

# Nōs

## Oposicións

## INGLÉS MESTRES

**TEMA 20.** The Foreign Language Area in the curricula. Criteria to be reflected in the Educational Project and in the Curricular concretion of the school.

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## 0. INTRODUCTION

There are many reasons for learning a foreign language. We can divide them into two groups:

1. The immediate objectives, which include learning to understand, speak, read and write the language.
2. The understanding of a foreign culture. This approach implies the gradual revelation of the customs, manners, institutions, geography, history, literature, etc. of the foreign land through the study of the language itself.

In the society in which we live, cultural exchanges, travels abroad and the spreading of news and technological advance have turned communication in a foreign language into a necessity. This need is even greater in the European Union, with the free movement of professionals. It is due to this that compulsory education must cater for this social need and provide students with communicative competence in, at least, one foreign language. Besides, students in Primary Education will attain a better command and comprehension of their mother tongue if they learn a foreign language.

Contact with different cultures favor respect to different ways of thinking and behaving as well as it endows the students with a richer and wider vision of the world.

For the elaboration and development of this topic we have taken into account:

- **Organic Law 3/2020, 29<sup>th</sup> of December which modifies the Organic Law 2/2006, 3<sup>rd</sup> of May**
- **Royal Decree 157/2022, 1<sup>st</sup> of March**, which establishes the curriculum for Primary Education nationwide.
- **Decree 155/2022, 15<sup>th</sup> of September**, which adapts the Royal Decree for the community of Galicia.

**Plurilingual competence** is an essential part for the protection and development of the linguistic heritage. This, will allow students to relate in a comparable manner the different cultures they have access to by means of their linguistic knowledge and they will understand them in a better way, so that they can develop their intercultural competence.

Developing Plurilingualism in P.E contributes to overcoming the egocentrism and localism typical of children's exposure to reality. The first contact with them must be carefully programmed to boost a positive attitude and meaningful learning on the part of students. It is important for ESL lessons to draw near the children's world as much as possible. Expression for English as a Second Language (ESL) lessons to draw near the children's world as much as possible. Expression in ESL lessons must be based on games and children's interests and students will be motivated in order to participate in a spontaneous way.

In P.E. the study of a foreign language will have as a goal the gradual familiarization with the new language and its use in simple and meaningful communication situations. Materials must be varied and adapted to the features of the pupils and to the purpose of learning a foreign language. Moreover, students in P.E will attain a better command and comprehension of their mother tongue if they learn a second language. Contact with different cultures favours comprehension of and respect to different ways of thinking and behaving as well as it endows students to a richer and wider vision of the world.

# 1. THE AREA OF THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN THE CURRICULUM

## 1.1. Justification

The aim of a second language teaching is to teach and learn the ability of communicating through it. Besides, we try our pupils to achieve an integral formation to become responsible citizens who know about their rights and duties within a democratic society. The inclusion of a foreign language in the curriculum is essential from two points of view.

First, it represents a new means of communication; and secondly, the educational component which helps to represent reality and also to have more open and balanced conception of the world.

The process of acquisition is parallel to the learning process, that is, progression in learning takes place in a global way, and errors are something necessary in the process of acquisition of a foreign language.

These are some reasons for initiating English at an early stage:

- To share programmes with the rest of the countries in the European Community.
- The learning of a new language opens new horizons in knowledge.
- We are helping to increase our students' capacity of audition and imitation.
- It is important to consider the foreign language as the basis for further studies.

One of the main benefits of learning a second language at an early age is that children learn languages faster and easier. They have more time to learn, less to learn, fewer inhibitions, and a brain designed for language learning. In short, teaching children a second language at an early age saves them from having to learn a second language as an adult. Five reasons to state this are.

