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Centro de Estudios de Postgrado

TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE TO HEARING IMPAIRED STUDENTS: A TEACHING PROPOSAL

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Abstract

This piece of research aims at raising awareness and visibility of the deaf community within education. More specifically, the teaching of English as a foreign language. For this purpose, a brief epistemological basis is included, which gathers the most relevant aspects related to this disability, both in a biological and in an educational sphere. Secondly, having these precepts as a base, a teaching unit is proposed for an inclusive group of students, among which there are several cases of hearing impairment. The main objective is to increase this community's visibility within society, as well as educating students in a plural and heterogeneous atmosphere.

Resumen

El presente trabajo tiene como objetivo concienciar y resaltar la presencia de la comunidad sorda en la educación. Más concretamente, en la enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera. Para ello, este trabajo incluye una breve base epistemológica acerca de los aspectos clave relacionados con esta discapacidad, tanto en el ámbito biológico como en el educativo. Con estos conceptos como base, esta investigación propone una unidad didáctica diseñada específicamente para un grupo de estudiantes en el que se incluyen varios casos de discapacidad auditiva. El objetivo primordial es incrementar la visibilidad de esta comunidad en la sociedad, al mismo tiempo que se educa a los estudiantes en una atmósfera plural y heterogénea.

1. Introduction

In general terms, it is unquestionable that the profession of a teacher is one of the most difficult, challenging and sometimes, even frustrating jobs that exist in our current world. At the same time, it can be one of the most gratifying and enriching experiences that a human being can enjoy. Teachers may find throughout their career fast and slow learners, more or less responsible children, some who behave in an excellent manner and others who do not. Definitely, teachers will have to deal with individuals of all different kinds, each one with their own personality, circumstances, and feelings. Only this statement on its own already confers upon this profession a heavy and difficult responsibility. However, this is not the end of the question. How can teachers deal with students who suffer an added difficulty? Are teachers properly prepared to identify, react, deal with and adapt those students to ultimately favour their integration in the class and in society?

This set of questions are the trigger for the development of the present paper. The importance of the topic resides on several reasons. To start with, I have been able to observe that teachers are not introduced with some basic precepts for situations where they have to deal with a student with an added difficulty. This fact is neglected both in the potential teachers' education and in the current educational law, where there are no tenets through which teachers can deal with this particular kind of students, apart from the general ill-defined label of inclusion, which in fact, can be applied to any student, not only those in need of special education. The only source of training that teachers may actually enjoy in this sense is called experience. It is already a bold affirmation to say that teachers start to work as almost a *tabula rasa*. It is bolder to state that they have no clue when dealing with this sphere of special education -obviously avoiding the teachers specifically studying this branch.

This fact acquires even more importance when affirming that, from my personal experience, teachers will have to deal with students with additional needs in the major part of their active years. My personal experience is supported with a 2019 article in Europa Press, where sources from the Ministry of Education affirm that, in the previous school year (2018-2019), there were 37,136 students with any type of additional need - disabilities, dyslexia, attention deficit and many others. Out of those 37,136, "the 59,6% (were registered) (...) in public schools, while the remaining 40% are dealt with (...) in an associated centre".¹ More specifically, the 23,1% of the total quantity of handicapped students are matriculated in ordinary schools; that is to say, they do not attend a

¹ At <https://www.europapress.es/epsocial/igualdad/noticia-cuantos-alumnos-hay-matriculados-educacion-especial-20190222133312.html>

specialized school adapted to their particular needs, but they attend a regular school where their curricula and teaching methods are modified.

As it can be observed, these figures are more than a tangible proof that teachers need to be trained for these numbers. However, all this circumstance becomes more alarming when dealing with the particular disability of auditory impairment.

Thus, this paper is focused on this precise branch within special education. One of the reasons of the importance of this choice of research is the fact that the label hearing impairment includes a wide range of degrees of loss, as it is explained in section 3.1. Consequently, the action capacity depends on the particular case of each student. In addition, the choice of this specific disability in relation with the concerned specialty: teaching English as a foreign language, becomes of considerable importance. This is because this subject, as any other subject dealing with language, concentrates on linguistic components. Being this disability one specially concerned with one important channel of communication, the research in this particular topic became especially challenging.

Besides, the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD), affirmed in their meeting held in Asunción (Paraguay) in 2019 that “Only a 2% of the deaf children in the world receives an education which combines sign language learning and the reading and writing of their mother tongue”. This is why the development of these two skills become particularly relevant in the didactic unit (section 4), together with the learning and use of the British Sign Language. This unit focuses on the introduction of some basic signs in BSL and on the special development of these two skills (writing and reading). To gather these contents together, a specific type of text has been chosen to work on: fables, as this type of text includes simple language and vocabulary and allows practice on the intended objectives.

The seriousness of the matter increases when mentioning the scarcity of documents, guides or articles concerning the schooling of hearing impaired students in Spain. *The Junta of Andalucía* offers a manual of attention to the students with specific needs for educative support derived from auditory disability. This manual, although useful, is not enough to cover the lack of knowledge and action that teachers enjoy nowadays. Apart from this manual, several organizations exist in Spain, which perform a praiseworthy work to help express this collective’s needs and presence in society. In Spain, we count with diverse organizations at national level, such as FIAPAS (*Confederación Española de Familias de Personas Sordas*), CNSE (*Confederación Estatal de Personas Sordas*) or AICE (*Federación de Asociaciones de Implantados Cocleares de España*). More particularly, in

Andalucía, the most renowned organization is FAAS (*Federación Andaluza de Asociaciones de Sordos*), which gathers an important collective of deaf people from all the Andalusian territories. All these organizations have made this piece of research easier with their publication of manuals, guidebooks and advices available for anyone interested.

However, apart from these altruistic organizations, there are scarce researches dealing with this particular topic. A lot of manuals on special education can be found, especially concerned with the psychological evolution of students. Authors such as Torres Monreal (1995), Castejón (2009) or Navas (2009) are concerned with the development of the previous topic; there also exist manuals on resources, sign systems and technical aids, as well as specific manuals for hearing impaired students in school and their psychological evolution, with the contribution of scholars such as Antonio Rodríguez Fuentes or José Luis Gallego Ortega. Nevertheless, the field of teaching English as a foreign language for deaf students is rather scant. We find “home-made” manuals devised by teachers of different subjects, who, like myself, have encountered this challenge in their classrooms every day. This lack of material is also a strong motivation when writing this piece of work.

It is also a strong conviction guiding this paper that teachers can and must continue learning still in their active years. Updating is an essential requirement for any 21st century teacher, where world is changing every moment and generations continuously adjust themselves to this new society. One clear example of this statement is the current situation that the world is suffering with the Covid-19 pandemic. Teachers have had to adapt their job into this unprecedented situation. Technologies have become the saviour of education. These circumstances have highlighted updating and adaptation as key factors of the teaching profession.

That is why this paper aims at gathering the basic tenets for this particular disability, both for personal and public knowledge, taking into account the rare existence of documents thereon. Firstly, a basis of the epistemological basics about this impairment is essential, in order to further understand the different schooling methods and didactic approaches that have governed the auditory disability in the past and current sphere. This issue, developed in section 3.5, points out the different approaches that both society and education have used, as well as the current inclusive method, whereby disabled students are guided towards their ulterior incorporation to society, taking into account attitude and aptitude. In this way, the final proposal for a didactic unit is ruled under this first precept: an inclusive atmosphere and education for all students.

This didactic unit will also highlight the presence of the main teaching approaches recommended by the law in force in the classroom. According to the Instructions of March 8th 2017, methods based on discovery learning and a learner's active role favour the inclusion and an appropriate attention to diversity in the class. For this reason, the most recommended methodologies for the correct adaptation of students with deficiency are the project-based approach and cooperative learning. Thus, the aforementioned topic of discussion, that is, the field of special education and its specific branch of auditory deficiencies, will be applied following several main driving ideas related to didactic methodologies: on the one hand, a learner-centered education, in which students can be able to develop autonomously and in which they hold the main role. On the second hand, a collaborative approach will be of crucial importance, since, as Mel Ainscow (1994: 31) affirms, "Most of us learn most successfully when we are engaged in activities with other people". This assertion, apart from the fact that collaborative work helps develop interpersonal abilities and improves social values, has made this particular approach one of the most attracting in the current sphere. Next, a project-based approach will be designed to foster an autonomous discovery on the part of the students and to encourage them to play an active role in the development of the class. Finally, a communicative approach will drive the design of the didactic unit. This method highlights communication as the basis of instruction, thus, it is the perfect allied when it comes to achieve the total integration of students with auditory deficiency. All these approaches are applied and visible in the section devoted to the development of the didactic unit (section 4).

To recapitulate, it is necessary to highlight that this paper occupies an explicit epistemological frame in the field of research. The main objective is to raise awareness and increase visibility of the deaf community within education, more concretely within the context of the subject English as a foreign language. This issue is usually forgotten due to lack of resources; consequently, the greatest contributions are provided by the organizations involved with this cause. The role of teachers is to keep training themselves in order to be updated professionals. Education is such a wide branch of knowledge that it is impossible to cover in the teachers' training years: it is a must to explore and learn during their whole career.

2. Basic concepts

The need for teachers to be as most prepared as possible for any kind of situation within the limits of the classroom is an evident statement. In order to understand the disability of hearing impairment, several basic concepts must be defined before proceeding. Firstly, two definitions of special education are provided, one complementing the other.

Secondly, the spectre is narrowed when defining auditory deficiency and designing the students who are considered within this category. Finally, those students are divided into students with hypoacusis and students with deafness. This paper is focused on students of the first kind, as it is explained below.

In the first place, regarding the traditional definition of special education according to UNESCO, is defined as:

An enriched way of education with the purpose of improving the lives of those who suffer different disabilities. It is called “enriched” as long as it resorts to modern pedagogical methods and technical materials to redress certain kinds of handicaps. Otherwise, if students enduring these circumstances are not paid the proper attention, they run the risk of being partially or completely maladjusted and disabled from a social point of view, as well as not achieving a full development of their capacities (UNESCO, 1977: 25 in Castejón and Navas, 2009: 14).

Thus, it is understood that the primary aim of special education is to achieve the highest possible level of the concerned individual’s capacities with the ulterior purpose of inclusion into all the spheres of life. However, this first definition, although precise, could be completed with the definition given by Mayor (1991 in Castejón and Navas, 2009: 15):

Special education is thus understood as a discipline with a unitary objective, defined by any kind of intervention oriented towards the maximum development of the concerned individuals’ capacities. Although this discipline can be analysed in different dimensions: biological, psychological, social and educational (Mayor, 1991 in Castejón and Navas, 2009: 15).

In their opinion, the different spheres belonging to special education follow a hierarchy, on the basis of the perspective of the human being as a “biopsychosocial unit” (2009: 15). The aforesaid hierarchy is culminated by the biological sphere, followed by the psychological and the pedagogical ones and ended by the social field. Despite this organized analysis of the field, all these levels are entangled and taken into account when dealing with a specific one. Each level is a prerequisite for the previous and posterior. In this paper, the educational sphere is the one which would have a heavier weight. Even so, a general overview will be provided for each one of the levels to be able to understand each one of them better.

Within the field of special education, as it has been stated before, this paper will be focused on the auditory deficiency, since it is one of the most forgotten deficiencies when it comes to teaching English as a foreign language, a subject within the Spanish curriculum to which this research is applied. One of the possible reasons is the difficulty of dealing with this handicap in a subject in which communication is essential, and in particular with the obstacle of proportioning a suitable input for students with this disability.

Before proceeding, it is necessary to pose the following question: which students are regarded as being hearing impaired? According to the Department of Education of the *Junta de Andalucía*, students are considered to suffer from an auditory deficiency when they have a deficient audition affecting both ears, what is called binaural hearing loss. It is contemplated that unilateral (just one ear) loss does not hinder a regular audition. Thus, it does not necessarily involve language alterations. In fact, the most common malfunction caused by unilateral hearing loss is the difficulty to identify the sound source.

