The Exposure to Listening Activities to Promote Speaking in the EFL Classroom

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THE EXPOSURE TO LISTENING ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE SPEAKING IN
THE EFL CLASSROOM

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Proyecto de aula presentado como requisito para obtener el título de
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Thank you.
Resumen

El siguiente trabajo presenta el desarrollo de un proyecto de aula de Lengua Inglesa sobre las habilidades de escucha y habla de estudiantes de primero de primaria. El proyecto fue llevado a cabo en una institución pública del municipio de Pereira llamada Suroriental con 44 estudiantes; en total se hicieron dieciséis sesiones en un periodo de tres meses en las cuales se intentó aplicar la mayor cantidad de material de escucha posible. Este proyecto tenía por objetivo principal intentar mejorar las habilidades de habla de los participantes mediante el uso de actividades de escucha. El análisis de la información se llevó a cabo a través de reflexiones escritas después de cada sesión.

Los resultados de este proyecto de aula sugieren que el uso de actividades de escucha en la clase de inglés para mejorar el habla de niños de primero de primaria en una escuela pública representa un desafío debido a diversos factores que impiden el desarrollo adecuado de los estadios propuestos para la implementación del proyecto y las habilidades de habla de los estudiantes en la segunda lengua. Se encontró también que este tipo de implementación, permite el desarrollo de las habilidades de comprensión auditiva en la segunda lengua y el aprendizaje de vocabulario. De igual forma, este trabajo muestra resultados positivos en cuanto a la actitud que se genera en los participantes hacia el inglés. Por otro lado, este proyecto también incita a los lectores a investigaciones más profundas sobre métodos para el desarrollo de las habilidades de escucha y habla con niños en el aula de inglés.
Abstract

The following study presents the development of an English Language Classroom Project about the listening and speaking skills of students from first grade. The project was developed with forty four students of a public institution in Pereira called Suroriental. In total, seventeen lessons were carried out in a period of three months in which it was intended to apply the highest number of listening activities as it was possible. This project aimed to try to improve students’ speaking skills through the use of listening activities. The analysis of the information was done throughout the use of reflective papers written after every lesson.

The results of this classroom project suggest that the use of listening activities in the English class to improve the speaking skills of children from first grade of a public school represents a challenge due to several factors that do not allow the proper development of the stages proposed for the implementation and students’ skills in the second language. It was also found that this type of implementations allows the development of listening comprehension skills in the target language and vocabulary. Moreover, this study shows positive results regarding students’ attitudes towards English. The project also encourages readers to investigate deeply about other methods for the development of listening and speaking skills of children in the English class.
Justification

Listening is an important skill in language communication as well as in the process of learning a second language; that is why, it is necessary to include it in the EFL classroom. Nevertheless, this situation rarely occurs in the Colombian context for different reasons. This classroom project is designed and implemented in order to analyze this situation and other facts linked to it. The following paragraphs will provide a brief but very specific description of what is going to be done. The purpose is to combine the listening and the speaking skill in order to reinforce speaking which is fundamental in the communicative process, and this reinforcement is going to be done through the implementation of simple listening tasks. Listening is of highly importance in the process of communication, and as Rosenbaum (2005) states, good communication starts through listening; therefore, listening becomes the necessary input for students to be able to perform the speaking act. Nevertheless, communication does not only depend on the input, it also takes into account whether the input can become a successful output or not. In his research about students’ perceptions on EFL speaking, Nazara (2010) states that the skill that has always been considered as the most essential, even for conversing with others, is speaking. Therefore, learners must be exposed as much as possible to this skill in order for them to carry out basic daily life conversations.

Although the teaching of the listening skill is a matter of importance, some theories and previous observations have clearly showed that it has not been taken into account in the Colombian context. It is important to mention Case (2012) who points out that in most Spanish-speaking countries, English lessons tend to be more focused on grammar and reading rather that speaking and listening. This situation has been evident in the Colombian context. Other authors that support these ideas are Pinnell & Jaggar (2003). They state that listening has been called one of the neglected skills in the EFL classroom in view of the fact it is not usually taught in early ages. Case, Pinnell, and Jaggar’s ideas are also supported by observations that have been conducted by the practitioners involved in this project in public schools in Risaralda, which have proved this assumption to be right. In fact, the main aspect to justify this project is the personal experiences witnessed by practitioners during their training process. This problematic situation might occur since some teachers think that it is more important to teach reading and writing during the time they are given to guide the lesson (Wilson and Barnard, 2007). Another important reason is due to the fact that teachers
are not well prepared to teach listening and speaking, that is why they focus on grammar and translation.

Considering the state of the art of the teaching and learning process of the listening skill, it is proposed to carry out a project in which the main focus is the presentation of listening activities. Teachers will use live-listening, audios from videos or songs. Some of these activities might be edited to slow the pacing in order to allow students to comprehend the materials more easily. Hong (2008) claims that to second language learners, the way native speakers talk is very fast, so it leads to some trouble to the non-native speaker and others; then, accommodating the pace would be necessary in the activities. It is a matter of importance to present listening materials that engage students to the activity since it is going to be the vital step for the process of production.

The objective of this project was to report students’ reaction to the methodology implemented which intended to promote speaking among learners. The purpose was to observe the way students handled listening activities, and how they incorporated new knowledge into their existing structure. Another important idea was to provide students with understandable listening input according to their level. This project was implemented in a primary public school. The students were from first grade, and it was expected to start from A0 level and incorporate these two skills (listening and speaking) to the classes. Finally, it was important to provide students with all the necessary tools in order to allow communicating at least basically in the second language.
Conceptual framework

The classroom project described in this paper, took into account four important concepts to develop its theoretical basis. The concepts of listening, listening comprehension, comprehensible input, and speaking were developed in order to frame this study. The concepts portrayed the stages in which the input was used in order to provide an output. In an overview of this theoretical basis, it was necessary to include definitions of the concepts, strategies, procedures, and other different perspectives that provided a background for the development of this classroom project. The concepts were speaking, listening, listening comprehension, and comprehensible input. The authors that contributed to this theoretical ground were Baker and Westrup (2003), Chaney (1998), and Kayi (2006) on Speaking. Schultz (2003) and Richards (2008) developed the Listening concept. Listening comprehension was defined based on Rost’s (2002), Misa (2010) ideas on the matter. When dealing with Comprehensible input, Krashen (1981) and Lee, and VanPatten, (2003) provided different points of view.

Speaking

In the new EFL (English as a foreign language) classrooms, the integration of the four basic skills has been an important matter of discussion due to the fact that all of the skills need to be promoted in order for them to be developed; nevertheless, observations carried out by practitioners show that many teachers still do not know how to integrate the skills in their lessons. According to Minh (2010), one of the four skills which has been more neglected and not incorporated in the classroom is speaking, and according to the author, in most cases it happens because students are reluctant to speak, that is why teachers prefer to take it out. In general terms, speaking refers to the process by which people get to communicate with others. As the main concept of this project, speaking will be the starting point of this discussion, and the authors that are developed in the following lines will try to define the concept from different perspectives.

Definitions:
The first authors to present ideas are Baker and Westrup (2003), who define speaking in the classroom as the way people repeat words or dialogues; however, they explain that repetition is only way of practicing language. In the classroom, it is necessary to ask students to make their own constructions, instead of working on repetition. The authors also claim that in real life speaking people do not repeat, people make their own sentences and dialogues. Chaney (1998) quoted by Kayi (2011) also points out that what speaking consists on is the use of verbal and nonverbal symbols in the process of building and sharing meaning, in a variety of contexts. Taking this into account, authors share a particular idea. They believe the context is essential in the speaking process.

How to present speaking:

Baker and Westrup (2003), state that as second or foreign language learners, students need to practice outside the classroom the language they are being exposed to. This author points out that students need to be able to practice real communication such as expressing their ideas, talking about news, talking about their lives, and discussing issues. That is why, the use of listening activities must be done by creating scenarios that simulate real contexts which allows students to get in contact with real life language structures, vocabulary, grammar, etc. Kayi (2006), states that the activities should be more communicative since they do not only help to the development of the speaking skill, but also to the development of social and cultural rules of the language.

How it is in the real context:

Kayi (2006), highlights that speaking is one of the most important skills learners need to develop; however, for many years it has not been given the importance needed by teachers, taking it as a process limited to repetition of drills and memorization of dialogues. This author claims that the world we live in requires more real goals regarding the teaching of speaking in order to allow students to have a better experience regarding the use of the language. Furthermore, Kayi (2006) points
out that a classroom environment by ESL teachers should create activities such as: authentic activities, and meaningful tasks that promote oral language, not pure memorization.

Listening

According to Pinnell & Jaggar (2003), the listening practices have also been left out of the EFL classroom, in most cases, because of the challenge it represents for students to carry it out or for teachers to employ it successfully. However, Rosenbaum (2005) states that listening is the starting point of the communication process, which is why, it is necessary to incorporate ideas on this matter which will help to reinforce the purpose of this project.

Definitions:

Many authors have attempted to define the concept of listening as a skill in the EFL classroom; that is the case of Schultz (2003) who presents different ideas about the topic. This author defines listening as an interactive process in which the listener constructs definitions from the message by making connections and comprehension. This author places listening as the center piece of the teaching process and as an essential aspect of students’ understanding.

Roles of listening:

Schultz (2003) places the listening activity not only for language development, but also as a tool by which the teacher can understand students’ needs, listening to teach; the idea is that the listening is not only developed by the students but also by the teacher. Another idea given by Schultz is that listening is not only about capturing written or spoken words, but it also focuses on every action that was not specifically said such as gestures (body language). Teachers and students can capture what was said and what was not said.
According to Richards (2008), listening takes a role in which the main purpose is comprehension and other in which acquisition is more important. In the first idea of the concept, the author considers that the main function of the listening skill is to understand when other person speaks; while for the second idea, the author considers listening as the way to facilitate a better learning of the second language. Richards also claims that: listening is an important tool to provide input in order to obtain a better development of second language proficiency.

**Listening techniques:**

Richards (2008) focuses on the listening process itself, he states two different strategies which can be implemented in order to potentiate understanding when listening to any material, and he also claims that these strategies must be provided by the teacher. The first strategy presented by the author is the bottom-up processing, in which the main aspect for understanding the new information is the new knowledge. The data collected needs to be analyzed and organized in different sections, so the process of comprehension becomes a process of decoding. When using this strategy, the students focus first on the language, and then he or she focuses on meaning.

