English teaching in Official Language Schools. A lesson proposal for the A1 level

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ABSTRACT

The communicative competence has been used in language teaching and learning for different purposes. This paper will present, through a theoretical and a methodological framework, the different competences and sub-competences that compose the communicative approach.

Since the level for which the sessions and activities are intended is level A1 of the Official Language Schools, the focus will always be on communication, but the comprehension of oral texts should also be a priority in the classroom.

Through the didactic proposal presented in the Methodological Framework, different communicative activities through 4 sessions will be proposed taking into account not only the different rhythms and needs of the students, but also their orientation towards lifelong learning.

Finally, a series of considerations will be presented on the A1 level in the communicative approach and on the previously established competences.

Keywords: Language teaching, A1 level, Official Language Schools, Lesson proposal,

Communicative activities.

RESUMEN

La competencia comunicativa ha sido empleada en la enseñanza y aprendizaje de idiomas para distintos propósitos. Este trabajo presentará, a través de un marco teórico y otro metodológico, las distintas competencias y sub-competencias que componen el enfoque comunicativo.

Ya que el nivel para el que serán destinadas las sesiones y actividades es un nivel A1 de las Escuelas Oficiales de Idiomas, el foco estará siempre puesto en la comunicación, pero la comprensión de textos orales también deberá primar en el aula.

A través de la propuesta didáctica presentada en el Marco Metodológico, diferentes actividades comunicativas a través de 4 sesiones serán propuestas teniendo en cuenta no sólo los distintos ritmos y necesidades de los alumnos, sino también su orientación hacia un aprendizaje para toda la vida.

Por último, se presentarán una serie de consideraciones sobre el nivel A1 en el enfoque comunicativo y sobre las competencias previamente establecidas.

Palabras clave: Enseñanza de Idiomas, nivel A1, Escuelas Oficiales de Idiomas, Propuesta

Didáctica, actividades comunicativas.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The communicative approach, together with the plurilingual and pluricultural competences, enables the teaching and learning of languages to be an open, integrative process towards learners. A1 learners will be able to discover their own learning process, rhythms and strategies throughout the contact with the language, that is, through communication. The communicative competences, as its main sub-competences (linguistic, sociolinguistic, pragmatic and strategic) compose the communicative approach that Official Language Schools follow in their methodology. The main aim of this academic paper is to reinforce the communicative approach through a lesson proposal in which A1 learners will be able to foster their communication skills. The completion of certain tasks, in some cases ending with a final task, makes students to practice the main skills while becoming more fluent in the L2.

It is necessary to state that, through being introduced to the language by context, and not by pure grammar-translation tasks or long, theoretical explanations, A1 learners will become familiar with the target language. The teacher has the main roles of the facilitator and orientator, while monitoring the tasks, and the student is the center of the learning process. Communication is seen as the main tool for acquiring the language.

The first part of the paper presents the conceptual or theoretical background of the educational system in language learning, while the second part is focused on the methodological considerations. The methodological considerations include those curricular and practical aspects that will be taken into account in the lesson proposal.

The lesson proposal for the A1 level contained in this paper is mainly focused on integrating the communicative approach in the EFL classroom. Not only the communicative competence is at stake, but also the intercultural one. In order to promote communication in the classroom, a lesson plan of 4 sessions will enable A1 learners to reinforce the present simple that they have already seen in previous lessons, and integrate the present continuous tense which will be new to them. The reason for directing the proposal towards a communicative methodology is that students will practice the main communication skills through communicative tasks.

Aim and Objectives

Through the communicative approach and intercultural competence, it will be noted that language learning must integrate all skills through communicative competence. Therefore, the main aim of this work is to apply the information found about the communicative approach to the A1 level of the Official Language School.

As for the objectives, one of them would be to develop a classroom proposal based on communicative activities. Another objective would be to reinforce all the skills through the communication process.

Lastly, the third objective would be to draw conclusions related to the communicative process in the foreign language classroom.

Section 1. Theoretical framework

1.1 The European perspective on languages: the plurilingual and pluricultural competences

Language teaching and learning in Europe comprises two important competences: plurilingual competence and pluricultural competence.

In first place, according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), the plurilingual competence "promotes the needs for learners as social agents to draw on all their linguistic and cultural resources and experiences in order to fully participate in social and educational contexts" (p. 123), that is, it enables the learners "to develop a linguistic repertory, in which all linguistic abilities have a place" (p. 124). In terms of the pluricultural competence, it takes place "when linguistic and cultural competences in respect of each language are modified by knowledge of the other and contribute to intercultural awareness" (p. 43). These two competences emerged as a need of making language teaching more creative, and to move away from the traditional perspectives and methodologies. Hence, language learners need to be aware not only of the linguistic aspect of the language, but also of the socio-cultural context in which the language is learnt.

One must take into account the Official Journal of the European Union, and specifically the "Language Policies". In regards to this, it contains a Council Resolution on "a European strategy for multilingualism" (2008/C 320/01). The main points of this resolution are focused on the need of promoting multilingualism, strengthen lifelong learning and reinforcing linguistic diversity. Lifelong learning is a key factor, due to the fact that it goes beyond the linguistic and communicative aspects of a language, but also the personal abilities and the "learn to learn" competence. These multilingual approaches are closely related to those of the FREPA, another European framework by the ECML (European Centre of Modern Languages in Europe), which bestows a wide description of different skills, perspectives and knowledge that conform plurilingual and pluricultural competences in the different European countries.

This framework provides a set of perspectives, competences and activities for all levels (A1-C2), with a didactic and functional approach. This leads to the fact that language teaching and

learning is conducted directly to the development of plurilingual and intercultural competences.

Additionally, the European Commission provided a proposal, Proposal for a Council Recommendation on a comprehensive approach to the teaching and learning of languages, in 2018 in which the need of developing the plurilingual competence is highlighted. This official document, which widely describes language teaching and learning in Europe, claims on the need of innovating teaching methodologies (such as the communicative approach or the use of ICTs in the language classroom), as well as reinforcing the pluricultural competence already explained. Ultimately, it also claims on the need of reinforcing Global Competence in language learning, which includes "the acquisition of in-depth knowledge and understanding intercultural issues" (p. 39). This makes one think about language teaching and learning in a way that conducts intercultural values and respect towards other cultures, and this is closely related to language awareness. Within language awareness "language learning is regarded as a dynamic process" (p. 18). This means that the learning and teaching of languages in Europe should not only be focused on the language itself, but also in the cultural differences and contexts of the languages.

1.1.1 The Common European Framework: Language levels

In relation to the levels of language command, the CEFR classifies them as follows: (A1-A2), intermediate levels (B1-B2) and advanced levels (C1-C2), although these levels are adapted to the different contexts and educational settings in which the languages are taught. In general terms, an A1 learner can recognize very simple words and structures, an A2 learner can understand words and sentences about daily life (e.g. Personal information, places, etc.), a B1 learner can understand and write more complex sentences and compositions, a B2 learner can write complex texts (e.g., Essays), a C1 learner can express himself in a fluent and accurate way, and a C2 learner has the highest proficiency level, being able to write all types of complex compositions and mastering a very wide range of vocabulary. For each level, there is a distinction between the 4 main skills: reading, writing, listening and speaking, but putting the focus in the communicative approach. The different levels include a wide variety of descriptors (written texts, oral texts, mediation) according to the level of proficiency. Language teaching and learning is focused on the learner as part of the language community, and it is important to highlight the need of communicating with the others using the competences already explained.

1.1.2 Themes of the European policies in Language teaching

The Council of Europe, together with the European Centre for Modern Languages in Graz (Austria), has developed a series of Language Policies which, according to Heyworth "have had a profound effect on the learning and teaching of languages in Europe" (p. 12).

To begin with, the European Centre for Modern Languages is an institution that reinforces innovation in language teaching, and it has developed several projects which reinforce the plurilingual and pluricultural competences in language teaching and learning throughout Europe. Although it is based in Graz, Austria, it collaborates with different countries from the European Union, with the main mission of fostering linguistic and cultural diversity.

