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STRATEGIES TO DEVELOP ACADEMIC PROFICIENCY THROUGH MOTOR AND COGNITIVE TASKS

**- A cultural design for a British-Spanish
comprehensive school -**

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INITIAL ASPECTS

➤ **TITLE**

Strategies to develop academic proficiency through motor and cognitive tasks - A cultural design for a British-Spanish comprehensive school -

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➤ **ABSTRACT**

This research is aimed towards the implementation of an educational intervention, in a Bilingual-British school with Year 1 kids. In this group of pupils, some of them have difficulties to achieve certain kind of tasks satisfactory, and also they have problems to develop their emotional, social and kinesthetic skills. Through this intervention, the main objective is to encourage these kids to improve and overcome those difficulties that are unfavourable to them.

➤ **KEYWORDS**

Educational intervention, Culture, Emotional Intelligence, Multiple Intelligences, Fine Motor Function.

➤ **INDEX**

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CORPUS

➤ INTRODUCTION

This research begins in my teacher trainee period for three months, where I have been working with kids that belong to Year 1 of Primary Education (KS1), in a Bilingual-British School – Tello Téllez School – in Palencia.

In this school there is a clear culture of integration: integrating cultures, children with motor difficulties, ethnic differences, harmonizing different social classes, a living together plan with the role of pupils working as a “security team” inside the classroom, in the corridors and stairs, and also working aiming at diversity. Following these premises, EFL teachers work in English Literacy, Science and Arts & Crafts to make social, independent and responsible people. Tasks assumed by all the teachers, but as school premises to be set in all grades, together with headmasters and workers, the problem is that the school curriculum at subject level let us little chances to work with it, and the time should be looked for and the strategies set to develop them.

In Tello Téllez School, the bases of the curriculum are founded on the British – Spanish Curriculum Agreement. This formal agreement between the Ministry of Education and the British Council states that the aim of the project is to provide children from the age of three to sixteen with a bilingual and bicultural education through an integrated Spanish-English curriculum based on the Spanish National Curriculum and the National Curriculum for England and Wales. This integrated curriculum has official recognition (BOE May 2000).

The specific objectives of the British-Spanish curriculum project are:

- To promote the acquisition and learning of both languages through an integrated content based curriculum.

- To encourage awareness of the diversity of both cultures.
- To facilitate the exchange of teachers and children.
- To encourage the use of modern technologies in learning other languages.
- If appropriate, to promote the certification of studies under both educational systems.

One of the aims -to encourage awareness of both Spanish and British cultures- makes students be more thoughtful of the diversity that can be found in each one. This is not only referred to historical and traditional themes, but educational theme in the way of knowing, respecting and putting into practice the characteristics of these cultures. With the Spanish-British educational project students have the opportunity to develop their skills through a program, which, in most of cases, works with body and non-verbal communication. This means, expression and motor skills are also developed while they get those skills that belong to their learning process.

To get a better communication is an objective to get a better understanding among people of different languages and cultures. One manifestation of this focus is in the inclusion of "communication in foreign languages" as a key competence in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: learning, teaching, assessment (CEFR)*. The *CEFR* is an instrument that provides a common basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks, etc. across Europe. It is widely used in Europe and other continents and its impact on policy and practice has been demonstrated.

The British educational system emphasizes the importance of body language in communication, as well as kinetic intelligence¹ -Gardner-. That is one of the reasons why the British Curriculum includes bodily expressions, mimics, upper extremity movements, and also, performing and interacting with others as contents in

¹ Gardner's Multiple Intelligences will be further developed in Theoretical Support epigraph.

communication at “text level”. To achieve these targets, most of the previous planning efforts were focused on designing tasks aiming at developing manipulating objects and materials, as well as interacting with the school environment when possible.

Due to my previous knowledge, and also following the British program premises, the plannings to work with in English Literacy, Arts & Crafts and Alternative to Religious Education were set in a way that pupils could learn by realia. The use of this kind of technique let kids develop their thinking skills, their information processing abilities, and their oral and bodily expression skills –verbal and non-verbal language- through experimenting, manipulating objects and materials, and connecting them to the specific syntax and lexical taught in lessons, where the difficulty is increased to lead pupils to a complex thought system. Almost all the experiences and learning through manipulating objects are linked to their common and daily actions, inside and outside the school.

My awareness about kinetic application in those three subjects let me notice about certain problems of some students. Once I have searched in the curriculum and identified the possible target to deal with, I have asked the main teacher to introduce some of those techniques in any of the subjects. After it was accepted, it was my risk to design the planning to be implemented on the lessons, where student’s values and cultural values can be found. Therefore, the first step to take is finding about school values. Designing an informal survey addressed to the different members of the school community was the first step in this work. In this way we obtain the information from: teachers, care-takers, head-teacher, and, finally, pupils.

The school environment is also important to know the pupils better and their characteristics: how they act, how they talk, and whom they talk to, how they move, their routines, their room’s changing, their mood to teachers and classmates, their behaviour inside the classroom and on the playground. In short: the school’s culture.

➤ OBJECTIVES

The aims of this research are connected to the British-Spanish educational system, in the way that the research takes the topics of educative aspects, school culture, pupil's culture and methodologies.

