



**BENEMÉRITA UNIVERSIDAD AUTÓNOMA DE PUEBLA**

---

---

**FACULTAD DE LENGUAS**

**“SUBTITLED SITCOMS AS A TEACHING RESOURCE  
FOR IMPROVING LISTENING COMPREHENSION AT  
SECONDARY LEVEL”**

**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF  
LANGUAGES FOR THE DEGREE OF**

**LICENCIATURA EN LA ENSEÑANZA DEL INGLÉS**

**PRESENTED BY:  
CARLOS GIOVANNI JARAMILLO ROJAS**

**THESIS DIRECTOR:  
MTRA. LETICIA PIANTZI VARELA**



**PUEBLA, PUE.**

**AUGUST 2018**

**SUBTITLED SITCOMS AS A TEACHING RESOURCE FOR IMPROVING LISTENING  
COMPREHENSION AT SECONDARY LEVEL**

**This Thesis has been read by the members of the thesis committee of**

**CARLOS GIOVANNI JARAMILLO ROJAS**

**And is considered worthy of approval in partial fulfillment of the  
requirement for the degree of**

**LICENCIATURA EN LA ENSEÑANZA DEL INGLÉS**

**Thesis director**

---

**Mtra. Leticia Piantzi  
Varela**

**Committee Member**

**Committee Member**

---

**Dra. Norma Flores  
González**

---

**Mtra. Georgina Aguilar  
González**

**Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla**

**Puebla, Pue.**

**August, 2018**

Dedicated to:

This project is dedicated to all the people involved in and out of the project, to my advisor Leticia Piantzi Varela for all her hard work during the advising process, for all the feedback provided and her constant work and patience going beyond what can be considered the duties of her work. It is dedicated to María de Jesús Flores Ramos, her advice, during the application of the methodology, became the key for this project, thanks to her feedback as an experienced teacher, thanks to her hard work mistakes that probably could have been committed where avoided and corrected. And finally, this project it is dedicated to my family and friends.

# INDEX

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION .....	1
1.1 Presentation .....	1
1.2 Statement of the problem .....	1
1.3 Main research question .....	2
1.4 Main research objective .....	3
1.5 Subsidiary research questions .....	3
1.6 Specific research objectives .....	3
1.7 Justification .....	3
1.8 Limitations of the study .....	4
CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW .....	5
2.1 Teaching aids and materials .....	5
2.1.1 Teaching aids .....	5
2.1.2 Teaching materials .....	6
2.2 Pedagogical strategies on ELT .....	10
2.3 Listening comprehension .....	13
2.3.1 Bottom-up .....	14
2.3.2 Top-down .....	15
2.4 The benefits of using video in English teaching .....	16
2.5 Working with videos .....	17
2.6 Improving listening comprehension .....	20
2.7 Defining and characterizing sitcoms .....	23
2.8 Building a lesson around a sitcom .....	25
2.8.1 Choosing a sitcom .....	25
2.8.2 Choosing the language focus .....	26
2.8.3 Choosing a scene .....	26
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY .....	28
3.1 Approach .....	28
3.2 Context .....	28
3.3 Participants .....	29
3.4 Data collection techniques .....	30
3.4.1 Survey .....	30

3.4.2 Classroom Observation .....	31
3.5 Data collection instruments .....	31
3.5.1 Survey .....	32
3.5.2 Observation format.....	32
3.6 Procedure of the research.....	32
CHAPTER IV: RESULTS.....	33
4.1 Results from the students survey.....	33
4.2 Results from the classroom observation.....	37
4.2.1 First session .....	38
4.2.2 Second session .....	40
4.2.3 Third session.....	42
4.2.4 Activities used in the sessions and their impact on students' performance .....	45
4.3 General results.....	48
CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS .....	49
5.1 General conclusions.....	49
5.2 Implications.....	51
5.3 Limitations.....	52
5.4 Suggestions for further research.....	53
REFERENCES .....	54
APPENDIX .....	60
APPENDIX A.....	60
APPENDIX B.....	61
APPENDIX C .....	62
APPENDIX D .....	63
APPENDIX E.....	64

## **CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Presentation**

In the modern era of English Language Teaching (ELT), the trend seems to go towards a more communicative language teaching rather than a traditional grammar teaching; therefore, students tend to encounter some challenges when working with exercises presented in a language different to their mother tongue, as a teacher. Rost (2011) noticed some factors that may affect the performance of a listening activity such as: hesitations, false starts, pauses, background noise, variable speed and variable accent.

These factors contribute to create some difficulties when working with elements such as audio recordings, videos or any multimedia elements during a lesson. Given this, students tend to have a wider margin of error because many, or most of them, have never worked with something more than texts or written exercises. Because of this, when presented with a multimedia element, such as a video, which is fully spoken in English and are required to work with, students tend to miss information needed to successfully respond to what they are required.

### **1.2 Statement of the problem**

A situation which has drawn the attention of many English Language Teachers throughout time is that many times when working during a class they have to focus on the topics included in the curriculum established by the institution. Thus, sometimes the development of the skills, specifically the listening comprehension, is moved to the background of the lesson.

When discussing this matter, teachers have mentioned that sometimes the tight schedules bring some difficulties on the application and the proper learning of the different skills by their students who are expected to acquire a specific language level when learning a foreign language, especially when working on a secondary level. Also, sometimes the types of materials do not engage or catch the students' attention because even when it is "attractive" in a way, they seem not to relate to their interests. Therefore students are uninterested during an activity which impedes any future interest they may have on the subject or the language. McCaughey (2015, p. 12) states that "students are not getting the listening practice they deserve. So often, we are sidetracked from listening goals and drift back towards the familiar safety of teaching vocabulary and grammar. We need more listening for the sake of listening."

This is why it is necessary to review the advantages provided by the use of multimedia materials in the classroom. In this case, the use of subtitled sitcoms with students from a secondary level, which may provide them with the interest they may lack and help them improve their listening comprehension skills.

### **1.3 Main research question**

In line with the previously given information, the main question is stated as it follows:

Does the use of subtitled sitcoms improve secondary student's listening comprehension skill? If so, at what extent?

#### **1.4 Main research objective**

The main research objective is to analyze the use of this multimedia material (subtitled sitcoms) and the advantages it may bring to students who are not native English speakers, focusing primarily on improving listening comprehension.

#### **1.5 Subsidiary research questions**

The subsidiary research questions that will contribute to the main research question are listed as it follows:

1. Which are the most popular sitcoms among secondary students?
2. What EFL classroom activities can be helpful when working with sitcoms with secondary students?

#### **1.6 Specific research objectives**

The specific research objectives are related to the subsidiary research questions and are listed as it follows:

- To identify which sitcoms may be popular among secondary students
- To analyze which activities prove to be helpful when working with this type of material

#### **1.7 Justification**

This study may be important to English Language Teachers when dealing with difficulties related to listening comprehension and in search of a different material that may be attractive to students.

The results of this research may be important to teachers and students that may be looking for a different type of material when dealing with the difficulties that may encounter when teaching or studying English as a curriculum subject at the secondary level, looking to adapt it for a different English level or even for a different language.

In this case, teaching aids and materials implemented along with the use of a holistic approach to teach English to non-native speakers provide the students with not only the correct grammar structures but with “local culture” (Piller & Skillings, 2005).

This study may aid English Language Teachers to solve the difficulties their students may have when working with listening comprehension activities by providing them with a different type of material that may be more attractive to students on a secondary level.

A point to take into consideration when working with this topic was the low number of studies directly related to the use of this type of material on students coursing secondary level.

### **1.8 Limitations of the study**

The study will be limited to demonstrate at what extent the use of subtitled sitcoms improve student’s listening comprehension skill, pointing out that most of these students have only taken English language through the curriculum given at the school, also, for most of the students, this is the first time they are enrolled in an English course and their mother tongue is Spanish.

## **CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW**

In this chapter, the fundamentals of the thesis are presented, described and discussed. Some of the topics presented in this chapter are: concepts, theories and models.

The purpose of this chapter is to offer a theoretical background and the fundamentals theories for the study.

### **2.1 Teaching aids and materials**

During this part of the study the different aspects between teaching aids and materials will be exposed and discussed.

#### **2.1.1 Teaching aids**

Patel and Mahichchha (2015) provide a classification of some aids; these can be divided in two categories:

- 1) Video - Audio visual aids: language laboratory, smart board, television, LCD projector, sound motion picture, record player, tape recorder, compact disc player.
- 2) Visual - Activity aids: pictures, photographs, flash cards, poster, charts, diagrams, graphs, maps, cartoons and demonstration programs.

They also mention that teaching aids “reinforce the spoken or written words with concrete images and thus provide rich perceptual images which are the bases to learning” listing the benefits of using aids in class:

- Adds interest, involvement and brings the world into the class room
- Makes learning permanent

- Develops greater understanding
- Stimulates self-activity
- Fosters continuity of thought
- Makes us teach efficiently
- Helps in overcoming language barriers
- Provides a great variety of methods

Also in their work, Patel and Mahichcha (Ibid) suggest that “it is not enough to be merely a teacher who wears a “know all” mask, but a facilitator who understands the students, empathizes with him/her, and in fact becomes a part of the search with the students, for knowledge and wisdom.”

