REFLECTIONS ABOUT MY EVOLUTION AND MY EXPERIENCE AS AN ENGLISH TEACHER: HOW TO TEACH AND HOW TO LEARN

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TRABAJO FIN DE MÁSTER

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INRODUCTION

1. BRIEF COMMENTS

The first point I would like to make is about my decision of studying this Master. I decided to study the Master Degree in Education because since I was a child I love languages, especially English, although I studied French (in the High School and during my degree) and Italian (during my degree) too. In a near future, I would like to work as a teacher in a High School and I think I have many skills as well as my great passion for learning and teaching. I am sure that I can do a great work as an English teacher because I consider Education as one of the basis of society and I love teenagers. I think I am good at teaching teenagers and my experience during my teaching process in the placement period has been successful.

This Master has been useful for my professional training despite the fact that some aspects are not well- organized, but it has helped me to broaden my knowledge in the field of Education. During the first period students worked with general and common subjects for all specialities with which we learnt new techniques to handle teenagers, how the internal organization of schools is, and the legal and institutional framework of education, among others. The best learning in this period was doubtless to design a Course Plan in our speciality because this provided us with a new experience and a new knowledge to develop our Unit of Work in the second period taking into account the basis of the **Aragonese Curriculum (2007)** and the **Common European Framework of Reference (2001)** in the teaching of languages. The second period was more interesting for students because it was focused on each speciality and we were provided with new knowledge, new training and all competences required to be a future English teacher in our speciality. We learnt how to evaluate, to adapt materials, to look for or to design new materials taking into account **authentic materials** as the basis for classroom learning. According to **Clarke and Silberstein (1977: 51),** they state that:

> *Classroom activities should parallel the 'real world' as closely as possible. Since language is a tool for communication, methods and materials should concentrate on the message and not the medium. The purposes of reading should be the same in class as they are in real life.*

Along this dissertation, the most meaningful aspects about the teaching-learning process are treated, presented in the English foreign language classroom taking into account both theoretical point of view (conceptualization, methods, approaches, strategies, different authors' opinions, among others) and practical point of view, in which we can observe the existing or possible relationships between two projects made during the academic year with a great diversity of tasks oriented to Secondary Education, with the purpose of developing students reach all the skills (reading, writing, speaking, listening and social interaction) and competences.

This dissertation shows some of my reflections about my evolution as an English teacher in accordance with my teaching-learning process in the Master Degree in Compulsory Education. It contains a series of reflections but also a critical analysis in which many authors' main ideas are assembled bearing in mind the knowledge that I have acquired during my training along this year. The structure to be continued is shown in the table of contents and this collects the most relevant aspects related to the field of Education.

Through this structure all the readers can see both practical and theoretical points of view making reference to some of the important authors and also making reference to aspects such as methodology, approaches and strategies. All these aspects have had a positive influence on my training and it will be reflected later on.

To conclude this first point, I would like to focus this dissertation on the Course Plan of the fourth year of ESO and the Unit of Work addressed to students of the fourth year of ESO too, because these projects have been the most important to me and have provided me almost the training designing activities, objectives and contents.

2. WHAT IS TEACHING AND HOW IT HAS CHANGED IN THE LAST DECADES

Teaching could be defined as a kind of program or maybe a plan to ensure that a certain degree of knowledge is passed from teachers to students in general terms. Applied linguists have tried to define the scope of language teaching. For instance **Widdowson (1990)** states that teachers have to take into account some general perspectives on pedagogy, within these perspectives we find the following approaches to language description: Semantic (how language contains within itself, within its grammar and

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lexis) and pragmatic (how these resources have to be exploited for learners in order to achieve meaning). These approaches are complementary in the teaching of foreign languages but there are also other important aspects such as morphosyntactic and discourse analysis focusing on language in context, this means context is significant because it effects literal meaning. Nowadays, the concept of the pedagogy of language teaching is changing and we can summary it in a word: 'communicative'. This means, an approach to language teaching that fosters communication through interaction in the target language. **Lado and Fries (1957)** say that the ability to communicate is the primary objective when people want to learn a language and conceives of structural practice only as a means to that end.

Teaching has been defined in many different ways and in the last decades it has changed a lot. Many years ago, teaching was **teacher-centred**, this means, teachers controlled what was taught, when, how and under what conditions within a classroom. For instance teachers relied on the textbook as their principal guide and determined the use of the class time. Nowadays, teaching is **student-centred**, that means, students have some responsibilities about what is taught, how it is learnt. For instance, students might help to choose some of the contents to be learned or most instruction occurs in small groups, in pairs, individually but it is not exclusively the teacher who is directed to the entire class. Students also determine some behavior rules or direct their own learning. This is the key to the effective learning according to some authors such as **Edwards (2001: 37),** that says:

> *Placing learners at the heart of the learning process and meeting their needs, is taken to a progressive step in which learner-centred approaches mean that persons are able to learn what is relevant for them in ways that are appropriate. Waste in human and educational resources is reduced as it suggested learners no longer have to learn what they already know or can do, nor what they are uninterested in.*

- SOME CHANGES IN TEACHING

In **1980**, it appeared the **Sociolinguistic Revolution** (a paradigm shift), it arose the **Communicative Approach** (language as a tool for communication and learning as a process of active construction) in an initial phase that derived on **Communicative Competence** (term coined by **Hymes** in **1972**) and this included linguistic competence,

sociolinguistic competence and pragmatic competence. Later, from 1990s onwards this approach was seen in a different way and with new interpretations including aspects such as learned-centred instruction and interactive learning. Other two approaches were **Content-Based Instruction** and **Task-Based Language Learning** (in which Second language acquisition was linked to language pedagogy).

