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From the Editors

TEACHING AND ASSESSING LISTENING SKILLS EFFECTIVELY IN THE LANGUAGE CLASSROOM: RESEARCH-BASED APPROACHERS

As stated in the last volume of the *International Journal of Listening*, “Compared with the other L2 skills of reading, writing and speaking, the field of listening is the youngest in terms of research” (Goh and Aryadoust, 2016: 6). This youth of listening skills development in the field of language teaching is partly due to availability of technological advances (audio recordings and videos) and (computer-based) teaching materials which were introduced at a later date in the classroom than paper-based materials. But a slower development of listening skills research is also determined by the fact that listening is a complex skill: it requires attention and concentration, it demands an instant recognition of an event and its related keywords, since vocabulary control and schemata knowledge (situation, topic knowledge and background knowledge) under which the listening input takes place are key factors in determining effective listening. Not only that, speaker factors (accent, intonation) and individual listener factors such as the listening strategies employed by an individual, gender or anxiety levels, are part of the listening skills construct. When we talk about assessing listening skills, together with these issues there is the question of task format in relation to both input and output requirements, the types of questions used in assessing listening skills or the number of times students are allowed to listen to a (video/audio) recording. All these aspects of listening make research in listening an intellectually and academically challenging work.

This volume presents three articles dealing with listening skills under three very different perspectives. The first article by **González-Vera** and **Hornero Corisco** deals with the advantages of using audiovisual materials to enhance speaking and listening skills. In the second article, **Martín del Pozo** tackles an important issue in academic listening: that of spoken discourse markers and how they influence listening

comprehension success in English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) classrooms. Finally, **Natalia Norte** presents a highly innovative article that goes beyond traditional listening comprehension analyses and focuses on the multimodal comprehension of audiovisual input.

González-Vera and Hornero Corisco worked on a questionnaire to find out their students' profile as listeners, trying to identify areas of difficulty in the listening process. This is the point of departure for implementing classroom tasks with the same students focusing on the detected problems. These authors advocate for the inclusion of authentic audio-visual materials and technologies in the EFL teaching and learning process trying to ascertain their belief that this type of material aids not only listening skills development but is also helpful in the enhancement of speaking skills when we use such materials as input to overcome language difficulties, such as those encountered with specific phonemes in the foreign language.

In “Discourse Markers and Lecture Structure: Their Role in Listening Comprehension and EMI Lecturer Training” it is suggested that lecturers need a more overt signaling of lecture stages as well as being able to turn to a wider stylistic variety of discourse markers. Providing a thoroughly exemplified review of lecture phases and how discourse markers apply to each phase, Martín del Pozo analyses the importance of discourse markers in lecture listening comprehension. Contextualizing this research in the internationalization process that is taking place in universities, together with the promotion of the teaching of content subjects in a foreign language, provides an added value to this article. Results in this article indicate that the lectures analyzed in the EMI (English as a Medium of Instruction) recordings are characterized by repetitiveness and weak stylistic resources when using discourse markers. This may influence students' lecture listening comprehension since the input they get may not be as clear and staged as it could be.

In the EMI context, the vision of listening skills not as separate skills but as part of the speaking-listening continuum in conversation is particularly relevant. As the author reveals, there are two key aspects in this process from the EMI perspective. One is paying attention to the “student learning to listen” and the other one is paying attention

to the “lecturer learning to speak”. Both are closely related in a lecture situation and affect lecture comprehension on the one hand, and lecture effectiveness on the other.

In “Multimodal digital tools and EFL audio-visual comprehension: students’ attitudes towards vodcasts”, Norte examines students’ attitudes towards the use of audio-visual listening materials (e.g., vodcasts) compared to traditional audio ones (e.g., audio tracks). The author selected vodcasts that were clearly connected to the participants’ specific syllabus in an attempt to consider academic interest of the listeners/test-takers as part of the experiment design. One of the aims of the study was to observe and contrast students’ attitudes towards listening to audio tracks versus watching vodcasts. A number of relevant reasons to support the use of vodcasts become apparent. These include issues that are relevant in the literature of listening skills both in first and second or foreign language acquisition (Wolfgramm, Suter and Göksel 2016), namely, that they aid concentration, and make students understand context and situations better. These three factors are frequently surveyed as predictors for effective listening comprehension in the literature. It was also shown how for the majority of students multimodality enhances comprehension and reduces anxiety.

The volume ends with a review of *A Multimodal Analysis of Picture Books for Children: A Systemic Functional Approach* written by Arsenio Jesús Moya Guijarro. In the review, written by Mary Frances Litzler, the connection between the linguistic and the visual aspects of picture books analysed in the book is discussed. Therefore, the book identifies the verbal and visual strategies used by writers and illustrators in order to convey a representation of reality, but also to create an effective interaction with readers (children) and coherent wholes of communication, serving thus as a framework for assisting in the selection of appropriate books for young readers.

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Audiovisual materials: a way to reinforce listening skills in primary school teacher education¹

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to show the effective use of audiovisual materials in the teaching of EFL to primary school teachers. For that purpose a representative sample of undergraduate students of the Degree in Primary Education with a pre-intermediate B1 level was selected. The students, whose ages ranged from 18 to 22, belonged to the so-called *E-generation* (Prensky 2001). In the first stage of the study a questionnaire was distributed in order to shed light on our students' level of English as well as on the ways and resources they have used to learn English. It revealed that oral communication skills (listening, speaking and pronunciation) were usually underestimated. Bearing in mind these results, the present study proposed two main activities, one focused on listening comprehension and another on the improvement of pronunciation through audiovisual materials

Keywords: *CLIL, university, methodology, guidelines, scaffolding, student-centred*

I. INTRODUCTION

There seems to be no doubt at present that, as experts in the field state, “the momentum of growth has become so great that there is nothing likely to stop the continued spread of English as a global lingua franca” (Crystal 2006: 421). It is easy to understand that, due to the great spread of functionality of English today, many countries have adopted it as “a medium of communication, either for internal or external purposes” (Crystal 2006: 427). However, other professionals of EFL teaching claim that

¹ Financial support for this research has been provided to the Swift H 46 Group by the Regional Government of Aragon.

in too many countries (...) English is still taught with little regard to its practical use. Until all English teachers are teaching English as a tool for communication, countries and individuals will not enjoy the full benefit of a global language (EPI, 5).

Surveys at the European level have proved the weak competence of Spanish users of English². A questionnaire completed in 2012 by 2,000 students of Secondary Education in Aragon revealed that not much time is devoted to listening outside the classroom. According to the students' perceptions, there would seem to be a need to insist on the practice of listening (Hornero et al. 2013, Mur-Dueñas et al. 2013, Plo et al. 2014).

Our own survey evidences the weaknesses of Spanish secondary education students' oral skills in English. Now those students are at university and their oral competence needs urgent improvement. The students, whose ages ranged from 18 to 22, belonged to the so-called *E-generation* (Prensky 2001), characterised by living surrounded by a digital culture and their ability to perform multiple tasks. These students have a low tolerance for lectures and prefer active rather than passive learning, which leads to a change in the model of pedagogy, “from a teacher-focused approach based on instruction to a student-focused model based on collaboration” (Tapscott 2009). The questionnaire revealed that oral communication skills (listening, speaking and pronunciation) were usually underestimated even though language curricula consider communication as the ultimate goal of learning a language.

When it comes to focusing on Listening skills, the description for the B1 Level provided by the EAQUALS³ Bank of descriptors (Figure 1) can be taken as a reference:

² For this purpose, see the results of the 5th edition of the English Proficiency Test, which presents a ranking of 70 countries based on test data from adults who took their online English tests in 2014. Spain is, according to this survey, located in the “moderate band”, which corresponds to CEFR level B1.

³ EAQUALS (Evaluation & Accreditation of Quality in Language Services) is an international association of institutions and organisations involved in language education whose aim is to promote and guarantee high quality in language teaching and learning. To achieve this aim, EAQUALS has created and published a demanding set of criteria to verify the quality offered by its accredited member-schools.

Figure 1. From the EAQUALS Bank of descriptors.

B1 Level

OVERALL LISTENING

I can understand the main points of clear standard speech on familiar, everyday subjects, provided there is an opportunity to get repetition or clarification sometimes

LISTEN TO INTERLOCUTOR

I can understand what is said to me in everyday conversations, but I sometimes need help in clarifying

LISTEN TO TV AND FILMS

I can understand the main points in TV programmes on familiar topics when the delivery is relatively slow and clear

Bearing in mind the results of the questionnaire and the above bank of descriptors for the B1 level, the present study proposed two main activities, one focused on listening comprehension and another on the improvement of pronunciation through audiovisual materials, as part of their continuous assessment in the subject *English in Primary Education I*. Students were given clear instructions for the completion of the tasks based on clips from the British animated children's television series *Peppa Pig* and *Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom*. The choice of these clips was justified by the thematic focus that is related to one of the units of the subject and the clarity of the RP (Received Pronunciation) accent used in both series.

II. LISTENING WITHIN A COMMUNICATIVE LEARNING APPROACH

Our study aimed to test the efficiency of using audiovisual materials and activities in the training of future teachers, focusing on the improvement of their listening skills. There is no doubt that both extensive and intensive listening provide students with the opportunity to hear different speakers and accents, strengthen their speaking habits and help them to improve their pronunciation. But whereas the former is usually done for pleasure, intensive listening tends to be more concentrated, less relaxed, and is often dedicated not so much to pleasure as to the achievement of a study goal. Moreover, it is often done with the intervention of the teacher (Harmer 2007).

More traditional recorded material (CDs, for instance) used in the classroom may also help to improve the students' listening skills, but in this case the students cannot see the speaking taking place. The great advantage of watching audiovisual clips is that they get to see 'language in use'. It is easy for them to see how intonation matches facial expression and what gestures accompany certain expressions, and they can learn a number of cross-cultural clues.

The introduction of technology and audiovisual materials in education has been intrinsically connected with the irruption of communicative approaches in language teaching contexts. The umbrella term "communicative approaches" (Widdowson 1978, Brumfit and Johnson 1979, Littlewood 1981, Krashen and Terrell 1983, Ellis 2003) gathers together different innovative approaches organised on the basis of communication. Under these approaches learning is thought to emerge through language production, and being able to communicate requires more than mastering linguistic structures, since language is fundamentally social.

Any truly communicative activity must have three features (González-Vera 2015: 72): information gap, choice and feedback as learners. Firstly, a text is communicative as it displays information that is unknown to the "reader". Communication exchange takes place as the participant has to understand the meaningful words or phrases of the message in order to fill the information gaps s/he has. The activity is communicative inasmuch that speakers have to choose what (content) and how (form) to reply to the other participants; in other words, they have to rely on their communicative competence, apart from their linguistic competence. Lastly, bearing in mind that communication is purposeful, the participants can evaluate whether or not the purpose of their message has been achieved by means of feedback, that is, the information reported by the listeners. These activities also have to be motivating and rewarding for learners. The students' interest in audiovisual texts lies at the root of considering the incorporation of audiovisual resources in learning-teaching environments. In addition, communicative approaches opt to expose students to natural language and advocate for the use of authentic language materials, as is the case of audiovisual texts. The use of animated TV series in the teaching of primary school teachers allows them to learn by means of authentic materials that deal with stimulating topics for their future students, namely, children. Therefore, the usefulness of these materials is beyond doubt.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

III.1. Data collection

The group under analysis was Group 1 of *English in Primary Education I*, which included 37 students in their freshman year. This subject, taught in the Faculty of Education at the University of Zaragoza, was worth 6 ECTS, which entailed 150 hours' work for the student. 50 of them were class hours, distributed across lectures and seminars, and 100 hours involved autonomous learning.

In order to study the impact of audiovisual materials on the development of our students' communicative competence, we first collected qualitative data from a questionnaire designed for this purpose. The questionnaire (Figure 2) shed light on our students' relationship with English and their level of language in different skills.

It was composed of two parts. The first part included students' personal information such as their mother tongue, the time they had been learning English and their level of English. The second part of the questionnaire concentrated on the types of exercises they usually practise in and out of class, which could contribute to assess the relationship between their strengths and weaknesses in the different skills and the time devoted to training these abilities. The questionnaire concluded with questions related to the type of resources used by the students to train aural skills and identified the main pitfalls that learners encountered when listening.

Figure 2. Initial questionnaire.

<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Surname, name2. Age3. Gender4. Country of origin5. Level of studies accomplished (secondary school, vocational training, graduate, post-graduate, others)6. Native speaker of...7. How many years have you studied English?8. How do you consider your level of English? (advanced, upper intermediate, intermediate, lower intermediate, beginner)9. Where did you learn English? (You can choose more than one option): At school, at a private language school, private classes, in summer camps,
--

travelling and meeting people, watching TV, seeing films, others.

- 10. How strong are your speaking skills in English?** (advanced, upper intermediate, intermediate, lower intermediate, beginner)
- 11. How strong are your listening skills in English?** (advanced, upper intermediate, intermediate, lower intermediate, beginner)
- 12. How strong are your reading skills in English?** (advanced, upper intermediate, intermediate, lower intermediate, beginner)
- 13. How strong are your writing skills in English?** (advanced, upper intermediate, intermediate, lower intermediate, beginner)
- 14. Have you got any English level certificate?** (KET, PET, FCE, CAE, Trinity level, IETLS, TOEFL, others)
- 15. As a whole, what level of English do you think you have (according to the European framework)?** (A2, B1, B2, C1, C2)
- 16. Can you speak any other foreign language(s)? Which? What level do you think you have?**
- 17. Have you been to an English-speaking country? If so, where and how many times? Specify the duration of your stay there** (Less than a week, from 1 to 3 weeks, from 3 weeks to 2 months, more than 2 months)
18. How frequently (hardly ever, not often, usually, always) do you do the following tasks outside class?
 - Listening exercises
 - Reading exercises
 - Compositions
 - Speaking
 - Grammar and vocabulary
 - Team work
 - Others
- 19. Which of these activities do you most enjoy doing in class?**
 - Listening comprehension
 - Oral presentations
 - Debates
 - Working in pairs
 - Others
- 20. How often do you do listening tasks outside the classroom?** (hardly ever, not often, usually, always):
- 21. What materials do you use?** podcasts, CDs, video clips, others.
- 22. Do you ever use audiovisual materials outside the classroom?** (hardly ever, not

often, usually, always)

23. Do you like using audiovisual materials to improve your English? Why?

24. Which of the following problems may appear when someone speaks to you in English or when you do a listening comprehension activity. Indicate the frequency in each case (hardly ever, not often, usually, always).

- I don't understand many words and I get lost very soon
- It is difficult for me to identify the sounds in English
- I need to hear the text more than once if it is very long and I find it difficult to concentrate

25. How hard is it for you to understand (very easy, easy, hard, very hard):

- The listening exercises in your workbook
- Real conversations
- News and documentaries
- Radio programmes, podcasts
- TV series

The questionnaire was followed by **two activities** with which we attempted to improve our students' level in those skills that presented more difficulties. For the design of these activities, Jain's (2013: 79) suggestions for a positive framework for developing communication skills were taken into consideration:

Identify audience - Define the characteristics of your audience.

Select Topic - Define the topic, purpose, and scope of your communication.

Set objective and criteria - Set objectives to measure the outcomes and effect of your communication.

Gather information - Find sources and gather information for your communication.

Select medium - Decide what you will use to deliver your communication.

Develop structure of message - Create your message and determine how it will be best communicated.

Test and Revise - Practise, test, and revise communication.

Deliver communication - Send the communication.

In our case, the type of audience was future primary school teachers. As they would have to teach children, we decided to choose two animated television series aimed at children. Regarding the topic, these television series deal with issues which appeal to the target audience. On the one hand, our students needed to learn how to tell stories to their pupils and these series would present the main structures and expressions required

for their future job; on the other hand, the subjects of these stories may be interesting and motivating for their pupils, thereby stimulating their desire to learn. The activities designed allowed them to practise communicative skills and to assess their success in communication.

III.2. Data analysis

All of our students were women aged 18 to 24 and most of them were Spanish, except for 5%, who were Romanian and whose mother tongue was Romanian.