The second strategy is the top-down, in which the main aspect for understanding the new message is the background of the students. According to Richards students will connect their previous knowledge to the one that they are listening to. When a student uses this strategy, he or she focuses first on the meaning, and then he or she focuses on the language that was used. Following Richards’ contributions, the background knowledge for using the top-down strategy might come from previous knowledge about the topic, contextual knowledge, or knowledge presented in scripts or schemata.
The main concept which highlights the main purpose of this project has already been presented, as well as the concept which defines the means to achieve that purpose. It is now relevant to present listening comprehension which is the aspect by which the objectives of the project might start to be considered vaguely successful. Considering the previous words, listening comprehension has become, perhaps, in one of the most controversial skills to be developed by students when talking about EFL teaching since it has been known as one of the most difficult one. Listening comprehension is a dynamic process in which students not only hear what others say, but they also interpret what they listen to. Listening is a communicative language skill which involves grammar, speaking and writing language skills as well; that is why, nowadays, it is a very important skill in EFL teaching contexts.

**Definitions of listening:**

To show the relevance of this concept, Rost (2002) is quoted; he defines Listening Comprehension, as a way of creating meaning through message given by the speaker, mediating meaning with this one and answering and constructing meaning through difficulty, imagination and empathy. He also states that listening is an intricate and dynamic process of interpretation in which the listeners create a relation with what they listen to with what they know already.

Another author presents very similar ideas to the ones of Rost’s is Misa (2010), due to the fact that both of them propose the idea of listeners focusing on specific items. In this case, Misa (2010) defines listening comprehension as a very intricate process in which varied knowledge and different skills are used together. The idea proposed in this statement is provided by recent research into listening comprehension in which the focus is the linguistic elements, the role of contextual clues, and previous knowledge.

**Listening strategies in comprehension:**

Rost (2002) confirms that the type of strategy the listeners should use for being successful in a listening task depends on what they are listening to. Richards
(1990), states that listeners tend to listen selectively according to the purpose of the task instead of paying attention to everything. This type of activity is in charge of telling the teacher or the student what type of listening strategy is required and the way in which listeners will handle the activity in order to comprehend the activity completely. It is very common, in EFL classrooms, to find that students do not have good strategies to deal with the different kinds of listening activities that teachers propose. That is why, as Rost (2002) suggests, teachers need to provide students with appropriate strategies depending on the type of activities they will be exposed to in order for them to know when to use the adequate one.

Misa (2010) claims that two useful, basic, and important strategies are: to highlight the world knowledge and the context of the situation. These two basic strategies are a matter of importance in the process of listening comprehension. The author also states that learners who have these strategic competences will have a better listening process even if their language tools are very limited. According to the author, learners will not need complex strategies in order to be successful in a listening activity.

**Comprehensible Input**

Finally, the concept of comprehensible Input is presented in this section. The reason for proposing this concept is the fact that every process that has been described before that deals with the different stages of listening, listening comprehension, and speaking, will not be carried if the input given is not comprehensible. According to previous observations conducted by practitioners, the challenges schools face when presenting listening activities are due to students’ lack of understanding of the input. That is the reason why, it is necessary to understand what input to present for each activity and how to present it, and how important it is that students understand what is being said or presented to them by the teacher in the classroom.

**Definitions:**
One author who provides very remarkable ideas on the topic is Krashen (1981), who claims that in order for a second language learner to achieve competences in the second language, it is necessary that the materials presented are a little more exigent for the learners from what they are supposed to be exposed to. In this way the students can face a real challenge when being exposed to new language. Krashen (1982) also states that exposure to comprehensible input is what allows the students to accomplish a second language completely. He also points out that comprehensible input is what makes a language difficult for some learners in view of the fact that they are not exposed to it. According to Lee and VanPatten, (2003), Comprehensible input is defined in this metaphor: “Comprehensible input in language learning is what gets the “engine” of acquisition going”.

Why it is important:

Krashen (1981) claims that the importance of accurate input in comprehending interactions is of particular interest due to the fact that the input that is given to the students, the interactions in which the learners get involved, and the interactions that allow a better comprehension are vital in the process of SLA. Just as krashen contributions, Lee and VanPatten, (2003), they consider that comprehensible input is one of the most important steps when acquiring a second language in view of the fact that if learners are not exposed to materials which help them in their process, acquisition will not occur.

As it was stated as the beginning, the paragraphs written above propose a theoretical ground for the development of this project. It is important to consider that other authors’ ideas might be relevant; nevertheless, for the focus of this project, the concepts presented (Speaking, listening, listening comprehension, comprehensible input) are the most relevant. It is important to highlight that each author that was presented contributed in the discussion in a way that really impacts on the different processes to be carried out. It is also necessary to add that other supportive theories which are important and necessary for the development of this proposal will be analyzed and discussed carefully in other sections.
Methodology

Context
This classroom project was carried out at a public school called Suroriental. The students belong to a low socioeconomic level. It is a big school in terms of structure size. Although the curriculum was presented at the beginning of the course, it was observed that English teaching at this school was not being oriented by the standards proposed by the ministry of education. For this project to be carried out, it was necessary to go to the classroom two hours a week. In this school, there were not English teachers for primary learners; there was one teacher who was in charge of teaching English. This teacher did not have formal studies regarding English, and it was not her area of expertise; she used some books to guide the classes.

**Participants**

This project was carried out with 44 first graders, 23 of which were boys, whose ages are between 5 and 7 years old. At the beginning of the course, the in-service teacher informed the practitioners that learners acquired some knowledge in the second language in view of the fact that she was paying an English teacher from the university; however, when revising basic topics with the students in the first lesson, it was observed that it was necessary to start the process from the A0 level due to students’ lack of knowledge of English basic topics. In relation to students’ attitudes in the classroom, it is important to say that in general terms students were willing to work and carry out the tasks proposed; however, sometimes it was difficult to implement some activities due to the fact that it was a large group, and they were noisy sometimes.

**Design**

The classroom project that is being described and analyzed in this paper was intended to promote the speaking skill; this process was done through the implementation of some listening activities. The primary objective was to present students a set of different listening activities that were the starting point for promoting learners’ production. According to Brown
in order to provide meaningful speaking practice, it is appropriate to carry out both listening and speaking activities. Taking this idea into account, it was decided to implement five specific steps in order to use listening as a tool for promoting speaking. Field (1998) proposes three steps in order to carry a listening activity; those steps are the pre-listening phase, the while-listening phase, and the post-listening phase. As these steps only consider listening, it was necessary to dive the post-listening in three different steps in order to be able to add the speaking part. That is the reason why, five steps were included rather than three, and those proposed steps are:

**Contextualization (Pre-listening):** According to Field (1998) and Brown (2006) the pre-listening consist on preparing students for the listening material, it is about activating their prior knowledge. That means letting the student familiarize with the language that is going to be presented in the material. This phase is about presenting or practicing vocabulary and structures which can be new or even from previous lessons. When carrying out the contextualization part in the implementation, this phase focuses on the presentation of vocabulary and structures that students would have to deal with during the listening task in order to facilitate their understanding of the language presented in the material.

**Presentation (While-listening):** Richards (2008), states that during this phase students apply techniques in order to get the meaning from the material presented; therefore, the goal during the while-listening phase is solely to have students understand what they are listening to.

**Checking Comprehension (Post-listening):** This is the first step of the post-listening phase in which teacher and students analyze together the information that is presented in the listening. According to Richards (2008), during the post-listening phase is necessary to make an analysis in which some features that student might not have understood are solved. Taking this into account, the implementation requires from the teacher to present handouts or formulate questions to the students about specific or general language that is presented in the listening material; this with the purpose of checking if students really understood or they need to clarify some concepts.
Repetition (Post-listening): Anderson, Allen, et al (2010), state that the more something is repeated, the more likely children are to remember. Therefore, it is considered that repeating the language presented in the material to the students is the way in which they could learn it easily. Moreover, the authors also state that repetition in different ways helps to approach students with different learning styles; besides, it aids to give a better understanding of concepts. That is why it is necessary to use this technique in different means, in order to foster the learning of vocabulary or structures.

Practicing the Target Language (Post-listening): It is necessary that children repeat and produce language. Richards (2008) states that after the comprehension stage is the post-listening phase which requires students to give opinions or talk about the topic given in the input. That is why, this classroom project included this step in which students used the language that they had listened and repeated to say their own information. The idea was to have students talk about themselves using the listening material as a model.

For the development of this design, standards by the Ministry of National Education were taken into account regarding listening and speaking; the idea was to propose activities which were according to students’ level. According to these standards, some activities were designed and incorporated in order to promote the achievement of certain goals which were led by these indicators.

Standards concerning listening:

- Entiendo cuando me saluda y se despiden de mí.
- Sigo instrucciones relacionadas con actividades de clase y recreativas propuestas por mi profesor.
- Comprendo canciones, rimas y rondas infantiles, y lo demuestro con gestos y movimientos.
- Demuestro comprensión de preguntas sencillas sobre mí, mi familia y mi entorno.
- Sigo la secuencia de un cuento corto apoyado en imágenes.
- Entiendo la idea general de una historia contada por mi profesor cuando se apoya en movimientos gestos y cambios de voz.
Standards concerning speaking:

- Recito y canto rimas que comprendo.
- Expreso mis sentimientos y estados de ánimo.
- Mencino lo que me gusta y lo que no me gusta.
- Describo algunas características de mí mismo.
- Memorizo y comprendo diálogos cortos.
- Respondo a saludos y a despedidas.
- Uso expresiones cotidianas para expresar mis necesidades inmediatas en el aula.
- Expreso e indico necesidades personales básicas relacionadas con el aula.
- Participo activamente en juegos de palabras y rondas.

Implementation

In the execution of this classroom project, several materials were used in order to provide students with different experiences regarding their contact with the target language. The materials played an important role in all the stages that were incorporated in the lessons; they allowed a more interactive and funnier presentation, as well as a study part which was more enjoyable for students. Materials used in the lessons were flashcards, audios, videos, songs, handouts, board, and projector. The use of these materials is analyzed based on different authors’ contributions which state the importance of such materials in the EFL classroom.

