

# The role of authentic materials for listening comprehension in the teaching of German as an additional language: a proposal for a didactic sequence for beginner classes based on a short film

[O papel de materiais autênticos para a compreensão auditiva no ensino do alemão como língua adicional: uma proposta de sequência didática para turmas iniciais a partir de um curta-metragem]

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**Abstract:** This article presents a proposal for a didactic sequence (DS) for listening comprehension in the teaching of German as an Additional Language (GAL) in beginner classes based on an authentic text – the short film *Milch & Zucker* (2018) –, which possesses essential features for the development of the proposed activities: accessible language; short duration; audiovisual inputs; a theme aligned with contextualized social practices; and free access on the internet. With the focus on describing the development of a DS composed of three phases, Introduction, Elaboration, and Production, suggested by Ende *et al.* (2013), this article presents reflections on textual choice and teaching strategies for conducting the proposed activities. The DS presented can be adapted to different textual genres and teaching contexts with the aim of learning that surpasses a structural sphere of language, including students and teachers in discursive interactions. Finally, the aim was to provide an alternative for listening comprehension activities, which are usually limited to textbook audios aimed at the international market (especially at initial levels), as well as to encourage greater motivation and participation of students in the process of learning German (AQUINO, FERREIRA 2023; BIMMEL, RAMPILLON 2000).

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**Keywords:** German as an Additional Language; authentic materials; listening comprehension; didactic sequence; short films (Kurzfilm)

**Resumo:** O presente artigo apresenta uma proposta de sequência didática (SD) para a compreensão auditiva no ensino de Alemão como Língua Adicional (ALA) em turmas iniciais a partir de um texto autêntico – o curta-metragem Milch & Zucker (2018) –, o qual apresenta características essenciais para o desenvolvimento das atividades propostas: linguagem acessível; curta duração; insumos audiovisuais; tema alinhado dentro de práticas sociais contextualizadas; e acesso gratuito na internet. Com enfoque em descrever a elaboração de uma SD composta pelas três fases Introdução, Elaboração e Produção, sugeridas por Ende et al. (2013), este artigo apresenta reflexões relativas à escolha textual e às estratégias de ensino para a condução das atividades propostas. A SD apresentada pode ser adaptada para diferentes gêneros textuais e contextos de ensino que tenham o objetivo de uma aprendizagem que ultrapasse a esfera estrutural da língua, incluindo estudantes e professoras nas interações discursivas. Por fim, buscou-se proporcionar uma alternativa para atividades de compreensão auditiva, geralmente limitadas aos áudios dos livros didáticos voltados para o mercado internacional (especialmente em níveis iniciais), assim como incentivar uma maior motivação e participação das estudantes no processo de aprendizagem de alemão (AQUINO, FERREIRA 2023; BIMMEL, RAMPILLON 2000).

**Palavras-chave:** Alemão como Língua Adicional; materiais autênticos; compreensão auditiva; sequência didática; curtas-metragens (Kurzfilm)

## 1 Introduction<sup>3</sup>

Given Berend's postulate that "it is no secret that spoken German is an extremely diverse and varied language"<sup>4</sup> (BEREND 2009: 215), we question in this article the use of audios from global German as an Additional Language (GAL)<sup>5</sup> textbooks as the only source for practicing listening comprehension in beginner classes. We consider these materials not to be capable of bringing the students closer to the language in its uses and contexts, which are outside the sphere of highly didactic texts, i.e., developed for teaching purposes (AQUINO, CHERCHIGLIA 2021). Nevertheless, it is not just a dichotomy between

<sup>3</sup> This article was developed with the support of the CAPES Master's Degree Scholarship (process 88887.940186/2024-00).

<sup>4</sup> Our translation from the original: *Es ist kein Geheimnis, dass das gesprochene Deutsch eine äußerst vielfältige und variantreiche Sprache ist.*

<sup>5</sup> We chose the term additional language (AL) over foreign language (FL) because, while the latter indicates that the learning took place outside of social interactions between speakers of the target language, AL refers to language as a resource for participation in social practices. The term LA is associated with the use of a language as a means of integration into everyday life and social interactions, taking into account the other languages or varieties that make up the learners' linguistic repertoire (SCHLATTER, GARCEZ 2009). In the field of German teaching, the term *DaF*, *Deutsch als Fremdsprache* (German as a Foreign Language), has been used since the 1970s, which refers to teaching from a European perspective. We therefore believe that the term German as an additional language tends to broaden the prospects for learning the language in Brazil.

*Hochdeutsch* and informal or dialectal language, as publishers sometimes make an effort to incorporate elements that bring these texts closer to the oral and informal world, as we can see in the excerpt below:

Nele: Du Marco, mach doch bitte das Radio lauter.

