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# Authentic Input in Early Second Language Learning

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AUTHENTIC INPUT IN EARLY SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

A Thesis Presented

by

BRIDGET CONNORS PINSONNEAULT

Submitted to the Graduate School of the  
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment  
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AUTHENTIC INPUT IN EARLY SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

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## ABSTRACT

### AUTHENTIC INPUT IN EARLY SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

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Several foreign language teaching methods facilitate the acquisition of a second language. This research proposes a new pedagogical method for teaching second languages, which is especially practical for younger L2 learners. Lenneberg (1967) has proposed the Critical Period Hypothesis which states that the critical period for foreign language acquisition ends when the acquirer reaches puberty (DeKeyser 2000). Therefore, his work may imply that learning a second language during this “critical period” is useful for foreign language learning. Furthermore, Krashen’s (1982) “Affective Filter Hypothesis” links authentic input as a useful tool in the second language classroom because this type of input can lower the “Affective Filter” of the second language learner.

The current study examines if authentic input leads to acquisition of lexical chunks<sup>1</sup>, acquisition of vocabulary and the beginning stages of the acquisition of some aspects of the lexicon, such as root morphemes and plural morphemes, and in some cases, gender morphemes in Spanish for a group of second language learners whose native language is English. Authentic input is incorporated into the language instruction through the use of songs, games, stories that are derived from the target language and

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<sup>1</sup> Lexical chunks will be defined as vocabulary words and small phrases, such as “Estoy bien” for example.

culture. This research proposes that language transference is occurring from first language, or L1, to second language, or L2, as the participants may fall under Minimal Trees Hypothesis of Vainikka and Young Scholten (1994; 1996a; 1996b). Since the participants are still developing lexicon and lexical chunks in their L1, this occurrence may aid in the transference from the L1 to the L2.

The subjects of the study are seventeen kindergarten, first and second grade students, who have not previously learned a second language. The results from the study confirm that the participants did learn lexical chunks in the target language after being introduced to the L2 via the authentic materials. Additionally, the participants were able to demonstrate acquisition of agreement in number in the L2. The long-term results also confirm the initial set of results.

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## CHAPTER 1

### DEFINING AUTHENTIC INPUT AND ESTABLISHING A CONTEXT FOR AUTHENTIC INPUT IN THE EARLY LANGUAGE LEARNING

#### 1.1 Introduction

The objective of this thesis is to investigate the use of authentic input as a teaching technique in the elementary school second language classroom. Children are able learn and acquire a second language. However, there is a dramatic decline in early foreign language education in the United States. This decline leads to a lack of materials for young second language learners and a lack of methods to teach languages to younger learners. This thesis sets out to prove that authentic materials can lead to second language acquisition of lexical chunks. It also shows how authentic materials may lead up to acquisition of agreement in number in a second language. The study investigates a new method for teaching early second language learners. This method draws upon other pedagogical methods already set in place for second language learners, and adds the component of the use of authentic materials. It examines concepts from generative grammar in order to investigate what the child second language learner has ready and available to them in their brain when beginning to learn and then later acquire the second language. Here Chomsky's Universal Grammar is investigated. Behaviorism to some extent may also play a small role in second language acquisition. The role of behaviorism is relevant in that language behavior as an observable behavior. Repetition of input in the form of music, movement, games etc. may be the stimuli and language behavior may be the response. It is the intention of this thesis to investigate if the learner does already have some language components set in place initially at the start of second

language learning by investigating an initial state hypothesis. These components would be a result of transfer of structures from L1 such as the NP (noun phrase) with strong number agreement features, and a weak node for gender agreement features, that will reset to strong as input is analyzed. The gender agreement parameter is “weak” in English and will be reset to “strong” in successful learners of Spanish. And, if provided with proper input, such as authentic materials, and proper repetition of that input, the second language learner can acquire a second language through a method that uses authentic materials. This method is presented in section three point six of chapter three.

Vygotsky also is considered for his role in peer collaboration in terms of learning. Authentic materials incorporate a variety of learner strategies which makes them a perfect technique for a young five or six year old that is learning a second language.

Chapter one presents an introduction to authentic input and how it relates to second language<sup>2</sup> education for early learners. Additionally, this chapter reviews the politics concerning the need for citizens proficient in more than one language in the United States. The U.S. government is currently in a situation where there is a strong need for proficient second language speakers. In order to address this issue, authentic input is introduced as a viable method for the implementation of early foreign language classes in the United States schools. Foreign language education that starts early will in turn lead to attainment higher proficiency levels of a foreign language for the nation’s citizens.

In this first chapter I address the issue of the need for more early foreign language education programs in the United States. My argument in this chapter is that these

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<sup>2</sup> The terms ‘second language’ and ‘foreign language’ will be used interchangeably throughout this document.

programs need to start in our nation's elementary schools at the earliest grade level possible in order for the United States citizens to attain superior proficiency in a second language. Chapter one also attempts to reveal how the United States government is soliciting for more citizens to become educated and therefore proficient in a second language. The chapter goes on to explain the types of foreign language classes that are currently being offered in the nation's schools. This chapter also details some of the policies established in order to create second language proficiency for citizens in the United States. The issues stated in this chapter are important to the relevance of the overarching topic of authentic input in early second language learning because they attempt to explain the amount of early foreign language education that is currently being offered in the United States. From this information we can assess whether or not authentic input in early second language learning is the appropriate method towards achieving citizens who are proficient in a second language by the time they have graduated high school.

#### 1.1.1 Purpose of the study

This research focuses on authentic input in an elementary school setting as it relates to the teaching of Spanish to Anglophones. For the purposes of the present study, the term authentic input is defined as songs, games, stories and other pedagogical materials that are used in the target language. This type of authentic input is more adequate to the particular needs and personal interests of a young group of learners. The present study determines how authentic input leads to acquisition and learning of lexical

chunks phrases in the target language for young second language learners through a possible transference of NP from English to Spanish.

### 1.1.2 Approach

In order to approach this problem, chapter two consists of the review of related literature which includes the theoretical frameworks relevant to the present study. This thesis reviews previous research and studies from the fields of psycholinguistics and second language acquisition. Additionally, it reviews theories of language learning and a variety of teaching methodologies for SLA. The review of related literature begins with cognitive developmental theories by key psychologists such as Vygotsky, Gardner and Skinner. It is important to determine how children develop and learn. Furthermore this work explores first language acquisition as it relates to second language acquisition. Children learning a second language may be relying on their native language to help them understand key concepts and terms from the second language. Some consideration is given to the similarities and the differences between how a child learns their mother tongue versus how he or she learns the second language. Here Chomsky's theory of Universal Grammar is investigated in order to see if aspects of this theory are relevant to second language acquisition in children. Also, initial state hypotheses following White (2003) are reviewed.

A review of literature pertaining to age and how it relates to second language acquisition is included in chapter two, with a focus on Eric Lenneberg's (1967) theory of the Critical Age Period. Age can be considered a relevant factor for the acquisition of some components of a second language.

Research pertaining to second language teaching methods is reviewed. This review of teaching methods is pertinent to the reader later when he or she is examining chapter three of this thesis because chapter three resolves to describe a variety of teaching methods used in the present study. In Chapter three I develop my main hypothesis. This chapter presents my study. It analyzes the data collected and its relevance. Chapter four summarizes the conclusions.

### 1.1.3 Relevance

This study brings together the above mentioned fields using second language input with a variety of pedagogical methods to investigate how early second language learners can become skilled at the target language. The study makes assumptions about the internalization and command of the target language by the young group of learners. The research began by conducting field work at an elementary school. The collected data was from native Anglophone students in kindergarten, first and second grade who had no prior experience learning Spanish, nor any other foreign language. The researcher taught two groups of students Spanish for a period of six weeks each. The subjects were part of an after school enrichment activity where they were able to take classes for six week time periods. After each six week session, the students were required to switch classes in order to learn a new subject. Therefore, for this study, data from two of the six week sessions were used. For this reason, two groups of students were taught Spanish separately, each group had a combination of kindergarten, first and second grade students. Two six week sessions of Spanish lessons occurred in order to utilize more research subjects for the study. Data from both sessions was combined to formulate the



overall results. The total amount of students in the study was seventeen. The target language classes met once a week for one and a half hour meetings. The children were exposed to Spanish through a variety of activities that used authentic input in conjunction with a variety of pedagogical methodologies. The pedagogical methods used in conjunction with the authentic input will be described in chapter two in more detail. However, to go over the main points, they are: the Total Physical Response method, where the students use their listening skills in conjunction with large motor skill movement; the Whole Language method, which incorporates the use of real world materials, such as, authentic texts instead of the use of translated texts in the target language; and, the Natural Approach, which incorporates a stress free atmosphere in combination with comprehensible input, or input which is just a bit beyond what the learner already knows.

The present study addresses how pedagogical methods in conjunction with the use of authentic input materials have an effect on the acquisition of the target language by the L2 students. Additionally, this thesis addresses whether or not lexical chunks in the target language were acquired by the L2 learners through the use of authentic input teaching methodologies. In order to determine the outcome for the L2 students, a final assessment was administered to the students.

## 1.2 Introduction to authentic input in the framework of a viable early language program for (pre)-literate children

Most children in kindergarten are considered to be pre-literate or developing literacy. Children are literate for their level. This means that a kindergarten student has

the expected reading level and writing ability for their age. By the time children are in school they have both aural and oral literacy but he and she are still developing their overall literacy to include reading and writing (Personal communication Weston 2007). Children are developing literacy in the sense that although they do not read and write, they have some access to oral literature. For example a kindergarten teacher will read a story to his or her students. How do we know a child is creating with their L1? Creating with language is introduced through literacy or literary contact. The child invents new utterances to express his or her needs. Perhaps he or she can be evaluated through singing a song, then by using the language of the song in a new way. Also, we can observe evidence of literacy for young learners when a child is able to tell their audience a series of events that occurred, or imitate storytelling he or she heard. One of the most likely methods for a child to provide us with evidence of their oral literacy is through play.

In order to establish methods for teaching a group of young second language learners who cannot yet read or write the term authentic input is used in the present study. Authentic input is 'authentic' because the input is given entirely in the target language. Additionally, authentic input is appropriate for the age and grade level of the students. Most important, it is derived from the target culture. These are songs, games, rhymes etcetera, that are sung, danced to, played, chanted etcetera, by children who speak the target language. This input can arrive through a variety of authentic teaching materials including singing, games, stories, and can be combined with other pedagogical methods that provide input to the student in the target language. The main reason to use an authentic input pedagogical method in the early foreign language classroom is that it

provides lessons that not only excite and motivate the L2 learner, but also these lessons are comprehensible for the age level of the L2 learner. For example, we cannot expect a kindergarten or first grade student to write a paragraph in the target language after one month of L2 lessons. However, it would be realistic to expect a student of this age to sing a song in the target language after one month of instruction. The children can then take elements from the song and use them in a creative way, such as using vocabulary in a new context. Through authentic materials pedagogic methods the L2 learner can extract the information he or she acquires from the authentic input and apply that information to new concepts. In chapter three methods for using authentic input in the early second language classroom are presented.

### 1.3 United States society and foreign language education

“The United States has traditionally had special problems defining foreign language competence because of the historic inattention to languages in our general educational programs” (Herzog 2007). The majority of educational policymakers seem to believe that starting a second language in middle school is good enough for our citizens. It is my belief that this view could be due to a lack of understanding as to how a young child can learn a second language. The current document confirms that children as young as the age of five years old can learn a significant amount of vocabulary in a second language as long as he or she is receiving input appropriate to their needs.

The United States is a country with a vast multicultural population. The U.S. government as an employer is currently seeking higher levels of language proficiency, especially for L2 speakers of European Origin Languages such as Spanish and French

where the maximum S5 level of proficiency from the Interlanguage Roundtable is now required (Personal communication Weston 2007). Therefore, it is necessary for more young children in the United States to be proficient in a second language. In order for this to occur, school systems must implement foreign language programs that begin in the elementary school rather than the middle school level or later. Currently, this situation is the norm for many school systems across the United States (Center for Applied Linguistics 2007). Studies have shown that approximately 25% of public elementary schools provide young learners with foreign language curriculum versus 65% of suburban private schools (Met 2003). Research shows that children who study a foreign language show increased cognitive ability. According to the Center for Applied Linguistics (2007), there are a variety of benefits of early second language learning including increased creativity, improved performance on basic skills tests and the Scholastic Aptitude Test, and enhanced skills in English among many other potential benefits. The majority of children in the United States are first introduced to a second language in high school (Center for Applied Linguistics 2007). In order to partake in the wonderful benefits of learning a second language, at the very least, our nation's children would benefit from being provided with the opportunity to learn the target language at a much younger age.

In today's multicultural society, the children of our society would profit from a cultural understanding of the Latin American and Spanish speaking world. This could be acquired without having to travel to Spanish speaking countries while the child is young. This is something that we as educators can inspire in our elementary schools across the United States. In order to do this, children need not only to learn about other cultures, but

also they should become equipped with the tools required to communicate with people from different cultures. Therefore, later on, they will be better prepared for their future employment, especially in the emerging global economy.

According to the 2000 United States census, the total population of the nation is approximately two hundred and eighty two million people. Of those citizens, approximately thirty five million of them are Hispanic or Latino (U.S. census 2000). This data shows that it would greatly benefit our nation's children to learn Spanish. Therefore, they could communicate and have a deeper connection with their friends and neighbors.

#### 1.4 Types of foreign language programs available in the United States

The United States currently offers a variety of foreign language programs. In the elementary schools, these foreign language programs can range from immersion programs to programs that explore languages.

##### 1.4.1 Immersion programs

Immersion programs offer the greatest amount of time in foreign language study. They can vary from full or total immersion programs to partial immersion programs. In full or total language immersion programs, children learn all of their subjects in the target language. This means that subjects such as social studies, science and math for example, would be taught entirely in Spanish. Partial immersion programs only teach a portion of the curriculum in the target language. In these types of programs, sometimes half of the school day is spent teaching and learning in the target language, while the other half of

the school day is spent using the students' native language. In both types of language immersion programs, the foreign language is the standard for content instruction rather than the subject of instruction. Research has shown that students learning a language through immersion programs reach higher levels of proficiency than students in other types of foreign language programs (Curtain & Dahlberg 2004).

#### 1.4.2 FLES

Foreign language in the elementary school or FLES programs, as they are generally recognized, have the largest number of programs in which a second language is taught as its own subject. FLES programs intend to provide some degree of language proficiency through a sequential language learning experience for students. These programs usually start at varying grade levels in the elementary school. The grade level when the second language is started, amount of time given to the second language classes and the amount of teachers allotted for these types of programs are due to a variety of political and social factors. These factors are also the reasons that many school systems do not include FLES programs in their curriculum. It seems that funding is one of the main underlying factors of learning a second language early, and who must wait until at least middle or high school to start their second language education (Met 2003).

#### 1.4.3 FLEX

According to the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (1998), another type of foreign language program is referred to as the foreign language exploratory program, sometimes referred to as FLEX. Similar to FLES programs, the

subject of instruction is the target language in foreign language exploratory programs. In this type of instruction, students are introduced to the language in general and cultural concepts of the target language. Generally, these FLEX classes meet once or twice a week for about thirty minutes to explore the language (Curtain & Dahlberg 2004). Due to the limited exposure to the target language that these programs provide, children will not become completely fluent in the language. However, these types of classes encourage and motivate children for later learning.

### 1.5 Current early foreign language programs in the United States

The Center for Applied Linguistics is leading the way in generating data concerning foreign language instruction in the United States. Their research has shown that currently in the United States, secondary schools seem to outnumber elementary schools in regards to the amount of foreign language programs offered to students. The most recent information in relating to language programs offered in elementary and secondary schools was completed from a 1997 survey of various schools (Rhodes & Branaman 1999). Nancy Rhodes reported during the 2007ACTFL conference that the next edition of the national foreign language instruction survey is due out in about two years, or roughly 2009-2010 (R. Raymond, personal communication, January 7, 2008). Prior to the 1997 survey, the Center for Applied Linguistics had completed a survey in 1987; the 1997 survey was a replication of the initial investigation. The investigation entailed a random survey sent out to school principals "...at approximately 6% of all public and private elementary schools in the United States" (Rhodes & Branaman 1999). This survey is useful in terms of information demonstrating not only the amount of

elementary schools offering early second language programs, but also it has some insight into why secondary schools seem to outweigh elementary schools in terms of number of language classes offered.

According to the investigation completed by Rhodes and Branaman (1999), the amount of elementary schools reporting to have foreign language instruction "... has increased by nearly ten percent" (Rhodes & Branaman 1999) from the earlier decade's survey. This information is promising as it shows a significant increase in early foreign language instruction. Of the languages researched in the survey done by Branaman and Rhodes (1999), it was acknowledged that Spanish instruction increased whereas French instruction decreased (Rhodes & Branaman 1999). Also in regards to program types, the majority of the elementary schools offered the FLEX type of instruction where exposure to the language was at the introductory level. According to this report, of the schools reporting to have early foreign language programs, only seven percent of them had curriculum programs where students would achieve a high level of proficiency (Rhodes & Branaman 1999). It was also stated that many of the elementary foreign language teachers were not as highly certified as the secondary school teachers (Rhodes & Branaman 1999).

#### 1.5.1 Addressing challenges in early second language programs

Why do the majority of the programs in the United States begin at the secondary educational level? Policymakers and school administration personnel have a variety of concerns about starting early foreign language programs. The time has come to address



these concerns and create logical solutions. These solutions will in turn lead the way towards a society that is proficient in at least two or more languages.

There are a variety of reasons why many schools only initiate exploratory early foreign language programs if they choose to create an early foreign language program at all. According to Curtain and Dahlberg (2000), many elementary school foreign language programs will not be successful due to poor decisions regarding planning (Curtain & Dahlberg 2000). First and foremost Curtain and Dahlberg (2000) cite scheduling as a problem for foreign language classes, stating that there is a delusion that children can learn foreign languages without extensive exposure to the target language. This can be related to funding because many schools only provide limited funds for foreign language learning, so, the amount of time spent in foreign language classes is limited. This limitation on the amount of classes and the amount of time spent in the class results in limited spending for related costs such as the salary of the foreign language teacher, the resources and materials, and the space available for the actual class.

Lack of space within the school for a foreign language classroom could be another reason why early foreign language programs may not be so popular in the elementary schools. Oftentimes foreign language teachers in the elementary schools do not have their own classroom in which to teach the target language. The teacher must go from room to room carrying their supplies with them throughout the day. Schools blame the lack of funding for the foreign language teacher as an explanation for the shortage of classroom space for the FL class; many times citing they have just enough funds for salary and supplies. This has a harmful effect on the early foreign language program in that it leaves the language teacher with a negative feeling of self worth within the school.

Usually, in these types of situations, the foreign language teacher is the only teacher without their own classroom, thus making them appear to be more like a visitor to the students' classroom rather than the teacher. This is highlighted when the foreign language classes meet for maybe only thirty minutes a week. This can also have a very negative affect on the students. Psychologically the children are accustomed to going out of their regular classroom for art, music, computers, gym, and etcetera. This change of routine with the foreign language teachers as a 'visitor' to the room can cause the students to think of the class as not being as important as their other classes.

Many schools with FLES programs only have one foreign language teacher per school. When commenting on her school system's FLES program, Kathleen Riordan, Foreign Language Director for Springfield Public Schools comments that "... it would be ideal if all schools could offer more time for foreign language instruction ... providing adequate instructional time for all students in the school necessitates very creative scheduling of the foreign language teachers' time" (Gilzow & Branaman 2000).

Of the many challenges to initiating or keeping an early second language program in our elementary schools, two are found to be the leading concerns. Funding and articulation are the two main challenges to early second language programs. Gilzow and Branaman (2000) did a study of "Model Early Foreign Language Programs" in the United States. Of the eight schools recognized in Gilzow and Branaman's (2000) analysis, four of them cited funding as one of their main challenges. Additionally, articulation was cited as another concern by many of the schools (Gilzow & Branaman 2000). At times, both of these concerns go hand in hand. The study shows that in Ohio for example at the Toledo Public Schools, lack of funding has lead to major articulation

issues. This school system has a foreign language program in the elementary schools, but is lacking a seventh grade program (Gilzow & Branaman 2000). As educators we need to come up with logical solutions to these challenges so that our children are able to reap the rewards of early second language education.