1. The brain of a child is designed to absorb new information unconsciously. They do this similarly to the way that we, as adults, unconsciously learn song lyrics, rhythms, and melodies.
2. Children who are learning a second language are not overwhelmed by the task of communicating their abstract thoughts and feelings in their second language because they simply don't have any. Then, as these children develop into adults, they learn to express themselves in both their native and second languages.
3. Time is another one of the benefits of learning a second language at an early age. Children have time on their side. They can start small and simply and work their way up to both higher levels of thought and communication at the same time.
4. Bilinguals are constantly experiencing a mental workout as they sort through more than one language system to communicate. In the 20th century, researchers and educators discouraged second language learning. A second language was thought to interfere with children's intellectual and cognitive development. While there is evidence that bilingual children do experience this interference of language systems, it turns out that the internal conflict that bilingual children experience prepares them to be expert problem solvers.

5. Collective evidence from various studies demonstrates that learning a second language improves the brain's executive function. This means, bilingual children are better at:
  - a. Planning
  - b. Problem solving
  - c. Concentration
  - d. Multitasking

## 1.2. European context

Considering the present-day reality of the European Union, the concept of plurilingualism has become more and more important for the Council of Europe as regards language learning. Plurilingualism means that, as the linguistic experience of a person expands, he/she does not keep this language in isolation, but makes them interrelate and interact with one another. In relation with that we have to mention two important documents:

### *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)*

The Framework is a document which describes in a comprehensible manner the competences necessary for communication, the related knowledge and skills and the situations and domains of communication.

This document facilitates a clear definition of teaching and learning objectives and methods and it also provides the necessary tools for assessment of proficiency. It is the result of extensive research and ongoing work on communicative objectives, as exemplified by the Threshold Level concept. It has become a key reference document and valuable tool for educational and professional mobility.

### *European Language Portfolio (ELP)*

The portfolio is a personal document in which those who are learning or have learned a language (whether at school or outside school) can record and reflect on their language learning and cultural experiences. It contains a language passport which its owner regularly updates. It also contains a detailed language biography describing the owner's experiences in each language. Finally, there is a dossier where examples of personal work can be kept to illustrate one's language competences.

The levels of proficiency established are C2, C1, B2, B1, A2 and A1, being C2 the highest level and A1 the initial. The ELP has two main aims:

- a. To motivate learners by acknowledging their efforts to extend and diversify their language skills at all levels.
- b. To provide a record of the linguistic and cultural skills they have acquired (to be consulted, for example, when they are moving to a higher learning level or seeking employment at home or abroad).

These two points refer to the two basic functions of the ELP:

- 1º) The pedagogical function to enhance the motivation of the learners to improve their ability to communicate in different languages, to learn additional languages and to seek new intercultural experiences.
- 2º) The documentation and reporting function.

The ELP aims to document its holder's plurilingual language proficiency and experiences in other languages in a comprehensive, informative, transparent and reliable way

### 1.3. Curriculum

The foreign language curriculum for P. E. boosts a teaching that integrates languages. It is based on the progressive development of communicative and intercultural competences and it fosters the use of diverse languages favouring communication: verbal, non-verbal, audio-visual and digital. The Act LOMLOE it is formed by the output profile, the objectives of stage, the 8 key competencies, the contents (articulated into 3 blocks: communication, plurilingualism and interculturalism), the evaluation criteria and the methodology.

In P.E, the communicative approach will aim at oral communication, primary goal of this stage. Motivation will be the basis for learning.

The process of acquisition runs parallel to that of learning. Errors will be dealt with as something necessary in the process of acquisition of a second language. In the first steps of learning, there are silent periods that must be regarded as information-processing rather than as failure in learning. We have to consider that receptive activities play an instrumental role in the learning of a second language. We will integrate receptive and expressive skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) in order to attain the degree of fluency and correction necessary for an efficient communication.

LOMLOE, *Organic Law 3/2020, 29<sup>th</sup> of December which modifies the Organic Law 2/2006, 3<sup>d</sup> of May* is developed through *Royal Decree 157/2022, 1<sup>st</sup> of March*, which established the basic curriculum for P.E. nationwide, setting up the KC, objectives, contents and assessment criteria and for the study of foreign languages. Galicia developed it through *Decree 155/2022, 15<sup>th</sup> of September*.

LOMLOE considers Foreign Language compulsory in the curriculum from the 1<sup>st</sup> level. The P.E. curriculum must be open, flexible and adaptable, enough to allow teachers to draw up projects and programmes which can be adapted to the characteristics of the pupils and the educational possibilities at each school.