The materials most frequently used were images and pictures presented as flashcards. The flashcards were used with three different purposes, presentation of new words, checking of background knowledge, and practice of vocabulary. Phillips (2001) claims that flashcards are cards with images that help in the presentation and revision of vocabulary. These images are invaluable help in the EFL classroom, and they can also help to focus students’ attention on a specific topic, simple structures and simple language functions. In this implementation, flashcards were vital in the development of different activities and for different stages of the design.
Another material that was used in the lessons was the projector, which was important for the presentation of videos and bigger flashcards, as well as other type of materials. According to Harmer (2001), projectors are tools that are easy to use and carry into the classroom; moreover, they make easier the presentation of the materials. The use of this tool was not frequent due to issues of availability in the school. The board, one of the most versatile tools in teaching equipment was also used; even though this is very traditional, it provides a motivating focus point during the teacher-whole class grouping, which was in fact the primary interaction pattern.

Besides from the materials mentioned above, videos were also incorporated in the lessons. According to Harmer (2001), videos promote students’ creativity and the use of specific structures of language. During this implementation, different videos were presented with the purpose of exposing students to authentic material. Videos also have the characteristic to be more attractive for students, and even though the level of English might be difficult, images allow the understanding of the scenes.

Other relevant materials for the lessons were audios and songs. Audios were important due to the fact that listening activities were the focus of the project, and audios have been the most representative listening material; furthermore, they provide certain contextual aspects and other elements that help in the understanding of messages. Trujillo, Torrecillas, and Salvadores (2012) state that students can be exposed to different styles of English through the use of audios; furthermore, these types of activities motivate kids due to the fact that they see them as a way to change the common routine. Songs took a very important role in the lessons as well, Solhy (2012) states that songs help to increase the children’s vocabulary, to develop listening and speaking skills, to let the students be in contact with the target language, to motivate student, and some other reasons. Children tend to enjoy this type of material more than some others.

Handouts were used in order to check comprehension in view of the fact that each handout shown had the information previously taught in the classes; in addition, handouts with images were used in order to get students’ attention and keep them painting or doing something. They also helped as a way of collecting information about students’ progress on the listening activities.
Evidence:

1. The alphabet (Pronunciation):

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This handout was given to students in order to help them to practice the alphabet while listening to the ABC song.

2. Balloons to color:
After learning some basic colors (Blue, Yellow, Green, Black, Orange, and Blue), learners were given this handout and an audio saying the color of each balloon with the purpose of checking students’ comprehension.

3. Stars to color:

![Stars](image)

This handout was given as a review of the color, and also to help to develop their listening skill. They had to listen carefully and paint the color mentioned for each start.

4. Working with stories. (Family and Fairy tales):

![Cartoon](image)

These cartoons were used in order to explain students the topic of the family, with these images learners were able to identify some members of the family (Brother and sister); besides, an episode of Phineas and Ferb was presented where they could see all the members of the family.
Students were exposed to some stories such as Snow White since it helps to develop their listening skill:

Results

Professional Development:

The implementation of every project always comes along with some results; whether positive or negative, results provide some kind of learning to the people involved in the project. However, learning is not acquired throughout an easy process; it comes after the project faces several challenges that have to be solved. During the implementation of this classroom project, challenges were faced in all the stages proposed and all the aspects involved in a lesson. From lesson planning to material design, the project had to foresee and
try to solve in advantage critical issues that menaced the accurate development of the ideas proposed for the project. Throughout the following section, the implementation of the project will be described, including specific aspects such as challenges, material design, lesson planning, and activities implementation. The learning after the project in terms of social view, academic and personal growth will also be discussed in detail in the following paragraphs.

Challenges:

During the implementation of this classroom project, several challenges were found. The large number of students in the classroom, lack of articulation between stages of the implementation (input and intake), inclusion of children with special needs, lack of children’s school elements, disruptive behaviors, and individual pacing. These challenges will be further explained in the next paragraphs, each of which will be analyzed and supported with relevant theory and examples.

One of the biggest challenges of this project was the large number of students in the classroom. There were 44 students, between the ages of 5 and 7 years old, which represented a challenge due to the fact that it was difficult to have all students’ attention on the activities proposed as well as on the instructions to carry out the tasks; therefore, it was necessary in some cases to explain to some students individually; moreover, the large number of students represented a challenge in terms of classroom management since students got distracted very often during the implementation. This can be evidenced in the following entry of the reflection papers:

“Now, to consider the amount of the students, we need to point out that, although the classroom size allows a better management, the quantity of students itself is an aspect of major attention due to the fact that it is very challenging to observe every student when they are working on specific activities that require movement or participation. In this class, we had a problem in which some students stopped working on the activity, and we could not realize until we were finishing the activity because it was demanding for us to focus on every student”. See Appendix 1.
Furthermore, one of the critical aspects of this implementation had to do with assessing the students’ oral performance due to the fact that the objective of this project is grounded on speaking, which demands the assessment of each student; however, there was not enough time to do this as the classes were just one hour long:

“Something that caused a lot of concern to us was the fact that the classes were extremely short, and they did not allow us to work on all the stages of the lesson. Therefore, we could not finish our lesson plan, and our aim for the lesson was not completely achieved”. See Appendix 1.

To support this, Ijaya (1997) highlights that an overcrowded classroom in a setting in which several negative factors can take place such as noisy students, students cheating during exams, restriction of teacher’s movement around the classroom, and a lack of control of students who sit on the back of the classroom. Now, considering the specific aspect of speaking assessment, Hayes (1997) states that the problems of teaching speaking in a large class are that learners’ production is not efficient and evaluations are not sincere due to the fact that time is not long enough to check on each student’s performance, and sometimes, some students cannot achieve the planned aims since they do not understand what they are expected to do, and the teacher is not aware of what is happening.

One of the most important challenges faced by the teachers during the implementation concerned to the approach used to carry out the project; the approach based on Richards’ (2008) contributions about listening. Richard proposed that there are two parts in listening, listening as comprehension and listening as acquisition; for the listening as comprehension part, Richards proposes a three-steps lesson format (Pre-listening, While-Listening, and Post-listening) which has a final goal comprehension, meaning that after this sequence students will be able to understand the message presented which was very successful in the lessons; however, the idea of the project was not only to improve listening or comprehension but also to promote speaking. The challenge emerged at the point of producing due to the fact that this approach proposed by Richards placed production in the stage of language as acquisition; he stated that for actually acquiring the language and using it, students have to notice and make consciousness of the intended language presented, and this task in children is highly demanding; therefore, Richards quoting Slobin (1985) states that:
"The only linguistic materials that can help children to actually produce are those parts of the message that attract children’s attention enough to be noticed and kept in memory.”

That means that the linguistic materials presented in the project were not attractive enough in order to make children able to notice them; it did not help students to move beyond comprehension, and as Schmidt (1990) quoted by Richards (2008) clarifies, comprehension can be done just using the input; however, real language development only occurs using the intake which is what the learner notices.

Another challenge that emerged during the implementation was that there were two students who had special needs. One of the students had Down syndrome; the challenges that were faced with this student were that he had a low pacing at the moment of doing an activity in comparison with the other students. Therefore, when the next activity was going to be presented, he felt angry since he felt he could not continue. Another issue that was faced with the kid with Down syndrome was that he felt asleep in class, and sometimes the teacher did not know how to manage this type of behavior. Having a kid with this type of special needs represented a challenge since as Miller, Leddy & Leavitt, 1999; Chapman & Hesketh, 2000, Chapman, 1999, 2003, and Abbeduto & Chapman, 2005, contribute on such matter, even though children with Down syndrome might be good at vocabulary comprehension, they have a marked deficiency concerning speech intelligibility, syntax, grammatical phonology, and phonological working memory; these contributions were evident during the class when the kid wanted to participate, and the teacher could not understand what he was saying, or his difficulty to say a sentence or repeat something. The other child that had special needs was one with low self-esteem, this represented a challenge during the implementation of the project due to the fact that as James (2010) claims, it is easier for children with high self-esteem to learn English since they are more likely to participate and take risks in the class to answer questions than children with low self-esteem that normally are afraid to get involved in classroom activities. This statement expressed by the author was during the lessons due to the fact that the kids did not want to participate, and in some situations he would cry since he told himself he did not know how to do it. Concerning oral production, a research conducted by Kalanzadeh, Mahnegar, et al. (2013) written in The International Journal of Language Learning and Applied Linguistics World states that there is a significant relationship between
self-esteem and the performance in oral production; stating that children with high self-esteem present better results at speaking than those with low self-esteem.

To mention another challenge that the implementation of this project faced, it is necessary to say that the lack of material was a key aspect. When talking about materials, it is the materials that students required to carry out specific tasks after the listening activities (Comprehension activities), the activities that were done for this stage of the implementation were in most cases colors, and most of the students did not have them. This challenge might derive from the socio-economic level of the students since most of them did not have the resources to buy the colors for the class. To face this challenge, teachers had to take colors to the classes; however, they were never enough for the large number of students, and when other students were asked to lend colors to their partners, some of them refused to do it. Yalin (2003), states that materials play a determinant role at the moment of attempting to assure a good performance in learning. Besides, Kasim Yaldirim (2008) points out that the use of materials in teaching can be identified best as the use of supporting elements which enrich the education and teaching setting, facilitate learning and concretize addressing the sense organs of the learner.

Now, talking about another problematic situation that was observed during the lessons, it is necessary to mention the disruptive behaviors of some students. There were two types of disruptive behaviors in the classes; the first one was the attention demander type of student and the challenging student who was always trying to disregard the instructions given by the teacher. In regard to the attention demander, it is possible to mention one specific example; a student named Miguel Angel was always shouting in class whenever the teacher asked a question to one student, he was always calling the teacher in order for her to observe what he was doing. The other student that showed a disruptive behavior in the classroom was a girl named Melany; she was always doing something different to what she was asked to do, and at the moment of talking to her and asking her to work on the activities proposed, she refused to do them and took an attitude in which she seemed not to care about it. The biggest problem was that she motivated other students to do the same. Sometimes, part of the time of the class was focused on trying to correct these behaviors, something that was very unproductive. Rehman, Shahzada, et al. (2013), claim that it is very important to know the difference between disruptive behavior of a student in classroom and the behavior that is merely inappropriate, understanding the first one as the one which interferes negatively with
the teaching or the ability of other students to learn the topic in the classroom. Inappropriate behavior may become disruptive when it persists for long time. Student’s disruptive behavior is disadvantageous to the educational society because it interferes with the learning process of other students, with the possibility of having a more effective teaching, the achievement of objectives, and may be evidence of personal problems or anguish on the part of the disrupter.