The ECML´s website presents a variety of thematic areas, all related to languages and plurilingualism, classified as follows: teacher and learner competences, sign languages, plurilingual and intercultural education, new media in language education, migrant education and employment, curricula and evaluation, early language learning, content and language integrated learning and languages of schooling. Each of the thematic areas host several documents related to the above-mentioned topics, written in French and English. The "plurilingual and intercultural education" area contains a document called *Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters,* created by the Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe, which claims that "interculturality involves being open to, interested in, curious about and empathetic towards people from any other cultures" (p. 7), so the more learners are open to the target culture, the more their knowledge of the language will be enriched.

Some important projects created and developed by the ECML are "Language learning for European citizenship" (1997), and "Language policies for a Multilingual and Multicultural Europe" (2001). Within this project, it is key to mention the use of new technologies and bilingual education, because, although ICTs are part of the teaching and learning of a foreign language, it is important that european teachers become aware of the need of using them in the EFL classroom.

As Heyworth states, the main bases of the ECML focus on "lifelong language learning, supporting research projects and curriculum reform" (p. 13), which are applied at a macro level (language policies in Europe), and at a micro level (institutions and departments, e.g., Official Language Schools).

Hence, lifelong language learning is a key aspect in language teaching, because the learner becomes aware of his/her own learning process and reinforces his/her own personal skills, such as self-confidence, ability to communicate with people from different backgrounds or relating

previous knowledge with the new ones.

1.2 Analysis of language teaching in the educational legislation

1.2.1 The Spanish curricular guidelines

In the Spanish language curriculum, the plurilingual competence is presented as the main basis of language teaching and learning (Head of State, Organic Law of Education, 2020). As the Common European Framework also states, the communicative and intercultural approaches are the two dimensions to which the foreign language should be conducted. In terms of the Foreign Languages curriculum, stated by the Royal Decree 217/2022, it is basically focused on reinforcing the specific competences of understanding, produce and interpret different texts in the L2, the ability of interacting with the others in the target language and the ability of using and widening linguistic resources. Moreover, the intercultural competence is always present in the curriculum because students need "to value and adapt to the linguistic, cultural and artistic diversity by means of the foreign language" (p. 179).

On the other hand, in terms of Official Language Schools, the article 59, it is stated that "students must be at least sixteen years old to be admitted to language courses" (p. 98), but they could be 14 if they want to learn a language different from the L2 they are learning at school.

In the article 60, it is stated that Official Language Schools foster the teaching and learning of "the languages of the Member States of the European Union" (p. 99), as well as distance-language learning for students who are not able to come to class.

1.2.2 Official Language Schools

1.2.2.1 Official regulations

The Official Language Schools in Spain are the main public institutions in which languages are taught. Official Language Schools offer different languages and levels, according to the CEFR dispositions, but they do have official regulations governing their operation, mainly the Educational Orders and the Royal Decrees. The following official regulations have been part of the Official School´s Curricula until the Royal Decree 37/2018 was officially published: Royal Decree 1595/2011, which establishes the main duties of teachers from the schools, and

Royal Decree 516/2013.

The Order 1657/2008 states the main principles of organization and regulation of the Official Language Schools, such as timetables, use of ICTs in the classroom, foster self-learning or enhance the intercultural competence. The use of ICTs in the classroom is a key aspect in language teaching, and the introduction of whiteboards and projectors in the classroom is something important during the last years.

In terms of the new curriculum, the Royal Decree 37/2018 states that the levels taught in the Official Schools are the Basic A1/A2, Intermediate B1/B2, and Advanced C1/C2 (although the C2 level is only available for Spanish as a foreign language). This curriculum assumes a communicative approach, in which "the learner is considered as a social agent who performs tasks through communicative activities" (p. 37373)". This means that the communicative approach is reinforced through all the main skills in all levels, and that the learner is oriented by the teacher through this process.

Not only the communicative approach but the task-based approach are some of the methodologies reinforced in these educational centers, due to the fact that, through different tasks, students learn the language(s) by being introduced to the context.

It must be mentioned that this last Royal Decree views language (teaching and learning) mainly by the practical approach, that is, the curriculum reflects a practical use of language, seen as the main goal for learners to communicate with the others, closely relating the linguistic competence, always present in language teaching, with the intercultural competence. However, in 2019 another Royal Decree was developed and published, Royal Decree 1/2019, by which the main principles of the certification tests for the different levels (A1-C1) were established. The document Exam Specifications for level A1, published for 2021/22, states that A1 learners are required to comprehend oral and written texts and produce and co-produce oral and written texts (monologues and dialogues), but the mediation task is not assigned to A1 levels as their level of proficiency is not high enough as in intermediate (B1-B2) and advanced (C1-C2) levels.

In addition, the Order 1553/2020, published the 22th December in the Bocyl, regulates the measures by which Official Language Schools in the region of Castile and Leon are organized (main schools and sections). As it is stated in the article 2, Measures for the promotion in Official Language Schools, "the student must pass each of the language activities of this test with a minimum score of fifty percent, which will also lead to the award of the certificate of general competence, as established in the aforementioned article" (Regional Government,

Bocyl 7/2021, p.286). The article 3 makes reference to the Royal Decree 1/2019, which states "the common basic principles of evaluation applicable to the official certification tests of the levels intermediate B1-B2 and Advanced C1-C2 of special regime language teaching" (p. 286). Subsequently, language learning is connected to the socio-cultural background of the English-speaking countries, so Official Language Schools are allowed by the Regional Government to organize trips to different places and use the language communicatively and in real-life contexts.

To conclude, it is important to highlight that the Advanced level C2 is available in different Official Language Schools, but in Castile and Leon it is only available for the Spanish language.

1.2.2.2 Specifications of the A1 level

It is important to clarify that, in each of the different levels taught in the Official Schools, there are some key aspects for evaluation. In the A1 level, which is the one at stake in this proposal, the main points that students will develop are the following: comprehension of written texts, comprehension of oral texts, production and co-production of written texts, and production and co-production of oral texts (monologue and dialogue).

In the production and co-production of oral texts, students of the A1 level will be able to communicate with the others in a very basic and simple way, but taking into account some formulas that they will encounter in real-life situations. In the case of monologues, they will be able to achieve a basic level of proficiency in communication as to describe people and places, events of their life, simple routines and habits, as well as having short, simple conversations with their peers about likes and dislikes, hobbies, etc.

As specified by the Castile and Leon Regional Government in the document of A1 level Certification tests, "the basic level A1 has as its main reference the level A stated in the CEFR" (p.1), that is, students will be able to "use the language for communicative purposes through the different activities" (p.1), again putting the focus in the Communicative approach. This document states that A1 learners must develop "the ability to use the language simply but appropriately and effective, both orally and in writing, in everyday situations of predictable content" (p. 1). As the CEFR also states, A1 learners develop the ability of producing texts, understanding a text as "any piece of language, whether an utterance or a written piece, that users or learners receive, produce or exchange" (p. 91).

Consequently, the concept of text at stake is not the traditional written or oral text, but a more

complex structure that is intended to be used for communicative purposes and contexts, thus reinforcing with it all the skills that a student should develop in his/her process of language learning.

1.3 Conceptual aspects of Language teaching

1.3.1 The Communicative approach: a general overview

The Communicative approach is the main methodology employed in Official Language Schools, but it covers a wide range of concepts depending on the context where the language teaching/learning takes place.

According to Richards (2006), the communicative approach reinforces the communicative competence, which is "the ability to use the language for meaningful communication" (p.3). Nevertheless, up to 1990s the communicative approach was not fully developed as more traditional approaches (grammar-translation) were. Nowadays, the Communicative approach is the main basis of Official Language Schools, by means of communicative activities and tasks.

As the CEFR states, the communicative competence comprises the following sub-competences: linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic. They are closely related and "cannot be isolated from each other" (p.129). Nonetheless, the main focus is put on communicating with each other, and thus the learner forms part of the linguistic community.

1.3.1.1 The Linguistic competence

This competence includes a variety of aspects that the learner will be able to develop during his/her learning process, such as vocabulary range, grammar accuracy, vocabulary control, orthographic control and phonological control. In the beginner level A1, the student uses very basic linguistic structures in order to give simple information about himself, "can copy familiar words and short sentences" and "can use basic punctuation like question marks" (p.136).

1.3.1.2 The Sociolinguistic competence

This competence deals with the social background of the foreign language, that is, it enables learners to be aware of the socio-cultural rules of language and discourse, such as "linguistic markers of social relations, politeness conventions, register differences and dialect and accent" (CFR, p. 136). At lower or beginner levels, the student may not be totally aware of the socio-cultural conventions of the target language, so it is important to introduce language by context

in a communicative way.