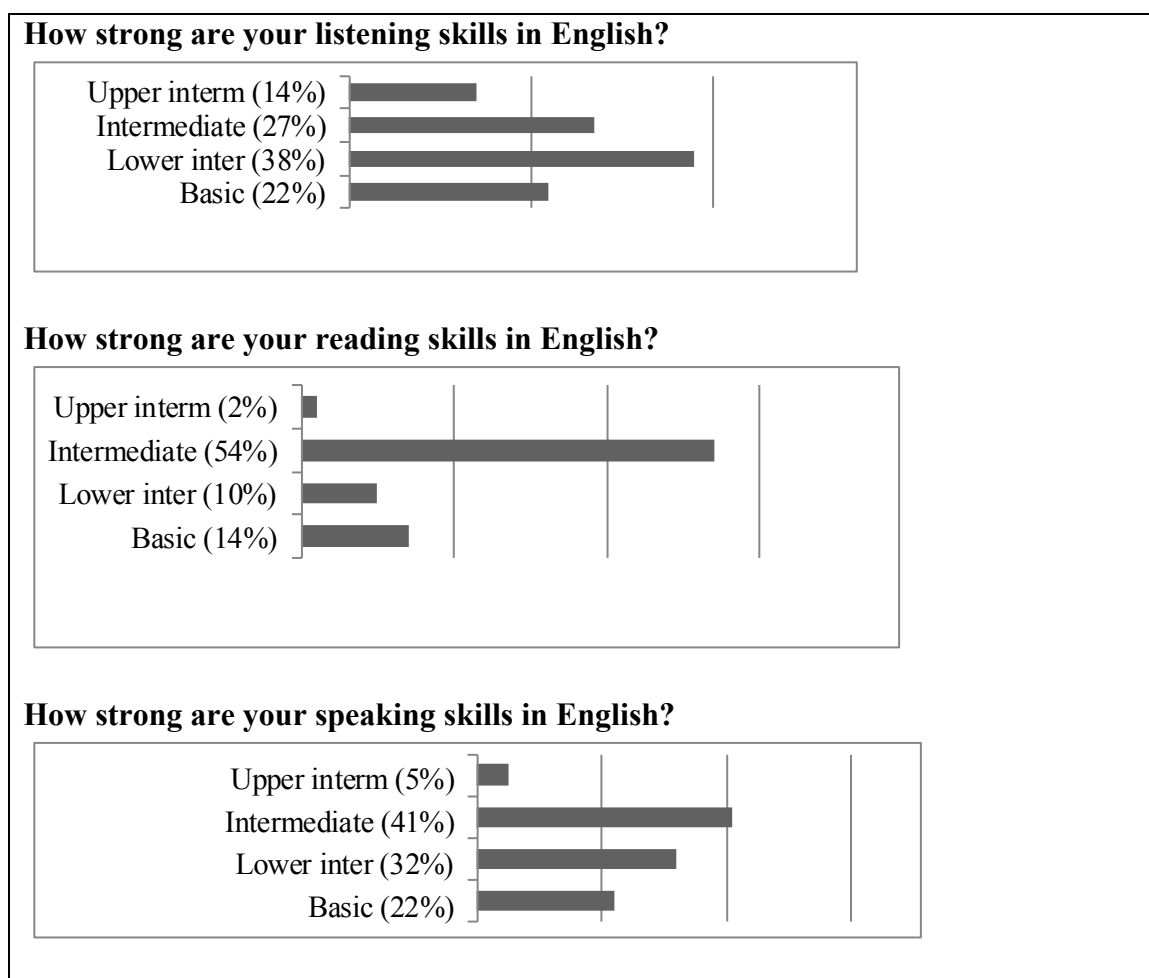
Although most of our students came from High School, a considerable number of them came from vocational training (11%), which led to a heterogeneous group with different levels of English.

They reported having devoted a good number of years to the study of English: 10-17 years. Although the majority studied English at school and many of them took private classes, they also learnt English by watching TV (12%), something that some years ago would have been unthinkable.

The questionnaire revealed that most of our students considered they were good at reading, whereas the percentages regarding their strengths in listening and speaking skills were more divided although the highest percentages move in low levels (Figure 3). 22% considered their listening and speaking skills basic and 38% and 32% lower intermediate in listening and speaking, respectively. One striking aspect was the high percentage (57%) of students who did not have any certificate proving their level of proficiency in English, and those who did have a certificate had A2. However, when they were asked about their level of English, they thought they had B1.

The fact that 76% of the students had never been to an English-speaking country was very enlightening; information about their (low) level in other languages was also obtained, French being their first option as second foreign language.

Figure 3. Level of listening, reading and speaking skills.

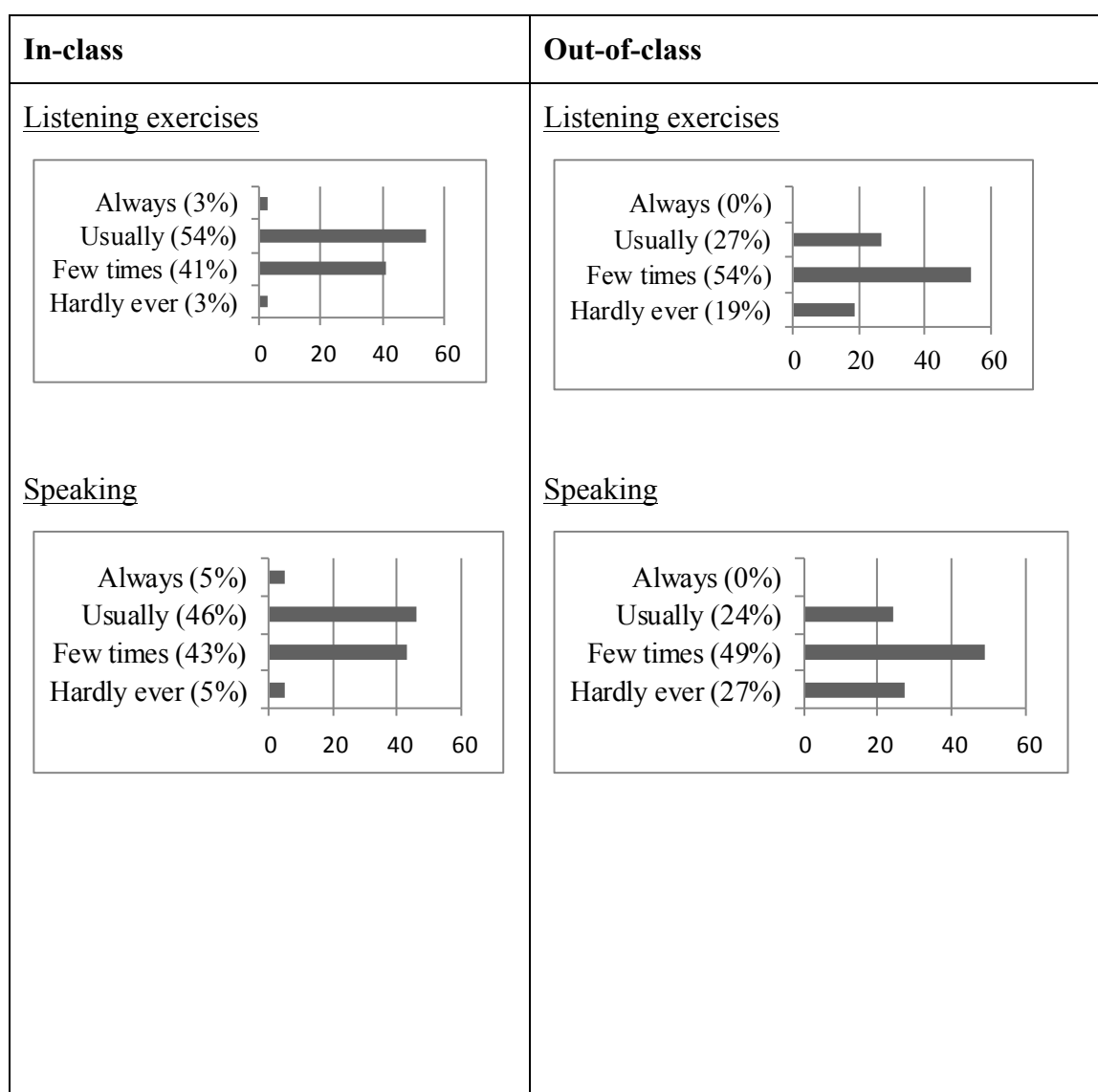


Students were also asked how frequently they do different types of activities in and outside class (Figure 4). The study reveals that students do not often do listening, speaking and reading exercises outside class, and none of them reported doing listening or speaking activities everyday outside class. In contrast, students are used to doing grammar and vocabulary exercises in and outside class. This leads us to think that students have been exposed to the Grammar Translation Method and not to the Direct Method, which implies a lot of practice of listening and speaking.

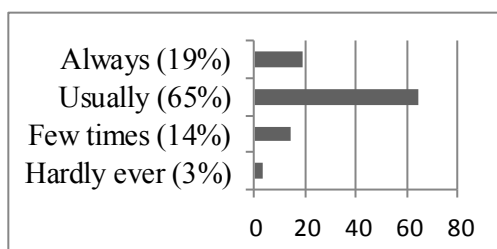
The questionnaire also confirms our suspicions that, in class, listening and speaking skills were underestimated with respect to the time devoted to reading, and grammar and vocabulary activities, even though the main aim of EFL lessons is to strengthen the students' communicative competences. In addition, although team work is fostered in class, as a consequence of the implementation of task-based learning, the number of

times students do team work outside class is still low. However, the students reported they enjoy team work and working in pairs, which should be taken into consideration for the activities that are proposed to motivate students. The low percentages in oral presentations and listening comprehension activities as tasks that students enjoyed most led us to think that they are not presented in an attractive way. Students said that they associated listening comprehension activities with a passive activity in which an excerpt was played and their involvement was low; and the reason for disliking oral presentations seems to rest on the lack of guidance they are given while doing or preparing them.

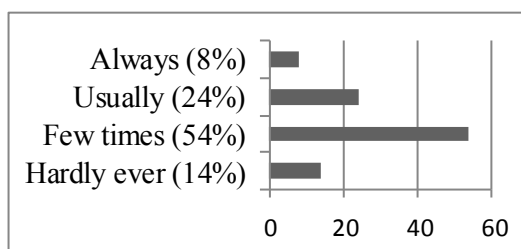
Figure 4. Frequency in the practice of listening, speaking, reading, and grammar and vocabulary exercises in and out of class.



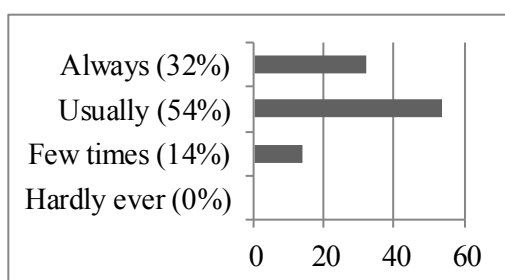
Reading



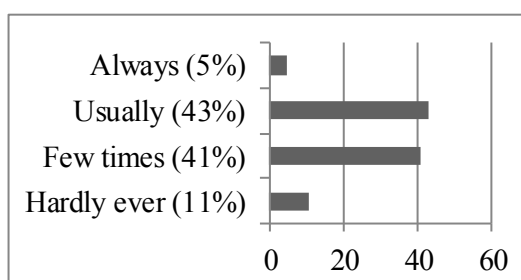
Reading



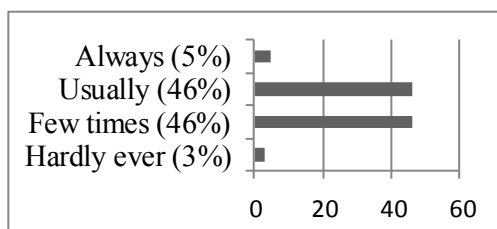
Grammar & Vocabulary



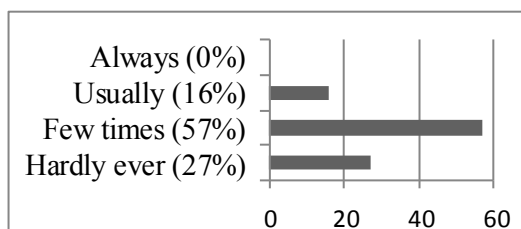
Grammar & Vocabulary



Team Work



Team Work



The use of traditional resources in class contrasts with the materials students tend to use outside class, video clips being the option preferred (30%) (Figure 5). However, when asked about the frequency with which they use audiovisual materials outside class they stated they do not use them very often. Perhaps they have not been taught how to use them, since a considerable percentage (95%) showed a liking for AV materials (Figure 6). Students said that they enjoy AV materials because they make the class more entertaining and catch their attention; it is easier to learn through AV materials and students are aware of their potential as a means to improve their accent and pronunciation.

Figure 5. Type of materials used out of class.

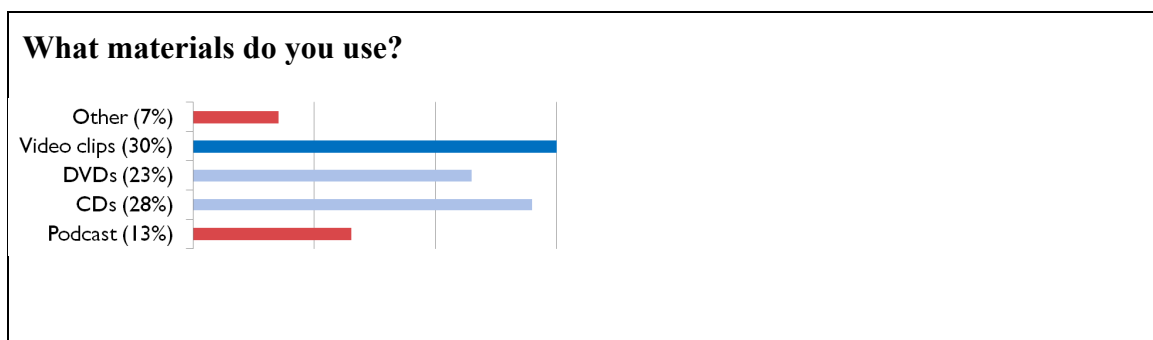
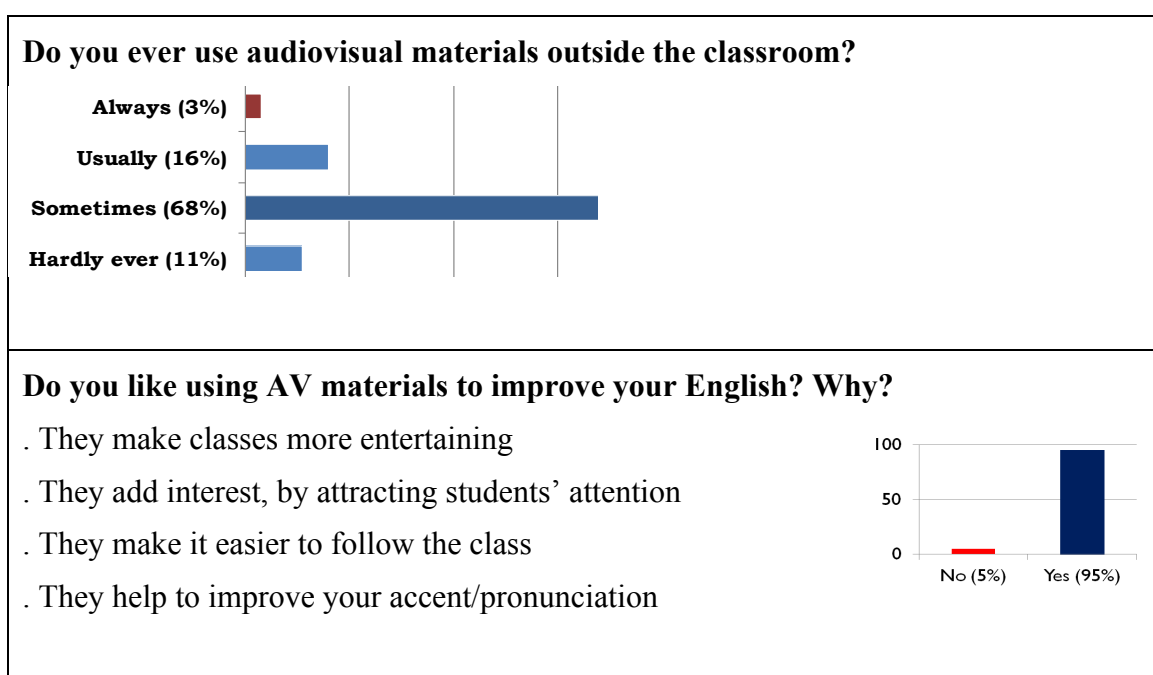
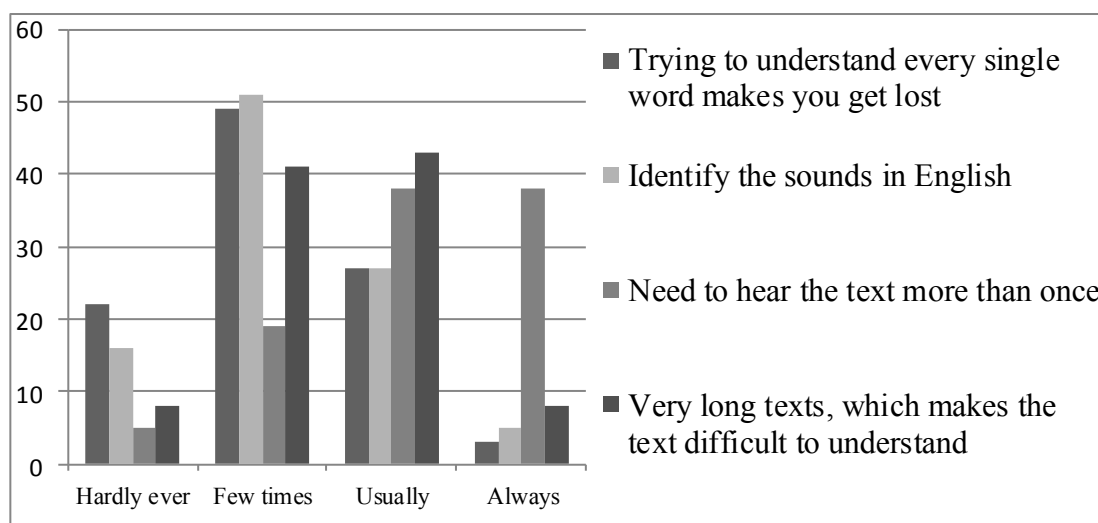


Figure 6. Frequency of use of audiovisual materials out of class and reasons for their introduction as part of the learning process.



