# THE PRACTICE OF THE LISTENING SKILL THROUGH THE USE OF

# AUTHENTIC MATERIAL IN A FIFTH GRADE COURSE

# FROM A PUBLIC SCHOOL IN PEREIRA

Trabajo de grado presentado como requisito parcial para obtener el título de

Licenciados en Lengua Inglesa.

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# ABSTRACT

This document presents the practice of the listening skill using authentic material which was implemented in the Institución Educativa Suroriental with forty five graders during the third and fourth period of an academic year in 2014.

The decision of implementing authentic material as a way to fulfill the students' needs in terms of listening skill was motivated after we observed a huge lack of listening comprehension which negatively affected the communication among the students and the tutor during the English class sessions.

First of all, we exposed the definitions of authentic material and listening skill, we also talked about relevant studies which have given us important ideas on how to implement this type of material with English learners.Finally we presented the methodology and some reflections we have made upon professional growth, linguistic outcomes, and students' responses.

**Key words**: Authentic Material, Listening skill

# RESUMEN

Este documento presenta la práctica de la habilidad de escucha a través del uso de material auténtico el cual fue implementado en la Institución Educativa Suroriental con cuarenta estudiantes del grado quinto durante el tercer y cuarto periodo del año académico del 2014.

La decisión de implementar material auténtico para satisfacer las necesidades de los estudiantes en relación con la habilidad de escucha fue motivada después de observar una inmensa falta de comprensión auditiva la cual afectaba negativamente la comunicación entre los estudiantes y el profesor durante las clases de Inglés.

Primero que todo, exponemos las definiciones de material auténtico y habilidad de escucha, también hablamos acerca de algunos estudios relevantes los cuales nos han dado ideas importantes acerca de cómo implementar este tipo de material con aprendices del Inglés, finalmente presentamos la metodología y algunas reflexiones que hemos hecho sobre crecimiento profesional, resultados lingüísticos y respuestas de los estudiantes.

**Palabras Clave:** Material auténtico, Habilidad de escucha.

**INTRODUCTION**

This project was based on a previous observation research that was conducted on a fifth grade classroom from a public school located in Pereira. We observed that students lack listening comprehension skills, so we tried to identify the needs of the students and making a teaching plan in order to impact, in this specific case, the Listening skill directly as well as the students vocabulary.

The main purpose of this classroom project was to help the students to improve their English language level and listening comprehension skills specifically by exposing them to authentic material which according to several preliminary investigations we found out ideas from authors such as Peacock (1997) cited in Tamo (2009) who describes authentic materials as materials that have been produced to fulfill some social purpose in the language community, going more deeply, those social purposes reference the goals of language since it is used for many functions, as for instance, expressive purposes, where language is used to demonstrate feelings ideas or attitudes, informative purposes, where language is employed with the intention of conveying information to others, or metalinguistic purposes, where language is used to discuss language itself; these authors have researched about the topic through many years of investigation, so we decided to implement these ideas to guide our sessions throughout the project. This project was implemented on three of the 10 classes of one hour that the practitioners carried on their guided teaching practicum of the bachelor program from the Universidad Tecnológica de Pereira .

The pre-service teachers were challenged to look for free materials easily found on the web and adapt them in terms of length and difficulty according the topics that were being taught, the Estándares de Competencias para la enseñanza de la lengua inglesa. The lessons were planned and then conducted following three different stages, pre, while and post listening, taking most of all advantage of the pre- and while listening to motivate the students for the listening activity using positive points in order to have them engaged with the activities.

As pre-service teachers implementing a project for one of the most challenging skills to teach, this project was a learning experiencing, on the field of planning lessons, as well as creators and adjusters of materials for teaching and having the experience of teaching in the real field of the English teaching campus on the context of a public school in Colombia.

This classroom project describes all the research, planning and Implementation of a classroom design based on the use of authentic materials and the top down strategy for developing students' listening skills and improving their attitude towards this type of task. It is divided into the following sections:

**Justification**, where it is explained the reasons of impacting the listening skill and why to use authentic materials, as well as the relevance of the project.

**Learning aims**, where we approached what the pre service teachers intended to achieve in terms of goals for the students as well as for themselves.

**Theoretical Framework:** In this section it is presented the evidence of all the research made by the pre-service teachers in order to have a basis for the

development of this classroom project.

**Methodology:** Where it is described how this classroom project was conducted, what strategy was used, the population and the context where it was carried out.

**Reflective stage:**  where the appreciations of the pre service teachers are stated in terms of professional growth, students' responses and linguistic outcomes.

**JUSTIFICATION**

The advantage of using authentic materials is that learners encounter target language items in the kinds of contexts where they naturally occur, rather than in contexts that have been concocted by a textbook writer. Ultimately, this will assist learners because they experience the language in interaction with other closely related grammatical and discourse elements. Second Language Teaching & Learning by (Nunan, 1998, p. 27)

Listening is a form of communication and an active process. When you listen you must get the meaning from what's being said before you can respond. (BBC, 2011, What is listening?, Types of listening).

Brody (2004) argues that the practice of the listening skill requires special attentiveness and concentration on the way the input is given, the context in which the information is being produced and the source of the message. Attention, memory and common sense play an important role when activating the listening skill in order to grasp the meaning of what is being said.

On the other hand, studies have identified that listening is usually considered as a passive skill meriting little classroom attention, up to the point that Nunan (2002, p. 238) describes it as "The cinderella skill in second language learning" and argues that the proficiency in L2 has usually been viewed in terms of ability to speak and write the language in question. Fan Yangang (1996) supports this view arguing that there is a great inversion of time on reading instead of exposing learners to listening

materials and activities.

