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MARÍA MONTESSORI'S PEDAGOGY

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RESUMEN

For half a century, we have been witnesses of incessant debates concerning education. Several commission reforms and many revolutions. Always-passionate discussions, unrecognizable points of view and usually changes on the sidelines that do not fix anything.

As a matter of fact, everywhere education is in crisis. However, what about if the question was merely poorly planned? The current system strives to prepare the child to respond to the needs of a society whose future we know poorly. On the other hand, if we looked at the child with a potential for energy, creativity, socialization and adaptability, the question posed would be very different.

First and foremost, it is no longer about filling an empty head, but helping the child to develop their talents, to adapt to a changing world and to fulfill themselves in the relationship with others. In fact, Maria Montessori's talent is to have searched for giving solutions to these problems and consequently, this is how her methodology sprang.

Throughout this research work, we are going to discover great differences between traditional teaching and the Montessori methodology, since one of the most striking aspects of this methodology is the relationship between the teacher and the student. Another key point to take into account is that in this new educational process, the teacher becomes a guide and the child is an actor, becoming the main part of this learning process.

Finally, we will also develop the importance of applying this method in the acquisition of a second language in a multicultural world, due to the fact that our current educational system needs to suffer a great transformation in order to get our main objective, which is to acquire at least a foreign language in the most natural way.

Key words: infant education, Montessori methodology, teacher's role, characteristics of the method and the acquisition of a second language.

ABSTRACT

This Master dissertation is about classroom management in early childhood education from the method proposed by Maria Montessori. This educational method is based on respecting each child rhythm of development and learning by giving children the freedom to choose the material they want to work with, as well as allowing them to repeat the activity as many times as it is needed. Likewise, the implications of this discovery go far beyond simple pedagogy. The relationship of force traditionally established between teacher and student is questioned. In this new educative process, the teacher becomes a guide and the child, becomes an actor as aforementioned. Albeit, the young adult who has benefited from this new education will not only have fulfilled himself or herself personally and socially, but will also have a positive influence on the evolution of society. As it is cited on Poussin Charlotte, 2017; *Montessori explained for parents; Spain*. “These words make us understand that Montessori approach is clearly a “preparation for life”, and also, for an intense personal life and a harmonious social life”.

At last, it must be remarked that Maria Montessori established that a real learning takes place through manipulative tasks. Therefore, this methodology is developed by using visual, tactile, olfactory, audible and gustatory materials, since it was researched by Doctor Maria Montessori that sensorial materials help children in the development of their research spirit. Indeed, Montessori let children explore and discover the material with the purpose of learning by themselves. Moreover, she considered these materials as tools, rather than a purpose themselves. Hence, for her, the main objective is not to pass, but to practice and build their individual knowledge after manipulating each activity. Without a doubt, this fact is not only applicable to maths or language among other subjects, but also in the acquisition of a foreign language. Since as it is well known, the acquisition of a foreign language must be as similar as possible to the acquisitions of our mother tongue. Therefore, the culture of the language that wants to be taught must also be introduced in the class.

INTRODUCTION

The Montessori Method was developed by Dr. Maria Montessori in the early 1900s. This approach is a child-centered method of education that involves child-led activities (referred to as “work”), classrooms with children of varying ages and teachers who encourage independence among their pupils. As a matter of fact, for half a century, we have witnessed unnecessary debates about “education”. Many reforms, many commissions and many revolution too. Basically, education has issues everywhere, as well as everywhere we regret the inadequacy between the products of the system and the needs of society.

The current system is focused on preparing the child to answer to the society’s needs. However, if we focus our attention on the child with an energy potential, creativity, socialization and adaptability, the question raised would be totally different. Considering that it is no longer about filling an empty head, but rather helping a human being to develop his/her talent, to adapt to a changeable world and to fulfill himself or herself in a positive relationship with the others.

Unfortunately, it can be observed how nowadays three excesses characterize most children, which are:

- Excess of protection
- Excess of repression
- Excess of feeding.

Sadly, children are subjected to a world dominated by fear of difference, a precautionary principle that sterilizes any creativity and stuffed themselves with candies and sweets. Therefore, it is not surprising that we find among the new generation many children who are overfed and under-cultivated, fearful, aggressive and finally excluded from a society that rejects them.

Nevertheless, there is a solution, which is within our grasps. This solution is not other than the implementation of the use of a different educative approach based on Maria Montessori, which over the years has demonstrated that children have abilities far beyond our expectations. However, in order to put it into practice and get our objectives, it is necessary that a revolutionary change happens in Education and both current and new teachers have the opportunity to learn about its objectives, benefits and advantages and the most important thing which are the results that children show while applying this method during their education. Undoubtedly, it must be considered of a great importance that the focus must be on the child. In this way, every instructor must be conscious

of the fact that the child is a natural explorer that knows how to learn spontaneously from his/her environment. Generally speaking, the child easily practices trial-and-error learning with surprising patience as well as receives the differences with opportunities for enrichment; diversity stimulates their curiosity and generates neither fear nor anxiety. The child knows how to solve conflicts and has a surprising ability to quickly restore them, after an even violent dispute, the conditions of a common life. It is not a question here of pretending that a child abandoned to himself or herself will develop naturally in a harmonious and optimal way. Quite the contrary, the action that is proposed is demanding and difficult. Definitely, it calls for a true "transformation" of teachers.

It is worth highlighting that establishing a non-dominant relationship with children is not a natural process. Consequently, the educator must be constantly questioned. The method requires a faculty of observation that must be developed incessantly in order to guide and support each child in his/her personal journey. Contrary to a preconceived idea, the Montessori class is not a place of laxism; it is a carefully organized environment where a discipline reigns that always surprises visitors. Conclusively, it must be mentioned the important role that parents have in their children's education by collaborating constantly with the teacher.

At first glance, inspiring a Montessori class is not an easy task, but the benefits it provides to children is appreciated in value. Let us Imagine a world in which young people reach adulthood trusting in their talents, socially integrated, stimulated by difficulties and brimming over with creativity. That world is possible and along this Master's dissertation, we will discover it.

This project is made up of four different parts: the first part analyzes Maria Montessori's biography, which is an essential part to be presented since her life influenced directly to the creation of her educational method. On the second part, it will be exposed the importance in the development of the child and the different sensitive periods that take place as the child grows up. "Montessori sensitive periods refer to a period of time when a child's interests are focused on developing a particular skill or knowledge area", Poussin Charlotte, 2017; *Montessori explained for parents; Spain*. The third part of this Master dissertation deals with the main principles of Montessori Methodology in children from three until six years old. Finally, it is of an essential importance to describe the main characteristics of this pedagogy when applied at school, since teachers need to know how to prepare an appropriated atmosphere, what material they should use with their students and which their role is as educators. Moreover, the importance of sensorial materials will also be described, as well as the need to know the culture when learning a foreign language.

The conclusion this project has provided us, is not other than this methodology is getting

more and more important in today's society, as well as teachers are more conscious and interested in its application due to the fact that this method provides excellent results.

JUSTIFICATION

Some aspects of the Montessori Method have always been present in all infant education schools. However, it is true that nowadays it has become more and more famous and studied by many teachers from all around the world. Even though, parents have also become conscious about this methodology by applying it at home. The main reason for that is that this educational methodology is based on the idea of giving the child the freedom he/she deserves. It defends, among other aspects, respect for the learning rhythms of each child, the role of guide on the part of the teacher and the importance of free choice, order, distribution and the state of materials and spaces in the classroom.

