TRABAJO FIN DE GRADO DE EDUCACIÓN DE INFANTIL

MENCIÓN LENGUA INGLESA

TIPS TO PROMOTE THINKING SKILLS

CONSEJOS PARA PROMOVER LAS DESTREZAS DE PENSAMIENTO

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ABSTRACT

The following proposal has been developed by an enriching research which its main aim is to promote thinking skills in Infant Education. So, by developing thinking skills and personal capabilities throughout the English area, pupils will be reflective about their learning, socialize in a better way and will improve their autonomy. Through a journey among some authors like Vygotsky, Bruner, Gardner and McGuinness; methods which include the development of Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities, overinclusive thinking, visible thinking or metacognition; we will arrive up to different programmes which main objective is to enhance the Thinking Skills of our pupils. Finally, my proposal design is based on the Edutopia' tips for brain - based learning (*Edutopia » Six Tips for Brain-Based Learning)* which I have included during my training and was very useful for my pupils' development, both personal and social.

RESUMEN

La siguiente propuesta ha sido desarrollada a través de una búsqueda enriquecedora, cual principal objetivo es promover las destrezas de pensamiento en Educación Infantil. Por lo tanto, a través del desarrollo de las destrezas de pensamiento y las capacidades personales a través del área de lengua inglesa, los alumnos serán reflectivos sobre su aprendizaje, se socializarán mejor y mejorarán su autonomía. A través de un viaje entre algunos autores como Vygotsky, Bruner, Gardner y McGuinness; métodos que incluyen el desarrollo de las destrezas de pensamiento y las capacidades personales, aprendizaje sobre-inclusivo, aprendizaje visible o metacognición; llegaremos a diversos programas cual mayor objetivo es mejorar las destrezas de pensamiento en nuestros alumnos/as. Finalmente, mi diseño de la propuesta está basado en los consejos para el aprendizaje basado en el cerebro por Edutopia (*Edutopia » Six Tips for Brain-Based Learning*), el cual he incluido durante mi periodo de prácticas y fue muy útil para el desarrollo de mis alumnos, tanto a nivel personal como social.

KEYWORDS

Thinking Skills (TS), Personal Capabilities (PC), cognitive development, Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), *scaffolding*, multiple intelligences, thinking taxonomies, overinclusive thinking, metacognition, Visible Thinking, routines.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Habilidades del Pensamiento (TS), Capacidades personales (PC), desarrollo cognitivo, Zona de Desarrollo Próximo (ZDP), *andamio*, inteligencias múltiples, taxonomías de pensamiento, pensamiento sobre-inclusivo, metacognición, Pensamiento Visible, rutinas.

1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays we are living in a constant change. People move to other cities, villages or even countries. In schools happens the same. Why am I saying this? Because as we are living daily life changes, we need to be ready for them. As teachers, we do not have to settle on old theories, methods or ways of managing the classroom that we do not like or maybe they just do not fit with us. We have to look for new methodologies, approaches, strategies, techniques or even resources that we like, that we believe on them; because if we do not believe and feel that they will work with our pupils and that they are useful for them, obviously they will not work. This is why throughout this research that I have done; I have tried to look for different stuff that can help me to be a better teacher. I based my theory on different studies of which I have analysed that valuable information for my teaching practice always bearing in mind my way on enhancing thinking skills. It has been a hard decision to choose just one of the following projects due to its wealth and this is the reason why I will also mention them throughout my work.

2. OBJECTIVES

In conducting this study on Thinking Skills the objectives that I have set are the followings:

- Understand and get the best of each theory, methodology, approach, strategy and technique related to the worked topic.
- Be more open - minded to a new classroom management.
- Improve teaching by enhancing pupils' thinking skills and personal capabilities.
- Use effective tips for brain - based learning in order to create a thinking classroom.
- Choose, adapt and apply some tips for brain - based learning.
- Feel comfortable and secure about this study.

3. JUSTIFICATION

When you have to decide what topic you should choose, all the concepts and things that you have learnt along your degree come back to your mind, making you doubt again about what will be the best topic to deal with. This is a true story in which I identify with but, hopefully I found something that caught my attention; develop thinking skills in Infant Education. At the beginning I did not have a lot of idea of this topic and all the things that encompass it, but with a hard work of investigation, analysis and understanding I could manage to achieve my goals. In addition, thinking skills is a topic which is related to different theories, methodologies, approaches, strategies and techniques, which means that we are able to search, compare, contrast, select and apply the features that fit best both to our pupils as on our teaching.

Now, talking about the objectives that I have set in accordance with the competences that Valladolid University established according to the Organic Law 2/2006 (2013), it is important to:

- Analyze the context and plan properly the educational action.
- Act as a mediator, encouraging coexistence within and outside the classroom.
- Act as a tutoring and guidance to students.
- Conduct a formative evaluation of learning.
- Develop curriculum documents adapted to the students' needs and characteristics.
- Design, organize and evaluate disciplinary and interdisciplinary work in diverse contexts.
- Collaborate with educational activities that occur in the environment and families.
- Apply in the classroom, critically, the information and communication technologies. (p. 2)

In addition to this, the objectives set based on the English mention on Infant Education are the followings ones:

- "Be able to express orally and writing in English" (Universidad de Valladolid, 2013). As English teachers we should have a good English level and also be able to speak and write without mistakes in order to do not confuse pupils.
- "Design, develop and evaluate teaching proposals using animation to reading and dramatization in the approach to the English in Infant Education" (Universidad de Valladolid, 2013). Gradually we have to promote reading to toddlers and there are so many different ways to enhance it on literacy.
- "Know and apply the teaching of communicative competence in its different components: linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic competence" (Universidad de Valladolid, 2013). If we are learning a second language we will develop the communicative competence and this is highly related to the topic that I am dealing with.
- "Master the foreign language curriculum (English) in Infant Education" (Universidad de Valladolid, 2013). As in each country and educational stage, we have to bear in mind the curriculum and its premises.
- "Know the main methodological trends of the teaching of foreign languages and their application to learning English at different levels established in the curriculum" (Universidad de Valladolid, 2013). Throughout my investigation I have discovered new trends of teaching such as developing thinking skills and personal capabilities.

According to the guide (Universidad de Valladolid, 2013) "*para el Diseño y Tramitación de los Títulos de Grado y Máster de la Uva*", the General Competences that I should have acquired during my studies are the following ones :

1. Knowledge and understanding of education and knowledge and understanding in the practical application.
2. Be able to apply work or vocation knowledge in a professional manner and have competences typically demonstrated through devising and sustaining arguments and solving problems within education.