1.3.1.3 The Pragmatic competence

The pragmatic competence is the ability of using language effectively, that is, it is "primarily concerned with the learner´s knowledge of the principles of language use" (p.137), and it deals with discourse, communication and interaction. Contrary to earlier traditions, the CFR states an "action-oriented approach" for the reinforcement of the pragmatic competence, which means that it is more an action than a theoretical concern. Through the pragmatic competence, A1 learners start developing coherence and cohesion, and they are able to link words and simple sentences and, in terms of fluency, as they are in the basic level, they "can manage short, isolated, pre-packed utterances" (p.142).

1.3.1.4 The Communicative approach: skills and activities for A1 level

Regarding the roles of the teacher and learner in the communicative approach, Richards states that students "are expected to take a greater degree of responsibility in their own learning" (p. 5), and this means that they do not fully rely on the teacher for the completion of certain tasks, because they are becoming aware of their own learning process. However, the teacher "acts as a facilitator and monitor", instead of stating models for learners to copy or to reproduce. This means that in Communicative Language Teaching, interaction between learners of the language community is crucial, and for this a set of "typo activities" is needed.

In Official Language Schools, teachers follow the communicative approach and reinforce it with all the skills (listening, reading, writing and speaking), but the main focus is put in the communication itself. There are three main types of syllabi that follow the communicative approach: the skill-based syllabus, the functional syllabus and the method-based syllabus.

The first one covers the main skills mentioned before, while the functional syllabus is more focused on "functions such as expressing likes and dislikes, offering and accepting apologies, introducing someone or giving explanations" (Richards, p. 11). Conversely, the method-based syllabus emphasizes more the methods that the teacher uses in the EFL classroom, in order to achieve the learning objectives. The methodology of Official Language Schools is usually a combination of all these syllabi, and teachers reinforce these approaches with the ICTs in the classroom (whiteboards and audiovisual comprehensions).

Supplementary, it is key to mention fluency and accuracy. In the beginner levels like A1 it is key to foster fluency first, and then, when the student had acquired a higher level of proficiency,

to bolster accuracy as well. Some typo-activities to reinforce fluency and accuracy in the beginner levels could be the following:

1. **Improvising dialogues** (real-life situations like an interview, or buying things in a shop).

In this type of activities, students can be creative and talk without a structured dialogue. This way, they feel free to communicate with each other while the teacher monitors the classroom and offers help when needed.

2. **Monologues** (about routines, hobbies, basic information about oneself)

Students can practice about different topics that they have already seen in class, but the monologues have to be simple in order for them to feel comfortable and secure.

3. **Warm up activities** (asking the dates, asking about their plans for the day)

This type of activities can be of multiple sub-types, like asking students about the news, about what they have done in the weekends, about their free time or about anything they want to share with the class before starting a new topic and refresh what they had seen in previous lessons. This is an excellent way of connecting previous topics with the new ones.

4. **Information gap activities**

The focus of this activities is entirely communicative, because students need to talk to each other in order to find the information missing in their texts. There are different levels of complexity in these tasks, but for beginner levels a simple text is enough to start brainstorming and talking. What is more, they will learn new vocabulary or expressions together.

5. **Role plays** (simple and short)

Role plays are traditional activities, but they can be made attractive and motivating for students as a closure activity or as a warm up one. Students again communicate with each other and develop creativity, and they know what to do because the activity is controlled by the teacher.

6. **Boardig-game activities**

Further, boarding game-activities are a good alternative when the class is about to finish or when the teacher wants the focus of the task to be entirely communicative. By boarding games, students ask and answer different questions of the topic chosen (e.g., Routines in the present simple), for which the teacher uses a methodology based on gamification, in which game dynamics are used with an educational purpose. The teacher can use a dice or flashcards with numbers.

7. Kahoot

Kahoot is a digital device that could be used to create quizzes, tests or games for students in order to revise vocabulary, grammar or any linguistic aspect in the target language.

It can be used as an evaluation for the teacher to see if students have understood correctly the contents explained and practiced in previous sessions. In A1 level, Kahoot could be used, for example, to set a quiz about clothing vocabulary, present simple vs continuous, or Saint Patrick´s festivity. Thus, while having fun and helping each other students are able to develop their reasoning abilities and extract previous knowledge about a given topic.

1.3.2 Learning strategies and materials

1.3.2.1 Learning strategies in L2 learning

Now that the typo-activities have been exposed, one should pay attention to learning strategies. In a nutshell, learning strategies could be defined as a set of actions, processes and techniques that enable the learner to become aware of his or her own process of learning, that is, each student may choose certain strategies according to his learning style, rythm and personal abilities. The student consciously plans and structures the information before doing a certain task, and this planning changes from one student to another, because learning strategies are conscious and controlled.

According to Oxford (1990), language learning strategies can be classified as direct (cognitive, memory and compensatory), and indirect (metacognitive, affective and social).

First of all, direct strategies are the ones that directly involve language, but they function in different ways. Cognitive strategies are the mental strategies that students use in order to reason and analyze information, like summarizing, synthesizing or note-taking. Secondly, Memory strategies are focused on storing information and connect previous and new knowledge. In third place, compensatory strategies involve how students are able to communicate in the foreign language in spite of their knowledge gaps. Direct strategies usually involve the main skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking).

In contrast, indirect strategies, as its name implies, are strategies that do not directly involve language but rather the mental processes implied in learning the language. According to Oxford (1990), metacognitive strategies are "actions which provide a way for learners to coordinate their own learning process", like "organizing, setting goals and objectives or the planning of

certain tasks" (p. 136), as well as paying attention to one´s learning process or to certain ideas, be positive and fair with one´s process of learning or pay attention to the things that happen when communicating in the language or performing a task (for example, by using a diary

or checklist when needed). When explaining affective strategies, these involve emotions, feelings,social abilities and their regulation in order to make the learning process more positive and feelmore self-confident. Specially in the beginner levels, students usually tend to feel anxious or lost with things, because their level of proficiency is very low, and for this reason it is very important that both teacher and students reinforce not only mental capacities and abilities in the learning process, but also rewarding the positive responses of students and giving them positive feedback. This is closely related to social strategies, because language learners form part of a huge community, and interaction and communication with the others are key aspects.Social strategies involve cooperative learning, which "consistently shows significant effects such as higher self-esteem, increased confidence and enjoyment", as well as resulting on "betterstudent and teacher satisfaction, stronger language learning motivation or greater use of language functions" (p.146). In the A1 and A2 levels, students need this help or support from their teachers, but also from their peers, in order to feel part of the language community. If students are more self-confident and do not doubt about their own abilities, thus, the learning process and the language acquisition will not only be better, but deeper.

1.3.2.2 Applying learning strategies in the classroom: activities

First of all, direct strategies are applied in different ways, by different tasks.

When it comes to cognitive strategies, a good way to apply them in the classroom is by taking notes, and activities related to this for the A1 level could be the following:

-Write the shopping list (with the things that need to be bought in the supermarket).

-**Using keywords to describe an item** (for example, students write in a piece of paper four keywords to describe the word "school", which could be "books", "teachers", "blackboard", "students").

-Scheming: Each student individually takes notes about a given topic and makes a scheme. After, they will use this scheme and notes to write a final composition (e.g., My Christmas holidays, a day in my life, etc.). This will help students to know what are they going to talk about, and how, and will help them with future compositions, written or oral.

-Planning a trip: In groups of three, students have to think how they are going to plan a trip for the English class. They have to collaborate and decide which place they are going to travel

to, why, when, for how long, and, the most important thing, which items are necessary for all students to take to the trip.

Talking about memory strategies, it is important that students are able to memorize certain items (e.g., Vocabulary of some topics), but it is important not to present it as a traditional memorization task. Two good examples to apply memory strategies are the following:

-Completing labels with the suitable word (e.g., Students have a worksheet with a drawing of a house, and they must complete the blanks with the corresponding word: living room, cupboard, etc.). This is a good way to remember previously seen vocabulary.

-Taboo: this is a game in which students have to describe a word without saying some other words that are forbidden (the forbidden words are written in the flashcard). The other student has to guess the word. This way, words are easily memorized by students without writing them down.

-Reading: Students individually read a short composition in 10 minutes. After having read the text, they have to write down in a piece of paper as many things as they remember from what they have just read.

