



UNIVERSIDAD DE JAÉN



UNIVERSIDAD DE CÓRDOBA

Master's Dissertation

TEACHING “REAL” ENGLISH FOR A REAL WORLD

Student: Valenzuela Delgado, Carolina

Supervisor: Dr. Jesús Manuel Nieto García

Department: English Philology

November, 2023

Abstract:

Throughout history, there have been many methods related to the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language. However, when these learners have communicative experiences outside the classroom, they do not feel prepared or confident enough to participate in communicative exchanges. This Master's dissertation arises from this concern and from the conviction that teaching "real" English is possible after having carried out a critical theoretical review and approaching the topic also from a more practical perspective in the following pages.

This change of focus is presented as a reality with the hope that we are all committed to change in order to help children become communicatively competent beings capable of communicating in English and being able to value and appreciate the diversity of the current world.

Key words: "real" English, authentic materials, culture, communicative competence, challenges, needs, comprehensible input, context

Resumen

A lo largo de la historia, ha habido muchos métodos relacionados con la enseñanza y el aprendizaje del inglés como lengua extranjera. Sin embargo, cuando estos alumnos tienen experiencias comunicativas fuera del aula, no se sienten lo suficientemente preparados o seguros para participar en intercambios comunicativos. Este Trabajo Fin de Máster surge de esta inquietud y del convencimiento de que enseñar un inglés "real" es posible tras haber realizado una reflexión teórica crítica y abordar el tema también desde una perspectiva más práctica en las páginas posteriores.

Este cambio de enfoque se presenta como una realidad con la esperanza de que todos estemos comprometidos con el cambio para ayudar a los niños a convertirse en seres comunicativamente competentes, capaces de comunicarse en inglés y de valorar y apreciar la diversidad del mundo actual.

Palabras clave: inglés "real", materiales auténticos, cultura, competencia comunicativa, desafíos, necesidades, información comprensible, contexto

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	4
2. LITERATURE REVIEW	5
2.1. Definition and significance of “real” English	5
2.2. The legislative frame: the CEFR and the Companion volume	7
2.3. Classroom English vs Everyday English	10
2.4. The new reality: current needs	13
2.5. Who and why should they learn “real” English in the 21 st century?	15
3. DIDACTIC PROPOSAL	17
3.1. A change in mindset: pedagogical implications	17
3.2. Keeping up to date with authentic materials and resources	19
3.3. Culture and language: intertwined terms	21
3.3.1. <i>The presence of English words in the Spanish language</i>	22
3.4. <i>Inspiring expressions and challenging activities in the EFL classroom</i>	24
3.4.1. <i>Inspiring expressions: classroom language and idioms</i>	24
3.4.2. <i>Challenging activities considering the Companion volume</i>	28
3.4.2.1. <i>Reception activities and language learning strategies</i>	29
3.4.2.2. <i>Production activities and language learning strategies</i>	30
3.4.2.3. <i>Interaction activities and language learning strategies</i>	31
3.4.2.4. <i>Mediation activities and language learning strategies</i>	32
4. CONCLUSION	33
5. REFERENCES	34

1. INTRODUCTION

This master's dissertation emerges as a profound reflection, as an introspection that has developed after delving into the study of the true essence of the English language. Through the exploration of a subject dedicated to “real” English and a careful review of my own learning language experience, I have posed fundamental questions: How much of our lives have we dedicated to the assimilation of a second language, in this case, English? And to what extent does that arduous effort and dedication become apparent when we communicate with native and non-native speakers of this language?

Most of us have gone through an educational experience that, unfortunately, has tended to focus on grammar, neglecting what authenticity and genuine interaction require for language proficiency. As a result, when we get the chance to communicate in English with people from diverse backgrounds, we often find ourselves lacking self-confidence, fluency in the language and natural expression and vocabulary that would make us sound like proficient language users. All of this is due to the absence of real and meaningful communication activities to which we have been exposed as students.

In essence, this master's dissertation has a clear and defined purpose: to transform the teaching of foreign languages into something that responds to current needs and demands. This involves considering the richness of the linguistic diversity in which we are immersed, and, in particular, the importance of teaching “real” English in the school environment. This aims to empower children to become communicatively competent in the language while they use it as a powerful tool for global and cultural understanding.

Teaching “real” English means changing many aspects, starting with our view of English, but it is worth it. Learning this type of English is a complex and difficult journey but we should not think of it as a dream, it is a challenging but achievable goal, we cannot give up, this change affects all of us.

To face teaching “real” English for a real world, throughout this document we will look in depth at what “real” English is, how education laws and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and its Companion volume deal with it and what the benefits from this learning are. This will be followed by a more practical part, an analysis of different methodological implications will be carried out, paying special attention to the impact of culture in language learning and, finally, practical proposals are encouraged to make this challenge a reality because it is just a matter of taking the step.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

To bring about the transformation of English teaching and learning in the classroom, we must delve into the literature and start with some fundamental concepts. In this section, we will focus on understanding what “real” English is and why it is so important, as well as who should learn it and why. Additionally, we will explore what the current laws reflect and, of course, what Europe outlines through the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and its Companion volume. Understanding the paradigm from a legislative perspective allows us to plan a route and see the significant gap that exists between everyday English based on the linguistic needs of the 21st century and the type of English taught in the classroom.

2.1. Definition and significance of “real” English

English is considered the official and co-official language in more than sixty countries, it is the most commonly spoken language worldwide and as a result one of the most or, arguably, the most influential in the current world. However, even though it is a universal language and millions of people have invested their time, effort and in many cases a significant amount of money in mastering it, can they ensure that they speak a “real” English that allows them to communicate fluently and keep up to date with both native and non-native speakers? To find an answer to this question, we need to understand what “real” English is and why it is so important in our daily lives and for our future.

According to Pérez-Cañado (2009), the term “real” English encompasses the different expressions, words and sounds that are typically used by native speakers in their informal language. Unfortunately, these aspects are not commonly emphasized in the teaching and learning process when English is taught as a foreign language.

After this definition, most people’s answer to the question posed is probably “no”, and it is not the fault of all those who have put effort and enthusiasm into learning a language. The issue often lies in the way English has been taught, with a focus on formality by means of old-fashioned materials, excessive emphasis on grammar and limited attention to oral production, which results in an English-speaking profile that is not well-prepared to face the current linguistic challenges. In this sense, a change in the way of teaching becomes evident, moving from a more theoretical approach focused on grammar and outdated expressions to a much more practical and realistic approach based on the reality of the current world and each of our students, as each one is unique and special.

Hence, the role of the teacher is one of the fundamental aspects within this revolutionary change. It is our responsibility as teachers to empower students with the necessary self-confidence to use English as a means of communication. All of this does not imply that children need to become native speakers of the language or imitate a particular accent. Rather, they should be able to communicate as best as they can in order to reach mutual understanding without paying too much attention to the minor grammatical errors that may be made along the way, as fluency should always take precedence over accuracy.

As we can appreciate, this implies a radical shift in the paradigm of traditional teaching, transforming it into a much more complex process. It is no longer just about teaching subjects such as mathematics, science, geography and history, among others; instead, it involves adopting a new more integrated approach. In this way, it is not only a matter of teaching English, but we are also actually introducing the English culture associated with the language to our students, enriching their educational experiences as we expose them not only to the great spheres (UK and USA); instead, our classroom becomes an open space where English from all over the world has a place and something to teach us.