As the theory explains, it is the environment, which has to adapt to the child's needs, and not the other way around. The independence of the students is prioritized.

The main objective of this Master's thesis is to study and analyze the Montessori Methodology in infant education field, as well as to improve the child's autonomy by preparing him/her for the life as it was established by the doctor Maria Montessori.

As it has been mentioned in the introduction, Montessori methodology provides many positive benefits on children. Therefore, what it is tried to be showed from this research is how this method can be implemented in schools, since it has been demonstrated that people who has been educated by this methodology have achieved success in their lives. We have the example of Jeff Bezos, the creator of Amazon; Gabriel García Márquez, who is a very well known writer and Hilary Clinton among many others. For that reason, the main purpose followed is to present and demonstrate how this method really works and what is more important how this method has changed people lives by turning them into independent, autonomous and free adults.

Moreover, I also want to emphasize that this topic about Montessori Method is of scientific interest because it provides a compilation of empirical data, a comparison with previous studies in the field or the study of a previous investigation, but with a new innovative approach and updated to the circumstances of the moment.

Be that as it may, this topic has a practical value, since it can be applied in real life situations.

CONTEXT

In order to talk and understand about Maria Montessori and her methodology, we must research about many aspects of her life such as social, industrial and personal that made her have a vision totally different to the ideals that people and women had at that time.

Maria Montessori was a revolution herself. She was an Italian educator, scientific, physician, psychiatrist, philosopher, anthropologist, biologist and psychologist. She was also contemporary of Sigmund Freud and developed her own classification of mental illnesses. Between the 1898 and the 1900, Maria worked with children who were excluded due to the fact that they had mental retardation. It was during that practice when she realized that some of those children did not have their potentials developed and that was the moment when she started to work with them by using her own methodology. Day by day, she was discovering how those children started to learn and develop their skills as any other children. From that moment, her vocation started until fifty years later.

Regarding education, since the middle of the XIX century public education is becoming the first and most important institution, which ensured the control of education.

What we currently know as New School or Active School is thanks to Maria Montessori, since schools needed a deep change in practical and theoretical levels. “Paidocentrism” (Sanchidran B. y Berrío, 2010) is among the approaches proposed by the new school, which means that the child is the center of all educational activity, an active being and capable of learning by herself or himself. Moreover, as it has been mentioned before, the teacher’s role also changed as he/she is not the center of the learning anymore, but a facilitator and guide for the child who is now the protagonist of his/her own learning process. In summary, it can be said that the New School was a revolutionary movement that took place in the last century by contributing in the educative system, where learning was understood as a process of acquiring knowledge transmitted by educators.

OBJECTIVES

The main objective followed when studying Maria Montessori method is to analyze in depth the nature of it, which implies the reasons why it took place, a revision of her theoretical approaches and decide its effectiveness on primary and infant children.

On the other hand, there are some specific objectives, which must be achieved:

- To investigate and analyze the most relevant aspects of the Montessori methodology.

- To determine the degree of effectiveness in primary and infant education students.
- To investigate and analyze the most important points of the Montessori methodology.
- To know the importance and the effect of teaching material used by Maria Montessori.
- To appreciate the need of teaching culture when learning a foreign language.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Along this section, we are going to give answer to those objectives established above. In order to do so, we do need to analyze Maria Montessori's life and the pedagogical system that she created herself and with the contribution of other important people such as Jean Piaget or Édouard Séguin.

In the history of pedagogy, few female names are remembered. Perhaps the most important one is Maria Montessori, author and creator of a method that greatly changed the way how children were taught in early childhood and primary education. Maria was born in Ancona, Italy in 1870 and her wide and long professional career is difficult to synthesize, since Maria dared to embody different roles at a time when women were defined as the angel of home. Today, her pedagogical method is as valid as at the beginning and it can be said without fear of exaggeration that Maria Montessori is the most famous Italian woman in history.

Forging a path in a world by and for men made her stand out since she was a child and throughout her life. Her desire to study medicine overcame opposition not only from his father, but from the authorities of the University of Rome. It must be taken into account that in those years of the late XIX century, women's access to higher education continued to be something strange and reserved for a few brave women. However, in 1897 Maria Montessori became the first woman in getting the certificate in Medicine in Italy. That episode on her life gives us an idea of how Maria Montessori was intellectually and morally. Moreover, it teaches us that anybody can fight against the system when it is unfair for human beings.

Maria had always rejected to become a teacher, as it was the unique profession that women could develop in the past. However, the extremely poor conditions in which she found many children that she saw during her visits to the hospital changed her mind and her professional career too. The direct contact with these children arose in the young doctor a concern for education, a subject in which she began to form herself, convinced that medical and physical treatment was insufficient for her to advance in her development.

Nonetheless, the doctor did not agree with the teaching techniques used in Europe, which

were often cruel and rigid. She believed that the child should not be modeled, directed and much less punished, but he/she should acquire knowledge progressively, freely, in a way that respects his/her own development. Then, it was when she designed her methodology, which is based on the development of creativity, the didactic autonomy of the student and a meaningful learning. These concepts, which in the XXI century are part of the current educational system, were completely new at the time. Thus, due to her reformist spirit, Maria broke the molds of the woman of her time and also the image of children, who at that time were seen but rarely heard. Besides this, one of her most important achievements was that the doctor developed her method to end a world at war and for the establishment of peace. This is perhaps the essential point of her thought and the most unknown as well. Maria, who lived through the two world wars and was also affected by the Spanish civil war, turned all her energies into spreading the importance of working for a peaceful future through education.

Therefore, generally speaking, Maria Montessori revolutionized education in such a way that her main purpose was to restructure the society in order to live in peace. For that reason, it can be said that the real objective followed by Maria Montessori was not to facilitate the learning of mathematics through manipulative materials and neither to get that children learnt how to read or write by themselves with a method that respects their rhythms and needs. Of course that these were also her purposes, however the main objective was to transform education in a useful instrument that avoid conflicts and achieves the peace for years and years. (Montessori explicado a los padres, Charlotte Pussin, 2017).

Nowadays, Maria Montessori is known all around the world and her methodology is applied in thousands of schools, as well as her books that have been translated into more than twenty-two languages. However, her methodology must be considered as a life philosophy and a way to understand the world. Maria was an exceptional woman who revolutionized the way to understand human beings and their own potentials. (Montessori explicado a los padres, Charlotte Pussin, 2017). In conclusion, it can be said that the message she tried to send was an optimist message and she also wanted to make us see that we need to fight for what is the best for us. Her legacy can be subscribed to the famous words that the social activist Martin Luther King said, “even knowing that the world may disappear tomorrow, we will still plant the apple tree.”

1. THE FIRST MONTESSORI SCHOOL

After working for four years as a professor in the University of Rome, Maria had the opportunity to create a reception place for children without specific needs. Indeed, she was entrusting some children who were homeless in San Lorenzo's neighborhood, in Rome. In January 1907, Maria opened the first school, which was called *Casa dei Bambini* ("children's house"). Immediately, Maria Montessori asked to have some furniture built, which were appropriated for the children's heights, which was seen as a revolutionary fact at that moment. She contracted an assistant, who helped her looking after fifty children and Maria offered to them pedagogical material, which had been designed previously.

