A REFLECTION ON TWO PROJECTS

Trabajo Fin de Master

Modalidad A

Lenguas extranjeras

Estudiante: NOEMI RAMO MOLINERO

Directora de TFM: SILVIA MURILLO ORNAT

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The main aim of this TFM (Trabajo fin de Master) is to make a reflection about two projects developed during this course. First of all, I would like to comment on the two semesters of the Master.

During the first one, I studied the subjects which follow:

- Interacción y convivencia en el aula.

- Contexto de la actividad docente.

- Procesos de enseñanza-aprendizaje.

- Diseño y fundamentos de las materias de lenguas extranjeras.

- Prevención y resolución de conflictos.

- Practicum I.

All these subjects were interesting and they gave me new knowledge and they helped me to develop many competences:

- To know evolutionary psychology.

- To be able to acquire different values in order to solve problematic situations as teacher.

- To be able to provide new answers to new situations

Apart from these competences I have gained new knowledge about many documents:

- PEC (Proyecto educativo de centro).

- RRI (Regulación de régimen interno).

- PGA (Programación general anual)

- DOC (Documento de organización de centro)

My practicum period was in the EOI in Utebo. During the Practicum I, I studied the main existing documents in this center and their legal frame of reference. I had to

analyze one of these documents deeply. I chose the PEC (Proyecto educativo de centro), because it was the identity card in the EOI. This document was brief and clear and it fulfilled its aim totally: 'recoger la orientación que este centro tiene en sus actuaciones'. This document is a useful tool which has some objectives such as:

- To give continuity and coherence between levels.

- To promote coordination and team work.

I would say that the main objective of this document is to improve the teaching-learning process all the time, in order to obtain good results. As I said before, many other documents are also important, apart from the PEC. All these documents are connected between them as we can see as follows:

INFORMATIVO / PEDAGÓGICO   **NORMATIVO**
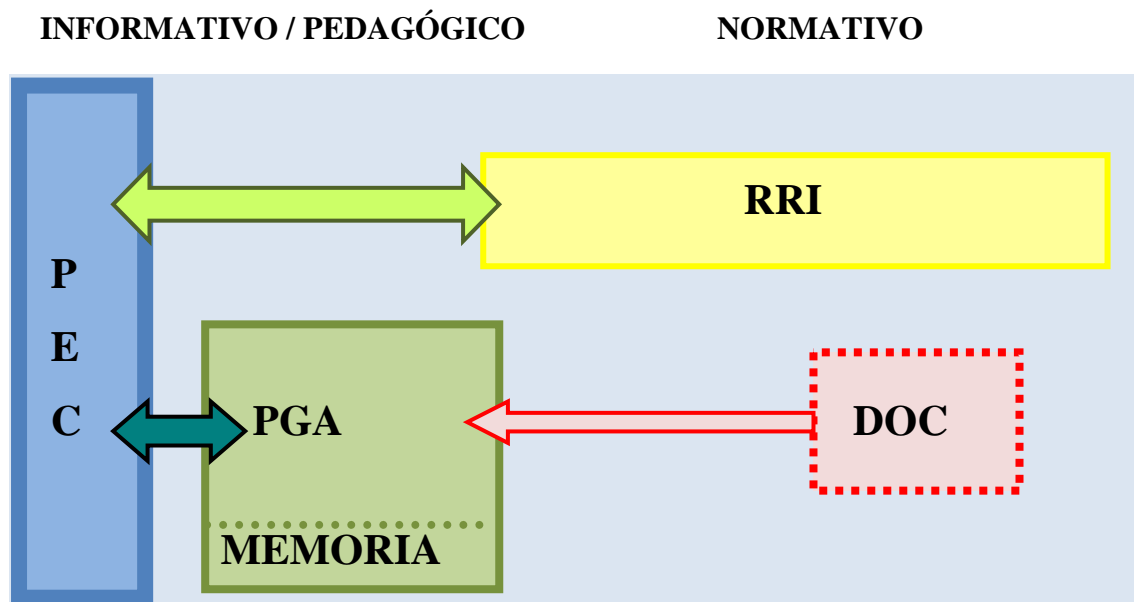
Regarding the organization in the EOI, I learnt a lot about the relationship between the members in this kind of centers. The structure of the center is divided into three groups: *órganos unipersonales, órganos colegiados o de gobierno and órganos de coordinación docente*. The first one corresponds to the board of directors, they work in group, although each member has specific competences. The second group is formed by the board of governors and the rest of the members of staff. Finally, the third group is the Didactic Department and Comisión de coordinación pedagógica. In fact, all the participants in the EOI have a good relationship and departments, teachers and directors are closely connected between them in order to work satisfactorily.

