Colección **Actualizaciones Académicas**

Actualización Académica en la enseñanza del inglés en la escuela primaria

Módulo 2: **Prácticas de comprensión en la enseñanza del inglés en el Nivel Primario**

Índice

Clase 1: Quién aprende y qué aprende

Presentación

Bienvenidos/as al módulo 2. En este módulo vamos a abordar las prácticas de comprensión acerca de la enseñanza del inglés en el Nivel Primario. En todos los casos, les vamos a pedir que reflexionen a partir de sus propias prácticas docentes y del material que utilizan en las aulas para tomar decisiones en cuanto a cómo abordar esta enseñanza a la luz del marco teórico presentado en el módulo.. Esta clase, como todas las clases, tiene una actividad de reflexión cuyas respuestas discutiremos en los foros. También se presenta una actividad de cierre que deberán subir a la plataforma y que tendrá una devolución de los/as tutores/as. Los/as invitamos a participar activamente para aprovechar este módulo al máximo.

Objetivos:

- Comprender el paradigma del lenguaje como práctica social y su implicancia en la enseñanza del inglés en el Nivel Primario
- Explorar las características del sujeto de educación del Nivel Primario

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Antes de comenzar en la clase propiamente dicha, les proponemos que se presenten en el siguiente foro.

Foro de presentación

Les pedimos que se presenten diciendo su nombre, y cuenten en qué grados enseñan en el Nivel Primario. No se olviden de indicar su localidad y provincia. El foro estará abierto por 2 semanas (hasta la publicación de la clase 2)

¿Qué es una lengua?

La historia de la enseñanza del inglés nos muestra diferentes enfoques a través de los años. Hasta los años 70, se consideraba que una lengua estaba compuesta por reglas gramaticales y vocabulario. Saber una lengua, por lo tanto, significaba conocer las reglas y rellenar espacios, por así decirlo, con palabras. Quienes aprendieron de este modo, aprendieron *acerca* del inglés, y no el inglés. Hacia fines de los años 70, en 1978 para ser precisos, Henry Widdowson revolucionó la enseñanza del inglés con su teoría sobre qué es saber una lengua. Nos mostró cómo una interacción oral puede ser gramaticalmente correcta pero incorrecta desde el punto de vista de la comunicación. Así, si una persona pregunta a otra "¿Me puede decir la hora?" y la respuesta es "Sí, puedo" pero la persona continúa caminando, vemos que contestó gramaticalmente pero no comprendió el sentido real de la pregunta que, de hecho, no es sobre habilidad o posibilidad sino un pedido.

La teoría comunicativa de Widdowson significó un cambio radical en la enseñanza. El lenguaje ya no era considerado como reglas gramaticales y vocabulario sino como funciones. Se le dio muchísima preponderancia a la comprensión auditiva y a la producción oral. Si bien se hablaba de balance entre las cuatro macrohabilidades del lenguaje –comprensión auditiva, comprensión lectora, escritura y habla– nunca se definió qué se entendía por balance. Así como en el paradigma anterior se consideraba que había que presentar oraciones con la estructura a enseñar y listas de vocabulario, en este enfoque comunicativo las instancias de presentación eran a partir de un diálogo.

Dentro del paradigma del enfoque comunicativo se consideró que el inglés, como toda lengua, era una herramienta, un instrumento. Les proponemos que piensen en una herramienta. ¿En qué pensaron? ¿En un martillo, un destornillador, tijeras? Piensen ahora en esta pregunta, aunque parezca extraña: ¿una herramienta es algo interno nuestro o algo externo? Seguramente pensaron que es algo externo. Algo que uno utiliza cuando se necesita y luego se deja de lado. Pensemos ahora en una lengua, ¿es algo externo, algo que se usa y se deja de lado? Definitivamente no. Toda lengua que aprendemos nos modifica de alguna manera. Vemos que hay diferentes maneras de ver el mundo, diferentes cosmovisiones. Comprendemos que ningún lenguaje es unívoco y que siempre hay interpretaciones, que la relación no es uno a uno entre dos lenguas, aun cuando sean cercanas. Entendemos que una palabra o frase puede tener traducción a la otra lengua, pero los diversos significados que pueden adjudicárseles no son siempre iguales en dos lenguas. A modo de ejemplo, si pensamos en información personal seguramente consideramos nombre y apellido, fecha de nacimiento, documento de identidad, nacionalidad, estado civil. Para muchos angloparlantes, el estado civil no forma parte de la información personal. En un pasaporte francés, se incluye altura y

color de ojos. En el pasaporte brasileño, se detallan los nombres de los padres. Vemos, entonces, que el concepto existe en varias lenguas, pero lo que cada hablante considera que es información personal difiere.

Reflexión 1:

Piensen en algunas clases cuando ustedes aprendieron inglés. ¿Pueden descubrir rastros de estos dos paradigmas? Describan una situación que recuerden y que evoque a cada uno de estos paradigmas.

Reflexión 2:

Tomen los ejemplos de preguntar la hora o la información personal y traten de encontrar qué tienen en común. Algunas ideas para orientar esta reflexión:

       La longitud

       El mensaje/el sentido

       El propósito/objetivo

       La significatividad

       El significado

Se considera actualmente que el lenguaje es una de las tantas prácticas sociales que aglutinan a los integrantes de la sociedad. Por lo tanto, estas prácticas son siempre situadas en un contexto en particular donde la construcción de sentidos cobra sentido. El uso del lenguaje es siempre significativo y los sentidos se terminan de construir en la interacción.

Los/as invitamos a ver este vídeo:

¿Qué hora es? Mexican Soap/Novela for Spanish Beginners

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lythMK1K_yE

A partir de lo que acaban de ver, los invitamos a reflexionar a partir de estas preguntas:

¿Cómo es que se comprende la situación? ¿Qué elementos ayudan a la comprensión?

Seguramente habrán pensado en lo siguiente:

- el contexto/la situación

- las expresiones faciales y corporales

- la entonación

Vemos, entonces, cómo el contexto es fundamental en la construcción de sentidos, y no solo, o no siempre, las palabras o frases en sí mismas.

¿Cuál es la **unidad**, por así decirlo, para presentar el lenguaje? Vimos que en los enfoques anteriormente descriptos las unidades eran oraciones para el primer paradigma y diálogos para el segundo. ¿Cómo se presenta el inglés si consideramos que es una práctica social? Pensemos cómo se usa cualquier lengua en una sociedad para comunicarse, tanto a nivel escrito como a nivel oral. Vemos carteles indicadores, afiches, información nutricional en envases de alimentos, resúmenes,

artículos, folletos, entre tantas otras opciones. En cuanto a la oralidad, a modo de ejemplo, podemos pensar en mensajes de audio, anuncios, publicidades, indicaciones… Este listado no es exhaustivo en absoluto.

¿Qué tienen en común? Todos son textos, géneros discursivos. Circulan en la sociedad. Se reconocen los formatos. Fíjense en este ejemplo. ¿Qué género discursivo es? ¿Tiene registro formal o informal? ¿Cuál puede ser el propósito? ¿Se sabe quién produce este texto y a quién está dirigido?
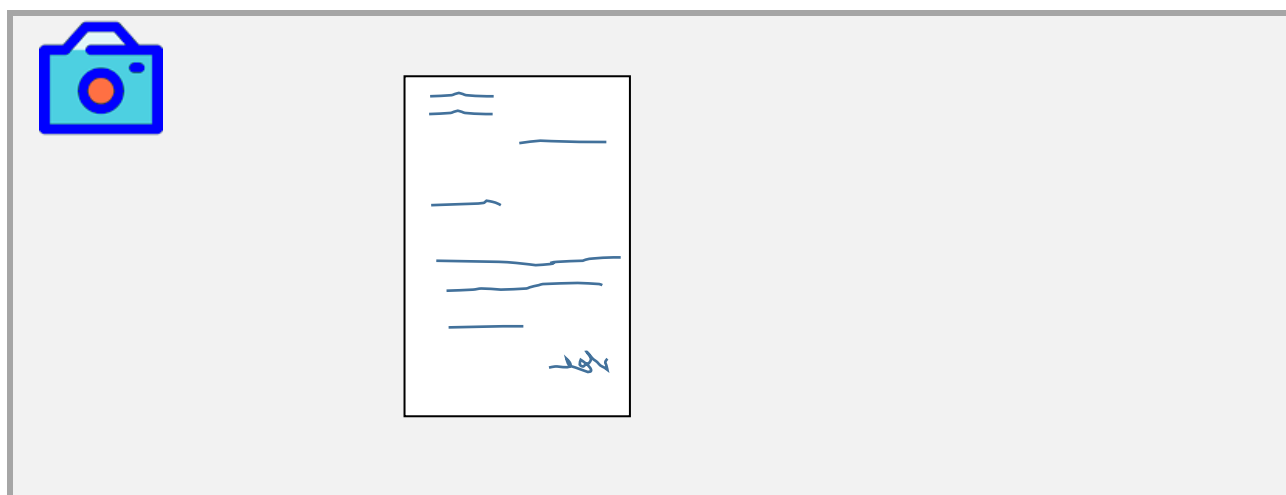
Seguramente las respuestas tienen mucho en común con estas:

Es una carta formal.