With a scientific attitude of investigation, Maria watched children evolving spontaneously in an environment that had been prepared for them. The material had been adapted according to observations, as well as new activities were elaborated. Maria Montessori was so surprised by children's concentration abilities and their auto discipline that she created more experiences and positive discoveries. She observed that children need order, be able to choose the material they want to work with and have the opportunity to repeat them as many times as they want to, since they want to focus more on the activity itself than on its purpose. In this way, Maria discovered a new pedagogy, which later on would be known as "scientific pedagogy", which is nowadays the Montessori Methodology. On the other hand, it is also important to mention how those children took the habits they were acquiring to their houses such as caring for the environment and keeping everything ordered around them, since it provoked on them positive feelings such as happiness or peace.

2. THE MULTIPLICATION OF MONTESSORI SCHOOLS

The methodology used by Maria was so revolutionary that it appeared in the international press and her school received thousands of visitors who wanted to discover this type of school and method. This resulted in the opening of a second house of children in another poor neighborhood.

Maria became famous all around the world and she decided to write some books talking about her method, children and their progress. She participated in different talks in which she could exhibit her methodology and talk about self-education. Everybody wanted to know about that method which gave room to the creation of a course for educators by Maria Montessori. There were two courses, one for children between three and six years old and the other one for ages between six and twelve. These courses became international in 1913. Schools multiplied, but it was interrupted

by the war of 1914. Due to that fact, Maria Montessori had to move to Barcelona, where formative courses were created and some schools too. In addition, it must be highlighted that Maria worked with his son Mario, who helped her in the development of her pedagogy by training more than five thousand teachers. Her main objective is that her methodology is developed by respecting the main fundamental principles. Consequently, in 1929, both Maria and Mario created The Montessori International association (AMI), whose main objective was to promote and preserve her methodology. Nowadays, this association is still active and in France, it is known as the AMF.

In 1934, Mussolini, who had met Maria Montessori previously and who admired her in such a way that he ordered to use her methodology in all the Italian schools, decided to close all her schools as he disagreed with an important principle that she followed, which was to educate for the peace. After that, Maria decided to move again with a unique purpose, which was to continue spreading her knowledge. She lived in England, but then she moved to the Netherlands, where she created a new formative course and a new school in Laren.

In 1939, Maria had to run away because of the war and she chose India where she would teach to more and more educators (that teaching was always free). She went to Madras and she stayed there till 1945, where she created numerous schools and where she also met Nehru, Tagore and Ghandi, who became her friend. She became more and more interested in intrauterine life and newborns. However, she insisted on the fact that in order to get a peaceful world, it is necessary that children were educated about it from the beginning of their lives. Consequently, she wrote down new books, like “Education and peace, 1949”, in which it is pointed out that establishing lasting peace is the goal of education. That book was nominated for the Nobel prize three times. Later on, she continued writing more books and one of them was “The absorbing mind of the child”, which was written before she died in 1952.

Maria was a revolutionary woman, since she did not only fight for the correct education for children, but also against the bad conditions that women and working people were involved in that time. On the other hand, she reported the fact that children must not work, but rather prepare for their lives, what would help them for their wellbeing and happiness. After her death, her son Mario Montessori was in charge of the association AMI until 1985. It can be clearly said that Maria Montessori left a great legacy all over the world.

3. MONTESSORI NOWADAYS

Nowadays, there are more than thirty thousand Montessori schools all around the world. Even though, some of those schools receive some public assistance. Despite its antiquity, the Montessori Method is more alive than ever. Nonetheless, it can be said that the traditional classroom has started to suffer important changes thanks to those teachers who have discovered this methodology and are applying it with their students, since once teachers explain to the children's parents the methodology he/she will be using in the classroom, parents become more conscious about what is about to change on their children's lives and still after that, this pedagogy is not just applied in schools, but it is also used as a practice to be developed in the familiar context with their own children.

Currently, many investigations have been carried out in the neuroscience field and the cognitive psychology too, which confirm the discoveries done by Maria Montessori. Among them, it can be cited the one done by Angeline Stoll Lillard, who studied her methods for more than twenty years. She is a North American investigator and psychology teacher in Virginia's University. In her book *Montessori, the Science Behind the Genius*, 2005. She presents the scientific investigations that confirm the Montessori principles.

The method of Maria Montessori can be applied in schools, however it is necessary to take into account each child's rhythm and peace, since as Maria explains every child is different to the others, learn in a different way and have different needs too. However, we must bear in mind that this methodology is concerned about the development of the child as an autonomous person and the spontaneous knowledge about the world. Therefore, it can be said that it is an essential tool, which releases children and which has nothing to do with the current traditional teaching in primary education, in which children are forced to stay in the classroom without moving, speaking or standing up. Therefore, "children are submitted to a learning system, which amputate their learning process, since as it has been proved the best way for children to learn is through movements." (Pussin, C., *Montessori explicado a los padres*, 2017.)

As it is cited in "Montessori explicado a los padres, Charlotte Poussin, 2017", although it is reassuring to demonstrate the effectiveness of this pedagogy, the objective of this approach is not to allow children to be "advanced", but to be autonomous, adapted and satisfied in their thirst to learn and therefore feel fulfilled, individually and in community. The Montessori pedagogy aims to be developed at home, in the nursery and in public primary schools.

4. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHILD

According to Maria Montessori, the development of the child is a process of change in which the child learns to control levels. These levels of difficulty start growing such as movements, feelings and his/her relationship with the others. Therefore, every change that takes place in the development of the child is related to the other and must be taken into account as a group. (Montessori, M., *The Absorbent Mind*, 1964).

As it has been researched along the years, the child development starts before he/she is even born, during the gestation process. For that reason, the child development must be seen as a process for his/her entire life. However, this development needs from social and environmental interactions from which the child learns every day. According to Maria Montessori, as the human being is not limited to a specific territory, époque or climate, it is in our hands to transform our environment. (Montessori, M., *The Absorbent Mind*, 1964).

Every child is unique and have the possibility to create a new way of life in which he or she can have the freedom he/she deserves. Therefore, it can be said that children do not just live for surviving, but rather participating in the human being's evolution. This development takes place because of an interaction process, which occurs when he/she responds to biophysics and social atmosphere, interacting with them and learning from them. In addition, it can be mention that there are four dimensions of child development, which are going to be described briefly in the following:

1. Communicative development or communicative dimension.
2. Logical development or logical dimension of thought.
3. Personal and social development or personal and social dimension.
4. Kinetic body development or kinetic body dimension.

Through the aforementioned dimensions, skills and abilities are considered basic for human's life and especially for children from zero to five years old. However, it is understood that it is expanded through adolescence. The dimensions are not developed automatically nor homogeneously, since every human being is different from the others. In order to know more about the five dimensions established above, let us introduce them in a briefly way. (Montessori, M., *The Absorbent Mind*, 1964).

In the first place, we must talk about the communicative development or communicative

dimension. It contains the different forms of interaction that enable children to establish dialogues that allow them to express feelings, emotions, needs, thoughts and interactions. Language does not only refer to the written or spoken word, it appears when the required physical maturation, the appropriate mental structure and an understanding of the world and socio-affective interaction that allows it have been reached. Through a good communication, the child development is achieved and in turn, this development points out to the search for the communicative capacity of the boy and girl, which is essential for their adequate growth. That is to say, that the smile, the babbling, the first words and corporal activities, among others, are expressions of the communicative capacity. The development of expression and communication is achieved through verbal and non-verbal language, the mother tongue, the identification and understanding of the developmental characteristics of the reading and writing processes. Bearing in mind that communication is very important in the early years; parents should take the opportunity to sow the principles and values that determine the rest of their lives. (Montessori, M., *The Absorbent Mind*, 1964).

