

# GENERIC, DISCOURSE, AND LEXICOGRAMMATICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF A LISTENING EXERCISE IN AN EFL CLASSROOM

CARACTERÍSTICAS GENÉRICAS, DISCURSIVAS Y LÉXICO-GRAMMATICALES DEL EJERCICIO DE ESCUCHA EN EL AULA DE INGLÉS

CARACTÉRISTIQUES GÉNÉRIQUES, DISCURSIVES ET LEXICO-GRAMMATICALES D'UN EXERCICE D'ÉCOUTE DANS UN COURS D'ANGLAIS

## Anamaría Sagre

Universidad de Córdoba

Mailing Address: Carrera 6

N.º 76-103 Montería, Colombia

E-mail: acreditauicor@gmail.com

## José David Herazo

Universidad de Córdoba

Mailing Address: Carrera 6

N.º 76-103 Montería, Colombia

Montería, Colombia

E-mail: jherazo4@hotmail.com

## ABSTRACT

This paper describes the listening exercise as a textual genre of the EFL classroom. To this end, we analyzed a 30-minute listening activity in terms of its purpose, its discourse structure, and the lexicogrammatical choices in EFL of teacher and students. Findings reveal that the discourse structure and lexicogrammatical choices teacher and students made facilitated comprehension and created opportunities for meaningful EFL production, reaching the genre's purpose. Whereas students were able to understand the listening text thanks to those choices, they were less successful in reporting what they heard and expressing opinions in EFL. This was due, in part, to how the comprehension task was realized linguistically and to the fact that little modeling was provided to express such functions.

**Keywords:** EFL learning, genre, listening tasks, systemic linguistics

## RESUMEN

Este artículo describe los ejercicios de escucha como género textual del aula de inglés como lengua extranjera (ILE). Para ello, analizamos un ejercicio de escucha de 30 minutos en cuanto a su propósito, estructura discursiva y características lexicogramaticales. Nuestro análisis revela que la estructura discursiva y las características lexicogramaticales del ejercicio facilitaron la comprensión y crearon oportunidades para la producción significativa de ILE, logrando los propósitos del género en cuestión. Aunque los estudiantes comprendieron el texto escuchado, fueron menos exitosos al reportar oralmente su contenido y al expresar opinión, esto debido en parte a la forma como se realizó lingüísticamente la tarea de comprensión y al hecho de que hubo poca modelación del inglés necesario para expresar tales funciones comunicativas.

**Palabras clave:** aprendizaje de inglés como lengua extranjera, género textual, actividades de escucha, lingüística sistémica

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Received: 2014-11-10 / Accepted: 2015-03-03

DOI: 10.17533/udea.ikala.v20n1a07

## RÉSUMÉ

Cet article décrit l'exercice d'écoute en tant que genre textuel de la classe d'anglais comme langue étrangère. À cette fin, nous avons analysé une activité d'écoute de 30 minutes en fonction de son objet, de sa structure de discours, et de ses caractéristiques lexico-grammaticales. Les résultats révèlent que la structure discursive et les caractéristiques lexico-grammaticales de l'exercice ont facilité la compréhension et ont créé des opportunités pour la production significative de l'anglais comme langue étrangère, afin d'atteindre l'objectif du genre. Bien que les étudiants aient compris le texte écouté, le rapport oral de son contenu et l'expression de leur opinion ont été moins bien réussis. Cela est dû, en partie, à la façon dont la tâche de compréhension a été réalisée et au modelage linguistique limité étant nécessaire pour exprimer les fonctions communicatives en question.

**Mots-clés:** apprentissage de l'anglais comme langue étrangère, genre textuel, activités d'écoute, linguistique systémique

## Introduction

Research on second language (L2) classroom discourse has received significant attention in recent years within the sociocultural tradition. Such research views discourse as the oral interaction that takes place between teacher and students in L2 classrooms and has covered a variety of topics (Thoms, 2012). These include, among others, the analysis of the initiation-response-evaluation or IRE pattern (Nassaji and Wells, 2000), of instructional conversations (Davin, 2013), and of mediational means such as questions (McCormick and Donato, 2000), repetitions, reformulations, and instructional ellipsis (Herazo and Donato, 2012). In addition, this research has investigated collaborative classroom discourse as a site for mediation (Donato, 1994; Rosado, 2012). Their contributions to the L2 field notwithstanding, the majority of those studies have looked at micro aspects of classroom L2 discourse such as moves and turns, rather than at how larger units of discourse such as a sequence of learning activities are constructed through the interaction of teacher and learners (Christie, 2002; Wells, 1993).

