SCAFFOLDING THE LISTENING COMPREHENSION SKILL IN THIRD GRADERS FROM A PUBLIC SCHOOL IN PEREIRA THROUGH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SEMI- AUTHENTIC AND AUTHENTIC MATERIALS SUPPORTED WITH IMAGES

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Abstract

This document presents a classroom project developed at the Instituto Técnico Superior School. It was carried out with a third graders group. Its objective was to identify the effects of implementing authentic and semi-authentic aural materials in order to develop the listening comprehension skill in the primary school context. This implementation was carried out during the last two academic terms of 2014.

This document presents in the first section different definitions related to listening, followed by the differences between listening and hearing, the concept of listening comprehension and its characteristics, types of listening, and different listening strategies. The document also presents the concepts of authentic and semi-authentic materials as well as the importance and difficulties of using them.

Finally this report portrays the results obtained during the implementation, which showed that the use of authentic and semi-authentic materials helped not only to develop the listening comprehension skill but also helped in raising students’ motivation, interest and participation.

It was also evidenced that the appropriate use of these materials helped to decrease the feeling of frustration that listening generates on the students when they do not understand the materials. Likewise, the report includes others aspects related to teaching like professional growth, students’ linguistic outcomes and responses towards the activities developed in the class.
Resumen

En este documento se presenta un proyecto desarrollado en un salón de clases del Instituto Técnico Superior, el cual se llevó a cabo con estudiantes de tercer grado. El objetivo del proyecto fue identificar los efectos de la aplicación de materiales auditivos auténticos y semi-auténticos con el fin de desarrollar la habilidad de comprensión auditiva en la escuela primaria. Esta implementación se llevó a cabo durante los dos últimos periodos académicos en el año 2014.

Este informe presenta en primer lugar distintas definiciones relacionadas con la habilidad de escucha, para pasar a destacar la diferencia entre oír y escuchar, qué es la comprensión auditiva y las características de la misma; tipos de escucha, y las diferentes estrategias de escucha. En segundo lugar, el documento presenta los conceptos de materiales auténticos y semi-auténticos así como la importancia y las dificultades de su uso.

Por último, se describen los resultados obtenidos durante la ejecución del proyecto, los cuales mostraron que la aplicación de materiales auténticos y semi-auténticos, no solo ayudó a desarrollar la comprensión oral, sino que también la motivación, el interés y la participación de los estudiantes. También se puso de manifiesto que el uso apropiado de los materiales ayudó a disminuir la sensación de frustración que genera la escucha en los estudiantes cuando no son capaces de entender los materiales.

El informe también incluye otros aspectos relacionados con la enseñanza como el crecimiento profesional del docente encargado del proyecto, y los resultados lingüísticos, y las respuestas de los estudiantes en relación con las actividades usadas en clase.
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1) **Justification**

This project is oriented to the implementation of the semi-authentic material in order to develop the listening comprehension skill especially in the primary school context, during this period of time, the learners have their first experience with the English language and is in that context where the learners need more listening input. This is a key factor for this project, it is relevant to notice that. I expect to find a solution to the poor listening comprehension skill development in the primary school context taking into account that during that portion of the school process is when the learners should develop their comprehension skills in order to be able to produce something.

It is not a secret that the teaching of the languages in the Colombian context is oriented to the written production, the idea is to give to the learners the appropriated input for them to feel enough confidence to express themselves with the basic knowledge that they acquire during this process. It is necessary to remember that the acquisition of a language follows and specific process. This process is perfectly explained with this sentence. First we listen then we talk.

The importance of develop the comprehension skill after the production skills is not something new, authors such Robin 2007, mentions the relevance of that process in order to obtain real effects in the development of a second language.

Even if we know that the development of the language is low, the real problem in the Colombian context comes from the few studies conducted about the development of the
listening skill in the primary school situation and from the wrong appropriation of them as a fact that can be used in any school context. There are many studies that talks about the development of listening skills and strategies for develop them, but almost any of them takes into consideration the primary school reality, and even more important, all of them were conducted in countries were the English language is the native tongue of is teach as a second language, the relevance of those aspects is that in Colombia the English language is teach as a foreign language, the time of exposure to the language is completely different. There is one more thing that I consider as a problem, it is that primary school teachers take those listening development strategies and start to apply them in their courses, without considering the differences between the primary school and the others school levels.

If we think about it, there are many differences between what a learner can do or understand in each education level. It is impossible to ask to a basic language learner to produce language, using the normal speed of this kind of documents. These kind of activities are the reason why most of the basic language learners are scared of learning a language.

As mentioned at the beginning of this document, the idea of this project was to use authentic and semi-authentic audio materials, but those resources were used following a scaffolding process, in other words, first we started with simple documents with low level requirements and then depending on the learners’ development, the difficulties and the requirements increased.
2) **Objectives**

With this purpose, the following objectives were proposed for this classroom project:

**Main objective:**

Contribute to development of students’ listening comprehension skill through the employment of authentic and semi authentic materials.

**Learning objectives**

1. Develop a positive attitude towards listening comprehension and overcome student’s resistance to listening comprehension activities.