3. Be able to gather and interpret critical data to make judgments that include reflection on social, scientific or ethical key issues.

4. Be able to communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences.

5. Develop those skills needed to undertake further studies with a high degree of autonomy.

6. Develop an ethical commitment in its configuration as a professional, commitment to promote the idea of integral education, critical and responsible attitudes; ensuring effective equality of women and men, equal opportunity, universal access for people with disabilities and the values of a culture of peace and democratic values. (pp. 1 - 3)

In addition to this, there are some specific competences that I should have also acquired. The most relevant ones for my research, that appear in the ORDER ECI/3854/2007, of the 27th of December, which regulates the title of teacher on Infant Education, are:

- Know the developments of evolutionary psychology of children in periods 0-3 and 3-6. (The topic takes into account psychology aspects).

- Ability to promote the acquisition of knowledge about the habits around autonomy, freedom, curiosity, observation, experimentation, imitation, acceptance of rules and limits, the symbolic and heuristic play. (I must acquire it in order to enhance TS to my pupils).

- Understand that the daily dynamics in Infant Education is changing depending on each student, group and situation and be able to be flexible in the exercise of the teaching function. (The establishment of daily routines will help pupils' development).

- Know international experiences and innovative experimental models in Infant Education. (I had to document to look for the right and valuable information that I needed for doing my research).

- Know the language and literacy curriculum of Infant Education, as well as theories on the acquisition and development of relevant learning. (In order to develop any program it is important to understand and know the

standing law and the different theories or methodologies that we can use in our classrooms).

- Know the linguistic foundations, psycholinguistic, sociolinguistic and educational on learning languages and be able to assess their development and communicative competence. (In order to develop this research it has been very important doing an intensive search on those aspects that will help my teaching practice).

- Be able to apply the processes of interaction and communication in the classroom as well as master the skills required to foster a climate that facilitates learning social skills and coexistence. (It is important to create a safe climate for learning in order to make pupils feel confident and promote opportunities for communication).

- Acquire habits and skills for cooperative and autonomous learning and promote the students. (It is important to enable collaborative learning and promote independent learning in the classrooms).

4. THEORETICAL FOUNDATION AND BACKGROUND

Through the analysis of the different theories, methodologies, approaches, strategies and techniques illustrated by some psychologists, educators and professors, I have selected some of them that will fit to the content of my design and will also help me to improve my teaching practice.

To start, in accordance with **Vygotsky** (1978), when a child has social interaction with a skilful tutor is when he or she has much important learning. So, as tutors we should be the ones able to model children' behaviours and also provide them verbal instructions or even guide them throughout different situations.

This is why Vygotsky refers to this process as cooperative or collaborative dialogue, because there is a communication among both child and tutor; the child internalizes the information and finally uses it. Furthermore, this dialogue promotes **cognitive development**, which has two main principles: the More Knowledgeable Other (MKO) and the **Zone of Proximal Development** (ZPD). Both principles are related, but I want to mention that ZPD is an important concept due to its significance.

As in the next figure we can appreciate, the level of achievement from individual learning besides receiving guidance and encouragement from a skilled partner is pretty different because, according to Vygotsky (1978) the ZPD is the most sensitive instruction or guidance area given which allows the child be able to develop skills which will use in the future by himself or herself in order to develop higher mental functions.
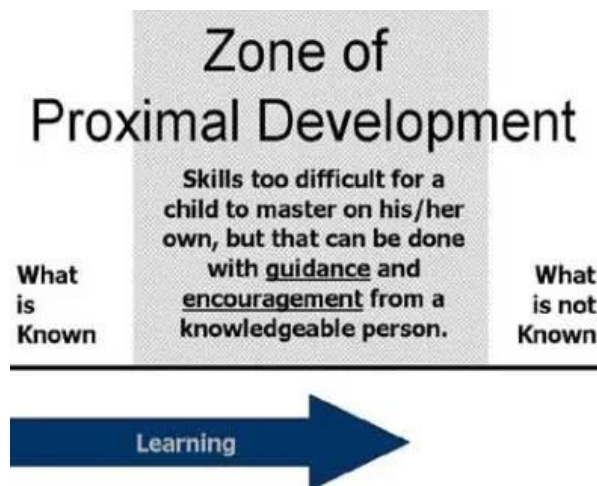

Figure 1: Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

In line with collaborative dialogue, Vygotsky also talked about cooperative learning activities, which will promote the interaction with peers in order to develop skills and strategies. Besides this, Vygotsky (1987) makes a difference among three forms of language: the social speech that consists on external communication used to talk to other people; the private speech that has an intellectual function because it is directed to the self; and finally the inner speech. In addition, Vygotsky considered that language and thought were initially separate systems from the beginning of life, but as children grow the speech and thought become interdependent because the thought becomes verbal and the speech representational; and, at this point is when pupils develop the inner speech that originate the cognitive development. So, Vygotsky (1962) argues the following:

Inner speech is not the interior aspect of external speech - it is a function in itself. It still remains speech, i.e. thought connected with words. But while in external speech thought is embodied in words, in inner speech words dies as they bring forth thought. Inner speech is to a large extent thinking in pure meanings. (p. 149)

Likewise, Vygotsky believed that children more socially competent were the ones engaged on large amounts of private speech whereas the ones that do not use it extensively.

As with Vygotsky, **Bruner** agrees that language is used to mediate between environmental stimuli and the response of each individual. And in the case of education, its main aim should be to create autonomous learners, promoting learning to learn. So, as teachers we must have the role of a facilitator and a guide, trying to give pupils the needed information always letting organize by themselves in order to let them discover their own learning. On the one hand, Bruner proposed three modes of representation on the **cognitive development of children** (1966) which includes: Enactive representation (action based), iconic representation (image based) and symbolic representation (language based). On the other hand, the purpose of education for Bruner (1961) is to assist and help a child in order to help him/her develop solving skills which could use at any situation in his/her life.

Previously, Bruner said that "We begin with the hypothesis that any subject can be taught effectively in some intellectually honest form to any child at any stage of development" (Bruner, 1960, p. 33) which means that any child is capable of understanding complex information, of course bearing in mind that the information will be structured in a way that they will be taught in a simplified level first and then they will be re-visited at more complex levels. This fact is connected to what Bruner called spiral curriculum which is the fact of thinking that a child is capable of having an abstract thought at any age through the evolution of the ideas in topic based learning. In addition, Bruner (1961) talked about the constructivist approach, in which by discovering learning, pupils will build their own knowledge by themselves.