The questionnaire concluded with questions about the problems they have in a listening activity when they have to listen to someone speaking in English (Figure 7). Most of them said that they would need to hear the text more than once, something that may occur in an everyday situation (as when you ask the addressee to repeat a question that you have not quite understood). The second factor that makes comprehension difficult is the length of the texts. As they do not have any visual aid, they have to concentrate more on the oral message and they can get lost if it lasts too long.

Figure 7. Frequent problems when someone speaks to you in English or when you do a listening comprehension activity.

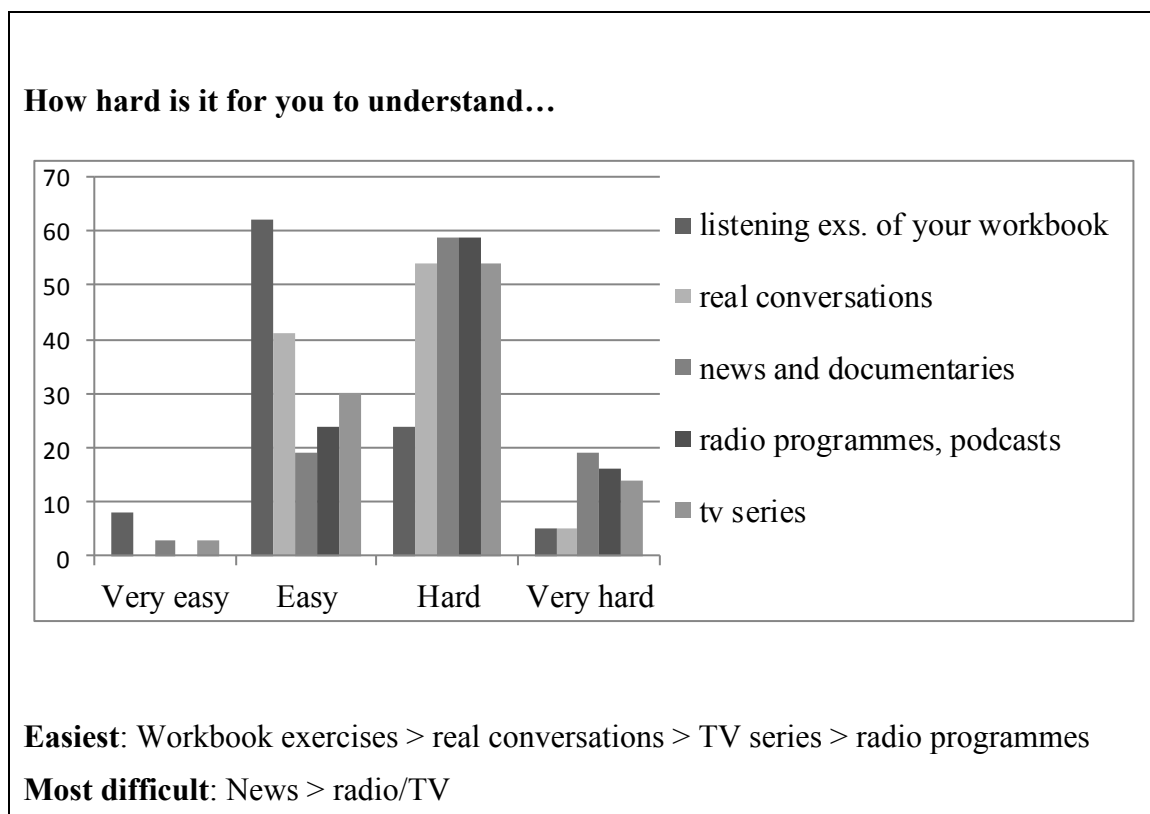


Conversely, the problem of understanding words and sounds, which one could think is the main pitfall for our students, is considered to be almost insignificant.

Finally, students were asked about the type of text they found harder to understand (Figure 8). The questionnaire revealed that the types of texts students find easier to understand are those taken from their workbook. This can be explained by the fact that these types of texts are “artificial”, as they are “too perfect”, clearly discernible accents are used, and few colloquialisms are found. Contrary to what it may seem, this is not an advantage, as we are not exposing our students to real situations.

News and documentaries, where technical terms pepper the text and a formal register is employed, followed by radio programmes, where students do not have any visual aid, are considered the most difficult texts in the students’ opinion.

Figure 8. Level of difficulty to understand different types of aural texts.



Given the low level of language reported and the scant practice of oral skills (listening and speaking), two activities were designed in order to improve students' learning. These activities were based on the use of authentic materials and gave them the opportunity to develop strategies for understanding language as it is actually used.

III. 3 Activities and discussions

Activity 1

The first activity (Activity 1) focused on the listening skills of our students and was aimed at the development of their comprehension when listening. The activity was included in Unit 2 of the subject *English for Primary Education I*. This unit was about the places and elements that can be found at school, such as the canteen, the playground, see-saws, slides, etc. and the students also had to learn how to tell stories, bearing in mind that they will be primary school teachers.

Taking all this into account, we decided to use *Peppa Pig* and *Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom* as our texts. First of all, they were authentic materials that dealt with topics and issues related to the children's world, which could engage our students in the activity, and, secondly, their level of English was reasonable for our students, as the initial questionnaire revealed a general low level of English.

Activity 1 was made up of two tests. The first one evaluated the students' comprehension when the students can only listen to an audio track; and the second assessed their listening comprehension when the students count on all the elements they have in a real-life situation (audio, visual aid and contextual information). The first test (Figure 9) included two multiple choice listening activities, without any visual aid, and the episodes selected were 'Grandpa at the playground' (*Peppa Pig*) and 'The Frog Prince' (*Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom*). Thus, the topics of playground activities and elements, and fairy tales and their structure were covered.

Figure 9. Listening comprehension pre-test.

A) You are going to listen to an episode of *Peppa Pig*. You will hear the recording twice. Indicate T (True), F (False) or DS (Doesn't Say). Only one answer is correct.

***Peppa Pig*. 'Grandpa at the playground'**

- | | | | |
|--|---|---|----|
| 1. Peppa Pig takes his grandpa to the park | T | F | DS |
| 2. Peppa's Grandpa didn't like the roundabout | T | F | DS |
| 3. Grandpa's rules benefit the little ones | T | F | DS |
| 4. The children end up making their own rules to go on the swing | T | F | DS |
| 5. Mummy Pig suggests the same rule should work for all | T | F | DS |

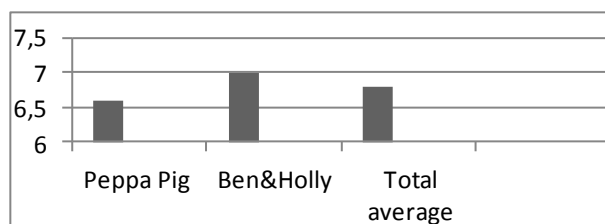
B) You are going to listen to an episode of *Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom* (*Ben & Holly*). You will hear the recording twice.

Ben & Holly. ‘The Frog prince’

1. Ben is not allowed to go out to play	T	F	DS
2. Ben is not very keen on using magic	T	F	DS
3. There are twenty odd frogs in the pond	T	F	DS
4. Holly and Violet identify Ben because he wears a waistcoat	T	F	DS
5. Violet easily turns Ben back into an elf	T	F	DS

In the *Peppa Pig* test, the students got an average mark of 6.6 and in the case of *Ben and Holly’s Little Kingdom*, an average of 7, the total average being 6.8 (Figure 10).

Figure 10. Results of the multiple choice test WITHOUT visual aid.



A few days later, another group of listening activities was presented to the same students (see below “Listening test”). These activities included multiple choice and gap-fill exercises, the latter being more difficult, in the students’ opinion. After the analysis of the results we could observe an improvement, 7.1 now being our students’ average mark.

“Listening test”

A) *Peppa Pig*. ‘The Blackberry bush’

You are going to see an episode of *Peppa Pig*. You will see it twice. Complete the sentences below with the correct information in no more than five words.

1. Peppa and her family are at Granny and Grandpa pig’s house. Granny wants to make _____ for dessert.
2. Mummy pig has been climbing the blackberry bush since _____.

3. But Mummy pig falls off the ladder and gets stuck in _____ .

4. That reminds Peppa of the fairytale of _____.

5. Once the problem is solved, they all go and take the _____.

B. *Peppa Pig*. ‘Bedtime Story’

Instructions: You are going to see an episode of *Peppa Pig*. You will see it twice. Complete the sentences below with the correct information in no more than five words.

1. It is night time. Daddy pig reads Peppa and George a bedtime story. After a while, Peppa notices her little brother is still playing, so she makes up another story which begins, as usual, with the words: _____ there was a little pig...

2. In the story, Georgie pig saw a little house in the forest, and inside the house there was _____

3. Peppa asks her little brother every now and then: _____

4. In the story, Georgie pig walks all around the world and finds a big green dragon with _____

5. The little friends in the story go back home _____

C. *Peppa Pig*. ‘Sports Day’

You are going to see an episode of *Peppa Pig*. You will see it twice. Indicate T (True), F (False) or DS (Doesn’t Say). Only one answer is correct.

1. Peppa argues that she is the fastest of all children T F DS

2. That Peppa is not the winner is not so important for her father T F DS

3. If George had not run, he would have jumped farther than Richard rabbit T F DS

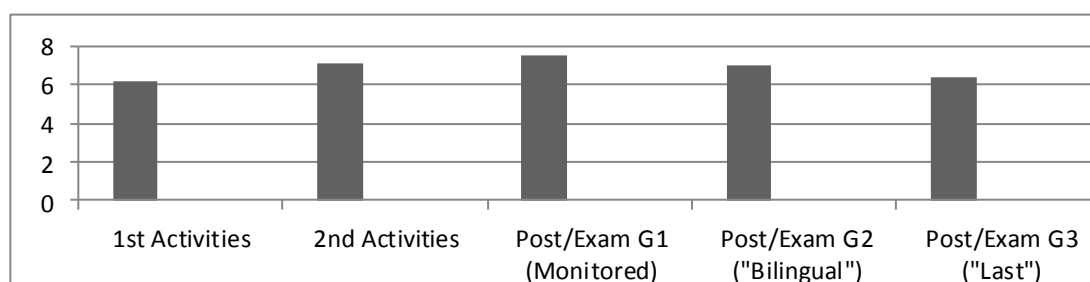
4. In spite of Peppa’s reluctance, Daddy pig finally races in the relay

in Peppa's team and does very well	T	F	DS
5. Finally the girls pull the rope hard and win	T	F	DS
D. Peppa Pig. 'School Play'			
You are going to see an episode of Peppa Pig. You will hear the recording twice. Indicate T (True), F (False) or DS (Doesn't Say). Only one answer is correct.			
1. Peppa's play group are going to put on a play: Little Robin Hood	T	F	DS
2. Daddy Dog sounds very scary as a bad wolf	T	F	DS
3. The teacher postpones photographing to the end of the play	T	F	DS
4. Pedro the Hunter does not help Grandma	T	F	DS
5. Peppa is convinced she is the best actress	T	F	DS

Finally, the study concluded with the final exam of this subject (post-test), which included a listening test, consisting of two gap-fill exercises, one of them a story that followed the pattern of those seen in the previous activities. Students were not allowed to watch the clips but just listened to them twice. The length of the clips was three minutes, and they were used for the first (pre-test) and second activities (test).

The students' results for the listening part of the final exam revealed an improvement in the case of those who had participated in this study (students from Group 1). They got 7.5 as their final mark in the listening part. Their results were compared to those of the students belonging to Groups 2 and 3. While Group 2 included the students with the highest marks in *Selectividad* (University Access Exams), who also had another subject, *Psychology*, taught in English and had the intention of taking the speciality of foreign language in their final year, Group 3 was comprised of students with lower marks who came mainly from vocational training. The results from the comparison were satisfactory, as they showed how the marks of the monitored students were better than those of students in the other groups, the average mark in Group 2 being 7, and 6.4 in Group 3 (Figure 11).

Figure 11. Comparison of the results of the listening test and comparison of the post-test results.



Activity 2

In the second activity students were given a script corresponding to an episode of *Peppa Pig* and another one of *Ben & Holly*. They were asked, first of all, to read it aloud, paying attention to the pronunciation of the words and the intonation patterns required in the conversation. Then they recorded their readings and sent them to us. The episodes were:

1. *Peppa Pig*. 'The Tooth Fairy'
2. *Ben & Holly*. 'Books' (the episode was edited, as it was originally too long)

A few days later, the students watched the two episodes corresponding to the scripts they had read a few days earlier. They could watch them as many times as they needed and then they recorded their second reading. Finally they sent us the recordings. A total of 24 students sent the four readings (the complete set). The students were given simple instructions for the reading activity but no information concerning what was going to be analysed.

The interest of this activity was focused on pronunciation and to what extent it could improve after watching the two episodes. By 'improvement' we mean that the speaker's pronunciation came closer to the English sounds of RP, which is unquestionably linked with education, prestige and authority; it is the accent that is most intelligible to the British population as a whole (Honey 2000).

Our interest focused on the pronunciation of 10 phonemes which are particularly difficult for Spanish students of English. Six of them were found in the reading of the episode of *Peppa Pig*:

/dʒ/ as in 'George'

/v/ as in 'visit'

/i:/ as in 'leave'

/j/ as in 'you'

/ʌ/ as in 'brush'

final /g/, as in 'pig'

and four in the episode of Ben & Holly:

/s/ as in 'star'

/h/ as in 'Holly'

/ʃ/ as in 'shining'

/ð/ as in 'that'

Then the pronunciation of the ten phonemes in the first and second reading was compared. Here follows the analysis of the results:

1. *Peppa Pig*. Where was the improvement detected?

In the second reading of *Peppa Pig*, after watching the episode, there was an improvement in pronunciation in 25 cases. The phonemes affected ('improved') were:

. from /ʊ/ to /ʌ/ in 'brush' (9)

. from /i/ to /i:/ in 'leave' (8)

. /j/ in 'you' (5)

. from /b/ to /v/ in 'visit' (2)

. from /j/ to /dʒ/ in 'George' (1)

Improvement represented 71.4% of all the cases where there was a change in pronunciation (35).

2. *Ben & Holly*. Where was the improvement detected?

In the second reading of *Ben & Holly*, after watching the episode, there was an improvement in pronunciation in 19 cases. The phonemes affected were:

. from epenthetic /e/ before /s/ initially to /s/ in 'stars' (7)

. from [x] (voiceless velar fricative to aspirated /h/ in 'Holly' (5)

. from plosive /d/ to the fricative /ð/ in 'that' (4)

. from /s/ to /ʃ/ in 'shining' (3)

Of all the cases where there was a change in pronunciation (24), improvement accounted for 79.1%. This might lead us to interpret that the extent of improvement has

been higher in this second practice, perhaps aided by the fact that the students had already gone through a previous 'training' process with the reading of the episode of Peppa Pig.

A number of students - six in each case - did not, however, vary their pronunciation in the second reading. In other words, 25% of the students tested did not modify their pronunciation in the second reading, in either case, (See Figure 12).

The data reveal that in some cases in the first reading of *Peppa Pig* our students did not pronounce the following phonemes properly and no improvement was observed in the second reading. This means that, in these cases, the students need to continue to practise in order to achieve a pronunciation that more closely resembles the sounds of English. Further pronunciation exercises (like reading word pairs or more audiovisual activities) would be helpful for that purpose. The phonemes that needed more practice were:

. /v/ → 79.1%. The students did not differentiate /b/ and /v/ in words like 'very'.

