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**Master in International Business Management and Modern
languages**

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STRATEGIES TO ACHIEVE THE FCE LEVEL:

THE EXPLOITATION OF THE COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH IN SECONDARY EDUCATION

Student: María de los Ángeles Mendoza Fernández

Tutor: Dña. Susana Nicolás Román

Facultad de Ciencias Económicas y Empresariales

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ABSTRACT

It is widely known that nowadays the contact with foreign languages is becoming more and more usual in our daily routine. Travelling, working experiences and also the media put you in contact, even without realising, with the English language. But how do we get to achieve that English knowledge?

The way in which we are put in contact with the English language is changing from date to date, the strategies and methodologies are becoming more and more modern and sophisticated, appropriated to the last educational modifications, and overall, the strategy is trying to motivate those secondary students who lately are going to face the real work environment, where the domain of English is crucial in every sector and position, and, which we have to properly adequate to the standards of the European Union in order to acquire the same levels of English proficiency.

This project also includes an identification of overall trends and areas for further development. In particular, it is argued that English Language Education innovation work needs to become more informed by many of the concepts and procedures which the English language education innovation management literature contains.

Es comúnmente conocido que hoy en día el contacto con las lenguas extranjeras es cada vez más usual en nuestra rutina diaria. Viajes, experiencias de trabajo y también los medios de comunicación nos ponen en contacto con el idioma Inglés. Pero, ¿cómo podemos llegar a lograr este conocimiento del inglés?

La forma en la que se ponen en contacto con el idioma cambia cada día, las estrategias y las metodologías son cada vez más modernas y sofisticadas, apropiadas en todo momento a las últimas modificaciones educativas, y en general, la estrategia se basa en la motivación frente al estudio de lenguas modernas a los estudiantes de secundaria que posteriormente se enfrentarán a un ambiente de trabajo real, donde el dominio del Inglés es crucial en cada sector y cada posición, adecuando debidamente su educación a las normas de la Unión Europea con el fin de adquirir los mismos niveles de Inglés.

Este proyecto también incluye la identificación de las tendencias generales y las áreas de mayor desarrollo. En particular, se argumenta que la innovación en la educación de lenguas debe estar del todo actualizada acerca de los conceptos y procedimientos que se utilizan en la enseñanza de lenguas y literatura.

INDEX

1- INTRODUCTION.....	pg. 5
1.1 THE IMPORTANCE OF LANGUAGES NOWADAYS: MULTILINGUALISM AND GLOBALIZATION.....	pg. 5
1.1.1 Commerce.....	pg.6
1.1.2 Enterntainment.....	pg.6
1.1.3 Globalization.....	pg.7
1.2 COMMON EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK OF REFERENCE FOR LANGUAGES...	pg. 7
1.2.1 Objectives.....	pg.7
1.2.2 Sociocultural absortion.....	pg. 8
1.2.3 Multilingual approach.....	pg. 9
1.2.4 Portfolio of European languages:.....	pg. 10
- What is the Common European Framework?.....	pg. 10
- General objectives of the portfolio of the European Language.....	pg. 11
- Why is Common European Framework Needed?.....	pg. 12
- Common CEF levels.....	pg. 13
1.3 ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE ADMISSION TESTS: CAMBRIDGE CERTIFICATE EXAMS, IELTS AND TOEFL.....	pg. 15
1.3.1 Reliability and validity of the ESL language tests.....	pg. 15
1.3.2 The admission tests:.....	pg. 16
1- Cambridge Certificate exam: purpose, content, reliability and validity.....	pg. 17
2- IELTS (International English Language Testing System): purpose, content, reliability and validity.....	pg.20
3- TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language-computer-based test): purpose, content, reliability and validity.....	pg. 22
1.3.3 Conclusion.....	pg. 24
2- EVOLUTION OF APPROACHES IN LANGUAGE TEACHING.....	pg. 25

2.1. LANGUAGE TEACHING IN SECONDARY EDUCATION, HOW TO REACH THE FCE LEVEL.....	pg. 25
2.1.1 Methodological trends.....	pg. 25
2.2 LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES.....	pg. 28
2.3 MODERN LANGUAGE STRATEGIES AND THEIR APPLICATION TO ENGLISH LANGUAGE ACHIEVEMENTS.....	pg. 34
2.4 THE INTEGRATION OF ORAL AND WRITTEN SKILLS IN TEACHING AND LEARNING FOREIGN LANGUAGES.....	pg. 37
2.4.1- Orality and writing: their relation in the development of the language.	
2.4.2- Oral and writing skills in the learning of second languages.....	pg. 38
2.4.3- From talk to write, the sociocultural explanation.....	pg. 38
2.4.4- The classroom as the ambit for the oral conception of writing.....	pg. 39
2.4.5- Conclusions.....	pg. 40
3- THE IMPORTANCE OF AN EARLY START IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION.....	pg. 41
3.1 CASE STUDY: THE ADVANTAGES OF AN EARLY START IN FOREIGN LANGUAGES EDUCATION.....	pg. 43
3.1.1 Advantages of Starting Early.....	pg. 43
3.1.2 Description of the study:.....	pg. 44
1- Data Collection.....	pg. 44
2- Conclusions	pg. 49
3.2 CASE STUDY 2: ENGLISH SKILLS OF STUDENTS IN EUROPE, 2002.....	pg. 51
3.2.1. The case of Spain, background view on foreign language education.....	pg. 54
- Test implementation and sample.....	pg. 55
- Results from the test.....	pg. 56
3.2.2. The case of Norway, background view on foreign language education.....	pg. 59
- Test implementation and sample.....	pg. 60
3.2.3 Comparison between countries.....	pg. 62
3.3 CASE STUDY 3: ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS	
3.3.1 Survey: the management of languages of the staff of NH Hotels.....	pg. 65
1- The case of Belgium.....	pg. 65
2- The case of Spain.....	pg. 69

3.3.2 Survey conclusions.....pg. 70
4- CONCLUSIONS.....pg. 71
5- REFERENCES.....pg. 75

1- INTRODUCTION

1.1 The importance of languages nowadays: Multilingualism and Globalization

In this new century, language has become a flexible thing, an elastic method of communication that is no longer bound by geography or nationality. Globalization, the internet, open borders, and increased mobility, especially among younger generations: all have had an unprecedented effect on the way the world communicates with itself. But what does this mean for the world.

English language is becoming more and more common in the everyday lives of Europeans, regardless of the mother tongue within individual countries. Take part in an international university seminar and you'll probably find that all the programs take place in English. Walk into a clothing retailer in continental Europe and it's likely you'll see more t-shirts in English than the native language. Attend a conference, where someone from Italy is conversing with someone from Sweden in English. In fact, the British linguist David Graddol has found that 2 billion people across the world are learning English. The English language has become the closest thing to a world language that we have ever had.

In a society of seemingly infinite choice (whether it is a language or a television show or a box of cereal on the supermarket shelf), the human mind seeks to narrow the crowd. This eases the difficulty of decision and allows us to go about our day without constantly sifting through every single option available to us. In Europe alone, the multitude of choice is dizzying. At one end, there is Portuguese, Spanish, Catalan, French, Russian, Estonian, Latvian, Finnish, and many, many others. Between all of this, you are faced with dozens of other dialects, each calling out from its place on the shelf, a nonsensical pitch of voices and indecipherable sounds. What is a reasonable person supposed to do? You begin to pick and choose, you follow the formula that you developed at some point in life when you realized there was more stuff in the world than you could ever possibly consume or participate in. Which language do they teach in school? What might help get me the job that I want? What is the language spoken by the person you find attractive? That is without doubt, English.

But why English? There are many variables that allowed English to gain its foothold as the common language of Europe and the world. There is, of course, the simple process of elimination. Most of the other languages just weren't being used by enough people. Macedonian, Euskara, Danish never had the population to have a lasting effect on economies and cultures as those of more populous nations. Other languages – Russian, German, Spanish, and Dutch, had some chance to establish themselves as the lingua franca. But as the twentieth century trundled forward, there were three major factors that contributed to the widespread use of English throughout the world: commerce, entertainment, and globalization.

1.1.1 Commerce:

One might be able to communicate basic needs in, say, a vegetable market without speaking the dominant language. But as commerce has expanded beyond the borders of small markets, or single nations, or even continents, it has become clear that a common language is increasingly necessary.

Commerce has been altered dramatically by the shifting foundation of technology and business in the past century. From the industrial revolution to the internet, international finance, stock markets, increased trade: for a company to operate in a more efficient manner, to grow and compete on a global scale, it was necessary to communicate effectively between nations. And for many companies to do this, all at the same time, every day, a default language would need to rise to the top of the linguistic heap. What language though? Perhaps the greatest other competitor might have been Russia. After all, Russia had a huge population and many of the resources necessary for international trade. But then the Bolsheviks drove the country into Communism, and as a result, Russia did most of its trading with itself and with the small number of other Communist nations, thus excluding its language from international commerce.

Meanwhile, the United Kingdom—through aggressive trade, imperial policies, and robust economic drive—had long been a primary force behind financial markets. And by the end of the twentieth century, the United States had become an essential consideration in nearly every economic decision, regardless of the origin of a company.

These changes had an impact on companies and the culture in general. Renault, the French automaker, designated English as the language of communication for senior management. A number of other corporations have done the same. In recognition of this

trend, schools and universities placed increasing value on the necessity of learning English. As a result more and more people learn English at an ever-younger age.

1.1.2 Entertainment:

Among all the other dramatic changes that took place in the twentieth century, one of the most important to consider was the increased significance of entertainment on the lives of people. At the same time as average personal income and leisure time increased, the availability of cheap entertainment exploded.

Much of this entertainment was in English.

1.1.3 Globalization:

The world has become a much smaller place in the past few decades. For most of human development, Europe was a very private territory. Although Europeans may have ventured to other lands for trade or imperialist reasons from time to time, a majority of the commerce remained within the continental borders. If things had remained this way, the outcome might have been different. However, travel became easier, more routine; companies reached farther into international territories; the internet made communication seamless, despite distance. The only thing that was separating us any longer was language.

So then, in this circumstance, what was it that gave English the edge. The answer lies beyond the borders of Europe. As globalization shrunk the world, other English-speaking nations gained ever greater importance in the culture and commerce of Europe. Before, English was only represented by the United Kingdom and its 80 million inhabitants (which is about equal to that of France, less than German-speaking countries, and far less than the Russia in population). But globalization gave less priority to location, and as you look to the east and west of Europe, you see America and Canada on one side and Australia on the other. English had Europe surrounded.

Many other reasons can be provided, pointing to education, war, economics migration, technology, etc. But ultimately, English is only a platform, a way of exchanging ideas and thoughts. It is the best way to fulfill every human need of communication.

1.2 - COMMON EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK OF REFERENCE FOR LANGUAGES

1.2.1 Objectives:

It is believed that in the majority of European countries at the end of the secondary education students should be adequately trained for the full development of their comprehensive and expressive abilities in the oral dimension of a foreign language in ordinary situations of social communication.

For that reason, the statement of the European Council of Ministers of Education meeting in plenary session on July 4, 1984 in Luxembourg Recognizes:

“Les Etats membres conviennent de promouvoir toutes mesures appropriées pour que le plus grand nombre possible d’élèves acquière, avant la fin de l’obligation scolaire, une connaissance pratique de deux langues en plus de leur langue maternelle (Conseil de l’Europe, 1984, p.12)

More recently, since the agreements derived from the common European reference framework for learning and teaching of languages, proposed in 1996 based on decisions and recommendations of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, the minimum has been extended to the need of doing at least two foreign languages.

What happened in these two decades can be summarized as a social situation defined of a great diversity in Europe regarding the adoption of those measures cited by the European Council of Ministers of Education in the educational systems of the member states. A diversity that shows, without need for further manifestations, the unequal degree of oral communication skills in foreign language skills by the students of different countries. At the same time, a diversity that reveals the advantages and disadvantages, at the individual and collective level, that the citizens of the European community will have in the coming years in terms of economic interactions and cultural social policies linked to the social power of effective use of several languages, not only for the performance of special tasks, but also in regular use of a more plural way of thinking, at the linguistic level, and more intercultural at a socio-behavioural level.

Without doubt, as a result of widespread disappointment socially perceived about the effective learning of foreign languages, the latest researches in the field of applied linguistics are going, in recent years, to a task that goes far beyond measuring results obtained depending on the application of different methodological approaches in the formal level school systems. The objective that guides nowadays most of the worries of the research in this field are focused in the task of qualify the dimension of the learning of languages. And this is being made from the initial hypothesis that the appropriation of these other languages, like the

acquisition of the language of everyday life, is a cultural appropriation and not the result of an academic teaching.

1.2.2. Sociocultural absorption:

Each day, the linguistic dimension of languages progresses, but this appropriation normally occurs through a sociocultural absorption. From this belief, the researches about the development of the processes of the effective appropriation of the communicative competence of the foreign language at a formal teaching-learning level are settled over three points:

- It is necessary to rethink about the sociocultural perception of the adoption of a language
- It is accurate to create a new progressive consensus about the processes and contents of the sociocultural characteristics of the languages that we try to incorporate to our own languages.
- It is essential to know that the application of this consensus will not be precisely the same in all contexts. It is not the same the learning of a language in a formal student context than the learning of a language for specific reasons of functional kind, for instance.

1.2.3 Multilingual approach

The multilingual approach is based on the recognition that an individual's communicative competence is enriched by all the experiences and language skills of their first language and other second languages. In that sense, these languages are related and interact between them. Thus, a person uses all his linguistic background (of all languages learned) in communicative exchanges when communicating in a foreign language.

Teaching and learning foreign languages from this perspective, does not pretend that people are supposed to master a language which the ideal model is the native speaker (this concept has done much harm in teaching languages in Spain, and is largely the cause of failure in language learning). The goal is for students to communicate in another language, developing a linguistic repertoire which exercises all language skills (speaking, writing, listening, oral lecture interaction or conversation).

This requires institutions to diversify the range of languages and teaching practice that encourages the interaction of competences between the languages (including the mother language, of course). This approach emphasizes on relationships between different forms of acting and communicating that the student gains in the new language with their first language

and other languages you know. This raises the need to integrate the teaching of languages, to contact and coordinate them in the curriculum vitae of the student, and to pool the efforts that teachers do in your area or subject to increase students' communication skills.