According to Bruner, the social nature of learning will help children develop skills throughout the **scaffolding** process, which is alike to Vygotsky's notion of the ZPD.

The scaffolding process involves a helpful and structured interaction among an adult and a child in order to help the child to achieve a specific goal. Bruner also defined: "[Scaffolding] refers to the steps taken to reduce the degrees of freedom in carrying out some task so that the child can concentrate on the difficult skill she is in the process of acquiring." (Bruner, 1978, p. 19).

Besides this, **Garner** proposes the **multiple intelligences** theory, which is the ability to solve problems assuming that humanity has eight intelligences, with different intelligence profile that corresponds to our genetics and our own life experiences, which make us different and value to the others. So, in order to represent a much broader spectrum of human capacities, the intelligences are divided into:
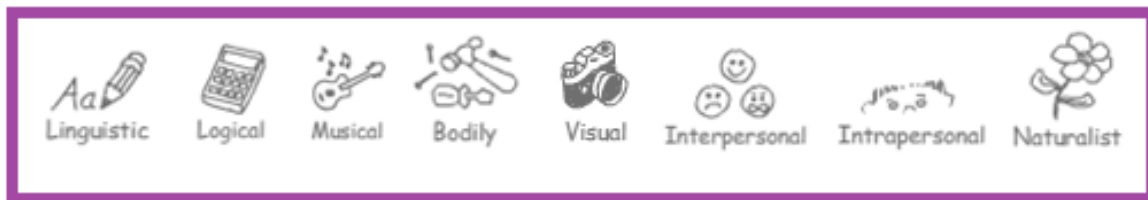

Figure 2: Multiple intelligences

First of all say that the **linguistic intelligence** corresponds to the ability of using both spoken and written language effectively in order to express by ourselves and communicate to others. This intelligence is very important to enhance in the classrooms in order to involve pupils into more complex thinking. In the case of the **logical - mathematical intelligence**, we have to bear in mind that is the ability to use the scientific method, in which the child will analyze problems logically trying to find a deductive reasoning and will be able to work effectively with mathematical operations. On the one hand, **musical intelligence** is considered the ability to perform, compose and appreciate musical patterns. On the other hand **bodily** or **kinaesthetic intelligence** is connected to the usage of the body for expression which demonstrates its physical coordination to master problems. Meanwhile, **visual** or **spatial intelligence** refers to the ability recognize the space around us, interpreting pictures and patterns in order to reproduce objects in 3D. Besides this, the **interpersonal intelligence** is the ability to put in others' place and try to understand their intentions, motivations and desires. It is very important to enhance it in the classrooms because it allows pupils to work better with their classmates.

Otherwise, the **intrapersonal intelligence** goal is to understand ourselves, try to interpret and appreciate our own feelings and motivations and realise about our strengths and weaknesses, so it increases our own reflective capacities. In addition to this, if pupils have a good tutor that help them in their way to self-knowledge and will be able to develop their autonomy and work by themselves. Last but not least important, the **naturalist intelligence** is the ability to identify and appreciate our relationship with the natural world that is part of our lives. Moreover, it is important to enhance all the intelligences throughout our entire lives but always keeping on mind that we can be better o weaker on the different intelligences and, that variety is a reality of our world.

Finally, just add that Gardner is highly related to Project Zero due to its reference on multiple intelligences that allows both teachers and students develop learning, creativity and thinking skills throughout different areas. On the other hand, McGuinness thinks that pupils learn to think spontaneously (*The case for thinking skills - Carol McGuinness - Video search - THE JOURNEY TO EXCELLENCE*). She explains that the immediate **pay-off** will empower a learner to think more deeply and will be able to understand its meaning in a deeper way, and, in addition will allow him/her to bring those learned skills to new situations in order to become more independent, more self-regulatory of their own learning. In accordance with McGuinness (1999), there are different **thinking taxonomies** which were previously mentioned by Swartz and Parks. McGuinness gives us some examples of a great range of different types of thinking as (Cited by Walsh, G., Murphy, P., & Dunbar, C., 2007):

> Sequencing and ordering information; sorting, classifying and grouping; analysing, identifying part/whole relationships and comparing and contrasting; making predictions and hypothesising; drawing conclusions and giving reasons for conclusions; distinguishing fact from opinion; determining bias and checking the reliability of evidence; generating new ideas and brainstorming; relating cause and effect and designing a fair test; defining and clarifying problems, thinking up different solutions and setting goals and sub goals; testing solutions and evaluating outcomes; planning and monitoring progress towards a goal and revising plans; and making decisions, setting priorities and weighing up pros and cons. (pp. 6 - 7).

Hence it is important to try to include all this types of thinking in our daily activities in class in order to make pupils think, explore, inquire, investigate and let them be participants of their own learning.

At this point I would like to introduce some important aspects to bear in mind when working with pupils that are related to **Thinking Skills** (TS) and **Personal Capabilities** (PC) stated by the Northern Ireland Curriculum (2015).

First of all, it is important as teachers to promote TS and PC by using as a starter point pupil's interests, set pupils a challenge, ask open ended questions, allow pupils select the materials and resources they need, enhance their imagination and let pupils be able to group by themselves. On the other hand, when working with pupils we can appreciate evidence at different stages. For instance, when managing information pupils will have to decide and select (with help) pieces of information or resources require, they will also have to follow some directions in order to begin a plan, think and try to solve the problem. Then they have to make a decision it is important to give reasons and express their own opinions; after that at the stage of being creative, pupils have to show interest, curiosity, ask questions and be willing to take on new challenges. It is also important when working with others to work and play in a cooperative way, develop different management routines and develop confidence between adults and partners as well. Finally, on their self management is it important to talk and discuss about what they have done and learned, develop ability to focus, sustain attention and persists on the different tasks, be autonomous to choice and decide about ones work and even ask for help to either an adult or a friend.