Dealing with hearing impaired students, they can be classified into two big groups: students with hypoacusis and students with deafness. The first case consists of students who, although experiencing a hearing loss, are able to receive oral language through the auditory system and to use it functionally in the communicative process. In most of these cases, students will need the help of an appropriate hearing aid.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the term *hypoacusis* makes reference to any kind of hearing loss, from the mildest to the most severe case. However, as the term “deafness” is only applied for serious cases, the previous one is most commonly attributed to a milder deficiency. Moreover, deaf students are unable to acquire oral language through the auditory system due to their high degree of hearing loss; consequently, the vision becomes their only channel of communication. As it is known, the oral communicative code is acquired during the first years of life through continuous and repeated hearing of language. In this latter case, students suffering from profound deafness do not have this model and as a consequence, muteness is produced, not by deafness, but as a consequence of it. In this process of research, both types of students will be studied. However, the main focus of attention will be placed on those suffering from hypoacusis, since, in severe cases of deafness, students usually attend a special school out of my future scope of action as a teacher.

3. Epistemological basis

In the next set of sections, the fundamental aspects dealing with the epistemological basis of the auditory disability are developed. Firstly, a classification for the different degrees of auditory disabilities is provided, as well as a summary of the possible limitations that the different degrees may cause on students. Afterwards, a brief account of the evolution that this impairment has had during history, as well as how it has been regarded by society, is included. Thirdly, the concept of self-esteem is shortly analysed in correlation with auditory disabilities, where it is questioned whether this impairment has a direct relationship with a low self-esteem or not. Next, some educational aspects around the concept of hearing disability are developed: the schooling options, the organization in the classroom and the most recommended teaching approaches. Finally, a short explanation about how British Sign Language works is provided. All of these aspects are taken into account and applied in the proposal of the teaching unit under scrutiny.

3.1. Classification of auditory disabilities

The point of departure is the classification of the broad concept of auditory disability into different degrees of hearing loss. According to Aguilar Martínez et al., this grading differs depending on the objectives, criteria and viewpoints followed by the different authors who have dealt with the topic. For this reason, different classifications will be addressed taking several reference criteria. It must be clarified that the following classifications cannot be valued on their own. The quality of hearing depends on multiple aspects, not only on the particulars analysed by each classification. In this paper, the classifications developed are based on the work by Torres Monreal et al. (*Deficiencia auditiva. Aspectos psicoevolutivos y educativos*) (1995).

In the first classification, called audiological, the hearing threshold level (HTL) measured in decibels (dB) is taken as the reference guide. The most accepted is the International Bureau for Audiophonology classification, which considers the normal hearing threshold between 0 and 20 dB. In this classification, several degrees of loss can be observed:

- Mild hypoacusis (20-40 dB). For students suffering this kind of hypoacusis, weak or distant voices are not perceived. Generally, children in this situation usually pay scant attention in class. Detection is crucial before and during school age, since "This kind of deficit might be confused with a simple lack of attention or as a typical feature of a distracted student" (Torres, 1995: 25). Usually, the intervention of a

speech therapist would be needed during a punctual period of time. However, in many cases, this kind of hypoacusis is transitory due to an infectious process.

- Moderate hypoacusis (40-70 dB). Between the 40 to the 55 dB, hypoacusis is considered of first degree, and of second degree between 56 to 70 dB. The hearing threshold is located at medium conversational level, since this kind of cases are prone to acquire their linguistic competence through the auditory system. However, a language underdevelopment and articulatory alterations at this level are frequent. For this reason, they would need hearing aids, a speech therapist's help and lip reading.
- Severe hypoacusis (70-90 dB). Between the 70 and the 80 dB, it is considered a first degree severe hypoacusis, and second degree between the 81 and the 90 dB. With this level of loss, voice intensity must be raised for students to be able to perceive oral messages. Consequently, the child will present very poor language or even lack of it. To prevent this, children suffering this kind of hypoacusis must receive the attention of a speech therapist before the 2 years old to learn and acquire intelligible speech and with the aim of using their residual hearing.
- Profound hypoacusis or deafness (more than 90 dB). In this case, this level can be subdivided into three degrees of loss. Without the appropriate rehabilitation, children in this stage will not be able to speak. They will just perceive very intense noises mostly through the vibrotactile channel rather than the auditory system. It is important, thus, to apply suitable hearing aids and to start rehabilitation before 18 months of age, through the use of special vibrotactile resources and mainly visual ones to achieve their auditory stimulation.
- Cofosis or anacusia. This degree consists of complete hearing loss above 120 dB. However, these are exceptional cases, since total deafness rarely occurs. It is normal that some residual hearing remains, which will become key elements in the process of rehabilitation.

This first classification becomes significantly important to ensure an early intervention and to foresee the possible difficulties with which a student with a certain kind of loss may have to deal. Thus, the case of the didactic unit proposed in section 4 is devised for a heterogeneous class with two students undergoing different cases of hypoacusis: one of them is a female student with a case of first degree moderate hypoacusis.

According to the previous classification, linguistic communication is still possible, as her threshold conversational level is medium. Consequently, with the help of some hearing aids, she is able to perceive oral messages when combined with lip reading. However, she has some minor articulatory alterations, particularly, she has troubles when pronouncing the phonemes /d/ and /t/. For this reason, one of the objectives in the didactic unit is the confrontation of this phonetic issue contextualized in the pronunciation of the phonemes related to the past simple inflections.

Secondly, there is also a male student undergoing a case of first degree severe hypoacusis. As stated in the classification, he may have very poor language, although he may be able to perceive some sounds due to the existence of some minor residual hearing. However, taking into account the difficulties for oral communication, the main code he uses for communication is sign language, a reason why the didactic unit explained in section 4 has as one primal objective, that is an introduction for the British Sign Language (BSL).

The second classification dealt with is called otologic (from Ancient Greek *οὖς*, meaning “ear”), since it is divided in terms of the kind of ear structure affected: whether sound-conductive or sound-transmission structures (outer and middle ear), sound-processing structures (inner ear, nerve tracts and brain cortex) or simultaneously conductive and perceptive structures. There is no evidence that the degrees in the previous classification find a direct relationship with any of the locations explained in the following classification. That is to say, we may find a case of mild hypoacusis located in the cochlear area, or a severe one due to a mixed hypoacusis. The only exception that can be signalled is the first case: conductive or transmission hypoacusis, where the majority of cases are hardly ever profound, as stated below:

- Conductive or transmission hypoacusis. Deafness is produced by some alteration in the outer or middle ear. Consequently, it is the ear’s mechanical part which is affected. This prevents sound from stimulating the cells located in the inner ear. The most frequent conditions that may cause this kind of malfunction are deformities in the external auditory canal, traumas, inflammations or tumours. Conductive or transmission hypoacusis is, as affirmed before, hardly ever profound and its effects can be reverted through pharmacological treatment and/or surgery.
- Neurosensorial or perceptive hypoacusis. The damage is located in the cochlea (a bony labyrinth in the inner ear), in the cochlear nerve or in the area of the temporal lobe. The most frequent causes of its damage may be classified depending on the moment of apparition: in the prenatal period, in which case may be either genetic

or acquired through some viral disease during the term of pregnancy; the neonatal period, which points out problems at the time of delivery, such as prematurity, low weight or asphyxiation; and the postnatal period, usually caused by diseases such as meningitis or otitis media. Currently, cochlear implants are common to address this deficit.

- Central hypoacusis. The loss of recognition of auditory stimuli is due to damage in central auditory pathways. It is also called auditory agnosia. More than a disability from the auditory channels is a disability directly linked with a neurosensorial blocking of the perception of sounds and their recognition.
- Mixed hypoacusis. Outer, middle and inner ear are simultaneously affected. The pathology is found both in sound-conducting and perception pathways.

Regarding the didactic under scrutiny and its two students undergoing different cases of hypoacusis, this classification adds new information about their cases: on the one hand, the female student with moderate hypoacusis has the damage located in the cochlea due to problems caused in the perinatal period. The hearing aids she uses is a cochlear implant, which boosts her ability to perceive sounds. Thanks to that implant and an early diagnosis, she is able to communicate orally. On the other hand, the male student with a case of severe hypoacusis has the damage located in his outer, middle and inner ear; that is to say, he undergoes mixed hypoacusis.

The following two types of classification, based on the studies made by Torres Monreal et al. (1995), may be taken into account as one unit. They both depend upon the time of apparition of the damage, a reason why they may be called together under the label chronological classifications. However, each of them has different points of reference in time. The first one focuses on the acquisition of oral language if any. That is to say, whether students had any previous contact with the oral modality of their mother tongue before the apparition of the damage. On the other hand, the second classification offers a division taking into account the pregnancy period. That is to say, whether the damage arose during pregnancy, at the moment of delivery or afterwards.

These two following classifications dealing with time of apparition, close the circle for the previous two, related to location and degree of the damage respectively. On the basis of the moment when the problem emerges, the location of the damage may be discovered, and thus, the degree of this damage can be diminished. Mainly, these classifications have a direct relationship with the previous one: the location of the damage. For example, conductive hypoacusis is prone to appear in a prelocutive or

perilocutive period, as its majoritarian cause is deformities in the external part of the ear. On the other hand, the case of neurosensorial hypoacusis is strongly determined by the time of apparition, and its consequences may greatly vary depending on the period. In any case, attention and early diagnosis are key concepts to discover this circle of classifications, because, ultimately, they may prevent posterior damage and diminish the effects of the impairment.

The first classification focusing on time of apparition takes oral language acquisition as the reference point in time. It is divided as follows:

- Prelocutive hypoacusis, in which the hearing loss is present since birth (either genetically or emerged at the moment of birth) or appears before language acquisition, approximately between 2 and 3 years old. As a consequence, children suffering from this kind of pathology are not able to acquire language in the case of profound or serious hypoacusis, and they have to acquire a new one since their contact with sounds has never occurred or it has been very limited.
- Perilocutive hypoacusis. It is acquired between the 2 and 5 years old, in the middle of the process of language acquisition. Children suffering from this condition have auditory memory, since they have had previous contact with the language, however brief it was.
- Postlocutive hypoacusis. The hearing loss appears after language is acquired and the subject possesses the basic communicative competence, approximately after 5 years old. Thus, they are regularly able to acquire language, but they usually present difficulties in their emotional and affective development.

Finally, taking into account the classification focusing on the pregnancy period divides the causes for hypoacusis into three types:

- Prenatal causes: the affections are already present during pregnancy. They can be subdivided into causes of genetic origin or acquired. In the first case, one out of 4,000 newborn babies is affected from this hereditary pattern. They can appear either isolated or associated to other syndromes or pathologies. In the latter case, acquired hypoacusis may be present since birth due to infectious processes normally acquired during the first weeks of pregnancy, such as rubella or syphilis. This type is also called anoxia. Acquired hypoacusis may also appear at any time after the moment of birth as a consequence of specific diseases such as rubella or traumas.

- Neonatal causes: this kind of causes is vague, since in many occasions they are not clearly delimited as they depend on multiple factors interrelated among them. However, they can be focused on four main causes: neonatal anoxia, neonatal jaundice, prematurity and birth trauma.
- Postnatal causes: in this group, any kind of hypoacusis appearing throughout life are included, whose commonest causes are meningitis, labyrinthitis, measles, varicella, mumps and the exposure to ototoxic substances, specially medicine.

Applying these classifications to the didactic focus of attention in this paper, the female student with moderate neurosensorial hypoacusis suffered the loss in a postnatal perilocutive period, when she had already had contact with her oral mother tongue. Consequently, and adding the fact that the location and degree of loss were not severe, together with the cochlear implant, she was able to preserve oral communication, even though she expresses some articulatory deficiencies. In the case of the male student with severe mixed hypoacusis, he suffered the damage in the neonatal prelocutive period, so his contact with oral language was brief. This is the reason why he has poor oral language, and his main code of communication is sign language.

As stated at the beginning of this section, none of these classifications can be taken for granted in an isolated manner. The four of them complement each other: the audiological classification, the otologic classification and the two chronological classifications. Their causes and diagnosis are not simple. There is not a direct formula that can be found in any classification to prevent or diminish symptoms. What is sure is the vital importance of an early identification to act as quickly as possible at the earliest stage.

To summarize this section, a table is included where the previous classifications are compiled, ordered and related on the base of the most common combinations among them.

