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The listening skill in Primary Education: a classroom-based experience

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ABSTRACT

In this BA dissertation I picture different ways of dealing with listening in the area of foreign languages in primary education. For this, I have done a literature review focusing on how this skill has been taught since the 18th century. Besides, I have commented on some authors who have contributed greatly to the development of this skill in EFL settings.

In order to have a more realistic view of how listening is introduced in the classrooms of primary education, I conducted a research through direct observation in a primary school for a period of three weeks. The analysis of such data lead me to draw some relevant conclusions about the treatment of listening today.

KEY WORDS

Listening, communication in the classroom, teaching, learning, Foreign Language

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1. Introduction and justification

The first communicative task that the human being does is listening, before speaking or a great deal earlier than reading or writing. Starting from this thought, with this work, part of the Bachelor of Arts dissertation, I intend to investigate the foundations that give meaning to listening. Thinking about the relevance of this task in our everyday life and understanding it as a fundamental tool for learning.

To perform this task the major element in which we focus is the Spanish curriculum with indications provided for the Royal Decree 1513/2006, that establishes the core curriculum of Primary Education. Contemporary curricula point out the need to teach English giving importance to the communicative level. This requires the recycling of teachers and a thorough change when it comes to teach.

The other pillar on which this research will be built is the contribution to the field of listening by various authors and theories from the 18th century onwards.

Given this importance, I believe that this work will help to understand better the development of listening and ask ourselves the objectives we want to achieve when we work this in school because teaching should be a planned and systematic process. It is important to reflect the objectives of the language class, as Stern argued "in recent decades, the definition of language teaching objectives has played an increasingly major role in the development of second language curriculums." (Stern and Allen, 1992, p. 63)

I conducted this research because I believe that listening is still a largely ignored skill in a Foreign Language classes, despite its importance. We also want to know the evolution of listening in the EFL classroom because this can make us more aware of the current state of this skill.

I also intend to know the reality of listening in the classroom and for this we will investigate for three weeks an English class in a particular context of the city of Granada. Therewith we know from inside how it works in the classroom and the ways used by teachers to make children understand what they hear. It is also useful to know children's attitude when exposed to listening-based activities.

2. Initial hypothesis

My initial hypothesis is that listening is worked less than other skills in the English class of Primary Education.

3. Objectives

The objectives I aim to achieve with this BA dissertation are:

- To conduct a literature review about listening throughout history.
- To recognize the importance of listening in relation to learning English in Primary Education.
- To collect data concerning the time dedicated to the task of listening
- To know how listening is worked in the Foreign Language class.
- To find the drawbacks of listening practice in an English classroom.

4. Historical background

This section focuses on the evolution of speaking as a key skill in the learning of foreign language. This historical overview starts in the 18th century which sets the turning point in the teaching of foreign languages. It was not until that moment that the subject of foreign languages appeared in the curriculum of any school. At that time, the subject was taught following the grammar-translation method. Students translated texts into the foreign language and then they read aloud their answers, or answers to comprehension questions. This method only gave them a few minutes of oral practice and, hence, they were unable to gain fluency in the language.

At mid-nineteenth century new developments appeared in the field of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL). There was a growing recognition that children did not have to learn complicated grammar rules to learn their mother tongue, hence the importance deviated from translation into oral fluency. A new teaching method was born, i.e. *the Direct Method*. This places great importance on drills, repetition, good pronunciation and use of phonetic symbols and phonetic writing, and above all, there were no rules and the use of L1 is forbidden. This system still has followers in many parts of the world, but it is not an easy method to use in schools because it is based on a classroom atmosphere created artificially.

Later, during the early years of the twentieth century there was an interest in the study of the structure of languages. In 1915, *Course in General Linguistics* was published by students of the famous Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913), known as the "father of modern linguistics", whose studies show that all language data are closely intertwined. During this same period, in the U.S., as a result of the desire of anthropologists to record the cultures and languages of the American Indians, Leonard Bloomfield (1887-1949), published *Language* in 1933. This led to a period of years

known as "the Age Bloomfield" in which linguists focused on writing descriptive grammars where the data were identified and classified without regard to meaning.

There were no new findings in teaching foreign language until '50s, when, as an indirect result of the need for troops and spies in World War II to learn a foreign language as fast as possible (although it was for a limited number of situations) emerged two new methods: *Situational Language* (language teaching across situations) and *the Audiolingual Method*. These two methods prioritize oral skills, with emphasis on everyday conversations. There is a lot of repetition and it is important for the student to imitate in order to acquire a natural pronunciation. The message is basically: "listen-repeat-understand" and is a method that was sold, and is still nowadays, by selling recordings on tapes or CDs.