Puede tener diversos propósitos: informar, reclamar, hacer un pedido, entre otras opciones.

Al ser una carta se sabe quién la escribe y a quién está dirigida, incluso si comenzara con "A quien corresponda".

Se sabe qué tipo de información presentan los géneros discursivos y tipos textuales y cuál es su propósito. Tienen también un nombre específico que los define. La longitud no es una variable. Con respecto a la diferencia entre significado y significatividad, podemos explicarlo con un ejemplo. Si una persona dice "tengo ojos" se pueden comprender las palabras, es decir, el significado. Pero, ¿por qué alguien diría esto? No es una descripción física. Salvo que pensemos en un contexto donde vemos a alguien en una actitud sospechosa y por ende decimos "tengo ojos", esta oración no es significativa. En otras palabras, se puede comprender qué dice, pero no por qué lo dice.

Los/as invitamos a ver este vídeo en el que se presenta una síntesis de lo que significa el lenguaje como práctica social.

Language as a social practice

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SBW6tiplW48
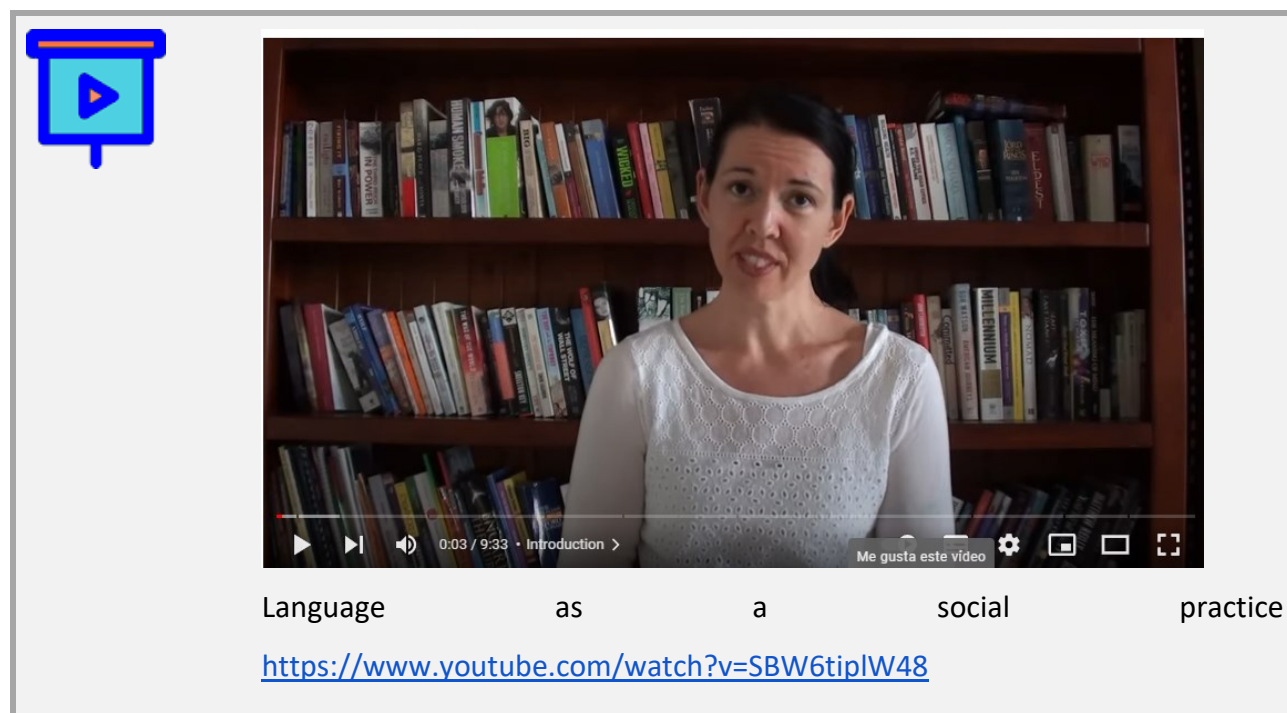
El/La estudiante del Nivel Primario

Cuando estamos frente al aula no solo es importante tener una perspectiva del lenguaje como práctica social sino además recordar que vamos a enseñar una lengua extranjera a un sujeto que tiene características propias. En el caso del nivel primario, estamos pensando en estudiantes que van desde los cinco a los doce años. Estas y estos estudiantes crecen y se desarrollan rápidamente y su aprendizaje está conectado a varios factores, tales como los físicos, sociales, emocionales, la madurez entre otros. Es importante trabajar de acuerdo con las características del sujeto y no tratar de imponer posturas adultas.

Kang Shin y Crandall (2016, p.25) mencionan las siguientes características de los sujetos del nivel primario:

1. Energetic and physically active.
2. Spontaneous and not afraid to speak out or participate.
3. Curious and receptive to new ideas.
4. Imaginative and enjoy make-believe.
5. Easily distracted and have short attention spans.
6. Egocentric and relate new ideas to themselves.
7. Social and are learning to relate to others.

Asimismo la autora Lynne Cameron (2011) agrega que los estudiantes de esta edad construyen el conocimiento de manera activa interactuando con los adultos e incorporando su propios saberes y conocimiento del mundo; necesitan de expertos que los acompañen a entender diferentes textos. La gramática de manera aislada y estructurada es algo incomprensible. Finalmente menciona que el aprendizaje de una lengua extranjera está unido a las experiencias que las y los estudiantes vivan con el lenguaje, es decir, a las oportunidades de aprendizaje que podamos crear en el aula de manera contextualizada y significativa.

Entonces, el marco teórico que nos posiciona para planificar y llevar adelante nuestras clases tiene que ver con la teoría comunicativa y social del lenguaje y con las características de las y los estudiantes. Esto nos servirá de guía para pensar nuestras prácticas y desarrollar y adaptar materiales acordes.

Pensemos ahora en muchos materiales que se usan en la enseñanza del inglés. Es llamativo ver la cantidad de oraciones y párrafos que se emplean para presentar el lenguaje. Cabe destacar que las oraciones sueltas y los párrafos no son textos de circulación social como sí son los géneros discursivos. Si bien los y las adolescentes y adultos/as de alguna manera se prestan al juego de aceptar que lo que se aprende en las clases de inglés no tiene mucho sentido o contacto con sus realidades y contextos, cuando se trabaja con niños y niñas la situación es muy diferente. Un/a estudiante del Nivel Primario no puede comprender por qué, por ejemplo, tiene que decir que su mamá tiene ojos verdes cuando son marrones.

Cierre de la clase

En esta clase abordamos aspectos fundamentales en la enseñanza del inglés en el nivel primario: el lenguaje como práctica social y el sujeto del nivel primario. Esta perspectiva del lenguaje nos hace repensar lo que seguramente hemos escuchado en aulas cuando aprendíamos inglés: "Olvidate del castellano". El lenguaje es parte de quiénes somos, no es algo ajeno. El lenguaje es una de las tantas prácticas sociales que tienen sentido en la comunidad en la que se usan. Esta perspectiva es fundamental para decidir no solamente cómo vamos a abordar la enseñanza a sujetos del Nivel Primario, sino también para (re)pensar qué enseñamos. Por ejemplo, hay materiales que abordan situaciones en un restaurante. Este contexto es totalmente ajeno a los sujetos de este nivel. Si bien es cierto que quizás vayan a comer a un restaurante, quienes están a cargo de los intercambios lingüísticos son los adultos. A modo de cierre, vemos en este ejemplo cómo se conjugan los dos temas centrales de esta clase: el sujeto del nivel primario y el lenguaje como práctica social. En las clases siguientes, abordaremos la enseñanza de las prácticas de comprensión.

Actividades

Actividad de cierre de clase: Actividad de reflexión

Los y las invitamos a que piensen en textos escritos y orales que circulan en la sociedad como, por ejemplo, cuentos, carteles, blogs, invitaciones, etc., que sean adecuados para trabajar en Primer Ciclo, en Segundo Ciclo o en ambos. No piensen en el contenido de cada texto ya que eso puede adecuarse y modificarse, sino en cuán cercanos son a las realidades y contextos de niños y niñas[M2] . Aquellos que quieran compartir sus ideas, pueden hacerlo en el Foro de Actividades de Reflexión.

