Assisting the intermediate-level language listener through the use of elaborated texts

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Assisting the intermediate-level language listener
through the use of elaborated texts

by

Marta Vessoni de Lence

A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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Program of Study Committee:
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Iowa State University
Ames, Iowa
2010

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To my husband and my children, Tomas and Sofía,

May Tomas and Sofia always pursue their dreams.
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ABSTRACT

The present study, conducted at a large Midwestern University in Fall 2009 semester, investigated the effects of different input modification devices on intermediate-level language learners’ aural comprehension of authentic texts. In particular, this study examined whether intermediate level Spanish language learners’ comprehension of authentic texts improves when listening to texts that have undergone principled modifications. Such modifications include the addition of instances of redundancy, transparency, and signaling. Unmodified authentic texts were used as a baseline to compare students’ achievement with the elaborated versions of the same text. The authentic baseline texts were developed by providing scenarios (Di Pietro, 1987) or real life situations and recording the spontaneous conversations of native speakers of the target language. Results indicated that none of the elaborative devices used in this study seems to have a positive impact on language learners’ listening comprehension of neither the main idea or specific information of the text. Furthermore, signaling appears to have a negative impact on comprehension of specific redundant information. Redundancy seems to be the most effective elaborative device in aiding language learners’ listening comprehension due to its significant positive effect on inference of information from a text.
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

This study is intended to contribute to the field of second language learning and instruction by providing insights into the creation of elaborated aural texts. The effects of three specific elaborative devices, (a) redundancy (e.g., repetition and paraphrasing of information), (b) transparency (e.g., overt markings of semantic and/or making subject explicit), and (c) signaling (e.g., signaling major propositions within the conversation or important transition points in the text) were considered in view of their impact on intermediate-level Spanish language learners’ aural comprehension. Guidelines for the principled development of elaborated aural texts for classroom activities and instruction are drawn from findings.

Statement of the Problem

An important issue in second language instruction is the identification of optimal types of input modifications in order to increase learners’ comprehension of texts. In the early years of research on this topic, modifications of input were considered to be changes in linguistic form (i.e., surface syntax, lexis and phonology, or modifications of interactions involving features of conversation or discourse function) (Parker & Chaudron, 1987). As noted by these authors, features of linguistic form modified to less complex ones included shorter utterances, and less complex syntax and vocabulary. Modifications of interactions included clarification requests, comprehension checks, confirmation checks, and completion and repetition of others’ utterances. Parker and Chaudron (1987) later introduced a third type of input modification, which they wanted to distinguish from simplification and modifications. It involved negotiation of meaning and was called elaboration. Elaboration, or elaborative modifications as defined by Parker and Chaudron (1987), refers to the addition
of repetitions or redundancy and clearer signaling of the thematic structure of the communication.

In summary, modification to input not involving a two-way interaction can be classified into two types: (a) simplification (i.e., the use of shorter sentences and less complex vocabulary and syntax), and (b) elaboration (i.e., unknown linguistic items are compensated by adding redundancy and explicitness to a text) (Yano, Long, & Ross, 1994).

Several researchers have compared and studied the advantages and disadvantages of elaborated versus simplified text as input (see Chaudron, 1983; Chiang & Dunkel, 1992; Long, 1985; Oh, 2001; Parker & Chaudron, 1987; Yano, Long, & Ross, 1994, to name a few). Researchers argued that although simplification was shown to improve comprehension, simplified texts lack implicitness, open-endedness, and intertextuality among other features of natural discourse needed for learning (Long, 2007).

Elaborated texts emerged as a third alternative to the use of simplified and authentic texts in language learning. Authentic materials, as defined by Nunan and Miller (1995), refer to those that were not created or edited expressly for language learners. Thus, most everyday items in the target language qualify as authentic materials (e.g., menus, brochures, receipts, television programs, newspapers, radio broadcasts, music, literature among other sources).

Authentic texts, as noted by Long (2007), except when used at the advanced level, impede learning by confronting learners who lack compensatory strategies with unknown material (e.g., complex grammar or sophisticated vocabulary). In addition, although authentic texts could bring real life situations and real authentic oral interaction to the classroom, caution needs to be taken in selecting instructional materials since some authentic source texts have no pedagogical value to the language learner (Richards, 2006).
On the other hand, “elaborative modification can help the learner to take advantage of more opportunities to process critical information within the text and thus to comprehend the text better, even though the resulting text remains at a high level of linguistic complexity” (Oh, 2001, p. 86). Thus, the potential of elaboration in “adapting” or creating materials resembling those of authentic sources but suited for language learning is immense and needs to be explored further, especially considering the difficulties for finding texts with culture and fairly accurate authentic form (Rogers & Medley, 1988).

Explicitly, more research needs to be done on how elaboration can aid the language learner who may not be “quite ready” for authentic materials with the comprehension of texts that resemble authentic oral interactions and yet are appropriate for the language classroom. Elaborated texts, which contain cultural cues, are spoken by native speakers, resemble authentic oral interactions, and are appropriate for language instruction will be referred in this study as authentic elaborated texts. In sum, there is a need for further investigation into the impact of input modification on language learners’ comprehensibility of authentic materials as well as into the development of materials resembling authentic texts and suitable for language instruction.

**Purpose of the Study**

The present study attempts to investigate the effects of different input modification devices on intermediate-level language learners’ aural comprehension of authentic texts. Specifically, this study considers the effect of elaboration on facilitating the aural comprehension of authentic texts by intermediate-level language learners.

As noted by Long (2007), “elaboration in materials design involves adding redundancy and regularity to a text and often more explicit signaling of its thematic
structures, followed by gradual removal of the ‘crutches’ the modifications provide as learner proficiency increases” (p. 131). Redundancy, as explained by Long (2007), can be accomplished through devices such as repetition and paraphrasing of information.

Regularity, also referred to as transparency, could be attained through such devices as retention of optimal constituents (e.g., not dropping subject pronouns in the sentence) and making the subject explicit. Lastly, explicit signaling of the thematic structure, also referred to as signaling, can be achieved through signaling major propositions within the conversation or important transition points in the text (Long, 2007). The definition of elaboration, redundancy, transparency, and signaling in the context of this study were adopted from Long (2007). Unless otherwise stated, the definition of elaboration, redundancy, transparency, and signaling in this study refer to Long’s (2007) definitions.

Thus, this study focuses on the extent to which elaborative devices such as (a) redundancy (i.e., repetition and paraphrasing of information), (b) transparency (i.e., overt markings of semantic and/or making subject explicit), and (c) signaling (i.e., signaling major propositions within the conversation or important transition points in the text) impact intermediate language learners’ aural comprehension of authentic texts. Purposely, this study explores which of these three elaborative devices is the most effective in aiding intermediate-level language learners’ comprehension of authentic texts.

**Research Questions**

The study aims to investigate the following research questions:

1. How does the use of (a) redundancy, (b) transparency, and (c) signaling impact intermediate-level language learners’ comprehension of authentic aural texts as shown by students’ performance on the listening task?
2. Which of the three elaborative devices, namely, redundancy, transparency or signaling is the most effective in aiding intermediate-level language learners’ comprehension of authentic aural texts as shown by students’ performance in the listening tasks?

**Structure of the Study**

In order to answer these research questions, four listening activities were developed and administered to 93 intermediate-level Spanish learners enrolled at a large public midwestern university in the U.S. in the Fall 2009 semester. Each listening activity consisted of listening to an authentic dialog in the target language and taking a multiple-choice test.

The difference between authentic and elaborated texts in the context of this study is not easy to establish due to the nature of the created aural texts. To create materials as authentic as possible and yet of instructional value for the language classroom, pairs of native speakers were provided with interactive scenarios (Di Pietro, 1987) or situations that simulate real life and they were asked to do role-plays. The spontaneous aural texts in the target language that resulted from the role-plays were recorded and are considered the baseline version of the texts. Although the speed of the conversation in the baseline versions was reduced as a result of the pilot study, the resulting interaction between the native speakers was spontaneous and is, therefore, considered authentic in the context of this study. Unless otherwise stated, authentic texts in this study refer to these spontaneous baseline texts.

These baseline versions were later “modified” by adding an elaborative device (e.g., redundancy, transparency or signaling) to constitute the redundancy-enhanced, transparency-enhanced, and signaling-enhanced versions of the texts. These modified versions are called authentic elaborated texts in the context of this study. Hence, unless otherwise stated,
authentic elaborated texts in this study refer to the modified versions of the spontaneous authentic texts created in this study.

Results from the listening test were collected after each activity throughout the semester. The data gathered for this study consisted of participants’ correct or incorrect answers to a five-item multiple-choice test and were analyzed quantitatively. The data also included participants’ self-reports of the difficulty level of the listening activities (e.g., vocabulary, quality of the audio, grammatical constructions/grammar, speed of the conversation and understanding the native speakers) and were collected at the end of the semester. Conclusions were drawn from the obtained results.
CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this chapter is to establish a theoretical background for the current study by reviewing the existing research on elaboration and the use of elaborated texts in second language instruction. In particular, this chapter will review previous studies on the impact of elaboration in listening comprehension, focusing on input and input modification in language learning. It also provides a review of existing studies on the use of authentic materials as input in language instruction.

This chapter is organized into three sections. The first section, called Listening and the Listening Comprehension Process, aims to enlighten the reader on the complexity and the different factors affecting the listening process (e.g., input). The second section refers to one of the factors affecting listening: input. This section is called Input in Language Instruction and presents information on the different factors that need to be considered when selecting input for language instruction. Specifically, this section focuses on previous research on the use of authentic listening material as input in language learning. The third section, called Input Modifications, is subdivided into two sections: (a) Simplification, and (b) Elaboration. This section presents an overview of the previous research on elaboration and focuses on the effect of elaboration on language learners’ reading and listening comprehension.

Listening and the Listening Comprehension Process

Listening, as defined by Rost (2002), “is the mental process of constructing meaning from spoken input” (p. 24). Furthermore, listening is “conceived of as an active process in which listeners select and interpret information which comes from auditory and visual clues in order to define what is going on and what speakers are trying to express” (Rubin, 1995, p.
Listening, along with reading, is a receptive skill. This is in contrast with speaking and writing, which are productive skills. According to Helgensen and Brown (2007), one way to understand listening is to view it as an “active” receptive skill. During listening, “listeners are actively paying attention and working on understanding and interpreting what they hear” (Helgensen & Brown, 2007, p. 5). Subsequently, as noted by these authors, it is not uncommon that listeners can usually understand language that they cannot produce. However, listening is the least explicit of the four language skills, making it the most difficult skill to learn (Vandergrift, 2004).

Another way to understand listening is to draw the distinction between reciprocal listening and non-reciprocal listening (Helgensen & Brown, 2007):

Reciprocal listening is between people. When we have conversations, we listen to each other, add our ideas, and give feedback (like the back channel phrases *uh, huh* and *really?*). Non-reciprocal listening is the kind of listening we are familiar with from language classes. The teacher plays an audio recording and students do the task, or the teacher dictates and students write. (p. 5)

Listening can also be understood by focusing on the elements that constitute listening. As noted by Buck (2001), listening is a very complex process, and in order to measure it, it is first necessary to understand how that process works. According to Buck (2001), two types of knowledge, linguistic and non-linguistic, are involved in listening comprehension. Linguistic knowledge includes phonology, lexis, syntax, semantics, and discourse structure. The non-linguistic knowledge involved in listening comprehension refers to context, topic, as well as global knowledge. When using global knowledge, listeners will use whatever
information they have available, or whatever information seems relevant to help them interpret what the speaker is saying (Buck, 2001). The order in which the different kinds of knowledge are applied during conversations is referred to as bottom-up and top-down processing.

Bottom-up processing tries to make sense of what the listener is hearing by focusing on vocabulary, grammar, sounds, etc. The listener starts with the smallest units (individual sounds or phonemes) of the message to later combine them into words and then into phrases and sentences. These sentences create concepts, ideas, and relationships between them (Buck, 2001). Bottom-up processing applies knowledge in a serial, hierarchical way.

Top-down processing, on the other hand, highlights the use of previous knowledge or schema. This previous knowledge can be referred to as content schema, which refer to the knowledge based on life experience and previous learning, or textual schema, which refers to the knowledge of language and content used in a particular situation (Helgesen & Brown, 2007).

In top-down processing, the different types of knowledge are not applied in a hierarchical order and are capable of interacting and influencing each other. Rumelhart (1975) investigated this processing of information under the premise that language involves parallel processing because it is processed simultaneously at different levels (phonologically, syntactically, semantically, and pragmatically). Rumelhart (1975) examined this model in the context of reading, although it can be applied to the listening process, by having participants describe their understanding of the text and, according to their understanding, hypothesize about what would come next. The author concluded that readers call upon previous knowledge to predict what is coming in the text, and that readers adjust their
predictions as they go along.

When listening involves both bottom-up and top-down process, it is considered to be interactive listening (Buck, 2001). As explained by Vandergrift (2007),

Listeners exercise top-down processes when they use context and prior knowledge (e.g., topic, genre, culture and other schema knowledge stored in long-term memory) to build a conceptual framework for comprehension. Listeners make use of bottom-up processes when they construct meaning by addition, gradually combining increasingly larger units of meaning from the phoneme-level up to discourse-level features. (p. 192)

The degree to which listeners use one process more than the other will depend on the purpose for listening, learner characteristics such as the level of language ability, and the context of the listening event. A listener who needs, for example, to verify a particular detail will engage in more bottom-up processing than a listener who is interested in comprehending the main idea of a text (Vandergrift, 2007).

This interactive model of processing information is of particular importance in second language listening. As noted by Flowerdew and Miller (2005), an important advantage of the interactive model is that it allows for the possibility of individual variation in linguistic processing, opening up the possibility of a model that is sensitive to individual learning styles as well as groups needs. At the individual level, some learners may prefer top-down processing, while others, especially beginning language learners, may be more prompted to use bottom-up processing. However, for more advanced language learners, a combination of bottom-up and top-down skills will be more appropriate for a more successful comprehension of texts (Flowerdew & Miller, 2005). The type of strategy used for listening
is based on students’ cognitive abilities. Successful listeners will use a combination of top-down (meaning-focused) and bottom-up (detailed-focus) accordingly to the listening objectives (Vandergrift, 2004).

The speed and effectiveness at which listeners carry out these processes depend on the degree to which the listeners can efficiently process what is heard (Vandergrift, 2004). Native speakers process the information automatically, without paying much attention to individual words. However, beginning-level language learners have little language knowledge and thus are not able to process all they hear. They focus on details of what they hear and, consequently, comprehension suffers due to the limited working memory and the speed of the native speakers’ speech (Vandergrift, 2004). Language learners make use of compensatory strategies or whatever relevant information is available to them to guess what was not understood in order to avoid a breakdown in comprehension.

There are other factors involved in the process of listening that affect comprehension. As noted by Jones (2009), “second language listening comprehension is a complex receptive skill that is sensitive to internal and external factors such as students’ cognitive abilities and the design and presentation of the aural material, either of which could affect a student’s ability to process the aural input” (p. 268). Cognitive abilities refer to listeners’ capacity to construct meaning of what is heard based on prior, cultural, and linguistic knowledge.

As indicated earlier, the importance of prior knowledge in language comprehension has been interpreted by what is known as the schema theory (Rumelhart, 1980). The schema theory hypothesizes that neither written text, nor spoken discourse carries meaning in itself. Rather, for a message to convey meaning, it needs to interact with the listener's or reader’s prior knowledge about the world. This prior knowledge enables individuals to anticipate and
make inferences about commonplace situations (Long, 1989). Thus, when differences in the cultural background of either the writer or speaker and the reader or listener exist, the reader or listener may utilize an unsuitable schema that leads to the wrongful comprehension of the text (Rumelhart, 1980).

Chiang and Dunkel (1992) studied the effect of prior knowledge, speech modification, and listening comprehension proficiency on how well English as a Foreign Language (EFL) listeners understood lectures. Specifically, they investigated whether speech modification (supplying redundant and elaborated information in the lecture), prior knowledge of the lecture topic, and the level of listening comprehension in English affected in positive, negative, or neutral ways the comprehension of information presented orally to 388 Chinese EFL listeners. They used a lecture on an unfamiliar topic (The Amish People and the Pennsylvania Dutch Country) and a lecture on a topic considered familiar to students (Confucius and Confucianism). As indicated by Chiang and Dunkel (1992), prior knowledge, in this study, was the information participants possessed as a result of the membership in the Chinese culture. Results indicated a significant interaction between prior knowledge (familiar vs. unfamiliar topic) and test type (passage-independent vs. passage-dependent items). Prior knowledge had a significant impact on participants' scores on the passage-independent test items on the post-lecture comprehension test for both groups of proficiency. As noted by Chiang and Dunkel (1992), the fact that Chinese students of English as a foreign language performed better on the familiar-topic lecture on Confucius than on the unfamiliar-topic lecture on the Amish may be attributed to their being able to activate schemata about Confucius and his teachings. The authors concluded that “the more prior knowledge the listener has about the topic of the lecture, the easier it is for that listener
to comprehend the lecture and retain general points of information” (Chiang & Dunkel, 1992, p. 365). This study is further discussed in the elaboration of aural texts section.

According to Helgensen and Brown (2007), the difficulty of listening depends on the listener, the speaker, the task, and the type of input. Anderson and Lynch (1988) suggested that the interaction of these factors function as if they were slide controls (equalizers) in a recording studio where teachers can raise and lower the level on each factor to match the characteristics and level of the language learner. Moving the equalizers up will make listening comprehension more challenging, whereas moving the equalizers down will make the process easier. Thus, listening involves an interaction of input, task, and individual variables. The next section addresses one of the mentioned “equalizers” of language learning, which is input.

**Input in Language Instruction**

This section provides a definition of input and information about considerations (e.g., cultural aspects of the content, length of the extract, nature and source of input, to name a few) that need to be taken into account when selecting input for language instruction. It also provides information on previous research on the use of authentic materials as input in language instruction. Specifically, this section focuses on previous research on authentic listening materials in language learning.

Input, as noted by Rost (1990), “is what learners are provided, have access to, or are expected to have available (including prior knowledge) as they proceed in a learning activity” (p. 158). Input is often associated with learning materials and, according to Rost (1990), it includes materials and language data that the learners are to attend to or manipulate during the task.
Selecting input for language instruction requires consideration of the cultural aspects of the content, length of the extract, abstractness of the content, number of information points, and level of linguistic difficulty (Rost, 1990). However, as observed by this author, none of these considerations alone can predict the difficulties the language learner will experience when encountered with the text, since text difficulty is also related to learners’ motivation and interest in the topic. For example, texts that are interesting or vivid may be easy to understand even if they contain complex syntax and low frequency, technical vocabulary (Rost, 1990).

This concept is in-sync with the Input Hypotheses (Krashen, 1985), which states that learners acquire language when they are exposed to comprehensible input containing linguistic forms that are slightly more advanced than learners' current language system. However, as noted by Krashen (2003), in order to acquire language we need to understand the input: “we acquire language and develop literacy when we understand messages, that is, when we understand what we hear and what we read, when we receive ‘comprehensive input’” (p. 81).

An additional consideration in selecting input for language instruction is the nature and source of the input. Bacon (1992) pointed out the importance of second language methodologists (Bacon, 1987, 1989; Rogers & Medley, 1988, cited in Bacon, 1992) who investigated the “message” in input and highlighted the need to expose learners to natural and authentic language. This kind of input, called authentic input, provides the learner with both linguistic and cultural information that may not be available in pedagogical texts (Bacon, 1992, p. 398). The next section will provide information on previous research on authentic materials and its application in second language instruction.
**Authentic Materials**

An authentic text, as defined by Gilmore (2007), “is a stretch of real language, produced by a real speaker or writer for a real audience and designed to convey a real message of some sort” (p. 98). Consequently, most everyday items in the target language qualify as authentic materials (e.g., menus, brochures, receipts, television programs, newspapers, radio broadcasts, music, literature, among other sources). Authentic materials refer to materials that were not created or edited expressly for language learners (Nunan & Miller, 1995). Thus, it is possible to discern whether a text is authentic or not by referring to the source of the discourse and the context of its production (Gilmore, 2007). Classroom materials, as noted by Clarke and Silverstein (1977), should resemble the "real world" as closely as possible. According to these authors, “since language is a tool of communication, methods and materials should concentrate on the message and not on the medium” (Clarke & Silverstein, 1977, p. 51).

Many methodologists advocate the use of authentic texts as a way of incorporating the advantages of natural acquisition into the formality of classroom learning (Bacon, 1992). Bacon (1992) noted that although authentic texts are usually not created with the purpose of language instruction, and typically learners do not have an opportunity to interact with the author of the input, “yet these texts provide a model that is more life-like and potentially more interesting than typical pedagogical text” (Bacon, 1992, p. 399).

Conversely, according to Richards (2006), using appropriate authentic materials or authentic source materials is not always realistic. Although finding authentic source materials, especially written texts, is rather easy and likely to be more motivating than author-written texts, it is still necessary to remove low-frequency lexical items and obscure
Finding authentic source materials with the appropriate level of difficulty for the target learners is rather difficult. Authentic source written texts, for example, can be easily found in magazines or the Internet; however, these texts may be written for a specific audience or may not be age appropriate (Richards, 2006). Moreover, as noted by Richards (2006), written authentic texts present a big challenge even for college-age language learners due to the fact that real world readers are assumed to have a high level of reading ability and substantial word recognition. Thus, these texts need certain level of adaptation before they can become useful for language instruction (Richards, 2006).

Furthermore, authentic texts (i.e., texts originally spoken or written by and for native speakers and not intended for language teaching), except when used at very advanced levels, impede learning by confronting learners with large amount of unknown material (e.g., new vocabulary and complex grammar) without compensatory devices to facilitate comprehension (Long, 2007). As noted by this author, written or oral authentic texts present too dense a linguistic target due to the lack of redundancy.

**Using Authentic Materials for Listening Instruction**

The ultimate goal for listening instruction is to help second language listeners understand the target language in everyday situations (Vandergrift, 2007). According to this author, “authentic listening materials are best suited to achieve this goal because they reflect real life listening, they are relevant to the learners’ life, and they allow for exposure to different varieties of language” (Vandergrift, 2007, p. 200).

Vandergrift (2007) noted that exposure to authentic-type texts and natural speech
rate is preferred by language learners and can be beneficial for listening development. When language learners are taught how to listen without the threat of a test, they “find it motivating to learn to understand authentic texts since this practice can help them access similar texts in real life listening” (Vandergrift, 2007, p. 200). However, there are issues of concern regarding the use of authentic texts for language instruction. One issue is that although authentic texts could bring real life situations and real authentic oral interaction to the classroom, caution needs to be taken in selecting instructional materials since some authentic source texts have no pedagogical value to the language learner (Richards, 2006).

According to Richards (2006), especially in the case of speaking materials, there are other concerning issues. Texts need to meet several design criteria (e.g., sentence length, exchange of conversation length, grammar, etc.) if they are intended to present new language, model speaking tasks, or provide content to initiate discussion. Chunks of authentic discourse would not meet these criteria and will have no pedagogical value for language instruction. As emphasized by Brown and Yule (1983, cited in Richards, 2006), an informal conversation in the real world serves the main purpose of maintaining social interactions. Consequently, the main reason of “chatting” is to be nice to the other person and not to convey information, and thus these texts are of little relevance to anyone else.

An additional concern in selecting input for listening in the language classroom is not only the nature and source of input, but also the purpose of the audience for whom the input is intended (Rost, 1990). The author emphasizes Widdowson’s (1979) differentiation between the concerns of the text itself and the concerns of learner’s use of the texts. As noted by Rost (1990), “genuineness is a characteristic of the text itself and is an absolute quality. Authenticity is a characteristic of the relationship between the text
and the listener or reader and has to do with appropriate response” (p. 160). Rost (1990) indicated that while many language educators advocate the use of prerecorded texts of native speaker conversations because of the genuineness they bring to the classroom, others (e.g., Candlin & Edelhoff, 1982, cited in Rost, 1990) argue that genuine texts do not necessarily lead to authenticity of the purpose for the learner. Teachers aiming to create real-life conditions of listening in the classroom may not be able to do so using genuine texts (Rost, 1990). Therefore, some educators support the use of authentic texts only in situations when it is needed, for example, to show dialectal differences or features of settings in particular locales (Ur, 1984, cited in Rost, 1990).

While examples of authentic source listening materials are abundant (e.g., radio broadcast, television announcements, etc.), they are impractical due “to logistical problems involved in recording genuine interactions, and copyright and ethnical issues that arise when one wants to use data from those sources” (Richards, 2006, p. 21). Additionally, these texts require substantial modification in order to be adapted for language instruction. The next section will focus on input modifications by reviewing previous studies on the impact of (a) simplification and (b) elaboration in language learning.

**Input Modifications**

In the early years of research on this topic, modifications of input were considered to be changes in linguistic form (i.e., surface syntax, lexis, and phonology) or modifications of interactions involving features of conversation or discourse function (Parker & Chaudron, 1987). As noted by these authors, features of linguistic form modified to less complex ones included shorter utterances, and less complex syntax and vocabulary. Modifications of
interaction included clarification requests, comprehension checks, confirmation checks, and completion and repetition of others’ utterances. Parker and Chaudron (1987) later introduced a third type of input modification - elaboration - which they wanted to distinguish from simplification and modifications involving negotiation of meaning. Elaboration, or elaborative modifications as defined by Parker and Chaudron (1987), refers to the addition of repetitions or redundancy and clearer signaling of the thematic structure of the communication. Although input modifications include modifications of interaction, the following section focuses exclusively on previous studies on simplification and elaboration due to the fact that the developed texts did not allow for any interactions between speakers and listeners. It is important to note that most of the literature on input modifications presented in this chapter refers to the use of simplification or elaboration in texts written or spoken in English, not in Spanish. Thus, some particular modifications do not apply to the current study (e.g., grammar points such as cleft sentences).

**Simplification**

Simplification, as defined by Honeyfield (1977), involves limiting syntax and vocabulary through de-transformation and paraphrasing. These processes reduce information density, and also disrupt the normal system of information distribution (since low frequency items are not used). Further, the highly restricted syntax that is often used may be inadequate for a given information load, and so may reduce cohesion and readability. Also, in concentrating on syntax and vocabulary, simplifiers often lose sight of communicative structure - the ways in which information is organized in texts for particular communicative purposes. (p. 439)
According to Parker and Chaudron (1987), typical features of linguistic simplification for instructional context include the use of shorter utterances (in words or in T-units), simpler syntax (in clauses or S-node per T-unit), simpler lexis (smaller type-token ratios and avoidance of low-frequency vocabulary), deletion of sentence elements or morphological inflections, and preference for canonical word order. Thus, in the case of written input, the result of simplification is a text that features shorter sentences, simple grammar, and restricted vocabulary.