To understand this in a more practical way, here is an example: when we praise a student we always say *Well done*, or *Congratulations*, outdated expressions that run the risk of becoming obsolete. So, to liven up our English, we can replace them with others like *You're on fire* or *Kudos to you*. This is what "real" English is about, a significant challenge that is well worth it, exposing students to probably more challenging English, but with enough input to be able to move from this input to output. In a few words, it is just a matter of daring to take the step and start including this kind of language in our classrooms, until this more ambitious goal becomes a reality.

In line with Engkent (1986), by introducing this type of English into the classroom and explaining its meaning to our pupils, we are preparing them for life outside school and bringing reality into the classroom, since this type of language does not commonly appear in textbooks. It goes without saying, of course, that it is necessary to expose learners to different registers of the language without allowing the more colloquial aspects to overlap into more formal tasks.

This prompts us to contemplate the direction English as a language is taking and the cultural context underlying it. All of this arises in a context of immense linguistic diversity, where the situation is becoming increasingly unpredictable, more and more people are using English to communicate at any place and time for a wide range of reasons (Crystal 1999). So

as foreign language teachers, we must be aware of every linguistic update and modification that occurs. We cannot remain disconnected from change if we want to teach quality English to our students, as Eaves-Walton (1999) and Swan (2005) point out, no language remains static from its inception; they all evolve constantly, and stopping this change is impossible.

This may sound idyllic right now, overwhelming and even more like a dream or an unachievable goal. However, many authors have been advocating for a different approach to language teaching for quite some time, although unfortunately this is not yet a common reality in many classrooms. Why does this happen? Do education laws not address this issue with full clarity and depth? What is the role of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and its Companion volume concerning this matter?

2.2. The legislative frame: the CEFR and the Companion volume

In this section, an analysis of how the current educational laws in Spain and in the Autonomous Community of Andalusia address the teaching and implementation of “real” English in Primary Education classrooms and how it is carried out is presented. At the same time, special attention is paid to the role of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and its updating, the Companion volume, in the development of this kind of English.

Currently, Spain is undergoing a legislative transition, and with the new national curriculum, *LOMLOE*, new educational challenges are introduced. This law already makes special mention that the teaching-learning process of English should promote a connection with students’ experiences and interests to give meaning and personal value to what is learned. In other words, in the classroom, opportunities for communication that align with children’s current realities must be engaged, thus it is about teaching “real” English.

Furthermore, this law emphasizes that linguistic communication must be linked to great challenges, fostering both critical and creative thinking among students, as well as their digital culture, an aspect developed in depth in the section on new pedagogical innovations. As a result, the acquisition of English becomes a double-sided coin, as it is not only used as a means of communication between people but also makes individuals more empathetic and tolerant, opening their minds to understanding new cultures, ways of thinking and ways of living.

In fact, both this curriculum and Royal Decree 157/2022 introduce a new key competence, the plurilingual competence, based on the recognition and respect of linguistic

diversity. The goal is to take advantage of prior experiences that enable mediation and transfer between languages to promote democratic and peaceful coexistence through knowledge and appreciation for the linguistic and cultural diversity that exists worldwide. In this sense, this competence bears the challenges of the 21st century very much in mind and is fully in line with the principles established for “real” English teaching.

In Annex III of Royal Decree 157/2022, a striking new concept appears: learning situations. This gives many clues about the type of methodology that teachers must implement, involving students as active participants and protagonists in their own learning through meaningful and purposeful projects aimed at solving real-world problems. In other words, this new concept is about providing students with communicative opportunities to connect their learning with their context, only in this way does learning a language make sense. After this, it becomes evident that at both national and regional levels, with Decree 101/2023 and the Order of 30th of May 2023 establishing the organizational and curriculum of Primary Education in the Autonomous Community of Andalusia, an effort is being made to carry out different and innovative pedagogical lines.

Nevertheless, education is taking a long time to change in a real way in the classroom, even though this is the desire of many teachers and current laws are now beginning to demand the implementation of principles that should have been put into practice several decades ago. Nowadays, there are still too many students who are being educated with outdated materials, using textbooks that do not meet current demands, and following a very traditional approach where the teacher is the one who speaks while students listen and memorize, and then their language proficiency is determined through an exam primarily focused on written activities. We should advocate for a change in all aspects, making use of all the resources at our disposal, giving students the voice they deserve. We must not allow our experience as students to influence how we teach.

In this context, as advocated in Autonomous Decree 101/2023, teachers’ training should be a continuous process, not only regarding the language but also concerning new methodologies, new technologies, and classroom management. This does not mean that teachers have to be native speakers to be exceptional teachers; instead, they should maintain continuous contact with English language, stay informed about any changes that occur, and aim to make the teaching and learning process a unique and enriching experience.

Indeed, Jenkins (2000) highlights that native speakers are not necessarily in an advantageous position when it comes to using English in an international context, as the modern world demands. If we can make a choice, a functionally bilingual person would be preferable, as they are familiar with the process of acquiring two different languages and both functionally and strategically they tend to use strategies and tools that promote understanding among people of different nationalities.

This is where the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (2001) played a key role for many years, since it was the first step to understand what Europe sets as standards for language teaching and learning. From now on, however, we will focus on its Companion volume (2020), which is an update of the CEFR itself. Although its title may be misleading for most people, this update actually provides us with achievement descriptors and a wide range of communicative activities associated with specific language competences such as interaction, intercultural competence, mediation, or the use of technology. In this sense, it is much more than a mere complement to the CEFR, as it was published after long reflection process that started with the original document and the deep changes in education, and in society as a whole, that took place between 2000 and 2020.

The Companion volume was developed by the Council of Europe and it acts as a vehicle for promoting quality in second language teaching and learning, as well as for multilingual and intercultural education. As language teachers, we should all be familiar with this document and appreciate that teaching “real” English goes hand in hand with the principles set out in it. The basis and structure of this document revolve around the acquisition of the communicative competence through the performance of communicative activities and the acquisition of strategies. Consequently, language is no longer seen as a mere four-skill model (listening, speaking, reading and writing); instead, it fosters a more realistic perspective, oriented to interaction and cultural mediation, which closely resembles language use in the real world.

Therefore, it is not a document designed exclusively for English language teaching, it is rather intended for learners, teachers and language teaching and assessment professionals. Its main purpose is to provide guidance and support for language teaching and learning within educational contexts. In summary, it is an invaluable tool for anyone involved in language teaching who wishes to understand and effectively apply the principles of Europe and citizenship.

The Companion volume provides achievement descriptors to understand what students can do and how well they can do it. This information is highly beneficial for assessing our students' level of proficiency, allowing us to build on a solid and realistic foundation that enables us to progress towards a higher level. In other words, it makes language teaching and learning a motivating rather than an overwhelming process. The achievement descriptors included in the Companion volume vary widely, ranging from pre-A1 to C2; nevertheless, bearing in mind that this master's dissertation focuses on Primary Education, we will take as a reference a sixth-grade class whose level should be A2+, with the intention of reaching level B1 during the Secondary Education stage.

Although there are different definitions of each achievement, one definition for oral comprehension would be that learners "can understand phrases and expressions related to areas of most immediate priority (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment), provided people articulate clearly and slowly" (Council of Europe 2020, p. 48). These descriptors are essential for planning our sessions and carrying out realistic competence tasks that are neither too easy nor too difficult.