In regards to articulation, many children coming from elementary foreign language programs move backwards in middle school. This is due to differences in pedagogy and curriculum. What I mean by moving backwards is that the FL students seem to go from learning many second language skills in the elementary school only to start from scratch again in the middle schools. This happens through the use of textbooks in middle schools that start at the very beginning level of the target language. Many elementary school foreign language teachers reported that they like to use their own materials instead of textbooks. The survey completed by Rhodes and Branaman (1999) showed the most popular teaching materials at the elementary level were teacher created materials. This usually lends itself to more communicative activities whereas there is more focus on grammatical aspects at the secondary level through the extensive use of the textbook. Students oftentimes have difficulties continuing from the elementary school language program into the middle school program because of this backwards movement. If the school system does not have their own program goals set into place, it would be difficult for the middle school foreign language teacher to identify at what level they should be teaching students coming from FLES programs. Frequently, middle school FL programs differ from elementary programs in that they use a more standard textbook and tend to use this text as the focal point, often creating the curriculum around

the text. This in turn, makes it easier for high school to follow because they can follow the sequence of the text as the students move from school year to school year.

Budget tends to be a concern for many schools (Gilzow & Branaman 2000). The cost of implementing an elementary foreign language program includes a budget necessary for the cost of the foreign language teacher(s), supplies and space. Initiating a FLES program may allow a school system to receive some sort start up funds through state or federal grants (Gilzow & Branaman 2000), however there is no guarantee that those funds will continue through the future years. In Prince George's County Public Schools in Maryland, everything was going fine concerning funding until the program was no longer new. "The amount of funding has decreased ... as the program has completed its thirteen years of implementation" (Gilzow & Branaman 2000:120). For the Springfield Massachusetts foreign language program the budget they are given depends upon test scores. If the test scores are successful, then the budget is sufficient (Gilzow & Branaman 2000). Many other schools must take a gamble as to whether or not they will receive the funding to continue the program in the following school year. Lack of funding can lead to a variety of issues including such things as program evaluation, the successfulness of the language program and the loss of highly qualified foreign language teachers.

## 1.6 The call for early second language programs in the United States

### 1.6.1 Politics and history

A well-known figure in early second language learning, Myriam Met of the National Foreign Language Center, reported in both 1993 and a decade later in 2003 in

regards to language education policy in the United States. Her findings reported that over the course of one decade there has not been much change with the exception of the National Standards for Foreign Language Learning, which she states were established on a voluntary basis rather than being mandated by policy makers. “Although voluntary, rather than mandated, the Standards have been a source of professional renewal and the basis for both state and local curriculum initiatives” (Met 2003). Met has stated that currently our policymakers “... remain unconvinced of either the importance of language learning or our ability to produce students with the levels of proficiency needed” (Met 2003:590). She goes on to explain that most of these policymakers have achieved their own success without being proficient in a foreign language. These policymakers also do not see schools as having the capacity to provide students with the skills to become proficient second language users (Met 2003). On the other hand, she refers to students and their parents as another category of policymakers. “Parents frequently lobby for starting or advocate for maintaining programs at the elementary grades” (Met 2003). Students on the other hand voice their preference through choosing the language they prefer to learn.

#### 1.6.2 Universal and selective systems of language education

Seemingly due to the lack of foreign language education policy, in the year 2003 the National Foreign Language Center of the University of Maryland proposed a policy for foreign language education. The proposal contains a universal system of language education and a selective system of language education. Both of these systems are currently in use in schools, with the selective system only in partial use. However they

are far from being available in all school systems throughout the United States (Met 2003).

In the universal system, all students have the opportunity to begin foreign language study early in their education and to continue learning for as long as possible. According to the policy proposed by the National Foreign Language Center, this system would be based on models currently occurring in the schools. It follows the sequential patterns for foreign language learning from one grade level to the next (Met 2003).

The selective system has goals for students to attain very high levels of proficiency. It works by allowing students to decide if he or she wants to participate. Because of this it can be limited in the amount of students that it serves. There are a small number of schools using this system. Those using this system however, usually have students attain at the very least Intermediate High proficiency upon high school graduation (Met 2003). This system follows the models of immersion, intensive FLES and content-based approaches to foreign language learning, amongst other methods. This system is relatively new and therefore serves as a demonstration for policymakers to see how foreign language proficiency can be attained.

### 1.6.3 “A Call to Action for Foreign Language Capabilities” in the U.S.

One year after the proposal by the National Foreign Language Center in the year 2003, a different proposal of foreign language policy was put forth. Addressing the need for improvements in our nation’s foreign language capacities, in 2004 a group of leaders and policy experts from government, business, academia, and language associations assembled at the National Language Conference. This conference was the government’s

response to the vital need for more foreign language learning opportunities. The outcome of the conference is what is referred to as the “White Paper” more properly entitled: “A Call to Action for National Foreign Language Capabilities” (2005). This report is a proposal for the future of foreign language policy in the United States. Due to a need for national leadership in this area, the attendees at this conference proposed establishment of both a “National Language Authority” and a “National Foreign Language Coordination Council.” The creation of both the National Language Authority and National Foreign Language Coordination Council will ensure that the key recommendations of the conference will be implemented. These recommendations include developing and overseeing the implementation of a foreign language strategy for the federal government across all areas (“White Paper” 2005).

The most pertinent part of this proposal for my current research is that it recommends to, “Design and oversee—with appropriate government and private sector support—a system that ensures coordinated foreign language and regional studies programs in K-12 and postsecondary training in order to raise the level of understanding of all students and produce highly skilled language professionals” (“A Call to Action for Foreign Language Capabilities” 2005). The proposal also goes on to propose new language achievement standards for K-12 students and standardized assessment methods for determining the proficiency achievement of the students. I find this to be extremely significant and exciting because not only does this proposal show movement towards the implementation of foreign language programs that begin in our elementary schools, it also demonstrates the need for accurate movement from one grade level to the next in regards to proficiency in the foreign language. Currently, so many of our schools have

foreign language programs where students may be grouped together without regard to their ability or level in the target language. If this proposal is to be practiced, it should proceed with the proper assessment methods so that students are placed at their appropriate level for learning the target language.

The conference did prove to be productive in that, the National Foreign Language Coordination Council was established on January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2007 (H.R. 747 Committee on Education and Labor 2007). This legislation is also cited as the ‘National Foreign Language Coordination Act’. This act was proposed to be put forth in consultation with not only state and local government agencies, but also academic institutions as well as business associations and foreign language interest groups. Part of the legislation entails “(f) effective ways to increase public awareness of the need for foreign language skills and career paths in all sectors that can employ those skills, with the objective of increasing support for foreign language study among—(iv) elementary, secondary, and postsecondary educational institutions” (H.R. 747 Committee on Education and Labor 2007). The bill also goes on to recommend incentives for foreign language teacher training and to recommend assistance for developing standards of achievement for foreign languages. Also, interestingly, the legislation calls for the development of “corresponding assessments for the elementary, secondary and postsecondary education levels” (H.R. 747 Committee on Education and Labor 2007).

Lastly, this legislation also calls for the establishment of a National Language Director. This person will have the role of creating foreign language competency at the national level through implementation of a national foreign language strategy. This director will also be in charge of raising public awareness of the need for foreign



language study and foreign language competency. Essentially, many of the elements from the preceding proposal at the National Language Conference were endorsed.

#### 1.6.4 Critical languages

Current languages deemed ‘critical languages’ in the United States are languages such as Chinese, Russian, Japanese, Farsi and Arabic (H.R. 747 Committee on Education and Labor 2007). Therefore the legislation at hand is putting these ‘critical languages’ in the forefront for foreign language learning. It is my hope that this council as a whole implements a strategy to address the need for education of not only the languages deemed ‘critical languages’ for today’s world, but for the education of a variety of languages. Additionally, policymakers must realize the crucial need to start second language education at a young age. Resulting from the enactment of this bill, also referred to as H.R. 747, the nation has a promising start of what could be a nation of capable and proficient citizens who speak a second language (H.R. 747 Committee on Education and Labor 2007).

#### 1.7 Conclusion

This chapter presented the need for proficient second language speakers in the United States. It provided information relevant to this need by reviewing current legislation for the implementation of a foreign language strategy for the U.S. federal government. Additionally, realization of the National Foreign Language Coordination Council was discussed.

Chapter one also gave detailed information regarding the type and amount of early foreign language programs currently offered in the United States. These programs range from full to partial immersion classes. We addressed the challenges encountered by the foreign language teacher and the school system alike. These challenges include funding, articulation, and the lack of value for an early foreign language program in many public school systems.

Although it is beyond the scope of this thesis to address every issue involved in early second language programs, it was important to note these issues in order to reflect upon possible solutions. If a school system is considering implementing an early second language program, faculty and administrators should familiarize themselves with the possible challenges to the program, so that they can quickly implement programs that clearly address and overcome each challenge. As a result, our nation's elementary schools will be well equipped to maintain programs that produce early second language speakers who are also culturally competent.

We recognize that there is value in giving a child the gift of learning and acquiring a second language. If the goal of the U.S. government is a level five proficiency then we must follow through to confirm that the nation's citizens are able to attain this goal. In order for this to happen, we know that an early start to foreign language education signifies that students are more likely to learn and acquire higher levels of target language proficiency.

Authentic materials and foreign language approaches as to how children learn best must be presented in the context of a well funded early language learning program, starting in kindergarten, which will result in proficiency levels delineated by the US

government by grade twelve. These students will be able to continue their foreign language study and to go on to become proficient second language speakers able to communicate with people from cultures other than their own thus becoming citizens of the multicultural world in which we live.

## CHAPTER 2

### THEORETICAL OVERVIEW AND FRAMEWORK

#### 2.1 Introduction

The field of Second Language Acquisition draws upon theoretical frameworks from many other fields. The following review of related literature draws upon linguists as well as psychologists, psycholinguists and other theorists whose knowledge paves the way towards a better understanding of child second language acquisition.

Chapter two details a comprehensive collection of theories and methodologies that relate to second language acquisition. Each theory and method presented in this chapter relates to form a hybrid of the method I will propose at the end of this chapter or provides evidential support for my hypothesis. All theories presented in this chapter are necessary components in the consideration of the formulation of an authentic materials pedagogical method, which is proposed at end of this chapter. The authentic materials method, which I propose, is an integral part of my hypothesis found in the last section of this chapter. It contributes to the creation of the learning environment and was used during data collection. This method addresses the specific needs of young learners who are learning a second language, although it could be adapted to be used with any age level.

Chapter two first presents the reader with a review of authentic materials and a definition of authentic input. This review and definition is put forth because the authentic materials method uses authentic materials as a basis for introduction of vocabulary in a foreign language. Therefore, it is important to first define authenticity, and next state how authentic materials such as texts and songs are integrated into the second language

classroom as tools to aid in acquisition of a second language. The chapter goes on to address learning and developmental theories as they relate to child learners.

Vygotsky's theory of learning is reviewed as it is related to an authentic materials method, because it shows how social interactions may influence development. His Zone of Proximal Development theory is reviewed in this chapter because it relates to the authentic materials method that is put forth at the end of the chapter. In this authentic materials method, students are able to help each other by scaffolding and peer interactions through role play. Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligences theory is briefly put forth as it relates to music in foreign language learning. The authentic materials method is firmly based on the use of authentic music in the second language classroom. Behaviorism is discussed as to some extent it be related to L2 learning. The imitation and repetition of authentic songs which are based on lexical themes may aid in acquisition of pronunciation of the target language. The authentic materials method requires repetition though singing songs repeatedly. In consideration of behaviorism, the stimulus is considered to be the authentic music and the reward for singing the song is more nativelike pronunciation gained over time with repeated practice, which promotes confidence in the target language. Also, the repetition of the vocabulary used in the lyrics of the music when combined with movements on the part of the L2 learner aids in target language vocabulary.

Stephen Krashen's Comprehensible Input and Affective Filter Hypotheses are both important for the present study. In order to create a method to teach a second language, the input must be interesting to the learner. Also, as Krashen states, it should be a bit beyond what the learner already knows (Krashen 1987). Authentic materials

when inputted to the L2 learner in the target language through song, texts or a game are most likely a bit beyond what the learner already knows in the language. Therefore, Krashen's Comprehensible Input Hypothesis relates to an authentic materials method for learning a L2 as the student is receiving input via the authentic materials which is a bit beyond what the learner already knows. So for example, if the L2 learner is singing a song that has them count up to ten, when the learner only knows how to count up to five, for example, the learner is receiving Comprehensible input.

The Affective Filter Hypothesis is an integral element of the authentic material method proposed at the end of this chapter. Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis states that a student learns best when he or she is not enduring a lot of stress (Krashen 1987). The authentic materials methods promote the reduction of stress through using materials that motivate and excite the student, thus lowering their affective filter. The students become happy and animated while learning, instead of afraid and stressed. This is because the authentic materials method of L2 learning uses materials that promote learning through games, songs and children's texts, which makes learning fun for the students. The class in turn becomes an enjoyable and stress free environment for the young L2 learner.

Additionally, first language acquisition, as well as child grammars is discussed in order to inform the reader briefly how a child acquires their first language. Here it is beneficial to observe if the way in which a child acquires their first language can be correlated with the way in which a young child acquires a second language and if authentic materials help this correlation. In the present study, many of the children who participated are considered to be (pre)literate or literate for their level. This means that

their literacy skills are that which a kindergarten, first or second grade student would hold. A (pre)literate student would be one who can understand a story; therefore they have aural literacy, but not yet read one on their own. It is important to determine the literacy level of the children who are learning a second language through the authentic materials method, because the materials and pedagogical methods used will determine the outcome of the L2 acquisition for the child learner. This new L2 teaching method is proposed so that young children can learn and acquire a second language properly.

In addition, the discussion of first language or L1 is also relevant because the subjects of the study are still acquiring their L1. These subjects are transferring their knowledge of their L1 into the initial state of their L2 (White 2003). Also, according to the literature on the acquisition of lexicon, L1 and L2 compete during lexical selection (Costa 2006).

Much time has been spent by previous researchers to make methods for older children, such as teens, and adults to learn a second language; the current thesis devotes time on determining the proper methods to teach children a second language. Therefore, differences between child and adult learners are discussed so that one can be informed as to why the authentic materials method would be a good choice for a child L2 learner. Also, age in relation to early second language education is an important consideration because the research shows that there are positive advantages to learning a second language as a child, such as better pronunciation and further ultimate attainment of the language (Krashen & Terrell 1983; Krashen, et al. 1979 & 1982; Singleton et al. 2004). A pedagogical method that uses authentic materials promotes the child learner of a second language because it is age appropriate.

Chomsky's Universal Grammar and the Initial State Hypotheses following White (2003) are included in chapter two as an explanation as to what the L2 learner is starting with when he or she begins the L2 learning. This knowledge of what the L2 learner could potentially have in their brain at the startup of L2 learning is important so that we can determine if an authentic materials method allows the second language learner to access their Universal Grammar. If the L2 learner can access their Universal Grammar then we know that the learner is able to pull out some lexical items that are already stored in their brain during L2 learning, such as morphemes, which later could be used to create lexical items in the target language.

Lastly, a variety of teaching methodologies for L2 pedagogy are discussed in this chapter. These methods for teaching a second language all contain some practical aspects that can be put to use in the new authentic materials method which is introduced at the end of the chapter. The methods discussed in this chapter, Total Physical Response, Whole Language and the Natural Approach, were chosen because they each have elements that can be selected for use in the new authentic materials method.

## 2.2 Authentic materials

### 2.2.1 Authentic materials as early L2 educational materials

For the purposes of the present study, authentic materials are deemed to be the best choice to introduce the target language to a group of young L2 learners. In addition, they are a good choice for all L2 learners as they provide input from the target culture. One of reasons that these materials work well for younger L2 learners is that they are appropriate for the age and grade level of the students in the present study. As previously



stated in chapter one, there is a lack of elementary school foreign language education. This shortage leads to the lack of materials for elementary school foreign language educators. Authentic materials not only fill in the gap for the necessary materials to teach the target language, they also provide a unique form of input for the L2 learner. This input is unique because it is quite possibly the same input that a young L1 learner of the target language could be receiving in their L1 language class in another country. For example, a L2 teacher of Spanish may teach their class “Brinca la tablita” (*Jump over the board*), a children’s song that deals with adding numbers, as a song to use with a content-based mathematics lesson. This same song may be used in Mexico to teach mathematics as it is considered a traditional Mexican children’s song. Using this song, for example, in a L2 Spanish class would be considered authentic input because it is a song from the target language, which is unchanged when used to teach L2 Spanish in the United States. The fact that the same song could be used in a country where the target language is spoken is a very important educational link to the target language for the student. Additionally, L2 students receive authentic target language input if the song is presented to the students in a recorded form where the recorded singer is a native speaker of the target language. The latter being the case if the L2 teacher is not a native-speaker of the target language, or if the song is from a country of a different origin than the L2 native target language speaking teacher.

### 2.2.2 Defining authenticity

It would be beneficial to define the term ‘authenticity’ in order to determine the definition of ‘authentic materials’. There are a variety of definitions of this term as it

relates to the foreign language classroom (Gilmore 2007; Taylor 1994). This diversity stems from the debate as to whether authentic materials in the foreign language classroom are in fact considered to be authentic or inauthentic. Taylor (1994) describes types of authenticity as distinguished by Breen (1985) which fall into the categories of authenticity of task, authenticity of language, and authenticity of situation. For the purposes of the present study, the data consists of circumstances where authenticity of the language is used. Authenticity of the language is presented by authentic texts, authentic tasks and authentic songs. It could be argued that the situation could be considered authentic in that it is a classroom situation, authentic for the purposes of language learning. However one might argue that in the L2 classroom we are taking these materials out of context, and therefore ask how authentic they are. But isn't this what we do in a sense when we teach a foreign language within the confines of the classroom setting? As Taylor (1994) states, "The classroom has its own reality and naturalness. Participants in the language classroom create their own authenticity there as they do elsewhere" (Taylor 1994:5). This thesis purely sets out to prove the beneficial relationship between authentic materials and early second language learning.

Gilmore (2007) gives us eight possible definitions of authenticity. Of those eight, the present study takes the position of the second definition Gilmore puts forth which defines authenticity as, "The language produced by a real speaker/writer for a real audience, conveying a real message" as cited from: Morrow (1977); Porter & Roberts (1981); Swaffer (1985); Nunan (1988/9); Benson & Voller (1997) in Gilmore (2007:98). Another good definition for the purposes of this study is presented in Taylor's (1994) research as cited from (Nunan) 1989 which states, "A rule of thumb for authentic here is

any material which has not been specifically produced for the purposes of language teaching” (Taylor 1994:2). A good way to approach authentic materials in the foreign language classroom is to define them as items made for the native speaker, in the target language, for the native speakers use in their target culture. From this definition of authenticity a definition of authentic input can be put forth as: the use of authentic materials from the target culture which are presented in the target language, such as songs, stories, games and play, which are derived from the target culture. These materials are not made for language teaching purposes. However, they do contain the characteristics of language used with young children learning their L1, such as the language used in children’s literature. The definition of authentic input provided will be used as part of the authentic materials pedagogic method that is presented at the end of this chapter.

### 2.2.3 Benefits and drawbacks to using authentic materials in the L2 classroom

Authentic materials are a wonderful way to expose students to the target language in the foreign language classroom. Martinez (2002) provides us with some advantages for using authentic materials in the classroom. One important advantage is that the materials provide the students with the wide-ranging ‘language change’ of the target language (Martinez 2002). Through listening to authentic songs and stories in the target language, students will be able to hear dialectal differences of various countries that speak the target language. This can be used later for a class discussion concerning observations of varying dialectal differences ranging from one target language speaking country to the next. For example, different versions of the same authentic story can be

used to indicate use or nonuse of a grammar aspect of the target language, such as the *ustedes* or *vosotros* verb forms in Spanish. The students can be asked if they notice the differences after listening to the story. Two storytellers from differing countries can come into the classroom as guests to read the authentic story and students can be asked if they notice any pronunciation differences between the two storytellers. Martinez (2002) also makes the reader aware of some of the disadvantages of the use of authentic materials in the classroom citing they may be too culturally biased, the vocabulary may not be relevant to the student's needs, and beginner students may have a hard time interpreting the texts due to the mixed structures that are used.

When considering Krashen's Input Hypothesis one can consider both the benefits of using authentic input in the FL classroom. Krashen's Input Hypothesis proposes that language is acquired through comprehensible input. 'Comprehensible input' can be defined as language that is appropriate to the L2 learner's capability (Curtain & Pesola 1988). According to Krashen (1987), the acquisition of grammar rules occurs when the L2 learner receives input that is just beyond their present linguistic capability. Krashen refers to this as  $i + 1$  (Krashen 1987; Krashen & Terrell 1983). From this information, one might ask whether authentic input is comprehensible input for L2 learners. This would have to depend on the level of the input being presented. For a novice L2 learner the authentic input would have to be relevant to their grade level and needs, but in line with Krashen's hypothesis it could be just a little more than the student can fully understand. A kindergarten student would not then be expected to read a text in the target language, because this would be considered far beyond their level. However, reciting lyrics to an authentic song in the target language is very much at the appropriate

level for a kindergarten student, even if the student does not know all the vocabulary in the song.