2. Differentiate and comprehend basic words and expressions used to refers about them, their families and their environment.

3. Relate basic descriptions about objects, people and animals with the corresponding images.

4. Follow the plot of a story using images as a guide.
3) **Theoretical framework**

This section of the project has different purpose the first one is to present the definition of the three main constructs that guided this project: listening comprehension, authentic materials and semi-authentic materials.

It is important to contextualize the reader and clarify the definition of the different constructs, the differences and similarities between author’s perceptions. Then, I will present a set of sub constructs in order develop more effectively each construct.

The listening comprehension concept will be explored through the following sub concepts: listening skill, the difference between listening and hearing, the importance of listening and the different listening strategies.

In relation with the construct of authentic materials, this project will look into the following issues: definition of authentic materials, types, factors for the selection of the materials, authentic materials in the EFL classroom and the benefits as well as difficulties of using them. Finally, the construct of semi-authentic materials is sub divided into definition of semi authentic materials, the difference with authentic materials, semi-authentic in the EFL, the benefits and the problems that this strategy may have.

**3.1) Listening vs hearing**

The differences between hearing and listening have been studied by Sayekumar (2013). This author describes listening as a voluntary and active process that requires conscious effort from the listener, who has an active role. By contrast, hearing is described by Sayekumar as an involuntary and automatic process in which the listener has a passive process. In relation with this characteristics, Giovannini, Martin Peris, Rodriguez and
Simón Blanco (1997) highlight that we hear even involuntarily, we listen consciously and for a reason.

Even if listening and hearing are different, students need both of them in order to develop the listening skill as Andrade (2006) states in his document “We learn after repeating what we hear.

It is important to make a differentiation of the two concepts, due to the fact that if we as teachers expect to help improve our learners’ listening comprehension skills, it is necessary to remember that listening is an active activity that requires more than just sit and wait to receive information. According to Muru (2008) who cites Emmert “listening is more than merely hearing words”. Muru states that an active process that allows the students to receive, construct meaning from and respond to verbal and non-verbal messages. Another idea that contributes to the idea that listening implies more that hearing comes from (Schnell 1995) according to this author hearing is just a physiological process used to be aware of the surrounding noise and that do not requires any interpretation from you. To this author listening is more complex taking into consideration that listening includes the interpretation in order to make sense out of the sounds you are hearing.

This author also gives an example of this (i.e. being able to distinguish your name being called out amongst the aforementioned traffic-related noise, and perhaps recognizing the voice of the speaker).

3.2) Listening comprehension

What is listening comprehension? Is it just receiving a message or does it require a more active role from the listener?
The concept of listening comprehension has been defined by authors such as Andrade (2006) who states that listening comprehension is the ability to hear and to understand what others say. Some other authors agree with this definition but they add some characteristics that are relevant for the final definition of this skill. Bakan (2006) considers listening comprehension as the relationship between the speaker, the listener and the message. That relationship is important due to the fact that when we listen, there is a message and a person involved. The meaning of the message depends on the understanding and the intention that each of them has in the moment.

Rost (2002) mentions that this skill is the result of experimenting contextual events; this refers to the fact that our understanding of listening input is really affected by the context. The message can be interpreted in a different way depending on the situation.

Another important aspect that this author presents is the relevance of sharing a context. If the speaker and the listener do not share at least some knowledge of the situation, this can be a cause for misunderstanding.

Finally, Wilson (2008) explains that listening involves the decoding of a message but differently from reading, where the reader can go back and read again.

Listening does not give that opportunity since it is a process that takes place in the exact moment and require full attention from the listener.

Besides, the listeners need to use their knowledge in order to get the appropriated intention from what they listen. It is not enough to listen, it is required to analyze what is the intention of the speaker.
There are some other authors that go beyond just defining the listening comprehension and explain that there are some stages in the listening process that should be completed in order for the message to be understood. The most complete and clearest definition in our opinion is Steinberg’s, which describes the process of listening as follows:

"Listening is more complex than merely hearing. It is a process that consists of four stages: 1) sensing and attending, 2) understanding and interpreting, 3) remembering, and 4) responding ... The stages occur in sequence but we are generally unaware of them."

(Steinberg, 2007)

3.3) Types of listening

Since listening is involved in many activities that we carry on in daily life and that have different requirements, usually we adapt the form in which we listen to a particular purpose and needs.

Kline (cited by Sayekumar, 2013), describes five different types of listening:

- **Informative Listening, whose** purpose is that the listener can get some information from the message; it can be specific or general information.

- **Relationship Listening**: “The purpose of relationship listening is either to help an individual or to improve the relationship between people”. (Kline cited by Sayekumar, 2013). This type of listening is relevant taking into consideration that each participant pays careful attention to what is said in order to avoid misunderstandings. Another example can be the conversations between store managers, whose intention is to develop a relationship so they should listen carefully in order to get to an agreement.
- **Appreciative Listening** is the kind of listening that we do when we listen for pleasure or enjoyment, without a necessity of understanding a particular information. Think about when you listen to a song, your intention is to enjoy the rhythm more than getting an information from it.