Secondly, the logical development or logical dimension of thought is recognized as the importance of providing children with conditions and an appropriated environment that help her/him to shape their childhood thinking and their particular way of reasoning, as well as expressing and organizing their ideas, conceptions of the world and of themselves, is recognized. (Montessori, M., *The Absorbent Mind*, 1964). Henceforth, logical thinking is described as the one that makes it possible to capture the internal and external world of the subject and make it his own, differentiating in it all those characteristics, dimensions and relationships that compose it. For example, distinguishing appearance from reality, differentiating objects and putting them for an adequate use, developing concepts, and establishing relationships, comparisons, and classifications are all aspects of logical thinking. Logical development involves learning related to observation, exploration, establishment of relationships, serialization, identification and construction of the notion of object. (Montessori, M., *The Absorbent Mind*, 1964).

Thirdly, the Personal and social development or personal and social dimension is understood in terms of the development of each person from an individual and social view, which refers to the self-esteem, autonomy and the relationship with others. The configuration of personality traits as well as the introduction into the attitudes, values and customs of a society, the family, adults, culture, are basic aspects of child development. Family, adults, other peers and, in general, the environment exert a vitally important influence to structure personal and social development in the first years of life. (Montessori, M., *The Absorbent Mind*, 1964).

Lastly, the Body-kinetic development or body-kinetic dimension results from its interaction

with the environment in a process that allows the progressive growth or increase in size, the development of functional body structures, and the maturation or progress throughout the life cycle of the human being. (Montessori, M., *The Absorbent Mind*, 1964). Regardless, it is important to enrich spaces and relationships, so that through exploration, movement, the perception of their own body and that of others and of body management, the boy and the girl take ownership of the environment, dominate it and build it. The greater or lesser richness of the environment influences the development results in each of the mentioned aspects. By the same token, nutrition is considered as the major contributor to this development.

Once the four dimensions in the development of the child has been presented, we are moving on to study in depth how Maria Montessori considered that a child's mind work. According to Maria, the child's mind absorbs naturally and progressively everything around them. The difference between the adult's mind and the child's mind is that adults learn in a conscious way, whereas children do it in unconsciously. As it can be read on Poussin Charlotte, 2017; Montessori explained for parents; Spain. Maria Montessori compared the child's unconsciousness with the dark camera in which the photographs were developed. The absorbing mind, which allows the child to absorb the means, which surrounds him/her. Even though, there is an expression that totally coincides with this assertions mentioned before, which is "children are like sponges". They learn from their experiences and the feeling that these experiences provoke on them, since these experiences are essential for their mental maturation. Consequently, the interaction between the physical life (the experience of the body) and the mental life (the work that the mind does) is what Maria Montessori called "The absorbing mind", which is a mental condition that allows children to assimilate their experiences and build themselves through them.

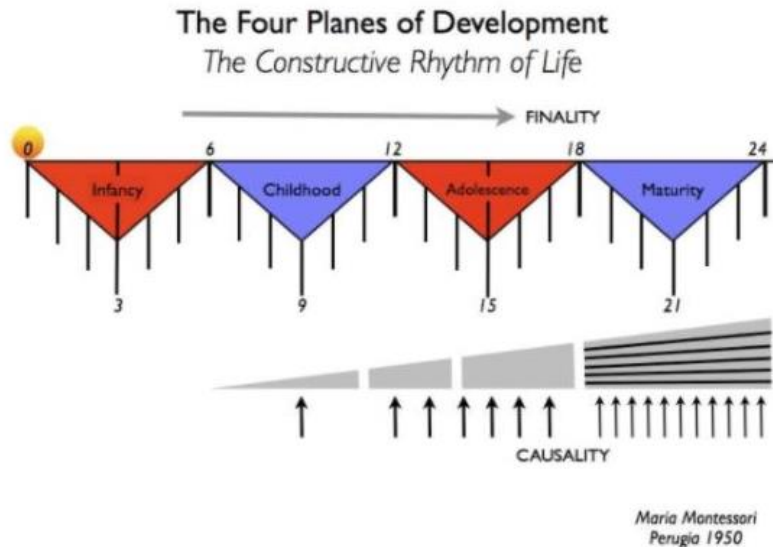
4.1. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHILD ACCORDING TO MARIA MONTESSORI

Montessori conceives education more as a development than as an adaptation itself. She established that the child needs to be respected and take into account their capacities to learn.

For Montessori in the evolution of the human being, mental development is an important factor, since after making different observations she realized that children went through different stages of development from birth to the age of eighteen. In addition, she observed that in these stages children learned in a very special way and consolidated their learning with little effort.

It turns out to be that the child is in a continuous process of growth and transformation, which is such a particular characteristic in which the child differs from the adult, who has already reached maturity in their development. In fact, Maria observed different characteristics and ways of

learning, which showed the need to establish concrete educational approaches for each period of development. According to this approach, the child would pass from birth to adulthood thanks to four different periods:



4.1.1. PERIOD 1 (0-6 YEARS OLD)

The first stage ranges from birth to six years of age. During this period, Montessori pointed out that the child possesses rapid and significant physical and psychological development. This period is called “the absorbing mind” and it is divided into the unconscious mind (0-3 years old) and the conscious mind (3-6 years old).

4.1.2. THE ABSORBING MIND (0-6 YEARS OLD)

According to Maria Montessori, the child first assimilates and then analyses what happens around him/her. As it can be read on many researches, children are learning unconsciously from the moment they are born until they are three years old. The most clear example is that children acquire the language; understanding the difference between the real and the unreal; the visual motor coordination; the personal hygiene habits and independence. Therefore, it is said that children use all their senses during this period. However, from the age of three till they become six, it turns progressively into a conscious learning and it is done through the movement. During this period, it is essential to work with children the concentration, the willpower or the memory. Now, the child is conscious about what happens around them and he/she uses his/her hands as the main tool to know that environment. Moreover, it is said that the brain works as a vacuum

that capture everything without differentiating between the good or the bad. For that reason, it is so important as adults to transmit good values and good practices with the others that help children differentiating between the good and the bad in order to avoid that in the future those children become racist, sexist or homophobic among many others negative behaviors that are quite present in our current society. This allows him/her to develop a feeling of belonging to a social group, which gives him/her a feeling of security and, hence self-confidence. Therefore, the child builds his/her own personality and is adapted to his/her culture and epoch by integrating the characteristics of his/her environment. Moreover, according to Maria Montessori, this is the age in which the child works without stress and assimilating the knowledge as an exhilarating nourishment as it is mentioned on *El método de la pedagogía científica, Biblioteca Nueva, 2004*.

It must be remembered that when the child becomes a teenager that capacity of absorbing everything starts diminishing, since their brain eliminates useless neurons in order to give rise to those, which are more used. Therefore, it can be said that learning is to eliminate superfluous capacities to develop the most useful ones.

4.1.3. THE CHILDHOOD PERIOD (6-12 YEARS OLD)

This second period of development takes place from the age of six till twelve. Although the child is continuously developing, during this period no many changes take place, since it is a period, which is characterized by the stability of the child. The main reason for that assertion is that they have the possibility to use the new information and the information acquired previously. This information will be used to answer questions such as “why”, “how” and “when”. On the other hand, as it is cited on Maria Montessori’s book, *El método de la pedagogía científica, Biblioteca Nueva, 2004*, “there are other aspects, which awake the child’s interest such as the development of the universe, of the life, of the history of human beings and their civilization among many others”. They also develop interest for the social relationships and they become worried about moral questions.