Marco: Was gibt es denn Interessantes?

Nele: Jetzt kommen die Hörergrüße aus unserer Stadt, also Geburtstagsgrüße und andere Glückwünsche — das finde ich total interessant. Man erfährt viel Neues.

Marco: Die Hörergrüße? Aber du kennst die Leute doch nicht.

Nele: Wer sagt denn das? Letzten Monat habe ich im Radio erfahren, dass meine Schulfreundin Pia schon ihr zweites Kind bekommen hat. Da habe ich sie sofort angerufen. Sie hat sich sehr gefreut

Marco: Na gut ... Dann wollen wir mal hören, wer heute etwas feiert. (BRAUN ET AL. 2016: 194).

The transcription of the audio above belongs to the textbook *DaF kompakt neu A2* (BRAUN ET AL. 2016) and presents orality marks, such as modal particles (e.g., *doch*, *denn*, *mal*) and the adverb *total*. However, including these elements doesn't prevent the text from sounding artificial, creating a gap between the language presented by the material and that of authentic texts. Besides the lack of dialogue contextualization and the focus on specific grammatical and lexical structures, it is noticeable that the **speech's** speed, the voice acting, and sound effects each play an important role in the perception of the lack of authenticity. In the German Language (*Língua Alemã*) disciplines at the Letras - Alemão at USP, this textbook was adopted until 2024, and like many other GAL materials, it was produced by a German publisher for the international market, essentially presenting didactic and inauthentic texts (AQUINO, CHERCHIGLIA 2021). From the author's experience, the textbook *DaF kompakt neu* is welcomed very strangely by students, who don't identify themselves with the themes, images, or activities and, as a result, don't feel motivated by the materials. Numerous studies relate this discomfort to the inauthenticity of the texts and the lack of representation (ANRANTES 2018; UPHOFF 2009; AQUINO, FERREIRA 2023). Therefore, it is up to teachers to select materials and prepare complementary activities that spark the student's interest and provide examples of authentic language (formal or informal), such as films, tv shows, podcasts, advertisements, and songs (AQUINO 2021: 25).

According to Maijala (2007: 548), even with the effort to integrate the spoken language of the additional language countries, textbooks still show a big deficiency when it comes to balancing spontaneity with the grammar and vocabulary of a specific level. Although they have many advantages for German language teaching, international textbooks don't have to be the only input for listening comprehension in the classroom. In this regard, we agree with Aquino and Cherchiglia (2021) when they advocate an integration between working with didactic texts (e.g., from the textbook) and those from authentic contexts (not produced for teaching). Adapting and adjusting materials also makes it possible for students and teachers to take a more active and critical approach and, consequently, to value local needs.

The use of authentic materials for listening comprehension has been gaining attention since the communicative approach during the 1970s, but the definition of the term “authentic” is still imprecise (cf. ANDRADE E SILVA 2016, 2017). Brown and Menasche (2010: 36) define an authentic text as one created for a communicative context outside of language teaching, which, in its application in the classroom, doesn't show any alterations to its grammatical structure, vocabulary, or elements that characterize its textual genre. Between the duality of authenticity and non-authenticity, there are also adapted and semi-authentic texts. In this article, we consider to be authentic texts which have been produced outside the context of language teaching, i.e., without didactization (repetitions, adaptations, etc.).

Just like Braun (2008: 72), we believe that listening is, above all, an experience that goes beyond understanding word for word. In this way, working with non-didactic texts may represent a tool to help prepare students to handle the German language in authentic interactions, inside and outside the classroom.

We present in this article a proposal for a didactic sequence (DS) using the short film (*Kurzfilm*) *Milch & Zucker* (2018) with the aim of aiding the work of reception and production of authentic oral texts for beginner classes, with activities of Introduction, Elaboration, and Production (ENDE ET AL. 2013). The chosen short film includes elements of spoken language, and the activities focus on content rather than form. We therefore believe that the proposed DS can be used as support material for students and teachers, with the possibility of adapting it to different GAL teaching contexts, from the choice of material to the students' subsequent productions.

In the following sections, we present a brief theoretical overview of the role of authenticity and of listening and audiovisual comprehension in GAL teaching. In the third section, we show the materials and methods used to design and prepare the DS, which will be discussed in more detail in the fourth section. Finally, in the conclusion, we present some reflections on this work.

## 2 Theoretical background

Below, we will discuss the roles and definitions of authenticity and participation in the context of GAL, as well as the main characteristics of listening and audiovisual comprehension, in order to explain the contexts that guided the development of the DS. To conclude the theoretical discussion, we give a brief presentation of what we consider to be a didactic sequence.