To conclude with direct strategies, compensatory (or compensative) ones could be applied in the classroom by the following activities:

-Multiple choice: students choose between different options (A, B, C) the one that best fits the question at stake, and wrong answers do not rest. Right answers count an extra point for students not to feel frustrated or demotivated.

-Solving the murder: The teacher hands out a newspaper article to the students in which it is written that a murder has been committed. By means of clues, written on cards, the students, in pairs, will have to guess who the murderer was. Each group of students will have a different article and a different list of suspects with pictures. When they have finished, they can exchange their cards and solve the other murders. This is an attractive way of learning new vocabulary and expressions, and revising the already-learned ones, especially for beginner levels in which dynamic activities are always needed.

In addition, indirect learning strategies (metacognitive, social and affective) could be applied as follows:

- **Discussing feelings and emotions**: students have to write a short composition in which they talk about their language learning process, how are they seeing it, which difficulties they have encountered and what are the things that make them feel happy or motivated. This will help to teacher to apply the ideas in his/her activities, or orient students in the things they specially need support.

-**Having a chat:** Students have to choose a person for the class and sit next to him/ her. Then, they have to tell this person positive things about himself, which could be adjectives, nouns, expressions, and then the other classmate does the same. This is an effective way of making students more open towards the others, express themselves and enhance their self-esteem.

-**Interviews:** Students ask their peers what are their good abilities and skills if they were going to apply for a job. The only rule is that negative words are forbidden, so students are self-centered in their good capacities and the personal abilities in which they highlight.

-**Meditation:** Students close their eyes and try to avoid stress for 15 minutes. An English song in played by the teacher. Once the time is up, they have to tell the others which feeling and emotions (in the target language) have they experienced. This can be done as a wrap-up or as a beginning activity. As Oxford states, tell your students to "do this any time you feel tension, as a way of relaxing your body and centering your mind" (p. 187).

1.3.2.3 Materials and resources in the English classroom

First of all, it is important to state that, in Official Language Schools, the learning process should be student-centered, that is, students not only learn the language (or languages), but they also reinforce their own learning processes, as explained above, and for this reason they need to be oriented by the teacher inside and outside the classroom. As Coady (2010) puts it, "the teacher serves as a facilitator of information while students engage on a variety of ways to learn the material" (p. 72). This means that, although the teacher acts as a guide for the student, it is the student who discovers his own learning processes.

It should be stated that, although ICTs are not considered innovation nowadays, they are almost compulsory in the classroom and especially in the language classroom. When it comes to applying ICTs in the English class, the main skills can be practiced with them, especially within gamification (Dixon, Khaled and Nacke, 2011). Materials like newspaper articles, to reinforce not only reading but writing and speaking, are also useful in the English classroom.

Furthermore, referring to audiovisual comprehension, it is important to mention that materials like BBC Cambridge listening comprehensions (levels A1-C2) and songs are very good tools

to start introducing the language by context. Students will listen to conversations produced by natives, and this brings them closer to the language.

Alternatively, it is important to mention real-life situations and authentic materials (realia), because it helps students establish a relationship between real life and real use of the language. These objects can be original concert tickets, a museum ticket from the British Museum, a green hat from Saint Patrick´s Irish festivity or a pumpkin to talk about Halloween in England and US. With these real-life materials, students can develop the main skills, especially the communicative competence, because they can talk to each other and share opinions once the teacher has already explained the cultural background of the objects. Thus, this makes students closer to the target culture. Printed materials like flashcards, pictures, puzzles or table games also enhance student´s motivation and reasoning skills, with activities like word ordering, describing people and places or guessing.

1.3.3   Procedural Syllabus and Task Syllabus in L2 learning

Now it is time to make reference to syllabi. The attention should be drawn to the distinction between Procedural Syllabus and Task Syllabus. According to Baleghizadeh (2015), "each lesson in the procedural syllabus consists of a pre-task, a task, and a quick marking component" (p. 106). Of course, the pre-task and the task are highly connected, and the pre-task could be conceived as "preparation for the task which is to follow" (p. 106). In language teaching, students usually do tasks in which they find a certain level of difficulty, that is, "students should face some challenge in doing the task" (p. 107). In beginner levels, these difficulties should not be extremely challenging in order for students not to feel anxious or overwhelmed.

Oppositely, the task or task-based syllabus comes from the TBLT (Task Based Language Teaching) and, although it may seem similar to the procedural syllabus, it is not the same thing. In Task-based syllabi the task has different parts (planning, development and closure). This is key especially in A1/A2 levels, because students need to have the tasks clearly structured and explained by the teacher in order to know what they have to do (careful instructions have to be stated).

In Official Language Schools, the Task-based Syllabus is closely linked to the Communicative Syllabus. They combine together to focus on real-life situations, like "objectives of foreign language courses for adults, the topics they need to talk about as well as the main goals of communication like meaning, convention, appropriacy, interaction and structure" (Sabbah, p.

137). Lastly, the Skill-based Syllabus is basically a combination of the four main skills by means of different tasks.

As the learning process is the most important factor, because students will acquire a lifelong learning (as the course lasts one academic year for each level), there is not always a final task or final product. When A1 students are focusing on a specific topic, (e.g., Habits in the present), the tasks that will follow are connected to this topic until the lesson has been covered, but probably they will not always do a final task about it, just do certain tasks interconnected with each other. An example of a communicative final task for A1 could be, in regards to habits, talk with classmates in groups about students' daily routines.

1.3.3.1 Roles of the student and teacher in the TBL approach

Primarily, in the TBL approach both student and teacher have different roles. As the task-based syllabus presents three different phases (pre-task, task and language focus), students focus on the task itself and, as Willis (1996) states, "they will begin to worry less about the L2 because they know they will have a chance to explore it later" (p. 40). As stated in the previous chapter, the main focus of the TBLT is "that the emphasis is put on learners doing things, using language to achieve the task outcomes" (p. 40), and language learners work collaboratively to achieve a goal, that is, completing the task for a given purpose. In the case of the teacher, he/she acts as a facilitator, "balancing the amount of exposure and use of the language, and ensuring they are both of suitable quality" (p. 40), but this does not mean that the teacher is not in control of the situation, that is, although the teacher is a guide or instructor, he or she "has overall control and the power to stop everything if necessary" (p. 41).

In conclusion, the teacher has to enhance motivation in the students in order for the tasks to be completed successfully.

1.3.3.2 Applying the task-based syllabus in the language classroom

The TBL involves three different stages: the pre-task phase, the task phase and the language focus. In the pre-task phase, which is usually the shortest one, students do tasks like "brainstorming and mind-mapping, matching phrases to pictures, memory challenge, odd one out, or order the jumbled words" (Willis, 1996, p. 44). In this first stage, the teacher must make sure that the students are clearly understanding the instructions for the task, and that they are paying attention to what s/he is saying. Sometimes, models are given to students by the teacher and this might help them with future tasks of the same type. Specially in writing tasks, a pre-writing task must consist of giving students a model in which they will identify certain features

of the writing type (e.g., An informal letter) and then, when they write their own composition, they will know better which structures and vocabulary they will have to use. Other pre-task examples may include memory games, crossword or word-search puzzles, picture identification or brainstorming about a topic.

In the second stage, the task phase, students complete a task, usually in pairs or groups, asking doubts to the teacher when needed as he/she is monitoring the task. Examples of tasks to apply in the EFL classroom can be the following: talking about visiting a friend, problem-solving situations in pairs or groups (e.g., a neighbor is noisy and you have to do something about it), storytelling, ordering situations or events (in oral or written texts) or preparing a surprise party for a friend. This is the most important phase or stage, as students are doing a central task that "is a vital opportunity for them to use whatever language they can muster, in pairs or small groups, to achieve the goals of the task" (p. 53). As they have already performed a pre-task, students are more ready to the following task, and thus they can be more creative and communicative.

To conclude, the last stage is the language focus. After being exposed to the language during the previous tasks, the teacher now starts focusing on the language itself. A good way of doing so is to write meaningful expressions and words in the blackboard at the end of every lesson. Also, as Willis (1996) recommends, teachers must "make sure learners realize what a lot they have understood and done and, at the end of each week, summarize again and underline the progress they have made" (p. 125). In beginner levels, students usually feel less confident as their level of proficiency is very low (some of them have never been introduced to the target language before), so it is important to make sure that students become aware of their own improvements. A good way of doing this in the classroom is by making the students identify verb tenses of the previous tasks (like a dialogue), repeating formulaic expressions (e.g., *I´m sorry, no problem, that´s fine, you are welcome*), or explain a brief, attractive infographic about a certain grammatical point which students would easily understand.