It becomes a subject that develops multilingual intercultural competences, because linguistic and cultural skills for each language interact, are enriched by the knowledge of another language and help develop intercultural and attitudes skills.

The use of the Portfolio of European Language proposed by the Common European Framework of references encourages students to record their learning experiences and to document the different languages, so their progress in multilingual competence.

1.2.4 Portfolio of European Language:

- What is the common European Framework?

It is a document that provides a practical tool for setting clear standards to be attained at successive stages of learning and for evaluating outcomes in an internationally comparable manner.

The Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) provides a basis for the mutual recognition of language qualifications, thus facilitating educational and occupational mobility. It is increasingly used in the reform of national curriculum and by international consortia for the comparison of language certificates.

It provides as well a common basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks, etc. across Europe. It describes in a comprehensive way what language learners have to learn to do in order to use a language for communication and what knowledge and skills they have to develop so as to be able to act effectively. The description also covers the cultural context in which language is set. The Framework also defines levels of proficiency which allow learners' progress to be measured at each stage of learning and on a life-long basis.

The Common European Framework is intended to overcome the barriers to communication among professionals working in the field of modern languages arising from the different educational systems in Europe. It provides the means for educational administrators, course designers, teachers, teacher trainers, examining bodies, etc., to reflect on their current practice, with a view to situating and coordinating their efforts and to ensuring that they meet the real needs of the learners for whom they are responsible.

By providing a description of objectives, content and methods, the Framework will enhance the transparency of courses, syllabuses and qualifications, thus promoting international co-operation in the field of modern languages. The provision of objective criteria for describing language proficiency will facilitate then mutual recognition of qualifications gained in different learning contexts, and accordingly will aid European mobility.

The Framework includes the description of ‘partial’ qualifications, appropriate when only a more restricted knowledge of a language is required (e.g. for understanding rather than speaking), or when a limited amount of time is available for the learning of a third or fourth language and more useful results can perhaps be attained by aiming at, say, recognition rather than recall skills. Giving formal recognition to such abilities will help to promote plurilingualism through the learning of a wider variety of European languages.

- General objectives of the portforlio of European language

1. To ensure, as far as possible, that the population have access to these means of acquiring a knowledge of the languages of other member states (or of other communities within their own country) as well as the skills in the use of those languages that will enable them to satisfy their communicative needs and in particular to deal with the business of everyday life in another country, and to help foreigners staying in their own country to do so. Also, an objective would be to exchange information and ideas with young people and adults who speak a different language and to communicate their thoughts and feelings to them, and of course, to achieve a wider and deeper understanding of the way of life and forms of thought of other peoples and of their cultural heritage.

2. To promote, encourage and support the efforts of teachers and learners at all levels to apply in their own situation the principles of the construction of language-learning systems (as these are progressively developed within the Council of Europe ‘Modern languages’ programme):

By basing language teaching and learning on the needs, motivations characteristics and resources of learners;

By defining worthwhile and realistic objectives as explicitly as possible.

By developing appropriate methods and materials.

By developing suitable forms and instruments for the evaluating of learning programmes.

3. To promote research and development programmes leading to the introduction, at all educational levels, of methods and materials best suited to enabling different classes and types of student to acquire a communicative proficiency appropriate to their specific needs.

The political objectives of its actions in the field of modern languages:

To equip all Europeans for the challenges of intensified international mobility and closer co-operation not only in education, culture and science but also in trade and industry.

To promote mutual understanding and tolerance, respect for identities and cultural diversity through more effective international communication.

To maintain and further develop the richness and diversity of European cultural life through greater mutual knowledge of national and regional languages, including those less widely taught.

To meet the needs of a multilingual and multicultural Europe by appreciably developing the ability of Europeans to communicate with each other across linguistic and cultural boundaries, which requires a sustained, lifelong effort to be encouraged, put on an organised footing and financed at all levels of education by the competent bodies.

In the light of these objectives, the Committee of Ministers stressed ‘the political importance at the present time and in the future of developing specific fields of action, such as strategies for diversifying and intensifying language learning in order to promote plurilingualism in a pan-European context’ and drew attention to the value of further developing educational links and exchanges and of exploiting the full potential of new communication and information technologies.

- Why is Common European Framework Needed?

The reason to develop a Common European Framework of reference for language learning at all levels has been done in order to: promote and facilitate co-operation among educational institutions in different countries; and provide a basis for the mutual recognition of language qualifications.

It is important not to forget that the process of language learning is continuous and individual. No two users of a language, whether native speakers or foreign learners, have exactly the same competences or develop them in the same way.

However, for practical purposes it is useful to set up a scale of defined levels to segment the learning process for the purposes of curriculum design, qualifying examinations,

etc. Their number and height will depend largely on how a particular educational system is organised and for which purposes scales are established.

- Common CEF levels:

Global Scale

Proficient	C2	Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.
User	C1	Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. Can express him/her fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.
Independent	B2	Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.
User	B1	Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes & ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.

Basic	A2	Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.
User	A1	Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/her and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.

Council of Europe, Language Policy Division, Strasbourg www.coe.int/lang

1.3 ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE ADMISSION TESTS: CAMBRIDGE CERTIFICATE EXAMS, IELTS AND TOEFL

In order to achieve the level required level of second language acquisition when secondary education learning, it is essential to discuss the different methods and approaches to get the desired common reference level. It is important to examine the purpose, content, and scoring methods of the three English as a second language admission tests: the Cambridge certificate exams, International English Language Testing System, and Test of English as a foreign language-computer-based test and discusses reliability and validity considerations salient to each instrument. The validity and reliability discussion is guided by the “Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing” (1999). It is critical, therefore, that these scores provide high quality information.

Historically, large-scale English as a second language (ESL) admission testing has been dominated by two test batteries: the Cambridge exams, sponsored by the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES), and the Test of English as a foreign language (TOEFL), from Educational Testing Service (ETS).

UCLES tends to emphasize a close relationship between testing and teaching.

The Cambridge exams have been constructed more like an achievement test with strong links between the examination and teaching.

The hallmark of TOEFL, on the other hand, is its psychometric qualities with a strong emphasis on reliability.

We will examine issues related to the three Cambridge certificate exams; the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), which is also operated by UCLES, and the TOEFL.

1.3.1 Reliability and validity of the ESL language tests.

The “Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing” is a widely recognized professional publication whose purpose is to provide criteria and guidelines to be observed by all participants involved in the testing process.

Reliability refers to the degree to which test scores represent test-takers’ true scores. Typically, when examining test reliability, issues such as the following are considered:

A. The degree to which the conditions under which the test is administered are conducive to optimal performance. In a second language test, any variable that these test scores is considered a potential source of measurement error. Errors of measurement can limit the reliability and generalizability of scores obtained.

B. The psychometric properties, e.g. difficulty and discrimination indices of test tasks/items, and internal consistency of test tasks/items; in the case of objective types of items, internal consistency refers to the extent to which items measuring a particular aspect of the language construct intercorrelate with each other.

C. Standard error of measurement (SEM), which summarizes fluctuations in scores due to various, imperfect measurement conditions.

Regarding the validity, the 'Standards' (AERA et al., 1999, p. 9) state:

Validity refers to the degree to which evidence and theory support the interpretations of test scores entailed by the proposed uses of tests. Validity is, therefore, the most fundamental consideration in developing and evaluating tests. The process of validation involves accumulating evidence to provide a sound scientific basis for the proposed score interpretations. When test scores are used or interpreted in more than one way, each intended interpretation must be validated.

The separate description of reliability and validity may give the impression that the two are distinct. This is not the case. The two are interrelated. Research documenting the quality of test results needs to assemble multiple sources of evidence that includes various aspects of validity and reliability.

The salient points of reliability and validity considered above will serve as the main components for evaluating the Cambridge certificate exams, IETLS, and TOEFL. The cumulative information provided can assist readers who wish to better understand ESL admission tests.

1.3.2 The admission tests:

1. The Cambridge certificate exams

1.1. Purpose

The three Cambridge certificate exams: First Certificate in English (FCE), Certificate in Advanced English (CAE) and the Certificate of Proficiency in English (CPE) are among the oldest and most established products in the English as a second language testing field. Exam developers maintain that success on these instruments can be considered proof of English language ability that satisfies entrance requirements at most British universities. The exams are also used to evaluate ESL for use in commerce and industry. The present review addresses the academic aspects of the test only.

1.2. Content

The First Certificate in English (FCE), Certificate in Advanced English (CAE) and the Certificate of Proficiency in English (CPE) exams have five obligatory sections, called papers: Reading, Writing, and English in Use, Listening, and Speaking. The exams vary in length and can take about 5-6 h. The Reading, Writing, and English in Use papers are administered in one day. Separate arrangements are made for Listening and Speaking. Each paper of the Cambridge certificate exams presents a variety of tasks with regard to both type of input and response type.

The first task involves listening to a debate with a multiple-choice response format; the second task requires listening to a radio interview with sentence completion as the response format; and the third comprises listening to a discussion with a matching response format.

Texts in the Listening paper are played twice. Listening texts present a variety of accents “variety of accents” as “accents corresponding to standard variants of English native speaker accent, and to English non-native speaker accents that approximate to the norms of native speaker accents” (UCLES, 1998a, p. 40).

These last two features of the exams, i.e. playing the text twice and the accent variety, are not always present in other admission tests such as TOEFL.

The Reading paper differs across the three certificate exams. The length of the reading texts ranges between 350 and 1200 words. Texts are obtained from various sources, e.g. literary books, journals, newspapers, magazines, etc. Tasks require test-takers to interact with the text in various ways - to focus on main points, detail, and text structure, recognize an attitude, make an inference, etc. Response type is limited to multiple-choice and multiple-matching.

The English in Use paper also differs across the FCE, CAE, and CPE. The purpose of this paper is to examine test-takers' knowledge and control of the formal elements of the language system. The paper includes task types such as multiple-choice, cloze, error correction, word formation and note expansion.

Across the three exams, the Writing paper requires test-takers to produce extended discourse. The "CAE Handbook" (UCLES, 1999a), for example, states that the CAE Writing paper includes two parts. The first part is compulsory. It requires test-takers to perform several tasks based on input materials such as texts and visuals. In the second part, test-takers have to select one of four tasks to perform. These tasks include writing an article, a report, an information leaflet, etc.

The Speaking paper involves a pair of test-takers along with two examiners. One examiner serves as an interlocutor and the other serves as an assessor. Tasks require each candidate to speak and varied interaction among the participants. Pair and group testing of speaking are welcome options to the typical one-on-one interview investigated (Shohamy et al., 1986; Fulcher, 1996).

1.3 Scoring method

The raw score for each of the five Cambridge exam papers is derived differently. For example, in the CAE (UCLES, 1999a) Reading paper, one mark is given for each correct answer to the multiple matching tasks and two marks are given to the multiple-choice and gapped items; and in the Listening paper, each correct answer is given one mark. For the Writing and speaking papers, impression marks with holistic band descriptions are used. The raw score or band level for each paper is then converted to a weighted score of 40, resulting in a test total of 200 marks. Therefore, all papers are weighted equally. The total score is then translated into a passing letter grade of A, B, C or to a failing letter grade of E, F.

1.4. Reliability

Rigorous work to document the psychometric properties of the Cambridge exams has not been emphasized by UCLES. Inadequate documentation of test reliability as well as evidence to support the equivalence of different test forms are some of the problems that have been voiced with regard to the certificate exams. Such issues raise concerns about the quality and the fairness of the scores obtained.

Making such information more available is mandatory to help test-takers and users make informed evaluations of the quality of the tests and the ensuing scores.

Published information is also lacking with regard to the productive skills. UCLES reports mention that assessors for both the writing and oral tests are adequately trained and monitored. While such information is reassuring, it is not supported with research evidence. Information such as reliability needs to be collected and published.

1.5. Validity

The most distinctive feature about the Cambridge certificate exams is their close connection to the educational context. The Cambridge ESL testing tradition grows out of the context of examinations for schools.

Having a direct impact on teaching has always been an intended feature of the Cambridge exams. UCLES publications do not shy away from actually making specific recommendations regarding instructional practices. UCLES handbooks include a variety of suggestions for teachers to promote classroom learning.

As such, the Cambridge exam developers encourage teachers and students to view exam results as indicators of learning.

In terms of score interpretation, the Cambridge exam letter grades are accompanied by statements that indicate the sections of the tests in which test-taker performance was weak/strong. Certificates documenting test-takers' language ability according to the Cambridge Instructional systems are awarded successful test-takers.

With regard to scores, however, two issues need to be considered. First, as indicated above, the FCE, CAE, and CPE exams yield overall grades that provide a general indication of the test takers' language ability. As such, the considerable work invested in test development and scoring is somewhat undermined given the loss of information resulting from combining the five paper scores into one final

While the final grade can be useful for an overall indication of language ability, individual paper scores would add rich and useful information that could provide feedback to the instructional process. Paper scores can also be used to make better selection and admission decisions into the various academic programs at a particular institution.

Second, Cambridge exam publications indicate that the letter grades are computed based on the percentage of the total marks. For example, the "CAE Handbook"

(UCLES, 1999a) states that the passing grade 'C' is equivalent to approximately 60% of the 200 total points on the exam. It is important for test-users to know how and why the raw scores are transformed into letter grades, and if such grades are more meaningful and afford more appropriate interpretation and use.

2. IELTS (International English Language Testing System)

2.1. Purpose

IELTS is another instrument administered by UCLES and used for university admission purposes. IELTS is intended to measure both academic and general English language proficiency. IELTS includes six sections, called modules. All test-takers are administered the same Listening and Speaking modules. Test-takers then choose to take either the General Training or Academic Reading and Writing modules. The General Training modules measure test-takers' readiness to work in English language environments, undertake work-related training, or provide language ability evidence for the purpose of immigration. The Academic modules measure test-takers' academic readiness to study or receive training in English at the undergraduate or graduate level.