Regarding the second semester, I have coursed other subjects:

- Evaluación e Innovación docente.

- Diseño, organización y desarrollo de actividades para el aprendizaje del Inglés.

- La comunicación oral en lengua inglesa.

- Enseñanza del español como lengua de aprendizaje para el alumnado inmigrante.

- Practicum II and III.

All these subjects have provided me with more competences and knowledge:

- To design a structured learning unit.

- To assess students with different criteria.

- To implement different activities which I had designed.

- To develop a research project.

I feel I have developed many more competences during this second semester. All the subjects have been motivating and I could also design a learning unit for the subject "Diseño, organización y desarrollo de actividades para el aprendizaje del Inglés" and later during the Practicum II, I implemented my learning unit with students in the EOI in Utebo. The implementation of my learning unit has been the most fascinating task I have done in this master; I really enjoyed teaching my activities.

The environment in the EOI is very good and professional, and there is an atmosphere of dialogue between students, teachers and all the members in the school. I would love to work in EOIs, because I could develop many competences as a teacher. In spite of this esteem towards working in EOI, since I was a child, I wanted to be a teacher in a school, with children or teenagers, as I think they are funny and unpredictable, although sometimes they do not have too much interest in learning; in my opinion they should be motivated to learn and I would like to teach them human values at the same time they learn English.

JUSTIFICATION

The learning unit and the research project have been the two most important assignments in this master. During all this time, we have taken interesting subjects, and I have learnt a lot from them. I have chosen these two projects in order to reflect on them because they are closely connected.

During our Practicum I period, we had an observation time in the classrooms where we went to implement our learning units. During this time, we started to know the students and we realized their low level in pronunciation. Later, in practicum II and III, we spent a lot of time with the students, and while I was designing my learning unit, the questionnaires of the research were passed to the students.

The learning unit has been the best activity I have done during this master. I have put into practice all my knowledge on key competences, methodology, skills, objectives and outcomes. During the first semester in the subject 'Diseño curricular de Lenguas extranjeras', I started to study these concepts, but I did not know how to design a learning unit properly. We worked in groups and developed a learning unit for a secondary class; it was a good experience, but I feel that a considerable improvement was made with my second learning unit, which I could implement in the EOI.

My learning unit 'Movies' has been developed in several stages. I designed my lesson plans by paying attention to the templates given by different teachers, I could implement my activities with the students and, furthermore, I had teacher assessment in order to improve it and my own style as teacher. At the end of this second semester we have shown our learning units to our classmates and we have been evaluated by them and by the teacher. Consequently, I chose this project for my TFM because I have worked a lot on it.

On the other hand, I chose the research project because it is connected with my learning unit and, in my opinion; it has been the most thorough activity I have elaborated in this Master. I think the contrast between both activities is interesting. The first one was made individually while the second one was prepared in group. Cooperative learning is an interesting aspect which I have learnt in this master. In the subject "Evaluación e Innovación docente" I learnt many aspects about this kind of learning. During the development of the research, we could implement a lot of methods of learning, and I

think it has been a success. However, it is important to note that in spite of the good results of our research, our teacher did not give us a very high mark, because our project should have been a little bit more structured. This detail was important for us, and we have learnt the different parts which a piece of research should have. We did not have time to improve our final paper but we are aware of our errors and we will improve them in future research.

During this Master, I have reached different competences; the main aims which I feel I have acquired through the subjects of this degree are:

- To integrate into the teaching profession according to its legal framework.

- To create a nice environment in class, in order to develop the level of the students.

- To be able to control the classroom management.

- To encourage the learning process of the students.

- To plan, design and organize the different activities and evaluate them.

- To research and make innovations in the teaching world.

CRITICAL REFLECTION

LEARNING UNIT

Preparation and design of materials for the learning unit

This section deals with the design and implementation of activities in my teaching practice. The learning unit was designed for students of 1st course of advanced level in the EOI of Utebo, to be carried out at the end of March. My learning unit was divided into three different sessions; two of them were implemented with my students while the last one is only an ideal lesson. My classroom had twelve students with medium-high level of English language. The learning unit is closely related to the research project that I carried out on fossilization, because we had an observation time for both and furthermore, we designed a questionnaire in order to see the level of fossilization in pronunciation of students in advanced level; at the same time, the results of this useful tool were used to design my learning unit and implement my activities, as I had the opportunity to learn about my students and their awareness on their level of pronunciation.