Honeyfield (1977) examined traditional simplification techniques for the preparation of language teaching materials, especially graded readers. He described the two principal forms of simplification: linguistic and content simplification. Linguistic simplification in English involves “a process of de-transformation in which complex sentences are broken up into simple or compound sentences; nominalizations are resolved in separate sentences; tense relationships are standardized; modal meanings may be lexicalized; and anaphoric links are filled in” (Mountford, 1976, p. 151). Paraphrasing (e.g., replacing “wealthy” by “very rich”) is another technique used for linguistic simplification. Content simplification involves rewriting a story in a simplified manner or omitting less important incidents or passages than the original version.

According to Honeyfield (1977), “these processes produce material which differs significantly from normal English in the areas of information distribution -- the way in which information is distributed in a text, -- syntax and communicative structure -- the way in which information is organized in a text for particular communicative purposes” (p. 431). Simplifying syntax may lead to material lacking in cohesion, and hence, lead to resulting material that inadequately represents the semantic and rhetorical systems of normal English.
The following example extracted from Honeyfield (1977) illustrates a text that was simplified by avoiding the use of adverbial clauses and by using other rather simple adverbials (e.g., then, later, but):

We were rather worried about the ropes. We did not think about them during the day. We were too busy. But we thought about them during the night. We lay on mats in the cabin. Then we could both feel and hear the ropes. The logs moved under us. They were like an animal breathing. The first two nights were the worst. Later the water swelled the ropes. The ropes then held the nine logs together more tightly. But they still moved about. (Honeyfield, 1977, p. 435)

The passage lacks cohesion due to the fact that “the relationship of one piece of information to the next is often unclear” (Honeyfield, 1977, p. 435). Consequently, simplification of the language and content of written texts could induce learners to develop reading strategies that are inappropriate for unsimplified target language materials (Honeyfield, 1977).

Additionally, the use of limited vocabulary and short, simple sentences in simplified texts is likely to result in a broken up, unnatural discourse, which may differ significantly from authentic target language materials (Oh, 2001). In a study conducted by Blau (1990) to investigate the effect of syntax, pauses, and speed on listening comprehension in learners of English as a foreign language and English as a second language, the author suggested that syntactic simplification (e.g., increasing the number of simple sentences) in the text did not increase language learners' listening comprehension of texts read aloud. However, listeners' comprehension was augmented by the inclusion of pauses at constituent boundaries in the aural text. As mentioned by Yano, Long, and
Ross (1994), even though learners may comprehend a text from which all potentially unfamiliar linguistic items have been eliminated, this elimination prevents exposure to items that learners eventually should know.

Furthermore, Chaudron (1983), whose research is later presented in the Elaboration of Aural Texts section of this chapter, pointed out that simplified texts impeded rather than facilitated language learners' comprehension of texts by creating an unnatural input that lacks natural materials needed to learn a language (e.g., implicitness, intertextuality, among other features of natural discourse). As a consequence, as noted by Honeyfield (1977), language learners may not be able to fully comprehend the text, especially when asked to perform specific tasks such as inferring, which requires an understanding of those relationships (e.g., implicitness and intertextuality).

An alternative to the use of either authentic or simplified texts for language instruction is elaboration. As noted by Oh (2001),

If one recognizes the need for a second/foreign language program to utilize some type of modified input to counteract learner deficiencies, efforts should aim to increase comprehensibility while maintaining essential features typical of unmodified input. In such efforts, elaborative modification represents a feasible alternative to simplification. (p. 91)

Elaboration

Elaboration can be defined as follows:

Features such as slower speech, clearer articulation and emphatic stress, paraphrases, synonyms and restatements, rhetorical signaling devices, self-repetition, and suppliance of optional syntactic signals (e.g., relative and complement clause...
markers) serve neither to simplify nor to ‘complexify’ the surface form, nor to create opportunities for interaction; rather, they are clarifications of meaning only, opportunities for the listener/reader to better decode the communication. (Parker & Chaudron, 1987, p. 110)

Elaboration, as described by Yano, Long, and Ross (1994), is a process in which unfamiliar linguistic items are offset with redundancy and explicitness. Elaborated materials are a result of several studies on “foreigner talk discourse” in the 1970s and 1980s, showing that in communicative interactions with nonnative speakers of English, native speakers of English often adjust or modify their speech in their attempt to make it more comprehensible to the second language listener (Long, 1983). Native speakers would slow the rate of delivery or use shorter utterances, but would not simplify the context of their speech in order to successfully communicate to non-native speakers. According to Long (2007), speakers (native and non-native) would “negotiate for meaning” by using devices such as repetition, paraphrasing, confirmation checks, clarification requests, and several types of scaffolding represented by lexical switches, decomposition, etc.

Redundancy is another natural feature present in communicative interactions. Buck (2001) noted that language is redundant by nature, and there are so many clues to what the speaker is saying that listeners can understand even if speakers do not state it clearly. Speakers would instinctively modify their speech depending on the situation and their knowledge of the listener. Buck (2001) observed that people would speak faster, run words together more, and be more indistinct when they share knowledge of a topic. However, speakers will speak more slowly and clearer when speaking to someone who has less background knowledge. The author concluded that comprehension takes place because
language is so redundant that people do not need all the information to be clearly expressed in order to comprehend. We use our knowledge of the language to “replace” any missing information and construct meaning for ourselves.

Therefore, how can elaborated text be designed to improve comprehensibility of spoken or written texts while maintaining essential features typical of unmodified input? As explained by Long (2007), elaborated texts (written or aural) can be designed by adding redundancy and regularity (also refer to as transparency) to a text, and often more explicit signaling of its thematic structure, followed by gradual removal of the modification provided as learner proficiency increases.

Redundancy, as noted by Long (2007), is achieved by repetition, paraphrase, provision of synonyms of low frequency lexical items, etc. Regularity, or transparency, is accomplished through parallelism, more frequent use of canonical word order, retention of optional constituents (e.g., subject pronouns in pro-drop languages), and matching order of mention to order of occurrence (e.g., The plane took off before the family reached the airport in preference to The family reached the airport after the plane had taken off, Long, 2007). Thematic structure is defined as "any non-canonical word order that has the functional purpose of placing the known information first, and the new information second” (Parker & Chaudron, 1987, p. 115). Thematic structure in English, as indicated by these authors, “is achieved syntactically by means of prepositional and adverbial phrase preposing, various types of cleft constructions and various types of extraposition” (Parker & Chaudron, 1987, p. 116). The following example shows instances of signaling of thematic structure as presented by Parker and Chaudron (1987): What separates the expert from the novice is the expert’s ability to remember board positions. This ability, it appears, is related to superior
knowledge of the game, not to superior memory (p. 116). Signaling of thematic structure was attained by the wh-cleft in the first sentence that separated the theme (which follows *What*) from the new information (which follows *is*). The addition of an extraposition construction (*it appears*) reinforces the fact that the information that follows is new (Parker & Chaudron, 1987). The following sections present an overview of previous research on elaboration, in which features of redundancy, regularity or transparency, and signaling of thematic structure were added to written and aural texts to study the effect of elaboration on language learners’ comprehension.

Elaboration of written texts.

Parker and Chaudron (1987) studied the effects of elaborated input on language learners’ comprehension of academic discourse. They referred to elaborated input as a combination of features of redundancy and thematic structure. The authors found that although neither redundancy nor thematic structure showed a significant impact on improving learners’ reading comprehension, the higher reliability (Cronbach’s alpha) and greater correlation with other statistical measures (e.g., higher Pearson correlations between the total passage score and the multiple choice placement reading test score) of the elaborated passages indicated to be more natural, i.e., more coherent and better structured, than simplification. This sort of results indicates that the elaborated reading text “was more like a normal reading passage possibly because it was more coherent and well-structured” (Parker & Chaudron, 1987, p. 121). As noted by the authors, the high level of lexical and syntactic difficulty of the written passages could be responsible for the lack of effect of elaboration on learners’ reading comprehension. Comprehension of the difficult syntax and complex vocabulary demanded too much processing and access to the target language grammar that
learners could not take advantage of the modifications of thematic structures (Parker & Chaudron, 1987). The authors concluded that elaborated input, which does not hinder comprehension but seems to be more natural, is a better choice for language instruction than non-elaborated texts.

Yano, Long, and Ross (1994) investigated the relative effects of simplification and elaboration on 483 Japanese English learners’ reading comprehension. Participants read 13 written texts in one of the three versions: baseline, simplified, and elaborated, with length varying from a short paragraph to a two-page text. Comprehension was assessed using 30 multiple-choice items. The results showed that language learners who read the linguistically simplified passage scored significantly better on a comprehension test than readers of the unmodified, original version of the same passage. Readers of the elaborated version of the text also performed better than readers of the unmodified passages, but the difference in scores between the two groups was not statistically significant. There was also no statistically significant difference between the scores of the students reading the simplified passages and of those who read the elaborated versions despite the fact that the elaborated texts were more complex in words per minutes and in words per sentence, about 50 % longer, and six grade levels harder in readability than the simplified texts. Yano, Long, and Ross (1994) concluded that elaboration demonstrated to improve comprehension, and although not statistically significant, comprehension of elaborated texts was comparable to comprehension of the simplified texts.

A study conducted by Oh (2001) investigated the effects of two types of input modification, i.e., simplification and elaboration, on 430 Korean high school English learners’ reading comprehension. Reading passages in one of three forms (i.e., baseline,
simplified, or elaborated) were presented to students who were divided into two proficiency levels: high proficiency and low proficiency. She also examined the effects of modification type and learner proficiency on general, specific, and inferential comprehension processes. In Oh’s (2001) study, general comprehension items required the reader to grasp the main idea of a passage by combining seemingly unrelated pieces of information (e.g., finding the most appropriate title for a passage or judging the author’s attitude toward some passage content). Specific comprehension questions “required the reader to pay close attention to explicitly stated factual information in a passage in order to be able to identify the truth or falsity of specific propositions regarding the passage” (Oh, 2001, p. 78). Inference items required the reader to draw implications from the text.

The author hypothesized that “if elaboration is as effective as simplification for comprehension, it will constitute an alternative approach to written input modification because it allows more native-like target language input” (Oh, 2001, p. 91). To construct the simplified version of the reading passage, low-frequency words were replaced by higher frequency words (e.g., credulous, coincidences, and obscure were replaced by believing, accidental events, and humble). In addition, multiword expressions were replaced by one-word items with similar meanings (e.g., used to be, bring to a conclusion, and accept the fact were replaced by were, end, and believe), thus reducing the length of sentences as well. In order to construct elaborated texts, Oh (2001) added redundancy and clearer signaling of thematic structure in the form of examples, paraphrases and repetition of original information, and synonyms and definitions of low-frequency words contained in the baseline passages.

Oh’s (2001) major findings can be summarized as follows: (a) simplified input
facilitated Korean high school English learners’ reading comprehension, although students of low proficiency did not significantly benefit from it; (b) elaborated input significantly enhanced the overall reading comprehension of students at both high and low proficiency levels. Learners who had read elaborated passages scored significantly higher on the comprehension test than did those at the same proficiency level who had read unmodified versions of the same passages. Surprisingly, those in the lower range of English proficiency seemed to do best on elaborated passages. For the high proficiency students, the facilitative effect of elaboration was comparable to that of simplification.

Oh’s (2001) findings also indicated no interaction effect between input modification type (e.g., simplified or elaborated) and learner proficiency. However, it is important to note that the high proficiency students benefited from input modifications to a greater extent than the low proficiency students did, meaning that modification of the passages had more of an impact on the reading comprehension of the higher proficiency group (Oh, 2001, p. 87). The author noted that

The low proficiency students’ insufficient knowledge of the language in general may have been the principal obstacle to their taking as much advantage of either type of modification as the high proficiency students did. Perhaps a certain threshold of linguistic competence is necessary to be able to profit from input modification. (Oh, 2001, p. 87)

Oh’s (2001) study also investigated how modification made to the input interacted with the kind of comprehension process required (e.g., general or specific comprehension items and inference of information). Results indicated that high proficiency students benefited from both types of input modification (simplification and elaboration) on general
comprehension items, while neither type of modification influenced the low proficiency students’ performance. Regarding the effect of input modification on specific comprehension items, elaboration significantly improved learners’ specific comprehension of items at both proficiency levels, while simplification was only significant in assisting high proficiency students. Results from the effect of input modifications on inference of information from a text suggested that only elaborated input significantly improved high and low proficiency learners’ performance on inference items.

Oh (2001) blamed students’ lack of ability or low proficiency for their low performance in understanding general comprehension items. As noted by the author, general comprehension questions, which demand a relatively high level of ability to combine separate and sometimes apparently unrelated pieces of information in order to get the whole picture of a passage, may be far beyond the low proficiency students' level of competence. (Oh, 2001, p. 88)

She supported this explanation with the observation that the low proficiency students were able to take advantage of the modifications on specific comprehension questions, which could be answered successfully with only partial understanding of the passages.

Oh (2001) concluded that “instruction with elaborated input should accelerate the progression to fluent reading of unmodified materials, which is the ultimate goal of foreign language reading instruction” (p. 69). Elaborative modification can help the reader exploit more opportunities to process critical information within the text and thus to comprehend the text better, even though the resulting text remains at a high level of linguistic complexity.

Li, Xu, and Wang (2005) conducted a study, in which they investigated the effects of simplification and elaboration on 48 Filipino high school students’ second language reading
comprehension. This study replicated Oh’s (2001) investigation by following her way of modifying and naming the passages: baseline version, simplified version, and elaborated version. Reading comprehension was evaluated based on students’ performance on general, specific, and inferential information. Three English reading passages in one of the three forms - baseline, simplified and elaborated - were presented to participants. Results indicated that elaborated written input was overall more comprehensible than baseline written input for Filipino learners of English; however, elaboration appeared more helpful for the low proficiency students than for the high proficiency students on general comprehension of the text.

Even though the elaborated version helped the low proficiency students more, high proficiency students scored significantly better than low proficiency students in general and specific comprehension of the elaborated texts. While simplification assisted students’ reading comprehension of specific items at both proficiency levels, elaboration did not benefit low proficiency students with comprehension of specific information as much as simplification had. The authors blamed the complex syntactic structures and infrequent vocabulary of elaborated passages for this result.

Results from the effect of elaboration on the inferential comprehension process showed that low proficiency students benefited the most. The authors concluded that elaboration facilitated the low proficiency readers’ inferential process “by providing them repeated chances to reread those terms and concepts so as to aid their inferential reading comprehension” (Li, Xu, & Wang, 2005, p. 60). However, high proficiency students did not seem to benefit from elaboration on inference of information from the texts as much as low proficiency students did. Li, Xu, and Wang (2005) suggested that this result may be
explained by the fact that the limited amount of reading denied the high proficiency students chances to show their abilities, or perhaps, the high proficiency students’ reading comprehension was not influenced by different types of text because of their high language ability and proficiency.

**Elaboration of aural texts.**

Several studies have investigated the effect of elaborated language on listening comprehension. Chaudron (1983) conducted a study to investigate how different types of topic reinstatements affected second language learners' recognition and recall of sentence topics in lectures. The topic reinstatements were repetition of the noun topic, rhetorical questions, synonyms, conditional clauses, and simple noun reiteration. The author wanted to examine which of the two devices would be more effective in promoting retention of the topic: syntactic simplicity or elaboration and redundancy. Chaudron (1983) provided the following example of the use of these devices in a context with a beer topic, as in "They are selling beer at the picnic:"

2. Synonym: *The brew tastes terrific.*
3. Repeated Noun: *The beer ... the beer tastes terrific.*
5. If-Clause (non-conditional): *If you can afford the beer, it tastes terrific.*

Findings suggested that the redundant repeated noun was significantly better recognized than the simple noun, and was better recalled than the synonym or conditional. However, relatively low English proficiency learners tended to have poorer recall ability on the syntactically more complex structures. Chaudron (1983) concluded that listeners’ better
recognition of the repeated noun than of the simple noun and than of either the if-clause or synonym on recall is due to “the clear redundancy of the device, which reinforces the aural impression to be recalled” (p. 448).

Chaudron and Richards (1986) piloted a study intended to explore the effects of discourse signals and markers in “reading style” lectures (e.g., the lecturer reads from notes, or speaks as if he was reading from notes) on second language learners’ listening comprehension. The baseline version of the lecture consisted of a condensed written passage of a videotape on the expansion of the United States from thirteen colonies to an imperial nation presented to university English students. The baseline version did not include any signals of discourse organization or linking between sentences other than what was necessary to convey meaning to the passage.

A second version of the lecture, the “micro” version, was constructed to include micro markers (e.g., markers of intersentential relations, framing of segments, and pause fillers). Inserted micro markers consisted of temporal links (e.g., then, and, now, after this), causal links (e.g., because, so), contrastive relationships (e.g., but, actually), relative emphasis (e.g., you see, unbelievably, of course), and framing/segmentation (e.g., well, OK, all right) among other links. A third version, the “macro” version, contained signals of metastatements about the major prepositions within the lecture, or the important transition points in the lecture (e.g., what I am going to talk about today, let's go back to the beginning, to begin with, etc.).

The authors found that inclusion of macro markers signaling major propositions or the important transition points within the lecture enhanced listeners’ comprehension and retention of lecture information. However, micro markers signaling intersentential relations,
framing of segments, and pause fillers did not aid the learners' recall of the lecture information.

Chaudron and Richards (1986) noted that important information arises from this apparent differential effect of macro and micro markers. While the inclusion of micro markers are of less semantic value in the lecture information and they only allow the speaker extra time to plan the next utterance, the macro markers are explicit signals of the development of the lecture information. The authors explained that listeners learn to pay no attention to all the minor pause fillers and redundant intersentential connectors, and instead make use of the time to process the important parts of the text. The listener knows that paying attention to markers of the general organization of the text is a critical skill for the comprehension of the information expressed by the lecture.

Chaudron and Richards (1986) concluded that their research has important implications for language instruction and material development. The authors pointed out that A lecture read from a written text will usually lack the kinds of macro-markers found in the more conversational style of teaching. A lecture that uses more macro-markers is likely to be easier to follow. On the other hand, an over-use of micro-markers possibly detracts from the overall coherence of the lecture. (Chaudron & Richards, 1986, p. 124)

Thus, the macro-markers represent a relevant focus for classroom activities and instructional materials although such focus is often absent in published materials (Chaudron & Richards, 1986).

In another study conducted by Chiang and Dunkel (1992), which was mentioned before in this chapter addressing the effect of prior knowledge on listeners’ comprehension
of texts, the authors examined the effect of prior knowledge of the topic, speech modification (supplying redundant and elaborated information in the lecture), and the listening comprehension proficiency in English on students’ listening comprehension. Participants were high-intermediate and low-intermediate proficiency Chinese students of English. They used a lecture on an unfamiliar topic (The Amish People and the Pennsylvania Dutch Country) and a lecture on a topic considered familiar to students (Confucius and Confucianism). The students listened a lecture the discourse of which was (a) familiar-unmodified, (b) familiar-modified, (c) unfamiliar-unmodified, or (d) unfamiliar-modified. The modified discourse contained information redundancies and elaborations.

Results in Chiang and Dunkel’s (1992) study suggested that level of listening proficiency played an important role in the comprehension of the aural texts. Both proficiency levels students benefited from their prior knowledge, but only the high proficiency students benefited from speech modification. As noted by the authors, “this finding seems to support Ur's (1984) contention that second language students comprehend and learn best if their level of listening ability is taken into consideration when planning listening materials” (Chiang & Dunkel, 1992, p. 363).

The rate of delivery of the speech is another factor that affects language learners’ listening comprehension. Results from a study conducted by Blau (1990) suggest that mechanically reducing the velocity of speech of the tape did not enhance the comprehension of Polish or Puerto Rican listeners except at the lowest levels of target language proficiency.

In another investigation on the effect of speech rate on listening comprehension conducted by Derwing and Munro (2001), the findings again indicated that altering the rate of speech did not enhance listener ratings of too fast or too slow. The researchers concluded
that slowing the rate of speech did not aid students in their aural comprehension of texts. However, other researchers (e.g., Blau, 1982; Griffiths, 1991) have pointed out that it is difficult to compare studies on the rate of speech because these studies have used different mechanical compressor-expanders, different texts of different lengths, and different measurement techniques. Also, as noted by Griffiths (1991), participants come from different cultural backgrounds, different languages, and different age groups. Because different languages have different "normal" rates, the rates defined in studies using English cannot be applied exactly to studies of other languages.

In conclusion, findings from previous research on elaboration suggest that “elaborative modifications of input achieve almost as great an increase in comprehension as simplified ones, but do so without impeding acquisition” (Long, 2007, p. 137). As indicated by Long (2007), authentic texts retain items needed for comprehension (e.g., new grammar, new vocabulary, sentence length, coherent relationship between sentences, etc.), but "are usually too complex for all except advanced learners, and mostly of no use for language acquisition" (p. 137). Comprehension can be improved by simplification, although it comes at a high cost where language acquisition is concerned due to the removal of usually most of the learning targets. “Elaboration, conversely, retains almost all unknown material, meaning that new language is available for acquisition” (Long, 2007, p. 137). As noted by the author, “elaboration does it work without ‘bleeding’ the input of items to which students must be exposed if they are to progress” (Long, 2007, p. 137).

Previous studies have approached elaboration as either an alternative to simplification or to unmodified baseline texts for language instruction, but have not provided evidence of how different input modification devices may affect (positively or negatively) the listening
comprehension of authentic elaborated texts. Consequently, more research is needed to understand how elaboration can aid the language learner who may not be “quite ready” for authentic materials with the comprehension of texts that resemble authentic oral interactions and yet are appropriate for the language classroom. The present study attempts to investigate the effects of different input modification devices (namely, redundancy, transparency, and signaling) on intermediate-level language learners’ aural comprehension of authentic texts. Specifically, this study considers the effect of elaboration on facilitating the aural comprehension of authentic texts by intermediate-level Spanish language learners.
CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter is to provide information about the participants in this research project and the data collection process, which entailed the development of the listening materials and activities used in the study. This chapter also provides detailed information about the followed procedures, including the design and implementation of a pilot study as well as a discussion of the data analysis methods used to answer the research questions.

Participants

The participants for this study were all native speakers of English enrolled in four different sections of intermediate Spanish at a large Midwestern University in the U.S. Classes met for 50 minutes four times a week for a period of 14 weeks, and were taught entirely in Spanish. A native Spanish speaker instructor taught two of the four sections, while a non-native Spanish speaker with a native-like Spanish proficiency taught the other two sections.

As a requirement to register for this class, students must have taken a minimum of three years of Spanish at the high school level, or two semesters of beginning Spanish at the college level, or received a score between 199 and 400 in the online Web CAPE foreign language placement exam for intermediate-level Spanish. The Web CAPE exam is a computer-adaptive language placement test authored by Brigham Young University and adopted by the Department of World Languages and Cultures at the institution where this research took place. The Web CAPE is a multiple-choice exam that covers grammar, reading,
and vocabulary. The purpose of this placement exam is to identify students’ ability level and to provide placement recommendations based on students’ score on the test.

A total of 93 undergraduate students enrolled in four sections of intermediate Spanish in Fall 2009 participated in the study. Data collected from a questionnaire at the beginning of the research project showed that sixty percent of participants were females and forty percent males. Almost ninety percent of participants had taken more than four semesters of Spanish classes at the high school level. The remaining ten percent of participants had taken up to two semesters of Spanish at the Midwestern University or another higher education institution.

Compliance with the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at ISU was ensured by informing participants in writing about the purpose of the study and the potential benefits from participating in it (such as extra listening practice and exposure to authentic-like aural texts) and by requesting them to sign a consent form that had been reviewed and approved by the IRB. Participants were informed that participation in this study was entirely voluntary and that the data collected through the listening activities were confidential. Participants were also assured that their performance in these activities would not affect their course grade.

**Materials**

This section offers an account of the terminology used for the denomination of the aural texts in the context of this study as well as the description of all developed materials. Provided is detailed information about (a) development of the authentic baseline texts, (b) development of authentic elaborated versions of the texts, and (c) development of five
multiple-choice comprehension items to check participants’ aural comprehension of the developed texts.

As previously stated in Chapter 1, the difference between authentic and elaborated texts in the context of this study is not easy to establish due to the nature of the created aural texts. To create materials as authentic as possible and yet of instructional value for the language classroom, pairs of native speakers were provided with interactive scenarios (Di Pietro, 1987) or situations that simulate real life. The spontaneous aural texts in the target language, which resulted from the role-plays, were recorded and are considered baseline versions of the texts. Although the speed of the conversation in the baseline versions was reduced as a result of the pilot study resulting interaction between the native speakers was spontaneous, and is therefore considered authentic in the context of this study. Unless otherwise stated, authentic texts in this study refer to these spontaneous, speed-reduced, baseline texts. The baseline texts were subjected to elaboration in order to create authentic elaborated versions of the texts.

Elaboration in the context of this study is defined as adding redundancy (repetition and/or paraphrasing of information), transparency (clear signaling and marking to increase topic importance and explicitness of the text), and signaling (signaling major propositions within the conversation or important transition points in the text) to a text as described by Long (2007). The authentic baseline texts were “modified” by adding one of the three elaborative devices (i.e., redundancy, transparency, or signaling). These varied revisions constitute authentic elaborated texts in the context of this study. However, in order to differentiate them according to the elaborations used to modify them, the elaborated versions
are referred to as follows: (a) redundancy-enhanced version, (b) transparency-enhanced version, and (c) signaling-enhanced version.

In summary, there were four different versions of the same authentic text for each activity, totaling sixteen elaborated aural texts for the entire project. The versions consisted of four baseline versions (authentic text) and each with their own three elaborated versions. The three elaborated versions were modified through the application of three elaborative devices, namely redundancy, transparency, and signaling.