Finally, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages does not specify a specific methodology to be used in the classroom. It actually recommends an action-oriented approach, since the aim is no longer for the learner to know the language, but for him/her to be able to use it effectively in everyday situations.

2.3. Classroom English vs Everyday English

Now that we have analyzed the different legislations in force at both national and regional level, as well as the fundamental role that the Common European Framework of Reference for Language and its Companion volume play in teaching a more "real" English, we can get an idea of what the language teaching should be like, taking into account the demands of the 21st century and how it is currently taught in Primary Education schools. Teachers must be very aware of the needs of the world in order to focus their teaching.

Despite the dramatic changes that time has brought with it, many years have passed while classrooms have remained unchanged. As Murray (2003) points out, educational authorities are who must first change their perspective before real changes can take place in classrooms, these are changes that both students and teachers are ready to welcome with open arms.

Along this line, Ranta (2010) states that English teaching must meet the needs of the students and encourage their participation without paying too much attention to the mistakes that may be made along the way, as sometimes there are many students who do not participate due to fear of making a mistake. This seems the perfect point to refer to this wonderful quote: “English is a universal language that is spoken and understood almost everywhere. No need to be afraid of errors” (Ranta, 2010, p. 14).

In this sense, creating a comfortable and welcoming learning environment where mistakes can have a place can ensure the success of the learning process. As Diert-Boté (2016) claims, it undoubtedly fosters engagement, commitment, passion and continuous learning for both teachers and students.

Transforming in this way not only the way of teaching, but also of evaluating, making students more aware and helping them to become more autonomous, reflective and creative people, the aim is to put an end to examination-based teaching which is not in line with the legislation and which does not encourage the use of language, merely identifying each person who takes a seat in the classroom with a simple pass or fail. Our students deserve much more, they deserve to be aware of the astonishing linguistic diversity around them through flexible and varied learning experiences. They should not be paralyzed by the fear of speaking with a native speaker; instead, they should feel capable of communicating in English with anyone.

All this promotion of speaking does not mean that students should become native speakers or imitate a particular accent, as each person has their own. However, we should expose them to native language by means of authentic materials such as songs, books, news, magazines or podcasts that will help them acquire a real language, always being aware of the students’ age and language proficiency level: “Teachers can adapt their usage of authentic materials to suit the age and language proficiency level of the students” (Wang, 2011, p. 7).

In fact, in 1986, Engkent stated that real people do not speak like books, and certainly not like textbooks, because even though these cover linguistic forms, they forget to contextualize and give them social and cultural meaning. If we just take a look at the dialogues included in textbooks, we will notice that some of the most common and repetitive will take on of the following forms:

- *What’s your name?*
- *My name is Lucy.*
- *How old are you?*

- *I'm seven years old.*

Or maybe something like the following:

- *How are you?*

- *I'm fine, thank you*

These forms are undoubtedly correct, but “real” English language is not so cold and rigid. Instead, some expressions that can improve this situation can be the following ones: *How is everything going? How are you doing? Not as well as you, and you?* or *I can't complain, what about you?* With all of this, we give the language the importance it deserves without neglecting linguistic diversity and cultural backgrounds, as teaching a language also means teaching its culture.

However, what happens after school? How much time are our students exposed to English outside the school? The big problem here in Spain is that almost everything, if not everything, is dubbed or translated (news, movies, books, interviews), and that greatly limits the amount of native language exposure learners receive on a daily basis.

In brief, change is possible, but there are still many advances needed both inside and outside the classroom through the use of authentic and innovative materials, active methodologies focused on students' interests, and the creation of a learning environment that promotes group cohesion. Students should feel that they are learning and that they are reflecting on their own learning, but also that we as teachers are learning with and from them because we are all in a continuous learning process, as we never stop learning a language. We are all in the same boat and every person is important and valued. This is how Pérez-Cañado (2018) asserts that “real” English learning is designed for teachers like you and students like yours; you just have to start putting it into practice.

2.4. The new reality: current needs

To make “real” English teaching a reality in our classrooms, we must carry out two actions. Firstly, we must change the way we teach, starting by changing the concept in our minds:

The common suggestion is that we should move on from teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) as spoken by the native speakers (NS) in the ‘target language cultures’ to teaching English as a lingua franca (ELF) with emphasis on the global role of English as a vehicular language between speakers from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Ranta, 2010 p. 2).

After bearing in mind this change in the way we focus on teaching English, the second thing we must do is one of the most important tasks as teachers and human beings: we must dedicate time and effort in getting to know our students and how they like to learn in order to adapt learning according to their interests and needs. As Arteaga and Hidalgo (2000) point out, children enjoy changing from one activity to another and working in different ways of grouping. They like to play, dramatize, sing and learn with reflective materials in a natural environment that takes into account their prior knowledge. Furthermore, they enjoy speaking and learning by doing things with the language. Thus, these characteristics must be considered when planning and timing our lessons.

It is evident that all of this is not easy; learning a foreign language is an effort for L2 learners. However, since students are facing the challenge, let us make sure that they do not spend their time learning outdated nearly obsolete expressions. As Pérez-Cañado (2009) points out, the difference between speaking English well and very well lies in the number of idiomatic expressions students have in their memory and can use naturally and automatically in their daily life.

Learning this type of English is a process that should be approached with care, calm and patience. It is normal for students to feel frustrated at the beginning, so it is essential to establish SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timed) objectives so that students are able to perceive an improvement both on a personal and academic level, which will be reinforced by a better self-concept and an increase in both their self-esteem and motivation to continue learning the target language.

This means that teaching “real” English also implies a significant change in the roles that teachers and students play in the classroom. Thus, students become active protagonists of

their learning while the teacher is a guide and a facilitator, they must be up to date and prepared to assume this educational challenge with the aim of seeking the best oral production in each student, rather than having them speak as native speakers, which should never be the goal.

It is also important to involve children emotionally in each activity and to promote communicative activities that encourage speaking, but what do we do when students make mistakes? It is absolutely essential to deal with mistakes in a constructive and supportive way. Here are some strategies:

1. Positive correction: instead of saying that a child has made a mistake, we can rephrase the answer and encourage them to try again.
2. Specific feedback: explaining why they are incorrect and how to correct mistakes helps students understand and learn from them.
3. Supportive environment: creating an environment where mistakes are seen as learning opportunities rather than failures is key for learners to feel comfortable.
4. Practice and reinforcement: provide exercises and activities that allow learners to practice and correct their mistakes.
5. Group work: according to Harmer (2001), a good tool for students to avoid feeling stressed when making mistakes is to encourage peer tutoring so that learners help each other without the intervention of the teacher.

Mistakes in foreign language learning occur for many reasons. In Spain, while some mistakes are made because of a lack of understanding, many others are caused by differences between Spanish and English, where English offers a complex spoken-written interface to know in advance how a new word will be pronounced. For this reason, one of the most recommended phonetic methods is Jolly Phonics, which introduces students to the world of sounds in a playful way with songs and gestures.

Other errors occur because learners want to make a direct translation of the language; in this context, presenting them with idiomatic phrases, double meanings and false friends can facilitate their understanding of the language, although these are complex aspects of the language which require a high linguistic level. After all, mistakes are a part of life, and we must help learners to cope with them.

2.5. Who and why should they learn “real” English in the 21st century?

Throughout the previous sections, some benefits of speaking “real” English have been mentioned, but who should speak it, and why is it so important? What connection exists between learning “real” English and addressing the challenges of the 21st century?

