**An online training programme for the improvement of listening skills in Spanish secondary education**

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**Curso Académico**

2012-2013
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1. Theoretical framework

This introductory chapter includes the analysis and some personal reflections about the different subjects that make up the "Master de Profesorado en Educación Secundaria y Bachillerato", hold at the University of La Rioja in the academic year 2012/2013. This postgraduate program has been designed for introducing students to the context of Spanish Secondary Education and to the teaching of a specific field that, in my case, is English as a foreign language, by providing them with the necessary pedagogical knowledge and innovative tools to cope with this extremely difficult and essentially vocational profession.

I want to start with the generic subject that, in my opinion, has been the most useful one. It is named "Procesos y Contextos Educativos" and helped us to become familiar with some pedagogical aspects of the Spanish Educational System that I personally ignored. Professor Santibañez Velilla provided us with the most important theoretical and didactic aspects related to the learning and teaching processes, explained to us the way in which the Spanish Educational System and secondary schools are organized through the analysis and comparison between complex legal documents such as the "Ley Orgánica de la Enseñanza" or the "Proyecto Educativo de Centro", and showed us the main steps to follow in order to design didactic programs and units appropriately. I found this course particularly interesting because the teacher was able to present complicated and abstract concepts and issues in a simple and methodical way. She displayed explanatory examples extrapolated from her long-time experience as a teacher, and gave us the opportunity to implement and consolidate the new concepts through useful and practical activities. Learning how to interpret and manipulate
national and local Legislative Decrees and norms was a very tough and time-consuming work, especially at the beginning of the course, but, on the other hand, their knowledge has proved to be indispensable when designing my didactic units during my practicum. The course titled "Sociedad, Familia y Educación", hold by professor Giró Miranda, provided us with a general overview of the educational context from a social point of view. The course has been divided into three parts. In the first one, we examined the family institution, its social and historical evolution in Spanish society during the last 50 years and its interrelation with the educational context. In the second part, we focused our attention on the most relevant social inequalities related to gender, social class and ethnic minorities, examining the impact of these phenomena on the educational system. The last part was dedicated to the analysis of the teaching practice and of its professional dimension, deepening aspects such as the social categorization of the teacher or the feminization of the profession. I would like to focus my attention on the last part of the course because I believe that it was the most interesting one. I appreciated the fact that the teacher invited the exponents of three different Trade Unions (AMPE, Comisiones Obreras and STES) to present us their respective points of view as regards the social and professional dimension of the teacher. In their interventions, they provided us with useful information, from a practical as well as from an ideological point of view. In another useful practical activity, the teacher asked us to go to a secondary school and to write down a couple of personal observations about its structural and social characteristics in order to discuss them in class. It helped us to have a first general impression about what a secondary school could be, some months before our practice time.
In "Aprendizaje y Desarrollo de la Personalidad", professor Urraca Martínez introduced us to a wide range of concepts related to developmental psychology, paying special attention to all those problematic aspects that could affect our future students. I consider this course as the most interesting of the master because it deals with aspects with regard to the human sphere of our profession. From all the topics we analysed, I consider very interesting the part dedicated to the Attention to Diversity and to the psycho-pedagogical strategies that teachers may adopt in order to cope with physical or mental disabilities affecting their students. The usefulness of this topic is due to the fact that professor Urraca Martínez provided us with a wide range of guidelines and practical examples that could help us face with these problems and to minimize their impact on the academic trend. I remembered with particular enthusiasm the session in which the teacher explained us how to treat blind or visually impaired students because she showed us several samples of tiflotechnical items such as tactile geographical maps or braille writer tablets or braille typewriters, and asked us to decode a riddle written in braille, providing us with an adapted version of the braille alphabet. As I'm blind, she involved me actively in the class and gave me the opportunity to share my personal experience with my classmates.

"Aprendizaje y Enseñanza de la Lengua Extranjera" is designed to provide students with the necessary theoretical background knowledge and practical instruments that allow them to base their teaching practice on solid and innovative principles. The subject is divided into three modules. In the first part, professor Molina Valero introduced us to the main structural and content aspects of the foreign language curriculum; in this way, jointly with our pedagogy teacher, he contributed to guide us through the complicated and methodical process of designing didactic programs and
units. Moreover, he provided us with a general overview of the main applied linguistic theories related to the learning and teaching process, relating them to the various English teaching methods established and adopted along the last fifty years. A session that I found very interesting was the pattern for the analysis of textbooks. Professor Molina Valero showed us several textbooks samples and explained to us that the way in which contents are selected and organized is closely related to the general purpose of the book and to the linguistic model that authors and publishing houses decide to opt for. The teacher remarked the importance of choosing a book in compliance with the method we want to use and encouraged us to develop a critical way of thinking in relation to the materials we will be invited to choose.

The second module was dedicated to the possible ways of including the so called intercultural competence in our didactic programs. Professor Canga Alonso firstly introduced the topic from a theoretical point of view, presenting a series of concepts related to this competence such as plurilingualism, multiculturalism, intercultural communication or cultural awareness. Then he showed us a practical possibility to apply these notions through the implementation of e-mail-tandem projects between a group of Spanish school's students of English as a foreign language and a group of foreign school's students of Spanish as a foreign language. Maybe the most interesting part of the module was the final session, in which professor Canga Alonso asked us to prepare an intercultural activity for our future students. In this way, we were encouraged to think about something that went beyond the material included in a coursebook and, at the same time, the feedback provided by the teacher contributed to improve our criteria of adequacy when choosing a topic and selecting materials.
In the third and last module, professor Fernandez Fontecha depicted us the theoretical features and practical implementations of a new interdisciplinary approach related to the teaching of English as a foreign language, the so called CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning). CLIL is an educational approach of foreign language teaching in which the foreign language becomes a means to teach non-linguistic contents. Professor Fernandez Fontecha provided us with a theoretical framework in which CLIL has been implemented and helped us to become familiarized with this innovative approach showing us a series of interesting online tools. I liked the fact that this kind of approach requires the teacher to constantly rethink his/her teaching practice, to go beyond a static conception of the teaching profession merely based on textbooks and adapted materials. In order to put these concepts in practice, the teacher asked us to design our own CLILQuest and this is the part of the course that I found particularly hard and useful as well, because I used the structure of the CLILQuest proposed by professor Fernandez Fontecha to create one of the two didactic units I was asked to design during my practice time. Furthermore, CLIL contributes to reaffirm the importance of providing students with authentic materials and to involve them in a real foreign language context, an idea that, in my opinion, is essential if we want them to improve their knowledge and skills significantly.

“Complemento para la Formación Disciplinar” introduced us to the teaching of English as a foreign language, contributing to make us aware of the main teaching methods and approaches experimented and developed along the history. Professor Agustín Llach complemented this theoretical overview with a practical exercise, asking us to prepare an oral presentation about a specific method and to design an activity for each of the ten methods presented. This task was particularly valuable and useful because it gave us the
opportunity to reflect critically upon each method and to analyze its strength and weakness points. Furthermore, professor Agustín dedicated a substantial part of the course to the presentation of a teaching training program in foreign language teaching, in order to provide us with a wide range of useful suggestions about the possible ways of planning our lessons. I would like to highlight the session dedicated to the teaching of listening skills, because it provided me with the theoretical basis on which I started to think about my research project.