- Educational:
 - Identify obstacles to overcome and work out the headlines of the British-Spanish program with SEN students, especially those who need clear instructions to perform an action (using Kinesthetic Intelligence).
 - Set the bases to implement this educational program, linking them to school and pupils' cultural aspects, to the Multiple Intelligences Theory –mainly Emotional Intelligence-, and also to the treatment of movement in their learning process.
- Cultural:
 - Link cultural aspects of pupils to any feature of their learning process.
 - Involve pupils in an environment full of a culture of integration where different cultures, difficulties and differences can live together in harmony.
- Kinetic:
 - Recognize and establish the main premises to design a program settled on the Multiple Intelligences Theory to improve the students learning as well as self-knowledge.
 - Recognize and put into practice techniques that involve kinetics to carry out the tasks.
 - Determine which “intelligences” are more noticeable in our pupils, and which ones should we focus on.

➤ JUSTIFICATION

Following the British-Spanish program's premises mentioned in the introduction, this research is also focused on the obtaining of different and specific abilities in pupil's learning process during my teacher trainee period. The features of the program let me work with Year 1 group level by level, using the observation as a way to record their learning results and progress, and giving more chances to assess pupils to improve their knowledge in English Literacy, Arts & Crafts and Alternative to Religious Education.

Due to my experience on dealing with behavioural, social and motor problems in my previous teaching process² in physical and sports activities, I gave importance to improve kinetic intelligence to get more efficiency in pupil's learning process. My experience in physical activities, about the perception of movements and communicative comprehension in kids, gave me the chance of working on those tasks that imply kinetic actions. Following these premises, in my trainee teacher period in Tello Téllez School, the plannings were focused in what I have learnt and practiced before and how to implement this awareness with Year 1 pupils. The teaching process was not the only provided during my trainee period; observing, communicating, advising and assessing were exposed competences too.

The acquired experience dealing with similar social contexts and others which the movement was the essential point, directly connected me to work with this bilingual educational system. This means that its features and my previous involvement let me face, observe, take decisions about teaching techniques, assess pupils, interview other teachers and pupils to know other points of view, and take conclusions. As a professional in this educational environment, every part named before was planned according to an informal survey. On it, some questions about social skills, pupil's bodily abilities and physical features, and their interacting and performing skills were set. Teachers' answers were quite similar in some of the kids of this group, because they were kids that have been working with the support of specific teachers –Therapeutic

² Specialist in the area of Physical and Sports activities (in Spanish, TAFAD – Técnico Superior en Actividades Físicas y Animación Deportiva).

Educator, Speech Therapist- since Infant Education. The problems I have detected on my observation period were confirmed through these answers: pupils with hyperkinesia, language problems when setting sentences to describe and explain things, and handwriting problems when copying or just writing. Also, could be added clumsiness, stuttering, or shyness produced by a lack of confidence. Talking about hyperkinesia, head-teacher and Year 1 main teacher answered that there were cases of Hyperactivity linked to Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder, and with the professionals, named before, supporting them the problem was reduced to certain moments of the week –last hours, Friday's noon, and Monday's morning-, independently the teacher, classmates and support they had.

When I got the information from the informal survey, those pupils with language and motor problems were asked covertly, and without interrupting their learning process. The questions were aimed to their social and bodily skills, in order to know when they felt comfortable and motivated if they work, experiment, play, talk to others, share experiences and opinions, etc. This gave me a path to work on in my lessons in English Literacy, Arts & Crafts and Alternative to Religious Education. In this last subject, I started to work with emotional skills, using techniques that imply knowing, recognizing, dealing with, respecting different emotions and feelings in a variety of situations that can be found at school and in pupil's environment.

The noted concepts brought me to think about working on the Multiple Intelligences Theory (Gardner, H., 1983). And this theory, and later group practice, took me to introduce fine motor skills and how to increase them in pupils with the difficulties described before. To that, some tasks were exposed; they were about sharing information, feelings and emotions, performing short texts, imitating animals and unanimated objects to guess them, cuttings, sticking pieces of paper, plastic and fabric, and learning how to tie their shoes.

Through these aspects, and having all the data written down, this research is going to be put into practice starting with the characteristics of the pupils that the investigation is focused on; continuing with the main actions to work with, the first results, and the

possible planning and techniques changes; and finishing with the difficulties that could appear and the viable solutions to those problems.

Some of these children's characteristics are linked to hyperkinesia, because of their lively mood; but there is a small group of kids in Year 1 that are extremely hyperactive, and most of times, this hyperactivity turns into an aggressive mood and "clumsiness".

Taking the opportunity of working with these children and following the theories about Multiple Intelligences, it was put into practice some tasks to reveal the type of "intelligences" they had developed, through the planning of English Literacy, Arts and Crafts, and Alternative to Religious Education.

To know the pupils better, tutors, teachers, headmaster, supporters and caretakers involved in the daily-routines of these pupils were interrogated. The answers were the similar: hyperactivity and, some of them, serious disorders related to it. Investigating more about this kind of disorders and how it can affect to their learning-process, the characteristics of some of these pupils were noticeable: excess of motor activity, oscillating mood swings, aggressive behaviour, impulsivity, and other lacks related to way of life at school, such as respecting the rules, sitting still, and frustration levels that result in an aggressive mood against oneself and classmates. Besides these facts, it was noticed that every child had different developed skills. As a trainee teacher, it was tried that that skills were increased in those kids they got developed ones, and also it was tried to develop certain skills in those pupils which cultural and personal troubles were interfering in their learning process.