Also Harmer (2007) states the importance of listening for achieving our communicative goals and affirms that successful spoken communication depends not just on one's ability to speak but also on the effectiveness of the way in which one listens; in other words, for any conversation, it is necessary to master both skills speaking and listening in order to comprehend the message and reply to it logically, thus, when learners have not properly developed their listening skill, understanding spoken language becomes a daunting challenge and students might feel frustrated during a listening practice.(Mohr, K.J, & Mohr, E.S 2007)

However, the assumption that the listening skill is the most difficult skill to teach does not come just from the perception of the practitioners of this classroom project; Anderson and Lynch (1988) cited in Fang Yagang (1996) argue that "lack of sociocultural, factual, and context knowledge of the target language can present an obstacle to listening comprehension" for the reason that language is a means for expressing cultural aspects.

Developing listening comprehension is particularly important even though it is very challenging and it is especially necessary in monolingual contexts as the Colombian public education system, where there are few opportunities for learners to be exposed to the spoken target language input outside the classroom.

Considering this, it seems of the utmost importance that during the English lessons, teachers provide chances to improve this skill, however as observers of English classes, the practitioners of this classroom project noticed some difficulties that took place on the classroom at the time of carrying out a listening activity. On the part of the students there was lack of attention and motivation and on the part of

the facilitator, we noticed no contextualization and no use of pre-listening activities so the students were not prepared to understand the main idea of the listening exercises, what led them to frustration during the development of the activity.

The main goal  of this classroom project was to impact the listening skill through the implementation of the top down strategy and the use of authentic materials  with the intention of facilitate the development of the listening skill with a specific group of learners.

For that purpose we established the following aims:

Thus Listening is one of the most important skills to have real communication an interact with others creating an unbreakable connection with real life since it has critical significance on how people get done their tasks in their daily, lives from the most simple thing as could be to watch a movie, set a medical appointment or to take notes in class and that is the special reason why we consider that **Authentic Materia**l should be included in all the activities of learning, in this case English, since learners will face real language in use, which can take place in a context where the target language is spoken, and the learners can find phrases that could be used for them in their daily lives.

**LEARNING AIMS**

According to the students' needs we have chosen the following standards to carry out our classroom project, which are the same time, are the goals established to achieve during the process:

- Listen and understand real spoken English language for the purpose of following directions.

- Identify and understand simple commands, sayings and colloquial expressions.

- Represent listening information by performing role plays

- Identify commands that they listen from the authentic videos.

- Follow directions in English that they hear from the authentic videos.

**THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

In this section we will present the ideas and theoretical  concepts that support the design and implementation of our project. They include the definition of authentic material based on the research of Yuanyuan (2010), Oura (n.d) and Tamo (2009) and the definition of  Listening skill according to the work  of  Harmer (2001) and Bulletin (1952). Besides some studies related to the concepts have been reviewed at the end of this section, studies such as authentic material centered on the effects of extensive Reading and Enhancing English Listening Skill through Websites have been explored to implement this Project.

The following concepts guided the bases of the development of this study; **Authentic material**, which is described as the material created for users of a language without the purpose of teaching, in this specific case, teaching English language. This concept was examined from the points of view of Ji Lingzhu and Zhang Yuanyuan (2010), Gail K. Oura (n.d) and finally Tamo. (2009). It is also of great relevance to our classroom project the concept of **listening skill**, which is defined as the ability to understand utterances emitted by a speaker in a specific situation guided by the contributions of Ronald and Roskelly (1985), and Harmer (2001).

**Authentic Material**

Back in the 1950's English was taught in a very systematic manner concentrating in

the structure of the language rather than the function, by the 1960's and forward scholars began to implement new strategies which focused on the usefulness of the language in real life settings (Richards, 1970) .

With the start of the communicative language teaching approach, English sessions started to include simulations of real communicative events such as medical appointments, interviews, talk shows, etc. For this type of activities, authentic material played an important role, since they were items that could be found in real life and allowed to imitate the context where real communication could be carried out.

The term **authentic material** has been defined in different ways throughout the literature of the English as a foreign language (EFL) field. The exposure to real language and its use in its own community is common in these definitions. Nunan (1989) as cited in Gail K. Oura (n.d) refers to authentic materials as any material that has not been specifically produced for the purpose of language teaching.

On the other hand, Peacock (1997) cited in Tamo (2009) "describes authentic materials as materials that have been produced to fulfill some social purpose in the language community", going more deeply, those social purposes reference the goals of language since it is used for many functions, as for instance, expressive purposes, where language is used to demonstrate feelings ideas or attitudes, informative purposes, where language is employed with the intention of conveying information to others, or metalinguistic purposes, where language is used to discuss language itself.

In addition to this definition, Marrow's (1977) cited by Lingzhu and Yuanyuan (2010), states that authentic material should be defined as "a stretch of real language, produced by a real speaker or writer for a real audience and designed to carry a real message of some sort." Therefore, it seems relevant to think in the implementation of the authentic material as a means for a Communicative Language Teaching class (CLT) where the main objective is to transmit a real message rather than focus on the form of how the message is produced.

Gebhard (1996) as cited in Lingzhu and Yuanyuan (2010) explains that authentic material should be classified into three categories which are defined according to each type of material

1. Authentic Listening-Viewing Materials: TV commercials, quiz shows, cartoons, news clips, comedy shows, movies, soap operas, professionally audio-taped short stories and novels, radio ads, songs, documentaries, and sales pitches.

2. Authentic Visual Materials: slides, photographs, paintings, children's artwork, stick-figure drawings, wordless street signs, silhouettes, pictures from magazine, ink blots, postcard pictures, wordless picture books, stamps, and X-rays.

3. Authentic Printed Materials: newspaper articles, movie advertisements, astrology columns, sports reports, obituary columns, advice columns, lyrics to songs, restaurant menus, street signs, cereal boxes, candy wrappers, tourist information brochures, university catalogs, telephone books, maps, TV guide, comic books, greeting cards, grocery

coupons, pins with messages, and bus schedules."

As well Tamo (2009), states that using authentic material even when not done in an authentic situation is really significant due to the fact that: learners are exposed to real language and on account of this, authentic material has a positive effect on learners motivation due to it contains a wide variety of language styles not easily found in conventional materials.