Some decades ago, the teaching of English was focused on different methods such as the grammar-translation method, the direct method, the silent way, etc. **Kumaravadivelu (2006: 67)** thought that none of these methods was perfect and that we should not look for an alternative method but an alternative to method. He argued that it is too difficult to apply them in a real classroom because they are not derived from the experience in the classroom **(Nunan, 1991; Pennycook, 1989; Richards, 1989)**. It is impossible to follow a single method and even though teachers are trained in one of them, they cannot follow a single one. He supports that teachers have to theorize from their practice and to practice what they theorize **(Kumaravadivelu, 2001: 545).**

Nowadays, there is no perfect method and methods and approaches are constantly changing because none of them is totally effective. Moreover, no teacher uses a single method because it is impossible; they combine different aspects from the different methods.

It is then when it arose what it is known as the 'post-method' situation which involves the teachers' autonomy. This situation recognizes the fact that teachers are able to teach and to perform autonomously within the limitations imposed by the different institutions, by the academic and administrative limitations, by the curriculum, etc.

As I said before, teaching has changed a lot in the last decades and recent explorations on pedagogy of the second language show a great change from conventional methods to post-method era. This means, conventional methods have not been very successful along years. **Kumaravadivelu (2006: 22)** supports this idea saying that post-method era is a call for the most optimal way to teach English and adds the following statement:

> *The postmethod condition is a sustainable state of affairs that compels us to fundamentally restructure our view of language teaching and teacher education. It urges us to review the character and content of classroom teaching in all its pedagogical and ideological perspectives. It drives us to*

streamline our teacher education by refiguring the reified relationship between theory and practice.

Today, English is taught from the perspective of the **Communicative Approach** which could be said to have started with **Dell Hymes's seminal work *On Communicative Competence*** published in **1972** and which provoked a sociolinguistic revolution. Now language is seen as a tool for communication and not only as a system as it had been seen until the 1970s or 1980s.

The Communicative Approach has many origins but it is said that it is the product of educators and linguists who had grown completely dissatisfied with the already mentioned methods.

Both educators and linguists thought students were not learning realistic language. They did not know how to communicate by using the appropriate social language, gestures or expressions. They were not able to communicate in the target language. Then, it took place the need to develop a communicative-style teaching in 1970; authentic language use and classroom exchanges in which students were involved in real communication with others became very important.

In the following years, the Communicative Approach has been adapted to different levels and new methods have been spawned under several names including teaching for proficiency, notional-functional, proficiency-based instruction, and communicative language teaching. The Communicative Approach can leave students in suspense as to the outcome of a class exercise, which will vary according to their reactions and responses. In this way, learners are more motivated and they desire to communicate in meaningful ways about meaningful topics.

According to **Berns (1984: 5)**; an expert in the field of communicative language teaching, language is interaction and it has a clear relationship with society so language study has to look at the use of language in context; this means, both its linguistic context (what it is uttered before and after a given piece of discourse) and the social one (who speaks, social roles of the speakers, etc.).

To summarize this point, there are many methods and approaches to take into account in the English teaching but there is not perfect method to learn it, the all

teachers merge methods or approaches to achieve a more effective teaching and to assure a better learning.

- TODAY'S TEACHING

The first term of this Master was focused in theoretical teaching. We were introduced to a general view of the recent history of educational theories and the current teaching intends to foster competence-based learning, cooperative work, the use of ICT's in the Educational System, active role of students, teachers as guides in the teaching-learning process and collaborative work. This is the new change in the theoretical approach which responds to the circumstances and needs of the current society promoting a better learning.

This point is one of the most important in the Educational System because teaching was teacher-centred (teacher as the main protagonist within the classroom transmitting knowledge to students as if they were 'sponges') and now, teaching is student-centred (students themselves have to discover knowledge with teacher's help and guidance). Some years ago, teaching profession was seen as the transmission of pre-selected content to students, but nowadays, it is seen as guidance in the students' learning process motivating them to acquire their knowledge by themselves.

Another important aspect seen in the first term was the study of procedures involved in the teaching profession. Bearing in mind the view of the Spanish Educational System, we studied some Legal Provisions that we, as teachers, we have to bear in mind in our teaching-learning process. As regards these ones, this Master takes into account the paradigm shift described in **LOE (2006)** (Spanish abbreviation for *Ley Orgánica de Educación*), this new paradigm is the **Competence-Based model** and replaced a traditional teaching based on teacher-centred, linear lessons, contents as 'aims' rather than 'means' to develop competences, etc. The new paradigm is focused on spiral lessons (consisting of the development of some competences), teaching as guidance (process-oriented view), contents are 'means' to the competence development, lessons are student-centred (students as protagonist of the learning process) and tasks are meaningful fostering communication.

The **AC** plays a relevant role in Today's teaching because is characterized by flexibility. This means, the AC is rather a descriptive curriculum in the sense that contents and procedures are described as broad guidelines, but also prescriptive because it describes contents and procedures for a given Educational Stage **(House 2011: 69)**. In this way, teachers have flexibility to design their plans and even they can adapt them bearing in mind context and current sitting within the classroom.

Regarding methodology, traditional teaching was based on a more linear teaching in which grammatical structures predominated. This was my foremost view in the English teaching, but my experience along this Master changed my point of view about the English teaching. Nowadays, as the **AC** establishes, English teaching is based on English as a tool for communication to help students to develop their communicative competence. Students have to be able to communicate in English because it is the main purpose in the teaching of foreign languages.

To conclude this point, the AC and the CEFR support Communicative Competence as the main base in the teaching of languages.