## 1.4. Specific Galician law related to languages

Galician administration has developed some measures related to the improvement of the linguistic proficiency of students:

- Early foreign language learning to early stages. Decree 150/2022, which establishes the curriculum for Infant Education. It helps learners to develop positive attitudes towards other cultures and languages as well as laying the foundation for language learning in later life.
- Plurilingualism. Decree 79/2010, 20<sup>th</sup> of May. It establishes that some non-linguistic areas can be taught in a foreign language, basically English. It could be up to one third of the total timetable. This Decree also establishes that the School Language Project is mandatory for all schools. The part of the curriculum taught in the foreign language must follow the pedagogical criteria established for CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning)
- CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning). A non-linguistic area is taught in a foreign language. It provides exposure to the language without requiring extra time in the curriculum, which can be of particular interest in vocational settings. CLIL gave birth to 2 different models:
  - Bilingual sections. With this option, the non-linguistic area is not necessary for the entire stage (it could be for one, two, three... levels). The foreign language is used in the classroom combined with the mother tongue (minimum 50% of foreign language).
  - Plurilingual schools. With this option, the non-linguistic area has to be established for the entire stage. Only the foreign language is used in the classroom. The school has to include the word "plurilingüe" in its name.
  - Language assistant programme. A native speaker collaborates with the teachers of CLIL areas and helps students in communicative competence in the foreign language.
  - The integrated treatment of languages through CLIL in curricular terms intends to break down all those artificial barriers created between the different languages and subjects.
  - Programmes for linguistic immersion of learners (axusdale) and teachers (PIALE, COMMENIUS)

## 2. CRITERIA TO BE REFLECTED IN THE EDUCATIONAL PROJECT

The foreign language area is not a watertight compartment within the educational process in P.E, but an integrated part within the whole it belongs to. With **The educational project** we are introducing our educational offer. It consists of stable and unstable parts.

### STABLE PARTS

- Educational aims: which are specified by the LOMCE. We will develop in our students the capacity to manage activities which will help them in the future.
- Curricular concretion: previously called Curricular School Project; nowadays it is the part of the Educational Project in which each school adapts the elements of the curriculum to its own reality.
- School interior regulations: It is about the organisation of the school. In relation with English, it is important to take into account the use of video rooms, the use of computers and the Internet and also the elaboration of a timetable where we can schedule the periods of teaching.
- Projects:
  - **Linguistic project**: In Decree 79/2010 makes reference to all the aspects that must be considered in the linguistic project: the languages to be used in the different areas, support and reinforcement measures that guarantee a correct linguistic use, criteria to determine the predominant environmental language and so on. The linguistic project must also refer to all languages taught in the school including aspects such as early foreign language learning, bilingual sections, CUALE programme, etc.
  - **Reader Project**: It aims at the improvement of the reading skills.
  - **Digital Education Plan**: It aims at the improvement of our students' abilities with technology.
  - **Promotion of healthy habit**: The Educational Project must include measures that promote the daily practice of sports during students' time at school to foster a healthier life.
  - **Plan of co-existence**: this plan guarantees the principles of coexistence, the prevention of conflicts and a peaceful prevention of these.
  - **Plan of scholar orientation**: establishes educational and professional training as well as personalized tutorials.
  - **Plan of tutorial function**: The criteria reflected in the Plan of the Scholar Orientation in a second language may be:
    - a) Tutors function as mediator/intermediary between the school and the families who will inform about the development and progress of each pupil and give advice if needed
    - b) Educational orientation: the teaching staff of foreign language must attend to diversity. This plan will also include decisions regarding aspects such as:
      - ✧ The possible development of the Foreign Language Area in different levels of complexity (we teach mixed-ability groups)
      - ✧ Orientation for individual curricular adaptations of the students with specific needs.



**UNSTABLE PARTS.**

The General Annual Programming: It is a document that is elaborated at the beginning of each school year. It includes the activities that should be carried out and the people in charge of them, timetables, pedagogical organization, attention to students with special needs, books and materials... Regarding the foreign language area, this could be the celebration of a national public holiday, or Christmas in the target language, performances and newspaper edition. The continuous training of the teachers, either here or abroad, will help learning as much as being in contact with new advances and methods is also included in the programming.