Material de lectura optativa

Fairclough, N. (1992). *Discourse and Social Change*. Cambridge: Polity Press. pp.3-4. Disponible en: https://newlearningonline.com/literacies/chapter-8/fairclough-on-discourse

Fairclough, N. (1995). *Critical discourse analysis*. London: Longman. Disponible en: https://www.studysmarter.us/explanations/english/key-concepts-in-language-and-

linguistics/norman-fairclough/

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Cameron, L. (2011). *TEACHING LANGUAGES TO YOUNG LEARNERS* (1.ª ed.). Cambridge University Press.

Shin, J. & Crandall, J. (2016). *Teaching Young Learners English*. Heinle ELT.

Widdowson, H. G. (1978). *Teaching Language as Communication*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Créditos

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Lesson 2: Teaching listening

Introduction

In the previous lesson, we focussed on the characteristics of young learners and on language as a social practice. In this lesson, we are going to see how these topics have a direct bearing on listening. We will also deal with how we can offer instances of meaningful listening tasks to young learners in the primary school.

Objectives:
- Understand primary school children's listening processes and strategies when they learn a second language.
- Evaluate and modify teaching materials to work on listening.

Listening and the context

It is important to remember that language is always used in a specific context, not in **a** context meaning **any** context, and that participants interact and construct meanings together, even though there may be no linguistic performance on the part of the listeners. Of similar importance is the fact that listening requires understanding, otherwise it is an instance of hearing. Let's compare two examples.

Reflection 1:

Read these two situations. In which of the two is there interaction and construction of meaning?

Situation 1

A teacher shows a pencil and tells his students, "This is a pencil."

Situation 2

A teacher shows a pencil, a pen and an eraser. Using gestures, she shows her students they have to close their eyes. She puts the pencil in a box and hides the other two. Once

> the children open their eyes, she shakes the box and says, "This is a pencil." She invites children to nod or shake their head, or to show agreement or disagreement using gestures. 👍 👎 She opens the box, shows what's inside and says naturally, "Yes, this is a pencil."

Most probably, you have chosen the second situation. In the first one, most students will understand the concept of pencil. If we consider that language is a social practice which entails interaction, we can see there is none. In what contexts would this situation be meaningful? As we showed in Lesson 1, we understand what somebody is saying, but not why that person is saying it. We can see interaction in the second situation. There's a reason why the teacher is saying "This is a pencil" since she had put one of the elements in the box. Students are involved in the situation.

The second situation is an instance of a discourse event, whereas the first one is a sentence. It is necessary to remember that in society we interact by using texts, not sentences. Listening is developed by means of discursive events.

What is the process of listening?

We can read some definitions by specialists in teaching English to young learners. Shin and Crandall state that "the process of listening is active. The listener must interact with what is heard and interpret the message accurately in order to make sense of it" (2014, p. 110). Kirkgöz says that "it is the process of interpreting messages by using context and one's knowledge of language and the world" (2019, p. 171). Pinter asserts that "learners are not yet able to analyse and manipulate language in an abstract way. They are learning by understanding meaningful messages" (2017, p. 167). What is common to these definitions of listening is that there is interpretation on the part of the listeners, and that the messages have to be meaningful to the learners. The context, therefore, is of crucial importance.

Reflection 2:

Consider your learners' lives. What instances of listening do they take part in on a daily basis, at school, at home and in other contexts. How can we tell if they have understood?

Most probably, some of the examples you have thought about are in our selection, which is not exhaustive. Some listening situations:

- Greetings

- Instructions and directions

- Rules

- Invitations

- Requests

- Complaints

- Stories and anecdotes

- Problems to solve

- Explanations

- Excuses

How can we tell if they have understood? In all these situations, the listener responds. This response may be physical or verbal. Whenever we say something, we check if our interlocutor has understood. We focus on different signals, such as body language, gestures, actions carried out as a result of listening, verbal responses, to name but a few. The most important part of listening is to check if the listener has understood. We do not consider this is a situation to use language correctly or an instance of language production. We should replicate this when we teach listening.

How are these principles translated to teaching listening?

First and foremost, we should remember that listening has to be contextualised and meaningful. When we talk about contextualization, we mean it should refer to a context our students are familiar

with. Whenever we listen, we do so with a purpose and have expectations as to the content, based on our knowledge of the context and the world. That's why it is absolutely necessary to consider the contexts our learners are familiar with, and not to think about imaginary situations which may be totally alien to our students.

Listening involves constructing meanings. This means we have to help our students understand what we say. How can we do so? By using gestures, body language, making reference to what our students know. Learners are involved in a cognitive process in which they look for clues in the context and in the oral text, and this is how they construct meanings. If we translate, there is no need for learners to look for clues and make connections. Therefore, their learning is stopped.

To check understanding, we need to design some sort of response. The most frequent activities to check listening, which we may find in teaching materials, are those in which learners have to number, point, show, match, circle, do TPR (total physical response), among other options. The listening texts for these activities tend to be short since children need time to do the activity. In general, they are related with lexical areas or short communicative situations – e.g. greetings or classroom instructions. How can we go about listening when the texts are longer? As indicated before, we always have ideas and aid understanding. What we have to do in class is, precisely, help students make predictions based on clues in the context. This context may be represented with a picture that clearly shows the situation. If there is no image, we should introduce some clues so that students can make predictions related to the text as a whole.

You may have thought in a greeting situation – either saying hello or goodbye. Most probably, language is informal, both participants know each other and are relatives. This is a prediction. From this analysis, we can make a second prediction thinking that we may hear words such as *Hello* or *Goodbye*. In a classroom situation, once you have helped the children analyse the situation and make predictions, we listen to check if the predictions are right or if we need to modify them. When working with young children, it is common for them to think it is a mistake if their predictions were wrong. We need to help them realise that comprehending a prediction is wrong means you have understood the text, which is the important thing. This is not about winning or losing, getting it right or not. As children develop their listening skills, their predictions will be more accurate.

Listening and tasks

The first time students listen to a text, the task should be global. What do we mean by this? That students have to check something general with respect to the oral text as opposed to identifying specific information or extracting it. Most learners will be able to solve this first task, which is motivating to everybody. For the second time they listen to the same text, we should design another task. This time, it may be an instance of recognition or identification, which is less demanding than

extracting specific information. This task of extracting specific information can be assigned to the third time they listen. Once they have listened to the text three times, it is easier to identify details and extract information. Moreover, as learners have been presented with different tasks, they will not have this idea that they had to listen several times to solve the task because they could not understand. It is quite rare to find different tasks for the same oral text in commercial materials and materials online. Therefore, we need to design them.

Reflection 4:

A) Look at the picture.
Mum's getting a voice
message. What's the topic?

* Food
* Activities
* Sports
.
Listen and check

B) Now listen again and
circle the correct elements.

Transcript:

Hi, Mum. We're in the park. We're having a picnic. Frank and Bobby are eating now.

Brenda's reading with her friends and Firulais is playing with a ball. Please, come!

Let's analyse this activity considering what we have been discussing.

It is a voice message, which is a type of text of social use. Its length is OK for young learners. The first activity helps students make predictions related to the content of the text. It requires global listening. Students are given options, which provides the scaffolding they need. The second activity requires a more detailed listening and again, students are given options in the form of images.

Based on this analysis, we can conclude that this is a good listening activity for young learners.

ESL Game: Listen Carefully

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SejE7LdWDAQ&t=4s

After you have watched the video, analyse the activity proposed in it.

Is this a meaningful activity?

Can listening in this activity be meaningful for learners or is it just a language practice activity?

Even though the suggestion is that students should practise making sentences, the focus is on listening for meaning, not listening as language practice. Therefore, this activity can be meaningful to learners.

Listening and NAP Lenguas Extranjeras

Let's consider now the *Núcleos de Aprendizajes Prioritarios (NAP) para Lenguas Extranjeras*, https://www.educ.ar/recursos/132577/nap-lenguas-extranjeras-educacion-primaria-y-secundaria, and let's focus on the listening process for the first cycle of the primary school, listed below:

- La aproximación a la comprensión de que un texto oral puede abordarse aunque no se conozca el significado de todas las palabras que lo constituyen, y de que el sentido de un texto no depende exclusivamente de las palabras que lo conforman.
- La comprensión de consignas orales en lengua extranjera apoyándose en el lenguaje gestual u otros soportes.
- La escucha de diferentes textos orales expresados por el/la docente o provenientes de fuentes diversas (grabaciones de audio y video, entre otras). Esto supone:
  - el inicio en la identificación de la situación comunicativa, los interlocutores y el tema abordado, es decir, de elementos relacionados con el contexto de enunciación;
  - la adecuación del tipo de escucha –global o focalizada– a la tarea comunicativa a realizar, con la ayuda del/la docente.
- La formulación de anticipaciones e hipótesis sobre el sentido de los textos a partir de palabras o expresiones relacionadas con el tema, del tono de voz de quien habla, entre otras pistas temáticas, lingüístico-discursivas, paraverbales y no verbales.
- La escucha global de textos orales breves del universo infantil (ficcionales y no ficcionales como, por ejemplo, cuentos, relatos de la vida cotidiana, canciones, poesías, adivinanzas, trabalenguas), con el apoyo de material rico en imágenes y de propuestas lúdicas.
- La apreciación del ritmo y la musicalidad en los textos trabajados.
- El inicio en la reflexión sobre algunas características de la oralidad como, por ejemplo, las marcas de registro formal e informal en los saludos, la entonación en preguntas y exclamaciones, entre otras.