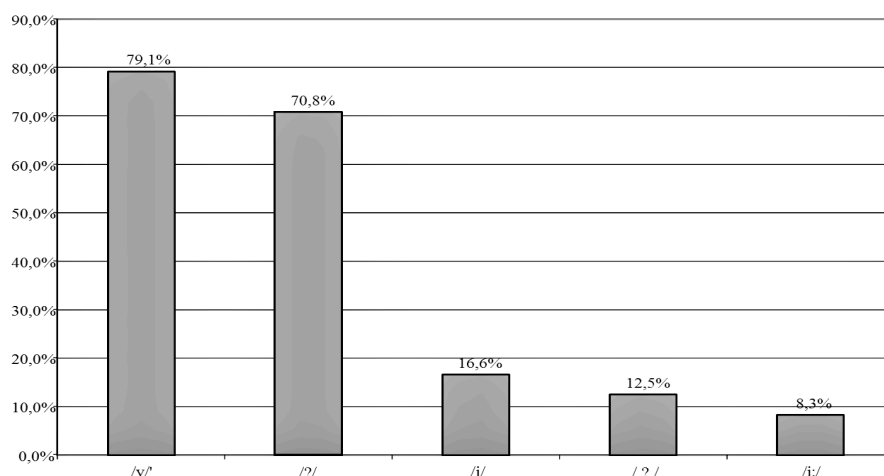
. /dʒ/ → 70.8%. The students did not differentiate /dʒ/ and /j/ in words like 'just' or 'George'. (They produced the phoneme /j/ all the time).

. /j/ → 16.6%. The students did not produce the phoneme /j/ in words like 'you'. Instead, they uttered the palatal lateral approximant /ʎ/.

. /ʊ/ → 12.5%. The students did not lower and centralise the phoneme to /ʌ/ in words like 'brushing'.

. /i:/ → 8.3%. The students did not produce the long vowel in 'leave'.

Figure 12. Phonemes that need improving (*Peppa Pig*).



Likewise, in the first reading of *Ben & Holly* some of our students did not pronounce the following phonemes properly and no improvement was observed in the second reading. In this case, the following phonemes needed further practice (See Figure 13):

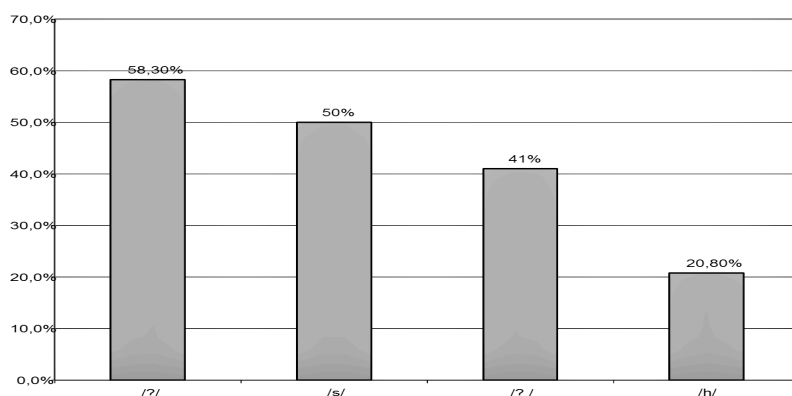
/ʃ/ → 58.3%. The students did not differentiate /s/ and /ʃ/ in words like ‘shining’.

/s/ → 50%. The students produced the epenthetic /e/ before the initial /s/ in ‘stars’.

/ð/ → 41%. The students did not distinguish the pair /d/-/ð/ in ‘that’.

/h/ → 20.8%. The students produced the [x] (voiceless velar fricative) initially, in the “Spanish way”, instead of the English aspirated /h/ in ‘Holly’.

Figure 13. Phonemes that need improving (*Ben & Holly*).



Therefore, as we have seen, in 75% of the cases there was a modification in pronunciation and, as pointed out previously, improvements were noted in 71.4% of cases in *Peppa Pig* and 79.1% in *Ben & Holly*.

Moreover, a clear improvement was perceived in the use of the appropriate intonation patterns. As we all know, intonation is a fundamental factor in speaking. It is used to show the grammar of what is being said (e.g., a falling tone indicating a statement, a rising tone a question), the speaker's attitude or a change in turn in conversation. However, it is difficult to learn and insufficient attention is devoted to its observation and teaching. One of the advantages of being exposed to watching videos is that students may raise their awareness of the power of intonation, a basic tool in every conversation.

IV. CONCLUDING REMARKS AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

In the case of the language training of primary school teachers, the use of animated television series allowed potential school teachers to learn by means of authentic materials that deal with stimulating topics for their future learners, that is, children. The choice of *Peppa Pig* and *Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom* seemed to be appropriate for the level of English in the class. Although, at first sight, one can think that the students might feel embarrassed or discouraged working with texts whose language level is not high and may be regarded as simple and naïve, the effect was the opposite. The students appreciated the use of authentic resources and saw these texts as potential materials for their pupils, which encouraged and motivated them.

The results were positive in both listening and speaking, as the final exam (post-test) revealed. While the progress in the case of listening was more remarkable, the improvement of their communicative skills was not so apparent. This could be justified by the profound lack of instruction in communicative skills during the students' previous training. Any improvement in these skills, however small it may be, encourages us to continue integrating the practice of using audiovisual materials, as it has proved to be so fruitful and rewarding.

Watching video clips allowed our students to improve their listening comprehension skills. The visual aid provided information that contributed to the full understanding of the message. As happens in real life, students completed what they understood aurally with what they saw; in other words, they filled in the missing gaps with visual information. Working with audiovisual texts also allowed our students to see language

in use, that is, to relate paralinguistic behaviour to intonation, an effective way to learn a range of cross-cultural clues at the same time.

By training future teachers with these tools and activities - once it has been proved they are effective and motivating - we are paving the way for a more straightforward inclusion of these materials and technologies in the EFL teaching and learning process. Likewise, we are also ensuring the methodologies of foreign language teaching are updated - a demand made by students themselves.

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Discourse markers and lecture structure: their role in listening comprehension and EMI lecturer training

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ABSTRACT

Listening comprehension of lectures in L2 contexts is a widely researched topic. Findings have been applied to both materials and course design. This paper focuses on findings about the facilitative role in comprehension of those discourse markers (DM) which signal lecture structure. These markers can also be of assistance in L2 contexts such as new English Medium Instruction (EMI) scenarios, where the lecturer is not a native speaker of English. A small-scale investigation about the presence of these markers in EMI lecturer discourse is presented. Findings indicate that lecturers need a more overt signalling of lecture phases and a wider stylistic variety enabling them to do so. The paper concludes by suggesting that EAP materials for training students in listening comprehension could be a good resource to provide the lecturer with a repertoire of linguistic tools to structure their lectures and in consequence facilitate comprehension for students.

Keywords: *listening comprehension, academic language, bilingual education, teacher education, discourse markers*

I. INTRODUCTION

Flowerdew (1994) defended the undeniable importance of teaching listening comprehension skills in a language other than the mother tongue. The reason for this was the high number of students learning through a foreign language at that time. Today, more than two decades later, his vindication becomes even more vital with the proliferation of English Medium Instruction (EMI) and other bilingual education approaches. Practice has outpaced the provision of qualified and prepared teachers. Surveys reveal that Spanish teachers at all educational levels are more concerned with linguistic than with methodological training. Though the partiality of this vision is arguable, the urgency of language upskilling is evident for in-service and prospective EMI teachers. This paper aims to advocate and propose the utility of academic listening comprehension materials as a valid resource to support EMI teachers in the process of class preparation. Research about the role of discourse markers in lecture

comprehension and the learning materials derived from these findings could now be transferred to these new scenarios of L2 listening comprehension. The paper will open with a reflection on the lecture as an academic oral genre and the role of discourse markers to signal phases and facilitate comprehension. Next, the actual presence of these DM in EMI lecturer discourses will be observed to identify linguistic needs. Finally, some academic listening materials will be suggested as resources to cover those needs.

II. LISTENING COMPREHENSION IN LECTURES

II.1 Academic listening: understanding lectures

Some teaching methods such as tutorials, seminars and practical sessions are gaining momentum in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). However, the lecture continues to be “a cornerstone of many tertiary level courses and, due to the increase in student numbers, it is likely to remain so” (Exley and Dennick 2009: 10). Therefore, it is currently relevant to contribute to a better understanding of how lectures are comprehended and of how to deliver them successfully, both for L1 and L2 contexts.

In lectures, the use of language is complex. There are significant differences between listening to academic discourse and more general listening events. Miller (2002) points out some of them:

- academic discourse presents a special disciplinary orientation,
- it is delivered to an audience in particular ways,
- the underlying rhetorical structures are different from other conversational contexts.

Complexity in lectures does not only affect the language. The situation itself is also multi-faceted. The listener has to integrate information coming from different channels (auditory, visual and perhaps kinetic). This is one of the main differences between the lecture comprehension process and the comprehension process of other oral genres. Thus, knowledge of the factors affecting L2 academic listening comprehension could provide benefits (Hyland 2009: 97). These factors have been the center of attention in numerous research studies, among which *Academic listening* (Flowerdew 1994) is still

said to be the most comprehensive work. The main argument underlying the whole book is that knowledge of how lectures are comprehended in L2 can be applied to:

- 1) Teaching students to understand lectures in a second language, and
- 2) Assisting lecturers to facilitate comprehension.

Or in other words, as Mendelsohn (1998) reflects:

The call for greater support in academic listening for non-native speakers comprises two aspects: the need to help students to help themselves, and the need to educate lecturers when they have classes with significant numbers of international students (p.92).

If we transfer this to EMI contexts where the lecturer is a non-native speaker of English, the application of this information to support and educate lecturers translates differently than it would in the case of native speakers. Subsequently, the question is what knowledge about lecture comprehension derived from these studies is useful for the linguistic education of teachers in EMI contexts.

A consideration of the factors affecting lecture comprehension could provide answers. Any good quality teaching practice should ponder these factors, but perhaps they present distinctive connotations in L2 contexts. Some of these aspects are tightly related to personal style (such as speed of delivery). Others, though depending on style, are “trainable”. Some of these factors are formal while others are cultural.

The research on L2 academic listening performance emerged from the growing practice of specific language courses for students of content in L2 (Chaudron and Richards 1986). The findings of this research are potential input for instructional materials, curriculum design and teacher training. This paper focuses on some of the findings about the formal factors which affect lecture comprehension and on their derived pedagogical implications. That is to say, the overview of some of the aspects revealed by the research provided in this paper endeavors to consider those which could be transferred to assist lecturers in delivering more comprehensible classes.

II.2 Formal elements in the lecture: phases and discourse markers

The use of certain rhetorical markers is a major feature of the language of lectures. These markers are lexical phrases which help to signal the most important content, and to indicate moves in argumentation or the boundaries of non-essential information.

These discourse markers (DM henceforth) are one of the most studied formal elements in L2 and L1 lectures.

The state of the art (Bellés-Fortuño 2008) shows heterogeneity in the concept and taxonomies of DM. Discussion about them is beyond the scope of this paper, since it tries to maintain an applied and didactic orientation. Chaudron and Richards (1986) provided one of the first and most widely used categorizations, which distinguishes between micromarkers and macromarkers. Though this classification has also been discussed, their study opens up a series of investigations about the role of markers in understanding lectures.

This paper will focus only on macromarkers, that is, metadiscursive comments on how the lecture itself will be organized, or phrases which signal to the listener what is coming next (e.g., Today, we'll talk about; Now, let's take a look at; We'll come back to that later).

The label DM will be maintained to refer to them. This option is justified by the phase model (Young 1994), which identifies a macrostructure of the lecture independent from the discipline or other situational factors. It is a model allowing the lecture to be approached as a genre. Phases are:

Strands of discourse that recur discontinuously throughout a particular language event, and, taken together, structure the event. These strands recur and are interspersed with others resulting in an interweaving of threads as the discourse progresses. (1994: 165)

This model fulfills two requirements that are relevant for this research paper. Firstly, the model has a didactic purpose, since the aim of a detailed description of lectures is to make them more comprehensible for students. Secondly, this phase model goes beyond traditional linear models such as “introduction, middle, end”, which cannot seize the complexity of the lecture as a discursive act. Young's model is not linear but recurrent. In addition, Young identifies some linguistic elements that are distinctive in each of the phases. DM are a group of these elements which, for example, signal or delimit a phase. The same author endorses the relevance of recognizing these linguistic features for both lecturers and L2 students: “an acquaintance with the correct schematic patterning of lectures will greatly assist students” (p.173). Table 1 recaps this phase model.

Table1. Lecture phases (Young 1994)

Metadiscoursal	Structuring Discourse	Lecturer indicates the direction that they will take in the lecture.
	Conclusion	Lecturers summarize points made during the class.
	Evaluation	The lecturer reinforces each of the other strands by evaluating information which is about to be or has already been transmitted.
Non-Metadiscoursal	Interaction	The lecturer establishes contact with students to check if they have understood or to reduce distance.
	Content	The lecturer transmits theoretical information.
	Exemplification	The lecturer explains theoretical concepts through concrete examples.

As already said, DM are an important element in this model. DM in lectures have been approached from two perspectives (Bellés-Fortuño 2008: 112):

1. The role and function of these DM in L1 lectures (from the perspective of the lecturer-sender and the genre *per se*),
2. The role of those DM in lecture comprehension in L2 (from the perspective of the student-receiver).

This second group has been more widely researched than the first one. Before summarizing the main contributions of studies in this line (section II.4), it is convenient to dedicate a section to reflect on the importance of DM in listening comprehension.

II.3 DM and listening comprehension

Listening is a complex skill which involves physiological and cognitive processes in conjunction with the processing of contextual information. A brief overview of the cognitive elements involved in listening will raise awareness of the implications for listening in L2 contexts. This section relates DM to both the sources of knowledge which aid listening comprehension and the processes of listening comprehension.

Firstly, Anderson and Lynch's model of listening comprehension (1988: 13) identifies three main sources of knowledge:

- schematic knowledge (background knowledge and schemata),

- contextual knowledge (situation and context), and
- systemic knowledge (knowledge of the language system at the phonological, lexicosemantic, morphosyntactic, and discursive levels).

DM are elements of the language system, and therefore knowledge of them can potentially enhance comprehension. In addition, DM signal the different phases in a lecture (Young 1994). This is related to schematic knowledge. Students are supposed to have lecture schemata in their L1 and this knowledge could be used to understand lectures in L2.

Other theoretical models provide information about the processes involved in listening. Two main types can be identified: top-down processes and bottom-up processes. In the first type, the listener builds a conceptual framework for comprehension using context and prior knowledge stored in long-term memory (topic, genre, culture, schema knowledge). On the other hand, bottom-up processes imply the construction of meaning by building up from smallest units of meaning (phoneme-level) to increasingly larger ones up to discourse-level elements. These processes do not exclude each other but interact depending on the purpose of the listening and on the listener's skills (Vandergrift 2004). Understanding the unit of meaning constituted by DM favors bottom-up comprehension processes.

Finally, the microskills models should be considered. **Richards'** (1983) highly cited paper provided a detailed list of skills needed for conversation and academic lecture speech, which others have followed (Mendelsohn 1998). Richards' taxonomy (1983) includes "the ability to recognize the role of DM for signaling the structure of the lecture". In this case, top-down processes are promoted. Hence, knowledge of DM is likely to foster both comprehension processes. Perhaps this is one of the reasons for their presence among the skills needed for comprehension ability.

II.4 DM in lecture comprehension

The significance of DM in lecture comprehension is sustained through their permanence as a focus of interest for many researchers. Chaudron and Richards' pioneering investigation (1986) concluded that macromarkers signaling major transitions and emphasis in a spoken academic lecture helped successful recall. Since then, other researchers have approached the question by combining different variables such as the

type of markers or the kind of evaluation process. Most of the studies agree on the facilitating effect of DM, especially macromarkers and metadiscourse in contexts where the student is not a native speaker of the language of instruction.

The methodology followed in these studies was similar. Firstly, an experimental group received the lecture with DM, while a control group received the same lecture without those DM (Chaudron and Richards 1986, Eslami and Eslami-Rasekh 2007, Flowerdew and Tauroza 1995, Jung 2003, Morell 2004, Reza *et al.* 2012, *inter alii.*). Secondly, students' comprehension is checked by means of questions, tests or the notes taken. In the same way, Tehrani and Dastjerdi (2012) showed that cohesion and coherence in the written compositions of students who received the lecture with DM was higher than in those by students who received the lecture without DM.

Some other studies included an interventional step: some students received explicit instruction on DM. Results show that these did better than students who had not been explicitly taught DM (Smit 2006). Smit's intervention program focused on training the students to notice when and how lecturers use DM to verbally signpost the different movements in the lecture. Thus, DM achieve a twofold utility as indicators of the structure of the discourse and as potential aids in training listeners to understand better.

The consensus about the presence of DM as a facilitator of comprehension seems to be general. The disagreements among these studies may be rooted in the type of markers studied, the students' language proficiency or the test employed. This paper will not discuss such disagreements.