Caleb Gettegno introduced a new method in the seventies: *The Silent Method*. It consists on introducing students a system using rods of different colors that represent some of the main verbs, adjectives and pronouns. The students have to join them via a color-coded chart to create their own phrases/sentences. In this method, the oral aspect of the language does not have much relevance but it develops student autonomy and self-sufficiency.

Charles A. Curran an American psychologist, introduced the *Language Learning Community*, based on their personal counseling techniques. As Hearn (2003, p.5) puts it: "In this method there is no prepared materials, students are encouraged to speak in a natural way about themselves and their lives, the teacher provides students repeated translation time". The sessions were recorded on tape and the end of the class the teacher speaks of language structures and vocabulary they have used. The aim is to create a non-threatening environment in which learning becomes an emotional process rather than merely intellectual, and in which the teacher assumes the role of advisor.

In 1975, Georgi Lozanov, a Bulgarian psychiatrist, proposed this revolutionary system known as *Suggestopedia*. With it the class should start by introducing new material, using lively and fun activities, with accessories, real objects, photos or drawings, or any other type of multi-sensory stimulation. Then the teacher reads what is to be learned, accompanied by classical music. The text is given to students so they can continue reading. During this step, students listen, read and comprehend. The process ends with an activity such as role-play to activate all learning channels.

Another important development in TEFL, which was developed in the late 60s, was James Asher's *Total Physical Response* method. Language is learned and stored in

our memory by using body movements. Therefore a child listens and understands before speaking, and oral activities should not be enforced. It is a very successful method in the classrooms of very young learners and greatly promotes oral interaction among students.

Also in the 60s becomes important the idea that communication is more than just learning grammar and vocabulary. To be truly communicative in a foreign language, students must develop the ability to make themselves understood in socially appropriate ways.

In the 70s, the language model of Stephen Krashen proposed to give students large amounts of material, considering the context, but not to grammatical strings, because he claimed that languages are learned in a natural way and peripherally, not taught. His underlying message was to give students the most natural communication, so that if they could not understand a specific time of a verb one day, they would understand it another day. That is, the production will automatically follow your hearing and understanding, although there is a time interval.

Years later, following this vision of teaching as communication, appeared the *Natural Method*, powered by Tracy D. Terrell. In this method the teacher creates situations that will motivate students to communicate. Its basic premises, according to Krashen and Terrell (1983), are:

- The general goal is communication skills
- Comprehension precedes production
- Production emerges without forcing it, after a silent period.
- Learning activities must promote subconscious acquisition rather than conscious learning

Oral production will develop slowly, but it is important not to force it. It should follow five natural stages:

1. Yes/no answers
2. Response word
3. Wordlist
4. Short sentences
5. Whole phrases

This method attempts to motivate students by reducing anxiety and giving little importance to errors. The teacher needs to use a variety of resources, such as

accessories, drawings or pictures and gestures. Therefore Terrell highlights some techniques, for example, the use of gestures or actions (such as in the Total Physical Response) is seen to be more binding than the use of translation. (Dhority, 1991, p33).

Following this timeline of teaching English, an idea that emerged was the *Language from within* (1976) by Galyean. In this method students have to think about their needs, values, interests and activities, and then discuss them with other students, bringing the language to different situations close to them.

In 1983, Dr. Howard Gardner, the great American psychologist at Harvard University, published a book called *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*, which completely unseated many old beliefs. Gardner proposes that all people are intelligent in many different ways and that our multiple intelligences are not fixed, they can improve, develop and spread. According to him, there are eight types of intelligences: Musical-rhythmic and harmonic; visual-spatial; verbal-linguistic; logical-mathematical; bodily-kinesthetic; interpersonal; intrapersonal; naturalistic; existential. The English teacher who has experience using songs and chants successfully in his/her class should be aware of the fact that he is accessing the musical intelligence and there is also a need to access the other intelligences. As a whole, we can affirm that teaching a language is most effective when the teacher provides students the opportunity to develop through all their intelligences.

5. The Importance of listening

Increasingly oral language development gives way to oral development. This importance comes from the spread of audiolingual and audiovisual methodologies, which understood the language as a conversational modality and highlighted its motivational value.