As far as legal reference is concerned, it is aligned to the Real Orden de 7 de Julio de 2008, in which the advanced level curriculum is established for Official Schools of Languages. The curriculum is based on the Common European Framework of Reference and sets a model of learning based on the use of the language. Thus, the level of the learning unit corresponds to B1.

Pragmatic, linguistic and sociolinguistic competences are of a great importance to the students and must be learnt through a series of activities and tasks where they are put into practice. So the learning activities must be communicative in order to offer the learner a chance to practice the language in real communicative situations.

In my first week in the EOI in Utebo I had an observation time to see the level of my students and to make the comparative study between two groups of 2nd advanced. At the same time I started to design my activities for my learning unit and I had to prepare my lesson plans including timing and skills to be taught in my class. Before starting the practicum II and III period, I was learning how to design lesson plans with different templates in the subject "La comunicación oral en lengua inglesa", and in "Diseño,

organización y desarrollo de actividades para el aprendizaje del Inglés", I was also taught the different skills on the development of activities according to the competences which students should have at the end of the year.

While I was working on my activities, I started to prepare the questionnaires for my research on fossilization. Once my students filled them in I could start to analyse their answers and therefore I learnt which were their favourite tasks, activities and skills.

Procedure

I chose Movies as the main topic of the unit because my monitoring teacher proposed it since it was in her planning. According to her, pronunciation and intonation should be very important aspects of the unit. Most of the students just speak Spanish with English words, using their L1 pronunciation and intonation. In spite of the efforts of their teacher, they do not show any trace of improvement in what is related to pronunciation. It is not surprising, then, to hear some expressions in Spanish. Some learners use them whenever they find it difficult to find the appropriate English word or expression. Many of these pronunciation mistakes become fossilized, as the results of the project showed.

In general, although it may vary from one lesson to another, it is important to take into account the students are passive. It seems that their goal is not to learn but to be taught; all the efforts must come from the teacher who has to offer good materials, topics and activities to keep the class going. In fact, when a given activity works well, the group `wakes up´ and becomes much more active and makes the teacher´s task much easier. It is not easy to push the students out of their comfort zone but, when they get out of it, they show a good attitude towards the lesson and work fairly well.

During these two weeks I had to search, adapt and develop a lot of materials for my activities: reading, listening, videos, a vocabulary bank, different situations for speaking, pair work activities, group work, writing, assessment, etc. The questionnaires were passed during the second week. During the third week I did the implementation of activities in my teaching practice. This week was the most important and remarkable in all my practicum. I had a very good time with my students and it was fun. I feel I have learnt a lot in the EOI and little by little I am also improving my English level.

My monitoring teacher and her colleagues also helped me to find videos, books, worksheets, texts, magazines and interviews related to cinema. They gave me some copies of their teacher´s books to help me in my planning and designing of activities. My classmates also collaborated with me on some pronunciation activities.

At the beginning I found it difficult to sequence my lesson plan; I had many ideas but everything was mixed up. Little by little my unit took form and I started to see my implementation clearer.

My monitoring teacher guided my steps and gave me advice on how to set the order of my activities to give them coherence and sense within the lesson. As it was scheduled, I developed two lessons, which means that I was teaching my class for a week. I used authentic materials and other ones I took and adapted from the Internet, course books and different resources. I made my own worksheets and developed some games to practice speaking about films.

Structure

The learning unit is divided into three lessons; as I said before two of them were implemented in the EOI, while the third one could not be put into practice. It is an ideal unit, which has some activities I would have liked to implement with my students.

My first lesson plan was made up of eleven activities. I prepared an introduction (warm up) with a brainstorm on types of films, after which I asked some questions to my students about their favourite movies, likes and dislikes, actors and actresses…

The lessons are of 135 minutes. This is the duration of lessons in EOI, so I had to adapt my lessons to this time. I have developed my learning unit just in three lessons due to their length requirements. Planning and designing the learning unit was complicated and I had to change the sequence of the activities in order to give coherence to the lesson plan.

The three lessons have activities in relation to the four skills: reading, speaking, listening and writing. Each lesson has coherence with the next one, and the activities were developed in order to acquire the knowledge, to practice and finally to produce it.

Methodology/Activities

Throughout my lesson plan I tried to include all the skills in different contexts. After speaking about films and genres in the introduction of the class, I planned two activities about cinema vocabulary. Later I was to implement a game about films, in which the learners would have to guess the movie. According to my lesson plan I played two listening tracks in different moments of the session; afterwards they would do a pair work reading-speaking activity about the film Moulin Rouge. Once finished the reading the students would have to solve a jigsaw crossword to learn more vocabulary and finally, at the end of the lesson, I planned a quiz activity in order to explain and work with relative clauses. Some homework was planned as well.