Consequently, for the development of this classroom project the definition of Tamo (2009) is considered very pertinent; since authentic material is the communicative material created for users of the language that have not been modified and it is presented to EFL students in the classroom. A classic example would be a newspaper article that is written for a native-English-speaking audience. In addition, it is important to highlight that for unfolding this proposal, authentic listening- viewing materials will be used in order to unite it with the practice of the listening skill.

**Listening Skill**

Listening is consider as the act of hearing attentively, according to Harmer (2001), listening skill is a process which should have the knowledge of phonology, syntax, semantics and text understanding and it is the first language technique that children acquire, since it provides the justification for all the aspects that language and cognitive development need, thus, this skill plays an important role in the process of

communication since the language is acquired from this practice.

In the same fashion, Bulletin (1952) manifests that listening is a fundamental language skill since it is the medium that learners use in order to gain a considerable portion of their training. Furthermore, according to second language acquisition theory, input is the most fundamental condition in gaining language, listening as an input skill, performs a crucial role in learner`s language development, consequently is relevant to clarify that at the time of learning English as a foreign language not all the input is significant thus the student take advantage only of what he or she needs and this is called intake.

On the other hand, Ronald and Roskelly (1985) denominate listening as an active process which requires the same skills of prediction, hypothesizing, checking, revising and generalizing that the rest of the skills demand.Listening as well, is an unconscious activity that is activated when performing the rest of the skills, it is to say that, regardless the skill that is being used in the moment the, listening will be always active and this is called the inner voice.

In addition teachers motivate learners with good listening skills to implement and take advantage of the inner voice when writing, in order to improve the listening skill whilst the writing is executed, the person who is carrying the action is totally conscious of the process, but in the other hand is not conscious that is mentally repeating with the own voice what is going to be written, hence carrying out a cognitive process that certainly is helping to develop the listening skill.  Ronald and Roskelly (1985), also argues that language learning depends on listening,  due to the fact that this skill supplies the aural input that handle the basis for language

acquisition and facilitate learners to interact in any real communication, this conveys that the mother tongue is primordially acquired via listening due to the fact that, once the children start listening words they internalize them, and then by repetition the children recognize how they sound and start producing language, so it is relevant to say that the productive skill of speaking is directly connected with the receptive skill of listening in order to create an output and employ in real communication.

These two constructs are thought to be united at the time of the execution by implementing listening-viewed materials in the classroom, in order to propose an alternative for practicing the listening skill in a way that is not the conventional used in the public schools of Pereira, and also to introduce materials that contains language that is used for native user of the target language in their daily lives, with the purpose of confronting learners with real language as well as cultural features, without the necessity of being abroad in a place where the target language is spoken.

**Literature review**

With the purpose of informing the project, we did an exploration of research related to the constructs presented in the framework. It revealed the studies that will be presented in this section.

Guo (2012) explored the relationship between extended reading on authentic materials and language proficiency as well as other potential effects influenced by authentic reading.

His study was relevant to our classroom project since its findings led us to expand

our knowledge about how to use authentic material with English learners.

In this study, Guo (2012) investigated the effects of extensive reading using authentic materials in students' English proficiency, particularly in relation to vocabulary and grammar. Fifty participants with the same proficiency level, were randomly divided in two groups; one experimental and the other controlled. The experimental group was provided a selection of 10 online reading materials related to the course topics. Students could choose what and when they wanted to read and did not have to complete any tasks about their readings.

As Tran cited by Guo (2012) suggests, teachers can select materials that are at a suitable level and can be read at a manageable time to help students with their reading skills. Of course students can also select the reading materials that they feel comfortable with, but for the study purpose and convenience, the instructor selected readings for students in the experimental group.

In contrast, the controlled group did intensive reading tasks in class and had no saying on the topics or times for reading.

The findings revealed that extensive reading using simplified materials enhanced students' reading habits, reading speed, and vocabulary knowledge. Most importantly, students enjoyed reading these selections. They were also able to nurture their intrinsic motivation for continuous reading. The previous findings support the practice of extensive reading in the development of English proficiency and autonomous learning.

The author also affirms that students today have become more passive and

reluctant in regard to reading, doing no more than what is required. Educators are concerned about students' disinterest and, therefore, endeavor to find ways and sources to encourage students to read. Textbooks are widely adopted in classroom teaching because they cater to specific language needs and gradual mastery of language skills (Wang, Lin, & Lee, 2011).But perhaps because textbooks materials often break down language to discrete linguistic points, it may be too formulaic for students. "While [textbook] materials provide valuable information to learners, students seem to have little interest in them" (Guo,2011)

According to the previous ideas, it can be stated that the source for English learning does not need to be limited to a specific set of textbooks and practices (Griffiths & Keohane, 2000), and Widdowson (1990) suggests the incorporation of authentic materials for learners.

In terms of opinions, students from the experimental group manifested positive attitudes toward the extended outside reading materials. According to the attitude survey, these students felt that the outside reading materials were relevant to their lives and helped them increase their understanding of the issues. Most importantly, the materials increased their overall English skills with a particular improvement in vocabulary and provided them with materials so that they had more things to say. Most students thought the additional reading enriched their knowledge and motivated them to pursue further reading. Many students would express their opinions in class, but only a few students would ask questions in class.

Although the control group was not provided with the outside reading materials, the students were given the survey to find out their general attitudes in

regard to outside reading if provided to them. This group of students agreed that outside materials could increase their understanding of issues and the materials should be relevant to their lives. They also believed that outside reading materials could enrich the classroom instructions. However, their attitudes toward the effects of outside reading materials were not as high as those of the experimental group. The independent-samples t-test showed statistically significant differences between the groups in terms of vocabulary gain, sources for communication, motivation for further reading, and expressing opinions in class. It is interesting to note that most students from both groups did not take any initiative to ask questions in class before the implementation of the study.

This research showed evidence of vocabulary gain and motivation increase as a result of extensive reading of authentic texts. These positive findings were interesting enough to justify an incorporation of extensive in-class or outside-of-class reading activity using authentic materials. Authentic materials expose students to English usage as it is used in real life, thus students may find them more interesting and relevant if they are at the right comprehension level. Reading, an effective practice for vocabulary building, is thus deemed important for both reading comprehension and reading fluency. It can serve as a complement to intensive class reading instructions.