Table 1: Relationship of the four types of classifications of auditory disabilities (Torres Monreal et al., 1995):

Audiological classification	Otologic classification	Chronological classifications	
		Language acquisition	Pregnancy
Mild hypoacusis	Conductive/transmission hypoacusis	Postlocutive hypoacusis	Postnatal period
Moderate hypoacusis	Neurosensory/perceptive hypoacusis	Prelocutive/perilocutive/postlocutive hypoacusis	Prenatal/neonatal/postnatal period
Severe hypoacusis	Neurosensory/Central/Mixed hypoacusis	Perilocutive/postlocutive hypoacusis	Prenatal/postnatal period
Profound hypoacusis	Neurosensory/Central/mixed hypoacusis	Prelocutive hypoacusis	Prenatal period
Cofosis	Neurosensory/Central/mixed hypoacusis	Prelocutive hypoacusis	Prenatal period

As it can be observed, the most common relationships show several facts. Firstly, mild cases are usually developed after the time of delivery as they are commonly acquired through certain type of viral diseases. Consequently, they are also contracted after oral language acquisition. Secondly, there is no clear evidence that moderate and more serious types of hypoacusis are developed in a foreseeable part of the auditory system. What is clear is that the most serious cases of this affection (severe hypoacusis, profound hypoacusis and cofosis) are commonly developed genetically or due to a problem at pregnancy, reason why oral language is less probable to acquire in these

cases. Finally, it is relevant to highlight the fact that moderate hypoacusis is one of the blurriest cases of this disability. Due to its variety of origins, a common pattern cannot be traced specially in this instance.

3.2. Limitations derived from auditory disabilities

Auditory disability or reduction implies a series of consequences or limitations in several psychosocial spheres. Once analysed the different categorizations made for this kind of impairment, it is clear that there are multiple important interrelated factors involved. In the same way, consequences or limitations are also conditioned by a series of diverse factors, such as moment of apparition, degree of loss, intellectual level or the collaboration and implication of parents and schools. What is clear is that auditory deficiency cannot be treated in the same way for every student. It does not exist a set of rules to resort to and apply systematically. In fact, auditory deficiency not only means a hearing loss, but the individual's whole development is also affected.

At the end of this section, table 2 shows some examples of possible limitations, which are divided into the different types of auditory disabilities taking as reference point the audiological classification; that is to say, the degree of hearing loss, namely: mild, moderate, severe and profound hypoacusis. These associated limitations have been summarized following the bases established by Castejón and Navas (2009) in their work *Unas bases psicológicas de la educación especial*.

The reason for choosing the mentioned classification as a reference point in this paper is simply contextual. The didactic unit in section 4 is designed for students around 11 and 12 years old. At that point, teachers can only assist them in their learning taking the degree of loss as a reference point, in order to know the possibilities and difficulties that the student may or may not experience. In addition, as the whole set of consequences are very wide and interconnected, a sample of the most relevant aspects (problems in their cognitive development, their sensory and motor functions and finally in their socio-affective development) is explained in more depth.

In the case of their cognitive development, it is reduced because individuals are not able to receive the same quantity of information and consequently, they cannot take enough advantage of their previous experiences. This, in the long term, entangles lack of motivation to learn. In addition to this lack of information, this is often incomplete or even erroneous, which impedes total comprehension. On its part, among the consequences related to the development of the sensory and motor functions, it is found that the loss of the sense of hearing is compensated by a predominant function

of the sense of sight. Moreover, as lack of hearing disables a proper development of orientation, the temporal-spatial structure is unbalanced. Finally, regarding the socio-affective development, the communication with their surrounding world is affected because of the lack of a common code among pairs, which explains some cases of inadequate behaviour due to lack of understanding and information of rules, social conventions and general functioning of our society. In addition, they also have difficulties for perceiving feelings such as anger or affection due to lack of information about pitch, intensity and rhythm.

Possible limitations derived from auditory disabilities					
Mild hypoacusis	Moderate hypoacusis	Severe hypoacusis	Profound hypoacusis or deafness		
-Minor phonetic alterations -Difficulty in perceiving low and distant voices. -Inattention	-Articulatory and palate mobility problems. -Phonetic, prosodic and syntactical alterations -Lack of understanding in explanations and poor vocabulary	-Altered articulatory rhythm and prosodic elements -Serious problems in comprehension and expression of oral messages -Problems in structuring oral and written language	Cognitive development	Sensory and motor functions	Socio-affective development
			-Difficulty to plan actions and to reflect -Difficulty in reasoning tasks, formulating hypothesis or proposing alternatives	-Problems in time distribution -Problems in appreciating rhythm -Balance problems	-Inadequate behaviour -Difficulty in perceiving feelings such as anger or affection

Table 2: Possible limitations derived from auditory disabilities (Castejón and Navas, 2009)

3.3. Historical evolution

To be fully aware of the evolution of this particular disability, a brief summary of the history of its treatment must be included. The meaning of *evolution* refers to the development of the importance and attention attributed in different ages of history to special education in general and to this disability in particular. On the other hand, the word *treatment* refers to methodology and recording of cases of auditory impairment until our present days. The importance of this section lies on the necessity of being acquainted with the historical evolution of auditory disabilities to define in a more concrete way the basis of the object of study at present times.

Oddly enough, the major part of the diseases and disabilities known and suffered today has been present since ancient times. However, it may appear to our eyes that there are more cases or more types of illnesses today than in the past because of some of the following reasons: on the one hand, there were a scarce amount of recordings or even lack of them, so in general, ignorance in this topic was a general issue due to unknown illnesses; on the other hand, and maybe also as a cause for this, the diagnosis were confusing and mistaken because of lack of resources. Of course, disabilities were not treated in a different manner. In fact, humanity has witnessed very early cases of deafness. This is one of the cases explained by Marschark (2001) in his work *Educating deaf students. From research to practice*, where he explains one case in times of the monk the Venerable Bede:

Among such reports was one by the Saxon monk Baeda, known as ‘the Venerable Bede’ and the first historian of the English people. In *The Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation*, written around 700 AD and still an important source of knowledge of the early Anglo-Saxon period, Bede tells of Saint John of Beverley’s cure of a young deaf boy (...) (2001: 18).

However, one of the first recordings about the education of deaf people is found in Renaissance Europe thanks to Ponce de León. Marschark (2001) explains that Ponce de León taught several deaf children of the aristocracy, for whom education was exclusively reserved. Among his students, there were the brothers Pedro and Francisco de Velasco or Fray Gaspar. “These appear to be the first indications of the empowerment of deaf people through education” (2001: 20) in the own author’s words. The advancements made by the monk Ponce de Leon were written down firstly by Juan Pablo Bonet in *The Reduction of Letters and the Art of Teaching the Mute to Speak* (1620). This is “[...] the

first-known treatise on the education of deaf people, which emphasizes learning as an ‘active construction of meaning’” (2001: 21).

As it can be observed, deaf people had to wait until the Renaissance for achieving a regularized status with respect to the rest of society. This delay in education and methodologies is an issue which has been pulled by humanity until the present as it will be shown later, even with all the improvements made. Continuing with improvements, the next important one for the deaf community was seen during the XVII century with the dissemination of scientific societies. In fact, this was a huge advancement almost for every scientific field, and not least in the case of auditory impairment: “[...] in many academies, the focus on acoustics, deafness, and the instruction of deaf people became of central importance” (2001: 23). This implied a deeper study and knowledge of the anatomy of the ear, which caused a great effect on the treatment of this handicap. From this moment onwards, the creation of some primary devices to improve hearing grew progressively. However, aristocracy was still the only social class who could find and afford these kinds of treatment.

Among the thinkers who helped to definitely establish deaf education as a serious and important matter, and thus, to little by little introduce formation among the lower classes, were philosophers such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Denis Diderot or George Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon. According to Mark Marschark,

Rousseau was among the early influential proponents of “learning by doing”. In his book *Émile*, Rousseau expressed views which became the basis for reform in France after the Revolution. In redirecting attention to learning through the senses and the importance of the child’s interaction with the environment, he challenged the prevalent emphasis on memorization of the classics. As a member of the French Academy of Sciences, he took a special interest in examining deaf children who were instructed (...). Through the effort of Rousseau and others, the instruction of deaf pupils gained increasing respect as a profession (2001:24-25).

It could be stated that the first and definite explosion of the claim of a deaf community emerged in the bosom of the views previously spread by the already mentioned philosophers, and fostered by the ideology of the French Revolution. It surged in the XVIII century, particularly in Paris, where communities of deaf people started to emerge. Among the most important milestones of the event, sign language was finally accepted as a language.

From this moment onwards, this deficiency was slightly normalized and studied more deeply, until the apparition of the first studies on a scientific basis at the beginning of the XIX century. The responsible for this was a French doctor called Jean Marc Gaspard Itard from the National Institute for Deaf-Mutes, one of the pioneers in the education of deaf-mutes. The next step took place in the mid-XX century, when the first schools of special education appeared. This found its basis in the overall belief that an individualized attention would be more favourable to precisely identify the disability. This, added to the introduction of conductivist ideas, fostered the aforementioned individualized attention. Conductivism emphasized that this impairment was only an acquired negative conduct influenced by environmental factors, and as such, it could be modified with a proper stimulus.

This segregationist approach was radically changed in the 70s, when an integrating viewpoint overtook the previous one due to diverse social, psychological and educational factors. In Castejón Costa's (2009) opinion, Denmark is considered the precursor of the conciliatory education, and later, the rest of Europe and North America followed. But, more recently, around the 90s, this vision was again exceeded by the stream of inclusive education. The previous concept made reference to the integration of students with additional needs into a regular group of students. However, the latter inclusive perspective proposed the total integration of the whole student community in a physical, educational and social sphere. Their primary aim is the students' attention through an effective education for everyone. In Castejón Costa's words:

In conclusion, this new perspective focuses on how the school can adapt itself to the students' diversity, which essentially requires the teaching staff to work collaboratively for the achievement of a common objective: to reach more effective schools, better for everyone (2009: 13).

However, is this same stream followed nowadays? In fact, it is; but in some authors' opinion, this vision is applied in a blurry way. One of these visions is the one held by Mel Ainscow, who states that the current treatment in schools is mainly individual. As he explains, in schools, difficulties are treated as if they were detached from any other context, either environmental, social or political. As this author declares, the aforesaid viewpoint may find its explanation in certain assumptions, which he deems to be mistaken.

In their most extreme form, these assumptions lead to a view of schooling as a process by which those who know (the teachers) are employed to transmit their knowledge to those who need to know (the pupils). Consequently, pupils who are perceived as being unable to take advantage of the opportunities provided

are taken to be in some way deficient: the focus is both on them as individuals and on those of their attributes that would seem to be preventing their progress (1994: 30).

This assumption that the author considers negatively influential for every student, may be summarized in the following stair of arguments, as specified by Ainscow: school as a “labelizing” institution, the reduced set of responses by the teachers, and the compulsory aid of a specialized teacher. First of all, Ainscow confirms that the school is a “labelizing” institution, since labels are continuously applied to define students and to gather their individual characteristics and thus, the nature of their difficulties. This may imply a lowering of expectations on the part of the teacher towards their students. In fact, researches support this argument, which agree with the idea that teachers usually hold lower expectations of deaf children, as they see them as unable or slow to learn. According to the article “In search of a new, linguistically and culturally sensitive paradigm in deaf education”, by Simms and Thuman (2007), this is another way of discrimination, and it is called audism: the assumption that those who are able to hear regularly are superior to those who are not. To stop this controversial issue, Ainscow suggests deleting “[...] special education categories as the basis of decision-making” (1994: 30) and “[...] widening this perspective in order to alleviate the problem” (1994: 31).

The next argument would constitute the following step guiding the previous idea. It consists on the reduced set of responses that teachers provide taking into account the previous labelling of students’ characteristics. In some way, this argument feed the anterior and vice versa. “Focusing attention on particular children in an individualized way leads the school population to be divided into ‘types’ of children to be taught in different ways or even by different type of teachers” (1994: 31). In his personal opinion and experience, Ainscow tells that a particular and correct specialized approach does not exist. He asserts that of course some types of techniques are very helpful for some students, but that “These [techniques] are not in themselves the means by which they will experience educational success” (1994: 31). This definitely distracts teachers from more meaningful matters such as the improvement of the overall concept of the institution of school and its purposes to achieve a full success of the whole student community.

