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ALTERNATIVE METHOD FOR THE LEARNING OF A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN A CLIL SCHOOL

Grado: Educación Primaria

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INTRODUCTION

When you arrive for the first time to a school, as a teacher, it is hard to adapt yourself; and it is more difficult when the method used is excessively organized, too much oriented, with a very clear process of work and, moreover, if you see that it follows a set of theories and strategies that you, as a professional in education, do not think they are the most appropriate ones for a specific age and context.

The first moment I started my teaching, I was presented the methodology used in the English Area, and I was given the main lines to work with by a group of representatives of the company. My first impression was of rejection since I found it extremely close, repetitive and quite far away from the communicative method I was used to. On the other hand, I became surprised about the good level children had in the Foreign Language along the whole stage of Primary Education. This situation led me to go deeper on this topic.

The present work is a mixture between the analysis of a method and the way a teacher learns to cope with a new situation in order to personalize the teaching-learning process along one year, while balancing the imposed method and the own professional principles.

1. JUSTIFICATION

In order to develop the present work, I find necessary to present the educational context where it takes place.

I am an English teacher who works in a bilingual/CLIL school in the Community of Madrid. The good location of the school has relevance due to the price of the materials, which not all the families can afford, and the kind of population. Most of the families attending to the school have a medium-high socio-economical level; besides, most of the parents have a university degree. There is a light socio-cultural diversity since some of the families come from countries such as USA, England, Germany and France, or South American countries.

Referring to the building, in terms of the way it determines the methodology's development, it is necessary to mention that all the classrooms have an Interactive

whiteboard with Internet access. This allows the teachers to work with the provided digital resources.

Moreover, the timetable followed in this school is from 9:00 to 12:30 in the morning, and from 14:30 to 16:00 in the afternoon.

In this school I teach the subjects of English in itself; and Science and Art&Crafts, where **C**ontent and **L**anguage are **I**ntegrated in the students' **L**earning process, in the First Cycle of Primary Education.
In this school, 1st and 2nd graders attend to five hours of English, 4 sessions of Science and one hour of Art&Crafts per week.

In the area of English, the whole school carries out a methodology which was created in San Diego as a way to teach this language to Mexican people. This method has been widespread to other countries, such as Spain. Its principles and main basis will be exposed in the following sections.

On the other hand, the subjects of Science and Art&Crafts are worked in a different way. While the former subject, Science, supports its instruction with textbooks and pedagogical resources from a very known British Editors, the second: Arts and Crafts, is planned and organized through projects. This fact balances the teaching-learning process.

I find very interesting to go beyond language methodologies, especially when you turn to be a direct user in your classes, to understand the target they try to reach and, mainly, the process they carry out, with the specific mediators and strategies they use. A deeper investigation helps the teacher to realize what s/he is really doing, to assess the process and the product, and to be aware of the advantages and disadvantages the method has. In this way, a significant improvement can be done.

1.1 OBJECTIVES

While carrying out this work, I will demonstrate that, as a Primary teacher, I am able to:

1- Know the curricular areas in Primary Education, its contents, how they are

connected, evaluation criteria and corresponding teaching-learning procedures and strategies.

2- Design, plan and assess teaching-learning processes, both individually and working with other professionals in the school.

3- Face to effective situations of learning a Foreign Language in multicultural and plurilingual contexts. Promote reading habits and understanding of texts which have to do with scientific issues and cultural contents within the educational curriculum.

4- Design and regulate language learning situations in diverse contexts, taking equality and respect to social rights into account.

5- Promote coexistence in and out the school, solve behavioural problems and deal with conflicts as a mediator. Stimulate and value effort, perseverance and personal behaviour.

6- Know the schools' organization and the wide range of actions which have to be developed to reach its proper running. Carry out tutorial functions and orient students and families taking their characteristics and needs into account. Assume that the teaching career must be improved and adapted to scientific, pedagogical and social changes along the time.

7- Work cooperatively with the different sectors of the educational community and its social environment. Promote democratic education to form active citizens.

8- Keep a critic and autonomous relation within knowledge, values and social institutions.

9- Value individual and collective responsibility to reach a sustainable future.

10- Reflect upon the teaching-learning strategies so as to update and improve the process. Acquire habits and skills to develop autonomous and cooperative learning and promote it among learners.

Moreover, as the responsible of the linguistic development of children aged 6, 7 and 8 years old, developing this analysis I will show that, as the Council of Europe expects from CLIL teachers and, on the contrary of the used method, I can:

a) Support content learning in language classes, integrating it from several subjects and fields of knowledge. Create cross-curricular themes and related activities in

cooperation with colleagues. Adapt course content to language and subject curricula. Design tasks that support planned learning outcomes.

b) Identify the language which is new for the students in text, audio or audiovisual materials, and support comprehension. Identify the language components needed by the learners for oral or written comprehension and expression and produce support material. Analyse content in terms of language needs. Use a wide range of language correction strategies with appropriate frequency, ensuring language growth without discouraging students. Consciously create opportunities for incidental learning of content, language and learning skills. Identify, adapt and design materials suited to the students' current level of cognitive development.

c) Select learning activities in terms of classroom interaction (learner-learner, learner-teacher, teacher-teacher). Develop a classroom culture where language learning is supported through peers and learner autonomy.

d) Use the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFRL) as a self-assessment tool. Engage students in an assessment-for-learning culture including: making connections between planned outcomes, learning skills and processes, actual outcomes, planning and negotiating strategies for future learning, using self and peer-assessment tools, maintaining a triple focus on language, content and learning skills. Decide whether production errors are linked to language or content.

e) Continue to evolve in the role of CLIL teacher through: working systematically to apply new techniques and improve teaching, trying out new materials and media, regular self-assessment of personal professional development needs taking continuous professional development courses

Therefore, this work will let me use all my professional skills so as to make an objective analysis of a methodology, basing it on theoretical basis and laws which regulate the current educational system, in this case, in the learning of the Foreign Language.