To finish with, all the ideas explained and analyzed are going to be developed in the sessions and activities of the methodological framework, focusing on the A1 level of Official Language Schools.

Section 2. Methodological framework

2.1 The Official Language School of Valladolid: Context and description

2.1.1 General context

In first place, it is important to set the main context of the Official Language School (EOI) of Valladolid. In accordance with its "Proyecto Educativo de Centro" (PEC), the Official Language School of Valladolid was created on August 28, 1987 by Royal Decree 1092/1987. The EOI is in a neighborhood made up of people of different socio-cultural and economic levels, predominantly middle/lower class. It should be noted, however, that, in addition to the EOI located in the city of Valladolid itself, there are three other sections in the towns of Iscar, Medina del Campo and Laguna de Duero. The EOI of Valladolid, together with its three sections in Íscar, Medina and Laguna, serves the entire population of Valladolid city and province, and has professionals who share the teaching of English, German, Chinese, French, Spanish for foreigners, Italian and Portuguese.

The general profile of students at the EOI tends to be heterogeneous: students between the ages of 14 and 35, middle-aged adults and older people or retirees. Students come to the center to seek complementary training in one or several languages that enable them to broaden or improve their professional and academic skills. It should also be highlighted that each student is provided with personal tools to advance in their learning, since there are different rhythms and learning styles.

The school has different schedules to adapt to the different needs of its students, with classes from 08:30 in the morning to 20:00 in the afternoon. In addition, some Fridays are also school days and students attend classes on their regular schedule. Most importantly, however, is that all students who attend the EOI enroll out of their own free will and interest, and their main motivation is the satisfaction of learning one or more FL, with the subsequent attainment of a diploma in that language(s).

Besides, it should be noted that the EOI of Valladolid is characterized by its adherence to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, especially those contained in Article 26. In addition,

the organization of the EOI has adapted the curricula established by the LOE, LOMCE and LOMLOE. Some of the objectives of the EOI of Valladolid, established in its PEC, are the following:

1. To improve the linguistic competence of the students in one or more foreign languages.

2. To strengthen students' professional and life development.

3. To promote the understanding, respect and appreciation of other cultures.

4. To give priority to critical, reflective, intelligent, and active learning.

5. To establish a participative management of the center for teachers, students and non-teaching staff.

6. The figure of the teacher at the teaching level and as a personal counselor for his or her students.

The PEC of the Official Language School of Valladolid has not undergone numerous modifications during the 2021/22 academic year, although it is worth mentioning that the excursions and intercultural trips have not been carried out in all departments due to current health restrictions. Even so, several of the previously mentioned activities have been maintained with the appropriate measures in each case. In addition, the Official School offers a distance learning English program, called "That's English", for all those students who cannot come to class. This program includes all levels from A1 to C1, but divided into 6 courses (from 1st to 6th).

With reference to extra-curricular activities, there are several programs developed at the EOI, by the different teachers of the departments, like the collaboration with Broadway Cinemas in the projection of original-versioned films, the participation in the program "Ventana Cinéfila" of the Seminci cinema festival, the Christmas solidarity market, the multilingual choir and the trips in the English department to foster the communicative competence between students and to make them feel part of the target language community.

2.1.2 Description of materials and classrooms: the A1 level

The Official School has a total of 23 classrooms, of which 19 have capacity for 30 students. In addition, the center has audiovisual materials available for loan to users, a digital blackboard and 18 computers. There are also departments for each language, teachers' offices, an auditorium and a study room, with capacity for 35 students who wish to study between classes or during their free time. Finally, it should be noted that the center has a cafeteria and a library

where enrolled students can borrow books and materials.

Furthermore, the center has specific classrooms, smaller in size, mainly used for conversation classes with language assistants. The school also has a big auditorium, which is located in the annex building, provided with a projector and a large digital screen.

The classrooms of the English department, in which the language is taught from level A1 to C1 (English level C2 has not yet been offered in Valladolid), are equipped with a traditional blackboard and a digital whiteboard, as well as loudspeakers, desks and a digital book (projected on the blackboard for the correction of the activities). The classrooms are used indistinctly for the different languages, but maintain the same weekly schedules, and the duration of each class is 1 hour and 45 minutes.

It should be stressed that in level A1 there can be students from 16 years old to retired people, around 60 years old, but the most common profile is the student between 30 and 50 years old. These students, some of whom have never studied English before, and some of whom have not studied English for many years, come from different socio-cultural backgrounds and have different personal circumstances. In general, however, English A1 classes tend to be mostly made up of adults. Most of the time in class is devoted to communicative activities, and A1 students need to be especially motivated by the teacher as their proficiency level is low. Some of the students do not have the target language (English), as their L2, because they come from different countries and Spanish is their L2. However, all the activities and resources in the A1 classroom are thought to be applied to the different learning rhythms and situations.

2.2 Curricular justification: objectives, contents and assessment criteria

2.2.1 Objectives

One must state that the A1 level of Official Language Schools corresponds to the A level established in the CEFR. According to the Common European Framework (Council of Europe, 2020), the A1 level:

> is considered the lowest level of generative language use, in which the learner can interact in a simple way, ask and answer questions about themselves, where they live, people they know, and things they have, initiate and respond to simple statements, rather than relying purely on a very finite rehearsed, lexically organized repertoire of situation-specific phrases. (p. 37).

However, in Official Language Schools each department states, according to the Regional

Government, their own basic contents, objectives (general and specific) and assessment criteria. In accordance with the English department´s schedule (2018), the general objectives that the A1 learner should be able to achieve in Official Language Schools are the following:

1. To use the target language in order to accomplish communicative tasks.
2. To Understand and express themselves in a simple way, both in oral and written formats.
3. To use a standard register.
4. To be able to recognize the simplest social aspects of daily life in the target language.
5. To apply the basic linguistic resources through approaching the L2 by context (theory through practice).
6. To learn simple, basic vocabulary about different topics (weather, clothes, etc.).

2.2.2 Contents

The contents of the A1 level are stated in the Official Language School curricula, and they can be classified as follows:

1. Understanding simple conversations.
2. Understanding the topic of a communicative task.
3. Recognizing and using basic greeting formulas in the target language.
4. Being able to understand the present simple and continuous tenses.
5. Being able to understand the past simple tense.
6. Being able to ask and answer questions in the present and past tenses.

7. Being able to understand and use vocabulary related to clothing, travelling and descriptions.
8. Writing simple compositions about descriptions, events or given situations.
9. Being able to pronounce correctly simple words, idioms and structures.

2.2.3 Assessment criteria and rubrics

According to the Educational Order/38/2020, "the evaluation of each language level will be done according to the different objectives, contents, competences and evaluation criteria, established for each level in the departmental curricula" (Curricular Project, Official Language School of Valladolid, p. 13). Accordingly, the assessment criteria for the A1 level are classified

into general and specific. In accordance to Royal Decree 37/2018, the general assessment criteria for the A1 level are the following:

Comprehension of oral texts

1. Identifying the communicative intent of short oral messages.

2. Formulating hypotheses on short and clear oral messages, in standard register.

3. Confirming predictable details of short oral messages.

Comprehension of written texts

1. Capturing the communicative intent and main points of everyday texts

(e.g., short e-mails, instructions or stories).

Production and co-production of oral texts

1. Making short, understandable speeches and presentations.

2. Making simple exchanges of personal or everyday information.

3. Making brief descriptions (e.g., of people, place of residence, work, daily activities, likes, dislikes, status and interests).

Production and co-production of written texts

1. Providing written information about personal data.

2. Writing simple messages and texts.

3. Writing short compositions (e.g., instructions, anecdotes, routines or likes/dislikes).

On the other hand, the specific assessment criteria are only applied for specific tasks, such as preparation for the final exams and written and oral pre-tests. The rest of the tasks are not evaluated following any grade (neither numbers nor letters), only by means of a rubric created by the teacher for certain specific activities (e.g., an oral preparation task for a monologue). These preparation tasks are made to prepare students for the final exams in June, which will enable them to obtain the A1 certification and continue in A2. The following rubrics are created in accordance to the Education Department of the Castile and Leon government.