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A final memory/report: It is a document that is elaborated at the end of each school year. It is a reflection as well as an evaluation of what has been done during the year. The conclusions will help to improve the results during the next year.

### 3. CURRICULAR CONCRETION: PARTS AND CRITERIA

As we have already said, the curricular concretion, previously called Curricular School Project, is the part of the Educational Project in which each school adapts the elements of the curriculum to its own reality.

#### 3.1. Key competencies

Education through KC is an integral or global approach whose aim is to link the educational community to society to attend to the constant transformation the world undergoes. Competences refer to the abilities that put special emphasis on "how to do things". They are the

sum of knowledge, skills and characteristics that allow a person to perform actions. Key Competences: the Key Competences are those skills, knowledge and attitudes which are essential for every individual in order to achieve his or her personal realization and development. All areas, including the foreign language one must contribute to the acquisition of those competencies:

- **Linguistic competency**: which refers to the use of language as an instrument of oral and written communication, representation, interpretation and comprehension of reality, construction and communication of knowledge and organisation and self-regulation of thought, emotions and behaviour.
- **Plurilingual competency**: being able to communicate effectively in different languages. It includes mediation skills (summarizing or translating) and intercultural understanding.
- **Science, technology, engineering and mathematic competencies (STEM)**: which consists, on the one hand in the ability to use and relate numbers, its basic operations, symbols and ways of expression and mathematical reasoning, in order to produce and interpret different types of information as well as to extend knowledge about quantitative and spatial aspects of reality, and to solve problems related to the daily life and the working world. On the other hand, is the ability to interact with the physical world, in its natural aspects as well as in those generated by the human action, in order to make possible the comprehension of events, the prediction of consequences and the activity aimed at the improvement and preservation of own life conditions, those of other people and the rest of the living beings.
- **Digital competency**: which consists in having abilities in order to search, obtain, process and communicate information, and to change it into knowledge.
- **Personal, social and learning to learn competencies**: ability to manage own's learning, individually or in groups, develop learning ability and personal development.
- **Learning to learn (LL)**: which consists in having abilities to learn and be able to continue learning in an effective and autonomous way according to the own objectives and needs.

- **Civic competency:** which makes possible to comprehend the social reality in which we live, cooperate, coexist and to exercise the democratic citizenship in a plural society as well as to contribute to its improvement.
- **Entrepreneur competency:** which refers to the acquisition of awareness and application of a group of values and personal attitudes interrelated, such as responsibility, perseverance, one's own knowledge and self-esteem, creativity, self-criticism, emotional control, capacity of choice, to calculate risks and face up problems.
- **Cultural awareness and expressions:** whose objective is to know, understand, appreciate and value in a positive and critical way different cultural, artistic and sporting expressions, to use them as a source of enrichment and enjoyment.

## 3.2. General stage objectives

The current law, *LOMLOE*, provides two types of objectives, the first one, to be attained at the end of the stage (they are different depending on the stage). The second one, are learning objectives (The previous law specified these objectives at community level but not now).

## 3.3. Contents

As we said before these are organised in blocks in each area, as regards foreign language teaching, *Decree 155/2022, 15th of September* divides our area in 3 different blocks:

- *Communication, which deals with the four skills*
- *Plurilingualism*
- *Interculturalism*

*Within all of them we will be able to work on written expression and comprehension, oral expression and comprehension as well as the cultural aspect necessary for an efficient communication.*

The two productive skills (writing and speaking) come later than the receptive ones. The general criteria to follow in order to sequence objectives and contents into the second and third cycles (from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 6<sup>th</sup> levels) are:

- Start from what students already knows
- Contents will be articulated out of the students' abilities
- Contents demand the presence of objects, people or actions aiming at facilitating the students' relating signifier and signified
- Contents must be understood as well as all new information coming into play in the learning-acquisition process
- Contents must not be presented in an isolated way.