As far as the second day is concerned, I decided to start the class with the correction of homework followed by seven activities for this second session. As in the first day, my intention was to give the students the chance to practice the four skills, but my monitoring teacher advised me that it was not necessary to offer another listening activity because students had already done two listening activities the day before.

The other skills, speaking, writing and reading, were planned to be practiced in the second lesson. I wanted my students to pay especial attention to reading and writing although speaking was also important. Students would read a text about mistakes in films and they would have to work in pairs on its comprehension. To teach the students how to write a good film review was my final aim. The order of appearance of activities consisted in giving the learners the necessary tools for writing, such as vocabulary and expressions about movies throughout the two lessons saving some time at the end of lesson two to explain to them how to write a film review correctly. My goals were to offer tips and strategies to build solid written tasks.

In my opinion the most daunting difficulty I found while I was preparing my lesson plan was allotting time to the different activities. I was not sure that I was going to have enough time to make the exercises I had for both days because I am inexperienced in teaching such long lessons.

In the next sections, I would like to comment on how students reacted to my teaching skills and also about the areas I want to improve as a teacher. My feelings towards

teaching are very positive and, although I still have a lot to learn, I think I could be a fairly good teacher.

Implementation of activities in my teaching practice and self-assessment.

As I have already mentioned, the preparation of my lesson plan was quite intensive and in a first stage my activities were not as coherent as I had thought. Setting a good sequence of tasks and activities for such long lessons (two hours) is quite complicated. In spite of that fact, I worked hard and finally I managed to develop a good lesson which was positively valued by the students. Unfortunately I did not have enough time to put all the activities into practice. I had fossilization in mind when implementing the lessons, and I paid special attention during the implementation of my pronunciation activities in order to check whether the same mistakes were repeated all time.

From my point of view, the lessons in the EOI are too long and the teacher must work very much. During my observation time I could see my monitoring teacher in action and I felt a great respect towards her because she is an experienced teacher. I tried to learn how to manage the classes with patience and calmness as she always does. My first moments as a teacher were full of different feelings like nervousness, worry and expectation because I thought that I did not have enough materials for such a long lesson. To be honest I was also a little bit scared of speaking English in front of so many people. I had planned eleven activities for my first lesson but I did not have enough time and I just implemented eight of them. During the class I had to change the order of my activities because the timing requested it.

Students reacted to all the activities perfectly, though. They seemed to particularly enjoy speaking activities in pairs or small groups. After speaking in groups I would have liked to ask feedback from my students but it was very tough for me. In fact I regard eliciting feedback as one of the most demanding skills a teacher must master. Some of my questions were received with silence and devising new engaging questions out of the blue was really challenging for me. Fortunately, two of the most participative students started answering questions and clearly made things easier for me.

As far as the ICTs are concerned, the IWB (Interactive white board) was incredibly useful to me. I had never used this kind of tool before, and it was absolutely amazing. Our monitoring teacher taught us the basics of this board so that we could design our lesson plan using it. Consequently, most of the activities I implemented in my class were shown on the digital interactive board. In my opinion, the use of this ICT improved my learning unit. The implementation of activities is much more versatile with the use of the IWB since the input materials can be presented in many different ways, like photos, videos, Websites, texts, etc… and those can be modified instantly in class. A teacher can easily underline, write notes down, match different objects and let students do the same. The use of ICT ensures that your students pay you plentiful attention so that you can enjoy your classes as a teacher a lot.

My second day as a teacher was better than the first one. I was quite more relaxed, and I tried to speak calmly and not as fast as I did the first day. I realized that the implementation of my lesson plan was too fast-tracked and, consequently, I tried to improve my second day teaching by speaking slower. According to my monitoring teacher I need to develop a more quiet, relaxed and even slow style of teaching.

The sequencing of my activities on this second day was much better. To start with, I was not compelled to change the order of the activities I had designed and they worked satisfactorily. On the other hand, lack of time made it impossible to carry out all the planned activities. So, timing was one of the biggest difficulties in my implementation and I had to leave some activities undone. My monitoring teacher advised me which of them I should leave apart because they were less significant to my lesson plan and to the students´ learning and goals.

During these two days that I implemented my activities in the classroom, I could clearly notice my inexperience in the learning teaching process. Regarding my activities, I would like to comment that I had some assumptions about how they were going to work, but I was, in many cases, wrong. Some activities which I thought to be totally hilarious were not so warmly received by the students while some others I had serious doubts about were amazingly funny and memorable.