2.2. Content

The length of IELTS is about 2 h and 30 min. The modules correspond to the traditional skills: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. The modules have no central theme or topic. Similar to the Cambridge certificate exams, IELTS includes a variety of tasks and response types within each module. An example of the variety of response types is illustrated Listening module, which includes: multiple-choice items; short answers; labelling diagrams; summarizing information; taking notes; and matching lists. IELTS publications state that the four parts within the Listening module are progressively difficult. Excerpts are played only once. Questions are provided in test booklets. Test-takers are given time to preview the questions. Test-takers are required to respond to the questions while the tape is playing. They write their answers directly in the test booklet. This appears reasonable, as some of the tasks require labelling diagrams, matching figures with words, etc. Test-takers are given time to transfer their answers to an answer sheet, probably to allow for the machine scanning of the responses. Test-takers need to be cautioned about this two-step recording of answers, as it provides opportunity for error.

The Reading module uses text sources from the UK and Australia. Texts used are intended for a non-specialist audience (Clapham, 2000). A Reading module includes at least one text with detailed logical argument and one text with non-verbal materials such as graphs, diagrams, etc. The variation of response types prompts test takers to work with texts in different ways.

The Writing module requires two writing samples.

The IELTS Speaking module consists of a 10±15-min interview between the test taker and one examiner. The interview requires test-takers to describe, narrate, and provide explanations on a variety of personal and general interest topics. The interview also includes a role-play. Interviews are recorded in case they need to be double marked. IELTS' manual (UCLES, 1999b) indicates that in evaluating interviews examiners consider “evidence of communicative strategies, and appropriate and flexible use of grammar and vocabulary”

2.3. Scoring method

The score report provides separate band scores for the four modules. Description statements of language proficiency are provided for the nine-level bands. As with the Cambridge certificate exams, IELTS developers do not explain how the Listening and Reading raw scores are converted into band levels. Additionally, the criteria scales used for rating Writing and Speaking as provided are scanty, and the information on how ratings are converted to band scores is lacking. Such information, however, is important to test users and helps in the interpretation of the ratings obtained.

2.4 Reliability IELTS

It differs from the Cambridge exams in that published reports recognize the need to address reliability and include information to that effect. Such information, while reassuring, needs to be augmented with research evidence.

“IELTS band scores reflect English language proficiency alone and are not predictors of academic success or failure” (UCLES, 1999b, p. 8). The remark is quite appropriate and is supported by the developers of all three instruments, Cambridge certificate exams, IELTS, and TOEFL. All developers agree that it is a valid approach to making admission decisions demands that institutions examine variables other than ESL ability.

2.5. Validity

The phrase “international English language” in IELTS’ name represents a distinguishing feature of this assessment as it acknowledges the ever-expanding status of English as an international language.

The appropriateness of using test scores in contexts for which they are not intended also needs to be considered. IELTS’ scores have been intended mainly for use in the UK and Australia. Increasingly, however, IELTS is marketing the test in North America. An important issue to address, therefore, is the comparability of language use in North American academic institutions to that in the other two countries. In other words, research is needed to investigate the appropriateness of scores obtained from IELTS as measures of academic language use in North America. Without such research, it is difficult to ascertain what the ensuing test scores in this context mean and how they should be used.

3. Test of English as a Foreign Language-computer-based test (TOEFL-CBT)

3.1. Purpose

The purpose of TOEFL is to measure the English proficiency of non-native speakers who intend to study in institutions of higher learning in the USA and Canada. In addition, scores are used by certain medical certification and licensing agencies. As with the other tests, TOEFL scores are increasingly being used by institutions, private organizations, and government agencies in other countries as well.

3.2. Content

In 1998, TOEFL was converted from a paper-and-pencil (P&P) to a Computer Based Test. TOEFL-CBT includes three sections: Listening, Writing combined, and Reading. Speaking is assessed separately using the Test of Spoken English (TSE). Although the TSE can be administered along with TOEFL, it is an independent test with different procedures and scheduling

The length of TOEFL- CBT, without the speaking component, is approximately 4 h. This time frame includes the mandatory Tutorial, which is intended to help familiarize students with needed computer functions and test skills.

A major difference between the TOEFL-CBT and other tests is the computer delivery system and the adaptive in the Listening and Structure sections. An adaptive test differs from a traditional, linear test in that an item is selected based on a test-taker’s performance on

previous items. Ideally, a computer-adaptive test (CAT) optimizes the testing situation by targeting each test-taker's ability level.

The Listening section uses visuals that require test-takers to view a picture and listen at the same time. The listening input is played only once. Test-takers are not given the opportunity to preview the questions, nor to see them while the listening input is being played, nor to take notes. Once the input has finished, the question is heard and both the question and response options are displayed on the screen. In addition to traditional multiple-choice items, the test includes item types that ask test-takers to select two options, match or order objects, and select a visual.

Similar to the P&P test, the Structure section contains two types of multiple-choice items: selecting the option that best completes a sentence and identifying an incorrect option. The Writing section is the only part of TOEFL-CBT where test-takers are requested to construct a response. Test-takers are required to write an essay on a generic topic. Only one topic is provided. No information is provided about the audience, purpose, etc., to help test-takers contextualize their essay. Test-takers can either hand-write or type their essay. Handwritten essays are scanned before they are sent to ratters for evaluation.

In the Reading section, test-takers are typically administered four to five texts with 10 ± 14 items per text. Interesting tasks have been developed. One such item requires test-takers to "insert a sentence" response into its appropriate place in a paragraph. Test-takers are administered linear sections of reading texts and items. The computer algorithm administers test-takers individualized sets of texts and items that meet the content and statistical requirements of the test. As no adaptive algorithm is used in this section, however, test-takers can return to previous items.

3.3 scoring method

Scoring in the adaptive Listening and Structure sections is cumulative. Correct answers to more difficult questions carry more weight than correct answers to easier ones. Section scores are converted into scaled scores (ETS, 1998). Scaled section scores across the three tests contribute equally to provide a total scaled score.

3.4. Reliability

The emphasis on the selected-response item type is to help ensure high reliability standards. With regard to scores, TOEFL results are represented as numeric scores that indicate the relative standing of students in comparison to a criterion group performance.

As indicated in the definition of reliability above, other than the language ability being measured, any variable that affects test scores is considered a potential source of measurement error. Measurement error can limit the reliability and generalizability of scores obtained. Given the computer format of TOEFL-CBT, an important issue to consider is whether test-takers' performance is adversely affected because they are not familiar with the computer medium.

Computer based tests represent the next generation of tests and the challenges encountered by the TOEFL program are to be expected. As more testing organizations convert to the computer medium (e.g. UCLES has introduced Communication), the collective effort of researchers should help resolve many of the current concerns. Nonetheless, computer familiarity and P&P and CBT/CAT equivalency research should become standard practice for any testing organization planning to use computers as a medium of test delivery.

3.5. Validity

Preoccupation with the psychometric qualities of TOEFL helps ensure good testing practices. Nevertheless, it has made the TOEFL somewhat resistant to and slow in incorporating changes that might reduce its high reliability standards. Also, the continued commercial success of TOEFL has contributed to its adherence to the status quo.

1.3.3 Conclusion

Language ability scores obtained from the Cambridge certificate exams, IELTS, and TOEFL are used to help make critical decisions concerning admission into institutions for academic training. It is critical, therefore, that the scores obtained provide high quality information. Developers want to construct instruments that meet professional standards; continue to investigate the properties of their instruments and the ensuing scores; and make test manuals, user guides and research documents available to the public...

Test-users also have a responsibility. As the 'Standards' (AERA et al., 1999) state test developers should, "provide information on the strengths and weaknesses of their instruments. However, the ultimate responsibility for appropriate test use and interpretation lies

predominantly with the test user". Test-users need to be cognizant of the properties of the instruments they employ and ensure appropriate interpretation and use of test scores provided.

2- EVOLUTION OF APPROACHES IN LANGUAGE TEACHING

2.1 LANGUAGE TEACHING IN SECONDARY EDUCATION, HOW TO REACH THE FCE LEVEL

2.1.1- Methodological trends

General methodological criteria applicable to the teaching of English:

Which method should be followed in order to teach English in the secondary education? Is there just one method, or various? Are some methods better than others or more appropriate given the characteristics of our pupils?

In order to reply correctly to these questions, we should start by discussing the different methods which have been used in the teaching of foreign languages in general, and specifically in the teaching of English. This is not of course the place to set out an exhaustive inventory of all the methods which have been used in the past (W. F. Mackey has already done so in his classic *Language Teaching Analysis*). Here, rather, are present the principal characteristics which differentiate the most important methodological trends which have been employed in the teaching of English.

Most important methodological trends:

1. The grammar-translation method.

The first method which we shall look at in this historical examination, which has prevailed a long time in the teaching of English and of other modern languages, is based on grammar and translation. It is a deductive, intellectual method, according to which the language is acquired by memorising the grammatical rules and paradigms and long lists of vocabulary, and is practised by the application of this knowledge in exercises of direct and inverse translations (Mackey, 1965, p. 153).

2. The direct methods.

Once it was decided that when learning a foreign language, the objective should be the ability to communicate with speakers of that language, rather than just the ability to read literary works, the method using grammar and translation was seen as no longer serving a purpose, or could not at least be employed exclusively. Thus in the 1920s and 1930s a series of methodological initiatives arose, later to be grouped under the heading of “the direct methods”, and whose common denominator is the idea that the pupil should be placed in direct contact with the language he chooses to acquire, through the simulation of concrete situations, as authentic as possible in the classroom situation.

3. The structural or audio-lingual method

This method, also known as “linguistic”, as it was the first to be consciously and intentionally based on a determined concept of language and its acquisition, arose in the United States at the end of the 1930s, due, on the one hand to the increasing disenchantment of teachers and experts based on the results of the direct method, and on the other hand, as a consequence of the need to communicate in foreign languages which were little known to the military, the diplomatic corps etc., of the United States, after the Second World War. The use of this method spread to the teaching of European languages in the United States, and to the teaching of English as a foreign language in Europe in the 1950s. Moreover, this method began to invade the education system at all levels: university faculties, technical schools, secondary schools etc.

4. The cognitive approach

At the end of the 1960s and beginning of the 70s, as a reaction against the defects of the audio-lingual method, and taking as its theoretical base the transformational and generative grammar of Chomsky, the so-called cognitive-code approach became popular. According to this approach, the learning of a language consists in acquiring a conscious control of its structures and its phonetic, lexical and grammatical elements, by means of, above all, the study and analysis of these structures, organised into coherent groups of knowledge. Once the student has reached a certain level of cognitive command of these elements, he will develop almost automatically the ability and capacity to use the language in realistic situations.

5. The communicative approach

These days, the methodological trend which appears to dominate the theories of language teaching and its teachers is the communicative, notional-functional approach. Rather than a new methodology, the communicative approach is a general philosophy which has been at the forefront of foreign language learning for the last 15 years. Its basic argument is that the learning of a foreign language should be directed towards the student acquiring communicative competence, that is to say, the acquirement of a series of skills which permit him to communicate with native speakers of the language in the most common situations of daily life. This new approach began to develop at the beginning of the 1970s, when the Council of Europe appointed a group of experts to elaborate a system of foreign language learning for adults (later adapted for use in schools).

Eclecticism in the choice of method exists. We have reached the history of the main methods used in language teaching. Which one should we employ in our classrooms? The answer appears to be obvious: the best one. But, are any of these methods better than the rest? And if this were the case, how would we identify the best method? Here we come up against a serious problem. It is almost impossible to conclude that one method is better than another. There are so many variables which enter into play in a teaching-learning situation that any experiment designed to elect the most or least effective method compared to another one, could never be conclusive.

All that has been previously mentioned brings us to a conclusion, albeit rather sceptical, but the only possible one: the need to be eclectic when choosing a method, to accept the good and positive elements of each methodological trend, and to collect together all that is most suitable given the situation and circumstances of the students. If we limit ourselves in an absolute way to a particular method, we run the risk of excluding other elements, of concentrating our efforts on one particular aspect of the language, (spoken or written, vocabulary, grammar etc.) forgetting the other equally important aspects. This need for eclecticism is not only based on theoretical principles, on a comparative study of the different methods. It also has a practical foundation based on the very characteristics of the students: each student has a particular reason for studying English, different from his companions. If all of them wanted to be translators, the traditional method of grammar-translation could be followed, without any need to teach the spoken language. But that is an imaginary situation, completely unreal. Some students will need the language they are studying in order to read technical texts or professional works not translated into Spanish,

other will need it in order to write commercial or other types of letters, others in order to make themselves understood by native speakers in trips for business or pleasure, etc. It highlights the need to teach the language in a comprehensive way, in all its facets. Later, each student will be able to specialise in the skill most suited to his needs, according to his individual or professional interests. But, in the initial stages of learning, the mission of teachers is to promote a basic and solid mastery of all aspects of the language, essentially the acquisition of the four basic linguistic skills.

This reasoning, at the same time, coincides with the general objectives set out in the Royal Decree 1523/1989, of 1st December, concerning the first level of the specialised teaching of foreign languages. “The elementary cycle -says the annex of this royal decree- article 1.1.1- has as its prime objective to help the student acquire a basic level of competence in the expression and comprehension of the language under study, both in its spoken and its written forms, so that he is capable of using it in everyday situations as a means of communication”. If the prime objective of the work of teachers is to make our students capable of using a foreign language as a means of communication, it seems logical to conclude that they should follow a methodology based on the communicative approach, excluding its defects, and incorporating the positive elements to be found in other methodological trends which we discussed in our account of the history of language methodology.

2.2 - LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES

There have been already discussed the importance of language learning strategies and have explained their main features. Now, we present a brief summary of Rebecca L. Oxford’s comprehensive book *Language Learning Strategies. What Every Teacher Should Know*. Language learning strategies can be divided into two major classes, direct and indirect. Learning strategies that directly involve the target language are called direct strategies. They include memory strategies for remembering and retrieving new information, cognitive strategies for understanding and producing the language, and compensation strategies for using the language despite knowledge gaps.

Indirect strategies, on the other hand, include metacognitive strategies for coordinating the learning process, affective strategies for regulating emotions, and social strategies for learning with others. They are called ‘indirect’ because they support and manage language learning without directly involving the target language.

Of course, our primary role as teachers of English is to promote the acquisition of the language by our students. But if we are able to train them in the use of some of the learning strategies we have examined in this section, they will become more autonomous in the learning process and more responsible for the acquisition of the new language. And not only this: they will have the tools to go on learning new things and improving the mastery of the language by themselves.