- **Critical Listening** refers to the ability to listen critically and generate a decision based on that.

**Discriminative Listening** may be the most important type of listening, for it is basic to the other four. By being sensitive to changes in the speaker’s rate, volume, force, pitch, and emphasis, the informative listener can detect even nuances of difference in meaning. By sensing the impact of certain responses, such as “uh huh,” or “I see,” relationship listening can be strengthened.” (Kline cited by Sayekumar, 2013).

On the other hand, Wilson (2002) suggests a different classification based on the purpose of listening and he distinguishes the following categories:

**Listening for gist:** in some occasions, we want to get the general idea of what is said as well as who are the participants and why they are talking.

**Listening for specific information:** as the name indicates it happens when the listeners are focusing their attention in a specific information. According to Wilson, this is the type of listening that we do when we don’t need to understand everything.

**Listening in detail:** it is defined as the kind of listening that humans do when they need to find an error or to determine differences between passages.
**Inferential listening**: it is the type of listening in which we use the content of what the interlocutors say, the intonation and speed of participants, their use of the language and extra linguistic information (sounds, ambience…) to deduce information that is not specifically stated.

According to Giovannini, Martin Peris, Rodríguez and Simón Blanco (1997), the purpose of the listening comprehension training is to develop the learner’s ability to comprehend oral messages. They state that in order to acquire this objective, teachers perform different activities that allow the learners to arrive to that objective.

The authors mention some micro skills that teachers should consider in order to arrive to the listening comprehension purpose already mentioned.

- **Recognize** this skill can be summarized in the ability to distinguish sound, words and specific information.
- **Selecting**: this skill refers to the ability to detect key words from a discourse (names, verbs and phrases) and differentiate them from the ones that are not relevant.

There are some other micro skills but taking into consideration the population in which this project was implemented, I consider they are not so relevant to be explained but will be mentioned.

- **Interpret**
- **Comprehend the form of the discourse**
- **Anticipate**
- **Infer**
- Retain

### 3.4) Listening strategies

Most learners consider listening as a hard skill to develop, since they get scarce exposure to real oral language and authentic materials. Lack of listening strategies also difficult the task. This situation together with the students’ anxiety when listening may result in learners’ frustration towards the language.

As Thanajaro (2000) explains “Listening plays a significant role in the lives of people, of the four major areas of communication skills and language development--listening, speaking, reading, and writing--the one that is the most basic is listening (…) “When it is time for children to learn to read, they still have to listen so that they gain knowledge and information to follow directions. In the classroom, students have to listen carefully and attentively to lectures and class discussions in order to understand and to retain the information for later recall”. Thanajaro (2000)

In order to facilitate students’ development of listening skills, different listening strategies where considered in the design of this classroom project. We will present them briefly in the following lines.

#### a) Top down and bottom up

According to Lingzhu (2003) top down listening is a strategy where listeners make use of their general prior knowledge in order to predict the content of a text or audio. For this strategy, the listener employs what they know about the world that surrounds them in order to interpret the message.
In contrast, in the bottom up strategy, learners use their linguistic knowledge to identify linguistic elements to construct the meaning. This means that, learners use the meaning of words that they know in order to get the complete message and perform the activity in a proper way.

From what has been previously stated we can affirm that both strategies need previous knowledge, general for top-down listening and linguistic for bottom up.

In relation with this issue, Lingzhu (2003) suggests the following activities to activate the learners’ prior knowledge in order to get the best results.

b) **Word association task:** The idea of this strategy is to give to the learners a topic, and ask them to write as many words as they know about it in 5 minutes. This activity is also useful for the teacher to identify students’ level of vocabulary and support needs.

c) **Questioning:** Usually, teachers ask questions about the audio materials after the learner has listened. However, the author suggests that it should be done before they listen, since it will allow the learner to get an idea of the content and also clarify any doubts.

d) **Making list of possibilities:** asking the learners to make a short list of possibilities about what is going to be heard should work as a useful pre listening activity. Given the fact that it can prepare the learners to listen considering that creating a list of possibilities requires an analysis of the topic and the possible situations that can have the audio.

e) **Looking at pictures before the listening-** this strategy is particularly useful for young learners since sometimes, an image can say more than a thousand words.

- After performing an informal learning styles test, the facilitator noticed that a large number of the learners were visual students. Considering this characteristic and the
usefulness of visual input for this type of students, the strategy of looking at images related to the listening before having the actual listening activity was employed in most classes.

- Helped the vocabulary to be more meaningful for them. This was evidenced during the class activities observation that the

3.5) **Authentic materials**

A very important aspect by the time to develop the listening comprehension skill is the type of material that is used in the classroom in order to help those linguistic processes, a large number of authors conclude that the materials that are used in order to get an improvement of the listening competence in a second language should be authentic. According to Ur (1989), one of the advantages of using authentic materials in the classroom is the motivation, this author states that if learners see the real purpose of what they listen, they will feel motivated and that motivation will lead the students to do something in the task, According to Nunan (1988) language learners should receive more and more authentic materials as possible, because if they used to listen to planned dialogues and listening tasks, they will face more difficulties in learning tasks. By using authentic materials, we present students with a valuable source of language input, thus students don’t expose only to language presented by textbook.