Another feature I would like to improve on is selecting activities of an appropriate level. I think some of the exercises I chose were too easy for the learners. A certain level of

challenge is necessary for a task to be motivating and, when it is not daring enough, can fall flat and be dull.

Finally, it is important to note that my students were absolutely participative and I think they enjoyed my teaching practice. I asked them to write a film review as homework, and all of them reacted positively to it. They wrote good pieces of work showing a good understanding of the strategies on writing tasks I had taught them.

I feel very pleased of my experience as a teacher and I would like to work as a teacher all my life.

FOSSILIZATION IN PRONUNCIATION IN ADVANCED LEVELS OF ESCUELA OFICIAL DE IDIOMAS

This section of my TFM is devoted to expressing my feelings and beliefs about my research project, which was made in group, putting into practice some of the cooperative learning strategies we have learnt throughout this Master.

I have selected the research as a topic for my TFM because it is deeply related with my learning unit; they share the same root and starting point: classroom observation. I regard observation as an extremely useful tool to get to know the learners (starting point for my learning unit) and their pronunciation features (starting point for my research).

As far as my research is concerned, I am going to mention the different sections of the project and the sequences which were carried out in order to develop a successful piece of work. It is important to state that this is our first research in our degree as teachers and, although we tried to put all our knowledge into practice, we know we have to improve as researchers.

Project Proposal

This section deals with the design and preparation of the research on fossilization in advanced levels of Escuela Oficial de Idiomas. We worked in group, and my classmates were very cooperative.

During our first practicum in Utebo we realized that one of the main problems for learners is pronunciation, intonation and stress, so we decided to pay especial attention to pronunciation of both segmental and suprasegmental features.

During our Practicum II we had an observation period and our teacher suggested an interesting book in order to carry out this task: Wajnryb, Ruth. *Classroom Observation Tasks: A resource book for language teachers and trainers*. (Cambridge University Press, 1992). In order to carry out our research we needed to do some reading about language investigation. This book showed us how to use observation to learn about language teaching. We tried to use it in order to design an observation tool to make a contrast between groups, and above all to know our students. This reading was

extremely useful both for the design of my learning unit and for the development of our research.

While we were working on our observation we started to study how the advanced level students in the EOI of Utebo felt about their own learning progress, in order to establish, or not, the presence of any kind of fossilization at this level. We could observe a very low level of pronunciation in both courses where we did our observation, and also we noted no effort was made to sound more "British", I mean, the students tended to speak Spanish with English words. No improvement was to be observed during this time in spite of the teacher´s constant efforts. Students kept repeating the same mistakes once and again. I would like to remark that there is not a clear relation between the time invested in communication and the results, at least in what concerns pronunciation.

After doing this study, we started to work in our research, and we selected a wide bibliography to know more about fossilization and its meaning. To start with, we came up with a general question: how is fossilization affecting the pronunciation of high level students?

Taking this question as a starting point, we decided to read different books and papers, and we added to our research the definition of fossilization which the British Council suggests, a very simple but accurate definition: 'Fossilization refers to the process in which incorrect language becomes a habit and cannot easily be corrected'. (http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/knowledge-database/fossilization).

We wanted to explore the pronunciation skills of advanced level students and the problems they may present. Also, we would ask them about possible solutions to their problems, in order, if necessary, to offer an action plan for improvement.

We passed a questionnaire among the advanced level students in Utebo (around 60 learners) at the beginning of our practicum II. One ultimate aim in this project was: If some patterns can be extracted from their opinions we will try to pass the same questionnaire to students of other schools in Zaragoza to find out if those opinions are `universal´.

We also made informal interviews to the teachers in Utebo to know their opinion on the progress of their advanced level students and we included a structured interview with our monitoring teacher. These interviews were designed to complement the students´ questionnaires, being a more professional source of information.

With the help of our two tools, and after collecting and analysing the data, we would try to answer the following questions:

- Is there any kind of fossilization in higher levels of EOIS? How often?
- Up to what point is that fact important?
- Do the learners feel OK about their progress in learning English?
- Do they feel capable of speaking, of interacting and communicating in English?
- Can they offer any ideas for improving the teaching-learning process?

The answers would lead us to some conclusions, such us the presence or absence of any degree of fossilization in learners, the satisfaction the students show about the learning experience and how that fossilization can be avoided or, at least, fought.

Reviewing and analysing the literature

As started above, we found many definitions apart from the one provided by the British Council. Another definition which we used as a starting point in our research is the definition that Selinker gave in 1972: 'a moment in the acquisition of a L2 beyond which it becomes difficult for learners to improve without additional effort'. This was the first definition for the term *fossilization*.