Finally, "Innovación Docente e Introducción a la Investigación" introduced us to the world of Innovation and Research. The course was divided in two parts, respectively hold by professor Jimenez Catalan and professor Canga Alonso. In the first part, professor Jimenez Catalan provided us with a detailed and exhaustive review of the main research terms, concepts, approaches and models, and guided us through the main steps to follow in order to conduct our research project appropriately. In the second part, professor Canga Alonso proposed us a series of concepts and ideas that could help us to innovate and improve our teaching method, asking us to read and discuss over a series of articles and complementing this theoretical framework with some practical activities.

I found extremely useful the session dedicated to the analysis of the literature review, since I consider it the most difficult and relevant part of a research project. Professor Jimenez Catalan insisted on the fact that we, as future teachers, have to be able to read between lines in order to understand properly the way in which a study or its results could improve on our own research project. Another fundamental element of a good literature review is the critical contrast between arguments, a process in which we have to summarize the ideas of several authors on the same topic, classifying them in terms of opinions and establishing connections among them according to our view. Another
The most interesting part of the course was the session devoted to the analysis of the article by the Danish EFL teacher Leni Dam, titled "Developing Learning Autonomy with School Kids: principles, practices, results". Dam proposed a radical change of teaching perspective in order to promote and develop learning autonomy in the classroom; the teacher has to move from a teacher directed teaching environment to a learner directed learning one. Furthermore, this article proved to be useful because Dam encouraged us to innovate our teaching method through a series of strategies that I found appropriate and motivating such as:

- To give the students the possibility to choose the topic to deal with;
- To create a linguistic environment in which the ongoing communication between teacher and learners and among learners must be authentic;
- To involve learners regularly and systematically in self evaluations and assessments.

Even if at the beginning it could be hard to deal with such methodical and rigorous processes, approaches and terms, it is fundamental to get familiar with research and innovation if you really want to improve and innovate your daily teaching practice and, at the same time, if you want to get the best from your students and make them enjoy the subject you are teaching them.

My teaching practice time at the Colegio San José Maristas in Logroño was undoubtedly the most useful and interesting part of this post-degree course. It was an extremely formative period, from a pedagogical as well as from a social point of view. For what concerns the pedagogical content, firstly I had the opportunity to understand what dads it really mean to teach English in a Secondary Educational context through the direct observation of my supervisor's teaching practice; secondly, I could design and
fully develop in class an intercultural unit, in order to deepen my students knowledge about some aspects typical of four English speaking Countries: Ireland, England, Australia and USA. Also from a social point of view, I consider my practicum as a hugely positive experience; I had the chance to work in a very collaborative and stimulating environment, a place in which I could plan and put into practice my pedagogical principles and ideas about EFL teaching, without any kind of pressure or limitation. My supervisor helped me to familiarize with all my students that showed high levels of participation and interest during all my teaching sessions. I would like to conclude this introductory part with a couple of personal considerations about the actual state of the art concerning the teaching of English as a foreign language in Spanish Secondary schools, as a result of the practical and theoretical information received during this master. First of all, in spite of the communicative approach promoted by the European Language Framework, that should permeate EFL teaching, I noted that the majority of textbooks designed for Secondary Education students are excessively focused on grammar and tend to present the same topics year by year, adding some lexical or grammatical content according to the year to which they have been designed for. Secondly, this excessive emphasis on grammar causes a lack of consideration towards two aspects that I personally consider essential in the language learning process: listening comprehension and oral production. Finally, another issue to which neither coursebooks nor teachers pay enough attention is the promotion of learners autonomy. I think we, as future teachers, will have to try to make our students responsible for their learning process, motivating them by means of practical activities that could make them reflect about the value and the purpose of learning a foreign language like English.
2. TEACHING PROGRAM

2.1. Introduction

This teaching program has to be conceived as a fundamental step in this postgraduate course, because it is the sum of all pedagogical knowledge that I have received and interiorized along this master and, at the same time, it can also be considered as the practical representation of my interpretation of the process of teaching English as a foreign language.

I have decided to base my teaching program on the second year of Secondary Compulsory Education for two main reasons: first of all because I spent most of my practice time of this master observing and teaching students at this particular educational stage, and secondly, because, on the basis of my personal experience, I consider Secondary Education in general and, more specifically, the second year as a considerably motivating and stimulating stage for EFL teachers. The majority of students, at this age, tend to consider everything related to their personal formation as something extremely boring, hard and totally useless for their daily life. This is the reason why programming for secondary students is a so difficult and time-consuming task to carry out. In particular, EFL teachers have to carefully select materials and topics to deal with, following a communicative and pragmatic approach, in order to provide their students with practical examples of the foreign language use in daily life contexts and to increase their awareness about the importance of managing this essential tool for their future work perspectives.

From a legal point of view, this English Teaching Program has its foundations in three fundamental documents:
1. The last Spanish educational organic low LOE 2/2006, promulgated on May 4th (BOE n. 106), which includes the general dispositions ruling the current educational system;

2. Royal Decree 677, promulgated on January 5th 2007 (BOE m. 5), which establishes the general structure of the Secondary Education minimum curricula;

3. Decree 5/2011 (BOR n. 16), promulgated on February 4th, which establish the curriculum for Secondary Education in the Autonomous Community of la Rioja.

These three documents constitute the structural base of the present Teaching Program whose 15 didactics units will include the four blocks of content: listening and speaking, reading and writing, linguistic knowledge and sociocultural aspects and intercultural awareness.

2.2. Didactic resources and materials

The present didactic program will be implemented by means of the following printed and audiovisual resources:

1. Challenge Book for ESO 2, Ed. BURLINGTON BOOKS: Student's Book and Workbook;


2.3. English Intercultural Kaleidoscope
The unit I decided to explain in detail within this didactic program is titled "English Intercultural Kaleidoscope". I opted for an intercultural unit because I have always considered intercultural communication as the most interesting and productive part of the EFL curriculum and also because I consider this kind of knowledge as extremely motivating for students. By learning about new habits, customs, beliefs, celebrations, historical or geographical aspects of countries different from their native ones, students have the opportunity to enlarge their views about the world surrounding them and, at the same time, to be introduced to new vocabulary and to grammatical concepts in an interactive and implicit way. This unit is primarily aimed at deepening students’ intercultural knowledge about some of the English Speaking Countries, and to consolidate some grammatical aspects of their curriculum. The unit is designed to last four lessons of approximately 55 minutes, separated by a week one from the other. Differently from the other 14 units presented in this didactic program, this unit will include the following sessions: Basic Competences, Unit Objectives, the four blocs of Contents: Listening and Speaking, Reading and Writing, Linguistic Knowledge and Sociocultural Aspects and Intercultural Awareness, the Sessions Schedule, the Material Resources and the Assessing Criteria.

2.4. Didactic units

Unit 1: Take the challenge

Contents

Listening and speaking
1. Obtain specific information from an oral text, in order to match each character with his/her pet. Extract information from a formal and an informal conversation for the subsequent fulfilment of a listening comprehension activity;

2. Use oral comprehension strategies and the verbal and nonverbal context, identify keywords;

3. Production of a dialogue based on a formal and on an informal conversational model, changing the colored words in order to interact with the classmates;

4. Participate to classroom conversations and simulations with an adequate level of pronunciation and intonation in order to facilitate communication;

5. Use of adequate responses to cope with communicative situations inside the classroom;

6. Develop strategies to overcome communicative interruptions and to start and end communicative exchanges;

**Reading and writing**

1. Understand basic instructions in order to carry out activities correctly;

2. Understand the vocabulary related to school subjects, numbers, food, human body and adjectives;

3. Identification and use of some formulas that differentiate between formal and informal language in written communication;

4. Being able to write cardinal and ordinal numbers, the favorite food of the characters included in a drawing, and sentences with given adjectives.