To address the previous gap, the purpose of this study was to analyze how one such larger unit, a L2 listening exercise, was discursively constructed by a teacher and her students in a high school classroom. The L2 listening exercise seeks to foster learners' understanding of spoken discourse and is usually described as consisting of three stages, pre-listening, while-listening, and post listening. Thus, pre-listening provides a context for recording, in the while-listening students listen and do a comprehension activity, and post-listening serves to verify how much students understood and to practice lexis or grammar (Field, 2008; Hinkel, 2006; Richards & Burns, 2012). Unlike such description of the listening exercise in chronological terms, as a sequence of pre-listening, while-listening, and post-listening activities, this study maintains that the listening exercise is a particular curriculum genre (Christie, 1991, 2002). That is, a particular

type of discourse of the L2 classroom which has a characteristic pedagogic purpose, is organized in predictable stages that are pedagogically motivated, and involves distinct ways of using the new language. Specifically, the study argues that the staging and linguistic realization of the L2 listening exercise, both in terms of interactional patterns as well as specific choices of lexis and grammar (henceforth lexicogrammar), is closely related to the purposes of instruction. Within this framework, patterns of L2 interaction such as the IRE sequence can be justified and even desired. We support these arguments with a description of the generic, discourse, and lexicogrammatical choices that a teacher (Kelly, pseudonym) and her students made during one listening activity in a ninth grade classroom. Our analysis draws on systemic functional linguistics (Eggins and Slade, 1997; Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004) to characterize the listening exercise as a genre. As such, it adds to the growing body of research seeking to understand the role of L2 classroom discourse for the development of L2 ability. In the first part of the paper we present key concepts underlying our study and review relevant research. Next we explain our research methodology and then present our findings. The paper ends with a discussion of what those findings imply for our understanding of L2 classroom discourse.

## Classroom Discourse as Textual Genre

One key principle in systemic functional linguistics (henceforth SFL) is that any instance of language-based communication corresponds to a genre (Christie, 2002). That is, to social, goal-oriented, staged, and repeated ways of using language to respond to the demands of the situations and cultural contexts in which language occurs (Martin and Rose, 2008). Genres are social and goal-directed because they are realized by people with specific intentions, they are staged because people usually go through more than one step for realizing each genre, and they are repeated because the language of each genre is similar from one occasion to the next. For example, the interaction

between a salesperson and a customer corresponds to a 'service encounter' genre (Ventola, 1987). This genre focuses on exchanging 'goods and services' and includes various obligatory and optional stages such requesting the goods, handing over the goods or paying. In addition, the specific grammar, expressions, and vocabulary realizing the genre is similar across various shopping exchanges, since such language reflects and constructs the content of the exchange (e.g., the language of selling/buying), the relation between participants (e.g., formal/informal), and the mode in which language is used (e.g., oral or written).

Based on the previous orientation, scholars like Christie (1991), Martin (2009), and Schleppegrell (2004) have convincingly argued that the language used by learners and teachers in the classroom represents a distinct type of discourse or genre. Accordingly, it responds and construes the characteristics of the sociocultural and pedagogic situation of the educational context. As Schleppegrell (2004, p. 77) explains, "teachers and students work in contexts where a variety of types of texts are written and spoken, related to the demands of different levels of schooling and various subject areas." From this view it derives that the discourse of the L2 classroom can also be viewed in generic terms: as consisting of oral and written genres that are realized by teachers and learners, a position that we share in this paper.

Such use of the concept of genre to study classroom discourse has allowed researchers to produce linguistic descriptions of the language of school disciplines (see Achugar, 2003; Achugar & Carpenter, 2012; Martin & Rose, 2008; Moss, 2000; Schleppegrell, 2004), to design learning pathways that take learners from everyday to more academic types of genres (see Byrnes, Maxim, & Norris, 2010), to explain how teachers and learners interact and what this implies for learning language and content (see Gibbons, 2003; Moyano, 2005a), and to create genre-based strategies for teaching in classrooms (see Achugar, Schleppegrell, & Orteiza, 2007; Feez & Joyce, 1998; Moyano, 2005b; Natale,

2005; Rose & Martin, 2012). This last strand of research has demonstrated, for example, that such form of instruction increases learners' awareness of the social nature of language and helps them produce clearly structured texts (Burns, 1990; Colombi, 2009), fosters learners' use of specific linguistic resources such as grammatical metaphor (Byrnes, 2009a), clause types, formality, modality and conjunctions (Cullip, 2009), and contributes to the development of a shared metalanguage between teachers and learners (Martin, 1999; Moyano, 2005b; Troyan, 2014). In sum, genre-based research has not only characterized classroom discourse in generic terms, but has also used these insights to promote students' mastery of language and content in a variety of curriculum areas.