This is why the **TS and PC framework** is divided into five strands: Self-management; managing information; thinking, problem-Solving and decision-making; being Creative; and working with Others. (*Northern Ireland Curriculum » TSPC » What Are Thinking Skills & Personal Capabilities*).
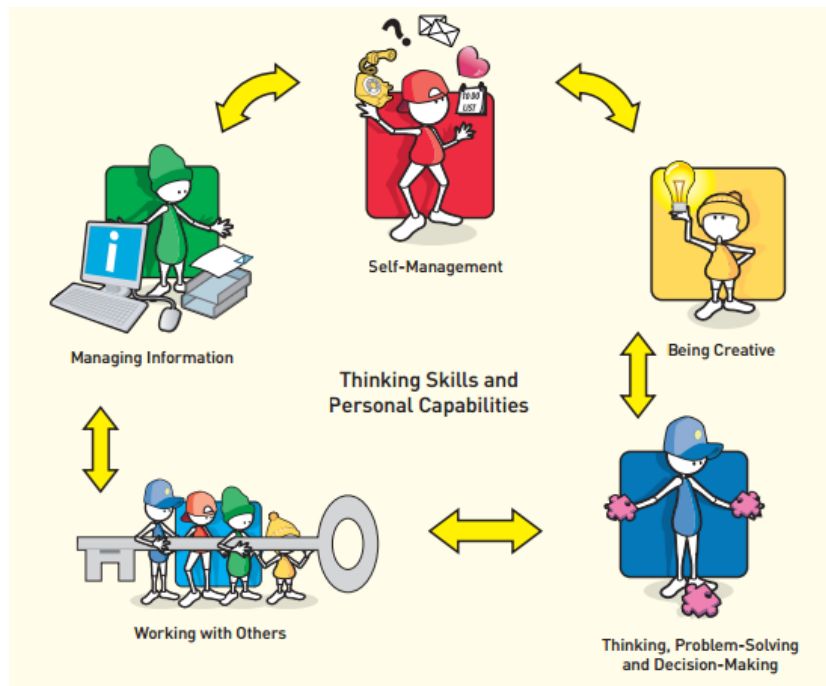
Figure 3: Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities framework

To begin with, when we talk about **managing information**, we have to bear in mind that it includes asking, accessing, selecting, recording, integrating and communicating (*Northern Ireland Curriculum » TSPC » What Are Thinking Skills & Personal Capabilities*) which means that the intention is to develop pupils' abilities in an information intensive environment, where pupils will try to discover how to ask focused questions, plan and determine goals and divide a task into sub-tasks or communicate with a purpose among others. In the **thinking, problem - solving and decision - making** strand, as teachers we have to engage our learners in active learning by for instance sequencing, ordering, classifying and making comparisons, make hypothesis, justify methods and so on. Moreover in the **being creative** strand, as teachers we must encourage our pupils' personal responses by making them imagine, invent or take risks for learning. Furthermore, when **working with others** we should enable our pupils to engage in collaborative activities in order to make the most of their learning when working with other partners, so pupils have to be collaborative, sensitive to others' feeling and opinions, fair and responsible or their own and group work. Finally, **self - management** evaluates the strengths and weaknesses and sets goals and targets in order to help pupils become more self - directed.

Alternatively and bearing in mind the different types of thinking, Cameron used the term **overinclusive** "to describe the thinking of schizophrenic patients" (cited by Chiu, 2014, p. 3) because it was "defined as the inability to preserve conceptual boundaries" (*Ibid.*). However, people that have overinclusive thinking have **broader conceptual framework** and are highly capable of freeing their minds from conceptual boundaries, "improving their creativity by considering concepts that other people deem unrelated to certain categories, and thereby providing an increased number of options" (*Ibid.*). In addition, those people are capable to perform **divergent thinking** and to generate more original ideas.

Besides this, it has a great importance to open our minds to **visible thinking.** The main purpose of visible thinking is to make thinking visible in the context of learning which has a double goal: **deep on subject - matter learning** and **grow pupils' disposition towards thinking**.

This is why visible thinking suggests an explicit and open part of the classroom discourse of a natural manageable way in order to set the stage for powerful practices internalization of both thinking and learning.

According to Visible Thinking work, it considers that "Visible Thinking is a broad and flexible framework for enriching classroom learning in the content areas and fostering students' intellectual development at the same time" (*Visible Thinking*). In addition, the good thinking requires a dispositional view of thinking which implies abilities, attitudes, and alertness. And if pupils think about their thinking, they become gradually more metacognitive. It is important take into account that teachers in schools should promote exploring ideas and address challenges instead of memorizing content. It is recommended to start with routines, exploring ideals and focusing on documentation if we want to introduce VT in our classrooms.

Furthermore, there are five main types of activities to promote VT designed by Visible Thinking (2011):

> 1) Uncovering students prior knowledge, 2) Exploring the ideal using the routines, 3) Reflecting on ongoing work in the ideal and identifying how thinking has changed, 4) Developing students' ability to detect opportunities, and 5) Reviewing and Assessing what students have gained from the module.

In relation to VT, we can find **metacognition** which involves the things we know, our level of comprehension throughout different tasks and the usage of our previous knowledge and skills at any situation; so, we could sum up this concept into **think about thinking**. It also involves three different types of knowledge: **declarative** (previous information), **procedural** (analysis of the information and planning of the task) and **conditional** (usage of strategic knowledge at different situations).

A way to promote, TS and PC in our classroom is the usage of **thinking cards** because they stimulate pupils' imagination; generate discussion, dialogue and lots of ideas in order to make the skill explicit. So, thinking cards is a cross-phase resource design by Northern Ireland Curriculum, which implies different kinds of usages depending on the level we need.

Although it does not offer thinking cards adapted to Infant Education, it is also a useful resource because from this idea we can adapt the thinking cards for example by using pictures or simple words in order to make pupils understand the context and start thinking and talking in class.

Now, I would like to introduce **Activating Children's Thinking Skills (ACTS)**. ACTS is a methodology for enhancing thinking skills across the curriculum designed by McGuinness on 2000. In addition to this, "ACTS adopted an infusion methodology which seeks to identify contexts across the curriculum where particular thinking skills can be developed" (McGuinness, 2000, p. 2). Obviously it has some benefits like matching thinking skills with topics in the curriculum, deeper understanding, optimisation of time, direct support to teaching thinking across the curriculum and facilitates learning transfer and reinforcement.

Apart from this, the general theoretical framework based on Swartz and Parks, which include the taxonomy of thinking skills in ACTS, which was developed by McGuinness (2000) are:

- Sequencing, ordering information; sorting, classifying, grouping; analysing, part/whole relationships, comparing and contrasting. This group can be characterised as searching out order and imposing meaning on information.

- Making predictions, hypothesising; drawing conclusions, justifying conclusions, distinguishing fact from opinion; determining bias, checking the reliability of evidence; relating causes and effects. This group can be characterised as critical thinking, questioning/scrutinising information and making judgements about it.
- Generating new ideas; brainstorming; formulating own points of view, combining ideas, recognising and using analogies. This group can be characterised as creative thinking.
- Problem-solving; defining problems, thinking up different solutions, testing solutions.
- Planning; setting up sub-goals, monitoring progress.
- Making decisions; generating options, weighing up the pros and cons, choosing a course of action. (p. 4)

On the other side, it is interesting to compare and contrast different projects that enhance TS in our classrooms. As mentioned before, **Project Zero** has a deeply connection with Gardner due to its multiple intelligences' theory. Project Zero was founded in 1967 at Harvard Graduate School of Education by Nelson Goodman and in 1972 both David Perkins and Howard Gardner became co-directors of Project Zero.