Extensive reading provides vocabulary not only in a large quantity but also in lexical contexts that are more meaningful to students. The reading also provides a wonderful source of information to expand students' knowledge which otherwise may be limited to course textbooks. A wealth of research has documented the effects

of extensive reading including this present study, and several leading researchers believe that extensive reading is one effective way for students to acquire a large vocabulary for reading and language proficiency (Day & Bamford, 2000; Krashen, 2007; Nation, 2011).

Students need a substantial amount of reading to develop language proficiency. For teachers who are concerned about the limited class time, extensive reading can be incorporated as an outside-class activity. This study has presented evidence on a strong relationship between extensive reading and language development, particular in vocabulary. Extended reading can increase not only students' vocabulary size but also promote other aspects of language learning such as motivation.

Despite a strong relationship found between extensive reading and language improvement, this study had several limitations. A study with forty-nine students was small in sample size. Another limitation was that the results came from a homogeneous group of a similar background in culture and learning experiences which limited the generalizability of its findings. Future studies could involve students in a larger group and from more diverse backgrounds.

The next study that informed our project is titled *Enhancing English Listening Skill through Websites*. Saitakham (2012) is the author of this qualitative research in which he studied the employment of websites to practice English listening skill.

The participants of this study were 24 fourth-year students majoring in English, Faculty of Education who enrolled in the Introduction to Multimedia in the

English Classroom course in the first semester, academic year 2011 at Rajabhat Rajanagarindra University, Chachoengsao, Thailand. The open-ended questionnaire and interview were used to collect the students' feelings, opinions, comments, strengths, weaknesses, and suggestions about the website employment to practice English listening skills. The websites were www.esllab.com, www.elllo.org, http://esl.about.com, www.manythings.org, www.englishclub.com/listening, www.carolinebrownlisteninglessons.com, and www. youtube.com.

Data collection was entirely conducted within the study where the entire time-frame was 14 weeks. It was obtained through open-ended questionnaires and interviews.

It took an hour per student a week in the practice hours of the Introduction to Multimedia in the English Classroom course. Five students were selected for in-depth interview. The qualitative data obtained from the open-ended questionnaire and the interview was analyzed by the process of content analysis.

It was observed that the students had positive attitude towards the use of the websites for practicing listening skill for the many advantages that websites offer, such as the opportunity to have real contact with real situations where they need to interact with native speakers. This type of events helped them to improve their vocabulary, and at the same time, learners developed autonomous learning strategies. Nonetheless, the students had some struggles with the native speakers' accent and sometimes they were not able to understand the conversations. Some other difficulties detected were, for instance, the lack of knowledge in terms of using

a computer or any other technological gadget.

The study revealed that learners agreed that the use of websites for practicing listening skill help them to improve not only their listening skill, but also other skills as well, and these websites help them to create autonomous learning strategies. Students said that this was a convenient method of practicing listening since they could use the websites for practicing outside the classroom anywhere and anytime. It was also found that all students mentioned the following advantages related to the convenience of the use of websites for the practice of listening skill:

Many websites provide various topics and students can choose the topics they prefer or those related to the topics they are studying in English class. They also stated that it saved time and was suitable. They did not need to find materials for practicing listening skill from library or book stores as before. Many informants said they used the websites in part time or in their free time at library, house, or dormitory and cybercafé which was quite convenient and satisfactory.

Finally, the students acquired learning strategies to solve some problems by themselves. Students could easily repeat listening materials again and again until they finally got information from listening materials, and with the help of scripts, students could find out where are the problems when they listened to those materials. Outside classroom students could use the websites for practicing listening skills to prepare themselves for listening test of their English class. This was quite helpful to create autonomous learning atmosphere.

Most students reported that through the use of the websites to improve English listening skill they also could improve pronunciation, speaking, reading, and

vocabulary. During the time they listened to the native speakers' conversation, they also tried to follow and repeat the sound, in order to get used to correct pronunciation, native accent and intonation.

The problems when using the websites to practice listening skill were mainly technical problems, the Internet connection was quite slow, the processes and instruction of the websites are complicated. Some students did not have their own personal computers. Somebody had a lot of schedules to do, so it was limitation for them to get good chance to practice listening skill outside the classroom. Another problem was students' background knowledge. Students did not know some new words consequently, learners were unable to get used to the native speakers' intonation and pronunciation.

In conclusion, new technologies have forced facilitators to think about their roles in teaching with computers. And nowadays, websites are growing rapidly, as a result teachers have begun to see computers more as "active partners" than "passive assistants" (Debski and Gruba, 1999). However, Levy (1997) and Fernandez (2001) discussed that teacher is the important person who decide how the class should be conducted, not the computers, not the Internet. Therefore, teacher is not the only source of knowledge but also the person who enlighten students to succeed in their learning.

This study was relevant to our classroom project since its findings led us to expand out our ideas about how listening skills can be developed through the use of different element in contrast with the typical textbook and audiobook which have been used for decades.

**METHODOLOGY**

**Context**

This classroom project was conducted at a public school named Suroriental which is located in a popular neighborhood of Pereira. The school has a good building but lacks technological tools such as tv or video-beams. The English class consisted of two hours per week.

The English class at Suroriental school is guided by the Estándares básicos de competencias en Lenguas Extranjeras: Inglés, clarifying that at the time in which this project took place, the students should have reached the level A.1 of mastery of the language and developed the following competences:

● Comprendo y utilizo expresiones cotidianas de uso muy frecuente, así como frases sencillas destinadas a satisfacer necesidades de tipo inmediato.

● Me presento a mí mismo y a otros, pido y doy información personal básica sobre mi domicilio, mis pertenencias y las personas que conozco.

● Me relaciono de forma elemental siempre que mi interlocutor hable despacio y con claridad y esté dispuesto a cooperar.

**Participants**

This classroom project was carried out by three ninth semester pre-service teachers from an English teaching program at the Universidad Tecnólógica de Pereira.