### Curriculum genres.

The notion of *curriculum genre* (Christie, 2002) is another example of how the concept of genre can be used to understand classroom discourse. For instance, Christie (1991) studied a group of 50-55 learners and their teacher during writing lessons over three years of schooling. She concluded that the language they used occurred in recognizable patterns that she called curriculum genres. By this she meant that language use in classrooms occurs among people, targets pedagogic and disciplinary purposes, and is organized in stages that involve particular lexicogrammatical and discourse features. In addition, each one of the stages was realized by different resources from the language system. Not unlike the notion of genres in general, some of the stages in a curriculum genre must occur for a particular text to be recognized as a genre (i.e., they are obligatory), whereas others can be omitted without impacting the purpose of the genre or its recognition as such (i.e., they are optional).

Using the previous notions, Christie (1991) described the "writing planning genre" as composed of three obligatory stages with particular linguistic features: a task orientation (TO) where the teacher provided some context for the learning activity and gave instructions, a task specification

(TS) that provided details about how the activity was to be done, and a task (T) where the activity was finally carried out. These stages comprise the schematic structure (i.e., the rhetoric structure) of the writing planning genre, represented as TO^TS^T (the caret symbol indicates sequence). Based on the analysis of the writing planning lesson as a genre, Christie showed how this lesson provided important language for talking about the contents of the writing task as well as for developing writing ability.

In a similar study, Dreyfus, Macnaught, and Humphrey (2008) analyzed how the stage of ‘joint construction’ was constructed linguistically as a way to scaffold writing ability in adults. Joint construction corresponds to a stage of the genre-based approach to literacy instruction in which teacher and students create a text together corresponding to a specific genre (Rose and Martin, 2012). Their findings show that joint construction can be viewed as an elemental curriculum genre which consists of three main stages: Bridging, text negotiation and review. In the bridging stage both teachers and students analyze the text model in order to understand the target genre. In the text negotiation stage students and teacher co-construct a similar text in the target genre, taking into account the suggestions given by the learners and the mediation provided by the teacher. In the review stage, the teacher and the students edit the text after assessing the product they have co-constructed. Based on such an analysis, Dreyfus and colleagues (2008) concluded that the scaffolding purpose of joint construction was reflected in how this curriculum genre was staged and in the use of extended dialogue. Accordingly, they posited that joint construction is fundamental for reaching the goals of writing lessons with adults, namely “apprenticing students into the process of writing regardless of the level of education” (2008, p. 154).

Another study using the concept of genre to investigate classroom discourse was conducted by Busch (2007). In this study, he investigated

the oral genres emerging from peer interaction during two task-based pedagogical activities. Using SFL as framework for analysis, Busch showed that each task represented a separate genre since they had unique generic structures. Moreover, he concluded that the stages of a genre can be best described in terms of how probable a stage is rather than in terms of whether stages are obligatory or optional (p. 169). That is, the stages may vary depending on the specific characteristics of interaction presented in the pedagogical tasks. For instance, the stages *explication*, *interpret*, and *solution* are usually obligatory in the opinion exchange genre, whereas the stages *organization*, *review*, *fact finding*, and *persuasion* are frequently optional. Unlike Christie (2002) and Dreyfus et al. (2007), Busch concluded that the staging of a curriculum genre such as the opinion exchange is rather flexible, depending largely on the nature and purposes of the pedagogic task itself. In sum, this short review of literature has demonstrated that classroom oral discourse can be analyzed in generic terms using SFL as a framework and that such an analysis may reveal important insights for understanding how classroom discourse contributes to achieving educational purposes.

### Study Design and Methods

Adopting the concept of genre as a research lens implies that analysis should look at units of language larger than the clause, mapping them onto the social goals of teacher and learners (Perret, 2000; Wells, 1993). Accordingly, in this case study we focus on a segment of interaction between a teacher (Kelly, pseudonym) and her learners during an EFL lesson in order to address the following two questions: 1) What linguistic choices do Kelly and her students use to construct a listening exercise in an EFL lesson? 2) In what ways do these choices respond to the teacher’s pedagogic purposes?

#### Participants and context.

Kelly is an English (L2) teacher at a low SES school in an urban area of Sincelejo, Colombia.

She has taught English for about ten years and holds a degree in second language teaching and a specialization in translation. Kelly's first language is Spanish, but she has an advanced proficiency level in English (C2). Kelly teaches two English lessons per week to all students at her secondary school, one hour on one lesson and two hours on the other lesson. Her overarching goal for the English lessons with nine-graders, the context for this study, was to help students present their views or comments during whole class interaction. In her own words, she wanted "students to say something, to feel they can be part of a conversation in English" (our translation). Instead of a textbook, Kelly uses selected sections from *Go for it 3B* (Nunan, 2005).

