communicative one, stating that it is "similar to other communicative approaches being

developed today" (p. 17). Seeing their theory and approach as a rejection of the behaviorist theory-based audiolingual method, they emphasized the communicative potential of language over focus on linguistic structures, believed in delivering as much comprehensible input as possible within the lesson, emphasized subconscious acquisition over conscious learning, and stressed the delivery of content in a supportive environment without anxiety to encourage low affective filters among students (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Krashen and Terrell (1983) claimed that this approach was "based on an empirically grounded theory of second language acquisition, which has been supported by a large number of scientific studies in a wide variety of language acquisition and learning contexts" (p. 16).

Krashen's theory is credited with having helped usher in a transformation of language teaching methodology away from form-focused approaches such as audiolingualism and the grammar-translation method to more communicative approaches focusing on meaning (Lightbown & Spada, 2006; Liu, 2015). As communicative language teaching approaches are now the most widely utilized and accepted of all approaches within the field of second language teaching, forming the basis of EAP teaching contexts in our current post-methods era, the significance of Krashen's contribution should not be underestimated (Liu, 2015). As will be discussed below, Krashen's theory has received criticism throughout the decades since its introduction, including the argument that many elements of the theory were poorly defined (Zafar, 2009). While Krashen (1992) acknowledged the need to better define or even reject elements of his own theory, his theory has remained largely unaltered since its original publishing in 1982.

Constructs of the theory. The five hypotheses of Krashen's (1982) theory of second language acquisition act both independently and holistically, making it essential to briefly

introduce them all for context. Although his fifth hypothesis, the affective filter hypothesis, serves as the theoretical framework for this study, it is not possible to understand it without providing the context of his complete theory. Krashen's (1982) first hypothesis is his acquisition/learning hypothesis in which he drew a distinction between the subconscious acquisition of language and the conscious learning about a language and its structures. Equating acquisition to the process a child goes through when acquiring their first language, he stated that "language acquirers are not usually aware of the fact that they are acquiring language but are only aware of the fact that they are using the language to communicate" (Krashen, 1982, p. 10). In contrast, he defined learning as gaining "conscious knowledge of a second language, knowing the rules, being aware of them, and being able to talk about them" (Krashen, 1982, p. 10). Krashen's advocating of a language teaching approach that emphasized communication over the learning of grammar rules and language structures helped usher in the communicative language teaching movement (Liu, 2015).

Krashen's (1982) second interrelated hypothesis in the theory of second language acquisition is his natural order hypothesis. This hypothesis states that children acquire language structures in a similar pattern and at a similar age regardless of the language being learned or even the content of classroom instruction (Krashen, 1982). Although this hypothesis is not central to this study, it is interesting to note that this idea within the theory links Krashen clearly with Chomsky's (1957) notion of universal grammar and other innatist linguistic models of the time (Spada & Lightbown, 2010). Such connections clearly mark his theory as stemming from an historical period of thought pertaining to language learning and teaching to be discussed at greater lengths below.

Krashen's (1982) third hypothesis is his monitor hypothesis. This hypothesis essentially states that a learner's ability to speak stems from his acquired language competencies (subconscious) not his learned language knowledge (conscious), and that the learned knowledge simply helps monitor the correctness of utterances. Further emphasizing the distinction between acquired competencies and learned knowledge, this hypothesis also highlights Krashen's preference for communicative approaches, stating, "Our pedagogical goal is to produce optimal users, performers who use the monitor when it is appropriate and when it does not interfere with communication" (p. 19).

The fourth hypothesis within Krashen's (1982) overall theory is his input hypothesis. This states that language is acquired "only when we understand language that contains structure that is 'a little beyond' where we are now" (Krashen, 1982, p. 21). In other words, ideal language content for acquisition contains a majority of comprehensible input but also a small amount of currently incomprehensible input for the student to learn. Represented graphically as i + I, with "i" representing what is currently known and "I" representing what is new, this notion is reminiscent of theories such as Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development. Many highly-trusted books on the practice of language teaching still advocate this principle, for example Harmer's (2001) *The Practice of English Language Teaching*, which states that "it is vital for students to get practice in dealing with writing and speech where they miss quite a few words but are still able to extract the general meaning" (p. 273).

The fifth and most important of Krashen's hypotheses for the purpose of this study is his affective filter hypothesis. Even though this concept was introduced some years earlier by Dulay and Burt (1977), Krashen (as cited in Liu, 2015) expanded on the idea and incorporated it into his theory as one of the five hypotheses. In his own words, Krashen (1982) noted, "The filter

hypothesis explains why it is possible for an acquirer to obtain a great deal of comprehensible input and yet stop short… of the native speaker level" (p. 32). Put differently, it is possible for teachers to expose ESL students to content they are capable of understanding and processing, but due to stress factors, they filter out the content from reaching the language acquisition device (LAD) in the brain. The LAD, first proposed by Chomsky (1965), is essentially a hypothetical area of the human brain that allows children and adults to process and learn languages.

Of importance is the fact that the affective filter hypothesis identifies three affective domain areas that can lead to a high affective filter resulting in comprehensible input failing to reach the LAD and thus failing to be acquired. These factors are motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety (Krashen, 1982). Krashen made the following three claims about these factors:

- Learners who have high motivation typically experience greater success at language acquisition.
- Learners who are more self-confident and have a healthier self-image generally experience more language acquisition success.
- Low anxiety, in the form of personal classroom anxiety, is more likely to result in greater second language acquisition.

Krashen (1982) further stated that our pedagogical goals as educators should include both providing comprehensible input while encouraging a low filter. He also noted, "The effective language teacher is someone who can provide input and help make it comprehensible in a low anxiety situation" (Krashen, 1982, p. 32). This notion of anxiety, low motivation, and low self-confidence preventing students from learning in the foreign language classroom has formed the theoretical basis for numerous studies since its introduction to be discussed below.

Studies based on the theory. Quite a few recent scholars have chosen to use Krashen's affective filter hypothesis as the theoretical framework for their investigations. Not surprisingly, such studies tend to look at affective factors such as self-confidence, motivation, and anxiety in the foreign language classroom. Five such studies are briefly introduced here.

One such study, published in the journal of *Theory and Practice in Language Studies,* investigated "the effects of affective factors in SLA and pedagogical implications" (Ni, 2012, p. 1508). This study used questionnaires with 50 advanced ESL students enrolled in the Foreign Language Department at Heze University to investigate the frequency and degree to which affective factors influenced students' learning. The survey questions were used to ask participants about their performance in class, their perceived proficiency level in English as well as their motivation level, self-confidence while speaking, anxiety level, and their preferred method of receiving instructor feedback (Ni, 2012). The results of the study indicated that successful students tended to self-report high motivation, high self-confidence, and low anxiety in class, and the method employed by teachers to provide feedback to students had either a positive or negative influence on students' emotional states (Ni, 2012). This study seemed to confirm Krashen's assertion that affective factors such as anxiety, self-confidence, and motivation influence students' language learning, with Ni (2012) stating, "The present study demonstrates that the affective factors decide the proportion of language learners' input and intake" (p. 1512). Ni (2012) went on to make recommendations regarding the pedagogical implications of the findings, in particular that teachers should fully consider learners' affective factors when making decisions regarding feedback in the classroom.

Another recent study in which Krashen's affective filter hypothesis was used as a theoretical framework investigated the use of humor in the college English classroom with

students in China. Stating clearly that “the theoretical basis for this empirical study is the Affective Filter Hypothesis proposed by Stephen Krashen” (Mingzheng, 2012, p. 397), this study used questionnaires with 80 teachers and 300 students enrolled in English classes at the University of Foreign Languages in Luoyang, China. With a hypothesis that “using humor as a pedagogical tool in foreign language teaching can lower students’ Affective Filter in the learning process, thus improving their ability to use the language” (Mingzheng, 2012, p. 399), the investigations produced the following results:

- 92.7% of students wished for teachers to use more humor in class, and
- 62.3% of students felt that a teaching approach using humor helped produce better learning efficiency when compared to a traditional, non-humorous approach.

Most notably, Mingzheng (2012) reported that the findings support the notion that teaching with humor has the benefit of lowering students’ affective filters, claiming that “participants indicate that reduced anxiety/tension, improved relationship between teachers and students, and increased levels of interest may result from the use of humor in the class” (p. 406). Although the methods used to incorporate humor into the classroom were not fully defined by the author, the use of Krashen’s affective filter hypothesis as a theoretical framework and the conclusive results of the surveys in favor of his hypothesis were pertinent.

Another interesting two-part study based on Krashen’s affective filter hypothesis used questionnaire data with 100 college students enrolled in Japanese foreign language classes to develop and test a new teaching program that was more responsive to students’ emotional states (Lin et al., 2015). The theoretical framework is clearly listed in the study as “foreign language anxiety” and “affective filter hypothesis” (Lin et al., 2015, p. 732). The study used the findings from initial surveys, which indicated that roughly half of the students experienced language

learning anxiety, to develop a computer-based affective tutoring system for Japanese language learning (Lin et al., 2015, p. 728). Further testing with the new system revealed that students using the system experienced higher self-confidence, reduced anxiety, and improved learning outcomes. Although the authors acknowledged that more research was needed to fully understand these positive effects, the study demonstrated how investigations designed to test materials intended to reduce students' affective filters can use Krashen's affective filter hypothesis as a theoretical framework.

Yet another similar study based on Krashen's affective filter hypothesis investigated teachers' questioning and feedback and their influence on students' affective filters in the EFL classroom (Yuhui & Sen, 2015). Using a mixed methods approach, this study combined in-class observations, recordings, and surveys to investigate student's preferences of how teachers should provide feedback and correction in the classroom, and how this feedback might influence students' affective factors such as self-confidence, anxiety, and learning success. Yuhui and Sen, (2015) indicated, "By employing Krashen's affective filter hypothesis as the theoretical framework" (p. 479), this study discovered that 99.6% of all students involved in the study felt that the teachers' chosen method of questioning and providing feedback either supported or undermined a harmonious classroom environment. Based on these findings, the authors of the study made recommendations for ESL teachers, including being mindful of their influence on students' affective filters, and the teachers' ability to improve the classroom environment through the careful selection of activities and communication strategies.

One final study demonstrates how Krashen's affective filter hypothesis has been used to form the theoretical framework in a very modern context. With the intent of exploring the use of computer-assisted language learning and its influence on students' affective factors such as

anxiety, motivation, and self-confidence, this study surveyed 124 freshman college students enrolled at Chung Shau Medical University in Taiwan (Huang & Hwang, 2013). The theoretical framework for the study was formed by both multiple-channel learning theories and Krashen's affective filter hypothesis to investigate students' feelings in a multimedia ESL learning environment. The results of the study clearly indicated,

> There is a positive relationship between reduced learning anxiety and use of a multimedia environment. Computer-assisted language learning instruction creates a non-threatening, positive and relaxed English learning environment and tends to help reduce learners' language learning anxiety and to motivate their learning. (Huang & Hwang, 2013, p. 32).

This study, as much as the previously-discussed studies, clearly speaks to the enduring relevance of Krashen's theory, and its suitability as a theoretical framework for research investigating affective factors such as motivation, anxiety, and self-confidence in the foreign language classroom.

As a framework for this study. One of the most profound and succinct justifications for the use of Krashen's affective filter hypothesis as the theoretical framework for this study comes from one of the most prominent scholars in the field today, Rod Ellis. He stated the following:

> Learners' affective factors are obviously of critical importance in accounting for individual differences in learning outcomes. Whereas learners' beliefs about language learning are likely fairly stable, their affective states tend to be volatile, affecting not only overall progress but responses to particular learning activities in a day-to-day and even moment-by-moment basis. (Ellis, 1994, p. 483)

By selecting and evaluating language teaching materials, activities, and approaches with Krashen's notion of affective factors in mind, we can continue to advance understanding,

policies, and practice in ESL contexts. As is evident by even the small sampling of five recent studies that have all used Krashen's affective filter hypothesis to inform their theoretical frameworks, this theory is not only appropriate but also still relevant after some 30 years of advances in the field.

Krashen's affective filter hypothesis specifically aligns with this study because of its focus on how EAP students experience *TBBT* in terms of the affective factors of anxiety, self-confidence, and motivation. The following central research question and three sub-questions are based directly on Krashen's hypothesis:

> How did *TBBT*, as a source of humorous authentic teaching material, contribute to the affective factors of anxiety, self-confidence, and motivation of adult ESL students in a postsecondary EAP program in the Southwestern region of the United States?
>
> **RQ1:** How did *TBBT* contribute to the anxiety of adult ESL students in an EAP program?
>
> **RQ2:** How did *TBBT* contribute to the self-confidence of adult ESL students in an EAP program?
>
> **RQ3:** How did *TBBT* contribute to the motivation of adult ESL students in an EAP program?

For several reasons, Krashen's affective filter hypothesis was chosen to serve as the theoretical framework for this study. First, the close ties between Krashen's hypothesis and the communicative language teaching movement make it a relevant theoretical lens for studies in an EAP context based on communicative approaches to language teaching (Li, 2017). Second, the clear evidence stated above that affective factors play a significant role in shaping students' experiences and learning success in the foreign language classroom provides further rationale for selecting his theory (Huang & Hwang, 2013; Mingzheng, 2012; Yuhui & Sen, 2015). Third, the

fact that Krashen so clearly made the case for delivering content in an anxiety-free learning environment but makes few concrete recommendations as to how to achieve this makes clear the need for studies investigating students' experiences with new materials and methods. Finally, the chaotic nature of theories being applied in the field of EAP (Li, 2017) in addition to the fact that advances in general ESL have been so slow to find their way into EAP methodology (Kashef et al., 2014) highlight the clear need to advance understanding specific to this field.

In short, Stephen Krashen's affective filter hypothesis provides an established theoretical foundation that can be used to inform this study. It is essential to further advance Krashen's ideas with specific EAP populations. As noted above, Wenzhong and Muchun (2015) discussed the lack of recent studies investigating the implications of both communicative approaches and the affective filter hypothesis in an English for academic purposes context, especially with humorous materials. This study's aim is to precisely fill this gap.

Reaction to the theory. Krashen's five-part theory of second language acquisition has held a position of prominence within the field, along with the overarching communicate language teaching movement with which it is associated. As a result of this position of prominence, Krashen's work has attracted both positive and negative attention by many scholars for some time. These reactions range anywhere from statements such as that Krashen's ideas are not even a theory at all (Gregg, 1984) and his is among "the most controversial theoretical perspectives in SLA in the last quarter of the twentieth century" (Brown, 2000, p. 277), to acclaim such as that his affective filter has "great practical effects for SLA" (Du, 2009, p. 164). These divergent perspectives on Krashen's theory will now be discussed.

In terms of criticism, Krashen's overall theory has received substantial backlash from other theorists, educators, linguists, and psychologists (Gregg, 1984; Liu, 2015; McLaughlin,

1987; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Swain & Lapkin, 1995; White, 1987). One critic, Gregg (1984), stated that Krashen's five hypotheses are "marked by serious flaws: undefined or ill-defined terms, unmotivated constructs, lack of empirical content and thus of falsifiability" (p. 94). One main criticism levied against Krashen's theory was that many of his claims were oversimplifications or overstatements (Brown, 2000; McLaughlin, 1987), with McLaughlin (1987) stating that Krashen has a "tendency to make broad and sweeping claims for his theory" (p. 58) that would be rejected by most scholars. In addition, McLaughlin noted that Krashen presented insufficient evidence to support his claims. McLaughlin (1987) believed that Krashen simply claimed that certain phenomena could be understood through the lens of his own theory. Considering the harsh criticism the five-part theory received at the time, Krashen (1992) himself acknowledged the need to better define or even reject elements of his own theory. Yet the theory remained largely unaltered, leading more recent scholars to launch the same criticism regarding the ambiguity of Krashen's work, noting that "what he exactly means by terms such as acquisition/learning, subconscious/conscious, implicit/explicit is hard to ascertain" (Zafar, 2009, p. 141).

Despite these criticisms, it should be noted that the vast majority of claims against Krashen's overall theory were actually levied against his input hypothesis, which Krashen (1985) himself noted is the core element of the theory. Interestingly, though Krashen's harshest critics at the time, Gregg (1984) and McLaughlin (1987) as well as more modern critics such as Brown (2000), Liu (2015), and Zafar (2009) are all unanimous in their agreement with Krashen about the importance of affective factors such as anxiety, self-confidence, and motivation in the language acquisition process. The large number of even current available empirical studies using

the affective filter hypothesis aspect of his overall theory as a framework speaks to the enduring relevance of at least this component of Krashen's overall theory.

Even though Richards and Rodgers (2001) stated that Krashen's theory, as a whole, gives little in way of practical suggestions for implementation of the theory into practice, it has nevertheless provided inspiration for numerous language teaching guidelines and studies. As McLaughlin (1987) noted, Krashen's theory is so popular "due in large measure to his ability to package his ideas in a way that makes them readily understandable to practitioners" (p. 19). Stating that Krashen's affective filter hypothesis has clear language teaching implications, Richards and Rodgers (2001) noted that a low affective filter and relaxed classroom result from focusing on meaningful and interesting communication as opposed to focusing on forms. This thought was seconded by others who proclaim the great practical implications for language teaching that the affective filter hypothesis has (Du, 2009).

It is this researcher's position that Krashen's affective filter hypothesis is a sound element of his theory in that it identifies the importance of factors such as self-confidence, motivation, and anxiety in the language learning process. Similar to Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs, it would be unrealistic to expect students to be able to focus on learning if they are experiencing emotional distress or are otherwise preoccupied with meeting other, more important needs. It is evident, however, that at the time of its introduction, less was known about cognition than is today leading to the inclusion of perhaps primitive beliefs such as the existence of a language acquisition device in the brain. Despite the arguably dated elements, the fact that the overall theory contains quite a few vaguely-defined terms, and that the theory was based on perhaps insufficient empirical evidence on the whole, it is easy to see the validity of Krashen's statements that factors such as motivation, anxiety, and self-confidence play a key role in supporting or

hindering language learning success. What further speaks to the credibility of this hypothesis is the fact that at least this element of Krashen's overall theory is overwhelmingly supported by other scholars. Further, the affective filter hypothesis is still used today to inform the theoretical framework of studies investigating affective factors in the language classroom.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provided a review of literature pertaining to research fields relevant to a qualitative case study investigating students' experiences with humorous authentic materials in an EAP context. Following a rationale for conducting the literature review, findings from the following fields were presented: ESL teaching, EAP, the use of humor in ESL teaching, the use of authentic materials in ESL teaching, the use of corpus linguistics and language register analysis techniques, and the affective factors of motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety. Finally, Krashen's affective filter hypothesis was presented as a theoretical framework for this study. Discussed were the theorist, the context of the theory, the main tenants of the theory, its reception by the academic community, refinements, application in other studies, and finally how it is used in the present study.

Chapter 3: Procedures and Methods

This chapter outlines the procedures and methods of a qualitative, instrumental case study. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine how a humorous authentic teaching material contributed to the affective factors of anxiety, self-confidence, and motivation of adult ESL students in a postsecondary EAP program in the Southwestern United States. This research sought to advance understanding in the field and help inform the refinement of teaching practices and policies in postsecondary EAP contexts both at the research site and in other similar contexts.

To explore this issue, the following theory-based central research question was explored in this study: How did *TBBT*, as a source of humorous authentic teaching material, contribute to the affective factors of anxiety, self-confidence, and motivation of adult ESL students in a postsecondary EAP program in the Southwestern region of the United States? This central research question was explored using the following three research sub-questions:

RQ1: How did *TBBT* contribute to the anxiety of adult ESL students in an EAP program?

RQ2: How did *TBBT* contribute to the self-confidence of adult ESL students in an EAP program?

RQ3: How did *TBBT* contribute to the motivation of adult ESL students in an EAP program?

The theoretical, methodological, and philosophical perspectives chosen to guide the study are presented here. These fundamental sets of beliefs help guide actions taken in the research (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Guba, 1990) and are critical to articulate. This chapter thus begins with an overview of the research design introducing both qualitative research design and the instrumental case study sub-design selected for this study. This chapter then outlines the site of

the study, the participants and sampling methods used, ethical issues, data sources, a description of the research instruments, data collection procedures, the researcher positionality, the trustworthiness and rigor of the study, and data analysis techniques used.

Research Design

It is this researcher's belief that the research questions should always guide the methodology used for an investigation (Morehouse & Maykut, 2002). Due to the emphasis on depth of understanding in this study, a qualitative design was chosen (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Creswell (2013) defined qualitative research as inquiry that "begins with assumptions and the use of interpretive/theoretical frameworks to inform the study of research problems addressing the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (p. 44). Creswell and Poth (2018) stated that qualitative research is often conducted in a natural setting with the researcher collecting data over a prolonged period of time through interviews, conversations, observations, interview guides, and through the analysis of documents. Both inductive and deductive reasoning can be applied to the analysis of data in qualitative research with findings presented in a rich, descriptive final report to provide a holistic account of participants' meanings and experiences (Choy, 2014; Yin, 2017).

Qualitative studies are often conducted when a researcher is interested in gaining a complex understanding of an issue, or when the researcher wants to convey the stories, interpretations, or meanings participants have about an issue being investigated (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Qualitative inquiry is also beneficial when the objective of a study is to advance theory and understanding in a particular field especially when existing theories are insufficient for explaining or encompassing the complexities of an issue within a given context or with a specific population (Morehouse & Maykut, 2002). Instead of measuring specific variables, as in

quantitative studies, a qualitative approach allows for more flexibility on the part of the researcher to describe what works, what does not work, and how it works from the perspective of the participants and the researcher (Patton, 2015). This ability to focus on what works, in turn, aligns well with the pragmatist perspective guiding this overall study (Creswell, 2014) to be discussed below.

One of the weaknesses of qualitative research is that it often requires a researcher to commit to extensive time in the field for data collection, extensive time for data analysis, and extensive time for writing a detailed report in literary style to convey the voices of study participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Despite this commitment of time, findings from qualitative studies can be less generalizable to other populations due in part to smaller sample sizes, purposeful sampling methods often used, and the perspectives or phenomenon being unique to a given case (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Despite these challenges of time commitment and potential limitations to the generalizability of findings, qualitative research provided the best opportunity for this researcher to capture and convey a holistic understanding of ESL students' experiences in an EAP context, making a qualitative design the most logical choice for this study (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Qualitative inquiry can be conducted for several reasons, using a number of sub-designs and methods to accomplish specific goals (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The five most established of these qualitative research sub-designs are narrative research, grounded theory, ethnography, phenomenology, and case study (Creswell, 2013). Given the researcher's questions and objectives in this study, a case study sub-design was selected (Yin, 2017). Case study research typically involves investigating a bounded case within a real-life context (Morehouse & Maykut,

2002). According to Yin (2017), case study is a research design that can be used best when the following three criteria are met:

1. A researcher seeks an in-depth understanding of a contemporary event or issue within a real-world context.
2. The research focuses on answering “how” or “why” type questions.
3. The behavioral events being studied are not within the control of the researcher.

With its origins dating back to the 1920s and 1930s in research conducted at University of Chicago and on the Trobriand Islands (Hamel et al., 1993), modern qualitative case study research has a long, established tradition and shares some common characteristics beyond the three mentioned above (Yin, 2017). According to Creswell and Poth (2018), the common elements in case study research include the following:

1. Case study often begins with the identification of a bounded case to investigate.
2. Case study investigations typically include several forms of data sources to provide depth of understanding in the case.
3. A detailed description of the case is included in the research report.
4. Case studies often conclude with data being analyzed and results being presented in the form of assertions, patterns, and explanations of observed events or phenomena within the case.

Yin (2017) added to this that case study often “copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points” and that such a research design often “benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide design, data collection, and analysis” (p. 15). Once a case has been identified, data collection typically involves the use of various sources of information, such as audiovisual materials,

documents, observations, and interviews to provide depth of understanding in the case (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Once the extensive process of data collection has concluded, data is then analyzed and presented in a detailed write up of findings (Yin, 2017).

As discussed by Yin (2017), there are several variations of qualitative case study design. A researcher can, for example, choose to look at a single case or a collective case, to compare cases or describe a single case, to conduct research within-site or at multiple sites, and to focus the study by conducting an intrinsic, exploratory, or instrumental study. Considering the purpose of this research study, to advance understanding in the field of how adult ESL students experience *TBBT* in a postsecondary EAP context, an instrumental case study design was selected. According to Creswell (2013), such a design is best suited for research in which the issue being investigated is of more importance than the bounded case selected to illustrate the issue.

In this study, using a single, within-site instrumental design (Yin, 2017), students who had were enrolled in EAP courses at a particular institute within the past two academic school years (Fall 2016 to Fall 2018) were selected. Students at this institute were selected to help advance understanding of how specific teaching materials are experienced, not because the particular institute was of primary importance, but rather because the population of students at the institute could be instrumental in providing in-depth descriptions of their experiences. Even though it can be difficult to generalize findings of small case studies to other populations, the experiences of the representative population at this site could be similar to those of other populations in similar EAP contexts (Yin, 2017).

There are several benefits to conducting a qualitative case study inquiry including the ability to gain a more holistic understanding of participants' perspectives in terms of how they

experience humorous authentic materials (Yin, 2017). The flexible research design afforded by a case study approach also allowed for the organic exploration of issues within the case (Yin, 2017). In short, a qualitative case study investigation approach afforded the best opportunity to collect original and in-depth data to further understanding of how a specific population, previously underexplored, experienced a source of teaching materials, potentially leading to the inductive generation of new knowledge in the field (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Mason, 2010).

There are, however, several inherent weaknesses in the selected case study design. These weaknesses include the following:

1. Findings may be very specific to the case and may be difficult to generalize to others (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The lack of objectively verifiable data when compared to a quantitative design as well as the generally small sample size available at the research site could result in findings that are perhaps not as generalizable to other populations and settings (Choy, 2014; Creswell, 2013).
2. A qualitative case study approach may require extended time in the field with numerous interview and observation sessions (Mason, 2010). Such an open-ended approach can be quite time consuming and difficult to conclude.
3. Due to the prolonged contact between the researcher and participants, answers provided by participants may become skewed by this relationship. Participants may attempt to provide answers they believe the researcher might want to hear (Creswell, 2013).

Decisions were made to help mitigate the abovementioned weaknesses inherent in the chosen qualitative case study design as well as to capitalize on its embedded strengths. Most importantly, as is discussed at greater depth below, the decision was made to include only former

students of the research site for this study. This decision to exclude current students helped ensure that participants felt more comfortable voicing any negative opinions about the institute, materials, or teaching practices without fear of repercussion (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This decision to sample only former students also ensured that participants were not taking part in the study in hopes of improving their own grades or receiving any preferential treatment at the institute (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Site Selection

The site of this study was a postsecondary institute of ESL at a major urban university in the Southwest region of the United States. This region of the United States has the highest percentage of ESL students nationally, with 15.5% (NCES, 2018) and contains cities such as Houston, Texas, and Los Angeles, California that are among the most ethnically diverse in the nation (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). With the top three most commonly spoken foreign languages of American ESL students currently being Spanish, Arabic, and Mandarin (NCES, 2018), this region is a prime location for such ESL studies due to its large population of each first language group (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). Further, this site was selected for the following 3 reasons:

1. With an established postsecondary ESL and EAP program, this site provided the researcher with a representative population that could be sampled to help advance understanding in the field.
2. As a department within a nationally recognized Hispanic Serving Institute and Minority Serving Institute (Torres, 2016), this institute was well suited as the site of a study focusing on the needs of minority populations such as ESL students.
3. With a documented decline of enrollment in EAP courses over the past decade from 2007-2017 (F. Le Grand, personal communication, February 19, 2018), studying how

this population experienced specific teaching materials not only had the potential to further understanding in the field generally, but also to help improve teaching practices, materials, and policies for this specific population.

Formed in the 1970s, the selected site for this study is an institute of ESL with an established ESL and EAP program, attracting adult students from around the world (Table 1). Students at the institute during the enrollment period being included (i.e., Fall 2016 to Fall 2018) ranged in age from 18-64, with an average age of 24. As such, the students' age range at this institute made it an ideal location for conducting research with adult ESL student populations. Further, permission to conduct research at this site was made easier due to established relationships between the researcher and the faculty and staff at both the institute and the housing university. As a former coordinator and instructor in the institute, IRB approval could be more easily obtained to access the university as well as permission granted to use the facilities from the director of the institute (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Table 1

Regions of Origin for Students at the Research Site

Region	Percentage of Students as of January 2016	Percentage of Students as of January 2017
Africa	9%	10%
The Americas	29%	27%
Middle East	37%	32%
Russia	6%	6%
Asia	18%	24%
Other	1%	1%

Note. As of January 2016 and January 2017.

The ESL institute for this study acts as an independent department within a major urban university system in the Southwest region of the United States. The objective of the institute is to prepare primarily international ESL students, the majority of whom already hold bachelor's

degrees from foreign universities, for the rigors of academic study at a university in which English is the primary language of instruction. All students must be at least 18 years of age to enroll in the program and must complete an entrance exam for leveling purposes. Instruction is broken into 7 levels of difficulty. The first 4 levels are considered foundational levels for those students who score the equivalent of A1-B1 on the common European framework of foreign language proficiency (Wisniewsk, 2017). For those students who score the equivalent of the upper range of B1 to C2 on the common European framework, Levels 5 through 7 are available at the institute. These upper levels of 5 to 7 are considered as advanced EAP courses with emphasis placed on training students in the specific language skills required to communicate effectively in an academic environment (Eick, 2017). These skills include specialized vocabulary sets for various fields of study, academic writing classes, reading comprehension classes with text materials similar to those that would be required for a course of study leading to an advanced degree, listening classes to train for such things as note taking during academic lectures, and speaking classes for preparing and delivering academic presentations. As is discussed below, participants in this study were sampled from those who had been enrolled in the upper three levels within the institute to focus specifically on the experiences of adult ESL students in an EAP context.

The researcher gained access to the research site through direct communication with the department director and all other university administrators. During the initial stages of research design for this study in early 2018, the researcher was still a part-time instructor at the research site. As a result of this employee status, no additional permission or appointments were needed to access the research site or communicate with the director. During the time of data collection, however, the researcher was not an active employee at the site. This change in status required

data collection sessions to be arranged during normal business hours when the director or other instructors could be on site to provide access to designated rooms. All times and locations for data collection were arranged directly with the department director either over the phone or through email (F. Le Grand, personal communication, October 16, 2018)

Participants

The researcher identified 76 international ESL students for the study. All 76 participants invited to take part in the study were at least 18 years of age and had been enrolled in EAP courses (Levels 5 through 7) at the research site within the past two academic school years (Fall 2016 to Fall 2018). Based on historical enrollment data (Table 1), all 76 invited participants spoke a language other than English as a first language and originated from a country outside of the United States (F. Le Grand, personal communication, February 19, 2018).

Demographic data from the previous two academic calendar years showed that approximately 61% of former students enrolled at the institute during this time were female, while 39% of former students were male (F. Le Grand, personal communication, February 19, 2018). It should be noted, however, that data were based on government-issued forms of identification used for enrollment purposes. No data were available on self-reported gender identity for any former students who may have identified as gender nonbinary. Former students at the institute during the past two academic calendar years ranged in age from 18-64 with the average age of 24. Of the 76 former students invited to participate in the study, approximately 96% had already obtained at least a bachelor's degree from a university in a country outside the United States. The age range, linguistic and academic backgrounds, and the academic goals of the participants in this study align well with the definition of EAP provided by Eick (2017).

Participant Selection

As is common in case study research, purposeful sampling methods were used to identify and study a population that had the potential to further understanding in the field (Creswell, 2013; Mason, 2010; Yin, 2017). The advantages of using purposeful sampling were that it allowed the researcher to select participants for the explicit purpose of advancing understanding of the case, the issue, or the participants' experiences (Yin, 2017). The disadvantages of purposeful sampling in case studies, on the other hand, include the fact that findings may be very specific to the case leading to difficulty in generalizing findings to other populations (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Specific to this study, purposeful sampling was justified in order to focus on the unique perspectives of adult ESL speakers in a specific postsecondary EAP context. The use of purposeful sampling thus helped to advance understanding of all research questions within the specific research context, even though the use of such purposeful sampling potentially limited the generalizability of findings to other contexts.