Once established the importance and usefulness of using authentic materials in the EFL classroom, it seems appropriate to briefly explain what authentic materials are.
Authentic materials are defined as oral and written language materials used in daily situations by native speakers of the language (Rogers & Medley, 1988:468). Thanajaro (2000) defines them as “language samples created by native speakers for native speakers” and Bacon (1992) as “unchanged texts that are produced by and for native speakers” as for instance films, TV commercials, cartoons, news, comedy shows, dramas, and soap operas; radio news, dramas and ads, audio taped short stories; pop and rock music, documentaries, etc.

From what has been previously stated, it can be inferred that authentic materials are those samples of language that occur in real life situations and have not been created specifically for the classroom context, nor do they have the EFL student in mind (Jordan, 1997). This also involves that in them we can find the language with all its complexity and without simplifications aimed at facilitating the comprehension of the message. In this type of materials, the language has not been modified in any way.

This characteristic of authentic materials demands for the teacher a complete analysis in order to see if the learners are prepared to face that kind of language and what would be the best way of facilitating them, due to the fact that if not used appropriately, the complexity of authentic materials can have a negative effect and discourage students.

In the following section we will present the different types of authentic materials.

The employment of authentic materials in the EFL classroom has been widely research. In the following lines we will present some of the most relevant studies in this field.
The Effect of Authentic Versus Non-authentic Aural Materials on EFL Learners’ Listening Comprehension

This study was conducted with 80 upper-intermediate students from among all language institutes in Khoramshahr and Abadan cities, the participants participated in two experimental treatment groups. During one semester, they were instructed in listening to authentic radio-tapes and non-authentic listening materials taken from the assorted sources. The results revealed that the participants who were instructed on the basis of authentic radio-tapes had gained a higher degree of listening comprehension and proficiency than non-authentic groups.

Something relevant about this study is that even if they are researching on the use of authentic materials, there are some differences with this project, first, the population, the learners were upper intermediate learners and this is important due to the fact that they have some language knowledge’s, the other difference is the context, in this study the learners are from a country were the target language is studied as a second language different from our country where it is studied as a foreign language.

The Effect of Using Audio Files on Improving Listening Comprehension.

In this study, the target population were high school students. The reasons why I consider this documents useful for the project, is because it helped me to show the reality, most of the studies related with the listening skill, were conducted in university or high school context, most of them present a perfect situation where the learners already have some basic knowledge in the English language and finally it also gives useful theoretical information and authors opinions that I plan to use as support for the development of my
project. Those situations differ from the Colombian context where most of the learners do not have any knowledge of the target language; the environment is not the best for teaching English.

3.6) Types of authentic materials

As we observed, according to the different authors, there is a large selection of materials that we can consider as authentic materials but for the development of this project we will classify them into aural authentic materials and visual authentic materials.

3.7) What are the visual materials and why are them important?

This kind of authentic materials can be summarized in videos, images and according to Gezegin (2014) videos can be defined as a way of transmit a message using both channels visual and aural Channel. Corder (1966, p.34) states that “in language teaching anything visible can be used by the teacher to teach meaning” Similarly with them Komorowska (2001) also mention some authentic visual resources this author mention that stimulus like pictures cut out from illustrated magazines, postcards, photographs, posters, maps, transparencies can also be consider as materials.

According to Dictionary of Applied Linguistics authentic visual material is “[a] visual device used by a teacher to help learning, for example pictures, charts, flash cards” (1987,
p.26). This means that those materials are resources used in order to generate a visual input in the learner.

According to Gezegin (2014) the use of videos is important in the EFL context due to the fact that it presents more than just language factors; it allows the learner to get contact with the target language culture. This is relevant taking into account that the purpose of the second language teaching in the primary school is not to create experts in the use of the language, it is to help the learners to get their first contact with the language.

According to authors such as Geddes and whites (1978), Stempleski and Arcario (1992) and many others, the videos present many advantages for the language learners since it facilitates to them the possibility to learn the language, taking into consideration the different language factors such as accents, idioms, pronunciation and others, but that is not only advantages of using them, the videos allows the learners to get samples of the target language.

Another positive opinion about the visual authentic materials came from Field (2008) who states that our comprehension of a conversation is highly affected by factors such as facial expressions and visual cues, this is something one of the benefits that most of the facilitators see about videos that make them better that using only audio. Wagner (2006) states that the use of visual support can help the L2 learners to develop their making inferences skill and this can result in an improvement of the L2 listening performance.

Even if the use of videos have proven to be a really useful options for develop the listening skill in the learners, the use of them will be limited during this project taking into consideration that the access to the video projectors and the environment of the school
where this project was conducted present many difficulties for the implementation of videos.

3.8) Authentic aural materials in the EFL context

the use of authentic aural materials have been an important factor in the language teaching for many years, especially in the language teaching in the EFL context, in the curriculum of almost all the schools and universities around the world, the implementation of course books with authentic readings or authentic conversations is a key tool for the development of language skills.