A fifth authentic text and its corresponding redundancy-enhanced version were created after the collection and preliminary analysis of the data from the previous four listening comprehension activities, which revealed that in this study redundancy had not helped language learners with the aural comprehension of the text. These results differed from previous research in which redundancy had significantly increased learners’ comprehension of texts in the target language (Brown, 1987; Chiang & Dunkel, 1992; Long, 1983; Parker & Chaudron, 1987; Yano, Long, & Ross, 1994, to name a few). The fifth activity was different from the previous ones as it had only two versions (i.e., baseline and redundancy-enhanced versions), and the number of instances of redundancy was increased to two. Hence, the fifth text was created with the purpose of having a redundancy-enhanced version with more than one instance of redundancy and investigating its effect on participants’ listening comprehension.

**Development of Authentic Baseline Version of the Aural Texts**

To create materials as authentic as possible and yet of instructional value for the language classroom, pairs of native speakers were provided with interactive scenarios (Di Pietro, 1987) or situations that simulate real life. The spontaneous aural texts in the target
language that resulted from the role-play were recorded, transcribed, and edited, and are considered the baseline version of the texts. This section will provide information about the creation of scenarios given to the native speakers to simulate authentic interactions as well as the software used for recording the texts, and transcribing and editing of the elaborated versions used in this study.

In order to simulate an authentic interaction, each of the four baseline versions of the aural texts was developed following Di Pietro’s (1987) guidelines to implement a strategic interaction approach to language learning. Di Pietro’s (1987) strategic interaction model refers to placing language learners in situations or open-ended scenarios similar to real life situations, with a set of circumstances dictated by the teacher, and with an element of tension and drama to be resolved by the students. As noted by Di Pietro (1987), the intention of the open-ended scenarios is “to emulate those situations which often occur in real-life wherein people are called upon to redirect their communication in response to newly introduced facts and events” (p. 16). Thus, a group of students is asked to develop a conversation based on the open-ended scenario given by the teacher, rehearse it to relieve students’ anxiety about how to verbalize their intentions, and then each group chooses one member to perform the scenario.

Di Pietro’s (1987) strategic interaction model was adapted in this study to create open-ended scenarios that resemble real life situations in hopes to simulate authentic interactions. All scenarios included an element of surprise or tension (i.e., information known by only one of the speakers) to create a more realistic environment. The scenarios addressed a familiar topic (e.g., travelling to Spain, family, at a restaurant, etc.), selected accordingly to the topic being studied in class at the time of the listening activity. This
measure was taken to account for listeners’ background knowledge since listeners will use whatever information they have available, or whatever information seems relevant to help them interpret what the speaker is saying (Buck, 2001). Thus, the listener will use his/her world knowledge to make inferences and form expectations about commonplace situations (Long, 1989).

An example of a scenario given to a pair of native Spanish speakers from Colombia is introduced below. This scenario aimed to capture a cultural aspect of the Hispanic world by portraying an encounter between a young man and a beautiful woman. Stereotypically, Hispanic men are flirtatious and prompt to the piropo, and it is a cultural male assumption that good-looking women need to be praised. A piropo is a playful, engaging or poetic compliment to a woman; it is an expression of admiration for women’s beauty (e.g., “If beauty were a sin, you would never be forgiven”; “I am now sure there is a heaven because I have seen an angel”).

Furthermore, this scenario represents an informal situation that encourages a flirtatious behavior on the part of the male:

**Speaker A:** You are a Colombian waiter working in a Mexican restaurant in the U.S. A young, elegant, and very good-looking woman (speaker B) comes into the restaurant, greets you in Spanish and sits down, waiting to be served. You immediately feel this young lady has captured your heart and you want to know more about her life. Try to impress her by using your charm or your knowledge of Mexican cuisine.

**Speaker B:** You are a businesswoman from Colombia who invests in ethnic restaurants all over the U.S. You just bought this Mexican restaurant and decided to
check the service and food by pretending to be a customer. Speaker B is the waiter, also from Colombia, and he has no idea that you are the new owner. It is important that you disclose your identity at one point of the conversation, but first test his professionalism.

The scenario contains an element of surprise that intended to break that stereotype by giving the female speaker power over her counterpart. The female speaker is not a simple customer but a successful businesswoman who had recently bought the restaurant and will not tolerate the flirtatious behavior of the male character. Similar situations, aiming to highlight cultural aspects of the Spanish speaking countries, were used to develop scenarios in order to create authentic dialogs for other baseline texts.

The created scenarios were given to a pair of native Spanish speakers who spontaneously role-played the real life situations. The spontaneous and authentic dialogs were recorded using Audacity, free open-source software for recording and editing audio. Native speakers of the same linguistic variation of the target language participated in the spontaneous dialogs within a given scenario to avoid confusing the participants and thus jeopardizing comprehension. However, in order to expose students to different accents and variations of the target language, different authentic baseline texts were role-played by a pair of speakers from different countries. That is, two native speakers from Colombia role-played authentic texts 1 and 4, two native speakers from Mexico role-played authentic text 2, and speakers from Spain participated in text 3. The fifth text was role-played by speakers from Argentina. Although most vocabulary should have been recognizable for participants due to the familiarity of the topics, it is important to note that the researcher had little control over the vocabulary used by the speakers. The recorded spontaneous dialogs were transcribed and
later edited to limit the length of the text, eliminate noises, and reduce the speed of the conversation as explained below.

The speed of the audio recordings was reduced as a consequence of the main finding from the pilot study in which participants considered the speed of the native speakers’ conversations as too fast. In an attempt to reduce the speed of the aural texts without modifying its pitch, the tempo of all versions of the texts was slowed down by 10 percent of its original value using Audacity. This effect added approximately 40 seconds to the original length of the aural text. This measure was adopted as a result of the pre-test activity (see later section for more information). Research suggests that the optimal length of a listening passage for beginning and intermediate L2 learners is between thirty seconds and two minutes (Thompson & Rubin, 1993, cited in Rubin, 1995). The resulting baseline aural texts were no longer than 3.0 minutes in duration. The researcher considered that 3.0 minutes was still appropriate for this study due to the fact that manipulating the tempo of the texts had extended the original length of the passages. These texts constitute authentic baseline versions, which were later modified to create authentic elaborated versions of the texts in this study.

**Development of Authentic Elaborated Versions of the Aural Texts**

The four baseline authentic versions (BV) were transcribed, carefully analyzed (see sections below), and elaborated by adding text to increase by one the number of occurrences of elaborative devices, i.e., redundancy, transparency, and signaling. The same native speakers that had spontaneously role-played the baseline version of the texts were asked to record the additional text, which was then manually inserted into the original version or
baseline of the audio file using Audacity. Thus, four different versions of the texts were created: (a) baseline version (BV), (b) redundancy-enhanced version (RE), (c) transparency-enhanced version (TE), and (d) signaling-enhanced version (SE).

As a consequence of the additional text in the elaborated versions, the length of the redundancy-enhanced, transparency-enhanced and signaling-enhanced audios was increased compared to the corresponding baseline version of the texts as shown below.

Table 3.1.

Length of Aural Texts (in minutes)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Authentic text 1</th>
<th>Authentic text 2</th>
<th>Authentic text 3</th>
<th>Authentic text 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baseline version</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redundancy-enhanced version</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>3.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transparency-enhanced version</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>3.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signaling-enhanced version</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>3.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Creating redundancy-enhanced (RE) versions of elaborated texts.

In this project, redundancy is defined as repetition or paraphrasing of information. The transcribed baseline version for each of the four aural texts was carefully analyzed in order to determine where to add redundancy to the text. Repetition or paraphrasing was added to increase comprehension and clarify information that otherwise could have been confusing to the intermediate-level listeners. Efforts were made not to add redundancy that
could be perceived as extra information and end up confusing instead of assisting the language learners.

The addition of redundancy to the four authentic baseline texts as well as the rationale used for adding the device is presented below. The addition of each occurrence of redundancy is presented in the context of each of the baseline texts. Thus, excerpts of the baseline version and the redundancy-enhanced version of each of the four authentic texts are provided in the next section.

**Redundancy-enhanced version of authentic text 1.**

The redundancy added was a paraphrase of information due to the ambiguity of the word *día* (*day*) in the sentence. The native speaker said that classes were going to last all day long (from morning till late at night), but to the language listener who is unable to ask for clarification the word *día* could have meant that classes were only during the day. By repeating the information and paraphrasing it, the meaning of the sentence was expected to become clearer to the listener. The adding of redundancy for text 1 was as follows:

1. Baseline version.

   Speaker 2: Bueno, no te perdiste mucho y yo no sé si sean buenas noticias o no. Pero la profesora Miranda nos dijo que íbamos a tener ..., muchísimas, muchísimas clases, mucho trabajo que hacer, *clases todo el día hasta tarde por la noche.* (Well, you didn’t miss much, and I do not know if I have good or bad news for you. Professor Miranda said that we would have a very busy schedule in Spain, with lots of homework, *and many classes lasting until late at night.*)

2. Redundancy enhanced version.
Speaker 2: Bueno, no te perdiste mucho y yo no sé si sean buenas noticias o no. Pero la profesora Miranda nos dijo que íbamos a tener un …, muchísimas, muchísimas clases, mucho trabajo que hacer, clases todo el día hasta tarde por la noche.  Sí, clases todo el día, desde la mañana hasta la noche. (…with lots of homework, and many classes lasting until late at night. Yes, classes all day long, from morning till night.)

Redundancy-enhanced version of authentic text 2.

In text 2, redundancy was added as a repetition of information due to the nature and importance of the information provided by the speaker. Speaker 2 is providing the reason for not liking the beach (she doesn’t know how to swim) and her decision to choose another location for her vacation. This information is also very valuable to the listener in the context of the text because it provides a tool for inferring that one speaker is a travel agent and the other is a customer. However, due to the quick exchange of information, it is likely that an intermediate-level learner would miss it. The adding of redundancy for text 2 was as follows:

1. Baseline version.

Speaker 2: Bueno mire, la costa me interesa, pero no mucho porque no sé nadar. Así que a mí me gustarían más unas … unas actividades más culturales. (Well, look, I am interested in going to the beach, but I am not crazy about it because I do not know how to swim. I prefer some … some cultural activities.)

2. Redundancy enhanced version.

Speaker 2: Bueno mire, la costa me interesa, pero no mucho porque no sé nadar. Y como no sé nadar, me asusta ir a la costa. Así que a mí me gustarían más unas …
unas actividades más culturales. (Well, look, I am interested in going to the beach, but I am not crazy about it because I do not know how to swim. And because I do not know how to swim, I am afraid of the beach. I prefer some … some cultural activities.)

**Redundancy-enhanced version of authentic text 3.**

In text 3, the speaker, a native from Spain, used a regional casual term (*liado*) to refer to the romantic relationship between Juana (the main subject of the conversation) and the cook. This piece of information is very important to successfully understand the rest of Juana’s story. Juana was not a perfect daughter or a perfect niece and wife as portrayed by the family’s old aunts, but an unhappy and unfaithful woman who had fallen in love with her cook. This piece of information is very unlikely for the students to understand without any paraphrasing of the term. The adding of redundancy for text 3 was as follows:

1. Baseline version.

   Speaker 1: Pues, ¿sabes qué pasa? Resulta que Juana… ¡se ha liado con el cocinero! (Well, do you know what is going on? As it turns out, Juana hooked up with the cook!)

   Speaker 2: ¿Cómo? ¿Qué dices? (What? What are you saying?)

   Speaker 1: Sí, sí. ¡Qué entre croqueta y croqueta, empanada y empanada…. (Yes, yes. That between a croquette here, and a croquette there; a turnover here and there) (speaker 1 gets interrupted by speaker 2)

2. Redundancy-enhanced version.
Speaker 1: Sí, sí. ¡Qué entre croqueta y croqueta, empanada y empanada… Se ha enamorado del cocinero. (Yes, yes. That between a croquette here, and a croquette there; a turnover here and there, … she fell in love with the cook.)

Redundancy-enhanced version of authentic text 4.

In text 4, the paragraph chosen to be enhanced conveys important information that the language learner could easily miss due to the syntactic complexity of the sentence structure used by the native speaker. The syntactic complexity is due to (a) the avoidance of the personal pronoun I to indicate who is "doing the thinking," (b) the use of a direct object pronoun lo and, (c) the use of the enclitic direct object pronoun lo at the end of the gerund (pensándolo). Paraphrasing the information added an opportunity for the language learner to understand the concept by unpacking syntactic complexity without sacrificing the authenticity of the sentence. The adding of redundancy for text 4 was as follows:

1. Baseline version.

Speaker 2: No importa. Estoy pensándolo muy bien acerca de dejarlo a usted como empleado. (It doesn’t matter. I am reconsidering if I should keep you as an employee.)

2. Redundancy added version.

Speaker 2: No importa. Estoy pensándolo muy bien acerca de dejarlo a usted como empleado. Realmente estoy pensando en que usted no debe trabajar más en el restaurante. (It doesn’t matter. I am reconsidering if I should keep you as an employee. I am seriously thinking that you shouldn’t work here anymore.)

Creating transparency-enhanced (TE) versions of elaborated texts.
Transparency is defined as an overt marking of semantic features, such as making explicit the subject of the sentence, which is often dropped in the spoken speech in Spanish. Transparency was added to the baseline texts in order to investigate its effects in aiding intermediate language learners in the comprehension of authentic aural texts.

The addition of transparency to the four authentic baseline texts as well as the rationale used for adding the device is presented below. The addition of each occurrence of transparency is presented in the context of each of the baseline texts. Thus, excerpts of a baseline version and a transparency-enhanced version for each of the four authentic texts are provided below.

**Transparency-enhanced version of authentic text 1.**

In text 1, transparency was added by replacing the word *eso* (*that*) with the explicit meaning of the word (going to the beach, going dancing, having a drink, meeting new people) in the sentence. This substitution was thought to be of significant value to the language learners since this piece of information was needed to fully comprehend the meaning of the speaker’s concern in the context of the conversation.

1. Baseline version.

Speaker 1: Ay, yo no sé. Pero entre ir a clase ..., irse a la playa, ir a bailar, ir a tomarse una copa, ir a conocer otra gente; pues a mi me parece que lo segundo es muchísimo más atractivo. (I do not know. But I think that choosing between going to class or going to the beach, going dancing, having a drink, meeting new people… I think that all of the second choices are more attractive.)

Speaker 2: Pues, para mí también. *Pero yo pienso que eso puede ser negociable.* Yo creo que si hablamos con la profesora Miranda y con los otros estudiantes se puede
llegar a algún acuerdo. ¿No te parece? (I agree. *I think that (that) could be negotiable.* I think that if we talk to Professor Miranda and the other students we could reach an agreement. Do not you think so?)

2. Transparency-enhanced version.

Speaker 2: Pues, para mí tambien. *Pero yo pienso que eso, como irse a la playa, ir a bailar, ir a tomarse una copa, ir a conocer otra gente, puede ser negociable.* Yo creo que si hablamos con la profesora Miranda y con los otros estudiantes se puede llegar a algún acuerdo. ¿No te parece? (I agree. *I think that (that), going to the beach, going dancing, having a drink, meeting new people, could be negotiable.* I think that if we talk to Professor Miranda and the other students we could reach an agreement. Do not you think so?)

*Transparency-enhanced version of authentic text 2.*

In text 2, transparency was added to clarify the concept that the speaker refers to the city of Barcelona as being like an open museum due to its architectonic style, and to avoid the possible misinterpretation that the speaker was referring to the existence of an open-air museum in the city of Barcelona.

1. Baseline version.

Speaker 1: Ah, pues, le recomendaría un viaje a Barcelona. *Barcelona es una ciudad muy artística. Hay diferentes museos. Pero lo más importante es que es un museo al aire libre* porque hay muchísima arquitectura interesante en las calles que usted podría visitar. (I recommend a trip to Barcelona. *Barcelona is a very artistic city. There are different museums to visit. But most importantly, it looks like an open museum* due to the architecture of its streets.)
2. Transparency-enhanced version.

Speaker 1: Ah, pues, le recomendaría un viaje a Barcelona. *Barcelona* es una ciudad muy artística. Hay diferentes museos. *Pero lo más importante es que toda la ciudad de Barcelona es un museo al aire libre* porque hay muchísima arquitectura interesante en las calles que usted podría visitar. (I recommend a trip to Barcelona. Barcelona is a very artistic city. There are different museums to visit. But most importantly, *all of the city of Barcelona looks like an open museum* due to the architecture of its streets.)

*Transparency-enhanced version of authentic text 3.*

In text 3, the sentence “… me comparan constantemente con mi hermana Juana” (...they are constantly comparing me with my sister Juana) is grammatically complex due to the use of a direct object pronoun *me* (meaning that she is the one being compared to her sister). Its complexity is increased by the absence of the personal pronoun *ellos* (*they*) to describe who is being compared and who is doing the comparison, even though this pronoun is implied in the sentence. In an attempt to make it more comprehensible to the language learner, the subject of the sentence (*the family*) was made explicit.

1. Baseline version.

Speaker 2: ¡Hombre, cómo no! Tú sabes que yo siempre estoy en estas fiestas. ¡Me encanta la familia! (Using a regional expression in a way of meaning “Of course, why wouldn’t I! You know I always attend parties like this one. I love family events!)

Speaker 1: Yah…y a mí. Pero me tienen últimamente… de harta. ¡Jo!… Es que tú no sabes, *me comparan constantemente con mi hermana Juana*. (Yeah, and so do I.
But lately, I am fed up with them. You do not know it, but they are constantly comparing me with my sister Juana.)

2. Transparency-enhanced version.

Speaker 1: Yah… y a mí. Pero me tienen últimamente… de harta. ¡Jo!… Es que tú no sabes, la familia me compara constantemente con mi hermana Juana. (Yeah, and so do I. But lately, I am fed up with them. You do not know it, but the family is constantly comparing me with my sister Juana.)

Transparency-enhanced version of authentic text 4.

In text 4, the Spanish word trago implies that the drink contains alcohol, the information that is very unlikely known to the intermediate-level language learners. However, the listener could infer this information if the topic of this paragraph (a stronger beverage) were made obvious. Replacing the word algo (something) by una bebida (a beverage) gives the listener an extra opportunity to understand the concept.

1. Baseline version.

Speaker 1: Bueno… ¿pero por qué jugos naturales? Le propongo algo más fuerte, como para la noche. ¿Qué le parece un trago? (Well, but why drinking a natural juice? I suggest something stronger, suitable for the night. What about a drink?)

2. Transparency-enhanced version.

Speaker 1: Bueno… ¿pero por qué jugos naturales? Le propongo una bebida más fuerte, como para la noche. ¿Qué le parece un trago? (Well, but why drinking a natural juice? I suggest a stronger beverage, something suitable for the night. What about a drink?)
Creating signaling-enhanced (SE) versions of elaborated texts.

For the purpose of this project, signaling was defined as indicating major propositions within the conversation or important transition points in the text. Signaling was added to the authentic baseline texts in order to investigate its effects in aiding the intermediate language learners in the comprehension of authentic aural texts.

The addition of signaling to the four authentic baseline texts as well as the rationale used for adding the device is presented below. The addition of each occurrence of signaling is presented in the context of each of the baseline texts. Thus, excerpts of the baseline version and the signaling-enhanced version for each of the four authentic texts are provided below.

**Signaling-enhanced version of authentic text 1.**

An important point of the conversation in text 1 is the “sneakiness” of speaker 2, who is trying to find the best way to enjoy the trip to Spain without attending the required classes. On the other hand, speaker 1 is a responsible student trying to take educational advantage of this opportunity and trying to persuade her classmate that he should take the class seriously. The word *consecuencia* (*consequence*) was added to add more relevance to the paragraph and to “signal” the listener to focus on the message conveyed by speaker 1.

1. Baseline version.

Speaker 1: Yo estoy completamente de acuerdo. Me parece que es aburridorsísimo pero esta clase sólo la ofrecen cada dos años y es una clase importantísima. Vos sabes que tenemos que tomarla. Y si vas a faltar a las clases, lo veo difícil porque van a tomar lista, y si…, me imagino que si no vas a todas las clases te va a bajar tu calificación. O sea que pues, piénsalo muy bien. (I absolutely agree. I think is...
extremely boring, but this class is only offered every two years and is a very important course. You know we have to take it. And if you are planning on not attending classes, I do not see it happening because they will take attendance. *And if you do not attend... your grades will drop.* Think about this thoroughly.)

2. Signaling-enhanced version.

Speaker 1: …Y si vas a faltar a las clases, lo veo difícil porque van a tomar lista, y si…, me imagino que si no vas a todas las clases… la consecuencia es que te va a bajar tu calificación. O sea que, pues, piénsalo muy bien. …And if you are planning on not attending classes, I do not see it happening because they will take attendance. *And if you do not attend… the consequence will be that your grades will drop.* Think about this thoroughly.)

**Signaling-enhanced version of authentic text 2.**

In this example, the inclusion of the phrase *señora, le parece bien a usted si comenzamos* (*Madam, is it OK if we start right now?*) attempts to signal a major transition point in the conversation since the speakers are done discussing places to go in Europe and are moving on to planning the trip to Barcelona.

1. Baseline version.

Speaker 1: ¿Qué tal? ¿Le ofrecemos ya algunas fechas? (What do you think? *May we look at some dates right now?*)

Speaker 2: Si. Me interesa mucho ir a Barcelona. (Yes, I am really interested in going to Barcelona.)

2. Signaling-enhanced version.
Speaker 1: ¿Qué tal? ¿señora, le parece bien si comenzamos y le ofrecemos ya algunas fechas? (Madam, is it OK if we start and look at some dates right now?)

**Signaling-enhanced version of authentic text 3.**

In the context of the conversation in text 3, it is important to understand that Mario and the rest of the family are unaware of Juana’s affair with the cook. Enhancing the signaling devices in the conversation highlights the idea that different members of the family are not aware of the situation. Understanding this idea is important for the listener to gauge the extent of this major issue.

1. Baseline version.

   Speaker 1: Mario no le ha dicho nada, a mis padres los tiene totalmente engañados. ¡Imágate al resto de la familia! (She hasn’t said a word to Mario (about the affair), she has absolutely tricked my parents. You could imagine the rest of the family!)

2. Signaling-enhanced version.

   Speaker 1: Primero, a Mario no le ha dicho nada. Segundo, a mis padres los tiene totalmente engañados. Y tercero… ¡Imágate al resto de la familia! (First, she hasn’t said a word to Mario. Second, she has absolutely tricked my parents. And third, you could imagine the rest of the family!)

**Signaling-enhanced version of authentic text 4.**

The information given in the paragraph below is key to fully comprehending text 4 because it provides a major change in the course of the conversation. Speaker 2, pretending to be a customer at the restaurant, reveals her true identity as the new owner to the flirtatious Colombian waiter. She also reveals the true reason behind her visit to the restaurant: to find out how the employees were relating to the customers. This is a major transition point in the
course of the conversation and openly stating the reason for her visit makes it more noticeable to the listener.

1. Baseline version.

Speaker 2: Yo soy la dueña de este restaurante y precisamente vine aquí hoy porque quería darme cuenta, saber, cómo los empleados están tratando a los clientes. (I am the new owner of this restaurant and I came here today to find out how the employees were relating to the customers.)

2. Signaling-enhanced version.

Speaker 2: Yo soy la dueña de este restaurante y precisamente la razón por la cual vine aquí hoy es porque quería darme cuenta, saber, cómo los empleados están tratando a los clientes. (I am the owner of this restaurant and the precise reason I came here today is to find out how the employees were relating to the customers.)

Creating the extra text to check differing results from previous research.

After the collection and preliminary analysis of the data from the previous four listening comprehension activities, a fifth authentic text and its corresponding redundancy-enhanced version were created. This measure was taken after quantitative data analysis revealed that, in this study, redundancy had not helped language learners with the aural comprehension of the text. These results differed from previous research in which redundancy had significantly increased learners’ comprehension of texts in the target language (Brown, 1987; Chiang & Dunkel, 1992; Long, 1983; Parker & Chaudron, 1987; Yano, Long, & Ross, 1994). Thus, in order to confirm these differing results, a fifth authentic text with the corresponding redundancy-enhanced version was created. In sum, the
additional authentic text created for this study had the purpose of “double-checking” the results obtained from adding redundancy to the previous authentic texts created in this study.

The fifth activity was different from the previous ones as it had only two versions: (a) a baseline version, and (b) a redundancy-enhanced version. Also, the number of instances of redundancy was increased to two, as can be seen from the following examples:

**Redundancy-enhanced version of additional authentic text (occurrence 1).**

In this example, redundancy was added as repetition of previously stated information. At the beginning of the conversation (see Appendix B for more information), the speaker had mentioned that language as well as a complicated grading system made it difficult for her to get used to being a student in the U.S. However, this information was not restated during the conversation and could have jeopardized the comprehension of the reasons for the speaker’s dislike of her life in the U.S.

1. Baseline version.

   Speaker 1: Si, bueno había leído… pero, pero, yo creí que lo entendía, que lo había entendido; pero ahora que estoy acá realmente estoy muy perdida. Además no sé si economía es lo que realmente me gusta a mí. *Y estoy...bueno, como te digo, la verdad es que estoy perdidísima.* (Well, yes, I had read about it, and I thought I understood it. *But now that I am here, I am very lost.* Also, I am not sure if Economics is what I like. And, I’m... well, as I said before; the truth is that I ‘m very lost.)

2. Redundancy-enhanced.

   Speaker 1: Si, bueno había leído… pero, pero, yo creí que lo entendía, que lo había entendido; pero ahora que estoy acá realmente estoy muy perdida. Además no sé si...
economía es lo que realmente a mí me gusta a mí. Y estoy…bueno, como te digo, entre el idioma que me es difícil y el sistema de calificaciones tan diferente… la verdad es que estoy perdidísima. (Well, yes, I had read about it, and I thought I understood it. But now that I am here, I am very lost. Also, I am not sure if Economics is what I like. And, I’m …well, as I said before, between the language that I find difficult, and the grading system that is so different, the truth is that I’m very lost.)

Redundancy-enhanced version of additional authentic text (occurrence 2).

The purpose of the text is to highlight the differences between the educational system of the U.S. and Spanish-speaking countries, and thus the consequent struggle of Hispanic students to understand and adjust to the U.S. educational system. Redundancy was added as a paraphrase of information to clarify that Educación 511 was a class that discussed the educational system in the U.S. throughout the years, and not a class about US history. Speaker 2 was showing solidarity for his struggling fellow countrywoman by encouraging her to take this class in order to comprehend the educational system of the U.S. Thus, the adding of redundancy provided the listener with a second opportunity to understand that situation.