Another advantage of authentic input for teaching children a second language is that it can provide for a relatively comfortable environment for young children. Songs, stories and games tend to motivate and excite children thus enhancing learning. The Affective Filter Hypothesis put forth by Krashen describes a filter that the brain has during SLA which can block out L2 input. This filter is raised when the L2 student has anxiety, low self-confidence or is unmotivated (Krashen 1987; Krashen & Terrell 1983). The filter is minimized, allowing input to come through when motivation is high, the student has self-confidence and when learning occurs in an environment that is reasonably anxiety free (Curtain & Pesola 1988; Krashen et al. 1983). Authentic input can provide for the type of environment that is conducive to learning because music, games, stories and play tend to be activities that children enjoy participating in and consequently they do not feel much stress.

Authentic materials are also promoted for both cognitive and affective reasons. Cognitively, authentic materials provide necessary context for appropriately relating form to meaning in the language acquisition process. Affectively, authentic materials are seen as motivators and as a means to overcome the cultural barrier to language learning (Bacon & Finnegan 1990). Authentic materials are becoming valued as positive tools to use in the second language classroom because of the encouraging opportunities for learning that it provides. “The pedagogical trend is clearly in the direction of increased use of authentic input in language instruction” (Bacon & Finnemann 1990:459). So, an approach to teaching young L2 learners using authentic materials would be beneficial to

the learners. Authentic materials form an integral part of the authentic materials pedagogic method will is later proposed.

#### 2.2.4 Authenticity and motivation

According to Gilmore (2007) there are many claims that authentic materials motivate learners. The most common claim is that authentic materials are more interesting to the learner than non-authentic materials due to their intent to communicate a message rather than highlight particular aspects of the target language (Gilmore 2007). On the other hand, there is research that claims authentic materials can be overwhelming to the L2 learner due to the difficulties associated with authentic texts, such as with the vocabulary used in the texts (Gilmore 2007). Yet, an additional point of view presented by Cross (1984) proposes that when the learner sees that he or she can cope with the authentic materials motivation occurs (Gilmore 2007). As long as the materials are appropriate for the age and grade level of the students, these materials should not be overwhelming to the student. As summarized by Gilmore (2007), Hill (1984) and Peacock (1997) claim that students are motivated when they comprehend that the authentic materials are in fact 'real'. Another factor that may influence motivation on the part of the student is their familiarity with the authentic material (Gilmore 2007). The data for the present study does not specifically ask the students about their motivation or lack thereof when presented with authentic materials; however it is quite apparent that the children appreciate listening to a story or singing a song in the target language because they do not act bored, rather they appear enthusiastic. This enthusiasm leads me to

believe that authentic materials are a good way to introduce the target language to a group of young L2 learners.

### 2.2.5 Authentic texts

Authentic picture books are another way to motivate L2 students since they offer students with opportunities to explore the culture of the target language and to aid in comprehension of lexical items through the use of illustrations. As cited by Gilmore (2007), Henry Sweet (1899) regarded as one of the first linguists made use of authentic texts:

The great advantage of natural, idiomatic texts over artificial ‘methods’ or ‘series’ is that they do justice to every feature of the language. The artificial systems, on the other hand, tend to cause incessant repetition of certain grammatical constructions, certain elements of the vocabulary, certain combinations of words to the almost total exclusion of others which are equally or perhaps even more, essential. (Sweet 1899:77)

From this quote we can see that authentic materials such as authentic texts have been used historically to teach foreign languages and they have been used in an appropriate manner.

Illustrations aid in learning as they provide visual cues for visual learners. A narrative text describes the scene, whereas pictures show the scene. “Picture books emphasize action and dialogue rather than description and reflection which helps learners with modest linguistic proficiency follow the tale” (Moffit 2003:17). Additionally, the illustrations can provide additional source of information about the culture, showing cultural similarities and cultural differences. Authentic texts immerse the student in the cultural context of the target language because usually books that are written for children

will contain proper societal customs and gestures. It is unlikely that a children's book will show a negative side of a society or improper customs.

Children's books also expose the learner to a wide variety of lexicon and grammar. After listening to the story, the L2 student can take the information he or she has received and use it in another way. For example he or she could take the vocabulary from the book and use it to create their own story. Or the story can be used in a content-based teaching lesson which could bridge the gap between one content area and the L2.

In addition, illustrated books draw on both sides of the brain, not merely the left side which is accessed during narrative texts (Moffit 2003). This is conducive to increased understanding and retention. The illustrations lower the students' affective filter because students are immersed in the story (Moffit 2003). Children's books reinforce language learning through context and the illustrations they provide. The story most likely has vocabulary centered around a certain theme, whether it is family members, colors, or animals which can allow the narrator to emphasize the lexical items they want the students to learn. Therefore, authentic children's books written in the target language are a favorable learning tool, especially for young L2 learners for the above listed reasons. Authentic children's literature will be used during the data collection for the present research.

#### 2.2.6 Authentic songs

Illustrations from children's text are the view into another culture; while songs can provide a voice from another culture. Researchers recently have studied how music learning and language learning are closely connected (Miché 2002; Schön et al. 2007).



However, only recently has the use of music and song as a pedagogical tool in the foreign language classroom been considered. Failoni (1993) states that “all too often, music in the classroom has been relegated to recreation and entertainment status” (Failoni 1993:98). According to Miché (2002) children develop their singing skills until about age nine. She additionally says that kindergarten is the critical point at which schools should be introducing foreign language learning (Miché 2002).

Music is a versatile resource for various foreign language lessons. Both communication and entertainment are combined as songs provide communication skills intertwined with entertainment. Pronunciation skills can be strengthened through music especially when a recorded version of the song being played is sung by a native speaker of the target language. A six year old who is spending time singing a song in a foreign language can learn to sing that song with a better accent (Miché 2002). Pronunciation variations are provided through input of authentic music as well as various dialects of the target language (Failoni 1993; Miché 2002). Therefore authentic music is a great way to make students aware of the dialectal variations from one target language speaking country to the next.

Songs can provide repetition in conjunction with rhythm which leads learners to remember not only the pronunciation, but also the vocabulary. “A lesser known fact is that music can also teach vocabulary and the synthesis of language” (Miché 2002:151). Vocabulary is reinforced through lyrics repeated in the chorus of the song. According to Miché (2002) children will sing songs even though they may not understand the meanings of the words contained in the lyrics. Eventually the L2 teacher can provide appropriate input to aid the students in the comprehension of the words in the song.

Expressions used in authentic songs can aid in comprehension of the target language though the context of the lyrics. A song can serve to reinforce the vocabulary the L2 student is learning. “In fact, songs can be one of the best vehicles for vocabulary development and language acquisition” (Miché 2002:151).

Byrnes (1996) explains how one song can provide a series of class exercises for an intermediate Italian L2 class. The activities range from singing the song, learning the vocabulary in the song and using it in different contexts, to using the song’s content to create poems. Children’s songs seem to center around a theme which can provide useful vocabulary for a lesson. Music can support other material and vocabulary in a content-based lesson. “The struggling student may find communication skills easier when linked to music, since many people often remember rhyme, rhythm, or melody better than ordinary speech” (Failoni 1993: 98).

Music provides opportunities for FL teachers to introduce the cultural context of the song (Failoni 1993). Music from the target language is the sound of the culture of that target language. Instruments can be brought into the classroom for cultural explanations. Authentic music in the L2 classroom provides an approach to teach students the target culture as well as to introduce the vocabulary of the target language. Music can be adapted for all ages, all levels, and all interests. Music can be used, both as method to reinforce communication skills, and as a tool to demonstrate culture (Failoni 1993). Authentic songs from the target language form a key part of the teaching method which is later proposed. Authentic target language songs were used throughout the data collection of the present research.

### 2.2.6.1 Songs and cognition

Schön, et al. (2007) show how learning a new language can be benefited by music because of the properties of music in song which tend to be motivational. Their research compared learning which was based on spoken sequences, to language based on sung sequences in a series of three experiments. The study explains how songs may lead to language acquisition stating that songs contain emotional aspects that may increase attention and excitement level. Secondly, they mention phonological benefits due to the pitch of the song. Lastly, they say learning operations may be “optimized by the consistent mapping of musical and linguistic structure” (Schön, et al.2007:976). The results of their research maintained, “Therefore, learning a foreign language, especially in the first learning phase wherein one needs to segment to new words, may largely benefit from the motivational and structuring properties of music in a song” (Schön, et al. 2007:982). The study concluded that children’s songs would facilitate linguistic processing due to their simple and repetitive structures (Schön, et al. 2007). This study clearly demonstrated that a FL teaching method which incorporates authentic songs could be a viable choice for a L2 teacher to use in his or her classroom.

For the purposes of the present study, we are looking to see if the child transfers NP from the first language to the second language. Also, if agreement features are being developed in the second language. This transference occurs, for example, if the child demonstrates that he or she understands the difference between *la mano* and *las manos*, i.e. number agreement. When a child demonstrates understanding the distinction between *el gato* and *la gata* then gender agreement parameter could be resetting itself from “weak” in English to “strong” in Spanish for successful Spanish L2 learners.

### 2.3 Vygotsky's theory of learning

Lev Vygotsky is a researcher and theorist in the field of child development. Vygotsky understood humans' use of language as a tool for mental activity (Mitchell & Myles 2004; Johnson 2004). He introduced us to the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development or ZPD. This concept shows a zone exists between current knowledge and potential knowledge. Vygotsky states this zone is where learning occurs for a child. According to Vygotsky (1978:85) as cited by Mitchell and Myles (2004) the ZPD is: "the difference between the child's developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the higher level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers"(Mitchell & Myles 2004:46; VanPatten & Williams 2007:210). A child who is in the process of learning a concept in a L2 may benefit from working with a more knowledgeable peer in the target language who can help them navigate through the ZPD. For the purposes of the authentic materials teaching method proposed in this thesis, it is imperative that the L2 students are guided through the ZPD by the teacher, and when available, a more capable peer.

### 2.4 Systematic support through scaffolding

A child learns best when given small pieces of information which aid them through the ZPD postulated by Vygotsky. These small pieces allow them to build upon prior knowledge which in turn allows the child to construct larger chunks of information. When introduced to new information, a young learner is not yet capable of acquiring the information; however with help he or she can attain the knowledge. The current

knowledge is that which the child already knows, and the potential knowledge is given by the adult or peer (Mitchell & Myles 2004; Pinter 2006) through scaffolding. In consideration of the work of Vygotsky, the term scaffolding was created by Jerome Bruner and his colleagues in 1976 (Pinter 2006). Scaffolding is to provide learners with activities that are just beyond what they currently can do on their own (Mitchell & Myles 2004; Pinter 2006). The teacher, or adult, or peer, anyone who is more capable than the learner, provides the scaffolds to help the learner achieve the task that he or she would not be able to complete on their own. This guides the learner through the Zone of Proximal Development. The learner is able to build upon prior knowledge when working in the ZPD. The prior knowledge of the learner is a tool that along with the scaffolding helps the learner to achieve the task at hand.

Once the learner is outside of the zone, he or she has attained the knowledge he or she otherwise would not have achieved without the scaffolding. According to Wood et al. (1976), scaffolding can do such things as make the task simplified for the child, and therefore help the child pursue their goal, among many other potential benefits (Mitchell & Myles 2004). Scaffolding is important as it gives children confidence and lets them take control of the task at hand. This confidence, in turn, helps the child to maintain interest in the task as it leads them towards completing other tasks the child may have earlier felt that he or she could not accomplish. Scaffolding is important for a child who is learning a second language because it allows them proceed through the ZPD in small incremental stages.

Vygotskyian learning theory can show how scaffolding can support play for a child learner (Cook 2000). This theory provides for socially constituted scaffolding

activities. If a child learning an L2 plays a game, he or she first participates guided by others before he or she internalizes what has been practiced (Cook 2000). Play occurs in the ZPD where the learner receives appropriate scaffolding and support. A child learning a L2 can learn aspects such as lexical items in the target language through playing a game while receiving scaffolding and support. It is necessary to use scaffolding when first playing authentic games from the target language as the novice student will most likely not be prepared for all the vocabulary used in the game.

### 2.5 Krashen's Input Hypothesis

As briefly reviewed earlier, Krashen considers that humans acquire language through 'comprehensible input' (Johnson 2004:47; Krashen 1987; Krashen & Terrell 1983; Macaro 2003). He shows comprehensible input as a formula,  $i + 1$ . The  $i$  is representative of the learner's current language level and the 1 is the learner's next level of competence, which is just beyond the learner's current level of competence (Johnson 2004; VanPatten et al. 2007). Krashen believes that grammar does not need to be taught deliberately because it can be acquired subconsciously with the help of Chomsky's language acquisition device (*which will be discussed later in further detail*) (Johnson 2004).

One might consider that a child can reach 'comprehensible input' through scaffolding. A child navigates through the ZPD presented by Vygotsky in order to reach potential knowledge or comprehensible input. Since in Krashen's view, a L2 learner does not need to be taught grammar explicitly, this view could accept authentic materials as a means to teach a child a second language. An authentic story in the target language

for example, would have input that is both intelligible to the L2 learner, and input that is a bit beyond the L2 learner's current level of intelligibility. However, this type of activity leads to comprehensible input as proposed by Krashen as it could allow a child learner to acquire the language through not only accessing their UG (which we will read later how this may or may not happen), but also through receiving input that is just beyond their current level of understanding. Scaffolding through the authentic story with a more capable peer or adult would help the student reach a level of comprehension.

## 2.6 Multiple Intelligences Theory

It is essential that language teachers maintain the enthusiasm of their students. In order to do this, however, the second language teacher must make sure to inspire the individual talents and skills that each student possesses. Howard Gardner did important research for the field of education by creating the Multiple Intelligences Theory. Gardner's theory is one that states that instead of simply having intelligence in one area; each individual has at least eight distinct intelligences, which can be developed throughout a person's lifetime (Haley 2004; Gardner 1999). The eight multiple intelligences include: verbal-linguistic, logical-mathematical, visual-spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, musical-rhythmic, naturalist, interpersonal-social and intrapersonal-introspective (Gardner 1999). This theory is a model that describes the various intelligences as possibly being personal tools that individuals possess in order to make sense out of new information and store it in way that the information can be easily retrieved when needed for use (Gardner 1999; Arnold & Fonseca 2004). Additionally, this theory showcases individual talent as it demonstrates that individuals possess these

intelligences to varying degrees. Multiple Intelligences theory, or MI, highlights the type of stimulus necessary for the child to learn L2 most effectively. This, for example, means that a child who relies upon musical-rhythmic intelligence would learn a L2 better through singing and dancing to a song in the target language than simply repeating lexical chunks in the target language. This song could be presented as an authentic song from the target language. A verbal-linguistic child would do well with listening to a story, which could also be authentic and from the target language. The child could use the vocabulary from the story to recreate a story of their own.

The theory of MI evolved in order to better determine how cognitive individual differences can be attended to and developed in the classroom setting. Gardner says that our schools and culture focus most of their attention on linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligences. He also states that we should be placing equal attention to individuals who show gifts in the other intelligences, such as, the arts, musicians, dancers, therapists, architects, and others who improve the world in which we live (Gardner 1999; Arnold & Fonseca 2004). Unfortunately many children who have gifts in certain intelligences do not receive the reinforcement they need in school. This is why it is important for L2 educators to determine the particular intelligences their students possess and coordinate all of these intelligences into their curriculum.

A study completed by Haley (2004), showed that L2 learners accomplished greater success rates when the Multiple Intelligences Theory was considered into the curriculum development. The purpose of the study was to use the Multiple Intelligences Theory with L2 learners in order to shape curricula development, instructional strategies and assign alternative assessments. In this study, the teachers collected data about their



students and established under which of the MI each child categorized. Next, the teachers were able to vary their pedagogical style in order to adapt the instruction to the intelligences of their students. Results from the study showed that if a child's intelligence is taken into consideration during the pedagogy of the foreign language, the child will be more enthusiastic about learning the language and demonstrate a high degree of satisfaction (Haley 2004). Furthermore, this study concluded that classroom management issues decreased as the students felt happier learning the L2 because the instruction was relating to their individual intelligences. This study emphasizes that individual intelligence must be taken into consideration for optimal L2 instruction.

If a foreign language teacher considers the MI theory when planning their lessons all students should be motivated and happy to learn. The L2 learners would not feel frustrated because they are using the intelligence they contain to learn the target language. Authentic songs, games, and stories are materials that the teacher can use as a tool to tap into the multiple intelligences of their students.

## 2.7 Behaviorism

Another theoretical consideration for second language learning is that of behaviorism. Behaviorism is a theory that attempts to explain behavior as a conditioned response to stimuli. As cited from Chastain (1976), in Hadley (2001), "behaviorists concluded that all learning consisted of some form of conditioning" (Hadley 2001:105). Therefore, second language learning has to do with behaviorism to a small extent. The extent to which I propose it is useful for L2 learning is that behaviorism could be

beneficial for pronunciation purposes in the L2. Additionally, the repetitive structures of the music may aid in the L2 learner's acquisition of target language vocabulary.

The behaviorist theory pertains to both animal and human behavior as it entails conditioning, reinforcement and punishment. These behaviors are not directly observable and must be inferred from observation (VanPatten & Williams 2007). An example of conditioning is shown in the experiment by Pavlov. For the experiment, dogs were conditioned to respond to stimuli of a ringing bell in order to get fed. The ringing of the bell or stimuli made them salivate as a response (VanPatten & Williams 2007). It was inferred that the dogs were conditioned to respond to the bell. The conditioning was not observed. This is an example of classical conditioning (Hadley 2001).

Operant conditioning is when a human or animal learns to respond to a stimulus because a reward is involved. Often, the initial response to the stimuli is done randomly and then the reward is given, thus conditioning the subject to repeat the action to get another reward (Hadley 2001). Later, the being can engage in a behavior without the presence of the stimulus as long as he or she has received regular feedback (VanPatten & Williams 2007). As summarized by Hadley, (2001), B.F. Skinner (1957) describes verbal learning as operant conditioning. He stated that humans 'use patterns of language' and when the learner receives reinforcements from a community of language users, those patterns will be reinforced (Hadley 2001).

B.F. Skinner looked at learning as operant conditioning. In regards to learning a language, he believed that learning occurs as a result of the reward given for doing the correct task (VanPatten 2003). Skinner also believed imitation and repetition to be important factors in first language acquisition (VanPatten 2003). Therefore imitation and

repetition could be considered by second language teachers as useful tools to aide in the acquisition of proper pronunciation in second language learning. However, they should not be considered the only tools the L2 learner uses when constructing the second language. Language learning is an observable behavior which improves over time. Operant conditioning over time influences the child's behavior, and music or movement, are stimuli resulting in expression in the form of language behavior. A L2 learner who sings a song sung by a native target language speaking musician and imitates their pronunciation may perhaps over time attain a more native like pronunciation of the target language after a lot of imitation, repetition and practice.

## 2.8 First language acquisition

There are similarities between a child's first language acquisition and their second language acquisition. For that reason, it is beneficial to look at first language acquisition so that we can later determine how the child's native language relates to the child's second language acquisition. This information is useful for a children's second language teacher to consider when gaining knowledge in regards to pedagogy for their language class.

Child language acquisition and second language acquisition have similarities and differences. We can draw upon child L1 acquisition to gain insight into SLA. A child learns their first language through input and initial interactions. For example, we can consider how a parent models words and phrases to a child, expecting the child to repeat after them. As cited by Pinter (2006) research done by Catherine Snow in the 1970's shows that mothers used simplified speech when speaking to their babies. This type of

speech leads to repetition, a slower rate of speech and higher pitch spoken by the caregiver. In second language acquisition, this type of language repetition is oftentimes frowned upon. Instructors are using more communicative methods of teaching second languages, where language students are more likely to speak to one another about a topic, rather than repeat after the instructor. For child second language acquisition, we can draw upon some of Skinner's work because children do learn well with repetition and imitation when it is not used as the sole method for teaching second languages. For example, a child can repeat or imitate a verse in a song in the target language which would be a type of authentic input.

Sociocultural studies on first language development provide for evidence on the social nature of development of a child's L1. Berman and Slobin (1994) proposed a form-function process of language learning by which children interactively acquire language (Hall 2001). They stated that frequent, regular and predictable use of linguistic resources are likely to increase what is noticed by the child, which in turn leads to ultimate learning (Hall 2001).