In conclusion, the facilitative role of DM to signal lecture phases (Young 1994) is implicit in the findings of most of these studies. As a result, pedagogical implications derived from them include the teaching of these elements to students and the recommendation for lecturers to incorporate them in their discourses. Accordingly, Mendelssohn (1998) offers eight suggestions for lecturers, all derived from the studies and experiences compiled in Flowerdew (1994). The third of Mendelssohn's suggestions reads: "train lecturers to insert many more overt DM that highlight the overall structure of the lecture" (p. 93). Eslami and Eslami-Rasekh (2007) emphasize the "teachability" of these elements:

The use of discourse markers can be considered as an area of strategic competence that can *be taught* and may have an immediate effect on comprehension. This means that nonnative speakers can compensate for skills that they lack by using appropriate strategies. (p.35) (emphasis added)

Materials design and methodology for the teaching of these elements are based on the findings of studies on academic listening comprehension like the ones reviewed in this section. Benefits have extended to lecturers and to students. However, with the growing expansion of CLIL/EMI, content lecturers are not necessarily native speakers. The next section deals with some of the implications of this reality.

III. LECTURES IN L2: THE NEW SCENARIOS OF ENGLISH MEDIUM INSTRUCTION

III.1 New contexts of English medium instruction: forces behind and challenges ahead

The EHEA, the internationalization of universities, and some European linguistic policies are promoting the teaching of non-linguistic disciplines in a foreign language at all educational levels. This is known as CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) in English and AICLE (Aprendizaje Integrado de Contenidos y Lengua Extranjera) in Spanish. In higher education, the label English Medium Instruction (EMI) is preferred. EMI does not necessarily imply the dual focus on language and content. In fact, a distinguishing feature of EMI is the non-existence of linguistic objectives (Smit and Dafouz 2012). EMI is content-driven and lecturers are not language teachers but content experts. However, some improvement in students' language skills is always expected in bilingual programs.

The speed of development and the expansion of these practices have no precedents and the forces behind them (such as those mentioned at the beginning of the section) can be easily identified (Coleman 2006). This celerity of implementation implies that praxis is outpacing theory. Therefore CLIL/EMI conceptual and theoretical frameworks are still under construction and a “theory-lessness” (Dalton-Puffer 2007: 10) permeates this trend.

Another important challenge at all educational levels is teacher training (Martín del Pozo 2013). The profile of EMI lecturers is moving from native speakers to speakers of

English as a lingua franca (ELF). Before the current CLIL/EMI boom, content lecturers were very frequently native speakers or had far more proficiency than students. However, this is no longer the case, or at least not in Spanish Universities (Lasagabaster and Sierra 2010). Language level is one of the main difficulties and reasons for lecturers to be reluctant to teach their content subjects through English. Some studies (see compendium for Spain in Martín del Pozo 2015) show that teachers do not consider themselves in need of methodological training. Their main perceived need is only linguistic upskilling.

There is also a debate about the linguistic needs and the language qualification required for content lecturers to take EMI courses (Halbach and Lázaro 2015). Teacher training is left to each individual institution and the materials available are scarce. A serious approach to this substantial challenge could start by describing how lecturers are actually teaching through English. The next section presents some classroom research about lecturer discourses.

III.2 DM in Spanish EMI teacher discourses

The preceding sections have centered on the significance of DM in lectures and their facilitative role in the process of lecture comprehension in L2. Two main pedagogical implications are derived:

1. The convenience of training students to identify and comprehend these elements.
2. Educating lecturers for a conscious use of DM could be beneficial.

Regarding this second pedagogical implication, a first step to be taken is to observe the frequency and type of DM employed in teacher discourses. Several studies have been conducted on EMI lecturer discourses in the Spanish context. The research group CLUE (*Content Learning in University Education*) gathered a corpus of oral data from different universities in the Comunidad Autónoma de Madrid. One of the novelties of this research group is to approach the discourse of a non-native speaker of English. Previous investigations have centered on strategies employed by native speakers of English teaching to international audiences or on these international audiences' understanding of lectures by native speakers.

Núñez and Dafouz (2007) studied four content lecturers' teaching through English and identified the different phases of the lecture (Young 1994). However, phase and phase change were only explicitly indicated in a small number of occasions. In addition, the use of some explicit markers such as “for example” did not correspond to a signaling value. These researchers forewarn that both cases (scarce signaling or ambiguous signaling) may be a hindrance for comprehension.

A following study (Dafouz and Nuñez 2010) expanded on and enhanced the research conducted in 2007. This time, the analysis did not only identify lecture phases but also the functional elements in each of them, with especial attention to DM. The resources with a signaling function of three Spanish lecturers teaching through Spanish were contrasted with those used when lecturing through English. Findings reveal that lecturers transfer linguistic tools from L1 to L2. However, L2 productions show a lower frequency, precision and stylistic variety. Explicit signaling of phase change is considerably inferior to the frequency and variety of resources when changing phase in Spanish. Conclusions indicate that resorting to these types of resources may strongly depend on personal teaching style and on the fact that lecturers tend to reproduce in L2 their own style in L1. However, very specific linguistic needs are derived from these results. One of them is the convenience of providing linguistic tools to signal phases, together with the awareness of their utility for the students to comprehend lectures. These studies call for further research in parallel contexts, such as the one addressed in the next section.

IV. CONTEXT, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODOLOGY

This section describes a small-scale investigation conducted in a Spanish EMI context. The long-term aim is to assist lecturers with the language needed to teach in English, in particular with DM to signal lecture structure. The first step before devising a pedagogical intervention, and therefore the immediate aim, is to observe the current presence of DM in these teachers' discourses.

IV.1 Research question

The following specific research questions attempt to fulfill the aim of describing the presence of DM in lecturer discourses and identifying linguistic training needs.

1. How many occurrences of the DM are there in the lecturer discourses?
2. What is the linguistic form of these DM?

IV.2 Context

The Escuela de Ingeniería Informática de Segovia (EIISG) (Universidad de Valladolid, Spain) was the first public higher education institution to offer a bilingual degree in Computing in the Comunidad de Castilla y León. EMI was an optional practice from 2006 to 2011 within the program *Ingeniero técnico de informática de gestión*. The subjects taught through English ranged from Microeconomics, Operating systems, Software engineering, Math, Physics, Information Systems, Programming, and other related areas of knowledge. The number of credits in English increased from 26 to 117 over this five-year period. The attitudes and perceptions of students and lecturers for the first two years of the experience were reported in Martín del Pozo (2008a and b) along with some narratives of lecturers' difficulties, strategies and achievements.

At the EIISG, 'The shift towards L2 medium education in English does not correlate with the introduction of CLIL' (Marsh and Laitinen 2005: 2). This means there are no explicit language objectives at the institutional or the individual level at the university. This is a widespread trend in Spanish universities. Nonetheless, students' linguistic competence is always expected to benefit from any bilingual program.

Six lecturers were videotaped during the delivery of a sample lecture. The transcriptions of the verbal language formed a corpus whose most relevant features are specified in Table 2:

Table 2. Corpus description

Lecturer	Topic	Recording time (minutes)	Number of words	EMI experience (years)
Lecturer 1	Processes in operating <u>systems</u>	31	2,580	2
Lecturer 2	Information representation in Quantum arithmetic	27	2,140	5
Lecturer 3	Consumer preferences	40	3,300	3
Lecturer 4	Graph theory	51	2,650	5
Lecturer 5	Basic concepts of mathematics	22	2,273	4
Lecturer 6	Gauss's Theorem and applications	36	3,470	4
Total	Number of lectures: 6	207 minutes	16, 413 words	

The six lecturers were selected on the basis of gender, subject and their having more than two years' experience teaching through English. Their discourses were analyzed to observe DM. This paper reports only on those DM used to signal the opening (openers), the sequencing (sequencers) and the introduction of new topics (verbal topicalization) in the discourse structuring phase.

IV.3 Methodology

The linguistic analysis of these data required the design of a taxonomy based on previous models. Among the available models used in previous studies, such as Chaudron and Richards (1986) or Bellés-Fortuño (2008), the most suitable for our purpose were the lecture phases model (Young 1994), already described in II.2, and the taxonomy which Dafouz and Nuñez (2010) used in their analysis. Since this paper centers only on DM for opening, sequencing and introducing new topics, an abridged version of the taxonomy is presented.

Table 3. Abridged taxonomy (Dafouz and Nuñez 2010: 220)

		Definition/Function	Example
Discourse structuring phase	Openers	Signal of the formal beginning of a class	<i>Today, we are going to talk...</i>
	Sequencers	Mark particular positions within a series	<i>First, then, next...</i>
	Verbal Topicalizers	Indicate introduction of new topics/topic shifts	<i>Another concept</i>

The opening move in the research process was to identify what constitutes a DM in the six lecturers' discourses. Once these markers had been identified, the analysis of each of them was undertaken following the taxonomy described above. Both qualitative (formal features) and quantitative (number of occurrences) information was used. The main relevant findings are now summarized.

V. RESULTS AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

V.1. Results

This is a small-scale investigation in a bilingual degree at a Spanish university. Results are not unexpected to be similar to those of previous studies in EMI parallel contexts,

such as the research on lecturers' discourse by Dafouz and Nuñez (2010). These results provide important insights into the features of Spanish lecturers using English to teach content subjects.

Nevertheless, as Figure 1 shows, markers to structure lectures prevail over the other types, although their presence is limited and characterized by a lack of stylistic variety (see Tables 4 and 5).

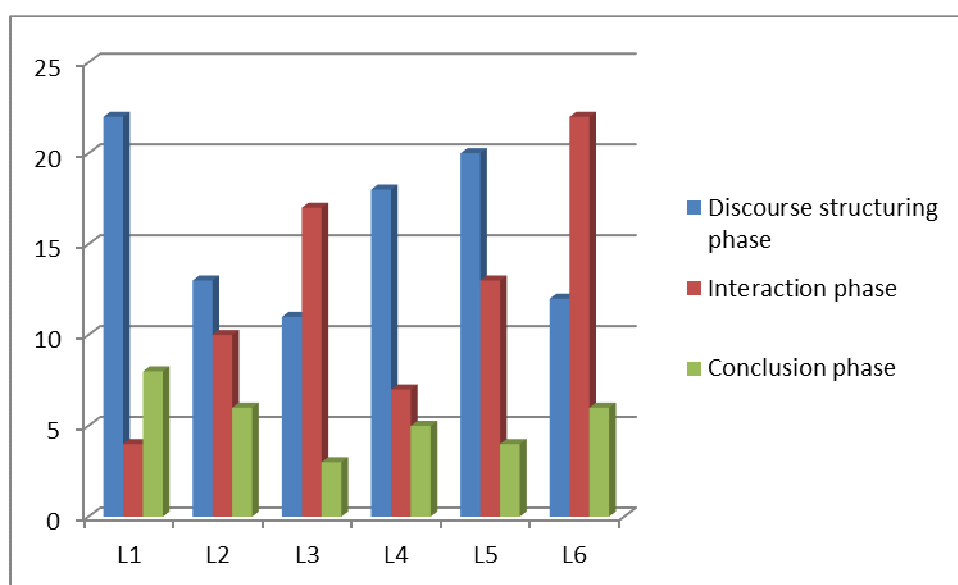


Figure 1. Distribution of DM per lecturer in lecture phases

As regards the qualitative features of the DM, the following Tables 2 and 3 provide an overview of markers produced to open the lecture, to indicate sequence, and to introduce new topics.

Table 4. DM in lecturers 1, 2 and 3

		Lecturer 1	Lecturer 2	Lecturer 3
Discourse structuring phase (DS)	Openers	Today's lecture is about The lecture today is We will talk/ We will describe The objectives of this talk will be	In this talk i am going We will introduce, we will see if In this very, very introductory lecture we just work with	This is the first less lesson in the course In this lesson <u>we will</u> talk about The target of this lesson is
	Sequencers	And, also The last, The third, Finally	First of all The first thing	First The second Once Until now
	Verbal Topicalizers	<u>The main notion</u> of this class, <u>Another possibility</u> in time share systems (2) <u>Another objective</u> of this lecture was What is a process? The basic issues of these notions are related in this slide We have the.	(First of all) we should tackle with Let's follow So the point here in this question The problem here is the following This has a problem , The rule is the following	For example What is a market basket? A new property of...

Table 5. DM in lecturers 4, 5 and 6

		Lecturer 4	Lecturer 5	Lecturer 6
Discourse structuring phase (DS)	Openers	This lecture is focused The title of the talk The lecture is divided in Three parts	Ok guys, good morning, Today we are going to study	The subject of today's lecture is...
	Sequencers	The first, The second, The third The next And then Initially	First of all Then Next After that In the second part Finally (we have) ¹ On the first level we have	
	Verbal Topicalizers	For example Another (possible model, situation, application) Also What is next? Next concept Why this kind of objects is important? What is the definition of ...? Let's start with... The question is the follow The problem is the following Now we are telling about Now we define what is a We are now trying to explain the	Let's start first with We need <u>another</u> set called... <u>Another</u> common mistake Now (let me) introduce	There is another concept The other thing is... What happens when the magnitude. We are measuring is not an scalar? Rhetorical question What do I mean by the symmetry? Rhetorical question

The frequencies and categories in the lecturers' discourses provide useful information about individual linguistic needs. However, commenting on and discussing them in detail is far beyond the extension and scope of the present paper. What is relevant is that, though they do have a battery of resources given their expertise in lecturing in L1, these are seen to be repetitive and stylistically weak.

V.2. Pedagogical implications

Indications or teacher training implications formulated in studies about the importance of DM in listening comprehension fall under the general label “train lecturers”. They need to be specified in language contents. This paper contributes to the specification, as the pedagogical implications derived from the findings are evident and match those proposed by similar studies. The first one is that EMI lecturers require linguistic tools to signal lecture phases. Materials in section VI could provide this instruction.

A second implication is the convenience of raising lecturers' awareness about the significance of introducing such DM. The materials recommended in section VI can potentially make them aware.

A third implication concerns the reality that assisting non-native speakers to deliver lectures will concurrently have an effect on students' comprehension. This is of great importance, as there is a tendency towards emphasizing the instrumental character of listening comprehension: “learning to listen in the L2 and learning the L2 through listening” (Rost 2002: 91). Although the explicit teaching of language is not among the duties of content teachers (neither are they trained to teach language), teachers are linguistic models of the academic and discipline discourses. DM are part of academic discourse and students are more likely to learn them if heard in lectures.

Finally, language training would perhaps be more welcomed and accepted if it could be overcome autonomously. The problem is the dearth of CLIL/EMI teacher-training materials for autonomous work. However, there are materials available, though they were not initially designed for that purpose. This paper advocates the use of materials targeted towards students who have to attend lectures in English. The new EMI scenarios where lecturers are also non-native speakers (or precisely because they are not native speakers) may also benefit from what has already proven efficient in EAP contexts.

VI. LISTENING COMPREHENSION MATERIALS: A RESOURCE TO ASSIST EMI LECTURES

The wide range of materials for learning academic listening demonstrates that the application of knowledge and results derived from research on L2 listening comprehension has targeted students much more than lecturers. For instance, the special research attention paid to how the structure of the lecture is signaled has resulted in instructional materials to train L2 students to identify signposting elements and overall lecture structure. This will only be possible if the lecture is structured and signaled. Lynch (1994) quotes a review by O'Brien (1984) on some materials to teach academic listening comprehension:

As authentic as they sound, however, one has to recognize that special care has been given to the structure of the talks. They *have* a structure and it is clearly marked. Sadly this is not always the case with the real lecture. Perhaps we should start training the lecturers (O'Brien, 1984, original emphasis).

This could be understood as a complaint about the lack of authenticity in L2 listening comprehension teaching materials and at the same time a call for lecturers to follow the generic conventions of the lecture. In the same line, Jung (2003) warns that EAP listening materials have limitations when compared to authentic lectures. For example, extracts are too short in comparison to real life or intonation is not fully exploited for communication purposes.

In spite of this, EAP listening comprehension materials could be used to learn lecture conventions, both for the native and the non-native speaker. They are often rich in samples of language to signal hierarchical organization in lectures, or language to refer to visual aids and other similar linguistic resources which would be useful for EMI lecturers. Using these already-existing materials is a contribution to “maximize content teachers' access to the generic tools for more explicit signaling of metadiscursive devices” (Dafouz and Núñez 2009: 109).

The resources (books, DVDs and websites) in the following list were originally targeted towards non-native speakers who had to attend content lectures in English. Non-native content lecturers who have to deliver instruction in English could benefit from the linguistic tools available in these resources. The resources are ordered by publication

date, though there are also expanded new editions. This list illustrates the permanent interest in teaching listening comprehension in academic environments. EMI lecturers may benefit from this heritage by making use of these resources as self-training tools. The list is by no means exhaustive. It aims to serve as an example and indication of where to look for linguistic assistance to teach through English at university.