1. Baseline version.

Speaker 2: Bueno, si a vos te parece. Pero te digo por las dudas que lo pienses y se te ocurra cambiar de idea. Es Educación 511 y habla un poco sobre la historia de la educación en los Estados Unidos. Porque vos no sabés pero Iowa State es una Universidad “land grant” y es un tipo muy particular de universidad que no existe en ningún otro lugar del mundo. (Well, if you feel like it. Let me tell you, just in case
you change your mind. *It’s Education 511 and talks about the history of education in the U.S.* In case you do not know it, Iowa State is a land grant university and is a very particular type of university that doesn’t exist anywhere else.)

2. Redundancy-enhanced version.

Speaker 2: Bueno, si a vos te parece. Pero te digo por las dudas que lo pienses y se te ocurra cambiar de idea. *Es Educación 511 y habla un poco sobre la historia de la educación en los Estados Unidos y la clase habla de cómo es el sistema educativo ahora.* Porque vos no sabés pero Iowa State es una Universidad “land grant” y es un tipo muy particular de universidad que no existe en ningún otro lugar del mundo.

(Well, if you feel like it. Let me tell you, just in case you change your mind. *It’s Education 511 and talks about the history of education in the U.S.* and the class talks about what the educational system is like now. Because in case you do not know it, Iowa State is a land grant university and is a very particular type of university that doesn’t exist anywhere else.)

**Development of listening comprehension items for each authentic text.**

Although each authentic text had three elaborated versions as mentioned above, the same listening comprehension items were used with all four versions of each text. That is, participants answered the same listening comprehension items regardless of the version of the authentic text they listened to. The listening comprehension items for each activity consisted of five multiple-choice items that focused on the following: (a) the main idea of the text, (b) detailed information on specific aspects of the conversation which could lead to misinterpretation, and (c) information that was not explicitly stated but could be inferred
from the text. The same three types of questions were included in each listening comprehension test. The comprehension items were presented to the participants in writing.

The reason for choosing these types of questions was based on previous research suggesting that successful listening involves both bottom-up and top-down processes (e.g., Buck, 2001; Chaudron, 1983; Long, 1989; Vandergrift, 2007) as discussed in chapter 2. In order to examine language learners’ use of bottom-up as well as top-down processes, the following five types of questions were used in the Multiple-choice Listening Comprehension items (see Appendix C):

- Item 1: Focuses on main idea of the passage.
- Item 2: Focuses on detailed information related to the redundancy in the elaborated version of the text.
- Item 3: Focuses on detailed information related to the transparency in the elaborated version of the text.
- Item 4: Focuses on detailed information related to the signaling in the elaborated version of the text.
- Item 5: Focuses on inferred meaning or information based on subtle textual cues or other clear evidence from the text.

Expert advice was sought to ensure that the comprehension items were worded properly and clearly as well as to make certain that they focused students’ attention on the elements that are essential to the full comprehension of the aural text.

**Research Design**

In order to account for students’ variability and to minimize errors in the collection of
data, the created materials were assigned to the classes following a staggered design that ensured that each of the four classes was exposed to a different version of the elaborated texts throughout the semester. As shown in Table 3.1 below, for activity 1, Spanish class A listened to the baseline version (BV1). Spanish class B listened to the redundancy-enhanced version of the text (RE1), while Spanish classes C and D listened to the transparency-enhanced version (TE1) and to the signaling-enhanced version (SE1) respectively.

Listening activity 2 was provided to the participants approximately in the mid semester. Spanish class A, which had previously listened to the baseline version during activity 1, listened to the redundancy-enhanced version (RE2) of aural text this time; Spanish class B listened to the transparency-enhanced version (TE2); and Spanish classes C and D listened to signaling and baseline version respectively.

Listening activity 3 was given to the students approximately two weeks after activity 2. Spanish class A listened to the transparency-enhanced version or (TE3), Spanish class B was exposed to the signaling enhanced version (SE3), participants in the Spanish class C listened to the baseline version (BE3), while Spanish class D did the redundancy-enhanced version (RE3) of the activity.

The last listening activity was provided to the students approximately two weeks before the end of the Fall 2009 semester. Spanish class A listened to the signaling-enhanced version (SE4) of the aural text 4, Spanish class B worked on the baseline version (BE4), Spanish class C listened to the redundancy-enhanced version (RE4), and Spanish class D to the transparency-enhanced version (TE4) of the listening activity 4. Table 3.2 shows the staggered design used to assign the materials to classes.
Table 3.2.

Assignment of Aural Texts to Classes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Listening Activity 1</th>
<th>Spanish class A</th>
<th>Spanish class B</th>
<th>Spanish class C</th>
<th>Spanish class D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baseline 1 (BV1)</td>
<td>+Redundancy 1 (RE1)</td>
<td>+Transparency 1 (TE1)</td>
<td>+Signaling 1 (SE1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening Activity 2</td>
<td>+Redundancy 2 (RE2)</td>
<td>+Transparency 2 (TE2)</td>
<td>+Signaling 2 (SE2)</td>
<td>Baseline 2 (BV2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening Activity 3</td>
<td>+Transparency 3 (TE3)</td>
<td>+Signaling 3 (SE3)</td>
<td>Baseline 3 (BV3)</td>
<td>+Redundancy 3 (RE3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening Activity 4</td>
<td>+Signaling 4 (SE4)</td>
<td>Baseline 4 (BV4)</td>
<td>+Redundancy 4 (RE4)</td>
<td>+Transparency 4 (TE4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As mentioned above, the comprehension check items were the same for the four versions of each text. Data collected from the listening activities were subjected to quantitative analysis.

Data of participants’ self-reports of the difficulty level of the listening activities (e.g., vocabulary, quality of the audios, etc.) were also collected at the end of the semester and used as an aid to interpret results from the quantitative analysis.

**Procedures**

**Study Approval**

This research project was submitted to and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) committee at the Midwestern University. As required by IRB guidelines, participants in this study were requested to carefully read and sign a consent form prior to the initiation of this project. The consent form offers information about the purpose of the study, associated risks and benefits, and measures taken by the researcher to ensure confidentiality of participants’ data as well as protection of their privacy (See approved consent form in
Appendix section).

**Expert Analysis**

Expert advice was sought on the technological and linguistic development of the elaborated aural texts, the clarity and appropriateness of the listening comprehension items, and the statistical analysis of the data.

**Pilot Study**

A pilot study was conducted to check the semantic and syntactic clearness of the listening comprehension items, as well as any problems related to the aural texts that could jeopardize comprehension of the text (e.g., sound quality, length, speed of the conversation, etc.). The pilot study consisted of a listening activity created and designed to resemble the actual activities given to the students. The pilot study was administered to the same 93 participants of the present study a week before the first listening activity. The pilot study was done during class time and it also served the purpose of familiarizing students with the activities. The main finding of the pilot study was that participants considered the speed of the native speakers’ conversations as too fast. As a consequence of this finding, the tempo of the created audios needed to be decreased in order to reduce the speed of the conversation without causing much distortion in the native speakers’ pitch.

**Data Collection**

To strengthen the internal validity of the study, a proficiency test was administered at the beginning of the semester. The proficiency test used in this project was the one administered in all lower-level Spanish classes at the beginning of each semester. It was selected by the coordinator of the lower level Spanish program at the Department of World language and Cultures at ISU. The Proficiency Test was divided in two parts: (a) a grammar
and vocabulary test, and (b) a listening test. The importance of this test is to account for any differences in results that could be attributed to the different proficiency levels of the students within a class, but not to the effect of the inserted elaborative devices. This information was included as a variable in the final data analysis. However, because of the staggered design of the study, in which each class was exposed to a different version of the elaborated texts throughout the semester, errors due to differences in proficiency levels among classes were minimized.

All data were gathered during class time. Participants were asked to read the comprehension check sheet containing five multiple-choice items before listening to the texts to ensure understanding of the vocabulary, grammar, and semantics of the multiple-choice items. This measure was taken due to research suggestion that question preview can facilitate test-takers’ performance (e.g., Chang & Read, 2006). The class instructor played the audio recordings using an IPod or a laptop computer connected to the classroom’s speaker system, allowing participants to listen twice to the aural version of the text assigned to their class. This measure ensured that participants within a class listened to the texts under the same conditions (e.g., volume, no pauses, no rewinding, and listening twice to the aural texts). Students could answer to the comprehension check items at anytime during listening or were allowed approximately 5 minutes after listening to complete the task. This method was familiar to the students, as it resembled other listening activities not related to this study done during class time throughout the semester. Data were collected immediately after each listening activity and stored by the researcher for further quantitative analysis at the end of the project.

Post-Activity Questionnaire
A Post-Activity Questionnaire (see Appendix D) was designed and given to participants at the end of the semester in order to get demographic data (e.g., semesters of Spanish taken at High School and/or College level, etc.) as well as participants’ self reports of the difficulty levels of the listening activities. Using a 5-point scale, participants were asked to rate the difficulty level of the following features: understanding the speakers’ accent, the speed of the conversation, vocabulary, quality of the audios, grammatical constructions/grammar, and understanding the speakers’ accent. Participants were also asked about their preferences of being exposed to authentic materials even if they do not fully comprehend them and to materials that they fully comprehend even if those materials do not resemble authentic ones. An excerpt from the post-activity questionnaire is shown in Figure 3.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How would you rate the level of difficulty for the following: (1 = very easy / 2= easy / 3= normal / 4= difficult / 5 = very difficult)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Understanding the speakers’ accent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Speed of the conversation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Vocabulary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Quality of the audios.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. The grammatical constructions/grammar</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please briefly explain your choice:

____________________________________________________________________

8. Please circle your preferences as a language learner.
   a. I prefer to be exposed to authentic materials even if I am not able to fully comprehend them.
   b. I prefer to be exposed to materials that I fully comprehend, even if they do not resemble authentic
      situations.

*Figure 3.1. Excerpt from the post-activity questionnaire.*
Analysis

The collected quantitative data were used to answer the two research questions in this study. Specifically, Research Question 1 investigated the impact of (a) redundancy, (b) transparency, and (c) signaling on intermediate-level language learners’ comprehension of elaborated aural texts as shown by students’ performance on the listening task. Research Question 2 examined which of the mentioned elaborative devices is the most effective in aiding intermediate-level language learners with the comprehension of elaborated aural texts.

The analysis was performed using a probit regression model in the statistical software Stata. Probit regressions are a popular specification for binary response models like the one postulated here. Thus, the decision of using a probit regression model in this study was taken due to the characteristics of the binary collected data (i.e., participants’ correct or incorrect responses to the comprehension items) and of the diverse independent variables to be considered (e.g., different elaborative devices of the elaborated aural texts, different instructors, different complexity of the aural texts, different proficiency levels of participants, etc.).

Probit regressions in Stata are estimated by means of maximum likelihood (ML), which is a method used for fitting a statistical model to data, and providing estimates for the model's parameters. Therefore, the probit regression model for this project was employed to determine whether the addition of redundancy, transparency, and signaling had a statistically significant impact on students’ likelihood of providing correct or incorrect answers to each of the five multiple-choice comprehension check items when compared to the baseline versions of the aural texts. The rest of the independent variables (e.g., different instructors, different
complexity of the aural texts, different proficiency level of participants, etc.) were also coded and included in the analysis as explained in the section below.

**Research Question #1**

The first research question (How does (a) redundancy, (b) transparency, or (c) signaling impact intermediate-level language learners’ comprehension of authentic-staged elaborated aural texts as shown by students’ performance on the listening task?) was addressed through the statistical analysis of participants’ correct and incorrect answers to the five multiple-choice comprehension questions of the four listening activities using a probit regression as mentioned above. The binary answers were coded as one (1) if correct or zero (0) if incorrect, and represent the dependent variables.

The independent variables were defined as (a) redundancy-enhanced version, (b) transparency-enhanced version, (c) signaling-enhanced version, (d) Activity 1, (e) Activity 2, (f) Activity 3, (g) Activity 4, (h) Instructor 1, (i) Instructor 2, (j) Instructor 3, (k) Instructor 4, (l) testg, and (m) testau.

Independent variables (a), (b), and (c) correspond to the three elaborative devices under investigation, which are the focus of this study. The variables (d), (e), (f), and (g) correspond to different listening activities in the study and were included in the analysis to account for differences in the complexity of the activities.

The variables (h), (i), (j), and (k) were defined as Instructor 1, Instructor 2, Instructor 3 and Instructor 4, respectively. Although only two instructors taught the classes under investigation, the classes were taught at different times of the day (e.g., one instructor taught one class very early in the morning and the second class mid-afternoon), which, consequently, could have affected not only the instructors but also students’ performance in
the class. All these data were coded as one (1) if corresponding to that category (e.g., added elaborative device, activity, instructor, etc.) or zero (0) if not corresponding (see Appendix E).

The last two independent variables, testg and testau, represent participants’ results from the general proficiency test and participants' listening proficiency test respectively. Due to numerical characteristics of these data, they were not coded as one (1) or zero (0) but included as the original numerical values. Table 3.3 contains an excerpt of the coded data used in this study corresponding to the data from Listening Activity 1 for Participant 1.

Table 3.3.

*Excerpt of Coded Data*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant #</th>
<th>Activity 1 Question 1</th>
<th>Activity 1 Question 2</th>
<th>Activity 1 Question 3</th>
<th>Activity 1 Question 4</th>
<th>Activity 1 Question 5</th>
<th>Group Baseline activity 1</th>
<th>Group redundancy activity 1</th>
<th>Group signaling activity 1</th>
<th>Test g</th>
<th>Testau</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These data can be interpreted as follows: Participant 1 answered Question 2 correctly as indicated by number one (1), and Questions 1, 3, 4, and 5 incorrectly as indicated by number zero (0). Participant 1 belongs to the class that was assigned the baseline aural version for Activity 1 as indicated by number one (1). The zeros (0) for the rest of the groups indicate that the participant did not belong to the groups that listened to the redundancy-enhanced, transparency or signaling-enhanced texts during Activity 1. Participant’s results for the general proficiency test and listening proficiency test were 20/100 points and 9/21
points respectively.

In conclusion, data from participants’ correct or incorrect answers to all five-comprehension check items in each activity were coded as zero (0) if incorrect and one (1) if correct. Group or class designation was coded as zero (0) if participant did not belong to the indicated group and one (1) if participant did. Results from the proficiency test were not coded but included with their corresponding numerical values.