Besides this, Project Zero tries to develop pupils' learning, creativity and thinking skills throughout all the disciplines. And in addition, it promotes independent and autonomous learners and thinkers and creative and critical thinking.

Based on a research done by Project Zero researchers and educators from the Municipal Preschools of Reggio Emilia in Italy, arouse **Making Learning Visible (MLV) project**. This is why this research has been part of Project Zero since 1997.

This project focuses on "making visible the 'how' and the 'what' of learning in groups has remained constant" (*Making Learning Visible*). Consequently, MLV at the Harvard Graduate School of Education (2006) addresses three learning and teaching aspects:

1) what teachers and students can do to support the creation of learning groups in the classroom; 2) the role of observation and documentation in deepening and extending children's and adults' learning; and 3) how teachers and students can both create and transmit culture, values, and knowledge.

Another proposal that offers tips for brain-based learning comes from **Edutopia** which published a guide in which it is explained the six main tips for brain - based learning (*Edutopia » Six Tips for Brain-Based Learning*) . First of all, highlight that there are some strategies that help students represent their thinking in a visual, kinaesthetic and phonetic way; and all teachers should have these techniques on mind to get the brain primed for learning. It is important to start **creating a safe climate for learning**, and in order to create it, we have to understand how our brain works. A curious fact to mention is that we have a part of the brain, which is called amygdala that somehow mediates the emotional arousal and in addition has a high impact in the learning process. The amygdala has the capacity to bring the emotions to the brain and store them in the memory, whether they are positive or negative.

This is why we should try to create a good climate, a good atmosphere in our classrooms trying to reduce stress and feel more relaxed. We can achieve this by making different type of tone voices when we talk to pupils, through the daily routines or even by making jokes at some moments of the day. Another important aspect is to make pupils be participant in the activities planned in class, we want our pupils to raise their hand and speak, give their own opinions and participate. It does not matter if they are right or wrong, what we should search is their willingness and desire to participate and lose the shame. Pupils do not have to be embarrassed of making mistakes, because we can learn from those mistakes and thus, be able to reinforce learning. Additionally we must not forget that pupils need to be listened and we have to be patients and offer our time to our pupils in order to make them feel confident and secure. If we are able to offer to our pupils this safety climate, we will have higher engaged pupils on their own learning and pupils will be able to develop the interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences too. It is also important to **encourage a growth mind - set**. This concept comes from the psychologist Carol Dweck who thinks that intelligence is not a fixed thing and it is possible to develop it we try it hard and with determination. If we can increase the mind-set of our students, they will be more willing to face possible challenges and every mistake or criticism will be useful on their learning process. Furthermore, we have to **emphasize feedback** in order to keep the learning on the good way. Of course, we have to try to focus on giving pupils positive feedback, even if they have done or said something wrong.

For instance, if we are correcting a sort of activities and a pupil answers wrongly, we do not have to discourage himself or herself, quite the opposite we have to take advantage of this situation and focus the attention on how it might be right, what do they have to do to improve their mistakes and reinforce their learning.

Nevertheless that is not the only moment in class to develop feedback, we can use it when playing, debating, problem - solving, peer editing and so on. The forth tip proposed by Edutopia is to **get bodies and brains in gear**, which is based on the ideas from John Medina, which corresponds to the relation between the brain and the physical activity, in particular because Medina thinks that brainpower boosts with exercise. This approach is justified due to the increase of the oxygen when doing cardio activity it allows a better flowing of our blood and as a result it increases our concentration ability.

So bearing in mind this approach we could try to combine during the day some kind of breaks with physical activity between the thinking activities in order to stimulate and activate our pupils' brain. Equally important is to **start early** the schooling. Although Infant Education is not compulsory and pupils must start their schooling at the age of 6, it is important to offer as soon as possible a good education to toddlers and open the door to discover the knowledge and make them eager and interested to learn when they arrive at school. It is also interesting a campaign called "Love, talk, play" created by the University of Washington's Institute for Learning and Brain Sciences (I-LABS), which has a personal website where we can find some tips to follow in order to enhance love, talk and play among babies and toddlers. This tips can help both parents and teachers in order to establish better relationships between babies and toddlers and this will help pupils develop their brain in a better way as they learn from what they see, listen and by the emotions. Finally, the last proposed tip is to **embrace the power of novelty**. All humans have a pattern - recognition mode which make us classify the information that we receive in our brain into two groups: the information that might be similar to previous information and the novelty. As revealed by Judy Willis, there is a part of the brain that is called the reticular activating system that is on charge of filtering all the stimuli that receives analyses it deciding if it is similar to any previous experience and autopilot it or decide if it has to pay full attention on it. This means, that as teacher we must search the novelty to our pupils although the objective is the same, we have to change its perspective in order to make them pay attention and be more perceptive.

Last but not least, it is interesting to consider the proposals offered by the Northern Ireland Curriculum (2015), as they think that in order to develop skills and capabilities, pupils have to be engaged with their own learning and the classroom should be a place full of skills practice, where can reflect on their achievements, and be able to recognise their strengths and weaknesses.

The Northern Ireland curriculum has designed a project that develops TS and PC (2015). First it is important to **establish the focus as problem-solving** and according to this; the **starting point** is the recognition of the problem that has to be solved. Then, the **initial challenge** is divided into thinking about the planning, evaluating the plan chosen, drawing together and talking stock of what has been learned and using questions to stimulate creative thinking.

The third step consists on **extending the challenge** by using questions to stimulate creative thinking; experimenting with ideas, sharing and explaining ideas to each other; and introducing a further design feature to extend thinking (a form of cognitive conflict). Finally, the last step is the **completion** in which the work and the teacher have to be evaluated and the teacher must do a self reflection.

At the same time, the Northern Ireland Curriculum has seven **classroom strategies** that will help to **create a thinking classroom**, with the right environment, promoting pupil - centred practices and integrating the skills in the curriculum. The first one is **set open - ended challenges**. This one promotes the skills and capabilities development by encouraging pupils to "offer reasoned decisions, offer solutions and possibilities, respond creatively, develop more autonomy and value individual differences" (*Northern Ireland Curriculum » TSPC » Creating the right climate for a Thinking Classroom*), and finally be able to construct meaning. The second one, **make thinking important**, requires time and space for our pupils and a promotion of the classroom culture. The third one consists on **effective questioning**, which influence pupils' achievements, attitudes and TS. Those achievements can improve "if high level questions are accompanied by wait – time, redirection, and probing techniques" (*Ibid.*) The next one is to make thinking explicit, and we can get it if in the learning intentions we explain the skills and capabilities in order to let them recognize their importance. In addition, it will create a higher and stronger link among skills and capabilities and learning assessment.