For this study, we focused on Kelly's interactions with her ninth grade students, a group of 42 mixed-gender learners whose ages ranged from 13 to 16 years. Kelly's ninth graders have only studied English for three years since they did not receive L2 instruction during primary school. As a result, they had a limited L2 ability in oral communication at the time of this study. Regarding their participation in oral discussions, Kelly described it as "timid and consisting of isolated words" (our translation). All students in Kelly's ninth-grade class belong to low SES households, most of them located around the school.

#### Data sources.

The data reported here were part of a larger study on the role of teacher mediation for learners' meaning-making participation in L2 classrooms (Herazo & Donato, 2012). For the original study, data were collected through observations of five consecutive lessons in Kelly's classroom, audio and video recordings that were later transcribed. For the current study, however, we focused on only one of those five lessons, whose purpose was to help students identify specific information from an oral text and to encourage them to express causes and consequences. This latter goal, framed by Kelly's overarching purpose of promoting students' participation during whole class interaction.

The lesson that is the context of this study involved three complementary listening exercises, all based on a recording of a morning assembly where a principal talked to students about the rules of behavior for an upcoming school party. Since our analysis is very detailed, we focus on only one of those exercises lasting approximately 30 minutes. Our analysis was complemented by Kelly's comments about her interaction with learners that were obtained through stimulated recall (Gass & Mackey, 2000) and informal conversational interviews.

#### Data analysis.

We first divided the 30-minute interaction segment into episodes, corresponding to recognizable activities of the listening exercise Kelly and her students did. Next, we identified the clauses that constituted each episode and did four types of analyses to those clauses as suggested by Eggins (2004, p. 1) Analysis of Transitivity, which included process types (i.e., verbs), participants, and circumstances used in each clause (i.e., ideational metafunction), 2) Analysis of theme and rheme, which included identifying the first experiential element and the remaining part of each clause, 3) Analysis of Mood choices, which included grammatical mood (e.g., interrogative, declarative, imperative, minor) and clause constituents (e.g., subject, finite<sup>1</sup>, predictor, adjunct, complement),<sup>2</sup> and 4) Analysis of speech functions to determine the purposes of each clause within each episode (see Eggins & Slade, 1997). Although we did not analyze the way clauses were sequenced into patterns such as the IRE sequence, such patterns will be reported when relevant. Coding for each type of analysis was done using NVivo 10

1 The finite element roughly corresponds to auxiliary verbs in questions and negatives.

2 In SFL's view, language is used to realize three types of meanings or functions: the ideational metafunction or the use of language to represent experience, the interpersonal metafunction or the way language creates/reflects relations among people, and the textual metafunction or the way meaning is organized within a clause (see Eggins & Slade, 1997; Thompson, 2004).

(QSR International); inter-coder agreement was 85% on average for all four types of analyses.

## Findings

As noted, the listening exercise we analyze in this paper was based on a recording of a morning assembly. Prior to listening, Kelly and students compared the recording with a morning assembly they had attended before the lesson. Then, Kelly introduced the purposes of the exercise, namely to help students classify what they heard into two categories: what students could do (Dos) and what they could not do (DON'Ts) at the school party. To achieve this purpose, Kelly went through several stages that fulfilled specific pedagogic functions and, consequently, required different ways of using language, as shown below.

### Task orientation 1 (TO).

The first stage was a task orientation (TO) in order to organize learning activity. To this end, Kelly gave students instructions to do the listening and then checked understanding, as Transcript 1 shows.

#### *Transcript 1<sup>3</sup>. Task Orientation 1*

74 K (i) S2, I'm going to give you this information, right/ (ii) So you have to listen to the tape and (iii) classify the information according to what the principle says, (iv) if it's a DO or a DON't (v) if the principle prohibits the info or the activity (vi) you have to write it... on the don'ts... (vii) okay/ (viii) if the principle says (ix) you can do ...*pueden hacer* (x) you can do this (xi) you have to write it on the/

75 S1 (i) Do's

During TO Kelly used mainly material processes (i.e., action verbs) to tell students what they had to do (e.g., *give, classify, write, do*). She also used

3 We use lowercase roman numbers to number clauses. Utterances that start with the symbol correspond to si

some relational processes (i.e., verb to be) to ask students to classify the information they heard into the categories of DO's or DON'Ts (e.g., clause v in turn 74: "if it's a DO or a DON't"). She used the pronoun 'you' repeatedly as theme of her clauses, placing students as the responsible actors of the listening task (e.g., "you have to listen to the tape"; clauses **iii**, **iv**, **vii**, **xi**, and **xii** above). In addition, Kelly's turns were commands realized through declarative clauses to give students instructions (e.g., 'you have to listen to the tape', turn 74). Although most clauses were full (e.g., clauses **i**, **iii**, and **iv** in turn 74), Kelly also used elliptical ones (i.e., clauses missing one or more parts of speech) ending with rising intonation, to verify students' comprehension of her instructions or of the contents of the recording (e.g., clause **xii** in turn 74). During TO, students' took five turns and Kelly six. Students' turns, however, consisted of the 'complement' constituent<sup>4</sup> (turn 75) of Kelly's elliptical clauses (turn, 74, clause **xi**).