If we focus first on who should learn “real” English, the answer is anyone who wants to and needs the language in any aspect of their lives. Learning “real” English is especially necessary and important for non-native speakers in contexts where the foreign language is used, such as in Spain, where the exposure to the language is very limited and artificial because all the information received is dubbed into Spanish (Pérez-Cañado 2018).

Despite the fact that it is recommended that language learning should start from an early age and that the earlier anybody starts learning a language, the better the development will be due to the brain plasticity and cognitive development of the youngest children, there is no right or wrong age to start learning a language. Anyone, regardless of their age and needs, who feels capable, motivated and interested in acquiring a new language can do so. It is never too late to embark on this path, and even less if it is a matter of learning. But why is it so important to learn “real” English? We are next focusing on its benefits and reasons for learning “real” English.

The first reason is the incredible presence of this language in our daily lives, whether as adults or children. English is a universal language that is spoken all over the world and being able to speak it authentically makes us communicatively competent individuals, capable of communicating with people from other countries and developing our critical thinking in important aspects such as racism, tolerance and diversity (Noxon 2020).

The second reason, according to Pérez-Cañado (2018), is the importance of dedicating time and effort to meaningful and purposeful learning. It makes the most sense to learn words and expressions used in daily life and incorporate them into our classroom language. In this way, students do not learn an almost obsolete and outdated language but instead become closer to native speech after receiving plenty of input. When students realize that with English they can communicate with other people and have experiences they could not have without speaking it, their motivation increases, and they become more positive about foreign language learning.

The third reason is more pragmatic and is linked to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, since to achieve the different official certificates that demonstrate our proficiency in the language, examiners take into account that people use the language in a

natural and fluent way, that is, that they make effective use of “real” English in both written and oral skills (Pérez-Cañado 2018).

Now, it is time to answer the second question addressing the connection between “real” English and the challenges of the 21st century. There is no doubt that learning “real” English opens the door to the real world and makes citizens capable of communicating confidently in English to meet the challenges and commitments of today’s society.

As stated in the *LOMLOE* (2020), the education system must not ignore today’s challenges. The connection between learning “real” English and meeting the challenges of the 21st century lies in increasing global interconnection. In the era of instant communication, the ability to communicate effectively in English is a key skill for addressing global issues. Pearson Education (2019) highlights four main pillars for achieving these goals within the classroom:

1. Cultural awareness: English helps to understand cultures, break down barriers and bring people together.
2. Critical thinking: students should have moments of reflection to give meaning to their learning.
3. Autonomy and personal initiative: giving students responsibility for their own learning is fundamental, cooperative learning is a great idea to achieve this point.
4. Digital literacy: most students are digital natives, so we must take advantage of these media to make the most of them. New technologies help to develop a more autonomous and personalized learning process.

In brief, learning and speaking “real” English is crucial to everyone; no matter what your age is or what your needs are, the most important thing is your attitude. Thus, “real” English is essential in the context of the challenges and opportunities presented by the 21st century.

3. DIDACTIC PROPOSAL

In this section we will focus on a more practical view of “real” English, as we already know what it is and all the practical benefits of acquiring it for both students and teachers. So after a more theoretically-oriented analysis, it is time to take a more didactic approach to help us understand how we can teach this type of English in the classroom, what materials we can use and what methodologies are suitable to promote “real” English, giving special value to the use of authentic materials and giving meaning to the acquisition of a new language and its culture.

3.1. A change in mindset: pedagogical implications

Now that we know what “real” English is, we must face the next question, how to teach it? As Nieto (2009) suggests, the overwhelming growth in the use of English around the world in recent decades has brought with it the emergence of new trends in language teaching. Many approaches have appeared in the evolution from classical language teaching and learning to current methodologies, but the appearance of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages in 2001 marked the turning point in the expansion of use of the main methodological principles to be followed in the foreign language teaching. Currently, the methodology recommended by the CEFR and its Companion volume is an action-oriented approach, whose main purpose is to develop learners’ communicative competence through performances in communicative activities, it is no longer about knowing the functions of language but about knowing how to use a foreign language in real situations.

Through this approach, learning is also discovery-based, students become autonomous and active learners, protagonists of their own learning who have curiosity and use language in meaningful and purposeful ways. Likewise, activities and projects should always be related to students’ immediate context, interests and psycho-developmental characteristics. The teacher thus becomes a guide and a facilitator who must awaken learners’ desires through challenges that allow them to put knowledge into action in a lifelong learning context, which is so trendy now.

ICTs are certainly having a crucial influence on learning, especially when it affects foreign languages, as is reflected in the *LOMLOE* and R.D. 157/2022 with the development of the digital competence. They are a huge source of participation and empowerment, as Pérez-Cañado (2009) states, they create virtual learning environments with infinite possibilities such

as access to updated texts, keeping in touch with native speakers or participating in E-twinning experiences. In other words, they are an incredibly powerful tool for increasing learners' exposure to "real" language.

This is where the concept of blended learning is gaining importance, as combining remote and face-to-face learning brings together the best of both experiences in order to achieve more efficient learning, by increasing pupils' responsibility for their own learning (Noxon, 2020). Learners can be exposed to authentic virtual materials or create their own resources which they can then share in class with their peers, giving them a sense of personal achievement and increasing their confidence with using the language. The International Society for Technology in Education declared in 2007 that a good digital citizen is able to use technology consciously and responsibly in order to maintain a positive attitude towards learning using technology.

In short, we try to use an inspiring reliable methodology where students can enjoy at the same time as they learn, that is why we plan according to what is established in national and regional laws and we carry out a formative and competent evaluation where the students themselves participate actively throughout the process of checking their understanding and reviewing their progress through moments of reflection, thinking routines and the implementation of metacognitive proposals that their teacher has previously shared with them.

Neither the current curriculum nor the CEFR or the Companion volume mention any specific approach for language teaching, they only give some recommendations, for instance to use an eclectic methodology. It is true that there have been many methods of foreign language teaching throughout history and many of them contain interesting proposals, but at the end of the day it is the teacher's responsibility to carefully select the approaches he/she considers most appropriate, taking into account the needs of the school, the students or even the objectives to be achieved with the class-group.

On the other hand, the new regulations also advocate a change of focus and that is why the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) was born with the aim of identifying existing barriers and promoting inclusive and flexible teaching proposals that cater for different learning styles and paces. The principles of the UDL are the following:

- a. Provide multiple ways of representation (the what of learning): information should be presented in different and varied media.

- b. Provide multiple ways of action and expression (the how of learning): offer learners different possibilities to express and reflect about their learning.
- c. Providing multiple ways of engagement (the why of learning): use different strategies to motivate and engage learners in language acquisition.

3.2. Keeping up to date with authentic materials and resources

These new methodological implications can only be implemented if they are supported by authentic materials capable of enabling a methodological change and facilitating the acquisition of “real” English. We cannot pretend to teach “real” English with the same old materials. Authentic materials can be defined as those that have been created for the purpose of being used by native speakers and not in the classroom when teaching English. However, their use in the classroom makes learning a more challenging, entertaining and enjoyable process as they help students to be exposed to real-world English. According to Pearson Education (2019), teaching “real” English can only be done with authentic materials, making use of technology but also of books, showing learners that they are an inexhaustible source of pleasure and enjoyment, so that reading increases exposure to the language and therefore improves their understanding and proficiency.