➤ THEORETICAL SUPPORT

The school culture is a suitable one to deal with the British-Spanish program, because both of them work under similar premises to get the best of all the pupils. To achieve this proposal both, school and educational program, follow the work-line that consists on planning by tasks, and using techniques that make pupils move, experiment, examine, prove, and those actions that need manipulation to be solved.

My research and most of the lesson plannings are based on Total Physical Response method (in the following lines, TPR). It consists on coordinating physical movement and language. This is given through teacher instructions and pupil's body answers. TPR was developed "after observing young children learning their first language, I noticed that interactions between parents and children often took the form of speech from the parent followed by a physical response from the child" (Asher, 1977). This is a method that let teachers use other techniques at the same time along the unit that is being taught.

In Asher's words, "young children's brain is predisposed to learn language through listening, but they internalize language when they respond with physical movement to language information". Then, he gives importance to the connections that should be developed between both hemispheres of the brain, where the right side controls movements and the left side controls the language comprehension, to a satisfactory language acquisition. Finally, Asher emphasizes that learners, and even more young learners, should not work in a stressful environment, because this kind of negative mood could interfere in their learning process, in whatever the technique used. That is why Asher's method implies movements and bodily responses. These actions facilitate the decrease of stress in learners.

Choosing this method to work with in Year 1 in English Literacy has the aim of beginning the development of oral skills in these group of pupils. This means that, following TPR's premises, first we worked listening comprehension skills in the lessons through short specific lists of vocabulary and verbs, to achieve the basic knowledge to express oneself fluently. Then, the tasks are aimed to link the oral commands proposed

by the teacher to the students' physical responses in a contextualized setting.

Following Asher's premises, the class time in a TPR lesson is spent doing "learning by doing" tasks in which the teacher gives certain and specific commands. Students respond to these commands with physical actions. To understand this, we have to figure the student's learning process out. This means that the student learns the meaning of the commands they hear by direct observation. After they learn the meaning of the words in these commands, the teacher originates other commands that use new combinations of the words they have learned.

Teachers using this method limit the number of new vocabulary items given to students to help them differentiate the new words from those previously learned, and to facilitate integration with their existing language knowledge. Asher suggests: "students can learn between 12 and 36 words for every hour of instruction, depending on their language level and class size".

"Learning by doing" can be used at the same time in a lesson with other activities, such as role plays and show&tells. Although this is not our case³, beginners (Year 1 pupils) are not made to learn conversational dialogs until 120 hours into their course.

The characteristics of this group of pupils let me work easily with TPR, and also kids felt comfortable with it, because the bases of teaching methods used in this school are very similar to this method.

This students' lively mood made me think about finding a way to increase their skills: *Multiple Intelligences theory*. What is the Multiple Intelligences Theory? To answer this question it is necessary to go to Howard Gardner's research about this topic (Prieto M.D., Ballester, P. 2003), which is defined as:

"The study of mechanisms that can be found in different areas of

³ Year 1 pupils in Tello Téllez School were on the second term of the course during this research, so they should have practiced more than 120 hours in conversational dialogues and speeches.

knowledge. Through this mechanisms, an evolutionary change could be produced, explaining the reasons about the diversity among people and the way that education can affect in their development”. Gardner declares that “this development is not produced in the same way in every person. He confirm that any cognitive change requires an individual effort and an external support made by education”. (p. 28-29).

His theory is also based on the influence of cultural aspects, as Prieto M.D. and Ballester, P. (2003) expose:

“Culture doesn't only affect to the evolutionary people progress, but in the active construction of it. The cognitive ability is specific of one field or knowledge, and it is necessary having access to different materials and information of those fields or knowledge to be able to evaluating the grade of cognitive skills and strengths of people”. (p. 30-31)

Gardner had worked in seven criteria to achieve what we know nowadays as abilities or *Intelligences* (Robert Slavin, 2009).

“The potential for brain isolation by brain damage, the place in evolutionary history, the presence of core operations, the susceptibility to encoding⁴, the distinct developmental progression, the existence of savant, prodigies and other exceptional people, and the support from experimental psychology and psychometric findings brought him the names of the abilities: spatial, linguistic, logical-mathematical, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal and naturalistic”. (p.117)

In this research, specific *Intelligences* have been worked. One of them is *Intrapersonal Intelligence*, which is related to individualism, how to take control of their own feelings, acts, thoughts and decisions, and also recognize the strengths and weaknesses about that control by themselves as a way to assess this kind of intelligence.

⁴ Understood as symbolic expression.

The *Interpersonal Intelligence* is linked to the ability of recognizing the worth and respecting others' feelings, acts, thoughts and decisions. Teachers can work with and improve this intelligence in small groups of pupils who have different characteristics of moods, friendship with classmates, thoughts and feelings about any topic they can discuss.

The *Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence* has as main points the control of self bodily motions and the ability to handle objects proficiently. Gardner affirmed that people who has this intelligence would learn better when involving themselves into movements. In this case, Year 1 pupils stand up, move around, go to the bathroom, go to the rubbish bin, perform songs, living and non-living things, and represent feelings and emotions.