JUSTIFICATION

In this section I will explain the reasons why I have chosen the projects mentioned before in the introduction: The Course Plan (a project of the first term of the subject "*Diseño Curricular de Lenguas Extranjeras*") and the Learning Unit (what I call Unit of Work, this is a project of the second term, in the subject "*Diseño, Organización y Desarrollo de Actividades para el Aprendizaje de Inglés*"). The last one was implemented in the High School Pedro Cerrada (Utebo) during the placement period ll.

I have chosen these two projects because they are the most important ones carried out in this Master and I think they have been the most useful for my training as an English teacher. Both of them have been designed bearing in mind the **Aragonese Curriculum (2007)** (AC) and the **Common European Framework of Reference for languages (2001)** (CEFR). The first one is a set of decisions which the Aragonese Educational Administration and the teaching staff of the whole stages and modes will have to make about objectives, contents, methodology and assessment. The second one is a guideline used to describe achievements of learners of foreign languages across Europe; its main aim is to provide a method of learning, teaching and assessing which applies to all languages in Europe.

One of the relevant reasons why I have chosen these two projects is the close relationship between them. Both projects, the Course Plan and the Unit of Work are based on the **Communicative Approach** (communicative view of language) established and assembled in the **AC** and the **CEFR.** This means according to **CEFR (2001: 9)**:

> *Language use, embracing language learning, comprises the actions performed by persons who as individuals and as social agents develop a range of competences, both general and in particular communicative language competences. They draw on the competences at their disposal in various contexts under various conditions and under various constraints to engage in language activities involving language processes to produce and/or receive texts in relation to themes in specific domains, activating those strategies which seem most appropriate for carrying out the tasks to be accomplished. The monitoring of these actions by the participants leads to the reinforcement or modification of their competences.*

According to the **AC (2007: 200)**:

> *The learning of a foreign language contributes in a direct way to the development of the competence in linguistic communication [...]. At the same time, language, as a vehicle of human thought to the interpretation and representation of reality, constitutes the tool of learning par excellence.*

Formerly (when I studied Secondary Education) we could find in the curriculum model exclusively grammatical contents and vocabulary, we did not find within it either communicative purposes or spoken interaction nor spoken production skills that in the current curriculum are the main basis. These aspects have been the key to elaborate these projects. We have to forget the way in which we studied in that period in order to focus on communicative competence because this is the main base for the current approach in the teaching-learning process. According to **Canale and Swain (1980: 28-30)**, the ability to communicate required four sub-competences that are the following:

-Grammatical

-Sociolinguistic

-Discourse

-Strategic

In this way, all the skills and competences have to be integrated in the teaching-learning process although the principal goal is the communicative purpose. But, grammatical sub-competence is not the most important one; this is another integrating element in the teaching of the Foreign Language (FL). In this sense and according to my reflections about my teaching-learning process along this Master, learners have to learn grammar in an inductive way involving real communication rather than in a deductive way involving only practice and production of the grammatical points. As **Ellis (1985)** says, grammar is seen as a mean and never as an end in the teaching-learning process, it means, grammar acts as acquisition facilitator when people learn a foreign language. Nowadays, grammar still plays an important role in High Schools as I could observe during my placement period because English teachers in High Schools still see grammar as the main point within the classroom; within my observation tasks, I realized that my mentor held a rather more traditional view of teaching, it was

determined by authority. Some authors such as **Yalden (1987: 61)** give special attention to the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and summarize it as:

> *It is based on the notion of the learners as communicators, naturally endowed with the ability to learn languages. It seeks to provide learners with the target language system. It is assumed that learners will have to prepare to use the target language (orally and in written form) in many predictable and unpredictable acts of communication which arise both in classroom interaction and in real-world situations, whether concurrent with language training or subsequent to it.*

According to **Richards and Rogers (1986: 64)**, when grammar teaching is concerned, CLT focuses on communicative proficiency rather than grammatical structures because the main goal in a teaching of an EFL is 'communication'.

We can also find some differences between these two projects, the Course Plan is just designed taking into account the communicative approach, neglecting grammar exercises but in the Unit of Work we can find some activities in which grammar appears in an indirect way but predominating the communicative approach to foster social interaction among partners and the use of the target language.

BRIEF EXPLANATIONS ABOUT THE TWO PROJECTS

I consider relevant to refer to the old methods of teaching and to the current methods of teaching with the purpose of seeing the evolution of the teaching-learning process in the last years. Not so long ago I was a student of Secondary Education and lessons were based on grammar activities and vocabulary. However, Nowadays the teaching process is based on communicative competence and communicative approach.

Regarding the Course Plan, I started this Master as a challenge because I did not have any previous knowledge about Education system, or experience designing tasks, contents, objectives and methodology, among others. The **AC** and the **CEFR** were a very useful help to provide us knowledge in the fulfillment of this project because these establish the main goals to develop a more effective teaching-learning process.

In the realization of this project, one of the main problems was to distinguish between some contents and some objectives. With my new training in the Master along

the first term, I want to focus on analyzing this one taking into account some mistakes such as I have mentioned previously.

Another reason why this project was a great challenge is that it was required to do it in small groups and some partners had knowledge in Education due to their Primary Education Degree. But in my group, none of us had previous knowledge so we started from scratch. Despite this fact, my group did a good work.

Regarding the Unit of Work, here the starting point was not the same because students of the Master had some more experience once the Course Plan was designed and we could develop new concepts such as **collaborative learning, peer-assessment and communicative strategies**. Moreover, the two placement periods were a great help to develop these new concepts and to understand better students' needs, the legal frameworks in the teaching-learning process, etc. Maybe this project was more useful because of its put implementation. In this sense it was easier to see the mistakes or the aspects that needed to be improved. Besides we had a recently acquired new knowledge in Education and bring the project to practice meant a good training for our future work as an English teacher.