Materials are a central aspect within the teaching process, as well as a decisive element in the relationship between teacher, students and language. The choice of materials has to be very careful considering the methodology or methodologies to be carried out and the characteristics of our students, as well as the connection and integration of all curricular elements. Teachers are free to choose the curricular materials they consider most appropriate for the context of the school and the learners, but the current boom in the acquisition of communicative competence has put the focus on authentic materials. In the past, the use of authentic materials was very restricted and mainly aimed at higher level learners because of the difficulty involved. However, there are many more advantages that these materials offer to the process of learning a second language than disadvantages.

According to Gilmore (2007), the effective use of authentic materials from a native-speaking environment helps to engage students in immersive linguistic and cultural experiences. Bringing such materials as films, restaurant menus, bestselling books, news, photographs or travel leaflets into the classroom, changes the learner’s attitude and makes them feel more motivated and interested in foreign language learning.

Real examples and stories, as well as videos, songs and podcasts that allow learners to be exposed to different varieties and registers of the language are great for familiarizing themselves with the foreign language in a fun and dynamic way both inside and outside the classroom. In the words of Vigil García, Andarcio Betancourt and Torres Domínguez (2021), authentic materials allow learning to go beyond the school, but in order to do so, students must learn how to use all the resources available.

This means that teachers must expose students to “real” English using authentic materials and resources, even if they have to be adapted to the age and needs of the students, as well as to their current knowledge of the language. For this reason it is essential to dedicate time to get to know our students, to be aware of their strengths and weaknesses, so that we can help them in their integral development in a more valuable way.

Authentic materials are outstanding tools for learning English in context rather than in isolation. Through films, series, quizzes, poems, jokes and many other resources, learners can stop and look at language and reflect on the way it is used. Of course, if we can offer opportunities and projects with other native students at school, as Pérez-Cañado (2018) points out, students will find a real purpose for using the language, and when they see that they can make new friends with the language, their commitment increases.

It is also interesting when learners have reached a certain level to involve them in the design of materials. In the methodological lines promoted by R.D. 157/2022, a lot of importance is given to the development of a learner-centred approach, so their collaboration and participation in the creation of materials can be a great idea, for instance, they can create personal dictionaries, language portfolios, board games, permanent decoration for the classroom or scrapbooks. These creations must take into account the different learning styles and paces of the classroom and the UDL principles, it is important to introduce authentic materials slowly as they can be difficult at first and we do not want to overwhelm our students. Definitively, authentic materials offer a touch of language reality which fortunately allows the learner to move away from repetitive and boring activities (Virgil García, Andarcio Betancourt and Torres Domínguez, 2021).

3.3. Culture and language: intertwined terms

Many sociologists believe that without language, culture would not be accessible (Wang, 2011). Culture is an inseparable term when we talk about any language whether it is a mother or a foreign tongue, that is why learners should be exposed to the customs, traditions and cultural background of the language they are learning from day one.

There are many definitions of the term culture, but in a nutshell, we could say that culture refers to the whole way in which a society lives. Therefore, teaching English through its culture allows us to develop the cultural awareness of our students in order to reduce the misunderstandings that occur due to cultural differences when people with different cultural and language backgrounds want to communicate, as culture is unique to each language.

For example, in Spain we usually greet each other with two kisses on the cheek, while in the United States they simply smile when they say hello or shake their hands. Another clear case is that British people, for example, are also famous for their punctuality, whereas in Spain, especially among friends, no one usually arrives at the agreed time. Working on such cases in the English foreign language classroom will help students to improve their cultural awareness, which means that they will be able to recognize both similarities and differences between cultures different from their own.

Knowing the culture helps a lot in the process of understanding the language and is a fundamental aspect to take into account as we increasingly meet or communicate with people from different cultures either face to face or online due to today's multicultural world. Carrying out communicative activities that give value to culture makes students better thinkers and more respectful and sensitive towards diversity.

In this context, it is inspiring to mention the relationship that Wang (2011) established between both terms, culture and language. He said that in order to understand and acquire a language well, we must see the world as if we were a native speaker of that language, as this will make us more tolerant, respectful and this will help us know the world from another perspective.

Despite the enrichment that knowing the culture of a language means, English materials and foreign language classrooms have not given culture the value and status it deserves, as they mostly focus on the functions of language but not on its meaning and applicability in real life. We cannot allow pupils to become ignorant of culture and we must provide them with authentic materials that make them appreciate it and reflect on it, because when this happens their

communicative competence improves overall, as they may not know the meaning of some words but they will be able to guess their meaning from the context. For example, with the expression *a piece of cake* for those students who have never heard it in a context, they will probably think that it means something edible, but it is not, it is an expression used to say that something is very simple. *This activity is a piece of cake* is for example one of the many expressions that we can introduce in our lessons so that students can start incorporating it to their active lexicon.

In the view of Ranta (2010), language becomes a window that joins people and cultures when we stop teaching it as a formal language and start seeing it as a vehicle between people with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

3.3.1. The presence of English words in the Spanish language

The influence of English on other languages of the world is undeniable, and Spanish is not an exception. A crystal clear evidence of this influence is the abundance of anglicisms in the Spanish language, these words demonstrate the presence of English in our lives and a consequence of worldwide globalization.

According to Real Academia Española (n.d), an anglicism refers to an English word, expression or way of speaking that is used in another language. Anglicisms tend to be a commonly used word, even among people who have little contact with English, due to their widespread use in daily life. They are especially common among young people, who are influenced by anglicisms found on social networks and mass media.

Throughout history, Spanish has been influenced by several civilizations that have coexisted in the country for centuries. The influence of English is somewhat more recent and has not necessarily been a result of the coexistence of speech communities, but its impact on Spanish has contributed a large number of words that are now recognized by most people in the world. We could say that the influence of English in the world began with the vast British Empire in the 19th century and reached its peak after the Second World War with the military, economic and cultural predominance of the United States on the international scenario.

Despite the different classifications that have been made of anglicisms, Real Academia Española distinguishes between two types of anglicisms:

1. Necessary: These are English terms for which there is no exact equivalent in Spanish, or if there is, the English term is more widely accepted. Examples of these anglicisms are *internet*, *jazz*, *software*, *marketing* and *camping*.
2. Superfluous or unnecessary: These are English words that have been accepted in Spanish, even though Spanish has a valid equivalent. For example, *healthy* instead of “saludable”, *link* instead of “enlace”, *hobby* instead of “pasatiempo” or *casting* instead of “audición”.

The presence of anglicisms has generated a lot of controversy: are they good or bad for Spanish? It is obvious that stopping this exchange and the contact between both languages is inevitable, especially among the younger generations who are not going to stop using these words, either because they are fashionable or simply through personal choice. However, it is important to use languages as a source of enrichment without harming our mother tongue.

The sometimes abusive use of Anglicisms, especially in the field of advertising, led Real Academia Española to carry out a campaign against them in 2016, called [“Lengua madre solo hay una”](#) [There is only one mother tongue], as this overuse often confuses the Spanish population.

In an article that appeared originally in *La Vanguardia*, the Spanish Education Attaché in the UK and Ireland, Gonzalo Capellán (2019), argued that we should not consider one language to be another language’s enemy, but rather that languages and cultures complement each other. The influence of English on Spanish should not be seen as unidirectional, as English has also historically adopted many Spanish words due to the influence of Spanish in the United States. Some of these words are “patio”, “vanilla”, “mosquito”, “siesta” or “rodeo”.