The *Multiple Intelligences* Theory and the theory of learning styles are connected to this research in order to I could work following the premises of both of them. In consonance with the theory of learning styles, those students who have a kinesthetic learning style would be discovery learners. This means that they understand their environment – scholar and familiar– through doing and manipulating, rather than thinking before starting any action. Kinesthetic learners usually succeed in experiments –Science-, sporting activities, arts and crafts, and acting and performing.

It is very common finding people with this *intelligence* focused on two or more activities at the same time, memorizing –at present, in the same day- and remembering – from past, last day, last week, last unit- those ones that are related to what they are doing at that moment. For example, some kids in Year 1 were usually singing to themselves and imitating other classmates while drawing or colouring.

Galeet Ben Zion⁵ defined kinesthetic learning as “a process that results in new understanding with the involvement of the learner’s body movements”. These movements establish new knowledge, and sometimes extend what already exists. It is said that kinesthetic learning is established when learners are capable to explain through

⁵ <http://galeetbenzion.com/Inffile/Edctn.htm>

body movements the things that others can say only with words. In the end, this ability let the learner being able to express oneself using verbal al non-verbal language.

Linked to these intelligences, there is one that is very important in first years at school and, of course, in this research. The *Emotional Intelligence* involves and connect emotions to the fact of acting. To explain it, Daniel Goleman (1995) affirms: “the etymological root of *Emotion* comes from the Latin verb *movere* –to move-, and the prefix “e-“, having as a result the meaning “moving towards”, and suggesting that all emotions tend to acts”.

The term *emotion* refers to a feeling or thought, psychological and biological conditions, and the tendency to act. There are many emotion types, many mixes and variations, and also different shades among them.

In this research, some emotions have been worked, such as anger, sadness, fear, happiness, love, surprise, aversion and embarrassment. There are terms included in each emotion that have been shown –by kids- during my trainee period:

- Anger: exasperation, irritability and, in extreme cases, violence and hatred.
- Sadness: grief, despair, pessimism, loneliness.
- Fear: anxiety, apprehension, worry, restlessness, nervousness.
- Happiness: joy, tranquillity, fun, satisfaction.
- Love: acceptance, trust, kindness, affinity.
- Surprise: astonishment, bewilderment, shock.
- Aversion: contempt, disgust, dislike, distaste.

- Embarrassment: guilt, remorse, humiliation.

About the aspect of emotions, feelings and thoughts, it is important to introduce the term *empathy*. This term comes from the emotional mind responses. The emotional mind is faster than rational mind when the answer of a perception may appear. That is the reason why we usually give the response *what have I done?* Goleman says that this is the moment when the rational answer to that perception comes, because of its slow reaction.

As I could notice in the observing part of this investigation, several pupils of Year 1 group had a lack of *empathy*, maybe produced by their personal reasons –familiar and culture conditions-.

Another important aspect that is connected to these theories is the link between the hyperkinesia and motor and linguistic problems in Elementary School Years. To this, I took David Pruitt's⁶ theory, which is aimed to describe the symptoms and characteristics of young kids who are extremely lively and a bit clumsy in any way.

Hyperactive children have difficulties when sitting still, planning ahead, or attending to what's going on around them, so they don't usually notice about their distraction mood. Their difficulties often cause disruption, annoyance, and disappointment to others in their environment. Also, these children are prone to accidents and motor problems if they have to manage objects -small objects too-.

The characteristic behaviour that David Pruitt refers about hyperactive children are the following:

- Inattention: inattentive kids take hard to focus their mind on a task for a long

⁶ David Pruitt, M.D., editor-in-chief, is past president of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry is the leading national association of physicians dedicated to the healthy mental development of children and adolescents.

time, becoming bored and distracted.

- Hyperactivity: kids are in continual motion; they are moving themselves all the time during the lessons.
- Impulsiveness: linked to hyperactivity, children cannot limit their reactions; they act before thinking.
- Disorganization: these kids usually are forgetful and unprepared –without school stuff-.

There are a few pupils -considered hyperkinetic kids- who have developed gross motor skills, but it seems that they are still clumsy when they are asked to do certain tasks carefully. This tasks are aimed to start with easy activities where gross motor skills are needed, to more difficult activities where fine motor skills are involved.

Of course, the fine motor skills of pupils in this research –small group of Year 1 pupils- are not developed yet, but it is expected a positive beginning of their development through specific tasks.

A few paragraphs before I named *stress* as an impediment of pupil's learning process. How to link the terms *stress* and *hyperactive* in this research? How to treat both terms and their features in class?

- There is a visible negative interaction between hyperactive kids and the rest of the classmates. Sometimes this is referred to the connections –friendships, enmities, discomfort- they make during the lessons, and also during the course. Both groups of kids can feel the stressful environment created by the behavioural attributes above mentioned. The mood of these lively kids could bother their classmates and getting into troubles. Frustration is one sign of the problematic, which would be also treated in Alternative to Religious Education and Arts&Crafts lessons. In this aspect, the tasks provided would be refused and

disliked because of the attention and effort required by these hyperkinetic kids. One of the most heard phrases was “I cannot do it! I am dumb!” in an angry mood surrounded by frustration feelings. Another aspect to take into account is that being forgetful and disorganized make them feel stressed too, because the teacher-pupil relationship asks kids to be organized and prepared to do the tasks, either in class or at home. This problem is also linked to the fact that these kind of kids have difficulties when they have to take their school stuff. Sometimes they dropped the books, notebooks, worksheets when handing out, pencils or crayons. This happens because of their lack of fine motor skills development.