To finish describing the challenges, it is important to highlight the individual pacing of the students in the classroom; as the classes were very large, there were many types of pacing that had to be managed. There were always students that finished fast, and others that were not able to finish the activities completely. This problematic situation was demanding taking into account that those students who finished first stood up and went around the classroom telling their partners the answers of the activity; something that did not really allow to see the individual progress of each student in terms of comprehension as well as in speaking.

One of the strategies implemented was letting those students help the practitioners with something or giving them an extra task; however, the amount of students made it more difficult to us. During the implementation of listening activities, there were some students that were standing around the computer trying to touch it, and it was very challenging to make them sit again; something that did not allow to do the listening task in its plain form.

**Material design:**

For the material design, there were some specific aspects that had to be taken into account due to the fact that the project was intended for children between five and seven years old. Therefore, materials were adapted and designed with two specific characteristics in order to make them colorful and attractive to children’s sight. Moreover, it was necessary that materials were related to students’ previous knowledge so that they could connect it to the new knowledge being presented. It is also necessary to highlight that the different materials were used in the stages of contextualization, listening, and comprehension. Each material was modified in order to fit the necessities of the project as well as the students.
To start with, and regarding the first stage of the implementation, which was the contextualization, colorful images were used in order to attract students’ attention to the topic presented, so the teachers had to select images which could work as flashcards; each of which with specific colors. This type of colorful material was very successful during the lessons; nevertheless, there was a class in which teachers presented one flashcard that was supposed to be red, but one of the students claimed that it was not red but brown. This situation became very problematic since every time that one student had to say the color of the flashcard, she would correct if the student said red. That is why, when designing the other materials, it was necessary to pay special attention to what was being used or how it was being adapted.

It is necessary to start now with the material related to students’ previous knowledge. For this stage, it is possible to present an example related to a listening activity in which students were presented a video about Phineas and Ferb; the important part of this material was that even though students did not understand what was being said by the characters, they understood what was happening and were able to describe it due to the fact that they knew the characters and could infer what was occurring. That is why it was important to select and adapt materials in order make it familiar for students to feel related to it; moreover, this type of materials are more contextualized and can help children to understand general ideas of the listening input.

The materials that were used in this implementation and their characteristics were based on Vernon’s (2007) contributions in her article of how to make ESL learning fun for preschool children. The author states that children are very visual, and for such reason, teachers need to use colorful and vivid images. According to the author, this type of material will make learning easier for children, which was evident during the development of the classroom project when students were able to learn vocabulary easier as the teacher presented colorful flashcards; moreover, students enjoyed seeing the flashcards and were able to identify them by looking at the colors on it. Concerning the adaptation of materials, Guariento & Morley (2001) claim that incorporating authentic materials in beginners lessons might frustrate students since this type of materials have structures and lexical components of the target language that students do not have or understand. Therefore, teachers adapted materials in order to avoid any type of frustration in the students, and that they could be able to accomplish the objectives of the activities proposed.
One aspect that is necessary to analyze, is the quantity of materials presented to the students during the implementation. It is important to frequently change the type of materials students are using due to the fact that variety means motivation; however, this was not taken into account by practitioners who did not present to students a variety of different materials. There was also an important objective when changing activities, and it focused on the fact that children have short attention span. According to Vernon, a child’s attention span does not go beyond the five minutes; so teachers needed to change the type of activity, the length, and the content constantly. Nonetheless, activities were very similar during the lessons, and although in most cases students were very attentive, in some cases some students showed boredom when they had to do an activity similar to one they would have done before.

Lesson Planning:

At the moment of planning the lessons there were some challenges that were faced and solved. Among the challenges that the practitioners had to confront are the entailment of the project to the practicum, the articulation of the implementation to the topic intended for the lesson, the connection between the activities and other skills, the alignment of the objectives of the project to the objectives of the practicum, the alignment of the sequence of the lesson to its objectives, the evaluation, and the alignment of the lessons to the theories proposed by scholars.

The first issue that emerged during the lesson planning was the entailment of the project to the practicum, due to the fact that during the lessons it was demanding to incorporate all the skills, and the classroom project focused only on two skills: listening and speaking. Therefore, there were some lessons in which the project could not be implemented, which permitted understand that in the specific context where the project was developed, it is not possible to have all the skills in one lesson due to time constraints. It is also essential to highlight the issues concerning the articulation of the implementation, the topics proposed in the curriculum, and the other skills. As it was mentioned before, during the implementation it was necessary to incorporate the four language skills, listening, speaking, reading and writing, which represented a reduction of the time intended for listening and speaking.
Moreover, it was necessary to propose activities for the other skills that could serve as a bridge to get to the activities proposed for the implementation.

Another aspect that was demanding during the implementation related to the alignment of the objectives of the project to the practicum which focused on children actually learning and improving their English skills. Instead, the project did not necessarily require a positive outcome but focused more on the observation. That is why, at the moment of planning it was demanding to establish objectives that were connected to the project and that could provide positive results. In order to solve this situation, teachers had to start by making changes to the syllabus proposed by the school which was noticeably not aligned to students’ real level; this adjustment allowed the teachers to accommodate the topics to the students’ real level, the needs of the project, and the objectives of the practicum. The adjustment made also possible the accomplishment of certain goals proposed by the project and the practicum.

Considering the alignment of the objectives of the project to the objectives of the practicum, practitioners faced a difficult challenge. The primary objective of the classroom focused on the teaching of English including the four skills: listening, speaking, writing, and reading meanwhile the objectives of the project focused only on listening and speaking. At the moment of planning the lessons, teachers had to propose activities to promote the development of the four skills using the sequence proposed in the methodology of the project which was specifically designed for listening and speaking. Therefore, it was very challenging to accommodate writing and reading activities to these stages.

The issues proposed above were difficult at the moment of planning; the evaluation was the most challenging aspect. The large number of students was a problem when assessing since as the New York State of Education Department proposes, oral production should be evaluated individually in order to have relevant and functional information about the student’s performance and having 55 minutes to evaluate 44 children was not enough. Therefore, teachers had to appeal to other type of evaluation such as students’ participation after a comprehension activity which focused on oral questions that checked students’ understanding of the listening material presented. One aspect that helped the evaluation of the students through participation was the fact that there were two practitioners in the classroom since one of them had students work in a specific activity while the other would have another child apart from the group to assess individually. Nevertheless, it is necessary to be careful
with this type of evaluation since the students that remain in the classroom tend to focus their attention on the student being evaluated rather than in the activity that is being carried out in the classroom.

Finally, focusing on the results of the proposal it is relevant to underline the fact that the sequence proved to need the three stages proposed in the design; nonetheless, it is also necessary to point out that there was a problem of articulation between the practice and production or in the stage of post-listening. The designed was based on the PPP method proposed Harmer (2009) and a framework for teaching listening proposed by Richards (2008) consisting on pre-listening, while-listening, and post-listening both of which were suitable for the lessons intended and granted the practitioners the use of a wide range of topics and activities. At the moment of planning the lessons teachers applied this design in order to sequence the class; however, at the moment of the implementation it was evident that students faced issues after the practice in order to make their own productions. This was evidenced on the ideas written on reflection #12: “this activity was an introduction to show us that the project as we planned it needs to be arranged since the production part that we were expecting from the students was not achieved... ...That lead us to think that the process of production needs a more strong basis from the one that we intended to use”. This ideas portray the problem of articulation evidenced in the lessons between are a relevant aspect to analyze at the moment of planning the lesson. However, it is important to highlight that this problem of articulation in the lesson plan is more related to the design of the project than to issues in lesson planning.

Activities implementation:

Regarding the implementation of the activities in the classroom, it is necessary to discuss about different aspects and problematic situation that teachers and students faced in the development of different activities. It is also necessary to establish a contrast between the results expected according to the theory and the reality of what happened during the implementation of the activities for this classroom project. All the aspect to be developed were essential and very influential in the type of outcome teachers received from the students at the moment of finishing an activity.
One of the important issues that teachers had to deal with was the fact that every student in the classroom had a different pacing in comparison to the others; therefore, every time an activity was implemented, there were some students who finished faster, and others that were never able to finish the activity proposed. Then, students who finished faster started going around the classroom trying to solve other students’ activity; issue that caused that the results presented by the students who received help were not very reliable due to the fact that some of the answers in the worksheets were not done by them but for students who had finished faster and were helping others. As Rice (2013) states, classes always have diversified learners, and there will always be students finishing earlier which is feared by most teachers since they do not know how to control them. One solution is to prepare activities like Sudoku, or readings, or for instance, as was the case of this implementation, teachers can use images to let students entertain while they colored them.

When implementing activities in the classroom project, it is also necessary to take into account the type of material that is brought to the class. For this project many copies were used due to the fact that the activity that children mostly enjoyed was coloring which caused that teachers had to bring many photocopies to the classroom not only for the activities intended for the class but also for the spare activities. Bringing several copies to the classroom had two important problems: the first was that every copy had to be pasted in the student’s notebook since that was the in-service teacher method to avoid losing the copies, and the second problem is the amount of money teachers had to invest every class. Having to paste forty four copies takes important time from the lesson, and the teacher will not be able to control students’ behavior while focusing only on one student. Concerning the money invested in the copies, teachers need to be aware that this type of activities needs more material than it is expected since there are always students who do not like the way they do their task or rip the copy off and want to start again with a new copy. The best solution is to give them a new copy in order to avoid misbehavior issues or negative reactions.

When implementing, there was also a key aspect to be taken into account: time management. There were lessons in which students were not able to finish some of the activities; as presenting the task took longer than expected, when students had to start working the task, they did not have enough time to do it. This caused frustration among the students since they did not like when they could not finish a task. Moreover, students felt that they were going to receive a bad grade given the fact that they had not done it completely.
That is why; teachers need to be careful at the moment of managing their time in view of the fact that it affects learners’ self-esteem for they feel they are not good enough to finish a task.

Another aspect to highlight during activity implementation was the fact that students did not develop the task using the target language. It was very common for students to read the content, whether oral or written, of the activity presented by the teacher using the L1. Nevertheless, it is also important to state that comprehension of the activities related more to the use of visual support rather than to the language used by the teacher to explain the activity. Farzizadeh and Sadeghi’s (2013) contributions on the matter emphasize that when dealing with young learners, it is necessary the use of an approach based on visual aids in order to help them in the accomplishment of learning objectives. This theory was of great support during the lessons due to the fact that it fostered students’ understanding when teachers talked and gave instructions.