If we think how anglicisms affect the teaching of “real” English, we can see that this is yet another example where teaching authentic English allows learners to become communicatively competent and able to understand and produce messages in two languages. Anglicisms facilitate communication between English and Spanish speakers (Insua, 2017), but we must be aware that globalization and linguistic diversity should not harm the way we communicate in our mother tongue.

From a more practical perspective, working with our students on anglicisms could be an easier aspect than many other aspects of teaching “real” English, as our students are familiar with many of them. A good way to introduce these words in the classroom is through authentic and contextualized materials where anglicisms are involved, such as stories, television shows,

songs and rhymes. We can also carry out activities such as crossword puzzles, word searches and role-playing games, with the help of apps where students are in contact with these words in an interactive way and can have open conversations about anglicisms, encouraging children to reflect on their meaning.

Indeed, an active reflection on the use of anglicisms is an effective tool that promotes the acquisition of “real” English in a natural and unconscious way, as well as improving communicative competence and understanding the global influence of English. However, although these words can generate debate, a balance must be maintained between their use and the preservation of the mother tongue, as the existence of these words does not exempt users from the obligation to understand their meaning in Spanish. In other words, knowing new languages cannot make us ignorant of our own mother tongue.

3.4. Inspiring expressions and challenging activities in the EFL classroom

This section has two parts, and its main aim is to provide practical examples of “real” English in an English foreign language classroom. In the first section, inspiring alternatives to common classroom language are provided, including the introduction of idiomatic expressions in an entertaining and motivating way with the purpose of taking each learner’s communicative competence to the next level. The second section focuses on communicative activities that we can carry out to promote “real” English in the classroom, organized taking into account the skills proposed by the Companion volume in 2020: reception (listening and reading), production (speaking and writing), interaction and mediation.

3.4.1. Inspiring expressions: classroom language and idioms

As English foreign language teachers, we must provide learners with comprehensible and meaningful input, being aware of the great effort involved in foreign language acquisition and that learners must go through a “silent period” in order to be able to produce output autonomously. Many teachers get discouraged when they notice that students’ level of communicative competence is low, but that is no excuse for not speaking English to them. Teachers should encourage students to speak English in the classroom, praise them for taking risks and not blame them for the mistakes they may make.

It is therefore essential to create a comfortable, supportive and enjoyable learning environment where students feel free and want to communicate in the target language because there is a real need or purpose for doing so. The English classroom is often the only space our

students have to communicate in English, and consequently the only place where they can learn to communicate too, so it is our responsibility as teachers to make the most of it.

Students should not only receive explanations in English, they should also learn the classroom language from the first moment they come to school (greetings, congratulations, instructions, rules of games), as making English part of the routine makes children get used to listening to certain expressions which they will not use at first, but which will finally become part of their natural speech. The contexts in which English can be used in the classroom are really varied, from the most everyday communication (greetings, instructions, routines) to specific communication activities (debates, dialogues, creative dramas, interviews, board games, videoconferences with native or non-native speakers). Of course, the most important thing is to start using real “expressions” in the classroom, as this is the starting point to make our students communicatively competent and able to communicate with anyone using English as a medium for communication.

If as an EFL teacher you would like to take the plunge and start introducing and exposing your students to “real” and natural English, here are some inspiring expressions that will make this idea a reality and take your students’ communicative competence a step further. Many of them have been taken from the book by M.G. Durán (2022).

- a. “Real” expressions for the common *how are you*:
 - How are things going?
 - What’s up?
 - How’s your day going?
- b. “Real” expressions for the common *you’re welcome*:
 - It’s nothing!
 - It was my pleasure.
 - No worries!
- c. “Real” expressions for the common *I’m fine thank you*:
 - Pretty good thanks!
 - Not too bad.
 - I’m alive!

d. “Real” expressions for the common *I don’t understand*:

- I don’t get it.
- Sorry, I don’t follow you.
- I didn’t catch that!

e. “Real” expressions for the common *thank you*:

- Thanks a bunch!
- I really appreciate it
- Thanks a million!

f. “Real” expressions for the common *congratulations*:

- Props to you.
- Hats off!
- Have five!

g. “Real” expressions for the common *bye bye*:

- Catch you later!
- See you later, alligator!
- Have a good one!

Now, we will focus on idiomatic expressions, which are words closely related to the culture and history of English and are always used in a very specific context, as their meaning is figurative (Virgil García, Andarcio Betancourt and Torres Domínguez, 2021). The acquisition of these expressions by L2 learners is a difficult process but it is necessary due to the many idiomatic expressions that native speakers use (Rizq, 2015).

Idiomatic expressions are very important elements during the acquisition of “real” English because they make students think about the culture of the language, since in order to understand their meaning it is necessary to think metaphorically and not to translate the language literally. In other words, to understand idioms, the knowledge of the language must go beyond the purely linguistic forms and students must know certain cultural elements in the language, which is why working with these expressions in our English classroom helps students to improve their plurilingual and pluricultural competence.

Because of that, the learning of these idiomatic expressions should take place within a context and considering authentic materials such as stories, dialogues, songs, sitcoms or comics. Below are some examples of some of them provided by the educational social account Bilingualbyme in 2023 (a page created by Edelvives and Macmillan publishers) related to the human body.



Figure 1. Idioms - Break a leg (Bilingualbyme 2023)



Figure 2: Idioms – Learn by heart (Bilingualbyme, 2023)



Figure 3: Idioms - Head in the clouds (Bilingualbyme, 2023)



Figure 4: Idioms – All ears (Bilingualbyme, 2023)

3.4.2. Challenging activities considering the Companion volume

As has been mentioned in all the previous sections, the first ones to take the step to implement this type of English in their classrooms must be the teachers. From the moment the child sets foot at school, we must ensure that they enjoy English at the same time as they are learning, being aware that it is a challenge but that with time and patience it will become a reality.

To make the students feel valued and involved in what is happening in the classroom from the first moment, we can attach different types of greetings to the classroom door, such as high fives, dancing or giving a hug. Implementing this type of routine in our classes changes completely the kids' attitude and even if we think it is something insignificant, it has a lot of impact on the teaching and learning process.

The decoration and distribution of the classroom are also crucial aspects to consider, we must make the classroom accessible to all students, that is why it is recommended to have spaces or corners such as the reading or emotional corner. In these highly personalized spaces students can spend quality time and get to know themselves, so improving their linguistic, intrapersonal and interpersonal skills.

Taking into account the English foreign language area, decisions about decoration will depend a lot on the group-class, but it is advisable to have a corner with the most commonly used words in class, with new vocabulary, or a space where children can show their last activities. This will make them feel very proud and that they are protagonists in the process.

Once all these details, as important as any other aspect within the teaching-learning process, are clear, it is time to plan and think what we want our students to learn, why we want them to learn it and above all, and most importantly, how we are going to make students learn, because it will not matter how many ideas teachers have in their minds if they do not know how to bring these proposals to their students or how to make them acquire this knowledge. The Companion volume (2020) includes a wide range of meaningful and interesting activities to carry out a “real” English teaching in the classroom, always taking into account learners' proficiency and mastery of the target language. These activities are focused on improving communicative competence and, of course, on the acquisition of learning strategies that will enable them to continue learning throughout their lives.