On the other hand, the rubrics are the following:

Rubric for written expression tasks

This rubric contains the following assessment criteria: content and degree of comprehensibility of the text, organization of ideas (coherence and cohesion), grammatical correction, lexicon-graphical correction, and use of language (variety, accuracy and naturalness).

Rubric for oral expression tasks

In contrast, the rubric for oral expression tasks, like monologues or dialogues, contains different assessment criteria: fluency, interaction (dialogue) and organization (monologue), pronunciation and intonation.

2.3 Methodological justification

In terms of the methodology used, the Official Language School focuses the classes on the communicative approach. In regards to the A1 level, it is important to state that communication between the students is the main means of learning the language, and before becoming proficient and accurate students must be fluent in the L2. The communicative approach can involve all types of activities, because, as communication is the main goal, reading and audio-visual comprehensions can also involve communication. Listening and audio-visual comprehensions also allow beginners to acquire the language, fostering pronunciation and intonation.

Students must feel confident to talk, to express and share opinions and to describe likes and dislikes. Teachers are aware of the different needs of the students, and for this reason learning strategies, explained in previous chapters, are important. Teachers do not only focus on isolated communication, but on integrating it as part of the whole learning process. To implement the communicative methodology in the classroom, teachers take into account pedagogical, psychological, linguistic and sociocultural factors. It is necessary to create the need of communication, and then guide students in order to find the linguistic resources they will need. The role of the teacher is to help the student seeking and finding those resources to solve communicative needs, and this is directly related to the notion of competence and performance. According to Canale and Swain (1980), competence and performance are two important aspects to take into account within communicative competence. While competence refers to

"knowledge of grammar and of other aspects of language", performance refers to "actual use" (p. 3), that is, to the factors that occur when learners produce utterances in the target language. As Canal states, while the main focus is put in communication, "an integrative test of communicative competence must not ignore grammatical accuracy" (p. 26).

In addition, teachers must reinforce communicative sub-competences. In terms of the pragmatic competence, communication must be subjected to any given context, that is, to a specific communicative situation. As Bruner (1981) states, "language acquisition occurs in the social context of discourse" (p. 175). When A1 students talk about a certain topic (e.g., festivities), they have to pay attention to what they are talking about, and sometimes this needs to be connected to the cultural background (E.g., festivities in the target culture). As Hymes (1972) states in his article, the distinction teachers should make is one between "form, meaning and context" (p. 71). This means that language, and communication, are directly related to the context in which their happen.

The sociolinguistic competence should be a means for students to know how to use formal/informal registers, but in a simple way that enables them to communicate effectively. This also includes greeting and social formulas, that students will apply during the class (e.g., asking the teacher). Finally, the strategic competence requires students to be creative and participative, although motivation needs to be implemented by the teacher in order to create a collaborative atmosphere. Teachers present real-life situations which enable students to feel more confident when talking. The communicative approach requires a didactic approach that takes into account the following points: the whole learning process is conceived as a life-long one, but also as an interactive process in which the two important nodes are the student-teacher relationship and the student-student relationship. This means that the teacher/student orientation should be produced inside and outside the classroom, because students need to feel supported by teachers in exam periods or when special difficulties come.

The constant use of the target language in the classroom, avoiding the use of Spanish and answering the students always in English. Specially in beginner levels (A1/A2), students should use their L1 as little as possible. Moreover, the communicative competence must be integrated within all the skills, and the communicative approach should also reinforce the intercultural competence. Students use the target language to communicate with each other, but also to discover cultural aspects of it.

 Teachers should increase the complexity of materials and assignments, as the course progresses, in communicative, not merely linguistic, terms.

The importance of conveying meaning, that is, that the communication takes place in a conscious and understandable way.

According to Prawat (1999), Vygotsky considered meaning as one of the most important points in communication: "Vygotsky realized that making meaning was the core activity of consciousness" (p. 267). Learners do not only have to be able to communicate, but to communicate effectively and giving sense to their speech.

This way, students are the main protagonists of their own learning process, discovering a significative learning which will vary depending on the student.

Ausubel in his book *The acquisition and retention of knowledge* (2000), following the cognitive perspective, states that the learning process should be conceived as an active, integrated one. The teacher should provide the tools for this learning to take place, and the student is the one who uses and integrates them. The language learning is produced in a conscious, student-centered way.

2.4 Lesson proposal for the A1 level

The following proposal contains 4 sessions which are focus on the communicative competence already explained through the paper. The main aim of the sessions is to integrate in A1 learners the present simple and the present continuous tenses. For this, communication will be set as the main goal. Students, through the different tasks, will be able to learn these tenses, distinguish them and describe events using them. The first session will be entirely focused on reinforcing and practicing the present simple tense, the second and third sessions will be devoted to the present continuous tense, and the last session will be directed to both tenses.

SESSION 1

This session will be entirely devoted to the practice of the present simple tense. Students have to become aware that the present simple tense is mainly used for expressing habits and routines in the present. At this point, the key is that they identify how to use it and when.

Time: 1 h and 45 minutes

Activity 1: My daily routine

Type: warm up

Time: 20 minutes

Resources: see Annex

Description:

The teacher will display an audio-visual comprehension onto the whiteboard. In the video, a girl talks about her daily routines, using the present simple tense. Students do not have to write anything now, just listen and watch the video. After this, the teacher will give students a photocopy in which they will have to match the expressions with the correct picture.

Activity 2: Simon says

Type: introduction

Time: 20 minutes

Resources: no extra

Description:

The teacher will play the role of Simon. She will say actions in the present simple tense, but students will only reproduce them when the teacher says "Simon says" before the action. Students who loose have to go back to their seats.

Activity 3: Sophie´s daily routine (reading)

Type: reinforcement
Time: 30 minutes
Resources: see Annex
Description:
The teacher will provide each student with a photocopy in which there is a text about daily routines. They have to read the text individually and highlight the expressions in the present simple tense. The activity will be later corrected in the blackboard.

Activity 4: Todd´s life

Type: reinforcement

Time: 20 minutes

Resources: see Annex

Description:

The teacher will display a video onto the whiteboard. The first time, students will listen to the conversation that two people are having on a plane, using the simple present tense. The video will be displayed again. This time, students have to listen again and, once done that, the teacher will give them a photocopy in which they will have to put a tick if the man does this action, or a cross if he does not.

Activity 5: Listen and draw

Type: wrap up

Time: 15 minutes

Resources: a piece of paper

Description:

Students will watch the video for the third time. Once this is done, they have to take a piece of paper or their notebooks, and draw as many actions as they remember Tom does in his daily life. Examples are "go hiking", "teach students", "drive his car". They do not have to write the expressions, but draw them. At the end, the teacher will write in the blackboard some expressions in the present simple tense corresponding to their drawings.

SESSION 2

This second session is focused on the present continuous tense. Most A1 students have not seen this tense before, so it is important that the teacher monitors the activities and groups in order for them not to be lost. At this stage, A1 learners must be able to identify this tense and how it is formed. They will be introduced to the language by context, that is, by communicative tasks that will enable them to integrate the grammar that is at stake.

Time: 1 h 45 minutes

Activity 6: Clothes (Listening comprehension)

Type: warm up

Time: 20 minutes

Resources: see Annex

Description:

The teacher will display an audiovisual comprehension onto the whiteboard. A girl is talking about clothes. Students must take notes in their notebooks. The video will be displayed twice.

Activity 7: Can you help me?

Type: introduction

Time: 20 minutes

Resources: no extra needed

Description:

The teacher presents a problem-solving situation to the students. A boy needs to get dressed for having dinner out with his friends, but he does not know which clothes suit best. The students, in pairs or in groups of 3, have to discuss among themselves some options for the boy to get dressed properly. Vocabulary items from the previous activity must be needed.

Activity 8: What are you doing?

Type: reinforcement

Time: 20 minutes

Resources: see Annex

Description:

The teacher will display a video. This time, students will hear to four different conversations. In each of them, people are having telephone conversations using the present continuous tense. As students have not yet been introduced to this tense, they will listen to the recording twice, and the teacher will stop if needed.