Physically, Maria Montessori could observe how children lost their milk teeth, their legs grow and their torso too. At an interactive level, Maria realized that boys and girls tended to work in groups; hence, they socialize with the other colleagues. From a developmental point of view, Maria thought that the work of children at this level would be the intellectual Independence and the social organization.

4.1.4. THE TEENAGER PERIOD (12-18 YEARS OLD)

This third period extends from the age of twelve until the teenager becomes eighteen and which is known as the adolescence and it's divided into two periods: puberty and adolescence.

As it is well known, puberty is a transformative period in which the Child's mind and body suffer many changes in a very short period of time. The teenager is not a child anymore, but he/she is not an adult neither. The adolescent is looking for his/her new identity. After having adopted the values of the environment, he/she reconsiders and questions them. The adolescent may reject it for a time. It is often a time of conflict or, in any case, of demands. It is a period of crisis in the etymological sense of the term, which comes from the Greek *Krisis*, which means to separate, distinguish, in other words, "to make choices." Unfortunately, it is a very unclear stage, because it is very difficult to give up the comforts of childhood. However, the adolescent has an increasing thirst for autonomy. According to Montessori in "*El método de la pedagogía científica, Biblioteca Nueva, 2004*", this period can be compared as a "new birth". Nevertheless, this time, it is a social birth.

4.1.5. THE MADURITY PERIOD (18-24 YEARS OLD)

Maturity is the stage of separation. As it can be read on "*El método de la pedagogía científica, Biblioteca Nueva, 2004*" by María Montessori, "the individual is no longer a seeking adolescent, there is nothing left of childhood. Independence is real. The young adult has become aware of his/her person and of the society. He/she is autonomous and capable of acquiring responsibilities. No doubt, in our day, entry into adulthood begins a little later. However, this depends on for whom. Knowing the stages of growth allows a better response to the psychic needs of the developing child". However, there is not much we know about this stage in words of Maria Montessori, since she did not go in depth in the study of this life 'stage'.

5. THE MAIN PRINCIPLES OF MONTESSORI METHODOLOGY BETWEEN THREE UNTIL SIX YEARS OLD

Maria Montessori established three sayings regarding the developmental needs of the child. These sayings can be read on "*El método de la pedagogía científica, Biblioteca Nueva, 2004*" by María Montessori", which are the following:

"Help me to be myself. It will favour my self-esteem", this is what the child told us from his/her birth moment until he/she becomes 6".

"Help me to do it alone or help me to act on my own, this favors the confidence in myself", he/she

tells us now, from 3 to 6 years old.

“Help me to think by myself”, he will tell us from 6 years old.

What Maria Montessori wanted us to know is that we must go with each child with the confidence that he/she is able to build himself or herself. Regarding the main principles of her methodology, we must start developing the most important one from my point of view, which is “the freedom”.

6. THE FREEDOM

As it can be read on the preface of “The method of the scientific pedagogy, 1909” by Maria Montessori, “It is not about abandoning the child to himself or herself to do what he/she wants, but about preparing an environment for him/her where he/she can act freely”. The concept of freedom is essential in the thought of Maria Montessori. She was convinced that the child carries within himself or herself his/her project and his/her own development scheme, which can only be developed if he/she evolves freely, if he/she chooses the activities responding to an intuition. This free choice of activity can only be carried out in a suitable setting. For this reason, the environment must be carefully prepared. (Poussin, C., Montessori explicado a los padres, 2017). However, this freedom is not considered total, since the child needs to build himself/herself progressively. As well as the fact that this inner freedom takes place in a flexible and adapted way to each of the children. The main reason for not giving a total freedom to the child is because if we allow him/her to do whatever they want, they will never be free, as he/she is lock on his/her loneliness. Therefore, it can be said that the child is free when he or she is able to learn and continue constructing himself/herself if some limits have been established. As it has been mentioned previously, our main goal as adults is to help the child become an autonomous and responsible person in a society in which we are constantly dealing with many people from the same or different culture. In order to get our objective, we need to provide our children with very clear rules and those rules must be permanent. Since according to Maria Montessori on “*El método de la pedagogía científica, Biblioteca Nueva, 2004*” by *María Montessori*”, “*we must constantly remind the Child that each one freedom stops where the others ‘freedom begins’*”.

Given these points, it is important to remark that the main objective of education is to help the child become an autonomous and independent adult. For it, it is necessary to have been dependent. Indeed, this dependence of the child has created a special link between both of them, since the child is aware of the security he/she feels when is with the adult. Later on, the child will know that he/she can rely on that person for any aspect of his/her life. In fact, this security is the responsible of the autonomy that the child develops. (Poussin, C., Montessori explicado a los padres, 2017). Maria

Montessori considered that the child needs to choose the activity he/she wants to develop freely, since on that way the child is developing both: his/her independence and dependence in a balanced way, which will bring happiness to him/her. In fact, this freedom, which is delimited by rules, seems immense when compared to children in certain traditional schools. The Montessori class is therefore a favorable place of life for trips and verbal exchanges, as well as for initiatives, insofar as the work environment is respected, of course.

6.1. THE FREE CHOICE OF THE ACTIVITY AND ITS DURATION

It is well known by those teachers who have studied deeply the Montessori methodology that the material, which is commonly known as the Montessori material, is in the classroom. Moreover, that material is available for the children in shelves adapted to their height. So that, they can freely choose the material they want to work with according to their needs and their sensitive periods too. However, it is quite important to mention that not every child develops at the same pace and consequently, their needs may be different. As it is mentioned on “*El método de la pedagogía científica, Biblioteca Nueva, 2004*” by María Montessori, “*the possibility to choose an activity and practice it as many times as the child wants to, allows the child to satisfy his/her needs of learning*”. The Montessori method is characterized by the fact that children can choose the material they want to work with and practice it as much as they need it. However, there is only a rule, which is to put that material back to the place it was found and also not to take any material if it is not in the place it is supposed to be, since it may mean that a child is using it, but maybe at that moment he/she is absent. On the other hand, it is also necessary to explain the child that he/she can choose an activity if it has previously been explained by the educator or another child. Since, every Montessori material must be presented before using it.

6.2. THE FREEDOM FOR COMMUNICATING AND MOVING IN THE CLASS

In the Montessori classroom, there is another very important rule that allows children to speak and communicate freely, however it should always be in a low voice to avoid disturbing the rest of the classmates who are working individually in the classroom. It is very important that a child who is concentrating on the activity he/she is doing is not interrupted, much less when the educator is introducing him/her to a new activity or material. To avoid these problems, the educator explains to his/her students that when they want to communicate something, they will simply need to put their hand on the shoulder of the person they want to talk to and once that person has finished, they will be attended.

On the other hand, another very important aspect to take into account in the Montessori

classroom is that the child has total freedom to move around the classroom. However, these movements must be controlled and silent. Maria Montessori wanted the child to be totally free, however she also realized that they needed to follow some rules. For this reason, she decided to teach them how to lift a chair to avoid making noise or how to close the doors softly and place the material carefully when they no longer need it. In fact, it is very surprising to see how children even walk on tiptoe to disturb as little as possible. This is due to this freedom of movement, since the child manages to structure himself. Teachers who work in Montessori schools have even said that in a Montessori class is possible to hear the flies because of the freedom that is given to the child and it is because this discipline comes from the inside of the child. In this way, we are also teaching them rules of courtesy and respect, which are also taught in the Montessori class such as how to raise a chair without making noise or disturbing other people; how to ask for help to the guide; the importance of collaborating in the cleaning of the class in a voluntary way or how to solve conflicts by speaking among many others. Therefore, the Montessori Method is also essential to teach children manners, respect, social education and skills.