Learning after the implementation:

Academic growth:

In terms of academic growth, it is important to mention the experience obtained during the implementation of the project since theory sometimes is very different from what happens in the real context. For instance, motivation is an aspect that varies widely from theory to practice. Books provide a long list of ideas in order to have your students working willingly in the tasks proposed for the lesson; however, most of them are not actually applicable such as the use of technology, group work, and autonomous language learning activities proposed by Nowlan (2012). That is why, it was very important to know students, to know their likes, and what kind of activities they like; so that, accurate motivation techniques can be implemented. Another important academic aspect that evidenced important results was the writing of reflections after the lessons, writing reflections helped to identify
different key aspects of the lesson whether positive or negative, and it also led to search for solutions before starting another lesson. Richards (1990) highlights that the teaching experience needs from reflection to become a powerful tool of academic growth and teacher development. Conclusions obtained from the reflective exercise are the ones helping to improve the teaching practice. Another relevant part of the growth consisted on understanding that, even though; sometimes theory is not contextualized, it is helpful with the understanding of students’ learning styles and needs. Finally, in terms of academic growth, it is necessary to highlight the fact that the project allows practitioners to become more autonomous by learning to identify easily students’ needs and what a lesson needs to be more successful.

Social views (students’ reactions):

After the implementation, some feelings appeared concerning the way students reacted to the classes oriented. At the beginning, it was not easy to make students understand that the purpose was to teach a subject; most of them did not understand they had to accomplish certain objectives when developing the activities proposed which caused that students did not pay attention to the practitioners or did not focus on finishing the tasks. After the second week, most students started to realize how important it was for them each class, which is why they became more motivated and enthusiastic and started to improve terms of discipline during the class as it is written on reflection # 7: “It is necessary to start talking about the aspect that has been concerning us the most in previous lessons, and we make reference here to our classroom management. Although in previous classes this aspect had been improving, what we achieved today with our students surprised us a lot. In general, all of our students paid attention and were very expectant to what we were presenting, we used the flashcards that referred to the ground rules, and students followed the instructions that each flashcard represented”. Even though at the beginning of the implementation there were negative reactions towards the lesson concerning discipline, this reflection evidences the improvements of students. Moreover, when it came to the first meeting with the students, some of them referred to the teachers by their names, but after getting to know them and vice-versa, they started to call them “Teacher” showing respect and letting them know they were an authority figure.
Personal growth:

After implementing, it was found that being a teacher does not only mean going to the classroom to teach something to students but also knowing every student and being sensitive with each story students have. Additionally, in terms of planning, it is relevant to mention that a good teacher is the one who comes to the class with enough materials so that students can be working during the class without decreasing motivation; to support this, it is essential to say that students seemed to be very motivated when materials they could touch were brought to the classroom. Moreover, after this experience some thoughts changed in relation to children since now it is easier to be in contact with them as a result of the fact that some behaviors were studied in order to understand the reason why they behave in certain ways. During university, some strategies were explained in order to be a good teacher; however, it is not the same as going to a real classroom to face real situations. As it was mentioned before, one of the students had Down syndrome and it is considered a challenge; nevertheless, this student could carry out successfully most of the tasks proposed as the other students in the classroom. In addition, he was very affectionate and this helped to be even closer to him, showing him love as he deserved. Jeremy Harmer (2008) points out that it is necessary to know what students are doing and how they are feeling in order to have a successful class, he also states that it might be difficult to work in a classroom if students feel that the teacher does not seem to be interested.

Aspects to improve:

After implementing, it is evidenced that there are still some things to improve due to the fact that there were some challenges during the implementation of the project which were already mentioned, these challenges were not taken into consideration when planning the lessons. In terms of academic growth, there are some important aspects to take into account due to the fact that the idea is to understand the new role of being a teacher and assume it. Furthermore, the necessity to improve some academic aspects was also evidenced. There was a lack of preparation to face 44 children in view of the fact that it was demanding to keep students engaged in an activity for a long time and to motivate them during the lesson. Even
though there were two practitioners, it is also necessary to mention that some days students were so active that teachers faced very difficult issues of classroom management.

**Students’ responses:**

Children’s reactions towards English classes in general can be numerous as it can be in any other classroom due to students’ different personalities and likes. As Monsalve and Correal (2006) state in their research about children’s oral performance, all second language learners follow different stages to learn the language due to different psychological, sociological, cognitive, and other factors which provides an individual variation in the English classroom. That is why, teachers cannot expect to have just one singular reaction from students as a result of the fact that every student processes the input given in a different way; moreover, analyzing the students involved in this classroom project, it is possible to observe a variety of different reactions such as excitement, boredom, happiness, and other type of more complex reactions that will be described below.

To begin with, it is necessary to point out that the students had already had contact with the target language and were familiarized with the English lessons due to the fact that the in-service teacher had hired another teacher. One of the clearest examples that show that students are familiar with the language was that when teachers were about to teach the numbers, students continued the sequence alone, and they said out loud that they had learnt it with the previous teacher. However, the teacher was described as to be extremely active and playful with the children all the time; this became an inconvenient for the implementation since as it was stated by the in-service teacher, the activities had serious disciplinary issues, and most of the time students screamed and played around the classroom without being controlled. During the implementation, teachers tried to start with very active activities, and students indeed became really excited about the lesson; which was very difficult to control. Knowing how students would now react, the teachers had to vary the type of activities since, as Vernon (2007) suggests, it is necessary to have calm games during the English lesson and not only lively since the class would be difficult to control. At the moment of implementing calm activities using students’ preferences, they were equally excited about them.
Among other students’ reactions, it is possible to evidence that students felt really comfortable and happy. Students’ comfort was mainly evidenced when they had to carry out calm activities focused on painting. The reasons for these reactions might be based on two theoretical ideas; first, the fact exposed by Vernon (2007) that children are very visual, so colors are very attractive to them, and the other fact is that it gave them opportunity to work at their own pacing. Moreover, most of the painting exercises worked with no possible incorrect answers; that is, students did not have a chance to make mistakes or get frustrated for being doing something wrong.

In general terms, very positive reactions were evidenced throughout the implementation, and one of the reasons why students reacted very positively was that no matter if the answer they gave at the moment of participating was incorrect, they were never told they were making a mistake. Instead, students were helped to find the accurate answer in order reinforce their learning by providing them with a positive experience and an accurate response to the task. Several authors state that feedback has been identified as an important medium for improving learning and performance when it is properly used. Moreover, it has been proved that the use of negative feedback without positive feedback and instruction could confuse learning and performance. Therefore, feedback can act as a powerful strategy if utilized correctly in the classroom, and this is what the teachers intended to do; it is not about letting students learn mistakes, it is about knowing how to correct the mistakes using appropriate feedback.

However, since students did not react positively to all the lessons, there were very particular cases that are necessary to be highlighted. The first aspect to be analyzed is the fact that at some hours, in which the English lessons were going to be guided, students were working on the computer lab. During this computer lab time, students were allowed to play video games or use the internet, which was very attractive to students. Consequently, at the beginning of those lessons, learners were not motivated by the English class. Another reaction that was not very positive towards the English class was self-esteem issues. Some students did not feel comfortable participating since they had a belief that they were not as intelligent as the others; therefore, they did not like the English class, and never wanted to be part of the group in the lessons. Analyzing this situation, it is possible to agree with Romon, Cuestas, and Fenollar’s ideas (2008) that self-esteem plays one of the major roles in learning. Even though there are other factors affecting academics such as background,
expectation, methods and approaches, self-esteem is a key factor and it needs to be improved. That is why teachers had to implement different motivational techniques in order to make the students feel more comfortable with the activities proposed in class in order to allow them to participate and to integrate with the class.

To conclude, it is necessary to point out that there might be a whole range of reactions not so evident for teachers. Therefore, teachers need to propose lessons that can provoke positive reactions among children in order to avoid self-esteem issues and misbehavior. Children in general tend to react very positively to English lessons. In this particular case, reactions were very different, there were moments in which students reacted positively as they enjoyed participating, enjoyed the activities, and had fun while learning a second language, and there were other moments in which students did not react as expected and did not pay attention to the lesson and were reluctant to participate.

Linguistic Outcomes:

In the following lines, aspects concerning students’ language development, linguistic profile, strategies developed, and the least and most noticeable developed skills will be explained:

Language development:

This implementation aimed to develop students’ speaking skills; however, due to many challenges evidenced throughout the process students were not able to accomplish this objective successfully. On the other hand, participants reinforced their listening comprehension skills and increased their vocabulary through the use of the listening activities proposed by practitioners.
**Students’ linguistic profile**

Identifying the linguistic profile of each student is a process that requires time and analysis, and having forty four students in the classroom was a factor that prevented a thorough analysis. That is why; the analysis is limited to a general overview of the class which focuses on a general description of the linguistic profile of the class. Abe (2014) emphasizes on the fact that there have been few studies on the topic, and that understanding of learner’s performance in multiple aspects of linguistics features is reduced. Therefore, a general picture of students' linguistic profile after the implementation will be presented based on the descriptors of the Common European Framework of Reference.

The framework will be used as a base to name what students were able to do at the end of the project. That will allow classifying the level in which students were at the end of the implementation. As it is known, the CEFR classifies users of language from A1 to C2 (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2), being A1 the lowest and C2 the highest; however, there are language learners that if well fit in certain descriptors of the lowest level, they still do not meet all the criteria to be classified as A1 users. Therefore, there are certain descriptors that according to the CEFR can be scaled below level A1, meaning that even though students do not reach the basic level, they still have certain knowledge of the language.