1- The teaching of pronunciation

When we talk about the teaching of a foreign language, we can consider the four basic linguistic skills, listening, speaking, reading and writing, or we can split up the language into its main levels or components, which are the sound level, the morphosyntactical level, and the lexical-semantic level. In methodological terms, people usually refer to the first one as pronunciation, to the second as grammar, and to the last one as vocabulary. The importance of the teaching and learning of the pronunciation of English is out of discussion among experts and teachers of this language all over the world. The problems and difficulties arise when these people set to the tasks of fixing the objectives and establishing the techniques and strategies for the teaching-learning of pronunciation in an English-as-a-foreign-language situation such as ours in Spain.

A lot of books and articles have been published on this subject. One of the best documented and most comprehensive, is Joanne Kenworthy's *Teaching English Pronunciation*, published by Longman in 1987.

What objectives should be set for our students in this field? How good should the students' pronunciation aim to be?

Some time ago it might have been said that the objective should always be native-like pronunciation, but today most people say that this is an inappropriate goal for most learners. Very few teachers today would claim that a pronunciation that is indistinguishable from that of a native speaker is necessary or even desirable for their learners. Instead, it is generally accepted that intelligibility is the most sensible goal.

It goes without saying that intelligibility is not the final aim of a correct pronunciation, but just a means to achieve communication. Foreign speakers need to be intelligible so that they

can communicate. But communication involves more than simply sending a set of well-produced sounds into the air. To achieve communicative competence, students of a foreign language must be intelligible in an effective and efficient way, within the context of the given situation in which they might find themselves.

2- The teaching of grammar

The teaching of grammar has provided the main battle ground for the controversies and methodological discussions concerning the teaching of languages. It is evident that all languages are governed by a set of grammatical norms, and therefore grammar is present in all teaching-learning situations of a foreign language. The problem is the way in which these grammatical elements should be taught: Should it be through memorising normative rules which are then applied to exercises of direct and inverse translation? In an inductive way, to use structural exercises or drills which practise a particular structure, but without specific reference to the underlying general rule?

Between these two extreme postures, practised by the followers of the grammar-translation method and those who favour the audio-lingual method, respectively, there are several intermediate possibilities. On the other hand, there will be no single solution valid for all occasions. The greater or lesser degree of explicit grammar teaching in any given English course will depend on the age of the students, their academic formation and other factors related to their intellectual capacity and education.

This does not mean, of course, that teachers should limit themselves to presenting a series of grammatical rules without concern for how these are registered and productively assimilated in the student's mind. The point is not to return to the practices of the traditional grammar-translation method.

So grammar instruction appears to be very convenient if not absolutely essential for acquiring a good level of proficiency in the target language. This does not mean, however, that grammar can be taught in isolation from the other language aspects and components. If we accept that the fundamental purpose of learning a foreign language is to be able to communicate in that language, then we must try to integrate the teaching of grammar into a communicative framework.

3- The teaching of vocabulary

The cognitive method and the communicative approach have restored to importance the semantic aspect, as opposed to the structural mechanism which was the glory of the followers of the audio-lingual methods.

It is evident that the semantic level of a language is not only to be found in its vocabulary: There are grammatical meanings, in the form of morphosyntactics, cultural meanings, etc. But we can say that the vocabulary or lexical level is where the meaning of a language is mostly realised and consolidated.

Presentation of new words: New words should not be presented in isolation, but in the context of a complete sentence, and in a meaningful situation. Only in this way will the words acquire meaning, when they appear with a particular definition in a determined context.

Teaching meaning: Teaching meaning is not the only aspect of the teaching of vocabulary, although it is certainly one of the most important.

Practising the new words: Once the meaning is understood, the new words are practised orally in different phrases, in various contexts and communicative situations, and using all the grammatical structures known to the students. Subsequently, one moves on to reading and writing the new words.

4 – The basic skills: listening and speaking

The linguistic elements discussed in the preceding sections -pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary- are practically never used outside of a piece of connected discourse or a communicative activity of listening, speaking, reading or writing. In these communicative abilities, also known as the four basic skills, all the other elements are used in an integrated way.

By this we mean that the basic skills are generally used together. That is, we usually speak and listen, or read and write at the same time. On the other hand, the different linguistic elements -sounds, intonation, lexical items, and grammar rules- are combined in appropriate meaningful sequences in speech acts or in longer units of spoken discourse and written text.

1. Listening comprehension:

Understanding what others say is essential for communication: It is impossible to answer or respond to another person if we have not understood what he or she has said. In spite of this, the skill of listening comprehension was usually neglected in the teaching of foreign languages until the spread of the communicative approach made theoreticians and

practitioner teachers aware of the importance of this basic linguistic skill.

2. The skill of speaking:

The communicative approach has placed the speaking ability as the most important objective in the process of teaching-learning a foreign language.

Most students of English want to be able to speak the language as perfectly as possible, in order to communicate with native and non-native speakers of English in their business or holiday contacts with them. The acquisition of this skill, however, is very difficult and demanding, and this difficulty is at the root of the discouragement a lot of learners feel after some time of studying the language.

5- The basic skills: reading and writing

Reading, like listening, is a predominantly receptive skill, while speaking and writing are productive skills, which demand not only the ability to recognise the different language elements, but also to combine them in a creative way in order to produce new speech acts or written texts. For this reason, students can usually deal with a higher level of language in receptive skills than in productive ones; the learners can process and understand language that is above their own level of production, because in the receptive skills they do not need to encode the language into speech or writing, but rather to interact with the text in order to understand the message, which seems possible even where the text contains language the students are not themselves able to produce.

5.1. Reading comprehension

People usually read for one of these two main reasons: for pleasure, as in the case of novels, short stories, poems, etc.; or for information to find out something (for instance who invented the telephone), or to do something with that information (for example, to operate a new household gadget).

Understanding a written text means extracting the required information from it as efficiently as possible. To do so readers employ a number of skills, and their success at understanding the content of what they read depends to a large extent on their expertise in these specialist skills.

5.2. The skill of writing

Of the four basic language skills, writing is usually the last to be taught and is normally considered a kind of reinforcement and extension of the other skills that are listening, speaking and reading.

Since writing is an activity which can be carried out individually, without the help or assistance of the teacher, little time should be devoted in class to practising this skill. Class time should be spent primarily teaching the oral skills or listening and speaking, because most students do not normally have the opportunity to hear or speak English outside the classroom. There are some activities, however, which should be done in class. These include dictations and cloze exercises, for example. Dictations, because they are difficult to do at home, even with the help of a cassette recorder, and also because it is an activity which requires immediate correction and feedback. Cloze exercises, on the other hand, can be done in pairs or in groups, and offer a good opportunity for the students to share their knowledge and engage in useful discussions about the appropriateness of different alternatives for a particular blank.

6- Textbooks and other teaching materials

Teachers have traditionally relied on a basic textbook for their work in class. In recent times, however, some teachers have questioned the usefulness and convenience of textbooks, on the basis that they constraint the teaching-learning process, do not leave space for the creativity of teachers and learners, or do not meet the specific interests and needs of different students or different learning situations.

In spite of the reasons put forward by the people who are opposed to using a textbook in class, I think that textbooks are not only useful but even necessary for a good and efficient teaching of the English language in our schools.

Of course a textbook is not a panacea and we cannot expect that it will solve all our problems and satisfy all the students' needs. Textbooks, like any other medium, have inherent limitations. As Robert O'Neill said: "Textbooks can at best provide only a base or a core of materials". They are the jumping-off point for teacher and class. They should not aim to be more than that. A great deal of the most important work in a class may start with the textbook but end outside it, in improvisation and adaptation, in spontaneous interaction in the class, and development from that interaction."

The question then, in my opinion, is not whether to use a textbook or not, but rather which textbook to use. There are so many general English courses offered by Spanish and British

publishers that we must have a clear idea of the points to look at when selecting a textbook in our establishments.

Textbooks are very convenient or necessary tools in the English class, but they are not the only teaching aid we have at hand. There are a lot of materials which can be used in class in a very fruitful and efficient way. Among them we can mention flashcards, wall charts, supplementary readers and other printed materials, audio-visual aids and computer programmes.

2.3 MODERN LANGUAGE STRATEGIES AND THEIR APPLICATION TO ENGLISH LANGUAGE ACHIEVEMENTS

Talking about secondary education, one of the most difficult tasks that teachers could find is how to teach their students how to learn, and even more when talking about languages. Nowadays, there are so many distractions that may take them far from these goals, so their teaching has to be as captive as possible.

Concerning the knowledge that we have already seen previously that the students have to reach when secondary education ends, there are several learning strategies that the student can be implemented both in the classroom, with the help of the teacher and surrounded of other students, or alone at home, in order to reach the personal achievements necessities to enhance the required level, ending the secondary education.

1- We have first to take into consideration that one difficulty that many teachers consistently have to face; English-language learner students have a huge lack the basic literacy skills needed to grasp grade-level content. A statewide survey of teachers in California identified the top three challenges facing secondary teachers regarding English-language learners:

- 1) Communicating with English-language learners about academic, social, and personal issues;
- 2) Encouraging and motivating English-language learners; and
- 3) Addressing the individual and diverse needs of English-language learners in both academic skills and English-language acquisition.

For this main reason, there has been developed successfully several methods or strategies based on multiple research studies from the past decade that identify effective methods for developing English-language and their basic interpersonal communication skills in English.

These strategies not only help students develop English as a second language, they also help native speakers learn words that are not part of everyday English.

1- One of the most important phases of the learning of second languages, is concerning vocabulary and language development, to reach that, we have to introduce new concepts via essential academic vocabulary. For that, we can connect the student with accessible synonyms or concepts to this essential vocabulary; like that they can start by themselves connecting the new words with others that they already know.

It is important to support students to distinguish word meanings, and their uses for subject-specific tasks and prerequisite language skills. For that, teaching essential language forms and uses per students' assessed language development level in listening and speaking, or reading and writing.

Some activities can be implemented in order to achieve a good use of vocabulary, such us:

- Word analysis: for instance, dissecting words into their parts (prefix, root, and suffix).
- Using vocabulary journals, A-B-C books, word webs, word walls.
- Introducing interactive editing, Cloze paragraphs, dictations, subjectspecific journals.
- Vocabulary internet learning websites.

2- For the student, it is also essential a guided interaction. Peer-to-peer interactions as a way to learn content and develop student's use of academic language in speaking, listening, reading and writing.

Also, to clarify expectations, outcomes, and procedures related to tasks for flexible group activities. These peer-to-peer interactions help a lot to increase speaking, listening, reading comprehension and writing skills.

Supporting language interactions with review/preview of language forms, using of graphic organizers or other types of modelling is also very helpful.

Some activities or assessments to follow could be to prepare partner interviews, Class surveys, Think Pair Share, Numbered Heads Together, Four Corners, poster projects, group presentations, perspective line ups, readers' Theatre...

3- the teaching to students processes for metacognition, this is to say, pre-reading & pre-writing skills, word analysis, and methods to monitor their reading comprehension; will teach and model ways for students to describe their thinking processes verbally and in writing, using a variety of activities and tasks to check for understanding.

To achieve this student metacognition learning, we can propose some activities to follow: Guided reading, completing chapter pre-reading guides, reciprocal teaching, in which students teach each others, directed reading thinking activity, think-alouds, journals, quickwrites..

4- Students at this level (FCE) have to know essential language forms and uses per students' assessed language development level in listening, speaking, reading and writing. For them, following contextualized introduction and explicit modeling of language use with repeated practice will help them to reach the language grammar form required. Students have to be taught and explained several languages applications reading directions, sentence starters, essay formats, pattern drills, or completing a story map; and always checking for understanding the activities and the vocabulary given.

5- During the learning process, introducing new concepts through familiar resources, prompts, visuals, or themes, will sustain motivation to learn challenging concepts by linking ideas to resources or contexts that reflect student interests & sociocultural or linguistic backgrounds.

Those methods listed above could be used to introduce academic vocabulary, sentence structures, and language uses. Also, in order to compare & analyze language use, and meanings to other cultures or context, to promote metacognition.

That strategy could be established by quick-write responses or recording student responses to visuals, current event stories, real-life models, video clips, teacher read-alouds, thematic prompts, role-play, comparing language uses for similar contexts, or identifying and analyzing different perspectives and language references.

A really useful strategie to achieve knowledge in second language learning is to provide graphic organizers and meaningful visuals to support students' recognition of essential information. They are used overall to support metacognition and general comprehension.

The methods listed above could be used with the addition of word banks, word walls, and modeling the use of graphic organizers appropriate to the FCE level.

We could introduce diagrams, story maps, main idea + supporting detail schematics, double-entry journals, and of course, read-alouds.

2.4 THE INTEGRATION OF ORAL AND WRITTEN SKILLS IN TEACHING AND LEARNING FOREIGN LANGUAGES

It is essential to discuss the didactic perspectives that show that dialogue is an essential basis for the teaching of writing. The integration of speaking and writing skills is grounded on the sociocultural theoretical framework, which considers that working in pairs stimulates the zone of proximal development (ZPD), as well as showing that speech is a key element in the planning process of writing

Along the time, there have been several researches that made really huge contributions to the understanding of all the social, cognitive and linguistic processes necessities to learn a second language.

2.4.1 Orality and writting: their relation in the development of the language.

The teaching of writing is usually introduced from the age of 5 but, even though writing can take shape at a very early age, oral language has reached a level of development far beyond that of the written language although writing skills develop later in the learning curve of language or require more time than any other linguistic skill to reach full development, they have the potential to be affected by the spoken language.

To understand how written and oral language skills correlate with each other can leave it clears the level of progress that a person can get in writing. It also shows in what manner and to what degree writing can be influenced by the spoken language.

It looks easy for oral language to be a good point to measure the development of writing: the early learners can rely on their oral basis such as morphology, syntactic

structures, the structure of the discourse and pragmatic elements, to gradually develop their written competence.

Effective writing depends on the verbal working memory.

Regarding the way in which writers and speakers influence the coherence of the ideas they communicate, it has been showed that the degree of cohesion in students from first grade of high school is higher in oral stories but lower in written ones. Other studies have shown how the cohesion that develops early in the spoken language tends to be reflected later in children's writings.