### 2.1 Authenticity and participation in discourse communities

When it comes to the definition of authenticity, Andrade e Silva (2017) points out that the materials which are mostly considered to be authentic are those without any modification for teaching purposes, however, there are other studies, such as Neuner, Krüger and Grewer (1981) and Edelhoff (1985) that cover authenticity for adapted texts, for example with grammatical-lexical simplification or editing of the text. Brown and Menasche (2010) list five degrees of material authenticity: (1) Genuine input authenticity - texts created in a real communication context, not designed for language teaching; (2) Altered input authenticity - input with visual edits, segmentation or commentary, but retaining grammar and meaning; (3) Adapted input authenticity - changes in structure and/or vocabulary; (4) Simulated input authenticity - created for language teaching, but attempting to simulate authenticity; (5) Inauthenticity - texts created for the classroom with no intention of appearing authentic.

Based on the classifications of Brown and Menasche (2010), Andrade e Silva (2016: 36) suggests her own definitions and defines an authentic text as:

[...] a text created for a context of communication between speakers external to teaching, but used in foreign language teaching without alterations to its grammatical structure, vocabulary, or elements that characterize its textual genre - corresponding to Brown and Menasche's types of input 1 and 2.<sup>6</sup>

In this paper, we consider authentic texts to be those produced for consumption outside of teaching, i.e., those that have not been developed or adapted with didactic intentions. Regarding the use of authentic texts in GAL teaching, it can be said that even with the current discussions of the “Post-Method” era, which moves away from the use of specific teaching approaches, most traditional textbooks are still strongly influenced by the communicative approach, seeking to simulate authentic interactions in order to adapt grammar and vocabulary (MAIJALA 2007). However, we can see nowadays an intensification of teachers and researchers concerned with selecting materials based on an analysis of the local context and needs of the students (BROWN 2007; LONG 2009; FUNK 2010; KLIPPEL 2016; AQUINO, FERREIRA 2023). The material from DDL 5 (RÖSLER, WÜRFEL 2014), for example, indicate that teachers can make necessary changes to the material to suit their group, thus making it possible to introduce authentic texts as a complement to the textbook.

In the context of teaching for specific purposes, Weissenberg (2012: 6-11) argues that, when designing the curriculum and lessons, teachers should ask themselves the questions “How?”, “What?” and “Why?”, to make it possible to achieve the learners' professional goals. In the German Language course (*Letras - Alemão*) at USP - whose specific aim is to train teachers and researchers - several projects have been developed with this concern, such as The Consultancy Project (*Projeto de Consultoria*), in which students collaborated with the teacher and tutors to develop activities aimed at raising awareness about learning strategies (AQUINO ET AL. 2022); as well as a survey of students' difficulties in their transition between the German language and literature subjects, discussing possible adaptations for the German major (UPHOFF, DEBIA 2017). Both projects seek diagnoses in collaboration with the students in order to offer possible paths for their needs and interests in a language course.

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<sup>6</sup> Our translation from the original: [...] texto criado para um contexto de comunicação entre falantes externo ao ensino, mas empregado no ensino da língua estrangeira sem alterações em sua estrutura gramatical, vocabulário ou elementos que caracterizem seu gênero textual - corresponde aos tipos de insumo 1 e 2 de Brown e Menasche.

Despite the acknowledged importance of working with complementary and authentic materials in GAL, there is little discussion about the impact on the teachers' work effort, where compensation often does not include lesson preparation time. However, it is clear that it can be extremely exhausting to constantly adapt and look for new materials, and not only that, the difficulty of finding references with relevant themes for each class. With regard to the use of authentic materials, it is still difficult to find a harmony between the students' linguistic level and the text. In this sense, we stress the importance of studies that present objective didactic proposals that encourage working with authentic texts in GAL.

Another concept related to authenticity is that of participation, which can be defined as the act of promoting greater interlocation between students and the discourses that circulate in target language communities (ANDRADE E SILVA 2021). However, in this article, we consider it important not only to increase contact with the additional language community, but also to enable Brazilian students to use the language in a contextualized way. Therefore, the aim of the activities using these authentic materials needs to be taken into account so that it is possible to provide active and contextualized participation, in which the students have something to say about the real world.

In the context of teaching German in the Letras course at USP, the curriculum allows students to have contact with Language, Literature, Linguistics, and Translation subjects, which provide varied interactions with authentic, semi-authentic, and inauthentic materials. In this sense, the literary works prescribed in the curriculum would be an example of a gateway to discourses from German-speaking discourse communities. However, contact with the language outside the classroom, i.e., starting from the student herself and not related to the course curriculum, is still a major challenge, but one which, due to its importance for participation, motivation, and learning, should be increasingly encouraged. As far as listening comprehension is concerned, the teacher's role in introducing the texts is even more important, since they otherwise will rarely be part of the course curriculum or the students' daily lives.