It was implemented with forty primary graders who were in fifth grade at Institución educativa Suroriental of Pereira and whose ages ranged between 10 and

13 years. The English language level of the students was low, as it was observed in the diagnostic session during the first classes.

Along the implementation of this classroom project, the practitioners assumed the following roles: the three practitioners were planners, task designers; two of them were in charge of guiding the classes and the remaining one was the observer.

**Design**

The lessons were designed taking into account the theory proposed by Harmer (2002) in relation with how to teach listening skills, where this author explains that listening sequences should be divided into three parts: pre-listening, while-listening and post-listening.

During the pre-listening stage, top-down listening strategies such as listening for the main idea, predicting, drawing inferences and summarizing were applied to increase learners' interest and help them to activate a set of expectations to interpret what was heard and anticipate what was coming next, for instance, the learners were exposed to the first screenshot that appeared on a video, then, the learners were asked about what they inferred the video was about.

After that, the facilitators gave the learners some pieces of paper with unknown words. They were numbered from 1 to 10 in order to facilitate the vocabulary of the listening task and served as a contextualization before the learners listened to the audio-video material. This strategy had the purpose of helping them to recognize some key concepts they would need to answer the question from the next activity.

In the following stage of the class, students received the questions they would have to answer after listening and the facilitators answered any questions they had regarding them, since sometimes they included slang and colloquial expressions they were not familiar with.

Later, during the While-listening stage, learners were attentive to specific information related to the questions in order to focus on the main idea and they were asked to collect as much data as possible. The video listening material was presented three times. The first time, students were asked to relax and just pay attention to the main idea of the audio; the second, students had to start writing down the information related to the questions and the third, which was also the last, they had the opportunity to check their answers.

Finally, during the post-listening stage, learners finished responding the questions and reviewing their answers.

The implementation of the previously described activities was done using authentic materials, which were adjusted to the students' needs and the target content they needed to master during the period.

Learners were exposed to the authentic material in order to bring the target language into the classroom in its original version without any adjustment for educational purposes.  For the students to have a direct contact with the language in use, we offered them real-life materials created by native users of the language to be delivered to native public for entertainment only; in this way, the students' motivation increased, and they were able to learn several new expressions used in contexts  which are not often found in academic material. According to Tammo (2009) "the authentic material has a positive effect because it contains a wide variety

of language styles not easily found in conventional material created for educational reasons".

Authentic material brings the learners the opportunity to practice the language as it is used for daily communication among native speakers, a language style that is not often found in material created for teaching which has been set to be more understandable for the target public who the material is produced for.

In the implementation of this classroom project, authentic materials such as video clips, short fragments of TV shows, images, flashcards, worksheets and games were used; this material was downloaded mainly from internet sources which were free to use for any public.

The video material was not adapted but we just showed the relevant sections in order to include the main information only, so the students would not feel overwhelmed with unnecessary input, the use of subtitles was implemented from time to time in order to clarify some doubts related to vocabulary. The implementation also required the employment of some technological gadgets such as: Screen, speakers, laptop in order to fulfill and cover all the visual students' needs.

**REFLECTIVE STAGE**

Reflection in teaching changes the way teaching is usually perceived and the facilitators' roles in the process become more effective and critical. Tutors who analyze their teaching through critical reflection produce important changes in attitudes and awareness which benefit their professional growth and improve the support they give to their pupils; according to Bartlett, L. (1990) "teachers who are

engaged in reflective analysis of their own teaching, report that it is a valuable tool for self-evaluation and professional growth." therefore, reflection enables the teachers to redirect their activities and plan according to the students' needs and also enables the teachers to improve their teaching skills.

**Professional Growth**

In this section, we present our reflections in relation with our growth as teachers. These reflections have been divided into strengths and challenges.

**Strengths**

Among the strengths developed through the implementation of this classroom project, we must mention our growth as planners of lessons using authentic materials as well as the improvement of self-confidence and time management.

**Classroom management and lesson planning**

During the searching and selection of the resources for supporting the classes we had to decide what part of the material was pertinent to use as input. It is our perception that we learned how to choose the authentic material in order to connect it with the appropriate activities, also the strategies that we used in order to enhance the classroom management showed the results at the time of directing the last classes.

In relation with this, Eison (1990, p. 22) said; "one key to confident teaching is effective planning", therefore the pre-service teachers identified as a strength the improvement of their self-confidence at the moment to face a real teaching scenario, feeling day by day, more comfortable when guiding the lessons and being able to achieve the objectives previously established, discarding the hesitations that could appear during the lessons.

This teacher's self-confidence was evidenced on the reflective journals. The comparison between the first and the last lesson in which the authentic material for listening comprehension was implemented demonstrates that, there was a significant improvement during the warm up section, so the students got prepared for the activities and engaged to the topic more easily. Our instructions were understood without difficulty by the learners, and they were able to develop the different stages of the lesson.

The students demonstrated that they were conscious of the steps to follow on the activities as there were comments of the students such as, *"Ay, vean muchachos que los profes ya están acomodando el televisor, yo creo que vamos a hacer otra vez de adivinar lo que vamos a ver".* All this was a demonstration of how the students were connected with the lesson and helped to enhance teachers' confidence since they felt that there was already an structure, that would help them to carry a smooth lesson, without the necessity of wasting much time, and taking as much advantage of this, to develop in just one class all the activities that were needed to be develop in order to avoid to postpone some activities till they have English class again, since some of the students were not going to be able to recall some things from the videos.

**Time management**

Another point that was evidenced as strength for the professional growth of the pre-service teachers was the punctuality. Punctual is defined as: "Happening or doing something at the agreed or proper time." (Oxford Dictionaries, 2015). This was important for the time management during the lessons in order to have control over the activities developed in the classroom as evidenced in our own reflections "The activities of the lesson were all fulfilled in the time we had planned due to the fact that the class started at the time it was established".