(p. 17)

We can see that the activity we have proposed is in keeping with many of the bulleted points and does not contradict any.

With respect to the second cycle, that is, for students that start learning English in the second cycle of primary school, we can see the same as before.

- La aproximación a la comprensión de que un texto oral puede abordarse aunque no se conozca el significado de todas las palabras que lo constituyen, y de que el sentido de un texto no depende exclusivamente de las palabras que lo conforman.
- La escucha de diferentes textos orales provenientes de fuentes diversas (el/la docente, otros hablantes de la lengua que se aprende, grabaciones, entre otras). Esto supone:
  - la identificación de elementos relevantes de la situación comunicativa, los interlocutores y el tema abordado, es decir, de elementos relacionados con el contexto de enunciación;
  - la adecuación del tipo de escucha –global o focalizada– al propósito comunicativo con la ayuda del/la docente.
- La formulación de anticipaciones e hipótesis sobre el sentido de los textos a partir de palabras o expresiones relacionadas con el tema, del tono de voz de quien habla, entre otras pistas temáticas, lingüístico-discursivas, paraverbales y no verbales.
- La comprensión y construcción del sentido del texto oral apelando a diferentes estrategias. En este ciclo, esto supone:
  - valerse de objetos y de otros soportes visuales para contextualizar la escucha;
  - confirmar o modificar las anticipaciones e hipótesis formuladas;
  - retomar conocimientos previos;
  - solicitar repetición, aclaración o reformulación.
- La escucha global o focalizada de descripciones y narraciones breves (textos ficcionales y no ficcionales como, por ejemplo, diálogos, cuentos, canciones, relatos, poesías, entre otros) y propuestas lúdicas.
- La apreciación del ritmo y la musicalidad en los textos trabajados.

> ● La reflexión sobre algunas características de la oralidad como, por ejemplo, el uso de expresiones convencionales para solicitar repetición, el uso de expresiones propias de la oralidad como interjecciones, marcadores de inicio y cierre de intercambios, las diferencias de registro que pueden aparecer en función de la relación que existe entre los interlocutores, entre otras.
> (pp. 40/1)

Let's analyse the activity in Reflection 4 in relation to the NAP. We don't expect students to understand all the words for the first task since it aims at global listening. Students are asked to predict what the topic may be, and then they listen to check their predictions. Students are familiar with the text type and they can reflect on different characteristics of this oral text once they have worked with the tasks provided, the topic of the next section.

How can our learners reflect on listening?

Once we have worked with the listening activity, we can ask students to think if the text is formal or informal, when they send or receive voice messages, if the level of formality or register may change depending on the situation, among other ideas.

How to go on

You might be wondering how to go on teaching after this activity. The oral text shows the Present Continuous being used naturally and meaningfully. It can then be used to expose children to this tense. Why is it imperative to present content from meaningful texts, as opposed to sentences? Knowing *about* a language does not mean we can use it, i.e. listen, read, speak and write. If we present language in meaningful, communicative situations, meaning and use are clear and evident, and we should only help students reflect on form. Once the teacher has worked with the two activities, he/she can take some examples from the text and help students reflect on the meaning, and how this meaning is expressed in English.

Closing the class

In this lesson we have focused on the process of listening and on listening tasks, and worked on how to connect the concepts in lesson 1 –language as a social practice and young learners– when teaching listening. As you may have realised, listening should not be taken for granted because it does not just depend on being able to hear. There are global tasks and more specific ones in which learners are asked to identify or extract information. They need time and plenty of exposure to learn how to do so successfully. Moreover, what they learn about listening can be transferred to any other listening situation, even though the language may not be English.

Activities

Analyse this listening activity by focusing on the questions proposed.

Questions about the activity

- Is the oral text used in society?
- Is there a global task first?
- Is there a task to identify specific information?

Bob, this is mum. Your bedroom is a mess. Please put your shoes in the box, your toys on your bed, your schoolbag under the table, your books on the table and your racket next to the table. I'll be home at 5. Love you !

Here are possible answers to the questions.

The text is an audio that people send all the time. So it is a text used in society.

The first task is global: listen and identify mum's feelings. She says the bedroom is a mess, and gives instructions for the boy to tidy it up. They can relate this to their lives, at some point, most kids' bedrooms are a mess.

Finally, there is a task to identify specific information: where the boy should place his belongings.

The following is a guide that you can use when planning or when teaching

Tips for a listening or reading activity:

- · Text: can the students find it outside the classroom, i.e. outside a teaching situation?

- · Predicting – global task

· Specific task (recognising or identifying information, extracting information)

Reading materials (compulsory)

Consejo Federal de Educación (2012). Núcleos de Aprendizajes Prioritarios. Lenguas Extranjeras. Educación Primaria y Secu*ndaria. Resolución Nº 181/12:* Recorrido de 4 niveles, Comprensión oral, Nivel 1 y 2; recorrido de 3 niveles, Comprensión oral, nivel 1.

Reading Materials (optional)

Ahmed, R. (2015) Five essential listening skills for English learners. Voices Magazine. British Council. Retrieved from: https://www.britishcouncil.org/voices-magazine/five-essential-listening-skills-english-learners

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Pinter, A. (2017). Teaching Young Language Learners (second edition). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Shin, J.K., & Crandall, J. (2014). Teaching young learners English: from theory to practice. New York: Heinle Cengage Learning.

Créditos

Autoras: María Leonor Corradi, Ana Paula Pino

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Lesson 3: Teaching reading

Introduction

So far, we have seen the characteristics of the young learner and how we should take them into account when teaching them. We have also shown how language is considered a social practice and should be taught as that. In this respect, the context in which children naturally interact is of crucial importance since they construct meanings in familiar contexts when situations are meaningful to them. We now move on to work on reading.

Objectives

- Understand primary school children's reading processes and strategies when they learn a second language.
- Evaluate and modify teaching materials to work on reading.

What is reading as a social practice?

Reading may be defined in different ways, much in keeping with one's perspective on what language is. There are some who consider that reading is a matter of decoding written symbols – letters – into their aural equivalents, and then matching it to meaning. This view of reading seems to suggest the context (or co-text) does not affect reading in any way which leads us to conclude that language is not considered a social practice.

Let's read some quotes and explore to what extent they are related to this previous view of reading:

> "When we read, we interact with the text, bringing our knowledge of the world, of language and of discourse or specific text types (a fairytale, newspaper article, poem, essay or report) to what we read. Our understanding increases or lessens depending on our background knowledge, knowledge of the language, and our experience with discourse and text structure."
>
> Shin and Crandal, 2019, p. 164

> "It is important to understand the interactive process that occurs between the reader and the text, as well as the reader and the writer. Most people think that reading is gaining meaning from the text. However, the reader actually brings meaning to the text and interacts with the meaning that is encoded in the text. Our comprehension of the text is often based on making connections from the text to our own experience and background knowledge. This background knowledge is often referred to as schema. For instance, when children read a story about Chicken Little, they bring their knowledge or schema of animals who live on a farm to the text, which will help them understand the story more easily. Reading can be seen as an interactive process involving the reader, the text and the writer."
>
> Shin and Crandal, ibid p. 189

> "Reading brings together visual information from written symbols, phonological information from the sounds those symbols make when spoken, and semantic information from the conventional meanings associated with the words as sounds and symbols. All three types of information are used by fluent readers in reaching an understanding of the text, together with information about the social uses of the text as discourse."
>
> Cameron, 2001, p. 125

We see in these explanations of reading that meaning and the context are of paramount importance since it is not about decoding letters into words, words into phrases and phrases into sentences. Kang Shin and Crandall (ibid.) explain that though literacy practices traditionally focused on phoneme-grapheme correspondence, socio-cultural perspectives have become very influential as both a theoretical framework and classroom practice. Barton and Hamilton (2000) approach literacy in terms of social practice, since literacy practices are "what people do with literacy" (p.7). They note that "literacy practices are more usefully understood as existing in the relations between people, within groups and communities rather than as a set of properties residing in individuals" (p.8). Perry (2012) reinforces this idea when he says that "conceptualising literacy as something one does as

opposed to a skill or ability one has, helps us understand the real-world ways in which real people engage with real texts, which ultimately could help educators make formal literacy instruction more meaningful and relevant for learners" (p. 62). Kang Shin and Crandall (ibid.) conclude that considering literacy as social practice "broadens our understanding of literacy beyond linguistic skills to decode the printed page and situates literacy within a context that is bound by both cultural and social practices" (p.190).