The following argument deals precisely with the fact that this individualized attention implies many times the involvement of a specialized teacher or any other adult who helps the student reach the goal. According to Ainscow, this inevitably leads to a limitation of opportunities for the rest of students who are meanwhile working on their

own. Consequently, they suffer the lack of this additional help, since their individual characteristics suggest they do not need so. Or, vice-versa, whilst the rest of students are enjoying a group activity, or simply the teacher is completely involved with them in a particular task, the student with additional needs cannot participate from this activity because their individual characteristics do not allow them to. According to Ainscow, additional help must be regarded “[...] as a means of increasing the flexibility of the teaching provided for all pupils” (1994: 32).

The fourth argument has to do with additional resources and the conception that a proper response to additional needs mandatorily entails the help of additional resources. Primarily assuming their obvious help and importance in schools, Ainscow affirms that proportioning extra help to some students develops in a set of disadvantages: first, the discouragement of effort and confidence in teachers when these resources are inexistent; second, the effort needed to apply for these resources commonly to the government; third, studies which confirm that the allocation of additional resources to some students inevitably leads to a major percentage of children in exclusion; and finally, the amount of money destined to the obtaining of these resources makes “Likely that even more victims will be created” (Ainscow, 1994: 32).

To conclude, Ainscow affirms that this dominant view is not only disadvantageous for the students it intends to help, but also for the rest of the student community: “The dominant approach to the special needs task assumes that the problem is the child’s; as a result it excludes from consideration other factors that lie in larger social, political and organizational processes that are external to the individual” (Skrtic 1991, in Ainscow 1994: 33).

In this section, the information developed can be divided into two different major blocks. On the one hand, a revision of the historical evolution of hearing impairment was provided, including the most important personalities who have contributed to the improvement of the deaf community’s progressive inclusion in society. But not only did resolute characters play a role in this advancement; some important periods of history dealing with social changes also had an essential part on this struggle, such as the French Revolution context. In this way, the different approaches with which the educational institutions have directed this issue until present time have been revised and evaluated.

On the other hand, the second block in this section pinpointed the current stream of the inclusive approach in schools. This approach aims at the adaptation of the school rather than the students, taking into account the diversity of its population: a reflection of society itself. In this sense, Mel Ainscow’s (1994: 28 - 35) opinion is essential to

understand that, even though this approach seems to be heading in the right direction, institutions can still do a lot more to achieve what inclusive education really aspires to.

3.4. Self-esteem in students with auditory disability

Another important issue to be briefly addressed is how hearing impairment affects the student's psychological aspects, and more concretely, how it affects self-esteem. The reason for the narrowing of choice into this particular aspect lies on the evidence that self-esteem plays an important role on a varied range of aspects of our daily life: work, studies, social relationships, etc. A high number of researches watched their peak in the decade of 60s. This brought forth varied experiments that became widely renowned. One example of this is "the Pygmalion effect", carried out by Dr Rosenthal at Harvard University. In this experiment it was proved that students from which success is expected become successful individuals in life; while students who receive negative commentaries have more difficulty in overcoming their problems. Other authors such as Krashen (1977) or Gardner (1983) have agreed on the importance of a good psychological state for the process of learning, including self-esteem. Following Krashen's affective filter hypothesis, a high affective filter promoted by negative psychological conditions such as anxiety or low self-esteem blocks the way of a successful learning process.

In fact, if students are supposedly being prepared to perform an autonomous learning and to become problem-solvers, teachers should be aware of the importance of the student's self-esteem in their process of education. This argument is endorsed by the following quote by Montes de Oca: "To be independent thinkers and problem-solvers, we do not just need the help of the cognitive area, but also of the affective one" (2005: 60).

Then, how does auditory impairment affect self-esteem? The question can be developed in the following manner. To start with, from a methodological point of view, it seems clear that an early identification of low self-esteem would be crucial to remedy the negative effects of the deficiency: "Self-esteem is a critical variable in the study of sensory impairment" (Satapathy and Singhal, 2001 in Castejón and Navas, 2009: 163).

However, as far as the question of whether there exists a direct relationship between auditory deficiency and a low self-esteem, researches have not shed enough light on this score. Some studies (Emerton, 1996; Bat-Chava, 2000; Crowe, 2003) throw evidences that this correlation is not confirmed, while in other researches (Bat-Chava, 1994; Schlesinger, 2000; Mulcahy, 2002; Weisel and Kamara, 2005) show that the levels of self-

esteem are significantly lower in deaf young-adults than in the rest of the population. Some explanations are provided for both cases. Regarding the first kind of studies, those who do not support the hypothesis of the direct correlation, they may find its justification in a set of factors devised by Jambor and Elliott (2005). These factors, if achieved, would protect the successful development of a healthy self-esteem to some extent. Some of these factors are the following: on the one hand, a proper communicative system since early ages, which allows the individual to promptly establish strong bonds in their family, as well as to foster a correct cognitive, affective and social development. Secondly, that the individual is immersed in a schooling modality where they receive a suitable response towards their specific needs. Or, finally, that the individual is integrated into a community which favours the creation of his or her own identity. "This results in the creation of a sense of belonging that blocks the negative impact of prejudices and discrimination" (Castejón and Navas: 2009, 177).

Nevertheless, there are some other factors that confirm the hypothesis of the second type of researches: those which affirm that an evident correlation between hypoacusis and low levels of self-esteem does exist. In this sense, it is worth mentioning that the evident lack of communication due to isolating situations and the difficulties for a correct linguistic and cognitive development may involve a negative process of integration, social relationships as well as affective development. This ultimately entails consequences such as low social competence (impulse control, low self-esteem...), non-accepted social conducts or difficulties in the correct development of personality. Among the causes previously mentioned for these problematic issues, Rodríguez Fuentes et al. (2005) highlight the following: fewer opportunities to dialogue with adults (share experiences, feelings or doubts); the development of a particular culture and socialization due to lack or scarce examples or comprehension; an imitative learning, since in many occasions, an over-protection hampers autonomy, independency and thus, an incidental learning; or, finally communicative problems with the family, maybe because they do not know how to communicate with their children, or because parents do not accept the deficiency and are not able to transmit a positive attitude to overcome its difficulties.

To conclude, emphasis must be made on the fact that teachers not only have to teach contents, but also competences, as stipulated by the Spanish educational law LOMCE 8/2013. Concretely, self-esteem is a crucial aspect for two specific competences: learning to learn and sense of initiative and entrepreneurial spirit. In the first case, the law establishes that:

This competence is characterized by the ability to start, organize and persist on learning. This demands, in the first place, the capacity of motivation to learn. This motivation depends on curiosity and the need to learn, on the student's feeling of importance in the process and its results and, finally, on the reach of the proposed learning goals. With that, the student should experience a sense of self-efficacy. Everything contributes to motivate the individual to address future learning tasks (Order ECD/65/2015, 6997).

Having the previous pieces of research and statements as a base, it is understood that a correct self-esteem is key to develop the aspects mentioned in the previous extract such as motivation, curiosity, feeling of importance or self-efficacy.

With respect to the competence of sense of initiative and entrepreneurial spirit, the law establishes that some abilities are necessary to achieve its full development. Among these skills, the Order ECD/65/2015 of 21st January cites the following:

Participation, leadership and delegating skills; critical thinking and sense of duty; self-confidence, evaluation and self-evaluation, as it is essential to determine strong and weak points in oneself and in a project (...). Finally, it requires the development of attitudes and values such as (...) self-knowledge and self-esteem; autonomy or independence, interest and effort and entrepreneurial spirit (..) (Order ECD/65/2015, 7000).

In this case, the quote is clear enough literally mentioning the word 'self-esteem'. In conclusion, although there are no resolute evidences that auditory deficiency implies a low self-esteem, an early identification of hypoacusic students suffering from this additional weight is crucial to dispel this psychological condition and with it, to reduce the negative effects of the hearing impairment.

In conclusion, it is not clear that auditory disabilities imply low levels of self-esteem. However, taking into account the fact that the educational law at force emphasises self-esteem as one of the crucial aspects for the correct development of motivation, for instance, it is not a bold statement to affirm that self-esteem plays an important role in the improvement of students, whether they experience any disability or not. Once more, each case is completely different, and an early intervention and diagnosis becomes the key factor once again.

3.5. Educational aspects

In general, teachers should devote part of their time to plan the organization of the space in the classroom. This becomes a more important aspect when dealing with students with auditory impairment, as part of the process of facilitating their access to the learning process and success. Until now, the previous sections have dealt with the general clinical aspects of auditory deficiency. The following section addresses this handicap from a didactic point of view, that is to say, the most important aspects that a teacher should take into account when in charge of a class with one or more cases of hearing impaired students. It is necessary then to cover several aspects to set a proper didactic background. In the next set of paragraphs, the models of scholarization existing and the organization in the classroom - both in a general approach and in the particular context of Spain and our region, Andalucía - are developed.

When it comes to the possibilities of schooling offered to these specific students, it has to be developed in a deeper manner, since it has a more complex organization. As it has been stated in section 2.3, special education schools were a revolution in the development of this field, and today they are still an option to children suffering from this condition. In fact, as Torres Monreal et al. point out,

The history of deafness is characterized by two main controversial issues: the confrontation between oral language versus sign language as the most appropriate linguistic system to teach, and the confrontation between special schools and integrated schools as the most appropriate type of institution (1995: 223).

With respect to the specialized schools in Spain, they were the main trend during the past decades, as mentioned in the previous section 3.3. Moreover, in a great percentage of cases, students attended in a boarding regime. This trend was due to the belief that these schools answered the students' necessities more accurately. In addition, classes had a reduced number of children, and this greatly facilitated the attention for every individual' needs.

However, this kind of institutions fell short of expectations, and several researches demonstrated that the students attending these schools had lower communicative and learning levels, as well as scarce or even lack of social adaptation when they finished their stay. Today, the debate continues, but there exist a range of levels of adaptation depending on a more individualized diagnosis of the children's needs. In other words, as Torres Monreal et al. explain: "There exist several integration levels, depending on the

characteristics of the deaf child and on the possibilities of the school in which he or she is going to be integrated” (1995: 224). Torres Monreal et al. explain these levels in terms of the basis established by Deno and Hogson (1970) and Clunies-Ross (1988).

In a first step, a complete integration means a regular schooling with little variation with respect to the rest of children. This is a level recommended for children undergoing minor learning problems, but not a disability.

In a second step, a combined integration offers schooling in a regular school and classroom but with the combined help of a support teacher during a determined number of hours per day, depending on the specific necessities. Thirdly, there exists a partial integration, in which the student attends a regular school but a separate and specialized class with a specialist support teacher at the head. This is a level recommended for students with serious disabilities. In Torres Monreal et al.’s opinion, this latter level has not been properly applied in our country, a reason why it has received a negative consideration due to two main causes: on the one hand, schools do not count with the optimal resources to hire support and specialized teachers assisting students a regular number of hours per week. On the other hand, the fact that students with additional needs are separated in a different classroom does not fit the current inclusive perspective where students are educated in diversity.

However, whenever used properly, it may bring strong advancements for the student in need. Finally, the last level of integration is the special education school itself. This level, although remains separated from children who do not suffer any kind of disability, is considered within the term “integration” since it is supposed to include integrative activities with other children of the community around the same age. This is a level directed towards students with serious disabilities when schools are not properly equipped and prepared for their specific needs.

In our region, Andalucía, students needing special education embrace the majoritarian option of following the same curriculum in ordinary groups and schools, with the additional help of specific resources and support, such as specialized faculty, special education monitors, as well as the educational guidance counsellor, psychologists or pedagogues. On the other hand, students more seriously affected (usually those with extensive and permanent needs) have the choice of schooling in specific classrooms or schools organized in terms of development and knowledge, from 6 to 16-18 years, in 10 courses, extendable in two years (Sánchez Fernández, 2001: 20).

In the specific case of students with auditory impairment, and following the base of the previous levels of general additional needs, they have several modalities of schooling. On the one hand, they may join a regular school either in a specific or in a regular class depending on their necessities. On the other hand, there also exist regular schools with preferential integration for deaf students. These institutions have specific resources to cover the students' necessities, such as Audition and Language teachers, support teachers, sign-language interpreters, or suitable technological resources. Finally, students also have the opportunity to assist a special education school for deaf students.

It goes without saying that the process of schooling of children with a particular deficiency or additional necessities must be closely followed and evaluated so that, eventually, the situation of the students progressively evolves and adjust to their particular needs at each stage of their learning process. Nowadays, most of students suffering from hearing loss attend a regular school in accordance with the current inclusive perspective. Moreover, in our country, the current educational law LOMCE specifies that students having specific learning difficulties will experience a process of schooling governed by the principles of normalization and inclusion, and their non-discrimination and equality will be claimed in their access and process of the educational system.