2. THEORIES SUPPORTING

This work establishes its roots on several theories supported by both the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFRL) and the national regulations. The intention is to expose them and, consecutively, analyze how are they taken into account and developed through this methodology to teach a second language.

2.1 VYGOTSKY'S LANGUAGE THEORY

In relation to the learning of a language, Vygotsky developed the term '**inner language**', establishing an explicit and deep connection between speech (silent inner speech and oral language) and the development of mental concepts and cognitive awareness.

According to his theory, at first, children learn the meaning of signs through interaction. In this way, they learn how verbal sounds can be used to conduct this social interaction. This is known as 'public speech'. Thus, children begin to use, build and develop this faculty, with the language as an essential tool.

At the ages of three and four, children use this tool as a sort of self-talk aloud, often addressing themselves by name or in third person: 'private speech'. Later, it is used as a tool for self-directing and self-regulating behaviour. As children mature, this language becomes internalized as they no longer need to speak the words out loud. Thus, when children start school, self-task is no longer present any more due to the internalization which has taken place.

> 'Self-task develops along a rising not a declining, curve; it goes through and evolution, not an involution. In the end, it becomes inner speech' (Vygotsky, 1987).

Inner speech is not comparable in form to external speech or verbal thought. While verbal thought is the process of turning thought into words, inner speech is the opposite: the conversion of speech into inward thought.

This theory is supported on **Constructivism**, basis of most of the educational systems nowadays. It is based on people being aware of their learning process, building it through scaffolding.

Constructivism implies:

- Active methodology. A series of mental processes must happen.
- Flexible methodology. Each learning process depends on the person and his/her abilities and intelligences.
- Participative methodology. Through scaffolding and support, the learner will create the knowledge and develop competences, taking part in the process directly. In the same way, the learner will also take part in the assessment.
- Social methodology. The child learn first from society and, then, as an individual.

2.2 MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES THEORY

Howard Gardner established that there is not just a kind of intelligence, but that there are different intelligences and that each person is more competent at one or another. He viewed intelligence as 'the capacity to solve problems or to fashion products that are valued in one or more cultural setting' (Gardner & Hatch, 1989). Therefore, Gardner proposed eight intelligences:

- verbal-linguistic intelligence (excel at words)
- logical-mathematical intelligence (excel at numbers or reasoning)
- musical-rhythmic intelligence (excel at music)
- naturalistic intelligence (excel at nature)
- bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence (excel with the body)
- visual-spatial intelligence (excel in painting)
- interpersonal intelligence (excel with people)
- intrapersonal intelligence (self smart)

It is the educator's aim to develop all of them as every learner is different and we cannot just respond to the traditional vision of intelligence. We must know how to value each difference and develop every skill learners are good at.

2.3 COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH

The importance of knowing how to communicate to each others in a fixed situation requires more than a linguistic competence; it requires a **communicative competence** (Hymes, 1971).

In those ages, educators noticed that students could produce adequate sentences in a situation but they could not use those sentences and have a real communication with the others outside of the class.

In the late 70s and early 80s there was a change from a linguistic structure-centred approach to a communicate approach (Widdowson, 1990). The main aim of the Communicative Approach is promoting the communicative competence in terms of developing the communication in a natural context.

2.4 PLURILINGUALISM

The main idea of plurilingualism is to build a communicative competence to which all knowledge and experience on language contributes and in which languages interrelate and interact (CEFRL, *page 4*). Therefore, the improvement in one of the skills in a language implies the improvement of such skill in other languages known by that person.

2.5 BASIC/KEY COMPETENCES

As the *"Real Decreto 1513/2006 de 7 de Diciembre, por el que se establecen las enseñanzas mínimas de la Educación Primaria"* establishes, the basic competences cover that knowledge which is considered essential for an **integrated** application of the acquired learning.

A competence is understood as the *capacity to put those knowledge, abilities and personal attitudes acquired in an integrated way into practice, in different contexts and*

situations. In other words, this concept includes (CEFRL, *page 101*): "Declarative" knowledge (to know), Skills and know-how (to know how to do), "Existential" knowledge (to know how to be), and Ability to learn (to know how to learn).

Their main purpose is, firstly, to integrate the different knowledge, either formal, informal, or non-formal. Secondly, to let the students integrate their learning, relate it with different contents, and use it effectively when necessary in different situations and contexts. And finally, to guide students' learning while allowing the identification of contents and evaluation criteria and inspire the different decisions related to the teaching-learning process.

Learning a foreign language contributes directly to the linguistic communication competence, enriching and completing communicative comprehension and expression. This Area let us use the language as means for the learning of different and varied contents.

According to the previous considerations and the established by the CEFRL, eight basic competences have been identified. The Linguistic Communication Competence or Communicative Competence is Foreign Language teachers' priority, since it is the main goal established not only by the current Spanish law, but also by the European guidelines. In order to work through this competence accurately, teachers must create significant communicative contexts in the classroom. The different basic competences offer a great range of possibilities to go through diverse cross-curricular contents in a Foreign Language.

Apart from the communicative competence learners must develop:

1. Mathematical competence.
2. Competence in the knowledge and interaction with the physical world.
3. Treatment of information and digital competence.
4. Social and citizen competence.
5. Cultural and artistic competence.
6. Learning to learn competence.
7. Self-autonomy and initiative.