There are different authors that mention the effect of the authentic materials in the EFL context. Constantin (2007) in her article mention one tool for the practice of the listening skill in the Elf context. She considers the use of podcasts as an effective tool for the practice of the English languages around the world.

According to Constantine (2007) podcasts are recordings of real language use such as radio or similar programs. She mentions that this tool is useful and easy to find, since there are much podcast on the web related to many topic that can be used to practice the language.

Kavaliauskiené (2012), states that the concept of podcasts means “the publishing of audio via the internet” she mention that this is a useful tool for the practice of the listening skill since the podcasts are designed to be downloaded and listened in any portable tool, and it can gives to the learners to be exposed to the language anytime anywhere.

Stewart (2010) “A podcast is simply an audio programmer that is usually distributed on the internet and can be downloaded from a website or a school server and listened to on a
computer or a portable MP3 player. This means that is a tool that can be used outside of the classroom and that provide many opportunities for the learners.

This author also mentions that we can consider podcast as materials created by the teacher to develop the language skills inside and outside of the classroom.

3.9) What is the importance of using authentic aural materials?

According to Constantine (2007) the relevance of authentic aural materials podcasts, is really important, she states that In order to obtain a development in the listening skill, EFL learners needs to be exposed to different voices and content, she states that this kind of materials can give that to the learners.

Constantine also mention that for teachers the use of authentic aural materials can provide fresh ideas, she mention that when we practice the listening skill in schools, teachers can become repetitive and start using the same listening materials over and over, Constantine mentions that with the use of this tool, that situation can be avoided, since there is a large selection of podcast on the internet. She also mention that the students can get benefits from this kind of materials even if the just listen for some minutes per day.

To conclude, Constantine also mention something relevant, she mention that in order to get a development of the listening skill with the use of authentic materials, it is important to have an outcome in mind, the idea of authentic audio is not just sit and receive some information, the intention of this kind of exercises should be focused to the use of that information.
Kavalierskure, also mention some reasons why the authentic aural especially (podcasts) is important, she considers that this kind of material provide language teachers and students large possibilities for individual language practice, this kind of materials can also connect different elements of the course and make them more meaningful for the learners.

Stewart (2010), considers the podcast not only as a tool for teaching English but also as an exercise that the learners can do in order to develop the language skills, this author mentions that asking the learners to create podcast for a class can be useful to practice not only the target language subject, it can gives to the learners the possibility to learn about many other topics.

To conclude this author also states that using podcast in the classroom has many advantages, among which there can be mentioned the following: It promotes independent work; It creates materials that can be listened to by parents and learners anytime, anywhere; and finally, it promotes creativity;

3.10) Some difficulties of using aural materials

In her article Ghaderpanahi (2012) mention some factors that can generate problems in the comprehension of the listening input only

- Layers of sound- according to Ghaderpanahi, the variation between the tones of voice of the different participants in a recorded conversation can result in misunderstanding of the listening input. She also mention that this phenomenon
happen only with the listening input since in a written text the tone of voice do not have a large variation

- **Accents** - the author considers that different from the written English that do not have much variations around the word, the influence that the different accents have in the understanding of an audio, can generate difficulties for the comprehension.

Different from reading or written activities, she mentions that even if listening and reading involves the comprehension of a message, the listening involves factors such as elision, assimilation and intrusion.

According to Wilson (2002) elision is a characteristic where some sounds are omitted. This can be a problem for EFL learners, especially for the basic level students, who have a basic knowledge of pronunciation and vocabulary. The assimilation happens when the succession of sound is really fast and the tongue does not get to the appropriate place on time.

Ghaderpanahi (2012) also mentions pronunciation and speed as other factors that can generate difficulties while you use authentic audio materials. This researcher concludes mentioning that listening is normally interactive, so commonly there are 2 or more people involved and non-verbal communication as body language, facial expressions and movements usually have an important role in the comprehension of the message.

### 3.11) **Semi authentic materials and the use of technology**

The presence of technology in the classroom has been increasing during the last years, some years ago, it was really complex to have a video projector in the classroom, nowadays, is possible to find this kind of gadgets in the different universities and schools
around the world. Normally when the teachers include the technology in their classes it has the purpose of presenting authentic materials such as radio programs, native speaker’s conversations, songs etc.

As we observed, there are many difficulties about the use of authentic materials in the classroom. Robin 2007 states that even if the use of authentic materials is a good option to develop the listening comprehension and the other skills in a second language, those are materials that should be used taking into account many factors especially the learner’s level. In his article, Robin talks about the development of the listening skill in primary school context. He mentions that there is a problem in the way how the teachers teach this skill. He states that in most of the cases, the teachers ask their learners to perform activities like producing or creating something based on what they listen from a radio program.

Robin mentions that this kind of activities is not appropriated since the learners are not ready to extract specific information from native speakers of the language. He claims that the intention of the listening training in the primary school context is not to create experts in the language but to give learners their first contact with the target language and to present is as simple as possible to make sure that it does not become a frustrating experience.