## 2.9 Child grammars

Children go through a series of stages that lead them to the development of oral language. First, the child begins by crying, next cooing, and then babbling. Subsequently the child starts to utter their first words, then two word utterances, and finally multiple utterances (Cattell 2000). When speaking to young children, caregivers seem to prefer to use nouns over verbs (O'Grady 2000). This could be due to the fact that caregivers like

to ask the child, “*What’s this?*” which would lead the child to respond with a noun. It could also be due to the fact that children are attuned to noticing objects.

There are times however, when a caregiver elicits a verbal response from a child. When the child responds verbally, he or she may not say the verb with the correct morphology. For example if the caregiver said, “*What is the cat doing?*” he or she would be eliciting a verbal response from the child where the child might say “*run*” instead of “*running*” for a response.

During L1 acquisition children make overgeneralizations in reference to their language. A famous study that shows this overgeneralization has been done by Jean Berko (1958). She studied children’s learning of English morphology. She administered a test whereby she showed children an imaginary animal called a ‘*wug*.’ First, she showed them one *wug*. Next, she showed them two *wugs* and asked the children what they saw; they replied “*wugs*.” By pluralizing the word *wug*, the children demonstrated that they were able to create the novel form, and they did not simply imitate. This study showed overgeneralization in a positive manner (Berko 1958).

Overgeneralization can also lead to errors. Recently, while working at a before school care program I was watching some children play a game called *Guess who*. The children were asking each other questions in order to guess the opponents person. When one child responded no to the question, “*Is your person a girl?*” The five year old opponent said, “*Ok, I have to put down all the womans.*” This child overgeneralized that by adding the –s to woman, it would make the word plural.

## 2.10 Universal Grammar

On the subject of to child first language acquisition, Chomsky disputed the ideas of Skinner (VanPatten 2003). He did not believe children learned language neither exclusively by imitation and repetition, nor through stimulus-response habit formation (Sharpe 2001). Some theorists such as Eric Lenneberg (1967) believed that language was managed by the individual's biological system. These theorists stated that language was 'genetically determined' (Mitchell & Myles 2004). Chomsky believed that children could produce language without having natural conversations with others (White 1989). An example of this could be would be when a child is playing by themselves. The child is not having a natural conversation because he or she is not talking to anyone else. The child must produce language alone.

Chomsky stated that children at times say things so clearly they cannot be simply imitating (Macaro 2003; Sharpe 2001). Additionally he stated that children and adults can produce and understand sentences they have never heard before (White 1989; Sharpe 2001). The theory of Universal Grammar or UG was developed by Chomsky as an explanation for language acquisition. Universal Grammar relates to the brain, in that the brain is considered at birth to have a structure called the 'language acquisition device' or LAD (Macaro 2003; Sharpe 2001; Johnson 2004). Chomsky argued through his concept of LAD that children were born with the facilities to learn a language (Sharpe 2001; White 1989). This device allows the child to sort the input that it receives; the language. This theory states that children use this Universal Grammar regardless of their native language (Kumaravadivelu 2006; Mitchell & Myles 2004). So, for example, the LAD allows the child to determine which language is the input (Macaro 2003). The device

was said to be universal because of its ability to sort out the input being sent to the brain. In essence, the brain has a set of Universal Grammar rules and parameters that are used to develop the native language of the child. This Universal Grammar is described by many as the blueprints for the native language. “The UG provides a kind of blueprint as to what grammar will be like, but details can only be filled in by the input from the language being learned” (White 1989:16). This blueprint contains the indispensable plan to acquire the native language and can be built upon by the child as more input is received. In essence, the brain has a set of Universal Grammar principles and parameters that are used to develop the native language of a child.

The theory of Universal Grammar in turn changed the view of first language acquisition to become viewed as the combination of both “internal mechanisms the child is born with and the language data the child is exposed to in everyday interactions (what is called input)” (VanPatten 2003:3). This Universal Grammar must exist because many linguists agree that adults could not acquire an adult grammar in their L1 with all of its complexity without some kind of prior knowledge (White 1989). Additionally, children (here referring to children without any delay in learning) acquire linguistic competence that reaches far beyond the language they are exposed to in a variety of ways. Just like an adult who has reached ultimate attainment or steady state in their L1, a child can create sentences he or she has never heard before.

Krashen’s  $i + 1$  or comprehensible input hypothesis supports that second language learners have access to the UG (Johnson 2004). With this claim, we can derive that Krashen is stating that L2 learner’s reach comprehensible input because he or she is still accessing their UG during L2 acquisition. The +1 part of Krashen’s theory is the area

where the L2 learner is trying to comprehend the next level of competence he or she will be able to accomplish. If the L2 learner is able to access their UG, he or she will have subconscious assistance in comprehending the next level of competence he or she is in the process of acquiring.

Although Krashen believes that the L2 learner is able to access their UG during L2 acquisition, other researchers find this assertion difficult to believe. There is still controversy as to whether or not L2 learners can in fact still access their UG. For this reason some initial state hypotheses have been prepared for us to ponder if in fact the L2 learner is accessing their UG during L2 acquisition or not.

#### 2.11 Initial State Hypotheses and a correlation to ACTFL novice proficiency

For a student who is learning a second language, the L1 is already present, for the language learner. Researchers have been trying to determine how the L1 affects the acquisition of the target L2. Is the UG is still accessible to the L2 learner? Some initial state hypotheses were developed to provide some theories to answer this question. These hypotheses attempt to discover if there is a relationship between the UG and the L2 grammars and or between L1 and L2 grammars. Some of these hypotheses state that there is not any access to the UG, others predict there is partial access, and the lastly some state that there is full access to the UG during L2 learning. For the purposes of the present study, we are going to concur with those who believe there is at least partial access to the UG during early L2 development. The reason for this presumption is because the data for the research at hand is considering the acquisition of L2 Spanish for young children. It is possible that young children aged five to seven years old have not



attained a complete adult L1 grammar. They are still working on lexicon and verb morphology, especially towards the five year old. Oftentimes, younger children make mistakes or overgeneralizations when trying to use past tense forms such as “*went*”, or plural forms such as “*men*”. Instead a five year old may say “*goed*” or “*mens*” as presented in the earlier example. Although this research is not setting out to exactly investigate what the initial state of a child L2 learner would be, it is important to consider where the student is starting from in order to evaluate the proper materials and methods to use when teaching the second language.

For the present study, it is presumed that a five year old has at least partial access to their UG during L2 data input. The reason for this presumption is that through interactions and conversations with children in the kindergarten grade level, certain utterances from students suggest that some of the children are still acquiring not only vocabulary in their L1, but also the expected morphology. An example of this would be the example given earlier where the child overgeneralized by saying “*womans*” instead of correctly saying “*women*”. This type of overgeneralization from a kindergarten student shows that a child is partially accessing his or her UG. In the example given, the child was able to access the vocabulary, but not the correct inflection.

#### 2.11.1 Interlanguage

“Initial state is unconscious linguistic knowledge that the L2 learner starts out with in advance of the L2 input and/or refers to characteristics of the earliest grammar” (White 2003:58). A second language learner already has learned their mother tongue. Depending upon the age and amount of input received, an L2 learner has learned the

mother tongue or L1 at least partially if not completely. “In L1 acquisition, UG is the initial state (Chomsky 1981b), determining in advance, the form and the functioning of language-particular grammars.” (White 2003: 59)

We know according to Chomsky that a UG exists for L1 learners. However, we do not clearly know what constitutes the initial state for a second language learner. As cited by White (1989:36), who summarizes Corder (1967), Selinker (1972) and Adejéman (1976), “the learner’s approach to L2 is systematic and rule governed, it is best accounted for by a series of interlanguage grammars.” Interlanguage grammars as proposed by Selinker (1972) are grammars in a language system used by the L2 learner that is neither the L1 nor the L2. “the learner’s ‘interlanguage, that is, the learner’s interim grammar of the L2.” (Thomas 2004: 179). These interlanguage grammars at some point during the L2 acquisition process arrive at a steady state.

According to White (2003) there are two logical possibilities for the initial state of a L2 learner. First, is that the grammar of the L1 is the initial state. Second, that the UG is the initial state. However, according to White (2003) neither the L1 nor the UG is the interlanguage initial state. Does the L2 learner have their L1 as the initial state or is it the UG? An investigation of the initial state hypotheses can help us answer this question.

#### 2.11.2 Is the UG available during L2 acquisition?

As reviewed in White (2003) The Fundamental Difference Hypothesis by Bley-Vroman (1990) states that the UG is unavailable during L2 learning. The L1 grammar is the initial state of L2 acquisition. This hypothesis states that L1 accesses the UG to select the principles and set the parameters required by that language, after which the UG is

nothing more than a mother tongue. All other principles and parameters are now inaccessible (White 2003).

The Initial Hypothesis of Syntax proposed by Platzack, (1996) claims the initial state is the same for both L1 and L2 (White 2003). It states the initial state is the UG and all functional categories and features are available, features are just set to 'weak'. This hypothesis argues that the interlanguage initial state is the UG and is similar to the situation of L1 acquisition (White 2003).

I assert that the initial state of an L2 learner is indeed a specific grammar. Additionally I am going to agree with White (2003), in that the L2 learner begins with representations derived from L1 grammar completely or at least partially. The initial state hypotheses that fall under this category are:

- Full Transfer Full Access Hypothesis of Schwartz and Sprouse (1994, 1996)
- the Valueless Features Hypothesis of Eubank (1993/1994, 1994, 1996)
- the Minimal Trees Hypothesis of Vainikka and Young-Scholten (1994,1996a,b)

Schwartz and Sprouse (1994, 1996) offer the Full Transfer Full Access Hypothesis (Hawkins 2001; Leung 2006; White 2003). This initial state hypothesis includes a transfer of all abstract properties in L2 initial state. In FTFA the L1 grammar is the initial state of the L2 being acquired (White 2003). However under this premise, once input data is encountered which cannot be dealt with in the L1, subsequent UG based restructuring occurs. Under this premise, we would state that the L2 learner has already arrived at a steady state in their L1. Since the L1 is in a steady state, or complete, the '*primary linguistic data*' or input in the L2, checks the L1 to see if it can establish a connection. If the PLD does not find a connection between the L2 and the L1, it checks

the UG for a connection. If no connection is found there, than interlanguage grammar is established. Here the interlanguage grammars are UG constrained which lead to full UG access (White 2003).

Eubank's (1994) Valueless Features Hypothesis attempts to explain why L2 initial state grammars might differ from L1 initial state grammars (Leung 2006). This hypothesis predicts a partial transfer of L1 grammar in the L2 initial state. This transfer includes all lexical and functional categories. However, the functional categories from the L1 are transferred into L2 grammar and are neutralized, and the features from the L2 learners L1 become valueless (Hawkins 2001; Leung 2006; White 2003).

Research by Vainikka and Young-Scholten (1994; 1996a; 1996b) considers the UG to be partially or at least indirectly accessed during L2 learning (White 2003). Under the Minimal Trees Hypothesis or MTH, only part of the L1 grammar is seen as constituting the initial state. This is where MTH differs from FTFA. MTH states that early grammar is restricted to lexical categories drawn from L1 grammar (White 2003). The Minimal Tree Hypothesis states that SLA initial state grammars lack functional categories because functional categories are not subject to transfer effects. Functional categories are not present from the L1 or the UG. An initial L2 state consists of lexical projections only. The MTH makes a prediction that there will never be instances of transfer effects associated with functional projections in interlanguage grammars. This theory states that functional projections are initially absent and emerge slowly over time triggered by L2 input (Hawkins 2001; Leung 2006; White 2003). From a syntactical point of view, initial L2 grammars under this premise have an incomplete syntactic tree, hence the name, Minimal Trees.

The current research entails the beginning stages of acquisition of lexical structures in L2. It asserts that the initial grammar developed includes the acquisition of lexical chunks, then the ability to analyze numbers in the creation of the plural. Then, the ability to analyze gender emerges as a later stage. We correlate this to beginner grammar with the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) novice stage which entails the ability to use one word utterances, or lexical chunks analyzed as one word utterances ([www.actfl.org](http://www.actfl.org)). Beginner grammar is lexical grammar, not sentence level grammar, including the morphology of the nouns (Montrul 2004).

The subjects in the current study are still somewhat attaching lexicon to their L1 English. We can assume that in their L1 a child brings forth with them a fairly complete L1 structure, but does not have a fully formed mother tongue. A five year old L1 speaker would not have achieved ultimate attainment or adult grammar in their L1 and therefore the child would still be partially accessing their UG. For example, some kindergartners may say something like, “*We **goed** to the art room today*” instead of saying, “*We **went** to the art room today.*” A child L2 learner at the kindergarten to second grade level is still working on lexicon in their L1. They have a very minimal L2 structure. For my present study I am going to go ahead and presuppose that the children in my study would have indirect access to their Universal Grammar and fall under the category of the Minimal Trees Hypothesis. Under this theory the addition of functional categories (available from the UG) which emerge gradually, will be triggered by L2 input (White 2003). The child is still making overgeneralizations, which at times lead to errors in their L1. Therefore, as previously stated, under this theory, initial L2 grammars have an incomplete syntactic tree.

Children who learn a L2 are better off learning small chunks of the target language. This could be completed by learning lyrics from a song, where the child receives the functional input without accessing it from their UG. For example, with the phrase, *¿Cómo te llamas?*, the verb is morphed for them. He or she is not receiving the functional projections of verb morphology from their UG; he or she is receiving them from L2 primary linguistic data. For the present study, the subjects do not conjugate verbs; further research would have them try to attain acquisition of a higher structure on a syntactical tree.

Additionally, for this research, since I am looking at lexical chunks, such as vocabulary and short phrases, I would say that the young children are following the Minimal Trees hypothesis with nouns, in that they are not adding functional categories to the nouns at first. These categories are emerging over time. Additionally, I am concurring with the Minimal Trees Hypothesis because there is not yet an L2 initial state hypothesis that specifically deals with children who are still in the process of completing their L1 grammar. Toward the goal of offering a model of child L2 acquisition I put forth that children transfer structures undergoing development and have full access to UG. When asked to identify a female cat in the target language, a kindergarten student could say 'gato' but he doesn't understand to change it to 'gata' for a female cat. I had not given him the input that 'gato' would change to 'gata' for a female cat. Oftentimes children in this study did not say the definite or indefinite article with the noun unless they memorized it with the noun through the authentic input they received. Furthermore, if a child learning Spanish L2 was asked to say what he or she saw when looking at a picture of two black cats, the child would most likely would not say "*Los gatos negros*"

because he or she cannot produce the plural change on their own without receiving any input, he or she would say “*gatos negro.*” Since their L1 English does not have agreement with nouns with articles and adjectives as in Spanish, so it might be difficult for a L2 learner of Spanish to extrapolate ‘*los gatos negros*’ when in English he or she would say ‘the black cats.’ This is why the order of acquisition proposed in my hypothesis is important to consider. Provided the appropriate input, number agreement will occur first, and then gender agreement will occur later.

A study by Boyd (1975) investigated whether L2 Spanish learning is similar to L1 English learning. This investigation considered adjective noun gender agreement as one of its criterion. Results of study indicated the subject-verb number and person agreement, adjective-noun gender and article-noun gender were morphological problems for L2 learners. Gender agreement was often neglected (Boyd 1975). Although the acquisition of Spanish grammatical rules was incomplete after three years of immersion education, pronunciation was native-like (Boyd 1975).

If children are still partially accessing their UG, as I presume, then they are still guided by instinctive linguistic principles which can greatly influence their L2 acquisition. Since only partial access to the UG is happening, then these principles may only be minimal. However, a small number of principles in the UG are a head start for a L2 learner’s acquisition of the target language. Is it possible for a child to acquire two languages at the same time? We recognize the answer is yes from our knowledge of bilingual children. These children must be assessing their UG if they are learning two languages at the same time. Can a child who has already almost completely acquired their L1 begin to acquire an L2? We can presume the answer is yes and that the children

in this situation have an advantage due to the possibility of access to their UG and thus the 'head start' on L2 acquisition over an L2 learner who according to many L2 acquisition models possibly is no longer able to access their UG. This is one of the many reasons for which I am a proponent of child L2 learning. I am only presuming the child has partial access to the UG following the Minimalist Theory model. However, since the L1 UG processes have not yet reached the steady state of the adult grammar it is likely that the child is utilizing UG principles to analyze both L1 and L2 input. This is not something I tested for explicitly in this research. However, it is the posture of my research that if a child is able to get a head start on a second language early in their school career he or she will reach a steady state in both L1 and L2. It would be beneficial for a child to not only learn how their native language works, and also begin to compare and contrast their native language to a second language before their L1 is completely attained. By introducing second language education early, a variety of benefits could occur for the L2 learner.

### 2.12 Second language acquisition

In the view of VanPatten (2003) second language acquisition and first language acquisition are interrelated depending upon, what is being considered. The main difference between SLA and first language acquisition is that a second language learner has already acquired a set of habits from their first language (VanPatten & Williams, 2007:20).

If we take into consideration age and maturity of the L2 learner is at the time he or she is acquiring the target language, we can gain insight into not only pedagogical



implications for teaching the L2, but also, we can gain insight as to how proficient target language the L2 learner could possibly later become. Therefore, a review of differences between child and adult second language learners is now put forth.

### 2.13 Differences between child and adult learners

Adults who are learning a second language already have another language present, which is their native language (Hawkins 2001). Adult learners are able to compare and contrast linguistic patterns and forms in the second language to those in their native language (VanPatten & Williams 2007). This allows them analyze the language abstractly. Adults are also able to learn the language in its written as well as its spoken form, unlike their L1 input (Hawkins 2001). In addition, adults can rely on context to determine the meaning of unknown vocabulary words through their experience in the world (Pinter 2006). Mature learners also have more formulated conversational skills than child language learners. For example, adults know how to hold a polite conversation with their interlocutor. A child learner needs to be taught how to converse in a polite manner and the proper words to use to give politeness.

Children at the age of six are not able to reflect upon how their L1 or L2 functions (Pinter 2006). They probably would not notice language morphology like an adult learner would. Nor can a child L2 learner rely on context as much as an adult L2 learner could due to their lack of worldly experience. A child L2 learner as young as age five in most cases does not learn the target language in its written form. Many activities involving kindergarten L2 learners would not have the children write any words in the target language. Children at this age learn a second language if they are motivated to do

so because it is rewarding to them as they are having fun while learning. An adult learner by contrast may learn a second language to advance in their career or to fulfill a college requirement and therefore, may not look at learning the second language as pleasurable. From these differences between child and adult learners, we can try to determine if one would be superior to the other in terms of learning a second language. And, if one is deemed more capable than the other, in which regards does this hold true?

Research has shown that children are considered to better in terms of ultimate attainment for SLA (Krashen & Terrell 1983). “Over the long run, those who start second languages as children will usually reach higher levels of competence than those who start as adults (i.e. after age 15). Over the short run, however adults are faster in attaining second language proficiency than younger children” (Krashen & Terrell 1983:45).

#### 2.14 Age and SLA

The debate over which age a second language learner best learns the target language has been steady and ongoing. The scope of the dispute is wide and it has not been resolved. Its most prominent points deal with maturational issues to issues involving the UG of the L2 learner. Due to the controversial history of this debate, this research does not set out to resolve the argument. Therefore by presenting the reader with relevant research in this area of SLA, the aim is to merely have the reader consider the possible encouraging outcomes for starting to learn an L2 early versus starting to learn an L2 later. Adults can and do learn foreign languages well. The main distinction between adult L2 and child L2 could be that adults are learning a second language

whereas young children may still be acquiring the L2. A child L2 learner can possibly attain much higher proficiency levels than their adult counterparts if he or she studies the language consecutively over an extended time period. Therefore a child who starts to learn their L2 in kindergarten can possibly attain higher proficiency levels in the target language than a student who starts their L2 learning in eighth grade. This distinction can be made through the initial state hypotheses where a child at the age of five may fall under the Minimal Trees Hypothesis where he or she is still in the stages of language acquisition and still maintaining UG access. This research sets out to show how authentic input can contribute to a rapid lexical development in the target language for the young learners who are acquiring the L2. It deals with the beginning stages of development of lexical structures in the L2.

A study by Asher and García (1969) investigated age effects of learning English for Cuban immigrants to the United States (Singleton & Ryan 2004). The study examined the interaction between age of entry into the country and length of residence there. Seventy-one Cuban immigrants ranging from seven to nineteen years old were investigated to consider if they had achieved nativelike pronunciation in English after being in the U.S. for about five years. The results concluded that although none of the subjects were judged to have nativelike pronunciation, many were judged to have near-native pronunciation by the panel of judges. Those who were deemed as having near-native pronunciation were the younger children. It was also concluded that the children who were younger when entering the U.S. had a higher probability for a nativelike accent of English. This increased more with the length of time in the U.S. (Singleton & Ryan 2004). This study shows that younger learners may be better acquirers of pronunciation

skills than their adult counterparts. Therefore, it would be beneficial to start FL lessons early in our U.S. schools.