### 3.4. Methodology

Nowadays it is thought that there is no perfect method. Due to this, methodology has become eclectic and informed. The learning of a foreign language is seen as a process of education and total growth. Helped by the teacher, the student controls this process, makes decisions and negotiates objectives, contents and procedures to follow.

Anyway, there are some factors affecting successful language learning:

- Aptitude: although anyone can learn a language given sufficient motivation, intelligence and opportunity, the task will be easier if some characteristics are present in a person: good memory, be good at finding patterns in samples of data, ability to detect phonetic differences...
- "Learn how to learn" strategies: pupils can benefit from being taught them, such as silent rehearsal, techniques of memorisation and alternative ways of expressing what they want to say.
- Exposure to the foreign language should be regular: the objective should be to teach little and often. We must remember that what is quickly learned is quickly forgotten.
- Exposure to authentic materials and native speakers is instrumental. An important dimension is the use of educational visits abroad.
- Teaching objectives must be carefully selected and graded to allow realistic progress with underachievers as well as with the gifted.
- Teaching methods should be flexible to suit the needs of the individual children and to make the best use of classroom design and resources.
- Motivation

The teaching of English in P.E. also includes a cultural component whose function is to familiarise students with different life styles and cultures, following Claire Kramsch, putting that culture in relation to one's own.

#### ANOTHER IMPORTANT ASPECTS RELATED TO METHODOLOGY

*Role of the teacher:*

During the lessons the teacher can develop different roles:

- Facilitator of the communicative process in the classroom.
- Participant in the activities.
- Organizer telling pupils what to do
- Needs analyst: the teacher assumes a responsibility for determining and responding to learner language needs. This can be done informally and personally in one-to-one sessions.
- Counsellor: in this case what the teacher has to do is to provide learners with translations when speaking, monitor what the learner says and help when it is necessary, advise with grammar...
- Controller: when the teacher is totally in charge of the class.

*Activities:*

To get the main goal in this area, the Foreign Language Area, which is to make students learn to communicate in a foreign language as well as to develop their communicative competence, the activities to use must be varied, motivating, flexible, creative and adapted to students' needs and interests, such as games, songs, simulations, role-plays, task-based activities, problems solving, etc. All activities will follow some stages:

- ✧ Warm up.
- ✧ Presentation Stage (introduce new language)
- ✧ Focused Practice Stage (manipulate the language)
- ✧ Communicative Practice Stage (Use that language to communicate)
- ✧ Feedback and correction Stage (Check if students have internalized and make modifications) For the development of the activities we will use diverse types of groupings:
  - Lockstep (all the class work together)
  - Pair work, increases opportunities of communication
  - Group/team work; it fosters cooperative and autonomous learning
  - Individual study; students use their own cognitive style

*Resources:*

Apart from the most traditional, if we want to get the students' interest and maintain their attention, we need to use varied and innovative materials:

- ICT's (Information and Communication Technologies): computer, DVD, interactive whiteboard, cameras, CD...
- Internet
- Realia (material that has not been created for an educational objective: menus, maps, tickets...)

### 3.5. Assessment

Apart from the Royal Decree and Decree already mentioned, we have the Order of the 26<sup>th</sup> of May 2023, which refers to the evaluation in Primary Education.

The evaluation in Primary Education is global, that is: continuous, formative and inclusive. We are going to evaluate our students, but also our teaching process.

The assessment criteria are related to the contents, as stated in the Official Curriculum. In the case of English, they are divided into five blocks: Comprehension of oral texts, Production of Oral texts, Comprehension of written texts, Production of written texts and Reflection upon language and intercultural awareness.

Assessment criteria can be defined as the specific reference to assess every student's learning process. These criteria describe those important aspects which must be achieved by students, considering both knowledge and competences, and give an explicit explanation of what any student must achieve in every subject.

## **| 4. CONCLUSION**

As we have explained, the learning of a foreign language is considered nowadays a basic necessity in the society in which we live.

Compulsory education includes English as one of the core subjects in the curriculum for Primary Education. The basic objective is to get communicative competence. It is a task of the teachers and schools to get this teaching-learning process to be successful. To get this, they have to take into account the elements included in the curriculum as well as the reality of the school.

## **| 5. BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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