Once they have listened and saw the video, students will have to decide in which conversation are certain actions performed (1, 2, 3, 4). They will have to match each action with its corresponding number. After doing this task, they will have to write the corresponding expression next to each photo with the teacher´s help. E.g. , She is writing a letter. The teacher will write the sentences in the blackboard as well.

Activity 9: It´s Mike´s birthday!

Type: reinforcement

Time: 30 minutes

Resources: a piece of paper (to take notes)

Students are divided in groups of 3. The teacher tells them to plan a surprise birthday party for their best friend, Mike. The only rule is that they use the present continuous tense to share opinions, ideas and, finally, reach an agreement. Each group will plan a different party, and after they have talked in their groups they will have to come to the blackboard and tell the rest of the groups how their party will be organized. They can make their own invitations for friends of the group if they want to. After this has been done, each group has to put a mark from 1-10 to each group.

Activity 10: Which tense?
Type: reinforcement

Time: 15 minutes

Resources: see Annex

Description:

The teacher will display a video in the whiteboard. The video explains how to use present simple and continuous, and the main situations when each of them are used. Students have to take some notes and write down expressions with the tenses that appear in the video. The video will be displayed twice. Following this, students will ask the teacher any doubts regarding both tenses. This is a preparation for the next session, in which the focus will be put on the contrast of both present tenses.

SESSION 3

This third session will also put the focus on the present continuous tense. As one session may not be enough for students to integrate this tense (and some of them may be confused with the present simple tense), it is time to reinforce it. By means of listening comprehensions, students will be more familiar with this tense.
Time: 1h 45 minutes

Activity 11: Let´s brainstorm!

Type: warm up

Type: 5 minutes

Description:

Now, it is time for students to try to remember what they have seen in session 2.

For this, they will have to write down as many expressions or ideas as they can, using the present continuous tense. They have to do it individually.

Activity 12: Mary´s family (Reading Comprehension)

Type:

reinforcement

Time: 25 minutes

Resources: see Annex

Description:

The teacher will give students a photocopy in which a girl talks about her hobbies. Students must read the text twice, and after that they will have to answer some questions about it. They will have to read the text twice.

Activity 13: Find the differences

Type: reinforcement

Time: 20 minutes

Resources: see Annex

Description:

The teacher will put students in pairs. Each pair will have two pictures which are apparently the same, but they are not. They have 5 differences. Each student must pay special attention to the details and, to end up, discuss with his/her partner what these differences are. They have to use the present continuous tense they have seen through the previous sessions.

Activity 14: True or false?

Type: reinforcement

Time: 20 minutes

Resources: see Annex

Description:

The teacher will project a recording onto the whiteboard. A boy is asking for information about where to find the library. The recording will be projected twice. After that, students will have to look at a photocopy and say if the statements on it are true or false, according to what they have just listened to.

Activity 15: Information transfer

Type: reinforcement

Time: 20 minutes

Resources: see Annex

Description:

The teacher will give each student a photocopy. Now they have to work individually. In the photocopy there is a text, and students have to do the following: first, they will have to take some notes, that is, scheming the text, and then they will have to draw in a piece of paper what they have just read. The drawing can contain as many items and details as each student prefers. They can also be as creative as they want.

Activity 16: My postcard

Type: wrap up

Time: 15 minutes

Resources: a piece of paper

Description:

Students have to take a piece of paper and create a postcard.

They have to imagine they are on holidays, and write it to a friend, or a relative. Students must use the present continuous tense (affirmative, negative and interrogative). The postcards will be collected by the teacher before the class finishes. This way, they will enhance creativity, motivation and originality.

SESSION 4

The fourth and last session will be devoted to working on the contrast between the present simple and present continuous tenses. The key through the different tasks is that students become aware of the distinction on how to use these tenses, and how they are formed. Especially when teaching beginner levels, students usually have doubts on when to use one or the other, so these doubts will be solved by presenting different real-life situations and communicative tasks.

SESSION 4

Activity 17: What do you usually do? What are you doing now?

Type: warm up

Time: 10 minutes

Resources: no extra needed

Description:

The teacher will ask the students questions using the present simple tense. Then, the teacher will switch the tense to the present continuous. Students will ask questions too, and the teacher will solve any doubts if needed.

Activity 18: Taboo

Type: introduction

Time: 15 minutes

Resources: flashcards

Description:

Students are put in groups of 3. One student takes a paper with an action written on it, and he/she has to describe it without using certain words which are forbidden. The only rule is that the student does not use these words. The other students in the group have to guess the word. Then, they will exchange places and the other students have to do the same. The actions are written in the present simple and the present continuous tenses.

Activity 19: Kahoot

Type: reinforcement

Time: 10 minutes

Resources: see Annex

Description:

Now, the teacher will put students in pairs and groups and they have to play a Kahoot game to revise what they have learned in the previous sessions. In each of the questions, students must decide which answer best suits the question (A, B, C, D).

Activity 20: Asking questions

Type: reinforcement

Time: 10 minutes

Resources: a piece of paper/notebook

Description:

Students have to write down questions in their notebooks as a pre-task preparation. In their questions, they must include at least two interrogatives in the present simple, and two in the present continuous. After writing them, students will have to hand in the paper to the teacher, and the teacher will collect all the papers and mix them.

Activity 21: A boarding game

Type: reinforcement

Time: 30 minutes

Resources: cut-papers

Description:

Once the teacher has collected all the questions, students sit down in a circle in groups of 4. The teacher will give each group a set of papers with the questions they have just written in the previous task. The teacher will put the questions in a square, and she will give each group a dice to play. Each student will take the dice and, according to the number they get, they have to count and jump to the question they have. The student asks a peer, and then the peer takes the dice. All students in the group have to ask and answer questions. Once they have completed

the game, and answered all the questions, they can prepare for the final task.

Activity 22: Who are you? (Role play)

Final task

Type: cool down

Time: 30 minutes

Resources: no extra needed

Description:

Still in their groups, students will be given cards. A party is going to be held at the School, and students are the ones in charge of organizing it. One student will be the manager, another the responsible for catering (food and drinks), and the other two are party guests. They have to improvise a small dialogue and share opinions, details, plans and arrangements for the party. The only rule is not to use the L1. They have to use the present simple and present continuous tenses. The teacher will be monitoring the task if anything is needed. After that, the teacher will write on the blackboard the formula for using each tense, for students to revise at home.

Homework: students have to write a short essay of 2 paragraphs telling a pen-friend about themselves. They have to use the present simple and present continuous tenses.

CONCLUSIONS

Taking everything into account, it is important to state some considerations concerning the A1 level of the English language command.

Regardless of the fact that the main focus should be put in communication, listening comprehensions and recordings are a key tool for students to integrate accent, intonation, word pronunciation and spelling. Although learning rhythms are different depending on each student, it must be stated that certain collaborative tasks could enhance their own learning abilities.

At the same time, traditional grammar-translation tasks must be avoided or, at least, must not be considered a fundamental tool within the communicative approach. Especially in the beginner level A1, students should not focus on translation or pure grammar as much as on acquiring fluency.

Through the different tasks in the 4 sessions presented, students will be able to see the communicative process as a natural one, and thus they will foster the ability of communicating by different tasks which do not consist of isolated communication.

With regard to the Official Language Schools, it can be pointed out that communicative methodologies allow students to feel more confident and ready for communicating with the others. Orienting students towards an autonomous learning is a key factor in languages. Tasks like information-transfer, jigsaws or problem solving might contain this real-life touch that will enable learners to connect the L2 with their own life. Avoiding the use of the L1 in the classroom is a key factor in beginner levels, because if students get used to talking in Spanish, the assimilation of the L2 would take much longer, at least in the communicative approach.

Finally, although the lesson proposal has been planned for only 4 sessions, it could be widened into a didactic unit, or even into a whole didactic program. A way of doing it would be to take into account the curricular and didactic considerations of a didactic program for A1 learners (in accordance to the Official Language School), thus reinforcing deeply the sub-competences of the communicative approach (sociolinguistic, pragmatic and strategic).