3. DESIGN

First of all, any teacher needs to have a deep knowledge of the method s/he is supposed to implement, considering knowledge a deep understanding of the theories supporting every decision taking, as well as its links to the established normative. Thus, our first step will be analyzing the frame we must adjust our task to: the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages; as well as the Order 5859/2010, from the Community of Madrid.

3.1 CEFRL

So, it is necessary to mention the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFRL), which provides a European common basis for the elaboration of language Syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations or, as in this case, textbooks. It describes in a comprehensive way what language learners have to learn to do in order to use a language for communication, and what knowledge and skills they have to develop so as to be able to communicate effectively. The description covers the cultural context in which language is set. The Framework also defines the Common Reference levels of proficiency (from A1 to C2), which allow learners' progress to be measured at each stage of learning and on a life-long basis.

These main lines share five important concepts to remark: *Plurilingualism, pluriculturalism, learning to learn, long-life learning awareness and task.-oriented approach.*

The conception of communicative competence in the CEFR is evident in the following quote: *"language use, embracing language learning, comprises the actions performed by persons who as individuals and as social agents develop a range of competences, both general and in particular communicative language competences. They draw on the competences at their disposal in various contexts under various conditions and under various constraints to engage in language activities involving language processes to produce and/or receive texts in relation to themes in specific*

domains, activating those strategies which seem most appropriate for carrying out the tasks to be accomplished". (CEFRL, *page* 9)

The CEFR offers the guidelines which have been taken into account to develop the 'Ley Orgánica de Educación' (LOE) within the Communicative Approach, whose main aim is promoting the communicative competence in terms of developing the communication in a natural context.

As the main item to be developed in any Language Area, including Foreign Language Learning, the communicative competence is perceived as a constructivist process followed by the learner, but scaffold through the instruction design. In this way, language and its skills become the foundations for knowledge development in the different Areas, as it is evidenced being considered one of the basic competences. Furthermore, the European recommendations provide suggestions on how to focus the programs in the integrated development of the five basic skills: *oral and written comprehension, oral and written expression and interaction*; giving priority to oral skills in the First Cycle of Primary Education; and introducing students in reading and writing through significant texts.

3.2 ORDEN 5859/2010

Talking about the main aims for a Foreign Language Area in a Bilingual/CLIL school in Madrid, regulated by the "*Decreto 22/2007, de 10 de Mayo, del Consejo de Gobierno, por el que se establece para la Comunidad de Madrid el currículo de la Educación Primaria*" and, especifically, by the "ORDEN 5859/2010, de 7 de diciembre, por la que se regulan los colegios públicos bilingües de la Comunidad de Madrid", we can highlight the importance of these didactic features:

- o Communicative competence development.
- o Content and Language Integrated English (CLIL).
- o Only English.
- o Pluricultural and plurilingual awareness.
- o ICT's.
- o Assessment for learning, assessment as learning and assessment of learning.

Besides, it is expected that at the end of the First Cycle of Primary Education, learners will be able to:

- Understand familiar and key words and phrases about everyday habits and routines, actions, position of objects, the classroom, short instructions, songs and rhymes, simple questions, and spelling.
- Say *hello* and *goodbye*, and give simple personal information, likes and dislikes, family members.
- Ask and answer very simple questions about name, age, family, who people are, someone's name, address, telephone number, nationality, where someone lives, how someone is, what people like and what they are doing, everyday life, hobbies, habits and routines.
- Make oneself understood: use gestures, say *'Pardon?'*, *'Sorry?'*, *'I don't know'* to get information.
- Describe people, animals, objects and places, indicate position, situations, characters, tell a story with pictures, state simple facts; recite simple rhymes, chants and poems.
- Interact with the teacher in conversations about people and places, current activities, quantities and amounts, things which can/cannot be counted; personal possessions, appearances and feelings; states and events in the past, when something happened; how often something happens, how you do something; what others are doing, explain agents or instruments of actions (*with, by*).
- Use simple structures to offer, suggest, request, indicate preference, compare, express in/ability, contrast, give reasons, express obligation, and ask for permission.
- Give simple directions and locations.
- Recognize words by common spelling patterns, rhyming words and final phonemes.
- Read and spell words with digraphs and three-letter blends.
- Read and spell high frequency words, including common irregular words, names, labels and familiar classroom captions.

- Read and understand a short dialogue, a simple postcard, the names of some objects, short sentences (including questions).

- Read rhymes, chants and poems.

- Read short simple and familiar stories with picture prompts.

- Read and follow simple instructions and labels, read and use captions.

- Read and follow simple instructions.

- Understand the general idea of simple informational texts, short simple descriptions and definitions

- Copy and write single words, phrases and sentences (with teacher support).

- Write words, labels (objects and pictures), phrases and captions.

- Write personal information, spelling, and numbers 1 - 20.

- Write a short, simple text, no more than 20 words long following a model. (e.g. *making lists, invitations, writing notes, completing texts, making simple story books*).

- Use capital letters and full stops, question marks and inverted commas

When talking about the contents that must be acquired at this level, this Order refers to:

Grammar:
- ✓ **Nouns:** Common nouns in singular and plural (regular and irregular), possessives; adjectives (size, shape, colour), pronouns; demonstrative, determiners: possessive adjectives, uncountable, common nouns for quantities and amounts.
- ✓ **Adjectives**: (comparatives and superlatives).
- ✓ **Verb forms**: (positive, negative, questions): *to be*, imperatives, present simple, present continuous; past simple (regular and irregular), *wh* question words, modals (ability), permission, (in)ability, obligation, offers, suggestions, preferences), sentence patterns (verb + infinitive, verb + ing form, go + ing, like/enjoy + ing), relative clauses (that).
- ✓ **Adverbs**: time, frequency, manner, degree.
- ✓ **Prepositions**: movement, time, place.