- Being able to handle certain situations inside the classroom is essential to control a group of kids with these characteristics. You can plan lessons, topics, and objectives, but one important thing to take into consideration is the ability to anticipate the problems during the lessons and tasks. The fact of working and dealing with hyperactive pupils is that you, as a teacher, have to know all about the possible reactions they could have in any of the situations in class, either alone or with classmates and teacher. This usually affects to lesson’s development. In this case, most of the lessons, tasks, activities and assessments were aimed to begin treating and trying to improve behavioural and motor problems of these hyperactive pupils from Year 1. Related to behaviour aspects, I have selected some objectives to be achieved by pupils at the end of the trainee period⁷. Pruitt suggests “social skills training has been effective in helping children with their difficult social behaviour”; that made me go back to *Multiple Intelligences theory*, and set work-couples (if possible, changing pupils) where one of them had social problems and the other with benefits to this kid, and vice versa. And the same happens to those kids with fine motor difficulties. All of these actions to improve their behaviour and motor skills are planned into different methods of work. The most used are task-games and role-plays, because I consider interaction –verbal and non-verbal interaction- as the first step to deal with these problems.

⁷ These objectives are explained in Methodology epigraph.

➤ **METHODOLOGY**

The Spanish Ministry of Education-British Council bilingual project was initiated in 1996 as a unique experiment within the Spanish state education system, which begins in Infant Education till the end of Primary Education, and with a possible continuation in high school (3-16 years old). The implementation of this curriculum requires a very different classroom approach from the common EFL classroom (Council of Europe – Foreign Languages – Modern and classical):

“Language teaching focuses on cultures associated with the language in order to achieve other humanistic goals, namely understanding of people of other societies and their cultures. Understanding of cultures, combined with opportunities for communication, is expected to lead to a reduction of prejudiced views of others. Since communication in modern languages can be both receptive and productive and immediate rather than mediated through texts, this educational goal has, in the recent decades, been given more emphasis than in classical languages. In modern languages, policy and teaching thus focuses on “intercultural competence”, which has humanistic consequences in the form of reflection on one’s own cultures and identities as well as utilitarian consequences since it enables direct interaction with people of other languages and cultures”. (p. 5)

The integrated approach, that concerns the British curriculum in order to learning languages, is settled on the Directives of the Council of Europe which insists on the need for children to be competent in three European languages by the end of the secondary compulsory education and that the learning of the first foreign language should begin in the early years of formal education.

This Spanish-British agreement needs a certain number of English lessons. That implies, at least, 9 hours per week of subjects in English to be taught. There are qualified teachers, and also, there are other experienced teachers on the British Educational System. The Ministry offers this high qualified bilingual project in the

Spanish educational system that encourages the mutual interest in both cultures, British and Spanish. The methodology developed in this program, mainly in Science, is a very active one, following the paths of “*hands-on*”⁸ system, which is based on experiential education theory (Dewey, 1938); it consists on giving students the chance to demonstrate and apply the skills and knowledge they had acquired through connections to the real world they are surrounded by. The *hands-on approach* let students learn more because of the active experimentation, resulting a group of independent learners who acquire different competences within a given social context. In short, living together as a member of a society, the classroom, requires from the individual to involve personally all their competences: interpersonal, intrapersonal, cultural, natural, technological, as well as communicative and linguistic skills, including: listening, reading, interacting, speaking and writing in a number of different genres and discourse settings. All these competences are acquired by learners with the rest of the people in the class, within the context of many different complex learning situations, at the same time they are learning to know themselves, a real hard task for a 6 year old student.

Working with this population, requires a complete plan to make them members of the small society, where they can get to know each other within the culture of the environment where they live. Besides being a British-Spanish school, it has a high number of SEN students, with psychological and motor handicaps. Sharing working and leisure times push them to implement interpersonal as well as intrapersonal competences: accepting others, but also being aware of their feelings and reactions, which might be interpreted in a different way according to the premises of their cultural background.

The process followed in the implementation of the design begins with a close study of its main characters: children in Year 1. At this stage, there are some kids who suffer from a lack of concentration as well as serious problems of interaction with others, even more, some of them were described – in the official reports- as hyperactive kids.

⁸ The Science British Curriculum is focused on learning through observing, manipulating, experimenting, evaluating, trying again, noting results.

Attention and distraction problems are basic symptoms of Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). There is an incapability of inhibiting oneself from distractions, so the person seems not to listen to explanations and not pay attention. They have difficulties on being tidy and organized, which provide them the problem of following the lessons and completing the tasks. This kind of person could also be forgetful and occasionally lose stuff. Difficulties by hyperactivity imply being lively and excessively talkative. Kids can run, jump, climb, walk, stand up and down all the time. These kids can have problems when playing alone and as a team. Impulsiveness' difficulties imply answering out of time or before the questions are made, respecting turns to speak, interrupt teacher and classmates to say non-relevant information, and interfere in dialogs and conversations.