With these two projects students of the Master have learnt to be aware of new concepts in the teaching-learning process such as communicative approach rather than grammar approach, the use of authentic and adapted materials, among others.

I had the chance to put into practice the whole Unit of Work in the High School Pedro Cerrada (Utebo) and I checked most of the activities I had designed did scarcely pose any problems. However, I realized I had to improve some aspects such as the prediction of students' difficulties and needs.

Finally, in the next section I will analyze the weak aspects of the projects chosen taking into account their elaboration.

CRITICAL REFLECTION ON EXISTING OR POSSIBLE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE PROJECT CHOSEN

1. LEARNING OUTCOMES

In this section I am going to analyze and reflect on the knowledge, competences and the type of syllabus that are included in the two projects chosen for the analysis: The Course Plan for the 4th grade of Compulsory Secondary Education and the Learning Unit for the 4th grade of Compulsory Secondary Education called *'Decorate it',* and whose implementation has been carried out at the High School Pedro Cerrada (Utebo).

1.1 COURSE PLAN

Designing the Course Plan for the subject *'Diseño Curricular de Lenguas Extranjeras'* in the first term of this Master has been one of the most difficult activities because I did not have any knowledge in education. Nonetheless, as a future teacher I knew students' level, context and differentiation within the classroom were important aspects to take into account in the design of the Course Plan. For its elaboration I have taken into account some legal provisions established in the AC, which are:

-**Ley Orgánica 2/2006, de 3 de Mayo, de Educación**. From this law, the most important chapters are those concerning principles and purposes of education, compulsory Secondary education, students with special educational needs; teachers, schools, participation, autonomy, authority and evaluation of the education system.

-**Real Decreto 1631/2006, de 29 de diciembre**. It establishes the minimum educational standard in compulsory Secondary education: purposes and aims of compulsory Secondary education and organization of the fourth year, key competences, promotion, evaluation, attention to diversity, tutoring and academic guidance. As regards English language, this subject contributes to the acquisition of key competences.

-**Orden de 9 de mayo de 2007**. It approves the Secondary Education Curriculum for schools in Aragon. Through this Order, the general provisions,

organization of the curriculum, qualification of the teaching process are taken into account.

These legal provisions establish the way in which the grades must be organised attending to competences, differentiation and evaluation. The AC is both **prescriptive** and **descriptive curricula** because teachers have to follow an exact list of contents and procedures for a given educational stage, but these contents and procedures are seen as broad guidelines at the same time. Teachers have freedom to design or to adapt their materials for the teaching process taking into consideration students' characteristics, preferences and dislikes in order to increase teaching and learning efficiency. Teachers are responsible for knowing students' characteristics and deciding which contents are more effective for each group of learners, bearing in mind contents are just the means to the end of **Communicative Competence Development**. **House (2011: 68)** supports teachers have to use the curricula in a flexible form saying:

> *A curriculum is not an instruction manual for producing perfect results, but a framework which provides teachers with a structure they then give character and content to.*

The same idea is established in the **AC (2007: 227)**:

> *The teacher will facilitate the decision-making process by guiding students on the reflection about the subject, their own learning process, the curricular demands (…), suggesting possible priorities, alternative procedures, strategies or resources.*

The Course Plan follows the contents of the curriculum for learning a foreign language (for both ESO and *Bachillerato*) and those are based on the foundations of language learning with the purpose of developing the all language skills, the understanding of all elements of the target language and the social and cultural engagement with language.

I took into account all these aspects when I designed the Course Plan but I had some difficulties because this project was not going to be into practice but its development had to be as if it was to be implemented. It is difficult to design activities without knowing students' characteristics, level, preferences, etc. The design of my Unit

of work or Learning Unit gave me the chance to be more coherent designing activities because I already knew my students and I acquired new knowledge in Education.

According to the **syllabus** chosen for the Course Plan, on the one hand I took into account **Candlin's definition (1984: 30)**:

Syllabuses are concerned with the specification and planning of what is to be learned, frequently set down in some written form as prescriptions for action by teachers and learners. They have, traditionally, the mark of authority. They are concerned with the achievement of ends, often, though not always, associated with the pursuance of particular means.

On the other hand and according to **White (1988: 44)**, it is important to make a distinction between the two types of syllabuses: **Type A syllabuses** that establish what should be learnt (teacher as decision-maker, external to the learner and determined by authority. It is more traditional, product-oriented) and **Type B syllabuses** that establish how the language should be learnt (negotiation between learners and teachers, doing things for or with the learner and process-oriented).

The Course plan is designed according to type B syllabuses in the sense that I focused on the process rather than the product, but also includes some features of the type A syllabuses, such as: General objectives. I exactly chose the **multi-strand syllabus** for this project because it is a combination of the whole syllabuses, since modern syllabuses are combining different aspects to be comprehensive and helpful to teachers and learners as much as possible. I mean, teachers combine different syllabuses in their teaching process because it is almost impossible to follow a single syllabus. Teachers need to find specifications of tasks, notions, grammar, functions, etc.

As regards **learning objectives**, my Course Plan included general objectives related to the stage objectives (in this case, the fourth grade of ESO), and then each lesson included specific learning objectives such as:

-*To develop learners' autonomy in conversation and in writing to be aware of how contribute to change the planet.* (Unit 3; p.13)

-*To write a letter explaining a problem.* (Unit 5; p.17)

When I started designing the objectives, I took into account real communicative needs, I had clear that grammar was not an objective and I focused on those established in the AC involving the all skills. It is clear grammar is a mean to achieve the objectives (through communication), but not an objective in itself. However, in some occasions I was a bit confused and mixed some objectives with grammar (see Course Plan; p. 15). Regarding real communicative needs, The **AC (2007: 201)** supports this idea stating that:

> *The communicative skills are grouped into two sections: listening, speaking and conversation, and, reading and writing. (...) At this stage there is a significant importance to oral communication, thus the first module focuses on developing the ability to interact in different situations and stresses the importance of oral language models coming from a number of varied speakers in order to collect, to the greatest extent possible, variations and nuances.*

Therefore, the main aim to teach English in Compulsory Secondary Education is to provide students with interaction in daily and real situations fostering communication in real contexts. Teachers must present students real communicative situations which prepare students for the real life. This idea is supported by **Brown (2007: 46)** stating classroom tasks must provide students with the skills they need for communication in real contexts.

The main problem I found when I designed the specific objectives of each lesson was the distinction between objectives and contents. For instance:

-*To be able to understand and to use present, past and future passive in real communication situations.* (Unit 4; p.15) I used it as an objective and it is clearly a content.

-*To be able to recognise and to use vocabulary and expressions related to music.* (Unit 4; p.15) It is a content but I designed it as an objective too.

In that moment I was confused with the two terms and I could not distinguish them correctly, but designing my Unit of work I learnt to distinguish them better.

As regards competences, I designed the Course plan bearing in mind the contribution to the key competences and the competences in the foreign languages as

the AC establish. It is important because students should know other cultures to do the given tasks through the *Cultural and artistic competence* (Unit 9: Rights and Responsibilities); they should develop the *Interpersonal and civic competence* (Unit 6: Today's English) contributing to the respect and tolerance for other cultures and languages, etc.

The AC supports the following statement for the development of the key competences such as the *competence of learning to learn, digital competence, competence in linguistic communication*, among others:

> *The learning of a Second Foreign Language contributes in a direct way to the development of the linguistic competence, expanding the general communicative ability incorporating new competences and strengthening the acquired competences in relation to the mother tongue or other languages.* **(AC; 2007: 202)**

At the same time, The **CEFR** supported in **2006** the key competences had to be incorporated in all EU countries because it defines these competences such as 'a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes', developing personal fulfilment, social inclusion, active citizenship and employment. Students must develop those in their learning process. For this purpose, I designed useful tasks that helped them develop the key competences. For instance: Unit 6 (Today's English; p. XVII) *El cambio de guardia en Buckingham Palace.* This task allows students to know a foreign culture (related to *competence in linguistic communication* and *cultural and artistic competence*).

As regards the competences in the foreign languages, those are: **morphosyntactic, pragmatic, procedural** and **intercultural**. These have to be integrated in the teaching-learning process taking into account as the main axis the development of the **communicative competence**. Competences convey aspects such as: grammatical and lexical aspects; functional and sociolinguistic aspects; the development of the autonomy and social interaction with others; the ability to relate the own culture and the foreign culture. Teachers have to take present these aspects to favour students' learning through tasks and fostering communication reinforcing the development of competences. My Course Plan includes tasks that prepare students for the acquisition of the all competences in foreign languages. For instance: Unit 6 (Today's English; p. XVII) *Differences between British and American English*. This task allows students to

relate two cultures (both British and American cultures; this task is related to *Intercultural Competence*) and to know phonological and grammatical aspects (related to *Morphosyntactic Competence*).

To design the tasks included in this project, my partners and me took into account what the AC establishes in relation to competences and what is called **Cross-curricular contents.** The LOGSE estates:

> *The integral character of the Curriculum involves that, within the development of the key competences taking into account the democratic values in Education, those will be incorporated in the different areas as cross-curricular contents that our society demands, such as: Education for tolerance, for peace, intercultural education, equality between sexes (...).* ***(Ley orgánica 1/1990, de 3 de octubre de 1990)***

This idea is supported by **Martínez (1995: 12)** that says cross- curricular contents are essential and very valuable because those allow students to sensitize themselves in the presence of problems, to give their opinions in a critic way and to act with an assumed commitment freely.

Some topics such as: *Our changing planet, The Battle of the Sexes and Rights and Responsibilities* are included in my Course Plan with the purpose of developing cross-curricular contents to humanize students. The effectiveness of those is not checked within the classroom because this project has not been implemented.

Most of the unit plans are not clearly linked between them. This is the reason why this Course Plan has not a title itself and it pretends to embrace different topics bearing in mind students' motivation with topics such as *Music* or *Relationships*, and with moral topics, as those mentioned before.

As regards Methodology, this is developed in general terms bearing in mind the whole unit plans but at the same time, each lesson plan has its own methodology depending on the types of tasks we designed. This point is very important because it is essential to meet the student's needs by accommodating and modifying activities for different kind of learners. If students have difficulties in their learning process, teachers can clarify difficult concepts; highlight the main ideas, etc. In our project, the methodology is the same for each student because there are not students with great difficulties in their learning process, so the methodology is not adapted to special

difficulties because it is not necessary. We designed methodology according to the **AC (225-228)** highlighting the more relevant aspects. A global methodology was developed to deal with subject matter as integrating several competences, a methodology that paid attention to the learning process, and fostered learner participation in the teaching and learning process. This kind of methodology adopted a global perspective integrating skills and competences in which communicative situations predominated.

Methodology may focus on how teachers deal with the whole skills (including spoken production and spoken interaction, as the CEFR establishes as the main basis). After designing my nine unit plans within the Course plan, I learnt how to select different texts, how to adapt and select materials with reliability and authenticity, etc, appropriate to students' needs, interests and level.