7. THE SELF-DISCIPLINE

One of the fundamental principles of the Montessori methodology is the self-discipline, which is totally linked to the concept of freedom. According to Maria Montessori on “*El método de la pedagogía científica, Biblioteca Nueva, 2004*”, “*the discipline must come from within to be real*”. Equally important to be mentioned is the fact that the control of the error that comes from the outside generates passivity and creates a dependency. Therefore, it is better that the child does not get used to being corrected by another, as this could make him or her a passive person. Children can often be observed in traditional classes waiting and even queuing in single queues to be corrected. However, it has been proved that this wastes their time and breaks their cycle of activity.

On the other hand, when marking the child's activity with a red pen we are not conscious of the big mistake we are making, since this can affect his/her self-esteem and lose confidence in himself/herself. It is true that an error can be underlined (sometimes), however it is better to do it orally to live to the child the choice to cross out his/her activity if it is wrong. Why should we mark their mistakes when they are rather at stage of learning towards the success? Consequently, the exercise must be considered as an activity for training and not an end in itself. The human being needs self-confidence to learn; therefore, if he/she feels that what has been done is wrong, his/her self-esteem will diminish daily. So that, as teachers we must value the errors, since the main objective is to work with the inside of the person, as we cannot forget that the fear for the intelligence is the stress. (Poussin, C., *Montessori explicado a los padres*, 2017). Therefore, the best

option is to let the child control his/her own learning process, as well as being able to discover his/her own mistakes, as this will increase his/her confidence. On the other hand, it is also important to teach the child how to praise himself/herself when he/she has successes in an activity. Since, it is better than giving him/her our congratulations, which can provoke dependence and he/she will only have the objective to do the activity correctly in order to obtain our praise. Consequently, it is better to tell them “you must be proud of yourself and feel satisfaction” instead of telling, “bravo, you are really good”. Of course, it is important to encourage them, but it is better to teach them how they can auto encourage themselves.

Once it has been developed how Maria Montessori considered that errors must be taken into account in order to avoid that children are not in low self-esteem. We are going to continue studying how teachers must act in the class by focusing on the environment, rather than on the child himself/herself.

8. ACT ON THE PERIPHERY

According to Maria Montessori, it is more suitable to act on the environment than directly on the child, since it will help to his/her own development. The main reason for that assertion is because many commands can pose a problem, even though it can block the child. It is quite easy to understand it and to do so we just need to put ourselves into their position. Would we be able as adults to handle as many orders as children do listen during a whole day? Then, why do you think that they can handle it? Even though, it is very clear that it can provoke a feeling of inferiority and what is worst, it can create new complexes. Therefore, children's behavior is influenced more and more positively, acting on the periphery of the child rather than on the child directly. (Poussin, C., Montessori explicado a los padres, 2017). For instance, if we want children to speak lower, we should speak to them in a low tone of voice and putting ourselves at their height. Progressively, children adapt their tone to adapt themselves to the atmosphere around them and even though they realize that, it relaxes him/her, what finally becomes on a pleasure for them.

On the other hand, another example of acting on the periphery is when we want children to take off their shoes at the entrance of the class. If we want to get that objective, it will be easier to place a furniture at the entrance of the class and teach them from the beginning that this is the best place to keep shoes when entering the class. Consequently, the preparation of the space encourages them to act in one way or another. We can act on the environment to act on the child indirectly being more respectful with them too. Since as it well known, the message is better received when it is suggested or proposed than when it is imposed. Moreover, those children who receive that respect, they do respect themselves and the others too, as well as they do concentrate more in

everything they have to do.

After having talked about the need of acting in the periphery rather than directly on the child, we are going to move into another important aspect of Montessori Method, which is the respect for the rhythm of each child.

9. RESPECT FOR THE RHYTHM OF EACH ONE

When talking about the Montessori Method, we cannot forget to mention about the importance of respecting each child rhythm of learning. It matters little whether the child is slow or fast, since the essential part is that the child is focused on what he/she is doing. Moreover, when respecting the child rhythm in a Montessori class is when a truth learning is taking place as the child feels free to explore, investigate and learn at his/her own pace without an adult slowing him/her down. Woefully, it is a pity that our society often favors those students who are faster. However, Montessori established that we cannot label children as slow or fast students, since if we repeat constantly that they are “slow”, they will finally be slow. Their rhythm can progress along the day, the year or their life. On the other hand, it can be confirmed that it is not so bad that children sometimes come to a standstill, but it is always good that adults do not make them feel that they did something wrong (Montessori, M., *The secret of childhood*, 1936).

In Montessori classes, it can be observed that children may look slow, because of the fact that they do want to repeat the same activity several times. However, this is not something negative as what those children try to do is to perfect that activity, since it will improve their self-esteem. It is very sad that our current educative system focuses on categorizing children according to their age, which forces teachers and children to teach and learn when they are not ready for that. Consequently, if we demand children to learn something for which they are not ready to, we will just get frustration, negation and what is worst, we will be postponing their learning rhythm. This is what Maria Montessori called as deviation, which was classified into two categories: deliberate (adult-fostered) and non-deliberate (those not fostered by adults). (Montessori, M., *The secret of childhood*, 1936). Maria Montessori established fugues and barriers as several deviations that are not fostered by adults and which are taken as “normal” stages of development and deviations that are demonstrated by the strong and the weak children (Montessori, M., *The Absorbent Mind*, 1964). Firstly, a fugue in Montessori terms is when a child “runs away” from a task. In other words, they start an activity, but suddenly they feel the need to leave it unfinished and start a new one. This reaction is related to those children who are never quiet and whose movements have no a purpose. These children only use toys because they do need to be entertained.

Secondly, a barrier is a deviation, which is strong enough to prevent the child from responding to his/her surroundings. It shows itself as disobedience or obstinacy. The most frequent barriers are dependence, possessiveness, lust for power, inferiority complex, fear, lies and psychosomatic illnesses. (Montessori, M., *The Absorbent Mind*, 1964). So, how is an adult going to help a child overcome these deviations and help them along the path to normalization? Dr. Montessori stated that teachers must be patient, since getting angry to children will not help them in the development of their confidence or independence. Therefore, she also recommended teachers to organize activities which have a final purpose and which are interesting for them. Once the child has returned into a normal behavior, the adult must be conscious of the importance of not interrupting him/her while is focused on the new task, since we want children not to deviate again (Montessori, M., *The Absorbent Mind*, 1964).

It has been demonstrated that deviations take place in both, strong and weak children. Moreover, in “The Absorbent Mind, 1964” Maria Montessori mentioned how deviation affect to both of them. On the one hand, the strong students are described by Maria as capricious and aggressive children, who react violently. They are also disobedient and unable to concentrate. Moreover, they have difficulties coordinating their hands. Generally, they are noisy and cruel with the others. On the other hand, weak students are the opposite. They are passive, without feelings and break down sobbing when they want to get something done by the others, since they need to be entertained, as they do get bored easily. In this case, children with this type of behavior perceive the world around them as terrifying. Consequently, they use to take refuge in adults, who will provide them the confidence they need. Moreover, these children may deny themselves to eat, have nightmares, be afraid of the dark and have psychosomatic illnesses. (Montessori, M., *The Absorbent Mind*, 1964).