To enable students to have conscious contact with authentic materials, the internet is an important tool for accessing audiovisual texts of different themes, forms of language, and lengths. In this study, we chose to develop a didactic sequence using the short film

*Milch & Zucker* (2018)<sup>7</sup> taken from the YouTube platform. We believe that working with short films can provide a space for participation both in the classroom and independently in the search for new audiovisual materials for GAL learning.

## 2.2 Listening and audiovisual comprehension in GAL

To achieve adequate listening comprehension, it is important to pay attention to the relationship between prior knowledge (*Vorwissen*) and new information, in order to form a mental image (*ein mentales Abbild*) of the text presented, which indicates an active role for the students (SOLMECKE 2010). According to Solmecke (2003), this process is a kind of “mental game”, which is influenced by three aspects: (i) the goal of comprehension; (ii) the focus of reading; (iii) the subjectivity and interpretation of the listener. According to Braun (2008), one of the difficulties when listening in AL is (i) the lack of a goal for this task. In this sense, it is essential to carry out activities to prepare for the reception of the text, allowing learners to achieve increasingly greater listening confidence. According to the author, there are three listening comprehension styles: (a) selective (*selegierend*), (b) superficial (*kursorisch*), and (c) intensive/total (*intensiv/total*). These styles can be practiced through didactic activities. For the first type of comprehension, texts in which it is possible to distinguish specific information are recommended. The second tends to be more effective with simplified texts that give an overview of the content, such as a dialog (BRAUN 2008).

From what has been discussed so far, there are not many differences between reading and listening comprehension, however, the latter has unique characteristics that must be taken into account in listening tasks in GAL: the speed of speech; pronunciation characteristics; background noises; the expression of emotions from verbal expressions; and gestures (RÖSLER 2012). As discussed above, the audio dialogues in the book *DaF kompakt neu A2* (BRAUN ET AL. 2016) show traits of didactic texts: its recorded in a studio; text adapted to certain levels of knowledge; carefully selected background noises to resemble, for example, a telephone conversation; reduced speech rate; erasure of regional elements; limited vocabulary; and themes aimed at training grammatical-lexical issues. In addition, these texts often have the main objective of finding answers to

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<sup>7</sup> Access at: <https://youtu.be/YauVQntAa8>



alternative exercises, testing listening comprehension on a one-off basis. In this sense, these activities do not explore a contextualized experience that involves a diversity of senses and perceptions.

We agree with Solmecke (1993) when she argues that students, even beginners, are critical receivers of the texts they are confronted with, and are often negatively affected by the lack of authenticity offered by textbook audios aimed at the international market. In addition to motivation and participation, contact with any language only through classes and textbooks means that the students' linguistic experience outside of an immersion context is too limited. After all, marks of orality, regional varieties, and dialects are part of the linguistic reality of all languages and need to be taken into account in teaching so as not to exclude active and contextualized participation in language use.

When it comes to audiovisual comprehension, images and context play a significant role in its reception, since, in addition to linguistic information, students need to take into account their perceptions based on the relationship of meaning presented by the images, which in many cases ends up making the comprehension of more complex linguistic structures a lot easier (BILYTSKA 2017). Thus, when discussing the difficulty in achieving linguistic harmony between the text and the students' level of knowledge, the use of audiovisual texts can represent a significant tool for comprehension in GAL. When using these texts, one must therefore take into account perceptions based on a semiotic construction woven by a series of codes that operate simultaneously to produce meaning, which can be transmitted through acoustic means and visual channels (CHAUME 2013; AQUINO 2023).

Furthermore, we believe that the use of audiovisual materials, such as films, is very suitable for GAL teaching, as it links linguistic, sociocultural, historical, and political knowledge (CRESPO, ROZENFELD 2018; AQUINO 2023). However, working effectively with films in initial classes is a challenge due to their long duration, complex language, and the elaboration of didactic activities that accompany the practice. Therefore, we suggest working with videos or short films taken from YouTube.

## 2.3 Didactic sequences in language teaching

A DS can be described as a sequence of activities based on a textual genre in order to work oral and/or written competences (DOLZ, SCHNEUWLY 2004). For a DS, texts are therefore used as the basis for reception and production, since they are the materialization of linguistic practices developed historically and socially, and are a kind of mediator between students and language (DENARDI 2017). In other words, students can appropriate discursive practices in the additional language through DSs in an easier way (DOLZ, SCHNEUWLY 2004). According to Machado (2004), access to different textual genres can represent a relevant strategy for socialization, since it makes it possible to participate in different social activities. However, Dolz and Schneuwly (2004) argue that for any work with textual genres, it is essential to present and discuss their characteristics, so that students can confront and reconstruct the texts.