Vocabulary/themes:

The alphabet, ourselves, family, friends and neighbours, age, appearance, clothes, feelings, possessions, colours, materials and objects, location and position; size, the senses, food and drink (healthy eating), actions, activities, abilities, sport and leisure; weather, holidays, countries, jobs and working, homes and houses (household objects and rooms), school and classroom, places and the local area (home, park, zoo, farm, theme park, sports centre, school, hospital, fire station, town hall, factories, countryside, seaside, cities, villages), means of transport, health (importance of physical exercise), the human body and how it works, animals (pets, domestic and wildlife), plants, the air and water, nature, in the country, landscapes, the earth, sun, and sky, inventions and discoveries, communications, days, dates, months, times, numbers *1-50*, ordinal numbers *1st – 31st.*

Pronunciation:

Use correct pronunciation of common words relevant to the vocabulary areas above (with diagraphs – *bl, br, cl, cr, dr, fl, fr, gl, gr, nd, pl, pr, sl, sm, sn, sp, st*), and three-letter blends – *shr, spl, spr, squ, str*), consonant-vowel-consonant words, and the combination of vowels to make long vowel sounds, use contractions (e.*g. I've, I'm*), use of basic stress and intonation patterns for words, short sentences and simple questions.

Discourse:

Join simple sentences

Socio-cultural awareness:

Use polite forms: please, thank you, greetings, farewells, introductions, sorry, be aware of different greeting customs (e.g. *kissing, hand-shaking*), ask how people are, use some gestures, festivals and special days (choose the most appropriate ones for this age level, e.g.: *Christmas, Easter, Tree Day, Halloween, Book Day*), use appropriate politeness conventions for thanking, apologizing, making requests, accepting and declining, being aware of visiting conventions (e.g. *punctuality, giving presents, what to wear, meal times*).

Values:

People and different groups (family, school, nationalities), respecting similarities and differences between people, caring for self, the family and others (staying healthy in different seasons), helping at home (health and safety at home), in the classroom, sharing and playing together, taking care of nature and the environment, respecting and treating animals with care.

As the way to close this cyclical process of teaching and learning, evaluation and assessment play an essential role.

At this point, the difference between 'evaluation' and 'assessment' must be established. When we talk about assessment, according to Nunan (1988), we refer to the set of processes through which we judge students' learning. Evaluation, on the other hand, is a wider term, entailing assessment, but including other processes as well: marking, scoring and testing. So that, evaluation is not simply a process of obtaining information, but a decision making process.

According to the LOE, the evaluation in Primary Education must be global, continuous, formative, regular and oriented. The evaluation is a continuous process made in three moments of the teaching-learning process: initial, formative and final evaluation.

If we study deeply the Communicative Approach, teachers should evaluate not only the students' accuracy, but also their fluency. The criteria should be sequenced in three levels of attainment, as the CEFRL proposes. Furthermore, varied instruments of evaluation should be used for this purpose.

Real interaction between the students will be promoted by not intervening in correcting errors of form: they will be pointed out during the accuracy-based activities. Errors are evidence of their progress and source of information for the teacher planning.

Assessment should be carried out in three different ways:

a- *Assessment as learning or self-assessment:* It provides one of the most effective means to develop critical self-awareness. It will allow them to improve their autonomy and ability to *"learn to learn"*. The use of the *European Portfolio for Languages* should be also encouraged as a way to register their progress.

b- *Assessment of learning:* It is used to confirm what learners know, if they have achieved attainment standards and to show how they are placed in relation to other learners in a *summative* way. Tasks to assess language use should always have a real purpose and the language itself should occur naturally in a real and significant context to the children. Testing should always be monolingual and tasks should involve communicative functions.

c- *Assessment for learning:* It involves: sharing learning goals with pupils, helping pupils to know and to recognize the standards they are aiming for, self-assessment, providing feedback which leads them to recognize the next steps and how to take them, both teacher and pupils reviewing and reflecting on assessment data. Formative assessment provides teachers with information to modify or change the teaching and learning process in which students are engaged.

Once the international and national regulations have been presented, it is time to talk about the methodology which is the centre of this work.

3.3 THE METHOD

3.3.1. Theoretical basis

This is a methodology for teaching English as a Second Language which was developed around a decade ago in San Diego, California.
Its main aim is to teach English, promoting the students' social and emotional development, as well as the communicative competence. Thus, it is based in five main features:

1. Teaching English as a "second mother tongue".
2. Voice Generation Theory. According to this theory, the child will use all the knowledge acquired through her/his experiences so as to communicate using the adequate language to which s/he has been exposed to carrying out a switching process. It is said that this theory develops listening, speaking, reading, writing and exploration.
3. Language interiorizing. Inner language.

4. Only English through the development of the skills.
5. Academic guidance.

Through these five principles, this method pretends to form brilliant pupils, with a multicompetent profile through the development of its own basic competences: emotional, technological, ecological, social, intercultural communication, creative, spiritual and practical.

Therefore, the promotion on these skills means the building of a global competence:

- Research the world and their close environment.
- Recognize different perspectives, apart from their proper one.
- Communicate ideas in an effective way to different groups of people.
- Look for and create opportunities to change the surrounding world.