Due to the characteristics of pupils from Year 1, the British-Spanish Curriculum, the information taken on the observing period, and the informal surveys to teachers, head-teacher, and care-takers, I've decided to work with the Theory of Multiple Intelligences (Gardner, 1983), focusing in Social and Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligences, as well as Emotional Intelligence (Goleman, 1996) and the acquisition of fine motor skills.

The following aims were set with the idea of having a control line to see which of them were achieved, who has achieved them and how kids have obtained them. These aims should be achieved through the tasks that are implemented on the planning of the three subjects, which are referred to the specific *Intelligences* we are working on during the research:

- Kid's aims related to Social and Emotional Intelligences.
 - Know and recognize own abilities and emotions through the tasks in English Literacy, Arts&Crafts and Alternative to Religious Education.
 - Know and identify other's abilities and emotions.
 - Be able to know and understand that everybody is different from others.
 - Be able to know, understand and recognize that everyone develop different abilities in different periods.
 - Respect other people's emotions and feelings.

- Be able to help others when their own characteristics don't allow them to do the tasks appropriately.
- Kid's aims related to Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence.
 - Be able to use the body as a way of communication.
 - Be able to identify and recognize in others, the non-verbal language.
 - Be able to use imitation and to describe animated / inanimated things, through movements.
- Kid's aims related to Fine Motor Function.
 - Know how hands and fingers work and know the own limits to work with them.
 - Be able to execute tasks using only hands and the material provided by teachers.

The small group I've been working with let me interact and link these type of intelligences following some lines. Starting with the cultural environment that these kids are surrounded by at school and at home, it was determined that their social skills were in trouble, because it was noticeable a changing and aggressive mood, the difficulty to make social relationships –they were angry and annoyed most of the time-, and to interact with classmates.

Some behavioural tasks were introduced to those kids who had problems in this theme in Alternative to Religious Education to determine their fulfilment about respecting turns to speak or answer, listening to others, respecting other opinions and comments, and playing with the spirit of fair play -learning to win and lose-. These tasks involve two of the intelligences of the Theory of Multiple Intelligences: *Intrapersonal Intelligence* and *Interpersonal Intelligence*, and also Goleman's *Emotional Intelligence*.

❖ **Alternative to Religious Education**

The tasks that I have implemented in Alternative to Religious Education were planned

on a timeline of six weeks. The eight pupils in this subject had the opportunity to obtain, and maybe consolidate, abilities they have not developed yet, focusing the research in the following aspects⁹: behave in class, feelings, reactions to other's feelings, discussions, solve (try to solve) own and group problems, learn how to listen to others, be respectful with classmates and teachers.

The planning lessons in Alternative to Religious Education were aimed to develop Intrapersonal, Interpersonal and Emotional intelligences through regulated games. In one of these games the teacher showed a picture of a sad, happy, bored, sleepy, angry, embarrassed and surprised character; kids had to guess the mood and try to imitate it. After that, they had to say the situations these moods can be found. The rules of the game were the following:

- Behave while doing the task.
- Do not disturb partners.
- Do no shout.
- Raise the hand to say something and answer.
- If the answer is the good one it will be given one point.
- If someone breaks any rule the point will be removed.

In the next session, another game was introduced but performing animals¹⁰. Here, kids had to work in pairs, so one of them imitated the animal, and the other how the animal goes. Those pupils who had to guess the animal, had to talk to their partner and agree with the decision they had taken; then, raise the hand and wait for the turn to answer. The rules were the same as in the other game, so if they did not respect the rules, the points would be removed from the scoreboard.

During both tasks, the main teacher and I realized that some of these kids had a high level of frustration while working and at the end of the activities. That was one of the

⁹ Emotional Intelligence, Goleman, D. (1996).

¹⁰ UNIT: ANIMALS - English Literacy and Science.

reasons why more collaborative tasks were proposed.

In other activity, pupils worked in pairs again to try to guess riddles. Apart from the common rules, I decided to increase two of them:

- Talk to their partner about the answer and raise the hand before answering.
- Those couples that did not respect these two rules would have their points removed, even if they had not points –negative score-.

One more task consisted on -working in pairs- finding the couples cards about objects and actions, such as flowers, animals, vehicles and people. The pair-team with more couples found was the winner. These are rules and instructions:

- Behave during the activity.
- Respect the other classmates.
- Talk to your parent before answering.
- Respect your partner's decision.
- Respect the turns when turning the cards around.
- Do not move the cards.
- Do not turn the cards around.
- Do not tell the other pair-teams where the couples of card are.
- Losing and winning – Learning to be respectful.

Continuing on this type of activities, kids had a little time to form a word with the vowels and consonants that were handed out. The words could be in Spanish and English as well. After that, they could exchange their letters to get better ones. Doing this, pupils could learn how to deal to obtain more useful things. If they did not respect the rules (the same as in the other activities), their points would be removed from the scoreboard, even becoming negative points.