It is important to note that multiple benefits accrue to the learner beyond the obvious improvements in listening skills. Particularly listening comprehension lessons are a way for teaching elements of grammatical structure and allow new vocabulary items to be contextualized within a body of communicative discourse.

Despite this, as Brown (1987) reflected, a good number of published courses on listening comprehension and classroom practices in many school continues to demonstrate that listening is still regarded as the least important skill. Schools still put the main emphasis on morphology and the syntactic rules for creating correct sentences, forgetting the interactive dimension of language.

The teaching of English, as is done today in Spain, does not serve to make the students feel good about their learning. The reasons for this are perhaps those indicated by Morley: "perhaps an assumption than listening is a reflex, a little like breathing-listening seldom receives overt teaching attention in one's native language-has masked the importance and complexity of listening with understanding in a non-native language" (1991, p.vii).

As the listening skill was ignored, the grammar-translation approach is the method which, aided by some typical activities of other methods, has been practiced in the classroom. This approach has been strongly criticized for being artificial and distorting the natural and authentic language. (Krashen 1982).

As argued by Canale and Swain in 1983, listening comprehension is certainly the basis for the development of oral expression, and ultimately, all communication skills, i.e., hearing controls production, it is obviously impossible that our students can produce correct sound of the foreign language if they cannot discriminate aurally. Therefore phonetic correction must begin with auditory discrimination to go ahead on production.

At this point it is essential to establish the difference between hearing and listening, to hear is to perceive sounds through the ear, while listening is a complex activity that involves paying attention to what you hear.

Therefore we know that the use of language as communication support for all activities in the classroom is essential, but to get the communication it is necessary that students understand what is heard. As Rivers (1996) noted: "speaking does not constitute communication itself unless what is said is comprehended by another person [...]. i.e. a communicative act must be reciprocal, well delivered and well understood. Teaching the comprehension of spoken speech is therefore of primary importance if the communication aim is to be reached" (p.196). It is of paramount importance to present children real contexts, making English class an ongoing dialogue in which the ears are opened and make progress understanding. The only presence of English is not sufficient, since we also need non-linguistic communication strategies that help us in understanding the concepts. Another important aspect to keep in mind is the context in which we communicate, because as Johnson said (1995) "the communication context can also determinate the rules that govern how speakers communicate, or the structure of communication" (p.5).

The language heard, which has a message, has acoustical patterning different for each language (Jakobson & Hall, 1956, p.98). This conventional patterning limits the possible sequences of sounds for that particular language and determines their frequency of manifestation. In the same way a child learns his/her mother tongue s/he expects certain sound patterns and not others. Therefore the frequency of a foreign language may be disconcerting until the student gets the experience to create a framework of expectations, which will be achieved through practice. The acoustic patterning of a language has not only acceptable sound sequences but anticipated degrees of loudness, levels of pitch and lengths of pause. With the experience the child learns to distinguish groupings to create the meaning.

Aspects that we work with listening should be known and belong to the students' former experiences. Prior knowledge will serve them to interpret new information and give meaning to it. As contact with the foreign language is necessarily limited because it is restricted, in most cases, to the school environment, what we do in class will be critical to the greater or less development of communicative competence. Behaviors and tools used by someone in a listening situation may not be the same as those used in another. It is necessary to emphasize this point when teaching effective listening skills. Although there is a process to follow to be an effective listener and certain behaviors lead to success more than others, students may not use all of the techniques provided in a workshop. They may also use strategies in different ways to accomplish the same goal of augmenting their listening effectiveness, and this is perfectly acceptable.

Very often teachers seem to picture listening as a comprehension of narrative events and descriptions of situations or people. But, as Wilkins stated, "…in practice language is used as much to *do* things as it is simply to *inform*." (1979, pp. 5-7). Children need to get used to hearing common expressions such as "excuse me" or "look out", because we produce each sentence with an intention and an end and this must be understood. This would awake students' awareness in the Foreign Language. It is necessary to understand and create language that is appropriate to the situations in which one is operating, because failure to do so may cause users to miss main points that are being communicated or to have their messages misunderstood.

That is why it is important to encourage students to think about why they are listening and exactly which information they are listening for. Then they can adapt the way they listen to their aims. If learners try to process everything that they hear, they are constantly trying to catch up with what someone is saying. So learners can focus their

attention productively. We should start by training learners to listen for the general meaning and not to worry about the details.

6. Listening in the curriculum

As teachers, within the Spanish educational framework it is necessary to know the implication of listening in the curriculum.