This will have a direct bearing on what we do in class. First, it is clear than reading involves decoding skills but it includes much more than that. Second, reading does not start with the first word in a text but considers the context –or co-text– as an integral part of a text. We will see next how to translate all this into our lessons.

Bottom-up and top-down approaches

Some people may think that in order to understand a text, we need to understand all the words that are part of it and that all the meaning comes from the text. Let's work with a few examples:

Reflection 1:

Do you understand what it says here? What if we give you this in a context?

The ℔ are learning a lot.

Did you understand it because you decoded it or because you focused on neighbouring words?

This example shows how the context – neighbouring words in this case – helps the reader construct meaning. This is an instance of a bottom up process. In other words, you may not understand one word in isolation but when considering the other words in the sentence in which it is embedded, the meaning becomes clear. We need to consider elements in the text to understand.

Reflection 2:

This is the beginning of a story:

You may have thought the main character is in a place in which there are bars – that is, places where one can have a drink – or in jail. If we read on, we may decide which one it is.

The man looked around. There were bars everywhere. He felt desperate, but knew he had it coming. Our knowledge of the world will help us understand the main character is in jail, even though the word jail is not used. This is an instance of a top-down process. In other words, to understand a text, we need to consider the context and our background knowledge, i.e., elements which are not in the text itself.

Reflection 3:

Read this text:

Las entidades aseguradoras deberán cuantificar y contabilizar en el activo las contingencias a cargo del reasegurador derivadas de los contratos suscritos de reaseguro proporcional, en caso de todas las reservas técnicas, y de reaseguro no proporcional, este último sólo aplicado a la reserva de siniestros avisados y ocurridos no avisados.

Barrero Mora, E. 2018 *CALCULO DE IBNR*

Is there any word you do not understand? Do you understand this text? If you had to tell somebody about it, what would you do? Could you do it by using your own words?

Most probably, you know all the words but would find it very difficult to use your own words to retell it. This is so because knowing all the words in a text does not mean you will understand the text as a whole. In our case, we are not specialists in the area. In other words, the context is alien to us.

Literacy development in English

We should point out that learners will become literate in Spanish – the language of instruction at schools – and will transfer the process to English, provided they are properly guided by teachers. There is no need for teachers of English to explain the alphabet to learners since both English and Spanish share the same script. In both languages, we read from left to right and from top to bottom. Most probably, they will have been shown why writing – and therefore reading – is important in our daily lives. From their experience as individuals living in a print-rich environment, they will have acquired the notion that writing is a way of conveying meanings and that reading is required to understand these meanings. They also know that the context – images, colours, graphs, the format of the text, to name but a few – also help the reader construct meaning.

When learners begin their literacy process in Spanish, they already speak it. In general, they start reading texts whose language they are familiar with. Their classroom teachers will help learners make predictions about where in a text, e.g. the title of a story, they can find certain words. English teachers will apply the same principles.

The first meaningful texts learners are exposed to are written instructions. We can make them accessible to learners by starting them with clear icons, and making them short, e.g. Look and draw. Listen and number.

English and Spanish consonant letters sound very similar though there are differences in the quality of some of them. Young learners, especially those in first year, will start learning classroom language and school objects. Classroom language is typically to listen – for example in TPR activities –, whereas they will need to read the words for school objects. It is advisable to start with three words, e.g. pencil, book, notebook. The first consonant is different. After writing the three words on the board, the teacher may ask learners where they think it says 'book', and then do the same with the other words. It is ideal to ask children how they know which word to choose. The second stage would be to include words that start with the same letter, e.g. pencil and pencil case. Children will start developing their own hypotheses as to how words are spelt in English.

Approaches to reading

There is an ongoing debate about where to start. Should we start from letters, then words into longer

units or should we begin with context and meaning, and then move on to analysing smaller segments of the language? The first one is a bottom-up approach whereas the second one is a top-down approach. We clearly need both, though which one we start with can make all the difference. We should begin with the context and meaning related to our learners' contexts and knowledge. From this natural whole, we help them focus on individual words and their pronunciation. We will now explain the two processes involved.

Phonics: it is a bottom-up process that aims at teaching children the relationship between sounds and letters. Its goal is to help learners decode written language using the sound-symbol relationship, either in isolation or from other words. It typically starts with individual consonant sounds such as /m/ or /s/ or with very short words that share a common sound, e.g. bat, cat, rat, hat, can. Children can make connections and say the word *man* correctly, even though they may not have seen it before in writing. This is the process of synthetic phonics. Analytic phonics starts from words and then helps children analyse these words to establish patterns.

A note about reading aloud, typically associated with phonics instruction: it is related to oracy skills, not to reading. In fact, when we are instructed to read a text aloud and are then asked questions about it, we may find it quite challenging to answer since our attention is on the form – that is, pronunciation, intonation, pauses, etc. and most probably, at phrase and clause level – and not on the meaning of the text.

Whole language: it is a top-down approach that focuses on meaning first and then uses language in context –in a definite context, not in any context– for further language study. Children bring their knowledge of the world, their knowledge of texts and language to construct meanings as they read, using the following types of clues:

Grapho-phonemic clues: related to sound-symbol correspondences.

Semantic clues: reflecting on what words may be expected in a text, based on their experience.

Pragmatic clues: relating to the purpose of the text.

Syntactic clues: referring to the part of speech expected in a given phrase.

A note about syntactic clues: learners have no metalanguage to refer to this, i.e. they do not know what a noun, verb or adjective is, nor what a sentence is. But if asked how to go on talking about a

character in a book, e.g. Bob, they can name a few adjectives, e.g. Bob is tall, happy, generous, and are not likely to say *Bob is cat. This is what we mean by syntactic clues at this level.

From the principles to the classroom

As discussed above, reading involves understanding and, as teachers, we need to check that our learners have understood. This is typically done by means of exercises or activities. When working at word/phrase level, students need to demonstrate they can identify the written form of the spoken language, i.e. what we say, or of images.

Reflection 4:

Analyse these activities. Do they involve reading?

A. Circle the correct word.

book - pencil

B. Match.

🎧   *cut*

✂️   *listen*
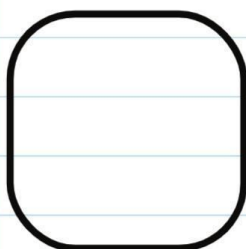
✏️   *draw*
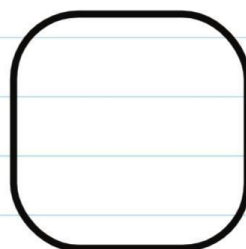
C. Draw.

A book   *A marker*

The three activities involve reading and students need to understand in order to complete them. The text types presented are either instructions or labels. How can we go about reading longer texts?

Reflection 5:

Make a list of the text types your learners are exposed to in their daily lives. Remember that all text types have a name, e.g. list, brochure, text message, instructions, etc. They also have a purpose and a specific format and are used and recognised in society.

Here's a list of common text types, by no means exhaustive:

Instructions	Captions	Dictionary entries
Invitations	Brochures	Articles
Text messages	Stories	Encyclopedia entries
Notices	Notes	Posters
Signs and signals	Emails or letters	Reviews
Labels	Blogs	Recipes

Some of them can be just one word, e.g. an instruction or a label, whereas others can be much longer.

All of them have a name and certain characteristics.

Let's analyse two examples:

Example A

My favourite animals

dog   kangaroo

elephant

Example B

I'm Emma. I'm seven. I have a brother and a sister. I like blue.

What's the text type in A? What is its purpose? What characteristics does it have?

It is a poster that presents information in visual form. Posters have images and few words.

What about B?

We may say it is a presentation, but in that case, it would be oral. It is difficult to say what text type it is or what its purpose is. B is a short paragraph, not an instance of a text used in society.

There are plenty of these instances in materials for teaching young learners. One of the things we

should do as teachers is to create the context it lacks. For instance, this text may appear in a school blog in which new students introduce themselves. We can show a few blogs to students –or use the school blog if there is one– for them to see what characteristics it has. It has a URL, a heading, e.g. HILLS SCHOOL BLOG, and it may have sub headings, e.g. New students. What is also necessary to include for this text to be natural and authentic as a text type is a photo or drawing of the person. A good idea is to ask students to add the necessary features to make this paragraph a text.