**Linguistic knowledge**

1. Morphological elements: identification of morphological elements: article, noun, verb, adjective, adverb, preposition etc. in the language use;
2. Vocabulary: school subjects, ordinal and cardinal numbers, food, human body and adjectives;

3. Language structures and functions: prepositions of place, singular of nouns, regular and irregular plurals, to introduce him/herself to someone in a formal and informal way, to indicate the position of ordinary objects.

**Sociocultural aspects and intercultural awareness**

1. Identification and appreciation of the foreign language as an international communicative instrument;

2. Identification and respect towards daily life aspects and customs of English speaking countries and cultures;

3. Use of adequate courtesy formulas in social interactions: greetings, formal and informal ways of being introduced;

4. Show interest and personal initiative for establishing communicative interchanges with foreign language speakers or learners;

5. Evaluation of the personal enrichment that implies the opportunity to establish relationships with people having different cultures.

**Unit 2: Games**

**Contents**

**Listening and speaking**

1. Predict the topic of the unit by means of its title, the questions included in the quiz, the visual support elements, previous vocabulary and background knowledge;

2. Obtain general and specific information by listening to the readings included in the unit, with the help of verbal and non verbal elements;
3. Oral production of adequately pronounced short texts about the seasons of the year and about the favorite climate of each student;

4. Participate to conversations and simulations inside the classroom with an adequate level of pronunciation and intonation in order to describe a place and a famous person and to locate someone on a map;

5. Develop strategies to overcome communicative interruptions and to start and end communicative exchanges.

**Reading and writing**

1. Predict the content before and while reading simple texts;

2. Understand general and specific information of several texts of the unit about the peculiar winter sport of Alaska buffalos and about the origin of the Monopoly game as a preparatory base for the fulfilment of the subsequent reading comprehension activities;

3. Write short texts to describe the weather conditions, the timetable of a person and to complete a paragraph dealing with the place presented in a picture, taking into account basic elements of cohesion, and using elementary strategies of the written composition process (planning, contextualization and revision);

4. Review the punctuation's rules, the use of capital letters and the disposition of words, evaluating the relevance of these elements in written communications;

5. Write a short text to describe your family and what each member of it does, paying attention to the punctuation's rules, to the way in which the words are disposed, and to the use of capital letters.

**Linguistic knowledge**

1. Morphological elements: identification of morphological elements: article, noun, verb, adjective, adverb, preposition etc. in the language use;
2. Vocabulary: weather conditions, places in a city, countries, ordinary and personal objects;

3. Language structures and functions: the verbs "to be" and "have got", possessive pronouns, possessive adjectives, Saxon genitive, describe people and objects, describe the seasons of the year, describe the weather conditions in different places of the world, express possession;

4. Phonetics: accentuation of words, pronunciation of difficult sounds: /v/ and /b/.

**Sociocultural aspects and intercultural awareness**

1. Identification and appreciation of the foreign language as an international communicative instrument;

2. Identification and respect towards daily life aspects and customs of English speaking countries and cultures;

3. Use of adequate courtesy formulas in social interactions;

4. Knowledge of several historical and geographical events related to the foreign language speaking countries, obtaining the information required by means of several resources;

5. Knowledge of the differences as regards the climate and the different seasons of the year in several places of the world;

6. Evaluation of the personal enrichment that implies the opportunity to establish relationships with people having different cultures;

**Unit 3: Birthdays**

**Contents**

**Listening and speaking**
1. Predict the topic of the unit by means of its title, the questions included in the quiz, the visual support elements, previous vocabulary and background knowledge;

2. Obtain general and specific information by listening to the activities included in the unit, with the help of verbal and non verbal elements;

3. Oral production of adequately pronounced short texts about positive and negative emotions;

4. Participate to conversations and simulations inside the classroom with an adequate level of pronunciation and intonation in order to express an opinion about different presents and to place an order by phone;

5. Develop strategies to overcome communicative interruptions and to start and end communicative exchanges.

**Reading and writing**

1. Anticipate the content before and while reading simple texts;

2. Understand general and specific information of several texts of the unit about the meaning of the precious stones corresponding to each month of the year and about the different traditional ways of celebrating the birthday in several countries;

3. Write short texts to describe the personality of someone known and verify if it corresponds to the precious stone of his month and to describe what happens normally during a birthday celebration, taking into account basic elements of cohesion, and using elementary strategies of the written composition process (planning, contextualization and revision);

4. Use of basic orthography and punctuation rules and evaluation of these elements in written communications.
Linguistic knowledge

1. Morphological elements: identification of morphological elements: article, noun, verb, adjective, adverb, preposition etc. in the language use;

2. Vocabulary: feelings, qualifying adjectives to describe the personality, the horoscope and the precious stones;

3. Language structures and functions: Present Simple, Present Continuous, contrast between both verbal tenses, the adverbs of frequency, express emotions, express and ask for opinions, express agreement or disagreement, ask for and give personal information, talk about ways of celebrating the birthday;


Sociocultural aspects and intercultural awareness

1. Identification and appreciation of the foreign language as an international communicative instrument;

2. Respect towards other countries ways of celebrating birthdays;

3. Identification of the cultural diversity around the world;

4. Use of adequate courtesy formulas in social interactions;

5. Appreciation of the personal enrichment that implies the opportunity to establish relationships with people having different cultures;

Unit 4: Fashion

Contents

Listening and speaking

1. Predict the topic of the unit by means of its title, the questions included in the quiz, the visual support elements, previous vocabulary and background knowledge;
2. Obtain specific information by listening to a dialogue about the sales in a dress shop and another one focused on the clothes that an adolescent wears to go to a party, as a preparatory base for the fulfilment of the subsequent listening comprehension activities;

3. Oral production of adequately pronounced short texts about garments and fashion accessories;

4. Participate to conversations and simulations inside the classroom with an adequate level of pronunciation and intonation in order to describe some garments included in a catalog or what they remembered of a shopwindow previously seen, to check where was the classmate and to talk about what two people did the previous week, specifying what they have been wearing in each moment;

5. Develop strategies to overcome communicative interruptions and to start and end communicative exchanges.

**Reading and writing**

1. Anticipate the content before and while reading simple texts;

2. Understand general and specific information of several texts of the unit: one of them dealing with the key factor that has contributed to the success of the brand Zara in the world of Fashion, and the second one related to the first jeans, as a preparatory base for the fulfilment of the subsequent reading comprehension activities;

3. Composition of several short texts about students favorite clothes, about one of the topics included in a list of proposals and about what two people did the previous week, describing exactly what they have been wearing, taking into account basic elements of cohesion, and using elementary strategies of the written composition process (planning, contextualization and revision);
4. Use of basic orthography and punctuation rules and evaluation of these elements in written communications;

5. Composition of a short text about a TV program paying attention to the organization of the most relevant ideas presented in the text.