Participants enrolled in this implementation are classified below level A1. However, students were also able to perform some activities stated in the descriptors of level A1. According to CEFR “Level A1 (Breakthrough) – is considered the lowest level of generative language use – the point at which the learner can interact in a simple way, ask and answer simple questions about themselves, where they live, people they know, and things they have, initiate and respond to simple statements in areas of immediate need or on very familiar topics, rather than relying purely on a very finite rehearsed, lexically organized repertoire of situation-specific phrases.” Based on this definition, the following table is a summary of what the group of students demonstrated to be capable of doing after the implementation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Descriptor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

38
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General use of the language</th>
<th>Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions related to the class. Can introduce themselves by saying very basic personal information such as name and last name. Can understand simple and basic instruction when the teacher uses body language to reinforce.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Simple, general tasks</td>
<td>Can make reference to vocabulary by pointing. Can say some basic greetings. Can understand phrases and expressions related to classroom tasks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociolinguistic appropriateness</td>
<td>Can establish basic social contact by using the simplest everyday polite forms of: greetings and farewells.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orthographic control</td>
<td>Can copy familiar words.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phonological control</td>
<td>Pronunciation of a very limited repertoire of learnt words and phrases.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary:</td>
<td>Has a basic vocabulary repertoire of isolated words and phrases related to particular concrete situations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General description</td>
<td>Has a very basic range of simple expressions about personal details and needs of a concrete type.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall oral production</td>
<td>Can produce simple mainly isolated phrases about him or herself with the help of the teacher.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from descriptors in The Common European Framework of Reference

**Students’ learning strategies**

During the implementation of the project, it was evidenced that students used different learning strategies to process the input given. However, there was one that was implemented by all of them to develop the activities proposed by the practitioners. Uhl &
Michael (1990) define learning strategies as the behavior or thoughts a person uses to retain and comprehend information. The strategy that they used was the association of real objects with concepts or vocabulary. Cohen and Aphek (1980) conducted a study in which the participants were asked to use real objects or contexts in learning. It showed that those who used different categories of association; for example: context, mental images, symbols, names and physical reactions were able to retain information; moreover, they affirmed that association is very efficient and helpful in learning. For example, in the class reflection #4, it was evidenced that “students were very interested on what we were doing especially when we made them paint. When they had to work on the handouts and using colors, students showed an excitement that had not been showed in previous lessons”. When practitioners were working on the colors, it was evidenced that just talking about them was not enough, students needed to see the real color in order to understand and identify what was being taught. Based on this, it seems that students can incorporate new language better if they can associate it with a tangible referent.

**Most and least noticeable developed skills**

Even though the purpose of the implementation was to help students to be able to talk using the second language, the least noticeable developed skill was speaking due to the difficulties seen in students when they tried to use English as a way of communication. On the contrary, the most noticeable developed skill was listening due to their facility to understand the listening exercises presented. This was due to the fact that the design of the project was based on Richards' contributions (2008) about the teaching of listening and speaking which propose that for understanding spoken discourse, high level processing is required. That is why, even though children were able to identify certain words to develop the comprehension activities, they could not use the complete target structures to create their own discourse. To show evidence of the difficulties presented, in the reflection #5 of October 3rd 2013, it is explained how challenging it was to conduct some activities because of their limited oral skills: “Besides from the mother tongue, there was a part of the lesson in which we intended to carry out an activity, but at the moment of analyzing whether we could carry it out with the students, we concluded that it was highly difficult due to the fact that students had not achieved the expected level which was derived from the goal settled for this lesson”.
Based on this, it is necessary to analyze the theories that are going to be used with children so that they help to conduct implementations properly. Moreover, it is also relevant to mention that due to the lack of time, practitioners were not able to carry out activities for each skill with enough amount of time.

Conclusions

One of the greatest results of the project was students’ motivation not only for the lessons and the implementation of the project, but also for future lessons that students might be involved in. It is also possible to evidence in those students that are now second graders the interest and desire to participate and be involved in the English lessons.

Concerning aspects related to students’ academic growth, there are varied results from specific students. The individual learning of the students was very different, but when coming to general terms it is possible to evidence that the exposure of students to listening material with the reinforcement of visual input can help in the development of the listening comprehension skills. As Al-Yaari (2013) states in his studies, there is a lot of research that proves that visual aids actually improve receptive skills of students. Therefore, when teaching listening to children, it is important to incorporate them in order to support the listening input children are being exposed to; in such way, comprehension is more likely to happen.

In relation to teachers’ academic growth, there are many aspects to highlight. Teachers manage several situations and aspects into a classroom such as students’ attitudes,
learning, and motivation, among others. Sometimes, it is difficult to control everything that happens in the classroom, so it is important to understand that teachers also make mistakes. However, after making a mistake it is necessary to reflect on what was done since it is the reflective process that actually helps learning. That is why Lewis (2015) places great value on self-reflection, and it is a task that is vital when carrying out this type of projects.

It is important to select methods you feel comfortable with at the moment of teaching, but these methods must have enough theoretical background to assure you a minimum degree of success. The fact that there is certain approach in which the teacher feels more comfortable does not guarantee that it is also appropriate for the class that is going to be held. Kizlik (2015) states that factors such as age, previous knowledge, content, objectives, time, or space are decisive at the moment of choosing the “appropriate” method. However, the author also highlights that there might be difficulties at the moment of selecting a method that is “right” for the lesson and to accommodate it to teaching styles. There is not a precise method for every lesson; however, it is good to make a balance based on different criteria and taking into account all the aspects that influence in the development of the lesson, so the teacher will be able to select the most appropriate.

There were other conclusions at the end of this project that were important even though they do not reflect exactly its focus. One of them is that it is important to have contact with students, which means that it is necessary to go beyond the relationship teacher-student due to the fact that there might be factors affecting a child’s development. Feinstein, cited in Hartas (2011) highlights that living in environments marked by poverty and low incomes can affect cognitive skills and language in children, so for further implementations, it is important to know the students’ context. It is not only about a group of students involved in a project but a group of students with different characteristics, stories, and social backgrounds that affect directly the process that is intended to be carried out.

Another important conclusion observed is that institutions and teachers need to be more realistic regarding what they expect their learners to achieve. Even though there are guidelines, descriptors and standards, an institution needs to take into account not only academic aspects but also social and psychological ones, as well as the material available and the learning environment. Not all students learn the same way or at the same speed and not all of them have the same social background. Moreover, classroom size is also a determinant
factor; therefore, it is necessary to set more realistic goals defined by all the factors mentioned above.

Finally, one of the most important conclusions obtained from this implementation is that when working with listening and speaking, the age of the students and the classroom size are significant aspects that affect performance and success. That is why, it is proposed to make some research on how to carry out successful speaking lessons with a large number of students and at early ages. It is possible to conclude that the objectives of this project were partly achieved. As it was already pointed out, students evidenced an improvement regarding listening comprehension skills which was the first objective of the project before moving to the speaking skill; nevertheless, it is necessary to highlight that the objective regarding speaking was not fully achieved. Taking this into account, it is proposed that when working on the improvement of the speaking skill, teachers may support their work with the contributions of Scott Thornbury (2005) in his book “How to Teach Speaking”.

Regarding the professional objectives, it is concluded that teachers showed an improvement in the selection of material to work on listening comprehension and speaking; nonetheless, it is necessary to make an analysis of the selection of the appropriate methods for a specific lesson. Teachers need to be more assertive at the moment of selecting a method to guide the lessons due to the fact that it is a vital component at the moment of determining whether the lesson can be successful or not. Although students evidenced certain degree of improvement in the skills targeted by the project, it is recommended to make deeper studies in terms of learners’ and class’ characteristics and the existing methods before starting a similar implementation.
Appendix

Observation N°1
Thursday, September 19th 2013

This class generated a lot of nervousness; we were very expectant to what we were going to find, but we also had a lot of hope for what we were going to teach. As we had previously observed, the practicum was going to become a challenge due to the amount of students and the profile of some of them. We had to look for many different activities and techniques to help us in the development of the class, activities that could provide us with an equal amount of learning and entertainment for the students in order to get every student involved in every activity. There were many aspects that were successful during the development of the class; nevertheless, we also have to show that there are many other aspects that need to be improved or changed in order to foster a better environment for learning.

To start with the specific aspects, we need to state that students were really engaged and cooperative at the beginning of the class. The big flashcards that were used in order to explain the ground rules can be considered a success due to the fact that they made students be focus on them (the flashcards). Nevertheless, it is necessary to analyze for future class, the place where we leave our flashcards when they are not being used since students tend to try
to take them. Other aspect to highlight was the classroom that we used (the computer lab); it allowed a lot of activities in which students could move and speak without bothering other classroom or giving an appearance of disorganization. Another good thing about this classroom was its size, it was essential because of the amount of students that we were dealing with, so it allowed us to organize the classroom in a way that we could manage our students easily. However, at some point of the lesson, students started getting distracted by the computers that were around them in the classroom.

Now, to consider the amount of the students, we need to point out that, although the classroom size allows a better management, the quantity of students itself is an aspect of major attention due to the fact that it is very challenging to observe every student when they are working on specific activities that require movement or participation. In this class, we had a problem in which some students stop working on the activity, and we could not realize until we were finishing the activity because it was demanding for us to focus on every student.

It was also problematic when dealing with the students, working with two boys that required special attention. We tried to plan the activities in such a way that both of them could be involved; nonetheless, one of the students was very reluctant to work, he seemed very unhappy. For handling this situation, one of us had to stop working with the group and work only with him; this situation that occurred became a major concern, since we consider that we cannot be paying special attention to only one student; therefore, we need to be more creative on how we create activities that can get this students more involved, or to find a space in which we can get to know him in order to identify his necessities.

Something that caused a lot of concern to us was the fact that the classes were extremely short, and they did not allow us to work on all the stages of the lesson. Therefore, we could not finish our lesson plan, and our aim for the lesson was not completely achieved. It was also possible to observe that the learning pace of the students is very different; this situation let us observe that most students achieved one of the purposes of the lesson, but there were some others that did not even achieve one of the goals. It was equally concerning the fact that the materials that we gave the students were damaged by them. Considering this, we have to think on creating stronger materials to give the students.

All the aspects that were mentioned before were relevant in the development of the class, and they are also relevant for preparing better classes for the future. However, there is an aspect
which is considered to be vital in our EFL classrooms, and it is the use of L1. We had to use our mother tongue 90% of the class; moreover, we had to use it to explain the topic of the lesson. We expect that this aspect can improve in future sessions, achieving a level in which the percentage of the use of the mother tongue is reduced to a 10%. The idea is that we get students involved with the target language as much as possible; in that way, students can have at least a basic model of the language that they are being taught.

Observation N°2
Friday, September 20th 2013

We had to start with the most important and concerning aspect for us, and it is the fact that we have not been able to reduce the use of the mother tongue. In this class, we had to explain again our topic in Spanish, and students are not cooperating with the class. Even though, we use L1 to explain the topic, students were not able to achieve the goal for this class. If we analyze the situation closely, we have to state that the goal we proposed was very demanding for the students. This is the reason why, we need to evaluate again the activities and goals we propose in order to allow students to learn because the idea is not to propose a lesson in which we include many items to make the lesson seem very good, but to propose lessons in which students learn, even if it is not very fast, at least they can learn step by step.