It pretends to make thinking visible and talk about it. Furthermore, **enable collaborative learning** has two functions: cognitive and social, and we have to find that cooperative point that will bring us to succeed. Equally important is to promote independent learning, which requires a development of a variety of planning, organizational, social and metacognitive skills. This is why by the observation of what they are able to do, the evaluation of this in relation to agreed or self – set goals and plan what to do next will regulate pupils' learning. The last, making connections, has to do with link and apply the learned concepts and skills to other topics, subjects and contexts; although pupils do not use to make these type of connections, we should plan and explain opportunities to transfer to our pupils. In consequence, in our lessons we should incorporate many of the previous strategies and steps in order to enhance the motivation, interest and knowledge of our pupils on the way of developing thinking skills.

5. DESIGN

In order to develop a classroom design, we have to bear in mind different aspects that will condition our work.

So, to start we have to think about the school where it is going to be developed and the group in which will be developed. Therefore, the school that I have chosen to develop this design is the public school Caño Dorado from Zaratán. which is an infant and primary education school and has a total of 280 students. The kindergarten classrooms are placed on the ground floor, 3 years A and B, 4 years and 5 years. Considering the parents' level of education, the study expectations for their children and the social field of almost every family in the school; we understand that we have students with normal characteristics and normal educational needs, in general, and which therefore can be performed favourably standardized curricular activities. Like all publicly funded school, it is committed to the constitutional principles of seeking students to a neutral ideology and democratic education that prepares them both intellectually and personally and socially.

Now, talking about the class were this proposal is going to be developed, say that I have chosen the same class of my experience on Practicum II, which corresponds to the 3 years B classroom. The class has got 18 pupils between 3 and 4 years old. It is a close-knit group, participative and with great interest on learning. At these ages, different maturation levels are shown but we have to try to adapt each and every one of the activities at these levels. In short, say it is a pretty diverse group, both maturing and in terms of behaviour. This difference in behaviour is seen in moments of free play, as some children prefer to play with toys in the corner of symbolic play and constructions, and others prefer to sit down and draw a picture, write the words of vocabulary that we are seeing, etc. Except some small quarrels and anger typical of this age, we cannot appreciate any conflict, because they are very social and have no problems of connivance.

In addition, my proposal is going to be developed throughout the English area, and according to the Royal Decree 122/2007, which establishes the objectives for the Infant Education stage in the foreign language area. I will try to make pupils develop their curiosity and interest for the English language, make enjoy along the different lessons by establishing routines, playing games, singing songs and so on. In order to develop thinking skills when dealing with festivities we can make pupils think and engage their TS. The interaction between pupils and both with the teacher is also important, and we have to try to communicate with verbal and non - verbal language, which will improve daily.

Besides this, the space that I am going to use to develop this proposal is the 3 years B classroom as it is well equipped. Classroom organization always depends on the activities taking place at each lesson. When working in large group I am going to use the assembly area in a circle so we could see our faces or use the space around the classroom to sing and dance songs proposed during the drive. On the other hand, individual work usually will be performed at the tables. However, it is very important that all students have clear the arrangement of things in the class and the work location.

The three-year classroom B is decorated with posters, illustrations, a mirror, material made by them and also provided for the classroom project conducted with the help of their parents.

The classroom also has an interactive whiteboard, which has attached to it a blackboard that is used to hang over posters related to the project or pictures. In addition to this, the class also has various corners and workplaces, such as the library, the artist corner, the numbers corner, the letters corner or the symbolic play corner. As I mention before, the classroom has got a mirror in which children are able to go and look at themselves when they dress up or when engaged in putting strange faces.

In the assembly area we can find the days of the week, the alphabet, the control systems, the pupil' list with names and photographs, a whiteboard where words are written daily and so on. The tables are located in the centre of the classroom divided in 4 groups, two per table. On shelves around the tables we find school supplies and the boxes where pupils keep their work. Finally add that this classroom has a double bathroom separated by a door next to the assembly.

Meanwhile, we have to consider that the methodologies that we should use in Infant Education are based in experiences, activities and plays; but they have to be surrounded by other important factors in order to achieve all the goals that we set for our pupils. In order to do so we have to focus on the pupils' learning and plan very carefully what things we want them to achieve, respect their learning pace and interests, let them be autonomous by promoting independent learning, enable collaborative learning, enhance metacognition, visible thinking and develop gradually their thinking skills and personal capabilities. Accordingly, our role as teachers must be the one of a guide, that helps them or give clues to solve the problems not a source of information, because what we want is to make pupils experience a meaningful learning. So, our function is to develop their ZPD as Vygotsky proposed in his studies, help pupils to grow their minds.

According to this, Bruner's opinion is not far from Vygotsky, of whom I share, because he thought that pupils are able to construct their own knowledge if they become active learners, so if they experience and work hard, they will be able to improve their learning. Moreover, we do not have to forget that each pupil is different, has different rhythms of learning and can feel more confident and secure around some areas of development and highlight in some of them. This is due to what Gardner called multiple intelligences and we have to enhance them throughout our daily work.

Thus for this proposal it is important to bear in mind the Thinking Skills and Personal Development methodology which has five main aspects to promote TS and PD to our pupils. It is important to let pupils manage information, let them search, select and explain why it is important to include that information; then pupils have to think, and try to solve the problem by making decisions, so here they have to order and classify all the information following the scientific method making hypothesis. Obviously when they have to make decisions there is a risk of succeed or failure, so in this point as teachers we have to encourage them to be creative and try new things. In addition, when we plan big things or projects we need to work with others, so they have to be responsible or their own work but also make all the group work because the team has to run by being collaborative, sensitive and respectful to others' feelings and opinions. And equally important is to self - manage their work. They have to analyse and evaluate their strengths and weaknesses in order to improve them.

Consequently, from the brain - based study realized by Edutopia, my proposal is based on some of its tips in order to enhance pupils' thinking skills, though I have thought previously about my context and I have adapted those ones that require it.