Finally, any of these schooling options require the division of their students into different groups of work. For these reasons, the organization inside the classroom becomes another central aspect when speaking of the different measures to be taken into account with hearing impaired students. First of all, regarding the organization of the classroom itself, a light-filled space with good acoustic and limited noise interference is recommended. Dealing with the organization of the students' seats, a U-shape is proposed to favour conversation. In this way, students' interventions are more likely to be heard by their partners. Also, the teacher should stay especially visible for the hearing impaired students. Additional integrative helps inside the class could be positive too, such as a calendar with reminders of all the exams, projects, handouts, etc.

To conclude this section, this theoretical background regarding the schooling options in Spain and Andalucía is applied in the context of the didactic focus of attention in section 4. This teaching unit is designed for students attending a school with preferential integration for deaf students, which it is not exclusive for children undergoing this disability. The only difference with a regular school is the presence of specialized resources, staff and technical aids for students with this particular impairment, such as a speech therapist. More concretely, the school chosen is IES Las Fuentezuelas, Jaén, where there are sign language interpreters immersed in the education of those students

in need. In addition, those hearing impaired students experience a combined integration; that is to say, they attend a regular class but they have the support of a specialized teacher or speech therapist a given number of hours per day.

3.6. Teaching approaches

In this section within the epistemological basis of this paper, the most important approaches guiding the didactic unit are developed in a theoretical perspective. The approaches with the heaviest weight in this paper are: The Task-Based approach, the Learner-Centered approach, the Cooperative Approach and finally, the Community Language Learning Approach (CLL). These approaches are chosen and selected on the base of two criteria: the particular context of a combined classroom of hearing impaired students and those with no known disability; and the recommendations provided by the Government with the law as it stands. The Order ECD 65/2015 of 21st January, which establishes a task-based learning as the most appropriate for the transmission of key competences, is the core element for this selection. At the same time, the law emphasizes the necessity to use different strategies and learning methods such as cooperative and learner-centered learning.

Firstly, the Task-Based Approach, as defined by Long (2015), involves the use of tasks, which are “[...] real-world activities [...]” (2015: 6) in order to create a “[...] *task syllabus*, which consists of a series of progressively more complex *pedagogic tasks*”. With pedagogic tasks, Long means “[...] the activities and the materials that teachers and/or students work on in the classroom or other instructional environment” (2015: 6). The task-based approach is considered nowadays an essential tenet in the syllabus, as it provides students with real content and context when developing the different tasks. In this sense, students learn and acquire everyday language, the one that is actually used in real English. This information applied to the didactic unit proposed in section 4 results in the combination of this approach with scaffolding techniques. Donna Lee Fields proposes a very suitable simile in order to understand this concept in her work *101 Scaffolding Techniques for Language Teaching and Learning* (2017):

You’re climbing a precipice (...). Everything has been fine up until now. You’ve climbed rock faces with very similar terrain. Suddenly you reach a deep and wide gap in the surface. You realise this is much more difficult than you have ever experienced before. Your breathing gets a little shallower, your mind freezes just a little bit, your senses go a little wild and you’re not sure what to do. All the confidence that usually pushes you along without thinking is now gone. You don’t know how to cross the gap. You crunch down and sink a little bit into yourself... Then you hear a sound from above. You look up and see a hand

reaching down. You hear a voice saying 'Take my hand. I'll help you across. I'll show you what to do.' Relief floods across your body. You straighten up. You take the hand reached out to you. And with that little bit of help, you make it over the gap, and continue your climb (2017: 11).

In other words, scaffolding techniques help students go across any gap they may find in their learning process. This help may be provided by a teacher, any other student or an experienced learner. According to Fields,

Scaffolding aims to help students to achieve intended learning outcomes. The helping hand is offered in cases where students are unlikely to complete the task without this extra aid. When the goal is for students to build competences, not just undertake specific tasks, scaffolding is offered quickly as required and withdrawn slowly when no longer needed (2017: 11).

Scaffolding techniques and task-based learning are two examples of approaches directly related with the Learner-Centered Approach. This approach emerged around the 60s as a reaction against the main stream at the time, which provided teachers with the central role in the classroom. Luckily, education became little by little more flexible and student-oriented. Apart from this important difference, the Learner-Centered Approach, "[...] tends to view language acquisition as a process of acquiring skills rather than a body of knowledge", as stated by Nunan (2013: 16). That is to say, learning English becomes a communicative process in itself, rather than the internalization of separate contents. In this sense, section 4 aims at the training of the four skills: writing, reading, listening and speaking. The Learner-Centered Approach makes students the protagonists of their own learning process.

Secondly, the Cooperative Learning Approach is combined in a perfect way with the previous ideas, since, as stated by Gillies *et al.* (2008): "Peer-mediated learning is well recognised as a pedagogical practice that promotes learning, higher level thinking, and prosocial behaviour in students from pre-school to college" (2008: 1). In a classroom setting, cooperative learning allows students to work and practice together in a wider range of situations. This permits "[...] to learn and develop a greater understanding of others with diverse social, interpersonal, adjustment, and learning needs (Stevahn & King, 2005; Shachar, 2003 in Gillies *et al.*, 2008: 1). This theoretical base is applied in the didactic unit, where students are expected to fulfill cooperative tasks in groups.

In this sense, the Task-Based Approach, the Scaffolding technique, Cooperative learning and the Learner-Centered Approach are united with a common utility in the didactic under scrutiny. Students are protagonists of their own learning process, where they

occupy the main role. The teacher's role is relegated to a secondary place. Thus, students are fostered to cooperate among pairs in an attempt to gather as much aid as possible to cross the "gap" of knowledge. Teachers, who also personify an additional help and guide for students, are expected to motivate and check students' development in the shape of tasks.

Finally, it is also necessary to mention the presence of the Community Language Learning approach (CLL). This perspective appeared around the 50s; although it is not a very common stream nowadays, it is highly useful in the present context of language teaching to auditory impaired students, and, as stated at the beginning of this section, it is a key factor to implement and use different approaches in the design of the curriculum. According to the British Council², CLL is an approach which "[...] is extremely learner-focused". This stream "[...] was primarily designed for monolingual conversation classes where the teacher-counsellor would be able to speak the learners' L1". However, this approach progressively involved the incorporation of the concept of a community of learners and teachers who use their own target languages in a collaborative manner. That is to say, CLL is a counselling approach with which students can work together to enhance those language aspects they would like to improve as a community of learners. In this sense, the didactics guiding this paper includes the collaboration with a project called 'Allies in English'³, designed by the Spanish non-profit organization *T-Oigo*, founded by Dale Sindell in 2007. This organization aims at supporting the families of auditory impaired children by creating a community of parents in Spain. Sindell thinks that there is a struggle to offer the same opportunities to hearing impaired students. As part of their challenging task, *T-Oigo* created the initiative 'Allies in English' in 2011. This project consists of the interchange of native students for a short period. They have the opportunity to attend classes with their partners and thus, to exchange conversation in both languages: the native tongue - Spanish, in our case -, and the target language - English. Besides, this programme embraces the participation of hearing impaired students, a reason why it was a perfect combination for its implementation in the didactic unit focus of attention in this paper.

To summarize this section, it is important to highlight the fact that the Learner-Centered Approach is the core element on which the rest of approaches are based: namely, the Task-based Approach, the Cooperative Approach and Community Language Learning (CLL). As mentioned by the educational law at force, a variety of approaches and methods are expected to fulfil each student's needs and expectations. In this case,

² At <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/community-language-learning>

³ At <https://www.visualfy.com/es/allies-english-primer-contacto-ninos-sordos-ingles/> and <https://t-oigo.com/la-asociacion/>

taking into account the heterogeneity of the students for which the didactic unit is addressed, these approaches are those which adapt to these particular students' circumstances in a more complete manner.

3.7. British Sign Language (BSL)

To conclude with the epistemological basis of this paper, it is mandatory to introduce some key aspects about the British Sign Language (BSL), a variety employed in the didactic designed in this paper. One of the main reasons why this precise variety is chosen is popularity. In the world, there are more than 300 sign languages, out of which there are two main English families: the American Sign Language (ASL) and the British, Australian and New Zealand Sign Language family (BANZSL). The first case has between 150,000 and 200,000 users around the world; a figure which the latter considerably exceeds as it is formed by a wider variety of sign languages: British Sign Language (BSL), Australian Sign Language, New Zealand Sign Language or Northern Ireland Sign Language among others. In sum, BANZSL family surpasses the 500,000 users around the world. In addition, more specifically, in our geographical context, the British Sign Language is the most extended variety, with around 150,000 users in the UK.

To begin with, it is necessary to mention that sign languages are not the only sign systems existing at disposal. There is a huge range of systems, both manual and graphic that were created around the end of the 60s. According to Rosell and Basil (1998) manual sign systems consist of signing the oral language. These systems are based on the production of messages with the syntactic and grammatical structures of the oral language but representing each word with the corresponding manual sign. Even though almost each language has a variety of sign language, there are only a few key words and expressions which differ one sign language from another. Besides, in sign languages, it is not possible to adapt the whole vocabulary and grammatical inflections from the oral modality and consequently, each variety of sign language has to invent new specific signs.

In addition, sign languages can be used in a different range of levels, depending on the communicative necessities of the hearing impaired student. For example, sign language can be used as a complement for some individuals undergoing a mild or moderate hypoacusis, who are able to use oral language with certain limitations. Being that as it may, the key factor is that sign language is a huge improvement in the lives of its users.

However, according to some authors, such as Basil and Rosell (1998), there is a belief that sign systems may inhibit the development of the oral modality in those cases in

which is possible to produce, especially if the use of sign languages is triggered from early ages. There is no empirical evidence that this assertion is true; in fact, more and more researches inform about the positive effects of the use of sign languages for the development of oral communication in some subjects. Researchers such as Silverman (1980) already demonstrated that sign systems can foster the vocalization of their users. According to these pieces of research, the act of signing triggers activity in both hemispheres of the brain: the right hemisphere, responsible for visual-spatial reasoning and long-term memory; and the left hemisphere, where language processes are located. When sign language is used in combination with oral language, the language existing is bolstered because an additional link to that word is created, and new connections among cells are generated in the brain.

Sign languages are also classified into different families of languages. Some of the most important are the following: British, Hispanic-French, German, Swedish-Finnish, Japanese, Kenyan and Arabic. The British Sign Language⁴, the variety used in this paper, is used in the United Kingdom, as stated at the beginning of this section. There are around 125,000 adults in the UK who use BSL and around 20,000 children using BSL as their main language. As the majority of sign languages in the world, BSL expresses phonological aspects through handshape, orientation, location, movement and some other non-manual features, such as facial expression. Besides, BSL has certain particularities regarding syntax. One important aspect of the BSL syntax are proforms. These are function words or phrases which express the same content previously introduced by a different word, phrase, clause or sentence. For proforms to be valid, the meaning they embody must be recoverable from context.

As its oral modality, BSL also has different regional varieties or dialects. In addition, some of the local expressions may not be understood in a different town, even though both places share the same dialect. Besides, it is also noteworthy that, just as oral languages do, certain words or expressions may go out of fashion and have to be transformed or substituted through time.

In this section, a brief account of the signed modalities has been developed, as well as a short introduction for the most important sign language families around the world, including the British Sign Language. It has been proved that sign languages have a deep field of study to be still discovered, as this particular section of the research has been a challenging one. The reason why is the scarcity of sources and researchers who have devoted part of their work and study to deal with this topic. More than scarce, the

⁴ At <https://bda.org.uk/>

sources are outdated. This vast field of research needs the dedication that its wide range deserves. Again, almost the only sources that can be found are provided by organizations deeply interested in the matter. That is to say, it is the deaf community in itself and their families who usually trigger investigation around this issue. The final moral here is that, even though advancements have been achieved, there is still a long way to reach the visibility this collective needs in society.

In the teaching unit exploited in the next section, the British Sign Language is the key concept of the sessions. Taking into account the context of the group, where there are two students undergoing different cases of hypoacusis, the role of sign language in the classroom is vital. Having this concept as a base, this unit would be the perfect opportunity to show students the essential role of sign languages in society. Thus, they are able to learn some introductory signs with the help of the teacher, the sign language therapist present in the centre and their partners. The two students focus of our attention become also a guide by showing the rest of their partners the usefulness of sign languages in a natural context.