> Curricula are concerned with making general statements about language learning, learning purpose and experience, evaluation, and the role relationships of teachers and learners. They will also contain banks of learning items and suggestions about how these might be used in class. (Candlin, 1984, p.42)

Gearing our attention towards the legal documents governing the teaching of foreign languages in our country, we need to focus on Royal Decree 1513/2006, which establishes the core curriculum of Primary Education. In this document, the area of Foreign Languages organizes learning outcomes into four blocks of contents. The first block develops the oral aspect:

> Block 1: Listening, speaking and interacting is, at this stage, particularly relevant. The limited presence of foreign language in the social context makes the language model provided by the school the primary source of knowledge and language learning. The dialogues are used in the classroom as a process and as an end, so the curriculum attended both the knowledge of linguistic elements and the ability to use them performing communicative tasks. Moreover, the language model must come from a number of speakers to collect as much as possible the variation and nuances that an environmental linguistic model offers speakers both in phonetic and prosodic aspects as in the choice of specific expressions for communication in familiar situations. This explains the presence in the curriculum of the use of conventional media and technologies of information and communication. (p.43092)

The general objectives related to oral aspect that marks the document on the BOE, Royal Decree 1513/2006 are:

> 1. Listening and understanding verbal messages in various interactions, using the information provided to perform various specific tasks related to their experience.

> 2. Expressing and interacting orally in simple and daily situations with a known content and development, using verbal and nonverbal procedures and adopting a respectful and cooperative attitude.

Value the foreign language and languages in general as a means of communication and understanding between people of different backgrounds and cultures and as a tool for learning different contents.

7. Expressing a receptive attitude and confidence in one's ability to learn and use a Foreign Language.

8. Use knowledge and prior experience with other languages for fast, efficient and independent acquisition of the foreign language.

9. Identify phonetic aspects of rhythm, stress and intonation, and linguistic structures and lexical aspects of the target language and use them as building blocks of communication. (p.43091)

If we rely on official regulation, we may realize that listening has great importance and should be worked thoroughly in the language class.

7. Theories and methodologies listening instruction

We can distinguish two types of listening instruction. On the one hand, extensive listening is a listening teaching methodology that is often used outside classes. Students need to learn real life listening. Real life listening is when you listen to someone speaking in real contexts. For instance, in a crowded context where the listener must make a greater effort to decode the message.

On the other hand, intensive listening is a listening teaching methodology that is often used in the class. As Michael Rost explained "the aim of Intensive Listening activities is to raise the learners' awareness of how differences in sound, structure, and lexical choice can affect meaning." (2011).

In order to use an extensive listening methodology we should use the audio of graded readers books or cassette, listening thus to natural human voice. Sometimes part of the conversation is informal and there are many chunks of information, so the students have difficulties to catch the meaning. That is why they need more concentration for this type of listening. The importance of extensive listening is that children enjoy this moment and internalize characteristic sounds of the language.

In addition, intensive listening can provide a significant source on language input. With this type, students are focused on identifying the different structures which listening entails, and recognize the vocabulary it contains. The main purpose of this intensive listening is to make the student more sensitive to the language itself, not the meaning.

The first working model of listening, are those activities called *Listening and repeating activities.* Using this type of activity the student repeats a pattern marked, as to imitate the sounds s/he hears to memorize them afterwards.

This model allows students to exercise patterns repeating conversations or speeches, and helps memorizing structures and intonations; imitating the patterns of pronunciation. It also increases the level of cognitive processing and use of structured propositional language.

Another model of tasks are known as *Listening-and-Do Activities*, within which, Morley (1991, p.82) distinguishes various types as we see below.

a) Listening and performing actions and operations:

1. drawing a picture, figure, or design
2. locating routes of specific points on a map
3. selecting or identifying a picture of a person, place, or thing from description
4. performing hand or body movements as in songs and games such as "Simon Says" or "Hokey Pokey"
5. operating a piece of equipment, such as a camera, a recorder, a microwave oven, a pencil sharpener
6. carrying out steps in a process, such as steps solving a math problems, a science experiment, a cooking sequence.

b) Listening, evaluation, and manipulating information:

1. writing information received and reviewing it in order to answer questions or to solve a problem
2. evaluating information in order to make a decision or construct a plan of action
3. evaluating arguments in order to develop a position for or against
4. evaluating cause-and-effect information
5. projecting from information received and making predictions
6. summarizing or "gistizing" information received
7. evaluating and combining information
8. evaluating and condensing information
9. evaluating and elaborating or extending information
10. organizing unordered information received into a pattern of orderly relationship --chronological sequencing, spatial relationships, cause-and-effect, problem-solution

c) Listening and transferring information:

1. listening and taking a telephone or in-person message by either transcribing the entire message word-for-word or by writing down notes on the important items

2. listening and filling in blanks in a gapped story game (in order to complete the story)

3. listening and completing a form or chart

4. listening and summarizing the gist of a short story, report, or talk

5. listening to a "how to" talk and writing an outline of the steps in a sequence (e.g. How to cook something, how to run a piece of equipment, how to play a game)

6. listening to a talk or lecture and taking notes

d) Interactive listening and negotiating meaning through questioning/answering routines

- Question Types

1. Repetition: Could you repeat the part about ...?

2. Paraphrase: Could you say that again? I don't understand what you mean by...

3. Verification: Did I understand you to say that...? In other words you mean.... Do you mean ...?

4. Clarification: Could you tell me what you mean by ...? Could you explain...? Could you give us an example of ...?

5. Elaboration: What about ...? How is this related to...?

6. Challenge: What did you base ... on? How did you reach...? Why did you...?

e) Listening and solving problems

1. word games in which the answers must be derived from verbal clues

2. number games and oral story arithmetic problems

3. asking questions in order to identify something, as in Twenty Questions

4. classroom versions of password, jeopardy, twenty questions in which careful listening is critical to questions and answers or answers and questions

5. "minute mysteries" in which a paragraph-length mystery story is given by the teacher (or a tape), followed by small group work in which students formulate solutions

6. a jigsaw mystery in which each group listens to a tape with some of the clues, then shares information in order to solve the mystery

7. riddles, logic puzzles, intellectual problem-solving

f) Listening for enjoyment, pleasure, and sociability

- Listening to songs, stories, plays, poems, jokes, anecdotes, teacher chat. Task listening

In this way we contribute to giving a practical sense to the spoken discourse. The child listens to information, which should answer, s/he should do something with the information, that is, carry out a real task using the information received.

To perform certain activities it is necessary to extract the meaning of what is heard. For this, students need to follow four basic steps (Goh, 2000):

- Figure out the purpose for listening. Activate background knowledge of the topic in order to predict or anticipate content and identify appropriate listening strategies.

- Attend to the parts of the listening input that are relevant to the identified purpose and ignore the rest. This selectivity enables students to focus on specific items in the input and reduces the amount of information they have to hold in short-term memory in order to recognize it.

- Select top-down and bottom-up strategies that are appropriate to the listening task and use them flexibly and interactively. Students' comprehension improves and their confidence increases when they use top-down and bottom-up strategies simultaneously to construct meaning.

- Check comprehension while listening and when the listening task is over. Monitoring comprehension helps students detect inconsistencies and comprehension failures, directing them to use alternate strategies.

Another type of English listening instruction is Interactive listening, which is orientated to help learners assume active roles in shaping and controlling an interaction, even when they are in the "listener's role". We should know that it is important for learners to take an active role as listeners. Accordingly, an interactive listening activity must have a built-in need for information or clarification questions by the listener.

Interactive listening is useful for developing oral listening skills in interactive scholarly communication and it is necessary to promote a critical listening and thinking and the ability to speak effectively.

In this type of classes, the teacher sidesteps his/her role, while the student becomes the central focus of the activities. It is the student who becomes the central focus of the activities. To this end, interactive listening skills are developed in the context of live exchanges, mainly through information gap pair work, jigsaw groups, and student presentations and reports.

Within this area, we find the Total Physical Response, a method developed by James J. Asher based on movement. As Laboria & Hearn (2003) explain, body movements provide us a way to recover memories by creating excitement and activating positive feelings in students. TPR gets an immediate physical response of the child, followed by a word.

Finally, we find a kind of listening based on the songs. One of the highlights of the songs is their rhythmic and repetitive character. The repetitive nature of songs, the joy songs impose to the learning activity and the associative power between the melody and the content of the word reinforce the attainment of the language to be internalized.