It is also important to mention Pennington (1994), who described three barriers to pronunciation improvement: psychological, physiological and cultural. According to some scholars, teaching pronunciation 'is not exclusively a linguistic matter'. For them there are possible factors which cause fossilization: our learners´ ages, exposure to the target language, amount and type of prior pronunciation instruction, attitude toward the target language, motivation to achieve intelligible speech patterns…

Psychological aspects are related to different concepts; mainly the concept of transfer and the contrastive analysis, and the fact that the L2 is acquired through L1 and which

affects pronunciation. Comfort is another cause of fossilization, as easier things become more frequent and so then they stay as a rule. That is what it happens with "Spanish-like" pronunciation for Spanish students of English. Moreover, learners will tend to produce and perceive sounds in the L2 using the L1 sound system which they already manage properly. In advanced levels, a student with instrumental motivation would leave aside aspects such as accent and pronunciation. Generally, pronunciation is a feature of unplanned discourse and that causes students to be less likely to archive language rules concerning this kind of discourse. Also, regarding psychological aspects, we should mention the theory of Multiple Intelligences (Gardner 1983): we can assume that each student has aptitudes that help him/her to learn. We can thus say that some students could find difficulties with pronunciation even in advanced levels.

Regarding physiological aspects, we have found different scholars´ opinions. There is a hypothesis which says that there is an ideal period of one´s life to acquire a language after which it becomes more difficult to learn without additional effort. But, not all second language researchers share this opinion: some of them think adults have other resources to learn languages that children or teenagers have not; our opinion is closer to this second group of scholars.

From my point of view, social and cultural aspects are almost the most important ones because learners of L2 could avoid proper pronunciation just to keep their strength, identity or just not to sound "weird" to their mates. During the implementation of my learning unit I could observe shyness was very noticeable and some students were quiet because of this reason. The student´s self-image and esteem is in relation with oral production.

Finally, we reached our own conclusion: fossilization is present in all students, and more easily found in medium and higher levels. It could be caused by multiple reasons and one of the main causes is that students are unconscious. Unawareness makes it difficult to find a solution.

Methodology

We decided to carry out our research with the elaboration of two tools: a questionnaire and an interview to the teacher. We thought that a questionnaire was a good way to analyze the answers of the students. Also, the interview to the teacher could help us to complement the results of the questionnaires.

We designed a questionnaire with 23 questions and divided it into four blocks. The first one (questions 1 to 4) dealt with general questions about the goals of the students, how they feel about their learning pace and what they find more difficult in class. We wanted to have a general idea of where the problems of the students may lay.

In the second block (questions 5 to 10) we dealt with spoken English: students gave us their impressions about how competent they feel, what they like best and which activities are more engaging. We wanted to know whether they feel proficient and where they found more obstacles regarding the use of English for communication. With the results of these two first blocks I could design the activities for my learning unit by knowing a little bit more about my students, their preferences among the different skills and their obstacles for learning.

The third block was devoted to pronunciation. Questions 11 to 19 tried to find how the learners felt about their pronunciation skills. We asked them about segmental and suprasegmental features, in order to find where the most difficult aspects were and up to what point they thought they were improving.

For the last block we offered more open questions. We wanted to know how important pronunciation is for the learners, what they do in class and outside the class to improve their skills and, especially what they would like to do. I could use the results of this last block when I was preparing my learning unit, in order to know what kind of homework students prefer and how they think they could improve their skills.

The second tool we used to carry out our research was an interview to the teacher; she knew the students perfectly and she could give us a professional opinion about fossilization because she was not affected by personal issues or unawareness. The objective of the interview was to contrast her ideas to those of the students. Our teacher always collaborated with us, both in the design of our learning unit and in the development of our research. She was a great help during our practicum periods.

Results

We designed a data collection tool (i.e. an Excell spreadsheet) in order to compile all the results of our students´ questionnaires. We compiled the data individually in the classroom where we were going to implement our learning unit, and later all the results were put in common, reaching different conclusions. We analyzed the results in four different blocks. The results can be summarized as follows.

Block 1: The first block had to do with questions about motivation, learning rhythm and preferences among the skills. Students are in class for different reasons but, 38 % of the total answers indicate the importance of communication and oral skills among learners. These data were insightful in order to design more speaking activities in my learning unit, because I discovered they were important for my students, although they do not feel too comfortable with them. Students´ comfort areas were grammar and written skills (4 points each). Listening was in a middle zone with 3.12 points and speaking and pronunciation were both below 3 points. Students were much more comfortable in writing, because they prefer to control the tasks rather than to produce improvised language. Another point is the fact that students feel more comfortable with tasks which are easy for them and uncomfortable with the difficult ones.