According to Shanatan, oral and written language are connected from a general point of view, so the children that have a good level of spoken language skills will work better with written tasks.

On the other hand, it has been demonstrated that writing has also an impact on oral language, for instance, in the forms that develop later in the process such as the morphemes. Morphology has been another area that has received attention in relation to the connection between speech and writing. In a study that examined the use of morphemes in oral and written composition, found that mistakes of oral language explained many of the morphological errors that occurred in writing.

2.4.2 Oral and writing skills in the learning of second languages.

All the studies regarding writing in foreign languages have been classified by Cumming (2001) in three main areas of research:

- (a) Studies conducted on the basis of the quality of the texts for learners,
- (b) Works that analyse the processes of composition of texts for learners,
- (c) Studies that consider the sociocultural context in which learning to write occurs

Such an approach, although concerned mostly with writing, takes a comprehensive and rigorous look at the spoken language, as it is perceived as the instrument that establishes the social context for writing.

2.4.3 From talk to write, the sociocultural explanation

For the sociocultural theorists, the oral discourse is the key to the development of cognitive and literacy skills. (Lee & Smagorinsky, 2000). This connection was already explored in the academic workings and researches of the Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky.

According to the theory of Vygotsky (1996 [1934]) he made some experiments to observe the behaviour of children when they have to face a variety of tasks that require a high level of cognitive pressure.

Based on these studies, this researcher concluded that children internalise their social discourse as a form of inner speech, a silent and abbreviated form of oral language that they use as a cognitive tool for solving problems.

Vygotsky (1996 [1934]) established as a fact that the more complex cognitive functions, which include writing, develop from the social interaction that becomes transformed into inner speech, which is the final stage in the development of activity forms of the human mind. The psychological function of speech does not emerge suddenly from the social discourse; it goes, rather, through an egocentric phase in which «its formal appearance is social but its function is increasingly psychological» (Lantolf and Thorne, 2000: 72). Thus, although the egocentric speech has the appearance of social, from the point of view of the form, it has a psychological slant.

Luria (1968) (cit. by Lee and Smagorinsky, 2000) left also clear the connection between oral speech and writing. He said that inner speech is the basis of writing and that novice writers use it to produce a type of written speech. According to this view, the writing that emerges is simply inner speech externalise.

Analysing the work of pairs, we can find out that the use of dialogue not only is a mean of communication but also it is a cognitive tool.

When students work in pairs on a writing project, some problems in their skill levels becomes apparent. That is, a member of the pair (or group) is normally slightly more advanced in a particular skill than the other member. In such a case, the oral interaction can turn into a natural learning phenomenon that Vygotsky (1996 [1934]) called the zone of proximal development (ZPD) and that was defined as:

The distance between the level of effective development, determined by the independent resolution of a problem and the level of potential development, determined through the resolution of problems with the help of an adult or in collaboration of more capable peers.

2.4.4 The classroom as the ambit for the oral conception of writing

Weisberg (2006) examined how oral and written languages interact for learners of a second and a foreign language and describes a general approach to teaching which is deeply rooted in the dialogue between several individuals:

- a) Dialogue between students and teacher;
- b) Dialogue between students;
- c) Dialogue within the minds of the students

This research had the theory that teachers have the option of creating in their classrooms a community of writers that, through the dialogue, help one another as tutors, co-authors and critical readers. The techniques utilize working in pairs and in groups as a means of planning the possible organization of the texts by brainstorming, debates and discussions, interviews, etc.

The social context that Weisberg concentrates on is the writing class maintains that the base of an approach based on the dialogue about the teaching of writing in L2 is reflected in four assumptions:

1) “The most effective language classrooms are those that are truly communicative, significant and relevant for pupils” Weisberg (2006)

Weisberg states that a speech involves at least two active speakers with an important topic to discuss. Similarly, the communicative approach in writing involves interaction and a cooperative relationship between the writer and reader.

2) The use of communicative language leaves people working together to exchange information, negotiate meanings and carry out tasks.

This second affirmation leaves clear that all the activities in small groups give the participants the opportunity to negotiate meaning through conversation.

3) Language learning in the classroom is, by nature, a social activity, thus interaction is not a precursor or a condition for learning the language but in itself a form of learning.

This implies that the dialogue is in itself a general approach for teaching and learning a second language.

4) Social interaction provides an ideal context to achieve dominion over complex cognitive skills such as writing. This last affirmation incorporates the idea that social communication is the basis for the development of literacy skill.

2.4.5 Conclusions

After analysing the work of these researchers, we can end up with some conclusions that reveal that:

The interrelation of the characteristics of speech and writing ends up in a concept of an interactive classroom that helps resolve the processes of writing in a practical manner. To integrate the linguistic skills in terms of a productive pedagogy emerges as a beneficial goal with direct implications for teachers, students and all other elements of the classroom.

The teacher is an essential figure in the process of learning; he is the guide of the process of learning, not only a reader. The interactive atmosphere in the classroom is the result of the adoption of the writing task as a dialogue process

The theories of the expert Vygotsky about the sociocultural perspective manifest a method in which the dialogue is a didactic tool to deal with the writing class and to formulate questions.

The work in pairs stimulates the proximal development enforcing even more strongly the concept of an interactive class for writing. To all this we must add that the inner speech, as a basis for writing, stands as a voice that encourages the learner's writing and establishes itself as a fundamental element of the planning process.

Finally, interaction and dialogue are essential elements for the execution of writing lessons. There is no doubt of the fact that the solid theoretical foundation associated with the practical applicability of Weisberg's ideas set the bases of a communicative pedagogy in accordance with the new conceptions of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

3 - THE IMPORTANCE OF AN EARLY START IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION

The resolution of the European Union aims to promote European multilingualism through the promotion of the early teaching of the languages of the European Union, while respecting cultural and linguistic diversity of Europe.

According to the act: "Council Resolution of 16 December 1997 on the early teaching of European Union languages [Official Journal C 1, 3.1.1998]":

The early learning of a language or languages other than their mother tongue language can help achieve this target because young age is the time flexibility and intellectual receptivity reach the highest level.

The integration of this learning and this awareness in compulsory education would, moreover, that all students have access to it.

The Council invites Member States to:

- promote early learning and diversification in the range of languages
- promote European cooperation between schools that offer early education at least one language of the Union other than their mother tongue language and promote virtual mobility of students or even, if possible, their physical mobility;
- promote the continuous supply of teaching in several languages; sensitize all concerned, particularly parents, about the positive effects of early language teaching;
- promote measures to develop and disseminate the most suitable teaching materials and multimedia resources in the field of early teaching of languages of the Union;
- encourage measures to prepare for the changing needs of teachers working in the field of early education.

The Council invites the Commission to support the activities of Member States with the objectives set out above and to promote, within the framework of existing Community programs, the early learning of the languages of the Union:

- providing support for measures to strengthen European cooperation and sharing or exchanging experiences and good practices in this area;
- supporting transnational cooperation in the development of methods and teaching aids (including multimedia products) and assessment instruments in the field of early language learning;
- supporting the dissemination of appropriate teaching materials and quality through European networks;
- supporting measures on the one hand, mobility of teachers and, second, updating and improving the skills necessary to exercise the early teaching of languages;
- promote cooperation between teacher training centres;
- Encouraging contacts between students, particularly through virtual mobility.

Moreover, it invites the Commission to consider the early teaching of languages at the time of reflection on future cooperation in the field of education.

3.1 CASE STUDY: THE ADVANTAGES OF AN EARLY START IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION

It is undeniable that, if we have to compare the speed of a learning student with a short age and another one with a more advanced age, the answer is clear, the less age an student have, the fastest is going to learn, and no mater which language they are studying. After having a deep look into the goals that we have to achieve when learning languages, it is convenient to have a look into some studies regarding this essential issue.

The study in which we are going to be focused, compares 27 sixth grade students who have been learning Spanish since preschool with 5 who have had Spanish for only I year using a battery of Spanish oral and written tests. The students who started early outperformed the new students in listening, speaking, and writing Spanish. Those who started early also displayed a positive attitude toward speaking Spanish in the classroom, a high level of confidence in their Spanish oral and literacy skills, and the use of sophisticated language structures in writing. These findings provide additional evidence supporting the case for early foreign language learning

3.1.1 Advantages of Starting Early

Even though Krashen, Long, and Scarcella (1979) concluded that early foreign language learners show better results than older ones in the long run. In many cases, these studies focused on a particular skill or task (e.g., reading comprehension), thus making it difficult to conclude with any general result about an early start. The present study presents findings that support foreign language learning for early learners based on results from a battery of oral and written tests comparing the academic and non-academic language skills of two groups of children.

Furthermore, Harley and Wang (1997) found that early learners outperformed older ones not only in pronunciation, but also in morphology and syntax. Regarding the achievements of late beginners, studies show that some learners whose exposure to a second language (L2) begins after age 12 can nevertheless acquire native like pronunciation. Researchers have begun to identify other factors that are related to age of learning and that may affect second language acquisition. For example, DeKeyser (2000) found that the few adult beginners in his study whose scores were identical to those of child beginners had high

levels of verbal analytical ability. Given these mixed results, it is clearly important to continue investigating the language learning of students who begin earlier or later in Foreign Language in the Elementary School (FLES) programs.

Concerning students of secondary school, comparative studies between nearly and late immersion students who had reached the same age in secondary school have shown that late immersion students sometimes catch up with early immersion students in writing and in reading comprehension. As for oral skills, early immersion students typically retain an advantage on communicative tests of listening comprehension and speaking when compared with late immersion students.

There are clear advantages for those who start early, compared with late immersion students, express greater confidence in using all four skills. These results reaffirm that: -- early foreign language learners benefit more in oral communication than those who start their foreign language instruction late.

There is evidence of cognitive, academic, and attitudinal advantages for children who start foreign language studies.

Children who begin early appear to develop better L2 oral proficiency and to feel more secure in their oral L2 performance.

Early learners have comparative advantages in relation to their monolingual peers with respect to cognitive development, academic achievement, and attitudes toward the target language and culture.

3.1.2 Description of the study:

This study reports the results of a battery of Spanish oral and written tests administered to 32 sixth graders in Spanish. This study was conducted in a suburban public school district in Pennsylvania, in 1996, with the initiative of the district superintendent; the school district began a Spanish FLES program (Tucker, Donato, & Murday, 2001).

There are two groups:

Twenty-seven students had been learning the target language since preschool, thus, they are considered early learners.

Five students had received only 1 year of Spanish instruction.

Because of the small sample, the findings of the present study cannot be generalized; however, they are meaningful to the extent that they show the same tendencies as those of previous studies.

1) Data Collection

Participants

At the start of the program, approximately 40 students (with an equal number of boys and girls) were randomly selected for continuous evaluation. At the end of each of the past 6 years, the Spanish teachers, assisted by members of the university partnership, have tested this same pool of students. Since the initial selection of this pool, some students have left the school, leaving 27 students to be tested in May 2003. Of these students, 14 were girls and 13 were boys.

During the school year, 10 new students had joined the Spanish program in grade 6. Of these 10 students, only 5 were tested due to a variety of reasons (e.g., late program start, special needs, absence).

The sample of new students consisted of 3 boys and 2 girls. With the exception of one child who had Spanish when she was in first grade, none of the new students had learned any other language in their former schools. All of the students were native speakers of English, and all but two participated in the “repasso” (review) held 2 out of 6 days.

Sources of Data Collection

Mainly, it has consisted in a Spanish Final Test (SFT) which consisted of a listening task, two speaking tasks, a reading task and a writing task. It has had different parts as follows:

Listening Task

In this task, students were tested in their comprehension of eight Spanish commands. The learner responded physically, not orally, and the tester was able to repeat the command to the examinee only twice. Each repetition of the command was counted like two-point scale to evaluate students’ responses regarding the accuracy and the number of prompts needed. For each correct response, the learner earned two points; for each correct response requiring a

prompt, the learner earned one point; and when students did not respond or answered incorrectly, they received no points.

Speaking Tasks

Students participated in two oral tasks. The first task required the child to answer questions about a picture orally in Spanish. The learner's responses were evaluated in terms of their understanding of the questions, regardless of grammatical errors or utterance length. Susan and Richard tested each other's students and used the same two-point rating scale described above. In the second oral task, the child described a set of pictures using as much detail as possible. The child had the opportunity to examine the pictures prior to the test, and was instructed to think of "all the things that they could say about the pictures in Spanish." Spanish oral prompts and questions given to the students were more open-ended than those in the first oral task. For example, the tester may have said "tell me about the people in the picture and their activities" or "tell me about the animals in the picture." Based on their responses, the tester also encouraged the students to participate in further conversation using questions such as, "what activities do you and your family like to do together?" or "what is your favourite animal?" Answers were recorded and carefully analyzed using rating scale based on a variety of adapted measures.

Reading Task

In which the students had just completed a unit on solar energy. In accordance with this familiar theme, students' reading skills were evaluated using a 127-word passage on the topic of solar energy. The passage, written in Spanish, was followed by five corresponding comprehension question written in English. To avoid any misunderstanding, the students answered the questions in English as well. Each question was worth 1 point, for a combined total of 5 possible points.

Writing Task

The writing test also included a picture-based activity. The picture depicted a family in a house and emphasized natural resources that they used and wasted. The students were given a word bank of six words and asked to describe the picture in writing. This word bank was used as a springboard for students' completion of the task. Students' writing was evaluated by means of a rubric containing the following categories: mechanics, grammar, semantics,

production, and discourse. Each category was worth 3 points, for a combined total of 15 points.

b) Results

Results from the Spanish final test were compared with teachers' expectations of students' performances on the test. In general, the oral and written test results confirmed the expectations of the teachers. Students who were ranked high by the teachers performed well and those who were ranked low performed poorly.

We are going to see the different results in each skill, to see in deep how early learners have more advantage than new students in each part of their second language study as we have seen before.

Listening Skills

The majority of students from both groups received high scores on the listening task. However, a careful look at the results on this task reveals a significant difference between the two groups with respect to the number of prompts needed by students to identify the items correctly.