Observing that situation, Robin, suggests the use of semi authentic materials as a possible option to develop the listening skill in the primary school. The author defines semi authentic materials as those authentic materials that were modified in order to facilitate their comprehension.
Among the most useful modifications that can be done to a real audio is to lower the reproduction speed, what can be achieved very easily simply by manipulating the speed controls of the player in the computer.

We want to highlight that Robin’s proposal of use of semi-authentic materials is according to this author, simply a scaffolding strategy for facilitating the first contacts with the language. However, Robin explains that the modifications should be reduced progressively until finally the learners can deal with real materials.
4) Methodology

4.1) Context

This classroom project was carried out during the second academic semester of 2014 at the Instituto Tecnico Superior, a public school in Pereira.

The topics and the competences to develop in the English language selected by the teacher for this classroom project were based on the Guide 22 “Estándares básicos de competencias en lenguas extranjeras: Inglés”.

The in-service-teachers in this school were primary school facilitators. In the Colombian context, this means that they are responsible of guiding all the subjects even if they have no expertise in the field, as tends to be the case of the English subject and was in fact the reality in the school where this implementation took place. The in-service-teacher had to guide two hours of English language lessons per week.

4.2) Participants

For this project the participants were 35 third grade students (25 boys and 10 girls) between 8 and 9 years of age, from the Instituto Técnico Superior, a public school from Pereira which provides primary and secondary education for students coming from different socio-economical levels.

After an informal assessment of the learners English language competences, it was found that their level was under A1 according to the Common European Framework of Reference for languages: learning, teaching and assessment.
It must be highlighted, that this informal assessment allowed to notice that almost all the learners in the group showed a high level of interest for activities that included music and or aural input.

The last participant was a pre service teacher in ninth semester from the English language teaching program from Universidad Tecnológica de Pereira, who had the responsibility to design and implement the lessons from August to December.

4.3) Data collection instruments

In order to collect evidence about students responses to the materials and strategies implemented in the class as well as about their linguistic growth, the pre-service teacher recorded the lessons to have the possibility to reflect about the process and the different situations observed.

During the implementation the pre-service teacher also completed reflection formats about the learners’ responses toward the implementation and their linguistic outcomes, analyzing from his perspective the positive and negative events that took place during the class and his opinions and insights about the reasons why the activities worked as expected or not.

4.4) Design

The design of this project involved the use of authentic and semi authentic aural materials supported with images to develop the listening comprehension skill. Those authentic materials were songs and fables selected taking into consideration the level of the learners and the topics that they should learn.
Activities such as listening for specific vocabulary, organizing images, creating a similar story using the vocabulary, following the rhyme, completing the maze and many others were used to develop and assess the process of the learners.

At the end of each lesson the learners were asked about what they thought about the uses of the audio materials and the modifications and materials implemented, whether they were useful or make it more complex.

4.5) Implementation

The purpose of this project was to develop the listening comprehension of third grade students by the use of authentic and semi authentic aural material supported with images.

During the implementation of this classroom project, the practitioner implemented different strategies in order to develop the listening skill in the learners.

Throughout this project, the facilitator mainly followed Robin’s (2007) proposal about the way in which young learners should be exposed to authentic and semi-authentic materials.

This proposal required the teacher in development to play the real listening input in the usual way, this means without any type of modification. This fits the definition of authentic materials.

The purpose of this strategy was to see the reaction and to prepare the learners to the speed of those materials. After this first listening, the practitioner played the audio again but this time he slowed it to facilitate recognition of words on the part of the students.
Something interesting about speed modification is that the audio document is still the same but, by the use of the Windows Media Player audio modification, it is possible to change the speed of the material without changing its authenticity.

During the implementation, the practitioner used images in order to support and facilitate the comprehension of the materials. This differs from Robin (2007) and it comes from the perception that young learners acquire the language more easily if they have some visual cues related to what they listen.

Using that perception, the teacher in development prepared images that represented different parts of the story or that were related to what the learners herd.

The way in which the facilitator used the images changed depending on the situation, and on how much time the project had been going on. During the first days of the implementation, the practitioner used a large number of images in order to present as many parts of the story as possible and guide the learners towards their location in the audio.

Once the implementation had been running on for some time, the use of images decreased, and the speed of the audio increased with the purpose that by the end of the implementation, the learners did not need almost any images and were able to understand a good portion of the audio in real conditions.
5) Reflection stage

5.1) Professional growth

5.1.1) Challenges

During the implementation of this classroom project, the most serious challenge I had to face in relation with my professional role was organizing my own time for preparing classes and materials, checking student’s homework and giving effective instructions.

5.1.2) Organization of time

The search of activities and materials to prepare the classes, the sequences and the general planning got a large part of my free time, due to the fact that, added to my role as student of the program and pre-service teacher doing his practicum, I also had the responsibility to guide English lessons during my free time.

This situation resulted in a lack of review and checking of the assignments given to the learners. As a consequence, some of the students started to disregard the completion of homework. This fact brought about indiscipline and conflict in the class, with confrontation between the students who regularly completed tasks and those who did not.

When I finally got conscious of the problem, I changed my behavior and assigned some time every day to check and grade all the students’ assignments. This simple action had a positive effect in learners, they got interested for the activities that I prepare for them again and the got better results in the class.