To start, when I arrived at the school, I realized talking with the tutor that some pupils were afraid of having a new English teacher, so I tried to **create a safe climate for learning** where I presented myself and I also introduced some daily routines, that where used from the previous teacher (Hello song) and new ones. But why we should try to create a good environment to our pupils? Does it really affect to their learning? The answer is yes, it does and we should try to create this safety climate. This is due to a part of the brain which is called amygdala and it is able to bring the emotions to the brain and store them in the memory even if they are positive or negative. So, when we are going to introduce ourselves to pupils or even a new puppet or new concepts, it is extremely important to make pupils feel comfortable with the situation and to do not frighten them. For instance, in my training when I introduced the new puppet, I placed it in a box, covered with a blanket, as if he was sleeping and the children had to find out what was inside. When I opened the box and pupils discovered what was inside, I asked them if they knew what animal was and its colour. I told them that his name was Cookie and I ask them to say "Hello" to him in order to make him feel comfortable in the class.

Then, Cookie asked pupils if they wanted to be his friends in order to return at each English lesson. Pupils agreed and then we passed Cookie around in order to let them touch it, feel it, greet it, hug it or kiss it. They were free to have the first contact that they wanted. By introducing Cookie we established a new daily routine, which consists of each day when I get into the classroom, pupils wake up and grate Cookie saying "Good morning Cookie / Hello Cookie" (depending on the moment of the day) and "Wake up Cookie". Once out of the box, everybody raise their hands and sing the "Hello Song". According to Edutopia (*Edutopia » Six Tips for Brain-Based Learning)*, by modelling our tone voice, our interactions with pupils through routines, games or activities will help pupils to loose their shame and try to participate actively. Moreover, pupils need to be listened, so we have to give them time and let them express by themselves and encourage them to participate although they make mistakes, because from those mistakes they can strengthen their knowledge. At this point is will be also useful to promote personal and social capabilities and develop interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences. We can promote interpersonal intelligences by explaining some situations and think about possible ways of reacting and trying to put in others' place. Also, whenever we have a possible conflict situation we can discuss it in order to solve the problem, show what was wrong an try to improve ourselves in order to have better relationships and work better with their peers. On the other way round, intrapersonal intelligence will allow pupils to think about their strengths and weaknesses to increase their own reflective capacities. Here, it is important to have a properly role as a guide to our pupils to afford them opportunities to discover and learn by themselves and be more autonomous. Related to this, I find very interesting **emphasize feedback**, because it can be used in different type of situations like debating, playing, problem - solving, peer editing, small - group discussions, after listening an audio or watching a video, after pupils presentations and even to compare and contrast different types of activities or works. It is very important to focus on giving pupils positive feedback in order to encourage them although they make mistakes; because when you encourage your pupils and offer them positive reinforcement is when pupils will not get embarrassed of talking or making mistakes and will be more enthusiastic and open - minded to new knowledge.

For instance, when we are dealing with a new topic we can ask open questions about it like "What has Cookie brought today?", "Of whom are those footprints?", "What things do we need to become explorers?; or even when we can work at time to do an individual worksheet which we can think and guess what things do we have to do and what steps do we have to follow. So, it is crucial to remember to try always to give positive feedback in order to keep learning on the good way.

Besides this, the fact of connecting learning to physical activity, **get bodies and brains in gear**, is based on the ideas from John Medina, who thinks that brainpower boosts with exercise. (Cited by *Edutopia » Six Tips for Brain-Based Learning)*. In order to understand it we have to know that this is produced because when we do a cardio activity our oxygen increases which allows a better flowing or our blood and in addition is increases our concentration ability. This is why in my lessons I have tried to combine physical activity throughout songs and vocabulary exercises. During my ladybug' project with 3 years B, we learned the ladybug song in which we had to learn some movements and as they manage to do it in their own space, I allowed them moving around the class, singing and performing the song as if we were flying ladybugs around the class in order to stimulate and activate their brain.

Pupils enjoy moving, this is why as I had short English lessons I started with the welcome routines, we sang the days of the week song which has also some hands movements, the ladybug song (depending on the lesson), some thinking practice followed like guessing parts of the ladybug body, match words to the right place and so on; and finally the bye bye song in which we also had some movements. In addition to this, **embrace the power of novelty** to our pupils seems to be a difficult task. At first, it seems a strange term, but we have to understand how our brain works. To sum up, our brain has a pattern - recognition mode, which allows classification of the information that is received to it. This classification is divided into two groups: the information that the brain considers that is similar to a previous one and the novelty. The fact is that, as Judy Willis revealed (Cited by *Edutopia » Six Tips for Brain-Based Learning)* this part of the brain that receives, analyses and classifies the information is called reticular activating system; and when our brain decides that it is a similar information to any previous experience, our brain autopilot it instead of paying full attention.

It does not happen to the new information, that the brain considers it as novelty and pays all the attention on it. This is why, when we teach pupils, we have to find different strategies in order to let them find a piece of novelty in each lesson. We can work the same topic but including some changes in order to develop this novelty. One example of it can be singing the ladybug song in different ways: we can change our tone voice, the speed, mime it, omit words and even change its words. If we are able to do it, this will make them pay more attention and be more perceptive.

Finally, I want to emphasize the fact that it is very important to **start early** the schooling. As I mention before on the theoretical foundation, although it is not compulsory to start schooling up to the age of 6, we have to try to offer as soon as possible a good education to babies and toddlers in order to engage them and make them eager and interested to learn when they start schooling. This last step I could apply it partially with pupils from 3 years, but I could not apply it on babies. It it interesting how pupils develop interest and are engaged with the activities that the teacher proposes. At the same time, I found pretty interesting the idea of a campaign called "Love, talk, play", created by I-LABS, which provide us some ideas in order to add more love, talk and play in our daily routine. Moreover, this tips can help to establish better relationships in order to develop their brain in a better way, because children learn from what they see, listen and of course what they feel, the emotions.

In consequence, when I analysed the results of my proposal and I think about the objectives that I pretended to achieve I believe that I have acquired all of them. With my research I have tried to understand and get the best of each theory, methodology, approach, strategy and technique related to the worked topic. And, in addition, I have chosen, adapted and applied some tips for brain - based learning throughout my training. To do so, I had to be more open - minded to a new classroom management, including all the aspects and new things that I have acquired, and I have tried to enhance pupils' thinking skills and personal capabilities along my training; and finally I have felt very comfortable and secure about this study because I have understood its meaning and its purpose. Our profession is very beautiful, but although this it is in constant changing, new methodologies and techniques appear and we do not have to stay in the past forever, we have to improve our teaching practice in order to motivate pupils.