### Task preparation (TP).

In this stage Kelly familiarized students with the content of the recording, preparing them for the subsequent task of classifying information into DOs and DON'Ts. Kelly first showed paper slips with key phrases from the recording, read them aloud, and then asked students to read them. She explained the meaning of those phrases and asked several students to stick them on the board, as shown in Transcript 2.

multaneous talk. The slash / indicates rising intonation. Comments and translations appear in double parentheses. The number assigned to turns in the transcripts corresponds to the actual order in which each turn was spoken.

4 In SFL terminology, there are three types of grammatical structure in one clause since the clause realizes three types of meanings (i.e., interpersonal, experiential, textual) at the same time. A constituent is one element of those grammatical structures. Other constituents for the interpersonal structure of a clause are subject, predicator, finite, and adjunct. Constituents for the experiential structure are participant, process, and circumstances and for the textual structure are theme and rheme.

*Transcript 2. Task Preparation*

- 78 K (i) Okay well I am going to read the info(ii) an::d one of you, one of the girls, is going to help me with this,(iii) this is ((K shows paper slips with the phrases written on them)) bring friends from other schools (iv)ok bring friends from other schools,(v) not from Dulce Nombre.. (vi)maybe *por* (vii) maybe from another school
- 79 K (i) o.k.help me S3  
(S3 comes front)
- 80 K (Addressing S3) (i) stick it there ... (ii)yeah (iii)stick it there ...(iv) *ves colocandola alla* ((on the board))...(vi) like in a...(vii)like this ... (viii)uh hum ... well ((Several turns later))
- 153 K (i) ok now let's read the info again (K reads from papers that are stuck on the board) (ii)we have bring [brought] friends from other schools, (iii) bring your/
- 154 SS (i)Cds
- 155 K (i)cds, (ii) Be in the gym by/
- 156 SS (i)Seven pm
- 157 K (i) seven pm , (ii) be in the gym by/
- 158 SS (i)Nine pm
- 159 K (i)nine pm (ii)be in the /
- 160 Ss (i)Cafeteria
- 161 K (i)cafeteria by/ six pm (ii) bring your school/
- 162 Ss (i) six p.m
- 163 Ss (i)Identification
- 164 K (i)Identification(i) bring your parents /
- 165 S? (i)bring your parents Id

Kelly used material (e.g., *bring, wear, dress*) and relational processes (e.g., *be in the gym*, turn 157) to familiarize students with the content of the recording. Unlike TO, however, she used mental processes (i.e., 'thinking' or 'feeling' verbs) to direct students' attention to the phrases on the paper slips and thus prepare them for the

listening task. Moreover, she used *we* and *let's* as theme of some of her clauses (turn 153), which turned her into a co-participant of the actions she was asking students to do. Kelly used full and elliptical clauses, the former to explain instructions (e.g., turn 76) and the latter to check understanding and promote learner participation (e.g., turn 155). Added, most clauses were imperatives of the *let's* type to direct classroom activity (e.g., '*let's read the info again*' in turn 153) or related to the contents of the recording (e.g., *don't wear jeans*).

Kelly took 51 turns during this stage whereas students took 53. As in TO, Kelly's turns consisted of various interconnected clauses, whereas students' consisted of isolated clause constituents. Similarly to Kelly, students used many material processes, which they read or recycled from the paper slips (e.g., *wear jeans*). As in TO, students used the complement element of clauses (e.g., *Cds*, turn 154), but also used adjuncts (e.g., [*by seven pm*, turn 156) and predicators (e.g., *bring*, turn 165) to complete Kelly's ellipses. Although the interaction in this stage fits the IRE pattern, Kelly's initiating move consisted of elliptical clauses that helped students use the words and expressions that would appear in the recording, hence achieving the purpose of this stage.

**Task orientation (repeated).**

After giving students a preview of the language of the recording during TP, Kelly reminded students of what they had to do during the upcoming listening task, namely classify the information they heard into the categories of DO's or DON'Ts. For this, she used the same type of lexicogrammatical resources: material clauses to instruct students and elliptical clauses to check understand of her instructions. Students, on their part, used little English during this episode, mainly to respond to Kelly's elliptical moves with the complement constituent of clauses. Kelly and students had a similar number of turns (nine and eight respectively), but Kelly's turns were again significantly longer.