Before students read a text, we should help them make predictions based on the format of the text, a heading if there is one, or visuals. In the same way as we do with listening, we may need to scaffold this first global reading task. Let's analyse the following.

Pre-reading

1 Look at the picture.
Is it a plant? Can you eat it?
Read and check.

Darwin's or Indian bread

Physiognomy: it is a fungus. It forms tumors on branches. It is white, orange or yellow.
Habitat: this fungus grows on beech trees in Patagonia.
Distribution: from the Fuegian Archipelago to the province of Neuquén.
Observation sites in this province: on route 3 in the province of Tierra del Fuego, Antártida e Islas del Atlántico Sur, around Paso Garibaldi, along route J and on the road to El Martial Glacier.
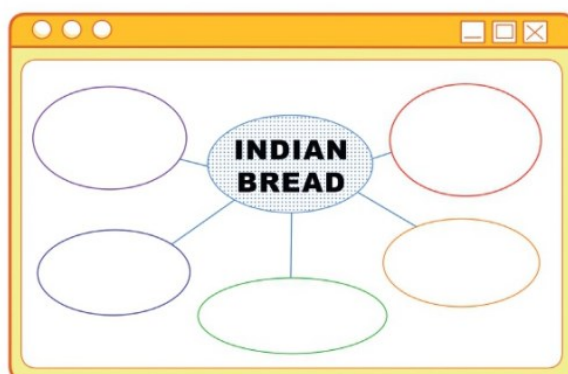Uses: it is an edible fungus.
Other names: llao llao in Mapuche, igueñe, quireñe in Chile.

2 Read and circle the correct answer.

1. This text is a story about plants / an entry about plants.
2. You can find this text in an encyclopedia / in a newspaper.
3. This information is for very young children / people in general.
4. We know / don't know the writer of the text.
5. The text shows imaginary / real information.

3 Complete the web chart with the information from the page.

INDIAN BREAD

36

Coordinación Provincial Tierra del Fuego (2023). My pago. Editora Cultural

The text type selected is a fact file. There is a pre reading activity aimed at activating learners'

schemata. The illustration shows Indian bread, an edible fungus typical of Patagonia. Once learners activate their schemata and make predictions about whether it is edible or not, they read and check. The first task is global and aims at answering one question.

The second time they read, students have to select the correct answers. We can see that there are items focusing on the text as a whole and its characteristics. The task for the third time they read focuses on specific information which learners have to extract from the text. There is a different task for every time they read, which goes from general to specific to make the text more accessible to learners. As indicated for listening, if learners can solve tasks successfully they will be motivated to keep on learning.

Reading and the NAP

Reading for the first cycle

- La aproximación a la comprensión de que un texto escrito puede abordarse aunque no se conozca el significado de todas las palabras que lo constituyen, y de que el sentido de un texto no depende exclusivamente de las palabras que lo conforman.

- La lectura de consignas acompañadas de íconos u otro tipo de apoyo visual, utilizados como referencia principal en una primera instancia y, posteriormente, sólo como apoyo o referencia secundaria de la palabra escrita.

- La formulación de anticipaciones e hipótesis en relación con el sentido del texto y el paratexto, antes y durante el proceso de lectura, a partir de ilustraciones, títulos y otras pistas temáticas y lingüístico-discursivas.

- La lectura de textos breves y simples de diferentes géneros discursivos, relacionados con diferentes temáticas y acordes al momento de la escolaridad y a las condiciones de enseñanza como, por ejemplo, invitaciones, carteles, poesías breves, textos descriptivos, con ilustraciones y otros tipos de apoyo visual en los casos en que sea necesario.

- La aproximación a la lectura como posibilidad de disfrutar, emocionarse,

conocer otros mundos posibles y reflexionar sobre el propio, y como recurso para buscar información o realizar una tarea.

- El inicio en la reflexión sobre algunas características de los géneros discursivos trabajados.

(p. 18)

There are no contradictions between the activities proposed in the example above and the bullet points for reading in the first cycle. In fact, we can find several realisations of the points to consider when working with reading.

Reading for the first level, second cycle: learners are already literate and have more strategies at their disposal that they can transfer to reading in English, that's why some of the points are somewhat more demanding than those for the first cycle. However, as stated before, there are no contradictions between the activities proposed as examples and reading for the second cycle.

- La aproximación a la comprensión de que un texto escrito puede abordarse aunque no se conozca el significado de todas las palabras que lo constituyen, y de que el sentido de un texto no depende exclusivamente de las palabras que lo conforman.
- La lectura de consignas en lengua extranjera.
- La formulación de anticipaciones e hipótesis en relación con el sentido del texto y el paratexto, antes y durante el proceso de lectura, a partir de títulos, ilustraciones y otras pistas temáticas y lingüístico-discursivas.
- La lectura de textos descriptivos, narrativos o instruccionales breves, de diferentes géneros discursivos, relacionados con temáticas variadas, de extensión y complejidad acordes al momento de la escolaridad y a las condiciones de enseñanza: invitaciones, mensajes, instrucciones, correos electrónicos, folletos, historietas, epígrafes, relatos, entre otros.
- La comprensión y construcción de sentidos del texto escrito apelando a

diferentes estrategias. Esto supone:

- o la identificación del género;

- o el recurso a pistas que brindan los textos y su paratexto;

- o la identificación, con la ayuda del/la docente, del tipo de lectura requerida –global o focalizada– acorde con la tarea comunicativa;

- o la confirmación o modificación de las anticipaciones e hipótesis formuladas.

- La frecuentación y exploración de variados materiales escritos en soporte físico o digital y en diferentes contextos de lectura.

- La resolución de dificultades de comprensión durante la lectura. Esto supone:

- o la consulta al/la docente y/o pares;

- o el uso de textos de consulta en soporte físico o digital, como, por ejemplo, diccionarios ilustrados, bilingües o monolingües o enciclopedias ilustradas;

- o la remisión a textos leídos anteriormente.

- El reconocimiento de la lectura en lengua extranjera como posibilidad de apertura a otras realidades y de reflexión sobre la propia, y como recurso para buscar información o realizar una tarea.

- El disfrute de la lectura en la lengua extranjera que se aprende, de las imágenes que pueda suscitar, de la apertura a mundos imaginarios.

- El inicio en la reflexión sobre algunas características de los géneros discursivos trabajados.

(pp. 41/2)

How can our learners reflect on reading?

As we can see in the Activity 1 in the example above, those items focus on the characteristics of the text. Even if the materials we use do not have this type of activity, it is our obligation to design one which focuses on the characteristics of a text. As suggested before, if materials present a paragraph

of sorts or a group of sentences, we can reflect with our learners on what is necessary to make that paragraph part of a real text which members of society use. We can also help learners become aware of how clues in the text can help their understanding, as well as its paratextual features.

How to go on

When working with listening, we showed one way of going on after working with a listening text. The same thing applies to reading. Once learners have worked on the text as a whole, teachers may extract parts of the text and help students focus on how language works. Students will have already worked with meaning and context, so now they have to focus on form.

Closing the class

In this class we have focused on reading and worked on how to connect the concepts in class 1 – language as a social practice and young learners – when teaching reading. We have seen that reading is an active process in which meaning is permanently constructed. We should emphasize that even though students become literate in Spanish, they will be able to transfer this knowledge into English. Moreover, when they realize that reading as a process does not change from one language to another, their literacy development will be positively affected by their reading in English.

Activities

Discussion forum: a reading activity.

Read the following activity and answer the questions in a maximum of 8 lines.

Is the text in the activity a text used outside a teaching situation? Is there a purpose in reading it?

Do students need to understand to do the activity?

Is there a pre-reading task for students to make predictions?

Is there a global task?

Is there a task aiming at specific information?

Account for your answers. Consider the questions to account for your answers.

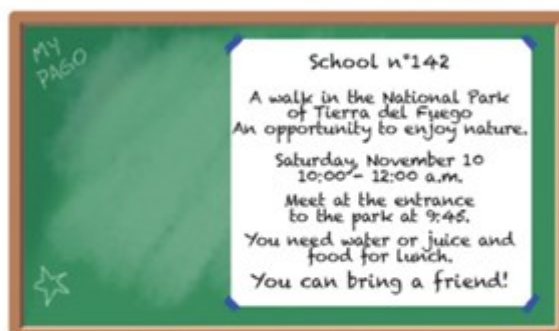The forum will be open for 2 weeks, up to the beginning of the following class.

Pre-reading

1 Look at the poster and discuss:

Is this poster useful?
Who can read this poster?, Where can you find useful posters?

Now let's read.