Reflecting about this situation helped me to understand the responsibility that the facilitator had in terms of correcting and grading the assignments and the importance of homework.
In relation with the planning, I used to plan my lessons the previous day. I noticed that in order to solve the problem with the grading of assignments, I had to start planning lessons in advance, in order to be more organized and be able to distribute my time in a better way to cope with unexpected tasks and problems.

5.1.3) Giving instructions

During the lessons I noticed that even if I prepared the lessons, most of the time the learners got confused or did not perform the activities as I planned them. In most cases, the learners performed parts of the instructions or simply mentioned that they did not understand.

It took me some time to realize that often the learners understood the vocabulary, but they did not know what they had to do with that it.

To solve this problem, I started to write down the instructions that I planned for each of the activities and analyze them and thus I discovered that in most of the cases, I made them really long and I also used complex vocabulary that the learners did not have.

After I identified the problem with the instructions, I started to simplify and make the instructions shorter, I used simpler vocabulary and also I tried to avoid changing the instructions each time the learners asked me to repeat. This organization resulted in a complete change of attitude from the learners and a better development in their performance. It also helped me to understand that the way in which I presented and gave the instructions of the activities was relevant in the results students achieved. If the learners did not understand what to do, it would not matter how well planned was the lesson.
5.2) Strengths

5.2.1) Material design

Designing and selecting appropriated materials for the lessons was one of the most remarkable and positive aspects during the implementation of this project.

Although most of the time it was possible to find prepared lessons in the internet or books that gave the impression of being appropriate in relation with the topic, the difficulty of the activities and the listening materials was too high for 3rd graders and it was not possible to use them in the class. I discovered that in most cases I had change a large portion of the materials or simply use my creativity to create new ones.

Taking into consideration that failure to perform successfully in class activities can result in a decrease of learners self-esteem and produce frustration in the learners, and remembering that according to Robin the intention of the language practice in the primary school context is not to create experts in the language but rather allow the student to have their first contact with the target language, being able to adjust the activities to students’ level and needs was of the utmost importance.

The observation of the students’ reaction to the listening activities and materials showed me that students liked them and that their motivation increased because they started to pay more attention in class and to participate without complaining.

Besides, most of the times they were able to perform the activities successfully and at the beginning of the class, they asked eagerly for the new activities for the day. Finally,
when asked at the end of the classes about how what they had liked best, they mentioned the games and the listening activities.

I would say that selecting topics for the listening activities (and in general for the English class) which related to the learners’ interests, was a motivating factor that resulted in an improvement in the leaners’ language attitude towards listening activities.

It is relevant to mention that the use of authentic listening materials was not reduced to the listening activities. For most activities related to other skills, students were provided listening input as a trigger for awakening interest and participation. In almost all the cases, videos and podcasts were used. They presented conversations, tales or any other contents related to the topics of the class.

5.2.2) Group work activities

In my brief experience as a teacher, the use of group work has been one of the characteristics that best define my teaching methodology since I consider it as a key factor in order to get positive results in the learner’s language development.

During the first week, in order to see the learners’ interests and their abilities I took different types of activities to the classroom. My observation showed me that learners had a poor opinion of group work. In most of the cases, they complained about the members of the group and demanded to be set with other people.

However, I decided to insist on group work, since according to Caruso & Woolley (2008) it can help to get a faster development of language skills. After some initial
resistance, students got used to it and the complaining finished. They seemed to understand the usefulness of working with somebody else since after some classes they would spontaneously look for different classmates to work with in the listening activities.

As it had been explained through the document, the objective of this proposal was to develop the listening comprehension skill in primary school by using semi authentic and authentic materials. Thus, the facilitator made use of different authentic sources and adapted them in order to be used in the classroom taking.

Another important factor is that as the facilitator I took into account the school requirements of topics that I received but in terms of the materials I tried to use the ones that will facilitate comprehension for the learners, those materials had as main characters people that learners might know from movies or TV shows and also simple vocabulary that was already practiced during the lessons or that would be practiced.

6) Students’ responses

6.1) Challenges

The main challenge that I observed were the learners’ negative expectations and the feeling of failure related to listening activities. When I started with the implementation, I prepared a lesson based on a short audio about a house and the parts of it. At the beginning of the lesson students had high expectations but when they discovered that there was listening involved, all those expectations disappeared.

This can be seen in the following excerpt taken from my reflective journal:
“As soon as I told students that the next activity was going to be a listening about the parts of the house, some of them started saying that listening was really difficult and that all the activities were boring.” (Reflective journal, p. 3)

After that, and during the following classes, I prepared lessons oriented to the use of videos and audio were the learners had to perform different kind of activities like: listening for specific vocabulary, listen and repeat, organize images based on the order of the audio, etc. Added to those activities, I used audio materials that were no longer than 5 minutes or in other cases, I played small portions of the audios. Those ideas linked to the modification in the speed and the use of images, resulted in an improvement of the learners’ attitude towards the listening input.

In truth, I must acknowledge that the group had good discipline and was interested in learning.