Table 6 offers examples of the language that EMI lecturers could learn from these materials. The stylistic variety of a single functional resource is evident.

Table 6. Sample of openers

What I intend to say is What I'd like to do is to discuss What I intend to do is to explain In my talk today, My topic today is Today, I'm going to talk about I'm going to talk to you about My colleagues and I are going to give a short presentation on	Today I want to consider In this talk, I would like to concentrate on The subject of this talk is The purpose of this talk is to This talk is designed to
--	---

It has to be noted that the table is preceded by some directions to the student who is using this resource to learn listening comprehension skills:

At the beginning of a lecture, or a section of a lecture, the lecturer will give you some idea about the structure of the lecture. Listen for these signals as it will help you understand what the lecturer is saying. (Text preceding Table 6 in one of the recommended materials)

However, the possibility and the utility of a shift from “student learning to listen” to “lecturer learning to speak” is manifest. Similar models to Table 6 are abundant in the following resources.

1) Books

These course books include information about how a typical lecture is organized and strategies for recognizing introductions, conclusions, and digressions. The accompanying DVDs or websites use actual excerpts and transcripts from authentic lectures covering a wide range of topics and academic disciplines. Some strategies for note-taking are also provided.

Lebauer, R. S. 1988. *Learn to Listen; Listen to Learn: academic listening and note-taking*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall

Goodith, Wh. 1998. *Listening*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

CELTE. 2002. *Essential Academic Skills in English: Listening to Lectures*. University of Warwick

Salehzadeh, J. 2006. *Academic listening strategies: a guide to understanding lectures*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press

Beglar, D., Murray, N. 2009. *Contemporary topics: academic listening and note-taking skills*. New York: Pearson Education

Smit, J and Campel, T. 2009. *English for Academic Study: Listening*. Reading: Garnet

Parrish, B. 2009. *Four point: Listening and Speaking 2*, advanced. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press

Wennerstrom, A. 1991. *Techniques for Teachers a Guide for Nonnative Speakers of English*

This reference is provided at the end because it is not targeted towards students but to academic professionals who speak English as a second language. It originated to train non-native teaching assistants in US Higher Education.

2) Web resources

- <http://www.englishforacademicstudy.com>

Portal to other sites related to Academic English. Some of them are free access. They include clips of lectures and information about the phraseology used in the different phases.

- <http://www.uefap.com/> *Using English for Academic Purposes. A Guide for Students in Higher Education*

Maintained since 1999 by Andy Gillett. Tips and phrases to recognize lecture structure. The information on academic functions can be very useful for content delivery.

- <http://www.prepareforsuccess.org.uk/>

This interactive web tool includes, among other aspects of academia, resources and tips to deal with the language challenge of lecturers in L2.

VII. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The paper opened by highlighting the prevalence of the lecture as an academic genre and thus the significance of understanding how it can be effectively comprehended (sections II.1 and II.2). Reasons for the facilitative role of DM in lecture comprehension have been argued (section II.3). Findings reveal that the presence of DM in lecturer discourse seems to have a positive impact on lecture understanding. On the contrary, the absence of DM may be a hindrance for oral comprehension in academic contexts (section II.4). The production of more DM is advocated in the conclusions of the studies mentioned in II.4. Therefore, if DM are a recommended feature, the first question to be answered is the type of presence of these signposting elements in lecturer discourse in EMI contexts. Discourse analysis of some Spanish lecturers (section III.2) reveals that: 1) there is a small number of DM and lecture phases are implicitly signaled (Dafouz and Nuñez 2010), and 2) Contrastive analysis shows less stylistic variety and less precision in L2 than in L1 (Dafouz and Nuñez 2010).

The small-scale investigation of lecturer discourse at EIISG (section IV) coincides with the earlier findings, with the exception of lacking the contrastive aspect with discourses in Spanish. If a lack of explicit signaling may hinder comprehension, and if EMI lecturers are not producing the desirable number of DM in L2, it seems highly convenient to make lecturers aware of their importance and to train them in the production of markers which clarify lecture structure. Academic listening materials designed to enhance students' lecture comprehension (section VI) could also be employed to provide lecturers with a wide range of linguistic tools for signaling lecture phases.

Other conclusions of this paper are not of that immediate pragmatic nature. Regarding teacher linguistic needs, the research findings summarized in this paper seem to suggest that the debate would be more productive if attention focused on the type of language required for successful EMI lecture delivery rather than concentrating on what language qualifications EMI lecturers should hold. Moreover, most of the CLIL/EMI research to

date has tended to focus on the product of CLIL/EMI instruction (language learning gains) rather than on the process of teaching and learning. In a modest attempt to fill this research lacunae, this paper has approached one of the elements of the process: DM in lecturers' discourse. The reason for this has been the significant role of DM for lecture comprehension, widely proven by studies on L2 listening comprehension.

Finally, the paper has advocated a new utility of academic listening comprehension materials whose suitability is supported by theoretical models of the listening comprehension process. These materials, originally designed to train students in ESP and EAP contexts, could serve now as a resource for autonomous language upskilling of CLIL/EMI lecturers. These professionals can be considered “a new EAP learner” (Martín del Pozo 2015b). In addition, one of the “synergies of mutual inspiration” (Dalton-Puffer 2007: 297) between ESP and CLIL/EMI could be making use of already-existing and solidly underpinned materials. A second source of inspiration is the application of the knowledge about listening comprehension in L2 lectures to these new L2 scenarios.

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Multimodal digital tools and EFL audio-visual comprehension: Student's attitudes towards vodcasts

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ABSTRACT

The emergence of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) has helped in the development and application of new language teaching materials that promote a multimodal approach (Jewitt, 2009, 2013; Kress and Leeuwen, 2001). Multimodal digital tools, such as vodcasts, bring together diverse modes of communication, which may enhance students' foreign language audio-visual comprehension. This paper discusses a study on the attitudes of 40 Spanish students at a B2 level, aged between 14 and 19, towards the use of vodcasts, in comparison with audio tracks. Questionnaires were employed to gather data on student attitudes towards two British Council vodcasts. The results showed positive attitudes towards the use of multimodal digital tools (e.g., vodcasts) rather than traditional listening activities (e.g., audio tracks). We suggest these findings point to the potential of vodcasts not only as influential multimodal tools to improve EFL students' audio-visual comprehension but also to increase students' enjoyment and engagement when learning English as a foreign language.

Keywords: *Multimodality, digital tools, audio-visual comprehension, EFL, students' attitudes, vodcasts*

I. INTRODUCTION

Though multimodal communication has always existed, there has been a preference for exploring one mode, spoken or written, in isolation. In the 20th century, visuals (e.g., photographs, figures and graphics) started to gain importance in educational contexts and they were included in textbooks to help students in the process of meaning-making and comprehension. Recently, the rapid dissemination of technology has contributed to the expansion and employment of innovative language teaching resources, leading to a shift from printed elements of communication to digital resources (Jewitt, Bezemer, Jones, & Kress, 2009). These digital tools (e.g., webpages, blogs, social networks, online dictionaries, and vodcasts) support a multimodal approach, due to the range of modes that are employed in their production. From a multimodal perspective, information is transmitted and received from the orchestration of different communicative modes of representation. On the one hand speakers make use of verbal (i.e., spoken and written) and non-verbal modes (i.e., images, music, and body

movements) to convey meaningful communicative acts. On the other hand, the audience perceive the information from the auditory and visual channels, and activate their cognitive processes to enable audio-visual comprehension. However, audio-visual comprehension does not only take place in interactional or two-way exchanges, but also while using transactional (i.e., one-way) multimodal digital tools such as vodcasts. The use of visuals to enhance foreign language comprehension has acquired a special role during the last decade. Nevertheless, little research has been carried out to check the effects of orchestrating visual and aural inputs to understand foreign language (e.g., Coniam, 2001; Ramírez & Alonso, 2007; Sueyoshi & Hardison, 2005; Suvorov, 2009; Wagner, 2007, 2010). This article focuses on students' attitudes towards the use of multimodal digital tools such as vodcasts to improve their EFL audio-visual comprehension. For this purpose, firstly, I provide a review of the most relevant resources and studies related to i) multimodality, ii) the application of multimodal digital resources in language learning settings, and iii) audio-visual comprehension. Secondly, I present a small-scale study¹ carried out to explore students' viewpoints on audio-visual tools as foreign language listening activities (Norte, 2016). This study paid attention to the EFL students' attitudes towards the use of multimodal digital tools (e.g., vodcasts) in comparison with traditional listening tools (e.g., audio tracks).

II. THE MULTIMODAL LANDSCAPE

The diversity of semiotic resources and social contexts involved in communication have produced a great variety of theoretical and disciplinary practices associated with multimodality (O'Halloran & Smith, 2011). Multimodality, defined as, "...the use of several semiotic modes in the design of a semiotic product or event, together with the particular way in which these modes are combined..." (Kress & Leeuwen, 2001:20), facilitates the possibilities of identifying, examining and reaching conclusions about the production of meaning through the orchestration of modes in diverse contexts. According to Jewitt (2013), three different premises underlie the multimodal approach. Firstly, language is a part of a multimodal ensemble. That is to say, representation and communication is produced due to the variety of modes that contribute, equally, in the

¹ This paper relates to a part of the doctoral thesis presented by the author.

process of meaning. Therefore, multimodality emphasises the idea of analysing all modes produced in multimodal ensembles (representations of more than one mode). Secondly, each mode in a multimodal ensemble is understood as realizing different communicative work. This assumption is based on the way modes have been created from the influence of culture, society and the use throughout history. Consequently, modes could differ from culture to culture and they are shaped by different meaning potentials and semiotic resources. Thirdly, people orchestrate meaning through their selection and configuration of modes. The postulation of this premise draws attention to the technological improvements produced in recent decades with the integration of the internet and new forms of online communication and representation. Due to these improvements, a special interest has grown about how modes work, semiotically speaking, and how they are used in online discourse.

The interest in multimodality in recent times has arisen from the arrival and the rapid spread of technology. New technologies (multimedia and mobile technologies) have taken a more prominent position in our lives and created new ways of representing and communicating meaning. Since the development of the internet in the 1990s and other technological tools, a generation of “digital natives” (Prensky, 2001:1) has arisen. Digital natives are very much familiar with the use of laptops, smartphones, video cameras, digital music and video players, videogames and many other electronic gadgets. This acquaintance with technology, or digital literacy, seems to be innate among ‘natives’ and its acquisition has been compared to that of their mother tongue. In contrast, those who were born before this technological impact, known as “digital immigrants” (Prensky, 2001:1), have felt the pressure of having to adapt to this new technological situation. One of the main reasons for this necessity to adjust to technological improvements is due to the emergence of new forms of communicative discourses found in social media and social networks. These discourses (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and WhatsApp) are distinguished by their potentials in the multimodal landscape, due to the great variety of modes that are employed in their designs. Although it was believed that previous discourses, without technology, did not include more than one mode, there was a tendency of orchestrating written language and images (Bezemer & Kress, 2014b). In the 21st century, coined as the era of digitalization, people, especially youth, are more aware of the technological affordances

of different semiotic resources (e.g., moving images, still images, typography, sounds and colours). As a consequence, more and more multimodal texts are appearing, making an effort to facilitate comprehension. Due to this growth in the assembly of multimodal texts, new theoretical means are necessary to have a better understanding of how they operate in the process of meaning making (Ventola, Charles, & Kaltenbacher, 2004:1).

The various possibilities of combining communication modes in the 'new' media, like the computer and the Internet, have forced scholars to think about the particular characteristics of these modes and the way they semiotically function and combine in the modern discourse worlds.

As happened centuries before with written and spoken language, a framework, that explains how these texts are created and how they can be produced, is required. That is to say, there is a need for a kind of meta-language related to other modes apart from language, such as images (still or moving) and gestures, among other modes of representation, that will help in the designing and production of multimodal texts (Bezemer & Kress, 2014a).

III. MULTIMODAL DIGITAL LANGUAGE LEARNING RESOURCES: VODCASTS

The development of vodcasts (i.e., video recordings uploaded onto the net with RSS feeds), during the last number years has been possible due to the widespread use of the Internet around the world, the creation of broadband technologies which permit users to download large media files, the familiar use of multimedia personal computers, the opportunity of streaming and downloading as separate actions, and the ubiquity of new technological devices (Campbell, 2005). Moreover, the advances in software (e.g., Audacity and Odeo) to create vodcasts and podcatchers (e.g., podOmatic, Education Podcasts, iTunes) to upload and download them have contributed to their proliferation. Vodcasts are characterised by their use in different settings, for this reason, they have been categorised (Evans, 2008) as a form of mobile learning (m-learning), which allow students "learning across multiple contexts, through social and content interactions, using personal electronic devices" (Crompton, 2013:4). In language learning contexts, vodcasts may be considered quite beneficial for students. Some of these possible benefits are included in Table 1. On the internet, we can find vodcasts related to a wide range of themes such as politics, the news, radio, television, music, fashion and beauty,

literature, arts and entertainment, comedy, education, health, games and hobbies, and technology, among others. This diversity of topics allows language teachers and students to choose those vodcasts that are more suitable to their interests.

Table 1. Benefits of using language learning vodcasts

Benefits
Foster an active role of the learner.
Promote flexible learning, anytime and anywhere.
Foment participation and collaborative-peer activities.
Facilitate the introduction of different communicative modes.
Adjust to students' learning styles, difficulties and disabilities.
Offer a great variety of topics creating rewarding learning experiences.
Distribute authentic-content situations.
Support formal and informal learning.
Promote blended learning environments.

The application of multimodal digital learning resources, such as vodcasts in traditional language learning environments is becoming quite common not only because of technological advances, but also by the interest in facilitating language learning. This new form of educational situation is known as blended language learning (henceforth, BLL). BLL is defined by Stracke (2007: 57) as “a particular learning and teaching environment, that combines face-to-face (f2f) and computer assisted language learning (CALL)”. Thus, as represented in Figure 1, blended language learning embraces the use of traditional language lessons, in which there are teacher-students and students-students interactions, and the use of technology-mediated language learning activities to contribute in the process of language learning.

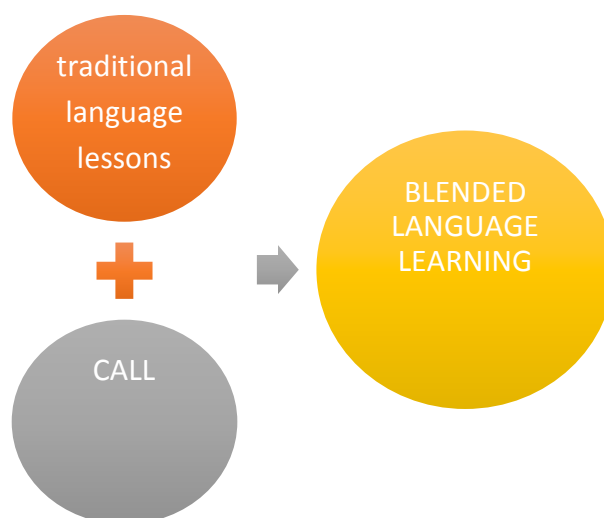


Figure 1. Components in blended language learning.

Traditional face-to-face language instruction is related to language learning situations in which teachers and students interact inside the classroom without the use of technologies. This kind of language instruction has been predominant during centuries and research has been carried out to identify significant issues with regard to these interactions (e.g., negotiation of meaning and the influence of interactive and non-interactive lectures), and how they could be influential on students' language learning (e.g., Allwright, 1984; Cazden, 1988; Chaudron, 1988; Morell, 2000, 2004; Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975).

CALL makes use of technological devices to facilitate the learning process without the need to have both, teacher and learners, together in the same setting. This form of instruction also takes into account a variety of modes to present information, even in a more powerful way than in traditional lessons. The orchestrations of modes produced by technological devices are more engaging for teachers and students, and consequently, they may influence the language learning process in some way.

When combining these two leading forms of multimodal representation (i.e., traditional lesson and technology-mediated instruction) the process of language learning takes a new perspective in which multimodal communication gains great importance. Recently, several scholars (e.g., Chinnery, 2006; Kukulska-Hulme, 2013) have proposed a new form of CALL in which mobile technologies are used for language learning purposes, i.e. mobile-assisted language learning (MALL). MALL is described as “mobile

technologies in language learning, especially in situations where device portability offers specific advantages” (Kukulka-Hulme, 2013: 3701). The field of MALL is not considered independent but related to CALL and mobile learning (i.e., learning everywhere and anytime using electronic devices), apart from second language acquisition (Stockwell & Hubbard, 2013). MALL differs from CALL in “its use of personal, portable devices that enable new ways of learning, emphasizing continuity or spontaneity of access and interaction across different contexts of use” (Kukulka-Hulme & Shield, 2008: 273). In other words, MALL promotes the use of mobile tools and mobile learning.