**Comprehension task (CT) and verification task 1 (VT1).**

Whereas in the TO Kelly gave instructions and in TP she provided a language pre-view, in the CT Kelly played the recording in chunks corresponding to each party rule. This means that the CT was realized non-linguistically, as students listened to the recording and classified the information they heard into DOs and DON'Ts silently. After students listened to each chunk, Kelly asked questions to verify students' recall of the content of the recording. For this reason, we named this stage verification task (VT1).

*Transcript 4. Verification Task 1*

- 277 K ((Plays tape again for the next rule: 'bring your school ID'))
- 278 K (i)What is that one?
- 279 S1 (i)the school ID
- 280 S2 (i)the school ID
- 281 K (i)The school ID is a- is in the DOs/ or in the DON'Ts
- 282 SS (i)Dos
- 283 K (i)Okay could you please stick that information? (ii)Who wants to do it?
- 284 S2 (i)((puts hand up))
- 285 K (i)but hurry up S2
- 286 S2 ((comes to the board and sticks slip of paper under DOs column))

In this stage Kelly used mainly relational processes (i.e., verb to be) to verify whether students had classified the information of the recording correctly, into the categories of DOs or DON'Ts. For this she used clauses like the one in turn 281 (*the school ID is a- is in the DOs or in the DON'Ts?*) or questions like "*drinks and/ food is that a DO or a DON'T?*" used later in this stage. This meant that whole phrases like '*the school ID*' (turn 281) appeared as subject and theme of Kelly's clauses. In other words, these phrases became the object of conversation between Kelly and her students and were presented linguistically as such (e.g.,

*"drinks and/ food is that a DO or a DON'T?"*). The use of interrogatives increased during VT1 (see turn 278, 281 above), since this stage fulfilled a verification function. Kelly's questioning was often realized through declarative clauses ending with rising intonation (e.g., turn 281).

Whereas Kelly took 58 turns during this stage, students took 66. Students answered Kelly's questions (e.g., turn 279), complied with her commands (e.g., turns 284, 286), and completed her elliptical moves, all of this within an IRE pattern. In most cases, students participated by providing the missing element in Kelly's elliptical clauses (e.g., turn 282). Although students uttered 11 full clauses in this stage, these were a repetition of clauses that appeared in the recording (e.g., *don't bring any food or drink*). As can be seen, students' turns were short and consisted of isolated clause constituents. However, these turns showed they categorized the information correctly in most cases, achieving the purpose of this stage.

**Verification Task 2 (VT2).**

After VT1, Kelly asked students to report what the recording stated concerning the consequences of not following the party rules. Although the function of this stage was to verify students' recall as well, this time Kelly asked them to use the conditional clause complex '*if ..., subject + will/ won't...*' (e.g., *if they wear jeans, the teacher won't let them in*) that she had modelled in a previous lesson.

*Transcript 5. Verification Task 2*

- 340 K (i) I got a question... (ii) what are the CONSEQUENCES? (iii) what are the CONSEQUENCES (iv) if the students do these activities? ((pointing to slips of paper on the board))
- 341 S1 (i) ((S1 puts his hand up))
- 342 K (i) Uh hum
- 343 S1 (i) If... they wear jeans/... (ii) the teacher won't .... let .... them ... in

- 344 K (i) Uh hum/ (ii) in that's right (iii) that's one of the consequences. ((Some turns later))
- 362 K (i) okay... (ii) could you remind me any other any other consequence (iii) maybe if that students those students bring FOOD (iv) or maybe if they bring friends from other schools?
- 363 S2 (i) Fight
- 364 K (i) They will/
- 365 S2 (i) fight
- 366 S4 (i) with the others eh...with other boys
- 367 K (i) With other/ boys (ii) so in a- (iii) yeah (iv) that's the idea ... (a lengthy explanation follows)

Kelly used many material processes (e.g., *happen*, *confiscate*, *bring*) involving human participants as subject (e.g., *you*, *the teacher*) in this stage. Unlike VT1, those linguistic choices referred to the content of the recording in terms of the consequences of 'people doing/not doing things', rather than in terms of categories of information like DO's and DON'Ts. To help students use the conditional structure mentioned above, albeit within an IRE pattern, Kelly used elliptical clauses that created frames for students to participate (e.g., turn 364), as was common in previous stages. Kelly also resorted to open questions to lead students to use that grammatical structure (e.g., turn 340, clauses **iii** and **iv**). Kelly used mostly declarative clauses that revoiced students' contributions (e.g., turn 364) or commented on students' interventions ("that's the idea", turn 367, clause **iv**).