4. Didactic Unit

4.1. Justification

The primary aim of the following didactic unit is to design and develop a total of five sessions fully adapted to students having additional needs related to hypoacusis. This didactic unit is devised to show that an inclusive atmosphere is possible, taking into account every student's needs, all of them adapted to their personal and physical context. One of the main demands is to develop among students some values such as respect, empathy and the ability to work cooperatively, while enhancing both socio-cultural and linguistic contents. Moreover, this didactic unit also aims at highlighting critical thinking, an ability which is at the same time intertwined with the aforementioned cooperative work particularly. To foster this skill, the approaches developed in section 3.6. are hereby applied, namely: The Task-Based Approach, the Learner-Centered Approach, the Cooperative Approach and finally, the Community Language Learning approach (CLL). As it has been stated in several occasions, the Order ECD 65/2015 of 21st January emphasises the use of different teaching approaches in order to fulfil the widest range of the students' needs. It is also relevant to notice that all the tasks included in these sessions have been originally designed. This teaching unit is envisaged as a hypothetical teaching programme; it has not been put into practice with a real group of students. However, it is available for its use and implementation in order to contribute to the variety of materials at disposal of any teacher in need.

All the mentioned approaches, specially CLL, are materialized in this didactic unit with the project “Allies in language”, where all students are introduced into the British Sign Language in interaction with students for whom BSL is their code for communication. There are also some other students who use the oral modality of English as their mother tongue; reason why this mixture is perfect for the achievement of the objectives in this unit.

Apart from some basic lexicon in this language, students will also practice the past simple tense in English, expecting a successful output both in British sign language and in the reading and writing skills. These two skills are emphasized because of the following reason. According to an article published by the local newspaper *La opinión de Málaga*,

The main aim of inclusion is the oral language acquisition, -mainly in the written modality-, in a way that hearing impaired students are able to acquire the necessary competences for their ulterior incorporation to upper educational levels and to the labour market, since it is the oral language will be responsible for their autonomy and critical thinking.⁵

4.2. Background information and contextualization

In order to explain the context in which the previous aims are pursued, it is necessary to detail the overall background information and contextualization of this didactic unit. It is organized into 5 sessions of around 55 minutes each, in a time period from the 21st to the 25th September, coinciding with the World Deaf Day, celebrated the last Sunday of September.

This unit is devised to be implemented on the first year of Compulsory Secondary Education, with students around 11 and 12 years old. They have an approximate level of English of A2.3 according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). The unit is devised to be implemented in the centre I.E.S. Las Fuentezuelas (Jaén), as this is a school with preferential integration for deaf students which counts with the presence of a sign language interpreter. This is specially important because the presence of a speech therapist or a sign language specialist in linguistic subjects such as English is vital; even more if we take into account the heterogeneity of the group of students: the group is formed by 30 students, out of which 17 are girls and 13 are boys. Out of these 30 students, there are two students undergoing particular cases of hypoacusis, as

⁵ At <https://www.laopiniondemalaga.es/opinion/2016/06/02/sorda-profesora-ingles-apoyo-alumnado/853921.html>

commented on section 3.1. Consequently, the figure of the sign language interpreter available at the centre is always taken for granted in the classroom.

On the part of the group of guest students from “Allies in English”, it is formed by 23 students (14 boys and 9 girls), out of which 8 use BSL as the main code for communication and 15 the oral modality of English as their mother tongue. This group is expected to arrive at the centre on the day of the second session. The activities programmed for them include interaction with several classes from the school. In this unit, their cooperation is scheduled for the whole of the third session. Apart from this, they would also be able to spend some time together during some time of the remaining sessions, a reason why some of the tasks in the unit consider the help from “Allies in English”.

The final project developed in session 5 is celebrated in honour of the World Deaf Day, when students will have to perform a play in order to demonstrate the knowledge gathered during the whole unit in front of the school community. For this representation there will be tickets with a symbolic price. The audience will be handed out a short questionnaire together with their tickets, with questions concerning the performance of each group. At the end of the project, the group with the major quantity of positive reviews has a prize: to choose one non-profit organization concerned with the inclusion of the deaf community from a list of several options and to donate the money collected from the tickets of the play. This aspect will also carry weight on the evaluation of the unit, an aspect explained in section 4.9.

4.3. Objectives

Taking into account what has been stated in section 4.1., where emphasis was made on the British Sign Language, on the one hand, and on the reading and writing skills, on the other, the present didactic unit comprises 4 main objectives:

1. To become acquainted with the presence of a sign language modality as a complement for the oral modality of any language.
2. To produce and understand basic lexicon in British sign language; more concretely, lexicon and expressions related to greetings, numbers and animals.
3. To be able to communicate and understand messages in the past simple tense.

4. To develop the reading skill in the shape of a fable.

5. To be able to write and perform a fable using previously practiced contents: parts of the narration, past simple tense and vocabulary related to greetings, numbers and animals.

As it can be observed, the objectives of this unit become more and more challenging and complete, as part of the scaffolding technique mentioned in section 3.6. In this sense, these objectives follow this same order in the sessions. In this way, it is impossible to achieve one objective if the contents and tasks related to the previous objective have not been introduced.

At the same time, these objectives are supported and justified under the general Compulsory Secondary Education objectives, included in the RD 1105/2014, Sec. I, pp. 176-77:

a) To responsibly assume their duties and to know and exercise their rights in respect with the others, to practice tolerance, cooperation and solidarity among individuals and groups of people, to practise mediation through dialogue, thus reinforcing human rights and equality between men and women, as well as the common values in a plural society and to prepare for the exercise of the democratic citizenship.

b) To develop and strengthen habits related to discipline, study and both individual and cooperative work as a necessary condition for an effective fulfilment of the learning tasks and as a means of personal development.

c) To value and respect the gender differences and the equality of rights and opportunities among them. To reject discrimination by reason of gender or by any other condition, either for personal or social circumstances. To reject stereotypes which entail discrimination between men and women, as well as any manifestation of violence against women.

e) To develop the basic skills in the use of different sources of information in order to acquire new knowledge with critical awareness. To acquire a basic formation in the technological field, especially in Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs).

g) To develop their entrepreneurial spirit and their self-confidence, participation, critical thinking, personal initiative and the ability to learn how to learn, plan, make decisions and assume responsibilities.

i) To understand and express in one or more foreign languages in an appropriate manner.

Simultaneously, these Compulsory Secondary Education objectives are supported by the following foreign language specific objectives contained in the Order of 14th July, 2016, pp. 212-13:

2. To be able to communicate and interact orally in everyday situations in a comprehensible and appropriate manner, practicing mediation as the way to peacefully solve conflicts.

3. To read and understand different texts adapted to the level and interests of students, in order to deduce general and specific information, complementing this information with other sources to acquire new knowledge with critical awareness.

4. To write simple texts with different purposes about several topics, using appropriate cohesive and coherent resources.

5. To correctly use different phonetic, lexical, syntactic-discursive and basic functional components of the foreign language in real communicative contexts.

8. To develop the ability to work in groups, to reject discrimination out of gender reasons or any other condition or personal-social circumstances, strengthening social abilities and affective capacities which are necessary to peacefully solve conflicts, and rejecting stereotypes or prejudices of any kind.

10. To value and respect the foreign language as means of communication, cooperation and understanding among people from different cultures and origins, fostering solidarity and respect to human rights, as part of a democratic citizenship.

11. To appreciate the foreign language as an instrument to access information and as a tool to learn different contents, as a means of artistic expression and to develop the ability to learn how to learn.

Below, table 3 displays the 5 main objectives considered in the present didactic unit and their justification under the governing law with the General objectives contained in BOE DR 11005/2014 (the Compulsory Secondary Education objectives) and the Stage objectives contained in BOJA Order 14th July (the foreign language specific objectives):

General objectives (BOE DR 11005/2014) pp. 176-77	Stage objectives (BOJA Order 14th July 2016) pp. 212-13	Main objectives
a), b), c), g), i)	1, 2, 8, 10, 11	To become acquainted with the presence of a sign language modality as a complement for the oral modality of any language
e), g), i)	1, 2, 3, 4, 5,	To produce and understand basic lexicon in British sign language; more concretely, lexicon and expressions related to greetings, numbers and animals
e), g), i)	2, 3, 4, 5	To be able to communicate and understand signed and written messages in the past simple tense
b), c), i)	3, 5	To develop the reading skill in the shape of a fable
e), g), i)	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8	To be able to write and perform a fable using previously practiced contents: parts of the narration, past simple

		tense and vocabulary related to greetings, numbers and animals
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Table 3: Interrelated summary of objectives

4.4. Contents

The contents in this teaching unit are organized in three blocks: ethical values, language (corresponding to the grammatical, lexical and phonetic aspects) and skills (listening, speaking and interacting, reading, and writing). It is important to notice that the skills of listening and speaking are adapted in this didactic unit, since it revolves around British Sign Language. Thus, these two skills include interpretation and production of messages in BSL.

a) Ethical values:

- Collaboration with partners who have additional needs in order to create an inclusive atmosphere in the classroom.
- Respect and recognition to different languages and modalities of communication.
- Importance of the awareness of an existing plural society, formed by individuals with all types of characteristics and personal circumstances.
- Learning communication and cooperative work as the only way to solve conflicts.
- Turn-taking and respect in discussions.

b) Grammar, lexicon and phonetics:

- Basic lexicon in British Sign Language: greetings, numbers and animals.
- Past simple tense in written English and British Sign Language.

c) Skills:

- Listening (interpretation of BSL messages):
 - Understanding simple messages in BSL related to greetings, numbers and animals.
 - Understanding simple messages in BSL in the past simple tense.
- Speaking and interacting (production of BSL messages):
 - Producing simple lexicon in BSL related to greetings, numbers and animals.
 - Communicating simple messages in BSL in the past simple tense.
 - Performing a fable in BSL.
- Reading:
 - Identifying and recognizing basic texts in the past simple tense.
 - Gathering the most important meaning in a fable.
 - Recognizing the basic parts and narrative elements of a fable.
- Writing:
 - Producing sentences and short texts in the past simple tense.
 - Creating a fable including its basic narrative elements and parts; organizing the information in paragraphs in a coherent way.

4.5. Key competences

This didactic unit aims at developing five main key competences. Firstly, the linguistic competence is an obvious and vital objective, as this unit is devised for a linguistic subject: English as a foreign language. Secondly, the digital competence is also a core achievement, as students are expected to fulfil tasks using the digital and

technological resources available. Thus, the use of ICTs is included in this key competence. Moreover, the competence of learning to learn is important, not only in this subject, but also it should be considered a transversal competence. Students are expected to develop learning and study strategies and to use information with critical awareness. Finally, the social and civic competence is one with additional importance in this didactic unit, as it is one of the main purposes to create an inclusive atmosphere adapted to every student's needs. It is necessary that students learn how to coexist in a plural and heterogeneous society, and to use dialogue and mediation as the only way to solve conflicts and difficulties.

4.6. Transversality, cross-curricular issues and interdisciplinarity

This didactic unit also pursues a series of transversal, cross-curricular and interdisciplinary aspects, with the purpose of designing and developing curricular subjects which educate students in versatile abilities. It is necessary to highlight the socio-cultural aspect contained in this didactic unit, as it is devised with the objective of providing a real social context of a plural society, in order to foster cooperative learning. At the same time, this socio-cultural aspect also includes the development of a cultural perspective, so students are able to recognize, assess and compare their own oral modality of communication with the signed one in order to recognize the value of sign languages.

In addition, the different linguistic skills are trained in order to provide students with a fairly appropriate language not only in the foreign language, but also in their own mother tongue through the use of different learning techniques. As mentioned before, the use of ICTs with critical awareness is crucial not only in the English subject, but also in the rest of the curricular subjects and more importantly, in the formation for their future life and democratic citizenship. Finally, it is also important to mention that several contents in this didactic unit overlap with other areas in the curriculum such as ICTs, Ethical Values, Maths or Spanish.