Little research has been done on vodcasts to better understand their efficacy on students' comprehension, and particularly, improving foreign language audio-visual comprehension. Basically, research on listening skills in language learning courses has been performed through the analysis of audio podcasts. Moreover, much attention has been given to students' attitudes and perceptions towards the use of audio podcasts rather than the effects podcasts could produce on learning outcomes. Results about the students' perceptions towards the use of podcasts have been quite positive (Kavaliauskiene & Anusiene, 2009; Chan, Chi, Chin, & Lin, 2011; O'Bryan & Hegelheimer, 2007). However, the experiences can differ among students and teachers according to their knowledge on the use of technologies (Kim & King, 2011). In different reports students have also shown their worries about the length and style of podcasts (Li, 2012; Chan, Lee, & McLoughlin, 2006). In the landscape of foreign language listening comprehension, Ashraf, Noroozi and Salami (2011) performed a study to check the effects of promoting listening skills in EFL situations through the use of audio podcasts. They proved that students in the experimental group (listening to audio podcasts) obtained better listening results than the ones in the control group (listening to English radio programs). Students stated their preferences towards audio podcasts for several reasons: the ease of access, the possibility of listening to them at any time and place, low- speed speech and the opportunity of listening to podcasts several times. Abdu and Abdul (2012) carried out an experimental study in Yemen with 60 students. It aimed to analyse the effects of audio podcasts and vodcasts as supplementary material in traditional English language listening courses. Through listening tests and the compilation of students' attitudes, they produce some evidence

supporting the use of podcasts and vodcasts compared to traditional listening courses. Abdous, Camarena, and Facer (2009), in their study comparing integrated and supplementary podcasts in foreign language courses, reaching the conclusion that students who used audio and video podcasts had positive perceptions towards them. Furthermore, students found podcasts quite useful in reference to their use as learning tools to improve their language skills (listening, speaking and vocabulary). Campos (2012) focused his research on measuring the effectiveness of listening to vodcasts to improve listening skills in foreign language learning. The results obtained through his experimental study concluded that vodcasts were a great pedagogical resource, especially due to the fact that, when 71.8% of the subjects stated real improvement on speaking and listening skills; 81% of the subjects believed they could learn pronunciation better, and 93.7% of the subjects manifested the effectiveness as an English learning tool according to the participants.

IV. EFL AUDIO-VISUAL COMPREHENSION

Up until the 1990s not much attention was given to the instruction and assessment of foreign language listening (Rost, 2002). However, in the last 25 years, research related to the Cinderella skill (as named by Mendelsohn, 1994), as listening was considered, has increased and evolved into new approaches. Although listening is defined as the action of “processing information which listeners get from visual and auditory clues in order to define what is going on and what the speakers are trying to express” (Rubin, 1995:151), studies on this language skill and its strategies have been mainly focused on auditory input. Little attention has been given to describe the influence of non-verbal cues in the construction of meaning and comprehension using audio-visual resources. Due to technological advances and the proliferation of audio-visual materials in language learning contexts, new research directions have arisen to describe the different effects of auditory, audio-visual or multimedia inputs on students’ comprehension. When referring to the process of audio-visual comprehension, it is not only necessary to describe the information processing model (Anderson, 2009) and its phases (i.e., perception, parsing and utilization), but also the language learning strategies and listening strategies (i.e., metacognitive, cognitive and socio-affective strategies) that are recommended by researchers of the field (Bacon, 1992; Goh, 2002; Goh & Taib, 2006;

Lynch, 2009; Mendelsohn, 1994; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Rubin, 1994; Vandergrift, 1997, 2003; Vandergrift et al., 2006).

As mentioned previously, audio visual resources, such as vodcasts, are associated to the concept of multimedia, which refers to the combination of multiple forms of media (i.e., text, sounds, images, graphics and animations) in a digital system. Therefore, the use of vodcasts, as multimodal and multimedia tools, and students' audio-visual comprehension might be associated with the Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning (CTML) by Mayer (2005, 2009). This theory is based on the dual-channel assumption, taken from Clark and Paivio's (1991) dual-coding theory, which emphasises that "the human information-processing system contains an auditory/verbal channel and a visual/pictorial channel" (Mayer, 2005: 33). Thus, one of the main reasons leading towards CTML is its concern with auditory and visual modalities for comprehension and learning. That is to say, comprehension increases when information is perceived from different channels. Consequently, audio-only materials may not be as effective as multimodal material.

The use of visuals to enhance foreign language comprehension has acquired a special role during the last decade. However, little research has been carried out to investigate the effects of orchestrating visual and aural inputs to understand foreign language. Some scholars (e.g., Sueyoshi & Hardison, 2005; Ramírez & Alonso, 2007; Wagner, 2010) lean towards the positive effects of video resources since they display relevant elements (i.e., non-linguistic knowledge) necessary to facilitate comprehension. Other studies (e.g., Coniam, 2001; Suvorov, 2009), which compared audio and visual modes in listening tests were inconclusive. Among the studies that have determined that visuals help students to better perform listening tests, Ramírez and Alonso (2007) prepared a quasi-experimental research study to check the effects of digital stories (in English) on six-year-old Spanish students and claimed positive results from the experimental (watching digital stories) over the control group. Digital stories allowed children to comprehend linguistic structures and vocabulary. Moreover, students were able to give some feedback despite their lower proficiency level of English. Another idea emphasized by Ramírez and Alonso is the level of attention students had while watching digital stories. They concluded in favour of using internet-based technologies with songs, games, and stories, since they may contribute in the process of

comprehension. Wagner (2010), compared two groups of students on an ESL listening test. The control group took the listening test with audio input while the experimental group carried out the same listening test through video input. The results demonstrated that non-verbal information from the video positively influenced students' performance. Sueyoshi and Hardison (2005) focused their attention on the role of speakers' faces and gestures from videotexts and how they contributed to second language learners' listening comprehension. Forty-two low-intermediate and advanced learners of English, were distributed according to three different stimulus: audio-visual including gestures and face expressions, audio-visual with no gestures, and audio-only. From the comprehension tasks, Sueyoski and Hardison determined that students from both levels of English performed better when visual cues were shown. However, higher-level students obtained better results in the audio-visual condition including face, and lower-level students when the input was audio-visual including gestures and face. Data from questionnaires reported students' positive attitudes toward visual cues, especially in face-to-face interactions.

As we have reviewed in the previous sections, research on podcasts and language learning has mostly been concerned with audio podcasts and students' attitudes, but scarce research has focused on connecting multimodality, vodcasts and audio-visual comprehension. For this reason, based on the multimodal approach of meaning making (Jewitt, 2009; Kress & Leeuwen, 2001) and taking into account the importance of dual-channels in the CTML (Mayer, 2005, 2009), this study pays attention to EFL students' perceptions towards vodcasts in comparison to audio listening activities

V. METHODOLOGY

This small-scale study attempts to answer the following research questions, "What are the students' attitudes towards the use of audio-visual (e.g., vodcasts) compared to traditional audio (e.g., audio tracks) comprehension activities in language learning contexts?" and "Do students believe that multimodal digital tools (e.g., vodcasts) could help them to improve their level of English?" Taking into consideration these research questions, we have designed the following study which attempts to begin to fill the gap of multimodal digital tools (e.g., vodcasts) and audio-visual comprehension.

V. 1. The participants

The participants of this study were 40 Spanish students, 15 males and 25 females, aged between 14 and 19, from a private language school in Alicante. They were enrolled in an Upper-intermediate or B2 level course, according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). These students had been learning English as a foreign language for approximately 8 to 10 years, and they had passed the Intermediate level or B1 level in this language school. Students had been accustomed to using audio tracks for listening comprehension activities, and to following the same ritualised procedure. First, they would read the questions, then, they would listen twice to the recording, and finally, they would answer the questions while listening. Once the students had completed the exercise, their teacher would give feedback on the answers, referring to unknown vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, pronunciation, etc. Although their textbooks included audio-visual resources (e.g., video extract with authentic real-world interviews, MultiROMs, iPack, online resources), the participants of this study were accustomed to carrying out audio comprehension activities without visuals. The main reason for not implementing audio-visual resources on a regular basis was due to a lack of technological infrastructure at the school.

V.2. The vodcasts

The two vodcasts employed in the study are called *English is GREAT, part 1* and *Camden Fashion*. They are taken from iTunesU and they are free downloads. *English is GREAT* (part 1) belongs to the series of vodcasts *Britain is GREAT*. The first vodcast has a duration of 5 minutes and 18 seconds and explains how the English language has evolved over the years. Richard, the presenter, goes to the British library in London to interview Roger Walshe, the Head of Learning. The vodcast informs viewers of the items in the library, the impact of the Industrial Revolution, the influence of the Internet on English, and the versatility of the language. The second vodcast, *Camden Fashion*, is part of the series of vodcasts *Word on the Street* has a duration of 4 minutes and 28 seconds. One of its notable characteristics is the presence of written prompts on the screen. In *Camden Fashion*, Carmen, the presenter, goes to Camden market to explain the variety of fashion styles that can be found there. First, she talks about the history of the market and the importance it has had for punk fashion. She also describes the main

characteristics attributed to punks over time. Other fashion styles, such as British fashion and Cyber-Goth are also mentioned throughout the podcast. In addition, Angela, from the *Grazia daily*, gives details about British fashion and the London Fashion Week. Finally, Carmen interviews Jack, who defines Cyber-Goth style.

The reason for choosing podcasts from the British Council was two-fold: first, because of the notable reputation of this organization in language education. Second, because of the connection of the podcasts to the specific syllabus of the participants of the study. Moreover, they fulfil some of the characteristics (i.e., exposure to the language, authenticity and length) established by Rosell-Aguilar (2007) to bear in mind when choosing podcasts for language learning purposes. And finally, both podcasts contained a variety of semiotic modes of communication (i.e., still images, gestures, written language, spoken language and music) which helped in the construction of meaning making.

V. 3. The questionnaire

After the viewing of these two podcasts, which were used as add-on activities, as described by Rosell-Aguilar (2007: 476) and Hew (2009: 337), students filled in a questionnaire (see appendix A) about their attitudes towards listening to audio tracks and watching podcasts. In the questionnaire, students provided information about their level of English, age, sex, nationality, and the years studying English. This information was relevant to collect data related the characteristics of each participant. Then, they answered 6 likert-scale questions (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree), related to audio listening activities and podcasts. These statements were focused on aspects such as sound quality, length, speed, entertainment, understanding and anxiety. The selection of these parameters are grounded on some complaints that students manifested throughout the course while doing audio listening activities. Finally, they answered two open questions related to preference and language improvement, *Do you prefer doing activities with video podcasts or the usual listening activities? Why?* and *Do you think that the use of video podcasts could help you to improve your level of English? Why?*

VI. RESULTS

On the first question, which asked students whether they thought the sound quality of

the vodcasts was better than usual, 92.5 % either agreed or strongly agreed. Responses to question two on the length of the vodcasts, showed that more than two thirds of students (72.5%) did not believe they were too long. On the third question, which asked if they considered that the speakers in the vodcasts talked slower than those in the normal audio exercises, many students answered in a neutral way (23.5%) or disagreed (27.5%). Question 4 asked students if they thought that vodcasts were more enjoyable and entertaining than the audio listening activities from the textbook, to which more than half agreed or strongly agreed (82.5%). On the fifth question, which asked if they deemed vodcasts more difficult to understand than the activities in class, the vast majority disagreed (45%) or strongly disagreed (27.5%). Finally, question 6, confirmed that students' anxiety was reduced with the vodcasts since 47.5% agreed or strongly agreed and 42.5% showed a neutral attitude. All these results are represented in the following graphs (Figures 2- 7).

1. I found vodcasts' sound quality better than in the usual audio activities.

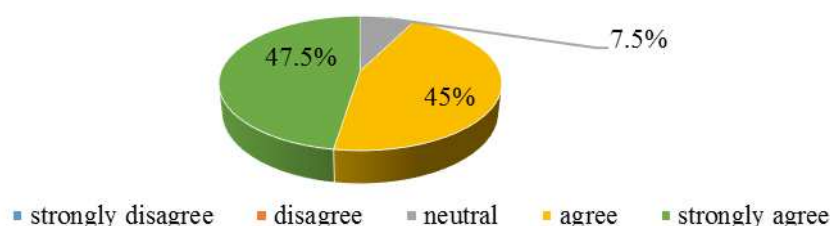
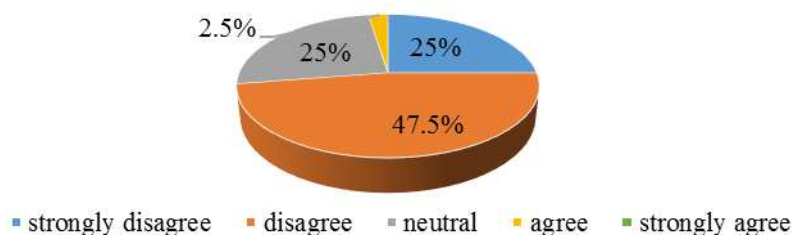


Figure 2. Statement 1: comparing sound quality between vodcasts and audio activities.

2. I found vodcasts too



long

Figure 3. Questionnaire statement 2: students' attitude towards vodcasts length.

3. I found the speakers in the vodcasts talked slower than the ones we listen to in normal audio exercises.

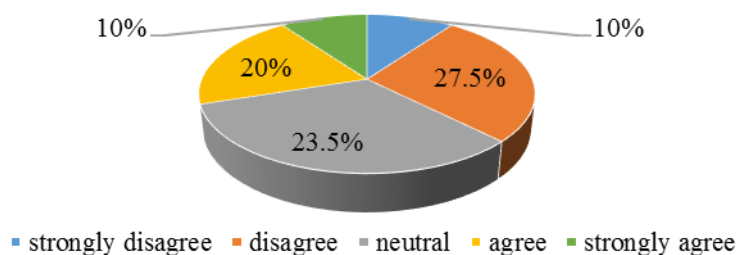


Figure 4. Questionnaire statement 3: students' attitudes towards speakers' speed in audio exercises and vodcasts.

4. I found vodcasts more enjoyable and entertaining than the listening activities from the textbook.

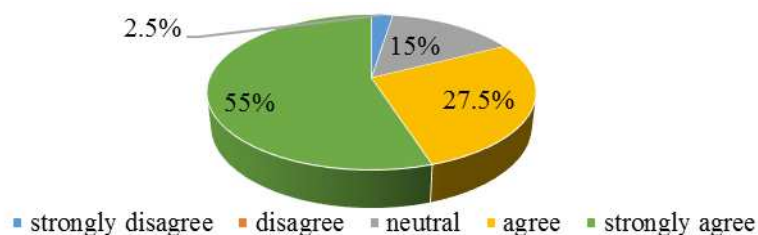


Figure 5. Questionnaire statement 4: students' attitudes towards enjoyment comparing vodcasts and audio listening activities.

5. I found vodcasts more difficult to understand than the activities in class.

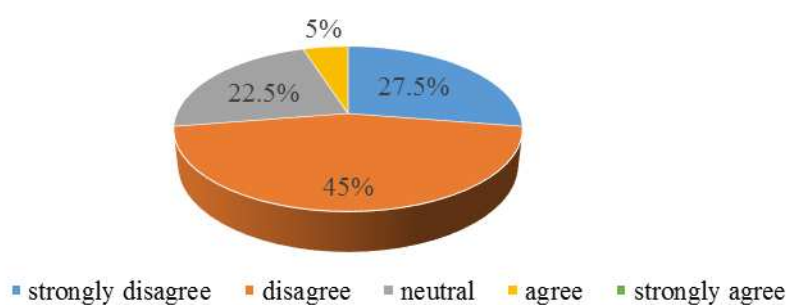


Figure 6. Questionnaire statement 5: students' attitudes towards the difficulty of understanding vodcasts.

6. I felt less anxious watching vodcasts and answering the exercises than in the usual listening activities.

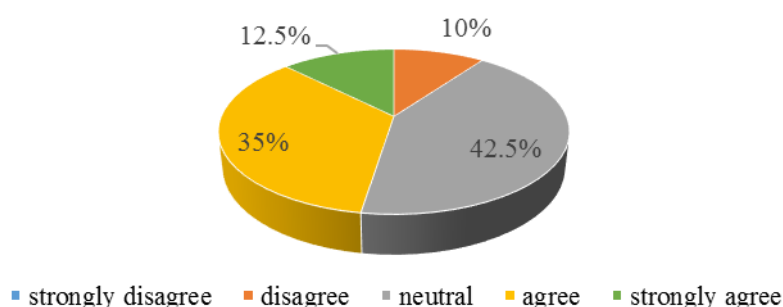


Figure 7. Questionnaire statement 6: students' attitudes towards the anxiety produced by vodcasts and audio listening activities.