After these activities, I suggested to include some motor tasks, so the first step was to make kids move their body, know their abilities about movements and also control them. The task consisted on two queues of four kids –main teacher also took part on it-. The last kid on the queue had to carry a pencil case, go through their line-partners in a

zig-zag way, and when the kid reached the top of the queue give the pencil case to the next kid moving only the trunk, starting to the right side, so the next kid would do it on the left side, and so on till the end of the queue where the task started again. The activity ended when one of the lines reached the opposite part of the room.

Due to the popularity of this activity, kids asked for more rounds, so I decided to do another one but changing the way to give the pencil case. In this new task, the pencil case had to be given fist under the legs and then over the head.

The instructions of these two tasks were the following ones:

- Respecting the rules while playing.
- Use a “fair-play” mood.
- Know how to move properly to get good results in the game.
- Encourage partners to respect the rules and instructions.
- Make a good playing environment.
- Respect other’s disabilities about movements and actions.
- Help others to get achievements in the game.
- Know and respect when loosing and winning.

Also, a role play was suggested. Here, kids had to think first, and act then how some animals go –dog, cat, bird, kangaroo and snake-. Then, they chose another animal, the elephant, and they had to make a group performance. That meant to work all together to make the animal with their bodies and how it goes. One kid was the head, another four were the legs and the last one was the tail¹¹.

❖ Arts & Crafts

Harnessing the energy and motor implication in these pupils, I have chosen the Total Physical Response method (TPR) to working with in this subject. Through it I have

¹¹ This day, two of the eight kids were not at school because of illness.

been able to get the essential information¹² to prepare and plan the correspondent lessons to improve the development of pupil's skills previously mentioned.

In Arts & Crafts¹³ the planned lessons took six weeks –one lesson per week-. The aims of these lesson's tasks –apart from the curricular aims in this subject- were:

- Determine who had problems¹⁴ and who stood out through cutting, sticking, tracing draws, and spreading plasticine and watercolours.
- Know, identify and manipulate different materials to make a collage.
- Know techniques to hold the different materials to cut, stick, trace and spread.

The rules, the task and the materials were introduced to pupils showing first a finished collage as an example in the following way:

“This is what we are going to do in this task. This is my collage. There are a lot of things and materials. Do you know what this is? –Wait for the answers and continue-. There are flowers, butterflies, a rainbow, the ground, the sky and the Sun. Do you like it? Let's make a collage.”

- Respect the rules.
- Behave in class.
- Take care of the material.
- Colour the sky and spread it with the cotton swab.
- Take the piece of yellow paper and trace the line.
- Cut the sun and stick it on the collage.
- Take a piece of plasticine and spread it with your fingers.
- Take a cotton swab and colour the ground.
- Take the piece of fabric and stick it in the right place of the collage.

¹² The information was recorded on a chart which is attached on the Appendix.

¹³ Unit: PLANTS.

¹⁴ Problems in Fine Motor Function when holding the stuff: scissors, pencils, crayons, glue, pieces of different materials.

- Take the piece of paper, fold it in half, and then fold it again in half.
- Cut the flowers.
- Cut the butterfly.
- Stick the stems of the flower and the butterfly's antennas.

Following the line of manipulating objects and materials, the next lesson -“Cut-outs” - was introduced as an instructive text; this means that there were a list of instructions again. This time, the aims were:

- Improve the techniques to hold the materials.
- Do the tasks in a proper way
- Know new vocabulary in the same Unit¹⁵.

To achieve this aims, some flashcards about clothes and a worksheet were shown to:

- Identify the clothes.
- Identify the materials.
- Identify the properties of those materials.
- Recognize the clothes on the worksheet.
- Be able to choose a material and a property to each clothes.

To link the awareness of clothes and materials to fine motor function development, main teacher and I agree about asking them to cut the worksheet out part by part following instructions and descriptions.

“Hands up if you have got the pink and blue coat! Let’s cut it out!”

“Who can tell me what this is? –Pointing at the rain-hat-. Cut it out if you have it!”

¹⁵ Unit: MATERIALS AND PROPERTIES.

❖ English - Literacy

The lessons implemented in this subject took, as in the other two subjects, six weeks. The opportunity to link English lessons to this research made me set the following aims:

- Work at text level through songs and performing them.
- Work at sentence level, connecting it to dramatization¹⁶.
- Work at word level; know how to write the main words of the tasks¹⁷.
- Work in pairs and as a team.
- Be respectful of other's disabilities and problems.
- Respect the rules.

At this age -6/7 years old-, it is difficult to perform other characters, even if they are non-living things. Each day, in English-Literacy, pupils and English teacher sang a song and performed it. This means, there is a text with a certain sentences to be performed:

The Cherry-Tree Song

*Once I've found a cherry stone,
I put it in the ground.
When I came to look at it,
A little shoot came out.
The shoot came up, and up each day,
And soon became a tree.
I picked the rosy cherries then,
And ate them for my tea.*

Sentence by sentence, kids can perform this song, even if they do not know the sentences by heart.

¹⁶ The use of role-plays within the lesson planning.

¹⁷ Vocabulary list of the unit. In this case, the units are about Plants, and Materials and Properties.

Another performed song was “There is a hole in my bucket”¹⁸, where the kids worked in pairs; one of them was Liza and the other Henry. The resources were provided by the teacher, and also kids took their own school stuff –pencil, crayon, pencil case- to replace other materials.