With regards to the construction of a DS, Denardi (2017) lists three factors to be taken into account: (i) the characteristics of discursive practices (textual genres); (ii) linguistic knowledge, and (iii) teaching strategies. Dolz et al. (2004) also argue that teachers should make theoretical decisions of the following natures: (a) pedagogical; (b) psychological; (c) linguistic; and (d) related to the general aims of DS. Works such as those by Stutz and Cristóvão (2011) also point to the importance of thinking about the target audience of the DS and its educational context. In this way, designing a DS is not just about working with the textual genre, but a series of choices based on the knowledge, needs, and interests of students and teachers.

It is also necessary to pay attention to the structure and systematization of a DS, which, according to Ende et al. (2013: 103), can be carried out in three phases: Introduction (*Einstieg*), Elaboration (*Erarbeitung*), and Production (*Anwendung/Transfer*). The first phase is responsible for activating the students' prior knowledge and arousing their interest, as well as initiating contact with the object of instruction. The second phase consists of analyzing, systematizing, and discussing the object of study. In this last stage, the students are expected to use the language in production situations (oral and written). The order of the phases is not rigid, and it is up to the teacher to organize the DS, but the most recurrent model is the linear one, which follows exactly the order of introduction (activation of prior knowledge), elaboration

(presentation, systematization, semantization, reproductive practice, partially reproductive practice) and production (transfer), which will be used in this article and will be further developed in topic 4.

Finally, we believe that the use of authentic texts in DSs can foster learning in a participatory and motivating way. By choosing a textual genre such as a short film, which includes the language spoken informally, current themes, and the possibility of adapting it to different levels of knowledge, we believe it is possible to achieve relevant and reflective learning. Furthermore, using an authentic text within the DS means that listening comprehension difficulties can be better addressed in order to provide a contextualized experience for reception and production in GAL.

### 3 The didactic sequence

Listening activities represent sensorial experiences which are essential for language learning, since listening involves feelings, sensations, and perceptions that are not limited to lexical or grammatical comprehension alone (BRAUN 2008). In this context, working with audiovisual genres can be even more relevant, as it involves a more complex cognitive process, with perception of characters, gestures, and images, allowing for sociocultural, linguistic, historical, and political experiences (MARQUES, ROZENFELD 2017). In addition, audiovisual texts allow more complex linguistic structures to be worked with and understood from the combination of text and image (BILYTSKA 2017). We believe that the short film genre can be an excellent choice for working with authentic materials because it promotes contact with discourses that circulate in communities of the additional language, as well as promoting learning in a spontaneous and interesting way. Finally, unlike many films, there are a number of short films available for free on platforms such as YouTube, which makes it easier for teachers and students to access them.

For the development of the didactic sequence, we used as the main teaching material a short film in German called *Milch & Zucker* (2018). It was produced in Leipzig, lasts six minutes, and shows a conversation between two characters (father and daughter) in a coffee shop. The nature of the relationship is not explicitly revealed, but must be inferred during the first few minutes of conversation. Throughout the short film, we

perceive different levels of interaction (such as discomfort and relaxation) that are translated not only by linguistic content, but also by expressions and gestures. This short film was selected because it has essential characteristics for the development of a DS with reception and production activities at initial levels of GAL, such as: accessible language (short sentences with pauses and a semantic field familiar to the students); short duration; audiovisual aspects with contextual information that facilitates understanding of the story; theme (family problems) aligned with issues within contextualized social practices, allowing students to understand and use the language in a reflective and critical way; a narrative structure from which it is possible to develop a DS; and free access on the internet.

Working with short films, therefore, allows for the development of didactic practices with comprehension and production activities that address different levels of learning. In addition to the accessible language, the theme of *Milch & Zucker* (2018) seems to be very relevant because it can incite individual reflections and connections with familiar experiences. In this article, we propose a DS divided into three phases: introduction; elaboration; and production. The activities for each meeting, modes used, and the execution time for each phase are systematized in the table below:

**Table 1:** Sistematization of the activities

Activity phase	Proposed activity	Execution mode	Meeting	Execution time
Introduction	Discussion of experiences with listening comprehension and contact with audiovisual materials in German	<i>Plenum</i>	I	20 min
	Discussion about the short film genre and previous experiences	<i>Plenum</i>		20 min
Elaboration	Hypotheses based on an image from the short film	In groups	II	15 min
	Global understanding with pauses in the video	Individually		25 min
	Answering the guiding questions <sup>8</sup>	In groups		20 min
Production	Discussion about the experience of watching the short film and personal Family relationships.	<i>Plenum</i>	III	15 min
	Making a sequel to the story from the following options: <i>Text/image:</i> (a) writing text messages between the characters; (b) writing a script for the sequel to the short film; (c) making a comic book; (d) making a collage/drawing with text. <i>Video/audio:</i> (e) recording a video reenacting a conversation between the characters; (f) recording audio messages exchanged by the characters; (g) recording a video telling what happened from the perspective of one of the characters.	Individually or in groups		45 min
	Presentation and discussion of the production	<i>Plenum</i>	IV	45 min

Source: author's work

As indicated in the systematization table above, the activities can be developed in four meetings, preferably in a consecutive order, in which each of the phases can be carried out in a restricted period of time, i.e., without necessarily taking up the entire lesson. The Introduction phase aims to gather prior knowledge and experiences involving the whole class (*plenum*) in relation to listening comprehension and contact with different genres of audiovisual texts, including short films. This discussion can be held in

<sup>8</sup> The guiding questions are: 1. Wer sind die Personen?; 2. Warum heißt der Film "Milch & Zucker"?; 3. Was ist die Beziehung zwischen der Frau und dem Mann?; Worüber sprechen sie? Warum wird die Frau unglücklich?; Warum muss sie losgehen?; 6. Was verabreden sie am Ende?

Portuguese and take up between 30 and 40 minutes of the lesson. In Elaboration, using small groups, the students will have the opportunity to create hypotheses about the short film they are going to watch based on an image, and then carry out their overall understanding of the film individually. The teacher can make short pauses during the video, asking guiding questions and raising topics of discussion to assess the students' needs. This phase can last around 50 minutes and should be conducted in German whenever possible.

The Production phase is divided into three stages: a group discussion of the students' impressions and experiences of the activities carried out in the previous stages; the creation (individually or in small groups) of a sequel to the end of the story; and the presentation of the results. This phase takes up two meetings and can last around 45 minutes each, with interactions preferably in German.

The division of topics, class time, and meetings can be easily adapted to different contexts, since different teaching-learning scenarios - such as previous experience, access to the internet and a projector, number of students per class, and interest in the topic - can affect the configuration of the sequence. For the systematization proposed in this article, we took as a basis the possible application of the sequence in a class of 15 to 30 students at initial level - A1 and A2, according to the CEFR (cf. CONSELHO DA EUROPA 2001). In the next section, we will present in more detail how the activities can be carried out in each of the three phases.

## 4 Description of the activities and suggestions on how to conduct them

This section presents how the activities in the proposed DS can be developed. As mentioned earlier, the DS presents possible ways of working with authentic texts in initial GAL classes. Hence, we will not only describe the activities, but also possible ways for the teachers to organize the tasks over time, as well as pedagogical attitudes towards the students' possible difficulties.

#### 4.1 Introduction activities

Since introductory activities should activate the students' previous knowledge, arouse their interest, and establish a first contact with the teaching object (ENDE ET AL. 2013), it makes sense for them to discuss their own perceptions of the textual genre to be worked on. Following this logic, the first phase of the DS was designed to include a brief survey of the students' experiences with listening comprehension in German, either with authentic materials or with textbook activities in the classroom, as well as a discussion of the textual genre to be worked on: the short film.

In this first phase, the students will be able to share their impressions of using the textbook and share experiences with music, videos, films, or tv shows in the additional language, which can be a space for exchanging relevant materials and media for GAL learning. We think this is an important moment for the students to feel welcome with regard to their difficulties and their experiences with autonomous learning in German, which can have an impact on their motivation and confidence. Consequently, discussions about different media for accessing authentic language, which go beyond the textbook, can contribute to a new position of autonomous study. In addition, this discussion aims to prepare students for the next phases of the DS, using the short film text genre, and serve as a way for them to access their prior knowledge.

Given the vagueness of the genre's definition and all its diversity (WELKE 2007), the introduction phase represents a fundamental step towards understanding the potential and expectations of working with short films. The time and direction of the discussions can be adapted to suit the students' interests and experience, but it is essential to open up a space for discussion about the relevance of working with authentic texts in GAL and what the possibilities are for autonomous learning.