The analysis of the coded data was performed using a probit regression model in the statistical software Stata. The following example is an excerpt of the data analysis results for the impact of the three elaborative devices on participants’ comprehension of Question 1:

```
---------------------------------------------------------------------------
question1 | Coef.(b)     Std. Err.  z    P>|z|       [95% Conf. Interval]
-----------|-------------|-----------------|------|---------|---------------------|
               +----------------------------------------
redundancy  | -2.842325   .2248607 -1.26  0.206   -.7249514 .1564865
transparency| 0.0581213    .2266154 0.26  0.798    -.5022792 .3860367
          signaling | 0.0396744    .230086  0.17  0.863    -.4112858 .4906347
              testg | 0.0112703    0.0091978 1.23  0.220    -.0067571 .0292977
              testau | 0.0359073    .230086  1.61  0.107   -.007694  .0795085
_interactivity_2 | 1.596304    .2603564  6.13  0.000     1.086015 2.106594
_interactivity_3 | 0.5870511    .1995648 2.94  0.003     .1959113 .9781909
_interactivity_4 | 0.7537633    .2069566 3.64  0.000     .3481357 1.159391
_interinstruct-2 | -3.074257    .2242488 -1.37  0.170   -.7469452 .1320938
_interinstruct-3 | 0.2882121    .2339696 1.29  0.198   -.7271844 .1507602
_interinstruct-4 | 0.043591     .2327626 -0.19  0.851    -.4997973 .426152
       _cons    | -0.6931617   .4513726 -1.54  0.125   -1.577836  .1915123
---------------------------------------------------------------------------
Where b= regression coefficient; z= test statistics result for that particular regression coefficient. P>|z| = probability of Z.

probit: Predicted probabilities of positive outcome for question1

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------
Redundancy     | Prediction
-------------- |-----------
               +---------------------
 0 | 0.8012
 1 | 0.7129
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------

probit: Predicted probabilities of positive outcome for question1
Figure 3.2. Excerpt from the data analysis.

Results were interpreted using the information provided by the $z$ test statistics corresponding to the regression coefficient estimates from the probit model. In a probit regression model, when $z$ is equal or higher than 2 and the $p>|z|$ is less than 0.05, the independent variable is considered to have a statistically significant effect on the dependent variable.

Results are also presented as predicted probabilities. Specifically, results are presented as the predicted probability that participants would answer correctly or incorrectly when listening to the redundancy-, transparency-, and signaling-enhanced aural texts as compared to their baseline versions. The following section aims to enlighten the reader about probit regression model and its statistical concepts.

**Probit regression model: Interpreting results.**

As mentioned above, probit regressions in Stata are estimated by means of maximum likelihood (ML), which is a method used for fitting a statistical model to data, and providing estimates for the model's parameters. Results in probit are interpreted using the information
provided by the \( z \) test statistics corresponding to the regression coefficient estimates from the probit model. The test statistic \( z \) is the ratio of the regression coefficients of the respective predictor to the standard errors of the individual regression coefficients:

\[
z = \frac{b - \mu}{\sigma}
\]

where \( b \) is a normal distributed variate, \( \mu \) is the population mean, and \( \sigma \) is the population variance. The \( z \) value follows a standard normal distribution that is used to test against a two-sided alternative hypothesis that the coefficient is not equal to zero. Thus, the population mean \( \mu \) and variance \( \sigma \) of the standard normal distribution are zero and one respectively.

It can be seen from the above formula that the \( z \) value corresponding to any \( b \) value is obtained by scaling the deviation \((b - \mu)\) into standard deviation units. Since for each \( b \) value there is a correspondent \( z \) value, any probability statement about values of the \( b \) distribution has an exact equivalent for the \( z \) distribution (Cox, 1987). Consequently, the \( z \) distribution follows the standard normal or Gaussian distribution where it is known that if \( z_1=1.96 \) and \( z_2=+1.96 \), then \( P[-1.96 < z < +1.96] = 0.95 \). Hence, 95% of all \( z \) variates lie between the values -1.96 and +1.96. Furthermore, substituting the \( z \) values in the formula \( z = x - \mu/\sigma \)
yields to the following:

\[
P[\mu - 1.96 \sigma < z < \mu + 1.96 \sigma] = 0.95.
\]

This shows that 95% of the normally distributed \( x \) values fall in an interval of width 2 (1.96) \( \sigma \) symmetrically disposed about \( \sigma \) (Cox, 1987). Consequently, when interpreting results from the probit regression analysis used in this project, any resultant value \( z = 2 \) or higher is understood as statistically significant for that particular variable.

Results from a probit regression could also be interpreted by using the probability of
the $z$ test statistic defined as $p>|z|$. This value is the probability the $z$ test statistic would be observed under the null hypothesis that a particular predictor's regression coefficient is zero, meaning that there is no relationship between the independent and the dependent variables. Thus, for a given alpha level, $p>|z|$ determines whether or not the null hypothesis can be rejected. Explicitly, if $p>|z|$ is less than alpha ($\alpha=0.05$ for any standard normal distribution), then the null hypothesis can be rejected and the parameter estimated is considered statistically significant at that alpha level. Thus, when $z$ is equal or higher than 2 and the $p>|z|$ is less than 0.05, the independent variable is considered to have a statistically significant effect on the dependent variable.

**Research Question #2**

The second research question (Which of the three elaborative devices used in this study, namely (a) redundancy, (b) transparency, or (c) signaling, is the most effective in aiding intermediate-level language learners’ comprehension of elaborated aural texts?) was addressed by using a $z$-test of the difference of the probit coefficients ($b$ coefficients) for the different independent variables (e.g., redundancy, transparency, signaling) in the regression. The $b$ coefficients are indicators of how much difference a unit change in the independent variable makes in terms of the cumulative normal probability of the dependent variable. That is, the probit coefficient $b$ measures the effect of the independent variables on the $z$ scores of the dependent variables. Any resultant value of $z$ equal or higher than 2 and $p>|z|$ less than 0.05 is understood as statistically significant for that particular variable.

In summary, the impact of (a) redundancy, (b) transparency, and (c) signaling on participants’ listening comprehension was interpreted using the information provided by the $z$ test statistics corresponding to the regression coefficient estimates from the probit model. In
the probit regression model, when $z$ is equal or higher than 2, and the $p>|z|$ is less than 0.05, the independent variable is considered to have a statistically significant effect on the dependent variable. Results were also interpreted as the predicted probability of a positive or negative outcome for each of the five comprehension items, or as the predicted probability that participant will provide a correct or incorrect answer when listening to different aural versions of the texts.
CHAPTER 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents an analysis of the data collected to answer the two research questions. It includes a discussion of the findings and of whether the addition of elaborative devices such as redundancy, transparency, or signaling impacts intermediate-level language learners’ comprehension of elaborated aural texts. It also discusses which of the three mentioned elaborative devices is the most effective in aiding intermediate-level language learners with the comprehension of elaborated aural texts.

This chapter is divided into two main sections: Results and Discussion. The Results section presents an analysis of the data collected to answer Research Questions 1 and 2 as well as results of the Post-Activities Questionnaire. The Results section is organized as follows. Firstly, it presents the results for Research Question 1, which has been divided in 3 subsections: (a) effect of elaborative devices on the comprehension of the main idea, (b) effect of elaborative devices on the comprehension of specific information, and (c) effect of elaborative devices on the inference of information from the text. Secondly, it presents the results for Research Question 2. Thirdly, it presents the results from the Post-Activities Questionnaire, which has been divided in two sections: participants' self-reports on activities’ level of difficulty and participants’ preferences as language learners. The second section of this chapter, Discussion, follows the same organization and subdivisions as the Results section.

Results

Research Question #1

Research Question 1 addresses how the use of redundancy, transparency, and
signaling impacts intermediate-level language learners’ comprehension of elaborated aural texts as shown by students’ performance on the listening test. The listening test consisted of five multiple-choice items targeting: a) the main idea of the passage, b) a piece of information which had been made salient through the use of an elaborative device, and c) information that could be inferred from the text. Results from the probit regression analysis using Stata software are presented and discussed below with regards to each of the five comprehension items on the listening task.

**Effect of elaborative devices on the comprehension of the main idea.**

This section presents the results of the probit regression analysis of the effect of the three elaborative devices on students’ correct answers to comprehension item 1 on the listening task, which asked about the main idea of the text. Table 4.1 presents the resulting statistics of such effect.

Table 4.1.

| Item | Regression coefficient ($b$) | Standard Error ($s$) | $z$ | $p>|z|$ |
|------|-------------------------------|----------------------|-----|--------|
| Redundancy | -0.29 | 0.22 | -1.26 | 0.206 |
| Transparency | -0.06 | 0.23 | -0.26 | 0.798 |
| Signaling | 0.04 | 0.23 | 0.17 | 0.863 |

*Note. N = 349, $z = (b- \mu)/s$, where $b$ is a $t$-distributed random variable, $\mu$ is the population mean of $b$ (assumed equal to zero to be consistent with the null hypothesis), and $s$ is the sample estimate of the standard deviation of $b$.|

Results from Table 4.1 indicate that the estimated $z$ test statistic value for the adding of redundancy to the aural text concerning comprehension item 1 is $z = -1.26$, which has an associated $p$-value (i.e., probability) of 0.206. The values for the adding of transparency and
signaling are $z=-0.26$ with $p=0.798$, and $z=0.17$ with $p=0.863$ respectively. Since the independent variable is considered to have a statistically significant effect on the dependent variable if $z$ is equal or greater than 2 in absolute value or, equivalently, if $p>|z|$ is less than 0.05, it can be inferred from these results that none of the estimated $z$ test statistic values for comprehension item 1 are statistically significant.

Thus, these results suggest that adding redundancy, transparency, or signaling to the baseline authentic texts did not assist participants with comprehension of the main idea of the text. Furthermore, results suggest that the addition of redundancy and transparency had a non-significant negative impact on participants’ general comprehension of the text.

Table 4.2 presents results from the probit predicted probabilities of positive outcome for the three elaborative devices for comprehension item 1, or the item about the main idea of the text. Results suggest that the predicted probability that participants would answer the main idea item incorrectly when listening to the redundancy-enhanced text is higher (80%) than the predicted probability that participants would answer this item correctly (71%). For the transparency-enhanced text, the predicted probability that participants would provide an incorrect answer to the item about the main idea of the text is also higher (78%) than the probability of providing a correct answer (77%). For the signaling-enhanced text, the predicted probabilities for incorrect and correct answers are 78% and 79% respectively.

Thus, the predicted probability that students would provide incorrect answers when asked about the main idea of the text when listening to the authentic elaborated texts is slightly higher than the predicted probability of correct answers, but this difference is not statistically significant.

Table 4.2.
Results of Predicted Probabilities of Positive Outcome For Comprehension Question 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elaboration</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Prediction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Redundancy</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transparency</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signaling</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Outcome = 1 is a correct answer, outcome = 0 is an incorrect answer

In conclusion, results in the present study suggest that redundancy, transparency, and signaling did not assist language learners’ listening comprehension of the main idea of the text. In fact, the addition of redundancy and transparency seemed to have had a non-significant negative impact on participants’ general comprehension of the text as shown by the estimated z test statistic values ($z = -1.26$ and $z = -0.26$ respectively). This outcome is further supported by results from the probit predicted probabilities of positive outcome for the three elaborative devices for the main idea of the text. Results suggest that the predicted probability that learners would respond incorrectly to the main idea item when listening to the elaborated authentic texts is slightly higher than the predicted probability of providing a correct response, although this difference was not statistically significant.

Effect of elaborative devices on the comprehension of specific information.

This section presents the results of the probit regression analysis of the effect that the three elaborative devices have on participants’ understanding of comprehension items 2, 3, and 4, which inquired specific information from the text.

Item 2 in the listening task targeted specific information, which had been enhanced through the addition of redundancy to the text. Results from the probit regression on the
effect of the three elaborative devices on students’ correct answers to comprehension item 2 are shown in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3.

*Results From the Probit Regression Analysis For Comprehension Item 2*

| Item 2     | Regression coefficient (b) | Standard Error (s) | z     | p>|z| |
|------------|---------------------------|--------------------|-------|-----|
| Redundancy | .17                       | .24                | 0.73  | 0.464 |
| Transparency | -.16                      | .23                | -0.73 | 0.465 |
| Signaling  | -.46                      | .22                | -2.10 | 0.036 |

Note. $N = 349$, $z = (b - \mu)/s$ where $b$ is a $t$-distributed random variable, $\mu$ is the population mean of $b$ (assumed equal to zero to be consistent with the null hypothesis), and $s$ is the sample estimate of the standard deviation of $x$.

It can be observed from Table 4.3 that the estimated $z$ test statistic value for the use of redundancy to the aural text concerning comprehension item 2 is 0.73 with $p>|z| = 0.464$, representing values that are not statistically significant. This means that adding redundancy to the text did not show a statistically significant impact on the participants’ comprehension of the question. Transparency had a non-significant negative impact as shown by $z = -0.73$, $p>|z| = 0.465$, while adding signaling to the text had a statistically significant negative impact as indicated by $z = -2.10$, $p>|z| = 0.036$. These results suggest that adding redundancy and transparency did not significantly impact language learners’ comprehension of specific information. However, signaling seemed to have had a statistically significant negative impact on language learners’ listening comprehension of specific redundant information.

Table 4.4 presents the results from the probit predicted probabilities of positive outcome for the three elaborative devices for comprehension item 2. Comprehension item 2
targeted specific information, which was enhanced through the addition of redundancy to the text.

Table 4.4.

Results of Predicted Probabilities of Positive Outcome For Comprehension Item 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elaboration</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Prediction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Redundancy</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transparency</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signaling</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Outcome = 1 is a correct answer, outcome = 0 is an incorrect answer.*

The predicted probability that participants would correctly answer comprehension item 2 when listening to the redundancy-enhanced text is slightly higher than the predicted probability for an incorrect answer, representing 83% and 79% respectively. For the transparency-enhanced text, the predicted probability for a correct answer and incorrect answer is 77% and 81% respectively. For the signaling-enhanced text, the predicted probability of students’ giving an incorrect answer is 83% and the predicted probability of correct answers is 69%. Thus, not surprisingly, the predicted probability that participants would provide a correct answer when asked about specific redundant information from the text is higher when participants listened to the redundancy-enhanced elaborated text. However, the predicted probability for a correct answer was lower when participants listened to the transparency- and signaling-enhanced texts.

In conclusion, results from the present study suggest that redundancy and transparency did not have a statistically significant impact on participants’ listening
comprehension of specific redundant information. However signaling had a statistically significant negative effect on language learners’ listening comprehension of specific redundant information as shown by $z = -2.10$ and $p>|z| = 0.036$. This outcome is further supported by results from the probit predicted probabilities of positive outcome for the three elaborative devices on comprehension of specific redundant information. Such results suggest that the predicted probability that learners would respond incorrectly when asked about specific redundant information when listening to the signaling-enhanced version of the text is higher than the predicted probability of a correct response.

Results from the probit regression analysis for comprehension item 3, which inquired detailed information in regards to the adding of transparency to the text are shown in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5.

*Results From the Probit Regression Analysis For Comprehension Item 3*

| Item 3 | Regression Coefficient ($b$) | Standard Error ($s$) | $z$  | $p>|z|$ |
|--------|-----------------------------|----------------------|------|--------|
| Redundancy | .32                         | .21                  | 1.54 | 0.123  |
| Transparency | .37                         | .21                  | 1.77 | 0.077  |
| Signaling | .16                         | .21                  | 0.78 | 0.433  |

*Note. $N = 349$, $z = (b - \mu)/s$ where $b$ is a $t$-distributed random variable, $\mu$ is the population mean of $b$ (assumed equal to zero to be consistent with the null hypothesis), and $s$ is the sample estimate of the standard deviation of $x$.*

Results show that there is a positive increase in participants’ listening comprehension of item 3 when listening to the redundancy- and transparency-added versions of the text. However, as shown by the estimated $z$ test statistic values ($z = 1.54$, $p>|z| = 0.123$ and $z = 1.77$, $p>|z| = 0.077$), such increase is not statistically significant. The addition of signaling to
the elaborated text showed no significant impact as indicated by \( z = 0.78, p > |z| = 0.433 \).

Table 4.6 presents the results from the probit predicted probabilities of positive outcome for the three elaborative devices for comprehension item 3.

Table 4.6.

*Results of Predicted Probabilities For Comprehension Item 3*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elaboration</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Prediction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Redundancy</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transparency</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signaling</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Outcome = 1 is a correct answer, outcome = 0 is an incorrect answer.

The predicted probability that participants would correctly answer comprehension item 3 when listening to the redundancy-enhanced text is 69%, while the predicted probability for an incorrect answer is 57%. For the transparency-enhanced text, the predicted probability for a correct answer is 70% and 57% for providing an incorrect answer. For the signaling-enhanced text, the predicted probabilities for correct and incorrect answers are 64% and 58% respectively. Thus, results for the three elaborated versions of the texts suggest that the predicted probability that students would provide correct answers when asked about specific transparent information are slightly superior to the predicted probability for incorrect answers, although not statistically significant.

In conclusion, results from the present study suggest that redundancy and transparency had a positive impact on language learners’ listening comprehension of specific transparent information. However, such positive impact is not statistically significant as
shown by the estimated $z$ test statistic values $z = 1.54, p>|z| = 0.123$ and $z = 1.77, p>|z| = 0.077$. The addition of signaling to the elaborated text showed no significant impact to participants’ listening comprehension of specific transparent information. This outcome is further supported by results from the probit predicted probabilities of positive outcome for the three elaborative devices on comprehension of specific redundant information. Such results suggest that the predicted probability that learners would respond correctly when asked about specific transparent information when listening to the redundancy- and transparency-enhanced versions of the text is only slightly higher than the predicted probability of a correct response.

Comprehension item 4 tested detailed information with regards to the adding of signaling in the elaborated version of the text. Results from Table 4.7 indicate that none of the three elaborative devices appears to have a statistically significant impact on participants’ comprehension of item 4, as shown by the correspondent estimated $z$ statistics for redundancy, transparency, and signaling ($z = -0.12, z = 0.54$, and $z = 0.76$ with $p$-values of $p>|z| = 0.904$, $p>|z| = 0.52$, and $p>|z| = 0.449$ respectively).

Table 4.7.

Results From the Probit Regression Analysis For Comprehension Item 4

| Item 4  | Regression coefficient ($b$) | Standard Error ($s$) | $z$     | $p>|z|$ |
|---------|-----------------------------|----------------------|---------|---------|
| Redundancy | -.03                      | .23                  | -0.12   | 0.904   |
| Transparency | .12                      | .23                  | 0.54    | 0.592   |
| Signaling | .17                       | .23                  | 0.76    | 0.449   |

*Note. $N = 349$, $z = (b- \mu)/s$, where $b$ is a $t$-distributed random variable, $\mu$ is the population mean of $b$ (assumed equal to zero to be consistent with the null hypothesis), and $s$ is the sample estimate of the standard deviation of $b$.  

The predicted probabilities that participants would answer comprehension item 4 correctly or incorrectly are shown in Table 4.8. The predicted probability that participants would correctly or incorrectly answer comprehension item 4 when listening to the redundancy-enhanced text is 69%. For the transparency-enhanced text, the predicted probability for a correct answer and an incorrect answer is 73% and 69% respectively. For the signaling-enhanced text, the predicted probability of students’ giving an incorrect answer is 68% and the predicted probability of providing correct answers is 74%.

Table 4.8.

Results of Predicted Probabilities For Comprehension Item 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elaboration</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Prediction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Redundancy</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transparency</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signaling</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Outcome = 1 is a correct answer, outcome = 0 is an incorrect answer.

Thus, the predicted probabilities that language learners would provide a correct answer to specific signaled information when listening to the elaborated authentic texts are fairly similar to the probability of providing an incorrect answer. This information supports previous results from the present study that indicated that none of the three elaborative devices appeared to have a statistically significant impact on participants’ listening comprehension of item 4.

In summary, findings for this study suggest that neither redundancy nor transparency has a statistically significant effect on language learners’ listening comprehension of specific
information from the text as shown by the estimated $z$ test statistics and the $p>|z|$ values for comprehension items 2, 3, and 4. However, the signaling-enhanced aural texts have a statistically significant negative effect on listeners’ comprehension of specific, redundant information.

**Effect of elaborative devices on the inference of information from the text.**

Results from the probit regression analysis of the effect of the three elaborative devices on participants’ listening comprehension of question 5 are shown in Table 4.9. Comprehension question 5 required participants to make inferences based on the information given in the aural texts.

Table 4.9.

*Results From the Probit Regression Analysis For Comprehension Item 5*

| Item 5    | Regression coefficient ($b$) | Standard Error ($s$) | $z$    | $p>|z|$  |
|-----------|------------------------------|----------------------|--------|---------|
| Redundancy| 0.51                         | 0.26                 | 1.97   | 0.049   |
| Transparency | -0.08                     | 0.23                 | -0.04  | 0.970   |
| Signaling | 0.20                         | 0.23                 | 0.87   | 0.387   |

*Note.* $N = 349$, $z = (b - \mu)/s$, where $b$ is a $t$-distributed random variable, $\mu$ is the population mean of $b$ (assumed equal to zero to be consistent with the null hypothesis), and $s$ is the sample estimate of the standard deviation of $b$.

Results show that the addition of redundancy had a statistically significant positive effect on language learners’ inference of information as shown by the correspondent estimated $z$ values ($z = 1.97$) with $p>|z| = 0.049$. However, transparency and signaling had no significant impact as suggested by the estimated $z$ values ($z = -0.04$) and ($z = 0.87$) with $p>|z| = 0.970$ and $p>|z| = 0.387$ respectively.

The predicted probabilities of listeners’ correct or incorrect answers to
comprehension question 5 are shown below.

Table 4.10.

*Results of Predicted Probabilities For Comprehension Item 5*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elaboration</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Prediction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Redundancy</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transparency</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signaling</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Outcome = 1 is a correct answer, outcome = 0 is an incorrect answer.

As indicated in Table 4.10, the predicted probability of providing correct answers to question 5 while listening to the redundancy-enhanced text is 91%, while the probability of incorrect answers is 80%. For the transparency-enhanced text, the predicted probability for a correct answer and an incorrect answer is 83%. For the signaling-enhanced text, the predicted probability for an incorrect answer is 82% and for a correct answer is 87%. Thus, results suggest that the probability that participants would correctly infer information when listening to a redundancy-enhanced text is higher than the probability of making an incorrect inference. These results suggest the probability being more significant for the redundancy-enhanced texts than for the transparency- and signaling-enhanced versions of the texts.

In conclusion, results from the present study suggest that the transparency- and signaling-enhanced aural texts do not have a statistically significant impact on listeners’ inference of information. However, the redundancy-enhanced texts significantly increased participants’ inference of information from the aural texts as indicated by the correspondent estimated $z$ values ($z = 1.97$) with $p>|z| = 0.049$, and a predicted probability of positive
outcome of 91%.

**Research Question #2**

Research Question 2 asks which of the three elaborative devices used in this project is the most effective in aiding intermediate-level language learners with the comprehension of an aural text. This question was addressed by using a z-test of the difference between the probit coefficients ($b$ coefficients) for the different elaborative devices (i.e., redundancy, transparency, and signaling) in the regression. It is important to note that given that only the redundancy-enhanced version showed a positive statistical significance on participants’ comprehension, the analysis of the data to answer this research question focused only on the effect of redundancy on students’ inference of information from a text. Participants’ inference of information was tested in the comprehension item 5 of the listening task as shown in Table 4.11.

Table 4.11.

*Results From the Z-test of the Differences Between Probit Regression Coefficients*

| Pairs                | Difference of regression coefficient ($b$) | $z$    | $p>|z|$ |
|----------------------|-------------------------------------------|-------|--------|
| Redundancy-transparency | .52                                      | 2.03* | 0.042* |
| Redundancy-signaling     | .31                                      | 1.18  | 0.237  |
| Transparency-signaling   | -.21                                     | -0.91 | 0.364  |

* Refers to statistically significant values at $p<0.05$.

According to the results of the z-test of the difference between the probit coefficients ($b$ coefficients) for different elaborative devices on question 5 presented in Table 4.11, statistically significant difference at $z=2.03$, $p>|z| = 0.042$ was found in the redundancy-transparency pair.

Thus, returning to the second research question (Which of the three elaborative
devices, redundancy, transparency, or signaling, is the most effective in aiding intermediate-level language learners with the comprehension of an aural text?), the results of the data analysis suggest that redundancy is the most effective device. This finding is due to the statistically significant positive impact of redundancy on aiding students with the inference of information from the text.

**Results from the extra text created to check differing results from previous research.**

The additional authentic text created for this study, authentic text 5, had the purpose of “double-checking” the results obtained from adding redundancy to the previous authentic texts created in this study. These results differed from previous research in which redundancy had significantly increased learners’ comprehension of texts in the target language (Chiang & Dunkel, 1992; Long, 1983; Parker & Chaudron, 1987; among others).

No results were obtained from the probit regression analysis of data collected for the authentic text 5 due to that they were dropped by collinearity by the software Stata. In a probit regression analysis, when one independent variable is a perfect linear combination of the others, it is not possible to get a sole estimate of regression coefficients (b) with all the independent variables in the model. Consequently, the software drops a variable that is a perfect linear combination of the others, to assure unique estimate of regression coefficients.

**Post-Activities Questionnaire**

**Participants’ self-reports on activities’ level of difficulty.**

As explained in Chapter 3, participants were asked to rate the level of difficulty of the activities using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = easy, 5 = very difficult). Participants rated the following statements: understanding the speakers’ accent, the speed of the conversation,
vocabulary, quality of the audios and grammatical constructions/grammar. Results from the participants’ self-reports of the difficulty levels are given in Table 4.12.

Table 4.12.

*Participants’ Self-Reports of the Difficulty Levels of the Activities (In Percentage)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very easy</th>
<th>Easy</th>
<th>Neutral/Standard</th>
<th>Difficult</th>
<th>Very difficult</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Speakers’ accents</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speed</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audio quality</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 93*

Speakers’ accent was reported as very easy and easy to understand by 20 percent of the participants, while 40 percent of learners reported it as at a standard level of difficulty. However, 40 percent of learners reported speakers’ accent within the difficult-very difficult range.

Although speed of the conversation was rated as neutral or standard level of difficulty by 44 percent and easy by 19 percent of participants, 37 percent of learners reported it as difficult-very difficult. Audio quality was reported as providing the most level of difficulty for the listeners, as shown by 52 percent who rated it as difficult-very difficult, although 40 percent of learners rated it as neutral.

Surprisingly, learners considered vocabulary and grammar as easy, as shown by 35 and 26 percent of participants respectively, whereas 54 and 59 percent considered vocabulary and grammar to be within the standard range of difficulty.

*Participants’ preferences as language learners.*
Participants were also asked about their language learning preferences. The options were (a) I prefer to be exposed to authentic materials even if I am not able to fully comprehend them, and (b) I prefer to be exposed to materials that I fully comprehend, even if they do not resemble authentic situations. Seventy-six percent of participants reported they preferred authentic materials even if they were not able to comprehend them, and 24 percent reported a preference for materials that they could fully comprehend, regardless of their authenticity. Results are shown in Figure 4.1.

![Bar graph showing preferences as language learners](image)

**Figure 4.1.** Participants’ preferences as language learners ($N = 93$)

**Discussion**

**Effect of Elaborative Devices on the Comprehension of the Main Idea**

Results from the data in the present study suggest that redundancy, transparency, and signaling did not assist language learners’ listening comprehension of the main idea of the text. In fact, redundancy and transparency had a non-significant negative impact on participants’ general comprehension of the text.

These results do not support previous research findings (e.g., Brown, 1987; Chiang &
Dunkel, 1992; Long, 1983; Parker & Chaudron, 1987; Yano, Long, & Ross, 1994). These authors suggested that modified input or elaborative modifications such as redundancy (enhanced through the use of exemplification, paraphrasing, repetition, definition or synonyms) and clear signaling of the thematic structure could aid learners with the comprehension of written and aural texts.

However, findings from this study can be discussed in light of Oh’s (2001) conclusions from a study on the effect of two types of modified input: simplification and elaboration on high and low proficiency levels of students’ reading comprehension. In her study, high proficiency students received significantly higher scores on the two types of modified text in comparison with the baseline text regarding general comprehension items, whereas neither type of modification influenced the low proficiency students.

Oh (2001) pointed out that students’ lack of ability or low proficiency was to blame for their low performance in understanding general comprehension items. As noted by the author, “general comprehension questions, which demand a relatively high level of ability to combine separate and sometimes apparently unrelated pieces of information in order to get the whole picture of a passage, may be far beyond the LP (low proficiency) students' level of competence” (Oh, 2001, p. 88). She supported this explanation by the observation that the low proficiency students were able to take advantage of the modifications on specific comprehension questions, which could be answered successfully with only partial understanding of the passages.

Li, Xu, and Wang (2005) conducted an investigation replicating Oh’s (2001) study with differing results. These authors found no significant difference between simplification and elaboration for high proficiency students regarding general comprehension of the written
They concluded that the high language ability of the high proficiency students “enabled them to extract the main idea easily from any type of reading passages no matter whether they have complex syntactic structures or lengthy sentences or vague and obscure meaning” (Li, Xu, & Wang, 2005, p. 87).

There are several differences between the present study and the studies mentioned above. Firstly, this study deals with listening and not reading comprehension. As noted by Jones (2009), “second language listening comprehension is a complex receptive skill that is sensitive to internal and external factors such as students’ cognitive abilities and the design and presentation of the aural material, either of which could affect a student’s ability to process the aural input” (p. 268). Cognitive abilities refer to listeners’ capacity to construct meaning of what is heard based on prior, cultural, and linguistic knowledge. The type of strategy used for listening also defines students’ cognitive abilities. Successful listeners will use a combination of top-down (meaning-focused) and bottom-up (detailed-focus) approaches depending on the purpose of listening (Vandergrift, 2004).

As Jones (2009) notes, the design and presentation of the material could also affect listeners' ability to understand the text. The aural material for this study was authentic (a staged conversation between native speakers) and consequently contained linguistic forms (e.g., vocabulary and grammatical structures) that could have hindered comprehension. More importantly, the texts prepared for this study contained cultural information most likely unknown to the learners due to differences in cultural background between the speakers and participants. These differences in cultural background could have interfered with comprehension.

As mentioned by Rumelhart (1980), when there are differences between the cultural
background of either the writer or speaker and the reader or listener, the reader or listener may use an unsuitable schema that leads to the wrongful comprehension of the text. The schema mentioned by Rumelhart (1980) refers to the concept that for a message to convey meaning, it needs to interact with the listener's or reader’s prior knowledge about the world. This prior knowledge enables individuals to anticipate and make inferences about commonplace situations (Long, 1989).

As mentioned earlier, the texts prepared for this study contained cultural information that, if unknown to the listener, could have obstructed comprehension. Two examples of cultural content present in the aural texts used in this study are (a) the strong and invasive relationships within the Hispanic family as revealed in the authentic text 3, and (b) the boldness of Latino men when dealing with women as exposed in the authentic text 4. In the authentic text 3, the speakers are spontaneously role-playing two cousins discussing family matters while at a family reunion. Specifically, the cousins are gossiping about the heated romance of the rich member of the family with her cook. They discussed how the “old aunts” invade their privacy by asking indiscreet and very personal questions and how they fear and regret these family reunions. This type of situation is not uncommon in Hispanic families. In the Hispanic world, family ties are so close and strong that it is commonplace for younger family members to feel that personal boundaries are not respected. Yet, because of the respect owed to the older members of the family, no youngster would dare end this invasive behavior. Thus, the audacious and bold adventures of the daring younger ones are usually kept in secrecy to avoid the judgmental advice of the elders. This cultural background, if unknown to the listener, could thwart comprehension.

The second example of cultural content present in this study can be observed in