Early learners (students 1-27) did not need additional prompts in order to answer correctly. In contrast, 3 new students needed additional prompts in order to respond correctly (students 28-32). The difference of the group means (early learners = 19%; new students = 33%) is statistically significant. Data from the teachers' checklists supported these findings with respect to listening comprehension skills. The Spanish teachers agreed that the early learners comprehend key words and phrases better than the new students. Data from students' self reports also indicated that new students feel less confident of their Spanish comprehension skills than the early learners.

These results all support the conclusion that the early learners outperformed the new learners in listening comprehension.

Regarding speaking skills, results from two tasks were examined. Data from the first oral task reveal no statistically significant difference between the two groups with respect to the number of prompts needed by the students to answer correctly. Results from the second oral task indicate major differences in students' speaking abilities across groups. Three new students were rated Novice Low, whereas two new students identified as "good students" by

their teacher were rated Novice High. For the early learners, only 1 was rate as Novice Low, 9 as Novice Mid, 8 as Novice High, 6 as Intermediate Low, 2 as Intermediate Mid, and 1 as Intermediate High. A closer look at the data from students who were rated as Novice High in both groups reveals that early learners talked more about family members and the likes and dislikes of their family members, whereas new students talked more about academically oriented topics.

Data from the teachers' checklists confirm that early learners outperformed new students in their speaking skills in Spanish. Furthermore, the Spanish teachers indicated that the early learners showed more language growth over the school year than the new students. Data collected from students' self-reports also reinforced the teachers' perceptions of the new students' insecurities about their Spanish-speaking skills.

All the data collected here lead to the conclusion that the gap between listening comprehension and speaking skills is greater for new students than for early learners. The early learners outperformed the new learners in their Spanish oral skills. Across groups the majority of students received lower scores in speaking than in listening comprehension.

Oral Skills

According to the grade 6 Spanish teachers, students who have been learning Spanish since kindergarten are more confident of their Spanish oral proficiency. Results of students' self-report support teachers' perceptions.

Averages from the early learners group were higher than those of new students, leading to the conclusion that the former are more confident in their Spanish oral skills. In addition, the early learners reported a more positive attitude toward speaking Spanish in the classroom than the new students. However, students from both groups reported speaking very little in Spanish to family members and friends outside the classroom.

Reading Skills

Students' results on the reading task were 70% average for the low students, including some of the new students, was 48%. The overall average for the early learners was 59% and the average for the new students was 52%. This difference was not statistically significant. This could be attributed to the fact that some early learners performed lower than the new students.

However, the teachers' checklists indicate that they believe that early learners are more confident about their reading skills than new students. Also, the students' self reports indicate that early learners feel more confident about their reading skills than new learners.

As for their writing skills, early learners outperformed the new students; early learners had a 60%; and new students 46% which is statistically significant. More specifically, the data show that early learners were able to write more and to use a wider variety of sentence constructions than new students. In addition, there were differences between these two groups in the areas of grammar (word order and agreement) and semantics (vocabulary use and meaning). The teachers' checklists indicate that they believe that both groups can "write a paragraph in Spanish when provided with appropriate support materials," but that only the early learners can "write a paragraph in Spanish that is not a copy of a model provided by the teacher." On the final test, students were not provided with a model and the early learners performed better than the new students, as expected by the teachers. Results from the student self-assessments also confirm that early learners are more confident about their writing skills.

Literacy Skills

Students who have been learning Spanish since kindergarten are more confident about their Spanish literacy skills, especially when it comes to producing a text without having a model.

Items from the student survey related to writing were divided into writing about academic topics and writing about non-academic topics. In general, early learners felt more confident about writing both kinds of texts than new students. While early learners felt more confident in writing about non-academic topics (92%) than academic topics (74%), new students demonstrated the same level of confidence in writing both kinds of texts (50% for academic and non-academic texts). Overall, students who have been studying Spanish since kindergarten were more confident about their literacy skills than those who started in grade 6.

2) Conclusions

This research has several evident limitations: the small sample that does not allow us to generalize its results. However, the results from this study correspond to those of Genesee (1987), Harley (1986), Swain and Lapkin (1986), Wesche, Morrison, Ready, and Pawley (1990). These studies indicated that early learners may have an advantage in oral

communication over those who start foreign language instruction later. In addition, an early start may lead students to more confidence in using the target language.

This study shows that students who started the Spanish program early outperformed new students in their oral skills. The gap between Spanish listening and speaking skills is greater for new students than for early foreign language learners. In addition to feeling more confident with their Spanish oral skills, the early learners reported that they were more inclined to use Spanish for communicating personal feelings than the new students.

It is evident language growth of early learners, as newer students needed more prompting and more time to respond on some of the tasks of the final test. In addition, results from the final test reveal that, even among early learners, there is a wide range of proficiency levels.

With regard to literacy skills, the results from this study agree with Harley and Wang's findings (1997) in the sense that early learners outperformed newer ones not only in pronunciation, but also in morphology and syntax. The early learners were able to write more and used more sophisticated language structure than the new students. Also, the early foreign language learners felt more confident about writing non-academic texts than writing academic texts. This may be attributed to the fact that these students had been learning Spanish for 7 years and thus non-academic topics were more familiar to them. The fact that new students reported the same level of confidence in writing academic and non-academic texts could be attributed to their recent start in a program that contains a heavy emphasis on literacy. With respect to reading skills, the results of the reading task indicate that there are no significant differences between the two groups, despite the differences reported by the teachers' checklists and students' self-assessments.

Perhaps the most important factor that may explain the apparent discrepancy in the reading results is the role of "locus of control" (Pierce, Swain, & Dough, 1999). In a reading task, control is not given to the student: The text is preselected; the level of difficulty is established, and the criteria for comprehension have been previously decided. Conversely, in a writing task, the control of the production resides with the learner. The language selected and used for production is largely controlled by the learners' abilities. As the writing task was open-ended (a picture prompt), the learners had much more control of the task and thus more opportunity to display what they knew rather than what they did not know. In short, there are a number of variables that may explain the inconsistency with the reading skills task results. In summary the findings of this study shows that beginning foreign language instruction at an early age may be advantageous for developing students' oral skills and their confidence in

using the target language. Results also indicate that an early start is beneficial to students' writing development.

Despite the small number of participants in the present study, the findings corroborate previous studies that highlight the effectiveness and advantage of early foreign language instruction.

3.2 CASE STUDY 2: ENGLISH SKILLS OF STUDENTS IN EUROPE, 2002

-The context of the project

This project has been commissioned by the European network of policy makers for the evaluation of education systems. It follows a previous study which was conducted in 1995-1996 to compare pupils' achievements in English as a foreign language in France, Spain, Sweden and later the Netherlands, using tests containing common elements. This was reported on in 1997 during a European conference organised jointly by five member countries of the European Network of policy makers for the evaluation of education systems (Finland, France, Portugal, Spain and Sweden) and the European Commission within the general framework of the SOCRATES Community programme (Action III, 3, 1).

-Participants

Under the European Network of Policy Makers for the Evaluation of Education Systems eight European countries participated in the present project which was co-ordinated by Gérard BONNET (Direction de l'évaluation et de la prospective, Ministère de la jeunesse, de l'éducation nationale et de la recherche).

These institutions and researchers chosen by the eight countries to implement the project are:

DENMARK – The Danish Evaluation Institute

FINLAND - National Board of Education (Opetushallitus)

FRANCE - Direction de l'évaluation et de la prospective, Ministère de la jeunesse, de l'éducation nationale et de la recherche

GERMANY – Deutsches Institut für Internationale Pädagogische Forschung (DIPF) The

NETHERLANDS – University of Nijmegen / University of Groningen

NORWAY – University of Oslo

SPAIN - Instituto Nacional de Evaluación y Calidad del Sistema Educativo (INECSE)
SWEDEN - National Agency for Education (Skolverket)

This are all the participants in the survey, but now we are going to be focused in the background, results, weak a good points and conclusions of one of the countries with more successful languages results and one of the weakest. We are going to see the comparison between Spain and Norway, and define their educational differences.

-The aims of the Project

In 2002-2003 the relevance of testing pupils' skills in foreign languages has, if anything, intensified since the first comparative work was conducted in 1995-96. Having comparable data in foreign language achievement available at a time when co-operation between EU member states is increasing in order to foster the construction of Europe in the field of education.

Clearly foreign language skills are central for Europe and indicators in this area are recognised as being a high priority.

It is particularly because while millions of pupils in the European Union, the British Isles aside, learn English as a foreign language at some point in their school careers, a lot of them throughout their school careers, the fundamental question of how successful this effort turns out to be is hardly ever formulated on a national -let alone European basis. More generally millions of tax-payers' money across and beyond the Union are spent each year on foreign language teaching provisions and yet none of the European institutions had, until very recently, ever wanted to know whether this was money usefully spent.

It was only at the European Council held in Barcelona in March 2002 that the Heads of States and Governments stated in their conclusions that steps must be taken for "the establishment of a linguistic competence [in foreign languages] indicator in 2003".

In this context, the aim of this study is to make available some information on this central issue. The idea is to provide some further basic comparative data on pupils' achievements across countries with a view to underline the cultural, structural and technical reasons why outcomes vary from one country to the next. Once again English has been chosen.

On the other hand the pupil and teacher questionnaires administered along with the test were modified and adapted to national contexts. Likewise the original sample description was retained and the test was administered to pupils towards the end of compulsory education. The same three basic components of languages were tested (listening, reading, writing), while speaking was left out for both methodological and financial reasons.

The main principle has been to try and provide useful and relevant information to individual countries in the light of an international perspective. There are perfectly well understood the reasons why some countries' pupils perform better in English than others. This has in part to do with the historical, geographical, linguistic and cultural context in those countries. What is attempted here is that thanks to comparative data, it is really helpful for countries to understand the strengths and weaknesses of their language instruction schemes, with a view to improving their results. This is why the emphasis of this study is as much about what goes on in countries as about comparison between them. The stakes of such an undertaking are high for countries in the light of European integration. This is about nothing less than creating the conditions for young people to acquire the linguistic skills which they need to possess in order to function as full European citizens.

-Sampling

They tested pupils at the end of lower secondary education (near the end of compulsory education). A target of around 1500 pupils per country was set. It was agreed to use a stratified sample to make the test representative of schools and pupils.

To complement the actual performance test, pupils were asked to fill in a "self-assessment" instrument which was common to all the participating countries and administered in the native language, except for Norway where the version in English was used. This self-assessment instrument consists of "can-do statements" based on Level B 1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. It does not include questions about speaking since this skill is not included in the test.

-The Pupil questionnaire

On the basis of the findings of the earlier project on English proficiency in various European countries, it was felt that a more comprehensive questionnaire on the pupils' characteristics was needed. In order to explain differences between groups of pupils within

and between countries, information on a considerable amount and variety of variables is needed. The fact that pupils receive their education in country X or Y in itself can never explain why they show a particular level of proficiency that may differ from levels found in other countries. While there may be underlying cultural factors that have an impact on national educational systems, explanations for differences between countries can only be elucidated if there are variables that can be empirically tested.

3.2.1. The case of Spain

- Background view on foreign language education

In the seventies a fundamental change in the teaching and learning of foreign languages took place in Spain. The General Education Act of 1970 introduced a foreign language as a compulsory subject for the first time within “Education General Básica” (6 – 14 years of age) from the age of eleven. The pedagogical orientation for the learning of a foreign language at this stage established that the main goal should be the acquisition of the four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) under an oral approach using active methods and techniques, taking into account some of the contributions of the linguistic structuralism.

From 1990 the current Education Act LOGSE, established that pupils learn a foreign language in all the compulsory levels. The learning of a foreign language has a compulsory nature from the third grade of Primary Education, 8 years of age, which means a three years advance compared to the former education system. It is worth noting that many Autonomous Regions are implementing the learning of a foreign language from the first grade on an experimental or permanent basis. The language studied depends on the school offer and on the pupils’ choice. Although the majority of pupils, 98%, enrolled in public schools study English, the remaining percentage is shared out among French, German, Portuguese and Italian.

Regarding the learning of a second foreign language, pupils have the chance of doing so at the beginning of Secondary Compulsory Education, twelve years of age. Schools must offer the teaching of a second foreign language in an obligatory way, but it has an optional nature for pupils.

42% of pupils enrolled in public schools study a second foreign language, 40% of pupils study French and the remaining 2% study German, English as a second language and other languages.

The pupils who finished their compulsory studies in 2001 were the first to benefit from the advance of the starting age, 8 years, for the learning of the first foreign language, and the possibility of learning a second foreign language from 12 years of age.

It is important to highlight that the curricular goal of foreign language teaching is not teaching a foreign language but teaching learners to communicate in it. This implies adopting an approach based on communication and geared towards the acquisition of a communicative competence.

Regarding Compulsory Secondary Education, the educational stage where the pupils of the survey belong to, teaching is primarily directed towards a communicative command of the spoken language, to a standard sufficient for communicating in everyday situations and in situations related to the interests and motivations of the learners. Likewise, teaching also promotes the acquisition of written skills, guaranteeing learners the ability to communicate in the written code. The command of both spoken and written language provides learners with the autonomy to continue studying the language in depth at a later date.

The first cycle, a minimum of 210 hours are taken during two years and for the following two years, second cycle, 240 hours are prescribed.

The pupils that answered the test administered in May 2002 were enrolled in the last grade of compulsory education, which is 10th grade. They started learning English as first foreign language on an obligatory basis at grade 3rd

According to the present National Curriculum they received three English lessons per week in periods of an hour approximately. Depending on the school curriculum these periods can be of 50 or 60 minutes, the majority of schools have 50 minutes teaching periods.

- Test implementation and sample

Spain decided to carry out the assessment following the agreements reached at the preparatory meetings in Paris. The decision was taken with the approval of all the Autonomous Regions met at INCE.

- Population and Sample:

The pupils studying at the end of compulsory education or finalising the lower stage of Secondary Education, as it was agreed among the participating countries, formed the target population. This pupils aged between 15 and 16 in grade tenth, the last grade of compulsory secondary education, studying English as first foreign language in 2002.

The sample was nationally representative. All the Autonomous Regions were included.

All the pupils and the teacher of English of the selected class were included in the sample.

The final obtained sample was built by: 123 schools; 2957 pupils; 123 teachers of English.