Block 2: This set of questions dealt with impressions about the oral skills; level of proficiency, obstacles for learning, etc. This second block provided us with interesting data to know how students feel about oral English, if they feel competent or not. Also, we could implement our activities paying attention to these aspects. Answers to question five were interesting: 56% of the students declared that they were not learning English for oral communication as quickly as they would like. Another significant point, in question 6, only 31% of the students regarded themselves as competent in oral English. We considered this percentage as surprisingly small because the students were in advanced levels. There were many explanations for this lack of success (question 7), but the most frequent were pronunciation problems or not being good at speaking. Regarding the group´s preferences of activities (question 10), individual speaking tasks scored only 3.64% of the answers. In fact, during my teaching practice I have observed and checked how the students feel much more comfortable doing communicative activities in small groups (3 or 4 students) than when speaking individually to the rest of

the class. It is surprising how advanced level learners still have problems with this type of task.

Block 3: This block of the questionnaire addressed more specifically pronunciation issues. This part showed us that only three students declared themselves competent in pronunciation, while 'average' was the most frequent answer. Maybe this relation of pronunciation incompetency and lack of theoretical knowledge might be explored in further research. Question 14 showed unexpected results; because the degree of difficulty given to phonemes that have been traditionally considered as difficult for Spanish learners of English was quite low, we concluded that students are not really aware of the pronunciation mistakes they make. In the subject 'La comunicación oral en Lengua Inglesa', we have dealt with the big importance of intonation and word stress, in order to make sense out of a sentence. Also, it is important to mention that, according to the answers to questions 17 and 18, learners are aware of the importance that pronunciation and intonation have for their level of English, but are not so conscious of their actual level of pronunciation skills.

Block 4: This block dealt with personal issues related to the learning process. The answers were too varied and we could not draw solid conclusions from them.

Conclusions

We have drawn several conclusions from our questionnaires:

The comfort areas for the students are grammar and written skills, with listening in a middle position, and speaking and pronunciation, clearly, as the most unmanageable parts of their learning. We could check these data in the implementation of our learning unit, because students were always more comfortable in groups. Nevertheless, students gave a lot of importance to oral English, and I could observe they liked speaking tasks in spite of the fact that they were not too comfortable with them, because they felt they were really learning to speak English.

Only 30% of the students regarded themselves as competent in oral English. Definitely, it is a surprisingly low number of students. The reasons for this low percentage are not a

large number of students in the class or few communicative activities, but a mix of personal circumstances (shyness, difficulty, etc…). The students are very reluctant towards individual speaking tasks. They tend to avoid any kind of individual exposure to the rest of the class. Only 3 students out of 57 declared themselves competent in pronunciation. This figure is absolutely representative, given the level of proficiency the learners have and feel they have. During the implementation of my learning unit, I could verify that pronunciation activities were really the most difficult for students. I taught them fricative sounds, since they are quite different to Spanish sounds, and this activity did not work at all.

Finally, 85% of the students knew just a few or none of the phonetic symbols. This could be a possible reason for pronunciation difficulties among advanced level students. Surprisingly enough, isolated sounds bear almost no difficulties for them. The marks given to clusters, fricatives or other sounds were quite low, showing no signs of being so demanding for them.

Apart from the conclusions from the questionnaires, we also drew some conclusions from the interview to the teacher. Both the data from the questionnaires and the teacher´s opinion were relevant and significant in our research. The interview contributed a professional opinion to the results of the questionnaires provided by students. According to the teacher:

- Students remarkably improve in the basic levels, and their process of learning is extremely effective. Improvement is much slower in advanced levels.
- Their comfort zone is doing reading activities, but they prefer to speak. They especially enjoy it.
- Speaking and listening activities are the hardest tasks for them.
- As far as pronunciation is concerned, many of them are totally fossilized; there would be an endless list of mistakes. Mainly: cluster sounds, the final /–ed/ in past tense, "could" and "would", intonation, word stress …
- The reasons for this low level of pronunciation are manifold: shyness, comfort, habit formation, and the fact that they do not have a good ear for languages.
- She makes an attempt to teach pronunciation by correcting mistakes in exercises, but in some cases she does effective pronunciation activities in order to make the students aware of their own mistakes.

- Students are not aware of their fossilization level. The main problem is that they do not know the correct pronunciation of many words. The teacher must always give a good model of pronunciation to the learners.