3.4.2.1. Reception activities and language learning strategies

The development of comprehension is always the priority to work on in a communicative approach, as the development of comprehension will lead to production. At the beginning, comprehension activities are tricky, but it is essential to work with authentic materials and around motivational topics related to the learners' concerns. Reception activities can include oral comprehension, audio-visual comprehension and written comprehension.

In Annex II of Royal Decree 157/2022 the first specific competence talks about oral and written comprehension:

1. Comprender el sentido general e información específica y predecible de textos breves y sencillos, expresados de forma clara y en la lengua estándar, haciendo uso de diversas estrategias y recurriendo, cuando sea necesario, al uso de distintos tipos de apoyo, para desarrollar el repertorio lingüístico y para responder a necesidades comunicativas cotidianas. (Royal Decree 157/2022, p. 83)¹

Needless to say, the types of texts and the language to which we expose the pupils depends on their proficiency in the language, in this case the activities and proposals are for students in their sixth year of Primary Education and whose language level is A2, so the aim of the activities is for them to identify both the general and specific meaning of the texts, as well as to be able to discriminate sounds and deduce the meaning of different words from the context.

In addition, activities will follow an order in their implementation. First of all, we will carry out dynamics to activate the students' knowledge, motivate them and solve any linguistic problems that may arise. We can do this by showing a picture or a sentence or a map to make them think and at the same time it serves as a support to introduce the topic.

At this stage students will be exposed to different authentic materials such as podcasts, interviews, live experiences such as theatre and city tours, celebrity biographies, Ted talks, audio books, documentaries, and songs –the possibilities are endless. Lyrics training app, Go comic website, Easy English channel or Book club for Kids podcasts are specific resources that can help students with the post receptive skills phase, where students can create stories, write letters or a recipe book using the main reception strategies; identifying cues and inferring.

¹ Understand the general meaning and specific and predictable information of short and simple texts, expressed in a clear way and in the standard language, making use of various strategies and appealing, when necessary, to the use of different types of support, to develop the linguistic repertoire and to respond to daily communication needs.

3.4.2.2. *Production activities and language learning strategies*

As in the previous point, the type of text we want our students to produce, the expressions we want them to include or the way in which they address the audience depends to a large extent on students' level of proficiency. Bearing in mind that our students are at an A2 level, Annex II of R.D. 157/2022 refers to production in the second specific competence:

2. Producir textos sencillos de manera comprensible y estructurada, mediante el empleo de estrategias como la planificación o la compensación, para expresar mensajes breves relacionados con necesidades inmediatas y responder a propósitos comunicativos cotidianos. (Royal Decree 157/2022, p. 83)²

The production activities require a certain mastery of the language but even so, the activities will be presented in a natural and logical order. Teachers should not be demotivated by the level of their students and encouraging the production of the target language is the only way to achieve our goal. At the beginning, activities will be controlled, students can review their knowledge through warm-up activities such as jumble letters to write correct words, crosswords, looking for objects in the classroom or drawing activities. After this, activities will be guided; here students will make use of models to facilitate their oral and written production so that they can then use the language by themselves.

Some oral production activities that we can bring to the classroom are short monologues or personal presentations as part of the classroom routine, where each student can be the protagonist each week and make a short speech using ICT, the Chatterpix app is also brilliant for encouraging speaking in the classroom. Debates on current issues and topics where students can share their opinions should also be encouraged. Creative theatres about holidays are also great for involving the school community. Finally, programmes such as E-twinning and Erasmus + increase the opportunities to communicate with native speakers.

Written production can be developed in the classroom through personal dictionaries and language portfolios, and creative writing that has meaning can make children enjoy this complex skill, such as writing birthday invitations or a letter to the Town Hall with proposals to improve the neighborhood. In these creations learners make use of the productive learning strategies; planning, compensating, as well as monitoring and repairing.

² Produce simple texts in an understandable and structured way, through the use of strategies such as planning or compensation, to express brief messages related to immediate needs and to respond to daily communicative purposes.

3.4.2.3. *Interaction activities and language learning strategies*

Interaction in the English foreign language classroom plays a key role in providing opportunities for practicing and improving communication skills. Interaction can be oral, written or online and can take at least two forms: student-teacher or student-student.

In Annex II of R.D. 157/2022, the third specific competence talks about interaction in a Primary English classroom:

3. Interactuar con otras personas usando expresiones cotidianas, recurriendo a estrategias de cooperación y empleando recursos analógicos y digitales, para responder a necesidades inmediatas de su interés en intercambios comunicativos respetuosos con las normas de cortesía. (Royal Decree 157/2022, p. 84)³

Activities that can be carried out to promote this skill orally or online include small talks and informal conversations on routine topics so that learners feel comfortable speaking in English while improving their fluency. Also this includes role plays with a real purpose where the learner sees the need to use the language, such as a role play about eating in a restaurant, going to the doctor or making a phone call to a family member. This skill also encourages learners to ask questions, so one activity we could do would be to raise together battery questions to ask our native speaker friends in the next videoconference. Through this type of exchange, children make strong connections that they may keep for life.

For written interaction, some ideas put forward in the Companion volume (2020) include writing a thank you or apology letter to a friend, writing an email to a tourist attraction in your city to find out about opening hours and activities, or filling in forms with personal details to create an educational profile. With these activities children will have a lot of fun and will realize what the real purpose of language is.

Bearing in mind that our students are at an A2 proficiency level, we need to introduce challenging activities that encourage the use of meaningful and contextualized “real” English. Students at this level can interact in small conversations and routine exchanges of information. They can also ask questions on familiar topics and ask for help when it is needed, as the main learning strategies for this skill are turn-taking and asking for clarification to check if the listener is following the interaction or not.

³ Interact with other people using common expressions, appealing to cooperative strategies and using analog and digital resources, to meet the immediate needs of their interest in communicative exchanges respecting the rules of courtesy.

3.4.2.4. Mediation activities and language learning strategies

The Companion volume (2020) offers a more detailed view of the term mediation than has been general hitherto. In mediation, learners act as social agents, building bridges and helping to construct and convey meaning taking advantage of their prior knowledge of the language.

Promoting mediation in the English classroom is particularly useful as it encourages collaboration between students and helps children with different levels of communicative competence, as classroom mediation involves telling and expressing something using your own words in a clear and accurate way. Overall, this skill helps students develop comprehension skills, as well as increasing their ability to communicate effectively in real-world situations.

In Annex II of R.D. 157/2022, the fourth specific competence talks about mediation in the area of English in a Primary Education classroom:

4. Mediar en situaciones predecibles, usando estrategias y conocimientos para procesar y transmitir información básica y sencilla, con el fin de facilitar la comunicación. (Royal Decree 157/2022, p. 84)⁴

Mediation activities are really varied and can range from mediating a text to mediating concepts and the act of communication itself. Exposing our students to this type of activities allows them to get out of the routine and put into practice many compensation strategies when they come across unfamiliar words, thus encouraging them to learn a language not by knowing the meaning of each word but by knowing the general understanding of the language.

Some activities to carry out with our Primary School children could be working in small groups to explain the information in a video, giving their personal opinion about a piece of news they have received, working together to give meaning to a new word, drawing the general idea of a text or acting as intermediaries between people to share a message.

There is no doubt that if these activities are approached in the right way, students can learn “real” English in a fun and entertaining way, while acquiring lifelong learning strategies such as linking new information with prior knowledge, adapting language by means of paraphrasing and breaking down barriers when faced with new information. A great tip is to use bullet points to separate ideas, read between the lines or simplify a dense text.