According to Maria Montessori in *The Absorbent Mind*, 1964, the role of the adult is of great importance to help the child overcome his/her difficulties. What Maria tried to transmit to those adults is that they do need to let go of anger and pride, since they child needs more help than a physical attention. Therefore, there is not better way to help them than being patience instead of getting angry to them. However, one of the main problems that adults have is that they are impatience with children. Therefore, adults need to know and educate themselves and provide as much help as they can. An example for that is when children want to help their parents lay the table. Children love helping in a volunteer way until they get tired. Consequently, the adult’s reaction is to release the child from that weight, but psychologist are convinced that this kind of “help”, by interrupting the child's cycle of activity, It's one of the most serious acts of repression that can be

carried out. All these alterations occur for a single reason: that it is sufficient food for the life of the mind. (The Absorbing Mind in Diana edition, 1986).

Once the importance of working with children in a patience way and according to their rhythm have been explained. We are going to mention how Montessori considered that the best way to learn is through the experience. As well as, the need to introduce the culture of the countries when a language is going to be taught.

10. LEARNING FROM THE EXPERIENCE AND THE IMPORTANCE OF CULTURE IN THE ACQUISITION OF A SECOND LANGUAGE

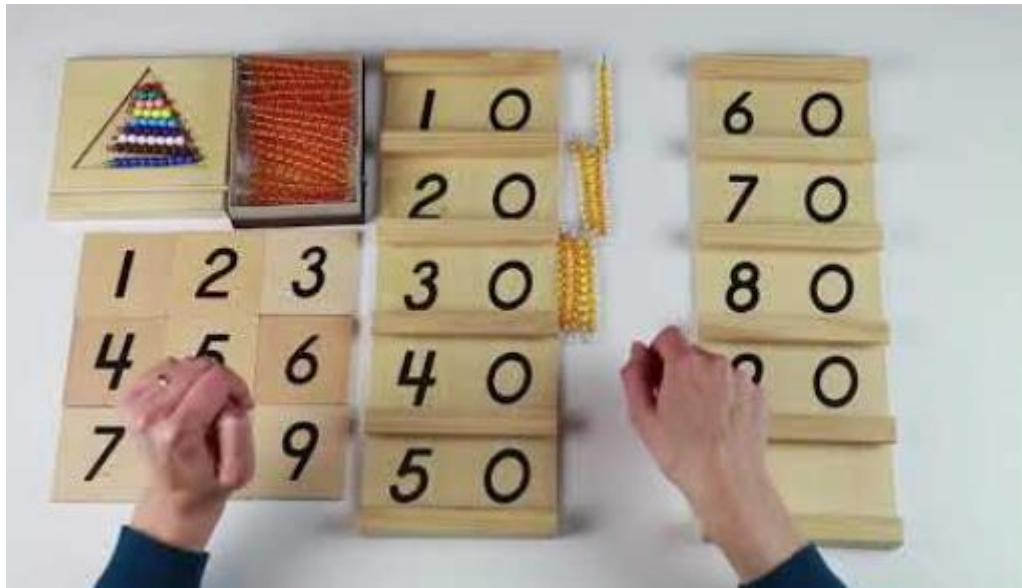
The social, technological and economic changes produced in the world in the last decades require a total transformation in the teaching-learning process. We are suffering a transition from a traditional educative system in which the teacher is the protagonist and children are just mere spectators to an education in which children are the responsible for their own learning process. Therefore, the main objective of the educative system must be directed into an education, which is not just focused on teaching knowledge, but rather teaching and training children to individually learn how to be independent and have a critical thinking. Therefore, a pedagogical methodology based on the experience, in which both teachers and students work together, is the most appropriated to get our aims.

According to Maria Montessori (*El Método de la pedagogía científica*, 1909), “the senses are organs of "pressure" of the images of the external world, necessary for the intelligence, as the hand is the organ of grasp of the material things necessary for the body.”

The methodology of Maria Montessori is totally focused on learning from manipulating materials. Learning takes place thanks to an individual process, which implies that through manipulation the child build his/her, own intelligence. Therefore, it is of great importance that the child learns each notion and must manipulate the material at length and freely before he/she conceptualizes it.

As it is cited in “*El Método de la Pedagogía Científica*, 1909, María Montessori”, “The experiences lived during the manipulation of the pedagogical material are playful, concrete, in addition to being satisfactory, they leave an indelible mark on the child's brain. They become references that the child memorizes and on which he can rely for a long time to understand abstract notions that he later finds.” For instance, in order to present the child the decimal system, it is suggested using “*tables de Séguin*”, which is a material created by Édouard Séguin a famous doctor who worked with mental disable children. This material allows the child count from ten till ninety-

nine adding to each ten the corresponding unit. The main objective of the game is to match the symbol with the quantity and for the child to understand that a 2-digit number is made up of tens and ones.



This mathematical game ensures that the process of mathematical abstraction is based on an activity of the child with a material that can be manipulated and touched, such as pieces of wood. In that way, the child internalizes a logical development that goes from the concrete and manipulable to the abstract.

According to Maria Montessori, all the experiences cause a psychological phenomenon related to the construction of intelligence, which occurs in three stages:

- **Indirect preparation:** the child accumulates unconscious impressions, absorbs and acquires a skill that he will need later.
- **Knowledge formation:** performed latently during repetition of the exercise.
- **Awareness:** in a jiffy, the child accesses conscious knowledge. This unpredictable moment belongs to you. It is a "miracle" of which only he is aware, in any case, it is a change: suddenly, the child becomes aware that he knows, after having progressively learned in action.

That need to acquire the knowledge through manipulative tasks is also applied in the acquisition of a second language. We are dealing with an essential topic, since knowing a foreign language is nowadays a necessity for social and educational reasons within the European Community. The European Council's latest figures indicate that the teaching of foreign languages is growing in Europe and becoming more and more widespread. Thus, effective communication in a

foreign language is more than elaborating grammatically correct sentences, involving the appreciation and respect of its speakers and their culture. Regarding this fact, according to Canale and Swain (1989), the Communicative Competence can be divided into five subcompetences, one of which is the Sociocultural competence (awareness of the social and cultural context in which the FL is used). Therefore, we cannot teach a foreign language without introducing cultural aspects and we cannot forest “communicative competence” without sociocultural competence.

In addition to that, The Foreign Language Curriculum for Primary Education states as one of the general objectives the value of the foreign language and languages in general as a vehicle of communication and understanding among people from different origins and cultures.

After having presented the sociocultural competence and its main role in teaching English as a foreign language, we will consider the way foreign languages can act as a barrier to international communication.

According to Crystal, language is the main means by which people communicate. Everyday, we depend more and more on other people and their countries, and to understand these relations it is important to know a foreign language and, more specially, English. However, ironically, language also constitutes the main barrier. The discovery that language can be a barrier to communication is clearly made by people who travel to a foreign country, or in other case, within our own country.