CONCLUSIONS AND WORK FUTURE PLANS

My main aim for the future is to become an effective teacher. I have enjoyed my practicum II and III very much. During that time I implemented my learning unit and I learnt a lot from it, although I know I have to improve in a lot of aspects about my teaching skills and style. During this Master I have had different subjects that have helped me acquire the competences that a good teacher should have and the methodology to design lessons. These two features have been of extreme usefulness in my practice stage and will be so in my future life as a teacher.

I have observed the difficulty of the curriculum adaptation to the level of the students and above all how timing is a challenging issue both for the planning and the implementation stages. In spite of the fact that my learning practice in the EOI at Utebo has been extremely useful, as far as my future as a teacher is concerned, I would like to work at high schools, because I love teaching teenagers. They are extremely unpredictable and complicated but at the same time they end up being genuinely funny. I would love to dedicate my professional life to them.

During my training period I have realized that the teacher´s level of English is crucial for the success of the teaching learning process. My aim as a teacher is to improve my pronunciation and I want to get used to doing my teaching wholly in English, because from my point of view, a teacher should speak English all the time in her classes in order to make her/his students practice it. As I described before, one of our projects at the EOI has been a research project about fossilization in pronunciation in advanced levels. We developed a questionnaire which we gave the students to fill in, and consequently we made a study on it. Working as a researcher has been an interesting task and, I would like to develop deeper this task in the future. At the end of our research we considered some possible sequels for next research, as follows:

- Is fossilization also present in other levels of the School?

- Is fossilization also present in other Official Schools?

- Are teachers of the different levels of EOI´s devoting enough time to pronunciation?

- Is the knowledge of phonetic symbols basic for a good pronunciation level?

- Is pronunciation well taught in Official Schools?

Any of these questions and a lot of more about different aspects both in the EOIs and in the high schools could be future issues for research. I feel I have learnt very much about how a good piece of research should be structured and developed. Of course, it is important to note the fact that I was totally inexperienced in this kind of work.

Another feature I would like to mature working as a teacher is to do research on diverse methods of education. During my first period of Master, I learnt a lot about methodology and I started to know something about different ways of teaching languages. To find good task resources is a motivating goal and I want to develop this field because in my opinion students can learn better if they are presented with interesting tasks.

For my practicum III, I was reading the EPOSTL (European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages) and I could do an interesting self-assessment as a teacher. From my point of view is an interesting, necessary tool which can be very useful in my learning as a teacher and in my teaching in general. I could take into account all the information of the EPOSTL in order to improve my learning-teaching process. I have learned a lot of things from this document and I believe I can improve as a teacher little by little. During this master I am acquiring many new competences that before running it I did not know.

According to this valuable tool, there are some specific areas in which teachers require knowledge and a variety of competences for their own self-assessment. All of them are important and extremely significant: context, methodology, resources, lesson planning, conducting a lesson, independent learning and assessment of learning. Several subjects of this master deal with all these competences. During my praxis, I have worked hard for all of them, and from my point of view I have developed most of them; lesson planning, methodology, classroom management and self-assessment.

In my opinion, it is important to note that a good teacher has a lot of roles to play. The teachers have to teach their subject but at the same time they should inculcate the competences and human values on their students and apart from teaching they have to maintain order. It is a hard work in all senses. I would like to be this kind of teacher who teaches human values apart from my subject.

In my implementation, I had to mature my lesson plans and carried out my activities with my own style as a teacher. Both things were complicated, and at the same time I should take into account the classroom management. Paying attention to all aspects in the class became complex. Regarding methodology, it has to do with the implementation of the four skills: speaking, writing, listening and reading. The teaching procedures are very important in the different styles as a teacher; I still have to define my own style and how I should teach my subject in order to improve as a teacher.

Finally, I think that a competent teacher must evaluate accurately his/her students but, in addition, he/she has to do a self-assessment all the time to be aware of his/her own mistakes and improve them.

REFERENCES

- Wajnryb, Ruth. *Classroom Observation Tasks: A resource book for language teachers and trainers*. (Cambridge University Press, 1992)

- http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/knowledge-database/fossilization

- Selinker, L., *Interlanguage* , IRAL; International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching, 10:3 (*1972*) p. 215 (online: http://es.scribd.com/doc/88547455/Selinker-Interlanguage#download

- Gardner, Howard. *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*. New York: Basic Books, 1983. http://www.multipleintelligencetheory.co.uk or http://www.howardgardner.com/

- EPOSTL (European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages)