TRABAJO FIN DE MÁSTER
Modalidad A

English Teaching in a globalized and modern society.

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ANNEX 1: Year Plan and Learning Unit.

1. INTRODUCTION

This *Trabajo Fin de Máster* is the culmination of the year-lasting *Máster Universitario en Profesorado de Educación Secundaria Obligatoria, Bachillerato, Formación Profesional y Enseñanzas de Idiomas, Artísticas y Deportivas* undertaken at the University of Zaragoza, during the 2012-2013 academic year.

This Master Degree is a mandatory requirement from the Spanish Ministry of Education prior to exercising as a teacher in secondary and related stages of education (professional training, language, arts and sports teaching modules), both in public and subsidized schools. The training offered during this postgraduate program is stipulated by the Ley Orgánica 2/2006, May 3rd, of Education and the Real Decreto 1393/2007 and 1834/2008 together with the Orden ECI 3858/2007 of December 27th.

Aiming at providing prospective teachers with efficient skills needed to successfully face all the challenges arising in the course of their careers, this Master Degree offers a comprehensive and quality education. Teachers must have specific training in their area of knowledge but they must also manage certain pedagogical abilities that will enable them to correctly handle the development of their students' competences, with the appropriate methodology and didactic resources. Furthermore, teachers should become a role model for their students so that they can acquire a comprehensive education based not only in curriculum aspects related to the subject, but also in civic and social values. Bearing in mind this ultimate aim, in the course of this postgraduate program, prospective teachers receive enough theoretical and practical training to feel and become prepared for their future profession.

The *Trabajo Fin de Máster* here presented, is the culmination of a year-long learning process that has given me the opportunity to acquire and develop a critical attitude towards the teaching profession. In the following pages, a global compendium of the knowledge acquired throughout this postgraduate program will be documented and presented. For this reason, this *Trabajo Fin de Máster* will contain a reflection on the teaching profession (in relation to the theoretical aspects learned throughout the year and the experience gained during the different *Practicum*s), an analysis and comparison of two of the projects elaborated during the Master Degree (in particular, the Year Plan and the Learning Unit previously designed for the subjects *Diseño Curricular de Lenguas Extranjeras* and *Diseño, Organización y Desarrollo de actividades para el Aprendizaje del Inglés*) preceded by a justification of the choice of these two projects and a final conclusion which will include what I believe could be suitable proposals for my future career as a teacher. In addition to this written report, the *Trabajo Fin de Máster* is supplemented by an oral presentation that will take place in front of a board of university tutors in the month of July.

Despite the mandatory nature of this *Trabajo Fin de Máster,* I regard this

final dissertation as a final stage in the process of consolidating all the concepts and experiences acquired during this year. This piece of work should not be regarded just as a mere subject requirement but rather as a guideline and support tool for our future profession. The notions assimilated during this Master Degree should be considered as an initiation to the teaching profession that will be completed with the experience gained in the following years as an English teacher.

2. THE TEACHING PROFESSION: THEORETICAL-LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Throughout the educational process, individuals are exposed to a series of skills and knowledge that include not only curricular aspects but also certain social and civic values necessary for their development as committed, responsible citizens.

These shared values and cultural notions are acquired by learners via different sources with more or less relevance. Educational institutions, together with the role of families, are perhaps the most influential factors in the students' maturing process. However, adolescents are not isolated individuals developing themselves exclusively in the context of a family or a school. As I learned in the subject *Procesos de enseñanza-aprendizaje,* students are immersed in a society, cultural and economic context in which they constantly search for all kinds of new experiences, challenges and role models which serve them as a background to their full development of physical, intellectual and moral capacities.

Taking into account that most of the people attending this Master Degree are aiming at becoming teachers at secondary education level, it is of vital importance that we are aware of the maturing stage at which our students are. In *Interacción y Convivencia en el Aula,* one of these Masters' subjects from the first semester, we learned that during their stage as high schoolers, our prospective students will be experiencing one of the most complex phases of their lives. The time span of from 12 to 18 years old, in which most of our future alumni will be found, is characterized by a series of radical changes (physically and psychologically speaking) that will greatly affect the way in which they interact with the world. However, this transformation does not only affect adolescents; adults (mainly parents and teachers) attend this maturing process sometimes without really knowing how to react to it. As a future teacher that will hopefully be working with adolescents, I agree with Mario Izcovich (2005)[1] when he states that understanding and managing the changing processes experienced by students as a major factor towards the success of the relationships established with him.

Teachers must hold a series of abilities that will encourage the creation of positive bonds in all directions (student-student and student-teacher) within the classroom context so that the general teaching-learning process is enhanced. Special attention has to be paid to features such as the students' motivation state, the ability of teachers to show an understanding attitude

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[1] "Del grado de aceptación de esta nueva situación que se tenga dependerá mucho la buena o mala relación con el adolescente. Quienes niegan las nuevas circunstancias que se plantean, generalmente viven esta época con mucho sufrimiento. En cambio, quienes lo aceptan con mayor flexibilidad tienen más elementos para acompañar al hijo o al alumno en este difícil proceso" (Izcovich, 2005: 20)

towards their alumni (bearing in mind the different students' learning processes) and their general background context (family, personal conditions, etc). In addition to this, they must be aware of the limitations and demands of their profession. In the following lines, an overview will be done of the general conditions of the teaching profession and the personal attitudes that teachers must hold, based on the concepts learned throughout the Master Degree and my own experienced at the placement high school in which I did the Practicum periods.

2.1. General legislative conditions.

In the subject *Contexto de la Actividad Docente* undertaken during the first semester, an extensive analysis was done of the different functions ascribed to education, the social context of educational institutions and several normative and legislative notions. This first approximation to the theoretical framework surrounding the teaching profession made me realize the complexity it encloses and the wide variety of aspects that influence instruction.

First of all, the educational system in our nation follows the principles and indications stated by the Ley Orgánica de Educación (and the National Educational Agreement). This macro-legislation gives the appropriate general setting to the development of the teaching profession which will be complemented by other pieces of legislation of a more regional nature such as the Aragonese Curriculum (in the case of the Autonomous Community of Aragon) and those that could be considered more subject-centered such as the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, the document designed by the Council of Europe in 2001 with the purpose of "establishing assessment criteria for the comparison of proficiency levels in different countries, thus facilitating the objective of educational and occupational mobility" (2001:1).

In the first article of the LOE, the general principles and objectives pursued are clearly stated. Among the main principles of this educational norm, we could point out as major breakthroughs the fact that this piece of legislation seeks to achieve a quality training for all, in equal terms (related to sex, economical and cultural factors) and sharing efforts by all the members of the educational sphere. In addition to this, it enhances other aspects such as permanent learning (on the part of all the individuals engaged in the teaching-learning process, including teachers), attention to the students' different learning processes (*atención a la diversidad*), the importance of providing students with the appropriate educative and professional guidance, the encouragement of constant research and innovation, continual assessment of the students' progress and the educational system in general.

All these principles under which the LOE has been elaborated have the ultimate goals of promoting the full development of the students' personal,

moral and social abilities with no discrimination of sex or general capacities of all the individuals engaged in the teaching-learning process. It also promotes notions such as tolerance, democracy, personal effort, autonomy and creativity.

As stated before, this law provides the general background in which the teaching profession takes place complemented by more concrete legislative norms. In the case of the Autonomous Community of Aragón, the educational legislation is specified by the Aragonese Curriculum *(Curriculum de Aragón)* in which objectives and principles are stated taking into account the context of this region. Among them, the Aragonese Curriculum emphasizes the role education holds in terms of the encouragement of educating students respecting the cultural identity of all the members of the community, their family entourage and the social context. Furthermore, it also enhances the development of education bearing in mind the specific conditions related to the cultural, historical, artistic and natural heritage of this community.

The Aragonese Curriculum has been elaborated in accordance with the general guidelines stated in the LOE. Yet, it provides more specific rules and information to shape the conditions and requirements under which the teaching profession is exercised in Aragon. Crucial aspects such as the general objectives of the secondary education stage, basic competences, subjects or modules included in the obligatory stage of secondary education, the implementation of values education, general principles related to methodology, attention to diversity and specific measures to deal with it, basic learning programs, initial professional qualification, evaluation and promotion, etc. are included in this piece of legislation.

This document provides teachers in Aragón with the appropriate information that guide their profession. However, when it comes to referring to specific subjects, there are other rules, recommendations and legislative aspects that should be taken into account.

In the case of English teaching, a large number of articles, academic papers, legal documents, etc. have been written on the suitability of different methodologies, requirements and teaching approaches. During the course *Fundamentos de Diseño Instruccional y Metodologías en la Especialidad de Lenguas Extranjeras (Inglés)* undertaken during the first semester of this Master Degree, we were able to take a first approximation to some of the legal documents governing the teaching-learning process of English in secondary education institutions. Among them, special emphasis was placed on the Common European Framework of Reference (from now on, CEFR). As mentioned before, this document was elaborated by the Council of Europe and has become the key reference for foreign teachers and educating institutions in Europe.

Susan House (2011: 86) points out some of the main principles underlying the Common European Framework of Reference:

⚔ *Effective communication* as the target of action-based language learning.

⚔ *Languages for all* (allowing general access to all those willing to learn a   new language avoiding its perception as something limited to an elite).

⚔ *Lifelong learning*.

⚔ *Learner-centredness*, beginning with the analysis of the learner's language needs.

⚔ *Plurilingualism* and *pluriculturalism*, promoting with this European cultural and linguistic diversity.

⚔ *Learner autonomy*, referring to methods of modern language teaching which will strengthen learners' independence of thought, judgement and   action.

⚔ *Self-assesment* and self-reflection on the part of the learner to be aware of his/her progress at all times.

⚔ A *task-based approach* to language learning and syllabus design.

One of the most salient features of this document is that while its nature is neither prescriptive nor normative, it provides the appropriate framework to maintain homogeneity and coordination in language instruction all along Europe, which I consider to be a very crucial aspect. As I learned from my own experience abroad as a university student, there are tremendous differences in the way English is taught at one or another country. These variations in the approximation towards English learning had its repercussions in the degree of 'success' students achieved. But, what do we refer to when we speak about learning success?

In the course of their careers, language teachers have to face numerous challenges that make them grow as professionals. Questions such as what contents correspond to what level, how to determine a student's level, how to correct their work, what type of methodology is best for what purposes, when we do conclude that a student has acquired the language successfully, etc. have very likely arisen to almost all language teachers. The CEFR aims at providing enough homogeneity to enable teachers to efficiently respond to these type of questions.

2.2. Teachers' working conditions and personal characteristics.

In the previous section, a general overview of the legal and administrative conditions that surround the teaching profession was elaborated. However, the lines above refer to an abstract context that is materialized in every secondary education institution. No two high schools, professional training centers, Schools of Languages, etc. are the same. They all share certain similarities but the differences between institutions are also obvious. This fact was even more evident after the experience gained during the course in the different *Practicum* periods I was able to pursue in a subsidized school in Zaragoza.

The *Practicum* periods (mandatory requirement for the consecution of this Master Degree), were my first ever approximation to the teaching profession. In their course, I was able to acquire some practical knowledge that would have been very unlikely to learn otherwise. One of the first things I realized during my placement periods was the amount of documents and bureaucracy teachers have to deal with. Figure 1 reflects just a part of all the documents teachers and the school in general have to elaborate and frequently manage:

Figure 1. Map of high school general documents.
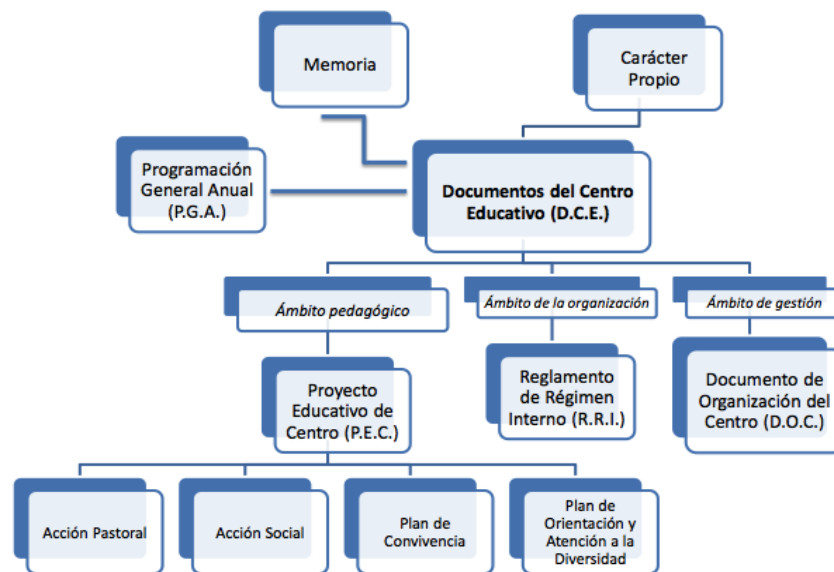
(Source: Map elaborated for *Practicum I* report)

The figure above included is complemented by a large amount of other documents teachers have to elaborate prior to starting their instruction of a particular subject. Personally, and after having shared some time with active teachers at my placement high school, I fear this amount of bureaucracy might produce some negative consequences for the teaching-learning process; teachers feel stressed from the overloading amount of paperwork they have to deal with and this has negative repercussions on the quality of their teaching. In fact, many researches have been conducted on teachers' stress level and their sources. As an example of the attention this topic is attracting among professionals, Chen and Miller (1997) conducted a compilation of the different international literature written on the topic and found out that many researchers agreed on regarding paperwork and overwork as one jeopardizing factor towards the teaching-learning process2.

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2 "Friesen and Williams (1985) administered the item Organizational Stress Questionnaire to 759 Canadian teachers and discovered workload was one of five dominant stress factors. Farber (1984) administered the Teacher Attitude Survey (TAS) TO 236 K-12 New York public school teachers, who reported heavy workloads due to excessive paperwork and unsuccessful administrative meetings. Also, Litt and Turk (1985), who administered a questionnaire to 291American high school teachers, found that too much paperwork was

UGT Andalucía (2006) elaborated an article explaining all the factors that had a negative impact on teachers' working conditions. Among them, bureaucracy was underlined as a major stress-producing source. Together with this, UGT Andalucía also stated that teachers were exposed to other stressful conditions such as sociocultural problems (loss of ethical values, dysfunctional families, etc.), poor relationships with students' families, lack of students' motivation, feeling of solitude, added professional and working demands that would not originally correspond to them, a poor working environment, etc.

Therefore, for the sake of a positive and successful teaching-learning process, teachers must be individuals with a solid and wide professional qualification which should be complemented by a series of personality traits that will enable them to face and successfully solve any possible challenges arising during the course of their career. Unfortunately, due to the strict educational system of our country and its overall characteristics, little emotional training has been given to teachers, specially to those exercising in secondary education coming from university degrees that integrated little pedagogical training. The importance of being 'emotionally prepared' for this profession is almost as vital as holding a good technical formation. This is corroborated by De la Calle Velasco, M. J. (2004: 252), professor at the University of Valladolid, who stated that good teachers were those who motivated, helped and paid attention to all the necessities students had, in addition to being technically well prepared:

> Cuando consultamos a los alumnos nos comentan que sus buenos profesores son los que se acercan a los estudiantes, motivan, ayudan, atienden cuando se les necesita. Son claros, ordenados en sus intervenciones y evalúan a lo largo del proceso. (De la Calle Velasco, 2004: 252)

Understanding the value of being emotionally prepared for the teaching profession was one of the most worthy aspects I learned throughout my placement at a high school in Zaragoza corresponding to *Practicum I, II* and *III* of this Master Degree. During that time, I realized how important it is to maintain students' interest in the subject and enhance their motivation towards the teaching-learning process.

In the course *Procesos de Enseñanza-Aprendizaje*, we were introduced to the notion of 'motivation' in education. This concept refers to the reasons and feelings that drive students in a particular direction to achieve a goal; the disposition they have towards making efforts to achieve success in a particular subject. Moreover, I also learned that motivation is something that can be maintained, increased or decreased by many different factors: students' personal disposition, teachers' approach to the subject, family

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one of the three specific job tensions. Reyes and Imber (1992) studied 472 midwestern teachers with three self-administered questionnaires; teachers who perceived their workload as fair had the highest levels of morale, commitment, and satisfaction". (Chen, M. and Miller, G., 1997: 6)

conditions and a wide range of other factors.

If we want to improve the disposition of our students towards our subject, holding several motivation strategies could be very helpful. Alonso Tapia (2005) conducted a research on this topic and elaborated a series of motivation enhancement strategies that could be really helpful for teachers.

Generally speaking, Alonso Tapia concluded that it was highly important for the success of the teaching-learning process to make students feel curiosity about the subject and to make them aware of the relevance and importance of the knowledge learned for their future. This would be done by presenting students with new and appealing information, raising problems and questions and using the concepts learned to solve practical situations. In addition to this, Alonso Tapia also proposed that the information and knowledge taught should somehow represent a challenge to the students, so that they can fully develop their intellectual capacities.

In the course of my Practicum stay, I was able to have a hands-on experience on the importance that students' motivation has for the development of a lesson. On one occasion, due to some schedule requirements, I was asked to carry a lesson following the traditional 'textbook and workbook' method. Students spent the entire hour doing and correcting exercises. From the very beginning, I could see faces and gestures of boredom and dislike in almost every student. Their participation was very limited and I actually had to compel them to respond to some questions.

However, on another occasion, I was allowed to carry some of the activities I had designed for my learning unit. At the beginning, I felt uncomfortable as I had been warned of the characteristics of my students (it was a *diversificación* class that 11 students were retaking that year). However the activity was very appealing3 to them and they instantly got engaged. They enjoyed it so much that they even continued after the bell rang. On another day, I asked some of the students why they liked the activity and they said that it was a new way to learn grammar, that they enjoyed working in groups and doing activities that required creative work.

These last words made me realize how important it is for students to feel challenged by the activities they do and to feel that they are also developing other skills besides the linguistic-related ones. Activities that allow students to be creative and participative together with a practical design (learning language in context) seem to be more successful than those in which students are asked to 'fill in gaps' or complete traditional workbook activities, where they tend to behave more as passive learners.

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3 The task consisted on a group activity designed for the students to remember grammar structures of *must* and *mustn't*. Complete indications of this activity can be found in Annex B. This is activity 3 in Lesson 4 adapted to working on the structures previously mentioned and not in the ones originately included in the learning unit (*don't have to* and *mustn't*). Changes were introduce as I was asked to deal with those particular structures.

In addition, my experience with the last activity above described has made me realize how important it is for teachers to develop skills that enable them to manage students' different levels and learning processes. This is in close relation to the concept of attention to diversity (*atención a la diversidad*).

As stated in section 2.1. of this dissertation, one of the main principles that inspired the elaboration of the Ley Orgánica de Educación (Article 1) was the aim of achieving an education system in which all the individuals can have access to education in equal conditions and are treated with no discrimination regarding their personal, cultural, economical and social characteristics. This aim is also pursued in the *Aragonese Curriculum* where it is stated that all the educational institutions must organize their resources to facilitate the comprehensive development of the students' basic competences, their success in achieving the objectives set for each stage of their education, bearing in mind the aim of providing an educative model which fosters the integral development of students' capacities in equal conditions. Thus, willing to successfully meet these objectives, all educational institutions must elaborate a *Plan de Atención a la Diversidad* which includes guidelines to detect and assess students' needs and suitable measures to deal with them (e.g. learning programs, curricular adaptations, tutorial action, educational support, etc).

However, I believe that although the legislative and institutional resources available to manage students' different learning abilities are many and very efficiently implemented, this aspect should not only be limited to these general proposals. Teachers must have their own personal skills and strategies to guide all of their students towards success in the learning process. Particularly, it is highly advisable for teachers to get to know their students as soon as possible (e.g. learning their names very soon can be a positive resource), showing flexibility in the general development of the class and showing appreciation for the the students' interests. Moreover, personal abilities such as being able to encourage students in their learning process, fostering engagement and active participation in activities, showing a comprehensive attitude towards learners, understanding their needs, etc. can certainly be a crucial factor towards the integration of all the students and their final success in the teaching-learning process.

2.3. Language teaching approaches and roles of language teachers.

Related to this issue, the role ascribed to language teachers in the classroom and their attitude towards the teaching-learning process is a very influential factor in the general development of such process.

In the course *Fundamentos de Diseño Instruccional y Metodologías en la Especialidad de Lenguas Extranjeras* pursued during the first semester, I was able to develop an overview at the evolution of language pedagogical approaches and teaching methods throughout history (from the traditional

grammar-translation method to more communicative approaches). Being myself an EFL4 learner who has had the experience of undertaking courses in which teachers adopted different approaches towards the subject, I feel that this is a major aspect to bear in mind for my future career as an English teacher.

As Brown (2001) states, researchers have been concerned about finding the best method for English teaching, appropriate for everybody and everywhere. However, by reviewing the history of teaching methodologies and theories, it seems that such a 'single universal method' applicable worldwide does not exist.

In the past few decades, many language teaching methods have been proposed, (as will be shown later one) and all of them have failed to maintain a permanent status. In fact, all these methods developed a cyclic process that could be summarized in the following way:

Method's proposal → increasing popularity → maintenance period →decreasing popularity → substitution by a new one.

Therefore, the long-term failure of achieving the desired 'universal method' indicates that this might just not exist as such. Brown (2001:15) broaches this question by distinguishing between *method* and *methodology*. The first one refers to those identifiable <u>theoretically</u>-grounded classroom techniques and the second one refers to <u>actual teaching</u>, pedagogical actions in general.

Despite the fact that 'universal methods' very likely do not exist, much knowledge can be acquired by looking at the positive and negative aspects of all of them. Therefore, an overview of the history of language teaching methods is well worth it.

In Spain, the traditional 'grammar-translation' method has been very popular within the modern language teaching sphere and it is still present in many English classrooms in our country. The main focus of the Grammar Translation Method (as it is summarized by Artigas, 2012) is to make students competent in reading and writing through a series of strategies that included a wide memorization of vocabulary and extensive translation from one language to the other. The main characteristics of this approach were summarized by Omaggio (in Artigas, 2012: 3) who outlined the main principles from the Grammar-Translation Method:

✡   Students first learned the rules of grammar and bilingual lists of vocabulary. All exceptions and irregularities were included at this point.

✡   Once students were done with these first aspects, prescriptions

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4   EFL stands for English as a Foreign Language.

for translation were given following the grammar explanations previously learned.

⚲ Comprehension of the rules and reading was assessed through translation. Success in the learning process was dictated by whether students translated well the passages given.

⚲ L1 and L2 were compared at all times, especially on the functioning of their grammar.

⚲ Little or none opportunities to work on listening and speaking practice; these were limited to a few opportunities to read aloud. In addition to this, the development of speaking skills was restricted to metalinguistic aspects (speaking about the language and not in the language).

These traits characterized a method which regarded the language not as a means of communication but rather just as a system formed by a series of rules and artificial language productions. As a former language student, I had the chance to experience this methodology and, basing my opinion on my own experience, I had little success when it came to using the language in a natural setting. I had a very good command of the grammar and wide knowledge of vocabulary yet I was not able to produce sentences with fluency. Neither could I successfully interact with native speakers; in fact, this feeling seems to be quite common among students learning under this method. They know the grammar but they do not know how to use it in a real life situation. However, I had the opportunity to move to the United States for a year and a half when I was sixteen years old and this fact meant a key change in my command of the language as a result of the exposure to large quantities of natural data.

As I learned in *Fundamentos de Diseño Instruccional y Metodologías en la Especialidad de Lenguas Extranjeras,* the Direct Method was the next step on the evolution of language teaching approaches. This method bears some similarities with the immersion situation above mentioned. In contrast to the Grammar-Translation method, this one enhances language learning by listening to large quantities of input, specially productions coming from native speakers. It is based on reproducing somehow the L15 acquisition process: learning to speak a language by speaking and listening to it. Ornaggio (in Ana Artigas, 2012) offers some of the basic characteristics of this method: translation is avoided at all times, learning should start with the here-and-now (speaking and listening about familiar objects and actions such as classroom materials, etc.) and students hear complete and meaningful sentences from the beginning. In addition to this, special emphasis on pronunciation is placed.

The benefits of this methodology are obvious: students acquire the ability

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5   L1: First language or mother tongue.

to actively use the language in real life situations. However, some doubts might arise in relation to whether or not L2 learning can be treated as L1 acquisition. Would students fully acquire the language just as a native speaker? Does the age factor have any influence on this type of approach? Would students infer enough grammatical rules from just being exposed to the target language? Despite the fact that this approach is certainly more focused on language use rather than knowing the language as a system, I doubt whether or not this type of methodology would be totally efficient in L2 learning. As Ana Artigas also states, an skeptical attitude towards this method is not surprising:

> Nevertheless, the Direct Method was criticized for its weak theoretical foundations. Its success may have been more a factor of the skill and personality of the teacher than of the methodology itself. By the end of the first quarter of the twentieth century the use of the Direct Method had declined both in Europe and in the United States. […] But interestingly enough, by the middle of the century the Direct Method was revived and redirected into what was probably the most visible of all language teaching 'revolutions' in the modern era, the Audiolingual Method. (Artigas 2012: 6)

The Audiolingual Method introduced many innovations in language teaching and learning that are worth to be mentioned. First of all, the proposition of separating skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) was proposed, giving more importance to speech "because it is the first medium L1 child masters. Speech comes first and writing follows on" (Artigas 2012: 7). Furthermore, the Audiolingual Method is also concerned about in-class procedures. As a model of learning, stimulus-response-reinforcement technique was proposed. Students are given a stimulus to which they should respond immediately; their utterances are reinforced afterwards by the teacher. In addition to this, a lot of emphasis in habit formation and repetition was made: structures were repeated by students to help their acquisition. Moreover, grammar rules and language patterns were introduced dividing them into different parts that the student had to master one by one.

Despite the novelty and groundbreaking changes introduced, the Audiolingual Method still presented some shortcomings (e.g. repetition caused boredom in students, it was a teacher-centered type of class, memorization, etc.) that prevented it from gaining permanent success. Generally speaking, this was a language-centered approach that did not adapt to students' needs.

After the failure of the above described methods for language teaching, researchers have made a lot of effort in proposing many theories and approaches that would reach that desired 'permanent method for language teaching' status. Yet, all of them went through a cyclic process of increasing and decreasing popularity as has been stated above, until the 80s.

In that decade, it became obvious that such a permanent and worldwide applicable method did not exist. A universal method would imply that all English classes are the same, regardless their configuration. However, each one of them is determined and influenced by their different characteristics ranging from alumni configuration to teachers qualification and experience, resources, legislation, etc.

Therefore, it seems that language teaching requires flexibility; it needs to move on from the 'permanent method' position to an approach in which the specific characteristics that define each class are taken into account. In fact, this is related to what Kumaravadivelu (1984) referred to as Postmethod Condition. With this notion, the Professor of Appied Linguistics states that we need to stop looking for an alternative method and make the effort to find another option that is not exactly what we understand as a method. Kumaravadivelu encourages teacher autonomy as teachers have the "potential to know not only how to teach but also know how to act autonomously within the academic and administrative constraints imposed by institutions, curricula and textbooks" (Kumaravadivelu, 1984: 30). No institution, researcher, authority, etc. can have such a precise knowledge of how a class is configured as the teacher assigned to it. Teachers have a hands-on knowledge of language instruction; they are on the frontline of the teaching-learning process. This privileged position together with quality training and technical formation, should enable teachers to make some decisions on the methodology and pedagogical strategies appropriate for their specific conditions of their classes.

Related to this last notion, decisions made by teachers should be grounded on a series of principles and careful reflections on their instruction. Usually, teachers develop an 'instruction style' (a series of methodological strategies that they acquire early in their career and define their instruction) that marks their teaching. These strategies help teachers deal with daily aspects of their lessons however, relying too much of them and not introducing any changes might jeopardize teacher's career and result in boring and routinized classes. Teachers should constantly evaluate, critically revise and reflect their teaching in order to introduce any suitable changes that would enhance their students' language acquisition. This notion is closely related to what has been known as *Reflective Teaching*. Richards and Lockhart (1994: 1) refer to this notion as the process in which "teachers and student teachers collect data about teaching, examine their attitudes, beliefs, assumptions, and teaching practices, and use the information obtained as a basis for critical reflection about teaching". This process of self-reflection enables teachers to detect any possible aspects that need to be improve in order to make the best out of each lesson and enhance their students' acquisition of a communicative competence in the target language.

But what is 'communicative competence'? All the above considerations were concerned with finding the most suitable way for students to acquire a full command of the target language, including sociolinguistic and pragmatic knowledge. The *Communicative Competence* refers to the ability

that a student has to use the language bearing in mind its linguistic features but also sociopragmatic notions around it. The following example shows the difference between being communicative competent and using the language:

> *John* at a party: This is so much fun! What a great celebration!
> *Maria* at a funeral reception: This is so much fun! What a great celebration!

Despite the fact that both sentences are linguistically well formulated, one does not adjust to the communicative situation. *Maria* lacks some socio-pragmatic knowledge when she refers to a funeral as a fun and great celebration. She is not supposed to say such a thing about a sad ceremony as it is a funeral.

The concept of *Communicative Competence* is introduced in the CEFR and also adopted by the *Aragonese Curriculum*. In the first document the communicative competence is said to comprise linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic components (CEFR, 2001: 13). This refers to the ability that students acquire to appropriately use the language in relation to the communication context.

In parallel to the evolution language teaching methods, the role ascribed to the teacher has also varied throughout time. As Choudhury (2011: 34) states "the role of the teacher in the classroom is of paramount significance because it is central to the way in which the classroom environment evolves". But this is not the only role that matters in language learning; students also adopt a position that is key to the teaching-learning process. But what do we refer to when we speak about roles? Choudhury (2011: 34) cites the work of Richard and Rodgers who declared that roles are something related to:

> ⚐ The types of function teachers are expected to fulfill.
> ⚐ The degree of control the teacher has over how learning takes place.
> ⚐ The degree to which the teacher is responsible for determining the content of what is taught.
> ⚐ The interactional patterns between teachers and learners.

These considerations have made researchers debate about how teachers should behave within the classroom context. Following Choudhury's indications (2011: 35), we can differentiate two major types of teaching (with their consequent teaching roles) depending on whether the classes are teacher-focused or student-focused:

> ⚐ <u>Teacher-centered classes:</u> the teacher as a *lecturer* to passive students. It encourages learning by repetition, mechanical drills, grammar and vocabulary memorization. This type of classes is in relation to traditional   ways of teaching in which teachers adopted

the roles of controller,   decision-maker.

   ⚔ <u>Student-centered classes:</u> the teacher acts as a *facilitator of learning* (an overseer of students' progress, classroom manager, consultant, adviser and   a guide). This is a much modern approach.

   In the past few decades, special efforts have been made to move from a traditional teacher-centered type of class towards student-centered instruction. In this kind of methodology, students get practical experience through activities in which language is used for communicative purposes. Personally, and basing myself in my own experience as a former student and the teaching initiation I had during the *Practicum* periods, I regard student-centered type of classes to be more productive than those in which the teacher takes up the role of a controller, authoritative figure. In teacher-centered lessons (such as the one I had to conduct where students were asked to fill in exercises from the book and correct them afterwards) learners tend to show a more passive attitude as they are under the control of the teacher, the organizer and decision-maker. In contrast to this, in student-centered classes and tasks (such as the cardboard activity about a grammar point already described), learners feel that they have more power to make decisions in their learning process as the teacher beholds the role of a guide and learning facilitator. Learners also feel that they are acquiring a more practical knowledge in which the target language is learned in context and used as a communication vehicle. Yet, I also feel that moving from one model to the other must be a gradual process; students who are used to working under a teaching-centered type of methodology might find difficult to immediately adjust to a more student-based type of learning.

3. JUSTIFICATION OF PROJECTS CHOSEN.

The main objective of this *Trabajo Fin de Máster* is to elaborate an original and comprehensive dissertation in which students who have pursued the *Máster Universitario en Profesorado de Educación Secundaria Obligatoria, Bachillerato, Formación Profesional y Enseñanzas de Idiomas, Artísticas y Deportiva* critically analyze the global knowledge and experiences acquired during this postgraduate program, using two projects elaborated in the academic year as the basis for their analysis. In this case, I have chosen the most challenging, but also rewarding tasks in the whole year:

> ⚲ The Year Plan designed in the first semester for *Diseño Curricular de Lenguas Extranjeras.*
> ⚲ The Learning unit, belonging to the second semester course called *Diseño, Organización y Desarrollo de Actividades para el Aprendizaje del Inglés.*

In the following lines, I will provide an explanation and description of the reasons that justify this choice.

Being a graduate of English Philology at the University of La Rioja, I have always considered that, while most of English Philology graduates would pursue a teaching career after their studies, little or none opportunity regarding pedagogical formation was offered in the curricular design of this university degree. Truth is that this program provides students with a solid formation in Linguistics and Literature, yet I perceive that it still lacks some training on the practical implementation of the acquired knowledge in relation to prospective professions, like teaching. Therefore, these two projects enabled me to have a first glance to such an important issue for the teaching profession as it is planning and activity design.

Despite the fact that these were challenging and difficult activities for me, their completion opened the way to acquiring essential skills for my future career as an English teacher. Both projects highlighted the importance of planning and activity design for the teaching-learning process. When done for the first time, lesson planning and activity design usually takes a lot of time and might turn out to be a dull task. However, once some experience is gained on this issue, its process speeds up and becomes easier; designing the Year Plan took me much longer than the Learning Unit, as many of the procedures that I learned while doing the first one where applicable to the design of the Learning Unit.

In addition, the elaboration of these projects enabled me to forsee some benefits for my future career. Carefully planned lessons prevent teachers from wasting time in improvisation and immediate planning. Furthermore, despite an initial time consumption, planning lessons and activities provides teachers with a series of materials and resources that can be used in the

future (with the introduction of suitable adjustments, if needed).

Moreover, an efficiently designed year plan or learning unit provides teachers with guidelines that make the teaching experience easier; teachers are able to control their students' progress with regard to the initial objectives. Thus, planning activities and lessons beforehand also prevents students' boredom; in the process of planning, teachers can collect and design a wide range of varied activities with which enhance learners' interest and motivation. Moreover, lesson planning also gives teachers time to predict possible problems arising in the course of the lesson or activity, as they reflect on their development prior to its implementation.

The paragraphs above are an overview of some of the future benefits I was able to forsee with both projects. However, these are not the only reasons that made me choose these particular activities for the *Trabajo Fin de Máster*.

The knowledge acquired via their elaboration is not limited to prospective benefits for my future career as an English teacher. As stated before, due to my lack of prior pedagogical training, initiating myself in the task of lesson planning and activity design was a tedious task. Luckily my group consisted of three people with different backgrounds: English Philology and Primary Education Teaching (*Magisterio*). We all complemented each other and cooperatively worked to achieve successful results. This made me realize of how important group work is going to be for my career as an English teacher. In the future, cooperative work will be something common for me: I will be constantly co-working with other teachers, departments, students, etc. and I would try to implement it in my classes. Therefore, the elaboration of these projects enabled me to perceive the importance of managing group working skills and being able to work cooperatively. Furthermore, I believe that group work enhances not only success in the teaching-learning process but it also encourages the development of certain social values (tolerance, respect, no discrimination, etc.) that are fundamental towards the comprehensive development of students as committed citizens.

Moreover, and perhaps the major reason that drove me to my final choice, is the global and comprehensive nature of both tasks. In their elaboration, I was able to introduce some of the concepts learned in other subjects from this Masters Degree. As an example, in the Learning Unit I introduced the use of certain Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) such as Powerpoints done with the online application called *Prezi.com,* videos and activities, etc. which I learned how to use in *Tecnologías de la Información y la comunicación para el Aprendizaje.* For both projects I used a technique to make homogenous groups that I learned in *Interacción y Convivencia en el Aula,* some of the legislation I included in the Year Plan was dealt with in the subject *Contexto de la Actividad Docente,* the underlying principles of English as a *lingua franca* and globalization tool were also treated in *Fundamentos de diseño instruccional y metodologías en la especialidad de Lenguas Extranjeras,* etc. All these examples of the existing connections

between the Year Plan and Learning unit, and the rest of the subjects are an obvious proof of the relevance they had for this Master Degree.

Finally, another reason that made me choose these two projects is the correlation that they both maintain. Many of the underlying principles, methodological strategies, objectives, etc. that I used in the Learning Unit were in correspondence to what I had previously included in the Year Plan. Personally I regard them as sister projects; one being the background (Year Plan) for the other. The lines above include some of the main reasons why I chose both activities for this *Trabajo Fin de Máster*. Their global nature, the relevance they will have for my future career, the opportunity to work in groups while doing them and many others helped me in my decision to include them for this final dissertation.

4. CRITICAL REFLECTION ON THE PROJECTS CHOSEN.

The elaboration of these two projects has given me the opportunity to transform my understanding of English teaching and learning taking into account the current characteristics of our society. Prior to critically analyze some of the most valuable aspects learned throughout their elaboration, I will provide a short context for both of them.

4.1. Context of the projects chosen: Year Plan and Learning Unit.

The Year Plan for the subject English as a foreign languages was the main project elaborated for the module *Diseño Curricular de Lenguas Extranjeras* belonging to the first semester of this Master Degree. It was designed for a fictional 1st year of E.S.O. of an anonymous school in Zaragoza.

It consisted of 12 units of work dealing with different countries and topics. As we realized after receiving feedback from our tutor, we did not give a title to our Year Plan but a possibility could be something similar to *Let's take a trip around the world!* due to its topic and structure.

Our Year Plan was designed following the idea of English as a *lingua franca* and a tool towards globalization. We do not longer understand English culture and language as part of the cultural heritage of some specific countries (those that were typically included in traditional year plans such a England, United States, etc). Thanks to the training received throughout this Master Degree, we expanded our horizons in the understanding of the English language as an international communication tool in a globalized society. Furthermore, we wanted to make this project an opportunity to offer our student a comprehensive education in sociocultural and economic aspects that would make them become committed and responsible citizens.

Moreover, in relation to the understanding of English as a communication tool in an interrelated and global society, we designed this Year Plan from a communicative approach; students learned the language in context and they were encourage to use it at all times in real life situations through a series of activities. We firmly avoided grammar-translation methodology and enhanced the use of English as the in-class language.

These general principles and aims were pursued through a series of strategies that turn this Year Plan into what I consider to be perhaps the most comprehensive and rewarding activity elaborated in the whole Master Degree. Finally, and before moving to the context of the learning unit, I will now give a brief overview of the contents included in each unit of work (for further information, please consult ANNEX 1) :

Unit	Content
1. Let's hit the road!	Introductory unit. Working on activities dealing with different countries and continents. Preparation for the 'world trip' that students are going to join with this Year Plan.
2. First stop: Ireland!	Learning aspects of an English speaking country but without forgetting its unique way of life. Contents and topics: different means of transport and planning trips.
3. Sun and Sea: Malta	Malta as an example of the diversity of the European anglophone countries. Contents and topics: geographical aspects (ocean, mountains, etc.)
4. Let's eat some cuscus in Morocco.	Aiming at making students aware of the importance of English as a basic tool for worldwide communication, Morocco (an exotic but proximate country) is the first stop in Africa. Contents and topics: foods and restaurants.
5. Across the Nile River.	Next stop in Africa is Egypt, a country strongly incluenfed by water coming from the Nile river. Contents and topics: importance of natural resources and healthy habits.
6. Wild China	A vast, unique and distant country that is becoming a world power, with increasing numbers of English speakers. Contents and topics: weather.
7. Go oriental! Trip to India!	India has hold a colonial status for a long time. This exotic country provides the opportunity to study the influence of England in other countries. Contents: grocery shopping.
8. New Zealand: The Land of Kiwis and Maoris.	Former colony of the British Empire, NZ preserves much of the English traditional ways of life. Contents and topics: family life.
9. Jump Kangaroo, jump!	Australia is the next stop. This country is the homeland of many unique natural species. Contents and topics: flora and fauna.
10. Ándale Mariachi!	This unit responds to the special bond between Hispanic countries and the influence immigration is having in countries like United States. Contents and topics: music.
11. The Far West: United States of America.	Representing Occidental culture, USA has exported much of its culture to the rest of the world. Contents: cinema and TV.
12. Back home, for good?	Wrap-up of all the contents. This unit will help students to settle all the knowledge acquired throughout the year.

With respect to the learning unit, many of the principles followed in the Year Plan were continued in this project. The Learning Unit was designed taking into account a more precise background.

The characteristics of the school in which it was meant to be implemented defined much of its elaboration in contrast to the Year Plan, which had an undetermined context. *Escuelas Pías* is the high school to which I was assigned for my Practicum periods. This institution is a large (approx. 1000 studens) charter high school located in the urban area of Zaragoza. With a wide educational offer (it offers infant, primary, compulsory secondary and 'bachillerato' education programs), much of its philosophy is defined by its Catholic condition; it belongs to the Piarist Catholic order present all around

Spain.

Escuelas Pías has gained much popularity among the city of Zaragoza due to the quality of its teaching and its constant innovation. This high school has been characterized for its capacity to adjust itself to the reality that surrounds it, introducing groundbreaking programs that have later on been implemented in many schools. Much effort has been made by this institution in foreign language teaching: *Escuelas Pías* offers innovative programs such as AMCO[6] for primary education or bilingual schooling in the secondary education stage. In addition to this, this institution has a large English Department including a native language assistant from New Zealand, they also participate in exchange programs such as Comenius and other similar ones. Furthermore, teachers and students have access to many technological resources that are present everywhere in this school (laptops and tablet PCs for all the students, screen projectors, digital boards, wifi connection, radio programs, etc).

In the elaboration of my Learning Unit, I took into consideration one of the most obvious and significant characteristics of this school. Despite its Catholic condition (which would initially make this institution appealing to members of that faith), *Escuelas Pías* has a very surprising high rate of multiculturalism; almost 30% of its students have a non-Spanish-origin7. The majority of them have Spanish as their native language (most of them come from Latin American Hispanic countries), yet there is still a very high number of students whose native language is a different one (e.g. English, French, etc). This cultural diversity is a perfect opportunity for students to acknowledge the importance of acquiring a good command of English a a way to communicate with people from other nationalities.

In the case of this learning unit and similarly to the Year Plan, I have followed the ideas of English as a communication tool and the foreign language subject as an opportunity to comprehensively educate students as committed and responsible citizens. In this case, the name of the learning unit already gives a hint to the topic that it is going to deal with: *Can we save the world?*

One of my main concerns when designing this learning unit, and after having discussed the topic with my tutor, was to make of this project an opportunity for my students to become aware of the problems that affect our world, the impact that their acts have for the society in which they live and the possible courses of actions that they could take in order to improve the present situation. This learning unit aimed at constructing responsible and committed citizens.

The worldwide problems that are dealt with here are poverty, natural

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6 AMCO is an American program based on a total immersion in the English language from a very young age. Students are taught several subjects in English and following the methodology typical from the United States. For further information, please go to: www.amco.me.

7   Data offered by the School Principal during *Practicum III*.

disasters, pollution and many others. Despite the negative connotations that this topic might initially suggest, the methodological strategies adopted make of it a very interesting and appealing learning unit. Activities such games (hangman), role plays, videos, etc. enables the approximation to such a complex topic from a more friendly perspective.

4.2. English as a Lingua Franca and a tool towards globalization.

Coming (as a learner) from a traditional methodological background, I had always understood English language and literature as part of the historical and cultural heritage from just a few traditional anglophone countries that were typically included in all the textbooks (e.g. England, United States, etc) and which served as general background for all the contents learned in the course. However, the elaboration of the Year Plan and the Learning Unit has meant an upside down change in my perception of English teaching-learning process.

Between the 16th and 18th century, the British Empire included colonies, overseas possessions, protectorates and other territories that made of this conglomerate the global power for over a century. During that time, almost 500 million people were ruled by the United Kingdom with the resulting influence and adoption of much of its political, linguistic, cultural and social traditions. With the independence of the United States and its later status as the world's leading power, English achieved an status of dominance, especially after World War II. Little by little, English has extended its use up to the point where approximately 80% of the English speakers are nonnative speakers[8], with the consequent impact that this fact has had on the evolution of the language. Nowadays, the majority of English nonnative speakers use the language as a *lingua franca*. As Jenkins (2008) states, ELF[9] is a way of referring to the kind of communication taking place between speakers who have different first/native languages and opt for the common use of English. Usually, this type of communicative situations involve speakers for whom English is an additional language and who do not share a cultural background.

Bearing in mind this context, it makes no sense to keep on teaching and learning English as if it were part of a very limited number of countries. In a globalized country, English has evolved to become a tool for global communication and interchange. Consequently, its instruction should adjust to this new reality.

In 2012, Kumaravadivelu was interviewed by *Marco ELE* and proposed groundbreaking ideas on the need to restructure English teaching-learning process as a consequence of the social frame to which is instruction is ascribed:

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[8] For more information on statistics related to the English language, consult: Jenkins, J. (2008) *English as a Lingua Franca* via
http://www.jacet.org/2008convention/JACET2008_keynote_jenkins.pdf
[9] English as a Foreign Language.

> Twenty first century society, because it is fast becoming a globalized and globalizing society, demands that we rethink the teaching of culture in our second language classrooms […]. English is being treated broadly as a language of globality, as a tool for global communication, as a carrier of global cultural flows, not narrowly as an instrument for spreading the cultural beliefs and practices of native speakers of English. Everywhere, the global is encountering the local, and vice versa. This is what is shaping English language teaching in most parts of the world. (Kumaravadivelu for *Marco ELE: Revista Didáctica Español como Lengua Extranjera,* 2012: n.p.)

As Kumaravadivelu continues in this interview, the 21st century demands a reconstruction of conceptions; we need to familiarize ourselves with other ways of living that have become closer to us thanks to the process of globalization, in which English has hold a very important role. In fact, following Kumaravadivelu's principles, we could state that English holds the key for global communication and worldwide cultural flow. Crystal (2003:13) perceives in this new situation an opportunity "to reach a more profound understanding of the nature of human mind and spirit" and continues with what I believe to be one of the most important benefits of this new way of understanding the English language:

> I believe in the fundamental value of a common language as an amazing world resource which presents us with unprecedented possibilities for mutual understanding, and thus enables us to find fresh opportunities for international cooperation [...] The second principle fosters cultural opportunity and promotes a climate of international intelligibility.
> (Crystal, D. 2003: 14)

The notions of English as a global language and opportunity that it offers towards international understanding directly addresses to the importance that this subject holds in the curriculum of our students and their comprehensive education as responsible citizens.

All the above aspects were taken as guidelines when elaborating both the Year Plan and the Learning Unit. Just by taking a glance at the topics dealt with and the methodological strategies adopted, we are able to see how these two tasks have been designed under the light of this new conception of the English language. Already in the introduction and justification included for both of them, these principles of English as an opportunity for globalization and the social commitment are firmly stated. Furthermore, the notion of multiculturalism and mutual understanding is also portrayed in the context given for both projects where data of cultural diversity is included.

Furthermore, these projects have been designed for students to acquire a communicative competence in English which is intrinsically linked to the ideas above commented. With these projects, an emphasis on making students achieve a good command not only of the linguistic aspects but also on the socio-pragmatical conceptions of the language (e.g. when it is appropriate to say something and when it isn't, what kind of behavior would be expected in different places, etc). In addition, the general structure of Year Plan and the Learning Unit is also in line with the principles

formulated in the previous paragraphs; concepts and topics are learned in a multicultural context which is interconnected by the English language. As an example, I will cite an introduction to one of the units included in the Year Plan (see Annex):

Introduction to Unit 4: Let's eat some cuscus in Morocco!

*Although most English year plans deal with aspects related to the English language and culture, our aim this year is to make students aware of the diversity present in the whole world and the importance of the English langauge as a basic tool for communication. Therefore, we have chosen Morocco as our first stop in Africa because it is a very proximate location to us yet, very exotic and unique, and it might result familiar to some of our students whose cultural background may be different from the Spanish one. This unit will be specially devoted to the study of Morocco's national gastronomy so that our students can learn about foods and restaurants. (*Annex: Year Plan, page 14)

The realization of this new conception of the English language, together with the elaboration of both projects in which these new ideas were put into practice, made me transform my understanding of EFL. The subject should not be considered just as a mere curriculum requirement but rather, as an opportunity for students to acquire the necessary formation to become committed citizens in a democratic and multicultural society.

In fact, by adopting such a point of view in English teaching as we have done in the Year Plan and the Learning Unit, we are encouraging the development of some of the basic competences stated by the *Aragonese Curriculum*:

⚔ Social Competence: The *Aragonese Curriculum* refers with this notion to the competence that enables learners to understand the social reality in which they live in, to cooperate, cohabitate and exercise democratic citizenship in a plural society, at the same time that they commit themselves to improve the present situation. This competence is worked in many different ways in both projects (from overall topics such as that of the Learning Unit in which world problems are the focus of the whole unit, methodological strategies like group and pair work, etc).

⚔ Cultural and Artistic Competence: The *Aragonese Curriculum* defines this competence as the ability to acknowledge, understand, appreciate and critically judge different cultural and artistic manifestations. In addition to this, it also refers to the capacity of using these representations as a source for enrichment and enjoyment, considering them as part of the cultural heritage of different cultures. The development of this cultural competence is present all along the Year Plan and the Learning Unit. In the first project, several countries and their ways of living work as the background for the teaching-learning process of the language. This aspect is also thoroughly worked

in the learning unit, in which a wide variety of problems and possible solutions belonging to all the different continents is presented.

In this section, an overview of two of the main principles that guided my elaboration of the Year Plan and Learning Unit, has been provided. These projects have made me realize that we cannot longer understand English as a Foreign Language just as another curricular subject dealing exclusively with linguistic and literature aspects. As a consequence of present-day society, English teachers are now presented with the opportunity to form future committed citizens of a democratic society in which English will hold (as it already does) a main role as a global communication tool.

4.3. Communicative Approach.

Continuing with the critical analysis of the projects chosen, I shall now comment on another of the major aspects that I took into consideration when designing both tasks: the Communicative Approach to language teaching and learning.

As stated in the first section, many students in our country complain about their inability to use English in real life situations despite the fact that they possess a wide knowledge of the underlying grammatical principles of the language. This could be understood as a consequence of the Grammar-Translation method (see section 2.3) that has been traditionally followed in many Spanish classrooms.

In this case, I adopted a different approach in the planning process of both projects. As it has been stated above, I applied the principles of Communicative Approach in all possible ways; the will to avoid Grammar-Translation method (e.g. translating texts, sentences, utterances, etc.) was clearly stated in the two cases. In addition to this, the use of English as vehicular in-class communication language was encouraged in both cases. Furthermore, activities designed for both cases followed the guidelines of the Communicative Approach.

This is specially the case of the learning unit. Already in its introduction it is stated that the main focus of that unit will be the development of speaking skills (see ANNEX 1) without forgetting about the three other skills (reading, writing and listening).Thus, every single one of the lessons included contains speaking activities of different kinds: powerpoint presentations with pictures in which students are asked to give their opinion and comment it with their partners, check lists that give way to speaking activities on pairs, roleplays, word-stress bingo, etc). These activities not only promote the development of speaking skills but they also help the development of socio-cultural awareness due to its contextualization and general topic (e.g. appropriate behavior, world problems, solutions, etc).

My decision for adopting such a perspective for the elaboration of both projects responded to the requirements of the *Aragonese Curriculum* but also, to the principles stated in section 4.2. (English as the key for globalization and global communication) and the will to foster simultaneous learning of linguistic and pragmatic concepts in real communicative situations.

4. 4. Use of ICTs.

Information and Communication Technologies have been introduced in both projects as a result of the importance they nowadays hold in the education sphere. Technologies are constantly developing and as a result, society introduces changes to adjust itself to the new reality drawn by this transformations. The impact of this process can be seen in all aspects of our surrounding environment and very obviously, in education.

As it has been stated in the contextualization section 4.1. with the example of *Escuelas Pías,* schools are making constant efforts to efficiently integrate these changes in their classrooms' contexts and adapt themselves to the challenges proposed by the rapid development of technology.

The characteristics of the alumni pursuing secondary education greatly differ from those of a few decades ago in relation to their familiarity with technologies so much so that this generation has received the pseudonym of *digital natives*. Palfrey and Gasser (2008: 1) state that we are able to see these changes everywhere, from "the teenage girl with the iPod, sitting across from you on the subway, frenetically typing messages into her cell phone" to "the whiz kid summer intern in your office who knows what to do when your e-mail client crashes".

As Palfrey and Gasser (2008: 1) suggest d*igital natives* are those who were born after 1980, almost at the same time as social digital technologies. They have the necessary skills to work with and have access to networked digital technologies with a surprising easiness.

This is the kind of learners that we will have sitting in front of us when we become professional teachers, hopefully in a not very far away future. Therefore, it is very important for instructors to become aware of this new reality; students 'speak' the language of technology everyday and teachers should be able to 'understand' it and efficiently respond in the same code.

A solid formation of teaching professionals on the matter of ICTs is needed more than ever before. Teachers should be able to easily handle and manage the technologies available so that they are on the same page as their students. Unfortunately, this field seems to raise some reticent attitudes on the part of some instructors (especially those who have been in the profession for a long time). Either because teachers feel unprepared to integrate ICTs in the classrooms or because they mistrust technological

efficiency as a methodological support tool, the truth is that still nowadays, high numbers of teachers refuse to integrate technological advances in their classes.

Personally, I feel that some training is needed prior to the integration of ICTs (especially in some of them like digital blackboards) in the classrooms, especially in the case of older teachers. This would be in relation to the need of maintaining a permanent formation to achieve quality education; teachers should periodically refresh their training to adjust and even forsee the changes appearing in the reality that surrounds them.

In the case of the Year Plan and the Learning Unit, activities have been proposed aiming at making the best use of the resources available. I wanted to maximize the possible benefits arising from the integration of ICTs in the classroom. Therefore, I included varied and appealing activities such as the elaboration of a wiki entry, a blog, a radio podcast, etc. combined with more traditional methodologies such as blackboard, activities done with cardboards, etc. to maintain students' interest. The reason behind this combination of innovative technologies with more traditional materials is very simple: exposing learners to a constant use of ICTs might be appealing at the beginning but, when done in excess, it might result in a decay of interest as they become accustomed to them.

Therefore, teachers should become aware of the importance that a responsible use of ICTs has for the teaching-learning process. When correctly used, ICTs can bring very positive effects into the teaching-learing process yet, this is not always the case. Sometimes, teachers depend too much on its use (e.g. powerpoint-based classes) or make a banal use of these technologies (e.g. overloading students with technology use when perhaps it is not worth its use). Thus, it is highly advisable to reflect on the suitability of their integration in the course of the lesson, depending on the objectives that are set to be achieved.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE PROPOSALS.

This final dissertation has been designed with the aim of serving as a final compilation of the knowledge acquired through this Master Degree undertaken all along this academic year. In the course of this postgraduate program, I have had the chance to approximate myself to what I hope it will be my future profession, English teaching.

One of my main concerns regarding foreign language teaching is the notion of English not as a mere curricular subject but rather as **the key for globalization and cultural flow.** In an interconnected and multicultural society like ours, English holds a main role; it is the language most commonly used on the Internet, communication media, business trade, etc. Those that master the language are more prepared to deal with the reality that surrounds them, being able to communicate with millions and millions of people despite the fact that they might not share a native language. This is in relation to the concept of English as a *lingua franca*; this is the language chosen for international communication, regardless of the native cultural background.

Just as I became aware of such important notions, in the future I would like my students to understand the learning of English not just as an institutional requirement but rather, as **a very helpful tool for their future, almost indispensable**. In order to achieve this goal, I will continue investigating and reading about this topic. In addition, I will try to design my lessons in a way that students are aware at all times of the global nature of English, incorporating the study of worldwide Englishes (e.g. Indian, Nigeria, Shangai, trade English, criolle, etc) so that learners understand that English is no longer restricted to the cultural heritage of England, United States, etc.

Furthemore, another goal that I have as a future teacher is to fully integrate the **Communicative Approach** into my lessons. English courses in Spain have been traditionally influenced by the Grammar-Translation method which I consider that it does not foster the ability of learners to become communicative competent (i.e. knowing not only how to produce grammatically correct sentences but also being able to distinguish whether or not an utterance is appropriate in a given communicative context).

Aiming at achieving this goal, I will continue the promotion of **English learning in real communicative situations** via innovative activities, in which social context is taken into account. I will **avoid the use of the native language** in class and will enhance the use of **English as in-class communication language** at all times.

Furthermore, I will enhance the introduction of **activities meant to improve long-term forgotten speaking skills**. These activities will range

from pronunciation tasks, accent and intonation activities to reading aloud, role-plays, debates, etc. All sort of proposals that will help regain all that time that has been lost in the developing of speaking skills.

Finally, in my future career as a teacher, I will try to stay **permanently aware of the innovations and changes** that surround my profession via periodical assistance to training courses and personal interest (e.g. reading, listening to the radio, trying new technologies at home, etc). I will try to keep updated with the latests technologies so that I can use them to communicate and work with learners, maximizing their potential for the sake of improving the teaching-learning process.

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