This competence is carried on in a space for global learning, with three dimensions: didactic, physical and psycho-social.

A. Didactic dimension: pedagogical basis, strategies and resources.

o Voice Generation Theory (Ángel Martorell). Cyclical sequence of contents, working with the "auditive discrimination", not to resort to the translation, and using just English. Switching process.

o Multiple Intelligence Theory (Howard Gardner): verbal-linguistic, visual-spatial, logic-mathematical, kinaesthetic, musical, intrapersonal, interpersonal, naturalistic.

They mean respecting every pupil and his/her individuality and diversity. Every human kind has eight different intelligences and each person develops them in a different way. In this sense, teachers have to work so as to enhance all of them while taking into account that not every student will learn and acquire knowledge and experiences in the same way.

According to Howard Gardner (Frames of mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences, 1983), two guide lines are exposed:

1. Intelligence is dynamic, not static.
2. Intelligence is plural. We count with eight different kinds of intelligences.

Moreover, intelligence is defined through three criteria:

- Capacity to find a problem.
- Capacity to find a solution for such problem.
- Capacity to create effective products.

o Emotional intelligence. This method promotes its development and stimulation: self-knowledge, self-control, self-motivation, empathy, relationship.

o Digital factor. Use as mediator in the class development for the interaction between the teacher and the students.

Pedagogical premises:

- Meaningful and contextualized learning through pre-activities, activities and post-activities.
- Scaffolding through interaction with both concepts and classmates. Besides, this method is supposed to favour the relation among the children, their close environment, interests, background so that they can experiment and life their own learning.
- Cooperative learning. Interaction among four to six students, working to reach a common objective.
- Learning through projects. In this way, we can deal with constrains of a method based on logical memory and low-motivating learning, gathering the students for investigation so as to produce outcomes. This kind of learning also allows teachers to work with different learners with different kinds of learning.

Pedagogical strategies:

1. Cyclical sequence of contents. Concepts are repeated continuously, structured through abilities rather than through topics, and being sequenced through the complexity of the learner's development.
2. Mind maps. They favour effective, meaningful learning while promoting self-confidence, meaningfulness and understanding. At the same time, learning will be enhancing creativity.

3. Thinking routines. These skills allow learners to order and communicate their thoughts, basing them on concepts, methodologies, context; so as to present them clearly and in a convincing way.

4. This method proposes integrate thinking skills to favour reading comprehension or acquire complex linguistic structures.

5. Development of the Basic Competences.

B. Physical dimension. It is formed by didactic materials and resources, digital resources, mediators, the classroom and the timing.

In this sense, a special focus must be placed upon the planning tools. They are its practical expression and they gather how to plan pedagogical and didactic basis as well as didactic strategies and the necessary tools.

C. Psyco-social dimension. It is formed by learners and teachers and their interactions, creating an effective communication. At this point, we must highlight the importance of the digital factor.

Teachers, as they become digital mediators, must act as a guide, focusing activities on the learners, favour cooperative learning or integrate ICT's.

3.3.2. Methodology development

Before talking about the advantages, disadvantages and main features this method offers, it is necessary to explain the whole structure of the process.

This method is very organized in every aspect. When a new teacher is told to work with it, the proper company invite her/him to a two-days meeting so as to introduce the basis, the method and the procedure which should be developed. Materials are presented, as well as the sessions' structure.

Moreover, a specialist in the methodology attends to your classroom once per term in order to check your strategies and intervention with your learners. Then, s/he gives you a feedback of the features that you should or should not modify to get the most of the method.

Actually, I find quite important to focus on the structure of the book, since this method sees it, in the practice, as one of the main vehicles for learning the Foreign Language.

For bilingual schools, Rocket V is recommended. This means that, each two months, teachers and students will be supported by a new book; in other words, it consists on using five books along the course.

	Book	Months
It is designed to be developed along 5 weekly sessions of 45 or 60 minutes.	1	September and October
	2	November and December
	3	January and February
	4	March and April
	5	May and June

Books do not follow the same structure at Early Years and Primary Education, due to the different Curriculum and child's development. I am going to focus on the First Cycle of Primary Education since it is the stage I am working with.
In this stage books are divided in five sections, defined by five colours, although two of them are not used so often:

- o Dark green: Pronunciation lab.
  - Hearing discrimination
  - Oral reproduction
  - Writing activities
  - Reinforcement activities
  - Home Schooling: Work done at home with parents every two weeks.
- o Yellow: Grammar.
- o Light blue: Reading comprehension. They are complemented with activities to work on skimming and scanning strategies, as basic reading comprehension and critical reading skills (assess the information read to determine their own values system).

- Dark blue: Memory work includes simple songs or rhymes.
- Light green : Listen and speak

Each book has its own CD with songs, rhymes, spelling, stories... They are essential since the Pronunciation Lab, native pronunciation, acquires a huge importance in this methodology.

Apart from the students' book, this company provides the teacher with:

1. Teacher's book and CD's.

   These books are mostly the same as the students' ones. However, they also include:

   - Unit Planner in which a proposal is made for you so as to follow it along the terms.
   - Teacher's Tips in Grammar, Spelling and Listening and Speaking sections, with some directions and ideas to reach the established goals.
   - Answers.

2. Planner.

   They are used for both registering students' evolution and planning the sessions.

3. Flashcards.

   They are cards with images and words from all the different lists of words which are going to be worked in the Spelling section.

4. Posters (vocabulary or grammar).

   These are very colourful and attractive posters with grammatical items, as well as the lists of words that will be worked.