- The instruments:

The test used was the same as the one used by the rest of the countries. The instructions of the questions were translated into the different Spanish official languages (Basque, Castilian, Catalan, Galician and Valencian). It was edited in two different booklets, Test A and Test B, the first one containing the oral comprehension and the linguistic competence set of items, the second one comprised the reading comprehension items and the written production ones.

The pupil's questionnaire contained more or less the same questions as the other countries' ones but with slightly differences, mainly those related to the own features of the Spanish education system.

The questionnaire was in English as it was in the majority of the participating countries.

The test of English was administered using two parts, the first one devoted to the first part of the test, Test A comprising the listening and grammar exercises, the second period devoted to Test B with the reading and writing exercises, three questions about the pupils' own opinion on the test, and thirteen questions about pupils' self assessment.

-Results of the test

The Spanish participation in this study involved 123 schools with 2,957 pupils in the final grade of Compulsory Secondary Education (ESO) from all the Autonomous Communities.

The results obtained by the Spanish pupils in the different competences address that:

- Oral comprehension:

It has been difficult for most of the Spanish pupils to command the oral comprehension exercises, only the pupils in the fourth quartile reach a 70% of correct answers. As the standard deviation shows the results of the Spanish pupils are highly varied. There are pupils with a low average percentage of right answers, 6%, and pupils with quite a satisfactory score, 82% of correct answers.

- Linguistic competence

As it can be observed the average percentage of right answers is eight points over fifty per cent, percentage that could be considered satisfactory in a 0 – 100 scale. It can also be observed that in this block of contents Spanish pupils perform in a similar way to those from the other countries, there is only 7.61 percentage points between the Spanish pupils and the Norwegian pupils, the ones with the highest score.

- Reading comprehension

The score obtained by the Spanish pupils in this skill is the highest of the test. Pupils have a score over fifty per cent of correct answers. The ten per cent of pupils with the best results have a percentage of right answers very close to hundred per cent. Compared with the other assessed skills, the pupils with the worst results have a score six points higher minimum.

- Written production

Spanish pupils score very low in this skill. Fifty per cent of correct answers are only achieved by the students in the fourth quartile, and the score of the ten per cent of pupils with the best results is five percentage points minimum lower than in any of the other skills. It is also a remarkable fact that the score of the pupils in the first quartile is 0% and 7% in the second one.

- The Spanish view of the English language

The surveyed pupils had to answer thirteen questions about how difficult they find different tasks in English. The scale used had four values: easy, quite easy, very difficult and impossible. These questions were based on the level B1 established by the European Common Reference Framework. Spanish pupils' answers partially coincide with the test results.

According to their answers the easiest skill is reading comprehension and it is in this skill where there have been better results. However, written production was also appreciated as an easy competence but the results in the assessment of this skill do not show at all that pupils could succeed in it.

This lack of coincidence between what pupils consider they know or they do not know and the test results could be explained as a consequence of the lack of self-assessment practice at schools.

Pupils from the other countries, with the exception of French pupils, have been much more realistic in their answers and very little differences have been found between their performance and their opinion on what they think they know in the use of the language.

- Attitudes towards English

The Spanish pupils' parents' level of command of the English language differs quite a lot from the other pupils' parents' command. 49% of the Spanish pupils indicate that their parents do not speak English at all, 21% indicate that they speak it very badly and only 13% think that their parents speak English well or very well. When taking as a reference the nearest percentages, the case of the Finnish pupils, we found that 12% of their parents do not speak English at all, 25% speak very badly and 37% speak English well or very well. The percentages from the rest of the pupils are far higher. However it is interesting to point out that percentages are much higher regarding the Spanish pupils' siblings' commands of the English language, what can suggest that the new generation may change this view.

The Spanish pupils are the ones who practice the English language out of school with the lowest frequency when speaking in English with parents or friends; to watching television in English; to watching films in English in the cinema; to reading magazines, newspapers or books; to travelling abroad. But when it refers to listening to music in English on the radio or in CD or cassettes, or to playing computer games, then the frequency is rather similar to the one of the pupils from the other countries. This lack of practice of the English language out of the school time could be considered as an important fact with a big influence in the Spanish pupils' achievement. When in most of the participating countries the presence of the English language around the learner is something usual (different kind of television programmes in English in the national channels, movies in their original version, not existing any type of dubbing) in Spain this presence does not exist at all. Regarding the pupils' attitude towards the English language, the Spanish pupils are the ones who like this language in a lower

proportion, 38.5% do not like English at all and 61.5% like it quite a lot. French pupils are the nearest to this opinion, 28.7% do not like English and 71, 3% like it quite a lot. The most distant percentages correspond to the Swedish pupils, 96.1% like the English language very much. However the Spanish pupils are not the last ones in appreciating the importance of learning English, while Norway gives to this issue a 90%. In the second setting figures go down much further in all the Countries.

An important difference has been found with respect to the amount of time devoted to homework. The mean in Spain is 144.14 minutes per week, 56 minutes over the mean of the whole participating countries. The mean in the other countries goes from 102.61 in Denmark to 47.95 in the Netherlands.

Finally regarding the pupils' perception about the most important sources in learning English, specifically: the school, the media or other sources, indicated in percentages, Spanish pupils declared a lower role of the media as a source and a higher role of the school and the other sources (out of school classes) in their learning of the English language.

3.2.2 The case of Norway

- Background view on foreign language education

Compulsory education in Norway is based on a 10-years curriculum, and 3 years of upper secondary voluntary school. Municipalities are responsible for primary and lower secondary schools while county authorities are responsible for upper secondary education. Norway has two official languages, Norwegian and the Sami language.

In the 1960s English became a compulsory subject in Norwegian schools with start in grade five. In 1974 English was taught from grade three. With the latest school reform in 1997 English is introduced from the first grade. Schools are however free to dispose over a certain amount of lessons in grades 1- 4.

English as a first foreign language is a compulsory subject in primary, lower secondary and in upper secondary education, including vocational classes.

English is based upon basic principles of communicative language learning and comprises four main areas:

1. Encountering the spoken and written language
2. Using the language
3. Knowledge of the English language and its cultural context

4. Knowledge of one's own language learning

Levels are not stated according to the Common European Framework of Reference, but content and texts are recommended as examples of learning material. In addition extra resources are recommended for use in the classroom, in particular computer technology. Aims are stated in more general terms so that the pupils can develop their abilities to communicate and interact with people from other cultures.

In Norway English is the dominant "other language" in pupil's everyday life in for instance music and media, and foreign films are not dubbed but subtitled.

English is to a large extent also used as lingua franca in business communication.

German, and later French, received the status of optional subject in the lower secondary school.

- Test implementation and sample

The Norwegian Ministry of Education and The National Board of Education are formally responsible for the survey. The Department of Teacher Education and School Development (ILS) at the University of Oslo is the performing institution.

The population surveyed comprises 15/16-year-olds in the 10th grade, the final year of compulsory education. There were selected 90 schools, so the number of pupils was divided by 90 giving the number 532. The school for each 532nd pupil was then included in the sample.

All the 90 schools were state schools. 18 of the 90 schools used New Norwegian, an official, written variant of Norwegian. There was a good geographic spread.

- Test and questionnaire adaptation

The instructions in the test booklet were translated into Norwegian and New Norwegian. The instructions for the listening exercises were translated from French into Norwegian. The test was identical with the original version sent from Paris. The added self-assessment items in the form of Can-do-statements were not translated into the mother tongue, but were kept in English.

The student questionnaire was translated, different from the Spanish version that was just in Spanish, one version in Norwegian and one in New Norwegian, while the teacher questionnaire was in English.

The pupils in the survey, the 10th graders in the final year of the compulsory school, have received English for one year in the fourth grade; they skipped one grade level and were taught according from grade 6 to 10. The test population has received 6 years of English instruction and 9 years of schooling and has had 15 lessons of 45 minutes each. The length of a Norwegian school year is on average 38 weeks.

The analysis of the answers to the pupils' questionnaires show that a majority of the pupils are born in Norway, 0.2% is born in an English-speaking country and 4.2% are born in another country. 0.9% of the pupils speak English at home, i.e. more pupils than those born in an English-speaking country use English as the main language of communication at home. The 10-graders think they have learnt about half of what they know of English at school. We find high results among the pupils who do not think of school as their main source of English input. Pupils consider parents as a relatively modest source of input. However, Norwegian pupils are massively exposed to English in many different ways in their spare time through the media: radio, TV, CDs, cinema, internet, and computer games. Pupils believe that as much as 34% on average of their knowledge of English is learnt from the media. Almost all of them watch TV, and those who watch English TV programs with or without subtitles have good test results. Furthermore,

Norwegian pupils are motivated for learning English primarily in order to communicate abroad, to understand English TV, films and song lyrics better, and to make better use of computers and the internet. Norwegian pupils' attitudes to English as a foreign language and English as a school subject are very positive. Norwegian pupils are highly motivated for developing their proficiency in English and they clearly see the advantages of learning English.

At the end of the 10th grade Norwegian pupils are expected to know about the structure and function of the language, about English-speaking cultures and societies, how to solve language problems when encountered and, and how to make use of a broad spectrum of language learning aids. In the exam requirements these objectives are concretized, and we see that pupils are expected to be able to communicate and interact in English and produce fairly long and coherent stretches of oral and written text.

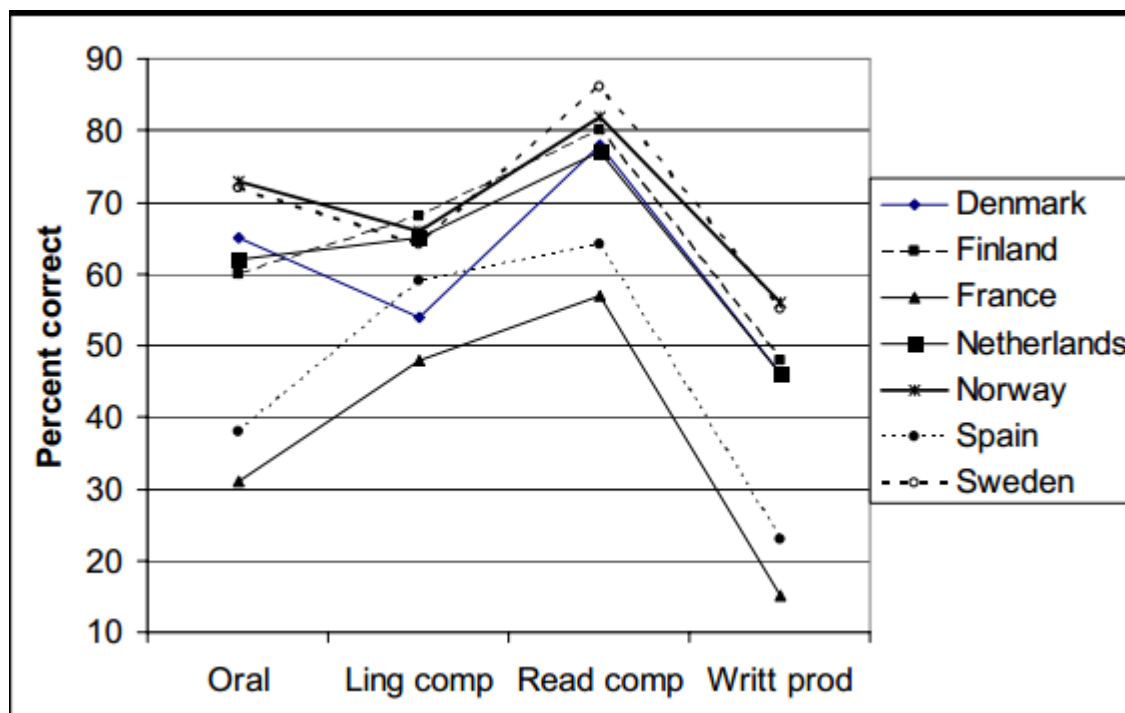
Norwegian pupils score high on the European test, but results show a relatively large standard deviation and the distribution of results in each classroom is also considerable. The Norwegian compulsory school system has as its main goal to provide equal conditions for all pupils and even out social differences. The data reveals a tremendous challenge for Norwegian teachers of English.

Pupils are supposed to “be able to communicate about and assess learning materials and learning methods in relation to objectives, and to make choices that are useful for further language learning.” From the Norwegian survey results we see that about 66% of the teachers state that they speak English more than half the time in the classroom. Still, in the European survey we see that only the Swedish teachers use English more in class than the Norwegian teachers. The most positive correlation between classroom activities and test results for Norway is the use of English as a means of communication.

Another positively correlated activity is the use of the textbook, meaning that those who follow the progression provided by the textbook obtain good results for their classes. The survey shows that Norwegian pupils often use the media and that they believe they learn considerably from different kinds of media. The teachers run classes relying primarily on the textbook and use ICT in the classrooms. Motivation of the pupils in the classroom relies on practices of the teachers.

3.2.3 Comparison between countries.

Figure 1 A proficiency profile of each participating country for oral comprehension, linguistic competence, reading comprehension and written production:



Ministère de l'éducation nationale – Direction de la programmation et du développement (DP&D), Gérard BONNET 2002

A general trend for all countries is to score best on reading comprehension, lower on linguistic competence and lowest on written production. The Scandinavian countries and the Netherlands score relatively high on oral comprehension, while Spain and France score quite lower on that skill. The Nordic countries and the Netherlands have all considerably better results than France and Spain. The Norwegian pupils seem to master the receptive skills, in particular oral comprehension. The result for reading comprehension is relatively good for Norwegian 10-graders. The largest of all countries in fact, indicating a spread in reading performances is for Norwegian pupils. Norway performs relatively well on written production.

Comparing the two countries we can mainly see that the results are totally the opposite in both cases. Beside the students of both countries start their education at the same scholar year and at the end of secondary education they have been learning for at least 10 years, the achievement of results has nothing to do from one country to the other.

The range of ages at which pupils start learning English at school is very wide, clearly, most children start learning English at age 8 to 11, which in most school systems is the second

part of primary education. The patterns are largely similar for all countries except Spain where the starting age is 8 rather than 10, and for Sweden and Norway is it 9 rather than 10.