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ANNEXES

ANNEX 1
SESSION 1

SESSION 1: 1h 45 minutes	
OBJECTIVES 1.To use the target language to accomplish communicative tasks 4. To be able to recognize the simplest, social aspects of daily life in the target language 6. To learn simple, basic vocabulary about different topics	**CONTENTS** 1. Understanding simple conversations 2. Understanding very simple instructions 3. Understanding basic, greeting formulas 4. Being able to understand the present simple tense

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

1. Identifying the communicative intent of short, oral messages
2. Confirming predicatable details of short, oral messages

Activities	TIME	CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT	RESOURCES
Activity 1: My daily routine	20 minutes	Students will work individually	See below (RESOURCES)
Activity 2: Simon says	20 minutes	Collaborative activity: whole class plays the game	No extra
Activity 3: Sophie´s daily routine	30 minutes	Individually, teacher monitoring	See below
Activity 4: Todd´s life	20 minutes	Individually, teacher monitoring	See below

Activity 5: Listen and draw	15 minutes	Individually, teacher monitoring	A piece of paper

SESSION 1: RESOURCES

Activity 1: My daily routine

Link/video: https://youtu.be/L31ExXwlsVc

Photocopy:

Source: original

Listen and match

Wake up

Go to university

Read a book

Go out with friends

Take a shower

Take the bus

Make breakfast

Acitivity 3: Sophie´s daily routine

Photocopy:

Source: original

Sophie´s daily routine

Every day, Sophie wakes up at 7 o´clock in the morning. Then, she takes a quick shower and makes her bed. After, she goes for a short walk. At 10 o´clock, she takes the bus to college. After that, she goes to a French restaurant and has some crepes for lunch. Sophie goes to her Spanish class at 2 pm. Then, she goes out with some friends. Some days they go to the cinema, but on Mondays and Wednesdays they go to the gym together. They love exercise. Sophie comes back home at 6 in the evening, and she puts on her pajamas and listens to music in the

living room. After, she cooks dinner in the kitchen. She usually has some scrambled eggs and avocado for dinner. Sophie goes to bed at 9 o´clock. She is usually tired at that time.

Activity 4: Todd´s life

Link: <u>https://soundgrammar.com/learn/L2-CEFR-A1/L2-02-Simple%20Present.htm</u>

Source: original

Todd

Lives in a small house
Is a doctor
Spends a lot of time in his house
Visits his family every summer
Lives in China
Gets up around 6 o´clock
Likes hiking
Loves cooking

ANNEX 2

SESSION 2

SESSION 2: 1h 45 minutes			
OBJECTIVES 1. To use the target language to accomplish communicative tasks 2. To understand and express themselves in a simple way 3. To apply the basic linguistic resources through approaching the L2 by context (theory through practice)		**CONTENTS** 2.Understanding the topic of a communicative task 5.Being able to understand the present tenses 7. Being able to understand and use vocabulary related to clothing and descriptions	
ASSESSMENT CRITERIA 1. Identifying the communicative intent of short, oral messages 2. Confirming predictable details of short, oral messages 3. Capturing the common intent and main points of everyday texts 4. Being able to write simple messages			

Activities	TIME	CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT	RESOURCES
Activity 6: Clothes (Listening comprehension)	20 minutes	Individually, teacher monitoring	See below (RESOURCES)
Activity 7: Can you help me?	20 minutes	Students are grouped in pairs/groups of 3	no extra needed
Activity 8: What are you doing?	20 minutes	Individually, teacher monitoring	See below

Activity 9: It´s Mike´s birthday	30 minutes	Students will be put in groups of 3	a piece of paper, no extra
Activity 10: Which tense?	15 minutes	Student will work individually	See below

SESSION 2: RESOURCES

Activity 6: Clothes (Listening comprehension)

Resources: whiteboard, Youtube video

link : https://youtu.be/BVMceypgbjs

Activity 8: What are you doing?

Link: https://soundgrammar.com/learn/L3-CEFR-A2/L3-03-present-continuous.htm

Source: original

Activity 10: Which tense?

Resources: whiteboard, YouTube videoLink:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M2X2SfLK3pM&feature=youtu.be

ANNEX 3

SESSION 3

SESSION 3: 1h 45 minutes	
OBJECTIVES 1. To use the target language to accomplish communicative task 2. To understand and express themselves in a simple way 5. To apply the basic linguistic resources through approaching the L2 by context	**CONTENTS** 1. Understanding simple conversations 4. Being able to understand the present simple and continuous tenses 5. Being able to use the present continous tense for communicative purposes 8.Writing simple compositions about descriptions, events or given situations

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

1.Capturing the communicative intent and main points of everyday texts

2.Providing written information about personal data

3.Writing simple messages/texts

4. Identifying the communicatie intent of short, oral messages

Activities	TIME	CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT	RESOURCES

Activity 11: Let´s brainstorm!	5 minutes	Students work individually	No extra
Activity 12: Mary´s family (Reading comprehension)	25 minutes	Students work individually	See below (RESOURCES)
Activity 13: Find the differences	20 minutes	Students work in pairs	See below
Activity 14: True or false?	20 minutes	Individually/ in pairs (they choose)	See below
Activity 15: Information transfer	20 minutes	individually	See below
Activity 16: My postcard	15 minutes	Individually or in pairs	No extra

SESSION 3: RESOURCES

Activity 12:

Link:

https://es.liveworksheets.com/worksheets/en/English_as_a_Second_Language_(ESL)/Present
_continuous/Present_Continuous_reading_comprehension_yu444190rb

Reading questions:

1. What are Mary and her family doing?
2. What is Mr. Harris doing?
3. Is Jim playing computer games?
4. What is Jim doing?
5. Is Mrs. Harris sleeping?

6. What is she doing?

7. Is Fluffy sleeping?

Source: original

Activity 13: Find the differences

Resources: pictures

Source:

https://www.thedelite.com/spot-the-difference-pictures-how-many-can-you-find/5/

Activity 14: True or false?

link:

https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/skills/listening/a1-listening/finding-the-library

The statements are the following:

-The tax for late delivery of books is 20 cents per day.

-The boy is lost because he is new in the city.

-You don´t have to be silence in the library.

-The boy talks with three different people.

-You can´t bring your laptop to the library.

-The boy asks the girl where the main square is.

-The library is located on a big building.

-You don´t need a library card to take books home.

-You can´t bring your phones to the library.

-You are allowed to eat in the library.

-The boy wants to take books home that day.

Source: original

Activity 15: Information transfer

Text:

My day off!

Hello, everyone, my name is Katia and I´m 20 years old. I´m studying my degree on Psychology at the University of Valladolid. Now, I´m just relaxing on my bed, watching a Netflix soap opera called Elite. It is a Spanish series. It´s 4 pm.

Now, it is 6 pm and I´m cooking dinner in the kitchen. I´m having a burger and fries.

Oh, now it´s 8pm! I´m exercising in the park with my dog Freddie. Freddie is running and playing with another dog, called Felix.

God! It´s 9 o´clock. I´m reading a crime novel. And you, what are you doing?

Source: original

ANNEX 4

SESSION 4

SESSION 4: 1h 45 minutes	
OBJECTIVES	**CONTENTS**
1. To use the target language to accomplish communicative tasks 2. To understand and express themselves in a simple way 3. To use a standard register 4. To apply the basic linguistic resources 6.To learn simple, basic vocabulary about different topics	1. Understanding simple conversations 2. Understanding the topic of a communicative task 3. Recognizing and using basic greeting formulas 4. Being able to understand the present simple and continuous tenses 6.Being able to ask and answer questions in the present tenses

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

1. Identifying the communicative intent of short, oral messages
2. Formulating hypotheses on short and clear oral messages
3. Confirming predictable details of short, oral messages
4. Capturing the communicative intent and main points of everyday texts
5. Providing written information about personal data
6. Writing simple messages/texts

Activities	TIME	CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT	RESOURCES
Activity 17: What do you usually do? What are you doing now?	10 minutes	Collaborative task, the teacher asks the whole class. Students work in their sits.	No extra
Activity 18: Taboo	15 minutes	Groups	Flashcards
Activity 19: Kahoot	10 minutes	Pairs, groups of 3	See below (RESOURCES)
Activity 20: Asking questions	10 minutes	Individually, teacher monitors the task	A piece of paper/notebook
Activity 21: A boarding game	30 minutes	Groups of 4	Cut-papers (previous task)
Activity 22: Who are you? (Role play)	30 minutes	Students will be grouped in 4s	No extra needed

SESSION 4: RESOURCES

Activity 19: Kahoot

Resources: mobile phones, whiteboard, Kahoot game

Game : original

2 - Quiz

........they reading?

▲	Are	✓
◆	Do	✗
●	Is	✗
■	How	✗