The early arrival of the pre-service teachers was fundamental because the pre-service teachers needed to prove different technological gadgets before starting the classes; it was also a significant improvement as facilitators in terms of optimization of the class length. It was observed that the issue helped us to recognize how important punctuality is; not only as teachers but professionals, because at the beginning of the practice sessions we didn't take much into account how a late arrival affected the normal development of a class, so we recognized it was an important factor in terms of time management and it was clue to improve that aspect. As it is described in our reflections "Lessons have been improved in terms of time management since we have been arriving 5 minutes before each class in order to check on all the gadgets we are to use during the lesson".

**Challenges**

Among the several challenges we faced during the implementation of the classroom

project, we want to highlight the most relevant because of their positive impact in relation to our professional growth. Those challenges were focused on the way the students interacted with the tutors and how we as teachers handled difficult situations related to complicated social background and interruptions during the development of the sessions.

**Difficult social background and disrespectful manners against the pre-service teacher**

The wide students' age range (10 to 13 years) was a main disadvantage for lesson design since we had to create engaging lessons thinking about how the participants were going to interact with one another, finding out common interests to bring them all together working as a team instead of working in isolation.

This was evidenced in our post lesson reflection, where we stated thoughts as the following: "Some Ss were not interested on the material we brought to the class. Probably it was because some of them belonged to a different age range and they didn't enjoy the content of the material. They said it was boring".(Lesson 4, post-reflection)

**Difficult environment and social problems**

The students belonged to a difficult environment, with abundant social problems and we found that we had little preparation to face those affective factors since our background did not include a subject which prepares to handle and control disruptive

behaviors against the facilitator.

Most of the students in the group came from vulnerable communities with a violent verbal background.  This turned into a challenge since we did not know the correct way to approach a rebel student that simply goes to school because he is obliged by his parents. They also lacked fear to use foul language against the teachers, and expressed rudely their dissatisfaction because the pre-service teachers had "white skin" while they were "Afro-Colombian".  One of them went so far as to say: "Ojalá siempre las clases de inglés nos las vinieran a dar los otros profesores que son negros como yo y no ustedes[1]".

This reality pushed us to act instinctively to overcome that misunderstanding. We left evidence of these uncomfortable situations in reflections such as the following: "Sometimes students mistreat us really badly due to their lack of manners and the problematic social environment they come from".

**Interruptions and suspension of classes**

The disruptive effect of interruptions while students were carrying a task or a simple class activity was a major source of difficulties for the practitioners of this classroom project. Cades posits that "When an interruption occurs, the current task goal must be suspended and the interruption goal must be instantiated. While working on the

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[1]The student was making reference to other practitioners who the in-service teacher allowed to teach some classes for a project.

interruption, the memorial representation, or activation level, of the main task decays, while that for the interruption grows." (2011, p. 3). This means that once there is an interruption, the students automatically stop paying attention to the academic activity that is being performed and their attention is automatically deflected to the situation causing the interruption.

During our classroom project we experienced 2 different types of interruptions: disturbances created by the teacher and disturbances created by the announcement system.

In relation with the first type of interruptions, we must say that the in-service teacher accompanied in the classroom most of the time and that led to her constant interference in the class in order to correct students' behaviors. The pre service teachers were aware that it was with the intention of helping them with classroom management, however since she interrupted the whole group in order to correct just one student, some of the other students lost the focus on the activity that were performing.

During some sessions the teacher called different students to present the homework from any other subject. This event caused that particular student to lose track of what the group was doing, but also generated anxiety and distraction on the rest of the students because they often did no homework and were worried about being called to show it or started to do it during the English class. This caused the pre-service teachers to lose time and interfered on all the lesson stages and activities that had been planned.

The second type of disturbances was generated by the announcements system of the school. Most days the classes were interrupted at mid-time with general announcements such as: "*Se le recuerda a toda la comunidad educativa que el día viernes es el día del Jean, por favor recuerden que tiene un costo de quinientos pesos …" (Reflective Journal, page 3. )*,  or at other times, the national anthem or the Pereira anthem suddenly started to sound. For this reason, the students lost their attention on the class topic and the pre service teachers were required to explain the lesson and instructions again. These problems reduced the time of the class, causing struggles on the pre-service's teachers planning.

**Students' responses**

Our reflections on how learners reacted to the use of authentic listening material during the implementation of the classroom project are presented in this section. They are divided into strengths and challenges.

**Strengths**

One of the strengths identified in students' responses was that they reacted with interest and attention to the tasks that involved the use of authentic materials. The reaction to more dynamic activities and the establishment of a class routine were relevant strengths related to students' responses which deserve to be highlighted in this section of the reflective stage.

**Dynamic teaching-learning**

Reflecting on how to increase students' interest in the target language, the pre-service teachers decided to plan student-centered tasks to make the session more appealing. According to Shin (2007) "In foreign language situations, it can be challenging to find real life communicative contexts in which to use the target language." For this reason, the tutors tried to create an environment in which the students could feel more comfortable and have fun during the process by bringing authentic material related to general knowledge about science and animals. This idea worked quite well since the students' attention was caught, and they demonstrated more interest upon the topic and the listening tasks.

**Positive outcome linked to class Routine**

In terms of students' responses, it was evidenced that having an established structure or routine was an advantage for the students at the moment of the implementation of this classroom project. When comparing the first implementation with the last one, a big difference was detected. On the first implementation the students were just experiencing a different activity while barely understanding what was going to be next, but during the last class, they were already conscious that there would be a listening activity with an engagement period, which would ask them to predict the topic of the task. They knew that that would be followed by another session which would be an implementation and at the end an assessment task. In relation with this, Leinhardt, Weidman & Hammond (1987, p.135) point out the usefulness of having established patterns for class routines when they affirm that "Routines in class, show scripted patterns of behaviors, serve to reduce the cognitive

complexity of the instructional environment".

In addition to what was mentioned before, even though the students were able to follow a routine in order to develop a task, they were not totally conscious that all these listening activities were part of a whole lesson built merely thinking on the improvement of the learners' listening comprehension skill.

The use of authentic material as cartoons unconsciously engaged them with learning even though they were not aware of the teaching objective. The pre-service teachers were able to create an environment for inductive, where, through catchy materials that took students' attention, they helped them to be less disperse, and more enthusiastic to complete the tasks the pre-service teachers presented them.