At the end of the questionnaire there were two open questions related to preferences and opinions. These questions were included to have a more qualitative point of view since the previous statements just showed information about the students' opinions without making reference to any reason for those ways of thinking. To the question, *Do you prefer doing activities with video podcasts or the usual listening activities?* 90% of students seemed to show more positive attitudes towards the use of vodcasts as illustrated on Table 2.

Table 2. Reasons supporting the use of vodcasts

Reasons supporting the use of vodcasts

They are more enjoyable/ interesting/ more fun/ exciting.

They are easier /clearer to understand (because you see the people while talking).

I feel more active when I see the video.

I pay more attention/ I am more concentrated.

I can see the people who are talking.

They make you feel good and not nervous.

They are more useful to understand the situation easily.

The images and movements help you to understand.

The context helps to know what they are talking about.

Speakers speak more slowly.

To the question, *Do you think that the use of video podcasts could help you to improve your level of English?* 97.5% of students had a positive attitude towards the use of vodcasts to improve their level of English. The most significant reasons to reinforce their answers are represented in Table 3.

Table 3. Reasons supporting the improvement of language learning using vodcasts

Reasons supporting language improvement using vodcasts

- | | |
|---|---|
| - You understand them better. | - They are not as formal as textbooks. |
| - I focus more on the context. | - I use my eyes and my ears and not only my ears to understand. |
| - They help me to learn vocabulary and expressions. | - They help me to keep concentrated because they are not as boring as audios, so I can understand more. |
| - They are less boring. | - In the audios in class, the speakers speak so fast that I cannot understand anything. |
| - When you watch videos you learn English better. | - You learn pronunciation. |
| - You learn more when you see pictures or a film. | - The sound quality is better. |
| - You can interpret better when you see the person talking. | - I can improve listening and speaking skills. |
| - As I enjoy watching the video, I learn | - They are quite natural. |
-

better.

VII. CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

This study focused on analysing EFL students' attitudes towards the use of multimodal digital tools (e.g., vodcasts) in comparison with traditional listening tools (e.g., audio tracks). The idea of gathering together students' point of views about new forms of teaching may be considered essential to improve their learning life. In order to determine the students' opinions, they completed a questionnaire based on a range of parameters mentioned previously: sound quality, length, speed, enjoyment, difficulty, anxiety, preference and language improvements. In general terms, and answering our first research question, "What are the students' attitudes towards the use of audio-visual (e.g., vodcasts) compared to traditional audio (e.g., audio tracks) comprehension activities in language learning?", we could say that students preferred audio-visual comprehension activities.

From the questionnaires, we have found that students seem to have a positive attitude towards the use of vodcasts (Abdous et al., 2009; Abdu & Abdul, 2012). Results from the first question (sound quality) showed that students preferred vodcasts in terms of sound. This outcome may have been influenced by the novelty of new technologies and the devices used to record and watch vodcasts. We must take into account that these language learners were used to doing listening activities (only audio) with a CD player. This technological aspect may have influenced the students' attitudes since the sound quality produced by some radio speakers is not comparable to other kinds of speakers. The results from the second question (i.e., length) were quite significant. Although the audio tracks that these upper-intermediate students were used to listening to were shorter in time (2-3 minutes), the vast majority of students did not have the sense of being watching the vodcasts for a long time, despite they lasted more (4-5 minutes) than the normal audio listening activities. This fact might be connected to the idea of amusement, that is to say, when people are watching or doing something that they really like, they lose all sense of time. Furthermore, the orchestration of different semiotic resources (e.g., spoken and written language, music, kinesics and images) could change students' time perception since they are not just focused on a piece of paper trying to

understand every spoken single word. The third question, devoted to speed, results were quite diverse. As a consequence, we cannot confirm that speed is a prominent parameter to be considered for students in the preference between vodcasts and audio tracks. It is important to bear in mind that B2 students (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, CEFR) are exposed to foreign language materials according to their level, and consequently in upper-intermediate, speakers' speech speed should be the same not only in audio tracks, but also in audio-visual materials. Question 4 was included to determine if students enjoyed watching vodcasts in comparison to listening to audio tracks. 82.5% of students reported that they found vodcasts more enjoyable and entertaining. This could be due to the innovative technological situation in which language learners were involved. Since the students selected for the study are digital natives (Prensky, 2001), they might enjoy more language learning using technological devices (e.g., whiteboards and laptops) rather than printed materials (e.g., books). Furthermore, as was mentioned before, the use of different semiotic resources or multimodal tools, might also contribute to the students' preferences. Currently, the use of visuals, kinesics and musical elements, among others, is deeply-rooted in the era of digitalization and language teachers do not have to forget that students are used to including these resources as part of their construction of meaning-making (Jewitt, 2013). The development of meaning-making is also linked to understanding and comprehension. For this reason, the fifth question was focused on the students' opinions about the difficulty of understanding vodcasts and audio tracks. The results from students exposed that vodcasts were considered easier to understand than audio tracks. These results could be comparable to those from the studies by Sueyoski and Hardison (2005) and Wagner (2010), which showed a notable preference for video materials. We have to consider that vodcasts are multimodal audio-visual materials that combine a range of modes to help in the process of meaning-making. Thus, the combination of verbal and non-verbal modes might be useful to enhance foreign language comprehension. The sixth question, related to anxiety, was included to measure if students felt anxious trying to understand the messages represented in the vodcasts. According to the percentages, more than half of students felt less anxious watching vodcasts and answering the exercises than in usual activities. The level of anxiety could have been reduced due to the pre-reading of the questions from the exercises. In that

way, they were able to gain previous knowledge about what the vodcasts were about. As the orchestration of modes in audio-visual material help in the construction of meaning-making, the level of difficulty to understand the message might decrease, and consequently, the level of anxiety. The easier the message is to understand, the lower the level of anxiety is. For his reason, it is important that teachers pay more attention to the selection of adequate materials and teaching methods so students could feel more confident and less anxious.

Question 7 gave us important information to suggest the students' positive attitudes towards vodcasts, in terms of preference. Moreover, the answers given were quite considerable to create a link between multimodality and audio-visual comprehension. As reported in Table 2, students preferred watching vodcasts because they were easier to understand due to the context in which the speech was included (i.e., written words, kinesics, music, and images). As stated by some students "the images and movements help you to understand" and "the context helps to know what they are talking about". They expressed the importance of images and gestures to enhance audio-visual comprehension and to catch their attention in favourable learning conditions (i.e., less nervous). From these results, we could imply that the use of several modes influences students' comprehension in language learning contexts. And consequently, they reinforce the relevance of the CTML (Mayer, 2005, 2009) and the use of materials in which students employ dual-channels (verbal/auditory and visual/ pictorial) to better understand information.

Finally, question 8 was used to answer the second research question, "Do students believe that multimodal digital tools (e.g., vodcasts) could help them to improve their level of English?" The high percentage of positive answers confirmed the students' willingness to use multimodal digital tools to improve their foreign language learning. From the reasons given to support this idea, students put special emphasis, once again, on the importance of context, the use of visual and aural channels to understand messages, the natural dialogues, and the possibility to improve other skills (e.g., speaking) apart from listening.

In sum, this particular group of students had overwhelmingly positive attitudes towards the use of multimodal digital tools such as vodcasts. These findings suggest the

potential efficacy of vodcasts as tools that may increase both student enjoyment and engagement as well as aural/oral learning outcomes in the FL classroom, making use of a variety of communicative modes. Due to the importance to verbal and non-verbal elements to increase comprehension reported by students, further research should be done to measure how the orchestration of verbal and non-verbal modes could be influential on students' audio-visual comprehension. Multimodal discourse analyses (Kress & Leeuwen, 2001; Norris, 2004, O'Halloran & Smith, 2011) of multimodal digital materials may help in the identification of the modes orchestrated and the design of audio-visual comprehension activities. This fact could help foreign language teachers to better select the materials they use so as to enhance students' audio-visual comprehension. The development and employment of language teaching materials with suitable orchestrations of modes according to our students' needs, may favour students' language learning experience. Furthermore, other interesting lines of research could be followed, for instance, how vodcasts, as mobile-assisted language learning materials, can influence on language learning (Chinnery, 2006; Kukulska-Hulme, 2013). Nowadays, in the era of digitalization, the use of technologies inside and outside language classrooms should not be something exceptional. Therefore, the idea of blended language learning environments could be expanded in the interests of students. For this reason, it is important that language teachers are aware of the numerous advantages that multimodal digital tools can offer to students in their language learning process. The application of multimodal digital materials (e.g., vodcasts) in language learning contexts may facilitate what students consider a difficult task, learning a foreign language.

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APPENDIX A: Questionnaire

QUESTIONNAIRE (FORMULARIO)

PART (PARTE) 1

English Level (Nivel de inglés): _____ Age (Edad): _____

Sex (Sexo): female(mujer) male (hombre) Nationality(Nacionalidad): _____

- Years studying English (Años estudiando inglés): _____

PART (PARTE) 2

-Tick the correct number according to your opinion (Pon un tic en el número correcto según tu opinión).

- 1 – strongly disagree (totalmente en desacuerdo)
- 2 – disagree (en desacuerdo)
- 3 – neutral (neutral)
- 4 – agree (de acuerdo)
- 5 – strongly agree (totalmente de acuerdo)

	1	2	3	4	5
1. I found the video podcasts' sound quality better than in the usual audio activities (La calidad de sonido del los "videos podcasts" me pareció mejor que la de las actividades habituales de audio).					
2. I found the video podcasts too long (Los "video podcasts" me parecieron demasiado largos).					
3. I found the speakers in the video podcasts talked slower than the ones we listen to in normal audio exercises (Me pareció que los hablantes de los "video podcasts" hablaban más lento que aquellos que escuchamos en los ejercicios de audio).					
4. I found the video podcasts more enjoyable and entertaining than the listenings from the textbook (Los "video podcasts" me parecieron más divertidos y entretenidos que los audios del libro de texto).					
5. I found the video podcasts more difficult to understand than the					

listenings in class (Los “video podcasts” me parecieron más difíciles de entender que los audios de clase).					
6. I felt less anxious watching the video podcasts and answering the exercises than in the usual listening activities (Me sentí menos nervioso viendo los “videos podcasts” y contestando a los ejercicios que con las actividades habituales de audio).					

7. Do you prefer doing activities with video podcasts or the usual listening activities?

Why?(¿Prefieres hacer actividades con “video podcasts” o las actividades frecuentes de audio?, ¿ Por qué?).

8. Do you think that the use of video podcasts could help you to improve your level of English?

Why? (¿Crees que el uso de “video podcasts” puede ayudarte a mejorar tu nivel de inglés?).

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BOOK REVIEW

A Multimodal Analysis of Picture Books for Children: A Systemic Functional Approach

Arsenio Jesús Moya Guijarro

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This book is a study of nine picture books for children ranging in age from 0 to 9 years old. The conceptual framework follows Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar (2004) (henceforth, SFG) and Kress and van Leeuwen's Visual Social Semiotics (2006) (henceforth, VSS). The main objective is to "identify the verbal and visual strategies used by writers and illustrators... to convey a representation of reality, to create interaction with child-readers and to form coherent wholes of communication" (257). The author is also interested in determining the correlation between the target age of the children and the choices made by the writers/illustrators as evidenced by the sample of books. It is hoped that the results of this study can lead to expanded information on the covers to children's books and on "web pages, public brochures or literary reviews that state the age range for which a specific tale has been written" (4). At the same time, the study is intended to serve as a framework for assisting teachers and other professionals involved in selecting books that are "appropriate for their young readers" (259).

According to the author, this study differs from previous research in that it considers the connection between the linguistic and the visual aspects of the picture books, while other writers either ignore the combination of the two or focus their work from a literary or cognitive perspective. This is the case, for example, of Feaver (1977) or Moebius (1986) (1). In addition, authors who have examined children's picture books from a multimodal standpoint, such as Lewis (2006), Martin (2008) or Painter et al. (2013), have not considered the age of the target readers (1-2).

Three books for each of Piaget's (1981, 1984) three cognitive developmental stages (0-2, 3-6 and 7-9 years old) are examined. The nine of them are all originals, as opposed to adaptations, and they have won literary awards for their quality. In addition, they have "defied time" and, in this sense, are classics that have been popular for at least one generation after the author (13). Examples are *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* and *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*. A thorough introduction to the study is presented in Chapter 1. It includes a clear reasoning for the present study, the selection of books and the sample size. Chapter 2 introduces Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar and Visual Social Semiotics as the framework for this research along with the author's rationale for using them as opposed to other models. The chapter takes the non-specialist's hand to lead him or her step-by-step through an overview of the concept of *text*, the differences between formal and functional grammar, and the different types of functional grammar. At this point, the characteristics of SFG that make it appropriate as the theoretical framework for the study are explained. Specifically, the author indicates that SFG considers language beyond the sentence level in its context (28); it views language as a sociocultural phenomenon (29); it describes the three metafunctions for which language is used: ideational, interpersonal and textual meaning (32-3); and it operates as a set of systems (36). The three types of meaning, along with their parallels in VSS, form the basis for the study presented in this book. In a similar fashion to the introduction to SFG, the author provides an overview to Visual Social Semiotics by comparing it to other types of multimodal analysis before stating his reasons for opting for VSS, which echo the reasons for using SFG. In particular, the representational, interactive and compositional metafunctions of VSS correspond to the three metafunctions in SFG (47), the VSS model considers texts in their social context (48) and it is made up of a number systems (48). Finally, a discussion of the concept of *mode* is provided.

Chapters 3, 4 and 5 provide details on the representational, interpersonal/interactive and textual/compositional metafunctions respectively. The applicable theoretical notions from SFG and VSS are explained for each of them along with a discussion of the difficulties in applying the models to the books examined here. Examples of these problematic areas include the assignment of specific verbs to different categories (75-77), or the handling of ellipsis of subjects or finite verbs when determining mood structure (98-99) according to SFG. In terms of VSS, difficulties can involve the need

for additional categories for labelling images in order to enable more precision in the descriptions (78-79), or in the determination of the degree of modality for the illustrations in the picture books (99-101). Of particular interest in each chapter is a section on the combination of the two models together to obtain a more complete analysis of texts. Chapter 3 goes into more detail in this respect and reviews work carried out in this area to date along with describing different possible degrees of agreement between verbal and visual elements at the representational level in a text, based on such authors as Barthes (1977), Nikolajeva and Scott (2000), and Unsworth (2006). One contribution of this study is the author's decision to include circumstantial elements when comparing the combined effect of the verbal and visual aspects of the books because a provisional examination of the books for the different ages revealed some differences in this respect (70). Each chapter then provides an analysis of one of the books as an illustration of the concepts discussed up to that point.

Chapters 6, 7 and 8 each discuss the findings of the corpus of 9 books as a whole in terms of each of the three metafunctions described in the previous chapters. As in Chapters 3, 4 and 5, the verbal aspects of the stories are discussed first, followed by their visual aspects, and then both are considered together. The main question addressed in the third of these sections is whether the visual information is merely a reflection of the verbal information or if it is a necessary part in communication of the plot (143). A fourth and final section in each chapter examines the relationship between the target age of the children for which the books were written and the verbal and visual choices made by the authors and illustrators. While the third section of the chapters comments to some extent on age while discussing the connection between verbal and visual information, the fourth section goes into a more detailed analysis that includes statistical measures for each of the different aspects of the metafunction in question. Readers with little or no background in statistics will have no difficulty following the discussion, as the explanations are clear. While these three chapters are, in fact, more technical in nature, the author's highly readable presentation of the results will enable non-specialist readers to benefit from the descriptions.

The ninth chapter serves as a conclusion to the entire study. It provides a summary of the verbal and visual features used to represent the three metafunctions, as observed in the sample of books and according to each of the three age ranges. The discussion

provides a valuable contribution to the study of picture books for children thanks to its new findings. While some of the results vary depending on the target age, other results were found to be common to all three age groups, suggesting that they are characteristics of the genre of picture books. One of these is the relationship of complementarity between the verbal and visual modes of communication, particularly in terms of the representational metafunction of language (278). In other words, the images provided in the books provide essential information for the storylines instead of paralleling the plot, even in the case of the books for the youngest age group, contrary to the author's expectations (169). The final pages of this chapter include some suggestions for writers and illustrators to assist them in making picture books more attractive to their young readers by taking advantage of the potential that exists in combining the verbal and visual modes in their work effectively. While the study is not aimed at them, researchers and educators who incorporate this study into their plan for evaluating books can convey these ideas indirectly to creators of future books.

A strength of this book is its thorough yet clear reasoning and explanations. The reader of the study is guided from start to finish so that both the theoretical framework and the actual technical analysis itself can be comprehensible to those involved in the field of education as opposed to linguistics or communications. This, together with the practical objectives and new findings of the study, mean that Moya Guijarro's book is fundamental reading for those involved in the selection of picture books for children.

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