Therefore, being able to communicate in English will allow our students to reduce those barriers that have existed for such a long time among different countries. In the following, we will describe several ways of getting around this barrier:

Firstly, the most usual way of getting around this barrier is by increasing the availability of translating and interpreting services. By finding someone to translate or interpret language. However, there are several problems when it comes to interpret or translate, because exact equivalence is impossible and there is always a loss of information. Secondly, some people believe that the foreign language barrier can be overcome by developing an auxiliary/artificial language understood by everyone. An ideal artificial language should fulfil several criteria such as Esperanto. This artificial language should be easy to learn, applicable to mother tongues, standardized and neutral.

On the other hand, developing an existing language understood by everyone is the most realistic way of breaking the linguistic barrier. Most of people think that using an auxiliary language as a lingua franca (language used among group of people, in order to communicate, each of them speaking a different language).

History demonstrates that there have been attempts to use a common language to communicate and exchange ideas. In the *Middle Ages*, Latin was used as the main medium of

communication in Western Europe and nowadays, English seems to be the language used at international levels. It is due to the political, economic and military power of the United Kingdom initially and now to the United States of America.

Finally, Increasing motivation and opportunities to learn foreign languages seems to be the most realistic way to break the linguistic barrier. Reaching a unified Europe depends on the European citizens' success to communicate fluently in a mutually understood language. Thus, some organizations (Council of Europe, 2001) have adopted recommendations to the governments to ensure that most of their population have free access to effective means of communication to acquire knowledge in one or more foreign languages. "Grants, scholarships, Erasmus". Therefore, if we really want to consider languages as means of communication among different cultures, we as teachers will have to make our students realise of the advantages and relevance of being able to communicate effectively in a common language in a world where so many languages coexist at once. But only by developing a communicative methodology will students be able to master a second language.

Unfortunately, the necessity of learning foreign languages is still questioned by many people who are reluctant to learn a second language. However, there are answers to defend the opposite idea to learn and teach foreign languages.

The Primary curriculum states that the ability to communicate in a foreign language constitutes a need in present day society. The main reason for this is because a nation needs to be able to compete in *international business affairs*. However, finance is not the only reason why people should be taught a FL.

In the following, we will analyze several reasons to teach and promote the learning of foreign languages.

Firstly, it can be said that learning a foreign language is not a luxury, but a need in a plurilingual world like ours. Secondly, learning a foreign language promotes understanding, tolerance and respect towards the culture, rights and values of others. Language learning broadens our minds, giving us a wider view of the world that surrounds us. Thirdly, foreign language teaching has an essential role in preparing our students to cope with an every-changing environment. They may overcome their insecurity and develop their confidence as they face up to social demands. Fourthly, it develops cognitive and social skills, as well as it encourages positive attitudes. Finally, we should mention that it is the only way to get a better understanding and appreciation of our own language and its culture. Therefore, the purpose of modern language teaching is not to teach a FL, but rather to teach how to communicate through its use (language is not an aim, but a useful tool to communicate), achieving Communicative Competence.

Now that we are aware of the way a foreign language can act as a barrier to communication and why learning a foreign language is necessary, let us go on with the second part of the essay; that is, interest in language diversity by getting to know a new language and culture.

Along this section, we will explain “what culture is” and “why it should be taught” when learning a foreign language. Next, we will propose how to incorporate culture in the EFL classroom and how to develop students’ cultural awareness, giving some practical considerations.

Let us start answering the first question “what culture is”. Culture can be defined as “a *whole of knowledge, lifestyles and customs of a concrete society in a historical moment*”. It has been widely recognised that culture and language are inseparable (being interrelated and complementing each other) and that language is used as the main medium by means of which culture is expressed.

“Nobody can learn a language without some exposure to its culture”.

Let us go on answering the second question “why culture should be taught”. In order to do so, we will highlight the main goals when teaching culture to Primary students:

- To be aware of the existence of different culturally-conditioned behaviours.
- To develop an understanding that social variables (age, sex, social class, regional accent) influence the ways in which people speak and behave.
- To avoid stereotypes in the target language (encouraging tolerance, respect and empathy).
- To stimulate students’ intellectual curiosity about the target language.
- To increase awareness of cultural connotations of words and phrases in the target language.

In the last decades, Methods and Approaches for teaching a foreign language have greatly changed and the sociocultural awareness has been a key factor in this evolution. The first methods were focused in the study of linguistic rules, avoiding the study of social and cultural rules and the importance of the language within a specific context. However, the development of cultural awareness is not an easy task. At Primary level, students are easily bad influenced towards foreign cultures. In that way, our main goal as teachers will be that of ambassador, allowing our students acquire the communicative competence. In order to do so, we as teachers should prevent those negative generalizations that arise among cultures, trying to fix these stereotypes to make our students realize the importance of learning foreign languages. However, *how can we teach culture to Spanish foreign language students?*

Although some language teaching materials may not include the target language culture, we as teachers should give students regular opportunities so as to help students develop a mental image of what the target language concerns (involving students both physically and psychologically within

the target culture, through real life exposure when possible). For example, *Coming into contact with native speakers* in the students' country (English club, Project, Skype, Pen friends); Working with authentic realia materials (magazines, posters, comics, games, etc.) from the country of the target language or Celebrating International Mother Language Day (UNESCO, February 21st): linguistic and cultural diversity represent universal values that strengthen unity and cohesion among societies.

As we can observe, the focus in the language classroom should be on cultural experience rather than on cultural awareness, with students being protagonists of the Teaching Learning Process.

“Beginning foreign language students want to feel, touch, experiment, smell and see the foreign culture, and not just hear its language”. (Peck, 1998).

11. CONCLUSION

The child is born with invaluable potential to build herself/himself. Nevertheless, this construction can only take place if he/she can develop himself/herself in an atmosphere where love, freedom and benevolence take place. Then, it will be when the child grows respecting himself/herself and the others. Our mission is helping the child to build himself/herself by respecting his/her rhythm of learning, as well as not depend on our help by being autonomous and self-sufficient.

The Montessori pedagogy favour mostly the confidence that children have on themselves, their self-esteem, the intrinsic need to learn about creativity and how to enjoy daily life aspects of life. The child wants to discover himself, which develops a love of work. On the other hand, this methodology also favours the research instead of the exposition, and the cooperation instead of competition. Therefore, in a natural way, the child is hungry for learning and growing. Consequently, the main role of the teacher is offering him/her an atmosphere and learning of freedom that can quench their thirst.

This is a topic that is close to my hearth, because from the first moment I heard about this methodology and I started to investigate and study about it I had no doubt that Maria Montessori methodology was a total revolution in education. As well as a Maria Montessori demonstrated that women have always been able to do anything that is in our power. She suffered a lot from the beginning when her father and the rest of society did not allow her to become a doctor. However, her strength demonstrated that when someone want to do something with his/her whole hearth, anything is possible. Therefore, her life has influenced directly to her pedagogy since she tried to demonstrate the world how a woman has the power to change the world or the education in this case. However, still nowadays our children are suffering from the traditional educative system since from my point of view will never evolve if politics are in. We do need a revolution in education; since it is the basis of human being ‘succeed, because as Montaigne wrote on his essays: “Teaching is not to fill a glass, but lighting a fire”. Without a doubt, Maria Montessori was inspired by that when she wrote down the following: “The child is not a glass that needs to be filled, but a fountain that springs up”.

Finally, I would like to include a saying, which describes the need to change our educative system. This saying was written by William Wordsworth and it says the following: “the child is the father of the man”. This proverb was later on re-written by Maria Montessori: “*The child is the builder of the man and there is not man who has not been formed by the child he/she has been*”. (Montessori. M., *The absorbent Mind*, 1964).

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