School n°142

A walk in the National Park
of Tierra del Fuego
An opportunity to enjoy nature.

Saturday, November 10
10:00 - 12:00 a.m.

Meet at the entrance
to the park at 9:45.

You need water or juice and
food for lunch.

You can bring a friend!

2 Read and answer.

Who writes the invitation?
Where are the children going?
When are they going there?
What time are they going there?
What do they need?
Who can they bring?

Reading materials (compulsory)

Consejo Federal de Educación (2012). Núcleos de Aprendizajes Prioritarios. Lenguas Extranjeras. Educación Primaria y Secu*ndaria. Resolución Nº 181/12:* Recorrido de 4 niveles, Lectura, Nivel 1 y 2; recorrido de 3 niveles, Lectura, nivel 1.

Reading materials (optional)

Arnold, W and Malcolm, F. Reading and Young Learners. British Council. Retrieved from: https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/ru/professional-development/teachers/knowing-subject/articles/reading-and-young-learners

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Ministerio de Educación de Tierra del Fuego, AeIAS (2023) My Pago. Río Grande: Editora Cultural Tierra del Fuego.

Shin, J.K., & Crandall, J. (2014). Teaching young learners English: from theory to practice. New York: Heinle Cengage Learning.

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Lesson 4: Assessment

Introduction

In the previous lessons, we focussed on the characteristics of young learners and on language as a social practice, and we approached the teaching of comprehension practices. In this class we will look at assessment as a fundamental part of the teaching and learning processes. We will also see how different instrument formats can allow us to work in a communicative and meaningful way in the classroom.

> **Objectives:**
> - Understanding assessment as a process.
> - Using assessment instruments in the classroom to further learning.

Listening and the context

It is important to remember that language is always used in a specific context, not in **a** context meaning **any** context, and that participants interact and construct meanings together, even though there may be no linguistic performance on the part of the listeners. Of similar importance is the fact that listening requires understanding, otherwise it is an instance of hearing. Let's compare two examples.

What is assessment?

> **Reflection 1**
>
> Let's think about this real-life activity:
>
> You need to buy a new cell phone, so you check out the different possibilities in the market. You do some research on the Internet about price, storage, apps and other features you would like your phone to have. Once you have gathered all the necessary information, you go to your nearest store and buy the phone you consider best serves your needs.
>
> How can you relate this idea to assessment in the classroom?

This definition provides an answer to the question:

"Assessment in education is the process of *gathering*, *interpreting*, *recording*, and *using* information about pupils' responses to an educational task."

Harlen, Gipps, Broadfoot, Nuttal, 1992, p. 62

As we can see in this definition, the authors make reference both to the gathering of information but also to the use of this information to our advantage, i.e. to make the necessary changes and adjustments in our classroom practices to enhance learning, and our learners' as well. Maggioli and Painter-Farrell (2016) agree when they say that

"…assessment … is an ongoing and systematic process that helps us and our students engage in an open dialogue about our work and its own effectiveness."
Maggioli and Painter-Farrel, 2016, p. 371

As we have mentioned before, we see assessment as part of the teaching process; this means then that when we set out to plan our lessons and their objectives, we are planning how and when we are going to assess students. This does not mean that we design the different instruments. What it means is that we will be considering what we need to assess, e.g. using language meaningfully to talk about events, reading globally, extracting information, etc. We will also make a list of how we will assess different points. For instance, if we are working with speaking, we need to assess our learners in class rather than give them a speaking test.

Let's focus on some of the keywords that are related to the term assessment. Although we link the ideas of testing, evaluation and assessment, it is important to differentiate what we mean by each. The main difference between assessment and evaluation is that evaluation refers to gathering information and passing judgement about courses and programmes of study, whereas when we

assess, we gather information about students to help them in their learning process. A test is just an instrument among many others that can help us get the information we need.

From the definitions above, it is clear then that assessment is for learning. This means that however we decide to assess our students, we need to make sure that they have learnt something out of it, which is the main idea behind formative assessment. Formative assessment focuses on the students' process and the information gathered serves to give feedback to them that will help their learning efforts and change the course of learning for the better.

Neil Harris explains very clearly the concept of assessment of learning, assessment for learning and assessment as learning.

Assessment of, for and as learning

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MYipHGVAiJI

What to assess

As we have seen, it is important to decide what to assess, when to assess and what to do with the result of that assessment.

Reflection 2:

You are teaching a 4th grade and you have been working on routines for a good part of the term. The school's administration tells you that you must hand in at least two marks to be included in the report card families will receive at the end of the term. Where should these marks come from? Why?

> **Option A:**
>
> As soon as you hear that you need two marks you develop a quick quiz and oral presentation based on what you have been working on and deliver it to the students the following week, collect the marks and send them to administration.
>
> **Option B:**
>
> You look at your records and what you have been working with your students and decide on a mark based on criteria derived from the class objectives, the other mark comes from the final product of a project you have been developing with your students since you started working on routines.

You have probably chosen option B where it is clearly demonstrated that the teacher, when planning the lessons related to routines, also thought about how and when to assess students; they have records of the different activities developed throughout the different classes and also a mark that will come from an already planned final project.

Making sure assessment is appropriate for Primary School learners

We would like now to focus on the different ways we can assess. In order to do so we need to take into account that assessment instruments need to follow criteria that make them appropriate for young learners, especially considering that assessment is another step in the teaching process and that these instruments will serve to make decisions regarding our teaching practices. Shin and Crandall (2014) quote Bachman and Palmer´s five criteria:

> 1. Reliability, which means that results should be consistent both with different scorers and with how students perform in class.
> 2. Validity aligns the demands of the assessment instrument with what students have learned.
> 3. Practicality refers to delivering an assessment instrument in a way that is possible given the class's realities.
> 4. Authenticity in terms of the foreign language classroom refers to assessing language in appropriate and relevant contexts and use to young learners.
> 5. Washback is the positive or negative impact that assessment has on teaching and learning.

The last idea of the washback effect is important because the impact, whether positive or negative, of assessment goes beyond the student, it also has repercussions for the families and the institutions. As teachers, we have a responsibility when assessing our students and their learning.

When we have already decided what we are going to assess and when, we need to make sure that students don't feel anxious or pressured. Edith Litwin (2008) states that "las siguientes condiciones: que la evaluación se lleve a cabo sin sorpresas, que sea enmarcada en la enseñanza y sin desprenderse del clima, ritmo y tipo de actividades usuales de la clase" (p. 173). This is also an important point to take into consideration when developing assessment instruments for young learners. All assessments, as we have mentioned before, should contribute to learning, but they should also motivate learners and allow them to grow confidence in themselves and their use of the foreign language. Assessment is an opportunity for students to demonstrate how much they are learning to everybody in the community, including themselves.

As we prepare the different assessment instruments we decide to use with our students, we should make sure that assessment reflects the way we teach and the goals and objectives we set out when we started planning. We plan assessment as we plan a lesson: sequenced, contextualized and with a purpose. But what is the purpose of language assessment?

> What is the purpose of language assessment? Tick the statements you agree with:
> - To monitor students' achievement and to help them improve.
> - To identify special needs from students.
> - To inform students' progress.
> - To assess ourselves as teachers.
> - To make changes in how and what we teach if needed.

Yes! All of the statements above are part of the purpose of language assessment. But how do we do this? We will explore the idea of authentic assessment.

Authentic assessment

Davini, in her book "Métodos de Enseñanza" (2008), defines authentic assessment as "… las formas de trabajo que reflejan situaciones de la vida real desafiando a los estudiantes a poner a prueba

aquello que han aprendido" (p. 220). As we have mentioned before, teaching and assessment are processes that go together, meaning that if we plan to assess language in authentic, meaningful situations, our teaching practices should mirror that intention, so you will see that many of the assessment instruments proposed below are also activities that can be developed in class. In the same way, we need to design meaningful activities for learners, which means that what we propose in our assessment instruments should also require meaningful language use.

Different instruments for authentic assessment

As we think of authentic assessment, there are a variety of ways to do so. Some of these include:

❖ **Observations**: in which the teacher pays close attention to how students perform different tasks in the classroom and monitors their progress while interacting with each other or with the teacher. This allows for the teachers to make decisions on what to reinforce, how and when to move on. Keeping record of this through lists or reports also registers these forms of assessment in a formal way.

Some tasks that students can perform for us to observe can be:

- Retelling stories

- Role playing

- Giving descriptions or instructions using visual or written prompts

- Oral reporting to the whole class

- Telling a story by using a sequence of three or more pictures

- Completing dialogue or conversation through written prompts

- Debating, either one-on-one or taking turns in small groups

- Brainstorming

- Completing incomplete stories

- Playing games

Remember that in all the previous situations, language should be used meaningfully and in a definite context, and in keeping with the students' level.