**Challenges**

Some of the challenges we faced in relation to the students' responses were the lack of interest in the target language and the anxiety which some students experimented during the development of the tasks.

**Lack of interest in the target language**

Smith (2004) argues that "A student's response to extrinsic motivation, is a very individual thing, what works for one student will not work for another" and that was exactly what the pre-service teachers experimented.

We observed that some students were trying to get things done in order to get a good grade instead of with the purpose of learning and accomplishing the task. For this reason, when their poor abilities resulted in lower grades than they expected, those students were upset and expressed their discomfort with the results.

**Anxiety**

Owens (2008) argues that "anxious children have to exert more effort executing a task, and it was evidenced in class at the time of the implementation". Students' anxiety was an extra challenging issue to the pre-service teachers since it caused the learners worries in relation with their performance on the tasks.

Considering this problem, the pre-service teachers took action by implementing another step to the lesson, adding another pre-listening activity to allow students be familiar with the listening task. This extra task facilitated the learners' listening by preparing them for the authentic audio-video material.

**Linguistic outcomes**

In this section, we present our reflections on how the project positively impacted the learners' knowledge regarding English language use. These reflections are presented in two categories as well, strengths and challenges.

**Strengths**

Despite the lack of class time and the reduced amount of sessions, the students achieved some relevant linguistic outcomes which are to be explained next. At the end of the process, the pre-service teachers noticed important improvement not only related to listening skill, but also other skills such as speaking and pronunciation. The students also increased their interest in the target language and felt more comfortable when being exposed to authentic material.

**Improvement on pronunciation through listening and repetition.**

Students were able to replicate the pronunciation of the vocabulary taught in class and they also recognized words and expressions from the authentic material after being exposed to listening comprehension input during the development of the activities. This is very related to do with Harmer's (2001, p. 249) statement that

> "the key to successful in pronunciation teaching however is not so much getting students to produce correct sounds or intonation, but rather than to have them listen and notice how English is spoken either on audio or video tape or teachers themselves. It means, the teacher need to give more example or show the students the way how to produce the correct sounds rather than ask students produce more sounds. The teacher might be a model to show how the sound produce than students imitate."

Our students showed significant improvement identifying specific information

by repeating some vocabulary from the authentic material they had heard several times during the sessions. Thus, it could be argued that the authentic material gave them the opportunity to be exposed to a natural input that led that served as a model to identify this vocabulary in a different context and also to incorporate those words to their vocabulary.

### Identification of key words in an audio input

The identification of keywords is tied to the de-codification that the learners do about specific words that they keep in mind as reference. Ding cited by Haiyan, (2015) states that the de-codification of a word has to do with different procedures: phonetic decoding, which consists on the premise that learners are familiar with the pronunciation system, and semantic decoding, which has to do with how listeners arrange the meaning of the phonetic message they have heard.

This relationship just mentioned above between words and meaning was a great tool for the learners at the time of the implementation of this classroom project, because due to the strategy that was used on the project to teach listening (Top-Down) the learners needed to focus on the whole structure and content of the input. Thus, the use of keywords helped the students to identify and decode the meaning of bigger stretches of language by associating the known key word with their semantic family.

As an example we can talk about the moment where the listening topic was

animals on the forest. In that case, even though many of the students had never heard before the word forest, they could guess its meaning because of the keywords that they already knew present in the context (e.g. this **animal lives** in the forest) by knowing the animal and the meaning of the word **lives,** they could predict or have an idea of the complete sense of the sentence.

In addition to this, as mentioned by Haiyan (2015), the true cognates were a relevant tool to help the students with the activities during the lesson. Because of   students basic English level, it was easier for the  pre service teachers to use words with similar sound  in  both languages, mother tongue and target language, but at the same time, the meaning of the words were easy to  understand due to their similarity to learners' mother tongue  words  in terms of vocabulary comprehension.

**Challenges**

Since the phase of planning previous to the implementation, our main goal with the project was to help students to improve their listening skill. The biggest difficulty was to maintain the students' motivation in a high level and to allow them feel more comfortable during the practice of the target language due to their fear of making mistakes. These aspects are explained below.

**Keep students motivated**

Students usually feel frustrated and helpless when activating their listening skill, because it is an interactive process in which learners need to apply much effort and

practice. Listening involves actively perceiving and constructing from a sound; according to Rost (cited by Saitakham, 2012), "listening was the primary channel by which the students gained access to second language data, and (…) served as the trigger for acquisition."

It was challenging to have the students focused and motivated throughout the implementation even though they were attentive. The facilitators and the students struggled learning new vocabulary at first but, then those frustration feelings started to reduce when the students acquired more vocabulary related to the topic and the material. The listening and reading tasks brought about students' increase of vocabulary, speaking habits and pronunciation as a result of the spoken or written English they absorbed in the process.

**The fear of making mistakes**

The oral expression in the class was heavily influenced by the fear of making mistakes. This was due to many reasons, such as those related to the context that the surveyed learners belong from: a predominant work around grammatical accuracy rather than the fluency; the lack of a comfortable environment in which students felt confident, the teacher's attitude towards the mistakes was not positive nor was correct the method to provide feedback to the students.

This is a very common problem and an opportunity for real interaction. According to Ribas and D'Aquino cited by Kalan (2007) the most authentic communicative exchange is the pedagogic interaction and the correction of mistakes a very

important part of this interaction. These authors highlight that when we correct the learners, the communicative performance has an authentic aim and is developed in its natural framework.

The mentioned authors, explain that if we compare the regular alternative to correct a teacher of language with the one of a native speaker of that language, we can observe that they both have different ways to correct. The native speaker holds up to allow the non-native speaker to correct himself. He corrects only the mistakes that make difficult the comprehension, asks for clarification or corroboration of the information, corrects in a lower tone, repeating the incorrect fragment in a correct form. This way, the native speaker does not disrupt the discursive flow.