4.7. Lesson plan

The following lesson plan is divided into five different sessions of around 55 minutes each, which are developed in the next sections step by step. The ultimate objective is to progressively increase knowledge starting with previous acquired contents to end with a final session devoted to a final project in which the overall contents should be included and applied by the students. In this way, the scaffolding technique is one of the main driving forces when devising this lesson plan. In this sense,

students are expected to include all the contents covered in the first 4 sessions in an autonomous way in session 5: the final project. They are allowed to consult all the materials provided during the creation of this enterprise. In this way, the scaffolding technique reaches its peak, since students will be able to cross the “gap” of knowledge with the help of the teacher, partners and materials. The development of this final task and the evaluation of the didactic unit is included in section 4.7.5.

In addition, the approaches explained in section 3.6. must be reminded, as the following sessions’ tasks are designed around the precepts guiding these procedures. The approaches with a heavier weight in this unit are: The Task-Based Approach, the Learner-Centered Approach, the Cooperative Approach and finally, the Community Language Learning approach.

Finally, it is also relevant to mention that the groups into which students are divided in the tasks where this pattern is explicitly mentioned are the same throughout the whole unit. In this sense, students are able to develop a closer relationship with their group mates session after session. This factor will boost their working strategies and cooperation. It is assumed that for the correct achievement of all these tenets, the sessions are always supported by the presence of a speech therapist specialized in sign languages.

4.7.1. Session 1: Greetings

The first session is designed to provide students with an introduction to the most common words and expressions about greetings in British Sign Language. However, in the first place, it is necessary that students become aware of the presence of sign languages around the world. For this reason, this session’s first task consists of a warming-up discussion in which students have to reflect on the presence of sign languages in society. Students are provided with guiding questions to foster their critical thinking and arrive to their own conclusions. For example, some of these questions include: how do you think sign languages work? Do you think there is one sign language modality for each language? Do you think that entertainment and media offer subtitles in sign language? For this task, the presence and help of the sign language interpreter is taken for granted since these tasks includes oral and signed communication between the hearing impaired students and their classmates.

Once students have discussed this topic, aimed at reflecting about their awareness of the presence of sign languages, they are shown a video⁶ where students from around the world say some greetings and some interesting facts about their own sign language variety. In this way, students become aware of the worldwide presence of sign languages and their versatility. Moreover, this video is both completely signed and subtitled in English, so comprehension is guaranteed in any case.

At this point, students have become immersed in the topic, a reason why the third task aims at developing their interest, autonomous research and critical thinking. Students are divided in 5 groups of 6. They are expected to look for information on the internet about sign languages around the world and how they work in order to confirm the answers to the questions discussed in task 1. Each group is offered a particular question or topic to develop:

- Group 1: Classification. How many families of sign languages are there? How are they classified?
- Group 2: Statistics. What are the most used sign languages around the world? How many people can sign a language around the world?
- Group 3: English. How many sign language families are derived from English? Which of them is the most used around the world?
- Group 4: British Sign Language. How does it work? What are its particularities? In which countries is it used?
- Group 5: Sign languages in media. How many TV channels offer programming subtitled in sign language? Are there other shows or entertainment where sign languages are used?

Once the groups have researched about their own topic, the whole group is expected to create a collaborative wiki which gathers all the information. This wiki is divided in different sections, so that each group fill in their corresponding one with the appropriate information. In the end, the whole group will have a single document which includes all the data and which can be consulted at any time.

⁶ At <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MFleW3gVwII&t=74s>

Task 3 is a link between two topics, from the general to the specific: sign languages around the world and British Sign Language. Consequently, task 4 aims at introducing students completely into BSL, a variety which will be developed in a deeper manner in the following sessions. For this purpose, students are shown a short but interesting video⁷ about the most common greetings in BSL. The video combines English oral language and BSL to guarantee comprehension. The video is paused any time a new sign is introduced, so students can practice individually and among pairs. Since signing languages is a kinetic activity, the bodily-kinaesthetic students will be benefited from this task. Simultaneously, students are challenged to complete a memory game. As the video is paused any time a new sign is introduced, they are challenged to memorize them and to perform all the signs as they are shown, adding one more at a time. After this task, students are handed out additional material to review these greetings signs at any time they are needed.

Finally, at the end of this first session, students will put everything they learned in practice in a real situation. As stated in section 3.6, this unit includes the participation with the project “Allies in English”, in which foreign students come to the centre for a week to interact with the group. This task is aimed at meeting these newcomers and make them feel welcome. For this purpose, students have to record a short video in groups where they have to use some of the greetings learned in the previous task. This will provide students with a suitable real practice for the content introduced in this session and will motivate them for the arrival of their partners from “Allies in English” in session 2, where they will be able to interact with them personally. For the development of this task, students are allowed to use the additional notes about greetings provided at the end of the last task, as well as the invaluable help of the sign language interpreter.

Below, table 4 shows a summary of the tasks developed in this session, including the timing, the group patterns, the materials and resources needed and the skills trained in each of them.

Task	Time (minutes)	Group pattern	Materials and resources	Skills
Warming-up	7'	Whole group	Guiding questions	Speaking, interacting

⁷ At <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kyicdRI3ULg&t=25s>

			Sign Language Interpreter	
Video "Sign Languages Around the World"	3'	Whole group	Video	Reading
Online research	15'	Group work	Computers Wiki	Reading, writing
Video "Greetings in BSL"	8'	Whole group	Video	Listening
Role-play conversations	7'	Pair work	Notes from video Guiding material	Speaking, interacting
Video recording for "Allies in English"	15'	Group work	Video recorder Computer Sign Language interpreter	Speaking, interacting

Table 4: Summary of tasks in session 1

4. 7. 2. Session 2: Fables

The second session aims at developing objective number 4, concerned with the reading skill. More concretely, this skill is trained through a fable. This type of text is chosen because its characteristics fit the students' age and level. Moreover, fables are a perfect tool to practice the vocabulary focus of attention in this unit: greetings, numbers and animals. At the same time, this is the first session where students are in contact with their colleagues from "Allies in English", who are involved in the last task of this session.

The first task consists of a brainstorming of titles of famous fables (*The Fox and the Grapes*, *The Lion and the Mouse*, etc.) on the board. Students are free to stand up and write their contribution. The objective of this brainstorming is for students to realize that they know more about this topic than they may have thought at the beginning of the session. Once some titles are noted, students are encouraged to find similarities between these stories: characters, main ideas, conclusions... in order to check their initial knowledge about the parts and elements of this particular type of text.

The students' initial knowledge is confirmed in the second task, which is the viewing of a short clip⁸ called "What is a fable?" The clip does not contain any oral message; in fact, every piece of information is written in the way of a presentation. Thus, all the students in the group will be able to receive the same input in this regard. The information provided in this video/presentation includes the basic elements of a fable: characters, moral, personification, simple language... In this manner, students can check whether their previous knowledge was accurate or incomplete.

In task number 3, students are able to put this knowledge into practice. They have to scan three short fables and identify their elements: characters, moral, parts of the story. This task is made individually; however, the whole group is joined again in the next task, a Kahoot quiz, where they will have to answer some simple questions about the fables of the previous task in order to check their scanning skill in reading.

Once students are familiar with the characteristics of a fable, they are provided with a collection of 10 famous short fables for the development of task number 4. They are grouped in their usual teams of 6 students to create a portfolio of animals which will be a part of the final evaluation. This portfolio must include a wide range of animals' vocabulary with images extracted from the collection of fables. In addition, this portfolio is expected to be completed in the following session with the corresponding sign in BSL

⁸ At <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dJ6k05Li3J4>

for each animal. This portfolio, apart from being an important part of the final mark, may also serve as guiding notes to which students can resort at any time.

As a final task for this second session, students have their first face-to-face contact with their colleagues from “Allies in English”. The group will have the opportunity to have some minutes of free conversation where they will be able to practice the greetings signs learnt in session 1, always with the guide and help of the teacher and the sign language interpreter. After these initial minutes of getting to know each other, where students will have the chance to practice the greetings learnt in session 1, this opportunity is also used to observe and listen to the representation of a fable. The students from “Allies in English” are asked to perform a fable in English, both orally and signed. With this opportunity, the students are able to check their comprehension and to observe this representation as a model for what they will have to perform in session 5.

At the end of this second session, the students are assigned some homework, consisting of recording a video in BSL greeting and congratulating one of the students from “Allies in English” for their performance that day. This short clip to be recorded has to include at least three greetings expressions in BSL. Table 5 summarizes this session’s tasks and the basic information.

Task	Time (minutes)	Group pattern	Materials and resources	Skills
Brainstorming	5’	Whole group	Board	Speaking, interacting
Vídeo “What is a fable?”	2’	Whole group	Video	Reading
Identify the parts and	8’	Individual work		Reading, writing

moral			File with fables	
Kahoot about fables	8'	Whole groups	Kahoot	Reading
Animals glossary	15'	Group work	File with fables Online dictionaries Varied manual arts material	Reading, writing
Attend a fable performance with "Allies in English"	20'	Whole group	"Allies in English" Sign language interpreter	Interacting, listening
Homework	-	Individual work	Video recorder Greetings notes	Speaking

Table 5: Summary of tasks in session 2

4.7.3. Session 3: Numbers and animals

The third session is focused on the acquisition of new vocabulary in BSL, more concretely, numbers and animals, as they are parts of the lexicon closely related to the register of a fable. This session also places an important weight on gamification, as many of the tasks to be developed consist of games through which students learn and acquire

new content at the same time. It is also relevant to mention that this whole session is accompanied by the colleagues from “Allies in English”. Students will continue to have contact with them eventually, but this is the only session completely shared with them.

The first task of this session aims both at breaking the ice among all the students and at introducing the topic of animals. The objective of this game is that students become aware of the fact that they are able to understand many of the animals’ signs even though they cannot produce them yet. In this sense, it resembles a mimic game, where students have to guess the gesture. At the same time, as this is also a kinetic game, the performance of the gestures will facilitate the students’ memory. The game consists of a memory task where students will have to remember all the elements that their partners have said and add one more at the end of the list. Each of them will have to start with the sentence “In my fable there is/are...”, and add one number and one animal at the end. The next player would then repeat what their partner said and add a contribution.

Once students have been warmed up with the previous game and the animal signs are more familiar to them, the next task aims at reassuring this knowledge. This time, the students from “Allies in English” and the teacher will hide several cards around the classroom. These cards contain one animal sign each. Once the cards are hidden, students can come in the classroom and divide into their usual groups. The portfolio started in session 2 is completed in this task: while some students in the group find the appropriate card appointed by the partners from “Allies in English”, the rest of the group has to complete the portfolio adding the sign cards next to their corresponding animal. In this sense, each group will have one portfolio containing animals’ vocabulary in English and in BSL that they can use every time they need.

When students are reasonably familiar with this lexicon, they will develop an interaction task. They are provided with a table containing questions about personal information related to animals, such as: “have you got any pet?”, “have you ever had a pet before?” “What are your favourite animals?” Each student will have to ask these questions to three different partners, either from their habitual group or from the “Allies in English” group. Before asking, these questions will be rehearsed in BSL with the help of the teacher, the sign language interpreter and the colleagues from “Allies in English”. This task links with the next one, task four, where students will have to join again in groups and compare their answers with their classmates. Then, they will have to answer questions such as: which is the most popular animal in the class? Which one is the least popular? How many students have a pet or which is the median of pets in the class? They may use tables, charts or graphics to represent this information either with a computer or by hand.

At the end of the session, the students' comprehension and acquisition of vocabulary will be tested with a video⁹ of a famous fable signed in BSL and with subtitles in English to guarantee comprehension at any level. After watching this video, the final task will join the students and the colleagues from "Allies in English" together in groups, where they will have to find and write an alternative ending for the fable. In this sense, the scaffolding technique is developed during the whole session: in the first tasks, contents were introduced and practiced little by little, diminishing the quantity of help as the session develops.

At the end of this session students are asked to watch a video¹⁰ about the past simple tense and answer some questions about its content as part of their homework in order to apply the flipped classroom technique, through which students take the lead in the process of learning. They are expected to go through the material on their own before strengthening these concepts in the following session. Below, table 6 summarizes the tasks reviewed in this session and the most relevant information.