According to Evaluation, I would like to distinguish between two terms: Evaluation and assessment. Evaluation is defined by **Fenton (1996: 13)** as *'the application of a standard and a decision-making system to assessment data to produce judgments about the amount and adequacy of the learning that has taken place'*, and he himself defines assessment as *'the collection of relevant information that may be relied on for making decisions'*. However, according to my experience in the Master, I would like to clarify that an effective evaluation is always the one which clearly defines the learning goals for later on provide a clear and accurate feedback. Moreover, it must be noticed that although these two terms are often used interchangeably, actually they are two parts of the same process when teaching takes place. With my new experience acquired in the placement period II and my observation in placement period III, I realized that evaluation has to have an effective program for the evaluation of teachers, students, materials, process or any aspect included in the teaching-learning process. Thus, it is possible to know whether students have learned, whether teaching is carried out in a correct way achieving the main goals or how to take into account students' needs.

1.2 UNIT OF WORK OR LEARNING UNIT

Designing the Unit of work for the subject *'Diseño, organización y desarrollo de actividades para el aprendizaje de inglés'* in the second term of this Master has been a difficult activity for me despite the fact that I had acquired some knowledge in Education. So its design was a great challenge because it was going to be implemented in a real High School and my experience was scarce. The development of this activity helped me especially to understand the importance of the different aspects of the teaching context and for them; I used the CEFR and the AC as the main basis.

In relation to the legal provisions, I used the same that I used for my Course Plan because those regulate our Educational System. These documents cited in **House (2011: 69)** say:

> *Leave plenty for teachers to develop their own topics and themes, and allow them to place the emphasis on skills and procedures according to their own pedagogical principles, and, importantly, the particular features and characteristics of their teaching environment.*

As teachers, we have freedom to design our own materials with topics or themes that we choose in the teaching-learning process, but always highlighting our pedagogical principles. For this project, I had freedom to design my own materials and all of them were created thinking about students' motivation. My teacher gave me the main topic for my Unit of Work and I designed the different tasks in relation to it.

Teachers have to be aware of the way they are going to teach languages or they have to bear in mind the process they are going to follow in the teaching of languages. In this sense, I designed my Unit of Work according to **Communicative Approach**, which allows learners to be involved in real communication, their natural strategies for language acquisition will be used, and this will allow them to learn how to use the language. This idea is supported by **Richards and Rogers (1989)** stating that this approach helps teachers develop students' oral communication skills and in this way students speak more and get involved in the classroom activities, and this is the purpose of my project. For its fulfillment, I also took into account the **Task-based Language Learning**, supported by **Ellis (2003)** and which has its origin in Communicative

Language Teaching. To understand this point well, it is required the definition of task. According to **Long (1985: 89)** task is defined as:

> *The hundred and one things people do in everyday life, at work, at play, and in between. Tasks are the things people will tell you they do if you ask them and they are not applied linguists.*

Another definition given in this case by **Nunan (1989: 10)** is:

> *(…)a piece of classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is principally focused on meaning rather than form.*

As Ellis says, teachers prepare students introducing them into the topic and giving them clear instructions about what they have to do (pre-task), students perform the task and the teacher's role is very limited to an observer because students have usually to work in small groups depending on the activity (task-cycle) and then students perform the task (post-task). I chose this approach to help students develop language through its use; the learner should be exposed as much as possible to the foreign language in order to develop it. This process provides the learner with personal experience and fosters the development of his communicative skill. The whole lessons follow this schedule to achieve an effective communication.

Bearing in mind the task-based language learning for the design of my Unit of Work, I would like to say I was a bit confused with the main authors that supported it. I gave special attention to **Harmer (1991)**, who is a secondary author that supported the ideas proposed by **Ellis (2003)** in *Task-based Language Learning and Teaching* and **Nunan (1989)** in *Task-based Language Teaching*. It is important clarify it because when I designed this project, I could not distinguish well among the most important authors. As a future teacher, it is necessary to understand well who the main authors are in order to support the development of my good teaching. I need to have clear all the concepts to develop my teaching in a correct way. My Course Plan was also developed from this perspective but it is most difficult to see the structure of pre-task, task-cycle and post-task because the description of tasks were not described within the project. However, the main author I used to draw information about the task-based approach in the Course Plan was **Skehan (1998)** in particular his article *Task-based Instruction*.

In general terms and from the perspective of the approaches mentioned before, the whole lessons that my partner and me designed were student-centred. The teacher is not the protagonist within the classroom but a promoter and as facilitator of communication among students. As a consequence, students' active role and interaction between them increases significantly, at the same time as learning through discovery is developed. For instance: In lesson 1 (*Creativity*: p.14-16) the pre-task consists of discovering relatives through practice. Students are shown a PowerPoint that contains some questions that include relative pronouns. Students have to be able to identify and use them in the second task through an interview to a famous person, designing questions that include them. The post-task of this lesson is a game in which students have to participate actively while teacher observes the learning process of her students correcting them if necessary. They have to use the previous knowledge that is acquired in the tasks done before. Students discover English grammar rules by themselves. The teacher does not explain the grammar rules in a theoretical way, they learn through practice. I acted as a guide during the implementation of my Unit of Work by solving some students' doubts on certain grammar structures appearing in the different tasks. Other examples in which students discover their learning through practice are lesson three and lesson five (developed in the same way following the same steps, but the tasks are different). It helped my students to learn in an autonomous way.