authentic aural text 4. The flirting attitude of the male speaker, who role-played a waiter in a restaurant, is not an uncommon behavior in the Hispanic world. Although not widely accepted, it is so intrinsically weaved in society that women usually ignore it. Moreover, the male waiter flirted with the female speaker only until he was told that she was not a regular customer but the new owner of the restaurant. Then, the waiter became apologetic and embarrassed of his behavior. This change in male attitude conveys an important cultural message that most likely went unnoticed to the learners: the flirtatious male attitude could be interpreted as a demonstration of male power over women. In other words, it suggests that flirting shows the relationship of power within the Hispanic society. This cultural information is clearly present in aural text 4. However, it may not be so obvious to a listener with a different cultural background or to the listener to whom the meaning of those relationships is unknown. Consequently, it may lead to an erroneous comprehension of the message in the text.

According to Jones (2009), summarizing a language learner’s ability to process aural input depends not only on his or her cognitive abilities but also on the characteristics of the aural material. In the present study, the cultural content of the texts could have hindered comprehension by activating the wrong interpretation of cultural information due to the different cultural backgrounds of listeners and speakers.

An additional explanation for the lack of statistical significance of the effect of the three elaborative devices on listening comprehension in the present study is that the learners’ low proficiency level prevented them from taking advantage of the modified aural texts. It is important to note that although participants were considered intermediate-level learners by either the departmental placement test or the length of language instruction, participants’
scores from a proficiency test suggest that their proficiency level was low intermediate. Data collected from a questionnaire at the beginning of the research project showed that most participants had not had any Spanish instruction at the college level and had not been exposed to native instructors. This is another important factor to be considered, as participants might not have been used to native speakers’ accents yet.

**Effect of Elaborative Devices on the Comprehension of Specific Information**

Findings from this study suggest that neither redundancy nor transparency has a statistically significant effect on language learners’ listening comprehension of specific information in the text. However, the signaling-enhanced aural texts have a statistically significant negative effect on listeners’ comprehension of specific, redundant information.

Results from the effect of signaling on language learners’ aural comprehension of a text could be interpreted as differing from Brown (1987) and Parker and Chaudron (1987). As noted by Brown (1987), elaborative modification such as signaling the thematic structure of a text can help the reader exploit more opportunities to process critical information and consequently comprehend the text better without sacrificing linguistic complexity.

A suggested explanation for the results in the present study is that signaling, added as an indicator of major propositions within the lecture or an important transition point in the text, may have prompted the learner to focus and listen for new or important information as illustrated in the following examples.

1. Baseline version.

Yo soy la dueña de este restaurante y precisamente vine aquí hoy porque quería darme cuenta, saber, cómo los empleados están tratando a los clientes. (I am the
new owner of this restaurant and I came here today to find out how the employees were relating to the customers.)

2. Signaling enhanced version.

Yo soy la dueña de este restaurante y **precisamente la razón por la cual** vine aquí hoy es porque quería darme cuenta, saber, cómo los empleados están tratando a los clientes. (I am the owner of this restaurant and **the precise reason I came here today** is to find out how the employees were relating to the customers.)

In the above paragraph extracted from Listening Activity 3, the speaker conveyed information that is key to fully comprehend the aural text because it marks a major change in the course of the conversation. Therefore, the signaling-enhanced version of the text alerted listeners about the change and made them focus on the new information. Thus, the negative effect of signaling on participants’ comprehension of specific redundant information may perhaps be explained as a consequence of language learners focusing on listening for new facts and discarding anything not perceived as new information.

**Effect of Elaborative Devices on the Inference of Information From the Text**

Findings from this study suggest that redundancy increased listeners’ inference of information from the text. Yano, Long, and Ross (1994) noted that making appropriate inferences requires "a linkage from the written text to pragmatic knowledge" (p. 213). As suggested by these authors, elaboration such as redundancy provides the language learner with an opportunity for a second look at critical information, thus facilitating inferential comprehension.

Hence, it can be suggested that redundancy encourages the use of top-down strategies by allowing listeners to concentrate on understanding the meaning and not focusing only on
details. That is, when listeners are exposed to repeated information, they have a second chance to understand the speaker and focus on the contextual and cognitive meaning of the text. Specifically, since there is no new information to be understood, listeners are encouraged to process linguistic input using a top-down approach. As a consequence, they give themselves access to background information that could facilitate the comprehension process through cognitive strategies such as inferring information to compensate for unknown words (Liu, 2003).

As noted by Bacon (1992), “Listeners meet a task with certain expectations; they test hypothesis and infer from context… Listeners attempt to build meaning inductively from the evidence that is presented in the text” (p. 400). The following example illustrates the possible effect of the redundancy-enhanced text on facilitating listeners’ inference of information while listening to Activity 4.

1. Baseline version.

Speaker 1: No importa. Estoy pensándolo muy bien acerca de dejarlo a usted como empleado. (It doesn’t matter. I am reconsidering if I should keep you as an employee.)

2. Redundancy-enhanced version.

Speaker 1: No importa. Estoy pensándolo muy bien acerca de dejarlo a usted como empleado. **Realmente estoy pensando en que usted no debe trabajar más en el restaurante.** (It doesn’t matter. I am reconsidering if I should keep you as an employee. I am seriously thinking that you shouldn’t work here anymore.)

Listeners were asked to infer the profession of the other speaker, Héctor, from the following three options: (a) Héctor is a restaurant’s cook, (b) Héctor is a waiter, or (c) Héctor
is a restaurant’s owner.

As shown in this example, the redundancy-enhanced text offers an extra opportunity to understand that the speaker is thinking of terminating Héctor’s contract as a worker in the restaurant. Therefore, it could be inferred that Héctor is not the owner of the restaurant, otherwise his job wouldn’t be in jeopardy. Furthermore, because the listener also had several chances during the text to comprehend that Héctor was not the cook, it could be inferred that Héctor was the waiter. Thus, redundancy presented listeners with an extra opportunity to comprehend the information by “triggering” the use of top-down processes that ultimately assisted learners with the inference of information. As noted by Vandergrift (2007), comprehension is enhanced by top-down processes through the use of compensatory strategies and other relevant information to infer what was not understood.

**Participants Self-Reports on the Activities’ Level of Difficulty**

Results from the Post-Activities Questionnaire regarding participants’ self-reported level of difficulty of understanding the speakers’ accent, speed of the conversation, vocabulary, quality of the audios, and grammatical constructions/grammar are represented in Figure 4.2. Results suggest that understanding native speakers’ accent as well as the speed of conversation were reported as standard or difficult matter in the listening tasks. Audio quality was reported as very difficult by 11 percent and difficult by 41 percent of participants. These factors could have had a detrimental effect on the learners’ comprehension of the elaborated material.
These findings are not surprising to the researcher due to the authenticity of the material. The texts, although staged, were spontaneous conversations between two native speakers and contained a rich cultural content and all the features of natural spoken language (e.g., different tones in voices, volume fluctuations, chuckles, speaker interruptions, etc.). This argument is further sustained by the learners themselves who chose “being exposed to authentic materials even if they do not fully comprehend the material” as their preferred option as language learners.

Surprisingly, language learners considered the vocabulary and grammar used by the native speakers in the texts as easy or neutral. This consideration could be attributed to the fact that the topics of the aural texts coincided with the topics being studied in class. Thus, learners were familiar with the topics and were able to understand most of the vocabulary used by the speakers.

In summary, this chapter discussed the results from the present study suggesting that (a) none of the elaborative devices had a statistically significant positive effect on language
learners’ listening comprehension of the main idea of the text; (b) neither redundancy nor transparency had a statistically significant effect on language learners’ listening comprehension of specific information in the text, whereas the signaling-enhanced aural texts had a statistically significant negative effect on listeners’ comprehension of specific, redundant information; and (c) redundancy increased listeners’ inference of information from the text. As discussed above, participants’ low proficiency could be blamed for the low impact of elaboration on improving language learners’ listening comprehension. As noted by Oh (2001), “perhaps a certain threshold of linguistic competence is necessary to be able to profit from input modification” (p. 87).

Results from participants’ self-reports concerning the level of difficulty of the activities suggest that the vocabulary and grammar used by the native speakers in the texts was considered easy or neutral. This could be attributed to learners’ familiarity with the topics of the texts. Results also suggest that the audio quality as well as the accent of the speakers and the speed of the conversation were standard/normal or difficult for them to understand. Unfortunately, these factors might have negatively interfered with learners’ comprehension of the aural texts. However, participants overwhelmingly reported a preference for authentic materials even if they were not able to fully comprehend them. These findings hope to open a wider door into the input modification, specifically the development of authentic-staged elaborated texts for language instruction.
CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION

This last chapter presents the implications that can be drawn from the results, describes the limitations of the study, and provides suggestions for future research on the impact of input modification on language learners’ comprehension of authentic elaborated aural materials. Guidelines for the principled development of elaborated aural texts that closely resemble authentic ones and yet are suitable for intermediate-level language instruction are drawn from the findings.

Implications

The study presented in this thesis investigated the effects of different input modification devices (i.e., redundancy, transparency, and signaling) on intermediate-level language learners’ aural comprehension of authentic texts. Specifically, this study considered the effect of elaboration on facilitating intermediate-level language learners’ listening comprehension of authentic texts. The following implications can be drawn from the results.

First, the input modification devices used in this study (i.e., redundancy, transparency, and signaling) do not seem to positively impact intermediate-level language learners’ listening comprehension of either the main idea or specific information of the text. Furthermore, signaling seems to have a negative impact on comprehension of specific redundant information of authentic aural texts. A suggested explanation for the lack of statistically significant impact of the three elaborative devices on comprehension of the main idea of the text could be that the learners’ overall low proficiency in Spanish may have prevented them from taking advantage of the modified aural texts. The negative effect of
signaling on participants’ comprehension of specific redundant information may perhaps be explained as a consequence of language learners focusing on listening for new facts and discarding anything not perceived as new information. Hence, when deciding to use elaboration with the purpose of assisting language learners' listening comprehension of authentic texts, material developers and language instructors should take into consideration the learners’ proficiency level in the target language, as low proficiency students do not seem to benefit from elaboration as much as high proficiency learners do, as suggested by previous research (e.g., Chiang & Dunkel, 1992; Li, Xu, & Wang, 2005; Oh, 2001).

Second, redundancy seems to be the most effective elaborative device in aiding language learners’ listening comprehension due to its significant positive effect on inference of information from a text. Although results suggest that there is no significant effect of redundancy on learners’ comprehension of either the main idea or specific information, there is a rather significant impact of redundancy on learners’ inference of information from a text. Redundancy, as noted by Yano, Long, and Ross (1994), provides language learners with an opportunity for a second look at critical information, thus facilitating inferential comprehension. Therefore, when creating or choosing aural texts for language instruction, redundancy-enhanced authentic texts seem to be a good choice in assisting low-intermediate proficiency language learners with comprehension of the materials.

Other implications found in this study concern the use of authentic texts for teaching low intermediate language learners. In this study it was found that there were three factors detrimental to the listening comprehension of authentic materials. These factors were: (a) native speakers’ accent, (b) the speed of the conversation, and (c) the quality of the audio. Even though these three factors were found to be detrimental, some of them can be easily
improved to help students overcome their difficulties. For instance, the speed of the conversation and the quality of the audios can be easily modified using audio editing software (e.g., Audacity). With regard to native speakers' accents, the inclusion of materials that expose students to different accents is seen as beneficial in this study given that exposing students to the different authentic accents of the target language can only benefit the language learning process of understanding language as it is presented in real life. Therefore, although variety in the accents exposed to may not be reported by students as beneficial, considering the variations in dialects in Spanish the use of such materials may increase their potential to comprehend such varieties.

Even though these three factors were found to be challenging, students nevertheless reported that they preferred to be exposed to authentic materials that contain the above-mentioned factors. Hence, when preparing or selecting materials for language instruction, students’ preferences of authentic texts should be taken into account.

Finally, when developing or selecting authentic aural texts for language instruction, special attention needs to be paid to the cultural references present in the text since a difference in cultural background of listeners and speakers can activate the wrong interpretation process and consequently hinder comprehension. In other words, learners’ lack of prior knowledge of the topic due to the different cultural backgrounds could prevent them from comprehending the material. Given that the aural texts used in this study were authentic (staged conversations between native speakers), they contained linguistic forms (e.g., vocabulary and grammatical structures) and an often-subtle cultural content that could have been unfamiliar to the learners, and consequently could have interfered with comprehension. Thus, for material developers it is important to consider that good
elaborated texts should include more elaborative devices than the ones used in this study (i.e., elaborative devices that make cultural references explicit or more salient).

For language instructors it is important to consider providing language learners with tools to successfully understand the cultural information in the texts. Raising students’ awareness of the cultural content of the text through classroom activities (e.g., short cultural readings followed by class discussions or presentations of cultural facts before listening tasks) can not only facilitate the listening comprehension of authentic texts but also enhance students’ language learning experience as a whole by giving low-intermediate language learners the confidence to understand speech as presented in real life situations.

Furthermore, elaboration of authentic texts provides an opportunity for material developers and language instructors to expose low intermediate learners to cultural aspects of the target language, which are otherwise difficult to find in textbooks. As pointed out by LeLoup and Ponterio (2000), “With the focus on language, communication, and culture in the national standards for foreign language learning (Standards, 1999), foreign language teachers are continually searching for better ways of accessing authentic materials and providing experiences that will improve their students’ knowledge and skills in these target areas” (p. 1).

This study investigated the effects of elaboration on facilitating intermediate-level language learners’ listening comprehension of authentic texts. Based on the results found in this study, and on the findings reported in the literature in the area of text elaboration, the following guidelines are proposed to assist instructors in the process of selecting materials that aid learners’ comprehension of aural text. In addition, the guidelines include information that material developers might consider for the process of creating authentic
listening texts.

**Suggested Guidelines For the Development of Elaborated Aural Texts**

1. Redundancy-enhanced authentic texts seem to be a good choice in assisting low-intermediate language learners with the inference of information from a text. The present study agrees with Oh’s (2001) assertion that, “redundancy brings an extra opportunity to process essential information within the text and thus to comprehend the text better, even though the resulting text remains at a high level of linguistic complexity” (p. 86).

2. Learners’ proficiency level in the target language should be taken into consideration, as certain elaborative devices (namely, transparency and signaling) do not seem to benefit low-intermediate students as suggested by the results of this study. However, previous research (e.g., Chaudron, 1983; Chiang & Dunkel, 1992; Li, Xu, & Wang, 2005; Oh, 2001) indicates that elaboration can be beneficial for high proficiency learners. This study supports Ur's (1984) claim that “second language students comprehend and learn best if their level of listening ability is taken into consideration when planning listening materials” (p. 363).

3. Attention should be paid to the speed of the native speakers’ conversation and sound quality of the text as these factors could hinder comprehension. A good way to improve the comprehensibility of authentic texts could be reducing the tempo of the text and eliminating background noises. Manipulating the tempo of the text allows for reducing the speed of the conversation without modifying the pitch of the native speakers’ voices.

4. Audacity, free open-source software for audio recording and editing, is a good option
for creating and editing materials for foreign language instruction since it is easily available, free, and easy to use.

**Suggested Guidelines For Choosing Elaborated Aural Texts For Language Instruction**

Based on the results of this study, when choosing materials for language instruction it is important to consider the following aspects:

1. Listeners' and speakers’ background differences should be taken into consideration when deciding to use authentic elaborated texts for language instruction. Raising learners' awareness of these cultural differences through previous classroom activities (e.g., short cultural readings followed by class discussions or presentations of cultural facts before listening tasks) can not only facilitate the listening comprehension of authentic texts but also enhance students’ language learning experience as a whole by giving low-intermediate language learners confidence to understand speech as presented in real life situations.

2. When selecting a text for language instruction, language learners’ preferences of authentic texts should be taken into account. However, authentic texts can be overwhelming and frustrating to low- and intermediate-level learners due to their linguistic and cultural complexity. On the other hand, elaborated texts such as redundancy-enhanced texts provide an opportunity for language learners to comprehend texts that simulate real-life situations and language as closely as possible and yet are comprehensible to intermediate-level learners.

**Limitations**

This study has a number of limitations that are related to both the development of the aural texts and the design of the study itself.
Development of Aural Texts

Although the present study investigated the effect of elaboration on learners’ listening comprehension, only three elaborative devices (i.e., redundancy, transparency, and signaling) were used. Moreover, in this study redundancy was accomplished only by repetition and paraphrasing of information, transparency was achieved only by overt markings of semantics or making the subject explicit, and signaling was attained by signaling major propositions within a conversation or important transition points in the text. Using a wider variety of modifications within the same elaborative devices could have provided different results and, consequently, could have offered a better understanding of how elaboration could assist low-intermediate language learners’ comprehension of authentic materials. For instance, other modifications that could have added redundancy to the texts include provision of synonyms of low frequency items in appositional phrases and a preference for full noun phrases over pronouns, as suggested by Long (2007). Transparency could have been attained by devices such as parallelism, more frequent use of canonical word order, or matching order of mention to order of occurrence (Long 2007). Lastly, emphasizing the important or major transition points within a conversation (i.e., making the signaling more obvious) could have yielded different results regarding signaling.

An important limitation regarding signaling is that the prevalent use of micro-markers instead of macro-markers could have interfered with learners’ comprehension of the texts. As Chaudron and Richards (1986) pointed out, “a lecture that uses more macro-markers is likely to be easier to follow. On the other hand, an over-use of micro-markers possibly detracts from the overall coherence of the lecture” (p. 124). For instance, as noted by these authors, micro-markers such as “the consequence will be”; “first, second and third” or “the
precise reason for ” used in the signaling-enhanced versions of this study are of less semantic value in the lecture information. That is, micro-markers only allow the speaker extra time to plan the next utterance; in contrast, the macro markers are explicit signals of the development of the lecture information. Chaudron and Richards (1986) explained that listeners learn to pay no attention to all the minor pause fillers and redundant intersentential connectors. However, the listener knows that paying attention to markers of the general organization of the text is a critical skill for the comprehension of the information expressed by the lecture.

Another limitation is that there is only one instance of each of the elaborative devices in the texts. Adding more instances of the same elaborative device to the texts could have provided language learners with extra opportunities to take advantage of elaboration and thus better comprehend the texts. Furthermore, more instances of the same elaborative devices could have offered different results and brought a deeper insight into the elaboration of authentic texts.

Design of the Study

Although a proficiency test was administered to participants at the beginning of the semester to strengthen the internal validity of the study, its results were not used to determine different proficiency levels. Using a standardized proficiency test to determine different groups of proficiency within the participants can provide a better idea of the impact of elaboration on the listening comprehension of authentic texts at different proficiency levels of language learners.

The study included participants in self-contained classes that were kept intact. Even though this factor helped in the diversity of the student population, the study did not consider individual learning styles such as the type of learner (e.g., visual, aural, or oral). Such factors
might have had an impact on the results given that some classes could potentially have more aural learners, which could have significantly affected their performance on the listening tasks.

Another factor that may have played a role in the outcome of this investigation is students’ knowledge of cultural information. Since the materials used for the listening tasks were focused on cultural information, preparing students in such topics may have affected students’ performance on the tasks. For instance, students could have been exposed to materials related to the topic in advance to better understand the topic and acquire background information. Some sample activities that could have been integrated to prepare students in the given topics include short cultural readings followed by class discussions or presentations of cultural facts before the listening tasks.

Participants’ self-reported data were used to determine the difficulty levels of different aspects of the activities (i.e., grammar, vocabulary, speed of conversation, and the quality of audio recordings). These data could be perceived as subjective information; therefore, to increase the validity of the information reported by students, interviews could have been conducted to provide more specific information about the factors affecting learners’ listening comprehension. For instance, an interview could have provided more information about what students considered to be a “difficult quality of the audios” since the level of difficulty could be due to the characteristics of spontaneous spoken language (i.e., chuckles, interruptions, intonations) or to bad sound quality.

Ideas for Future Research

Ideas for future research emerge as an outcome of the results and implications of this study. More research is needed to investigate the impact of input modifications on language
learners’ comprehensibility of authentic aural materials since elaboration could open possibilities for exposing lower-proficiency learners to real-life listening and different varieties of a target language. Specifically, more research needs to be done on how material developers and language instructors could adapt authentic texts and transform them into materials suited for language instruction. In agreement with LeLoup and Ponterio’s (2000) statement that, “the intrepid and creative teacher will venture into this virtual realm [internet and emerging technologies], find authentic resources, and use them to make the second language classroom a marvelous place to learn” (p. 1), the present study suggests that more research needs to be done on how elaboration could be used to help intermediate-level language learners understand and take advantage of those authentic resources.
APPENDIX A

Scenarios For Creation of Authentic Texts

1. Scenario for Creation of Authentic Text 1

Speaker 1 (Héctor): You are a student at University of Bogotá, Colombia. You are planning a four-week trip to Spain with your *Spanish Literature in the XVII century* (“Literatura Española del Siglo XVII”) class. Miss Miranda is the teacher for this class and she is well known for overwhelming students with class work. You have been sick with the flu and missed several classes. Since you really do not care much about *Spanish literature in the XVII century*, you feel that you MUST have leisure activities in order to “survive” the trip. Angélica is your classmate and she is also going to Spain with the class.

Speaker 2 (Angélica): You are a student at University of Bogotá (Colombia). You are planning a four-week trip to Spain with your *Spanish literature in the XVII century* (“Literatura Española del Siglo XVII”) class. Last class, Ms. Miranda, the course instructor, gave important information about the trip. Students will attend classes all day long and there is no leisure activities planned. Héctor is your classmate. You haven’t seen him in class for a while but you know for sure that he has no intention of spending all day long in the classroom during the trip.

2. Scenario for Creation of Authentic Text 2

Speaker 1 (Adolfo): You are a travel agent. You need to sell tickets; excursions and hotel accommodation to a Mediterranean beach in Spain in order to win the prizes that an important agency is offering you. Elisa is an older woman seeking your advice
on places to visit in Europe. She doesn’t look like she would enjoy the beach but, all you can think are those promised prizes…. 

Speaker 2 (Elisa): You are an older woman who had never travelled abroad. You want to celebrate your retirement with a trip to Europe to visit museums and quiet places. You visit a travel agency looking for help on planning your trip.

3. Scenario for Creation of Authentic Text 3

Speaker 1 (Cristina): You attend your second aunt Maruca’s 80th birthday party. You meet cousins that you haven’t seen for a while. You are nervous because you know that the old aunties will ask you about your love life and even how much money you are making. To make matters worst, you know you will have to see your cousin Juana at the party. Juana is the perfect daughter, niece and wife in the eyes of the family. Her love story with Mario is such a fairy tale that it makes you sick. At the party, you meet your favorite cousin, Julia. Julia is Juana’s sister, but she is lovely, funny and as imperfect as you are (quite the opposite of Juana). To your relief, Juana and her husband Mario are not at the party. Talk to Julia about her life, and of course do not forget to inquire about Juana and her luxurious trips around the world with her millionaire husband.

Speaker 2 (Julia): You attend your second aunt Maruca’s 80th birthday party. You meet cousins that you haven’t seen for a while. You are nervous because you know that the old aunties will ask you about your love life (which is a disaster!) and they will keep comparing you with your sister Juana. Since Juana married Mario, a handsome millionaire, the family is totally fascinated with your sister’s life. Your parents have told everybody that Juana is travelling around the world with her
husband, but the truth is that Juana run away with her cook and is planning on divorcing Mario.

To your contentment, your favorite cousin Cristina is at the party. Cristina is fun, friendly and as imperfect as you are. Cristina is the only person that you will tell the truth about your sister’s romantic adventures.

4. **Scenario for Creation of Authentic Text 4**

Speaker 1 (Héctor): You are a Colombian waiter working in a Mexican Restaurant in the U.S. A young, elegant and very good-looking woman (Angélica) that comes into the restaurant, greets you in Spanish and seats down, waiting to be served. You immediately feel this young lady has captured your heart and you want to know more about her life. Try to impress her by using your charm or your knowledge of Mexican cuisine.

Speaker 2 (Angélica): You are a businesswoman from Colombia who invests in ethnic restaurants all over the U.S. You just bought this Mexican restaurant and decided to check the service and food by pretending to be a customer. Héctor is the waiter, also from Colombia, and he has no idea that you are the new owner. It is important that you disclose your identity at one point during the conversation, but first test his professionalism.

5. **Scenario for Creation of Authentic Text 5 (Extra text to test Redundancy-only)**

Speaker 1 (Marta): You are an International student from Argentina who has recently arrived to the U.S. While at the library, you meet another Argentinean student, Sergio. Talk to him about your struggles as a graduate student at ISU (i.e., understanding the English language as well as the
American grading system). Highlight the differences between the educational system in the U.S and your home country.

Speaker 2 (Sergio): You are an International student from Argentina. While at the library, you meet Marta, an Argentinean student newly arrived to ISU. Marta is feeling very confused and frustrated with her experience as a graduate student at ISU. Try to help her by giving information about the educational system in the U.S and the benefits of assisting a university such as ISU.
APPENDIX B

Script of the Authentic Texts

Script of Authentic Text 1: Viaje a España (Trip to Spain)

H: Hola Angélica. ¿Cómo estás? (Hi Angelica. How are you doing?)

A: Bien, ¿y vos? (Well, and you?)

H: Pues bien. Bueno, más o menos. Acabo de salir de una gripa terrible. (I am O.K. Well, so and so. I had a terrible flu)

A: Héctor, no te veo hace como dos semanas (Hector, I haven’t seen you for two weeks)

H: Pues mira, es que estuve enfermisimo. Pero no sólo eso, lo que más me preocupa es que falté a muchísimas clases. (Well, I was very sick. But what worries me the most is that I missed several classes)

A: Eso me dí cuenta, y faltaste a la más importante. (I noticed that and you missed the most important one)

H: Ay si, la del viaje a España? ¿Qué dijeron? ¿De qué me perdí? (Oh, yes, the one about the trip to Spain. What did they talk about? What did I miss?).

A: Bueno, no te perdiste mucho y yo no sé si sean buenas noticias o no. Pero eh…, la profesora Miranda nos dijo que íbamos a tener un …, muchísimas, muchísimas clases, mucho trabajo que hacer, clases todo el día hasta tarde por la noche. (Well, you didn’t miss a lot and I do not know if they are good news or not. But Professor Miranda said that we will have lot of classes, lots of work to do, classes all day long until late at night).

H: Uuiiy! No puede ser… (It can’t be…)
A: Si…los fines de semana… no se sabe…, ya como que va a poner actividades de práctica. (Yes, and on weekends…. We do not know yet… but we may have practice activities).

H: (expresión de asombro)(surprised)

A: Entonces fuera de eso no podemos ir a bares, ni a discotecas y tenemos que siempre estar con el mismo grupo de trabajo todo el tiempo. (Then, on top of that we can’t go to bars, or night clubs and we must stay with our group at all times).

H: (asombrado) Ahhhh! Ay no, m’hijita. Yo creo que yo voy a faltar por lo menos a la mitad de las clases. Porque cómo explicas que estando uno en Bogotá, planeando un viaje de verano a España, que son casi vacaciones, se va a meter en un salón a estudiar “Literatura Española del siglo XVII”. ¿Qué es eso? Eso no tiene sentido! (ahhh, no, no. I think I am going to miss at least half of the classes. How do you explain that been in Bogota, planning a summer trip to Spain, a trip that is almost like a vacation, we are going to be in a classroom studying Spanish Literature of the XVII century. What is that? That doesn’t make sense).

A: Yo estoy completamente de acuerdo. Me parece que es aburridoresísimo pero esta clase sólo la ofrecen cada dos años y es una clase importantísima. Vos sabes que tenemos que tomarla. Y si vas a faltar a las clases, lo veo difícil porque van a tomar lista, y si…, me imagino que si no vas a todas las clases te va a bajar tu calificación. O sea que, pues, piénsalo muy bien. (I absolutely agree. I think is extremely boring but this class is only offered every two years and is a very important class. You know we need to take it. And if you are planning on missing classes, I see it rather difficult because they will take attendance and if you do not attend classes your grade will go down. You better think it over)
H: Ay, yo no sé. Pero entre ir a clase y….. irse a la playa, ir a bailar, ir a tomarse una copa, ir a conocer otra gente; pues a mí me parece que lo segundo es muchísimo más atractivo.

(Well, I do not know. But between going to class and going to the beach, go dancing, go for a drik, meet new people; I think the second is more attractive).

A: Pues, para mí también. Pero yo pienso que eso puede ser negociable. Yo creo que si hablamos con la profesora Miranda y con los otros estudiantes se puede llegar a algún acuerdo. ¿No te parece? (I think so, too. I think this could be negotiable. I think that if we talk with professor Miranda and with the other students we can reach an agreement. Do not you think so?)

H: Ay, pues eso me parece imprescindible porque …pues eso, va a ser imprescindible para que yo decida viajar o no. (I think that is essential because…. because that will be essential to decide if I am going on that trip or not).

A: Pues, deberíamos reunirnos lo más pronto posible con ella. ¿Qué te parece? (Then, we need to meet with her as soon as possible. What do you think?)

H: Si, me parece buena idea. Vamos y nos reunimos mañana. (yes, I think is a good idea. Lets’ go and we will meet with her tomorrow).

A: Mañana, ¿a qué hora puedes? (Tomorrow, at what time are you available?)

H: Mañana a la tarde. (Tomorrow afternoon).

A: Perfecto, mañana nos vemos. (Perfect, see you tomorrow).

H: Bueno, Ciao! (Well, ciao)
A: Ciao

**Script of Authentic Text 2: Agencia de viajes (Travel agency)**

**E:** Buenas tardes (good afternoon)

**A:** Buenas tardes, señora. ¿Cómo está? Pase, por favor. Bienvenida (Good afternoon, madam. How are you? Please, come in. Welcome.

**E:** Ay, muchas gracias joven. (Ay, thank you very much, young man)

**A:** ¿Qué tal? ¿En qué la podemos ayudar? (How can we help you?)

**E:** Pues mire… (Well, look)

**A:** ¿Ya está lista usted para unas vacaciones? (Are you ready for a vacation?)

**E:** Ay sí, pues fíjese… aunque ya estoy jubilada…, pero finalmente…, fíjese que … después de mucho tiempo logré convencer a mi esposo de que nos fuéramos de vacaciones. Entonces, yo quería venir a preguntarle si me puede dar algunas opciones. (Oh, yes, look… although I am retired., but finally…, after a long time I convinced my husband to take a vacation. Then, I want to ask you if you could give me some options).

**A:** A ver, mire … tengo un millón de opciones. Pero para hacerle un paquete a la medida, voy a pedirle que me diga… un poquito… si le interesa a usted alguna actividad en especial. En estas fechas tenemos paquetes especiales a Europa y tenemos los mejores precios, pero si me dice qué tipo de actividades le interesa a usted o a su esposo, podemos planear algo a su medida. (Look, ...I have a million options. But to offer you a package that suits you well, I need to know… if you are interested in any activities in special. This time of the year we
have specials offers to go to Europe and special price deals. If you tell me what kind of
activities you and your husband are interested in, we can plan something that fits your needs.

**E:** Oiga… ¿y en Europa hablan español? (Tell me, do they speak Spanish in Europe?)

**A:** Claro, por supuesto, pues tenemos viajes a España. Tenemos muchas ciudades en España
que usted puede visitar, y en los paquetes le ofrecemos estadía y también excursiones.
Tenemos paquetes, por ejemplo, a Madrid, a Barcelona, a Salamanca. ¿Le interesa a Ud la
costa, las montañas, las ciudades? (Yes, of course, and we have trips to Spain. We have
several cities in Spain that you could visit and we have packages that include hotels and
excursions. We have packages to Madrid, Barcelona, Salamanca.) Are you interested in the
beach, the mountains or the cities?)

**E:** Bueno mire, la costa me interesa, pero no mucho porque no sé nadar. Así que a mi me
gustarían más unas … unas actividades más culturales. (Well, I like the beach but I am not
ver interested in it because I do not know how to swim. I would like something more …. More cultural).

**A:** Ah, pues, le recomendaría un viaje a Barcelona. Barcelona es una ciudad muy artística.
Hay diferentes museos. Pero lo más importante es que es un museo al aire libre porque hay
muchísima arquitectura interesante en las calles que usted podría visitar. (oh, then I would
recommend a trip to Barcelona. Barcelona is a very artistic city. There are different
museums. But most importantly is that it is an open museum because of the arquitectonic
style of its street).
E: Oye, ¿y es verdad que allá hablan otra lengua? (Tell me, is true that they speak another language?).

A: Bueno, en Barcelona tienen dos lenguas. Hablan el español, el castellano, pero también hablan el catalán. Pero no se preocupe, cualquiera persona puede entenderle si usted le habla en castellano. (well, in Barcelona there are two languages. They speak Spanish, Castillan, but they also speak Catalan. Do not worry about it because everybody can understand Spanish).

E: Ah, bueno.(oh, O.K)

A: ¿Qué tal? ¿Le ofrecemos ya algunas fechas? (Well, what do you think? Could we look at some dates?)

E: Sí, me interesa mucho ir a Barcelona. (Yes, I am really interested in travelling to Barcelona).

A: Muy bien. ¡Veamos las fechas! (Great. Let’s look at dates).

**Script of Authentic Text 3: La familia (Family)**

J: ¡Cristina, cariño! No esperaba verte en la fiesta de la tía Maruca. (Cristina, sweetheart! I wasn’t expecting to see you at auntie’s Maruca party)

C: ¡Hombre, cómo no!. Tú sabes que yo siempre estoy en estas fiestas. ¡Me encanta la familia! (Of course, I would be here. You know I always attend parties like this one. I love family!).