#### 2.14.1 Age in relation to early second language education

In a study completed by Domínguez and Pessoa (2005) the results of an early versus a later start for second language education were examined. This study compared sixth grade students who had been learning Spanish since kindergarten with students who had only studied Spanish for one year (Domínguez & Pessoa 2005). The results of the study concluded that the students who started their Spanish language classes earlier, in kindergarten, surpassed those who started later in the areas of listening, speaking and writing the language. “The Spanish teachers agreed that the early learners comprehend key words and phrases better than the new students” (Domínguez & Pessoa 2005:477). Additionally, the children who started learning the language earlier demonstrated more self-confidence in their speaking and literacy skills. Also, those children were able to write in Spanish using complex sentence structures (Domínguez & Pessoa 2005).

It is apparent that the amount of time studying the target language for one group over the other in this particular study may give it some bias as to the results concluding that the younger students, those who had been studying the language longer than the others, outperformed them. However, what is important to extract from this study is that the early start to the second language classes instilled self-confidence for those particular students, especially in their spoken and literacy skills. When learning a second language, as Krashen’s Affective Filter shows us, a lower affective filter, hence, more self-confidence, helps the student to learn and eventually acquire the target language.

Domínguez and Pessoa (2005) state: “Children who begin early appear to develop better L2 oral proficiency and to feel more secure in their oral performance. Early learners may also have comparative advantages in relation to their monolingual peers with respect to cognitive development, academic achievement, and attitudes toward the target language and culture” (Domínguez & Pessoa 2005:474).

Research put forth by Krashen, Scarcella and Long (1979 & 1982) concluded that younger learners are more proficient in terms of overall foreign language studying throughout the years. They maintain that adults do go through the early stages of L2 acquisition in the areas of syntactic and morphological development more quickly than children go through these stages (Krashen et al. 1979). Additionally they affirm that older children acquire more quickly than younger children in these stages of morphological and syntactic development. However, Krashen et al. (1979), in their long term study of age, rate and attainment of L2 also maintain that “Acquirers who begin natural exposure to second language during childhood generally achieve higher second language proficiency than those beginning as adults” (Krashen et al. 1979:573-574).

The study completed by Krashen et al. (1982) concluded that younger learners are more proficient than older learners in the situation of long term learning. VanPatten (2003) is in agreement that children get further than adults and adolescents in L2 learning. When speaking about learning a second language, he states, “however this research shows that in the long run, children are better learners, they get further and acquire more in the end” (VanPatten2003:93).

A study completed by Johnson and Newport (1989) looked at the long term attainment of English for a group of immigrants from China and Korea to the United

States who had lived in the U.S. for at least five years. This study showed that subjects who arrived to the U.S. before the age of seven performed within the range set by the native speaker controls (Singleton & Ryan 2004).

There are differences between child and adult L2 learners. However there does not appear to be a concrete clarification stating that older learners are better than younger learners or vice versa. We can simply take the information we receive from these previous studies and pull out what we consider the most important points that would influence one age bracket over another. Older learners are better in some areas, such as learning grammar quickly during the initial startup of L2 learning (VanPatten 2003; Krashen 1982). Also adults most obviously already know how to learn, for they have been studying much longer than children.

Although older learners may learn more quickly than child learners, this does not mean that we should not start teaching foreign languages in the elementary schools more often. Furthermore, studies have shown that children are able to reach further ultimate attainment in a second language than their adult counterparts (Krashen et al. 1979; VanPatten 2003). Areas such as nativelike pronunciation seem to prevail in the learner who started their target language education during early elementary school years.

“Researchers claim that if L2 learners begin their language learning after about the age of twelve, they will end up with some degree of foreign accent” (Kumaravadevelu 2006: 32). Consequently, if a child begins to learn the target language before the age of twelve, he or she may not have an accent. The reasons listed above show that learning and FL early can be very beneficial for the L2 learner. Therefore, it would be imperative to start FL programs in the United State elementary schools. The students who receive an early

start to FL education would benefit from a) further ultimate attainment in the target language and b) more nativelike pronunciation in the target language. A further analysis of this is postulated in the next section where the Critical Period Hypothesis is assessed.

### 2.15 The Critical Period for foreign language learning

There has been ongoing research pertaining to the success of a child learning a second language versus an adult second language learner. Research has shown both positive and negative assertions for child and adult L2 learners alike. One of the more controversial research hypotheses for both L2 grammar and pronunciation learning is that of the Critical Period Hypothesis. A review of the Critical Period Hypothesis, or CPH, will currently be put forth, in order for the reader to consider the possibility of biological advantages to receiving foreign language education in early elementary school grade levels.

Evidence supporting the CPH states that individuals past a certain age are worse at learning a foreign language than younger individuals (DeKeyser 2000). Penfield and Roberts (1959) were the first to introduce the critical period for language learning. They said that language acquisition was more efficient by the age of nine because “the human brain becomes progressively stiff and rigid after the age of nine” (Snow et al. 2000:9). The investigation completed by Penfield and Roberts (1959) helped the linguist Eric Lenneberg (1967) get his start into researching this claim. Lenneberg coincided with Penfield and Roberts since he also claimed there is a critical period for language learning. Yet Lenneberg stated in his Critical Period Hypothesis that the critical period ends when the acquirer reaches puberty (Danesi 2003; Kumaravadivelu 2006). This theory leads to

the critical period hypothesis. Lenneberg examined brain changes in children and compared them to maturational development, especially related to speech and language. He believed that the language acquisition device deteriorates before adulthood. He said hemispheric lateralization in the brain is complete by the onset of puberty (Danesi 2003; Kumaravadivelu 2006; Singleton et al. 2004). Furthermore, this brain lateralization occurs during the period of heightened plasticity in the brain. According to Lenneberg, once the individual reaches puberty, this period of plasticity in the brain ends and firm localization of language-processing abilities in the left hemisphere occurs. His research suggests that puberty is the approximate cutoff age for completely successful primary language acquisition. Therefore, he suggests post-pubertal L2 acquisition would be more difficult than pre-pubertal L2 acquisition, due to the latter being the time of rapid neurobiological development (Snow et al. 2000; Scovel 2000).

As summarized by Kumaravadivelu (2006) who cites Scovel (2001), the critical period hypothesis has been scrutinized and reviewed. Scovel states that there are three 'strands' of the critical period hypothesis. First, is that the critical period does exist, but is only for foreign accents. Second, is that the critical period exists for grammar in addition to accents. And the third 'strand' states that there is no critical period (Kumaravadivelu 2006). It does seem valid that a child learning a L2 may maintain a nativelike accent as he or she advances in their studies. Many researchers do agree that the critical period exists for accents (Kumaravadivelu 2006). The notion that the critical period exists for accents states "researchers claim that, if L2 learners begin their language learning by the age of 12, they will end up with some degree of foreign accent. The reason is that L2 phonological production is presumably the only aspect of language



performance that has a neuromuscular basis” (Kumaravadivelu 2006:32). For this reason an early start to learning an L2 would be beneficial in terms of ultimate proficiency.

As cited in Singleton and Ryan (2004), Piper and Cansin (1988) studied twenty-nine advanced ESL learners in Canada with ages of arrival ranging from about the age of six to around twenty-eight years old. Each individual participated in an interview.

Results from this study concluded that subjects who arrived to Canada as children had better English pronunciation than those who arrived later in their lives. Also, the length of residence in Canada was not considered a significant factor (Singleton & Ryan 2004).

In the consideration of an adolescent, instead of brain lateralization and plasticity, it could be considered that children going through adolescence have difficulties learning an L2 during puberty due the emotional changes they undergo. It could also be considered that many teenagers are concerned about not being embarrassed in front of their peers following Krashen’s (1983) Affective Filter Hypothesis and therefore do not excel as well as a younger child learner. The students at this age level could have high affective filters which discourages foreign language learning.

#### 2.15.1 Sensitive period for L2 learning

Next, as summarized by Kumaravadivelu (2006), a ‘sensitive period’ rather than a critical period was proposed by Lamendella (1977) and Singleton (1989). During this sensitive period it is proposed that the sensitivity fades away, but does not disappear entirely at a certain fixed point. Certain language skills are acquired with more ease during certain times in development (Kumaravadivelu 2006). The sensitive period maintains that certain language skills can be learned with difficulty after the critical

period. In addition, certain language skills can be acquired with more ease during certain times of development (Kumaravadivelu 2006).

Both the critical period and the sensitive period have been up for debate by many. As previously stated, research does seem to maintain that children do better in regards to ultimate attainment of the target language when compared to adults (Krashen et al. 1979; VanPatten 2003). The Critical Period Hypothesis shows to some extent that learning a second language as a child may be beneficial, especially in the area of target language pronunciation. . However, we know that adults can learn a foreign language, although they may not get as far into the language as children do. Although it is debatable as to whether this critical period exists for L2 learning, we can presume that children who receive an early start to FL education maintain a more nativelike accent than their adult and older learner counterparts. Therefore, an authentic materials approach to early foreign language learning may help a child L2 learner learn the target language and therefore increase the likelihood that the child gains a more nativelike accent in the target language. Further research however, will have to explore and advance this area of study before we are convinced if the totality of the CPH does in fact hold true or not.

#### 2.16 Methods for teaching foreign languages

When teaching a language to young children, techniques and materials must be interesting and fun to the target language learner. A variety of teaching methods have been developed to employ when teaching a second language. Some of the methods would work well with authentic input and young learners, whereas others may be more appropriate for older L2 learners. A review of some of the more popular methods for

teaching foreign languages is be put forth here in order to consider which methods would be most applicable for young children leaning a second language. A hybrid of the methods postulated below will be used as a basis for the authentic materials pedagogic method that is proposed at end of this chapter.

### 2.16.1 Total Physical Response

Total Physical Response or TPR is a language teaching method developed by James Asher, a psychology professor from San Jose State University, California. This method uses command forms as children respond physically before they respond verbally (Kumaravadivelu 2006; Richards & Rodgers 2001; Asher 1981). TPR has the teacher give students commands in the target language classroom. Most of this method centers on using a verb in its imperative form. Partially similar to behaviorism, TPR uses a stimulus-response method of learning.

Asher considers first and second language acquisition to be comparable processes (Richards & Rodgers 2001). He assumes that students can learn a second language the same way infants can learn their native language (Asher 1981). He states that children develop listening skills before they can speak. Asher states that in all languages throughout history, infants do not acquire speaking before comprehension (Asher 2000:1). These skills are acquired as children respond physically to spoken language in the form of commands. So, for example when a caregiver says, "*Pick up your doll*", the child does so without saying anything at first (Asher 1981). Speech evolves once a basis in listening skills is acquired (Richards & Rodgers 2001). Therefore, Asher states that listening skills in the L2 should be acquired in conjunction with physical movement.

In this method the teacher uses the target language to direct physical responses for the students (Asher 1981). Asher (1981) believes the imperative tense can make L2 acquisition possible when used correctly with movement of the learner. According to Asher within twenty hours of training the students will be ready to speak the language, stating that the twelfth hour would be the earliest point where the student could speak the target language. Asher claims that TPR as a teaching model can at least partially stimulate how children learn a language (Asher 1981).

Asher (2000) says that the best language acquisition experience is to comprehend the target language before speaking the target language. He claims that his method allows for this to occur, in that the students are showing comprehension through their response to commands before speaking. Additionally he says that TPR is a good alternative to direct translation because it allows for classroom experiences that are convincing (Asher 2000).

TPR is a good method to use when introducing vocabulary to young learners. Since it is a method that does not require the L2 student to speak at first, it lowers the affective filter of the student. Therefore the learning environment becomes stress free in the sense that the children are required to respond through movement instead of orally when first learning the target language. Young children like activities that involve movement and have a difficult time sitting still for long periods of time. Therefore, TPR, at least in the beginning phases would be an appropriate method to use when teaching a young child a second language. This method could be used with authentic materials as for example, children could be asked to give the teacher authentic objects found in the classroom. Asher has emphasized that TPR should be used in addition to other teaching

methods (Richards & Rodgers 2001). Consequently, TPR could be used to support other teaching techniques and methods used in the L2 classroom, such as, a method that incorporates the use of authentic materials.

### 2.16.2 Whole Language

The Whole Language approach sees language as a means for communication where there is an “international relationship between readers and writers” (Richards & Rodgers 2001:109). In this approach to language teaching, teachers do not give students knowledge; rather they interact with students to construct knowledge mutually. Whole language uses “authentic literature rather than artificial, specially prepared texts and exercises designed to practice individual reading skills” (Richards & Rodgers 2001:110). Texts that are interesting to the students are used. Additionally, writing is constructed for a real audience and a focus on student-produced texts transpires. Risk taking is encouraged and errors are supposed to be accepted by the students. In the Whole Language approach, the teacher is seen as a facilitator whereas the student is a collaborator.

Whole language promotes the use of real-world materials instead of texts created for the foreign language classroom (Richards & Rodgers 2001). This approach focuses on activities that are relevant to the target language learner’s life and needs. “Whole language activities may prove useful particularly for younger learners in ESL environments” (Richards & Rodgers 2001:113). It is interesting to note that this quote refers to ESL learners and not L2 learners. Is this because early L2 education in the elementary schools is not widespread?

Whole language is an approach that seeks to develop both reading and writing skills in the target language. For the purposes of a group of young kindergarten through second grade L2 learners, this approach is beneficial in that it promotes the use of authentic texts as a tool for learning a second language. Furthermore this approach supports real-world materials, which in turn could be authentic games and songs. This approach has considerable applications that could be put to use in a young L2 learner's classroom. The teacher however, needs to adapt the approach to the needs and appropriate level of the young L2 learners. A student produced text for a kindergartener may involve the teacher reading a sentence in the target language and the child drawing a picture that identifies the content. Aspects of the Whole Language approach could definitely be used with young second language learners.

### 2.16.3 The Natural Approach

The Natural Approach was designed to “supply good comprehensible input and lower the affective filter” of the L2 learner (Krashen & Terrell 1983:38). The Natural Approach is based on Krashen's views of language acquisition. The approach follows his five hypotheses for language acquisition, which are the Acquisition Learning Hypothesis, Monitor Hypothesis, the Natural Order Hypothesis, the Affective Filter Hypothesis and the Input Hypothesis. Instead of summarizing each of these hypotheses individually, the following gives a brief synopsis as presented by Richards & Rodgers (2001). The five hypotheses of Krashen incorporate that the L2 teacher should incorporate plenty of comprehensible input in their lessons. Exposure to vocabulary used for communication is most important, rather than emphasis on syntactic structure. Visuals are used to

introduce new vocabulary. Students should allow speaking to “emerge.” The focus of the student should be on meaning, rather than form, in order to lower the affective filter. The L2 input should occur in a stress-free atmosphere (Richards & Rodgers 2001).

The Natural Approach is designed for oral and written communication skills (Richards & Rodgers 2001; Krashen & Terrell 1983). The approach is divided into four goals based on communication and academic objectives. These include oral and written skills in both “basic communication skills” and “academic learning skills” (Krashen & Terrell 1983:66). Krashen and Terrell (1983) state however, that the Natural Approach was not developed to teach academic learning skills, it is just assumed that a basis in those skills will lead to good basic communication skills.

This approach focuses on the needs of the students. It incorporates the use of situations where the L2 student could use the target language in real life and creates topics around those situations (Richards & Rodgers 2001). Krashen and Terrell (1983) state that by adjusting to the needs and interests of students, a low affective filter will occur for them. By having a low affective filter, the students will feel relaxed, interested and at ease, instead of uptight, nervous and stressed.

Techniques to teach while using this approach often borrow from other L2 teaching methods. For example, Total Physical Response is encouraged and simply adapted to fit the criteria for the Natural Approach (Richards & Rodgers 2001). Students go through stages of acquisition. First, is the “pre-production stage,” where the students do not have to respond orally in the target language; however they may act out a command physically to show comprehension (Richards & Rodgers 2001: 187). Next, is the “early production stage,” where students respond to yes or no questions with single

words or small phrases (Richards & Rodgers 2001:187). And, lastly, is the “speech emergent stage” (Richards & Rodgers 2001:187). In this stage students use role play and games and as the title implies, speech begins to emerge (Krashen & Terrell 1983; Richards & Rodgers 2001).

The Natural Approach would be considered appropriate for a group of young L2 learners. The emphasis on vocabulary rather than syntactic structures is adequate and appropriate for child learners. The introduction of the vocabulary with pictures is a good way to incorporate students’ interests and a good opportunity to provide the students with views of the target language culture if possible. The emphasis on comprehensible and meaningful practice activities is not only appropriate for a group of young learners, but also adequate to introduce authentic materials. Krashen and Terrell (1983) stress that appropriate texts should be used when incorporating aural input. They maintain that “research suggests that second language acquirers with limited syntactic competence can still extract meaning from texts that contain syntax that is beyond them” (Krashen & Terrell 1983:133). A young L2 learner can therefore listen to a story, not understand each sentence, yet still pull out vocabulary he or she recognizes which in turn will hopefully lead them to acquire those lexical items.

The methods presented are solely a brief introduction to the large array of second language teaching methods. However they form the hybrid called the Authentic Bridge to Acquisition Method introduced in the conclusion of this chapter. When planning materials to teach a second language, there are many methods to consider. A good second language teacher is able to properly adapt themselves to the methods in the field and determine which ones are appropriate for the age level and needs of their particular



group of students. Also, he or she should be able to take from the methods and create methods of their very own. These methods may not be famously published or perhaps not even spoken about beyond the walls of the classroom in which they occur. However it is important to keep the students interested, motivated and desiring to come to class and learn. The techniques, methods and materials will vary depending upon the situation of the classroom and its teacher.

### 2.17 Conclusion

Chapter two provided a variety of theoretical frameworks that incorporate both how children acquire their native language, and how they learn and begin to acquire their second language. These frameworks include methods and materials to teach a second language to a child. Various theories were presented in order to present the reader with a clear indication of the possible techniques and mechanisms necessary for a child to learn a second language.

In this chapter a definition of both authenticity and of authentic materials has been established in order to clearly demonstrate how the terms are used for this particular research. Additionally authentic texts and authentic songs as teaching materials were reviewed. Vygotsky and his theories of learning were incorporated which explained how a child can navigate through the ZPD, in some cases with the systematic support of scaffolding. Comprehensible input as proposed by Krashen in his Input Hypothesis was explained. Also presented were some of the theories involving behaviorism.

First language acquisition and child grammars were discussed leading up to Universal Grammar proposed by Chomsky. Next, an investigation of the initial state

hypotheses transpired. The review of the initial state hypotheses demonstrated how young child L2 learners may fall under the Minimal Trees hypothesis of Vainikka and Young-Scholten, thus conceivably maintaining partial access to their UG during L2 acquisition.

Next, a review of age and how age relates to second language acquisition was postulated. Differences between child and adult L2 learners were examined. Lenneberg's Critical Period Hypothesis was explored. Lastly, a brief review of current L2 teaching methodologies as put forth stating which of the methods could be considered appropriate for young second language learners.

Each facet that was considered in this chapter had a relationship to either authentic materials or child second language learners. In regards to child second language learners this chapter provided insight into how they learn a language, and what materials are best suited for their age level and capacity for learning a second language. There are many additional aspects that could be considered in this review of literature, for the literature is abundant. However, the impression that was provided in this chapter was intended to give the reader an opportunity to consider the reasons why it would be beneficial to have children start to learn foreign languages early in the United States educational system. And secondly, to ponder how the child learner acquires a second language in order to consider what is the best method for these children to learn a second language. What essentials do we need to take from psychologists, behaviorists, psycholinguists, linguists and educators in order to create an appropriate methodology for a second language learner?

## 2.18 Authentic Bridge to Acquisition Method

Drawing upon all of these elements for the younger second language learner, learning is facilitated by a variety of factors. These factors include a lower affective filter, comprehensible input and a higher ability to acquire pronunciation. As a methodological framework these factors include creating the appropriate learning environment, lowering the stress level of the L2 learner, employing the L2 learner's sensory motor skills and multiple intelligences, and creating opportunities to act or play in the language through role play. Authentic songs in the target language provide for repetition and imitation which facilitates learning for a child learning a L2. Furthermore, the L2 learner should be going through the ZPD put forth by Vygotsky along with scaffolding from the instructor or another peer through these role play activities. Comprehensible input can occur through a variety of activities that use authentic materials, such as, listening to an authentic text.

Additionally, it is important to know the initial state and to connect it to ACTFL novice language production resulting in "observable behavior" in the target language, Spanish. Consequently, I propose that authentic materials presented within the above methodological framework, will be called the Authentic Bridge to Acquisition Method, which will result in first, the acquisition of lexical chunks (i.e. vocabulary) and then second, the acquisition of lexical agreement (first agreement in number, then in gender), adhering to novice level proficiency as designated by ACTFL. Therefore, first lexical chunks are acquired and second lexical agreement is acquired, both via the authentic materials presented in the learning environment. Chapter three elaborates on this and informs the reader additional insight into the above mentioned hypothesis.

## CHAPTER 3

### AUTHENTIC INPUT IN THE ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM

#### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology for the present research. The first section describes the participants and the location of the study. Next, the methods and materials employed in the study are explained. The hypothesis and research statements are presented in this chapter. The third section of the chapter describes the data collection procedures as well as the analysis of the data, including bar graphs for each task category. And lastly, the final section includes the conclusion for the current chapter.

#### 3.2 Setting

The research data were collected at the Leeds Elementary school in Leeds, Massachusetts, which is a suburb of Northampton, Massachusetts. The elementary school is part of the Northampton Public school system and students range from kindergarten through fifth grade. According to the Massachusetts state Department of Education (DOE) profile for this school, in the area of enrollment by race, eight-five point nine percent of the students at the school are white, nine point four percent are Hispanic, point nine percent are African American, point three percent are Asian, and the remaining three point four percent of the students enrolled are considered “Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic” (<http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/home>). The reason I make reference to the DOE profile is to clarify that the school is predominantly populated by white students who do not speak Spanish at home. Secondly, the school does not have a large Hispanic population as do some of the other schools in the Northampton Public schools district.

Therefore, it could be stated that it is not likely that the students who attend Leeds Elementary School receive input of the target language in their community of Leeds, Massachusetts.

### 3.3 Participants

The research subjects for the present study are seventeen kindergarten, first and second grade students. Twelve of the students are kindergarten students, four of them are first graders and one is a second grade student. The age range for these students is five years old to seven years old, with the majority of the students in the present study are between the ages of five and six. This age range did not affect the results in terms of the students' acquisition of the target language. The students all started at the same stage since they were started the Spanish lessons without having any prior foreign language lessons. The second grade student was able to help the younger students as he was able to do a bit more physically and mentally than the younger students due to his older age. However, by stating this, I do not mean that he was able to acquire more aspects of the target language than the younger participants. On other occasions, he was able to complete written work faster than the younger students and therefore he was able to help them and provide some scaffolding for them.

The subjects in the study participated in an after school enrichment program that lasted over a period of six weeks. The participants had five Spanish lessons, lasting for one and a half hours per week. In order to participate in the study, the parents or guardians of the students enrolled their children in after school Spanish lessons as part of the enrichment program. It was required that the students enrolled did not have any prior

foreign language lessons. A survey was sent home to make sure no student enrolled in the Spanish lessons had previously been taught a foreign language. Results of this survey clarified that the selected participants had not been previously been taught a foreign language before enrolling in the lessons. If a parent answered yes that their child had previously been taught a foreign language, the child was not chosen to be part of the group. Additionally, in order to participate, it was also required that the students were enrolled in kindergarten through second grade only at the time of the lessons.

### 3.4 Research statements and hypothesis

The research statements for the present study are as follows:

1. (Pre)-literate Anglophone children are able to acquire lexical chunks (i.e. vocabulary) in Spanish through the use of authentic materials.
2. The use of authentic materials as both teaching and learning techniques leads to the attainment of first, number agreement, and second, gender agreement in Spanish.

My hypothesis is that as a result of exposure to Authentic Input, L2 learners between the ages of five to seven years old, who are still acquiring English as their L1, produce evidence of the transfer of the structure of noun phrase (NP) including number agreement first, and then later activate the available structure corresponding to gender agreement.

Under this hypothesis, the L2 learner is still developing the NP structure of L1, (in other words, the learner is still developing the grammar of the L1) and at this stage child L2 production shows transference of Minimal Trees, however structure is added and developed as input is analyzed and acquired in both L1 and L2, loosely following the model of the Minimalist Program (Chomsky 1994).

### 3.5 Preliminary assessment

In order to evaluate the actual level at which the participants could function in class related activities, such as, reading or writing in their native language, or any prior knowledge of Spanish, a preliminary informal assessment was administered to each group of participants. This assessment was necessary in order to determine what types of activities the students would be able to accomplish. Both the fine motor skills and literacy level of the participants were tested. Fine motor skills were tested as they relate to writing, and it was necessary to determine if the children would be able to write any words for any class related activities because of their young age. For the first task, the participants were first asked to trace shapes and lines, thus testing their fine motor skills. Next, the participants were asked to fold a piece of paper into four equal boxes. Some participants had difficulty folding the paper. Subsequently, the children were told to write their name in the upper left corner and the date in the upper right corner. All participants were able to write their name. Next, they were asked to draw a person in the upper left box. Then, the participants were told to draw a tree in the upper right box. If they finished early they were told to add more detail to the tree or person. In the lower left box they had to draw a house. In the lower right box they were told to write the alphabet. Not all of those participants could write the complete alphabet from the first session; only about three quarters of them could do so. And, one participant from the second session could only write up to the letter H. Additionally, seven of the overall participants wrote letters the wrong way, namely, writing the letters J, Z and S backwards, and they were not able to correctly write R and some wrote the letter Q upside down. Those who finished early were told to write numbers on the back of the

paper. Only three of the overall participants from both sessions combined finished early. Many kindergarten teachers do a similar assessment as a way to informally evaluate the starting point of each of their individual students. In regards to reading skills in their native language, responses on the parent questionnaire showed that none of the twelve kindergarten students were able to read. Of the four first graders, two were able to read some words, but not entire sentences, and the other two could not read. The one second grade student, however, was able to read. Once more, these preliminary assessment activities were administered to the participants so that the learners were given pedagogical lessons appropriate to their age and ability level.

In addition to testing fine motor skills and the literacy level of the participants, this preliminary assessment established that the students did not know any Spanish prior to their first lesson. Although the survey sent home to parents already asked this question, it was essential to ascertain that the participants in this research had no prior knowledge of any basic Spanish vocabulary in order for the study to not have any bias. The participants were also asked informally how much Spanish they knew. The researcher asked the participants to raise their hand if they could count in Spanish, and if any of the students said yes; they were asked how high they could count. A participant from session one said “Uno, dos, tres.” The researcher asked this participant where they learned those numbers and the participant replied that they learned them from television. In session two, nobody knew any numbers in the target language. Next, the researcher held up color paper, and asked, does anyone know what color this is in Spanish? One student from session two knew the translation of the color green (*verde*), but was unable to tell the researcher how they knew this color. No one from either session knew any of



the other colors. The participants were then asked if they knew any Spanish words. Of the participants from session one, one participant knew the greeting *hola*. Of those from session two, as previously stated one knew the color green in Spanish, a second student said *hola*. (However it should be noted here that the researcher started the class by saying, “*Hola estudiantes,*” which translates to *hello students*).

### 3.6 Research methodology and data

For this research there was a total of six sessions that occurred during the beginning of the school year. Each lesson lasted for one and a half hours, after school, over a period of six weeks. In all, the sessions amounted to a total of seven and a half hours of instruction time. The final hour and a half session was allotted for the research tasks. The total research was completed over a period of twelve weeks. Two different groups of students were taught Spanish over a period of six weeks per group. During the first six week session, ten students attended the Spanish lessons. The remaining seven students were enrolled in the second six week session.

Authentic materials were incorporated into each Spanish lesson. Each lesson had at least one authentic material incorporated into the lesson plan. It was essential to use materials such as songs, games etc. in the target language because the majority of the children in this study were not able to properly write the entire alphabet correctly, as shown in the preliminary assessment. Also, many of the participants could not read in their native language, as was clarified according to the answers given in the parental survey. Authentic materials allow the teacher to teach the lesson without the standard textbook, pencil and paper methods. Moreover, many FLES teachers with whom I have

communicated with have told me that there is a lack of materials for foreign language education in the elementary schools in the United States. Their opinion is that there are not that many textbook companies creating FL books for elementary students due to the lack of demand for these types of books (Personal communication A. Restrepo, & B. Rivera 2007). Therefore, in the United States it is customary for the elementary school foreign language teacher to create their own materials to supplement their curriculum.

Also, when authentic materials are used appropriately, the students are motivated to learn. This motivation comes from the reality that authentic input allows for more entertainment in the classroom and consequently less stress for the student. These materials cause the motivation level of the student to be high and therefore he or she has a lower affective filter which allows for more learning to occur (Curtain & Pesola 1988; Krashen et al. 1983). Activities are centered on a game, a dance or perhaps learning lyrics to a song or poem in the target language. There is no written emphasis on grammar; however it might be learned through participation in a game.

The new method created by this researcher, the Authentic Bridge to Acquisition Method, has been used as the teaching methodology for each lesson. According to Bacon (1992) researchers have shown that L2 learners benefit both from authentic input both cognitively and affectively (Bacon 1992:399). In this method, authentic materials are used to first introduce the lexical chunks for each lesson. So, the first encounter that the participants have with the new vocabulary in the target language is via the authentic input, without any English translations. In the present study, the participants first listened to authentic songs in Spanish. Researchers recently have studied how music learning and language learning are closely connected (Miché 2002; Schön, et al. 2007). So, authentic

songs are a perfect resource to bridge the gap between learning and acquisition as Schön, et al. (2007) has stated that the repetitive nature of songs can lead to acquisition.

The songs that were played were related to the theme of the vocabulary to be learned. The affective filter (Krashen 1982) of the students was thus lower, because the music was motivating them to learn. Also, as I mentioned earlier, Schön, et al. (2007) shows how learning a new language can be benefited by both the motivational and the structural properties of music in a song. Music has repetitive structures which are beneficial to the L2 learner. And, music allows the L2 learner to map both linguistic and musical structures in their brain (Schön, et al. 2007). In addition, the music is tapping into the musical and bodily kinesthetic intelligences, as some of the songs require hand movements or a dance. For the abovementioned reasons, it is imperative that authentic music is used in the Authentic Bridge to Acquisition Method.

There were a total of five Spanish lessons because the sixth session was set aside for testing purposes. Each lesson started with a daily routine. When teaching young children it is imperative to have a daily routine, something that they find familiar. This provides a sense of security for the student because it allows them to know what to expect and thus lowers their stress level. In a classroom situation with small children, it is important to alleviate any stress before it occurs so that the environment is conducive to learning.

The daily routine is a great opportunity for both receptive and productive skills as it allows the student to practice acquired skills in the target language. The daily routine starts with the children singing songs from the target language and culture. This is where authentic materials are first introduced into the lesson. The songs that were repeated

daily were, “Dibuja un Círculo,” a traditional Mexican song on the subject of shapes, “Buenos Dias,” a song that incorporates greetings and responses to greetings, “Los Dias de la Semana son Siete,” a song that incorporates both the vocabulary for the days of the week and counting, and finally, “Cómo te llamas tú,” a song that teaches the participants how to introduce themselves in Spanish. Each of the songs used in the lessons except for the one song about the shapes, “Dibuja un Círculo,” are from José-Luis Orozco’s compact disc collection, *Lírica Infantil Volumes 1-5* (2003). José-Luis Orozco is an author, songwriter, performer and recording artist who has assembled a collection of children’s songs, rhymes, lullabies, and games gathered from Spanish-speaking countries. Orozco’s compact disc collection used in this research includes a collection of authentic children’s songs from a variety of Latin American countries.

When the participants were first introduced to the authentic songs, they obviously did not know the lyrics, or the language. So, they were encouraged by the researcher to try their best to sing each song. For the first and second lessons daily routine, the researcher played each song twice. When the subjects first tried to sing those songs, it sounded like they were mumbling. However, by the third lesson, the participants were singing the songs from the daily routine well. Each time the participants were introduced a new song, such as, in a themed lesson, they started singing that song with this mumbling. However, although they had to infer the lyrics, they were still receiving the important authentic input which they show later on, that they could put to use in other activities.

After the daily songs were sung, the next part of the daily routine consisted of the teacher using large posters with the alphabet, the numbers, the shapes, the vowels and the

days of the week. The alphabet poster included small pictures next to each letter of a vocabulary word that started with that letter. Once children had learned to pronounce the alphabet correctly, they were able to begin to recite the vocabulary on the poster. The number poster contains the numbers one through twenty. They were written numerically and spelled out in Spanish. Also each number is in a box with a picture of something amounting to the number in that box. For example, number three would have the number written both numerically and in script, and it would also contain three hearts. The shapes poster has pictures of a square, a circle, a triangle and a rectangle with the vocabulary written in Spanish. The days of the week poster is titled '*Los días de la semana*' and it listed the days of the week in Spanish. The vowel cards, are five large laminated cards each containing a letter and three pictures of items that would start with that vowel. For example, the card with the letter U, had pictures of a unicorn (*unicornio*), some grapes (*uvas*) and a fingernail (*uña*). The researcher started by having the students repeat the vocabulary of the posters during the first two sessions, however, eventually the participants were able to take over and say a lot of the vocabulary on their own, especially the vocabulary that was reinforced through authentic songs, such as the vocabulary relating to the numbers and shapes.

The daily routine consisted of a lot of repetition, imitation and practice. The songs provided for repetition of the vocabulary. Students were able to repeat after the teacher until they were able to recite the items on their own. All of the posters were written in the target language and in fact two of them were made in places where the target language is spoken, namely Puerto Rico and Mexico. After the posters were recited, the daily lesson began.

Each lesson was centered on a theme. These themes include: colors, body parts, numbers, clothing, and animals. These five themes were chosen in particular because the researcher had authentic materials pertaining to each of the themes. Each lesson included at least one, however, in most cases more than one, authentic material used in the lesson. The authentic materials were used to first introduce and then later reinforce the lexical chunks for the lesson. Therefore, the first receptive encounter that the participants received with the new vocabulary in the target language was through the authentic materials. The lessons were set up by themes so that the data analysis could later be correlated with the theme for each lesson. The materials used, as previously described in chapter two, are materials which are presented in the target language, such as songs, stories, games and play, which are derived from the target culture.

The lessons also included other activities in the target language which were used to reinforce the lesson of the day. These activities were created by the teacher or created for educational purposes in any language and across various content areas. An example of a teacher created material could be asking the students to draw an object the teacher tells them in the target language. An activity created for educational purposes in any language or content area could be to have the students color a paper with pictures of animals. The latter could be used for any language, and in a variety of subject areas such as science, art, foreign languages, or language arts. All lessons were taught in Spanish, with very minimal translations occurring only when necessary. Additionally, all lessons began with the lexical chunks being introduced through the use of authentic materials.

The theme of the first lesson was colors. The subjects learned the lyrics to the songs, “Los Colores” and “Tengo un Color Escondido” which are both from José Luis

Orozco's abovementioned collection. Each song in the following lessons is from Orozco's (2003) music collection. The first lesson started with the daily routine. The researcher played each song two times, asking the subjects to try and sing along. Here is where the subjects had their first interaction with authentic materials as the songs are authentic songs from the target language and culture. As the lyrics of the song said the vocabulary for the colors, the researcher held up a piece of construction paper for each color. Next, the participants were introduced to the vocabulary word for each color. The researcher once more held up a piece of construction paper for each color. As the colored paper was held up, the researcher modeled the vocabulary word for the subjects for the subjects to repeat. For example the word "azul" was said as a blue piece of paper was held up. The subjects were asked to repeat the word. This process was followed until each color was presented. The colors that were presented to the subjects were red, yellow, blue, green orange, purple, pink, brown, white and black.

Next, the researcher read the authentic children's poem, "Arcoiris" (*rainbow*) written by Andrés Díaz Marrero (*see: <http://www.poemitas.com>*). This poem incorporates authentic poetry with vocabulary in the target language referring to the colors. "El blanco es para escribir con el negro nuestros sueños" is a stanza from the poem which shows the incorporation of both the colors and the agreement in gender and number, (*White is for writing with the black our dreams*). As a color was referred to in the poem, the researcher held up a piece of construction paper made of that particular color. It appeared as though the participants had learned the colors very quickly from the content of the poem. After listening to the poem, the participants were able to successfully identify objects in the classroom of various colors when asked to do so in the

target language. Therefore this poem is another example of authentic materials successfully teaching children the vocabulary in the target language for colors.

For the next activity, the subjects played a board game called “Candyland.” This game is one that many of the subjects already knew how to play from learning it in their native language. The particular version of “Candyland” used in the research was the Dora the Explorer version of the game, where all words on the game board are written in Spanish. Dora the Explorer is a popular children’s animated television series. In each episode Dora teaches her viewers Spanish. It would be debatable as to if this game may or may not be deemed as an ‘authentic’ game derived from a target culture since it comes from an American television series. However, it should be considered that since Dora the Explorer was the theme of the particular Candyland board game used, the subjects could have more ease correlating the use of Spanish with this game, which is one that some of the participants are primarily used to playing in English. For this particular lesson, the children first learned the colors through listening to and singing the authentic songs. Next, the vocabulary was reinforced for the participants by listening to authentic poem. The game was used as an additional pedagogical activity, yet the lexical chunks were introduced and reinforced through the authentic songs and poem.

In order to play this game, the players have to take turns choosing a card. Each card has one or two squares of a particular color on the card. The players must then move their game piece to the color they receive on their card. The subjects were asked to say the color in Spanish that was on their card. Since they had only been introduced to the colors earlier in the same lesson, the researcher gave hints and helped those who could not remember the color words in Spanish at first. The game involved a great deal



of repetition on the part of the subjects which reinforced the authentic input they had received when listening to the songs.

Finally, the students listened to and sang the authentic song “Cómo te Llamas tú” (*What is your name*). This song is one of the songs that are incorporated into the daily routine, so the participants had already heard and attempted to sing this song twice at the beginning of this first lesson. After singing, the student used puppets they made to ask each other these questions and practice responses. The researcher used a puppet, named Dora, from a popular present day Spanish cartoon to model the questions. The Dora puppet is the same character that was used in the Candyland themed game. The participants sat in a circle on the floor. To begin, the researcher rolled a ball to one of the students and asked the question “¿Cómo te llamas”? (*What is your name?*), the participant was then instructed to answer using “Me llamo” (*my name is*) and their first name. They were also prompted to use the lexical chunk “y tú” (*and you*) to ask the student who they were speaking with, what their name is. Each participant had a turn asking and responding to the question. The song was then sung and consequently reinforced daily as part of the daily routine.

The theme of the lesson for the second session was the body parts. The lesson introduced vocabulary, and agreement in gender and number. One authentic song was used to introduce the lexical chunks for this lesson. The song is called “Juanito” and the lyrics are about a little boy who incorporates all of his body parts while dancing. The song “Juanito” is rich with vocabulary related to the body parts. Each verse introduces a new body part. After listening to the song for the first time, it was then played for the participants a second time, only this time they were to follow along as the teacher showed

them a dance to go with the song. Basically as they sang, when a vocabulary word for a body part occurred, the subjects were to touch that part of their body or do something with that part of their body. Aside from teaching the lexical chunks of the body parts, this song also taught the students' agreement in number since the song refers to a pairs of body parts, such as hands, feet, legs, shoulders, and arms, as well as single body parts such as the hand, the foot, etc. The lyrics of the song first introduced one body part and then the two as a pair. So, for example, some lyrics to this particular song are "Juanito cuando baila, baila con su pie," (*Juanito when he dances, he dances with his foot*) as they sang these particular lyrics the children then stomped one foot. However, when the lyrics said "Juanito cuando baila, baila con sus pies," (*Juanito when he dances, he dances with his feet*) then the children had to stomp both of their feet.

Next, the children listened to an authentic story entitled, "¿Qué te Picó la Hormiga de los Pies a la Barriga?" (*What, Did the Ant Bite You from Your Feet to Your Stomach?*). The story introduces additional vocabulary pertaining to the body parts which is not incorporated in the "Juanito" song as well as reinforces lyrics from the song. In this book, there is reinforcement of the lexical chunks for the body parts. In the story an ant annoys and bites a toddler in several body parts. The participants listened to the story. While reading the story, the researcher asked questions after each page such as, "¿En cuál parte del cuerpo del niño, le picó la hormiga, el brazo o el estomago?" (*Where on the boy's body did the ant bite him, on the arm or on the stomach?*). The illustrations from this authentic book were able to help guide the participants to the correct answer, thus reinforcing the vocabulary pertaining to the body parts.