⁴ Mediate in predictable situations, using strategies and knowledge to process and transmit basic and simple information, in order to facilitate communication.

4. CONCLUSION

Throughout this document an attempt has been made to answer the questions raised in the first sections in the hope of shedding some light and more realism on the process of teaching and learning English as a foreign language, especially at the Primary Education stage.

Across these pages it has become clear that the transformation towards a more real teaching is a change and a reality. Creating learning experiences in line with the current linguistic and cultural challenges is already an obligation, the educational laws at the European, national and regional levels are betting on methodological changes that can often bring with them the benefits that we have been wishing for a long time.

Teaching “real” English is not an easy task but it is worth it, it is not about making all the changes from one day to the next, I am sure that many teachers already carry out enriching proposals and in line with the current demands, but I also hope that this document has served to make teachers reflect on where the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language should head for. Certainly, I also hope I have been able to provide the readers of this document with new ideas or proposals that they were possibly unaware of and will now hopefully want to carry out with their current or future students.

As has been mentioned throughout the different sections, the first step is to get to know our students in order to help them achieve real learning, take time to get to know them and give them opportunities to get to know you. This type of dynamic creates a very strong cohesion and sense of belonging to the group that is impossible to break even if time goes by. So you should not let your memories as a student stop you from being the teacher you want to be and the one you would have liked to have as a child.

As mentioned, “real” English allows the language to expand beyond the four walls of the classroom and students feel motivated and interested in the language to continue learning at home through authentic materials such as reading blogs, listening to English music, watching films or series in the native language or using new technologies as an infinite source for accessing resources and applications.

As the famous professor Howard G. Hendricks once said, the teaching that leaves a mark is not from head to head, but from heart to heart, and “real” English seems to make such teaching easier to achieve, taking into account the emotional dimension of each student to become more empathetic, tolerant and sensitive beings capable of appreciating and valuing the multicultural and linguistic richness of the world.

5. REFERENCES

- Arteaga, F.M. & Hidalgo, A. (2000). Teaching English to Children: Conclusions on a Study. *How Journal Colombia*, 5(1), 53-59.
- Bilingualbyme (2023). *Aprender idioms en clase* [Poster idioms Human body]. Instagram. <https://www.instagram.com/p/CrBHg1St3q7/?igshid=MTc4MmM1YmI2Ng==>
- Capellán, G. (2019). El inglés y el español pueden ser complementarios, en vez de “enemigos”. *La Vanguardia*. Available at <https://www.lavanguardia.com/vida/20190522/462416608210/el-ingles-y-el-espanol-pueden-ser-complementarios-en-vez-de-enemigos.html>
- Council of Europe (2020). *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment – Companion Volume*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing. Available at <https://rm.coe.int/common-european-framework-of-reference-for-languages-learning-teaching/16809ea0d4>
- Crystal, D. (1999). The future of Englishes. *English Today*, 15(2), 10-20.
- Decree 101/2023, 9th May, that establishes the arrangement and curriculum for Primary Education in Andalusia. Available at https://www.juntadeandalucia.es/boja/2023/90/BOJA23-090-00026-8470-01_00283499.pdf
- Diert-Boté, I. (2016). *I did not learn English at school: an exploration of English language learners' beliefs and emotions*. Master's Thesis, University of Lleida. Available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/325217920_I_did_not_learn_English_at_school_An_exploration_of_English_language_learners'_beliefs_and_emotions_Master's_Thesis
- Durán, M.G. (2022). *101 truquitos para speak English de una vez por todas: El libro definitivo para aprender inglés*. Random Comics.
- Eaves-Walton, F. (1999). Native speakers get it wrong! *English Teaching Professional*, 12, 6-7.
- Engkent, P. (1986). Real people don't talk like books: Teaching Colloquial English. *TESL Canada Journal*, 3(1), 225-234.

- Gilmore, A. (2007). Authentic materials and authenticity in foreign language learning. *Language Teaching*, 40(2), 97-118.
- Harmer, J. (2001). *How to Teach English: An introduction to the practice of English language teaching*. Longman.
- Insua, I. (2017). *Contact between languages: the case of English and Spanish*. Final Degree Thesis, University of Coruña. Available at <https://ruc.udc.es/dspace/handle/2183/20644>
- International Society for Technology in Education (2007). *National Educational Technology Standards for Students*. ISTE (International Society for Technology in Education).
- Jenkins, J. (2000). *The Phonology of English as an International Language*. Oxford University Press.
- Murray, H. (2003). Swiss English teachers and Euro-English: attitudes to a non-native variety. *Bulletin Suisse de Linguistique Appliquée*, 77, 149-165.
- Nieto, J.M. (2009). Establishing “new” priorities in TEFL? The challenge of the “new” millennium. In M. Falces Sierra, E. Hidalgo Tenorio, J. Santana Lario & S. Valera Hernández (Eds.). *Para, por y sobre Luis Quereda*. Universidad de Granada, 535-545.
- Noxon, E. (2020). Global Interaction: Becoming a “good global citizen” through blended learning in an English communication class. Available at https://www.academia.edu/45402060/Global_Interaction_Becoming_a_good_global_citizen_through_blended_learning_in_an_English_communication_class
- Order of 30th May 2023, which develops the curriculum corresponding to Primary Education in Andalusia. Available at https://www.juntadeandalucia.es/boja/2023/104/BOJA23-104-00281-9728-01_00284744.pdf
- Organic Law of Education 3/2020, 29th December (LOMLOE), which modifies the Organic Law of Education 2/2006, 3rd May (LOE). Available at <https://www.boe.es/boe/dias/2020/12/30/pdfs/BOE-A-2020-17264.pdf>
- Pearson Education (2009). *Real World Teacher's Sample Material*. BBC. Available at https://www.pearsonelt.es/content/dam/professional/english/pearsonelt-es/materials/real_world/Real%20World%20Teacher%27s%20Sample%20Material%20L1.pdf

- Pérez-Cañado, M.L. (2009). Reengineering English Language Teaching: Making the Shift towards 'Real' English. *English Language Teaching*, 2(3), 3-10.
- Pérez-Cañado, M.L. (2018). "*Real English*" for communicative interaction in the CLIL classroom. Workshop, University of Cádiz.
- Ranta, E. (2010). English in the real world vs. English at school: Finnish English teachers' and students' views. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 20(2), 156-177.
- Real Academia Española (n.d.). *Anglicism. Diccionario de la Lengua Española*. Available at <https://dle.rae.es/anglicismo>
- Real Academia Española (2016). *Lengua madre solo hay una* [Video]. Youtube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jvnOS6KWEhc>
- Rizq, W.M. (2015). Teaching English Idioms to L2 Learners: ESL Teachers' Perspective. *Culminating Projects in English*, 19.
- Royal Decree 157/2022, 1st March, which establishes the organization and minimum teaching standards for Primary Education. Available at <https://www.boe.es/buscar/pdf/2022/BOE-A-2022-3296-consolidado.pdf>
- Swan, M. (2005). What is happening in English? *English Teaching Professional*, 40, 4-6.
- Virgil García, P.A., Andarcio Betancourt, E.E. & Torres Domínguez, M. (2021). La enseñanza de frases idiomáticas desde una nueva cultura del aprendizaje de lenguas. *Mendive*, 19(1), 1-17.
- Wang, J. (2011). Culture Differences and English Teaching. *English Language Teaching*, 4(2), 223-230.