**Linguistic knowledge**

1. Morphological elements: identification of morphological elements: article, noun, verb, adjective, adverb, preposition etc. in the language use;

2. Vocabulary: garments and accessories, qualifying adjectives to describe garments and accessories, synonyms and antonyms, simple past of irregular verbs, time expressions used in the past;

3. Language structures and functions: Past Simple, regular and irregular verbal forms (there was, there where), talk about past events and about fashion, describe garments and accessories and a shopping day;

4. Phonetics: Pronunciation of strong and weak forms (was, where).

**Sociocultural aspects and intercultural awareness**

1. Identification and appreciation of the foreign language as an international communicative instrument;

2. Use of adequate courtesy formulas in social interactions;

3. Knowledge of the history of the Levis trousers inventor and of the repercussions of this invention all over the world;

4. Knowledge of the history of the bikini's creator;

5. Evaluation of the interrelations between people coming from different countries, established through the world of fashion;
5. Appreciation of the personal enrichment that implies the opportunity to establish relationships with people having different cultures;

Unit 5: Beasts

Contents

Listening and speaking
1. Predict the topic of the unit by means of its title, the questions included in the quiz, the visual support elements, previous vocabulary and background knowledge;
2. Obtain specific information by listening to a dialogue about the shields, the animals appearing on them and what they symbolize, and another one in which two people talk about the night before, as a preparatory base for the fulfillment of the subsequent listening comprehension activities;
3. Oral production of adequately pronounced short texts about animals and the parts of their bodies;
4. Participate to conversations and simulations inside the classroom with an adequate level of pronunciation and intonation in order to describe the animal selected by the classmate from a list of drawings and, at the same time, to discover what someone in the class did the day before;
5. Develop strategies to overcome communicative interruptions and to start and end communicative exchanges.

Reading and writing
1. Anticipate the content before and while reading simple texts;
2. Understand general and specific information of several texts of the unit: one of them dealing with legendary animals, and the second one related to the way in which scientists prove the existence of prehistoric animals by means of fossils, as a preparatory base for the fulfilment of the subsequent reading comprehension activities;

3. Composition of several short texts in order to describe a legendary animal and an unforgettable day, taking into account basic elements of cohesion, and using elementary strategies of the written composition process (planning, contextualization and revision), paying special attention to the use of the introduction in the structure of the paragraph;

4. Use of basic orthography and punctuation rules and evaluation of these elements in written communications;

5. Composition of a short text about something strange, paying attention to the presentation of the main idea in the introduction.

**Linguistic knowledge**

1. Morphological elements: identification of morphological elements: article, noun, verb, adjective, adverb, preposition etc. in the language use;

2. Vocabulary: Parts of the human body, wild animals, connectors "when/while", temporal ways of expressing past events;

3. Language structures and functions: Past Continues, contrast between Past Simple and Past Continues, talk about past events and about interrupted actions in the past, express simultaneous actions in the past, describe animals;

4. Phonetics: Pronunciation of the verbal suffix "ed" of the past /d/ /t/ /Id/.

**Sociocultural aspects and intercultural awareness**

1. Identification and appreciation of the foreign language as an international communicative instrument;
2. Use of adequate courtesy formulas in social interactions;

3. Knowledge of stories from several parts of the world dealing with legendary animals;

4. Knowledge of the scientific investigations about the existence of some animals by means of the recovery of fossils;

5. Knowledge of the investigations carried out at the University of Yale, about the recovery of the cadaver of a marine monster;

6. Evaluation of the interrelations between people coming from different countries, established through the world of fashion;

7. Evaluation of the contribution of the Spanish fashion brands in the international market.

Unit 6: Going Green

Contents

Listening and speaking

1. Predict the topic of the unit by means of its title, the questions included in the quiz, the visual support elements, previous vocabulary and background knowledge;

2. Obtain specific information by listening to a conversation about the journey of two friends to London and another one related to the holidays plans of a character, as a preparatory base for the fulfilment of the subsequent listening comprehension activities;

3. Oral production of adequately pronounced short texts about means of transport;

4. Participate to conversations and simulations inside the classroom with an adequate level of pronunciation and intonation about a trip and about the predictions regarding the future of some characters included in several pictures and of the classmates;
5. Develop strategies to overcome communicative interruptions and to start and end communicative exchanges.

**Reading and writing**

1. Anticipate the content before and while reading simple texts;

2. Understand general and specific information of several texts of the unit about the vehicles of the future, the extreme sports and the environmental care, as a preparatory base for the fulfilment of the subsequent reading comprehension activities;

3. Composition of several short texts about a sport event that students want to watch, their holidays plans and a prediction about what they are going to do within 30 years, taking into account basic elements of cohesion, and using elementary strategies of the written composition process (planning, contextualization and revision), paying special attention to the appearance of the main idea in the last paragraph;

4. Use of basic orthography and punctuation rules and evaluation of these elements in written communications;

5. Composition of a short text about the predictions related to the future of the planet, paying attention to the appearance of the main idea in the conclusion.

**Linguistic knowledge**

1. Morphological elements: article, noun, verb, adjective, adverb, preposition etc, in the language use;

2. Vocabulary: Transport verbs, means of transport, journeys, time expressions of the future;

3. Structures and functions of the language: Intentional future (to be going to), future simple (will), Present Continuous in its future dimension, make future plans and predictions, take spontaneous decisions, talk about journeys and holidays;
4. Phonetics: Pronunciation of the abbreviation "'ll" and "wont't".

**Sociocultural aspects and intercultural awareness**

1. Identification and appreciation of the foreign language as an international communicative instrument;
2. Use of adequate courtesy formulas in social interactions;
3. Knowledge about the existence of electric vehicles that don't contaminate in several European cities;
4. Knowledge of the extreme sports Olympic Games that take place in Los Angeles and about their focus on the environmental protection;
5. Knowledge of the possible consequences of the climate change;
6. Evaluation of the personal enrichment that implies the opportunity to establish relationships with people having different cultures.

**Unit 7: What's on TV?**

**Contents**

**Listening and speaking**

1. Predict the topic of the unit by means of its title, the questions included in the quiz, the visual support elements, previous vocabulary and background knowledge;
2. Obtain specific information by listening to a film documentary and a program dealing with animals, as a preparatory base for the fulfilment of the subsequent listening comprehension activities;
3. Oral production of adequately pronounced and coherent short texts about Tv programs and animals;
4. Participate to conversations and simulations inside the classroom with an adequate level of pronunciation and intonation in order to invent and solve riddles about animals and to recommend TV programs included in a specific list;

5. Develop strategies to overcome communicative interruptions and to start and end communicative exchanges.

**Reading and writing**

1. Anticipate the content before and while reading simple texts;

2. Understand general and specific information of several texts of the unit: one of them about the soap operas and their educational function, and another related to a scientific TV program, as a preparatory base for the fulfilment of the subsequent reading comprehension activities;

3. Composition of several short texts to describe TV programs, to elaborate an individual list of programs, and to describe the way of taking care of a pet, taking into account basic elements of cohesion, and using elementary strategies of the written composition process (planning, contextualization and revision), paying special attention when including details that could broaden the main idea in the development of the paragraph;

4. Use of basic orthography and punctuation rules and evaluation of these elements in written communications;

5. Composition of a short text about a concourse, paying attention to the details that could broaden the main idea in the development of the paragraph.