Following Kelly's initiating questions, students expressed consequence independently (e.g., turn 343) or with Kelly's help (e.g., turns 362-367), using the conditional pattern mentioned above. Accordingly, this stage fulfilled Kelly's intention to provide practice on that grammatical pattern. Like Kelly, students used mainly material processes, some of which came from the recording (e.g., *confiscate*, *bring*) while others were introduced

by students (e.g., *fight*, *hurry*) themselves. These processes represented the reality of the recording as people doing actions with consequences. In sum, although in this stage Kelly verified recall of the content of the recording, students also added content of their own, mostly through predicators like *fight* (turns 363, 365) or *leave*. In quantitative terms, participation was almost equal between Kelly (48 turns) and her students (44 turns), but Kelly's turns continued to be longer and were made of clauses involving all necessary constituents.

### Extension task (ET).

After doing VT1 and VT2, Kelly sought to elicit students' opinions about the party rules. Since such elicitation went beyond simply asking students to report what they understood from the recording, we have called this stage Extension Task (ET).

### Transcript 6. Extension Task

- 452 K (i) by pairs you are going to give me your opinion about those rules (ii) what is your opinion about those rules?... (iii) do you like those rules? (iv) do you like- (v) do you AGREE with those rules? (vi) like and agree are similar... (vii) like agree with the rules/ (viii) what do you say?
- 453 S1 (i) I like
- 454 K (i) remember (ii) that is a school party.. (iii) so for the school party ... (iv) let's picture (v) that the school party is here at DulceNombre.. (vi) so you hav- (vii) tomorrow night you have a school party that you can't wear jeans (viii) you can't bring food or drinks or (ix) you can't bring friends from other schools... (x) what do you think about that party? (xi) what do you think about those rules? (xii) what is your opinion?
- 455 S1 (i) I like
- 456 K (i) you like it/
- 457 S1 (i) estoy de acuerdo

- 458 K (i)why? (ii)do you agree\ (iii) you agree with the rules (iv) what about you?  
 459 S2 (i) teacher XXX  
 460 K (i)you don't/ agree.. (ii)why?  
 461 S2 (i)the party eh.. will be/ boring  
 462 K (i)oh.. that's one of the reasons for you.. (ii) the party/  
 463 S2 (i) will be/ boring  
 464 K (i)the party will be BORING (ii) do you agree?  
 465 SS (i) yes

As its focus was on students' opinion, the ET was dominated by mental (e.g., *think, like, agree* in turns 452, 454, and 458 respectively) and relational processes (e.g., *is* in clause ii, turn 452). Kelly's clauses contained human and personal participants such as 'I' and 'you' rather than non-human impersonal participants referring to categories of information (e.g., DO's, DON'Ts). Her choice of *Wh-question* words and then *finite element + pronoun* as theme (e.g., *what do you think about that party?* clause x in turn 454) also reflected her focus on students' opinions. Kelly's frequent use of 'you' as subject (18 times in this stage) positioned students as major participants in the interaction and confirms the personal orientation of this stage.

The ET's focus on personal opinion could also be seen in students' participation. Indeed, they frequently positioned themselves as subject and theme of their own clauses, sometimes explicitly by the use of the pronoun 'I' (e.g., 'I like' in turns 453 and 455) and other times implicitly in the elided part of their short answers (e.g. turn 465 'yes,[I do]'). Although students' participation decreased in this stage (26 turns vs. 53 by Kelly), it was qualitatively more significant, since students expressed authentic meaning beyond what the recording presented and even used all the necessary constituents, albeit in only one clause (e.g., turn 461).

**Discussion**

This study sought to analyze a L2 listening exercise following SFL's concept of curriculum genres. As shown in the previous section, our analysis revealed that the listening exercise constituted a curriculum genre of the L2 classroom, consisting of the stages of task orientation, task preparation, comprehension task, verification task, and extension task. These stages were sequenced as follows:



Each stage played a specific function in achieving the purpose of the listening genre and, consequently, had particular lexicogrammatical characteristics, as we explained in the previous section. This confirms Christie's (1991, 2002) and Wells' (1993) claims that the characteristics of classroom discourse reflect the pedagogic goals of teachers, hence the need to study classroom discourse in connection with such goals.