J: Yah…y a mí. Pero me tienen últimamente… de harta. ¡Jo!… Es que tú no sabes, me comparan constantemente con mi hermana Juana. (I do too, but lately I am so fed up! You do not know it, but they are constantly comparing me with my sister Juana)

C: Es que la Juana…. (That Juana…)

J: ¡Pues no sabes lo que tiene Juana. Bueno mira, te cuento.. (Well, you do not know what’s going on with Juana. Listen, I will tell you!)

C: A ver. ¡Dime, dime! (Tell me, tell me).

J: Juana…resulta que …bueno…que… bueno, con Mario supuestamente todo fenomenal, siempre te ha querido vender esa vida perfecta… Pues, ¿sabes qué… te habrán dicho mis padres que se ha ido de viaje con él, no? (Juana, well, …. Well, it looks like everything is perfect with Mario, she has always try to make it look like she has a perfect life. Well, have my parents told you that she is on a trip with him, right?)

C: ¿Adónde? No, no sabía. (Where? No, I didn’t know that.)

J: Pues, por ahí , para dar una vuelta por el mundo. Claro, ¡cómo tiene tantos millones Juanita!. ¿Pues, sabes qué pasa? (Well, taking a trip around the world. Of course, she has so many millions Juanita! Well, you know what’s going on?)

C: Esta Juana… (Oh, Juana…)

J: Pues, ¿sabes qué pasa? Resulta que Juana… ¡se ha ligado con el cocinero! (Well, you know what is going on? Juana is in love with her cook!).

C: ¿Cómo? ¿Qué dices? (What? What are you talking about?)
J: Sí, sí. ¡Qué entre croqueta y croqueta, empanada y empanada…! (yes, yes. That between a croquette her and there, empanada and empanada…).

C: ¡No, no te creo!. Venga, ya… (No, I can’t believe it! Come on…)

J: Pues, sí. (Well, yes)

C: ¿Y Mario, no sabe nada? (And Mario? Does he know about it?)

J: No se sabe nada. Yo, te comento… (I do not know. I am only telling you….)

C: Ay, ¡pobre Marioooo! (Ay, poor Marioooo)

J: Bueno, la verdad es que Juana la está pasando muy mal. (Well, the truth is that Juana is not having a hard time)

C: ¿Mal? ¡Pero si tiene a Mario y al cocinero! (Hard time? But if she has Mario and her cook!).

J: A Mario no le ha dicho nada. A mis padres los tiene totalmente engañados. Y tú, imaginate, al resto de la familia. (She hasn’t told Mario anything. My parents do not know anything either, and you can imagine the rest of the family!)

C: Pero espérate. Entonces, ¿ahora está de viaje con Mario o con el cocinero? (Then, wait, is she on a trip with Mario or her cook?).

J: No, no, está con el cocinero. ¡No, no!. Ella ha dicho que está de viaje con su marido, con Mario, pero no, en realidad no está. (No, no, she is with her cook. No, No! She has told everybody that she is on a trip with her husband Mario, but the truth is that she is not).
C: Esto parece una historieta, ¿eh? (This sound like a soap opera, right?)

J: Y Juana la verdad lo que me ha dicho es que lo está pasando fatal. Porque claro, se ha dado cuenta que realmente quiere al cocinero. (Juana told me that she is having a very hard time. She has realized that she is in love with the cook).

C: ¿Y qué le vamos a decir a las tías? (What are you going to tell the family?)

J: Pues eso yo..., allí ya no me meto. Tiene que ser Juana quien organice su vida y se lo cuente a todo el mundo. (Well, that... that’s not my problem. Juana needs to organize her life and tell everybody).

C: Pero tú que eres su hermana la tienes que ayudar. But you are her sister and you need to help her). (pause)

Tú sabes que yo estoy muy, pero muy nerviosa porque las tías me quieren hacer de todo. Me quieren preguntar de todo y no me atrevo a ir a hablar con ellas. (You know, I am very nervous because the aunties ask me about everything and I am even afraid of talking to them).

J: ¡Ay! ¡Y a mí que constantemente me comparan con mi hermana Juana!. ¡Ay.. ¡y tú para cuando? ¿Y tú cuando vas a casarte? ¿Cuando nos vas a dar la sorpresa? Qué , ¿estás saliendo con algún chico? ¡Pues no, pues no!. (Ay, and they constantly compare me with my sister Juana. Ay, and you, when are you going to get married? When are you going to surprise us? Are you dating anybody? Well, no, no!).
C: Pues, tú ya sabes que yo cambio de trabajo cada dos por tres. Y también mi vida amorosa es un desastre. ¡Ya sabes tú, Julia! (Well, you know I change jobs often and my love life is a disaster. You know that, Julia!).

J: ¡Ay hija mía, la imperfección!. (Oh, my dear, imperfection!)

C: Y las tías están ahí, dale que te dale, preguntándome que si cuánto dinero gano y yo… ¡que no tengo ni trabajo!. ¿Qué les digo? ¿Qué les digo? (And the aunties keep asking and asking about how much money I make and I…. I do not even have a job right now! What do I tell them? What do I tell them?)

Bueno, ¿sabes qué? Vamos a intentar hablar las dos juntas con las tías. (Well, you know what? Let’s go and say hi to them together!).

J: Venga, sí vamos a tomarnos un vinito. ¡Alá! (Yes, Let’s go and grab some wine, too!)

Script of Authentic Text 4: En el restaurante (At the restaurant)

A: Buenas noches. Muy bien. ¿Y usted? (Good evening. I am well, and you?)

H: Buenas noches. Bienvenida. ¡Hoooolaaa!! Buenas noches. ¿Cómo le va? (Good evening. Welcome. Well, hellooo!! )

A: Buenas noches. Muy bien. ¿Y usted? (Good evening. I am well, and you?)

H: Pues, ahora que la veo, me va muy bien. ¿En qué puedo servile? (well, now that I see you, I am very well. How can I help you?).

A: Mire, este… tenía un antojo horrible de comer comida mexicana y decidí venir a este restaurante porque me la han recomendado muchísimo. ¿Qué tiene de especialidades para esta noche? ¿Qué me recomendarías? (Well, I was craving Mexican food and I decided to
come to this restaurant becuae it has been highly recommended. What is the tonight’s specialty? What would you recommend?)

H: Para sus antojos… ¡un colombiano! Pero bueno…, del restaurante, puedo ofrecerle el delicioso plato del día que es una enchilada de pollo. Pero si Ud quiere, le mando a preparar cualquier otra cosita. (For your cravings…. A Colombian man! But…. from the restaurant I can offer tonight dish that is chicken enchiladas. But we can order anything you like.)

A: Sabe que sí, yo preferiría un burrito vegetariano. (You kow what, I prefer a vegetarian burrito)

H: Vegetariano… (Vegetarian…)

A: ¿Tiene? (Do you have it?)

H: Pero por supuesto, lo que Ud me pida yo se lo tengo. (Of course whatever you want, I have it for you).

A: Y de tomar, ¿tiene jugos naturales? (And to drink, do you have natural juices)

*H: Bueno…¿pero por qué jugos naturales? Le propongo algo más fuerte, como para la noche. ¿Qué le parece un trago? (Well, but why a natural juice? I recommend a stronger beverage, something for the night. What about a drink?).

A: No, la verdad que un trago en el medio de la semana no suelo tomar. Preferiría un jugo natural. ( No, I am not used to having a drink in the middle of the week. I prefer some juice.)

*H: Bueno, hagamos una cosa. Le traigo su pedido y le traigo su jugo natural. Pero en el medio de la semana …de pronto no estaría mal salir y…después de la cena tomar un trago.
¿Qué le parece si yo invito? (Let’s do something. I will bring your order with your natural juice, but by midweek maybe we could go out and…. Share a drink after dinner. What do you say if I invite you?)

A: Como así… ¿usted me está invitando a tomar un trago, hoy? (what…. Are you inviting me to a drink tonight?)

H: No, no. No es para que se moleste. Pero es que viéndola a usted tan bonita, joven y tan sola en este restaurante, ni más faltaba que no tuviera una atención con usted cómo se lo merece. (No, no, do not get upset. But you look so beautiful, so young, and you are so lonely in this restaurant that it’s my duty to be nice to you and treat you as you deserve).

A: Venga, yo le pregunto a usted. ¿Siempre es así de coqueto con todos los clientes? (Look, I am just wondering… are you always like that with your customers?)

H: No, no, no. Sólo con usted. (No, no, no. Just with you).

A: ¡Pero me parece una falta de respeto! (This is disrespectful!)

H: ¡Pero cómo se le ocurre! Si es…. al contrario… Es un reconocimiento a su figura y una mujer tan hermosa. (How can you say that! By the opposite …. It’s to acknowledge your figure and your beauty).

A: Mire, quiero decirle que acabo de comprar este restaurante. (Look, I want you to know that I recently bought this restaurant)

H: ¡¡¡No puede ser!!! (It can’t be true!!!)
A: Yo soy la dueña de este restaurante y precisamente vine aquí hoy porque quería darme cuenta, saber, cómo los empleados están tratando a los clientes. (I am the new owner of this restaurant and I came here today because I wanted to know how the employees are behaving with the customers).

H: ¡Ay, señora! ¡Ay señora! No me diga que eso es cierto. (Oh, madam, oh madam, do not tell me that is true).

A: Pues claro que sí y estoy muy, muy molesta. La verdad que no puedo creer que usted sea tan atrevido y haciéndole insinuaciones a los clientes. (Of course, it is and I am very, very disappointed. I can’t believe you could be so bold and flirt with the customers like that).

H: Pero espere un momento. Dígame una cosa, ¿ usted es casada? ( But wait a minute, are you married?).

A: No importa. Estoy pensándolo muy bien acerca de dejarlo a usted como empleado. (It doesn’t matter. I am seriously considering if I should keep you as an employee).

H: ¡Ay, no puede ser! Perdóneme, perdóneme. (Oh, no, I can’t believe it. Forgive me, forgive me!).

Script of Authentic Text 5: La universidad en los Estados Unidos (A U.S University)

M: Hola, disculpame pero te vi cara de latino y te escuché hablar por teléfono. ¿De dónde sos? (Hi, excuse but you look latino and I heard you speakin on the phone. Where are you from?).

S: Yo soy de Argentina. ¿Y vos? (I’m from Argentina, and you?)
M: Yo también soy de Argentina. ¿Cuánto tiempo hace que estás acá? (I am also from Argentina. How long have you been here?).

S: Y hace un año empecé. ¿En qué carrera estás vos? (I started a year ago. What’s your major?).

M: Yo estoy estudiando economía. (I am studying Economics)

S: Ah, mirá que casualidad… yo también estoy estudiando negocios. (oh, what a coincidence… I am studying business).

M: ¿En serio? (Really?).

S: Si. (yes)

M: Ay, mirá. Estoy tan perdida, acabo de llegar y se me hace todo tan complicado. Realmente no entiendo el sistema de calificaciones, no es de 1 a 10 sino con A, B, C. Me resulta muy difícil entender el idioma. ¿Vos cómo hiciste? (Look, I am feeling very lost, I just arrived and everything looks so complicated. I do not understand the grading system because is not from 1 to 10, but with A,B, C. It’s hard to understand the language. How did you do it?).

S: ¿Pero no viniste preparada? ¿No habías leído nada antes de venir a Iowa State de cómo era el sistema de educación en Estados Unidos? (Didn’t you come prepare? Didn’t you read about the U.S educational system before coming here?).

M: Sí, bueno había leído…pero, pero, yo creí que lo entendía, que lo había entendido, pero ahora que estoy acá realmente estoy muy perdida. Además no sé si economía es lo que
realmente a mí me gusta. Y estoy…bueno, como te digo, entre el idioma y el sistema de calificaciones… la verdad es que estoy perdidísima. (Well, yes, I read about it … and I thought I had understood it, but now that I am here, I feel completely lost. And I am not sure I like economics either. Well, as I told you… between the language and the grading system I am feeling very lost).

S: Mirá, se me ocurre una idea. Estoy por anotarme en las clases para el semestre que viene y una de las clases que me interesa tomar es una clase sobre el sistema de educación en Estados Unidos. ¿Qué te parece si la tomamos juntos? (Look, I have an idea. I am about to register for classes for next semester and one of the classes I am interested in talks about the educational system in the U.S. What do you say if we take it together?).

M: No, la verdad que no me resulta muy interesante. Como te digo, yo vine acá a estudiar economía y la verdad que estudiar sobre el sistema educativo acá…, no disculpame.. te lo agradezco pero no. (No, I am not interested. As I told you before, I came here to study economics and to have to study about the educational system here, no, no… I am sorry, but I say no).

S: Bueno, si a vos te parece. Pero te digo por las dudas que lo pienses y se te ocurra cambiar de idea. Es Educación 511 y habla un poco sobre la historia de la educación en los Estados Unidos y cómo es el sistema ahora. Porque vos no sabés Iowa State es una Universidad “land grant” y es un tipo muy particular de universidad que no existe en ningún otro lugar del mundo. (O.k, if you think so. But just in case you think it over and change your mind. It’s Education 511 and talks about the history of education in the U.S and how the system is now.
Because, in case you do not know it, Iowa State is a land grant university and is a very particular kind of university that doesn’t exist anywhere else).

**M:** Debe ser por eso que el sistema me parece imposible de aprenderlo. Hmm, bueno mirá, dejame que lo piense, dejame que lo piense y cualquier cosa te contacto. (Maybe that’s why I can’t understand the system. Hmm, well, let me think about it and I contact you).

**S:** Bueno, dejame el número de teléfono así te llamo. (O.K. Give me your phone number and I’ll contact you).

**M:** No, no, mirá, yo igual te voy a encontrar por acá, por la biblioteca. Yo cualquier cosita me acerro y te digo, ¿si? (No, no, I’ll find you around her, around the library. If I see you, I’ll let you know, o.k?)

**S:** Bueno, está bien. (O.K).

**M:** Ciao

**M:** ¡Uy, dios mío, qué pesado! ¡Qué plomazo este hombre!. ¡Ni loca tomo una clase con él! (Uy, my goodness, what a nerd! There is no way I am taking a class with him!).
APPENDIX C

Multiple-Choice Listening Comprehension Items For the Texts

Comprehension check items for texts 1

¡A ver qué bien escuchas! Escucharás dos veces la conversación entre Angélica y Héctor. Luego circula la respuesta correcta. (Listen to Angélica and Héctor’s conversation twice, then circle the right answer.)

1. ¿Cuál es la idea principal de la conversación entre Angélica y Héctor? (What is the main idea of the conversation between Angélica y Héctor?)

   a. Angélica y Héctor hablan sobre la clase de “Literatura Española del siglo XVII”. (Angélica and Héctor talk about the class “Spanish Literature in the XVII century”)
   
   b. Angélica y Héctor hablan sobre todas las clases que tomarán durante el viaje de verano a España con la clase de la profesora Miranda. (Angélica and Héctor talk about all the classes they have to take during their trip to Spain with professor Miranda’s class)
   
   c. Angélica y Héctor hablan sobre la profesora Miranda de la clase “Literatura Española del siglo XVII” en España. (Angélica and Héctor talk about professor Miranda’s class in Spain, “Spanish Literature in the XVII century”).

2. Según Angélica, ¿cómo será el programa de clases? (According to Angelica, how will the class schedule be?)

   a. Tienen clases todo el día, desde la mañana hasta la noche. (Classes all day long, from morning to the evening).
   
   b. Tienen clases todos los días por la mañana. (Classes every day in the morning)
c. Tienen algunas clases por la mañana y otras por la noche. (Some classes are in the morning and others in the evening)

3. ¿ Cual de las siguientes oraciones es correcta? (Which sentence is correct?)

a. Angélica dice que es posible que la profesora Miranda les permita (permitir: to allow) a los estudiantes ir a la playa o ir a bailar, si hablan con ella. (Angelica said that it is possible that if they talk to professor Miranda, she will allow students to go to the beach or dancing).

b. Angélica dice que la profesora Miranda nunca (never) les permitirá ir a la playa o ir a bailar. (Angelica said that professor Miranda would never allow them to go the beach or dancing)

c. Angélica dice que la profesora Miranda es aburrida. (Angelica said that professor Miranda is boring).

4. ¿Cual es la consecuencia de no ir a todas las clases de “Literatura Española del siglo XVII”? (What is the consequence of not going to all the “Spanish Literature of the XVII century”’s classes?).

a. No importa porque no es una clase importante. (It doesn’t matter because the class is not important).

b. La profesora Miranda no toma lista en la clase. (Professor Miranda doesn’t take attendance)

c. Tendrán calificaciones (grades) bajas. (Students will have lower grades).
5. **Angélica y Héctor** … (Angelica and Hector …)

a) Son dos estudiantes en la clase de la profesora Miranda y viajarán a España con la clase para estudiar. (They are students in professor Miranda’s class and will travel to Spain with her class to study)

b) Son compañeros de apartamento y viajarán de vacaciones a España con la profesora Miranda. (They are roommates and will travel to Spain on vacation with professor Miranda).

c) Son dos estudiantes y viajarán de vacaciones a España con la profesora Miranda. (They are two students and will travel on vacation to Spain with professor Miranda).

**Comprehension check items for texts 2**

Escucha la conversación entre “Señor Adolfo” y “Señora Elisa” y luego circula la respuesta correcta. (Listen carefully to a conversation between “Señor Adolfo” and “Señora Elisa” and circle the correct answer).

1. ¿**Cual es la idea principal de la conversación?** (What is the main idea of the conversation?).

   a. La señora Elisa es jubilada (retired) y desea vender la casa de vacaciones en la costa. (Elisa is retired and wants to sell her beach vacation home)

   b. La señora Elisa desea irse de vacaciones y desea aprender a hablar español. (Elisa wants to go on vacations and wants to learn to speak Spanish).
c. La señora Elisa desea irse de vacaciones y necesita ayuda para planear su viaje. (Elisa wants to go on vacations and needs help planning her trip).

2. ¿Cual de las siguientes oraciones es correcta? (Which sentence is correct?)

a. La señora Elisa prefiere no ir a la costa porque ella no sabe nadar. (Elisa doesn’t have a preference for the beach because she doesn’t know how to swim).

b. La señora Elisa prefiere ir a la costa porque le gusta mucho el sol. (Elisa prefers going to the beach because she enjoys the sun).

c. La señora Elisa prefiere no ir a la costa porque su marido no sabe nadar. (Elisa doesn’t have a preference for the beach because her husband doesn’t know how to swim).

3. ¿Por qué el señor Adolfo le recomienda a la señora Elisa visitar Barcelona? (Why does Adolfo recommend Elisa to go to Barcelona?)

a. Porque en Barcelona aprenderá el idioma español y el catalán en sus calles. (Because she can learn Spanish and Catalan in Barcelona’s streets).

b. Porque Barcelona es un museo al aire libre por la arquitectura que hay en sus calles. (Because Barcelona is like an open museum due to the architecture of its streets)

c. Porque en Barcelona hay un museo al aire libre que tiene muchas calles y arquitectura. (Because there is an open museum that has streets and architecture in Barcelona.)

4. ¿Qué propone el señor Adolfo al final del audio? (What does Adolfo suggest at the end of the audio?)
a. Comenzar (to start) a buscar casas para comprar en el viaje a Barcelona. (To start looking for houses to buy in Barcelona).

b. Comenzar (to start) a buscar fechas para el viaje a Barcelona. (To start looking for the best dates to travel to Barcelona).

c. No comenzar a buscar fechas para el viaje a Barcelona. (Not to start looking for dates to travel to Barcelona).

5. Según el audio, ¿Cual es la profesión del señor Adolfo? (According to the audio, what is Adolfo’s profession?)

a) Es agente de viaje. Trabaja en una agencia de viajes. (He is a travel agent. He works at a travel agency).

b) Es vendedor de casas. Trabaja en una agencia que vende casas en las playas de Europa. (He is real state agent. He sells houses).

c) Es profesor de español. Enseña español a señoras jubiladas (retired) en Europa. (He is a Spanish teacher. He teaches Spanish to retired ladies in Europe).

Comprehension check items for texts 3

Listen carefully to a conversation between Julia and Cristina and circle the correct answer.

1. ¿Cual es la idea principal de la conversación entre Julia y Cristina? (What is the main idea of the conversation?)

a. El cumpleaños de la tía Maruca. (Aunt Maruca’s birthday).
b. Los viajes de Juana y Mario. (Juana and Mario’s trips)

c. El romance entre Juana y su cocinero. (The romance of Juana and her cook).

2. ¿ Cúal de las siguientes oraciones es correcta? (Which of the following sentences is correct?)

a. Juana está enojada con el cocinero. (Juana is angry at her cook)

b. Juana está enamorada del cocinero. (Juana is in love with her cook)

c. Juana tiene un nuevo cocinero. (Juana has a new cook).

3. ¿Quién compara a Julia con su hermana Juana? (Who compares Julia with her sister Juana?)

a. El esposo de Juana. (Juana’s husband).

b. Toda la familia. (Everybody in the family).

c. La tía Maruca. (Aunt Maruca).

4. Según Julia, ¿ cuántos motivos tiene Juana para “estar pasándola mal”? (According to Julia, how many reasons does Juana have to be having a hard time?)

a. Tres motivos: Mario, los padres y resto de la familia. (Three reasons: Mario, the parents and the rest of the family).

b. Dos motivos: El marido Mario y el cocinero. (Two reasons: Her husband Mario and the cook).
c. Ninguno, porque Juana tiene a Mario y al cocinero. (None. Juana has Mario and she also has her cook).

5. ¿ Cual es la relacion de Cristina y Julia? (What is the relationship between Cristina and Julia?)

a) Julia y Cristina son hermanas. (Julia and Cristina are sisters)

b) Julia y Cristina son primas. (Julia and Cristina are cousins).

c) Julia y Cristina son amigas. (Julia and Cristina are friends).

Comprehension Check Items for Texts 4

Listen carefully to the conversation between Angélica and Hécitor and circle the correct answer.

1. ¿Cual es la idea principal de la conversación en el audio? (What is the main idea of the conversation?)

a. La comida mexicana y los jugos naturales del restaurante. (Mexican food and the natural juices offered at the restaurant)

b. El “flirteo” de Héctor con Angélica en el restaurante. (Hector’s flirting with Angelica at the restaurant).

c. Las actividades de Angélica y Héctor en el restaurante. (Hector and Angelica’s activities at the restaurant).

2. Angélica piensa que Héctor… (Angelica thinks that Hector …)
a. Es el mejor empleado del restaurante. (Is the best employee).

b. Es muy respetuoso de los clientes. (Is very respetuos of his clients).

c. No debe trabajar más en el restaurante. (Shouldn’t work at the restaurant anymore).

3. Según Héctor, ¿qué debe tomar Angélica? (According to Hector, what should she be drinking?)

a. Una bebida más fuerte. (A stronger beverage).

b. Un jugo natural más fuerte. (A stronger natural juice).

c. Un burrito más fuerte. (A stronger burrito).

4. ¿Cuál es la verdadera razón (true reason) por la cual Angélica va al restaurante?(What is the true reason of Angelica’s visit to the restaurant?)

a. Porque le gusta la comida mexicana. (Because she likes Mexican food)

b. Porque es la nueva dueña del restaurante. (Because she is the new restaurant owner).

c. Porque cree que Héctor es muy guapo. (Because she thinks that Hector is very good looking)

5. ¿Cuál es la profesión de Héctor? (What is Hector’s profession?)

a) Héctor es el cocinero (cook) del restaurante. (Hector is the restaurant’s cook)

b) Héctor es el mesero (waiter) del restaurante. (Hector is the restaurant’s waiter)

c) Héctor es el dueño (owner) del restaurante. (Hector is the restaurant’s owner)
Comprehension Check Items for Texts 5

Listen carefully to the conversation between Marta and Sergio and circle the correct answer.

1. ¿Cúal es la idea principal de la conversación en el audio? (What is the main idea of the conversation?)
   a. Marta no entiende el sistema educativo en ISU. (Marta doesn’t understand the educational system in the U.S).
   b. A Marta le encanta el sistema educativo en ISU. (Marta loves the educational system in the U.S).
   c. Las clases de economía y negocios en ISU. (The economics and business classes at ISU).

2. ¿Por qué está Marta tan perdida (lost) en ISU? (Why does Marta feel so lost at ISU?)
   a. Porque el idioma le parece muy difícil. (Because the language is very difficult for her).
   b. Porque el sistema de calificaciones es diferente. (Because the grading system is different).
   c. Por ambas cosas. (Both reasons).

3. ¿De qué trata la clase Educación 511? (What is the Education 511 class about?)
   a. Del nuevo sistema educativo en ISU. (It is about the new educational system at ISU).
   b. Del nuevo sistema de calificación en ISU. (It is about the grading system at ISU).
4. ¿ Cual de las siguientes oraciones es correcta? (Which of the following sentences is correct?)

a) Marta y Sergio tomarán una clase de economía juntos. (Marta and Sergio will take a class together)

b) Marta no quiere tomar la misma (same) clase que Sergio. (Marta doesn’t want to take the same class as Sergio’s).

c) Sergio no quiere tomar la misma (same) clase que Marta. (Sergio doesn’t want to take the same class as Marta’s).

5. ¿ Cual es la relación (relationship) entre Marta y Sergio? (What is the relationship between Sergio and Marta?)

a) Novios desde Argentina. (Dating since they were in Argentina).

b) Compañeros de clase. (Classmates)

c) Ninguna. (None).
APPENDIX D

Post-Test Questionnaire

1. Name (first, last): ________________________________ Gender: F  M

2. How many semesters of Spanish did you take in High School? Please circle one.
   None  1  2  3  4  More than 4

3. How many semesters of Spanish have you taken in college (do not include this class)? Please circle one
   None  1  2  3  4  More than 4

4. How would you describe your Spanish language ability? Please, choose only one answer

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<td>I can recognize familiar words and very basic phrases concerning myself, my family and immediate concrete surroundings, when people speak slowly and clearly.</td>
<td>I can understand phrases and the highest frequency vocabulary related to areas of most immediate personal relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local area, employment). I can catch the main point in short, clear, simple messages and announcements.</td>
<td>I can understand the main points of clear standard speech on familiar matters regularly encountered at work, school, leisure, etc. I can understand the main point of many radio or TV programs on current affairs or topics of personal or professional interest when the delivery is relatively slow and clear.</td>
<td>I can understand extended speech and lectures and follow even complex lines of argument provided the topic is reasonably familiar. I can understand most TV news and current affairs programs. I can understand the majority of films in standard dialect.</td>
<td>I can understand extended speech even when it is not clearly structured and when relationships are only implied and not signaled explicitly. I can understand television programs and films without too much effort.</td>
<td>I have no difficulty in understanding any kind of spoken language, whether live or broadcast, even when delivered at fast native speed, provided. I have some time to get familiar with the accent.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

5. Why are you currently taking Spanish 201? Please circle all that apply.
   a. Need to fulfill a foreign language requirement to graduate from ISU.
   b. No need to fulfill a requirement. Just love to learn a foreign language.
   c. No need to fulfill a requirement. Thinks that language learning is important for career purposes.

6. Overall, how would you describe the difficulty level of the listening activities done in class? Please circle
   Very easy   Easy   Normal   Difficult   Very difficult

7. How would you rate the level of difficulty for the following: (1 = very easy / 2 = easy / 3 = normal / 4 = difficult / 5 = very difficult)
a. Understanding the speakers’ accent  
1  2  3  4  5

b. Speed of the conversation.  
1  2  3  4  5

c. Vocabulary.  
1  2  3  4  5

d. Quality of the audios.  
1  2  3  4  5

e. The grammatical constructions/grammar  
1  2  3  4  5

Please briefly explain your choice:
__________________________________________________________________________________

8. Please circle your preferences as a language learner.
   a. I prefer to be exposed to authentic materials even if I am not able to fully comprehend them.
   b. I prefer to be exposed to materials that I fully comprehend, even if they do not resemble authentic situations.

9. Do you have any comments about the listening activities? ______________________________________

Your answers are appreciated! Thank you!
### APPENDIX E

Coded Data For Probit Analysis

| Student's number | A1Q1 | A1Q2 | A1Q3 | A1Q4 | A1Q5 | A2Q1 | A2Q2 | A2Q3 | A2Q4 | A2Q5 | A3Q1 | A3Q2 | A3Q3 | A3Q4 | A3Q5 | A4Q1 | A4Q2 | A4Q3 | A4Q4 | A4Q5 | A5Q1 | A5Q2 | A5Q3 | A5Q4 | A5Q5 | G BA1 | G RA2 | G RA1 | G SA2 | G BA2 | G TA2 | G TA1 | G SA1 | G BA4 | G BA3 | G TA3 | G SA3 | G BA5 | G TA4 | G SA4 | G RA5 | TestG | Testau |
|-----------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
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| 2               | 0        | 0        | 0        | 1        | 1        | 0        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 1        |
| 3               | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 1        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        |
| 4               | 0        | 0        | 0        | 1        | 0        | 0        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 0        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        |
| 5               | 0        | 0        | 0        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 0        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        |
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| 9               | 0        | 0        | 0        | 1        | 0        | 0        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 0        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 0        | 0        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 0        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        |
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| 11              | 0        | 0        | 0        | 1        | 0        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 1        |

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APPENDIX F

Results of Data Analysis Using Probit

Data Analysis: Probit regression (Stata software)

X: Probit comprehension item 1

Independent Variables: redundancy, transparency, signaling, testg, testau, activity, instructor

i.activity _lactivity_1-5 (naturally coded; _lactivity_1 omitted)
i.instructor _linstructo_1-4 (naturally coded; _linstructo_1 omitted)

note: _lactivity_5 dropped because of collinearity
Iteration 0: log likelihood = -199.21876
Iteration 1: log likelihood = -171.06374
Iteration 2: log likelihood = -170.14206
Iteration 3: log likelihood = -170.13132
Iteration 4: log likelihood = -170.13132

Probit regression Number of obs = 349
LR chi2(11) = 58.17
Prob > chi2 = 0.0000
Log likelihood = -170.13132 Pseudo R2 = 0.1460

|                | Coef.  | Std. Err. | z    | P>|z|   | [95% Conf. Interval] |
|----------------|--------|-----------|------|-------|---------------------|
| redundancy     | -.2842325 | .2248607  | -1.26 | 0.206 | -.7249514 ,  .1564865 |
| transparency   | -.0581213 | .2266154  | -0.26 | 0.798 | -.5022792 ,  .3860367 |
| signaling      | .0396744   | .230086   | 0.17  | 0.863 | -.4112858 ,  .4906347 |
| testg          | .0112703   | .0091978  | 1.23  | 0.220 | -.0067571 ,  .0292977 |
| testau         | .0359073   | .0222459  | 1.61  | 0.107 | -.007694 ,  .0795085 |
| _lactivity_2   | 1.596304   | .2603564  | 6.13  | 0.000 | 1.086015 ,  2.106594 |
| _lactivity_3   | .5870511   | .1995648  | 2.94  | 0.003 | .1959113 ,  .9781909 |
| _lactivity_4   | .7537633   | .2069566  | 3.64  | 0.000 | .3481357 ,  1.159391 |
| _linstructo-2  | -.3074257  | .2242488  | -1.37 | 0.170 | -.7469452 ,  .1320938 |
| _linstructo-3  | -.2882121  | .2239696  | -1.29 | 0.198 | -.7271844 ,  .1507602 |
| _linstructo-4  | -.0433591  | .2327626  | -0.19 | 0.851 | -.4997973 ,  .4126152 |
| _cons          | -.6931617  | .4513726  | -1.54 | 0.125 | -.1577836 ,  .1915123 |

. prtab redundancy

probit: Predicted probabilities of positive outcome for item 1

------------------------------
Redundancy | Prediction
----------|----------
0 | 0.8012
1 | 0.7129
------------------------------

prtab transparency
probit: Predicted probabilities of positive outcome for item 1

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probit: Predicted probabilities of positive outcome for item 1

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lincom redundancy-transparency

(1) redundancy - transparency = 0

|        | Coef. | Std. Err. | z    | P>|z|  | [95% Conf. Interval] |
|--------|-------|-----------|------|------|----------------------|
| item 1 |       |           |      |      |                      |
| (1)    | -0.2261112 | 0.2215448 | -1.02 | 0.307 | -0.6603311 0.2081087 |

lincom redundancy-signaling

(1) redundancy - signaling = 0

|        | Coef. | Std. Err. | z    | P>|z|  | [95% Conf. Interval] |
|--------|-------|-----------|------|------|----------------------|
| item 1 |       |           |      |      |                      |
| (1)    | -0.3239069 | 0.220915 | -1.47 | 0.143 | -0.7568923 0.1090784 |

lincom transparency-signaling

(1) transparency - signaling = 0

|        | Coef. | Std. Err. | z    | P>|z|  | [95% Conf. Interval] |
|--------|-------|-----------|------|------|----------------------|
| item 1 |       |           |      |      |                      |
| (1)    | -0.0977957 | 0.2270789 | -0.43 | 0.667 | -0.5428621 0.3472707 |

X: Probit comprehension item 2

Independent Variables: redundancy, transparency, signaling, testg, testau, activity, instructor
i.activity _Iactivity_1-5 (naturally coded; _Iactivity_1 omitted)
i.instructor _Iinstructo_1-4  (naturally coded; _Iinstructo_1 omitted)

note: _lactivity_5 dropped because of collinearity
Iteration 0: log likelihood = -184.16892
Iteration 1: log likelihood = -166.3236
Iteration 2: log likelihood = -166.08659
Iteration 3: log likelihood = -166.08632

Probit regression
Number of obs = 349
LR chi2(11) = 36.17
Prob > chi2 = 0.0002
Log likelihood = -166.08632
Pseudo R2 = 0.0982

------------------------------------------------------------------
item 2 |      Coef.   Std. Err.     z  P>|z|   [95% Conf. Interval]
------------------------------------------------------------------
redundancy |   .1752177   .2393164  0.73  0.464   -.2938338    .6442691
transparency |  -.1656858   .226948  -0.73  0.465   -.6104958    .2791242
signaling |   .4597649   .2191965   2.10  0.036   -.8893821    1.701817
              testg |   .0204669   .0089711  2.28  0.023    .0033935    .0375398
              testau |   .015839    .0199786  0.79  0.428   -.0233183    .0549963
              _lactivity_2 | -.463772   .2402772  -1.93  0.054   -.9347067     .0071268
              _lactivity_3 |  -.3795741   .2458872  -1.54  0.123   -.8615042    .1023559
              _lactivity_4 |  -.8585058   .2335004  -3.68  0.000   -1.316158   -.4008535
              _linstruct~2 |  -.2988339   .2174253  -1.37  0.169   -.7249797    .1373119
              _linstruct~3 |   .1273455   .2292866   0.56  0.579   -.3220479    .5763790
              _linstruct~4 |   .0337394   .2293485   0.15  0.883   -.4157754    .4832542
              _cons |   .3921519   .471484  0.83  0.406   -.5319397    1.316244
------------------------------------------------------------------

. prtab redundancy

probit: Predicted probabilities of positive outcome for item 2

Redundancy  |  Prediction
--------------+----------------
        0  | 0.7902
        1  | 0.8370
--------------

. prtab transparency

probit: Predicted probabilities of positive outcome for item 2

Transparency  |  Prediction
--------------+----------------
        0  | 0.8139
        1  | 0.7663
--------------

. prtab signaling
probit: Predicted probabilities of positive outcome for item 2

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.lincom redundancy-transparency

(1) redundancy - transparency = 0

| item 2 | Coef. | Std. Err. | z    | P>|z| | [95% Conf. Interval] |
|--------|-------|-----------|------|-----|---------------------|
| (1)    | .3409035 | .2340899  | 1.46 | 0.145 | -.1179043 -.7997112 |

.lincom redundancy-signaling

(1) redundancy - signaling = 0

| item 2 | Coef. | Std. Err. | z    | P>|z| | [95% Conf. Interval] |
|--------|-------|-----------|------|-----|---------------------|
| (1)    | .6349825 | .2250607  | 2.82 | 0.005 | .1938716 1.076093 |

.lincom transparency-signaling

(1) transparency - signaling = 0

| question2 | Coef. | Std. Err. | z    | P>|z| | [95% Conf. Interval] |
|-----------|-------|-----------|------|-----|---------------------|
| (1)      | .2940791 | .2123368  | 1.38 | 0.166 | -.1220934 .7102515 |

.xi: Probit comprehension item 3

Independent variables: redundancy, transparency, signaling, testg, testau, activity, instructor
i.activity _Iactivity_1-5 (naturally coded; _Iactivity_1 omitted)
i.instructor _Iinstructo_1-4 (naturally coded; _Iinstructo_1 omitted)

note: _Iactivity_5 dropped because of collinearity
Iteration 0:log likelihood = -238.73397
Iteration 1:log likelihood = -204.23794
Iteration 2:log likelihood = -202.9409
Iteration 3:log likelihood = -202.92823
Iteration 4:log likelihood = -202.92823
Probit regression

Number of obs = 349
LR chi2(11)    = 71.61
Prob > chi2    = 0.0000
Log likelihood = -202.92823  Pseudo R2    = 0.1500

------------------------------------------------------------------------------
            item 3 |      Coef.   Std. Err.      z    P>|z|     [95% Conf. Interval]
-------------+-----------------------------------------------------------------
      redundancy |   .3236238   .2096268     1.54   0.123      -.0872373    .7344848
      transparency |   .366887   .2072193     1.77   0.077      -.0392554    .7730294
        signaling |   .1634183   .2082199     0.78   0.433     -.2446852    .5715218
        testg |   .0041846   .0082514     0.51   0.612     -.0119878    .0203570
        testau |   .0210237   .0193922     1.08   0.278     -.0169843    .0590316
     _Iactivity_2 |   .0537887   .1917791     0.28   0.779     -.3220914    .4296688
     _Iactivity_3 |   .0058744   .2095571     0.03   0.976     -.3708189    .3825676
     _Iactivity_4 |   1.552964   .2399359     6.47   0.000      1.082698    2.02323
     _Iinstruct~2 |  -.1106084   .2036244    -0.55   0.585     -.5072313    .2860146
     _Iinstruct~3 |   .0572977   .2095571     0.27   0.785     -.3534267    .4680221
     _Iinstruct~4 |   .0021548   .2089427     0.01   0.992     -.4073654    .411675
          _cons |  -.8067978   .4245823    -1.90   0.057      1.638964    .0253682
-------------+-----------------------------------------------------------------

.prtab redundancy

probit: Predicted probabilities of positive outcome for item 3

-------------------------------------------------------------
Redundancy | Prediction
-------------+------------------------------------------
      0     | 0.5680
      1     | 0.6897
-------------------------------------------------------------

.prtab transparency

probit: Predicted probabilities of positive outcome for item 3

-------------------------------------------------------------
Transparency | Prediction
-------------+------------------------------------------
      0     | 0.5641
      1     | 0.7014
-------------------------------------------------------------

.prtab signaling

probit: Predicted probabilities of positive outcome for item 3

-------------------------------------------------------------
Signaling | Prediction
-------------+------------------------------------------
      0     | 0.5838

. lincom redundancy-transparency
(1) redundancy - transparency = 0

| item 3 | Coef.  | Std. Err. | z     | P>|z|  | [95% Conf. Interval] |
|--------|--------|-----------|-------|-------|---------------------|
| (1)    | -0.0432632 | 0.2064737 | -0.21 | 0.834 | -0.4479441 - 0.3614177 |

. lincom redundancy-signaling
(1) redundancy - signaling = 0

| item 3 | Coef.  | Std. Err. | z     | P>|z|  | [95% Conf. Interval] |
|--------|--------|-----------|-------|-------|---------------------|
| (1)    | 0.1602055  | 0.2091412 | 0.77  | 0.444 | -0.2497038 - 0.5701147 |

. lincom transparency-signaling
(1) transparency - signaling = 0

| item 3 | Coef.  | Std. Err. | z     | P>|z|  | [95% Conf. Interval] |
|--------|--------|-----------|-------|-------|---------------------|
| (1)    | 0.2034687  | 0.2063681 | 0.99  | 0.324 | -0.2010054 - 0.6079428 |

. xi: Probit comprehension item 4

Independent variables: redundancy, transparency, signaling, testg, testau, activity, instructor
i.activity _Iactivity_1-5 (naturally coded; _Iactivity_1 omitted)
i.instructor _Iinstructor_1-4 (naturally coded; _Iinstructor_1 omitted)

note: _Iactivity_5 dropped because of collinearity
Iteration 0:log likelihood = -231.94353
Iteration 1:log likelihood = -177.91866
Iteration 2:log likelihood = -173.44381
Iteration 3:log likelihood = -173.0951
Iteration 4:log likelihood = -173.08984
Iteration 5:log likelihood = -173.08983

Probit regression
Number of obs = 349
LR chi2(11) = 117.71
Prob > chi2 = 0.0000
Log likelihood = -173.08983 Pseudo R2 = 0.2537

--------------------------------------------------------------------------------
| item 4 | Coef.  | Std. Err. | z     | P>|z| | [95% Conf. Interval] |
|--------|--------|-----------|-------|-------|-----------------------|
| redundancy | -0.0273305 | .226295  | -0.12 | 0.904 | -.4708605 -.4161995 |
| transparency | .1211491 | .2258559 | 0.54  | 0.592 | -.3215204 .5638186 |
| signaling   | .1757877 | .2323285 | 0.76  | 0.449 | -.2795678 .6311433 |
| testg      | .0211643 | .009032  | 2.34  | 0.019 | .0034619 .0388667 |
| testau     | .0025281 | .009032  | 0.28  | 0.781 | -.0382937 .0433499 |
| _Iactivity_2 | 2.61746  | .3341594 | 7.83  | 0.000 | 1.96252  3.272401 |
| _Iactivity_3 | 0.6913573 | .199491  | 3.47  | 0.001 | .3003622 1.082352 |
| _Iactivity_4 | .8597664 | .202673  | 4.24  | 0.000 | .4625346 1.256998 |
| _instruc~2  | .4762857 | .2272857 | 2.10  | 0.036 | .0308139 .9217575 |
| _instruc~3  | .4889628 | .2318479 | 2.11  | 0.035 | .0345492 .9433763 |
| _instruc~4  | .0898902 | .2275436 | 0.40  | 0.693 | -.3560871 .5358676 |
| _cons       | -1.735872| .4810635 | -3.61 | 0.000 | -2.678739 -.7930048 |