Also, when an input is assimilated through songs, that input is stored with other elements. That is, the melody of the song and the emotional elements created by the melody. Multiple clues related to the stored input foster the retrieval processes from the registry web in the semantic and structural schemata. Thus, the use of songs in listening activities will ease both internalization and retrieval processes of the phonologic forms of language. And is that as Jolly (1975) indicated:

> The close relationship between language and music is an easily recognizable one. Both entities have significant common elements and similarities. Songs might be looked upon as occupying the middle ground between the disciplines of linguistics and musicology, possessing both the communicative aspect of language and the entertainment aspect of music.

Songs are important teaching tools in teaching foreign languages because as most teachers find out, students love listening to music in classroom. Students often hold strong views about music and students who are usually quiet can become very talkative when discussing it. Thus, the main goal of modern foreign language teaching, communication, can actually take place. Singing is definitely one of the most effective language learning strategies reported by most children. On this matter, Klein (2005) reports that her experience shows that children respond enthusiastically to songs and welcome them.

8. Methodology

Research design

This research is a qualitative, descriptive case study of the state of the listening skill in English language learning in a Primary school in Granada, Spain. The qualitative approach was chosen for this investigation, as the main aim throughout was to attempt to describe the richness and complexity of the data gathered rather than its classification and quantification for statistical analysis.

Data collection method

As part of the qualitative approach much of the research process was developed and adjusted throughout the investigation period. This does not mean, however, that there was no methodological planning, as one specific data collection method was used: daily observation. According to Daft (1983), scientific observation has the ability to describe and explain the behaviour, having obtained adequate and reliable data for behaviours, events and / or situations clearly identified and embedded in a theoretical context. (p. 207). The key words in observation are: describe and explain; adequate and reliable data; and clearly identified behaviours. Therefore, observation is a method of gathering data and information which consists of using the senses to observe facts and present social realities and people which normally operates. In this BA dissertation, we focus on a class of the fifth grade of primary education. It will focus on the aspects of listening that are promoted by the teacher and received by the students.

Context

We conducted this study in the school "Cristo de la Yedra", located in the north of Granada. It is a religious school founded by the congregation Jesús-María. The school defines itself as Christian but open and fully respectful to children whose families are not catholic.

Children's socioeconomic status ranges from medium to very-low. One of the most outstanding features of the school is the great degree of family diversity found in this centre of learning. This is mainly due to location of the school which is in between the downtown area and Almanjáyar quarter, one of the most undeveloped regions of Granada.

Participants

Observation was conducted in a class group of fifth grade of Primary Education. The class group has twenty students, aged 10 or 11 years old. Twelve are boys and thirteen girls. The class has two students working with an adaptation of the curriculum: a child with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and another student with dyslexia.

Although they have been exposed to English since they were 6, this is the first time the English subject is taught in the target language. Students have three periods of this subject per week and each class lasts 45 minutes. This should be born in mind when conducting this study.

9. Results and analysis

Observations

We conducted an exhaustive observation for a period of three weeks, a total of nine hours of English teaching (three hours a week on Tuesdays at 13:00, three on Thursdays at 13:00 and three on Fridays at 9:00 am).

During my placement at school, I participated with the teacher in the development of English classes attending the methodologies used and analyzing the structure of the class. I used direct observation to gather data concerning the task of listening.

The development of the class is in English. This is new to the students, because in previous years the classes were taught in Spanish, although the contents were of the English language.

The moments of listening can be classified into different types depending on the different communicative situations. These types are: greetings, requests and orders, listening using with flashcards, and songs.

The class begins with greetings such as "hello", "good morning", "how are you?". Students have internalized this routine and they know how to respond to these chunks of language.

Besides, requests and orders that the teacher gives are in English. Students usually understand and react to them, but it is true that they do not understand some of them and ask the meaning to a partner who tells him or her what to do. Children should understand phrases like: *Sit down, please!; You're next; Silence!; Please start reading on page...; Copy this; Repeat, Please; Raise your hand; Repeat after me; Have you finished?; What does it mean?*

Also in relation to oral content of the classes, the teacher makes use of flashcards with pictures and real images for the pronunciation of the vocabulary. When the vocabulary is unknown at the beginning of the unit, she says the word, and the children repeat it. In later sessions, when they already know the word, the teacher shows the flashcard and children say what it is. Then, the teacher pronounces the word again to listen to the correct input.

In relation to the above and in order to avoid the children end up lost in the class, Spanish language is used at the end of the class to clarify and give some indications

about homework. At this time, the teacher also resolves any doubts that students may have.

Each unit, which is divided into six sessions, i.e. two weeks, has a song that children learn. Songs are about what they learned in the unit, especially key vocabulary.