Unlike Christie's (2002) and Dreyfus (2008) analyses of curriculum genres into apparently fixed stages, Kelly's discursive staging of the listening exercise was flexible and recursive. Thus, instead of just giving instructions to students, having them listen to the whole text at once, and then checking comprehension, Kelly played the recording in chunks (CT) that were followed by verification questions (VT). This scaffolded the listening task into more manageable chunks (Donato, 1994; Wood, Bruner, Rose, 1976), hence providing students more chances to complete it. In addition, she added a Preparation Task (PT) that previewed the language of the recording and an Extension Task (ET) in which students had the chance to express their opinions. Whereas in Verification Task 1 and 2 (VT1 and VT2) Kelly focused on eliciting students' answers to the Comprehension Task, as is common in the comprehension approach Field (1998) describes, the PT and ET

expanded the listening genre, showing Kelly's concern for student participation. In other words, the PT and ET 'opened up' the genre to match students' need for support at the time that helped reach the goals of the listening activity, namely to identify specific information and provide chances for students to participate orally in the lesson. This realization of the listening genre seems to respond to Busch's (2007) call to represent curriculum genres as recursive and flexible, dependent on the instructional goals of lessons.

As it was shown in the previous section, Kelly's interaction with her students followed the IRE pattern in the preparation and verification tasks. Whereas this may be seen as a drawback in Kelly's pedagogy that contrived students' oral L2 production (Hall & Walsh, 2002; van Lier, 1996), our analysis revealed that this pattern served to fulfill the functions of those stages, namely to prepare students for the comprehension task and to verify understanding after listening. Accordingly, we side with Nassaji and Wells (2000) and Christie (2002) when they claim that the IRE pattern has a relevant function to play in the L2 classroom if seen in the larger context of a whole sequence of activities. As Wells (1993) warns, the IRE pattern is "neither good nor bad; rather, its merits—or demerits—depend upon the purposes it is used to serve on particular occasions, and upon the larger goals by which those purposes are informed" (p. 3).

Concerning the lexicogrammatical characteristics of the listening exercise, our findings show that these were clearly pedagogically oriented. To be true, our analysis of transitivity, mood, and theme-rheme revealed differences across stages that resulted from their specific pedagogic functions. For example, the orientation and preparation stages were dominated by material and relational processes, imperative clauses and commands; the verification stage was characterized by relational processes and by the use of categories of information (Dos and DON'Ts) as theme and subject of interrogatives or declaratives; and the

extension stage by mental processes appearing in questions and statements related to opinion.

One lexicogrammatical characteristic common to almost all stages was Kelly's use of ellipsis ending with rising intonation, which students completed using isolated clause constituents like complements. Although this may look as a case of simple and meaningless repetition within the IRE format, this use of ellipsis created a linguistic scaffold (cf. Herazo & Donato, 2012; Toth, 2008) to help students step in when otherwise they would not be able to do it on their own. Accordingly, we interpret this situation positively, as a sign of students' efforts to participate in the lesson despite their limited linguistic repertoire, especially at the extension stage. These efforts are significant because, on one hand, students' answers contributed to achieving the goals of the stages of the listening genre. On the other, students' contributions showed their initial attempts to become peripheral participants during the lesson (Lave and Wenger, 1991).

In addition to ellipsis, Kelly's choices contributed to creating a classroom atmosphere in which authority was negotiated. For example, instead of using an imperative to realize a command, a choice that affirms authority, Kelly used questions that implied some degree of negotiation (e.g., '*could you please write it?*') or declaratives that functioned as commands (e.g., '*we are going to classify the information into DO's and DON'Ts*'). Also, instead of realizing the commands with an imperative in which the subject was elided (e.g., '*read the info again*'), she included herself in the command using *let's*. Similarly to Christie (1991), we think that those choices allowed Kelly to create solidarity with her students at the time that she assumed a position of less authority within the lesson.

## Conclusions

One lesson to be learned from this study is that there is more to a listening activity than simply introducing the listening task, playing the

recording for students to listen and then verifying their understanding. As we have shown, albeit using only one case, doing a listening activity in an L2 context requires staging the listening task so as to provide enough support for students to understand what they hear. In addition, there is no reason why a listening task cannot trigger opportunities for students to be part of oral interaction. As we showed with our analysis of the extension task, the listening task can be a valid site for attempts to engage students in basic conversation, especially with low-level students such as was the case in this study.

To conclude, SFL constitutes a revealing lens with which to look at discourse in the EFL classroom. Our study, however, was limited to 30 minutes of interaction between an EFL teacher and her students during only one listening exercise. Further research can look at more instances of this important learning activity across different classrooms in order to reach more robust descriptions. Since a listening exercise genre in an EFL classroom is never only about listening but could involve other language skills such as speaking or writing, a clear understanding of the way in which the different stages of the genre are realized linguistically and the language skills involved will facilitate teacher's planning, monitoring of students' learning (Byrnes, 2009b).

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**How to reference this article:** Sagre, A., & Herazo, J. D. (2015). Generic, discourse, and lexicogrammatical characteristics of a listening exercise in an EFL classroom. *Íkala, Revista de Lenguaje y Cultura*, 20 (1), 113-127. doi: 10.17533/udea.ikala.v20n1a07