5. Online materials: Teacher@home:

   i. Information about the method.

   ii. Didactic resources: images bank and activities to be downloaded.

   iii. A visor gives us access to online books, posters, flashcards, audio...

   iv. There is a virtual community for students so as to develop their abilities and knowledge through games.

   v. Planning (PGA, monthly planner and daily planner), assessment tools.

Actually, when this methodology is used in the Foreign Language class, and seen as a process which starts when pupils are 3 years old, it creates a whole routine which exists during the nine scholar years from Early Years to the end of Primary Education.

This fact, being such a structured methodology, favours a sense of self-confidence in the students. The structure is the same along the whole period. On the other hand, being so close does not let the teachers be creative because, apart from its own nature, the method is wider than what a scholar year can developed quietly, focusing on important aspects, such as communication in the class; and classes are always a rush so as to finish on time.

It encourages the following synchronic timing through the role of one of the students as a helper:

o   Daily routine

Its main aim is a switching process into the English language. Moreover, it also aims to create an adequate environment for the learning or remind previous knowledge.

1.   Greetings
Good morning, class.
Good morning, Alicia.
How are you today?
I am fine, thank you. And you?
I am great, because...

2.   Assistance checking
T: Alicia, is there anyone missing today?
Let's count!
One, two, three, four, five, six, seven...
T: So, is there anyone missing today?
Victoria and Mario are missing today.
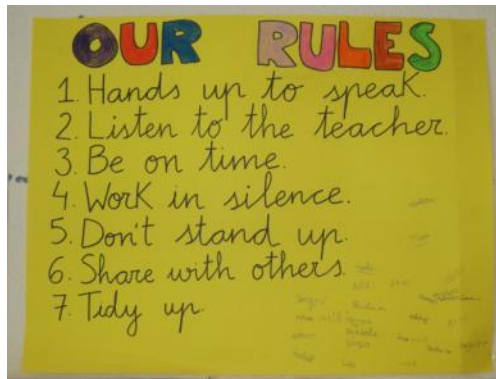*T: How many children are there in your class then?*
Today, there are 25 children.

3. Date

What's the date today?

Today is Wednesday, 25th April 2013.

4. Rules revision

5. Weather

What`s the weather like today?

Today it is sunny and warm.

What season are we in?

We are in spring.

6. Review and previous activities *(Trinity questions, which prepare students for the external test they have to do at the end of each cycle).*

In reference to the routine, each teacher can introduce any other aspect appropriate for the level, such as starting the whole routine with 'Today's Plan', a clear structure for the students to know what is going to happen next.

1st *Say hello*

2nd *Sing a song or say a rhyme*

3rd *Work*

4th Check the list, and think if they have gone through all the steps successfully (self-assessment).
5th Say goodbye.

The method understands the importance of oral skills when learning a language, so it encourages teachers and pupils to work on the Pronunciation Lab every day. This section is formed by 4 lessons in which lists of words are introduced for the students to repeat them orally every day, work on their spelling, and acquire both their pronunciation and writing mechanically through filling gaps, crosswords or dictations.
In Primary Education it is formed by 3 blocks:

1. Block 1. Hearing discrimination. It includes hearing, pointing, ordering, finding the missing word and identifying. Students have to hear the list of words every day, as well as repeat them. The words appear alone and contextualized in sentences.
2. Block 2. Reproduction. It includes pronouncing, writing, writing as they listen to the words.
3. Block 3. Review. Games, flashcards, drawings, sentences and, at the end, a dictation.
   Home Schooling. At this step, parents' help is needed. Its aim is to get the pupil used to speak English at home too in a natural way. It consists on:

   o Copying the list of words in class.
   o Take the CD and the list at home.
   o Listen to the CD and pronounce the words.
   o Take it back to school with parents' assessment.

This procedure happens once a week, usually on Thursday, and it is back at school on Friday.

Besides, each session must be complemented by working with grammar or reading comprehension, in an alternate way. The yellow section deals with grammatical contents in a cyclical way along the whole stage of Primary Education, starting with

concepts such as: nouns, adjectives, articles, a/an, verbs in present, the third form in verbs, regular verbs in past tense, plurals of nouns or irregular plurals of nouns. These grammatical contents' acquisition is not an aim. This methodology promotes a cyclic sequence of contents: year by year, the learner will acquire them through the mechanical practice.

So, Grammar is complemented with Reading comprehension texts. They include the story, tests, filling the gaps, true or false, questions and answers, putting the story in the right order or other cross-curricular activities. Along the first grade, all the stories go around one fiction character, Max, and his friends Susy and Bobby; however, from second to sixth grade, the stories are of different nature: science fiction, real, thematic, poems... Lexical difficulty is balanced, and texts are seen as a way for children to infer grammatical structures from practice.

These three sections are the basis of the books. Moreover, there are other two sections which cover the five basic skills in some way. Memory work consists on songs and rhymes; and Listen and Speak work upon such skills through similar activities as the ones worked on Reading Comprehension.

However, it is supposed that, as this methodology believes in 'Only English', the interactive skill is worked along all the sessions as a vehicle for learning the language, at any moment.

This method considers evaluation and assessment as an essential and integrated process carried out to check the learning process' quality. It is a continuous element from the point of view of the competences, objectives and contents.

General and specific objectives are evaluated through different techniques such as class observation, continuous evaluation, assessment of oral and written work in class, rubrics and exams, which take place at the end of each book.

Learners could be also conscious about their learning process by using self-assessment, pair assessment and group work mediators; however, not much attention is paid upon it.