The first difference is the fact that pupils in Spain needed the test translated in their mother tongue while Norwegians did it mainly in English. The results obviously are not the same. The results of the Spanish test show deficiencies in almost all language skills. All the expression skills such as writing or speaking show that the Spanish students are not able to communicate properly in English language at the end of the secondary education. This is partly because the lack of use of the communicative approach in learning. On the other hand, Spanish students don't show so many difficulties in the reading tests.

An overall view of the Spanish pupils' performance indicates that this performance is very varied, with both pupils with good achievement, and others with a very poor one. It also indicates that lessons may not be methodologically approached as communicatively as they should be, bearing in mind the existing communicative oriented curriculum. Grammar and reading command have been the most successfully achieved competences in this survey.

In the questionnaire there were two questions related to attitudes towards English: one on likeability or appreciation of English, and one on the importance of English. In the test four categories of answers have been reduced to two: for the question 'Do you like English?' and the question of the importance of English. The outcomes show that English is really liked in the Nordic countries with Sweden's 96.1% as the top score.

Slightly lower but still positive outcomes are found for France, Spain and the Netherlands. On the other hand the case of Norway reveals the opposite results. The education in English is based on the language-learning foundations laid when pupils learn their first language, on experiences pupils have already gained through contact with other languages and cultures both at school and elsewhere, and on text competence, which pupils have acquired through learning their mother tongue.

It is for that reason that they show better results. Their motivation towards English is based on the world of the entertainment, music, movies, travelling or communication move students to learn English as their second language, while in the case of Spain this motivation does not exist at all. Also the learning by communication with parents in the case of Spain

does not commonly exist while in Norway is one of the most important sources of acquiring knowledge.

Here we can see again why the common European framework of languages is so important, even more with those two cases with which we can compare two different sides, to have a trustable source to compare and measure the different levels of English that we can find depending on each country.

3.3 CASE STUDY: ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS

All the studies followed and the researches done on the field of modern languages has no other reason that their practical application to business. As we have already seen in the first part of this study, the globalization of almost all parts of our daily life is something more and more usual, and the business field does not scape from this phenomenon.

Apart from the cultural and socializing association of languages, this learning has a business approach that involves good part of our lives. The globalization of modern business has ensured that more opportunities are available for individuals to build a career. At the same time, being proficient in a field is not just sufficient rather the capacity to market your skills globally has become a priority. In order to be competitive in an international business market it is important to have fluency in English language to state clearly your ideas and views.

From the very beginning of our student life, the second languages are focused to fill in our CVs; in fact, this takes a big part in it. To prove their value in English as a second language in order to find a better job in the future could be one of the most important motivations when taking their First Certificate exams at the end of the secondary education. The more languages you speak the best your curriculum will be. And this is not something strange regarding our professional life. More and more businesses give a huge importance to the formation of their employees in this field.

Repercussion of the English language can be easily seen in all sectors and fields, but if we have to think in one of the most involved, this is without doubt the tourism industry.

In the tourism industry, quality service is based on the practical use of languages. The use of languages is the main task in our daily routine, so employees have to be experts in the practical use of different foreign languages. This fact can be seen by the following survey, made to the staff of a big 4 stars NH Hotel in Brussels, the heart of Europe, we can better realise the added value of languages in each employee, and how did they learn these languages from school, or in an early stage of their lives.

Our target market are clients participants of the European Union, as well as weekend tourists, that search this hotel due to the proximity to the main attractions of the centre of Brussels. They look for quick answers and personalized service.

As it is located in Brussels, the main language used is French, but English is not too far from it. Also Dutch as official language and Spanish, because it is a Spanish chain, and this is its main characteristic of the company, and it defines the culture of NH. The corporate image is based on the Spanish culture.

It is for this reason that a great part of the staff can speak Spanish.

3.3.1 Survey: the management of languages of the staff of NH Hotels

- The case of Belgium:

These are the questions that 15 members of the staff of the four stars hotel NH Grand Place in Brussels have answered in English when they were asked for their relation with foreign languages and their impressions about the importance of them:

- 1- Name, age and actual position
- 2- Educational background
- 3- Which are your previous working experiences?
- 4- Languages that you speak, how did you learn them and when.
- 5- Languages that you would like to speak in the near future
- 6- Why do you find languages learning important?
- 7- Do you like working in the tourism sector?

Here there are the answers of the employees:

WORKER	AGE, NATIONALITY ACTUAL POSITION	EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND	WORKING EXPERIENCE	LANGUAGES LEARNED	LANGUAGES	PERSONAL VIEW ABOUT LANGUAGE LEARNING
1	32-year-old , French Front Office Manager	BTS diploma in Hotel Management	4 years experience in Sheraton Hotels	English, Spanish, learned in a period in America	Dutch, to continue working in Belgium	The knowledge of different languages helps you to know new and interesting people and cultures.
2	23-year-old, Spanish Receptionist	Master degree International Business Management	NONE	French, English and Italian. She learned this at school and through her life here in Belgium	Dutch. Because she already knows 4 languages and she wants to add this fifth one which would create many opportunities for the attraction of a better job.	The use of different languages makes a difference in host their clients stay.
3	42-year-old Moroccan night auditor	degree in Tourism	Hotel receptionist	French, English and Spanish learned at School.	Dutch,	He finds languages very important when working in Belgium.
4	35-year-old Belgian receptionist	graduated in high school	Brussels Casino	Arabic, French, Dutch, English and Spanish	Chinese	Emerging languages can be quite important in the future.

5	20-year-old Dutch receptionist trainee	Tourism student	NONE	English and basic French and Spanish	Spanish, because of its use in the tourism industry	language learning is important for her, to continue developing it is a big plus in this industry
6	43-year-old Belgian shift leader	degree in Economics	Hotel receptionist	Dutch, Spanish, French, English, German	Japanese	hotel industry is an ideal for business and languages it also has that social aspect
7	54-year-old Belgian , Manager of Housekeeping	not in possession of an advanced degree	She has had just this job all her life	Spanish and Italian	English	English is a world language
8	35-year-old Italian, Operational Manager	Bachelor in French	Deputy Manager	French, English, Dutch and Spanish	Russian	In such an international environment, to have a good knowledge gives you better opportunities.
9	38-year-old Mexican / Belgian. City ledger	Degree in Tourism	Hotel receptionist	English, French and Dutch	She sees no need	Having a broad knowledge, in combination with working in the hotel industry opens many different doors, and meeting new people and nationalities
10	30-year-old Belgian receptionist	Public administration	Not specified	English, Dutch, French, Turkish, Macedonian and Albanian	German	He finds that knowing many languages is important in the hotel sector.
1	35-year-old,	Degree in the	Accounting	English, French	Dutch	With better performance

1	Argentinean, F&B Manager	direction of Administration and Financial Economics	Department	and Italian		of English, customers receive better service and there are many advantages in international communication
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- The case of Spain:

At the same time of the previous survey, exactly the same one has been sent to NH Ciudad de Almeria. This action has been done to know the same answers in a totally different environment, in order to have potential data to compare the issue of the study.

With this survey results it can be easily seen the linguistic differences between countries but in the same working sector, and even more, in the same company.

The survey has been done as well to NH Ciudad de Almeria in English, but with one especificacion, in the survey instructions there has been the possibility of answering both in Spanish or English.

These are the answers provided:

WORKER	AGE, NATIONALITY ACTUAL POSITION	EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND	WORKING EXPERIENCE	LANGUAGES LEARNED	LANGUAGES	PERSONAL VIEW ABOUT LANGUAGE LEARNING
1	29-year-old , German , Receptionist	Tourism Degree	Hotel receptionist	English and Spanish, learned at school	French and Chinese	Her her first motivation to learn languages is based on her proficiency at work

2	28-year-old, Spanish Receptionist	Tourism Degree	Beach Hotels	English and basic French	Italian and Portuguese because they are similar to Spanish	learning foreign languages is useful to communicate with clients and enrich your daily life
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3.3.2 SURVEY CONCLUSIONS

It is undeniable that in all business sectors languages are important, but as we can see, in the touristic sector they are crucial, not just for the correct development of your job, but also to give the best quality service to clients. In this sector, the correct use of several languages gives an added value to your work.

We have to take into consideration as well the particular case of Belgium. First, the country itself has two official languages, French and Dutch, both commonly spoke by a huge part of the population. Furthermore, it counts with Brussels, the capital of Europe. This fact makes people be related with loads of expatriates and tourists, which have English as their main language. Also at schools, both two official languages are mandatory form primary education and English is learned from age 6.

All the workers except one have had previous jobs in the tourism sector, which gives you experience when dealing with several languages and all of them would like to continue developing their careers in this business.

Almost all of them, except one, would like to add more languages knowledge to the one already acquired, because they are aware of the importance of switching languages that a position in a hotel requires. It is essential for a hotel good service that the staff can easily change language according to the necessity.

On the other hand, in the case of Spain the surveyed people speak a maximum of three languages, and that is the case of the workers that have born in a foreign country, like the case of the worker number one, who stat her education in Germany.

The most remarkable aspect in the case of Spain is the fact that, even the survey was designed and sent in English language, as it existed the possibility of doing it in Spanish, the totality of the people surveyed decided to make it in Spanish language.

This fact bring me to some conclusions, the attitude of Spanish speakers towards English let us see that once they have the opportunity of choosing a language, they would prefer Spanish; even they all have the opinion that language learning is crucial in their working sector. None of the surveyed people in Belgium answered in their original language, not even in French wich is the official language.

4- CONCLUSIONS

It is widely known that society needs innovation. The capacity to innovate is what keeps institutions, industries, economies, public service departments and business flexible, responsible and self-renewing. This capacity is also essential to the education service in all levels. This innovation holds the key to raising standards in that it promotes a sense of well-being in the teaching profession.

Students' language development and subject knowledge flourishes when teachers, mentors, and administrators are supported to equip students with academic language skills, prerequisites for understanding subject-matter concepts, and motivational, culturally for learning.

It is difficult to discern the specific impact of the strategies of learning on teacher practice and student achievement, because this tool is only one element in an array of training and assessment tools. However, as the FCE program continues to expand, more formal evaluations will be completed.

Innovation in English language education has become a major 'growth area' in recent years. At the same time, an English Language Education innovation management literature has also developed, based on insights from innovation theory and their application, both from outside and within English language education and concerned with attempting to critically evaluate and inform educational innovation practice. Thus, using a well-established three-part framework for distinguishing the main stages involved in innovation project management could describe and discuss the main features of this body of work.

It has to be considered what is said about the innovation 'initiation' phase, in which the student is starting to be in contact with the new language as the crucial learning step, in terms of innovation causes, characteristics and contexts. Then, it is important to examine conceptualisations of the innovation 'implementation' stage, by distinguishing main overall approaches, frameworks for identifying and configuring roles, underlying psychological processes, and the use of evaluation techniques. Lastly, the literature relating to innovation 'institutionalisation' stage is necessary to analyse.

In this line, "Innovation is needed in education in order that the service may be responsive, flexible and self-renewing. Innovation holds the key to raising standards, because it is a driving force which enhances teachers'", Judith Hamilton, 1943

On the other hand, innovation is also a great strategy to success in business. Talking about the business area in which languages are a main character, "the language of strategic change within management relies heavily on the new discourses for the introduction of major policies by changing agents to foster sense-making and cohesive interaction between management and employees during times of significant strategic change" (Fairhurst, 1993).

Finally, recent research into metaphorical discourse shows how "language is critical to subjectivity and to identify creation in organizations". (Alvesson, 1994:255).

Language is set to become both "the key to interpreting work practices and the focus of comparative research, particularly where the physical and tangible practices trend to be less salient and, on the other hand, knowledge based activities such as advertising and consultancy activities are more traited". (Alvesson, 1994:560).

Internationally the challenge represented by a global business scenario requires an increased awareness and sensibility to distinctive cultural influences that are particularly significant in inter cultural encounters. Cross-cultural studies are significant if globalization as a process is ever to be fully understood, but perhaps the greatest challenge in the future to business researches will be developed in:

- Offer new insights into the critical note of languages in an across organization, both nationally and internationally and therefore
- help to provide solutions to real problems and

- advance our knowledge of social and cultural behaviours which inform business context.

Regarding recent studies in business internationalization, there have been considered the top three most useful languages for business after English. Surprisingly, Spanish didn't make the cut despite being the official language of 20 countries and spoken by over 329 million people, according to Bloomberg.

Not surprisingly, Mandarin Chinese is the most useful language for business after English, spoken by 845 million people in the world's second-largest economy, China. French (no. 2) and Arabic (no. 3) follow, with Spanish ranking fourth. Russian, Portuguese, Japanese, German, Italian, Korean, and Turkish followed.

English alone should not be seen as a catalyst for business. This is one of the main conclusions of a major conference "Languages mean business", held in Brussels last September. It examined the benefits that language abilities and intercultural skills bring to business enterprises. Although English will continue its role as a lingua franca in the business world, which can provide competitive advantage are additional language skills, in combination with the relevant intercultural skills. The conference also presented the new Business Forum on Multilingualism, to examine how to make operational use of multilingualism to maximize business performance.

This meeting was attended by people representing the interests of companies and workers; language specialists and academics, policy makers and individuals interested in the subject. This was a much-needed opportunity for all stakeholders to discuss about the languages and to encourage businesses to be a change of attitude that brings real results.

The conference was convened following the results of a study published last year showing that the lack of language skills leads to loss of business. Companies with a strategic approach to multilingual communication proved able to increase its export sales by over 40% compared to their competitors without formal language strategies.

In the same study showed that, although English is in first position as a lingua franca for international business, there is increasing demand for other languages. Although about a quarter of the companies in the study felt that they should continue to improve their English, a similar proportion felt the need to expand their knowledge in German or French, not to

mention the Spanish and Russian, which also occupied a featured position in the ranking. Many companies, particularly large ones, also stressed their need for non-European languages such as Chinese or Arabic, as they seek to expand into markets outside Europe.

According to a recent UK study, the number of people learning English worldwide reach two billion in the next ten or fifteen years. Contrary to popular belief, this is bad news for monolingual English speakers. An earlier study by the organization CILT on the impact of language skills on the UK economy showed that companies that country export as much to Denmark, with a population of five million, which in Central and South America, have 390 million inhabitants.

Although English will continue to remain as a lingua franca for business in the coming years, other languages will increase its weight and possess the advantage of those who can prove more languages. The future is in multilingualism.

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