### **2.1.2 Teaching materials**

Epstein and Ormiston (2007) define teaching materials as “a tangible item that you can use to facilitate teaching and learning”. Providing some examples such as:

- Textbooks
- Handouts and worksheets
- Written text
- Audiovisual materials
- Computer software

In contrast with Epstein and Ormiston, Trujillo, Torrecillas and Salvadores (2004) classify some of the materials used in a class in two categories:

- ❖ Traditional resources:
  - The blackboard

- Visual aids: realia, flashcards, wall charts and posters
- The textbook
- Hand-made materials
- ❖ Audio and visual materials
  - The OHP (overhead projector)
  - The audio player
  - The video player and video camera

With this classification Trujillo, Torrecillas and Salvadores explore the different type of materials: the traditional resources and the audiovisual resources. In their work they aim to “inspire teachers to take advantage of their knowledge and creativity to undertake the development of their own teaching materials.

Harwood (2010) purpose that materials should be coherent and principled applications of:

- Theories of language acquisition and development
- Principles of teaching
- Our current knowledge of how the target language is actually used
- The result of systematic observation and evaluation of materials in use

Also, that “materials should not be random recreations from repertoire nor crafty clones of previously successful materials” (Harwood, Ibid, p.82)

On other hand, Pardo and Téllez (2009) suggest that there are seven components that teachers’ materials development must cover:

- Needs assessment: use
- Setting goals and objectives
- Content
- Selecting and developing materials and activities
- Organizing content and activities
- Evaluation
- Resources and constraints

Also, Epstein and Ormiston (2007 p.9) provide a “general evaluation criteria” when developing or selecting materials:

- Language teaching materials should address language beyond the sentence level to provide context.
- In language teaching materials, language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing, pronunciation, and grammar development) should be integrated wherever possible.
- Language teaching materials should prepare students for authentic encounters in English.
- Language teaching materials should offer a challenge to learners at different levels of English language proficiency.
- Language teaching materials should stimulate and develop student motivation through intrinsic, thematic, or topical interest and through associated techniques and activities.

- Language teaching materials should include accurate information that is appropriately sequenced and activities that address the stated objectives.
- Language teaching materials should encourage learners to express their own ideas; materials should tap into students experience, prior knowledge, intelligence and creativity.
- Language teaching materials should be user friendly and include clear instructions for use by students and teacher.
- Language teaching materials for developing oral skills should focus on communication, fluency, and accuracy.
- Language teaching materials should be oriented to help students succeed since students at all proficiency levels must experience success to gain confidence.
- Language teaching materials should be flexible, allowing adapt onto individual teaching contexts and students in those contexts.
- Language teaching materials should be inclusive and culturally sensitive; they should avoid stereotyping and cultural biases.
- Language teaching materials should be attractive in terms of layout and design.
- Students should find materials beneficial. You can find this out by asking for feedback. Ask students how motivational and suitable they thought the materials were to their language learning.

In conclusion the teaching aids and materials should aim to the students' learning by providing "authentic English" through the use of resources which can be traditional

(textbook, flashcards, etc.) and audiovisual materials by helping the students to overcome language barriers by reviewing the content of the materials and setting the goals and objectives expected for a specific class or a curriculum.

## **2.2 Pedagogical strategies on ELT**

Lin and Chien (2010) suggest that in the field of teaching English there are primarily six basic foundations:

- Structuralism
- Constructivism
- Behaviorism
- Cognitive Psychology
- Interactive Approaches
- Computer Assistant Language Learning

Without dismissing the six basic foundations, presented above, Lin and Chien (Ibid, p.21) also point in their study that there are “more than thirty major subject areas”. Some of these major subject areas that Lin and Chien suggest, but are not limited to, are:

- Fields of early childhood language acquisition
- Non-native language pedagogy
- Language testing
- Literacy studies
- Reading processes and instruction
- Writing bilingualism

- Reading processes and instruction
- Translation
- Pragmatics
- Discourse analysis
- Specific languages
- Lexicology
- Interpersonal behavior and communication
- Sociolinguistics
- Communication strategies
- Nonverbal language studies

Lin and Chien (Ibid) conclude that “recent teaching methodologies as well as the language pedagogies mostly focus on an immerse environment or a more active training way through which students can apply English as a real tool of communication instead of learning for taking examination.”

In contrast, a study conducted by Piller and Skillings (2005) takes a more direct approach by asking teachers of New Delhi (31 teachers and two administrators, ranging from a primary up to a high school level) directly about the methods and strategies used during a lesson, according to this study the beliefs and guiding principles that the teachers have about teaching English learners are presented below:

- Includes listening, speaking, reading and writing

- Uses formal and informal methods
- Is structured and unstructured
- Is developmental
- Is holistic
- Is integrated
- Uses repetition
- Uses patterns
- Use questioning
- Happens in a safe and supportive environment

As the information presented before shows, teachers use a mix of formal and informal, structured and unstructured approach when teaching English to no-native speakers. As the participants of the study explain (when talking about formal and informal methods), they teach grammar, usage and spelling but also using language that is “lively and common” trying to apply “local culture” when creating lessons pointing that “the old system of just grammar and structure of sentences is not the way now”. The participants explain that a “structured and unstructured” lesson is by pointing that they “believe” in a structured and unstructured curriculum taking as base the “readiness and maturity” of the group.

In conclusion, the ideology presented above, contrast with the information presented previously by Lin and Chien by taking the basis and subjects exposed as a basis but also taking into consideration their students (group) when applying them,

adapting and taking a more “relaxed” approach if they deem it will favor their students’ learning.

### **2.3 Listening comprehension**

Kue (2004), claims that listening comprehension is a communicative skill which can be defined as the ability to recall and understand information which is presented orally. Chastain (1971) points out that it could be the ability to understand the speech of native speakers at normal speed in listening, but Saricoban (1999) suggests that it is the ability to identify and understand what others are saying, involving speakers’ accent or pronunciation, his or her grammar vocabulary, and understanding the meaning of what is said, On the other hand, Morley (1991) infers that it can be defined as the human process which mediates between sound and the construction of meaning. However, Rost (2011) suggests that the term “comprehension” is thought to be a “first-order goal” and considered by the listener as “the highest priority”, the ideas presented previously share a common point which is the understanding of an idea shared through a communicative medium (e.g., a conversation).

As it was discussed earlier, to achieve listening comprehension, one must understand what is said, not just the words but the meaning of those words, because: "Speaking does not of itself constitute communication unless what is said is comprehended by another person" (Rivers, 1966, cited by Morley, 1991, p. 82).

Summarizing, listening comprehension is a communicative skill which involves a relation between the speaker’s accents, his or her grammar and vocabulary. All these elements interacting at normal speed among the participants, culminating in the

comprehension of what was said, as a whole and not just the comprehension of the words as isolated vocabulary. There are two processes that interact in listening comprehension, the first is the bottom-up process and the second is the top down process, which are explained below.

### **2.3.1 Bottom-up**

The bottom-up processing is often called: data-driven or stimulus-driving processing. Morley (1991) suggests that this is the processing of language information originated by an external source; this is the incoming language data itself. The bottom-up comprehension of the speech refers to the process in which the understanding of language is developed from converting sounds into words, into lexical meaning and grammatical relationships and so on, to finally understand the meaning of the message. According to Buck (2001), the bottom up process follows a defined order: first, the input is decoded to identify individual words, then, continues with the syntactic level processing followed by the analysis of the semantics at a literal understanding of the basic linguistic meaning, and finally, the literal meaning is interpreted by the listener in terms of the communicative situations to understand what the speaker means. Both, Carrell (1988) and Brown (2001) coincide in their description of the bottom-up processing as a text-based and data driven processing.

The Bottom-up processing has to do with the small pieces of language (phonemes) in which, individual words are identified, then these are processed into a syntactical level followed by an analysis of the semantics at a literal understanding, and finally the literal meaning is understood by the listener. Thus; in order to understand the

language, the process starts with the smallest and simplest part and upgrades to a more complex integration.

### **2.3.2 Top-down**

Eysenck (1998), comments that the top-down is a processing which is influenced by expectations, goals, stored knowledge, context, and so on. Chaudron and Richards (1986), notice that this process involves prediction and inference on the basis of facts, propositions and expectations. This suggests that it is possible to understand the meaning of a word before decoding its sounds, because of the different types of knowledge people have. This concept comes from the idea that, in real life situations, people know what normally happens and have expectations about what they will hear. Expectations about the language and the world are included in this process. Additionally Carrell and Eisterhold (1983) pointed out that the background information in the listeners mind is divided into two kinds: content schemata, which include cultural knowledge, topic familiarities and previous experiences, and formal schemata, involving people knowledge of discourse forms: text types, rhetorical conventions, and the structural organization of prose, and both schemata facilitate the listeners comprehension.

As mentioned above, the top-down processing involves prediction and inference, propositions and expectations, the language and the environment are involved in this processing, in which the content schemata and formal schemata interaction help the listener with their language comprehension.