4. METHOD ANALYSIS

At this point, my intention is to analyze how all these theories are put in practice along the scholar year as well as to identify factors that do not correspond to the exposed information.

Actually, carrying out this methodology means a stressful teaching learning process, especially for the teacher, since both the method and the concepts are too wide. On the other hand, when assumed the routine, children have learned how this method works and it becomes an automatic process which does not change very much along the years. Besides, the fact that this method is used along the whole educational period in the school helps all the teachers to share a common way of teaching, as well as be unique when possible.

Each book must be worked in less than a two-month period, and there is a pressure to work on the whole one due to the expensive price of the materials.

The level of written skills demanded to follow the rhythm is high for this cycle when, according to the CEFRL and the current Curriculum, oral skills should be the basis, and this makes the method just appropriate for those learners with a good level of English. Learners who do not read properly in the Foreign Language need continuous help to understand the instruction or to do the exercise correctly. Bit by bit, they make it automatic and they just follow the pattern acquired along years. This can be damaging for students if they reach a point in where they just complete exercises by routine and mechanized.

The fact of getting used to written activities is not a good technique, and, as it is not significant for the learner, it does not fit within the regulations established for bilingual schools in Madrid, where oral communication is an element to be enhanced.

Although it is said that this methodology takes all the different intelligences into account, just the most traditional one is developed: linguistic, since contents are presented in a hardly structured format along the 5 books in the whole Primary Stage; as well as visual intelligence through the constant use of flashcards, images, or the instructions represented through icons. There is not too much work on other non-

standard intelligences such as kinetic, musical, technological, interpersonal or naturalistic ones.

This makes the teacher be carrying out alternative activities so as to fulfil the gap and respond adequately to each learner. Kinetics, music, digital resources are elements which should be more present in the planning of these books and, actually, they might be worked through specific techniques.

As well, at least in the First Cycle, contents are basically the same, being repeated continuously to get students into them through repetition. Even, sometimes, activities and contents are harder in the higher level. In this way, learners complete the books using a mechanic strategy: examples are presented and they just have to follow the same rule along the activity proposed.

The digital factor which is explained in the method's basis consists, basically, on having access to the digital book and giving them the chance to do the exercises on the board so as to see if learners can do them, or to check them. Besides, as I have said before, contents are so extended that every session is a rush if the teacher wants to develop different tasks and practice interaction with the students.

According to the Spanish curriculum, culture of the Foreign Language must be worked on. The method does not suggest neither cultural activities or themes to work on, nor specific time to develop them properly with extra resources.

The emotional intelligence is clearly developed because of the teacher's strategies. However, it is true that the methodology tries to encourage positive reinforcement as much as possible through stickers or dollars.

This method claims that, when a learner answers right or uses the Foreign Language as a means of communication within the classmates, the teacher will congratulate and reward him/her.

In reference to the learners' self-esteem, the method does not seem to pay enough attention to those children with non-traditional intelligences, who may think they are not good at English or other skills since they are not good with the method.

Although it says that children interiorize language and turn it into 'inner language', which I saw it as Vygotsky's influence, when paying attention to the techniques the books use it has nothing to do with it. Children learn the vocabulary proper from each session through lists of words with, normally, no cohesion and no context. The process tells them to listen and repeat the words constantly, and then, writing them. In this way, pupils will learn automatically, with no significance for them. Besides, when working with Spelling and Reading Comprehension sections, teachers are said not to produce oral input, but let the children just listen to the native speaker on the CD. This is an evidence of the mechanical repetition children get used to while learning new vocabulary. Sometimes, lists of words respond to a phonetic pattern; but, anyway, words are still out on a context. This is also a clear evidence of Audio-Lingual method's influences, dating the 50's.

The way in which grammar is worked reflects some characteristics of an obsolete methodology: the Direct Method, which believes in the teaching of structures and vocabulary as a way to learn a Foreign Language. These two methodologies do not have anything to do with the Communicative Approach which is the basis of Foreign Language Teaching since the 80's.

The contents suggested by the method are so dull that, objectively, it is hard to manage and introduce a useful and interactive routine, pre-activities, activities, post-activities, tasks or final tasks in a proper way along the whole course without avoiding stress. Moreover, the way contents are introduced, in isolation, is not the way the legislation promotes it. Instead of acquiring knowledge through significant texts and within a context, contents are learnt by repetition, mechanically.

In terms of cooperative learning, this method shows again a poor development. Grouping possibilities are very wide, especially at these ages. Instead of taking advantage of it, the books and, therefore, its activities just propose individual exercises to be carried out alone. No cooperation is promoted and, once again, teachers have to manage to bring collaborative activities in the classroom. There is no interaction among students so as to reach a common goal; at least, in this First Cycle.

It also happens when talking about projects' work. Although the method claims it as one of its basis, there is no slight approach to that kind of teaching-learning process. As I have just exposed, the sessions go around individuality, which is in some way also promoted by the reinforcement system, which make learners develop a sense of competitiveness instead of the sense of belonging to a group and team work.

Other feature that is exposed as basic within the method is the use of mind-maps. This happens when trying to understand and analyse a text. Some elements come to be the focus through which children will try to relate contents.

As we, the teachers, are aware of these facts, we work together so as to reach the final aims in this Foreign Language Area by balancing methods and strategies with the other subjects.

Visual materials are useful as it is the digital book, but the planning suggested is hard and difficult to carry out as it is proposed. Timing is not real and more emphasis should be placed over interactive and communicative aspects with the children, rather than activities on the book or listening and repeating lists of words with no context.