#### 4.2 Elaboration activities

In order to start the Elaboration phase, i.e., the time for the students to analyze, systematize, and practice the teaching object, a further discussion would be held orally and, if possible, in German, on the basis of the image below in order to raise hypotheses about the short film. The teacher could ask the students the following questions:

- (a) *Wer sind diese Personen?*
- (b) *Wo findet die Geschichte statt?*
- (c) *Warum heißt der Kurzfilm “Milch & Zucker”?*
- (d) *Was passiert im Film?,*
- (e) *Was ist das Thema des Filmes?*<sup>9</sup>

**Figure 1:** Excerpt from *Milch & Zucker*



**Source:** BENSER ET AL. 2018.

The questions based on the image activate previous knowledge and encourage discussion and systematization of essential vocabulary (e.g. *Café, Vater, Tochter*) in order to analyse the image and predict the content of the short film. The teacher can give the students time to look up key words in the dictionary to answer the questions. It's important that working with authentic texts doesn't cause anxiety for the students, but rather gives them the opportunity to deal with language in a more creative and contextualized way. The provocative questions, the elaboration of answers, and space for discussion, dialogue with pedagogical, psychological, and linguistic aspects of DS (DENARDI 2017; DOLZ ET AL. 2004).

Regarding the use of subtitles for the presentation of the short film, Hjelset (2015) suggests that accompanying the videos with subtitles in the same language can support learning and enable a better understanding of the text. However, subtitles require an extra

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<sup>9</sup> (a) Who are these people? (b) Where does the story take place? (c) Why is the short film called “Milch & Zucker”? (d) What happens in the film? (e) What is the theme of the film?



reading effort, which can override listening comprehension. Thus, we believe that teachers can adapt their decision to the level of comprehension expected by the students and the difficulty level of the text. In the case of the short film *Milch & Zucker*, we opted to broadcast the film with the original audio in German and without subtitles. As previously mentioned, the semantic field of *Milch & Zucker* is well known to the students and is not grammatically complex. In addition, the fact that we are working with an audiovisual text makes it easier to understand more complex linguistic structures by combining text and image (BILYTSKA 2017).

For this DS, it is suggested that the short film be played twice. In the first viewing, the students will be able to gain a global understanding of the film's story, trying to identify familiar and unfamiliar words. Before the first screening, the teacher can present and explain the guiding questions that will support and direct the interpretation of the short film. During the second viewing, the teacher can pause at specific passages to check their understanding of the plot and discuss the answers to the guiding questions, for example:

1. *Wer sind diese Personen?*
2. *Warum heißt der Film "Milch & Zucker"?*
3. *Was ist die Beziehung zwischen der Frau und dem Mann?*
4. *Worüber sprechen sie? Warum wird die Frau unglücklich?*
5. *Warum muss sie losgehen?*
6. *Was verabreden sie am Ende?*<sup>10</sup>

It's worth noting that students don't need to fully understand the short film in order to answer the questions. An important aspect of this work is that it demonstrates that students at an early level do not only need to be confronted with simplified or highly didactic texts. In addition, images and discussions can help them understand the video. The guiding questions and discussion time can be adapted by the teachers depending on

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<sup>10</sup> 1. Who are these people? 2. Why is the film called "Milch & Zucker"? 3. What is the relationship between the woman and the man? 4. What do they talk about and why does the woman look unhappy? 5. Why does she have to leave? 6. What agreement do the two characters reach at the end?

the specific needs of the students. It may be eventually relevant to provide a transcript of the characters' speeches to accompany a third viewing. It may also be necessary to offer extra time for the students to discuss the questions and try to formulate answers in German.

### 4.3 Production activities

The last phase should encourage production (oral and written) through activities in which the students are free to make choices about the topics and ways of developing their texts. Therefore, this phase introduces the possibility of using language and textual development strategies that take into account the students' knowledge and interests, representing a contextualized and reflective learning process. We therefore suggest that the teachers present alternative tasks for the students to choose from, adapting them to their needs if necessary. The development of these tasks can be carried out both inside and outside the classroom, but ideally, it would be interesting if the teachers and/or tutors could support the students during the process of preparing the texts.

The first phase of the activities after listening comprehension would be conducted orally and in groups, in which the students can discuss (preferably in German) their experiences of watching the short film. For this discussion, the teacher could offer some guiding questions, such as: *Wie ist Ihre Familie? Wie ist Ihre Beziehung zu Ihren Eltern bzw. anderen Familienmitgliedern?*<sup>11</sup>. In addition, discursive resources could be offered to encourage them to speak in both discussions, such as "*Den Kurzfilm finde ich ...*" and "*Ich habe gut/viel/wenig verstanden*" for the first part, and "*Meine Familie ist ...*", "*In meiner Familie gibt es...*" and "*Meine Beziehung zu (+ Dativ) ist...*"<sup>12</sup>. The choice of discursive resources can vary according to the level of each class. In addition, it may be relevant to offer individual support to prepare the students' oral production.