Finally, the participants also learned some greetings and the lexical chunks pertaining to asking someone about their feelings. First, the children listened to and then next sang the authentic song “Buenos Dias” which incorporates the lexical chunks for greetings and for asking someone how they are feeling and then telling someone how you feel. Next, the children learned how to greet each other and ask someone how they are feeling. The puppets were used in this lesson. The participants had already listened to and sung this song as part of the daily routine during these first two lessons; however it had not been explained to them what the lyrics meant. Here is where the puppet was able to help the participants comprehend the meaning. The researcher had the puppet ask her “Cómo estás” (*how are you*) and the researcher replied “estoy muy bien gracias y tú” (*very well thank you and you*). Then the puppet responded “estoy así-así gracias” (*I am feeling so-so, thank you*). Next, the researcher had the puppet, Dora ask each individual student’s puppet how they were doing. The researcher also modeled “estoy mal” for them, so they would know how to say that they weren’t feeling well. After that the students sat in a circle. One at a time they turned to the person next to them and asked the person next to them how they were feeling. That person then replied with how he or she was feeling and asked them using the lexical chunk. “y tú” (*and you*).

For the third week, the theme was numbers. Here the students learned the lexical chunks for the numbers. The participants learned the authentic songs, “Dos Manitas, Diez Deditos”, a song that has movements where the children count using their hands and fingers, and “Uno, No Tengo Ninguno,” a rhyming song that uses rhymes and gestures in order to count from one to ten in Spanish. The song “Dos Manitas, Diez Deditos” incorporates agreement with lyrics such as “Dos manitas, diez deditos, cuenta **los** si

quieres”(Two hands, ten little fingers, count them if you want to). After practicing the songs, the next activity for the children was to fill in a sheet of paper that had sixteen blank squares using the numbers one through sixteen. They were instructed to wait for the researcher to say a number before they wrote it in the square. So, for example, the researcher would say “uno” (*one*) and the participants were instructed to write the number one in a square. The researcher also wrote the number on the board, so the students could see the number, and so that it did not have to be translated into English. Also, the participants were told that they would be using the paper for a game later, so they needed to write the numbers in different squares, not in any particular order. The researcher called this activity “los cuadrados locos” (*the crazy squares*) so that the participants could understand better that they did not need to write the numbers in a sequential order.

The last activity for this lesson was to play the authentic Mexican game “Lotería.” The researcher explained to the children that “lotería” is a popular game played in Mexico. The students were shown examples of pictures used from authentic “lotería” card pieces (<http://b-muse.com/images/products/Lotto.jpg>). The researcher then explained that instead of using these pictures for the game, the students were going to play the game using their number sheets that had made a moment ago. They were instructed that the researcher would call out a number in Spanish and then write it on the board, the participants had to cover that number after it was called. Whoever had four squares in a row covered wins a *pegatina* or sticker. The students were given dried black beans to use to cover their card. After this game was finished, the class ending by

reciting the authentic tongue twister “Pin Una, Pin Dos,” which incorporates the numbers one through eight.

Lesson four, similar to all the previous lessons, started with the daily routine where the children were now able to sing all of the songs they had learned. The theme of lesson four was “La Ropa” or the clothing. The children were introduced to the authentic song entitled, “Me Voy a Pasear” (*I’m going for a walk*) which has lexical chunks concerning clothing. For this song, the children were asked to get up and walk in place, pretending they were going on a walk. While singing (or attempting to sing) the lyrics they had to pretend to put on an article of clothing. For example, some lyrics of the song say, “Me voy pasear, me voy a pasear, me pongo la camisa, me voy a pasear” (*I go for a walk, I go for a walk, I put on my shirt, I go for a walk*). In addition to teaching clothing vocabulary, the song also shows the change that occurs in determinants from singular to plural forms. An example of another lyric from this song is “Me voy a pasear, me voy a pasear, me pongo los zapatos, me voy a pasear” (*I go for a walk, I go for a walk, I put on my shoes, I go for a walk*). In the first example, the lyrics say “me pongo **la** camisa” (*I put on my shirt*), and then later, with a different article of clothing which is in the plural form, the lyrics say “me pongo **los** zapatos” (*I put on my shoes*). Moreover, both examples, “la camisa” and “los zapatos” show agreement in gender and number since “la camisa” agrees in feminine gender and “los zapatos” agrees in masculine gender and is in the plural form.

For the next activity, the children were given paper dolls. They were told to color, cut out, and dress the doll. Then the researcher asked questions such as, “¿Quién se viste su muñeca con unos pantalones? ¿Quién se viste su muñeca con una falda?”

*(Who dressed their doll in pants? Who dressed their doll in a skirt?).*

To finish, the participants listened to “Buenos Dias Samuel.” In this story, Estela patiently helps her younger brother Samuel to get dressed. The story reiterates vocabulary pertaining to clothing and agreement in gender and number. After the story was finished, the researcher asked some follow up questions to the participants. They were asked for example, to raise their hand if they were wearing pants, then, to raise their hand if they were wearing blue pants.

Lesson five was the last lesson in the series. This lesson used animals for a theme. After participation in the daily routine, the participants learned the authentic song “La Granja” (*the farm*). This song incorporates many farm animals and the noises that they make. For example a lyric of the song says, “Vengan a ver la granja que es hermosa, el patito hace así qua qua” (*Come to see the beautiful farm. The duck does this, quack, quack*). After singing this song, the researcher held up pictures of the animals that were included in the lyrics of the song. The researcher modeled the vocabulary for the participants and the participants repeated the vocabulary.

For the subsequent activity, the students colored farm animals. After their completed this task, they listened to the story, “¿Dónde está mi Osito? (*Where is my teddy bear?*). This story only incorporates the word bear (*oso* in Spanish) and does not incorporate other farm animal vocabulary. Lesson five was the last lesson because there were only six sessions per group. So the last session was used for the tasks or exam, which is detailed in the next section.

### 3.7 Data Analysis Procedures

For this research the participants were required to do seven tasks. The tasks were all combined into one complete exam<sup>3</sup>. The exam included both written and oral components. The test categories centered on the following themes: colors, numbers, shapes, animals, body parts, introductions and greetings. The students took the exam during the last session of the program. The students' desks were arranged in the classroom in positions where they could not see a classmate's exam. For both the oral and agreement components of the exam, the participants worked individually with the researcher, separated from the rest of the participants.

The exam was arranged so that it corresponded with the literacy level of the students at the kindergarten grade level. The results of the preliminary informal assessment showed that the majority of the students in kindergarten could not fully write their letters correctly. The results of the parental study show that many of these same kindergarten and some first grade students also cannot read words in their native language. Therefore it was necessary to create an exam where the students did not need write any words or letters, beyond their own name. For the agreement task, the students did not have to write anything, they simply had to respond to commands given by the researcher, which is explained later in further detail. Additionally, the oral exam was given to the students in order to examine their communicative abilities in the target language. Also, to determine if the authentic input provided to the participants lead them to acquire lexical chunks.

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<sup>3</sup> See appendix

The first task on the exam tested the participants' knowledge of lexical chunks relating to colors in the target language. For this section the researcher said a color in Spanish and the student needed to make a mark on the test using the crayon that corresponded with the color said by the researcher. The researcher said six colors for this section.

Next, the acquisition of numbers was tested. For the numbers task, a variety of twelve numbers were on the exam. The numbers were not written sequentially. The researcher said five of the twelve numbers on the exam. After the researcher said the number in Spanish, the students identified it by circling the number they heard. Each number was repeated two times before the next number was said.

In order to test the shapes, four pictures of different shapes, a circle, a square, a rectangle and a triangle, were on the exam. The students put a circle around the shape as the researcher said the shape. The researcher only said two of the four shapes. The animals were tested in the same way as the shapes. There were pictures of eight animals and the children had to circle the four animals that the researcher said. Again, for each lexical item, the researcher said the word two times each during the examination. For both the shapes and the animals tasks, the researcher had to circulate the room to see which items the students circled and if they were correct or not, and this was noted for each individual student.

For the assessment of the introductions and greetings tasks, which occurred as part of the oral exam, the children had short conversations with a puppet, named Dora, from a popular present day Spanish cartoon. The researcher had the children each speak to the Dora puppet individually. First the puppet said to the children, "Me llamo Dora,



¿Cómo te llamas?”(*My name is Dora. What is your name?*) The student was then expected to respond properly. Next, for the greetings section, the researcher said, “Hola” (*Hello*) expecting the proper response from the student, then the researcher, or puppet asked “¿Cómo estás?” (*How are you?*), the student was then expected to give an appropriate response. For the assessment of this particular task a rubric was used<sup>3</sup>. The rubric categories include fluency, comprehensibility, vocabulary and pronunciation.

Lastly, for the assessment of agreement, the participants were told to show the researcher certain body parts, sometimes just one body part, and then other times a pair of body parts. For example, the researcher said, “muéstrame el brazo” (*Show me the arm*) and then something such as, “muéstrame los brazos” (*Show me the arms*). The part of the exam used the body parts, so it essentially tested for both body parts and agreement in number. First, the student had to indicate that he or she understood the body part he or she was being asked to show, by pointing to it or holding it up. Next, he or she had to show if he or she understood agreement if he or she was asked to show more than one body part, such as, “muéstrame los brazos,” by holding up both arms for example. A checklist was used with two categories to analyze the results of this data. First, if the participants understood the lexical chunk (i.e. correct body part) they received a checkmark. Next, if the participant showed agreement, such as holding up both arms when asked, or just one arm when asked, a checkmark was placed in subsequent category.

### 3.8 Results

Results for each of the seven tasks are shown below in bar graphs. These graphs represent the individual scores for each of the seventeen students. Students from both sessions are shown together in the graphs. In other words, all seventeen students are on each graph, and the first six week session of students is not separated from the second six week session since we are not comparing the two sessions. Where the legend of the graphs says 'series' this simply indicates the color schemes that are used each graph, and therefore, is not germane to the interpretation of the results. The series one pertains to the participants and the series two is the individual's score for that particular task. Once each participant's individual score for each task was formulated, the scores were then averaged together to create an overall score for each task. This was done in order to indicate if there was an area where the participants did unusually poorly, and if so, in order to determine why that may have occurred. The students received a percentage score out of one hundred percent for each task on the exam, with one hundred percent being perfect. A rubric was used to grade the oral tasks, which were also graded out of one hundred percent. The results for each task show that overall and on the average, the students did well on six out of seven tasks.

For the first task, shown in figure one, which was the identification of the colors, the participants did very well. The overall average score in this particular task is ninety-nine percent. The authentic materials used for teaching the lexical chunks pertaining to colors were two songs and the "Arcoiris" poem. The chart below indicates the score for each individual participant.

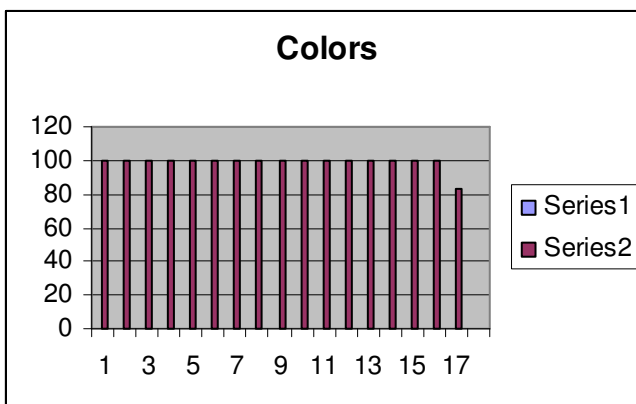


Figure 1 Colors task results

For the second task, shown in figure two, which was the identification of the numbers, the overall average is ninety-five percent. The authentic materials used here were three authentic songs and the lotería game. The activities that allowed the students to acquire the numbers in Spanish allowed them to acquire those numbers quickly as they were able to use less complicated language during the acquisition. By the end of the five lessons, the students were able to count up to the number twenty in Spanish. The Minimal Tree transference allowed for these structures to be added quite quickly during the authentic input in the lessons.

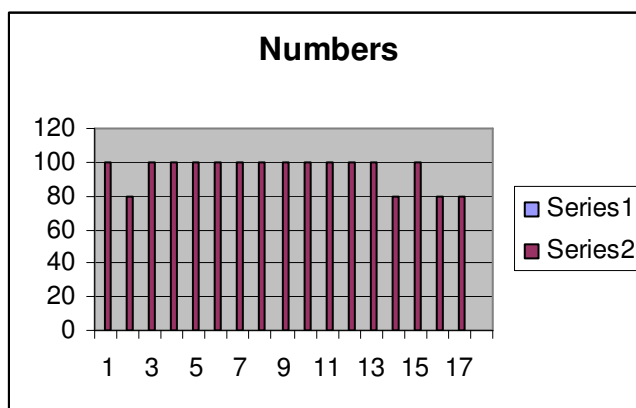


Figure 2 Numbers task results

The third task, as shown in Figure three below, the shapes, there was an overall average of one hundred percent; one authentic song was used here which was part of the daily routine. The reason that the participants did so well on this theme, is for the most part, because they learned the shapes through an authentic song that way sung daily. The lexical chunks for some of the shapes in the subjects L2 are quite similar to the lexical chunks that they have in their L1. For example, “**tri**angulo” has the same prefix as “**tri**angle” in the participants L1. Also, “circulo” and “circle” are quite similar lexical chunks.

Furthermore, the participants used a poster daily while singing the shapes song. So, one student would stand at the poster and point to the shapes, while the others followed along singing the lyrics from the song. Additionally, the participants made the shapes in the air with their fingers while singing the song. The combination of singing, using motor skills, and seeing the shape in front of them, most likely lead to the acquired lexical chunks for this theme.

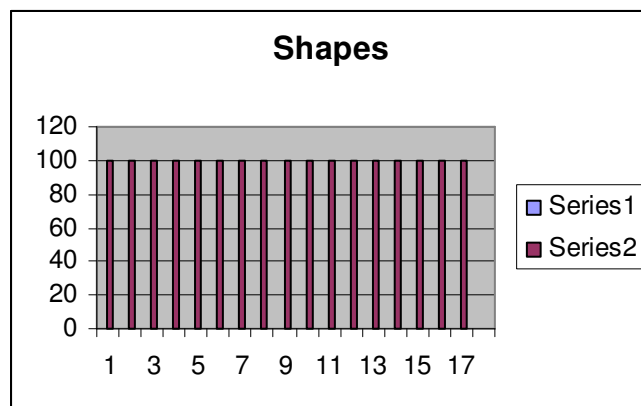


Figure 3 Shapes task results

Figure four shows the individual participant scores for the task related to the animals. The animals had an overall average of sixty-six percent. The animals were taught with one authentic material, being a song. This section had the lowest overall scores, with only ten of the seventeen overall students receiving a score of over sixty percent. This is most likely due to the amount of time allotted for teaching the animal vocabulary, since it not was introduced until the last lesson. Therefore, the students did not have the practice with this vocabulary like they did with the shapes, for example, via the authentic shapes song that was sung daily. Another likely reason for the lower scores in this area could be that there were not enough authentic materials used in the lesson. As stated earlier, for this activity, the students listened to and tried to sing only one song, “La Granja,” and the next activity they did was a color paper. Lastly, they listened to a story where the vocabulary mostly pertained to a bear and a teddy bear. Therefore, had there not been a lack of authentic materials for this theme, the participants may have done better on with this task.

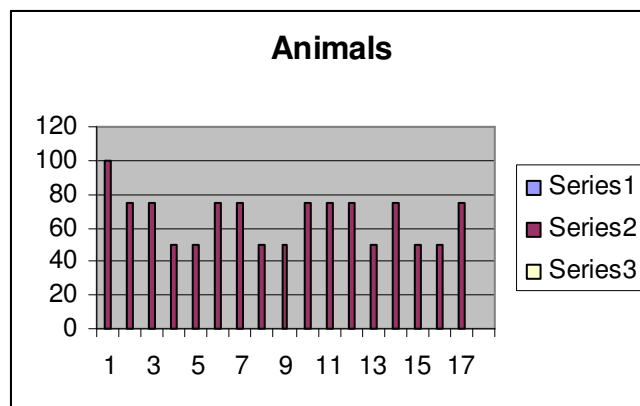


Figure 4 Animals task results

Figure five shows the individual scores for the body part identification task. The body part identification task had an overall average of eight-eight percent. Looking at the

individual results listed below, it is quite apparent that the participants were able to acquire the lexical chunks for this category quite well. Many students received one hundred percent. The body parts were taught with one authentic song and one authentic story. As described earlier, the song that was used to teach the body parts, “Juanito,” had the students not only sing, but also touch the part of their body that they were singing about. This undoubtedly helped them to retain the lexical chunks and to make an easier transfer from their L1 to their L2.

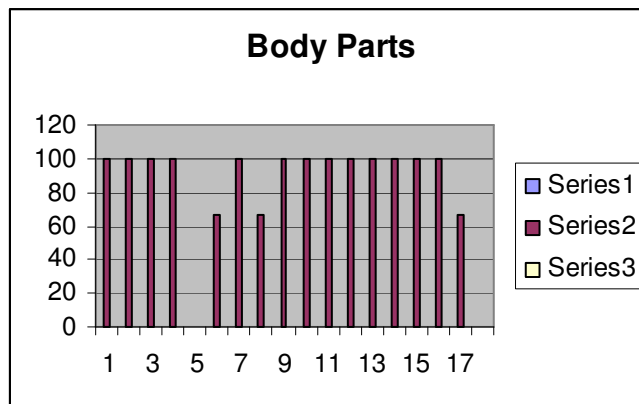


Figure 5 Body Parts task results

The oral exams tasks, which included asking someone how they are feeling and responding to this question, and asking someone their name and responding to this question, for this task the overall average is ninety percent. For these lessons, authentic songs were used for all of the lexical chunks and phrases and play was incorporated through the use of the puppets.

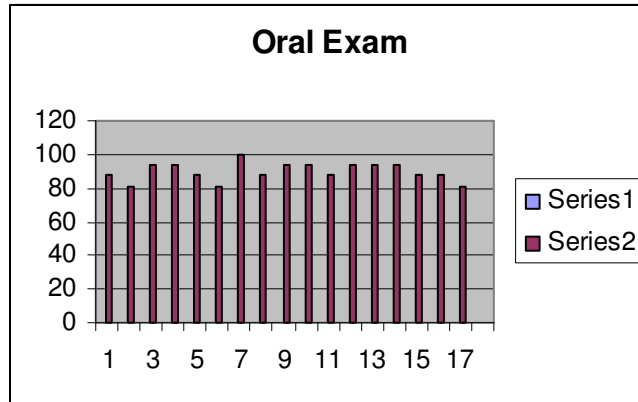


Figure 6 Oral Exam task results

The children learned agreement through the authentic song, “Juanito.” This song also had a dance incorporated to connect with the lyrics. So, if the lyrics said, “Juanito cuando baila, baila con su pie,” the children then stomped one foot. However, when the lyrics said “Juanito cuando baila, baila con sus pies,” then the children had to stomp both of their feet. A checklist was used with two categories to analyze the results of this data. First, if they understood the lexical chunk they received a checkmark. Next, if they showed agreement, a checkmark was placed in that category. The overall average for this exam is eighty-two percent.

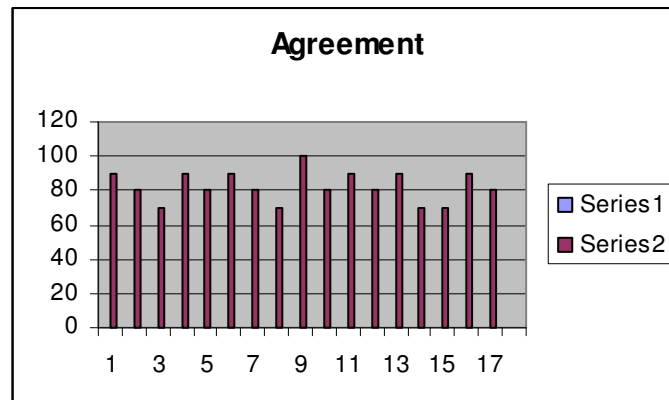


Figure 7 Agreement task results

It should be noted that it was not the aim of this thesis to correlate the effectiveness of authentic materials versus non authentic materials. My hypothesis states

that as a result of exposure to Authentic Input, L2 learners between the ages of five to seven who are still acquiring English as their L1 produce evidence of transfer of the structure of NP; this includes the transfer of number agreement first, and then later activates the structure corresponding to gender agreement. The results of the test show that transfer of the structure of NP did occur. Also, that lexical agreement is starting to occur.

Figure eight shows the overall results for each category, thus reiterating that the participants did transfer the NP from their L1 to their L2 through the acquired lexical chunks. The results for the tasks of the colors, numbers, shapes, body parts, agreement and lexical chunks clearly indicate that the participants acquired, learned and retained the lexical chunks pertaining to these categories.