❖ **Conferences and oral interviews:** Although this may be a challenge in large classrooms, different exchanges and even group presentations can allow for this kind of assessment.

❖ **Portfolios:** a portfolio "is a purposeful collection of student work that documents a student's efforts, progress and achievements over time" (Shin & Crandall op. cit, p. 260). They may include a variety of materials, such as photographs, collages, videos of various student participations, posters, journal entries, and crafts among others, but whatever we choose must be placed there with a purpose in mind. A good way for students to do so is to include a reflection sheet with each sample that accounts for it being chosen. A great asset of portfolios is that they provide a guideline of the students' progress, hence allowing for formative feedback and student growth. Some positive aspects of using portfolios is that they are a great way to foster students' autonomy since they can select which pieces to include in their portfolio and even organise them according to what they believe best represents how much they have learnt. They also allow students to be actively involved in assessment, focus on improvement, effort, and achievement and they integrate assessment with the learning process.

❖ **Gamification:** Using games, whether they are digital or not, can be a great way to check how much our students have learned and how much support they still need in the process. They can be used to check any language practice and even for cross curricular content.

Reflection 4:

How different are these assessment instruments from the ones you are using in your classroom today?

Which assessment instruments can be easily introduced in your practices? Which one/s would mean a change in your teaching practices?

The answers to these questions are personal. However, if you have not considered authentic assessment so far, you can start trying out some of the activities suggested in this module.

As we have already discussed, learning and assessment are intrinsically linked, so you can include all the possibilities in your daily work and, hopefully, they will make your teaching practices more meaningful to your students.

Organising assessment

When we discussed assessment at the beginning of this class, we agreed that it is a way of gathering information to make decisions. A rubric organises what information we want to gather in order to share it with others. By rubric we mean the criteria for grading and providing feedback to the student. Rubrics help us focus on the objectives we had when we planned the lesson. Rubrics also foster student autonomy since when they are well developed, they guide students on what is expected of them and they can take ownership of their learning.

> "Rubrics are a time-honored tool in the classroom. They identify the goal of a particular lesson, communicate clear expectations to students in regard to their work, and spell out the criteria for success. With a rubric in place, you can assess how well your students understood and learned the lesson, and if you need to reteach certain concepts.
>
> Think of the rubric as a road map for each lesson or concept you are trying to teach. Teachers who use rubrics have a clear path for instruction and a means by which to assess student progress."
>
> Epperson, 2020

Have a look at the following rubric for listening:

	AREA OF CONCERN	NEEDS WORK	GOOD	VERY GOOD
Global listening	Finds it difficult to understand the topic globally.	Can understand the topic globally with support and guidance.	Can understand the topic globally with some support.	Can understand the topic globally.
Identification	Finds it difficult to identify information.	Can identify information with a lot of support and	Can identify most of the information or can do so with a	Can identify information.

		guidance.	little support.	
Specific information	Finds it difficult to extract specific information.	Can extract specific information with lots of support or guidance	Can extract most of the specific information or can do so with a little support.	Can extract specific information.

See how the different indicators allow us to see what is expected from students in each area, giving us the opportunity to give feedback to the students and also focusing on what we want to check when we create the assessment instrument. Since students get the rubrics before any instance of assessment, they also know what is expected from them. Moreover, learners can self-assess their own performance using the rubrics as a guideline, thus fostering autonomy and further learning. Nowadays there are several online platforms from which you can generate rubrics. Here are some examples here for you to explore:

- iRubric (custom)
- RubiStar (customizable templates)
- Teachnology (premade and customized)
- Schrockguide (Common Core)
- ThemeSpark (Common Core)
- PBL Checklist (project based learning)
- RubricMaker (customizable templates)
- Teacher Planet (premade)

Remember that a rubric helps both teachers and students to plan, develop, revise and assess their work. So it is important that we take time in developing them, sometimes even together with our students, and that they are clear from the beginning for everyone involved.

You have probably had to make some minor changes, but all in all, it is obvious that when thinking of reading and listening there is a lot in common, paying attention to the general ideas as well as detail, inferring meaning and understanding the information in the text whether it is written or audio.

Assessing language practices: listening and reading

So far, we have discussed some key ideas:

- Assessment is part of teaching and of learning.
- Assessment is a process.
- Assessment influences teaching practices and vice versa.
- Assessment needs to be planned and organised.

Assessment can focus on language as a whole or it can focus on lexis, grammatical structures and/ or any of the language practices. We will now work on ideas as to assessing reading and listening since we have dealt with them in this module. Even though language practices are always integrated and we cannot see one detached from the other, we can study and assess them individually by different means.

We have defined listening as an interactive process that happens in a contextualised communicative situation. We have seen that we can have a global or an intensive understanding of the text we have listened to, and that it is necessary to design activities to focus on global listening, identification and extracting information. It is also important to remember that we do not need to understand every word to grasp the meaning of what we are listening to.

As with all assessment, students should be aware of what is expected of them and bearing in mind that assessment instruments must agree with our teaching practices, we should never introduce a new way of doing things during assessment.

We have made a list of possible activities that can be used as assessment instruments or part of them.

This list is by no means exhaustive and it should be part of a contextualised and communicative instrument with known and thought through criteria. Whenever possible, activities should replicate authentic and or real world listening and activities.

When we focus on the assessment of reading, we take into consideration the same key ideas about assessment we have been developing. As we consider language a social practice, we must assess reading with texts that students might encounter in their daily lives and which they have dealt with in class. Texts should be motivating, relevant and according to their level. Some texts that can be included are birthday card invitations, poems, e-mails, charts, social media posts or profiles, chats from chatting apps, among others. Remember that they should have been tackled during teaching. These are some activities that can be used to assess reading and listening.

- Identify the main idea.
- Identify specific information.
- Point to or select a picture, word or object.
- Respond to simple commands.
- Draw or colour a picture as a picture dictation or reading about it.
- Match, number or organise pictures.
- Complete a chart, graphic organiser, table with general and/or specific information.
- Correct mistakes related to information.
- TPR (total physical response) responses to songs and games.
- Use context clues to infer the general idea of the text.
- Predict what comes next in the text.

We hope you have enjoyed these materials on assessment and that you find them useful for your teaching practice. We recommend that you go to the Diseño Curricular from your area and check how these practices are dealt with. Consult with other teachers in the school or schools you work at and discuss together how English as a foreign language should be included in the "Plan Institucional de Evaluación" taking into account other subjects such as "Prácticas del Lenguaje".

> **Reflection 6:**
>
> What do you think about authentic assessment? Reflect on your classroom settings and decide which type of authentic assessment would become useful in gathering information about your students' learning and how to improve it. Remember: one of the criteria for a successful assessment instrument is practicality. Think about the contents you would teach, the context, and the activities you would carry out with your students, how long it would take to do them. What materials will you need? Will you have to create, adapt or adopt them? What about other teachers, subjects or activities that happen in the school that would enrich this experience for your students?

Once you start thinking of assessment as an integrated process to learning, thinking only about one assessment instrument is not enough. The challenge is to put it all together and provide students with engaging and motivating activities that enhance their learning experiences.

Closing the module

We have worked on the concept of language as a social practice and its relevance when teaching English to Primary School students. We have approached the teaching of listening and reading – comprehension practices – and have also dealt with assessment. We should remind you that although assessment is discussed in the last class of this module, it does not mean that assessment should signal the end of anything – a module, a unit or an academic year. Irrespective of when we assess learners and the instruments we use, assessment has to be decided upon at the time of planning. Since to assess learners we need to gather information, we should do so from different sources, i.e. different instruments, and at different times. This will also allow us and learners as well to see progress and make decisions so that learning should be enhanced.

Activities

TRABAJO FINAL: Listening, reading and assessment

Go back to the reflection activities and tasks in lessons 2 and 3 for listening and reading. Select one activity for reading or one for listening. Can it be used for assessment?

Consider the answer to these questions to answer the previous question.

Is the text of social circulation? Remember that a paragraph is NOT a text of social circulation.

Is the text appropriate for students in the primary level?

Can the text and the activity be used for assessment? If your answer is YES, then consider the following questions.

Is there a pre-reading/listening activity or instance?

Is there an instance of global reading/listening?

Is there at least one instance of detailed reading/listening?

Do this on a Word document. Format: A4, Arial 11 and simple line spacing.. Your answer should not take longer than half a page. Once it is ready, send it to your tutors. Please write your full name at the top of the document . Deadline for this activity: November 9th.

You can also upload queries and comments onto the Final Paper forum.

Final Paper Forum

The aim of this forum is to establish a line of dialogue between the tutor and participants. Queries can be consulted, whose answers can also provide useful information to all.

Reading Materials (compulsory)

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Créditos

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