**Linguistic knowledge**

1. Morphological elements: article, noun, verb, adjective, adverb, preposition etc, in the language use;
2. Vocabulary: TV programs, offsprings of animals, adult animals, connectors "if, unless";

3. Structures and functions of the language: First Conditional, modal verb "can", ask for and concede permission, express conditions, describe a TV program, talk about the ways of taking care of a pet;

4. Phonetics: Pronunciation of the week form "can".

Sociocultural aspects and intercultural awareness

1. Identification and appreciation of the foreign language as an international communicative instrument;

2. Evaluation of the opportunity to learn English and other foreign languages by means of international TV series;

3. Identification of popular TV programs in the UK;

4. Use of adequate courtesy formulas in social interactions;

5. Knowledge of several events related to other countries, obtaining the information required by means of several resources;

6. Knowledge about the existence of scientific studies related to the experimentation on animal cells in the USA and the UK;

7. Evaluation of the personal enrichment that implies the opportunity to establish relationships with people having different cultures.

Unit 8: Cool Homes

Contents

Listening and speaking
1. Predict the topic of the unit by means of its title, the questions included in the quiz, the visual support elements, previous vocabulary and background knowledge;

2. Obtain specific information by listening to a conversation in which two characters talk about a town and another one in which they talk about the new house in which one of them is going to move, as a preparatory base for the fulfilment of the subsequent listening comprehension activities;

3. Oral production of adequately pronounced and coherent short texts about the geographical accidents of students’ countries and about the furniture and appliances;

4. Participate to conversations and simulations inside the classroom with an adequate level of pronunciation and intonation in order to describe a dream room and to opine about the houses included in some pictures;

5. Develop strategies to overcome communicative interruptions and to start and end communicative exchanges.

**Reading and writing**

1. Anticipate the content before and while reading simple texts;

2. Understand general and specific information from several texts of the unit: one of them related to the types of houses depending on the climate and the temperature of the place in which they are built, and a series of advertisements about charming houses built in caves, as a preparatory base for the fulfilment of the subsequent reading comprehension activities;

3. Composition of several short texts to describe an imaginary house located underground in a town of the desert, the ways in which students are going to redecorate their bedrooms, their dream house and to compare the houses presented in a series of pictures, taking into account basic elements of cohesion, and using elementary strategies
of the written composition process (planning, contextualization and revision), paying special attention to the sentences used to introduce and conclude the composition;

4. Use of basic orthography and punctuation rules and evaluation of these elements in written communications;

5. Composition of a short text about the refurbishment of the living room of your family's house, paying attention to the structure of the paragraph.

**Linguistic knowledge**

1. Morphological elements: article, noun, verb, adjective, adverb, preposition etc, in the language use;

2. Vocabulary: geographical accidents, furniture and appliances, domestic rooms, qualifying adjectives;

3. Structures and functions of the language: comparatives / superlatives (As..As, Too, Enough), object form of personal pronouns, describe places and objects, talk about the geographical features of a place, compare elements with each other and establish differences and similarities between them;

4. Phonetics: Identification and production of basic intonation patterns.

**Sociocultural aspects and intercultural awareness**

1. Identification and appreciation of the foreign language as an international communicative instrument;

2. Use of adequate courtesy formulas in social interactions;

3. Knowledge about the existence of different types of house in different parts of the world, depending on the climate and temperature of the place in which they are built;

4. Knowledge of the characteristics of the houses built in caves in Granada and houses built underground in the Australian Desert;
5. Knowledge of the existence of caves under the city of Nottingham;
6. Evaluation of the personal enrichment that implies the opportunity to establish relationships with people having different cultures.

Unit 9: English intercultural kaleidoscope

Competences

1. Linguistic and communicative competence: Students will practice their communicative and linguistic skills in order to understand the oral input provided by the teacher and to respond adequately to the wide range of tasks he/she will ask them to do;
2. Artistic and cultural competence: Students will deepen their intercultural knowledge about Ireland, England, Australia and the United States; at the same time, they will be involved in two games related to, respectively, London and the United States, that the teacher will use as references to check their cultural knowledges about both topics;

Objectives

1. Listen and understand general and specific information about London, its historical origins and transformations. Listen and understand general and specific information about Australia Day, its historical origins and about the way in which Australians celebrate this national holiday today.
2. Read and understand different kinds of texts adapted to the students capacities level and interests, in order to extract general and specific information about intercultural topics such as: St. Patrick's Day, Thanksgiving Day or Australia Day, and to use reading as a means of students personal enrichment.
3. Appreciate the foreign language as a tool through which students can have access to any kind of information and learn a wide range of intercultural contents.

4. Consider the foreign language and languages in general as a means of communication and understanding between people having different cultures, origins and languages, avoiding any kind of discrimination and stereotypes from a linguistic as well as from a cultural point of view.

Contents

Listening and speaking

1. Listen and understand messages inside the classroom related to intercultural contents.

2. Comprehension of general and specific information from oral texts related to intercultural topics such as London and Australia Day.

3. Use of comprehension strategies for understanding oral messages;

4. Use of background intercultural knowledge and key words identification to better understand the intercultural topics dealt with.

5. Production of short, coherent and adequately pronounced oral texts about personal interests.

6. Respond adequately to communicative situations inside the classroom.

Reading and writing

1. Deduction of the lexical content before the reading of short and simple texts about St. Patrick's Day, Australia Day and Thanksgiving Day.

2. Comprehension of general and specific information of different texts, authentic as well as adapted, regarding intercultural topics.
3. Identification of the intercultural elements of a text, inferring their meaning from the context or personal background knowledge.

**Linguistic knowledge**

1. Identification of morphological elements such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs or prepositions through the language use.
2. Use of the most common language structures and functions.
3. Application of strategies to organize, acquire, remember and use lexical elements.
4. Focus on the communicative use and meaning of grammatical aspects such as comparatives and superlatives.
5. Active participation to group working activities.

**Sociocultural aspects and intercultural awareness**

1. Identification and appreciation of the foreign language as an international communicative tool to deepen students’ knowledge of intercultural aspects about the English speaking countries.
2. Identification and respect towards daily life aspects and customs of English speaking countries and cultures.
3. Knowledge of cultural, historical, literal and geographical aspects of Ireland, England, Australia and the United States by the use of several means of communication such as internet and new technologies;
4. Evaluation of the personal enrichment that implies the opportunity to establish relationships with people having different cultures;

**Session schedule**
**First session**

1. The teacher will introduce the topic giving students some general information about Ireland and its geopolitical features.
2. Students will have to complete a vocabulary preparation exercise in which they have to match eight words with eight correspondent definitions.
3. Students will read a short text about the historical origins of St. Patrick's Day and then they will have to state if six sentences about the text are true or false and, eventually, correct the false ones.
4. Students will be divided in teams of four per group. Each group will have to complete a fill in the gap activity concerning a short text about the ways of celebrating St. Patrick's Day all over the world. Students will be provided with a list of words and each guessed word marks a point for each team.
5. Students will be provided with a special version of the lyrics of the song by U2 "with or without you" with some blanks to fill in. They will be asked to fill in the blanks while listening to the song.

**Second session**

1. The teacher will introduce the topic talking students about London's main tourist attractions: Tower Bridge, Saint Paul Cathedral, Westminster Abbey, London Eye, Buckingham Palace or Covent Garden.
2. Students will have to complete a vocabulary preparation activity in which they will be asked to match six words with six correspondent definitions.
3. Students will get involved in an activity called Vocabulary Bingo, in which they will be asked to write down ten words they think they will hear in the following listening session. The student who will guess the higher number of words will be the winner.

4. Students will have two listening sessions: in the first one, students will check their vocabulary bingo lists, and in the second one they will be asked to answer six comprehension questions.

5. Students will be asked to write down five sentences in which they will compare London with their hometown, using the three degrees of comparison, and five sentences about London using the two degrees of superlative.