In addition the teacher promotes different oral activities from the book. These activities develop interaction among children.

In fact, during the three weeks the most common activity is to ask questions and answers among peers. Some of these questions are:

- *What are you wearing?; Are there three tables?; Where are you from?*

If we focused on the tests students do at the end of each unit, listening is reduced to two tasks:

- Ordering or classifying drawings about the vocabulary they have heard.

- Marking the words they have heard in a dialogue.

10. Analysis

After gathering data for three weeks, I have established 4 categories regarding the type of listening:

- Listening and repeating: Children use the computers for listening and repeating the key words of the unit. The teacher may also set the example and student repeat after her.

- Listening and do: Students have to perform some activity after listening. In this case, listening requires of them to take some action. This action will take place if the student has understood the oral message produced. For instance, order a story, select the correct option or fill in gaps. Throughout the nine sessions of observed, this is the activity with more repetitions. It fits within the category "Listening and Do" and students have to order a story (3x).

- Interactive listening: I include the relationship between listening dialogues and the teacher or other classmates. For example, I have seen how they work answering questions among peers.

- Listening through songs: At the end of each unit children have the opportunity to listen to a song related to the topic, incorporating vocabulary and structures they have already learned.

All students in the class engage equally in these activities, even the two children with special educational needs. No differentiation is made with respect to these

students. In relation to examinations, the teacher will not change anything related to the listening activities of these two students. The reason for this is that they have no difficulty hearing, their need appears only when writing.

During the three weeks of observation I have noted down the time that was devoted to each of the categories mentioned above. The results are registered in the following table:

Week 1	Listening and repeating	Listening and do	Interactive listening	Listening through songs
Tuesday	12'	5'	20'	-
Thursday	-	2'	15'	-
Friday	5'	7'	8'	-
Week 2	Listening and repeating	Listening and do	Interactive listening	Listening through songs
Tuesday	-	7'	17'	5'
Thursday	5'	-	21'	-
Friday	-	5'	10'	-
Week 3	Listening and repeating	Listening and do	Interactive listening	Listening through songs
Tuesday	-	-	14'	-
Thursday	-	3'	10'	-
Friday	5'	5'	15'	-

As it can be seen, we have recorded the days dedicated to each of the activities, in order to reach conclusions based on real experiences. The time spent on listening in relation to other activities during the three-week period can be observed in the graph below. We distinguish between four categories that we have set for observation.
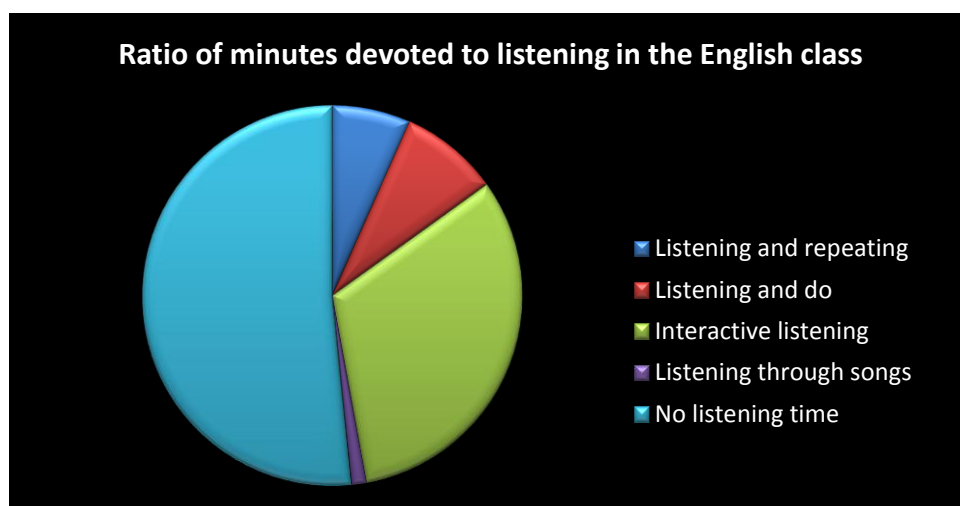
11. Discussion

Looking at the graph of the previous analysis, we can see that only half the time is devoted to the development of listening. That is, from a total of 405 minutes spent in teaching English, approximately 196 of them were dedicated to oral listening activities.