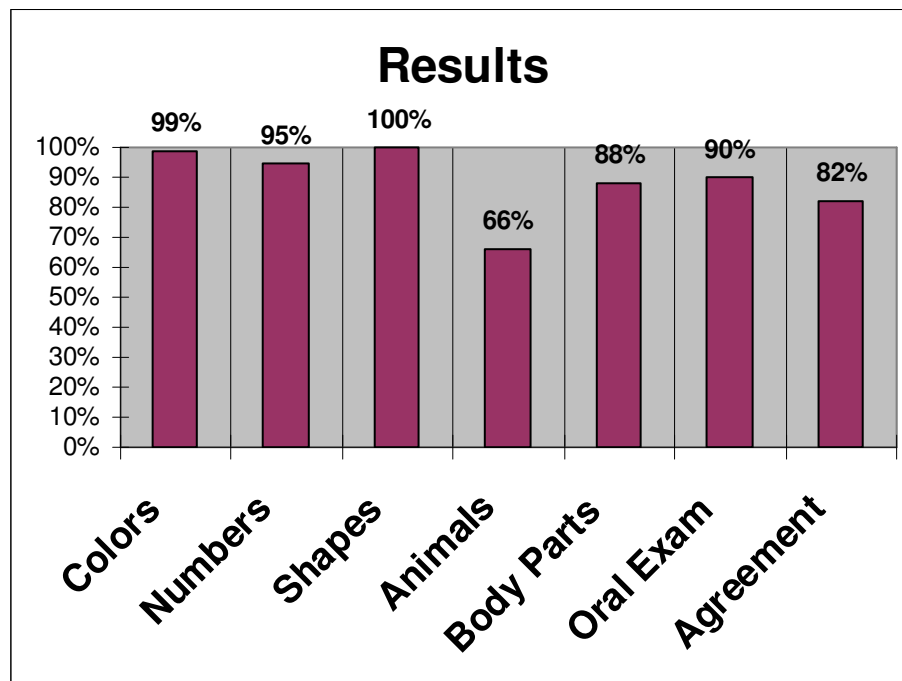


Figure 8 Overall results for each task category.



### 3.8.1 Long-term results

Two of the students in the study were tested informally three months after the administration of the written test. This time, however, the data was video recorded. These two students were in the kindergarten grade level. It was originally planned to videotape all of the lessons occurring for this research. However, due to the disappointing circumstances of some inhabitants of our society today, many parents do not feel comfortable having their children videotaped at school. Therefore, the researcher could only videotape two of the participants from the study. This videotaping occurred three months after the last Spanish lesson and it was not originally planned as a test. It should be considered an informal assessment of long-term knowledge of lexical chunks acquired through authentic materials.

The videotape of the two participants showed those participants three months after completing their Spanish lessons. These two participants demonstrated that they had retained the lexical chunks that they had learned. The participants are able to count from one to twenty in the target language. They showed they had acquired the color lexical chunks. The participants also showed acquisition of lexical chunks pertaining to shapes. They were able to use the lexical chunks to ask someone how they are doing and respond to that same question. And, they were also able to say the lexical chunks to ask someone what their name is and to respond to that question being asked to them. It was very exciting to see that these young children were able to not only learn, but acquire the lexical chunks given to them three months prior to the videotaping.

### 3.9 Limitations

The first limitation to the present research is time constraints. The data took place in a very short amount of time, only five lessons occurred, one per week, lasting one and a half hours per lesson, this totals seven and a half hours of instruction time over six weeks. That amount of time totals to a little bit more time than one average school day. The sixth session was used for testing purposes. If more time was available, a more formal long-term test could have been administered to all of the participants. The participants also were required to change activities after the six week session had ended; consequently, there was not the possibility to have a continuation with the same group of students longer than the six week timeframe that was allotted.

Additionally, a limitation would be a lack of participants. A larger amount of data would have been more beneficial to providing results for the study. Seventeen participants is a very low amount. However, this also draws a parallel to the time constraints. Had there been more time available to proceed with the data, there could have been more participants for the study.

### 3.10 Conclusion

Chapter three provided the methodology for the present research within the framework of the Authentic Bridge to Acquisition Method. Each lesson that the subjects participated in was described in detail. These descriptions include exactly which authentic materials were used to introduce the vocabulary for each themed lesson. A depiction of the participants and the setting was also completed in this chapter, including an account of the location where the data were collected in order to show the demography

of the school. The chapter also presented the research statements and hypotheses. The data analysis procedures including all assessments and tasks were described in order to assess whether or not the authentic materials aided in the comprehension and acquisition of the lexical chunks in the target language. This chapter included the results, which showed that the authentic input did result in learning and retention of lexical chunks in the target language. Also, long-term results showed that two of the participants had acquired lexical chunks presented to them through the authentic materials and that they were able to use this lexical chunks three months after their last class session. Additionally, limitations to this research were put forth, which included time constraints and a lack of a large quantity of participants.

## CHAPTER 4

### CONCLUSION

#### 4.1 Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, authentic input in the form of songs, games, stories and play does result in acquisition, learning and long term retention of lexical phrases. This demonstrates that through exposure to Authentic Input, via the Authentic Bridge to Acquisition Method, young L2 learners produce evidence of the transfer of the structure of the NP, which includes first, number agreement, and then second, gender agreement will be activated. The results of this research show that authentic materials are a viable choice to provide input of a second language for a young L2 learner. Authentic materials from the target culture provide practical target language and culture for teaching a second language to young children.

Authentic materials provide a unique form of input for the L2 learner. This input is unique because it is quite possibly the same input that a young L1 learner of the target language could be receiving in their L1 language class in another country. In addition, authentic input provides a window into the target culture for the L2 learner. The child who learns from authentic materials is in a semi-immersion type of situation since he/she is learning through the voices and views of the target culture. From this view the L2 student can envision and hear cultures from around the world. These sights and sounds lead to interest and motivation which could increase the level of vocabulary learned in the target language. This study is limited to target language input and learning of the lexical chunks, which is the beginning stage of L2 acquisition. This form of input is appropriate and for the age and grade level of the young L2 learner. It is appropriate because it

allows for an immersion-like exposure to the language where meaning is conveyed by large motor movement, role play, visuals and performance based activities such as reciting chunks of the language.

The participants in the present study acquired lexical chunks in the target language through the authentic input that they received. The participants learned the language in context. The authentic materials provided this context for the participants through extralinguistic input, such as, the music, the large and small motor movement, and the visuals. Additionally, there is transference from L1 to L2. It was assumed that the participants are still able to access Universal Grammar (following White 1994; 2003) especially since they are still acquiring lexicon in their L1. The Minimal Trees Hypothesis of Vainikka and Young-Scholten can still be invoked (as in White 1994). Under this hypothesis, the L2 learner could be said to be still developing the structure, in other words, the grammar of the L1 and could be said to be adding structure as acquired, loosely following the Minimalist Program (Chomsky 1994). Or, if we are to assume that the L1 grammar is more fully formed, as in the Full Access Full Transfer Model, the subjects transfer their knowledge of NP including number agreement, and then activate the available structure corresponding to gender agreement.

The present study shows that lexical agreement was acquired through the authentic materials pedagogical method. Without being explicitly taught the differences in agreement between gender and number in Spanish and their native language, English, the subjects were able to infer the difference between, *el brazo (the arm)* and *los brazos (the arms)* for example. The participants learned this lexical agreement through the authentic activities in conjunction with the large motor movements in which they were

participated, such as songs that they while using their large motor skills such as dancing. This lexical agreement inference especially occurred for the participants through learning the song, “Juanito,” for example, as this song had many changes in number throughout the song. From singing the lyrics while using large motor skills via dancing to this song, the children were able to deduce the differences between **el brazo** and **los brazos**. This was assessed as the subjects held up either one arm or two arms, depending on the lyrics at that particular moment in the song. The subjects learned both how feminine and masculine determinants change from *el* to *la* from the song “Juanito” as the lexical chunks in the song had both masculine and feminine determinants and nouns.

The participants also remembered the intonation and rhythm patterns of the authentic stories and chants and rhymes which allowed them to not only deduce the meaning of the vocabulary, but also to begin to acquire the phonetic structures of the language. The repetitive nature of the songs oftentimes combined with hand movements, or perhaps a dance, leads to acquisition of the repeated vocabulary and more nativelike pronunciation. It is very likely that the child will sing the song at home thus reinforcing the vocabulary which also acts as motivation for learning. Children’s books written in the target language provide a view into the target culture through their illustrations and the stories that they provide. The illustrations in the books also provide contextual cues for the learning of unknown vocabulary and phrases in the target language.

The government is calling for an early start to foreign language learning through “increasing support for foreign language study among—(iv) elementary, secondary, and postsecondary educational institutions” (H.R. 747, Committee on Education and Labor, 2007). Early foreign language programs are therefore necessary in order to follow this

current United States legislation. The “White Paper” proposal put forth by the U.S. government recommends to, “Design and oversee—with appropriate government and private sector support—a system that ensures coordinated foreign language and regional studies programs in K-12 and postsecondary training in order to raise the level of understanding of all students and produce highly skilled language professionals” (“A Call to Action for Foreign Language Capabilities,” 2005). Foreign language educational programs that start in kindergarten will not only increase the level of proficiency for our students in a second language by the time they graduate high school, but they will also provide positive education about a culture other than their own.

In order to build an appropriate foreign language program, state framework for foreign languages should be followed. If there is not one for the elementary level, then one must be implemented. Appropriate instructional methods must be used. From this thesis we know that authentic input through the use of authentic materials is an appropriate and viable method for early second language acquisition and learning. Additionally, these methods should be age appropriate, affordable, and culturally appropriate. They should focus on meaning and not on form, and these instructional methods should provide opportunities for meaningful language use.

The Authentic Bridge to Acquisition is an appropriate method to teach learners as young as the age of kindergartners a second language. In order to use this method, the target language must first be introduced through authentic materials, in this way, the students are receiving input that is derived from the target culture. The vocabulary should be reinforced through authentic games and role play. All lessons should be spoken in the target language as much as possible. So, at least the majority of the class time

should be spoken in the target language by the instructor and the student. A minimal amount of class time will be for clarifications, concerns, explanations of tasks, and reassurances as the learners are very young and it would be inappropriate to concern them by not giving explanations in their native language when necessary. However, everything should be said by the instructor in the target language, and very limited translations should occur. This method provides for learning the target language through immersion. Consequently, the instructor gives directions in the target language and only translates if extremely necessary for comprehension and to ease discomfort if it should arise. Any means necessary to avoid translation such as gestures, should be used by the instructor first. All other references in the native language should be for extreme circumstances. It is most important that all materials are introduced in the target language and through any means possible via the target culture. The learning environment must be appropriate and adequate for second language learning at the grade level of the student. Scaffolding can provide assistance for the L2 learners to achieve each lesson. Peer collaboration is encouraged, especially though the uses of role play.

To use this method, the classroom should be decorated appropriately for the needs of the learner. It should be painted a color that promotes calmness and motivation to learn. The instructor needs to experiment with various shades to find the proper color for the classroom. Perhaps a light shade of blue or green would be appropriate. Other appropriate colors could be neutral, such as white or gray. Additionally, the classroom should be filled with as many authentic materials and links to the target culture as possible. With authentic materials, the classroom is, in effect, the bridge to other nations, cultures, peoples and modes of human expression. The instructor could change the theme



and focus of the classroom monthly or semi-annually. So, for example, in the case of Spanish, one month the classroom could be decorated with authentic materials depicting the diverse cultural reality of Mexico, and the next month, or change of term, the classroom could be decorated with authentic materials from the various cultures of Spain. The language lessons introduced should reflect how the target language is spoken in that particular region, providing another bridge to the target language. Also, in addition to recordings, it would be beneficial to have native speaking storytellers come into the classroom to read to the students, or musicians, artists etc, showing the many cultural manifestations through presentations for the learners. The long term results of this type of approach would be a deeper global understanding. The children who start to learn a second language early through the use of the Authentic Bridge to Acquisition Method are always introduced grammatical concepts first via authentic materials. This bridge is allowing them to learn in an innovative way in which mimics how a child who is required to move to another country may be immersed in and learn the language of that country. The child would most likely listen to songs, play games, and listen to stories in the target language. They would also most likely try to play with speakers of the target language without knowing all of the necessary vocabulary to play the game. The child would first be introduced to the game, song or story, in the target language, and then would later figure out meaning. The Authentic Bridge to Acquisition Method, will result in first, the acquisition of lexical chunks (i.e. vocabulary) and then second, the acquisition of lexical agreement (first agreement in number, then in gender), adhering to novice level proficiency as designated by ACTFL. Consequently, first lexical chunks are acquired

and second lexical agreement is acquired, both via the authentic materials presented in the learning environment.

The Authentic Bridge to Acquisition method draws upon research related to cognitive theory and development in that this method for a child to learn a second language can benefit the child both cognitively and affectively. Cognitively, authentic materials provide necessary context for appropriately relating form to meaning in the language acquisition process. Affectively, authentic materials are seen as motivators and as a means to overcome the cultural barrier to language learning (Bacon & Finnegan 1990). This method is the most appropriate method to teach a child a foreign language because it provides for comprehensible input within an environment that does not give any stress to the student. The student is happy and motivated to learn, because they are using authentic materials from the target language. The student is also learning the L2 in a similar manner to which he or she learns their L1, which is through such activities as singing songs, listening to stories and playing games. Since the child is still learning lexicon in their L1, using authentic materials in their L2 could be the most effective way to teach the child a second language. These materials would be quite similar to materials that a child in the target language speaking country is using to learn their own native language. Therefore, the Authentic Bridge to Acquisition pedagogical method has the student learn their L2 in similar way in which he or she is learning their L1. Research by White (2003) has shown that children are still accessing their L1 during early L2 acquisition. The child is still progressing in their native language, which is why it would be best to present a second language to a child when he or she is still learning their L1 and possibly still accessing their Universal Grammar.

Frequency is a factor that may allow for acquisition of a second language. Authentic input gives higher frequency to certain structures, logically, those repeated in the chants, songs, games. The participants who retain the use of Spanish taught in the lessons after three months without Spanish lessons undoubtedly had acquired the language and retained the language through the frequency of the lexical chunks provided.

The materials provide input which is beyond what the learner already knows, in the comfortable context of what he or she already knows, that is, how to play, sing, recite, and dance, etc., which in turn leads to curiosity, a great motivator for learning. The Authentic Bridge to Acquisition Method not only allows the second language student the context to learn the language, but is also the most efficient way to implement authentic materials into the second language classroom geared to learners developing literacy.

#### 4.2 Suggestions for future research

The present research deemed the participants to be under the Minimal Trees Hypothesis of Vainikka and Young-Scholten (White 1994). Future research could try to determine if these participants are able to attain a more complete syntactical tree through the Authentic Bridge to Acquisition Method. Also, an investigation could entail the order in which a second language learner acquires the language, over a longer timeframe. Can agreement of irregular nouns, meaning nouns that are masculine, yet end in *-a*, such as, “*el tema*” be acquired through input, or must it be explicitly taught? Also, the use of authentic materials for adult learners could be investigated. Do authentic materials work as well for the acquisition of target language lexicon? A future study could investigate authentic songs versus authentic texts. Is one better than the other for overall retention of

target language lexicon? A study could investigate how motivation plays a role in second language learning, and if authentic materials provide more motivation to second language learners than non-authentic materials. The use of authentic materials for the acquisition of agreement in the target language could be investigated. Does reading authentic materials lead to acquisition of gender and agreement without gender and agreement being taught explicitly?

APPENDIX A  
FINAL ASSESSMENT

**LEAP Spanish Program (K-2)**

NOMBRE \_\_\_\_\_

I. Los Colores

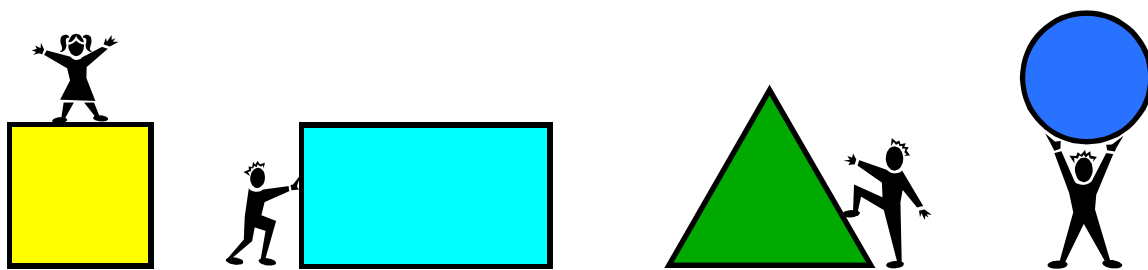
1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_ 5. \_\_\_\_\_ 6. \_\_\_\_\_

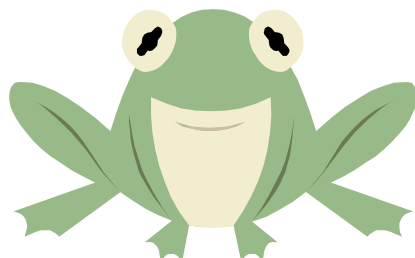
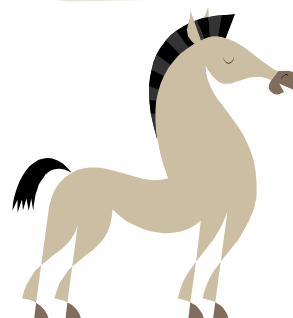
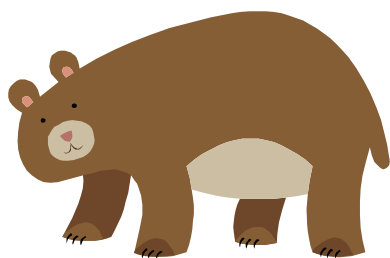
II. Los Números

5	12	4	8
3	7	14	10
6	2	9	13

### III. Las Figuras Geométricas



### IV. Los animales



APPENDIX B  
ORAL EXAM RUBRIC

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Test	4	3	2	1
a. Fluency	accurate delivery, no pauses	fairly smooth	unnatural pauses	halting, hesitant, long gaps
b. Vocabulary	accurate use of all targeted vocabulary	some use of targeted vocabulary	minimal use of targeted vocabulary	fails to use targeted vocabulary
c. Comprehensibility	responses are completely comprehensible	responses are mostly comprehensible	responses barely comprehensible	responses are incomprehensible
(d) Pronunciation	Pronounces vocabulary good	Pronounces vocabulary fairly well	Pronunciation barely sounds like Spanish	Sounds do not resemble Spanish at all

- 4 exceeds expectations
- 3 meet expectations
- 2 needs improvement
- 1 does not meet expectations

(a) \_\_\_\_\_  
 (b) \_\_\_\_\_  
 (c) \_\_\_\_\_  
 (d) \_\_\_\_\_

Total \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX C  
AGREEMENT TASK

Student: \_\_\_\_\_

Agreement Task

- A) Did the student show understanding of agreement? (check if yes)
- B) Did the student understand the vocabulary word?

	A.	B.
The researcher said:		
1. Muéstrame el brazo	_____	_____
2. Muéstrame los brazos	_____	_____
3. Muéstrame la pierna	_____	_____
4. Muéstrame los ojos	_____	_____
5. Muéstrame el pie	_____	_____
6. Muéstrame la mano	_____	_____
7. Muéstrame un dedo	_____	_____
8. Muéstrame el ojo	_____	_____
9. Muéstrame los pies	_____	_____
10. Muéstrame las piernas	_____	_____



APPENDIX D  
PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE

¡Muchas gracias! Thank you very much for your interest in having your child learn Spanish. Could you please respond to the following questions?

1. Name of child:

2. Grade level:

3. Has your child ever had foreign language lessons?

4. If yes, how long did he or she study the language and which language did he or she study?

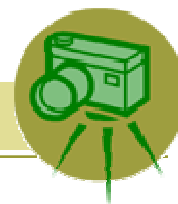
5. Has your child ever traveled to a Spanish speaking country? If yes where and for how long?

6. Does anyone in your home speak any languages other than English to your child? If yes which language(s)?

7. Does your child know how to read in English?

APPENDIX E

RELEASE FORM FOR MEDIA RECORDING



**Release Form for Media Recording**

I, the undersigned, do hereby consent and agree that Bridget Pinsonneault has the right to take photographs, videotape, or digital recordings of my children and to use these in any and all media, now or hereafter known, and exclusively for educational purposes. I further consent that my name/name of children and identity may be revealed therein or by descriptive text or commentary.

I do hereby release to Bridget Pinsonneault all rights to exhibit this work in print and electronic form publicly or privately for educational purposes. I waive any rights, claims, or interest I may have to control the use of my identity/identity of my children or likeness in whatever media used.

I understand that there will be no financial or other remuneration for recording my children, either for initial or subsequent transmission or playback.

I represent that I am at least 18 years of age, have read and understand the foregoing statement, and am competent to execute this agreement.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness for the undersigned: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

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