For Ribas and D'Aquino cited by Kalan (2007), taking all of this into account, it is not surprising that the respondents have less fear to make mistakes in real life than in class. The direct correction is not regular in the conversation between the native speakers. From the communicative point of view the auto correction increases the communicative ability of the learner. Likewise, it gives the student the opportunity to repair the mistake by himself and this way, makes less damage to the self-esteem.

According to Ribas & D'Aquino (cited by Kalan, 2007), a possible reaction is to pass over the mistakes what can result useful and productive only in particular opportunities. However, this researchers call our attention to the fact that this is normally understood as the lack of teacher's interest. In the survey that these authors applied, all the students want to be corrected when they do not express themselves in a good way, they have a positive attitude toward mistakes and they are aware that they can learn a lot from them.

**CONCLUSION**

The pre-service teachers who implemented this classroom project attempted to introduce authentic listening materials in order to expose learners to real language created for a real foreign language context to help them improve their English listening skill and impact also their pronunciation, speaking, reading, and vocabulary.

It was observed that students were able to replicate the vocabulary which was previously taught in class not only with good pronunciation but also accurate intonation due to their previous exposure to it in the listening activities; the learners were even able to recognize specific information from the audio and correct one another. Their self-esteem rose as also did their participation and they expressed to feel more motivated.

Improvement in other skills was also observed, since students started extending their vocabulary, their writing skill got better and they also felt more comfortable when reading texts. Even though their results in listening tasks were not as good as expected their interest upon the subject helped them to be more aware of their own mistakes.

As practitioners-observers, we learnt that students' learning processes happen in different ways and rhythms, each learner being a different world, and that as teachers, it is necessary to adjust the strategies according to each learner's needs in order to guide them to achieve their objectives and encourage autonomous learning along the way.

**APPENDIX**

Universidad Tecnológica de Pereira    **UNIVERSIDAD TECNOLÓGICA DE PEREIRA**
**Licenciatura en Lengua Inglesa**
**Guided Teaching Practicum**
**GENERAL PLANNING INFORMATION**

Licenciatura en Lengua Inglesa

## LESSON PLAN

| Date of the class:<br><br>October 9th, 2014 | Class Number:<br><br>___7___ |
|---|---|

| **AIM:**<br>At the end of the lesson the learners will be able to: |
|---|

| **Estándares Básicos de Competencias (MEN)**<br><br>**Estándar General:** Participo en conversaciones cortas usando oraciones con estructuras predecibles<br><br><br>**Estándares Específicos:**<br>- Escribo oraciones cortas que describen mi estado de ánimo y mis preferencias<br>- Respondo preguntas sobre mis gustos y preferencias<br>- Identifico objetos, personas y acciones que me son conocidas<br><br>**Indicadores de logro:**<br>Respetar las diferencias individuales de mis compañeros<br>Participar en juegos y actividades siguiendo instrucciones simples del profesor |
|---|

| **Assumed Knowledge:**<br>Students should know vocabulary about feelings and the structure "How do you feel today?" |
|---|

| **Materials:**<br><br>Flash cards, computer, worksheets, |
|---|

| DAY/STAGE/<br>ACTIVITY/TIME | PROCEDURE<br>TEACHER AND LEARNER ACTIVITY | ANTICIPATED<br>PROBLEMS AND<br>PLANNED SOLUTIONS | COMMENTS |
|---|---|---|---|
| **\*warm up**<br><br>**15'** | - Facilitators will model the activity which is about following commands, then the students will be asked to make couples and listen the commands that the facilitators are | Ss misbehavior<br><br>Will be controlled giving students extra point or taking out the | "Sometimes students mistreat us |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Study**<br>**15'-20'** | saying out loud and act them out, E.g back to back, side to side etc.<br><br>Facilitator will ask what about the last class, what did we do, and what do they remember, and if they practice at home or not? Then showing the flashcards Ss will be asked what the feelings are. Some Ss will be asked to stand up and write in the board the feeling that the facilitator is showing.<br>One of the facilitators will check if the Ss have consigned in their notebooks the feelings already taught and the draws of them, since it will be graded. | ones that they already have | really badly due to their lack of manners and the problematic social environment they come from". |
| **Activate**<br>**20'** | - Ss will be given with a worksheet where they have to go around the classroom and ask to some classmates "how they feel today?" and write it in the bubbles in the work sheet and the name of the person they asked, this task will be given back to the teachers for grading. | | |
| **Engage**<br>**10' to 15** | - Facilitators will ask the Ss about their favorite sports, and which is their favorite player. | | "The Ss were not interested on the material we brought to the class since some of them belonged to a different age range and they didn't enjoy the content of the material they said it was boring". |
| **Study**<br>**10'** | - Facilitator will show (a ppt) or some flashcards about sports and will say what sport it is and the Ss will repeat in choral | | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Activate** 15' | The Ss will be given with a puzzle for working in pairs and check if they have learnt the vocabulary taught. | Ss won't be working, the facilitators are going to be checking in each group if they are doing things and clarifying doubts | |
| Extra Warm up 15' | Charades: one Ss will be chosen and will be shown in secret a flashcard, then the Ss have to model the sport and the other Ss will guess what sport it is. | | Some of the Ss, were upset because they wanted to be taught by other teachers and they expressed their discontent about us. "Ojalá siempre las clases de Inglés nos las vinieran a dar los otros profesores que son negros como yo y no ustedes" The class had many interruptions by the coordinator at any time using the speakers, to give information as the following: "Se le recuerda a toda la comunidad |

| | | | educativa que el día viernes es el día del Jean, por favor recuerden que tiene un costo de quinientos pesos …" |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | "The activities of the lesson were all fulfilled in the time we had planned due to the class started at the time it was established and the lessons have been improved in terms of time management since we have been arriving 5 minutes before each class in order to check on all the gadgets we are to use during the lesson". |

**EXTRA-CLASS WORK, ANNOUNCEMENTS, THINGS TO CONSIDER:**

**REFLECTION SESSION:**

**What went well?**
**How do you know that?**
**What didn't go that well?**
**What would you do different next time?**

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