The data obtained confirm the ideas that we commented on the literature review sand emphasizes the importance of this skill in EFL contexts. As Canale and Swain (1983, p.58) stated: "listening is the basis for the development of oral expression, and ultimately, all communication skills", the results of this experience confirm that. Hence, listening sets the frame for the development of other skills and activities in the English class.

The results bring us closer to communicative approaches that we discussed at the beginning. These envisage language learning as a result of the development of the communicative competence. As a result, learners become communicative competent listeners and speakers. By developing the communicative competence students are able to manipulate small forms of information, to improve their understanding and conduct real peer interactions.

To a greater or to a lesser extent, the four above-mentioned categories are present in the development of the classes. We found that 32% of time spent in listening for the period of research is devoted to interactive listening activities. It is the skill more promoted by the teacher. She encourages children to get lessons in the language and they should relate to each other in different situations using English. The next type more developed in the classroom is the category "Listening and do", with 8% of minutes of the study. With this, children carry out activities after listening, they often must make a physical response, which provides teachers a clear information about the child's understanding. The activities of "listening and repeat" get 7% of class time. I believe that this time is reduced because these activities have great value, especially to improve the pronunciation of students. It is true that the use of songs as a resource is almost anecdotal because this it is only worked once in a period of three weeks. We must not forget the importance of songs, a key tool to memorize more easily words and structures by relating them to a melody and a really motivating element for children, as Klein (2005) stated.

No doubt that we have seen the importance that the student should practice the various elements of the language in communicative situations that make him discover the real value of the language s/he is learning. This will make learning effective and motivating. Thus the teacher should allow the student to receive the maximum amount of auditions and interact in situations of communication in pairs or groups. From the pedagogical point of view it is necessary for communication situations to stimulate the interest of students, so that they can get really involved in them.

In this task, we cannot overlook the key role of the teacher as creator and facilitator of listening situations, who will not miss the opportunity to send messages in the target language. He or she, as the main expert of his students, will seek to talk to them sending messages accompanied with appropriate gestures, intonation and redundancies that facilitate understanding.

In re relation to such gestures, one aspect that is present in the classroom is the use of the total physical response method. It provides great dynamism in the class. I consider it a very useful element that should to be implemented more frequently.

Also I must say that children show a very attentive and receptive attitude with listening activities in the classroom. It is therefore an activity that they find fun and motivating. In addition, hearing a different language trying to decode what it means is like an exciting treasure hunt.

12. Conclusion

After conducting this research, my initial hypothesis has been refuted. This is because we have found that almost half of the time implied listening practice. Therefore it would not be true to say that listening is worked far less than other skills in the English class of Primary Education.

Listening provides students with a means of direct contact not only with grammatical structures being studied, but with a living and real language. This BA dissertation has allowed me to learn more different ways to deal with listening because as teachers, we need many diverse and enriching classroom resources that make each class a new and motivating experience.

We have also discovered that an important objective is to ensure that children are able to use the foreign language to communicate, and not only focusing on correcting the productions. Therefore, oral communication takes a central role in our classrooms. So it is necessary to develop a list of tasks that promote the use and control of oral skills in our students.

We should make our students become attentive listeners in the class, because as stated in the curriculum, the presence of the foreign language is limited outside the classroom.

As the main expert in his/her students, the teacher will seek to talk to them sending appropriate messages to their age in terms of verbal expression, gestures and intonation in order to facilitate students understanding messages.

Using the foreign language as medium of instruction and communication in the classroom increases greatly oral input for children. This helps them become familiar with words and phrases related to routine expressions, with themselves, with the organization of class and the topics covered. These phrases may be the basis for the acquisition of syntactic structures applicable to different situations.

Besides, I want to stress the importance of songs, teaching materials that foster students' motivation. This may become a major tool to master vocabulary, progress in learning sentence structure and improve pronunciation.

It is obvious that there is no a magic formula that guarantees the perfect way to bring listening to schools, but this work has given us the opportunity to meet different options that can help us in our profession and give us some self-confidence when we face this task. However, one thing is clear: It is very important to create a climate of trust and respect in the classroom, so that communication can occur and children are willing to listen.

We should be aware of the idea that emerged in the sixties (English teaching should be based on communication as indicated, among others, by Rivers, 1966). This is still a burning issue nowadays. Thus interactive activities, in which listening plays a key role, are the most used in the classroom.

Finally, after having reflected on many aspects related to listening in the classroom, I would like to quote the following phrase said by Plutarch in the first century, where the importance of this skill is highlighted: "To learn to speak, first we must know how to listen".

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