6.2) Strengths

There are many factors that can influence the students’ performance during the lessons. Some of them are external, such as the environment, and other are internal, like motivation but, in my personal opinion and based on my experience, I would say that a high portion of the responsibility of the lesson results, lies with the facilitator.

A particular characteristic of this group of students which can be considered as a strength was that even though they expected to fail in the activities as explained previously, they had the will to learn and they kept on trying to complete the exercises and to participate in the activities.
I consider this a relevant factor, that helped them to achieve good results in the activities and allowed me implement the use of authentic and semi authentic audio materials.

Something important in this group was that they really liked music. Thus, when I noticed it and started to use songs in the class, the learners immediately started to pay attention. This strategy caused that in some cases, they went beyond what I had planned, i.e., they not only completed the tasks that I had given to them but also proposed alternative or complementary activities related to the material that had been implemented there.

This is shown in the following sample from my reflective journal:

Wednesday September 10 2014

*Today there was not noise outside of the classroom, I started the lesson and most of the learners were paying attention, they started to participate in the activities that were proposed by the facilitator. I got surprised when the learners asked me to practice what now they call “what is your name song”, this was a song that I used during the first and second class in order to learn their names but also to practice questions and the way to answer them. While they were singing I noticed how Santiago stand up and started to move following the rhythm of the song and that gave to me an idea, I decided to divide the group in 4 and each of them had to modify the rhythm of the song and showed to the others.*

In some cases, I followed their suggestions and included the activities they proposed in the lesson plans, not only because those were good but also because I wanted to give the learners the possibility to participate in the lesson in a more active way.
7) Linguistic outcomes

Taking into consideration what I observed and the grades that learner’s obtained during the implementation process, I could say the following in terms of development of the four language skills the learners are able to.

7.1) Reading:

The in service teacher demanded that students were taught reading in relation with recycling since they were working in a “Proyecto de Aula” related to that topic. Considering that learners were beginning to develop this skill in their mother tongue, their progress was based on the recognition of vocabulary.

Learners were able to identify specific vocabulary related to class activities and the topics practiced, follow simple written instructions with common vocabulary, and relate images with the appropriated written form. An example of the kind of tasks that students learn to develop is shown in image 1.

In this activity, students had to highlight the vocabulary related to materials that could be recycled in a text. (Image N°1: Printed text to recognize vocabulary seen in class.)

7.2) Writing:

By the end of the implementation, students were able to write in the correct way basic vocabulary using images as a guide about topics such as family, the house, what they liked
and disliked, and the animals. One of the activities implemented with them were crosswords in which the clues were the images and they had to remember and write the appropriate word. An example of this kind of tasks can be seen in image N° 2

Image N°2: Crossword

7.3) Listening:

This skill was the one that presented the higher development considering that it was the intention of this project. During the time of the implementation learners were able to identify specific vocabulary from an audio document, extract specific information from authentic and semi authentic simple audio materials, follow the rhyme of songs, and to follow the plot of a story using images as a guide.
Image N°3: listen to a common day of a kid and organize the images in the correct way

Image N°4. Listen, write and number the different rooms of the house

7.4) Speaking:

About this skill in general, the principal development was based on learner’s motivation. By the use of authentic materials and activities related to listening, the learners started to participate and tried to answer the questions even if they were not sure about the answers. Another development observed, was the possibility to use simple expressions to talk about themselves, what they liked and disliked and also to follow pronunciation in the sentences of short songs.

To conclude, the use of authentic materials, allowed me to collect information about the development that the learners had in 3 specific language skills, (listening, reading and writing) I was able to get information due to the fact that there is a large number of authentic materials used to practice those skills.
8) Conclusions

This project pointed out evidences about the usefulness of the authentic and semi-authentic materials in the development of the listening comprehension skill in a second grade course in Pereira. During the implementation the students guided by the practitioner were exposed to a variety of authentic audio materials, and performed different activities in order to get some developments in their listening skill.

Authentic materials proved to be a useful tool in order to develop the listening skill since they allow the learners to encounter real intonation, accents and idioms that are not listened to audios prepared for educational purposes which had been created to practice a specific knowledge. It is important to mention that those materials required a previous analysis from the teacher and a continuous practice in the classroom in order to obtain the best results from them.

The implementation of the semi-authentic materials presents different advantages not only to learners but also to the teachers. Those materials allow the teacher to make use of the same resources in different ways, they also give the teacher the possibility to help the learners to overcome problems such as frustration, negativity and anxiety.

The use of this kind of material can be helpful for the learners taking into consideration that we can use them in and scaffolding process, starting from simple and modified materials and finishing with the not modified material.

The use of this kind of materials can be in most of the cases an exhausting work for the facilitator taking into consideration that it requires a lot planning and preparation, in
addition, it is not easy to find the appropriated material to use with your learners, but the results obtained, are more than enough to do the work.

To conclude, I would like to highlight one of the ideas that most influenced me in the development of this project: the target of the listening comprehension in primary school is not to create experts in listening but rather to give the learners the first contact with the language and to make that first contact as comfortable as possible. (Robin, 2007)
References