Compared to quantitative studies, the sample size for qualitative investigations is often notably smaller (Dworkin, 2012; Mason, 2010). Despite efforts by previous studies, there is still significant debate as to the exact sample size of a qualitative investigation (Marshall et al., 2013; Mason, 2010). Mason (2010) recommended selecting a sample size that is large enough at a given site to represent the majority of those experiencing the given phenomenon/situation being investigated. For this reason, all former students who had been enrolled in EAP courses were invited to participate in the study. Marshall et al. (2013) also refrained from setting a minimum sample size for qualitative inquiry, arguing instead that the depth of investigation (i.e., number of repeated interviews, observations, and time spent in the field collecting data until themes saturate) was more important than the breadth (number of individuals sampled). Further, there is

arguably no requirement for a minimum number of data occurrences in qualitative research (Mason, 2010). For example, with qualitative case study investigations, a single subject may be the entire sample with the researcher relying on depth of investigation as opposed to number of participants (Mason, 2010).

In this study, the maximum sample size of 76 participants was dictated by the given enrollment in EAP courses during the time period being investigated in this bounded case (Fall 2016 to Fall 2018). To interfere with the demanding study schedule of any current students at the institute, the decision was made to only include former students of the institute and no currently-enrolled students. This decision also helped ensure that participants felt more comfortable voicing any negative opinions about the institute, materials, or teaching practices without fear of repercussion (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This decision to only include former students also ensured that participants were not taking part in the study in hopes of improving their own grades or receiving any preferential treatment at the institute (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Using a list of former students, emails were sent out to all 76 former students who had been enrolled in EAP courses at the institute within the past two academic school years. Participants were invited to arrange times to complete interview guides as well as take part in observation and interview sessions. Of the 76 invited former students, the goal of this study was to collect data from at least 10 individual participants with repeated interview sessions and prolonged time in the field significantly increasing the number of data points that could be used to gain an in-depth understanding (Yin, 2017). Collecting data form 10 participants was both a realistic goal for number of participants and a sufficient number to provide an in-depth understanding of the issue being investigated (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2017). With sufficient linguistic, gender, and age diversity amongst the former students between Fall 2016

and Fall 2018 (F. Le Grand, personal communication, February 19, 2018), trends could also potentially emerge during the investigation to suggest how former students of different language backgrounds, genders, and ages might experience *TBBT* differently.

Following the initial stages of investigation with the sample group, further decisions regarding sampling were required. For example, when certain participants reported that they experienced humorous authentic materials differently to others, these former students were asked to participate in further interviews to advance understanding of the case. Such stages in the sampling process, to identify and question participants who could help advance understanding, is typical of purposeful sampling in case studies (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2017). These stages of purposeful sampling, to select certain participants for additional interviews, were justified in this study in order to saturate emergent trends in findings and to thoroughly answer all research questions.

Ethical Issues/Permissions

Several steps were taken to ensure this research was conducted ethically, as recommended by Creswell and Poth (2018). First, the top priority of this study remained the protection of all participants. For this reason, all guidelines provided by the IRB overseeing the research site were strictly followed. According to the guidelines put forth by both governing IRBs in this study, a detailed application outlining the research objectives and procedures was submitted, revised, and approved by the governing IRBs in spring 2018 and fall 2018 (Appendix A). In order to ensure the anonymity of the research site, all identifying information in the IRB approval letter from the research site has been redacted. In addition to IRB approval, all guidelines put forth by *The Belmont Report* were followed to ensure this study showed the upmost respect for persons, beneficence, and justice (Vollmer & Howard, 2010). Because a

qualitative study such as this one focuses on reporting the individual perceptions, feelings, and experiences of human subjects, great measures were taken to guarantee the human rights, freedoms, and anonymity of every participant (Creswell, 2013).

Once IRB approval was secured from both governing universities, written consent was obtained from all participants before data collection began. The consent form (Appendix B) was written using approved language provided by both governing IRBs. This consent form explained the purpose of the study, the potential risks to the participants, the potential benefits, the fact that participation is strictly voluntary, and that the participants could discontinue participation in the study at any time without risk of repercussions of any kind. This form was given to every invited participant and collected as a receipt of acknowledgement and understanding before data collection began (Kvale & Brinkman, 2015). These signed consent forms were scanned and will be stored on a secured hard drive within a safe for a minimum of 7 years. More detail is provided regarding the collection of informed consent, including procedures for the translation of information into former students' first languages upon request, in the data collection procedures section below.

In addition to IRB approval and informed consent forms, each participant was also given the contact information of the researcher and the governing IRB chairperson at the overseeing university if they had any questions or concerns regarding the study. To protect the identities of all participants, their names were kept strictly confidential (Kvale & Brinkman, 2015). Each participant received a randomly-assigned participant number so that their names would never appear on any documents beyond the consent forms. During audio-recorded interview sessions, the participants were instructed not to use any names or other identifying information such as addresses, birthdates, etc. If this information was inadvertently mentioned or written on an

interview guide, this information was redacted during the transcription process, deleted from recordings, and did not appear on the final report in any way (Kvale & Brinkman, 2015). If any participants objected to having interview sessions audio recorded, these wishes were respected.

Due to the extended time spent in the field conducting interviews and observations, there was a risk that a relationship would begin to form between the researcher and participants (Creswell, 2013). This closeness could lead to participants stating what they believed the researcher wanted to hear as opposed to how they actually felt or experienced the phenomenon. To minimize this risk as much as possible, only the former students in the institute's EAP courses were invited to participate in the study. In addition to this step, the researcher acted as a nonparticipant observer and used semi-structured interview questions with interview protocols to maintain a level of formality for the duration of the data collection phase. The decision to only include former students meant that the researcher was not responsible for giving grades to any of the participants in the study, leading to a situation in which they felt less obligated to participate or provide answers they thought the researcher might want to hear (Shenton, 2004).

Data Sources

Several data sources were used to collect data for this study. There are some data sources that are compatible with case study inquiry, including interviews, observations, documents, audiovisual information, interview guides, and focus groups (Yin, 2018). This study relied primarily on two of these data sources: observations and interviews with interview guides. This section focuses on the data sources used, their advantages and disadvantages, the reasons for their inclusion in the study, and any steps taken to address the disadvantages of these data sources.

Observation. The first source of data in this study was observation. According to Creswell (2013), observation is a key tool for data collection in qualitative research and is defined as "the act of noting a phenomenon in the field setting through the five senses of the observer, often with an instrument, and recording it for specific purposes" (p. 166). The steps recommended by Creswell (2013) for collecting data through observations were followed. These steps included selecting a site and gaining permission to use specific rooms for observation sessions from the director of the research site, identifying and contacting the participants to be observed, determining the role of the researcher as a nonparticipant observer, using an observation protocol to record descriptive and reflective notes, and writing all notes and observations immediately after sessions (Creswell, 2013).

The primary justification for the inclusion of this data source was to help answer the central research question of how *TBBT* contributed to the affective factors of anxiety, self-confidence, and motivation for participants in an EAP context. Observing participants while they viewed *TBBT* allowed the researcher to witness and document any signs of anxiety, self-confidence, and motivation exhibited. The data collected through observation sessions could then be triangulated with data collected through interviews to improve the reliability and trustworthiness of findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The major advantage of this data source is that observation can be particularly useful when working with ESL participants who may have linguistic limitations preventing them from clearly expressing their views in English (Griffee, 2012; Heigham & Croker, 2009). Including observation as a data source helped ensure that any observable ways in which *TBBT* contributed to the affective factors of participants could be immediately noted without relying on the verbal or written accounts of participants.

A potential disadvantage of observation as a data source is that it can be difficult to accurately capture and document all events that take place during observation sessions (Creswell, 2013). In order to minimize this disadvantage, several steps were taken by the researcher. First, an observation protocol was developed by the researcher to record both descriptive and reflective notes during sessions (Appendix C). This protocol, as recommended by Creswell & Poth (2018), included two columns in which to take reflective and descriptive notes, including date, time, location, participants involved, and any reflections the researcher had about the events being observed. Second, the researcher acted as a nonparticipant observer, described by Creswell (2013) as an observation situation in which "the researcher is an outsider of the group under study, watching and taking notes from a distance" (p. 167). This distance afforded by the nonparticipant role of the researcher allowed for more time and energy to be spent on taking notes as an outsider. The nonparticipant observer role also helped ensure that the researcher was not influencing the reactions of participants, as might have been the case if the researcher had acted as a complete participant or participant observer, as discussed by Creswell (2013). Third, the decision was made to only observe one participant at a time, allowing the researcher to focus on the ways in which *TBBT* might have contributed to the affective factors of each participant individually. Finally, permission was obtained from each participant to make audio recordings of each observation session (Appendix B). The resulting observation recordings allowed to researcher to review the events of sessions after their completion, thus alleviating some of the pressure to capture and reflect on all observed events in the moment (Creswell, 2013).

Interviews with interview guides. The second data source used in this study was interviews with interview guides. Interviews are a common data source in qualitative research, defined as "a conversation, such as one conducted by a researcher, in which facts or statements

are elicited from a subject" (Hancock & Algozzine, 2016, p. 91). Interviews in case study research allow the researcher to gain in-depth, personalized, and detailed information from participants (Mason, 2002). The primary reason for including this data source was to thoroughly answer the central research question of how *TBBT* contributed to the affective factors of anxiety, self-confidence, and motivation in an EAP context. For this data source, the *Seven Stages of an Interview Investigation* was used as a guide (Kvale & Brinkman, 2015). These stages included creating a theme and concept for the interviews, designing interview questions, conducting the interviews, transcribing recordings, analyzing initial findings, and reporting on the findings. The initial interview questions were open-ended in nature to help foster meaningful conversations with participants, allowing for the emergence of new information and allowing the participant the freedom to push the conversation in new directions (Marshall et al., 2013; Patton, 2015). The major advantage to this data source is the depth of information the researcher can gain by conducting interviews, as discussed by Hancock and Algozzine (2016). The depth of information obtained through this data source was essential in thoroughly answering each research question.

There are also several potential disadvantages with using interviews as a data source. One of the potential disadvantages is the volume of information collected at once, which can be difficult to record in real time (Creswell, 2013). In order to mitigate this disadvantage, an interview protocol (Appendix D) was developed so that the researcher could take notes during interview sessions. Further, permission to record interview sessions (Appendix B) was obtained from each participant so that responses could be transcribed accurately after each session (Creswell, 2013). These steps helped ensure responses were captured accurately for later processing and analysis. A second potential disadvantage of interviewing is that interview sessions may not produce quality information that thoroughly answers all research questions

(Hancock & Algozzine, 2016). In order to ensure all research questions were thoroughly answered during each interview session, an interview guide of semi-structured interview questions was systematically developed by the researcher (Creswell & Poth, 2018). An extensive process of expert review was conducted with content specialists and methodologists at the University of West Florida to ensure all interview questions aligned with the research questions of the study. This process will be discussed in more detail in the following section.

Because this study focused on the experiences of ESL speakers, one final disadvantage with interviews was that participants may not have been able to express themselves in spoken English. To mitigate the potential disadvantage of live interviews with ESL speakers, each participant was also given an opportunity to respond to interview questions in writing. As discussed by other researchers in ESL contexts, it is important to provide opportunities for participants to express their views and experiences in both written and verbal form (Griffee, 2012; Heigham & Croker, 2009). In order to provide this opportunity, the developed interview guide questions used in live interview sessions was also given to each participant to complete in writing. This opportunity to respond to questions in writing allowed the researcher to account for the experiences of all participants, regardless of if they were more comfortable expressing themselves in written or verbal form. The interview guide (Appendix E) that was given to each participant began with a short cover letter giving instructions on how to answer the questions, following the wording suggested by the governing IRB overseeing the research site. This cover letter explained the purpose of the study, assured participants of the confidentiality of their answers as well as thanked participants for their willingness to assist in the study (Creswell, 2014).

Description of Research Protocols/Instrumentation

This section provides a detailed description of the research protocols and instrumentation used for the humorous authentic material, observations, and interviews with interview guides. The structure of each instrument, protocols, and the steps followed for developing each of these data collection tools is discussed. Further, the questions included on the interview guide are also detailed along with the steps taken to ensure the trustworthiness and credibility of each instrument and protocol.

Research protocols for humorous authentic material. For this study, *TBBT* was selected as the form of humorous authentic material. The primary reason for including this data source in the study was to have a humorous authentic material to use with EAP students in order to explore its effects on participants' affective filters. In order to align with the theoretical framework of Krashen's affective filter hypothesis, a material that could have an influence on participants' affective factors of anxiety, self-confidence, and motivation was needed. In addition to being an authentic material, as defined by Tamo (2009), *TBBT* also provided a source of humor as a television sitcom (The Nielson Co., 2016). These features of authenticity and humor helped further align this selected data source with the stated advantages of humor in the ESL classroom (Petraki & Nguyen, 2016) and with the stated advantages of using authentic materials in the ESL classroom (Tamo, 2009).

There were also several disadvantage to using *TBBT* as a data source. First, the show spans 12 seasons from 2007 to 2019, encompassing a substantial body of material. Performing a thorough linguistic analysis on the entire series would have required more resources than were available within the scope of this study. To overcome this disadvantage, the decision was made to use and conduct only linguistic analysis on the pilot episode of *TBBT* along with two excerpts

from later seasons. This narrowing of the scope of linguistic analysis allowed the researcher to better control the content being shown to participants. A second disadvantage to this data source was that *TBBT* likely contained many mixed structures, advanced language, culturally-specific references, improper uses of language, or strong accents or dialects that might make it difficult to understand for lower level students. Other researchers have noted the potential disadvantage of these elements in authentic ESL teaching material sources (Csajbok-Twerefou, 2011; Gillett, 2011; Taghavi & Aladini, 2018; Tamo, 2009). Instead of attempting to avoid this disadvantage, the present study attempted to better understand the ways in which these authentic elements might affect students' anxiety, self-confidence, and motivation in an EAP context.

Techniques for *TBBT* analysis. AntConc 3.5.7 is a free, commonly used corpus analysis software developed by Laurence Anthony (O'Keeffe, McCarthy, & Carter, 2007). This software allows users to analyze an uploaded corpus using the following seven tools: the concordance plot tool, the concordance tool, the file view tool, the clusters and N-grams tools, the word list tool, the collates tool, and the keyword list generator tool. Of importance to this study was the keyword list generator tool, allowing the user to upload a reference corpus and a second corpus to generate a list of words that appear unusually frequently or infrequently in a body of text (O'Keeffe et al., 2007). Using this tool of AntConc 3.5.7, the one-million-word Brown Corpus was uploaded as a reference corpus (Francis & Kučera, 1964). This corpus is often used to provide a baseline of standard English against which to compare specific examples of English in corpus linguistic studies (Fuster Márquez & Clavel Arroitia, 2010). Once a reference keyword list was generated for standard English using the Brown Corpus in AntConc 3.5.7, this information was used to determine the keyness values for all words spoken in the pilot episode of *TBBT*. Next, the pilot episode script of *TBBT* was uploaded into AntConc 3.5.7 for comparison

and analysis. Upon analyzing the data, it was determined that 560 words had a keyness value of +1.0 or greater, meaning that they stood out as unusually frequent when compared to the Brown Corpus baseline.

These 560 key words were then entered individually into the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) to determine if they occurred more frequently in the spoken English section of the corpus or in the academic register section. According to O'Keeffe et al. (2007), COCA is "a mega-corpus that attempts to capture a snapshot of English as it is used in the United States" (p. 110). Using the register comparison tool, two main corpora within COCA were used. The first corpus was the spoken corpus containing 116,748,578 examples of spoken English words in use. The second corpus was the academic register corpus containing 111,410,528 examples of English words in use. Figure 1 displays an example of a result for one word entered for comparison using COCA's register comparison feature.

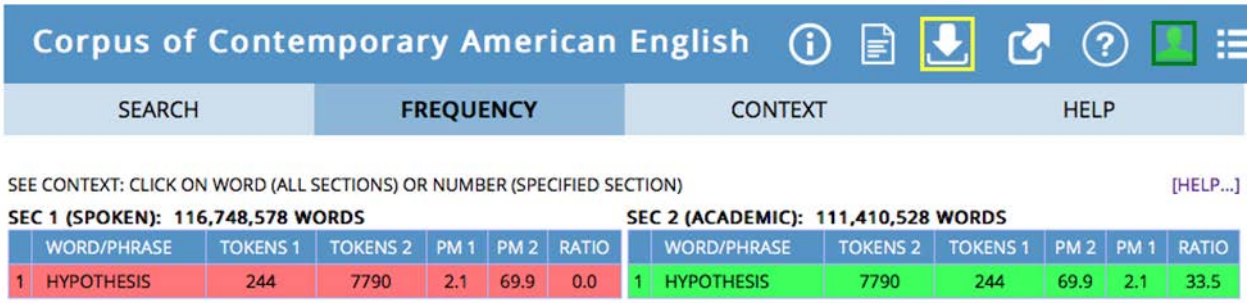

Figure 1. Search results on COCA for hypothesis with register comparison.

This analysis process revealed several pieces of information. First, the word hypothesis was found to have a keyness value of +10.18 when compared against the Brown reference corpus. This means that the word hypothesis, proportionate to the total number of words spoken in the pilot episode of *TBBT*, appeared 10.18 times more frequently than usually found in modern spoken English. Second, the word hypothesis was then found to have been used 244 times in the spoken corpus in COCA. On average, hypothesis appeared 2.1 times per million

words in the spoken corpus. In comparison, the word hypothesis appeared 7,790 times in the academic register corpus within COCA. The word hypothesis appeared 69.9 times per million words in the academic register corpus. Compared to the spoken corpus, the word hypothesis was used 33.5 times more frequently in the academic register section of COCA. The red and green colors of the sections in Figure 1 indicate where a word is more likely to occur within the sections of COCA. Because the word hypothesis appears so much more frequently in academic writing than in spoken English, this word was classified as an academic register word for the purposes of this study.

This example with the word hypothesis illustrates the process used for all words from all humorous authentic materials sources in this study. These analysis techniques are common for corpus linguistics studies, as discussed by O'Keeffe et al. (2007). Results from all analysis work were compiled into tables (Appendix F), which will be discussed at greater lengths in Chapter 4.

Linguistic analysis of *TBBT*. Using the corpus analysis techniques, *TBBT* was analyzed to determine its suitability for use in an EAP context. These standard analysis techniques included the AntConc 3.5.7 software program, the one-million-word Brown Corpus, and the COCA corpus (Francis & Kučera, 1964; Lindquist, 2009; O'Keeffe et al., 2007). Continuing the linguistic analysis of *TBBT*, all 560 keywords found to have a keyness value of +1.0 or greater from the pilot script were individually entered into COCA for comparison across registers. It was determined that 111 keywords from the script were found to occur more frequently in the academic register section of COCA compared to the spoken section. Each of these words was then entered into a table along with information pertaining to the character who uttered the word, the word's keyness value, its actual occurrence in each section of COCA, and its ratio of spoken to academic frequency (Appendix F). Based on this analysis, it was determined that 3.96% of the

words included in the script of the pilot episode of *TBBT* (111 of 2,802 words) occur more frequently in academic register than in spoken American English.

To put these findings into perspective, the same analysis was conducted for the script of the pilot episode of another popular American sitcom, *Modern Family*. After analyzing the data, it was determined that out of 3,222 words, 539 were found to have a keyness value of +1.0 or greater. All 539 key words were then entered into COCA to compare the frequency of occurrence in spoken and academic register sections. It was found that only seven of the keywords appeared more frequently in the academic register section on COCA. These seven words are listed in Table 2 below. Also included in this table are the keyness values of the seven academic words, occurrences in each section on COCA, and frequency ratios. These data show that 0.217% of the words used in *Modern Family's* pilot episode script occurred more frequently in academic register than spoken in COCA. When compared to the pilot episode of *TBBT*, these data suggest that *TBBT* contains 18.25 times more academic register words than the pilot episode of *Modern Family*.

Table 2

Academic Register Words from Modern Family's Pilot Episode

Keyness Value	Spoken Register	Ratio (in millions)	Academic Register	Ratio (in millions)
12.14	2497	0.3	7902	3.3
11.43	10	0.3	28	2.9
11.43	101	0.2	483	5.0
22.86	14	0.4	34	2.5
3.52	2697	0.6	4038	1.6
6.06	225	0.2	1343	6.3
8.66	103	0.3	376	3.8

This analysis shows that *TBBT* is not only a source of humorous authentic material, but that it's high concentration of academic register words might provide ESL students with an opportunity to hear academic vocabulary that they would otherwise only be able to read in academic texts. As discussed by several other authors, authentic video and television programs in the ESL classroom can help improve students' vocabulary acquisition and pronunciation skills (Ghanbari et al., 2015; McNulty & Lazarevic, 2012; Webb & Rodgers, 2009) and increase students' listening comprehension (Karimi & Dolatabadi, 2014). More importantly, these authentic materials "can increase students' motivation and expose them to real language and culture as well as to the different genres of the professional community to which they aspire" (Benavent & Sanchez-Reyes Penamaria, 2011, p. 90). Specifically, the results of this analysis of *TBBT* suggest that the show could be instrumental in exposing students to the type of academic vocabulary they would need both in an EAP context and in the academic community they aspire to join.

Further analysis revealed that the use of academic register words was not distributed evenly among all characters on *TBBT*. Sheldon, for example, consistently used the highest concentration of academic register words based on script analysis of the pilot episode. As shown in Table 3, 8.03% of all the words spoken by Sheldon during this episode were academic register, or 22.44% of all keywords he uttered. This percentage is more than twice as high as Howard's use of academic register words, with 3.63%; four times as high as Leonard's use of academic register words, and roughly 14 times higher than Penny's use of academic register words.

Table 3

Percentage of Academic Register Words by Character on the Pilot Episode

Character	Academic/Keyness	% Academic Register
Sheldon	22.44%	8.03%
Howard	6.36%	3.63%
Leonard	6.34%	1.85%
Penny	1.70%	0.56%

These findings were consistent with the analysis of two additional excerpts of *TBBT* from later seasons. One additionally-analyzed selection was from "The Re-Entry Minimization" Episode 6 from Season 4, in which the cast members played Pictionary on two teams, boys versus girls. The second analyzed selection was taken from "The Focus Attenuation" Episode 8 of Season 5, in which the characters analyzed the grammar needed to describe the events in the *Back to the Future* movie. As shown in Table 4 and Table 5, Sheldon maintains the highest percentage use of academic register words compared to the other characters. These findings are consistent with the notion of register variation, or that "the language we speak or write varies according to the type of situation" (Halliday, 1978, p. 32). Because the character of Sheldon is employed in a university setting and that the character of Penny is not, the difference in the percentage of academic register words spoken by each of these characters could be expected. These findings are also consistent with Tamo's (2009) statement that a benefit of authentic materials in ESL teaching is that such materials can expose students to diverse communication styles. These register differences could thus be used beneficially to expose EAP students to register variations, to be discussed in the implications section of Chapter 5.

Table 4

Percentage of Academic Register Words by Character on "The Focus Attenuation" Episode Excerpt

Character	Academic/Keyness	% Academic Register
Sheldon	42.10%	4.67%
Howard	10.52%	3.29%
Leonard	16.66%	2.15%
Raj	0%	0%

Table 5

Percentage of Academic Register Words by Character on "The Re-Entry Minimization" Episode Excerpt

Character	Academic/Keyness	% Academic Register
Sheldon	72.20%	11.11%
Leonard	11.10%	6.78%
Penny	2.26%	1.85%
Amy	0%	0%

In contrast to the positive findings pertaining to academic register words on *TBBT*, analysis of the topics discussed on the show could have negative implications for the show's suitability in a multicultural learning environment. The pilot episode of *TBBT* shows the characters discussing a wide range of topics. The inclusion of scenes in which the characters discuss dating, sex, relationships, religions, or alternative lifestyles could be offensive to some students in a multicultural ESL learning environment. The inclusion of culturally-specific and possibly offensive topics, as discussed by Tamo (2009), has been reported by other studies as a potential disadvantage to the use of authentic materials in ESL teaching. Further, the inclusion of such elements on *TBBT* aligns with the reasons Taghavi and Aladini (2018) present as to why ESL teachers are often reluctant to include authentic materials in the classroom. Even when *TBBT* is meant for use with adult students, the inclusion of such topics could cause offense and limit its suitability. Lastly, the inclusion of such potentially offensive topics could create the need

for special preparation by educators to remove offensive elements, as discussed by Tamo (2009) as another disadvantage of authentic materials.

Observation instrumentation. In order to facilitate the collection of data through the second data source of observations, the researcher developed an observation protocol (Appendix C). Creswell (2013) discussed the need for using an observation protocol in order to record both descriptive and reflective notes of observed events. Based on Creswell's (2013) description of an observation protocol, the researcher developed a protocol specifically for use in this study. The protocol begins with a heading section in which descriptive information was noted, such as the date, start time, end time, and observation number of each session, as recommended by Hancock and Algozzine (2016). The left column under the heading section allows for descriptive notes to be taken. In the descriptive column, the researcher noted the assigned participant number of the involved participant as well as the viewed *TBBT* clip name, and any observable reactions to the viewed clip of *TBBT*. In this descriptive notes column, the researcher noted any signs of changes to participants' affective factors during observation sessions. These descriptive observation notes helped the researcher answer the central research questions of the study directly. For example, if a participant laughed at a specific joke made on the show or looked confused during a section of dialogue containing a large number of academic register words, these reactions were noted in the descriptive notes column on the left. In the right column, reflective notes were made. These reflective notes included the researcher's thoughts, interpretations of events, and potential follow-up questions to ask participants about their observed reactions to *TBBT* (Creswell, 2013). Observation sessions were also audio recorded and listened to by the researcher directly after sessions. Listening to observation sessions again allowed the researcher to add reflective notes to the right column for further follow up. The recording and reviewing of observation sessions

using the observation protocol also helped improve the trustworthiness of the findings, as the accuracy of reflective and descriptive notes were not dependent on the researcher's memory of events experienced only once (Hancock & Algozzine, 2016).

A prolonged process of expert review was conducted to ensure the appropriateness and alignment of the observation protocol with the research questions and purpose of this study. The initial draft of the observation protocol was sent to the researcher's dissertation committee members for review before data collection began. The members of the committee are experienced and published qualitative researchers with extensive knowledge in both the content and methodology of this study. These committee members acted as expert reviewers, helping to ensure the alignment of the observation protocol with the research questions and purpose of this study.

Interview guide. An interview guide of 17 initial questions was developed by the researcher as a tool to use with the third data source, interviews, in this study. Following the *Seven Stages of an Interview Investigation* (Kvale & Brinkman, 2015), the researcher systematically developed all tools for this data source. The first two stages included creating a theme and concept for the interviews, and designing interview questions (Kvale & Brinkman, 2015). First, the central research question of this study was considered during the interview development. Next, each of the following sub-question was considered. Based on these questions, all questions on the interview guide were developed (Creswell, 2013).

The decision was made to conduct semi-structured interviews with "predetermined but flexibly worded questions" (Hancock & Algozzine, 2016, p. 47). Described as being especially useful in case study research, semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to develop initial questions that could be followed by additional questions to probe deeper into issues, reword

questions for clarity, and to ensure that quality information was gleaned from participants (Hancock & Algozzine, 2016). The flexibility afforded by semi-structured interviews was especially helpful with ESL participants, as questions could be reworded to ensure they were understood by all participants.

Interview sessions were also audio recorded after gaining consent to do so from participants (Appendix B). The use of recordings helped strengthen the trustworthiness of the study, as responses could be accurately transcribed for processing, coding, and analysis following interview sessions (Yin, 2017). The trustworthiness of the study was also strengthened by the researchers' use of a printed interview guide to write reflective notes during interview sessions (Hancock & Algozzine, 2016). These reflective notes on the interview guide helped the researcher keep track of follow-up questions or other thoughts while participants were still answering questions (Creswell, 2013). Following initial interview sessions, interviews were repeated with certain participants until a clear picture emerged of both their individual perspectives as well as a holistic picture of the entire case itself (Kvale & Brinkman, 2015).

In order to ensure each participant included in this study met participation criteria by being an adult ESL speaker who had experienced the same phenomenon of EAP education at the research site, several demographic questions were initially developed and asked (Creswell & Poth, 2018). These initial questions included on the interview guide (Appendix E) asked for participants' age, gender, first language, years of English instruction received, and duration of EAP study at the research site. All these questions helped ensure alignment with the purpose of this study to focus on the experiences of adult ESL speakers in an EAP context (Hancock & Algozzine, 2016). Had it been discovered, for example, that a participant spoke English as a first language or that they had never been enrolled in EAP courses at the research site, these answers

would not have helped answer the research questions.

The remaining questions on the interview guide were open-ended in nature. The open-ended questions were used to discover strength of feeling on certain issues (Bell, 2005). These open-ended questions also helped foster meaningful conversations with participants, allowing for the emergence of new information and allowing the participant the freedom to push the conversation in new directions (Marshall et al., 2013; Patton, 2015). As McDonough (1997) and Foddy (1993) discussed, great care was taken to avoid leading, vague, yes or no, and bias questions. The first seven open-ended questions included on the interview guide were developed to provide the researcher with general background information about the ESL learning experiences and learning preferences of each participant. These questions also helped the researcher become familiar with the level of understanding of each ESL participant and helped the participant become more comfortable with the interview process before the more critical questions pertaining to each of the core research questions was asked. The decision to include these initial seven questions also helped maximize the responsiveness of each participant by ensuring their comfort and understanding, as recommended by Hancock and Algozzine (2016).

Questions 8, 11, and 15 on the interview guide were developed specifically to answer RQ1: How did *TBBT* contribute to the anxiety of adult ESL students in an EAP program? To ensure alignment, participants were first asked to define or describe what anxiety was for them in the learning environment. Once it was established what anxiety meant for each participant, questions 11, and 15 were asked to determine exactly how *TBBT* could contribute to the anxiety of each participant in an EAP context. Follow-up questions of an open-ended nature were also asked to ensure each question was thoroughly understood and answered by each participant (Hancock & Algozzine, 2016). Questions 9, 12, and 16 were designed specifically to answer

RQ2: How did *TBBT* contribute to the self-confidence of adult ESL students in an EAP program? Similar to the pattern of questions established for RQ1, question 9 asked participants to define self-confidence for themselves in an EAP learning environment before questions 12, and 16 were asked to determine how *TBBT* contributed to this affective factor. Finally, questions 10, 13, and 17 were developed to address RQ3: How did *TBBT* contribute to the motivation of adult ESL students in an EAP program? Question 10 asked participants to define or describe motivation in an EAP learning environment before questions 13 and 17 were asked to determine how *TBBT* contributed to this affective factor for participants. Questions 8 through 17, thus, aligned directly with the central and three sub-questions of this study. Following the first 17 questions, space was left to ask any remaining follow-up questions of participants to ensure all emergent themes had been thoroughly saturated (Creswell, 2013).

Because participants in this study were not native English speakers, it was important to provide opportunities for participants to express their views and experiences in both written and verbal form (Griffee, 2012; Heigham & Croker, 2009). In order to provide this opportunity to participants, a printed and slightly modified version of the interview guide was given to each participant to complete in writing (Appendix D). The printed interview guide began with a short cover letter giving instructions on how to answer the questions, following the wording suggested by the governing IRB overseeing the research site (Hancock & Algozzine, 2016). This cover letter explained the purpose of the study, assured participants of the confidentiality of their answers as well as thanked participants for their willingness to assist in the study (Creswell, 2014). The printed interview guide contained the same open-ended questions as were asked during the semi-structured interviews. Written answers received from participants on printed interview guide were then compared with those transcribed from in-person interview sessions,

allowing for better data triangulation (Yin, 2017).

Similar to the process described for the observation protocol above, an extended expert review period was conducted on the interview guide to ensure the alignment, quality, and thoroughness of all questions included on the interview guide (Hancock & Algozzine, 2016). The initial draft of the interview questions was sent to the researcher's dissertation committee members and reviewed by members of the Doctoral Support and Quality Assurance Center before data collection began. These members assisted with ensuring that the study design alignment remained intact. As discussed by Hancock and Algozzine (2016), several rounds of revisions were conducted to ensure the appropriateness and adequacy of each question and instrument.

Data Collection Procedures

Throughout this study, the researcher was the main instrument for data collection, as is common in qualitative studies (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As such, the researcher acted as the main observer and interviewer of participants. The timeframe for this study was during the Fall 2018 academic school session, with repeated interview sessions occurring throughout the fall session until a detailed and holistic understanding of the case emerged. The specific procedures for each of the three data collection processes involving participants (observations, written interview guides, and interviews) are detailed in this section. The remainder of this section is organized into the following three sections: prior to data collection, during data collection, and after data collection.

Prior to data collection. Before data collection began, informed consent forms were first distributed to, and collected from all participants (Appendix B). Once IRB approval was obtained through University of West Florida, an email was sent out to all 76 former students who

had been enrolled in EAP courses at the institute within the past two academic years (Fall 2016 to Fall 2018). This email detailed the purpose of the study, asked former students if they would be willing to participate, and gave instructions on how to set up individual interview, observation, and interview guide completion sessions at the institute. Specific times and dates were arranged with each of the participants individually. Before data collection began at these individual sessions at the research site, the informed consent form was given to the participant and explained. Details regarding the purpose of the study, the timeframe of the study, and what was requested of participants was explained in detail. Participants were invited to ask questions for clarification during these sessions. All participants had the ability to request a translation of the consent form and the study overview into their first language. Institute and university staff were asked to assist in this process, if requested, as is common at the institute if students have questions regarding academic affairs.

During data collection. Once consent forms were collected, observation sessions were conducted with each participant individually. During these sessions, the selected material was simply shown to the participant without a lesson being taught, as the focus was solely on the material and not on a teacher's individual teaching style or instructional methods. The same prepared script was read before *TBBT* was played for participants. This script read as follows:

> Today you will be played a selection from an American television sitcom called *The Big Bang Theory*. This selection is approximately 20 minutes in length. Once you have seen the show, you will be provided with an interview guide with further instructions. Thank you again for your willingness to participate in this study investigating how you experience different teaching materials.

Immediately after each observation session, participants were given a printed copy of the

interview guide with an added cover letter explaining the purpose and instructions for completion (Appendix D). Before the participant began filling out the interview guide, they were randomly assigned a participant number to use on all written documents and in audio-recorded interview sessions. This participant number helped preserve participants' anonymity. To avoid as much confusion as possible during the interview guide completion session, participants were offered assistance with the interview guide if needed, resulting in better cooperation (Bell, 2005). Great care was taken by the researcher, however, as not to influence participants' responses. If a participant was still unable to understand a question, they were instructed to skip the question.

Once initial observations and interview guides were concluded, one-on-one interviews were conducted with participants. The same room was used for a given participant to conduct the observation, interview guide, and interview, all during the same session. Once audio recording commenced, participants were asked all 17 initial questions on the semi-structured interview guide (Appendix E). Following these initial questions, any remaining follow-up questions were added as needed to gain depth of understanding. Even though interviews were audio recorded, the researcher used the interview guide to take notes on specific answers, including reflections, thoughts, follow-up questions to be asked, and notations of recording time stamps to note comments of interest for analysis. Interview sessions lasted an average of 30 minutes, depending on the depth of responses and the number of follow-up questions asked. Participants were instructed that the sessions could be paused at any time for breaks. Drinks and snacks were also made available during sessions.

After data collection. Following all initial interview, interview guide completion, and observation sessions, data analysis was used to determine which participants would be invited for further interview sessions to advance understanding of the case, if needed (Creswell & Poth,

2018). Follow-up interview questions were also developed at that time to help explore new directions of inquiry and to ensure that a holistic and in-depth understanding was gained. The specific procedures conducted after data collection are discussed in the data analysis techniques section below.

Researcher Positionality

Researcher positionality is comprised of both a researcher's view of the world, in terms of their philosophical and ideological perspectives, and their given position in terms of their relationship to the specific issue and site involved in in investigation (Bourke, 2014). In this section, this researcher's positionality in this study is discussed in both terms. In terms of philosophy and ideology, the use of case study makes it essential to detail this researcher's positionality. As discussed by Rosenberg and Yates (2007), qualitative case study "is not assigned to a fixed ontological, epistemological or methodological position" (p. 447). This philosophical flexibility allows for case studies to be conducted by researchers with a multitude of alignments, such as to positivism, realism, or even relativism and pragmatism (Harrison, Birks, Franklin, & Mills, 2017). This flexibility also makes it necessary for researchers to describe their philosophical and ideological positionality to ensure the reader understands the origins of methodological decisions for the study (Harrison et al., 2017).

As an educator and researcher steeped in the multicultural context of ESL education for the past 15 years, this researcher's philosophical and ideological leanings have been heavily influenced by the writings of John Dewey and William James (Schiro, 2012). These ideas of pragmatism, progressivism, and cultural pluralism, in turn, help form the pragmatist interpretive framework guiding this study. As such, no one system of philosophy or reality is ascribed to. is the researcher did not believe that all participants will perceive or experience events the same

way; thus, greater emphasis was placed on discovering what worked best for a given context, as opposed to having preconceived notions about what should work. The researcher assumed that research is best conducted in the social context in which participants usually interact, rather than in a laboratory or other artificial environment (Creswell, 2013).

Having been an ESL educator for the past 15 years, the researcher holds a firm belief both in learner-centered ideology (Schiro, 2012) and in communicative language teaching approaches (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). As such, greater emphasis is placed on each learner as an autonomous individual, and on the social construction of knowledge. In addition, previous experience in the field of ESL education and familiarity with existing literature and theory in the field might cause the data to be interpreted through the belief that motivation, and a positive and engaging classroom environment are essential in helping facilitate language learning success. In the interest of full disclosure, these deeply-held beliefs may influence the analysis and interpretation of findings. The ethical obligations to accurately present findings and allow data to speak for itself, however, make it both possible and essential to put these personal beliefs aside to represent findings accurately.

Of equal importance is a researcher's positionality in terms of their relationship to the specific issue and site involved in the investigation (Bourke, 2014). This positionality is critical to articulate because it can potentially influence the ways in which data is collected, analyzed, and interpreted (Bourke, 2014). As a former coordinator and instructor at the research site, established relationships with the director of the institute, other faculty members, staff members, and university employees helped facilitate access to both the research site and its students. It should be noted, however, that no current students of the researcher or the institute were included in this study. Despite the researcher's associations with the research site, it should also be noted

that the researcher did not teach any of the EAP courses between Fall 2016 and Fall 2018 from which the study participants were sampled. This disconnect helped ensure that the researcher could more easily maintain an outsider, non-participant observer position, and that no existing social relationships between the researcher and any participants would influence the collection, analysis, or interpretation of findings (Patton, 2015).

Throughout this researcher's 15 years of work with ESL students of various ages, at various levels, at various institutes, and for various purposes, interest arose in the topic of Krashen's affective filter hypothesis due to the consistently-observed importance of students' affective factors (anxiety, self-confidence, and motivation) in determining language learning success. Interest in the idea of exploring the use of humorous authentic materials like *TBBT* arose out of observations of consistent low motivation and high anxiety among EAP students when more traditional, non-humorous authentic teaching materials were used. Interest in the use of an instrumental case study design stemmed from a desire to improve understanding, instructional practices, and policies for EAP contexts reaching far beyond the specific research site at which this study was conducted.

Trustworthiness and Rigor

Several strategies were employed to ensure the trustworthiness, credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the findings of this study. The primary validation criteria put forth by Whittemore, Chase, and Mandle (2001) are addressed: (1) credibility, or the accuracy of the researcher's interpretation of findings; (2) authenticity, or the presentation of all findings and all voices of the participants; (3) criticality, or the presence of a critical analysis of the data by the researcher; and (4) integrity, or the self-critical nature of the researcher., Discussed below are several validation strategies used to address these points.

On a basic level, to ensure that readers can evaluate the trustworthiness, credibility, and validity of this study, several recommendations put forth by Baxter and Jack (2008) were followed. First, the central question and sub-questions were presented in a clear manner. Second, reasons were provided to explain why a qualitative cases study was conducted due to a desire to gain depth of understanding over objectively verifiable numbers. Third, appropriate purposeful sampling strategies were used in this study to advance understanding in the case. Fourth, data was collected, managed, and analyzed systematically. Finally, every attempt was made to provide sufficient detail regarding the rationale and specific steps used for this study to allow for the reader to evaluate this study's trustworthiness and rigor (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

Specifically, for credibility, or the accuracy of the researcher's interpretation of findings, triangulation techniques were used to cross reference findings, as suggested by Creswell and Poth (2018). As such, notes taken during observations were compared against answers provided by participants during interviews and on interview guides completed in writing. This strategy helped to ensure that the weaknesses inherent in one data collection instrument were compensated for by the inherent strengths found in other instruments being used to answer the same questions. Specific to triangulation with ESL participants, the use of multiple data collection instruments allowed for better triangulation despite the linguistic strengths or weaknesses of any given participant (Griffee, 2012; Heigham & Croker, 2009). In addition, prolonged engagement in the field with persistent and repeated interviews were employed to get a more solid grasp of the phenomenon, as recommended by Creswell (2013).

In terms of authenticity or the presentation of all findings and all voices of the participants, the researcher primarily employed member checking techniques (Baxter & Jack, 2008). By doing so, participants had the opportunity to confirm or refute the findings before

publication and, most importantly, to ensure their voice was heard in the findings. To conduct the member checking, a draft version of the pertinent sections of the final report was given to each involved participant for review before final submission occurred. To further bolster authenticity, negative case analysis was used to investigate especially any and all disconfirming evidence as a clear picture of the case began to emerge (Creswell, 2013). For this strategy, the data analysis process was helpful in determining which negative cases would be purposefully sampled for additional interviews. During this data analysis, further interview questions were developed to ensure an encompassing perspective of each negative case was gained (Whittemore et al., 2001).

For criticality or the presence of a critical analysis of the data by the researcher as well as integrity, or the self-critical nature of the researcher (Creswell & Poth, 2018), the rich, thick description of the findings is essential. In addition, peer review techniques were used to ensure the researcher was kept honest and that the interpretation of findings was accurate. For this, the anonymized findings were shared with select instructors involved at the research site. They were then asked to review the findings to ensure the report was accurate. Further, triangulation techniques and the aforementioned negative case analysis technique helped ensure the emergent picture was based on present data and not a preconceived idea of the researcher. To this end, self-disclosure of beliefs and biases up front was also essential (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

For reliability, the techniques discussed above of recording observation sessions, using protocols, and note taking helped ensure data were captured accurately. Once data were transcribed and coded for analysis, findings were confirmed by these multiple sources for added reliability. The same techniques of recording and transcribing interviews were combined with interview guide notes, as suggested by Creswell (2013).

Lastly, the prolonged period of expert review of all instruments and protocols helped

bolster the overall trustworthiness and rigor of the study (Hancock & Algozzine, 2016). This expert review process involved drafting and sending the developed interview guide and observation protocol to the researcher's dissertation committee at University of West Florida. The methodologist, Dr. Rashmi Sharma, the content expert, Dr. Ashley Clayson, and the committee chair, Dr. Mark Malisa, all reviewed data collection instruments for their appropriateness, conciseness, adequacy, and alignment with the purpose statement and research questions of the study. Several rounds of revisions were completed to refine the instruments before data collection began, as recommended by Hancock and Algozzine (2016). Further, the Doctoral Support and Quality Assurance Center at University of West Florida also reviewed all approved all instruments as part of the dissertation proposal before any data collection began.

Data Analysis Techniques

This section presents the techniques used to analyze data from all data sources in this study. First, the analysis techniques used for observation and interview data are discussed. Next, the coding process is discussed that helped sort data into emergent themes.

Analysis techniques for observation and interview data. In this single, within-site case study, both embedded and holistic data analysis was conducted in order to give an overall sense of the entire case as well as more details about specific aspects of interest (Yin, 2017). To facilitate this analysis process, data from every collection session were immediately processed in steps, as suggested by Creswell (2013). First, data were collected through the individual instruments and protocols. Meticulous field notes and comments written on observation protocols and on the margins of interview protocols were read through for any patterns. Data from each instrument were then typed out and entered into separate spreadsheets and databases for internal and then external comparison. Audio recordings taken from interview sessions were

also transcribed by hand into word documents. These transcriptions were then entered into large spreadsheets to isolate responses per question and participant. Once all data were entered into computer databases, coding took place to sort data into emergent categories (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). This coding helped determine trends and themes as well as helped signify the need for additional data collection in order to gain a complete understanding of the case (Yin, 2017). Three types of coding were used for the data analysis of this study, as suggested by Creswell (2013):

- open coding, in order to initially sort data into general categories;
- axial coding, in order to connect themes and trends; and
- selective coding, in order to build a theory or story from the findings.

To help facilitate this coding process, interview transcription spreadsheets were isolated and printed according to each of the included questions. Colored highlighters were then used to initially identify emergent themes. Red, for example, was used to identify ways in which responses indicated how *TBBT* negatively affected a participant, while green was used to identify ways in which *TBBT* positively affected a participant. This process was repeated with every question on both the interview transcriptions and the spreadsheets created for the interview guide responses. Next, each emergent theme was assigned an abbreviated name for further sorting. Theme identifiers to emerge included “ANX+” and “ANX-” to label the ways in which *TBBT* had both positively and negatively affected participants’ affective factor of anxiety. These themes were then categorized on the computer to connect themes across data collection instruments and questions. Selective coding was then applied to help identify an overall story of the findings.

The final steps involved interpreting findings and determining how to present them in the final report (Kvale & Brinkman, 2015). Following the collection and analysis of all data, findings were presented in a detailed write up of the research. Emergent trends are presented in both text and graphic form in the following two chapters. Selective coding was used to identify an overall answer to the central research question of how participants experienced *TBBT* in terms of the affective factors of anxiety, self-confidence, and motivation. This overarching response is presented in Chapter 5. In this report, a rich description of the case and its findings was presented along with the graphic representation of the central themes.

Chapter Summary

This chapter detailed the methodology of a qualitative case study investigating how adult ESL speakers experience *TBBT* in an EAP context. Discussed in this chapter was the case study paradigm and history, qualitative methods, site selection, participant description and selection, ethical issues and permissions, data sources, research instruments, data collection procedures, researcher positionality, trustworthiness and rigor, data analysis techniques, and the strategies used for the interpretation and presentation of findings. Also discussed in this chapter was the justification for the selection of both a qualitative approach and an instrumental case study approach for this study for depth of understanding. Finally, specific steps were outlined for improving triangulation and credibility with ESL participants using multiple research instruments.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results

This chapter details the data analysis and results for a qualitative, instrumental case study with the following theory-based central research question: How did *TBBT*, as a source of humorous authentic teaching material, contribute to the affective factors of anxiety, self-confidence, and motivation of adult ESL students in a postsecondary EAP program in the Southwestern region of the United States? This central research question was explored using the following three research sub-questions:

RQ1: How did *TBBT* contribute to the anxiety of adult ESL students in an EAP program?

RQ2: How did *TBBT* contribute to the self-confidence of adult ESL students in an EAP program?

RQ3: How did *TBBT* contribute to the motivation of adult ESL students in an EAP program?

Using a three-level coding process, data were analyzed and sorted into categories and themes. Data collected through semi-structured interviews, written interview guides, and observations were triangulated to enhance the reliability and accuracy of findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This chapter begins with a detailed description of the 12 participants involved in the data collection process of this study. This description of participants is followed by the findings from all data sources presented according to each research questions and broken down further by emergent themes and categories. Once the findings that answer the main research questions are presented, all unexpected findings are presented in a separate section, followed by a chapter summary.

Description of Participants

Seventy-six former students who had been enrolled in EAP courses at the research site within the past two academic school years (Fall 2016 to Fall 2018) were invited via email to participate in the current study. Of these 76 former students, 22 responded with 12 individual participants available to schedule and complete the interview, interview guide, and observation process. These 12 participants made up the sample group for this study to be described in detail within this section. Each participant received an assigned participant number so that their names would not be used in the final report. Thus, each of these participants will be referred to as Participant 1 through Participant 12 as findings are presented. Although a paragraph will be dedicated to the description of each of these 12 participants individually, a brief summary of the sample group is provided first.

The sample group consisted of six female and six male participants. The average age of the participants was 37.3 years. This average age was older than the average age of 24 for former students enrolled in EAP courses at the research site for the academic school years that were included. The researcher surmised that this skewing was a result of the more stable life situations of older former students with relationships, careers, and permanent residency permits allowing these older former students to have remained in the region after completing their studies at the research site. The researcher determined, for example, that all but three participants had either gained American citizenship or had stable employment that allowed them to remain in the country with the necessary visas. The remaining three participants were either married to American citizens or were married to other foreign nationals with stable employment and residency status in the region. These stable situations resulted in these 12 participants being able to take part in the data collection process for this study.

Among the 12 participants, a wide range of linguistic and cultural backgrounds was represented. There were eight first languages spoken by the participants, including: Arabic (one participant), Farsi (one participant), Mandarin (two participants), Cantonese (one participant), Spanish (three participants), Portuguese (two participants), German (two participants), and Korean (one participant). These participants stemmed from eight different countries: Spain, Germany, Brazil, Venezuela, China, South Korea, Iran, and Egypt. The average number of years of formal ESL training received by the participants was 12.75 years, with an average length of approximately 1.5 years (three academic terms) spent studying in an EAP context. All but one of the 12 participants had an English proficiency level of at least B2, with the majority at a proficiency level of C1, according to the Common European Framework of foreign language proficiency (Wisniewsk, 2017). The remaining participant had an English proficiency level of high B1, meaning that she was fluent enough in English to be able to understand and respond to all questions without translation assistance. This high level of proficiency in English ensured that each participant was able to understand questions and able to express their ideas fluently in English without significant difficulty. All 12 of the participants had at least a bachelor's degree with 10 of the 12 having also obtained a graduate degree in their respective field. The areas of professional or academic specialization represented by the 12 participants also included the following: corporate finance, accounting, oil and gas, sourcing and procurement, medical translation and international patient services, international security, education, engineering, and geophysics. Two participants were not employed outside the home at the time of data collection, though their fields were fashion design and social work.

This demographic data suggests that the 12 participants in this study represent the increasing number of foreign-born students in the Southwest region whose first language is not

English, as discussed by Cigdem (2017). The researcher determined that all 12 participants had been enrolled in an EAP course at the research site between Fall of 2016 and Fall of 2018. Descriptions of EAP instruction at the institute matches the definition of EAP instruction provided by Hyland (2006) as "specialized English language teaching grounded in the social, cognitive and linguistic demands of academic target situations, providing focused instruction informed by an understanding or texts and constraints of academic contexts" (p. 2). Thus, the researcher determined that each of the 12 participants had a similar background as an ESL student and had experienced the same phenomenon of representative EAP instruction. Through the data collection process for this study, all 12 participants also experienced the same phenomena of *TBBT* as a source of humorous authentic teaching material in an EAP context. This similar background and experience of all participants provided insights that helped to advance understanding of the central research question in this study, justifying the use of purposeful sampling techniques to focus on the experiences of a specific population (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Participant 1 was a 41-year-old male from Venezuela who spoke Spanish as a first language. Now employed as a finance professional with a multinational company in the Southwest region of the United States, he stated that he had received 3 years of formal EAP training. With an English proficiency level of C1, according to the Common European Framework of foreign language proficiency (Wisniewsk, 2017), Participant 1 had a solid command of English but was interested in improving his accent, writing, and use of specialized vocabulary in the context of corporate finance.

Participant 2 was a 37-year-old female from Venezuela who spoke Spanish as a first language. Now employed as a finance professional with an international oil and gas company,

she has lived in the Southwest region of the United States for over 13 years. After a 9-year gap in her study of English, she received approximately 5 years of EAP instruction, most recently within the past 6 months in early 2018 at the research site. With a C1 command of English, Participant 2 was interested in EAP courses for the purpose of improving her communication skills in English for the eventual possibility of beginning a doctoral study, specializing in economics.

Participant 3 was a 38-year-old male from Brazil who spoke Portuguese as a first language. Now employed in the accounting department of an international company in the region, he began taking EAP instruction approximately 8 months ago to improve his accent, use of vocabulary, and writing skills in English. Despite approximately 20 years of formal training in ESL, Participant 3's English proficiency level would be classified as B2, primarily due to significant observable limitations in verbal communication. Of importance with this participant was confidence building in English, as fear of his comprehensibility during verbal communication in English had led to his ongoing reluctance to speak in the foreign language. Participant 3 was also interested in EAP courses due to his intention to eventually enroll in a graduate program in the United States.

Participant 4 was a 33-year-old female from Germany who spoke German as a first language. She came to the Southwest region of the United States in 2016 on a spousal visa along with her husband, a Swiss national, who took a foreign assignment in the region. Participant 4 was interested in improving her English for the possibility of continuing her education. Participant 4 had studied English for approximately 12 years in Germany but had only recently enrolled in EAP courses beginning in 2017. Her English proficiency level was B2, and her field

of interest was fashion and textiles, although she was not employed or enrolled as a full-time student at the time of data collection for this study.

Participant 5 was a 37-year-old female from Brazil who spoke Portuguese as a first language. She currently works in global procurement for a multinational company in the Southwest region of the United States. She received approximately 4 years of formal EAP instruction and was enrolled in EAP courses at the research site from 2016 to 2017 to improve her verbal communication skills in an academic setting. Her English proficiency level was C1, despite a noticeable accent with certain phonemes when speaking English due to her Portuguese interference.

Participant 6 was a 48-year-old male from China who spoke Mandarin as a first language. He began taking EAP courses at the research site in 2016 after nearly 30 years of general ESL instruction, primarily in China and Canada. His interest in EAP courses was to improve his academic and professional English for educational and working purposes. He had worked as a school director in China, among other things, before immigrating to the United States, but was unemployed during the time of his EAP studies at the research site. He has since found employment in medical translation and international patient services for a major hospital system in the region. His English proficiency level was C1 with only slight limitations noticeable in his English writing structure and grammar. As a former educator in China, Participant 6 had a very unique and insightful perspective on the needs and interests of Chinese students.

Participant 7 was a 36-year-old Arabic speaker from Egypt who moved to the Southwest region in 2014. Fluent in Arabic, Italian, and English, Participant 7 was primarily interested in EAP courses, beginning in 2014, in order to eventually pursue a graduate degree in international security. Participant 7's English proficiency level was C1, having received approximately 20

years of ESL instruction, including 4 years of formal EAP instruction. During the time of data collection for this study, Participant 7 was enrolled as a full-time graduate student, completing a master's degree in international studies.

Participant 8 was a 34-year-old female from southern China. She grew up speaking both Mandarin and Cantonese as her first languages. Participant 8 received approximately 14 years of ESL instruction, including 1.5 years in an EAP context and an English proficiency level of C1. Prior to beginning EAP courses in 2017, Participant 8 lived and studied for some time in both Canada and England. Her perspectives on the differences in ESL instructional practices between China and Western countries, like the United States, Canada, and England, provided valuable insight about the application of humorous authentic materials for this study.

Participant 9 was a 31-year-old female from former East Germany who spoke German as a first language. Having moved to the region in 2015 on a spousal visa when her husband, also a German citizen, accepted a foreign assignment, Participant 9 began to take EAP courses to improve her academic English. Her English proficiency level was B1, with noticeable difficulties in both verbal and written communication in English. Participant 9 also exhibited reluctance to express her ideas in English due to the language barrier, but she was able to answer all questions fluently in English without assistance. Participant 9 was not employed outside the home at the time of data collection and discontinued her EAP studies in 2017 when her first child was born. Her interest in EAP courses was due to a desire to improve her English in order to continue her formal education while living in the United States.

Participant 10 was a 51-year-old male from South Korea who spoke Korean as a first language. He had studied English for approximately 12 years and had relocated to the Southwest region of the United States 6 years ago for work. He was enrolled in EAP courses at the research

institute for 3 months in 2017 to improve his ability to understand academic papers in the field of petroleum engineering. He was also required to write and deliver academic presentations for work, requiring him to improve these skills. Participant 10 had received all of his English training, apart from the 3 months at the research site, in Korea. He reported on the differences in teaching approaches between the United States and Korea and showed a preference for more traditional, teacher-centered approaches to language teaching that were similar to those expressed by the two other participants from Asia, Participant 6 and Participant 8. These themes will be discussed at greater lengths below.

Participant 11 was a 33-year-old Spanish speaker from central Spain. She relocated to the Southwest region in 2014 when her husband, also a Spanish national, accepted a foreign work assignment in the region. Her English proficiency level was C1, with only slight limitations noticeable in verbal communication. She is also fluent in German and works part-time as both a language instructor and translator between English, Spanish, and German. Her interest in EAP courses initially stemmed from an interest in an eventual doctoral study of linguistics. Her EAP studies at the research site began in 2015. She discontinued her study of EAP in 2018, however, to welcome her first child.

Participant 12 was a 30-year-old male from Iran who spoke Farsi as a first language. He moved to the Southwest region of the United States to begin EAP classes at the research institute in 2016. He had a total of 3 years of ESL instruction as an adult, including two academic terms enrolled in EAP courses at the research site. Participant 12 has a strong background in geophysics and discontinued his ESL studies at the research site when he began working fulltime as a geophysicist for an international company in the region.

Presentation and Analysis of Findings

At this point in the data collection process, participants were shown selections of *TBBT* and asked to answer questions on the interview guides during in-person interviews. The data presented in the following sections pertains to the answers to each of the three research sub-questions, beginning with RQ1. Analysis is also provided for the themes that emerged according to RQ1.

Research Question 1. Questions 8, 11, and 15 on the interview guide were developed specifically to answer RQ1: How did *TBBT* contribute to the anxiety of adult ESL students in an EAP program? Responses to these questions during in-person interviews were triangulated with written responses received from participants on the interview guide as well as observations conducted. This section provides the raw findings along with an analysis of these findings pertaining to RQ1.

In order to establish what each participant understood about the affective factor of anxiety, Questions 8 and 11 on the interview guide were asked. Responses to question 8 indicate that anxiety in the learning environment was viewed relatively similarly by all 12 participants. Words commonly used by participants in these descriptions were bad, blocked, fearful, afraid, nervous, stressed, and uncomfortable. Table 6 provides an overview of the paraphrased definitions of anxiety provided by each participant.

This compiled list in Table 6 showed most of the participants understood anxiety as a negative feeling associated with fear or nervousness. Specific to a language learning environment, over half of the participants described anxiety in terms of a fear of not being able to express their thoughts or ideas in an understandable way in English. Participant 2 (personal communication, November 16, 2018), for example, described anxiety “like a fear. If I want to

say one thing and it's in my brain, but I don't say it right for my audience to understand. I get anxious about that."

Table 6

Paraphrased Definitions of Anxiety from Interview and Interview Guide Responses

Participant	Paraphrased definitions of anxiety from interview and interview guide responses
Participant 1	Afraid when you don't know a word or topic Afraid to speak Feeling blocked
Participant 2	Stressed or nervous about something Anxious when trying to say something but can't
Participant 3	Fear when you want something but can't wait Frustrated and fearful
Participant 4	To fail or forget about too many things during exams or while speaking Fear of not being good enough
Participant 5	Being nervous, out of your comfort zone, and stressed
Participant 6	Anxiety to use the language correctly Stress when you are taking a test
Participant 7	Uncomfortable and afraid to ask questions Unable to understand and thinking you are the only one not understanding
Participant 8	An obstacle to learning caused by stress Feeling unable to do something well Fear of being misunderstood in the language
Participant 9	Feeling blocked or unable to respond Fear of saying something incorrectly
Participant 10	A bad feeling that makes you underperform Stress about an exam
Participant 11	Feeling blocked When you don't understand someone, or they don't understand you

Other common themes that emerged were participants describing anxiety as stemming from a fear of inadequacy in the foreign language, either during exams or while trying to follow and understand written and spoken expressions in the language. For example, Participant 4 (personal communication, November 6, 2018), described experiencing anxiety during exams and presentations in this way: “I think it’s just the anxiety of failing. Just like not being really good at what you prepared or what you did.” The only description of anxiety that initially diverged from the generally consistent description provided by other participants was from Participant 3. His initial description of anxiety was more closely associated with impatience than fear. He explained anxiety, for example, as “when you want something so much and you cannot wait. When you want a quick result and you cannot get it as fast as you want, then it causes anxiety” (Participant 3, personal communication, November 5, 2018). He later described anxiety, through an anecdote, as a fear of failure he had while taking an English class in college. He explained that due to not knowing many words and not having time to prepare or finish his homework between classes, he had felt anxiety in class. This second description was more in line with the other participants’ descriptions of anxiety in a learning environment.

The findings from question 8 on the interview guide align with Arnold and Brown’s (1999) findings that anxiety “is associated with negative feelings such as uneasiness, frustration, self-doubt, apprehension and tension” (p. 8). Additionally, the descriptions of anxiety provided by participants align with Horwitz et al.’s (1986) definition of anxiety as being “the subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with an arousal of the autonomic nervous system” (p. 125). Several participants in this study also described anxiety in terms of feeling blocked or prevented from learning, which aligns with what several scholars have reported in recent studies about anxiety rendering students incapable of absorbing target

content (Huang & Hwang, 2013; Lin et al., 2015; Yuhui & Sen, 2015). Because this study did not include an experimental component to test learning outcomes, it cannot be stated to what extent anxiety blocked participants from absorbing content. It can only be stated that participants reported feeling blocked as a result of anxiety experienced in the learning environment. The descriptions of anxiety provided by participants also directly align with Krashen's (1982) affective filter hypothesis, which posits that high anxiety can block or prevent a student from learning target language content.

Participants were also asked to explain which instructional practices, activities, and materials created anxiety for them in the learning environment. Table 7 displays an overview of the responses provided by participants on interview guides and during interviews.

Table 7

Instructional Practices, Activities, and Materials Reported to Create Anxiety

Participant	Instructional practices and materials that created anxiety for participants
Participant 1	Discussing grammar rules
	Unfamiliar topics
	Fear of asking a stupid question
	Large class size
Participant 2	Giving presentations
	Not being understood
Participant 3	Exams
	Deadlines
	Homework
Participant 4	Giving presentations
Participant 5	Reading aloud in front of people

Table 7

Instructional Practices, Activities, and Materials Reported to Create Anxiety (continued)

Participant	Instructional practices and materials that created anxiety for participants
Participant 6	Exams
	Comprehensive reading assignments
	Fear of making mistakes
Participant 7	Materials that are too advanced, with many unfamiliar words
Participant 8	Long texts with lots of unfamiliar vocabulary
	Writing essays
	Major writing assignments
Participant 9	Exams and pop quizzes
	Reading aloud in front of the class
	Not being helped if you can't think of the word
Participant 10	Long reading passages with limited time
	Bookwork
	Many reading comprehension questions
Participant 11	Listening exercises when you don't understand
	Listening without images to help you (radio vs. TV)
Participant 12	Large class size
	Competition between students
	Fear of saying something incorrectly or being judged by others
	Speaking in front of native English speakers

Table 7 encompasses many activities, instructional practices, materials, and even situations that generated anxiety for the participants in an English learning environment. Several common sources of anxiety reported by participants included: not being understood by others, not understanding something they were reading or listening to, having to take exams, and being under time pressure to complete assignments. Participant 7 (personal communication, November 13, 2018), for example, explained that a source of anxiety for him was "when the materials being

used are somehow above my English skills and abilities. If it is too difficult for me to understand what is being said in the materials, this somehow would make me anxious." These themes align with Horwitz's (2016) description of foreign language learning anxiety due to students' fear of performing incorrectly in the foreign language, embarrassing themselves, or failing to understand what is taking place because of a language barrier. In addition to foreign language learning anxiety, other sources of anxiety such as test anxiety were also discussed, aligning with Horwitz et al.'s (1986) descriptions of other sources of anxiety common for students in learning environments.

When analyzing the responses of participants further, one of the common themes that emerged was participants' fear of being judged by others. This source of anxiety took the following forms for different participants: fear of asking a stupid question, fear of not being understood when trying to say something in English, fear of reading aloud in front of others, fear of being judged for mispronouncing a word, fear of making grammar mistakes, fear of not remembering a word while speaking, and a general fear of speaking in front of others during presentations or other activities in class. Because all of these sources of anxiety in this theme take place in a foreign language learning environment, they can also be classified as forms of foreign language learning anxiety discussed by Horwitz (2016). Participant 12, for example, described a long-standing anxiety about taking an ESL class due to experiences he had had in English class in Iran. There, he described how students were competitive with one another and would judge or even make fun of other students who made mistakes in class. This source of anxiety, he explained, had led to a general fear of speaking in front of any native English speakers who could tell if he had made a mistake by mispronouncing a word or making a grammar error. Participant 5, too, explained that her fear of being judged by others while reading

aloud in class had caused such anxiety that she had avoided signing up for an ESL of EAP class for years. In her own words, she described this anxiety in the following way: “Reading in front of other people. Can’t do that. Do not like that. If the teacher is like, ‘Oh guys, I got this new book today. We’re going to start reading it aloud,’ I’m like, ‘oh heck no! That’s not happening.’” (Participant 5, personal communication, November 12, 2018). In this same theme of anxiety being caused by a fear of being judged, Participant 1 (personal communication, November 9, 2018) also said, “When you have a question about the topic and it’s very simple and you have already discussed it, I am afraid to ask again about the same rule we have already gone over.”

Question 15 on the interview guide was designed specifically to answer this research question. Question 15 was asked both during interview sessions and on interview guides. The following table (Table 8) provides an overview of responses provided by all 12 participants in this study to question 15.

Table 8

Reported Ways TBBT Could Affect Anxiety in an ESL/EAP Learning Environment

Participant	Quote	Personal Communication Date
Participant 1	“Maybe there are some words that you cannot catch, and you will feel anxiety. When they were discussing the grammar, could create anxiety for me.” “But if not, it’s the opposite because it made me think about different vocabulary and that’s good.” “The speed of the clip could maybe create anxiety. That it’s fast at times. For me it’s not too fast but maybe for other people.”	November 9, 2018

Table 8

Reported Ways TBBT Could Affect Anxiety in an ESL/EAP Learning Environment (continued)

Participant	Quote	Personal Communication Date
Participant 2	"It's probably something students could get anxiety about because they speak so fast, so you can't pick up everything. And that causes anxiety because you cannot get the whole object of the show specifically because they are talking so fast." "And the other thing is that they use very new vocabulary. It's not like a day-to-day vocabulary. It's like a science vocabulary or a technical vocabulary, and for people who are not familiar with those words will be lost, so that would cause some type of anxiety."	November 16, 2018
Participant 3	"Sometimes I could not understand. I couldn't follow all the text and I feel bad about it. So, at some point if you did not stop the film and teach me. I think it goes both ways. I should interrupt and say I don't understand so you can explain it. I think for me it's very common for me to not interrupt because I am shy, so I would not understand, and I would block myself form learning more in the rest of the film." "If I did not ask you to interrupt the film and explain I would be lost and the film would not make sense. It would be difficult."	November 5, 2018
Participant 4	"I think it definitely could be a positive help for anxiety. You kind of learn in the show that it's ok to fail sometimes and to see things in your own way. It's pretty obvious how different their personalities are in the show. Penny is supposed to be the not super intelligent one, and even she has some bright moments in there. Because she sees things in another way and it's ok. There are different ways to do things." "I think it would be quite positive because it's always easier when you have humor in it and you can see it in a funny. And I think this takes anxiety away. Just this simple thing can take anxiety away."	November 6, 2018

Table 8

Reported Ways TBBT Could Affect Anxiety in an ESL/EAP Learning Environment (continued)

Participant	Quote	Personal Communication Date
Participant 5	"If you ask specific questions, like, 'Did you understand all the words? Did you know exactly what they mean?' that could make people uncomfortable. But if you ask overall questions, like 'what did you understand about this?' oh they're talking about movies and time, that could be a good discussion."	November 12, 2018
Participant 6	"You have to understand it's really fast. So, some of the material I don't understand because I didn't grow up here. You try to catch up, but you cannot." "You want to understand. You don't want people to think you don't understand it and that you are pretending to understand by laughing because when everyone is laughing and you're not, its obvious that you don't understand. But I catch most of the parts and it made me laugh."	November 12, 2018
Participant 7	"Positively, I would say it's going to be very helpful if the videos are chosen carefully. Like the first one where they were playing a game- This was very interesting, and I believe this would help me be more engaged in the class and that it would make the lesson more fun." "Negatively, I would say when it's too fast or the content of the video is confusing, would be distracting to me more than teaching."	November 13, 2018
Participant 8	"It would be quite positive and would ease student's anxiety. The show has four people talking in the same frame and I can understand one person's words and then I can understand another, and that makes me feel like I can be involved with the whole situation. Like, if I couldn't understand one person's words it wouldn't affect my ability to understand the whole story. That's really important for not making me feel anxiety about not being able to understand. Because I could understand."	November 14, 2018

Table 8

Reported Ways TBBT Could Affect Anxiety in an ESL/EAP Learning Environment (continued)

Participant	Quote	Personal Communication Quote
Participant 9	"I think it could be positive because you can watch and it's not that you just learn English, you also learn other things. You learn words you need for school."	November 14, 2018
Participant 10	"Students will be frustrated because it is very…. even if you understand the words and grammar and everything you learn from textbooks, you cannot understand what it really means, and you will have so many questions for yourself."	November 15, 2018
Participant 11	"If they have a high level, it can take away their anxiety. Because once you understand one joke, it's like 'wow, ok, I got it! I can understand others!' But if you don't have a high enough level, then it will frustrate you."	November 15, 2018
Participant 12	"I think the comedy and the humor in any kind of relationship or environment makes people feel more comfortable with each other. So, when you are feeling comfortable learning things will be easier. Also, about how friendly the teachers could keep the class. It's always helpful. So, if they make it friendly by using humor that's good."	November 21, 2018

As evident from the quotes included in Table 8, participants mentioned ways in which *TBBT* would both positively and negatively affect anxiety. Unlike the uniform positive general reception of *TBBT*, several themes emerged from responses to this question. These themes are presented below, beginning with those describing how *TBBT* could positively affect anxiety.

Ways TBBT could positively affect anxiety. Participants' responses to the question of how *TBBT* could affect anxiety revealed four positive themes. These themes included the following: (a) humor reduces anxiety, (b) exposure to new vocabulary reduces anxiety, (c) showing students that they can understand complex language reduces anxiety, and (d) showing

different ways of being or communicating reduces anxiety. Each of these themes is presented below.

The first of the themes to emerge regarding how *TBBT* could positively affect anxiety relates to humor. Several participants discussed the fact that the humorous aspect of *TBBT* could potentially reduce their anxiety in the learning environment. Participant 4 (personal communication, November 6, 2018), for example, stated, "it's always easier when you have humor in it and you can see it in a funny [way]. And I think this takes anxiety away. Just this simple thing can take anxiety away." This idea of humor reducing anxiety was also mentioned by Participant 12 (personal communication, November 21, 2018), who stated,

> I think the comedy and the humor in any kind of relationship or environment makes people feel more comfortable with each other. So, when you are feeling comfortable, learning things will be easier. Also, about how friendly the teachers could keep the class. It's always helpful. So, if they make it friendly by using humor, that's good.

When these responses are combined with those from the previous question about which aspects of *TBBT* participants liked, it is clear that the humorous aspect of the show could be significant, not only for increasing enjoyment, but also for reducing anxiety. This theme suggests that the humor of *TBBT* could be used to reduce students' anxiety in an EAP context, as other scholars have demonstrated with humor in other studies. Chiang et al. (2016), Garner (2006), Philaretou (2007), and Stambor (2006) all stated how humor decreased anxiety, tension, and stress in other educational contexts. The findings of this study also align with those discussed by Mingzheng (2012), who reported that the use of humor reduced anxiety and increased the interest level for participants in an EAP context in China. This theme begins to indicate that the positive findings about humor also apply to the use of *TBBT* in this postsecondary EAP context.

The second theme to emerge regarding how *TBBT* could positively affect anxiety relates to new vocabulary. Two participants directly mentioned that exposure to new vocabulary on the show could increase their interest and reduce their anxiety. Participant 9 (personal communication, November 14, 2018), for example, stated that watching *TBBT* could positively affect her anxiety "because you can watch and it's not that you just learn English, you also learn other things. You learn words you need for school." This idea was seconded by Participant 1 (personal communication, November 9, 2018), who began by saying that his anxiety could be reduced "because it made me think about different vocabulary and that's good." For these participants, it is perhaps the stimulation of learning new vocabulary that might reduce their anxiety by increasing their interest. This theme further aligns with the notion that authentic materials can be used by teachers to bridge the artificial and formal classroom environment and the target language community (Li, 2017; Tamo, 2009; Wingate, 2015).

A third theme to emerge about how *TBBT* could positively affect anxiety relates to showing students that they can understand complex language, which could reduce anxiety. Participant 8, for example, described in detail how being able to follow the conversations of the characters could reduce her anxiety. When asked how *TBBT* might affect students' anxiety, either positively or negatively, she answered:

> It would be quite positive and would ease students' anxiety. The show has four people talking in the same frame and I can understand one person's words and then I can understand another, and that makes me feel like I can be involved with the whole situation. Like, if I couldn't understand one person's words it wouldn't affect my ability to understand the whole story. That's really important for not making me feel anxiety

about not being able to understand. Because I could understand! (Participant 8, personal communication, November 14, 2018)

Another participant, Participant 11, also mentioned how being able to understand the show could reduce students' anxiety and increase their motivation. She stated about ESL students that "if they have a high level, it can take away their anxiety. Because once you understand one joke, it's like, 'Wow, ok, I got it! I can understand others'" (Participant 11, personal communication, November 15, 2018)! Participant 11 (personal communication, November 15, 2018) also mentioned that the show's potential to reduce students' anxiety depended on each student's ability level in English, stating, "…but if you don't have a high enough level, then it will frustrate you." When asked to follow up with how the show could affect her anxiety personally, Participant 11 continued that she was able to understand the show, and she did not have anxiety while watching. Her comment, however, reiterates the need to carefully consider students' English proficiency levels when selecting authentic materials as complex as *TBBT*, which will be discussed at greater lengths in Chapter 5.

This theme of students' anxiety being reduced by showing them that they can understand the complex language on *TBBT* aligns with the affective element of second language self-confidence, as discussed by MacIntyre et al. (1998). This affective element relates to the anxiety and fear experienced when communicating in the foreign language, which studies have shown can be reduced if students experience success in understanding and communicating in the second language (Clément, 1986; Edwards & Roger, 2015; MacIntyre et al., 1998). This theme suggests that *TBBT* could be used to reduce students' anxiety and simultaneously increase their second language self-confidence in an EAP context.

One final theme to emerge about how *TBBT* could positively affect anxiety relates to showing different ways of being and communicating. Several participants mentioned that the range of different characters and communication styles featured on *TBBT* could have a positive effect on students' affective factors. Specific to anxiety, Participant 4 (personal communication, November 6, 2018) mentioned,

> I think it definitely could be a positive help for anxiety. You kind of learn in the show that it's ok to fail sometimes and to see things in your own way. It's pretty obvious how different their personalities are in the show. Penny is supposed to be the not-super-intelligent one, and even she has some bright moments in there. Because she sees things in another way and it's ok. There are different ways to do things.

This theme is potentially a significant reason why a show like *TBBT* might help reduce anxiety in a language learning environment. Especially for ESL students who may worry about saying things incorrectly in a foreign language, a show featuring a range of communication styles and characters who are all accepted but who communicate so differently could help reduce students' anxiety. As stated by Tamo (2009), authentic materials have been shown to help reduce students' anxiety by exposing them to different communication styles. Further, exposure to different genres through authentic materials in an ESL context has been shown previously to decrease anxiety and increase motivation (Benavent & Sanchez-Reyes Penamaria, 2011).

Ways TBBT could negatively affect anxiety. Analysis of responses to the question of how *TBBT* could affect anxiety in a learning environment also revealed two negative themes. The two themes of how *TBBT* could negatively affect students' anxiety include the following: (a) exposure to unfamiliar words or concepts that are difficult to understand could increase anxiety

and (b) the rapid speed of dialog on the show could increase students' anxiety. Both themes are presented below in separate sections.

The first common theme was that anxiety could be caused by *TBBT* exposing students to unfamiliar vocabulary or concepts that are difficult to understand. Participant 1, Participant 2, Participant 3, and Participant 10 all mentioned this aspect of the show as potentially causing anxiety. Participant 1 (personal communication, November 9, 2018), for example, stated, "Maybe there are some words that you cannot catch, and you will feel anxiety. When they were discussing the grammar, could create anxiety for me." While Participant 1 did state that he did not feel anxious due to the unfamiliar vocabulary on the show himself, he did state that other students might experience anxiety. He did, however, mention that the exposure to unfamiliar grammar on the show caused him anxiety personally. Participant 2 (personal communication, November 16, 2018) also mentioned anxiety potentially being caused by the new vocabulary, stating,

> And the other thing is that they use very new vocabulary. It's not like a day-to-day vocabulary. It's like a science vocabulary or a technical vocabulary, and for people who are not familiar with those words will be lost, so that would cause some type of anxiety.

Participant 3 also discussed not being able to follow parts of the show due to the unfamiliar vocabulary and concepts. He stated,

> Sometimes I could not understand. I couldn't follow all the text, and I feel bad about it. So, at some point if you did not stop the film and teach me. I think it goes both ways. I should interrupt and say I don't understand, so you can explain it. I think for me it's very common for me to not interrupt because I am shy, so I would not understand, and I would

> block myself form learning more in the rest of the film. (Participant 3, personal communication, November 5, 2018)

Participant 3's comments illustrate how a student might experience anxiety by not understanding all aspects of the show and how this anxiety might be compounded by a reluctance to interrupt or ask for clarification in class. This concept of students potentially experiencing anxiety due to not understanding words, grammar, or concepts was also discussed by Participant 10. He stated, "Students will be frustrated because it is very…. even if you understand the words and grammar and everything you learn from textbooks, you cannot understand what it really means, and you will have so many questions for yourself" (Participant 10, personal communication, November 15, 2018).

The exposure to unfamiliar vocabulary, grammar, and concepts on *TBBT* could potentially be a source of anxiety for students in a language learning environment if not managed correctly. As discussed by Tamo (2009), authentic materials "may be too culturally biased, difficult to understand outside language community," may "contain vocabulary not relevant to students' immediate needs," and "may contain too many mixed structures for lower levels" (p. 75). Harmer (2001), however, stated that "it is vital for students to get practice in dealing with writing and speech where they miss quite a few words but are still able to extract the general meaning" (p. 273). This theme suggests the need for educators to carefully select authentic materials in order decrease and not increase students' affective factor of anxiety. As Krashen (1982) stated, "the effective language teacher is someone who can provide input and help make it comprehensible in a low anxiety situation" (p. 32).

The second negative theme to emerge from participants' responses to the question of how *TBBT* might affect student anxiety pertained to the speed of dialog on the show. Participant 1,

Participant 2, Participant 6, and Participant 7 all mentioned that the rate of speed at which the characters spoke on the show could either cause anxiety for themselves or for other students in a language learning environment. Participant 1 (personal communication, November 9, 2018), for example, stated, “The speed of the clip could maybe create anxiety. That it’s fast at times. For me it’s not too fast but maybe for other people.” Participant 2 (personal communication, November 16, 2018) also mentioned this aspect, stating,

> It’s probably something students could get anxiety about because they speak so fast, so you can’t pick up everything. And that causes anxiety because you cannot get the whole object of the show specifically because they are talking so fast.

Participant 6 (personal communication, November 12, 2018) also stated,

> You have to understand it’s really fast. So, some of the material I don’t understand because I didn’t grow up here. You try to catch up, but you cannot. You want to understand. You don’t want people to think you don’t understand it and that you are pretending to understand by laughing because when everyone is laughing and you’re not, it’s obvious that you don’t understand.

When asked if this aspect of *TBBT* caused him anxiety personally, he said that it had not, stating instead, “I catch most of the parts and it made me laugh” (Participant 6, personal communication, November 12, 2018). This statement was reinforced by observation sessions, during which Participant 6 repeatedly laughed at jokes and situational humor. Lastly, to this theme of speed, Participant 7 (personal communication, November 13, 2018) mentioned, “I would say when it’s too fast or the content of the video is confusing, would be distracting to me more than teaching.” The fact that the speed of dialog on the show was mentioned by several participants suggests its possible significance. As Participant 6 mentioned, students might feel

anxious and embarrassed about revealing that they cannot understand certain aspects of the show due to the speed. This could cause more anxiety, not only because of the speed of dialog, but also out of a fear of being embarrassed or even made fun of by others for not understanding. This theme will be discussed further in Chapter 5 along with recommendations on how to mitigate this potential source of anxiety in a language learning environment with *TBBT*.

This theme of students experiencing anxiety due to the rapid speed of dialog on *TBBT* also aligns with the affective element of second language learning anxiety (MacIntyre et al., 1998) that students may experience anxiety about understanding or communicating in the foreign language. This theme also aligns with Krashen's (1982) assertion that language educators should expose students to comprehensible input in a low filter environment. If the speed of dialog is too rapid, the input is not comprehensible and would thus fail to be absorbed. Failing to understand input, in turn, could lead to increased foreign language learning anxiety, as discussed by Horwitz (2016).

Research Question 2. The next research question to be addressed was: How did *TBBT* contribute to the self-confidence of adult ESL students in an EAP program? Questions 9, 12, and 16 on the interview guide were designed specifically to answer RQ2. The responses from all participants to these four questions are presented and analyzed in this section.

Participants were first asked to describe self-confidence in the learning environment. Table 9 provides an overview of paraphrased definitions provided by all 12 participants on interview guides and during interviews.

Table 9

Paraphrased Definition of Self-Confidence from Interview and Interview Guide Responses

Participant	Paraphrased definitions of self-confidence from interview and interview guide responses
Participant 1	A feeling of control over the topic A feeling that you enjoy and understand a topic that causes you to participate actively Not afraid to participate The belief that you can do something
Participant 2	When you feel secure, prepared, that you have the knowledge, and you are not scared
Participant 3	Not nervous
Participant 4	Not being ashamed of anything you say, even if it's not completely correct Accepting yourself and liking what you do Knowing a lot of words and grammar
Participant 5	The feeling that "I got this." (personal communication, November 12, 2018) Not ashamed to express your knowledge
Participant 6	Confidence to speak or write despite making mistakes
Participant 7	When you are strong enough to participate in all of the class activities Being willing to participate A feeling that you are able to comprehend everything being taught

Table 9

Paraphrased Definition of Self-Confidence from Interview and Interview Guide Responses (continued)

Participants	Paraphrased definitions of self-confidence from interview and interview guide responses
Participant 8	Feeling capable of expressing everything fluently Feeling proud and positive about learning something that is difficult
Participant 9	Not being shy Feeling safe and good
Participant 10	A sense of achievement when you know you can do something When you feel you can communicate, even when not perfectly Feeling confident you understand
Participant 11	Being able to understand and be understood
Participant 12	Trusting that you will do something well, even if it is not perfect Not being anxious or shy Knowing yourself

The responses displayed in Table 9 paint a fairly consistent picture of the definition of self-confidence among the participants in this study. Several common themes emerged through participants' descriptions of self-confidence, including that self-confidence is a sense of control over one's ability to communicate and understand, a firm belief in one's language abilities, not feeling fear or shyness about communicating in the language, and a willingness to communicate despite any errors or mistakes one might make. Participant 5 (personal communication, November 12, 2018), for example, succinctly described self-confidence by saying it's a feeling

that “I got this. I know that I know it. I’m not ashamed to express my knowledge.” Participant 10 (personal communication, November 15, 2018) also succinctly described self-confidence as “a sense of achievement, when you know you can do something. When you can communicate even when not perfect.”

Several participants discussed self-confidence in terms of a willingness to speak despite knowing or feeling that their English was not perfect. This description of self-confidence was expressed directly, albeit in slightly different ways, by Participant 4, Participant 6, Participant 10, and Participant 12. Several other participants spoke of self-confidence as not being afraid or shy to communicate or as a willingness to participate in class. These descriptions place the definition of self-confidence for many participants as the opposite of anxiety in class in that their definitions of self-confidence included a willingness to do the very thing that they previously mentioned as having caused anxiety in the learning environment. Participant 12 (personal communication, November 21, 2018), for example, described self-confidence as trusting that you will do something well even if it is not perfect. He also discussed self-confidence in terms of not being anxious or shy. He had previously stated that a major source of anxiety for him in the learning environment was a fear of saying something incorrectly or being judged by others.

The descriptions of self-confidence provided by participants in this study align well with the concept of second language self-confidence described by MacIntyre et al. (1998). As discussed by MacIntyre et al. (1998), second language self-confidence is an “overall belief in being able to communicate in the L2 in an adaptive and efficient manner” (p. 551). The two elements of second language self-confidence discussed by MacIntyre et al. (1998) are the cognitive element (i.e., one’s own assessment of their foreign language skills) and the affective element (i.e., fear or anxiety associated with communicating in the foreign language).

Participants' descriptions of self-confidence in this study as being a sense of control over one's ability to communicate and understand and a lack of fear or shyness to communicate align almost one-to-one with MacIntyre et al.'s (1998) definition of second language self-confidence.

Participants were next asked to explain which instructional practices, activities, and materials created self-confidence for them in the learning environment. Table 10 offers an overview of the responses provided by participants on interview guides and during interviews.

Table 10

Instructional Practices, Activities, and Materials Reported to Create Self-Confidence

Participant	Paraphrased responses of instructional practices, activities, and materials reported to create self-confidence for participants
Participant 1	Discussions about authentic materials Being able to prepare for a discussion in advance
Participant 2	Discussing a familiar topic
Participant 3	No exams Having freedom in class to develop and express When students have control over the conversation
Participant 4	Receiving encouragement from the teacher Seeing others not being perfect either Discussing things of interest to the student
Participant 5	Receiving words of affirmation from the teacher Receiving positive feedback Receiving constructive criticism and positive correction Being successful with new learning challenges
Participant 6	Discussing or engaging with familiar topics and materials
Participant 7	Activities involving audio and video material together Working in groups Working with materials that are within an easy range Understanding the majority of content in new materials
Participant 8	Being able to understand the majority of words in new materials Familiar and interesting topics

Table 10

Instructional Practices, Activities, and Materials Reported to Create Self-Confidence (continued)

Participants	Paraphrased responses of instructional practices, activities, and materials reported to create self-confidence for participants
Participant 9	Interacting with others in smaller groups Not being judged by others for making mistakes Engaging in games, puzzles, or creative activities in class
Participant 10	Engaging in structured discussions, led by the teacher Engaging in authentic interactions with native speakers Materials that have a real-world connection to daily life
Participant 11	Having time to think and prepare before speaking Watching videos Playing games to learn vocabulary
Participant 12	Engaging in real-world activities Not feeling judged for making mistakes Not being corrected in front of others

One theme that emerged from these responses in Table 10 was that Participants 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, and 11 mentioned that activities, materials, and topics that were familiar to them, or that they had time to familiarize themselves with in advance created self-confidence in the learning environment. The following are direct quotes from these participants that support this theme.

Table 11

Participant Direct Quotes Related to the Self-Confidence Theme

Participant	Quote supporting the idea that familiarity creates self-confidence	Personal communication
Participant 1	"When you have something to prepare previous to the class and you do your work and for sure you'll feel confident about what you did."	November 9, 2018
Participant 2	"Probably when I'm talking about something that I really know, that I'm really familiar with, then I feel confident."	November 16, 2018

Table 11

Participant Direct Quotes Related to the Self-Confidence Theme (continued)

Participant	Quote supporting the idea that familiarity creates self-confidence	Personal Communication
Participant 4	"I had some material you're really interested in it gives you a little more confidence."	November 6, 2018
Participant 6	"For me, if you are familiar with the things you are learning, it causes confidence."	November 21, 2018
Participant 7	"When the materials are within my range and allow me to give correct answers … it makes me comfortable."	November 13, 2018
Participant 8	"As long as the material is about a subject I am familiar with, it makes me confident."	November 14, 2018
Participant 11	"When you have time to think and prepare. It makes me confident."	November 15, 2018

This level of familiarity with materials, as was explained, caused the students to be more confident in their ability to express their ideas fluently. This confidence led to a reduction in anxiety about an inability to say the correct word or not knowing a word necessary for understanding the material. This theme of familiarity with topics and materials creating self-confidence also aligns with the affective element of second language self-confidence discussed by MacIntyre et al. (1998). In particular, the cognitive element of one's own assessment of their foreign language skills could be increased through the familiarity with material, and the affective element of anxiety associated with communicating in the foreign language could also be reduced due to this familiarity (MacIntyre et al., 1998).

Another theme that emerged was that games, interactive activities, and interesting or current topics with a real-world connection created self-confidence for participants. This theme aligns with findings from other researchers that communicative activities such as games and interactions can positively contribute to students' affective factors while leading to improved learning outcomes (Gillett, 2011; Karimkhanlui, 2005; Khan et al., 2016; Li, 2017; Tamo, 2009; Wingate, 2015). One final theme that emerged, however, was that participants discussed an increase in self-confidence when they were encouraged by teachers or at least not judged or corrected harshly in front of others in class. Participant 5, for example, discussed themes from Chapman's (2010) book, *The 5 Love Languages*. Participant 5 (personal communication, November 12, 2018) described her self-confidence being increased this way:

> Have you ever read the five language of love? I am rewards kind of person, so when people tell me that I did well, here that brings me confidence. You know, like just giving me reassurance of where I'm getting things right helps my confidence. Positive feedback and not getting yelled at when things are wrong. Not calling me out in front of everybody.

These themes of familiarity, interest, and positive encouragement suggest that whatever materials are used in class, it is important to allow students time to become familiar with their content and topics in order to increasing students' self-confidence. In addition to allowing this time for familiarization, it is important to create and maintain a positive classroom environment in which students do not feel judged, reluctant to ask questions, or fearful of making mistakes while communicating. These themes align with Brown and Lee's (1994) assertion that both intrinsic and extrinsic factors can influence a students' sense of self-confidence in the learning environment, which should be considered when deciding to use *TBBT* in an ESL or EAP context.

Further, the theme that students' self-confidence can be increased by games, interactive activities, and interesting or current topics aligns with other researchers' findings that novel learning situations and activities release dopamine in the brain (Baudonnat et al., 2013; Green, 2016) and improved learning in an ESL context (Wong et al., 2012; Wong et al., 2013).

Once participants were asked general questions about the affective factor of self-confidence, question 16 was asked to determine the ways in which *TBBT* could contribute to this factor. Table 12 below presents quotes from both of these questions on how *TBBT* affected self-confidence. The emergent themes are then presented with analysis.

Table 12

Reported Ways TBBT Could Affect Self-Confidence in the Learning Environment

Participant	Quote	Personal Communication Date
Participant 1	"Listening to an authentic conversation between native speaker creates self-confidence because you start using the phrases and slang words they use and you know they are correct and that creates self-confidence for people while they are speaking English."	November 9, 2018
Participant 2	"I think if they understand at least 80% of what they are talking about, that will give you confidence because you will feel like, 'whoa, I understand everything.' So, without even reading subtitles I can understand that content of what they are talking about. If they understand that will create self-confidence."	November 16, 2018
Participant 3	"Sometimes when I see people laughing and I haven't gotten the joke and I don't understand, it makes me less confident that I cannot understand the message they are trying to transmit." "When I can understand, and it makes me laugh and it makes sense for me and it's more interesting, it makes me feel like I am ready to watch other films and gives me self-confidence."	November 5, 2018

Table 12

Reported Ways TBBT Could Affect Self-Confidence in the Learning Environment (continued)

Participant	Quote	Personal Communication Date
Participant 4	"It makes you more self-confident because of the way they talk and think. They are so different and they're all right and friends. It's not just one was right. This can help you get self-confidence, just to know that you can be accepted, too, without perfect English."	November 6, 2018
Participant 5	"It's a funny show. It could lead to fun discussion. It could actually be used as an icebreaker at the beginning of the class. If you played it and then asked people what they thought about it. It would be funny. If the class is talking together, you feel more part of the group. That gives you confidence."	November 12, 2018
Participant 6	"The culture is very relaxed on the show and they're very active and I think the mutual communication is better. And everyone is willing to share. They would feel less pressure. Maybe more confident to be active in class."	November 12, 2018
Participant 7	"It could influence self-confidence positively if it's something like a social activity that the actors are doing and I am somehow invited to do a similar thing. This will impact confidence in the class positively as I will be able to participate and get up and do something."	November 13, 2018
Participant 8	"If the content of the video is somehow disturbing or confusing and I don't really understand what's going on, it might make me refrain from participating in any activity related to the video. It depends on the content." "Yes, it would influence their self-confidence. I think that if it's a teaching material, the students who watched it could find it easy to accept the material because it doesn't take a lot of effort to understand what they are saying, unlike other films. It doesn't require specific knowledge. Everyone feels confident because they can understand. It's very light and funnier than normal day in class."	November 14, 2018

Table 12

Reported Ways TBBT Could Affect Self-Confidence in the Learning Environment (continued)

Participant	Quote	Personal Communication Date
Participant 9	"I think it could work because it's not really the typical person. Everybody in the series are different and has different quirks and everybody likes them. And you can learn that everyone is different but that everybody has value. And that you can learn from each other."	November 14, 2018
Participant 10	"If you are a person who loves to overcome challenges, I think this could be something that makes you confident. But I think it's not that simple. It depends on your character. If you're somebody who always loves being challenged and overcoming things and achieving things, this may be interesting. But for the general public, I think this choice needs to be deliberate."	November 15, 2018
Participant 11	"I think it can help students to feel more secure because it's difficult series to understand. If they understand the native English, they would feel very confident."	November 15, 2018
Participant 12	"From the clips that I watched, it seemed like some of the characters are smart people or more nerdy people and some have lower knowledge. So, just showing the attraction they have with each other, I think it could help in a way that makes you confident. You don't need to know everything. You're there to learn."	November 21, 2018

Ways TBBT could positively affect self-confidence. Several themes began to emerge about how *TBBT* could positively affect self-confidence in the learning environment. Participants discussed the following ways in which *TBBT* could positively affect self-confidence: (a) exposure to authentic language could increase self-confidence, (b) being able to understand complex language could increase self-confidence, (c) actively engaging students in classroom activities centered around *TBBT* could increase self-confidence, and (d) showing a range of

different but accepted personality types could increase self-confidence. All of these themes will be presented in sections below.

The first theme to emerge about how *TBBT* could positively affect self-confidence relates to exposure to authentic language. Participant 1 (personal communication, November 9, 2018) for example, discussed the idea that he would be able to learn phrases such as slang expressions through *TBBT*. In turn, he could then use these words and expressions with confidence because he would know they were correct. In his own words, Participant 1 (personal communication, November 9, 2018) stated, "Listening to an authentic conversation between native speaker creates self-confidence because you start using the phrases and slang words they use, and you know they are correct and that creates self-confidence for people while they are speaking English." As discussed above, the theme of authentic materials reducing students' affective factors has been noted by other researchers such as Tamo (2009) and Li (2017). This theme, however, indicates that the benefits of authentic materials noted by other authors also apply to *TBBT*, which had not yet been demonstrated in an EAP context.

The second positive theme to emerge relates to the self-confidence students could gain if they are able to understand the complex language on *TBBT*. Participant 2, Participant 3, Participant 8, and Participant 11 all discussed this potential benefit to students' self-confidence in a positive light. Participant 2 (personal communication, November 16, 2018), for example, stated,

> I think if they understand at least 80% of what they are talking about, that will give you confidence because you will feel like, 'whoa, I understand everything.' So, without even reading subtitles I can understand that content of what they are talking about. If they understand, that will create self-confidence.

Participant 3 (personal communication, November 5, 2018) discussed the same effect, “When I can understand, and it makes me laugh and it makes sense for me and it’s more interesting, it makes me feel like I am ready to watch other films and gives me self-confidence.” Participant 8 (personal communication, November 11, 2018) stated the same idea in her own words:

> I think that if it's a teaching material, the students who watched it could find it easy to accept the material because it doesn’t take a lot of effort to understand what they are saying, unlike other films. It doesn’t require specific knowledge. Everyone feels confident because they can understand. It's very light and funnier than normal day in class.

Finally, Participant 11 (personal communication, November 15, 2018) succinctly discussed the same concept by saying, “I think it can help students to feel more secure because it’s difficult series to understand. If they understand the native English, they would feel very confident.”

This theme of students’ self-confidence being increased by showing them that they can understand the complex language on *TBBT* aligns with the affective element of second language self-confidence, as discussed by MacIntyre et al. (1998). This affective element relates to the fear or anxiety associated with communicating in the foreign language, which studies have shown can be reduced if students experience success in understanding and communicating in the second language (Clément, 1986; Edwards & Roger, 2015; MacIntyre et al., 1998). This theme suggests that *TBBT* could be used in at the research site to increase students’ second language self-confidence despite its inclusion of academic register words.

The third positive theme to emerge relates to how *TBBT* could be used to generate students’ active involvement in the language classroom in various ways. One idea presented by Participant 5 was that *TBBT* could be used to initiate an enjoyable and engaging class discussion

that could increase students' self-confidence. Participant 5 (personal communication, November 12, 2018) discussed this by saying,

> It's a funny show. It could lead to fun discussion. It could actually be used as an icebreaker at the beginning of the class. If you played it and then asked people what they thought about it, it would be funny. If the class is talking together, you feel more part of the group. That gives you confidence.

Another idea of how *TBBT* could increase active involvement and self-confidence in the classroom was presented by Participant 6. He discussed the relaxed atmosphere and open communication on the show and how these elements could have an influence on students in a language classroom. He said, "The culture is very relaxed on the show and they're very active and I think the mutual communication is better. And everyone is willing to share. They would feel less pressure. Maybe more confident to be active in class" (Participant 6, personal communication, November 12, 2018). One final idea, presented by Participant 7, was that self-confidence could be increased if students were invited to engage in activities they had just seen on *TBBT* in class. Participant 7 (personal communication, November 13, 2018) stated,

> It could influence self-confidence positively if it's something like a social activity that the actors are doing, and I am somehow invited to do a similar thing. This will impact confidence in the class positively as I will be able to participate and get up and do something.

As has been demonstrated by other studies, the self-confidence of ESL students can be increased by showing them that they are accepted into a group and are capable of successfully communicating with other members of the group (Edwards & Roger, 2015; Lee, 1994). Additionally, this theme suggests that engaging students actively in activities can increase their

self-confidence, aligning with one of the core communicative language teaching principles of developing language through meaningful and communicative activities (Gillett, 2011; Karimkhanlui, 2005; Khan et al., 2016). As will be discussed in the motivation section below, this theme also aligns with ideas of integrative motivation, or a learner's desire to become part of a target language community (Gardner, 1985).

The final theme to emerge about how *TBBT* could positively affect self-confidence relates to the variety of personality types featured on the show. Participant 4, Participant 9, and Participant 12 all discussed how seeing such diverse characters who were all accepted on the show could positively influence students' self-confidence in a language learning environment. Participant 4 (personal communication, November 6, 2018), for example, stated,

> It makes you more self-confident because of the way they talk and think. They are so different, and they're all right and friends. It's not just one was right. This can help you get self-confidence, just to know that you can be accepted, too, without perfect English.

In a similar sense, Participant 9 (personal communication, November 14, 2018) discussed a potential increase of students' self-confidence by stating, "Everybody in the series are different and has different quirks and everybody likes them. And you can learn that everyone is different but that everybody has value. And that you can learn from each other." Similarly, Participant 12 (personal communication, November 21, 2018) stated,

> From the clips that I watched, it seemed like some of the characters are smart people or more nerdy people and some have lower knowledge. So, just showing the attraction they have with each other, I think it could help in a way that makes you confident. You don't need to know everything. You're there to learn.

This theme of self-confidence being increased by showing students that different personality types and communication styles are accepted could be quite significant. Little research could be found in an EAP context to align with this theme, though it does generally match findings by Lee (1994) that global self-confidence can be increased over time through successful interactions with and acceptance by others in a language community. By showing that characters on *TBBT* are all accepted and communicating successfully despite their differences, this could lead to ESL students feeling greater confidence in the likelihood of their own acceptance by a target language community (Gardner, 1985).

Negative effects on self-confidence with TBBT. In addition to the themes that emerged pertaining to how TBBT could potentially increase students' self-confidence, an additional theme emerged about how the show could adversely affect self-confidence in the learning environment. This theme is presented below along with an analysis. The teaching implications will be presented in Chapter 5.

The only theme to emerge pertaining to how *TBBT* could negatively affect self-confidence in a language learning environment pertains to the possibility that students might not understand the complex or rapid language of the show. As Participant 3, Participant 7, and Participant 10 discussed, this inability to understand could, in turn, adversely affect students' self-confidence. Participant 3 (personal communication, November 3, 2018), for example, stated, "Sometimes when I see people laughing and I haven't gotten the joke and I don't understand, it makes me less confident that I cannot understand the message they are trying to transmit." Similarly, Participant 7 (personal communication, November 15, 2018) suggested that *TBBT* might negatively affect self-confidence, stating, "If the content of the video is somehow disturbing or confusing and I don't really understand what's going on, it might make me refrain

from participating in any activity related to the video. It depends on the content." Finally, Participant 10 implied that the humor on *TBBT* was very difficult to understand, and only students who enjoyed an extremely difficult challenge would enjoy it. In his own words, which do not capture the sarcastic tone with which he made the statement, he said,

> If you are a person who loves to overcome challenges, I think this could be something interesting. But I think it's not that simple. It depends on your character. If you're somebody who always loves being challenged and overcoming things and achieving things, this may be interesting. But for the general public, I think this choice needs to be deliberate. (Participant 10, personal communication, November 15, 2018)

This theme of students experiencing a reduction in self-confidence due to the rapid speed of dialog or unfamiliar words on *TBBT* aligns with the affective element of second language learning anxiety (MacIntyre et al., 1998). This theme also aligns with Krashen's (1982) assertion that language educators should expose students to comprehensible input in a low filter environment. If the speed of dialog or content make the material too difficult, the input is not comprehensible and would thus fail to be absorbed. Failing to understand input, in turn, could lead to increased foreign language learning anxiety, as discussed by Horwitz (2016). As discussed by Tamo (2009), authentic materials "may contain too many mixed structures for lower levels" (p. 75), potentially rendering them unsuitable for use with lower-level students. This theme suggests that excerpts of *TBBT* used in the EAP classroom should either be carefully selected or introduced thoroughly to ensure alignment with students' current ability levels in the EAP classroom, as discussed by Tamo (2009).

Research Question RQ3. The third research question to be addressed was: How did *TBBT* contribute to the motivation of adult ESL students in an EAP program? Questions 10, 13,

and 17 on the interview guide were developed to address RQ3. The responses from all participants to these four interview guide questions are presented and analyzed in this section to thoroughly answer RQ3.

When asked to describe motivation in the learning environment, participants provided a broad range of understandings of the concept. Table 13 provides an overview of the paraphrased definitions of motivation provided by participants during interviews and on interview guides. The emergent themes are then outlined below.

Table 13

Paraphrased Definitions of Motivation from Interview and Interview Guide Responses

Participant	Paraphrased definitions of motivation from interview and interview guide responses
Participant 1	Feeling to pursue a goal Willingness to practice and improve your English
Participant 2	Wanting to get a prize When you feel encouraged
Participant 3	Comfort and relationship with teacher Feeling of happiness
Participant 4	A desire to improve Interest in learning and studying
Participant 5	A desire to get better at English
Participant 6	Interest in understanding the culture and people better Interest in changing your situation (getting a job)
Participant 7	Looking forward to going to class More interest in the subject

Table 13

Paraphrased Definitions of Motivation from Interview and Interview Guide Responses (continued)

Participant	Paraphrased definitions of motivation from interview and interview guide responses
Participant 8	Wanting to learn more about the foreign language and culture Your reason for doing something
Participant 9	Interest in understanding others better Desire to get a job
Participant 10	Desire to go the extra mile
Participant 11	A need to learn due to life circumstances (need to study, relocation to another country)
Participant 12	A goal Interest in learning or doing something

In general, participants described either a need or interest in pursuing a goal or a desire to improve or learn. Participant 1 described motivation as "a feeling that people have to pursue any goal. In the English environment, is to be willing to continue studying and participating to reach the goal of making their English perfect" (Participant 1, personal communication, November 9, 2018). This description reflects both of the main emergent themes of learning English to achieve a secondary goal, and the theme of learning out of an interest in learning. This description of motivation was common for several other participants in this study.

For different participants, however, motivation for learning English was expressed as a goal to get a better job (Participant 9) or to get better grades (Participant 4), which aligns with Gardner's (1985) definition of instrumental motivation as a desire to learn in order to achieve a secondary goal such as to make more money or receive a promotion. Participant 6 described motivation in terms of wanting to feel less isolated in a new country, which aligns with

Gardner's (1985) definition of integrative motivation as a learner's desire to become part of a target language community. Participant 5 (personal communication, November 12, 2018) described motivation by saying, "Progress is motivating. So, motivation comes from your success." This description of motivation aligns well with Ghani and Azhar's (2017) definition of resultative motivation as being influenced positively or negatively by a learner's past success or failure. Some participants' views of motivation as a desire to improve their English skills for the sake of improving align well with Gardner's (2007) definition of foreign language learning motivation as a student's desire to learn a foreign language for various reasons. Participant 3 (personal communication, November 5, 2018), for example, stated,

> First, the objective is to learn English. So, after class, you will be speaking better than before you learn something that you can actually use. When you see progress and you can communicate better in writing and speaking, then you are motivated.

The divergent descriptions of motivation provided by the participants in this study align with trends in thinking within the field of ESL education that motivation is "a complex dynamic system that is constantly in flux and different for all individuals" (Green, 2016, p. 70). It is arguable that regardless of the definition of motivation, as long as students are stating that they feel motivated in whatever way that means for them, it is not of primary importance to solidify a unifying definition of the term for the purposes of this study.

Participants were also asked to explain which instructional practices, activities, and materials created motivation for them in the learning environment. Table 14 is an overview of the responses provided by participants on interview guides and during interviews:

Table 14

Instructional Practices, Activities, and Materials Reported to Create Motivation

Participant	Paraphrased instructional practices, activities, and materials reported to create motivation for participants
Participant 1	Describing events from videos, comic strips, and images Engagement and active participation in class Having a teacher who enjoys teaching
Participant 2	Receiving encouragement from the teacher Learning something that has value to her life Receiving helpful feedback
Participant 3	Having a friendly, comforting teacher Being able to overcome challenges with new materials or activities
Participant 4	When the activities have a purpose, you can understand Activities and lessons with a connection to real life Receiving encouragement from the teacher Feeling connected to the topic through authentic materials Topics with a personal connection or interest
Participant 5	When progress in class builds on itself Receiving encouragement from the teacher Receiving constructive, positive feedback
Participant 6	Humor in the classroom Creating cheat sheets for writing
Participant 7	When the teacher is approachable Classmates have a positive attitude Interesting materials and topics are used Topics with a cultural connection
Participant 8	Working with interesting materials and topics Topics that fit with her field of study Using authentic materials that seem real

Table 14

Instructional Practices, Activities, and Materials Reported to Create Motivation (continued)

Participant	Paraphrased instructional practices, activities, and materials reported to create motivation for participants
Participant 9	Conducting independent research Activities with a real-world and cultural connection
Participant 10	When materials are not too difficult When you can learn a real skill through the class, like cooking in English. Engaging in a topic of personal interest
Participant 11	Learning expressions really used by native speakers Being encouraged to speak in class Discussing current topics
Participant 12	Interesting topics with a personal connection Activities with a connection to daily life

From participants' responses to this question, there was little distinction made between instructional practices, activities, and materials that created self-confidence and those that created motivation in the learning environment. Because participants had already listed many activities that created self-confidence earlier in the interview, several simply said "what I mentioned before about self-confidence" (Participant 12, personal communication, November 21, 2018) to answer this question. Of note, however, were the following three themes: (a) activities and materials with a real-world connection created motivation, (b) personal connections with, or interest in topics created motivation; and (c) Having a positive teacher who provided constructive feedback created motivation.

First, the idea that activities and materials with a real-world connection create motivation was mentioned by nine of the 12 participants. Participant 2 (personal communication, November

16, 2018), for example, stated, “When I am learning something that I know will add value to my day-to-day activities, then I am motivated.” This theme aligns with the findings of several other researchers who have claimed that authentic materials can be used to bridge the artificial and formal classroom environment and the target language community (Li, 2017; Tamo, 2009; Wingate, 2015). Second, the idea that activities and materials with a personal connection create motivation was mentioned by 6 of the 12 participants. Participant 7 (personal communication, November 13, 2018), for example, stated, “When the instructor discusses something that is close to the area of my knowledge and my culture, this makes me more motivated and willing to participate and provide information about the subject.” This theme aligns with Harmer’s (2001) assertion that “our students’ motivation is far more likely to remain healthy if they are doing things they enjoy, and which they can see the point of” (p. 102). Third, the idea that having a positive teacher who provides constructive feedback creates motivation was mentioned by five of the 12 participants. Participant 4 (personal communication, November 6, 2018), for example, stated, “This is something really important for me personally. This is most important I needed that always be encouraged a little bit. Not all the time, but it makes me feel much better when you get kind words from a teacher.” This theme aligns with Huang and Hwang’s (2013) findings that a relaxed and supportive English learning environment helped reduce the language learning anxiety experienced by students.

Other participants mentioned that humor created motivation for them (Participant 6). As discussed above, various studies have reported that humor can lead to increased student motivation in various learning environments (Chiang et al., 2016; Garner, 2006; Philaretou, 2007; Stambor, 2006). Participants 1, 3, 5, and 9 mentioned that overcoming challenges, conducting original research, and being encouraged to leave their comfort zone created

motivation. These themes align with the core principles of communicative language teaching to create a safe environment in which students can explore and develop communicative competencies by engaging in guided but authentic language exploration (Gillett, 2011; Karimkhanlui, 2005; Khan et al., 2016). This wide range of potentially motivating activities and instructional practices further highlights the complexity and personal nature of motivation for individual students in the language classroom, which aligns with current perspectives that motivation is "a complex dynamic system that is constantly in flux and different for all individuals" (Green, 2016, p. 70). Still, the common theme of using materials or activities with a real-world connection in a positive and encouraging classroom environment seems to have motivational implications for the majority of participants in this study, which aligns with numerous previous studies on communicative language teaching and authentic materials (Gillett, 2011; Karimkhanlui, 2005; Khan et al., 2016; Li, 2017; Tamo, 2009; Wingate, 2015).

Once participants were asked to describe motivation in the learning environment, question 16 on the interview guide addressed RQ3: How did *TBBT* contribute to the motivation of adult ESL students in an EAP program? Participants were asked to respond to question 16 both during in-person interview sessions and in writing by completing the interview guide. Direct quotes from participants' responses to these questions are presented in Table 15 below.

Table 15

Reported Ways TBBT could Affect Motivation in an ESL/EAP Learning Environment

Participant	Quote	Personal Communication Date
Participant 1	"Well, when you start understanding and enriching your vocabulary, for sure that will motivate you." "It will create a different environment in the class. It's	November 9, 2018

Table 15

Reported Ways TBBT could Affect Motivation in an ESL/EAP Learning Environment

(continued)

Participant	Quote	Personal Communication Date
	not just speaking and writing, it creates a new environment because people maybe this is a activity that people will like. To discuss the videos. For me this would motivate me."	
Participant 2	"I think the people in that series have different personalities, but they are very smart people and they are also very funny. So, that is motivating. Like, you can be smart, but you can also be funny and not be boring when you speak. I think when they make you laugh about their ideas and that is funny and it's the mix of personalities being very diverse in a normal environment. That is motivating me. I like that. I think it brings a lot of motivation especially since some of the characters come from other countries that can also make a difference and motivate people."	November 16, 2018
Participant 3	"When I feel that I could understand, I see that my English is improving in class and day by day situations I was more exposed to English it gives me more motivation. Motivation when I speak and communicate better and understand better, when I go for a meeting or when I am presenting, when I cannot interrupt my speech to think about my word, these kind of things motivate me. When I see progress in my daily experience."	November 5, 2018
Participant 4	"Definitely can motivate you a little more if it's about a serious topic in general and just demonstrate it in a funny way." "And they always take a chalkboard to show things and you see that very often in the show and they are kind of teaching each other things on the whiteboard. They can think together about how things work and how to explain things and I think this is motivating for student because it's a possibility or opportunity to see things differently and that you could do it that way as well."	November 6, 2018

Table 15

Reported Ways TBBT could Affect Motivation in an ESL/EAP Learning Environment

(continued)

Participant	Quote	Personal Communication Date
Participant 5	"To challenge yourself to understand the context and to find out new words. Like the first video, it was really hard for me to understand some of the words, but I just added context and put them together. It was really funny to me. I knew what they were trying to talk about, I didn't know the name of the scientist, but I understood the context of what they were trying to do. And I know that other people wouldn't know her name either, so it didn't bring me any anxiety to not know."	November 12, 2018
Participant 6	"It's interesting. That will motivate people who want to participate in groups activities to share and be willing to share and copy the sentence or try to understand the sense of humor and humor other people and to make other people feel laughing and happy."	November 12, 2018
Participant 7	"I would think it positively impacts motivation. It's very funny, and I think they are talking about really deep topics in a funny way." "The show talks about what everyone is doing normally, so there should be some sort of link between the show and the life of the student. So, I think it will create some kind of link between what is introduced in the class and my life, which is somehow helpful and makes me motivated to learn." "As I mentioned before, when the content would be confusing for me to comprehend. Other than that, it's all positive."	November 13, 2018
Participant 8	"I think it would increase motivation because if you learn from a material that you find fun and with not too much effort, then people will not give up easily. It helps to motivate." "If they can understand what they're saying in the clip, then they want to learn more and watch more."	November 14, 2018

Table 15

Reported Ways TBBT could Affect Motivation in an ESL/EAP Learning Environment

(continued)

Participant	Quote	Personal Communication Date
Participant 9	"I think it would motivate because it's funny, and you would want to watch the next episode, and every time you watch you will learn some new words."	November 14, 2018
Participant 10	"If you want to show the students a variety of real language, this can be a good example because often times, after work in a bar you get along with your colleagues, they use a lot of sense of humor and laugh loud and make jokes and I think it's something you will really have to face. You cannot run away from it. It's a reality that you have to deal with anyhow. So, I think if there's a way you can master this comedy and the sense of humor then you can produce the same kind of humor. If that works, that would be good." "But I've never seen that kind of programming. Sense of humor is very unique and a difficult subject to handle. If there can be a way as a native to speaker to teach sense of humor in language, that would be a powerful weapon for your language acquisition. Because in western culture, the sense of humor is very important. In Asian culture, its ok, but in western culture it is way more important. Mastering a sense of humor is a dream area. I can communicate and make jokes but there is a certain level of humor beyond the clouds. It's difficult to reach for me as a non-native speaker."	November 15, 2018
Participant 11	"Motivation to try to learn some expressions, from like daily expressions that young people use. It motivates you to learn new language and some new vocabulary to be able to express yourself in a casual environment."	November 15, 2018
Participant 12	"So, mostly about the friendships. So, creating some relationships shows some social act. It shows them [students] how they could do a better job in socializing. This is the main point of language. Learning about socializing in the new language would be motivating."	November 21, 2018

Participants' responses revealed various themes relating to how *TBBT* could affect students' motivation in a language learning environment, both positively and negatively. The seven emergent themes are presented in their own sections below. These themes are presented along with an analysis of each theme.

Positive effects on motivation with TBBT. The six emergent themes of how *TBBT* could affect motivation positively include the following: (a) learning new and challenging vocabulary creates motivation; (b) learning about the American sense of humor creates motivation; (c) *TBBT* offers a different or fun way to teach content, creating motivation; (d) a connection between the classroom and real life/social life increases motivation; (e) exposure to different but accepted personalities increases motivation; and (f) understanding complex language increases motivation. These themes are detailed in the following six subsections.

The first theme to emerge about how *TBBT* could affect motivation positively pertains to learning new and challenging vocabulary in the language classroom. Participant 1, for example, discussed how learning new vocabulary creates motivation for him. In his own words, he stated, "When you start understanding and enriching your vocabulary, for sure that will motivate you" (Participant 1, personal communication, November 9, 2018). This idea was also mentioned by Participant 5, who stated that she enjoyed having to use context clues to understand the unfamiliar vocabulary she encountered while watching the show during observation sessions. She stated,

> It was really hard for me to understand some of the words, but I just added context and put them together. It was really funny to me. I knew what they were trying to talk about, I didn't know the name of the scientist, but I understood the context of what they were

> trying to do. And I know that other people wouldn't know her name either, so it didn't bring me any anxiety to not know. (Participant 5, personal communication, November 12, 2018)

Participant 11 also discussed the idea that learning new vocabulary and expressions through *TBBT* could potentially be motivating. In her own words, she stated that the show would give her "motivation to try to learn some expressions, from like daily expressions that young people use. It motivates you to learn new language and some new vocabulary to be able to express yourself in a casual environment" (Participant 11, personal communication, November 21, 2018).

This theme of students' motivation being increased by learning useful new vocabulary on *TBBT* aligns with Harmer's (2001) statement that "our students' motivation is far more likely to remain healthy if they are doing things they enjoy, and which they can see the point of" (p. 102). This theme also aligns with and suggests that previous researchers' findings that authentic materials can help improve vocabulary acquisition and improve motivation (Benavent & Sanchez-Reyes Penamaria, 2011; Wingate, 2015). This reported increase in participants' motivation could also be a result of targeting the communication needs of EAP students beyond the classroom setting, as is advocated by communicative approaches (Gillett, 2011; Karimkhanlui, 2005; Khan et al., 2016).

The second theme to emerge about how *TBBT* could affect motivation positively pertains to learning about the American sense of humor. Participant 10, who had a noticeably negative reaction to viewing *TBBT* during the observation sessions, discussed how learning about the American sense of humor could be personally motivating, if not a daunting task for him. In his own words, he stated,

> Sense of humor is very unique and a difficult subject to handle. If there can be a way as a native to speaker to teach sense of humor in language, that would be a powerful weapon for your language acquisition. Because in western culture, the sense of humor is very important. In Asian culture, it's ok, but in western culture it is way more important. Mastering a sense of humor is a dream area. I can communicate and make jokes but there is a certain level of humor beyond the clouds. It's difficult to reach for me as a non-native speaker. (Participant 10, personal communication, November 15, 2018)

Participant 10 discussed the unavoidability and importance of humor and small talk in his new job in the Southwest region of the United States. He mentioned how motivated he would be to learn more about the American sense of humor and how *TBBT* could be instrumental in helping a language teacher expose ESL students to American humor. This theme will be discussed further in the Connection Between the Classroom and Real Life/Social Life Increases Motivation section.

This theme aligns with studies that have focused on students with integrative motivation, or a students' interest in becoming part of a foreign language community (Gardner, 1985). Long espoused as a benefit of authentic materials (Li, 2017; Tamo, 2009; Wingate, 2015), exposure to real discourse that could be used by students in the target language community can be motivating. Further, as noted by Rucynski (2017) sitcoms "not only offer a glimpse into daily life in the English-speaking world, but also provide valuable clues into how humor is used and what people find funny in the respective culture" (p. xiii). This theme suggests that the authentic and humorous aspects of *TBBT* could be used to increase students' motivation, even in an EAP learning context.

The third theme to emerge about how *TBBT* could affect motivation positively pertains to it offering a different or fun way to teach target content in the language classroom. This theme encompassed several ideas from various participants, which will be presented in this section. Several participants, for example, discussed how *TBBT* could be used to present content in a light or fun way. Participant 1 (personal communication, November 9, 2018), for example, stated, "It will create a different environment in the class. It's not just speaking and writing … To discuss the videos. For me this would motivate me." Slightly differently, Participant 4 (personal communication, November 6, 2018) stated *TBBT* "definitely can motivate you a little more if it's about a serious topic in general and just demonstrate it in a funny way." Participant 7 (personal communication, November 13, 2018), too, stated, "I would think it positively impacts motivation. It's very funny, and I think they are talking about really deep topics in a funny way." Lastly, Participant 8 (personal communication, November 14, 2018) mentioned, "I think it would increase motivation because if you learn from a material that you find fun and with not too much effort, then people will not give up easily. It helps to motivate."

Several other participants discussed how the humorous aspect of the show would motivate students to want to engage with the material or with the class, thus leading to exposure to new words and learning. Participant 9 (personal communication, November 14, 2018), for example, mentioned, "I think it would motivate because it's funny, and you would want to watch the next episode, and every time you watch you will learn some new words." Participant 6 (personal communication, November 12, 2018) also stated,

> It's interesting. That will motivate people who want to participate in groups activities to share and be willing to share and copy the sentence or try to understand the sense of humor and humor other people and to make other people feel laughing and happy.

Finally, Participant 4, who was very familiar with *TBBT* before participating in this study, discussed the idea that the premise of the show and its situations could provide an opportunity for students to be motivated and to learn. She described,

> They always take a chalkboard to show things and you see that very often in the show and they are kind of teaching each other things on the whiteboard. They can think together about how things work and how to explain things, and I think this is motivating for student because it's a possibility or opportunity to see things differently and that you could do it that way as well. (Participant 4, personal communication, November 6, 2018).

Participant 4 went on to describe how the academic elements of the show could help expose EAP students to academic topics and vocabulary in a funny and social way.

This theme of TBBT providing a fun and different way of learning in an EAP context aligns with elements of Zabidin's notion that amusement "derives from the unexpected or surprise that contradicts with past experience, cognitive frameworks and expectations" (p. 105). It is likely that students' motivation is being increased in this way due to the unexpectedness of seeing *TBBT* in an otherwise serious EAP learning context. As discussed previously, such unexpected or incongruent elements have been shown to release dopamine in the brain (Baudonnat et al., 2013) and improved learning in an ESL context (Wong et al., 2012; Wong et al., 2013). This theme helps reveal a significant way in which *TBBT* could positively contribute to the affective factor of motivation for students in an EAP context.

The fourth theme to emerge about how *TBBT* could affect motivation positively pertains to the connection the show might offer between students' lives both inside and outside the language classroom. Several participants discussed ways in which *TBBT* could motivate them by showing real language used in real situations outside the classroom or by focusing on social

situations the students actually encounter outside the learning environment. Participant 7 (personal communication, November 13, 2018), for example, stated,

> The show talks about what everyone is doing normally, so there should be some sort of link between the show and the life of the student. So, I think it will create some kind of link between what is introduced in the class and my life, which is somehow helpful and makes me motivated to learn.

Similarly, Participant 11 (personal communication, November 21, 2018) mentioned that *TBBT* would give him "motivation to try to learn some expressions, from like daily expressions that young people use. It motivates you to learn new language and some new vocabulary to be able to express yourself in a casual environment."

Participant 10 also discussed that the perceived authenticity and humor of the show's language would motivate him because he needs this type of language in his life. He stated,

> If you want to show the students a variety of real language, this can be a good example because often times, after work in a bar you get along with your colleagues, they use a lot of sense of humor and laugh loud and make jokes and I think it's something you will really have to face. You cannot run away from it. It's a reality that you have to deal with anyhow. So, I think if there's a way you can master this comedy and the sense of humor then you can produce the same kind of humor. If that works, that would be good. (Participant 10, personal communication, November 15, 2018)

Finally, Participant 12 also discussed the social aspect of *TBBT* and how this focus could be motivating to students. When discussing how the friendships on the show could be motivating, he stated, "So, creating some relationships shows some social act. It shows them [students] how they could do a better job in socializing. This is the main point of language. Learning about

socializing in the new language would be motivating" (Participant 12, personal communication, November 21, 2018).

This theme aligns with the benefits of authentic materials discussed by Tamo (2009) as well as the increase in motivation associated with the increased connection to the real world offered by other authentic materials (Benavent & Sanchez-Reyes Penamaria, 2011; Ghanbari et al., 2015; Karimi & Dolatabadi, 2014; Marzban & Davaji, 2015). This theme suggests that *TBBT* has motivational potential due to the connections students feel with the real world while watching it. This theme also aligns with the findings of other studies that have discussed the benefits of authentic materials specific to an EAP context (Deane & O'Neill, 2011; Dudley-Evans, 2001; Gillett, 2011; Li, 2017; Wingate, 2015).

The fifth theme to emerge about how *TBBT* could affect motivation positively pertains to students' exposure to different but accepted personalities and communication styles on the show. Similar to participants' statements about how exposure to different personality types on the show could increase their self-confidence in the learning environment, participants also discussed this in regard to motivation. Participant 2, for example, discussed how characters on the show who were from different countries, such as Raj, could help motivate ESL students by showing them that they could be successful as foreigners. In her own words, Participant 2 (personal communication, November 16, 2018) stated,

> I think the people in that series have different personalities, but they are very smart people and they are also very funny. So, that is motivating. Like, you can be smart, but you can also be funny and not be boring when you speak. I think when they make you laugh about their ideas and that is funny and it's the mix of personalities being very diverse in a normal environment. That is motivating me. I like that. I think it brings a lot

> of motivation especially since some of the characters come from other countries that can also make a difference and motivate people.

As stated by Tamo (2009), authentic materials have been shown to help reduce students' anxiety and increase their motivation by exposing them to different communication styles. Further, exposure to different genres through authentic materials in an ESL context has also been shown previously to decrease anxiety and increase motivation (Benavent & Sanchez-Reyes Penamaria, 2011). Unlike previous studies, this theme demonstrates how *TBBT* could be used in an EAP context to increase motivation by exposing students to different but accepted personalities.

The final theme to emerge about how *TBBT* could affect motivation positively pertains to an increase in motivation if students are shown that they are able to understand the complex language used on the show. This aspect was mentioned by Participant 3, Participant 5, and Participant 8, and is similar to what was discussed previously in terms of understanding complex language and an increase in self-confidence. Participant 3 (personal communication, November 5, 2018), for example, stated,

> When I feel that I could understand, I see that my English is improving in class and day by day situations I was more exposed to English it gives me more motivation. Motivation when I speak and communicate better and understand better, when I go for a meeting or when I am presenting, when I cannot interrupt my speech to think about my word, these kind of things motivate me. When I see progress in my daily experience.

He went on to discuss how watching *TBBT* could increase his motivation by showing him that his understanding of authentic communication between native speakers was improving, which he, in turn, could apply to everyday situations in his own life.

This concept of students' motivation being increased by seeing that they can understand complex language was also discussed by Participant 5. She discussed that motivation would stem from challenging herself "to understand the context and to find out new words. Like the first video, it was really hard for me to understand some of the words, but I just added context and put them together" (Participant 5, personal communication, November 12, 2018). She discussed this situation in a positive way despite stating she could not understand everything that was said on the show. Finally, Participant 8 (personal communication, November 14, 2018) stated, "If they [students] can understand what they're saying in the clip, then they want to learn more and watch more.

This theme is similar to the theme of students' self-confidence being increased by showing them that they are able to understand the complex language on *TBBT.* As such, this theme, as it pertains to motivation, also aligns with the affective element of second language self-confidence, as discussed by MacIntyre et al. (1998). This affective element relates to the anxiety and fear of communicating in the foreign language, which studies have shown can be reduced if students experience success in understanding and communicating in the second language (Clément, 1986; Edwards & Roger, 2015; MacIntyre et al., 1998). This theme suggests that *TBBT* could be used to increase students' second language self-confidence while also increasing their motivation. Further, this theme aligns with Ghani and Azhar's (2017) discussion of resultative motivation that can be influenced positively or negatively by a learner's past success or failure. This theme suggests that students' resultative motivation can be increased by showing them that they can understand complex language on *TBBT*. Students' confidence and motivation could be increased when they encounter such struggles in the future due to prior successes in understanding *TBBT*, for example.

Negative effects on motivation with TBBT. Participants' responses to questions relating to how *TBBT* contributed to motivation in the learning environment also revealed one negative theme. This theme related to the ways in which the complex language on the show might decrease motivation in an EAP context. This theme is discussed in the next section and corresponds to responses previously discussed about complex language and its effect on anxiety and self-confidence.

In contrast to the positive themes to emerge about how *TBBT* could affect motivation positively for ESL students, one theme emerged about how the show could have a negative effect on motivation. Similar to participants' mentioning of how their self-confidence could be affected detrimentally by not understanding the complex language on the show, Participant 7 discussed this theme in terms of motivation. He stated that his motivation would be influenced negatively "when the content would be confusing for me to comprehend. Other than that, it's all positive" (Participant 7, personal communication, November 13, 2018). Even though this theme was only discussed by Participant 7, several other participants discussed this theme in regard to the other affective factors. The potentially negative affect such complex language could have on students' affective factors will be discussed in greater detail below.

As discussed with the other affective factors above, this theme of students experiencing a reduction in motivation by not understanding the complex language on *TBBT* aligns with the affective element of second language learning anxiety (MacIntyre et al., 1998). This affective element relates to the anxiety or fear of communicating in the foreign language, which studies have shown can be reduced if students experience success in understanding and communicating in the second language (Clément, 1986; Edwards & Roger, 2015; MacIntyre et al., 1998). This theme also aligns with Krashen's (1982) and Horwitz' (2016) assertion that language educators

should expose students to comprehensible input in a low filter environment or risk increasing students' foreign language learning anxiety. As discussed by Tamo (2009), authentic materials "may contain too many mixed structures for lower levels" (p. 75). This theme suggests that excerpts of *TBBT* used in the EAP classroom should either be selected or introduced carefully to ensure alignment with students' current ability levels in the EAP classroom (Tamo, 2009).

Participants' general perceptions of TBBT. Before participants were asked to describe specific ways in which *TBBT* contributed to their affective factors of anxiety, self-confidence, and motivation, they were asked to provide their general perception of the show. Based on triangulated data from all sources of interview guides, interviews, and observations, most participants responded positively to viewing *TBBT*. The following table provides an overview of selected quotes taken from all 12 participants. These quotes are meant to reflect the general sense of each participant's response.

Table 16

Direct Quotes Illustrating the General Perception of TBBT by all Participants

Participant	Quote	Personal Communication Date
Participant 1	"First, I liked the humor, which was good." "Second, I can find different words and it's in a day-to-day environment which give you the opportunity to listen to a situation that is native English and you notice the behavior and the words they use."	November 9, 2018
Participant 2	"It was interesting. So, Pictionary is so funny because everybody has a different perception about the word. It's interesting to see how people see things differently." "It's funny, it's always funny."	November 16, 2018

Table 16

Direct Quotes Illustrating the General Perception of TBBT by all Participants (continued)

Participant	Quote	Personal Communication Date
	"They are very smart guys and the girls feel differently and I like that because they combine a lot of different personalities and get a lot together."	
Participant 3	"I like the way people think and it's totally different. So, one simplifies things and the other tries to have so many things on the mind and tries to express it but to transmit the message that is much more difficult. The funny thing is that we see this in normal life."	November 5, 2018
Participant 4	"I don't really know the show, I liked the humor and that they kind of themselves in the show but in an ironic way."	November 6, 2018
Participant 5	"Humor, I like how they bring brains to it. I like how it's a lot of humor and it lets me be out there, out of my box. It made me laugh."	November 12, 2018
Participant 6	"It was interesting, and their ways of thinking is so different. The man makes the simple thing more complicated and he thinks he express himself well but no one in the real world can understand him. And the women think about things so differently and they get things easier." "It's very relaxing like in daily life and the persons are very open and direct and friendly. You can tell by their expression that they have been friends for a long time, how they tease each other and play with each other and they're even arguing and discussion but on a good basis. I liked it. It was warm and open and simple."	November 12, 2018
Participant 7	"I was interested in watching and following up on what was going on and looking forward to what's going to happen next."	November 13, 2018

Table 16

Direct Quotes Illustrating the General Perception of TBBT by all Participants (continued)

Participant	Quote	Personal Communication Date
	"Yes, it's a very popular show and I like it. For this experiment we are doing I think it's a very nice show and I was happy to see it."	
Participant 8	"It was easy to understand. The funny parts, and the humor come very naturally." "I think that each person has different personalities in the show and also that there may be people in real life who are like these characters and that's very funny."	November 14, 2018
Participant 9	"It was funny, and I was amused. I liked the humor between Sheldon and Leonard and all the actors together. And Penny. They are crazy together."	November 14, 2018
Participant 10	"I think it will maximize anxiety for students. After the class you can give the script of the actors. The students get nothing much because the sense of humor for native people cannot be learned in a classroom, it cannot be educated." "I don't even know if this comedy is funny even among Americans. I would not recommend learning Korean through Korean comedy. It's very messy."	November 15, 2018
Participant 11	"Sometimes I miss some jokes. In general, I understand it pretty good and I get the material and its fun. Sometimes some of their conversations are like ok, next one."	November 15, 2018
Participant 12	"They were pretty funny."	November 21, 2018

When asked which aspects of *TBBT* participants liked, 11 of the 12 participants mentioned the humor of the show. Participant 5 (personal communication, November 12, 2018), for example, stated, "I like how it's a lot of humor and it's lets me be out there, out of my box. It

made me laugh." When compared to observation notes taken while participants watched selections of the show, it was also clear that 11 of the 12 participants laughed and seemed to enjoy the show by leaning closer to the TV, fixing their gaze on the screen, smiling, and appearing generally relaxed and comfortable. Numerous quotes from Table 16 demonstrate participants' appreciation of the humorous aspect on *TBBT*. Even Participant 9, who had the lowest level of English proficiency of all 12 participants, stated very clearly that she enjoyed the humor on the show. She mentioned, "It was funny, and I was amused. I liked the humor between Sheldon and Leonard and all the actors together. And Penny. They are crazy together" (Participant 9, personal communication, November 14, 2018). This response was slightly unexpected, as it was suspected that linguistic limitations might have prevented some of the less advanced participants from understanding and therefore enjoying some of the humor on the show. In contrast, it was found that nearly all the participants mentioned the humor of the show as something that they enjoyed.

This theme of participants responding positively to the humor of *TBBT* aligns with the findings of other researchers who have claimed that humor in education can decrease anxiety, tension and stress, improve self-confidence and morale, increase motivation, curiosity, and even perceived quality of life (Chiang et al., 2016; Garner, 2006; Philaretou, 2007; Stambor, 2006). Specifically, these findings align with those of Bell (2009) and Zabidin (2015), who both reported an increase in students' senses of enjoyment when humor was used in the ESL classroom. Rucynski (2017) also noted that movies and sitcoms as sources of humor in the ESL classroom "not only offer a glimpse into daily life in the English-speaking world, but also provide valuable clues into how humor is used and what people find funny in the respective culture" (p. xiii). These initial findings about participants' positive responses to the humor of

TBBT also align with Rucynski's (2017) claims that humor is a vital tool that ESL teachers can use to combat the seriousness, anxiety, and stress of the language classroom.

Another common theme among participants was that they reported enjoying the differences in personality types and communication styles among the characters of the show. Participant 2, Participant 3, Participant 6, and Participant 8 all mentioned this aspect in a positive way. Participant 8 (personal communication, November 14, 2018), for example, stated, "I think that each person has different personalities in the show and also that there may be people in real life who are like these characters and that's very funny." This theme aligns with Tamo's (2009) claim that a benefit of authentic materials is their ability to expose ESL students to various registers and communication styles. Participants also reported enjoying the connection between *TBBT* and real life, or day-to-day activities and situations. Participant 1 (personal communication, November 9, 2018), for example, explained, "I can find different words and it's in a day-to-day environment, which give you the opportunity to listen to a situation that is native English and you notice the behavior and the words they use." Participant 1, Participant 6, and Participant 8 all discussed enjoying the connection between *TBBT* and the real world beyond the language classroom. Both themes of students enjoying the connection with the real world and the different communication styles on *TBBT* align with Tamo's (2009) discussion of the benefits of using authentic materials in ESL teaching. Specifically, Tamo (2009) stated that the exposure to real discourse and language, the creation of a connection to the real world beyond the classroom, and the exposure to various styles and registers can all be benefits of authentic materials.

Of noticeable contrast to this general theme of positive reactions to *TBBT* was the reaction by Participant 10. He appeared to not respond to any of the jokes on the show with laughter or a smile during observation sessions. He also watched with a look of almost irritated

disbelief throughout the sessions. When asked if he liked the show, Participant 10 (personal communication, November 15, 2018) responded,

> I think it will maximize anxiety for students. After the class you can give the script of the actors. The students get nothing much because the sense of humor for native people cannot be learned in a classroom, it cannot be educated . . . I don't even know if this comedy is funny even among Americans. I would not recommend learning Korean through Korean comedy. It's very messy.

Participant 10's assertion that comedy is messy aligns with researchers' claims that humor can be extremely complex and nuanced for ESL speakers (Bell, 2009; Norrick, 2003). Additionally, this theme aligns with Csajbok-Twerefou's (2011) statements that humor can lead to misunderstandings if used in an ESL learning environment. Although other participants mentioned not getting all the jokes, or not being able to understand certain words (for example Participant 11), Participant 10 was the only participant who had a categorically negative reaction to *TBBT*. Regarding those participants, such as Participant 11, who stated that they did not understand everything but still enjoyed the humor of the show, this theme further aligns with Harmer's (2001) statement that "it is vital for students to get practice in dealing with writing and speech where they miss quite a few words but are still able to extract the general meaning" (p. 273). As will be discussed in the implications section of Chapter 5, provided students' affective filters are not increased due to a lack of understanding, exposing ESL students to content that is just beyond their ability level can be a useful teaching tool for the acquisition of a second language (Krashen, 1982; Vygotsky, 1978).

Unexpected Findings

In addition to the findings that helped answer the central research questions of this study, three additional themes emerged. These themes are: (a) cultural differences and instructional practices, (2) participants' perceptions of instruction at the research site, (c) what *TBBT* could be used to teach. In responses to the first seven questions included on the interview guide as well as to follow-up questions, these three themes emerged. Although these themes do not directly answer the central research questions of this study, they do help shed light on the ways in which EAP students might respond to *TBBT* in an EAP context.

Cultural differences and instructional practices. One theme that emerged was a reported difference in instructional practices in different countries. During the initial 7 questions on the interview guide, participants were asked to share their experiences in ESL and EAP contexts prior to the study. Participant 8, from China, had spent several years studying English in Canada and England before moving to the United States. She had a total of 14 years of ESL learning experience, including 10 years of ESL lessons in China. She discussed significant differences in instructional practices between China and the West. She stated that ESL lessons in China were based heavily on grammar analysis with very little opportunity for students to use English to communicate. She claimed that the approach to ESL teaching she was familiar with in China was good for preparing students for exams, but that it was not good at preparing students to communicate in English in authentic ways. These differences caused her to experience "culture shock" when she first began taking ESL classes in England (Participant 8, personal communication, November 14, 2018). She stated that ESL instruction in the West, in her experience, used many more authentic materials and focused more on communication than on grammar. Although she was unfamiliar and uncomfortable with such materials at first, asking

herself what the point was, she soon began to prefer the methods she was experiencing in England and other Western countries.

These cultural differences reported by Participant 8 were also shared by Participant 6 (from China) and Participant 10 (from Korea). Participant 6 discussed the heavy emphasis on comprehensive reading work, charts, data, accuracy of writing, textbook work, and exam preparation in English courses taught in China. Although he mentioned that he disliked courses that only focused on textbooks, he also suggested that Chinese students who are more familiar with ESL instruction in China, which he described as more teacher-centered and exam-oriented, might initially be uncomfortable with an ESL teaching approach using humor or authentic materials. In his own words, he stated, "If they only have fun in class, they will feel that it is a waste of their time. But maybe students from other countries would respond differently" (Participant 6, personal communication, November 12, 2018). Participant 10, from Korea, also expressed that he would struggle to see the point of a student-centric ESL teaching approach that used humor since his experience in Korea was that ESL classes were specifically for exam preparation and not for learning how to communicate.

Other cultural differences in instructional practices were voiced by the participants from Germany and Brazil. While the two participants from Germany, Participant 4 and Participant 9, discussed the teacher-centric and exam-oriented nature of the ESL instruction they experienced in Germany, the participants from Brazil seemed to have more experience with an ESL teaching approach that was less exam-oriented and that used more humor. The two participants from Brazil, Participant 3 and Participant 5, both discussed the relaxed atmosphere of ESL classes they had taken in Brazil. Participant 3 (Participant 3, personal communication, November 5, 2018) stated, "Humor is part of our culture, in English class and in life." These initial themes in

cultural differences in ESL teaching between countries suggest that students' cultural background should be taken into consideration when designing an approach or selecting materials for ESL teaching. This theme will be discussed at greater lengths in the implications section of Chapter 5.

This theme helps indicate how students from different cultures may respond to a humorous authentic material in an EAP context. As discussed by Csajbok-Twerefou (2011), humor can cause misunderstandings and offense for some students in an ESL context. In addition, authentic materials may be difficult to understand without a significant understanding of the target culture (Tamo, 2009). While aligning with these findings, this theme goes a step beyond by indicating the extent to which participants from specific cultures may feel comfortable with the general use of humor in an ESL or EAP context. These findings should be considered by ESL educators when including a material like *TBBT* in an EAP lesson.

Participants' perceptions of instruction at the research site. Other questions asked of participants during the initial 7 questions on the interview guide sought to understand participants' perception of instruction at the research site and their preferred methods of learning in an EAP environment. Responses to the question about participants' general perceptions of instruction at the research site revealed a wide range of insights. Several participants discussed the elements of lessons at the site, such as grammar exercises or comprehensive reading activities (to be discussed below), but few overtly discussed their feelings about their experiences at the site. Those who did, however, had mixed perceptions of instruction. Participant 4 (personal communication, November 6, 2018), for example, simply stated that instruction was "good," and that lessons were "ok at the school." This neutral sentiment was also shared by Participant 10 and Participant 12, who both described the program as being typical of their experience in ESL

and EAP classes elsewhere. Participant 10 (personal communication, November 15, 2018), for example, explained that instruction at the research site was “the typical program, focusing on writing and speaking.” Participant 12 (personal communication, November 21, 2018) also described how ESL instruction at the research site was structured “like a subject at school,” focusing on grammar and vocabulary, reading, writing, listening, and speaking. The only participant who voiced an overtly negative perception of instructional practices at the research site was Participant 9. She stated that lessons were “boring and horrible” (Participant 9, personal communication, November 14, 2018), though she offered little in way of concrete examples as to why she felt this way when asked to elaborate. Her lack of elaboration could have been due in part to her limited fluency in English, as she was the only participant in the study to have a proficiency level below B2.

In order to gauge students’ perception of instructional practices at the research site, it was important to look more closely at the types of instructional practices and activities they described as typical at the research site compared to the types of instructional practices and activities they said they preferred or that they felt had a positive influence on the affective factors of motivation, anxiety, and self-confidence. Table 17 provides an overview of instructional practices, activities, and materials participants reported that they had experienced at the research site compared to instructional practices, activities, and materials participants reported that they enjoyed.

Table 17

Comparison of ESL Activities Experienced and Preferred ESL Activities

Participant	Instructional practices, activities, and materials reportedly used at the research site	Preferred instructional practices, activities, and materials used in any ESL/EAP context
Participant 1	Discussions Grammar exercises Reading comprehension	Describing things and situations using pictures and comic strips Presentations with correction Interactive and fun activities
Participant 2	Exercises for grammar and vocabulary Pronunciation work Lots of tests Reading textbooks Homework	Interaction Presentations Projects
Participant 3	Parts of speech Writing Accent reduction Grammar	Interaction with teacher Discussions Demonstrations American accent training
Participant 4	Topic-based projects Presentations Group work Dictation	One-on-one learning Engagement with teacher Interactive activities
Participant 5	Texts Reading Answering questions	Culture-based projects about American culture American history activities Pronunciation work
Participant 6	Grammar Use of commas Proper way to write Pronunciation Sentence structure Comprehensive reading	Interaction with teacher Discussion about current topics Communication
Participant 7	Teacher lectures at blackboard Grammar explanations Listening exercises Group work Quizzes How to write	Interesting, unconventional materials Jokes and sarcastic explanations Group activities Interaction
Participant 8	Lots of grammar exercises Texts Oral practice	Culture-based lessons Activities about topics she likes Authentic materials Interactive dramas and plays

Table 17

Comparison of ESL Activities Experienced and Preferred ESL Activities (continued)

Participant	Instructional practices, activities, and materials reportedly used at the research site	Preferred instructional practices, activities, and materials used in any ESL/EAP context
Participant 9	Reading Vocabulary Tenses Reading aloud Filling in paperwork Vocabulary	Interactive lessons Funny topics Relevant subjects to her Communicating in groups
Participant 10	Reading Writing Listening Speaking	Communication with others about topics Speaking preferred over writing
Participant 11	Grammar Listening exercises Speaking in groups Tests	Learning idioms and expressions Variety with interaction Speaking practice Real sentences people use
Participant 12	Vocabulary Grammar	Research and presentations Projects Focus on content instead of language Spontaneous activities

From this comparative table, it can be noted that participants reported having experienced a wide range of activities and instructional practices at the research site. These activities and instructional practices can be broken down into the following categories: discussion and speaking, grammar exercises, reading exercises, vocabulary exercises, pronunciation and accent reduction, exams, textbook work, homework, writing, projects, presentations, group activities, dictation and listening activities, and lectures. The most frequently mentioned instructional practice experienced at the research institute was grammar exercises, with nine of the 12 participants mentioning grammar exercises as a common activity they experienced. Other types of activities that were mentioned frequently included reading exercises, writing exercises, and exams.

In contrast, the most frequently mentioned activity that participants reported as an instructional practice or activity they enjoyed was communicative interaction with either the teacher or other students. Interaction was mentioned by 10 of the 12 participants as being an English learning activity they enjoyed. Participants also mentioned enjoying discussions about current or interesting topics, learning about the American culture and expressions that are used by real Americans, making presentations, working on projects to learn English, or practicing English through describing images or putting on plays, for example. None of the 12 participants mentioned grammar of writing as their preferred activities in an ESL or EAP class, which were the most frequently mentioned activities participants experienced at the research site. This finding suggested a disconnect between current instructional practices at the research site and how students might prefer to learn.

Many of the participants' preferred instructional practices align with common communicative language teaching practices discussed by Richards and Rodgers (2001) and Wenzhong and Muchun (2015). These instructional practices include discussions about current or interesting topics, learning about the American culture and expressions that are used by real Americans, making presentations, working on projects to learn English, or practicing English through describing images or putting on plays. In contrast, many of the most commonly experienced instructional practices at the research site such as grammar exercises, reading exercises, vocabulary exercises, pronunciation and accent reduction work, exams, textbook work, homework, writing, dictation, listening activities, and lectures are not common practice in communicative approaches (Khan et al., 2016). Researchers have shown how such non-communicative teaching practices in ESL contexts can lead to increased affective filters and the perception among students that the language classroom is highly serious and stressful (Park,

2014; Nadeem, 2012). Although more investigation is needed to explore a causal relationship, it is this disconnect between preferred and actual instructional practices at the research site that could be contributing to the precipitous decline in enrollment (F. LeGrand, personal communication, February 19, 2018).

What TBBT could be used to teach. One of the last questions asked of participants during interview sessions was, "What do you think *TBBT* could be used to teach in an EAP class for adults?" This question generated various themes. Common themes to emerge included that *TBBT* could be used to teach the following things in an EAP context: vocabulary, grammar, listening comprehension, social skills, sense of humor, academic concepts, cultural differences, idioms, and different ways of communicating. Several of these themes will be presented in the sections below, following an overview of participants' responses in Table 18.

Table 18

How to Implement TBBT through Teaching in an EAP Context

Participant	How to use *TBBT* through teaching
Participant 1	Vocabulary Grammar Listening comprehension
Participant 2	Grammar Vocabulary
Participant 3	Everyday vocabulary Academic vocabulary Grammar Communicating with people
Participant 4	Different ways of communicating Academic concepts Academic vocabulary

Table 18

How to Implement TBBT through Teaching in an EAP Context (continued)

Participant	How to use *TBBT* through teaching
Participant 5	Vocabulary Sense of humor World history How to make small talk Could start discussions and break the ice in class Cultural differences
Participant 6	Verbal communication Could be used to break the barrier between teacher and student
Participant 7	Vocabulary Pronunciation of new words
Participant 8	Social skills Different communication styles
Participant 9	Ways of interacting Communication styles
Participant 10	Used to actively teach language
Participant 11	Vocabulary Expressions and idioms Modern usage of language
Participant 12	Social skills Language for everyday use

Teaching vocabulary and grammar with TBBT. The most common theme among all participants was that *TBBT* could be used to teach vocabulary and grammar in an EAP context. This theme aligns with those of Ghanbari et al. (2015) who reported that authentic materials had led to increased vocabulary learning for EAP students. Additionally, this theme aligns with other researchers who have discussed improved learning outcomes when humor was used in ESL

contexts (Wong et al., 2012; Wong et al., 2013). Participant 7 (personal communication, November 13, 2018), for example, said, “I think it would be very helpful in teaching new vocabulary. It also helpful for learning the pronunciation of words.” This theme of *TBBT* being used to teach vocabulary was mentioned directly by 8 different participants. In terms of grammar, Participant 1, Participant 2, and Participant 3 shared similar ideas. Participant 3 stated, (personal communication, November 5, 2018) stated,

> But something to bring to the class is the correct grammar. Sometimes grammar is hard to learn, but when the guy was making fun of the grammar, it was helpful. Sometimes when we watch film in my classes, there is nothing to link back to the class. I couldn’t see the connection. But this one I could see because of the grammar and the first film was more interesting, not because of the English but more about how to communicate with people.

Teaching social interactions with TBBT. Several other participants discussed how *TBBT* could be used to teach EAP students about the phrases and idioms they would need to engage with others in a modern social context. This theme aligns with those that take a progressive orientation in EAP education with “a desire to create a common body of knowledge that will enable the communication of citizens in the public sphere” (Bingham & Biesta, 2010, p. 377). This theme suggests how *TBBT* could be used to improve EAP students’ communicative competence, which is a central goal of communicative language teaching (Gillett, 2011; Karimkhanlui, 2005; Khan et al., 2016). Participant 11 (personal communication, November 15, 2018) said that *TBBT* could be useful in helping students learn “the way young people use the language.” Participant 12 also mentioned how *TBBT* could be used to teach expressions that ESL students could not learn from a textbook. He stated,

> I think that most of the topics in this kind of show they are kind of daily things that people talk about in their friend groups, so people could learn some English terms that they wanted to use or about the things that they wanted to talk about. Terms they could use, because they are talking about very daily stuff that you couldn't find in a textbook. (Participant 12, personal communication, November 21, 2018)

Participant 8 (personal communication, November 14, 2018) also discussed this theme of teaching social interaction through *TBBT*, stating,

> The show can teach you about how to be social with other people. Because the people in the clip are friends and they express themselves freely and don't need to be professional in their speech, so it could help the students learn how to express themselves freely.

Introducing academic concepts and cultural differences with TBBT. Other participants discussed how *TBBT* could be used to introduce academic concepts in an EAP context. Participant 5, for example, described a possible lesson in which *TBBT* could be shown to introduce an academic concept for a lesson. He stated, "So, if you came to class and watched Season 2, Episode 5 and then after you discussed the solar system or the names of the planets, whatever was in the episode that day. You could go into scientific topics" (Participant 5, personal communication, November 5, 2018). This idea was also mentioned by Participant 4 and Participant 8. Similarly, Participant 5 mentioned that *TBBT* could be used to introduce students to cultural differences between their counties and the United States. He stated,

> The show can teach about American culture or talk about the different kinds of police. The United States has a lot of kinds of police. Most other countries don't have this many. Like Brazil only has like two kinds of police. (Participant 5, personal communication, November 12, 2018)

This theme aligns with Green's (2016) recommendation to incorporate novel learning situations through the inclusion of humor in the ESL classroom. As discussed by Wong et al. (2012) and Wong et al. (2013), the inclusion of humor or novel teaching approaches can lead to improved learning outcomes for ESL students. This theme also highlights the benefits of authentic materials including their ability to offer connections to the real world beyond the classroom, both in students' social and academic lives (Benavent & Sanchez-Reyes Penamaria, 2011; Ghanbari et al., 2015; Karimi & Dolatabadi, 2014; Marzban & Davaji, 2015).

Removing the barrier between teacher and students and improving the classroom environment with TBBT. Of particular interest was the idea that *TBBT* could be used to help deconstruct the perceived barrier between the students and teacher in an EAP classroom. Participant 6, from China, explained how *TBBT* could be used to accomplish this goal. He stated that teachers could use *TBBT* to

> break the barrier between teacher and student. That would be helpful. In China, the teacher is the teacher you have to respect that boundary. There is not connection. But here, your teacher and you can develop trust and you can make a friend with this real human being who is just also your teacher. Because Chinese students believe in the leadership of the teacher and believe them to be like an idol who is always correct. But on the other hand, in their daily lives they don't need that. They want to get in close and intimate and more cordial and closer to you. Not always holding them in such high esteem. Not having to keep that sort of distance. (Participant 6, personal communication, November 12, 2018)

Participant 6 went on to discuss how TBBT could help create a relaxed environment in class, leading to more open communication between the teacher and students. This theme will be discussed at greater lengths below.

Similarly, Participant 5 discussed how *TBBT* could be used to improve the learning experience for students. She began by discussing her own learning experiences:

> Back in high school, I had a really bad time learning biology, and my teacher brought humor and music to class and things that open your mind up. So, if you get out of the textbook environment and you bring something new to student, you're going to get a better reception and feedback of what you're teaching, and you will have students be more interested in what you're teaching. People want something new. You have to keep innovating and progressing. So, if you start being more innovative and creative approaching them with different things, it works better. This is a new era. If you try to bring something you might as well bring something that will take people out of their comfort zone but not in an embarrassing way. So, watching movies using humor or anything that could make people open up. Getting my fears out not worrying about my fears, getting myself out of the box. (Participant 5, personal communication, November 12, 2018)

This theme of improving the learning environment with *TBBT* aligns with Krashen's (1982) statement that "the effective language teacher is someone who can provide input and help make it comprehensible in a low anxiety situation" (p. 32). Additionally, this theme aligns with Mingzheng's (2012) findings that humor in the ESL classroom resulted in students reporting "reduced anxiety/tension, improved relationship between teachers and students, and increased

levels of interest" (p. 406). This theme suggests how *TBBT* could be used to achieve the same results in an EAP context in the Southwest region of the United States.

Teaching differences in communication with TBBT. Finally, several participants discussed ways in which *TBBT* could be used to teach students about differences in communication. Similar to themes that emerged about how *TBBT* could increase self-confidence and motivation by showing students different ways of communicating, Participant 8 discussed this theme as a possible use for *TBBT*. She stated, "The four different characters express themselves in very different ways, and students could use that to find their own way to express themselves and being understood by the others" (Participant 8, personal communication, November 14, 2018). This idea was also discussed by Participant 3 and Participant 4. This theme aligns with Tamo's (2009) statement that the inclusion of different styles and registers in authentic materials can be of significant benefit to ESL students. This theme suggests that EAP educators should not fear the use of authentic materials due to their sophisticated language, randomness, complex grammatical forms, and challenging lexis, as reported by Taghavi and Aladini (2018). Instead, the inclusion of materials like *TBBT* could be both enjoyable and useful in teaching EAP students a variety of concepts.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the descriptions of all 12 participants in the study, a systematic presentation of all findings from interviews, observations, and interview guides, and an analysis of those findings. Organized by research question and emergent themes, findings from the central research question of how students experience *TBBT* in regard to the affective factors of anxiety, self-confidence, and motivation were thoroughly presented. Additionally, all unexpected findings were presented along with an analysis. Chapter 5 will deepen the analysis of the

findings presented in this chapter by detailing the implications of all findings as they relate to knowledge, policy, practice, and decision making in the field of EAP education. All findings are also summarized and presented in graphic form to serve as the theoretical framework for future research on the topic of *TBBT* in EAP education.

Chapter 5: Summary, Conclusions, Implications, and Suggestions for Future Research

This chapter provides a summary of the major findings, conclusions, interpretations, implications, suggestions for future research, and limitations and reflexivity for a qualitative, instrumental case study with the following central research question: How did *TBBT*, as a source of humorous authentic teaching material, contribute to the affective factors of anxiety, self-confidence, and motivation of adult ESL students in a postsecondary EAP program in the Southwestern region of the United States? The following section summarizes the major findings of this study before further analysis is provided in the conclusions, interpretations, and implications sections. Finally, a discussion of the limitations and reflexivity will be provided as well as suggestions for future research.

Summary and Major Findings

The problem leading to the need for this study included the fact that shifting demographics in the United States has led to a situation in which ESL students rank currently as the fastest growing group in American public schools (NCES, 2018), with the Southwest region consistently seeing some of the highest rates of ESL student enrollment (NCES, 2018). With national ESL student high school graduation rates lagging some 20 percentage points behind non-ESL students (NCES, 2015), there is a growing need to better understand and serve these ESL student populations at all levels. Postsecondary EAP education is not as regulated as K-12 ESL education, with the Education Commission of the States (2014) stating that Texas, the largest state in the research region of this study, has no federal or state level policies governing ESL education beyond Grade 12. As a result of this lack of regulation and comparative lack of research specific to the needs and experiences of adult ESL students, the nature of existing theories, practices, and policies being used in postsecondary EAP education has been described

as “chaotic” (Li, 2017, p. 497). Further, a recent report by the Modern Language Association indicated that 651 foreign-language programs offered by colleges in the United States closed between 2013 and 2016 (Johnson, 2019). Citing declining enrollment and economic pressures on universities and students as contributing factors for these closures, the problem is cause for national security concerns, as fewer programs are leaving American citizens with a decreased ability to communicate across languages in an increasingly globalized world (Johnson, 2019). Similar to the pressures on the 651 programs that have closed, the immediate problem warranting the need for this study was a precipitous decline in enrollment at a specific institute of adult ESL education in the Southwest region over the past decade (F. LeGrand, personal communication, February 19, 2018). Research suggested that this decline in enrollment was due in part to what Horwitz (2016) described as foreign language classroom anxiety, as a result of students perceiving the ESL learning environment as difficult and stressful (Park, 2014).

Citing the benefits other researchers have claimed about the use of authentic materials (Benavent & Sanchez-Reyes Penamaria, 2011; Tamo, 2009) and humor in ESL teaching (Chiang et al., 2016; Garner, 2006; Philaretou, 2007; Stambor, 2006), this study sought to understand if a particular source of humorous authentic materials might be beneficial in eventually helping to reverse the declining numbers at the research site. As a result, the purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine how a humorous authentic teaching material contributed to the affective factors of anxiety, self-confidence, and motivation of adult ESL students in a postsecondary EAP program in the Southwestern United States. The following theory-based central research question was explored in this study: How did *TBBT*, as a source of humorous authentic teaching material, contribute to the affective factors of anxiety, self-confidence, and motivation of adult ESL

students in a postsecondary EAP program in the Southwestern region of the United States? This central research question was explored using the following three research sub-questions:

RQ1: How did *TBBT* contribute to the anxiety of adult ESL students in an EAP program?

RQ2: How did *TBBT* contribute to the self-confidence of adult ESL students in an EAP program?

RQ3: How did *TBBT* contribute to the motivation of adult ESL students in an EAP program?

Literature was reviewed pertaining to the postsecondary EAP context in which this study took place and the pedagogical developments that underpin its methodologies. The practice of second language teaching began to develop rapidly in the 20th century, with advances in psychology, linguistics, and education eventually shifting thinking towards developing students' communicative competencies in the second language (Hymes & Gumperz, 1964; Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Hymes' (as cited in Richards & Rodgers, 2001) idea of communicative competence became a catalyst that initiated the formation of a new method known as communicative language teaching, which sought to focus more on the communicative and functional potential of language. This resulting movement gained momentum in the 1980s and continues to be a leading method in ESL education today (Khan et al., 2016). Theories and concepts central to the communicative language teaching movement, such as Krashen's (1982) affective filter hypothesis and the idea of using authentic materials to focus on students' communicative needs beyond the artificial classroom environment, not only form the basis for modern EAP teaching approaches (Wenzhong & Muchun, 2015), but also serve as the rationale and theoretical framework for this study. While ESL education has seen rapid advances in the

past decades, these advances have been slow to find their way into EAP contexts and methodologies (Kashef et al., 2014), contributing to the need for this study.

Literature was also presented as a rationale for the selection of *TBBT* television sitcom as a source of humorous authentic material for this study. This rationale included the use of authentic materials in ESL teaching. Although interest in the use of authentic materials in language teaching dates back as far as the 1890s (Sweet, 1899), the rise of the communicative language teaching movement brought about vastly increased interest in the use of authentic materials to promote students' communicative competencies (Deane & O'Neill, 2011; Dudley-Evans, 2001; Gillett, 2011; Li, 2017; Wingate, 2015). For some time, researchers have cited numerous benefits to using authentic materials in the ESL classroom, including exposure to real discourse and language, a heightened connection to the real world beyond the classroom, increased motivation and engagement, exposure to improper and real language interactions, and exposure to various styles and registers (Benavent & Sanchez-Reyes Penamaria, 2011; Ghanbari et al., 2015; Karimi & Dolatabadi, 2014; Marzban & Davaji, 2015; Tamo, 2009; Wingate, 2015). Other authors, however, have also noted the potential disadvantages of using authentic materials due to their potential inclusion of mixed structures, advanced language, culturally-specific references, improper uses of language, or strong accents or dialects that might make the materials difficult to understand for lower level students (Gillett, 2011; Taghavi & Aladini, 2018; Tamo, 2009). Specific to the context of this study, advances in understanding have been slower to find their way into EAP contexts and methodologies, which has prompted the need to conduct research such as this on the use of authentic materials in EAP contexts (Kashef et al., 2014).

The rationale for the use of *TBBT* also included the fact that the selection of authentic materials in ESL teaching has been aided more recently by advances in corpus linguistics

techniques. Corpus linguistics methodologies allow large bodies of text or spoken examples of language to be amassed for analysis for a variety of applications (Lindquist, 2009). The number of recent studies using corpus analysis techniques within EAP is substantial, focusing primarily on identifying language features that would otherwise be difficult to observe (Agathopoulou, 2010). These studies have focused on linguistic features in academic English such as rhetorical structures (Pho, 2010), collocations (Ward, 2007), lexical bundles (Hyland, 2008; Wood, 2010), word frequencies (Martínez et al., 2009), and features of student errors and language output patterns (Granger, 2009; Hyland, 2009; Martínez, 2005). Despite these studies, Agathopoulou (2010) noted that very few authors have made specific recommendations as to classroom activities, approaches, or materials based on their findings. This situation further highlights the need for studies in an EAP context that not only utilize modern corpus linguistics techniques for language analysis in isolation, but that also apply these findings to the advancement of policies and teaching practices within the field.

Finally, the rationale for selecting *TBBT* included the benefits of using humor in an ESL teaching context. In language teaching, the use of humor, described as "the comic, absurd or incongruous quality that causes amusement" (Zabidin, 2015, p. 105), has been shown by many studies to release dopamine in the brain, improve motivation, increase self-confidence, reduce anxiety, improve student-teacher relationships, and improve learning outcomes in an ESL context (Erten, 2015; Jedynak et al., 2000; Kozhevnikova, 2013; Wong et al., 2012; Wong et al., 2013). Despite these documented benefits of using humor, previous studies have also noted that humor is underused in the foreign language classroom (Liu, 2015). This underuse of humor could be due to the extreme complexity and nuanced nature of humor for ESL students (Bell, 2009; Norrick, 2003), confounded by humor researchers' failure to account for these

complexities or make suggestions for effectively using humor in the classroom (Bell, 2009; Schmitz, 2002). Some researchers also advocated caution when using humor in a multicultural, multilingual context, as their use can potentially lead to misunderstandings or offense (Csajbok-Twerefou, 2011). This reluctance to use humor in ESL teaching has led to a situation in which researchers need to better understand how specific ESL student populations experience humor and need to make concrete recommendations on how to incorporate humor into the language classroom.

The theoretical framework used in this study was Krashen's (1982) affective filter hypothesis, as part of his larger theory of second language acquisition. Developed during a time of great interest in communicative approaches to language teaching in the 1970s and '80s, Tracy Terrell (1977) first introduced "a proposal for a 'new' philosophy of language teaching" (p. 121) calling it the natural approach. Partnering with Krashen to develop the theoretical rationale for the new approach, the two researchers published a book in 1983, drawing heavily on Krashen's five hypotheses of second language acquisition to justify the new approach (Krashen & Terrell, 1983). Cited as having "great practical effects for SLA" (Du, 2009, p. 164), Krashen's hypothesis has changed little since 1982, despite criticism by some for its vaguely-defined terms and overgeneralized claims (Gregg, 1984; Liu, 2015; McLaughlin, 1987; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Swain & Lapkin, 1995; White, 1987).

The constructs of Krashen's (1982) overall theory include the acquisition/learning hypothesis, the natural order hypothesis, the monitor hypothesis, the input hypothesis, and the affective filter hypothesis. Despite being parts of the same theory, only the affective filter hypothesis is relevant to the present study. The affective filter hypothesis includes three affective domain areas (high anxiety, low self-confidence, and low motivation) that can result in ESL

students failing to learn target language content. According to Krashen (1982), “The effective language teacher is someone who can provide input and help make it comprehensible in a low anxiety situation” (p. 32). This notion of high anxiety, low motivation, and low self-confidence preventing students from learning in the foreign language classroom has formed the theoretical basis for numerous similar studies since its introduction (Huang & Hwang, 2013; Lin et al., 2015; Yuhui & Sen, 2015). Specific to EAP teaching contexts, however, little research has been conducted recently to understand the applicability of Krashen’s affective filter hypothesis (Wenzhong & Muchun, 2015).

Krashen’s affective filter hypothesis aligns directly with the purpose statement and research questions of this study, as they are deliberately worded to explore *TBBT* through a lens of the three affective domains of anxiety, self-confidence, and motivation. Justification for the use of Krashen’s affective filter hypothesis as the theoretical framework for this study comes from one of the most prominent scholars in the field today, Rod Ellis. He stated the following:

> Learners’ affective factors are obviously of critical importance in accounting for individual differences in learning outcomes. Whereas learners’ beliefs about language learning are likely fairly stable, their affective states tend to be volatile, affecting not only overall progress but responses to particular learning activities in a day-to-day and even moment-by-moment basis. (Ellis, 1994, p. 483)

For this reason, the ways in which new teaching materials or approaches contribute to students’ affective filters should be evaluated (Huang & Hwang, 2013; Mingzheng, 2012; Yuhui & Sen, 2015).

For this qualitative study, a single, within-site instrumental case study design was selected, involving a bounded case within a real-life context (Yin, 2017). Such a design was

selected due to the researcher's interest in gaining an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of the participants in the case, in order to best answer the central research question. This case study focused, namely, on 12 adult ESL students who had been enrolled in EAP courses at a postsecondary ESL institute in the Southwest region of the United States between Fall of 2016 and Fall of 2018. As the main instrument for data collection, the researcher acted as a nonparticipant observer and interviewer of participants, using semi-structured interviews, interview guides, protocols, corpus linguistics analysis, and observations to collect data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Data processing included triangulation and analysis, coding, and sorting of data into emergent categories and themes (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). The primary methods employed to strengthen trustworthiness and reliability were data triangulation, member checking techniques, expert review, and negative case analysis to help ensure that the final report accurately reflected the voices of all participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

As is common for qualitative case study, purposeful sampling techniques were employed to focus specifically on the experiences of individuals who represented a population of EAP students (Yin, 2017). Such sampling allowed the researcher to limit the focus of the study to only include adult ESL speakers at a selected institute, which might reduce the generalizability of findings but offer a greater depth of the phenomenon under study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Participation criteria included that all participants had to have been enrolled in EAP courses at the research site between Fall 2016 and Fall 2018, that they needed to be over the age of 18 to be representative of adult EAP students, and that they could not have been enrolled in EAP courses at the research site at the time of data collection so that they could speak freely about their experiences without fear of recourse.

The sample group for this study included 12 adult ESL speakers who had been enrolled in an EAP course at the research site between Fall of 2016 and Fall of 2018. This sample group included six male and six female participants between the ages of 30 and 51, originating from eight different countries (i.e., Spain, Germany, Brazil, Venezuela, China, South Korea, Iran, Egypt) and speaking eight different first languages (i.e., Arabic, Farsi, Mandarin, Cantonese, Spanish, Portuguese, German, Korean). The average number of years of formal ESL training received by the 12 participants was 12.75 years, with an average length of approximately 1.5 years (three academic terms) spent studying in an EAP context. The English proficiency levels of the 12 participants were between B1 and C1 on the Common European Framework of foreign language proficiency (Wisniewsk, 2017), meaning that all participants were proficient enough in English to express their ideas fluently. All 12 of the participants had completed a bachelor's degree prior to participating in this study, with 10 of the 12 having also completed a graduate degree in their respective field. This demographic data suggests that the 12 participants in this study represent the increasing number of foreign-born students in the Southwest region whose first language is not English, as discussed by Cigdem (2017), and this sample group represents the specific perspectives of adult ESL students in an EAP context.

Analysis of *TBBT*'s pilot episode was conducted using corpus linguistics analysis techniques and resources, including AntConc 3.5.7 Software, the Brown Corpus as a reference (Francis & Kučera, 1964), and the COCA. It was determined that 3.96% of all words on the pilot episode occurred more frequently in the academic section of COCA than in the spoken section, compared to only 0.271% of the words on the pilot episode of *Modern Family*, another popular American sitcom. The fact that *TBBT* contains such a high percentage of academic register words, 18.25 times higher than *Modern Family*, suggests that *TBBT* could provide an opportunity

for EAP students to hear academic register words spoken when they could otherwise only read such words in academic writing. Further analysis revealed that the use of academic register words was not distributed evenly among all characters of *TBBT*. It was determined that 8.03% of all the words spoken by Sheldon in the pilot episode were academic register, compared to 3.63% for Howard, 1.85% for Leonard, and 0.56% for Penny. This linguistic feature of the show could be used to demonstrate different communication styles that could be useful for students in an ESL or EAP learning environment. In EAP settings where academic vocabulary acquisition or the development of communicative competence is a goal, the use of a comedy like *TBBT would* align well with Krashen's (1982) recommendation to "provide input and help make it comprehensible in a low anxiety situation" (p. 32). In contrast to the potential benefits of exposing ESL students to academic register words on *TBBT*, the inclusion of potentially offensive, culturally-specific topics might cause offense to some students in a multicultural learning environment. This possibility confirms Tamo's (2009) discussion of authentic materials including potentially offensive topics, as well as Csajbok-Twerefou's (2011) discussion of the need for caution when using sources of humor in an ESL teaching context.

Analysis of participants' response helped thoroughly answer the first sub-question in this study. The findings pertaining to this question include that *TBBT* could positively affect ESL students' anxiety in an EAP context by (a) exposing students to humor, (b) exposing students to new vocabulary, (c) showing students that they can understand complex language, and (d) showing different ways of being or communicating. Each of these themes, at least in part, had been reported to reduce anxiety by previous studies involving other sources of teaching materials (Arnold & Brown, 1999; Bell, 2007; Horwitz, 2016; Huang & Hwang, 2013; Krashen, 1982; Lems, 2013; Lin et al., 2015; Rucynski, 2017; Yuhui & Sen, 2015). Adversely, it was found that

TBBT could affect ESL students' anxiety in an EAP context by (a) exposing students to unfamiliar words or concepts that are difficult to understand and (b) exposing students to rapid dialogue that could be too fast for them to follow. Both of these factors could increase anxiety due to students' failing to understand what is taking place because of a language barrier, as discussed by Horwitz (2016).

Analysis of participants' responses helped to thoroughly answer the second sub-question in this study. It was determined that *TBBT* could positively affect students' self-confidence in the following ways: (a) exposure to authentic language through *TBBT* could increase self-confidence, (b) being able to understand the complex language on *TBBT* could increase self-confidence, (c) actively engaging students in classroom activities centered around *TBBT* could increase self-confidence, and (d) showing a range of different but accepted personality types could increase self-confidence. Many of these themes align with findings from previous studies exploring other sources of teaching materials (Ghanbari et al., 2015; Giménez-Moreno & Skorczynska, 2013; Lin et al., 2015; MacIntyre et al., 1998; Marzban & Davaji, 2015; McNulty & Lazarevic, 2012; Mingzheng, 2012; Petrides, 2006; Tamo, 2009; Webb & Rodgers, 2009; Yuhui & Sen, 2015;). In contrast to the ways in which *TBBT* could positively affect self-confidence, participants also reported that their self-confidence could be adversely affected if they did not understand the advanced language on the show. This theme matches Tamo's (2009) discussion that authentic materials can have an adverse effect if they include too many unfamiliar themes, advanced language, mixed structures, or require special background knowledge to be understood.

Analysis of participants' responses also helped to thoroughly answer the third sub-question in this study: How did *TBBT* contribute to the motivation of adult ESL students in an

EAP program? It was determined that *TBBT* could positively affect students' motivation in the following ways: (a) learning new and challenging vocabulary through *TBBT* could create motivation; (b) learning about the American sense of humor could create motivation; (c) *TBBT* could offer a different or fun way to teach content, which could create motivation; (d) *TBBT* could provide a connection between the classroom and the real lives or the social lives of students, which could increase motivation; (e) *TBBT* could expose students to different but accepted personalities, which could increase motivation; and (f) Students' motivation could be increased if they are able to understand the complex language on *TBBT*. Many of these themes align with those of studies investigating other teaching materials (Chiang et al., 2016; Gardner, 2007; Garner, 2006; Ghanbari et al., 2015; Giménez-Moreno & Skorczynska, 2013; Marzban & Davaji, 2015; McNulty & Lazarevic, 2012; Petrides, 2006; Philaretou, 2007; Stambor, 2006; Tamo, 2009; Webb & Rodgers, 2009; Zabidin, 2015). In contrast to *TBBT*'s potential benefits, one negative theme to emerge was that students' motivation could be affected adversely if students were unable to understand the complex language used on the show. This theme matches with findings from other studies relating to authentic materials (Tamo, 2009) and foreign language learning anxiety caused by students' failing to understand what is taking place because of a language barrier (Horowitz, 2016).

Overall, participants responded positively to the use of *TBBT* in an EAP context. All but one participant was observed laughing and showing signs of relaxation during observation sessions when *TBBT* was shown. Participants also reported that *TBBT* could be used to teach the following in an EAP context: vocabulary, grammar, listening comprehension, social skills, sense of humor, academic concepts, cultural differences, idioms, and different ways of communicating. Participants' ideas of using *TBBT* to teach vocabulary, grammar, and cultural differences align

with previous studies that have reported on the benefits of using authentic materials to teach in ESL contexts (McNulty & Lazarevic, 2012; Webb & Rodgers, 2009). Additionally, several participants mentioned that *TBBT* might be confusing for some students in an EAP context due to the rapid speed of dialogue or advanced language included on the show. Follow up questions revealed, however, that participants were not referring to themselves being confused by *TBBT*, but rather stating that the potential for confusion existed with the use of *TBBT* in an EAP context. Lastly, as discussed above, participants' cultural backgrounds seemed to influence their prior experiences with and prior perceptions of humor and authentic materials in an ESL learning environment.

In addition to answering the research questions, three unexpected themes emerged. First, one theme suggests that participants' first language and cultural background influenced both their prior experiences with and perception of the use of humor in ESL contexts. Participants from South Korea, China, and Germany reported higher expectations of seriousness in the ESL classroom in their respective countries, whereas participants from Brazil were more familiar with the inclusion of humor in language teaching. The participants form China and Korea also discussed having experienced the inclusion of more humor in ESL contexts in Western countries as opposed to their home countries. The second unexpected theme was that many of the participants' preferred instructional practices aligned with common communicative language teaching practices discussed by Richards and Rodgers (2001) and Wenzhong and Muchun (2015). These preferred instructional practices included discussions about current or interesting topics, learning about the American culture and expressions that are used by real Americans, making presentations, working on projects to learn English, or practicing English through describing images or putting on plays. In contrast, the most commonly experienced instructional

practices at the research site such as grammar exercises, reading exercises, vocabulary exercises, pronunciation and accent reduction work, exams, textbook work, homework, writing, dictation, listening activities, and lectures are not common practice in communicative approaches (Khan et al., 2016). This difference in preferred and actual teaching practices at the research site could be causing the decline in enrollment (F. LeGrand, personal communication, February 19, 2018), as other researchers have shown that such non-communicative practices can lead to increased affective filters and the perception among students that the language classroom is highly serious and stressful (Nadeem, 2012; Park, 2014). The third unexpected theme was that participants had recommendations on what *TBBT* could be used to teach in an EAP context. Common recommendations included that *TBBT* could be used to teach the following things in an EAP context: vocabulary, grammar, listening comprehension, social skills, sense of humor, academic concepts, cultural differences, idioms, and different ways of communicating. Many of these recommendations align with other researchers who have reported on the effectiveness of teaching with humor and authentic materials in other ESL contexts (Benavent & Sanchez-Reyes Penamaria, 2011; Bingham & Biesta, 2010; Ghanbari et al., 2015; Karimi & Dolatabadi, 2014; Marzban & Davaji, 2015; Wong et al., 2012).

Conclusions

The data collected and analyzed within this study support the following conclusions: (a) characteristics of *TBBT* were identified that both speak for and against its use in EAP teaching, (b) nine ways in which *TBBT* could decrease students' affective factors were identified, (c) four ways in which *TBBT* could increase student's affective factors were identified, (d) participants' preferred EAP learning methods differed from methods experienced at the research site, (e) students' cultural backgrounds and lived experiences contributed to their perception of humor

and authentic materials in an EAP context, and (f) participants identified nine elements *TBBT* could be used to teach in an EAP context. The following paragraphs contain discussions relative to each conclusion. Further, examples are provided for stakeholders in each discussion.

First, *TBBT* was found to contain a higher percentage of academic register words than other analyzed potential sources of humorous material for use in an EAP environment. This high percentage of academic register words presented in an authentic material source provides an opportunity to expose students "to real language and culture as well as to the different genres of the professional community to which they aspire" (Benavent & Sanchez-Reyes Penamaria, 2011, p. 90). Secondly, consistent variations in the usage of academic register words was found among *TBBT* characters (Table 3). These variations could additionally be used to expose students to register and style variations in an EAP context, as noted as a benefit of other sources of authentic materials in ESL teaching (Tamo, 2009). Analysis also revealed that *TBBT* contained culturally-specific and potentially offensive content that could cause offense or misunderstanding in an EAP context, as discussed by Csajbok-Twerefou (2011) and Tamo (2009). This conclusion could be of interest to EAP policymakers, instructors, and course designers interested in reducing students' affective factors while meeting the unique learning needs of EAP students such as academic vocabulary acquisition and communicative competence development across registers (Hyland, 2006).

Nine ways in which *TBBT* could decrease students' affective factors were identified. Extant research identified many of the beneficial features of humor and authentic materials found in *TBBT* to reduce participants' affective factors, but this research extended these findings to a previously-unexplored material source for use with a new population (Benavent & Sanchez-

Reyes Penamaria, 2011; Chiang et al., 2016; Garner, 2006; Philaretou, 2007; Stambor, 2006; Tamo, 2009). The nine ways in which *TBBT* was found to contribute positively to all three affective factors are presented in Figure 2.

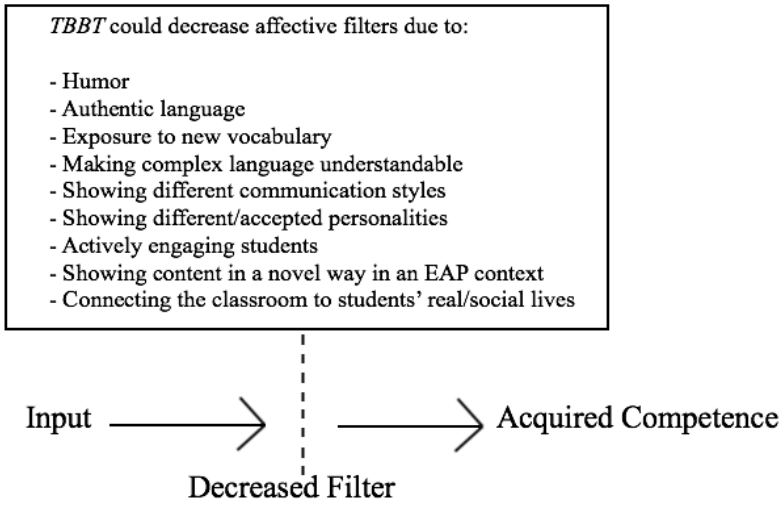

Figure 2. Diagram of how *TBBT* could decrease students' affective filters. Adapted from *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition*, by S. Krashen, p. 32. Copyright 1982 by Stephen Krashen.

Data from this study also support the conclusion that *TBBT* could increase students' affective factors due to the following four ways: its inclusion of unfamiliar words and content, the rapid speed of dialog on the show, its inclusion of inappropriate humor and topics, and students' potential unfamiliarity with authentic materials. Extant research previously identified each of these aspects of humor and authentic materials that can increase students' affective factors, though this research extended these findings to *TBBT* in an EAP context (Csajbok-Twerefou, 2011; Horwitz, 2016; Krashen, 1982; Tamo, 2009). Figure 3 presents this conclusion in graphic form.

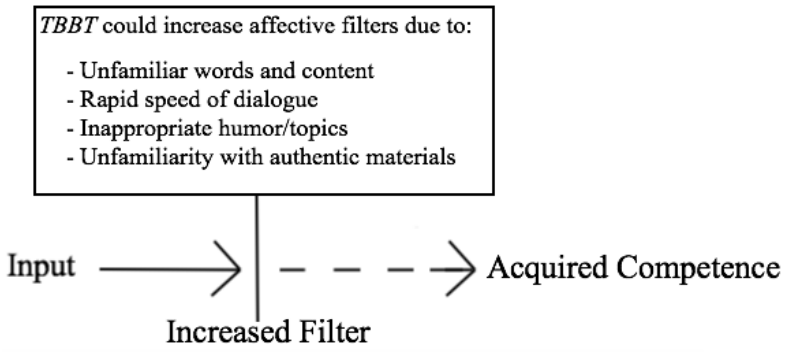

Figure 3. Diagram of how *TBBT* could increase students' affective filters. Adapted from *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition*, by S. Krashen, p. 32. Copyright 1982 by Stephen Krashen.

These diagrams (i.e., Figure 2, Figure 3) represent the major conclusions drawn in response to RQ1, RQ2, and RQ3. These conclusions have significant implications for EAP policymakers, instructors, and course designers, as they encompass all ways in which this study found *TBBT* contributed to students' affective factors in an EAP context. These conclusions can also serve as the theoretical framework for future research investigating the use of *TBBT* in EAP or other ESL contexts, to be discussed in the implications section below.

Data from this study also support the conclusion that participants' preferred EAP learning methods differed from methods commonly experienced at the research site. As one of the three unexpected findings of this study, participants described experiencing many instructional practices that are not consistent with common communicative approaches (Khan et al., 2016). In contrast, participants consistently described their preferred methods of learning in an EAP environment, which align directly with the common communicative language teaching practices discussed by Richards and Rodgers (2001) and Wenzhong and Muchun (2015). This difference in preferred and actual teaching practices experienced at the research site could be causing the decline in enrollment (F. LeGrand, personal communication, February 19, 2018), as other researchers have shown that such non-communicative practices can lead to increased affective

filters and the perception among students that the language classroom is highly serious and stressful (Nadeem, 2012; Park, 2014). This conclusion has potentially significant implications for stakeholders such as EAP policymakers, instructors, and course designers. Especially in contexts experiencing similar declining enrollment, as discussed by Johnson (2019), a lack of communicative language teaching practices may be a contributing factor leading to the decline, as this conclusion suggests about this study's research site.

Data from this study also support the conclusion that students' cultural backgrounds and lived experiences contributed to their perception of humor and authentic materials in an EAP context. Participants from South Korea, China, and Germany reported higher expectations of seriousness in the ESL classroom in their respective countries, whereas participants from Brazil were more familiar with the inclusion of humor in language teaching. The participants from China and Korea also discussed having experienced the inclusion of more humor in ESL contexts in Western countries as opposed to their home countries. Participants from Asian countries involved in this study also indicated that students from these countries may even be uncomfortable with communicative approaches that incorporate the use of humor or authentic materials. As communicative language teaching across cultures was not a main focus of this study, this preliminary conclusion will need more focused investigation, though it does align with themes of the cultural-specificity of authentic materials, as discussed by Tamo (2009). This conclusion, however, has significant implications for EAP policy makers, developers, and educators, as it suggests that the use of *TBBT* and other forms of humor and authentic materials may not be uniformly received in a positive way across cultures (Tamo, 2009).

The data from this study support the conclusion that *TBBT* could be used to focus on the following nine elements in an EAP context: vocabulary, grammar, listening comprehension,

social skills, sense of humor, academic concepts, cultural differences, idioms, and different ways of communicating. This list of areas that *TBBT* could be used to teach was compiled only from answers provided by the 12 participants in this study, though extant research indicates the effectiveness of using humor or authentic materials for focusing on each of these areas in ESL teaching (Benavent & Sanchez-Reyes Penamaria, 2011; Bingham & Biesta, 2010; Ghanbari et al., 2015; Karimi & Dolatabadi, 2014; Marzban & Davaji, 2015; Wong et al., 2012). This conclusion, however, extends several of these findings from general ESL contexts specifically into EAP contexts as well as demonstrates the possible uses of *TBBT* specifically. Especially for EAP policy makers, educators, and content developers who may be reluctant to use authentic materials for fear of sophisticated language, randomness, complex grammatical forms, and challenging lexis (Taghavi & Aladini, 2018), this conclusion indicates the potentially broad applications of *TBBT,* not only for reducing students' affective filters but also for targeting specific content and skills.

Interpretations of Findings

Several interpretations are supported by the research conducted in this study. First, data collected and analyzed helped to fully accomplish the purpose of this study to examine how *TBBT* contributed to the affective factors of anxiety, self-confidence, and motivation of adult ESL students in a postsecondary EAP program in the Southwestern United States. In general, these findings strongly suggest that *TBBT* could positively contribute to the three affective factors of anxiety, self-confidence, and motivation for students in an EAP context. Although many of the findings of this study align with those of previous studies exploring other materials and approaches, this study was able to demonstrate that the reported benefits of humor and authentic materials can be extended to *TBBT* and EAP contexts (Benavent & Sanchez-Reyes

Penamaria, 2011; Chiang et al., 2016; Garner, 2006; Philaretou, 2007; Stambor, 2006; Tamo, 2009).

In terms of the ways in which *TBBT* might have a negative effect on students' affective factors of anxiety, self-confidence, and motivation, the findings of this study suggest that teachers can mitigate these potential negative effects with proper lesson planning and preparation. The potential risks to students' affective filters inherent in *TBBT*, through the inclusion of unfamiliar content and vocabulary, the rapid speed of dialogue, and inappropriate topics or humor, could all be mitigated to avoid an increase in students' affective filters. As mentioned by Participant 3 after watching *TBBT*, "Sometimes I could not understand. I couldn't follow all the text and I feel bad about it. So, at some point if you did not stop the film and teach me. . . . I would not understand, and I would block myself form learning more in the rest of the film." (Participant 3, personal communication, November 5, 2018). To avoid an increase in students' affective filters due to unfamiliar words or content, teachers could pre-teach key vocabulary or use schema activation activities before showing selections of *TBBT*, as discussed by Harmer (2001). To avoid an increase in students' affective filters due to the inclusion of inappropriate content or humor on *TBBT*, teachers could simply preview potential excerpts to evaluate their suitability based on target content and any included topics or jokes that might cause offense or confusion (Tamo, 2009).

Another interpretation of this study is that Krashen's affective filter hypothesis is a useful theoretical framework for the evaluation of materials in an EAP context. While recent studies have maintained the relevance and applicability of Krashen's affective filter hypothesis in ESL generally, little research has been conducted in an EAP context on its implications (Wenzhong & Muchun, 2015). Krashen's hypothesis provided an adequate lens through which to evaluate

materials for use in an EAP context, though certain refinements would have been helpful. First, the lack of definitions provided by Krashen to the constructs of anxiety, self-confidence, and motivation required additional questioning to determine how each participant defined these constructs for themselves. As discussed by Gregg (1984), Krashen's theory contains "undefined or ill-defined terms" and "unmotivated constructs" (p. 94). If to be used a ruler with which to measure how materials influence the constructs of anxiety, self-confidence and motivation, it would be nice to have more clarity provided by Krashen as to what is exactly meant by each of these. Second, if to be used as a theoretical lens by other researchers in an EAP context, Krashen's hypothesis could be extended to include ways in which a given material or approach both increases and decreases students' filters. This refinement was made to the diagrams presented above (Figure 2 and Figure 3) about how *TBBT* contributed to the affective factors in this study. This extension, however, was not seen by other researchers who have recently used Krashen's hypothesis as a framework for their studies (Lin et al., 2015; Mingzheng, 2012; Yuhui & Sen, 2015).

The linguistic analysis of *TBBT* conducted and presented in this study allowed the researcher to quantifiably confirm suspicions regarding the high concentration of academic register words on the show. These findings speak to the show's suitability for use in an EAP context, especially when the acquisition of academic vocabulary is an objective of instruction. The generally positive reception of *TBBT* in this study, by 11 of the 12 participants, further speaks to the show's potential to expose students to academic vocabulary in a way that could also be enjoyable, thus reducing students' affective filters. These findings could provide other educators with concrete ideas of how to apply Krashen's (1982) recommendation to "provide input and help make it comprehensible in a low anxiety situation" (p. 32) in an EAP context.

Finally, when considering the use of *TBBT* as a source of humorous authentic material in an EAP context, the findings of this study suggest that student's lived experiences must be considered. As discussed, students from countries in which humor and authentic materials are less frequently incorporated into the ESL classroom might be uncomfortable, unfamiliar, or even offended by their inclusion. Failing to take students' lived experiences into account when selecting teaching materials could lead to an inadvertent increase in students' affective filters. The teaching implications of these findings will be discussed at greater lengths in the next section.

Implications

The findings presented in this study have some implications for theory, policy, and practice. These implications are discussed in the subsections below. The need for further research to refine or test these implications will be discussed in the Suggestions for Future Research section. The implications of the unexpected findings from this study are also discussed in this section.

Theory. First, this research advanced the application of Krashen's affective filter hypothesis in EAP teaching contexts. As Wenzhong and Muchun (2015) noted, despite the wide acceptance of Krashen's affective filter hypothesis in ESL teaching generally, little research has been conducted within an EAP context on its implications. This study has demonstrated the viability of Krashen's hypothesis as a theoretical lens through which to investigate and answer relevant questions in a postsecondary EAP context. The ease of use of Krashen's hypothesis in this study aligns with Du's (2009) assertion that Krashen's hypothesis has "great practical effects for SLA" (p. 164). In contrast, however, the lack of definition provided by Krashen in terms of the affective factors of anxiety, self-confidence, and motivation did require additional questioning of participants and further research to define these constructs. The lack of defined

terms in Krashen's hypothesis was found to be a hindrance in this study and aligns with other researchers' criticism of the theory (Gregg, 1984; McLaughlin, 1987). For consistency of use of the hypothesis, refinements and exact definitions of the three affective factors would be helpful for future researchers.

Second, this study adds to the literature by demonstrating the applicability of *TBBT* to reduce students' affective filters in an EAP context. The conclusions of this study provided a thorough understanding of the ways in which *TBBT* contributed to the affective factors of the involved participants (Figure 2 and Figure 3). These findings helped advance the stated benefits of the use of humor in ESL teaching (Chiang et al., 2016; Garner, 2006; Philaretou, 2007; Stambor, 2006) and the stated benefits of using authentic materials in ESL teaching (Deane & O'Neill, 2011; Dudley-Evans, 2001; Gillett, 2011; Li, 2017; Wingate, 2015) to an EAP context. Despite certain educators' reluctance to use authentic materials in an EAP context (Taghavi & Aladini, 2018; Tamo, 2009) or humor in the same context (Csajbok-Twerefou, 2011), this study was able to demonstrate that EAP students responded positively to the use of a humorous authentic material like *TBBT*. This finding has implications for theory in that it indicates the qualitative benefits of *TBBT* in EAP teaching while paving the way for future quantitative advances in the form of studies exploring learning outcomes.

Third, the use of corpus linguistics analysis techniques in this study adds to the literature in this field. These techniques, discussed by O'Keeffe et al. (2007), helped identify language register variations among the characters of *TBBT* (Li, 2017). The findings that Sheldon used the highest concentration of academic words, followed by Howard, Leonard, and Penny (Table 3) demonstrate new research implications for corpus linguistics techniques in an EAP context. The register variation findings helped quantify emergent themes discussed by participants in this

study on how communication differences among the characters reduced their anxiety and increased their self-confidence. This study thus demonstrated a new way in which corpus linguistics techniques can be used to identify communication differences among characters in authentic materials (Tamo, 2009), and how these findings can be used to better understand how these differences contribute to EAP students' experiences. Many recent corpus linguistics studies have focused on rhetorical structures (Pho, 2010), collocations (Ward, 2007), lexical bundles (Hyland, 2008; Wood, 2010), word frequencies (Martínez, Beck, & Panza, 2009), and features of student errors and language output patters (Granger, 2009; Hyland, 2009; Martínez, 2005). However, few studies included looking at the ways in which these linguistic patterns contribute to students' affective filters in an EAP context. Further, despite these recent studies, Agathopoulou (2010) noted that few authors have made specific recommendations as to classroom activities, approaches, or materials based on their findings, which this study intends to do.

Policy. The findings of this study also have several implications for theory in an EAP context. First, the findings of this study affirm the need for advances in policy governing EAP teaching contexts in the Southwestern region of the United States. The fact that ESL teaching beyond Grade 12 is less regulated by state or national policy (Education Commission of the States, 2014) was supported by participants' wide range of instructional practices experienced in EAP contexts. By unifying policy governing postsecondary ESL education, institutes serving these populations could help ensure that the needs, experiences, and objectives of all students are better accounted for. Such changes to policy could potentially lead to a less "chaotic" (Li, 2017, p. 497) state of EAP practices and theories. For example, a state policy dictating the need for entrance questionnaires about incoming students' preferred teaching methods could help align

teaching practices with students' preferences. This alignment, in turn, could lead to the reduction of students' foreign language learning anxiety (Horowitz, 2016). As was found by this study, there was a significant discrepancy between students' preferred teaching practices and the practices actually experienced at the research site. Policy improvements could be instrumental in better aligning students' preferences with actual teaching approaches.

Second, the findings of this study indicate the need for advances in policy governing the education and training of EAP teaching professionals. Despite the availability of many studies indicating the benefits of humor, authentic materials, and communicative language teaching practices (Benavent & Sanchez-Reyes Penamaria, 2011; Chiang et al., 2016; Garner, 2006; Philaretou, 2007; Stambor, 2006; Tamo, 2009), the most commonly experienced instructional practices at the research site were still writing and grammar exercises. This lack of inclusion of humor, authentic materials, and communicative language teaching methods indicates the need for improved policies governing training of EAP educators to ensure instructors are familiar with and well versed in the inclusion of materials and methods that may help reduce students' affective filters in an EAP context. Such training of EAP professionals would also benefit from the inclusion of cultural awareness and sensitivity training to ensure EAP educators consider students' lived experiences and cultural backgrounds when selecting materials for use in the classroom (Csajbok-Twerefou, 2011; Tamo, 2009).

Third, the findings of this study have direct policy implications for the research site. The findings of this study can be used to inform decisions that can potentially reverse the declining enrollment at the research site while leading to improved student learning experiences. This study found that *TBBT* contributed positively to participants' affective factors while reducing their foreign language classroom anxiety (Horowitz, 2016). In addition, the unexpected findings

of this study indicate that current instructional practices at the research site are not aligned with the preferred teaching practices of the 12 participants involved in this study. These findings provide justification for new policies at the research site mandating that students' experiences be considered when selecting teaching materials and activities for EAP courses. By using *TBBT* or other preferred teaching practices discussed by the participants in this study, the declining enrollment could potentially be reversed. While Johnson (2019) discussed financial pressures as a reason for the national trend in declining enrollments in foreign language programs, the findings of this study suggest that the lack of governing policy and the subsequent discrepancies between preferred and actual EAP teaching practices may also be significant contributing factors.

Practice. The findings of this study have several implications in terms of teaching practices in an EAP context. First, *TBBT* was shown to contribute positively to all three affective factors of anxiety, self-confidence, and motivation, aligning with the benefits of humor and authentic materials noted by other researchers (Chiang et al., 2016; Deane & O'Neill, 2011; Dudley-Evans, 2001; Garner, 2006; Gillett, 2011; Li, 2017; Philaretou, 2007; Stambor, 2006; Wingate, 2015). Based on these findings, *TBBT* could be used to reduce the affective factors of the EAP students at the research site. To mitigate any potential increases to students' affective factors by using *TBBT* in an EAP context, excerpts should be carefully selected to both align with students' current proficiency levels (Harmer, 2001; Krashen, 1982) and introduced by pre-teaching new vocabulary (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Even if future studies find that *TBBT* does not help improve learning outcomes in an EAP context, this study clearly demonstrates that *TBBT* could be used to reduce students' foreign language classroom anxiety (Horowitz, 2016) while reducing their affective filters. Based on this improvement of students' affective factors

with *TBBT* alone, EAP teaching practices should be adjusted to at least include *TBBT* as a warmup activity to improve the overall engagement and motivation of the class (Qi & Steen, 2012).

Second, despite the findings of other researchers that authentic materials may contain too many mixed structures and advanced language for use in ESL contexts (Taghavi & Aladini, 2018; Tamo, 2009), this study demonstrated that the use of authentic materials can contribute positively to students' affective filters. Further, the use of *TBBT* as an authentic material, with its high concentration of academic vocabulary, refutes the findings of these studies that such advanced language could be detrimental to ESL students (Taghavi & Aladini, 2018; Tamo, 2009). Based on these findings, EAP educators should work to include even advanced forms of authentic materials into classroom activities. As Harmer (2001) noted, "it is vital for students to get practice in dealing with writing and speech where they miss quite a few words but are still able to extract the general meaning" (p. 273).

Third, the findings of this study indicate that students' affective factors can be reduced using humor in an EAP context. The finding that 11 of the 12 participants in this study responded positively to the humor of *TBBT* suggests that humor can be incorporated into teaching practices in an EAP environment to reduce students' affective filters. As Rucynski (2017) stated, humor can be used with almost any teaching approach to combat the seriousness, anxiety, and stress of the language classroom, which the findings of this study affirmed in an EAP context. The implication of this finding is that EAP teachers should attempt to incorporate more humor in the EAP context despite some researchers' statements that humor can lead to confusion and offense in multicultural classrooms (Bell, 2009; Csajbok-Twerefou, 2011; Norrick, 2003). Concretely, a

humorous material like *TBBT* could be used as part of a warmup activity or as a material through which to teach target academic vocabulary in an EAP context.

Unexpected findings. The three unexpected findings of this study also have implications for theory, practice, and policy. First, the finding that students' cultural backgrounds may contribute to their perception of humor, authentic materials, and communicative language teaching approaches has significant implications. This study found, for example, that the participants from China, South Korea, and Germany had experienced less humor in ESL teaching in their home countries than had those from other countries such as Brazil. This finding has implications for theory and research in that it indicates the need for research to understand these differences in experiences and perceptions across cultures. This finding also has implications for practice in that EAP educators need to consider students' cultural backgrounds when selecting materials and approaches for use in the classroom. As indicated by other studies, there are cultural differences in the perception of humor, for example, which should be taken into consideration by educators in a multicultural environment like the EAP classroom (Csajbok-Twerefou, 2011; Tamo, 2009). Further, policy at the research site could be adjusted based on this finding to restrict the nature of topics included in authentic materials to avoid offending students from different cultures (Bell, 2009; Norrick, 2003). One potential policy, for example, could state that excepts of *TBBT* in which the characters discuss dating and relationships should be excluded from use as not to offend students from other cultures.

Second, the unexpected finding that students' preferred teaching practices differed from those actually experienced at the research site has significant implications. If students' learning experiences and affective factors are a concern, instructional practices at the research site should be adjusted to more accurately align with their preferred teaching methods. As discussed by Park

(2014), students often perceive the foreign language classroom as difficult and stressful, which can lead to foreign language classroom anxiety (Horwitz, 2016). The current instructional practices at the research site of exercises, lectures, bookwork, and exams are likely contributing to an increase in students' affective filters (Huang & Hwang, 2013; Lin et al., 2015). In contrast, participants' preferred instructional practices that align with communicative language teaching methods have been found to improve both learning outcomes and the experiences of students in the language classroom (Gillett, 2011; Karimkhanlui, 2005; Khan et al., 2016). The implication of this finding in terms of practice is that the research site should include more communicative language teaching methods in EAP courses, including meaningful interactions, discussions about current or interesting topics, learning about the American culture and expressions that are used by real Americans, making presentations, working on projects, or practicing English through describing images or putting on plays. Due to the significant alignment of students' preferred teaching methods with communicative language teaching approaches, policy could also be adjusted at the research site to mandate the inclusion of communicative language teaching methods in its teaching practices (Harmer, 2001).

Third, the findings of what participants thought *TBBT* could be used to teach in an EAP context have implications. Participants stated that *TBBT* could be used to teach vocabulary, grammar, listening comprehension, social skills, sense of humor, academic concepts, cultural differences, idioms, and different ways of communicating. Previous studies have demonstrated that other authentic materials have been used to improve students' vocabulary acquisition and pronunciation skills (Ghanbari et al., 2015; McNulty & Lazarevic, 2012; Webb & Rodgers, 2009) and increase their listening comprehension (Karimi & Dolatabadi, 2014). This finding suggests that practice at the research site could be adjusted to use *TBBT* to successfully teach

vocabulary and listening comprehension, if not in the other areas mentioned by participants. Theory could also be further advanced if an approach to teaching with *TBBT* were developed and compared with more explicit teaching methods in an EAP context.

Suggestions for Future Research

Several lines of research could be extended from the findings of this study. First, the linguistic analysis of *TBBT* was conducted on a few excerpts of the entire body of work produced as part of *TBBT* television sitcom. This study was not designed to be an exhaustive analysis of all episodes of *TBBT* for use in an EAP context. Future studies could continue this line of linguistic analysis to determine the suitability of *TBBT* for specific lessons with EAP students. For example, future studies could use the analysis techniques outlined in this study to identify specific clips for use to teach target academic vocabulary on a given topic. One possible future research question could be: Which excerpts of *TBBT* could be used to present specific content in an EAP classroom?

Second, as a qualitative study, this research study sought to understand the ways in which *TBBT* was experienced in an EAP context. This study was not designed to test learning outcomes. Future studies could extend this research by conducting quantitative or mixed methods inquiry to investigate the ways in which *TBBT* might influence learning outcomes such as the acquisition of academic vocabulary or communicative competencies in an EAP context. A research question for a future study could be: What are the differences in learning outcomes in an EAP context when *TBBT* is used as opposed to traditional teaching methods?

Third, future studies could continue to investigate the theme from this study that students' lived experiences and cultural backgrounds might influence their perception of humor, authentic materials, and communicative language teaching methods. Another possible research question

for a future study could be: What are the differences in EAP students' perceptions of *TBBT* across cultural backgrounds? Theory, policy, and practice in the field of adult ESL and EAP education could benefit by advancing understanding of each of these areas.

Limitations and Reflexivity

This study was primarily limited by the sample size available at the research site. By limiting the study to only include EAP students, the sample size remained small but focused on the unique perspectives of this underexplored population. The purposeful sampling methods used (Creswell, 2013) significantly limited the generalizability of findings beyond the research site. Another limiting factor in this study was the fact that the researcher was the primary research instrument. This limitation of the researcher as the primary instrument resulted in data being interpreted through a specific lens that may include biases (Creswell, 2013). A quantitative or mixed methods study design incorporating a double-blind experiment with a control group would have helped produce more generalizable findings (Creswell, 2014). Without significant funding and with the time constraints associated with conducting research while working full-time, it was not possible to delve as deeply into the problem as was desired. As discussed above, the inclusion of quantitative data would have helped understand not only the ways in which students experienced TBBT, but also how the show might have influenced learning outcomes. Still, the qualitative findings of this study were thorough and useful in generating a theoretical framework for future studies on TBBT in an EAP context.

The findings of this study were further limited by the lack of field testing conducted on the protocols and instrumentation prior to data collection. Although a process of expert review was conducted (Creswell & Poth, 2018), no field testing was conducted. This lack of field testing resulted in large amounts of data being generated that did not address the central research

questions directly. If this study were to be repeated, further refinement of the questions included on the interview guide would be helpful in focusing the findings to only those relevant to the central research questions. In the interest of time and focus in future studies, Questions 1 through 7 on the interview guide would likely be omitted.

In terms of reflexivity, this dissertation journey has taught me how to systematically ask and seek answers to a relevant problem in education. Throughout this journey, I have learned how to base inquiry on existing knowledge and theory; how to identify gaps in that existing knowledge; how to conduct research with human subjects in an ethical and respectful manner; how to interview in a way that participants feel comfortable and willing to tell their stories; how to design and refine research instruments; how to collect, manage, sort, and triangulate data; and how to present findings in a way that other scholars in the filed can readily understand and use. Asking a question and being open to its answer often leads to many more questions, which this journey has taught me to fully embrace. This dissertation journey has taught me, above all, the joy of disciplined academic inquiry and the confidence that I truly have the knowledge and skills necessary to join the academic community.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented an overview of all findings of a qualitative case study exploring the use of *TBBT* in a postsecondary EAP context. This chapter summarized the findings, conclusions, interpretations, implications, recommendations for future research, limitations, and the researcher's reflections. The conclusions in this chapter thoroughly answers the central research questions. It was determined that *TBBT* contributed positively to participants' affective factors in nine ways, while it contributed negatively to participants' affective factors in four ways. Overall, the findings of this study indicate that with proper selection and preparation of a

humorous authentic material like *TBBT*, EAP students' affective factors and their foreign language learning anxiety can be reduced (Horowitz, 2016). These findings are significant in that they have expanded the applicability of Krashen's affective filter hypothesis to EAP contexts and helped provide concrete suggestions for EAP policymakers, educators, and materials developers on how humorous authentic materials can be used to decrease students' affective filters in an EAP context. This chapter also presented a graphic representation of the conclusions of this research that can be used in future studies to better understand how *TBBT* might contribute to learning outcomes in EAP contexts.

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Appendices

Appendix A: IRB Approval

[redacted]

Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects

19 March 2018

CPHS[redacted]

Stephen Cook, M.A.
Instructor
[redacted]

Dear Mr. Cook,

The Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects thanks you for your application for your study entitled [redacted]
After review, the Committee has approved the application.

If your research project goes beyond a year, you will need to request a renewal and provide a progress report one month before today's date one year from now. If you make additional changes to the project, you will need to submit a new revision request which we must approve before you implement the changes. The documents to do so can be found on the [redacted] website.

We wish you the best with your research. If I can be of further assistance to you, please do not hesitate to contact me by email [redacted] or phone [redacted]

Sincerely,

[redacted]

Chair, Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects
[redacted]

University of West Florida

Research and Sponsored Programs
11000 University Parkway, Bldg. 11
Pensacola, FL 32514-5750

MEMORANDUM

November 01, 2018

TO: **Mr. Stephen Cook**
Ed.D. Curriculum and Assessment

FROM: Dr. Matthew Schwartz, Assistant Vice President for Research and Interim Assistant Vice President Research Administration

Dr. Carla Thompson, Chair, IRB for Human Research Participant Protection

SUBJECT: IRB Modification Approval

Thank you for keeping us apprised of the progress made on your project titled "IRB 2019-022, Exploring the Use of The Big Ban Theory in ESL Teaching." The IRB has approved your request to modify your project based on the recently submitted application.

The IRB has approved your request based on the recently submitted modification with the following conditions: .

Continued good luck in your research!

Phone 850.474.2824 Fax 850.474.2082
Web research.uwf.edu
An Equal Opportunity/Equal Access/Affirmative Action Employer

Appendix B: Consent Form

Informed Consent Form

Project Title: Exploring the Use of *The Big Bang Theory* in ESL Teaching

I. Federal and university regulations require signed consent for participation in research involving human participants. After reading the statements in section II through IV below, please indicate your consent by signing and dating this form.

II. Statement of Procedure: Thank you for your interest in this research project being conducted by a graduate student at The University of West Florida. By this time, the investigator should have described the procedures for you in detail. Basically, this study is interested in the way you experience *The Big Bang Theory* television show as a potential ESL teaching material in an EAP context. You will find a summary of the major aspects of the study described below, including the risks and benefits of participating. Carefully read the information provided below. If you wish to participate in this study, sign your name and write the date. Any information you provide to us will be kept in strict confidence. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this project, please contact Stephen Cook at 713-890-2691 or by email at Sc95@students.uwf.edu.

I understand that:

1. (1) I will be asked to watch a clip of *The Big Bang Theory* television show. During this time, the researcher may take notes on my reaction to the show.
2. (2) I will be asked to complete a 17-question survey about the show, teaching practices, and about some background information.
3. (3) I will be asked to take part in an interview about the show, teaching practices, and about some background information.
4. (4) My interview answers will be audio recorded so that my responses can be typed out by the researcher for analysis.
5. (5) I may discontinue participation in this study at any time without penalty.
6. (6) My answers will be made anonymous through the use of a random participant number instead of my name.
7. (7) My identity and contact information will never be published or shared with anyone.

III. Potential Risks of the Study:

1. (1) There is no expected risk for me participating in this research project.

IV. Potential Benefits of the Study:

1. (1) My participation in this study could help improve instructional practices and policies for ESL and EAP programs like at the ELI.

V. Statement of Consent: I certify that I have read and fully understand the Statement of Procedure given above and agree to participate in the research project described therein. Permission is given voluntarily and without coercion or undue influence. It is understood that I may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of any benefits to which I may otherwise be entitled. I will be provided a copy of this consent form.

_____
Participant's Name (Please Print)

_____ _____
Participant's Signature Date

Recorded Media Addendum to Informed Consent Form

Project Title: Exploring the Use of *The Big Bang Theory* in ESL Teaching

Date: November 1, 2018 Investigator: Stephen Cook

Email address: Sc95@students.uwf.edu Phone: 713-890-2691

Description and Purpose of Recording:

The researcher would also like to make audio recordings of your interviews for transcription purposes only.

Confidentiality:

To protect your identity, these recordings will only be used by the researcher to help write out (transcribe) your responses accurately. Once the transcription process is completed, these recordings will be permanently deleted. Your name and other personal information will not be typed into the transcription, even if you accidentally say your name or someone else's name during the interview. This information will be replaced with anonymous references like "Student 1" or "Teacher B".

Voluntary Consent:

By signing below, you are granting to the researcher the right to use your audio recording for transcription purposes only. No use of this recorded media will be made other than for the reasons stated herein.

Your participation is voluntary and your refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may discontinue participation and withdraw this consent at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

If you have any questions, please contact:

Stephen Cook
713-890-2691
Sc95@students.uwf.edu

University of West Florida Institutional Review Board
11000 University Parkway, Building 11
850-857-6378
irb@uwf.edu

_____ _____
Participant's Printed Name & Signature Date

_____ _____
Investigator's Printed Name & Signature Date

Appendix C: Observation Protocol

Observation Protocol, *TBBT* as Humorous Authentic Materials

Observation Number ____ Date _____
Start time _____ End time _____

Descriptive Notes	Reflective Notes

Appendix D: Initial Interview Questions

Initial Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Participant Number Assignment _____ Date/Time _____

Age _____ Gender _____ First Language _____

Years of English Instruction _____ Duration of study at this institute _____

1. What is your general perception of instruction within the department?

2. Please describe a typical lesson here at the institute in your own words.

3. Are there any instructional practices you like better than others? Describe and why?

4. If any of your teachers use humor in the class, can you describe how this makes you feel?

5. Do any of your teachers ever use authentic materials in class? If so, please describe.

6. If any of your teachers ever use authentic materials in class, can you describe how this makes you feel?

7. Have you ever been in an ESL class where a comedy TV show or movie has been used to teach? If so, please describe.

8. What is your understanding or description of anxiety in a learning environment?

9. What is your understanding or description of self-confidence in a learning environment?

10. What is your understanding or description of motivation in a learning environment?

11. What instructional practices create anxiety for you in your learning environment?

12. What instructional practices create self-confidence for you in your learning environment?

13. What instructional practices create motivation for you in your learning environment?

14. What aspects of TBBT did you like? Please explain.

15. In what ways did TBBT affect anxiety in selected courses? Please specify and give examples.

16. In what ways did TBBT affect self-confidence in selected courses? Specify and give examples.

17. In what ways did TBBT affect motivation in selected courses? Specify and give examples.

18. Additional questions as needed.

Appendix E: Interview Guide with Cover Letter

Using Humorous Authentic Materials to Teach English: An Interview Guide

Thank you in advance for your willingness to participate in a research project looking at how you experience the use of humorous authentic materials as a tool in foreign language teaching. Your answers will be kept strictly confidential and none of your personal data will be shared. The results of this interview guide will be used as part of a doctoral dissertation at University of West Florida. In addition, this information will be used to help improve teaching practices at the English Language Institute at UHD.

You have just taken part in a lesson in which *The Big Bang Theory* was used as a teaching material. Please now read through the questions on this form carefully before answering. Answer all the questions you can by either writing in a response or circling the statement that best applies to you. If you do not understand a question, you can ask a teacher for assistance. If you wish not to answer a question for any reason, you may skip the question and move on.

Thanks again and have fun!

Participant Number Assignment _____ (ask Mr. Cook if you do not know).

1. What is your general perception of instruction within the department?

2. Please describe a typical lesson here at the institute in your own words.

3. Are there any instructional practices you like better than others? Describe and why?

4. If any of your teachers use humor in the class, can you describe how this makes you feel?

5. Do any of your teachers ever use authentic materials in class? If so, please describe.

6. If any of your teachers ever use authentic materials in class, can you describe how this makes you feel?

7. Have you ever been in an ESL class where a comedy TV show or movie has been used to teach? If so, please describe.

8. What is your understanding or description of anxiety in a learning environment?

9. What is your understanding or description of self-confidence in a learning environment?

10. What is your understanding or description of motivation in a learning environment?

11. What instructional practices create anxiety for you in your learning environment?

12. What instructional practices create self-confidence for you in your learning environment?

13. What instructional practices create motivation for you in your learning environment?

14. What aspects of TBBT did you like? Please explain.

15. In what ways did TBBT affect anxiety in selected courses? Please specify and give examples.

16. In what ways did TBBT affect self-confidence in selected courses? Specify and give examples.

17. In what ways did TBBT affect motivation in selected courses? Specify and give examples.

Appendix F: Analysis of all Words from *TBBT* Pilot Episode

Character	Word	Spoken Register	Ratio (in millions)	Academic Register	Ratio (in millions)	Keyness Value
Howard	Anticipating	360	0.7	498	1.4	17.53
Howard	Jupiter	229	0.2	941	4.3	5.9
Howard	Lecture	554	0.2	2879	5.4	4.03
Howard	Physics	819	0.1	5908	7.6	3.44
Howard	Quest	1060	0.4	2624	2.6	10.61
Howard	Sentiment	1139	0.6	1836	1.7	3.36
Leonard	Aftermath	1137	0.6	1463	1.3	6.55
Leonard	Bandwidth	59	0.1	591	10.5	8.77
Leonard	Biological	2766	0.3	8160	3.1	3.62
Leonard	Carnal	41	0.4	103	2.6	7.73
Leonard	Dimensions	388	0	7559	20.4	2.89
Leonard	Einstein	479	0.4	1299	2.8	5.83
Leonard	Establish	2099	0.2	9453	4.7	1.73
Leonard	Fractional	15	0	314	21.9	8.77
Leonard	Heterosexual	451	0.2	2006	4.7	11.53
Leonard	Hypothesis	244	0	7790	33.5	10.18
Leonard	Impossibility	71	0.1	632	9.3	8.7
Leonard	In Response	1425	0.2	6187	4.5	1.32
Leonard	Laxitive	16	0.4	40	2.6	8.77
Leonard	Milimeters	53	0.2	275	5.4	23.07
Leonard	Motives	773	0.3	2581	3.5	3.62
Leonard	Must We	52	0.7	69	1.4	60.73
Leonard	Paradox	311	0.2	1439	4.8	5.09
Leonard	Particles	464	0.2	2577	5.8	2.3
Leonard	phylum	27	0.2	166	6.4	11.53
Leonard	Proffer	48	0.7	61	1.2	11.53
Leonard	Self-explanatory	34	0.5	64	2	6.55
Leonard	Significant	8226	0.1	56257	7.2	1.17
Leonard	Undergoing	386	0.3	1125	3.1	4.56
Penny	Occasional	561	0.3	1895	3.5	2.52
Penny	Participate	2410	0.2	10966	4.8	16.39
Sheldon	Access	8034	0.3	23520	3.1	3.29
Sheldon	Accomplish	599	0.5	1155	2	3.29
Sheldon	Aforementioned	51	0	1046	21.5	7.73

Sheldon	After Which	97	0.2	548	5.9	6.55
Sheldon	Angle	1299	0.6	2015	1.6	1.91
Sheldon	Antisocial	33	0	1039	33	7.73
Sheldon	Apparent	1668	0.2	7353	4.6	1.79
Sheldon	Approximation	28	0	612	22.9	5.55
Sheldon	Arbitrarily Defined	1558	0.1	16326	11	6.16
Sheldon	Arbitrary	87	0.2	411	5	6.16
Sheldon	Bowel Movement	90	0.2	461	5.4	13.6
Sheldon	Causality	17	0	903	55.7	11.53
Sheldon	Chain of Causality	0	0	903	55.7	1.94
Sheldon	Clavicle	14	0.3	51	3.8	11.53
Sheldon	Constellations	29	0.1	322	11.6	6.55
Sheldon	Contradistinction	456	0.3	1335	3.1	4.41
Sheldon	Cultural	2866	0.1	39734	14.5	1.82
Sheldon	Defined	1558	0.1	16326	11	2.3
Sheldon	Delusion	77	0.2	339	4.6	6.55
Sheldon	Derivative	117	0.2	566	5.1	8.77
Sheldon	Development	6051	0.1	71226	12.3	1.1
Sheldon	Differential	123	0	3529	30.1	10.61
Sheldon	Directed	2719	0.4	5873	2.3	1.44
Sheldon	Discouraging	249	0.5	457	1.9	6.16
Sheldon	Discovers	2331	0.4	5683	2.6	17.53
Sheldon	Distal	19	0.2	119	6.6	5.55
Sheldon	Distortion	210	0.2	1033	5.2	5.55
Sheldon	Downloads	64	0.6	97	1.6	11.53
Sheldon	Ergo	25	0.4	61	2.6	11.53
Sheldon	Evidently	521	0.5	1044	2.1	3.21
Sheldon	Examine	1452	0.1	12138	8.8	2.52
Sheldon	Existence	1553	0.1	9945	6.7	4.89
Sheldon	Experiments	982	0.2	5523	5.9	5.43
Sheldon	Generate	978	0.2	5230	5.6	5.55
Sheldon	Genetic	2026	0.3	6513	3.4	6.16
Sheldon	However	10846	0.1	99952	9.7	1.42
Sheldon	Hindered	48	0.1	510	11.1	7.05
Sheldon	Hypothesis	244	0	7790	33.5	10.18
Sheldon	Imaginary	275	0.2	1204	4.6	3.92

Sheldon	Implication	546	0.3	1924	3.7	4.89
Sheldon	Integral	236	0.1	3118	13.8	4.41
Sheldon	Intolerant	138	0.5	268	2	8.77
Sheldon	Invent	337	0.6	558	1.7	13.58
Sheldon	I.Q.	65	0.1	1703	6.7	52.27
Sheldon	Lactose	24	0.3	89	3.9	11.53
Sheldon	Lactose Intolerant	257	0.1	3433	14	8.77
Sheldon	Lasers	125	0.4	336	2.8	11.53
Sheldon	Mass	6366	0.5	13494	2.2	6.55
Sheldon	Mechanics	446	0.2	1861	4.4	3.71
Sheldon	MIT	525	0.5	1088	29.3	23.07
Sheldon	Neither	4165	0.4	11091	2.8	2.9
Sheldon	Observed	869	0	17286	20.8	5.08
Sheldon	Odds	2062	0.6	3571	1.8	4.15
Sheldon	Offspring	170	0.1	1513	9.3	5.55
Sheldon	Participate	2410	0.2	10966	4.8	16.39
Sheldon	Perspiration	42	0.8	58	1.6	8.77
Sheldon	Photon	24	0	494	21.6	8.77
Sheldon	Population	7296	0.2	37044	5.3	7.05
Sheldon	Position	16845	0.6	23910	1.5	6.39
Sheldon	Privilege	1807	0.6	2154	1.3	3.81
Sheldon	Protocol	562	0.1	3957	7.4	7.05
Sheldon	Quantum	280	0.1	2287	8.6	6.16
Sheldon	Query	61	0.1	770	13.2	8.77
Sheldon	Rational	936	0.2	4095	4.6	3.21
Sheldon	Redundant	116	0.2	496	4.5	6.55
Sheldon	Relative	1761	0.1	14394	8.6	2.14
Sheldon	Remain	5894	0.4	13211	2.3	1.04
Sheldon	Restatement	12	0	467	40.8	6.55
Sheldon	Result	9986	0.3	36288	3.8	5.83
Sheldon	Retrieve	236	0.4	573	2.5	7.73
Sheldon	Scribbled	47	0.7	61	1.4	8.77
Sheldon	Sequence	732	0.1	6323	9.1	2.61
Sheldon	Slits	27	0.5	57	2.2	14.11
Sheldon	Species	2438	0.1	24530	10.5	2.42
Sheldon	Target	5931	0.5	11375	2	2.07
Sheldon	Technically	1304	0.2	7492	6	5.09
Sheldon	Thus	1510	0	53191	36.9	2.25

Sheldon	Unobserved	46	0	1304	29.7	11.53
Sheldon	Valid	1039	0.2	4284	4.3	9.44
Sheldon	Veritable	50	0.2	274	5.7	6.55
Sheldon	Yearn	213	0.6	362	1.8	8.77