```
. prtab redundancy
probit: Predicted probabilities of positive outcome for item 4

----------------------------------------
Redundancy | Prediction
----------------------------------------
0 | 0.6999
1 | 0.6903
----------------------------------------

. prtab transparency
probit: Predicted probabilities of positive outcome for item 4

----------------------------------------
Transparency | Prediction
----------------------------------------
0 | 0.6869
1 | 0.7284
----------------------------------------

. prtab signaling
probit: Predicted probabilities of positive outcome for item 4

----------------------------------------
Signaling | Prediction
----------------------------------------
0 | 0.6818
1 | 0.7417
----------------------------------------

. lincom redundancy-transparency
(1) redundancy - transparency = 0
item 4    |      Coef.   Std. Err.       z    P>|z|     [95% Conf. Interval]
-------------
   (1)    |  -0.1484796   .2264765  -0.66   0.512   -0.5923653    .2954061

.    lincom redundancy-signaling
(1)redundancy - signaling = 0

item 4    |      Coef.   Std. Err.       z    P>|z|     [95% Conf. Interval]
-------------
   (1)    |  -0.2031182   .2328713  -0.87   0.383   -0.6595376    .2533011

.    lincom transparency-signaling
(1)transparency - signaling = 0

.    xi: Probit comprehension item 5
Independent variables: redundancy, transparency, signaling, testg, testau, activity, instructor
i.activity       _Iactivity_1-5    (naturally coded; _Iactivity_1 omitted)
i.instructor     _Iinstructo_1-4    (naturally coded; _Iinstructo_1 omitted)

note: _Iactivity_5 dropped because of collinearity
Iteration 0:log likelihood = -181.61139
Iteration 1:log likelihood = -145.85464
Iteration 2:log likelihood = -145.09965
Iteration 3:log likelihood = -145.0941
Iteration 4:log likelihood = -145.0941

Probit regression
Number of obs   = 349
LR chi2(11)     = 73.03
Prob > chi2     = 0.0000
Log likelihood  = -145.0941     Pseudo R2      = 0.2011

item 5    |      Coef.   Std. Err.       z    P>|z|     [95% Conf. Interval]
-------------
     redundancy |  0.5122099   .2596744    1.97   0.049   0.0032575    1.021162
     transparency|  -0.0084754   .2272928  -0.04   0.970   -0.4539611   .4370104
     signaling  |  0.2027026   .2341070   0.87   0.387   -0.2561386   .6615439
     testg      |  0.020069    .0099226   2.02   0.043   -0.006212    .0395169
     testau     |  0.0324772   .0238178   1.36   0.173   -0.0142049   .0791593
     _lactivity_2 |  0.1088605   .2610392   0.42   0.677   -0.402767    .6204879
     _lactivity_3 | -1.240141    .2264675  -5.48   0.000   -1.684009   -.796273
. prtab redundancy

probit: Predicted probabilities of positive outcome for item 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Redundancy</th>
<th>Prediction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.7963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.9100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

. prtab transparency

probit: Predicted probabilities of positive outcome for item 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transparency</th>
<th>Prediction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.8314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.8292</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

. prtab signaling

probit: Predicted probabilities of positive outcome for item 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signaling</th>
<th>Prediction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.8176</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.8663</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

. lincom redundancy-transparency

(1) redundancy - transparency = 0

| item 5 | Coef. | Std. Err. | z     | P>|z|  | [95% Conf. Interval] |
|--------|-------|-----------|-------|------|----------------------|
| (1)    | 0.5206852 | .2559201  | 2.03  | 0.042 | .0190911  1.022279  |

. lincom redundancy-signaling

(1) redundancy - signaling = 0
| item 5 | Coef. | Std. Err. | z   | P>|z| | [95% Conf. Interval] |
|--------|-------|-----------|-----|------|---------------------|
| (1)    | 0.3095072 | 0.261493 | 1.18 | 0.237 | -0.2030097 to 0.8220241 |

`lincom transparency - signaling`

(1) transparency - signaling = 0

| item 5 | Coef. | Std. Err. | z   | P>|z| | [95% Conf. Interval] |
|--------|-------|-----------|-----|------|---------------------|
| (1)    | -0.211178  | 0.2326403 | -0.91 | 0.364 | -0.6671445 to 0.2447885 |
APPENDIX G

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Title of Study: Assisting the intermediate level language
listener through the use of elaborated texts

Investigators: Marta Vessoni de Lence/ Dr. Cristina Pardo Ballester

Dear student,

This is a research study assessing ways to better assist intermediate level language learners with listening comprehension in the target language. In order to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of different types of input modifications on intermediate level language learners’ listening comprehension of modified audios, (i.e., creation of audios where repetition of main idea is inserted) I will need your collaboration. Please take your time in deciding if you would like to participate. Please feel free to ask questions at any time.

You are invited to participate in this study because you are an intermediate level Spanish learner enrolled in one of the Spanish courses offered at ISU and you are the most appropriate person to evaluate the effectiveness of modified audios in aiding students’ listening comprehension of texts in Spanish.

If you agree to participate in this study, your participation in listening activities is needed throughout the Fall 2009 semester. This study is done during class time and it will not take time outside your Spanish class to be completed. During the study you may expect the following study procedures to be followed: you will be asked to listen to a modified or elaborated audio in Spanish and to answer to five multiple choice questions to check your comprehension of the material.

Each listening activity will address the same topic being studied in the chapter of your textbook. Thus, most of the vocabulary, context and grammar will be familiar to you. However, these activities are informal conversations between native speakers of Spanish to simulate authentic situations as closely as possible.

It is hoped that the information gained in this study will benefit ISU as well as the field of second language learning and teaching by providing valuable information into the creation of elaborative or modified aural text (audios) and the effects of these modifications on
intermediate level language learners' listening comprehension. The results of this study will also benefit future students in the intermediate Spanish program. You will also benefit from participating in this project by using the listening activities provided in this project as extra listening practice as well as getting feedback on how you may improve your listening comprehension skills after the project is done.

You will not have any costs from participating in this study. You will not be compensated for participating in this study.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or leave the study at any time. Please, note that performance in this study will not affect your grade in the course. If you decide to not participate in the study or leave the study early, it will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. We hope you are willing to permit us to use your listening comprehension tasks’ results as part of this study.

Records identifying participants will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by applicable laws and regulations and will not be made publicly available. However, federal government regulatory agencies, auditing departments of Iowa State University, and the Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews and approves human subject research studies) may inspect and/or copy your records for quality assurance and data analysis. These records may contain private information.

To ensure confidentiality to the extent permitted by law, the following measures will be taken: subjects will be assigned a unique code and letter and these will be used on forms instead of their name. The principal investigator will have access to the study records and they will be kept confidential by placing them in a locked filing cabinet. The data will be retained for ten years before destruction. If the results are published, your identity will remain confidential.

You are encouraged to ask questions at any time during this study. If you are willing to participate and permit us to use your listening comprehension activities results, please sign the permission form below. Your name will not be used in any report of the research.

*For further information about the study contact:

Marta Vessoni de Lence        Cristina Pardo Ballester
Graduate Teaching Assistant of Spanish Assistant Professor of Spanish Linguistics
Coordinator, Lower Division Spanish Language
• If you have any questions about the rights of research subjects or research-related injury, please contact the IRB Administrator, (515) 294-4566, IRB@iastate.edu, or Director, (515) 294-3115, Office of Research Assurances, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa 50011.

PARTICIPANT SIGNATURE

Your signature indicates that you voluntarily agree to participate in this study, that the study has been explained to you, that you have been given the time to read the document and that your questions have been satisfactorily answered. You will receive a copy of the written informed consent prior to your participation in the study.

I understand that my listening tasks results may be used for research purposes. I understand that my name will not be used in reports for this study.

Participant’s Name (printed) ________________________________

____________________

(Participant signature)
I certify that the participant has been given adequate time to read and learn about the study and all of their questions have been answered. It is my opinion that the participant understands the purpose, risks, benefits and the procedures that will be followed in this study and has voluntarily agreed to participate.

________________________   _______________________
(Signature of Person Obtaining  (Date)
Informed Consent)
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Rost, M. (2002). Teaching and researching listening. Harlow, UK: Pearson Education.


Yano, Y., Long, M. H., & Ross, S. (1994). The effects of simplified and elaborated texts on...
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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I am indebted to many of my Teaching Assistant colleagues and faculty, who have contributed their time and effort to help with the audio recording of the authentic texts used in this research: Adolfo Carrillo-Cabello, Angelica Reina, Héctor Bombiella Medina, Dr. Cristina Pardo Ballester, Dr. Julia Dominguez and Dr. Elisa Rizo. I want to thank them for their wonderful voices, their enthusiasm, support and creativity.

Special thanks go to my dear friend Adolfo Carrillo-Cabello for all of his academic and emotional support, advice and help. I would also like to thank Ruslan Surovov for his kind and helpful assistance with editing.

I am thankful to Dr. Cristina Pardo Ballester, Assistant Professor and supervisor of the lower and intermediate level Spanish classes at Iowa State University, for allowing me to conduct this study in this institution and for her support during this study.

I owe my deepest gratitude to my co-major professor, Dr. Julio Rodriguez, for his encouragement, guidance, enthusiastic support, and generous help from the initial to the final level of this research study. I would have been lost without his great ideas and invaluable advice.

I would also like to thank my thesis committee members, Dr. Barbara Schwarte, Dr. Marcia Rosenbusch and Dr. Kathy Leonard for their support and helpful feedback on the topic.

Finally, special thanks go to my family. Thank you to my children, Tomas and Sofia, for their unconditional love and sweet encouragement throughout this entire journey. Thank you to my husband Sergio for his love, patience, emotional support and wise advice as well as for
the long hours he spent teaching me about Probit regressions. But most importantly, I thank him for believing in me! To my children and husband, I dedicate this thesis.