Once kids were working at sentence level, the performing task was introduced. Imitate non-living things imply to make them more human:

- Know the characteristics of the non-living thing.
- Know how the different materials work and their properties.
- Set the proper intonation to each non-living thing.
- Use parts of the body to emphasize the performance.
- Encourage your partner and the other groups to do it in an appropriately way.
- Respect the disabilities and problems of your partners.

To work as a group in a performance is difficult in order to be everybody connected to the actions and sentences or words they have to say. At this point, I chose an activity where kids worked into two groups. One had to imitate my verbal and non-verbal language; everything I did and said, they had to imitate it. The aims and the rules of this activity were the following:

- Be able to imitate movements in the right way.
- Be able to repeat the words and sentences using the same intonation.
- Be able to control emotions while doing the activity¹⁹.
- Respect the rules.
- Be respectful to other’s disabilities and difficulties.
- Accept criticism from teacher and classmates.
- Set a good playing-environment.

¹⁸ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rBHdZj-qkeQ>

¹⁹ Showing enthusiasm, sometimes leads kids to have bad behaviour and be disrespectful.

The other group had to be silent, paying attention to their classmates' actions and behaviour. The main task of these kids, while the others were performing were:

- Be in silence while the others are doing the activity.
- Pay attention to every partner and their behaviour.
- Be able to say an objective opinion about their partner's actions.
- Be able to control their emotions and feelings when giving own opinions.
- Recognize when a partner makes something wrong and negative to the achievement of the task.
- Be respectful when giving opinions.

Following the line of imitation, I decided to introduce a task about silence and tapping. Sitting on my desk, and with all the pupils in front of me on their desks, I started to tap the table; first once with my hand, then twice, and so on, till forming a rhythm. The difficulty was increasing according to their ability to imitate my movements; tapping only with fingers was a trouble for some of the pupils.

This task let me think about their fine motor function, so at the end of these six weeks I implemented an activity related to tie their shoes²⁰. The aims of this task:

- Know if kids know how to tie their shoes.
- Determine who of them have more difficulties to do the task.
- Give advice to those kids who have more problems to achieve the targets.
- Set a collaborative work to tie the shoes.
- Increase the difficulty to those kids who are more able to tie the shoes.
- Ask pupils to encourage themselves and others to achieve the task.

These tasks and activities, of the three planned subjects, were linked in order to achieve all the aims that have been set during my research, whose results will be displayed in

²⁰ It was noticed that every child wore shoes with Velcro fastening.

the next chapter.

CONCLUSIONS

➤ OUTCOMES

The kid's ability to control their emotions and feelings when they were performing tasks, let me know that their skills about this topic were improving. The level of frustration was, sometimes, lower than the first days of work, especially with SEN students, as a school where integration is a cultural premise. Some pupils showed high levels of frustration caused by their fear of losing, which made them unable to work on the group task. Others also got angry with themselves and with their classmates, till the point to become an aggressive person. All those situations lead the axis of the present work with the following outcomes.

The first step focused on the individual through task planning. The kids with these kind of problems were able to control themselves in certain moments of the activity thanks to the micro-instructions offered (using Total Physical Response Method). Most of the times, they needed help to control their emotions and actions, that was achieved through the language provided by the teacher, little by little this help was supplied by the other classmates, who encouraged them to keep trying doing the task. At the same time, we design and implemented motor skill activities addressed to a small group of eight students, some of them SEN students, in the classes of Alternative to Religious Education. With this individualized instruction, we could see improvements in our students either their motor skills, their capacity to understand rules as well as their control of the emotions.

The second step: Creating groups. The problem of collaboration among pupils when performing tasks relates on the pupils preference to work individually, because when they failed the task, they blamed the partner and that result an angry mood. The teacher's proposal has been providing moments and situations to assume the perspective of the other.

As a third step, in order to get them controlling emotions, a very difficult task at these ages and even more when they are working with the big group in other subjects, the program focused on linking subjects. In this way, this affective part –Intrapersonal and Interpersonal- linked kinesthetic skills to communicative skills through role-play simulating Arts & Crafts activities in English Literacy lessons.

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APPENDIX

FIRST CHART – “Collage”					
PUPILS	TRACING	TAKING THE SCISSORS	CUTTING ALONG THE LINE	STICKING INSIDE THE PIECE	SPREADING
Student A	×	✓	✓	×	×
Student B	✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓
Student C	× ×	× ×	× ×	×	✓
Student D	✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓
Student E	✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓
Student F	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Student G	×	✓	×	×	✓
Student H	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Legend: ✓ ✓ = Very good ✓ = Good × = Not good × × = Very bad					
In these charts of Arts and Crafts, the variables were focused on the manipulative skills and abilities of the eight kids from Alternative to Religious Education					
SECOND CHART – “Collage”					
PUPILS	TAKING THE SCISSORS	CUTTING ALONG THE LINE	STICKING INSIDE THE PIECE		
Student A	✓	✓	×		
Student B	✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓		
Student C	×	×	×		
Student D	✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓		
Student E	✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓		
Student F	✓	✓	✓		
Student G	✓	×	×		
Student H	✓	✓	✓		
Legend: ✓ ✓ = Very good ✓ = Good × = Not good × × = Very bad					