After this initial phase, the aim is to offer some options for oral and written production activities, which the students can choose according to their goals and interests. The proposal is to work with the open ending of the short film by suggesting a

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<sup>11</sup> How is your family? How is the relationship between you and your family members?

<sup>12</sup> "I think the short film..." and "I understood very little" "My family is...", "In my family there is..." and "My relationship to (+ dative) is..."

continuation of the story. This choice was inspired by the didactic textbook *Dimensionen* (JENKINS ET AL., 2002-2006), one of the aims of which is to offer alternative activities that may be relevant to the needs of a specific group of students. We therefore thought of seven options divided between text/image and video/audio. With regards to text/image: (a) writing text messages between the characters; (b) writing a script for the continuation of the short film; (c) making a comic strip; (d) making a collage/drawing with text. For the video/audio production: (e) recording a video staging a conversation between the characters; (f) recording audio messages exchanged by the characters; and (g) recording a video telling what happened from the perspective of one of the characters.

For alternative (a), the students could write the messages on paper or even exchange WhatsApp or Instagram messages with their classmate(s), allowing them to work with digital media. Text/image activities are more appropriate for learners who prefer abstract-analytical tasks (*abstrakt-analytisch*), since text messages allow for a clearer systematization of the situation (BIMMEL, RAMPILLON 2000). In addition, they also aim to include visual skills (*visuell orientiert*) and action-oriented skills (*erfahrungsorientiert*), which can foster creativity.

The video/audio activities are oriented towards auditory skills (*auditiv orientiert*), communicative/cooperative skills (*kommunikativ bzw. kooperativ orientiert*), motor skills (*haptisch bzw. motorisch orientiert*) and action skills (*erfahrungsorientiert*) (BIMMEL, RAMPILLON 2000). The students will be able to concentrate on speaking and interacting with colleagues, moving around to act scenes out, and put into practice the vocabulary and structures seen in the short film.

Considering the comments and suggestions made in this section, we believe that the activities proposed through the use of an audiovisual text in a DS structure can encourage work with materials and authentic participation, promoting greater autonomy and freedom of choice for German students (JENKINS 2006). Through tasks that allow for different linguistic, sensory, and cultural experiences, students have the opportunity to use the additional language in a more contextualized and creative way, influencing learning and motivation. We hope that the suggestions for activities can support students and teachers when designing activities with authentic texts for initial classes, creating new alternatives for didactic work in GAL.

## 5 Conclusion

This article proposes a didactic sequence for teaching listening comprehension in German as an Additional Language, using an authentic text for initial classes. We therefore advocate working with authentic texts rather than the exclusive reception of highly didacticized audios from textbooks aimed at the international market, which often do not include the variety of the spoken language (BEREND 2009). On the one hand, there is the aim of integrating aspects of orality from the countries of the additional language, but without abandoning the linguistic progression of the textbooks, in order to balance the ways of working with the target language (MAIJALA 2007).

Although listening comprehension is an experience that goes far beyond lexical or grammatical comprehension (BRAUN 2008), many of the processes that occur naturally in the first language do not happen intuitively in the additional language (BRAUN 2008). One of these is the lack of comprehension intent (BRAUN 2008). For this reason, we designed a DS with Introduction, Elaboration, and Production activities (ENDE ET AL. 2013) that aimed to help the students achieve contextualized experiences for global and selective comprehension of the text. In this sense, the choice of an authentic audiovisual text is also relevant at the initial levels, as the combination of text and image allows more complex structures to be worked on and understood (BILYTSKA 2017).

The designed SD was based on the short film *Milch & Zucker* (2018), highlighting its linguistic accessibility, short duration, audiovisual resources, and free online availability. This approach is not limited to a closed manual, but can be adapted to different textual genres and teaching contexts, aiming for learning that goes beyond the structural sphere of language and promotes the active participation of students and teachers. Therefore, by adopting authentic materials, the aim is not only to enrich the learners' linguistic repertoire, but also to motivate and encourage them to engage in linguistic communities of the additional language, and to use the language in a contextualized way, i.e., with specific objectives relevant to the target audience. In addition, the integration of authentic materials in GAL teaching allows for more complex critical and cultural reflection, preparing students for authentic interactions inside and outside the classroom.

Although working with authentic materials presents challenges, such as adapting the language level and thematic relevance, it is essential that teachers and researchers look for ways to overcome these difficulties, aiming for a more contextualized and meaningful education. In this sense, the proposed teaching sequence presented in this article offers a viable and effective alternative for teaching listening comprehension in GAL, promoting a more authentic, participative, and motivating learning experience for the students.

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