The **AC (2007: 226)** establishes as methodological guidelines in relation to authentic materials that:

> *Authentic materials will be favoured, understanding by "authentic" those*
> *not specifically designed for the EFL class and giving preference to those*
> *that a native speaker of his age would use (magazines, comics, Internet,*
> *(...).*

The use of authentic sources is largely supported among applied linguists, for instance **Nunan (1999: 212)** states:

> *The use of authentic sources leads to greater interest and variety in the*
> *material that learners deal with in the classroom. This authentic material*
> *helps bring the contact to life, and ultimately makes learning and using*
> *language more meaningful, and, ultimately, easily for students.*

During my placement period, I had the chance to check the usefulness of this methodology in a real EFL classroom with my students of the High School Pedro Cerrada. Students got easily involved in lessons 4 (*Tattoos*: p. 21-22) since they were asked to think and do things instead of being passive listeners. For instance: they had to demonstrate they had understood well the chapter of the *Big Bang Theory* and they were able to answers questions related to it. This chapter was an authentic material for them and it was used with the purpose of developing their comprehension ability. The use of the authentic materials chosen in accordance with students' needs and likes helped them to get involved in the lesson. It can favor students' learning.

It is important to highlight that I mainly designed communicative tasks born in mind students' specific needs and expectations, but the unit included different tasks involving the whole skills (see lesson 3; it also developed the writing skill) . As the main aims, I wanted students to improve their writing and speaking skills. The speaking skill was developed through several debates and role-plays in which students expressed different points of view supporting or contrasting ideas, using vocabulary and common language structures related to the topic of each lesson; for instance, lesson 4, task 3. Students developed their writing skill for instance writing letters showing a critical attitude about the topic and supporting ideas in a well-organized way; for instance, lesson 3, task 4. Thus, the lesson eight is an exam of the all unit and includes the all skills (listening, writing, reading, spoken production and spoken interaction).

Proceeding with the analysis related to the materials and tasks included in this project on *Decorate it!,* I would like to explain the reason why I designed the work in group or in pairs. **Vygotsky (1962)** supports this idea stating people learn through interaction and communication with others, and social environments can influence our learning process. According to him, learning takes place when students interact with their classmates and teachers. In this way, teachers create a learning environment that maximizes learners' ability to interact with others through collaboration, discussion or even feedback. Thinking about Vygotsky's statements, I designed tasks involving interaction through debates, in which interaction was made among small groups of students; for instance, lesson 5, task 3. The work in pairs and the interaction among students and the teacher were also developed. I used the collaborative work to promote a successful learning was concerned with creating a rich environment in which students

had many opportunities for using the language in meaningful contexts. I thought it was a great idea to focus my unit of work on students' interaction promoting cooperative learning to motivate students and to achieve an effective learning. In this way and according to **Long and Porter (1985)**, I fostered the increase of language production opportunities, the improvement of the quality of students talk, the individualized instruction, the promotion of a positive affective climate, and students' motivation. Obviously, the lessons were not effective at all because students' interests and needs were changing.

As teachers, we have to be flexible and creative, and we have to provide students the chance to use the language in different ways. During my placement period, students had different roles depending on the purpose of each task, so the language they used changed. My role as teacher was also changed according to the requirement of the tasks. Therefore, I acted as a mediator when students did classroom debates, as a supervisor when they did work group tasks. I promoted students' participation as much as possible, especially by promoting the participation of those who were less cooperative students involving them more and more in the lessons. Some years ago, the teaching-learning process of languages was organized in a linear way and was very traditional. Nowadays, the teaching-learning process is cyclical, global and interactive. I mean, teachers must think about what to teach, how to teach and whether students are learning to achieve a more effective learning.

In relation to the type of tasks, the most successful were the role-plays, which took place the first time in the first lesson through a game in which students shown their previous knowledge. My main aim was to get students much more involved in the topic but discovering the implicit content. The result was really good and students were very motivated and took an active role.

However, there was a problem with some of the role-plays (lesson 1, task 3 and lesson 5, task 3). Students were very passionate trying to guess what their partners described using their previous knowledge. In this sense, these role-plays were developed in a little time so I had to adjust the time of the tasks otherwise. At the end of my placement period, I achieved to control better the length of each task with students

because my mentor gave me the chance to teach my students more days. Therefore, my problem with classroom management was overcome.

With regard to the contents, those are included in my Unit of Work are not a translation taken from the AC, but they are an adaptation of those divided into modules according to the skills (as in my Course Plan). Contents were designed bearing in mind the characteristics of my students in order to adapt instruction to their educational needs, searching for the best way to attract and maintain their interest and motivation. For instance:

-Autonomous lecture of extensive texts related to students' interest; for instance, about graffiti or Venice Carnival Mask. (Unit of Work, p. 10)

-Interest to use the learning opportunities created in the classroom context and outside it. For instance: in Communicative tasks. (Unit of Work, p.10)

All contents of this project are adapted according to the AC establishes taking into consideration the tasks and the topic included in it following the same schedule that I chose for my Course Plan.

Both projects, the Course Plan and the Unit of Work have been addressed for the 4th grade of ESO and are based on the same legal provisions that regulate our Educational System. They are different in content because of the topic but they establish the same principles for a good Education attending to the AC and the CEFR. I designed the two projects from the same perspective, the Course Plan provided me the main knowledge to learn how to design the unit plans paying attention to students' needs and interests, but the Unit of Work gave me the experience as a future teacher having the chance to implement it within a classroom with two groups of the 4th grade of ESO. These ones have been very useful for my training period because it is important to know how to plan the lessons but also how to carry out the implementation within a classroom knowing the main principles of the Educational System. I learnt to achieve an effective learning; teachers have to be consistent with the teaching-learning process and they have to bear in mind students are the most important factor within a classroom.