Other situation that happened in this class was that we had to change the activities that we proposed in our lesson plan. As we started explaining the planned topic for the lesson, we observed that students were not really understanding what was being taught; moreover, the topic for this lesson was connected to the previous class, and it look like if most students had forgotten what they had learned the class before; that showed us that they had not really internalized and were not really internalizing what was being taught. That is why, we ended up proposing very different activities, which can be considered as improvising. Other important thing to point out is that there were materials from the previous class that were necessary for this lesson, and most students left it at home. We had to use other alternatives that were not very interesting for the students.

In this lesson, we had a serious problem of classroom management, students were talking to themselves all the time, and they did not pay attention to us. We tried to use the flashcards
that contained the ground rules, but they still did not change their behavior. We had to start calling their attention using a higher tone of voice which led to students getting mad at us; to solve this problem, the in-service teacher had to help us to organize the class, but even for her it turned out to be a difficult task because as soon as she finished, students went back to the same misbehavior. One aspect that might be consider as a reason for this indiscipline is the activities that we had to come up with during the development of the class; as they were not interesting enough for the students, they started paying attention to different things.

Normally, when you are going to deal with students of the ages we are working with (5 to 7), students are not supposed to write and read, but the students we are working with are able to do it. Therefore, we tried to make an activity in which they had to write a question and an answer; unfortunately, students took too long carrying out this task, something that took time from the other activities. We tried to make students stop writing and move to the next step of the lesson, but they did not want to let unfinished what they were doing. From this experience that we had in this lesson, we now can consider that it is not a good option to make students write these kinds of sentences.

When we move to the L1, the idea is that we use it to clarify understanding and to check instructions. Nevertheless, the use of L1 was not successful in this case; all the activities we did in this lesson were not understood by the students, not even when they were explained in their mother tongue. This comes up as a result of the use of improvised activities due to the fact that we were not clear enough when explaining to the students. Another problem that resulted from this lesson was that we had a worksheet prepared for the homework, but as students did not achieve the goal, we had to start organizing the material during the class so that students could do the homework.

Observation N°3

Thursday, September 26th 2013

We have to start by stating that we have been really eager to see our students’ improvement in our English classes; nevertheless, we have to be conscious that this might be a slow process because of the amount of students, their characteristics, and their level. We believed that as every class advanced, we could have at least a better classroom management if we did
not have an evident improvement on the children’s proficiency in the English language. However, this has not been the case; we have not been able to evidence much improvement on the students and the practitioners’ skills. During this lesson, our classroom management faced a real challenge, and we were not able to handle it properly. Students were not paying attention to what we were doing, and our efforts to make them focus were very unsuccessful. This situation worried us and gave us a lot of frustration; the techniques that we were using did not help us and the in-service teacher had to step into the situation in order to control students.

One of the aspects that caused us a lot of troubles was the grouping techniques; we tried to organize students in a way that the learning process could be more successful; however, the grouping techniques caused the opposite effect on the students’ behavior. They did not want to sit in the way we wanted, and they did not want to work with the people we grouped them; therefore, students started moving their chairs and changing places. That makes us consider that although many sitting arrangements have been said to be better than the use of the classical lines, we need to use it in our classroom in order to be able to control students. Another aspect that was considered to be a problem in this class was the use of the computer lab, as this is a space that students really enjoy; they wanted to continue working on them. This is something that we have to analyze for future lessons since all the tools that are in this classroom are becoming a distraction rather than a helpful tool.

Something that we are also concerned about is the fact that most students did not achieve the goal that was settled. Students were not able to use the language that we intended them to use; we think that this might be a result of the indiscipline that was evident in the class due to the fact that if students were not paying attention, they would not be able to internalize what they were being taught. There was something new during this lesson that we had not had the chance to observe before, and it was a very particular situation in which one of our students that has special needs separated from the group and started crying, we did not really know how to handle this situation, and the in-service teacher had to help us again. After this situation, we were really confused since we did not know what strategies or technique we could use when managing this type of situations; therefore, we need to search for theory on how to manage this type of situations in a classroom.
Just like in previous lessons, we have not been able to reduce the L1 in the students, and that is affecting the process since students are not making any effort to use the second language even though we try as much as we can to expose students to the target language. Nevertheless, we need to take into account that this is a process in which we have to go step by step, and students need to continue being exposed to the target language even though they might be reluctant to use it. We also need to consider from this lesson that there are several aspects that we need to work on and research on because there might be several situations that we have not faced, but we will face. We need to consider that this is also a learning process for ourselves, and we need to be open to every situation in order to avoid frustrations during the process. It is necessary to consider as well that not all the aspects can be negative, and we need to take into account those students that show a little improvement on their skills. Those students are being affected by other students’ behavior; nonetheless, the material that has been presented has helped to have them connected to the lesson.

Observation N°4
Friday, September 27th 2013

For today’s lesson we need to consider again several factors that have been the matter of discussion during previous reflections. The first item that we need to deal with is that as we were not able to achieve the complete goal in the previous class, it was necessary to take the previous topic and present it again in a different way in order to be able to continue with the topic that is intended to be taught during the next sessions. The issue of teaching the topic from the previous lesson was that we did not prepare it in the lesson plan due to the fact that it was not very clear to what degree students had had troubles during the last lesson. That is why we had to adapt the activities for today’s lesson to the topic from the previous class. The techniques that we presented were better considering that students were more concentrated and actually started learning the alphabet; however, for those students who had understood the topic in the previous class, it was becoming boring.

The activities that were presented during this class helped us to get students’ attention; they were very interested on what we were doing especially when we made them paint. When they had to work on the handouts and using colors, students showed an excitement that had not been showed in previous lessons. Nonetheless, there was an issue at the moment of carrying
out this activity; students were so excited about this that they did not paint attention to the instructions that we were given; therefore, students ended up painting the papers as they wanted to do it and not as we intended it to happen. Another issue that we had was in one activity in which students had to go to the board and select the letter that we told them to signal; the problem was that every student wanted to pass in front to do the exercise, and the time that we had was not enough for all of them; as a consequence some students that were not able to pass in front were very disappointed and did not want to continue participating in other activities during the lesson.

According to the situations described before, we can evidence a little bit of improvement regarding classroom management; nevertheless, we have to consider that more than an improvement in our skills in could have been a product of more engaging activities for the children due to the fact that they were highly concentrated on the activities. It is also important to say that the new type of activities also allowed a better understanding for the kids, and although we had to present a topic that had already been presented, we could evidence that students were in fact learning. An important aspect to consider in the future when planning the activities is that we need to get all students involved, and especially when we are working with children because they tend to feel excluded and get frustrated; therefore, in future lessons we need to try to have all student’s participation or find a way in which they do not feel left aside. As for the use of L1, we need to say that it has not been reduced, students continue using their mother tongue, and they simply use the target language when they need to answer a question made by the teacher.

**Observation No 5**

**Thursday, October 3rd 2013**

We have to start by saying that in today’s class it was possible to observe that we are not really having an increasing improvement, and that each class we have situations that are very different from each other. The first problem that we had today was that we had to work in a classroom that we were not prepared to use; therefore, we had to change the way in which we had planned to do the activities; that issue led again to the problem that we had had before in which not all students were able to participate. Another issue that we have to consider is that we presented the material in a similar way we had done it in previous classes, and students
did not seem very interested this time. They were talking among each other and did not pay attention to what we were trying to teach them. To solve this problem of indiscipline, we made students stand up and take their chairs; they were sitting in a u-shape sitting arrangement which was not helping us, so we decided to organize them in lines again. This helped us a little bit, and we managed to finish teaching them the alphabet.

However, it is important to say that even though we finish presenting the topic, students were not really prepare and had not really internalized everything. During today’s lesson we had to continue with the plan, which is why we presented the next activity that we had planned: the song. Taking into account the level of the students, and that they did not really learn what we expected, the listening activity was a very successful part of our lesson in some aspects. The first thing was that students understood the song and understood what was being said; students answered accurately when we asked them what the song was about, which is something that portrays understanding even though they used the L1 to answer this question. Another aspect that is necessary to consider is that we tried students to follow the song just by listening to it a couple of times, and this goal was not achieved. In order for students to be able to reproduce the song we had to start writing the pronunciation of the letter on the board; this was another item that showed us that students had not really learned.

It is also necessary to point out that the use of Spanish has not been only by the students; the practitioners have had the necessity to use the mother tongue in order to give instructions. Besides from the mother tongue, there was a part of the lesson in which we intended to carry out an activity, but at the moment of analyzing whether we could carry it out with the students, we concluded that it was highly difficult due to the fact that students had not achieved the expected level which was derived from the goal settled for this lesson. When dealing with classroom management, one of the aspects that have come to be a real challenge, we need to state that the degree of improvement has been very low. The in-service teacher had to help us to control the students. One important aspect that we found was the fact that students were able to understand the listening material, something that might lead us to the use of this type of activities more frequently.

Observation N°6
Thursday, October 17th 2013
We have to start by saying that this class showed us a little bit of improvement in different aspects. We have to start with one of the most challenging aspects which has been classroom management; although we cannot say that it was really good, we have to state that the improvement was evident most of the class. Students were very attentive, and we could manage, if not perfectly at least better than other classes, those cases in which their attention was going away.

It is also necessary to mention that the material presented was better to get students attention; nevertheless, there was a moment of the class in which the material became a distraction to our objective, but we found the way to get the attention back to what we intended.

Another aspect to mention is that when dealing with listening students reacted in a very positive way, but it is also necessary to state that to carry out the task completely, students had to follow a worksheet as an aid.

**Reflection №7**

**Thursday, October 24th 2013**

First of all, it is really important to point out that this lesson was the best we have had so far; students participated actively, the techniques that were used worked as we expected, the indiscipline reduced significantly, and the material was very engaging for the students. Another important aspect is that time management improved, and the entire lesson was carried out. It is necessary to start talking about the aspect that has been concerning us the most in previous lessons, and we make reference here to our classroom management. Although in previous classes this aspect had been improving, what we achieved today with our students surprised us a lot. In general, all of our students paid attention and were very expectant to what we were presenting, we used the flashcards that referred to the ground rules, and students followed the instructions that each flashcard represented. We had only one student that we had an arduous time with; however, we were able to solve the situation by going to his desk and talking to him.

Concerning the material that we used, we need to state that it was very similar to the ones from the previous lesson; nevertheless, it was more contextualized, and it was something that
students immediately recognized. Children were trying to guess what we were going to present to them, and actively participated when we asked to pronounce one word or to say the color. Another aspect about the material was that it was bigger and more colorful, but we still have to consider that there was a part of the class in which the material required from students to have colors, and we did not have many colors for those who did not have. That provoked that some students were mad until we were able to find some colors for them. Aside from this, students enjoyed painting, they enjoyed participating, and they enjoyed learning the colors as well.