6. Students will be provided with a special version of the lyrics of the song by James Blunt "You are beautiful" with some blanks to fill in. They will be asked to fill in the blanks while listening to the song.

**Third session**

1. The teacher will introduce the topic providing students with general information about Australian political and geographical features.

2. Students will have to complete a vocabulary preparation activity in which they will have to match seven words with seven correspondent definitions.

3. Students will have to complete a multiple-choice activity after having listening twice to a file about Australia Day. They will be requested to fill in the blanks of a special transcript of the audio file, choosing from a list of words listed in a table under the text.

4. Students will have to match some phrases from the transcript of the audio file about Australia Day in order to rebuilt two paragraphs.
5. Students will have to state if five sentences about the audio file are true or false and, eventually, they will have to correct the false ones.

6. Students will be provided by a special version of the lyrics of the song with Savage Garden "Truly madly deeply" with some blanks to fill in. They will be asked to fill in the blanks while listening to the song.

**Fourth session**

1. The teacher will introduce the topic providing students with general information about American political and geographical features.

2. Students will have to complete a vocabulary preparation activity in which they will be asked to match six words with six correspondent definitions.

3. Students will read a short text about Thanksgiving Day historical origins and then they will have to state if seven sentences regarding the text are true or false and, eventually, to correct the false ones.

4. Students will have to complete a multiple-choice activity after having reading a text dealing with the ways in which americans celebrate Thanksgiving Day. They will be requested to fill in the blanks of a special version of the text, choosing from a list of words listed in a table under the text.

5. Students will have to complete a test about American History in which they have to match a series of historical events with a list of years.

6. Students will be provided by a special version of the lyrics of the song "Knocking on heaven's door" by Bob Dylan with some blanks to fill in. They will be asked to fill in the blanks while listening to the song.
**Final test**

The last session will end up with a multiple choice final test of 16 questions about the topics dealt with, that students will have to answer choosing the write option.

**Material resources**


2. Original and adapted lyrics of the songs: With all without you by U2, You're beautiful by James Blunt, Truly madly deeply by Savage Garden and Knocking on Heaven's Door by Bob Dylan.


4. Activities related to the listening session "London Walk" downloaded from the webpage [www.bbclearningservice.com](http://www.bbclearningservice.com).


7. Multiple choice activity related to Thanksgiving Day downloaded from the webpage [www.eslholidaylessons.com](http://www.eslholidaylessons.com).


9. Multiple choice activity related to the listening session about Australia Day, downloaded from the webpage [www.eslholidaylessons.com](http://www.eslholidaylessons.com).
Activities and final test produced by the teacher.

Assessment criteria

1. Understand the general idea and specific information from oral texts dealing with the intercultural topics covered in the unit provided by the teacher or by other means of communication.

2. Be able to complete a series of tasks and a multiple choice final test in order to check the understanding of general and specific information from several adapted or authentic written texts, regarding the intercultural topics covered in the unit.

3. Identify and present examples of some social, cultural, geographical or literal aspects of Ireland, England, Australia or the United States, and show interest for knowing more about these countries.

Unit 10: Crime

Contents

Listening and speaking

1. Predict the topic of the unit by means of its title, the questions included in the quiz, the visual support elements, previous vocabulary and background knowledge;

2. Obtain specific information by listening to a conversation in which a detective interrogates two employees of a museum and another one in which two characters talk about a TV program, as a preparatory base for the fulfilment of the subsequent listening comprehension activities;
3. Oral production of adequately pronounced and coherent short texts about the different kinds of jobs;

4. Participate to conversations and simulations inside the classroom with an adequate level of pronunciation and intonation in order to verify if the classmate has done any of the things included in a list and to describe the action that each character included in a picture has done;

5. Develop strategies to overcome communicative interruptions and to start and end communicative exchanges.

**Reading and writing**

1. Anticipate the content before and while reading simple texts;

2. Understand general and specific information from several texts of the unit: one of them related to a newspaper article, and to a police report about a theft in a museum, and another one concerning the differences between the CSI that we watch on TV and the real one, as a preparatory base for the fulfilment of the subsequent reading comprehension activities;

3. Composition of several short texts about a picture and about the things that students have made or not during the day, and elaboration of a list of questions that a detective is supposed to ask when interrogating two employees, taking into account basic elements of cohesion, and using elementary strategies of the written composition process (planning, contextualization and revision);

4. Use of basic orthography and punctuation rules and evaluation of these elements in written communications;

5. Use of the connectors of sequence;
6. Composition of a short text about a circumstance in which students have gotten scarred, paying attention to the use of the connectors of sequence.

**Linguistic knowledge**

1. Morphological elements: article, noun, verb, adjective, adverb, preposition etc, in the language use;

2. Vocabulary: jobs, crimes, participles of the irregular verbs, time expressions (already, since, yet, for, just, ever, never);

3. Structures and functions of the language: Present Perfect Simple, expressions such as like, love, hate plus gerund, express likes and preferences, ask for and answer questions about things that have already ended or that have not ended yet, talk about recent doings and experiences;

4. Phonetics: Pronunciation of simple and compound sentences with an adequate intonation and rhythm.

**Sociocultural aspects and intercultural awareness**

1. Identification and appreciation of the foreign language as an international communicative instrument;

2. Identification of popular TV programs in the USA (the CSI detective series);

3. Use of adequate courtesy formulas in social interactions;

4. Knowledge of the working method of the CSI in the USA;

5. Knowledge of several detective stories about crimes committed in the USA and Canada;

6. Evaluation of the personal enrichment that implies the opportunity to establish relationships with people having different cultures.
Unit 11: Ready, set, go!

Contents

Listening and speaking

1. Predict the topic of the unit by means of its title, the questions included in the quiz, the visual support elements, previous vocabulary and background knowledge;

2. Obtain specific information by listening to a dialogue in which two young people talk about a peculiar American tradition and another one dealing with sports, as a preparatory base for the fulfilment of the subsequent listening comprehension activities;

3. Oral production of adequately pronounced and coherent short texts about the different kinds of sports;

4. Participate to conversations and simulations inside the classroom with an adequate level of pronunciation and intonation in order to talk about the necessary equipment when practicing different sport disciplines, to opine about several sport activities, and to describe what students remember after having observed a picture of a shop;

5. Develop strategies to overcome communicative interruptions and to start and end communicative exchanges.

Reading and writing

1. Anticipate the content before and while reading simple texts;

2. Understand general and specific information from several texts of the unit: one of them related to the Olympic Games and another one about curious competitions, as a preparatory base for the fulfilment of the subsequent reading comprehension activities;

3. Composition of several short texts in order to provide information about some sportsman and about the answers of the classmates or of the members of students families concerning their sports preferences, and in order to describe a shop represented
in a picture, taking into account basic elements of cohesion, and using elementary strategies of the written composition process (planning, contextualization and revision), paying attention to the correct use of the personal pronouns;

4. Use of basic orthography and punctuation rules and evaluation of these elements in written communications;

5. Composition of a short text about the family's favorite sports, paying attention to the correct use of the personal pronouns.