Task	Time (minutes)	Group pattern	Materials and resources	Skills
Memory game	10'	Whole group	Notes with number signs	Speaking
Finding game	10'	Group work	Animals portfolio BSL cards	Listening
Fill the table	10'	Whole group	Table with questions Animals portfolio	Interacting Writing

⁹ At <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tl9AAav3Qo>

¹⁰ At <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QtAYUaRWnnI>

Animal statistics	10'	Group work	Table with questions Computer/cards	Reading Writing
Video "The tortoise and the hare"	5'	Whole group	Video	Listening Reading
Find an alternative ending	10'	Group work	Animals portfolio	Writing Interacting
Homework: Flipped classroom	-	Homework	Video Questionnaire	Reading Listening Writing

Table 6: Summary of tasks in session 3

4.7.4. Session 4: Fables in the past

This session links with the last task assigned to students in session 3, concerned with the flipped classroom technique. Students were expected to devote some time at home to watch a short video about the past simple tense and to answer some questions about this topic, such as: has the verb "to be" any particularities in the past simple tense? Do you find any similarities among some examples of irregular verbs in the past form? Can you imagine a situation where you would use this tense? Do you find any similarities with the present simple tense?

Once students have devoted some time to think about these questions at home, in this session's first task they are divided into their already-familiar groups and discuss the

ideas they noted in each of the questions answered at home. They have to gather their points in common in a single document, which can be written on a paper sheet, on a computer or outlined on a poster. This task works the same way as the portfolio task in session 3, that is, self-made notes for help and study.

When students have their past simple notes prepared, they need to present a brief exposition of their ideas. Each group is offered a maximum of 10 minutes per exposition, where all the members are encouraged to share at least one contribution. This intervention will be taken into account in the evaluation of this unit (section 4.9).

Tasks 1 and 2 have been focused on comprehension check and reinforcement. Next, tasks 3 and 4 aim at practicing this content once understanding has been established. On this occasion, students and their group mates are handed out a short text briefly explaining the history of fables. Students have to identify and underline all the verbs in the past simple tense they can find throughout the text. Once all past simple verbs are pinpointed, the groups may progress towards task number 4. All these verbs must be divided into regular and irregular verbs. All the verbs belonging to the first kind must be written in blue cards, while the verbs within the second type will be written in green cards. The blue cards are then stuck on the left side of the classroom and the green cards on the right side. In this way, students will have instances of each type of verbs at first glance.

Finally, for the development of the final task of this session, students will have at their disposal the notes about past tenses gathered in task 1, the examples of regular and irregular verbs created in task 4 and the animals portfolio created in session 3. With all these additional materials, students have to put all contents into practice, as a way of rehearsing the final project in session 5. This final task aims at linking the vocabulary about animals, the past simple tense and the structure of a fable in the platform Twitter. Students have to write a Twitter thread narrating a fable. This Twitter thread will be created with private accounts, only visible for the school community. At the end of the week, the team whose thread collects the higher number of likes will have additional points in the evaluation of this unit. Besides, after the narration of this fable on the social network, a message will be added, informing the school community that these fables will be played next day at the centre and that tickets are available at a symbolic price. As mentioned in section 4.2., the money gathered will be destined to one non-profit organization concerned with the inclusion of the deaf community at the winners' choice.

At the end of this section, table 7 summarizes the tasks in session 4 as well as all the convenient information related:

Task	Time (minutes)	Group pattern	Materials and resources	Skills
Discussion of ideas in groups	15'	Group work	Answered questions (homework) Computers/Poster /Paper	Interacting Writing
Exposition of ideas	10'	Group work	Computers/Poster /Paper	Speaking
Identify past verbs in a text	10'	Group work	Text	Reading
Colour cards	5'	Group work	Colour cards	Writing
Twit a fable	15'	Group work	Twitter Guiding notes	Writing

Table 7: summary of tasks in session 4

4.7.5. Session 5: final project

The main aim of the final project is to check the compliance of the five objectives pursued at the beginning of the unit. Some of them were observed together in the final task of session 4, as a way of introducing the final project to students. They were asked to write a fable in the social media Twitter. In the final project, they are asked to subtitle this same fable in BSL with the help of the animals' glossary created in session 3, the sign

language interpreter and their colleagues from “Allies in English”, with whom they will cooperate in this final session.

Each group of students will be completed with 1 partner from “Allies in English”, who will be in charge of subtitling the most difficult parts in BSL, especially those concerned with tenses and grammar in general. Thus, each group will count with two subtitlers, the student from “Allies in English” and another student within the group who will be in charge of subtitling animals, greetings and short interventions. The rest of students in the group will have the role of animals and will perform the fable in a role-play act, supporting the BSL subtitles with their lines in English to guarantee comprehension at any level.

At the beginning of this session, each group will have the time to meet their guest from “Allies in English” and to rehearse their fable together before acting. As stated in section 4.2., the audience will pay a symbolic price for their tickets and will be also handed out a short questionnaire about each group’s performance. The group with the highest score will be very positively evaluated, an aspect discussed in section 4.9. They will be also awarded by choosing a non-profit organization concerned with the inclusion of the deaf community from a list of options. Some of the organizations included are: *Confederación Española de Familias de Personas Sordas* (FIAPAS), at national level; *Federación Andaluza de Asociaciones de Sordos* (FAAS), at community level; or *Asociación Provincial de Personas Sordas de Jaén* (APROSOJA), at provincial level. The winner group will be able to personally donate the money collected from the tickets of the play to the organization at their choice.

Below, table 8 summarizes the stages of this final project as well as the most relevant information:

Stage	Time (minutes)	Group pattern	Materials and resources	Skills
Preparation and rehearse	20'	Group work	Animals portfolio Fable	Speaking Interacting Listening

			Props Sign language interpreter “Allies in English”	
Acting of fable	35’	Group work	Props “Allies in English”	Speaking

Table 8: summary of stages in the final project.

4.8. Attention to diversity

The present didactic unit has as one of the main aims to create an inclusive atmosphere in the classroom, specially devised for the two students undergoing different types of hypoacusis. In this sense, all the tasks are designed so that both of them as well as the rest of their classmates may receive the same amount of input. It is necessary to remember that one of the students has a moderate type of hypoacusis. She is able of perceiving oral messages, using lip reading and hearing aids. In this sense, all the tasks should be supported by the presence of a speech therapist to try to improve oral output, with special emphasis in the phonemes with which she has more difficulties. In addition, the organization of the classroom in U-shape is recommended, so that this student is able to see all their classmates and teacher in a clear way.

Secondly, there is also a student undergoing a severe hypoacusis who is barely capable of producing speech. Therefore, all the tasks containing any kind of oral output are subtitled in BSL for him. Moreover, this is another main objective of the unit: the awareness of the presence of sign languages in society. In this way, the whole unit is designed for the inclusion of all individuals in the classroom.

However, some attention must be paid to two kinds of students that may be present in this group: fast and slow learners. For this reason, one additional task is suggested for

each type. On the one hand, fast learners may devote their extra time to investigate about the expression of tenses in BSL, with special emphasis on the past tense. In this way, the additional task consists on creating a supplementary portfolio which could be joined to the animals' portfolio created in session 3. This portfolio should contain an outline of the grammar rules about tenses in BSL and images with the gestures involved in the past tense expressions. In addition, these fast learners could also subtitle the past expressions in the play of the final project instead of one partner from "Allies in English". This last task is optional and it would be highly regarded in the final evaluation.

On the other hand, for slow learners there are several alternatives, depending on the contents where the problem resides. If the student needs additional material to practice the past simple tense in English, it is recommended the reading of a short story specially focused on the past simple tense. Secondly, if the problem has to do with the animal vocabulary in BSL, these students will be organized in one group and share some minutes playing vocabulary games such as mime, bingo or Kahoot.

4.9. Evaluation

This section is devoted to the evaluation of students in this unit, whose criteria are in a one-to-one correspondence with the different didactic objectives stated in section 4.3., as it is framed in the law. The different percentages that correspond to the different instruments of evaluation are distributed as follows: a 30% of the final mark corresponds to the students' performance in the final project, contained in session 5. This 30% is evaluated taking into account the short questionnaires that the audience filled in, and to a rubric devised by the teacher. Secondly, another 30% corresponds to the students' attitude and behaviour in the classroom. Although this part of the final mark may be subjective to evaluate, the teacher should take into account the students' attitude in the development of each session, by observing the group work, their individual work and interaction with the environment in general. For this purpose, the use of rubrics of notes are useful to gather a set of more objective opinions. Finally, the remaining 40% of the final grade is focused on the students' daily work, which is divided into the four first sessions, that is to say, a 10% will fall on each day. The evaluation tool used in this case is a rubric filled by the teacher during the development of these 4 sessions.

Finally, it is important to mention that, according to the Royal Decree 1105/2014, the different evaluation criteria are matched with the following evaluation standards: for the oral comprehension, the standards 1, 3 and 6 are selected; secondly, for the oral production, the standards 1 and 4 are chosen; in the case of written comprehension, the

standards 5 and 6 are selected; finally, for the written production the standard 4 is the main one in the assessment.

Evaluation criteria	Learning standards
Oral comprehension	
1, 3	1, 3, 6
Oral production	
1, 7	1, 4
Written comprehension	
1, 3	5, 6
Written production	
1, 6	4

Table 9: Relationship between evaluation criteria and learning standards

	Inadequate	Sufficient	Good	Excellent
Listening	The student is barely able to perceive the general meaning of the oral/signed text, with the exception of some words.	The student identifies lexical and grammatical items but is not able to perceive the general meaning.	The student is able to perceive the general message, but is not able to distinguish some important details.	The student is able to perceive both the general message and the important details of the oral text.
Speaking	The student is able to produce some isolated sentences either orally or signed with poor performance.	The student is able to produce simple sentences coherently, either orally or signed, with some pronunciation and grammar mistakes.	The student is able to produce oral or signed messages coherently, connecting several sentences with isolated pronunciation and grammar errors.	The student is able to produce coherent speech, either signed or oral, with few pronunciation corrections.
Reading	The student is able to identify isolated words and expressions,	The student is able to perceive the general	The student is able to understand the general	The student understands the text almost completely,

	but does not understand the overall meaning of the text.	message, but does not understand a great part of the text.	meaning and to identify the most important lexical and grammar items.	identifying important details and lexical and grammar items.
Writing	The student is able to produce short and simple written messages with spelling mistakes.	The student is able to produce simple sentences with no spelling mistakes.	The student is able to produce simple texts, using the lexical and grammar items learned and with few mistakes.	The student is perfectly able to produce cohesive and coherent texts, using the learned lexical and grammar items.

Table 10: Rubric for the evaluation of the tasks (40%)

			
Originality			
Clarity of message			
Coherence			

Pronunciation/Gestures			
Fluency			
Visual material			

Table 11: Rubric for the final project (30%)

5. Conclusion

In this paper, focused on the teaching of English as a foreign language to hearing impaired students, several objectives were mainly pursued: on the first place, to show the isolation that this community suffers in terms of opportunities and resources; secondly, the fact that an inclusive atmosphere in the classroom, where tasks are designed and directed towards all types of students is possible, no matter their particular circumstances; and finally, the difficulties that teachers face in their daily work and the lack of information at the point of departure of their professional career.

Throughout the sections, three of these objectives have been proved: the epistemological basis of this paper developed the needs of hearing impaired students - in biological, educational and social perspectives - and their treatment in society - in past and present times -. These paragraphs inform about the scarce resources that the deaf community enjoy and about the need for investigation and contribution. On a second step, the proposal of the teaching unit under scrutiny has as the main aim the cooperation of all students to learn some basic expressions in BSL and some grammar and lexical items, with special emphasis on the writing and reading skills. In this sense, the objectives of the unit are designed for a heterogeneous and inclusive classroom, with equal attention to every kind of need. Finally, the last objective of this paper is deeply subjective, a reason why it is impossible to prove in these sections. However, it is reasonable to affirm that, being education one of the most complex branches of professional careers, it is almost impossible to be updated about every branch within education. In addition, auditory disabilities are not at the peak of its glory with regards to research contributions and resources. This is the reason why the motivation for pursuing that objective is highlighted.

This small contribution intends to raise awareness of the needs that are still visible for the deaf community regarding education. One important point to be highlighted in this sense is the evaluation of the teaching unit (section 4.9). The prize for the winning group is not a numerical mark, but a real reward both for their results and for their self-fulfilment as individuals.

It goes without saying that there is still a long way until the needs of the deaf community are met. Alongside, there is also still a lot to be made to provide teachers with the right tools and resources which allow them to grow as professionals. For the time being, experience and research are the most powerful aspects driving the career of a teacher.

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