## **2.4 The benefits of using video in English teaching**

Videos can provide a model for activities during class, such as a role-play, but also can generate interest in students about the customs and activities in other countries; furthermore students might increase their vocabulary greatly if the video shown creates curiosity in them. (Arthur, 1999 cited by Çakir, 2006) suggests that videos provide realistic models and daily life situations which can be exploited in class with a role-play, but videos are not only good for activities, also, awareness of other cultures can be raised.

Harrison (2008) refers that a carefully structured video can be good for starting a student discussion of an important issue. By generating a discussion or forum during class, students can apply what they have learned, expose their ideas and beliefs about a specific topic using the information given during the video and adding their personal experience about the topic into the discussion, which is the main point in teaching, and is a way of applying the knowledge acquired during class.

The use of videos in teaching, specifically in teaching English, provide students with a clear example of how it is applied, depending on the type of video that is being used, it can show them how language is used in daily life situations, how to expose their ideas in a clear and ordered way to generate curiosity in other topics creating awareness and motivating them to do further research about it, and how to apply the structure of a sentence in a correct way, and also providing teacher with activities that can ensure a better learning of the lesson.

## 2.5 Working with videos

Before the main activity takes place, it is recommended to have a pre-listening activity, as Richards (1983, cited in Howell, 2005) asserts that, the use of pre-listening is an important aid to teaching listening comprehension. Howell (ibid) proposes that teachers should provide an appropriate pre-listening activity to make students think about the topic, also, mentions that during the pre-listening activity the teacher should look for what students already know about the topic, and if it is necessary, pre-teach the vocabulary or language that is or may be unknown to the participants. With the points previously presented possible errors may be prevented but possibly not totally corrected, students share a different amalgam of abilities and knowledge and because of this the outcome of the pre-listening activity may be uncertain, but it is highly recommended to apply it before the main activity takes place.

Harmer (1998), states four main activities when working with video related activities, the activities are presented and explained below:

- Playing the video without sound: during this activity the students and the teacher discuss what they see, look for clues in the picture about the conversation and guess what the characters are saying, after the predictions have been made the video is played again, but with sound this time.
- Playing the video but covering the picture: during this activity, while students listen they try to guess where the participants are, what they look like, what is the situation, after they have made their predictions the video is played to review their predictions.

- Freezing the picture: during this activity students have to guess what is going to happen next in the video.
- Dividing the class into halves: during this activity half of the classroom sits facing the video while the other half of the classroom sits backward the screen, the half that was facing the video describes the situation to the other half.

Kraiova and Tsybaniuk (2015, p.153) suggest that teachers need to have a full transcript of the video used during the lesson to exploit the vocabulary, also comment that it may be useful to hand the vocabulary to the students “either as a helping tool during the lesson or as a further reading after it. Kraiova and Tsybaniuk (Ibid) also suggest that before watching a video the teacher must cover certain points, such as:

- Familiarize learners with the topic
- Input/elicit some of the vocabulary
- Give some background to what they are going to watch

The third point specifically refers to include some historical, economic, personal, cultural or any other information about the video, setting or participants.

Kraiova and Tsybaniuk (Ibid) suggest that the main activity, the one in which the use of the video should focus on, can include a wide range of activities as long as they are based on watching the material (video), such activities may be:

- Vocabulary-focused.
- Grammar-focused.

- General comprehension of the video.

The first one includes activities such as: completing the gaps, matching words and definitions, matching words and pictures, matching words that go together and choose the correct word. These activities focus primarily on different vocabulary aspects. The second one focuses on writing words in a certain grammar form, completing scripts, transforming sentences, writing questions and choosing the correct option. Finally, in the third one, students have to listen/look for the main points or the general information presented in the video, this activity can be divided into four types:

- **Listening for detail:** It refers to grasp specific information, details that are relevant, important or necessary.
- **Listening for sequence:** It includes information that is needed to act on or orders that need to be followed.
- **Listening for attitude or opinions:** It implies listening for what someone is “really” saying and not to what is literally being said.
- **Listening for functional language:** It refers to how expressions are used in a real conversation and how they are used to accept or decline invitations, giving suggestions or advice, etc.

In conclusion, the activities previously presented and discussed may not be taken as a basis but as a suggestion when working with this type of material, given that the activities applied during a class have to suit what the teacher needs students to practice.

## 2.6 Improving listening comprehension

According to Rubin (1994), there are five major factors that researchers believe affect the listening comprehension:

- 1) **The text characteristics:** It refers to the variations in a listening passage/text or associated visual support.
- 2) **The interlocutor characteristics:** These are variations in the speaker's personal characteristics.
- 3) **The task characteristics:** It refers to variations in the purpose for listening and associated responses.
- 4) **The listener characteristics:** These are variations in the listener's personal characteristics.
- 5) **The process characteristics:** They are variations in the listener's cognitive activities and in the nature of the interaction between speaker and listener.

In the text characteristics, related to the acoustic-temporal variables, Griffiths (1991) suggests three variables: speed rate, pause phenomena and hesitation. Speed rate is divided into two parts: speech rate (the rate at which speakers can easily comprehend a text) and threshold rate (the rate at which comprehension begins to decrease rapidly). Taking this point into account will help to choose an appropriate speech to improve the listening skill.

The interlocutor characteristics have to do with the gender of the speaker. Markham (1988) carried out a study with intermediate and advanced university ESL

students about gender differences and perceived expertness of the speaker as factors in ESL listening recall. In this study, he reported that, first, both groups paid more attention to a non-expert male speaker than a non-expert female speaker, second, the advanced group paid more attention to the male expert and the intermediate group did the same but in a less marked way, and finally, both groups performance was in a higher level when the presentation was given by a female expert than a female non-expert. With all this information he concluded that: “gender bias is a persuasive factor that exerts an influence on ESL students’ recall of orally presented material” also noticing that because a gender-related status division in the speech community maybe female listeners paid more attention to male speakers.

The tasks characteristics have to do with the type of task asked students to access their learning. Eykyn (1992) studied the impact that four tasks had with novice high school French learner while watching authentic video material. The tasks were: multiple choice, choose a picture, French to English vocabulary list and WH questions. The results were that students answered in a better way with multiple choice rather than WH questions, choose a French to English vocabulary list. As it was shown, students had a better response to the multiple choice task when using video material. Also, Shohamy and Ofra (1991) concluded that it is easier to look for data-specific information rather than generalize, infer and synthesize information. This clearly shows that a task must be focused on looking for specific information to help students with their learning. But there is not a perfect task when trying to assess learning, all depends on what is being evaluated, according to Lund (1991), one task is not necessarily superior to another, all depends on the objectives for listening.

According to Rubin (1994), “listeners’ characteristics appear to have considerable impact on an individual’s listening comprehension”, pointing out that only eight areas have been subjects of research, these are: language proficiency level, memory, attention, affect, age, gender, learning disabilities in L1 and background knowledge.

Rubin (ibid) suggests that the process characteristics refer to the process of listening and how listeners interpret input in terms that they know or identify what they do not know, and as the process of listening consists of internal operations and behavior and for this reason is not easy to measure directly.

Summarizing the points discussed, to improve the listening comprehension one must take into account such aspects as the type of “text” that is being used, taking into account if the speed rate is suited to the level of the listener, the influence that the interlocutor gender and level of knowledge may have during an exercise, the aim of the task used, if it is focused on vocabulary or searching for specific information, the characteristics that influence the listeners learning and the process of listening to itself, this means taking into account the possible answer a listener may have during an exercise.

In a more pedagogical point of view, Suzuki (2011) points that the material used must be carefully selected, because in large groups, students with major or minor listening skills are often mixed, and another point has to do with the difficulty of the material. If it seems difficult, the teacher has to tell students to pay special attention, if

the materials seem “easier”, rather than focusing on a specific aspect, the aim must be the overall comprehension of the material.

## **2.7 Defining and characterizing sitcoms**

Sitcoms are usually “a half-hour series segmented into episodes, where the same characters appear in the same settings. The episodes are finite, what happens in the episode is explained and solved” (Hložková, 2013, p.3). Also, Stafford (2004) points out that the episodes are presented in seasons. These seasons usually consist of a group of thirteen episodes or more, whose length may vary between twenty five to thirty minutes. Mills (2005) suggests that sitcoms share a standard definition, which can be presented by pointing the three main characteristics of a sitcom structure:

1. Recurring setup and characters
2. A happy ending
3. Episodes rarely refer to events presented in previous ones.

Moreover, Sherman (2003) suggests that during an episode the central characters are exposed to the unexpected comical situation, also, that the “in knowledge” shown during a program is what makes people laugh because of the knowledge that people had and the brief cultural references.