**Linguistic knowledge**

1. Morphological elements: article, noun, verb, adjective, adverb, preposition etc, in the language use;

2. Vocabulary: sports, sport equipment, accountable names, unaccountable names;

3. Structures and functions of the language: determinants, quantifiers, forms "there is/there are", express the existence of something and quantitative concepts, talk about skills, likes and preferences, describe the necessary equipment for each sport discipline;

4. Phonetics: Pronunciation of difficult sounds such as "schwa, /o:/".

**Sociocultural aspects and intercultural awareness**

1. Identification and appreciation of the foreign language as an international communicative instrument;

2. Identification of curious habits related to several sports competitions in the UK, and of habits related to the celebration of the Backwards Day in the USA;

3. Use of adequate courtesy formulas in social interactions;

4. Knowledge of the history of the Olympic Games and of the women fight for having the possibility to participate to them;

5. Knowledge of the characteristics of the extreme sports;
6. Evaluation of the personal enrichment that implies the opportunity to establish relationships with people having different cultures.

Unit 12: Music

Contents

Listening and speaking

1. Predict the topic of the unit by means of its title, the questions included in the quiz, the visual support elements, previous vocabulary and background knowledge;

2. Obtain specific information by listening to a conversation in which a couple of friends talk about a music band and about a music academy, as a preparatory base for the fulfilment of the subsequent listening comprehension activities;

3. Oral production of adequately pronounced and coherent short texts about the different musical genres;

4. Participate to conversations and simulations inside the classroom with an adequate level of pronunciation and intonation about students’ favorite leisure activities and about obligations and prohibitions according to the content of a picture;

5. Develop strategies to overcome communicative interruptions and to start and end communicative exchanges.

Reading and writing

1. Anticipate the content before and while reading simple texts;

2. Understand general and specific information from several texts of the unit: one of them related to the relation between music and adolescents, and another one dealing with the urban music festivals, as a preparatory base for the fulfilment of the subsequent reading comprehension activities;
3. Composition of several short texts in order to explain what kind of music students particularly like and why, and the music that their friends particularly like, taking into account basic elements of cohesion, and using elementary strategies of the written composition process (planning, contextualization and revision);

4. Observation and review of the writing norms and strategies deepen in the previous units, in order to identify errors in a paragraph and to try to improve the written work;

5. Use of basic orthography and punctuation rules and evaluation of these elements in written communications;

6. Composition of a short text about the daily schedule, paying attention to the writing norms and strategies deepen in the previous units.

**Linguistic knowledge**

1. Morphological elements: article, noun, verb, adjective, adverb, preposition etc, in the language use;

2. Vocabulary: musical genres, musical instruments, leisure activities;

3. Structures and functions of the language: modal verbs "can/can't, must/mustn't, have to/don't have to, should/shouldn't", give advice, express obligation, prohibition and possibility, talk about leisure activities and favorite musical genres;

4. Phonetics: Pronunciation of the abbreviations "couldn't, shouldn't, mustn't and can't".

**Sociocultural aspects and intercultural awareness**

1. Identification and appreciation of the foreign language as an international communicative instrument;

2. Evaluation of the English language as an international vehicle of communication in the world of music;
3. Identification of curious habits related to several sports competitions in the UK, and of habits related to the celebration of the Backwards Day in the USA;

4. Use of adequate courtesy formulas in social interactions;

5. Knowledge of the existence of urban music festivals in Great Britain and of the multiple alternative activities that are part of these festivals;

6. Knowledge of the origin of some musical genres;

7. Evaluation of the personal enrichment that implies the opportunity to know people having a different culture through the music festivals;

8. Evaluation of the young talents of the English music scenario.

Unit 13: Success

Contents

Listening and speaking

1. Read and listen to a catalog of auctioned famous objects, answer to a general comprehension question about the Beckham's BMV, match a series of objects recently auctioned with the people they belonged, listen again and check students answers;

2. Listen to an answering machine providing information about the Fame Museum and complete a fill in the gap exercise;

3. Listen to a dialogue in which two character buy a ticket for a museum and answer to a general comprehension question;

4. Practice a communicative interchange with a classmate, telling him what you were doing in the moments indicated in a frame;

5. Establish communicative interchanges by asking and answering questions in order to talk about what students did in the last weekend;
6. Prepare and practice a dialogue in which two characters have to buy a ticket for the cinema, using the dialogical model provided in the unit.

**Reading and writing**

1. Read and listen to a text dealing with an adventure of a young man who sailed alone in the Atlantic Ocean, infer some information and answer a general comprehension question, read the text again and complete a true-or-false exercise;

2. Read and translate the content of a frame concerning the use of "could/couldn't" as past forms of "can/can't";

3. Read a text about the professions of some actors before they were famous and match each profession with the correspondent actor. Read the text again and answer some comprehension questions;

4. Read a dialogue in which two characters buy a ticket for a museum and answer a comprehension question;

5. Take notes about a biography of the actress Angelina Jolie in order to answer a series of comprehension questions;

6. Write a biography of Angelina Jolie, taking as a reference the writing plan presented in the unit.

**Linguistic knowledge**

1. Morphological elements: article, noun, verb, adjective, adverb, preposition etc, in the language use;

2. Vocabulary: Words related to important events in life and jobs, linking words and functions;
3. Structures and functions of the language: Past Simple, regular and irregular verbs, Past Simple questions, talk about important events and happenings in life and about the past, ask for actions and events that took place in the past, buy tickets for some event;  
4. Phonetics: Practice and learn how to pronounce the verbal suffix "ed" used in the past tenses, practice the appropriate rhythm and intonational patterns related to some sentences.

**Sociocultural aspects and intercultural awareness**

1. Identification and appreciation of the foreign language as an international communicative instrument;  
2. Use of adequate courtesy formulas in social interactions;  
3. Make reference to people that have become famous in different ways and professions: sportsmen, actors, musicians, movie directors, spacemen, businessmen etc;  
4. Talk about the Hollywood Stars and cinema and compare them to the Spanish ones;  
5. Knowledge of information related to the singer Eminem, his origins, his music genre, his most famous records etc;  
6. Evaluation of the personal enrichment that implies the opportunity to establish relationships with people having different cultures.

**Unit 14: Computer world**

**Contents**

**Listening and speaking**

1. Listen to a conversation in which two people express their opinions about a new computer game, complete a true-or-false exercise related to the conversation in question and answer some specific comprehension questions;
2. Listen to a documentary about the new technologies, predict what this documentary will be about answering to a series of questions, listen to the program and check your answers;

3. Listen to a conversation in which a grandson gives instructions to his grandfather about the way of writing and sending an email and reorder appropriately the instructions;

4. Ask and answer questions about the ways of using the computer;

5. Talk about personal future plans using the ideas included in a frame, make future predictions for people that students know with the help of the ideas included in another frame.

**Reading and writing**

1. Read and listening to a conversation in which two young people talk about what they are going to do with their computers that they won in a competition, read the words related to the computer world included in a frame and identify which of the two young people talks about them, read the text again and answer some specific comprehension questions;

2. Observe the pictures of several electronic and computer devices and complete a text with the words included in a frame;

3. Read the text of an email that a grandfather is writing with the help of his grandson and answer some comprehension questions;

4. Read a dialogue in which two friends express agreement or disagreement about computer games, answer a comprehension questions and complete a true-or-false exercise;
5. Read an email and its reply and complete a fill in the gap exercise inferring the words omitted in the text, listen to a Cd recording and check students answers;

6. Complete a dialogue with the expressions included in a frame, write down another dialogue similar to the previous one, giving information about the way of searching for information on internet.