When talking about evaluation, some different resources take place, and others are not taken into account. The method encourages teachers to use grids and rubrics to collect data in the classroom, and suggests exams so as to see their development in the different skills. This, at this age, has no sense since it is not an objective proof of what children can do and how s/he communicates in the Foreign Language.

A sample of exam would be formed by different sections which the method thinks are the most important elements to evaluate: grammar, spelling, reading comprehension and listening comprehension. This is a sample of the exam 1st graders do in February:

Name _____   L.N. _____
Date _____   Grade _____
Total Points _____   Final grade _____

Grammar

A. Draw a line to match the phrases to complete the **polite question** and **answers**.

1. _____ like to play?   · So do · too
2. _____ If Me _____!   · Would you
3. Yes, I _____.   · Let's
4. _____ play!   · would

B. Answer the questions using **Yes, I do** or **No, I do not**. Don't forget the comma.

5. Do you like cake?   6. Do you like lots of homework?

C. Answer the questions using **Yes, she/he does** or **No, she/he does not**. Don't forget the comma and period.

7. Does she like onions?   8. Does he like ice cream?

D. Answer the **What is it?** questions with **It is** and the **What are they?** questions with **They are**.

9. What is it?

10. What are they?

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E. Complete the following sentences circling the correct **prepositions**.

11. The apple is (between · on) the table.
12. The grapes are (under · in) the table.
13. The apple is (between · on) the bananas.
14. The eggs are (under · in) the box.

F. Answer the following questions with the correct **day of the week**. Use the Word Bank.

15. Two days before Monday
16. The day after Sunday
17. Two days after Tuesday

Sunday · Monday · Tuesday · Wednesday · Thursday · Friday · Saturday

G. Circle the letter of the day, holiday, or month that needs to be a capital.

18. Next thursday in november will be thanksgiving day.
19. We always visit our grandparents on new year's day.

H. Write the **plural form** of the following words.

20. egg   23. cherry
21. mouse   24. child
22. woman   25. tiger

I. Underline the **pronoun one** in each sentence.

26. One of those days I will be ten years old.
27. Those frogs are green; the one in the middle is mine.

J. Circle the correct **There is** or **There are** answer to complete the following **How many?** sentences.

28. (There is - There are) four apples in the basket.
29. (There is - There are) a camel in the zoo.
30. (There is - There are) children in the classroom.

Spelling

A. Listen to the words for the following dictation. Use your best writing.

1. _____   4. _____   7. _____
2. _____   5. _____   8. _____
3. _____   6. _____   9. _____

Reading Comprehension

A. Read the story carefully.

Let's Fly a Kite

It is a bit windy today. The mailman brought a package for Bobby. It is a kite-making kit! Bobby calls Max and Susy right away. They make their kites out of light wood and paper. They attach a string to each of the kites. Max says, "Let's go out and fly our kites in the wind." The children have lots of fun!

B. Circle the correct answer to complete the sentence.

1. The mailman brought a _____ for Bobby.
   a) letter   b) package   c) gift
2. Bobby calls _____ right away.
   a) Mom and Dad   b) the mailman   c) Max and Susy

3. They make their _____ out of light wood and paper.
   a) kites   b) homework   c) lunch
4. _____ says, "Let's go out and fly our kites in the wind."
   a) Susy   b) Bobby   c) Max

C. Use the **Word Bank** to complete the sentences.

5. It is a bit _____ today.

6. It is a kite-making _____ !

7. They make their kites out of light _____ and paper.

8. They attach a _____ to each of the kites.

wood · kit · windy · string

Listening Comprehension

A. Listen carefully to the conversation between Bobby and his friend. Choose the correct answer to complete the statements.

Let's Make Kites

1. Bobby says that today it is _____ .
   a) sunny   b) windy   c) rainy
2. It is the _____ day to use Bobby's kite-making kit.
   a) best   b) worse   c) perfect
3. They can build _____ with the kit.
   a) trains   b) airplanes   c) kites
4. The kit comes with light wood, _____ string, and instructions.
   a) paper   b) glue   c) paint

These exams have the same format along the whole stage. This shows the mechanizing intention of the method, which prepare children to adapt to a very structured routine so as to pass tests.

5. CONCLUSIONS

To conclude this work, as we can see along this analysis, this method do not follow many of the premises established by the international and national regulations whose main aim is the communicative competence's development, basically because it does not follow communicative premises.

It does not mean that children do not reach the final goal but, in my opinion, this happens thanks to external strategies and resources. We could say that learners communicate more along the day, being in contact with the foreign language in every subject excepting Spanish and Mathematics, than the situations the method can propitiate.

Teachers from my close environment and I usually look for extra activities and tasks so as to leave such structured and close method in order to be more creative and develop other aspects which are not developed.

In this aspect, the fact of having a twin school in England gives us the opportunity to focus some sessions to creative writing. These moments of freedom let students focus on a real task, in a context, where they have a clear goal to reach and, besides, it has significance for them. From my point of view, the sense of satisfaction showed by them when being aware of the effort and progress they have done to reach the outcome means more than the pages they have to 'fill' in the books.

Furthermore, as bilingual schools' students have to do an external test, teachers promote interaction whenever we can so as to practice the skills which will be evaluated on them.

To sum up, I think that this method should not be used in a bilingual school, regardless the results, since it does not fix to the current regulations and, besides, many of the already established and accepted theories in Foreign Language learning are not taken into account. In my opinion, this method is the result of ancient theories of language and it does not have anything to do in a plurilingual and pluricultural society which fosters real communication. Despite of the good level children acquire, it can be also reached through different methods and techniques which are more learner centred and focused on each child's needs.

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