FINAL CONCLUSIONS AND NEW PROPOSALS OF IMPROVEMENT

I consider that all the subjects of the Master Degree in Education have contributed to build my theoretical background provided me with the development of the different skills within the scope of the Educational System. I think the three placement periods have been the best trigger for our new recently acquired knowledge in the field of Education. I have expanded my knowledge thanks to the fulfillment of the Course Plan and the Unit of Work, but my great help has been the placement period II, in which I had the chance to implement my Unit of Work and take the role of a teacher. This allowed me to become aware of the importance of bearing in mind students' interests and needs. Furthermore, the placement period II also gave me the possibility to improve my classroom management with students of ESO. I enjoyed dealing with students of different ages to see other students' intellectual and social development, other behaviors within the classroom, other needs, etc.

Another important point in the teaching-learning process is 'vocation' because it requires effort, patience, commitment and passion on the part of teachers. Teachers have to have vocation in this profession to achieve an effective teaching-learning process because dealing with students is a difficult task.

This Master gave me the chance to be an English teacher for three weeks and I was very satisfied with the implementation of my Unit of Work. I feel I am well equipped to invest my energy in this profession and I am aware of the process of continuing learning along my teaching practice is very important.

I would like to give some proposals that could help improve the Educational System in the teaching of languages, those are the following:

Teachers should use (both in Primary and Secondary Education) the target language as much as possible in those institutions where Content and Language Integrated Learning **(CLIL)** is not introduced. **McDonald (1993)** states classroom situations can provide real-life situations for students through simulations only using the target language in the classroom but if the teacher uses the mother tongue, students may lose the chance of benefit from these situations. **Turnbull (2001)** maintains the same

opinion saying students do not benefit if the teacher relies on using the mother tongue. Students should have exposed to the target language as much as possible for a better learning.

The CLIL should be introduced in all the schools if possible, I mean, many subjects should be taught in the target language so that students could acquire the language.

The Educational System should foster participation in any exchange with English native centres to ease students the ability and fluency to communicate in a foreign language.

Although the **AC** and the **CEFR** establish as the main basis students are assessed orally, not all the centres carry out this kind of assessment within the classroom. Teachers should test students orally both in Primary and Secondary Education so that they can get used to speak in the foreign language. Teachers have to foster students' communication, in this way they can improve their communication strategies.

Nowadays TICs are being incorporated in all the fields of Education but there are many teachers who do not make use of them. It would be good and very interesting for students the creation of a forum with foreign High Schools of English-speaking allocating each student a foreign partner with the purpose of easing English learning.

Students must be the centre of learning and this is the reason why teachers must try to base the lessons on practice, using in addition to the textbook (in many occasions it is boring and even it can fossilize students' learning because of motivation) other interactive resources and tasks. For instance: To invite an English native teacher that provides students lectures about different interesting topics for them, or even to participate in an English theatre each year.

All these proposals can help students improve their English and acquire communication strategies for their personal training in the foreign language. Some of them, such as the introduction of CLIL in all the schools may not be feasible.

I would also like to give proposals for teachers and for my professional future. **Zeichner and Liston (1996: 34)** states that:

The process of learning to teach continues throughout a teacher's entire career (...). No matter how good a teacher education program is, at best, it can only prepare teachers to begin teaching.

In this sense, my foremost aim is to be a **reflective teacher** and to continue improving my knowledge and skills along my professional future. Reflective teachers have to look at what they do in the classroom thinking about why they do it and if works. It could be defined as a process of self-observation and self-evaluation. Collecting information about what happens within the classroom concerning our teaching, and analyzing it allow us to identify our own practices and beliefs. This is the first step to change and improve our teaching. In my future as a teacher, I will collect information through personal interviews with my students, rubrics or even one-minute papers to know students' requests, needs and interest for their learning. This will give me the chance to reflect on my teaching and to improve the aspects that do not work well.

I would like to put emphasis on **professional development and teacher education policies**. Those affect teachers' abilities to teach and students' abilities to learn. In Spain there are some education programs that many teachers carry out freely for their professional development. The Ministry of Education offers some programs for improving teachers' career along their professional lives but these programs are carried out by teachers freely. The Ministry of Education should change this policy and these programs should be carried out by all the teachers every two or three years and in a compulsory way to assure all the teachers improve their skills, knowledge and techniques in their teaching process. Teachers must follow learning to know how to improve their teaching along their careers. In many countries as United Kingdom, this kind of programs is compulsory every five years giving the chance to teachers to develop and to improve their teaching process, and ultimately students 'learning.

Finally, as an English teacher I would like to study evaluation in depth. It is one of the best ways to motivate students in their learning process. Some years ago, evaluation was reduced to testing as it was considered the primary way to assess students' achievement. Nowadays, this has changed and there are different kinds of evaluation that ease students' learning process and motivation. As an English teacher, I would like to promote students' interest and motivation to learn, not only to get good

marks. The kind of evaluation and what it implies for them is very important to improve their learning and to achieve students' success.

To conclude this section, the main aim is to become a reflective teacher, able to improve along the years through a continuous process of reflection.

I will foster communication among students to get them prepared for real-life situations through communicative tasks within the classroom. I will also promote the task-based learning taking into account students' needs and interest assuring their learning and checking they are able to use English effectively. In this way, lessons will be students-centred and me as a teacher will be a guide in their process.

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APPENDIXES

<u>APPENDIX 1:</u>

Course Plan 4th grade of ESO (Academic Year 2013-2014); 'Diseño Curricular de Lenguas Extranjeras' [pp. 1-30] + Appendixes [pp. I- XXIV].

<u>APPENDIX 2:</u>

Unit of Work 4th grade of ESO: 'Decorate it'; Implemented in Pedro Cerrada (Utebo); (Academic Year 2013-2014); 'Diseño, Organización y Desarrollo de Actividades para el Aprendizaje de Inglés' [pp. 1-35] + Appendixes [pp. I-XXIII].