Also, Taflinger (1996) infers that sitcoms are one of the most abundant programs on television. This demonstrates how popular this genre is and scholarly talking, how many opportunities a sitcom has to be exploited in classroom when teaching English. Stafford (2004, pp. 1-7) defines some characteristics that most sitcoms share:

- 1) Having the story developed a main character in a sitcom is important but not vital.
- 2) Guest stars or cameos are important in long-running series.
- 3) Most sitcoms are filmed in a studio, but sometimes when editing, filmed scenes are added.
- 4) A “laughter track” is often added; these recordings came from a studio audience or “canned” recordings from other shows.
- 5) The aired time spent in an episode varies from twenty five minutes to thirty minutes.
- 6) The number of locations is limited.
- 7) The number of characters is also limited.
- 8) Characters are often from different social ground, ages, cultural values and personal traits, and characteristics like: gender, national, regional or ethnic differences, may be different but this does not mean they have to.
- 9) The characters in a sitcom often follow a pattern, such as one being the “fool”, the simpleton, the clown etc. stereotyped characters based on their ethnicity, social class, age and gender.
- 10) The most common narrative situations used are: family, workplace, social institution (hospitals, schools, police stations, etc.) and leisure facilities (pub, club, bar, coffee shop, etc).
- 11) A recurrent source in sitcoms is the use of social taboos such as: sex, drugs, death, etc.

12) Sitcoms show situations or events that might possibly happen in real life slightly exaggerated.

Looking at the points above and depicting them in a pedagogical view, the limitations given by the sitcoms, such as: number of characters, number of locations and narrative situations, may help teachers to familiarize students with sitcoms. These can be exploited during various sessions focusing on different academic topics during the students' course.

## **2.8 Building a lesson around a sitcom**

This section and the following three present what Bilsborough (2009) considers doing when working with sitcoms. He proposes three bases to develop a lesson plan when working with a sitcom and to build a lesson around a sitcom. Firstly, choosing a sitcom, secondly, choosing a scene and thirdly, extracting useful language. These elements can help teachers to have a narrower idea when planning to work with a sitcom during a class and aid them to prevent any mislead during a lesson.

Teachers have to do a small research before exposing their students to this type of material, by doing this they can grant students a focused learning aimed to a single point, which can beneficiate both parts and avoid any misleads during the time the lesson takes part.

### **2.8.1 Choosing a sitcom**

Bilsborough (ibid) suggests that before starting to develop an activity around a sitcom the very first thing one must be aware of is the target audience. If the sitcom is not appropriate (meaning that students might not relate to) students will not pay

attention to it and therefore to the activity. The sitcom must be attractive and catch students' attention.

It is preferable to do a little research about the popular sitcoms at the time. This will help to ensure that what students are being exposed to is from their preference, granting students' attention will help with their learning during the activity.

### **2.8.2 Choosing the language focus**

Bilsborough (ibid) proposes a question to ease this process: what do I want to teach? This question must be in mind to acquire a successful learning in students. One must be aware of what is going to be taught, if it is going to be temporal structures, adverbs or if it is going to be phrasal verbs and common slang, whatever it is, the activities must be focused primarily on the main idea.

But, as it was discussed earlier in this paper, one must consider the difficulty of what is being taught. If it is considered difficult, it is preferable to focus only on one point. On the other hand, if the activity is considered "easy" one can focus on more than one specific point during the class.

### **2.8.3 Choosing a scene**

Bilsborough (ibid) recommends that the scene chosen from the sitcom has to give students, or at least try to, provide a real situation that they might encounter in real life. Taking this point into account will be really helpful for the learning of the students because many times they want to apply what they know but they do not know how or when. In addition to this, the scene must be rich on examples of what is being taught and provide them with a reliable context, not forgetting that the scene must be eye-

catching to students. Hložková (2013, p. 18) states that “by using authentic video in his/her lessons, the teacher can enhance students’ perceptive as well as productive skills. In other words, learners may not only understand authentic English but also utilize it in real communication” therefore, providing students with helpful aids when presented with a daily life situation in which they have to apply the knowledge acquired in the classroom. To avoid what McCaughey (2015) reported a student once told him “After studying English for many years,” she said, “I was able to understand only my teachers, nobody else.”

If we take into consideration the points presented before (see sections 2.6.1, 2.6.2, 2.6.3) when planning an exercise or an entire class, the learning of the students can be increased significantly than if a video/sitcom is used in only some classes and not exploited at its maximum potential. In conclusion, one must consider these points: consider the target audience, what is going to be taught and the level of difficulty of what is going to be taught and if it does provide students with a “real situation” they might encounter in their learning environment.

## **CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY**

In this chapter, the research approach, the subjects, the context, the research instruments and the techniques used during the research to collect data are presented and described.

### **3.1 Approach**

This study was conducted using a qualitative approach with the purpose of analyzing at what extent reading and listening to subtitled sitcoms improves secondary student's listening comprehension skill. Taking a qualitative criteria for the study seemed appropriate because through it is possible, according to Babchuk and Badiie (2010, p.3) "to better understand an area where little is known, to make sense of complex situations, contexts, and settings, to learn how participants construct their worlds, to gain deep, rich and detailed descriptions of cultural scenes, to help empower individuals to share their stories and enact meaningful social change, and to generate theory where little exists".

In order to collect the data for the research, the participants were evaluated at the start of the study to have data that could provide information about what listening comprehension difficulties they might have and at the end of the study to compare the results provided by the participants.

### **3.2 Context**

The study was conducted out in the field of ELT, the students first language (Spanish) was used during classes by students when a language barrier exists or there are doubts about the activities or instructions provided by the teacher, therefore, the

teacher during a class tends to use both languages, using English first and Spanish second to explain an activity, give instructions for the class or to clarify the students' doubts.

The institution where the study took place is located at the West of the city of Puebla. The institution "Escuela Secundaria General No.9 "México 68" was selected to carry out the study taking into account the curriculum provided by it, in which students are offered English classes, generally, consisting of three sessions, per group, of roughly an hour each a week. The institution provides classes to groups consisting of around forty to fifty students in each classroom. The classrooms are divided into six groups labeled from A to F in three grades: 1st grade, which consists of newly enrolled students, 2nd grade, students coursing their second year on the institution and finally, 3rd grade, which consists of pre-graduate students coursing their last year in the institution. It is important to mention that the only foreign language taught officially in the institution is English and from time to time, by request of the students or students' parents in the institution. English workshops may be provided outside the normal teaching hours.

### **3.3 Participants**

In order to collect data for the study, the participants; a group of second grade from secondary and the English language teacher assigned to teach that subject at that level were selected.

It is important to notice that both participants (teacher and students) are from Mexico and that their mother tongue is Spanish. The English teacher in charge of the

group finished the “Licenciatura en educación secundaria enfocada en lengua extranjera”. She has been working as a teacher for nine years and specifically as an English teacher for the last six years. She is thirty two years old, is originally from Puebla, Mexico. The group selected for the research consisted of forty five students whose ages ranged from thirteen to fourteen years old at the time of the study. From this sample, only three students in total were taking another English language course besides the one taken at the institution. The participants’ level at the time of the study could be considered A1.

### **3.4 Data collection techniques**

In this section, the techniques used to collect information are presented.

#### **3.4.1 Survey**

According to Fellegi (2003), “a survey usually begins with the need for information where no data - or insufficient data - exist”. With this in mind, a survey was applied to the participants with the purpose of gathering information. Given the number of participants a sample survey seemed appropriate given that Fellegi (ibid) states that a sample survey collects data of just a fraction of units of the population as it happened in this study.

It is important to mention that the instructions for the survey were told in both languages (Spanish and English). First, the instructions were given in English and after that in Spanish to clarify any doubts and misunderstandings that the participants might have had.

The first part of the survey consisted of a brief introduction of what is a sitcom, its characteristics and examples. In the second part, the participants were asked to give examples of the sitcoms they knew, in order to search for the most popular sitcom that most participants had seen.

### **3.4.2 Classroom Observation**

The observation took place during each session that the participants had an activity directly related to a sitcom. During each class, students worked with an activity, such activities were:

- Ordering or filling the gaps of a conversation.
- Performing a scene.
- Recognizing the time tense.
- Responding to what was the video about.
- Rewriting the dialogue.
- Writing an ending.

The activities focused on a small scene selected before the session that included a setting that the participants might find familiar, such as: a park, a scholar setting, a party or a daily situation. It is important to mention that in order to compare the results provided by the participants the scenes selected during some classes consisted of sitcom scenes without subtitles and others with subtitles.

### **3.5 Data collection instruments**

In this section, the instruments used to collect data are described.

### **3.5.1 Survey**

The instrument selected to gather information on the participants' knowledge about sitcoms was a survey which purpose was to identify the appropriate sitcoms for secondary students.

The survey consisted of three questions. In order to gather specific information for the study, two were "yes" or "no" questions and the third one was an open question.

### **3.5.2 Observation format**

The purpose of this instrument was to see at what extent reading and listening to subtitled sitcoms improved secondary student's listening comprehension skill.

After the classroom activities were finished, the results obtained from the students were reviewed and compared to their previous results.

### **3.6 Procedure of the research**

Having the instruments and procedures defined to collect the data what followed was the application of the instrument. First, students were given instructions about the activity to be carried out during the session in both languages, before playing the scene previously selected from the sitcom. After this, students proceeded with the activity of the session and with the aid of the head teacher the activity was evaluated.

The information obtained from the classroom observation was analyzed and compared with the results obtained from the last class and then compared with the results obtained from the previous classes. Finally, the results are presented and discussed during the next chapter.

## CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

In this chapter, the information collected through the research instruments is presented. The results obtained by the instruments are analyzed, discussed and compared with the theory.

### 4.1 Results from the students survey

Before the research could properly start, the participants were asked if they knew what a sitcom was, having in mind that this type of gender or even the term sitcom might not be familiar to them. Before explaining the topic, participants were asked if they knew what a sitcom is, its characteristics, or if they were able to give some examples. In order to gather the information, forty five participants were asked the following questions:

Question 1	Yes	No
Do you know what a sitcom is?	0	45

With no previous information, from a sample of forty five participants, zero of them answered positively to this question.

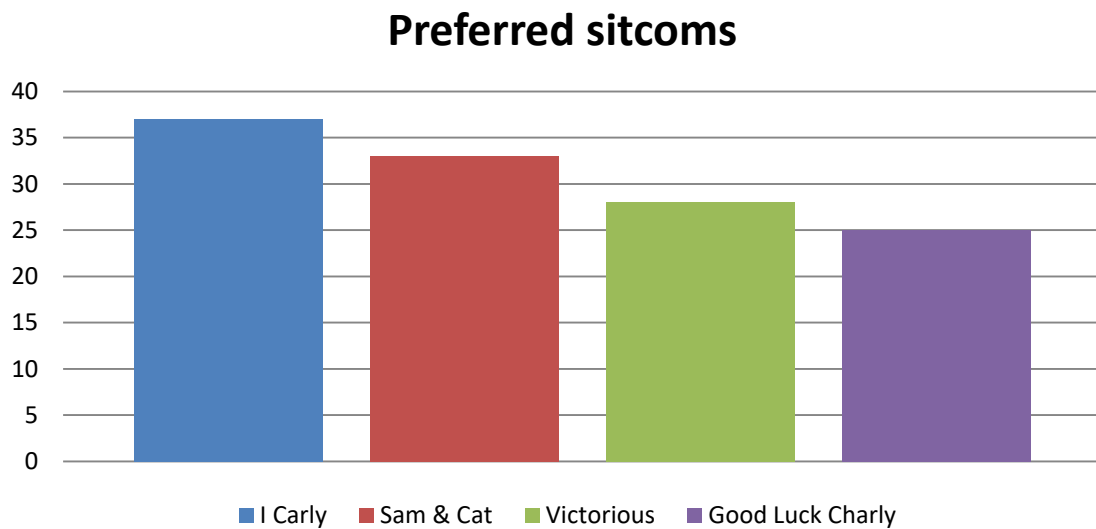
After a brief introduction of what a sitcom is, its characteristics and some examples the participants were asked again:

Question 2	Yes	No
Do you know what a sitcom is?	45	0

From a sample of forty five participants forty five answered positively to the question.

After explaining the characteristics of sitcoms, and with the information, examples and elements that a sitcom has, the participants were asked to list what sitcoms they like.

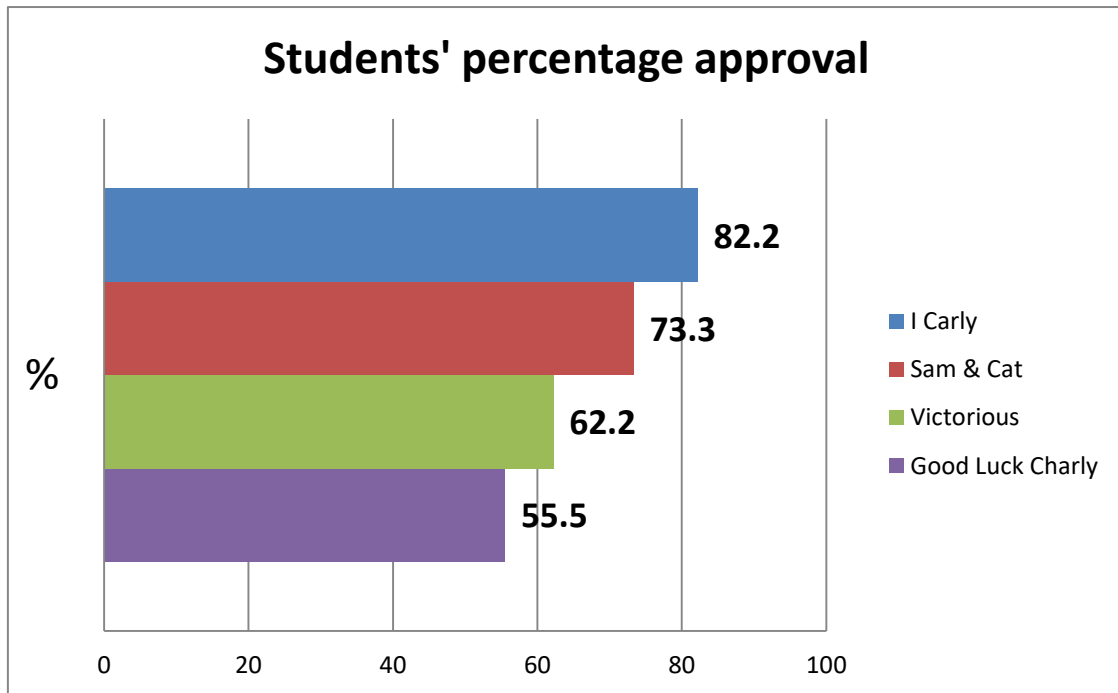
The results provided by the participants are shown and explained below in figure 4.1:



**Figure 4.1 Popular sitcoms among second grade students.**

From a total of forty five participants and after reviewing the information of a list of thirty one TV programs, provided by the participants, the next step was to analyze which TV programs shared the characteristics of a sitcom and which were ranked most popular by the participants. From a list of thirty one TV programs, four were listed as programs that shared the denomination of sitcom and were the most popular among the participants, these programs are listed next to the number of matches provided by the

participants: I Carly (37), Sam & Cat (33), Victorious (28) and Good Luck Charly (25). From the total sample of participants none of them shared a similar taste for the same programs. The percentage of the total number of participants that shared a common answer is presented below in figure 4.2:



**Figure 4.2 Student's percentage approval.**

This information will ease the selection of the most appropriate sitcom for a secondary level given the popularity they have among the participants. It is important to mention that even with the information the participants provided some other programs that were listed by them. In order to decide if the information provided was relevant to the study, the characteristics of the listed programs had to be reviewed and compared to the characteristics a sitcom has. I would also like to report the results related to some of the programs that qualified as sitcoms in the following chart. Due to the percentage

they obtained it was decided to not include them in the study because they were not popular among students. See the table below.

<b>Sitcom</b>	<b>Number of students</b>	<b>Percentage of students</b>
1. Big time rush	4	8.0%
2. Drake and Josh	14	31.1%
3. Friends	1	2.2%
4. Girl meets world	4	8.0%
5. Hannah Montana	6	13.3%
6. Jessie	6	13.3%
7. Kenan and Kell	2	4.4%
8. Liv and Maddie	2	4.4%
9. Malcom in the middle	5	11.1%
10. South park	2	4.4%
11. The big bang theory	11	24.4%
12. The middle	2	4.4%
13. True Jackson, VP	3	6.6%
14. Wizards of waverly place	8	17.7%
15. Zoey 101	6	13.3%

**Chart 4.1 List of sitcoms not used**

## 4.2 Results from the classroom observation

The findings of the observations are presented according to three sessions, which consisted of three or four classes. Moreover, the impact obtained in each of the activities implemented in the sessions is presented. The layout of how the sessions were applied is presented in groups defining the class number with the activity used during each one and if during the class subtitles were applied. The information is presented as it follows:

### 1. First session

- ❖ First class [responding what the video is about] [without subtitles]
- ❖ Second class [recognizing the time tense] [without subtitles]
- ❖ Third class [filling the gaps of a conversation] [without subtitles]

### 2. Second session

- ❖ First class [rewriting the dialog] [without subtitles]
- ❖ Second class [responding what the video is about] [with subtitles]
- ❖ Third class [ordering a conversation] [without subtitles]
- ❖ Fourth class [performing a scene] [with subtitles]

### 3. Third session

- ❖ First class [writing an ending] [with subtitles]
- ❖ Second class [responding what the video is about] [with subtitles]
- ❖ Third class [responding what the video is about] [with subtitles]

The information gathered following this layout is presented below.

### **4.2.1 First session**

During the first session which consisted of three classes in total, students worked with non-subtitled sitcoms. During these classes, the participants showed difficulties when working with the material. The activities and results of the first session are presented below:

#### **First class:**

During this class, a brief explanation about the activity of the day was given at the start of the class. This explanation was given first in English and after in Spanish. During this class, students had to respond what the video was about. First students watched a scene and after that, a round of questions took place. Most students seemed to share a common problem, when asked; according to them it was hard to follow the interaction between the participants because they were speaking “fast”. It is important to notice that the rhythm of the conversation occurred at what can be considered a normal pace. Another difficulty shared was the use of vocabulary previously unknown to them. Also, students had some difficulties trying to express their ideas mainly because of the “fear” of committing a mistake in front of their classmates. Besides these difficulties, students did not seem to have problems with the material and when asked if they liked the material, they were eager to continue using it.

#### **Second class:**

In the second class, a brief explanation of the activity of the day was given at the start of the class. This explanation was given first in English and after in Spanish. During this class, students had to recognize the tense (see appendix A) used by a

participant during a scene. When asked about the tense used by the participants according to what they were intending to express, students answered with ease, especially students that have been taking courses besides the ones given at the school. The problems presented during this class seemed to be surprisingly the ones from the first class, this regarding unknown vocabulary and some “fear” to commit a mistake.

### **Third class:**

Finally, in this class, a brief explanation of the activity of the day was given at the start of it. This explanation was given first in English then in Spanish. During this class, students had to fill in the gaps of a conversation (see appendix D) based on a scene they watched previously. During this activity, students did not seem “stressed” or “fearful” because they knew their answers will not be shared with the rest of the group. Most of the students answered almost perfectly but committing few errors corresponding to misspellings or empty gaps. When the results were handed individually at each student they were asked about the empty gaps, in which students shared the problem with the speed in which the participants were talking versus how fast they could write.

At the end of the first class, the participants mentioned difficulties following the rhythm of the conversation because of the “speed” at which the actors in the sitcom were talking. Another thing mentioned by the participants was the vocabulary used during the participants’ interaction, because they had difficulties understanding the words, or more precisely, the meaning of the word and some showed some kind of stress or “fear” when expressing their ideas because of the possible mockery by their

classmates. Besides these problems, the results obtained regarding this type of material being used at a classroom seemed favorable; students seemed to like the use of this type of material and were eager to work with it.

#### **4.2.2 Second session**

After the first session, the next step consisted of mixing non-subtitled sitcoms with subtitled sitcoms. First, the participants watched a non-subtitled episode and on the next class a subtitled sitcom episode. The episodes used were the same in both classes. This system was applied for the next four classes. During these classes, four in total, the participants showed better results when working with the subtitled sitcoms rather than with non-subtitled sitcoms. The activities and results of the second session are presented below:

##### **First class:**

During the first class, a brief explanation of the activity of the day was given at the start of the class. This explanation was given first in English and after in Spanish. During this class, students had to rewrite a dialog (see appendix C) presented in a scene divided into seven teams of six participants except three groups consisting of seven participants. The video used during this class did not have subtitles. The point of this activity was that with the information collected by each participant individually they would be able to rewrite the scene based on their knowledge and collectively writing a new dialog based on the scene previously shown. Students seemed to have no problems when writing and even if they had a doubt in group they were able to solve it. At the time of presenting their conversation to the group, most of the teams seemed to

ace easily the activity, except one group, but this group specifically was not focused at the time the activity took place. Students were seemingly distracted over activities regarding other academic subjects or personal interests.

### **Second class:**

In the second class, a brief explanation about the activity of the day was given at the start of the class. This explanation was given first in English and after in Spanish. During this class, students had to respond what the video was about. The video used during this class was the same previously used during the first class of the second session but now with subtitles. Because the video used during this class was the same previously shown, students did not have problems responding to the questions about what the scene was about or the intention expressed during the interaction.

### **Third class:**

In the third class, a brief explanation of the activity of the day was given at the beginning of the class. This explanation was given first in English and after in Spanish. During this class, students had to order a conversation (see appendix B) according to what they watched in the video without subtitles. This was the first time they worked with this video. The results provided by the participants this occasion showed an average of two of three errors; perhaps, this had to do with the fact that the video was shown just once providing students with some confusions at the time of arranging the paragraphs.

### **Fourth class:**

In the fourth class, a brief explanation of the activity of the day was given at the start of the class. This explanation was given first in English and after in Spanish. During this class, students had to perform a scene based on the video showed during the third class of the first session but with subtitles during this class. The group was divided into seven teams consisting of six participants except for three groups that consisted of seven members. Before the video was played, students were suggested to take notes about the conversation while the video was running in a loop to aid during their activity. When performing the activity, students did not have problems except some students that paused to correct what they were saying or to “mimic” the pronunciation of a word, if the word was spoken while the video was played.

Before the end of the session, participants were asked: “was easier to work with non-subtitled or subtitled sitcoms?” The participants mentioned that it was easier to understand the conversation with subtitles because if they misheard a word just by looking at the subtitles they could correct that mishearing. Students also mentioned that having the subtitles made much easier to recognize the words spoken by the characters in the sitcom because it helped them to learn not only the spelling of the word but their correct pronunciation. This comment relates more to the way in which the actor in question speaks rather than the pronunciation of the word itself.

### **4.2.3 Third session**

During the last session, which consisted of three classes, the same methodology of the previous sessions was applied, with the difference that:

- In the first two classes, after presenting the sitcoms without subtitles during the first session, they were presented again but now with subtitles.
- In the last class, after presenting the sitcom with subtitles during the second session, the sitcom was presented again but now without them.

The activities and results of the third session are presented below:

**First class:**

During the first class, a brief explanation of the activity of the day was given at the start of the class. This explanation was given first in English and after in Spanish, during this class students had to write the ending of a scene based on the video used during the first class of the first session but now presented with subtitles. Because of the subtitles, it was easier for the students to write an ending based on the video shown. It is important to mention that, regardless of this aid students presented grammatical errors when trying to express their ideas on paper and also misspellings on some words.

**Second class:**

At the second class, a brief explanation about the activity of the day was given at the start of the class. This explanation was given first in English and after in Spanish. During this class, students had to respond what the video presented was about. The video shown at the time had subtitles whereas the first time it did not. The video selected for this class was the one used during the second class of the first session. This time the activity seemed easier than the first time, when students were asked

about the time tense used. During this class, students did not only respond faster and more accurate but pointed out the intentions expressed by the participants regarding if they were being for example: sarcastic, interested, uninterested or “attracted” to someone in particular.

### **Third class:**

Finally in the third class, a brief explanation of the activity of the day was given at the start of the class. This explanation was given first in English and after in Spanish. During this class students had to respond to what was the video about. The video selected for this class was the one used during the third class of the second session but now presented with subtitles. When presenting their ideas, students seemed eager to participate. When students were asked about what the participants said or meant to say, students did not show problems even, as previously presented, some mentioned the “body language” used during the participants’ interaction, and after some students pointed out that, maybe in the wrong way to some of their classmates, other students eagerly tried to correct those “mistakes” generating a discussion between their point of views.

At the end of the observation, the participants showed better results when working with the sitcoms used during the first session, but when working with the previously subtitled episodes, the participants seemed more confident and were able to correct some mistakes made during the first session. This was possible thanks to the fact that students remembered and understood most of the dialogs presented during the scene and to the feedback provided by some of their classmates.

#### **4.2.4 Activities used in the sessions and their impact on students' performance**

During this section, the conclusion drawn from the activities and the impact that each one had on the students' listening comprehension is presented and explored.

##### **Ordering or filling the gaps of a conversation**

Because of the type of activity, in which listening comprehension was involved in relation to the coherence of a conversation; this activity was used twice: the first time during the third class of the first session, the second time during the third class of the second session. Both times the activity did not involve subtitles. During these activities, students problems presented during the first class had to do with misspellings or empty gaps and when applied the second time, students presented better results with fewer errors with misspellings, but had some confusions arranging the paragraphs.

##### **Performing a scene**

Because the relation with listening comprehension could not be considered "close" given that the activity was based on the knowledge of the students and improvisation, this activity was only used once during the fourth class of the second session. Students did not have many problems when performing the scene previously shown; they only paused their performance briefly to correct their dialogs and to try to "mimic" the pronunciation of certain words.

##### **Recognizing the time tense**

This activity was not closely related to listening comprehension and is mostly based on grammar. Because of this, students were asked to respond orally instead of

just writing and to “question” at their level every time they did this. This activity was only used once during the second class of the first session. Students answered with ease during the activity having difficulties just with unknown vocabulary and presented some kind of “fear” when presenting their responses openly to their classmates.

### **Responding to what the video was about**

Because of the close relation this activity had with listening comprehension and how it dealt with the expression of an idea through spoken language the activity was used four times: the first was during the first class of the first session without subtitles, the second was during the second class of the second session with subtitles, the third at the second class of the third session with subtitles, the fourth time at the third class of the third session without subtitles.

The difficulties presented during the first class of the first session had to do with a difficulty following the interaction between the participants also with unknown vocabulary, difficulties expressing their ideas and “fear” to commit a mistake during their explanation. The second time this activity was presented to students, they did not have problems responding because the video was used in a previous session. The third time students responded easier and faster to the activity and pointed intentions expressed by the participants through their tone of voice and body movement. And finally, at the fourth class students seemed eager to respond during the activity, they presented no major problems, again pointed intentions expressed by actions and tone by the participants and corrected mistakes made during the previous time the video was shown.

### **Rewriting the dialog**

This activity was not related to listening comprehension, but it provided students with an idea of what the context of the situation was about. Thus, it was used only once during the first class of the second session. Students did not have problems, such as misspellings or grammatical errors and doubts were solved within the teams in which the students worked.

### **Writing an ending**

The relation with listening comprehension during this activity was not close, but provided students with a general idea before working with it. This activity was used once during the first class of the third session. Students presented grammatical errors and misspellings at the time of writing their ending. Besides this, the activity seemed easier for them than the one they did during the first class of the first week.

In conclusion, when working with a subtitled and non-subtitled sitcom the activity worked better and with a closer relation with improving the students' listening comprehension was: responding what the video was about. With this activity, students seemed to progress with time. At the beginning, students had many problems than at the end of the research; students grew gradually and had much less problems expressing their notions and ideas while working with this type of material. At the very last class students were able to correct the mistakes they had made during the previous session the scene was shown to them, and even pointed to other factors that had to deal with the intention expressed during a conversation by the participants, commenting

paralinguistic elements of the non-verbal communication: such as body movement, pronunciation and tone of voice when interacting.

### **4.3 General results**

As presented in the section above, the participants seemed to show better results when working with subtitled sitcoms rather than with the non-subtitled ones. These results seem to be related to the fact that the participants were able to check any mishearing occurred during the activities almost at the moment without much difficulty except when, in isolated cases, they did not know the meaning of the word.

## **CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS**

The purpose of this chapter is to provide some conclusions to the research. First some general conclusions are presented. In this section, some answers related to the main research question and the subsidiary research questions are included. The next section of this chapter includes the implications of the study, possible benefits that the research may have in general and specific contexts. The limitations encountered during the research are presented and explained. Finally, ideas and suggestions are offered for future researches or possible studies related to this topic in particular.

### **5.1 General conclusions**

The results obtained by the instruments applied at the time of the research contributed to obtain some findings related to the main research question, which are presented as follows:

Does the use of subtitled sitcoms improve secondary student's listening comprehension skill? If so, at what extent?

The conclusion will be expressed accordingly to the results of the research; therefore the information is presented as it follows:

According to the results, it can be said that the use of this material may improve secondary student's listening comprehension skill if the material is carefully selected to appeal to the student's interest and is related to what the teacher in question wants to achieve during the lesson, taking into account the number of sessions and the time given at lectures, by doing this the attention of the students is directed to the material.

The time in which the results might show probably will vary depending on the teacher's acumen when trying to apply this type of material during class.

Also, an occurrence during the sessions was that the students not only paid attention to the meaning and intention of the conversation, also paid attention to the intention given by the participants through their paralinguistic elements of the non verbal communication, such as: body language, gestures. Also including tone changes that pointed to sarcasm or playfulness.

The results obtained by the instruments applied at the time of the research contributed to obtain some findings related to the subsidiary research questions, which are presented as follows:

1. Which are the most popular sitcoms among secondary students?
2. What EFL classroom activities can be helpful when working with sitcoms with secondary students?

The conclusion will be expressed accordingly to the results of the research; therefore the information is presented as it follows:

According to the results the most popular sitcoms provided by the participants at the time of the research, and that were used for the research were four and are presented below along their popularity percentage:

- 1) I Carly (82.2%)
- 2) Sam & Cat (73.3%)
- 3) Victorious (62.3%)

#### 4) Good Luck Charly (55.5%)

This information may be relevant by the time but one needs to take into account that this information may change gradually depending on the generation, socioeconomic status, scholar level, age and popularity of the sitcom, therefore, if this specific genre of media is going to be implemented it is highly suggested to perform a survey beforehand.

In reference to the second subsidiary question, the activity that proved to be more helpful when working with secondary students was “responding what was the video about”. The activity was implemented four times with and without subtitles, the participants at the beginning had difficulties following the interaction between the participants, expressing their ideas, “fear” to commit a mistake and problems with unknown vocabulary, these difficulties seemed to decrease after the second time it was implemented, in the next sessions, the participants responded easier and faster during the activity, also, pointed out other aspects during the interaction between the participants such as intentions expressed through their voice tone and body movement, the participants presented no major problems during the activity and corrected mistakes shown previously on the past sessions.

## **5.2 Implications**

This study helped to show the possible impact that the use of subtitled sitcoms may have on secondary level non-native English speaker student’s listening comprehension.

The results may show that the use of subtitled sitcoms on a secondary level can have an impact on student's listening comprehension and actually improve it if the material is carefully selected and applied during a class based on the topic at hand that is going to be taught during a number of consecutive sessions, also, that one has to take into consideration the factors that are believed to affect the listening comprehension, as Rubin (1994) suggests:

- 1) The text characteristics.
- 2) The interlocutor characteristics.
- 3) The task characteristics.
- 4) The listener characteristics.
- 5) The process characteristics.

These characteristics as Rubin (ibid) points appear to impact an individual's listening comprehension considerably.

And finally, the material must be carefully selected and the audience listening skills must be considered beforehand since working with an amalgam of listening comprehension levels in a single group tends to create difficulties during the process given that not all of the participants share the same background knowledge regarding to the vocabulary they saw on the videos, the rhythm of the speech or the tone of the participants.

### **5.3 Limitations**

It is important to mention that this research was carried out in a total of ten sessions, because of this limited time better results may have been achieved. Also, the

search for material that could fit the institution's curriculum provided a challenge because of the time devoted to a class and the number of topics that needed to be covered on a certain number of classes. Another factor was the time the content, and the evaluations. When working with this material, it had to be related to the topics that were covered in the evaluation process.

#### **5.4 Suggestions for further research**

Based on the findings of this research, it can be recommended to people interested in leading investigations about the same topic to apply it in other languages besides English or even with other media genres such as documentaries, sports, cartoons, news, reality TV, talk shows or soap operas.

A further research that can be explored could be how subtitled media can impact the learning of a second language on target language learners in a selected range of ages or target language level, it is possible to even develop or replicate the same study to contrast results.

## REFERENCES

- Babchuk Wayne A. and Badiee M. (2010). *Realizing the Potential of Qualitative Designs A Conceptual Guide for Research and Practice*. Department of Anthropology. Nebraska: University of Nebraska-Lincoln.
- Bilsborough K. (2009). *Building a lesson around a sitcom*. TeachingEnglish. British council, Spain. BBC. Retrieved 13 April, 2018 from <http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/building-a-lesson-around-a-sitcom>
- Brown, H. D. (2001). *Teaching by principles: An Interactive approach to language pedagogy*. (2nd ed.) White plains, New York: Pearson Education.
- Buck, G. (2001). *Assessing listening*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Çakir, I. (2006). *The use of video as an audio-visual material in foreign language teaching classroom*. Retrieved 18 April, 2018 from <http://www.tojet.net/articles/v5i4/549.pdf>
- Carrell, Patricia L. & Eisterhold, Joan C. (1983). *Schema theory and ESL reading pedagogy*. TESOL Quarterly volume 17 no.4. Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc. (TESOL).
- Carrell, Patricia L. (1988). *Some Causes of text-boundedness and schema interference in ESL reading*. In P.L. Carell, J. Devine & D. E. Eskey (Eds.), *Interactive approaches to second language reading* (pp. 35-56), New York: Cambridge University Press.

- Chastain, K. (1971). *The development of modern language skills: Theory to practice*. Philadelphia: Center for curriculum Development.
- Chaudron, C. & Richards, J. C. (1986). *The effects of discourse markers on the comprehension of lectures*. Applied Linguistics vol. 7, issue 2, Oxford University Press.
- Epstein R., & Ormiston M. (2007). *Tools and Tips for Using ELT Materials: a Guide for Teachers*. University of Michigan Press.
- Eykyn, Lollie B. (1992). *The effects of listening guides on the comprehension of authentic texts by novice learners of French as a second language*. University of South Carolina.
- Eysenck, Michael. W. (1998). *Psychology: an integrated approach*. Harlow: Addison Wesley Longman Ltd.
- Fellegi, Dr. Ivan P. (2003) *Survey Methods and Practices*. National Library of Canada Cataloguing in Publication Data. Statistics Canada. ISBN 0-660-19050-8
- Grace Hui-chin Lin, Paul Shih-chieh Chien. (2010) *An Introduction to English Teaching: A Textbook for English Educators*. VDM Verlag Dr. Muller ISBN: 978-3-639-227314, OCLC number: 884294858
- Griffiths, R. (1991), *Pausological research in an L2 Context: a rationale review of selected studies*. Applied Linguistics vol. 12, issue 4. Oxford University Press.