Developing thinking skills in 3 years B classroom has been a great experience, because as it was integrated with the other content, pupils have developed it in a natural way without forcing it. As we based on thinking skills, we have to think on qualitative results, and according to this, nowadays pupils are more competent and are able to manage different situations using different strategies. In addition, pupils have enabled collaborative learning, for instance when we worked ordering vocabulary words, each child had to say what letter did they need, and when one of them ran aground his/her classmates helped him/her by making sounds to predict the letter or saying the needed letter.

To sum up, the more motivated pupils will be in the classroom, the more they will learn. So, let's try to include thinking skills in our daily work with an intention in order to let pupils be participants of their own learning.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Though this proposal I have tried to apply certain steps from a given program in order to promote and enhance thinking skills in Infant Education. In order to do so, I did a first research which led me to other researches. Then, I analysed all the aspects that I had on my head, thinking about what sort of things could be useful both for pupils and to my teaching practice. It is curious how I have developed my own metacognition and I have realized about it. Some time ago, when I planned a lesson, I was not aware of the importance or thinking skills; I used them, but without realizing that I was using them. I mean, without bearing in mind all its significance, usage and importance.

In the theoretical foundation, we can rediscover those strategies, methods and proposals that can be used in our classrooms. By the usage of thinking skills, pupils will be more competent, autonomous and responsible of their own learning. Although this, we have to consider that each pupil is unique and has a particular profile. This is why multiple intelligences are present in our daily life, due to its difference. No one has the same tastes, the same preferences; neither have the same potential in all the areas of development. Nonetheless what we try is to develop and enhance all the intelligences taking into account all the diversity that can be found in schools and that at the same time can enrich our classroom.

Our role as teachers should be the one of facilitator, guide, consultant, coach, mentor, promoter, motivator and integrator among others. For this reason, we do not have to become sources of information, we have to be the ones that encourage pupils to experience and enjoy learning.

It is said that teachers plant seeds of knowledge that grow forever, and this is what we have to do, inspire our pupils and make them develop thinking skills and personal capabilities in order to become critical thinkers and owners of their own thoughts and believes.

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8. APPENDIX

APPENDIX 1: 3 YEARS B CLASSROOM

About this Guide

We have written this guide to support you in the introduction of Thinking Cards to your pupils.

The cards can scaffold and guide pupils' thinking. It is important to introduce them at a pace that enables pupils to grasp how best to use them. Please use the steps outlined in this guide in whichever way best suits your situation. Take time to consolidate each stage. Pupils need to develop sound foundations in the skills and capabilities before they can engage higher-order thinking skills.

Extracts from a 'reflective journal' throughout this guide illustrate how a teacher might implement some of the ten steps in practice.

APPENDIX 3: LOVE, TALK AND PLAY GUIDE

Why are love, talk and play so important?

LOVE. Your gentle touch, attention and understanding help your child grow in every way. In fact, the stronger your relationship is with your child, the easier it will be for her to make friends and do well in school because she feels safe and loved at home.

TALK. As soon as your child is born, start talking, singing and rhyming about anything and everything. These interactions start building your child's language skills long before he can talk or understand what's being said. They are also critical in helping him learn to read.

PLAY. Play is the way your child learns, and parents are their child's favorite toy. What you play isn't as important as following your child's lead during play time and having fun together.

LoveTalkPlay

Everyday Ways to Love, Talk and Play

FUN ACTIVITIES for PARENTS and THEIR BABIES & TODDLERS

ON THE GO

AT HOME

Shopping at the Grocery Store or Market

❤ Keep me close to you, so I feel safe. Look me in the eyes when you talk with me.

💬 Talk with me about how things look, feel, smell and sound. Ask me what my favorite stuffed animal or doll would like to eat.

🎾 Let's play a game and find things in the store that are blue or start with the letter M. Help me count and weigh the apples.

Riding on a Bus or in a Car

❤ Keep me safe and close. In the car, put me in my car seat. On the bus, hold me on your lap. Talk with me about how to stay safe on the bus, in the car or when crossing the street.

💬 Talk with me about where we're going and what we're going to do. Ask me what I see out the window.

🎾 Sing me songs and tell me rhymes that you liked as a child.

Going for a Walk

❤ Follow my lead and walk slowly. I want to touch and smell flowers, watch bugs and birds, and look at people. Come down to my level, so I can show you what I see.

💬 Stop, point and talk with me about the colors and shapes we see. When we see a real animal or a picture of one, ask me what sound it makes.

🎾 Let's count the number of steps it takes to get from one place to another. Help me find shapes in the clouds. If I'm walking, pretend to race me.

Playing with a Ball

❤ Get down on the floor with me and play. Encourage and help me to roll the ball.

💬 Talk with me about the shape and color of the ball, and tell/show me what we can do with the ball. Use words I may not know yet.

🎾 Roll or bounce the ball to me. Count out loud the number of times the ball bounces.

Changing a Diaper or Giving a Bath

❤ Make me the focus of your attention. Tickle my tummy and give me kisses on my fingers and toes.

💬 Talk with me about the color of the clothes I'm wearing or the shapes of the bath toys. Point to and name parts of my body.

🎾 Sing songs. Play Peek-a-Boo. Let me explore your face with my hands.

Enjoying Music

❤ Sway with me, bounce me gently on your lap or hold my hands as I dance.

💬 Sing me a song that you enjoyed as a child. Sing with me even when I want to sing the same song again and again. Teach me new songs or make up new songs based on a tune I already know.

🎾 Let's make our own music with pots, pans, spoons and cups. Crawl around on the floor with me to the beat of the music.

Making a Meal

❤ Keep me in the kitchen with you. Let me do little tasks for you like holding a spoon or putting ingredients in the bowl.

💬 Talk with me about what you're cooking and how it will taste. Tell me about your favorite foods and ask me about mine.

🎾 Let me play with pots, pans, spoons and cups and pretend to cook. Make a game out of trying new foods.

Sharing a Book

❤ Cuddle with me on your lap, and give me your full attention. Let me choose the book even if I want to read the same one again and again. Repetition is how I learn.

💬 Talk with me about how the people or animals in the book might be feeling. Ask me what might happen next or to tell you the story based on the pictures.

🎾 Ask me to find different letters, shapes and colors on a page. Act out the story and give the characters different voices.

Getting Ready for Bed

❤ Create a bedtime routine that I can count on. Make this a calm and quiet time for me. Tell me that you love me, and give me a chance to snuggle with you one more time.

💬 Talk with me about what we did that day and what we plan to do tomorrow. Hold me at the window and help me say goodnight to family, friends and neighbors. Share a book with me.

🎾 Sing me the alphabet as you help me brush my teeth.