Now, it is important to talk about the aspect that we still need to improve; the first of those aspects is the use of L1. At this point of our practicum, we observed that more than a rejection to the use of the target language, students are trying to make sense of what they are saying, they are trying to translate every time they hear something in English, and that is where we find the difficulties. We are trying to present material which helps clarify the meaning of the ideas we introduce using English; however, students want to understand what we say in Spanish, and we have not been able to find an strategy that helps us avoid that.

Even though many aspects were improved in this lesson, there are still many aspects that need improvement. However, it is necessary to point out that this lesson was very rewarding in terms of students’ learning and interaction with the material as well as with the teacher. The use of the new techniques helped us, and it is very important to keep in mind what activities we present to our students and be careful in order to have all the material that they need to complete a task.

Reflection N°8

Although we have to admit that in this lesson we also observed improvement, we have to clarify that there were many external factors that did not help in the development of this class. This lesson was very similar to the previous one due to the fact that it was used to connect the same topics as the class before; that is why, we proposed a similar goal with different topics. As this lesson was intended for October 31st, we proposed an activity about Halloween. Nevertheless, some classes at school were cancelled, and we were not able to
carry out this class for the day that was expected. As a result, we faced problem in the contextualization part, students were not really connected to the materials due to the fact that they did not find a real connection to the other topics. Another problem that we found during this session was that we did not take one of the materials that we needed for one of the activities, so we had to look for other options in order to be able to carry out the activity.

Now, talking about the internal factors that occurred during this session, we have to start by saying that the techniques we are using for classroom management are becoming more successful; even though students had to be sitting most of the time, it did not affected a lot on their motivation since painting is one of the activities they enjoyed the most. We have to analyze the fact that we need to find other activities in which we can provide students a new experience and at the same time foster language learning. There was an important situation during today’s class, and it was that as we requested our students to paint some handouts, we were ready this time and took colors to the classroom so that they could all be painting at the same time, and not waiting for other students to finish in order to use their colors. Therefore, we did not have many students walking around the classroom and asking for colors, situation that can provoke indiscipline.

In terms of contextualization, something that we mentioned above, it is necessary to state that even though students enjoyed the activities we presented, there was not a real attraction to the topic itself in view of the fact that students did not notice a real connection between the word that we were presenting and their context. It is a matter of importance to keep in mind that the lessons we plan should be flexible, and we should be able to make changes when it is necessary taking into account that we teach for our students’ necessities, and it is necessary to have a topic which they can relate to their real life experiences. Finally, talking about the learning process we have to mention that students did not learn the language that we expected them to learn; pupils only achieved part of the goal, and it was regarding the vocabulary expected for that lesson. We should look for other teaching techniques that we can apply in order to foster learning, so that we can avoid those activities in which students can only learn vocabulary.

Reflection N°9
Thursday, November 14th 2013
The special characteristic that we had for this lesson was that we had real balloons, which was something very attractive for the children. During this lesson, we tried to use a different technique for teaching our students a specific structure; however, as the previous lessons, it did not really work. Students kept focusing on the words, and paid little attention to the sentences that we were saying or showing them; we are concerned about this situation due to the fact that our lessons are turning in vocabulary lessons for our students, and as they cannot make sense of the structures and translation was not allowed, students starting avoiding this type of language in which they had to use more than one word.

Nevertheless, we need to mention that the goal for this lesson was achieved by a highly percent of the group since it was focus on recognizing and differentiation of simple words and not structures. We also have to say that the use of real balloons kept our students expectant about the activity that we were going to carry out; we can then consider that the material used for this session helped us a lot and was successful in a high degree. Nonetheless, we still have to mention that there were some students that distracted for a while, and tried to take the balloons; therefore, we had to start calling their attention and asking them to sit down at their desks.

Another important point to state was the fact that we played an audio that was combined with other vocabulary, and we did not explain this vocabulary to our students since it was not very relevant for the purpose of our activity. Taking into account the previous statement about different vocabulary, and the fact that most students were able to carry out the activity successfully, we need to state that we observed easiness from our students to understand the language contained in real audios, which is something that is really impressive. That also makes us think that we need to incorporate more of this type of activities in order to foster our students’ learning.

Now, concerning the topic of classroom management, we need to say that there were not many aspects to highlight; students’ behavior was similar to the last two previous lessons, despite those especial aspects that we still have to work on. Even if we talk with them we found a negative attitude towards us from some students; this situation is becoming more challenging; nevertheless, we still have to search for the reasons of this behavior and try to change it.
Reflection N°10
Friday, November 7th 2013.

There are several aspects to consider during the analysis of this lesson such as the changes that we had in the level of the activities, teacher-student interaction, lesson planning, use of audio-visual room, and the activities presented. When dealing with these different aspects, we need to point out that there was certain success and failures which need to be reflected. We need to start by saying that our success was derived from the fact that we presented very challenging input for our students and most of them were able to understand it. The material that we presented was a video with very difficult and authentic language; the success of this activity consisted on the images that supported the story rather than the language. Moreover, we need to say that the video that was presented to our students was about topics that they really enjoyed, and that helped at the moment of engaging them to the topic that we intended.

Another positive aspect that deserves to be mention is that for the first time in our practicum, students used the structure that we expected them to use which showed a little degree of improvement. Nonetheless, we cannot state that it was very successful due to the fact that students limited to repetition, and at the moment they had to use the structure, they were not able to do it. This situation allowed us to observe that the visual aids were highly relevant at the moment of presenting the language to the students. Besides from the material, another item that aided us during this class was the use of the audio-visual room, a situation that permitted the presentation of more realistic and bigger images.

Besides from the positive aspects mentioned above, we need to point out that this was one of the poorest lessons in terms of planning due to the fact that we did not really know what activities we could apply in order to contextualize the topic to our students’ reality; we were also very confused with the fact that there were many variations on the topic according to each student. It is also important to clarify that the aim that we proposed did not fit our students’ level of performance, since students had to make an analysis of a structure in order to produce their own sentence. Moreover, it is necessary to point out that one of the activities proposed was not very connected to the lesson.
Concerning the topic of teacher-students interaction, we need to mention that we were able to reach those students we had been having problems with due to the fact that the cartoon presented was something they liked. They started answering the questions that we presented; however, there were some cases in which the sitting arrangement provoked a lot of whispering among the students. Finally, it is noteworthy the fact that our students were more involved with the language compared to previous lessons, they even tried to read some written information that was presented.

Reflection N°11
Thursday, November 21st 2013
Friday, November 22nd 2013

To start with, it is fundamental to mention that all the aspects that are going to be mentioned are influenced by the change we experienced regarding the amount of students. During this session, our group was reduced from forty-four students to thirteen, and this change influenced positively on the lesson. The first significant aspect that we need to recognize is the fact that the amount of students allowed us to have a more personalized lesson in which we could check on each students to observe and correct mistakes that were being made. Consequently, the level of achievement that was experienced during this lesson was higher, and besides using vocabulary we were able to review previous structures that were used during the previous lessons.

As there were not many students, the desks were more separated, something that did not allow much talking from the students. The little distractions that there were in the classroom granted our students’ attention to the topic and material presented. Moreover, the material that presented this time was contextualized with all our students’ reality, and it was a topic that students immediately recognized and related to. Aside from the contextualization, the level of the listening material that was presented was also higher; however, students proved again that there were able to focus on the specific information that they had been asked for
and were able to complete the task as well. Students felt excited to notice that they could understand the activity and the language that was requested.

Regarding the use of L1, we certainly need to work more on that matter. We need to analyze different activities or techniques that we can use in order to promote the use of the target language in young learners. As this was the last lesson and there were few students, we could foster the use of structures in our students; however, there was not a situation in which our students could really use the language to work with their own information. We need to analyze what part of the lesson is the crucial point for promoting speaking in our students since it was evident that simple repetition and examples, whether real or created, does not really promotes speaking.

Finally, it is necessary to make a special emphasis on the amount of students that are involved in a classroom. It is very demanding to teach a second language when there are 44 students in a classroom, and more important when they are children that need to be very active and their space is very reduce. As teachers in development, we need to start developing stronger techniques, so that learning can really take place in a classroom with these characteristics.

Reflection Nº 12

The implementation of our first activity from the thesis project was not as successful as we expected to be. Although, we had some positive aspects, we could also notice that the perspective from which we took our project was not very accurate for the contact of our students with the material. The first thing that we have to point out is that we tried to present a material which was attractive to students in order to get them focus on the activity they were supposed to develop; in fact, students were really connected to the material, which was a song of the alphabet. We could notice that they enjoyed it due to the fact that they started trying to sing it; another important point, perhaps the most important for our classroom project, was the fact that students understood the material that we presented without us telling them what they were going to listen.
According to what we had planned in our methodology, the listening was going to be presented to the students without them knowing what they were going to listen to; the idea was to observe if students were able to identify the content of the material in general, even if they were not able to exactly decipher what was being said. The second step was checking if children had actually got the general idea. If we take a close look to what we observed, the first two steps that were proposed for the development of this project can be consider to be successful; when we presented the material students immediately recognized it and tried to follow what they were listening to, after playing the listening for the first time, we asked our students what was the song about, and they immediately answered (although they did it in their mother tongue) that the song referred to the alphabet.

This activity showed us how important it is to prepare a student with the appropriated knowledge in order for he or she to face, if not fully successfully at least in general terms, a listening activity. On the other hand, this activity was an introduction to show us that the project as we planned it needs to be arranged since the production part that we were expecting from the students was not achieved. We have to state that students were able to really understand the content to what they were being exposed. Nevertheless, when we asked them to follow the lyrics or to at least say one part of the audio they were listening to, students were not able to achieve this goal. That lead us to think that the process of production needs a more strong basis from the one that we intended to use.

It is clear so far that the techniques that were established in the methodology in order to get speaking from the students was not successfully achieved in this first implementation, during the class in which this activity was performed by students, we had to implement a technique that was not within the plans; we had to create a visual aid for students to be able to follow the song, when we did this students were more capable to produce, not in a hundred percent but more than when they did not have any help; however, the technique used let us two important questions: Was the technique of the visual aid successful itself? Or Weren’t students prepared with the necessary knowledge to face the activity and presenting the pronunciation visually just clarified the concepts?.

References


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