- Harmer J. (1998) *How to Teach English: An Introduction to the Practice of English language Teaching*. 7th impression 2001, Addison Wesley Longman Limited 1998. Cambridge.
- Harrison, Dr F. (2008). *Using learning resources to enhance teaching and learning*. Senior Lecturer in Educational Development. Centre for Educational Development, Imperial College London.
- Harwood N. (2010). *English Language Teaching Materials Theory and Practice*. Cambridge Language Education. Cambridge university press.
- Hložková M. (2013). *Sitcom as a tool for English language teaching*. Masaryk University Brno, Faculty of education, Department of English language and literature.
- Howell S. (2005) *Teaching Listening Comprehension*. International Center Annual Report, Ryukoku University International Center, NCID: AN10538881. Retrieved 15 March, 2018 from <http://jairo.nii.ac.jp/0157/00002121/en>
- Kraiova O. & Tsybaniuk T. (2015) *Use of Authentic Video Materials in Teaching Listening*. Interactive Models of Scientific Educational Environment Development in the Sphere of Security and Defence Modern Information Technologies in the Sphere of Security and Defence № 3(24)/2015 ISSN 2311-7249 (Print) / ISSN 2410-7336 (Online) UDC 519.6
- Kue, P. (2004). *A study of the effect of teaching english by using physical response to improve the listening and speaking skills and attitude about learning english of*

- sixth-grade students*. Faculty of the education: division teaching English as a second language, Patten University. Oakland, California.
- Lund, Randall J. (1991). *The effects of listening tasks on comprehension*. Paper presented at the Research Perspectives in Adult Language Learning and Acquisition Annual Symposium. Columbus, Ohio, October 11-12.
- Markham, Paul L. (1988), *Gender differences and perceived expertness of the speaker as factors in ESL listening recall*. TESOL Quarterly, volume 22, issue 3, September. TESOL International Association.
- McCaughey K. (2015). *Practical tips for increasing listening practice time*. AmericanEnglish, English teaching forum. Retrieved 13 April, 2018 from [https://americanenglish.state.gov/files/ae/resource\\_files/forum\\_article\\_-\\_mccaughey\\_practical\\_tips\\_for\\_increasing\\_listening\\_practice\\_time.pdf](https://americanenglish.state.gov/files/ae/resource_files/forum_article_-_mccaughey_practical_tips_for_increasing_listening_practice_time.pdf)
- Mills, B. (2005): *Television Sitcom*. London: British Film Institute Publishing.
- Morley, J. M. (1991). *Listening Comprehension in Second/Foreign Language Instruction*. In Marianne Celce-Murcia (Ed.), *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language (Second Edition)* (pp. 81-106). New York: Newbury House.
- Pardo A., Téllez M. (2009). *ELT Materials: The Key to Fostering Effective Teaching and Learning Settings (Materiales para la enseñanza del inglés: la clave para promover ambientes efectivos de enseñanza y aprendizaje)*. Universidad Externado de Colombia, Colombia.

- Patel F., Mahichchha N. (2015). *Teaching English Language by Using Modern Teaching aids to Upper Primary Level Students*. INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL FOR INNOVATIVE RESEARCH IN MULTIDISCIPLINARY FIELD, vol. 1 issue. 1 (AUG) ISSN – 2455-0620
- Piller B. & Skillings M. (2005). *English Language Teaching Strategies Used by Primary Teachers in One New Delhi, India School*. TESL-EJ Volume 9, no.3
- Rost, M. (2011). *Teaching and researching listening*. New York: Pearson Education ESL. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. Applied Linguistics in Action Series. Pearson Education Limited.
- Rubin, J. (1994). *A Review of Second Language Listening Comprehension Research*. The Modern Language Journal, 78: 199–221. doi: 10.1111/j.1540-4781.1994.tb02034.x
- Saricoban, A. (1999). *The teaching of listening*. The Internet TESL Journal. Retrieved 6 April, 2018 from <http://iteslj.org/Articles/Saricoban-Listening.html>
- Sherman, J. (2003). *Using Authentic Video in the Language Classroom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Shohamy, E. & Ofra, I. (1991). *Validation of listening comprehension tests: the effect of text and question type*. Language Testing Journal vol. 8, doi: 10.1177/026553229100800103
- Stafford, R. (2004). *TV sitcoms and gender: notes to support Pictureville Event*. Media education magazine. Retrieved 6 April, 2018 from [58](http://www.media-</a></p></div><div data-bbox=)

diversity.org/en/additional-files/documents/b-studies-reports/TV%20Sitcoms%20and%20Gender%20[EN].pdf

Suzuki K. (2011). *Factors that affect Listening Performance: Strategies helpful for Japanese EFL learners*. Waseda University, School of Education. Retrieved 13 April, 2018 from [https://waseda.repo.nii.ac.jp/?action=repository\\_uri&item\\_id=10358&file\\_id=162&file\\_no=1](https://waseda.repo.nii.ac.jp/?action=repository_uri&item_id=10358&file_id=162&file_no=1)

Taflinger, Richard F. (1996). *Sitcom: What it is, how it works*. Washington State University. Retrieved 18 March, 2018 from <http://public.wsu.edu/~taflinge/sitcom.html>

Trujillo F., Torrecillas J. & Salvadores C. (2004). *Materials and resources for ELT*. Faculty of Education and Humanities of Ceuta, University of Granada.

**APPENDIX**

**APPENDIX A**

**SURVEY**

Circle your answer.

Question 1

Do you know what a sitcom is?      Yes      No

Question 2

Do you know what a sitcom is?      Yes      No

Question 3

What sitcoms do you like?

## APPENDIX B

### ACTIVITY WORKSHEET 1

#### Recognizing the time tense

Identify the verbs by marking them in the following way:

| PAST TENSE | PRESENT CONTINUOUS | ~~FUTURE TENSE~~ |

-The Sushi here is amazing. -I know. -And this is the only place where they give me the training chopsticks.

- Ha-ha! Look at the baby's chopsticks! -Jerks! -Dude, you can't call little girls "jerks". -Hey girl! That's a stupid red jacket.

-Jerks! -You want something else? -Tori? -Uh, nah, we better get back to school. -Just the check, please. -I'm buying lunch.

-This is the least I can do after what you did for me. -What did she do for you? -She helped me massage my grandmother's feet.

-Yeah, great story Now I gotta go puke. -You know I really don't mind paying half. -It's the least I could do for a friend.

-Who helped me massage my mammaw's feet -Oh dear. -Robbie, I've told you, nobody our age says oh dear. - Oh my. - Or that.

-I think I left my wallet in my locker.-It's okay, I'll pay for lunch. -Well, I'm paying you back as soon as we get... -Uh-oh.

- Hey! Why are you still here? -We We kinda forgot to bring money. -So, would it be okay -I know but -Now you give me twenty-two dollars worth of money. -I just told you I can't just give us a minute to figure this out. -Yeah sure. -I'll give you a minute.

## APPENDIX C

### ACTIVITY WORKSHEET 2

#### Ordering the conversation

Fill the gaps numbering from 1 to 11 corresponding to the order in which they appear in the conversation

\_\_\_ Hey guys, quick announcement... I am not currently dating anyone. Just puttin' that out there.

\_\_\_ We start at seven thirty, so probably get here twenty minutes early.

\_\_\_ Oh, y'know, they're sandwiches that are... They have um... They're just normal sandwiches.

\_\_\_ Something we can do for you? Uh, would you guys autograph my... Sister's scrapbook?

\_\_\_ Yeah, I'm not puttin' anything out there.

\_\_\_ Yeah. It's a really popular girls' name here in America.

\_\_\_ Anyway... We made you guys some British sandwiches, if you're hungry.

\_\_\_ And I give good foot massages. Just puttin' that out there.

\_\_\_ Yeah. Sure -- What's your sister's name?

\_\_\_ Is there any water around here?

\_\_\_ So, what time do we do the show tonight?

## APPENDIX D

### ACTIVITY WORKSHEET 3

#### Rewrite the dialog

Taking the text as a basis, change the underlined words to promote your own business or service

–If you're a parent –You probably love your kids.

–But who wants 'em around all the time? –Nobody

–You got that right –Does this kinda stuff drive you nuts?

–Crying babies –Fighting

–So why not bring your kids to sam and cat's super rockin funtime babysitting service

–Sam!! –Cat!! –Fun!! –Eggnnhh!!

–Where Sam and Cat babysit your kids

–We feed them!

–We burp them!

–We change them! –I don't do that –I change them!

–We'll even babysit pets!

–So if you've got kids or pets –and you don't want 'em around for a while –bring 'em on down to sam and cat's super rockin funtime babysitting

–Contact us at samandcatssuperrockinfuntimebabysitting.net

## APPENDIX E

### ACTIVITY WORKSHEET 4

#### Fill in the gaps

Complete the conversation by writing the correct word in the blank space

–...And then Sam yelled at me all the way \_\_\_\_\_.

–Well, it \_\_\_\_\_ have taken you that long to pull 'em out.

–Oh, excuse me for not being skilled at \_\_\_\_\_ hams from my pants.

–So. Maybe it's not so important that you guys do things \_\_\_\_\_.

–You were the one \_\_\_\_\_ said it was.

–Well, I don't have a \_\_\_\_\_, so what do I know? I need a biscuit. You \_\_\_\_\_ want some biscuits?

–No. -Yes.

–Okay. I'll get Sam a biscuit but Freddie \_\_\_\_\_ want a biscuit, so...

–I'm sorry I \_\_\_\_\_ get the hams outta my pants.

–I'm sorry I blew up your \_\_\_\_\_ Fudge master.

–Trudge master.

–Trudge.

–And it was a \_\_\_\_\_. You can tell because the '52 has six rivets on the front, whereas...

–Shut up.