**Linguistic knowledge**

1. Morphological elements: article, noun, verb, adjective, adverb, preposition etc, in the language use;

2. Computers and the internet, control pad, screen keyboard, printer, speaker, software, scanner, Cd reader/writer, webcam, disc, mouse, website, download, graphics, videos, mobile phones, music players, laptop, portable console, mp3 player;

3. Structures and functions of the language: Be going to, be going to and will, talk about computers and their functions, express future predictions and intentions, agreement and disagreement;

4. Practice the intonation in some sentences, listen to five sentences and rewrite them, indicating the stressed points, practice the appropriate rhythm and intonational patterns related to some sentences.

**Sociocultural aspects and intercultural awareness**

1. Identification and appreciation of the foreign language as an international communicative instrument;

2. Use of adequate courtesy formulas in social interactions;

3. Knowledge of the computers, of their functions and performances, and of the way in which the new technologies have changed our life in the last years.
4. Knowledge of the evolution of the computer games since 1970, with the appearance of the first consoles, to the present in which the games are tridimensional and their graphic is fantastic;

5. Knowledge and comparison between data related to some British Colleges, differing from the other normal secondary schools, since students make use of the new technologies in all their class and subjects.

Unit 15: Summertime

Contents

Listening and speaking

1. Read some information in a Tv guide and look at a series of pictures, infer what kind of program is Extremes;

2. Listen to an interview in which the explorer of the program Extremes and answer some comprehension questions by choosing the correct option within the two possible ones;

3. Look at the pictures of two summer festivals (The Festival of the Midnight Sun and the Festival of Saint John), and search for the meaning of the words in blue, match the pictures with the correspondent sentences in order to learn to infer the content of unknown information by interpreting contextual elements, listen to a Cd recording and check students answer. Listen again to both conversations about the festivals and answer some more specific comprehension questions;

4. Listen to a dialogue in which a mother and her daughter talk about their personal preferences regarding the place in which they would like to spent their holidays and answer to a comprehension question;
5. Ask and answer questions about the summer parties or festivals typical of the native or living place of each student;

6. Prepare and practice a dialogue expressing preferences about the place in which each student would like to spent his/her holidays, by using the dialogical model presented in the unit and a series of ideas included in a frame.

**Reading and writing**

1. Read and listen to a text about the Summer Camps, answer reflectively an opinion question, copy and complete a table, ordering the camps in two groups;

2. Read the description of a summer festival and correct six errors, listen to a CD recording and check students answers;

3. Take notes to describe a summer festival celebrated in the native or living place of the student and use such notes to answer some comprehension questions;

4. Describe a summer festival using the writing plan presented in the unit and the ideas proposed in the previous exercise;

5. Write a letter to a magazine describing a place in which the student spent his/her holidays;

6. Spotlight the adequate sentences in a dialogue and write down a similar one expressing personal preferences, using the ideas included in a frame.

**Linguistic knowledge**

1. Morphological elements: article, noun, verb, adjective, adverb, preposition etc, in the language use;

2. Vocabulary: sun hat, sun cream, torch, insect repellent, towel, rucksack, sleeping bag, camera, suitcase, insects, high-rise, hotels, crowd, noise;
3. Structures and functions of the language: "a/an", "some and any", infinite pronouns "a lot of, much/many", talk about holidays, holidays equipment and problems, express quantity, wishes and preferences;

4. Phonetic: Review and practice the intonation when asking questions, listen and write some sentences, practice the rhythm and the intonation of some sentences.
3. RESEARCH PROJECT

AN ONLINE TRAINING PROGRAM FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF LISTENING SKILLS IN SPANISH SECONDARY EDUCATION

Abstract

Many scholars agree in considering the acquisition of listening skills as the most difficult goal to achieve for EFL learners. This experimental and longitudinal research study concerns an online listening training program, specifically designed for students of the fourth year within Spanish Secondary School. It is primarily aimed at measuring the effectiveness of the implementation of this kind of programs as regards the improvement of students’ listening comprehension level, and the efficacy of the use of authentic materials in the EFL classroom. The experiment will involve forty students that will have to complete a series of online listening comprehension tasks designed and uploaded periodically by the teacher to the educational social network Edmodo for a whole school year. At the beginning of the experiment, all the participants’ listening comprehension skills will be evaluated by means of a pre-listening test. Later they will be divided into two groups of twenty students: the experimental group and the control group. The online listening comprehension program of the experimental group will be based on authentic materials, while the program of the control group will include pedagogical and adapted resources. Both the experimental and the control groups
will be constantly monitored and finally assessed through the same test used at the
beginning of the treatment. The choice to use the educational social network
Edmodo pretends to increase and promote students’ learner autonomy, to improve
their digital competence and to save teachers’ time that they can dedicate to their
curricular activities in the classroom.

3.1. Introduction

In an always more globalized and interconnected world, English plays an essential role
as a lingua franca, promoting communication in every sector of the international
scenario, such as trade, politics, cultural exchanges, science and technology. This is the
fundamental reason why people are required to improve their competence in English, if
they want to keep being competitive in the international arena. For this reason, EFL
teachers have to do their best in order to allow their students to use such an important
instrument in the most appropriate way. Within the four language skills EFL students
have to develop, i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing, I have decided to focus
my research project on listening, because of its difficulty and its relevance in the
learning and teaching process.

Listening is the ability to accurately receive and interpret messages in the process of
communication. It plays an essential role because without the ability to listen properly
messages could be easily misunderstood, therefore communication could break down
and the sender of the message could easily become frustrated. The listening process
requires a sender (e.g. a person, the radio or the television), a message and a receiver
(the listener). Listeners must frequently process messages as they come, without the
possibility to backtrack or looking ahead. Besides, they also have to deal with the
sender's choices of vocabulary, structure and rate of delivery. Developing good listening skills brings also benefit to our social life because it contributes to increase our number of friends and social networks, our health and wellbeing, as well as to improve our self esteem and confidence. There is a tough difference between listening and hearing; listening requires, metaphorically, paying attention not only to the story, but also to the way in which the story is told, to the way in which the sender of the message uses his or her language, voice and body. In other words, our listening skills depend on our degree of perception of the world surrounding us. When we listen, we receive a message from a speaker, focus on it and contextualize it and attributing to it more or less relevance according to our way of thinking. It is just the finding of relevance that is the essential element of the listening process as opposed to hearing. Listeners are far for being simply receptors of an oral input, they actively engage themselves in a process of interpretation of what they hear, using all their background and linguistic knowledge to grasp the meaning contained in the oral text (Schwarz, 1998). Listening is the language modality that is used more frequently. In this sense, an interesting research by Adler, R. et al (2001) reveals that adults spent almost 70% of their time engaged in some communication activity, of this an average of 45% spent listening, 30% speaking, 16% reading and only 9% writing. What is more, students may receive as much as 90% of their information at school by listening to their instructors and to one another.

Listening comprehension is a complex and active process in which the listener must be able to discriminate between different sounds, understand vocabulary and grammatical structures, and interpret stress and intonation in the immediate as well as in the broader sociocultural context in which the utterance is produced. Besides, recent studies (Dunkel 1991, Feyten 1991) have demonstrated the fundamental role of input in the
language learning process, supporting the primacy of listening comprehension in instructional methods. Also Gary (1975) highlights the necessity to give prominence to listening comprehension, particularly in the early stages of the second language teaching and learning process, because it provides advantages of four different types: cognitive, efficiency, utility and effective (Vandergrift 1999: 168). Second language acquisition requires students to be considerably exposed to the target language and the listening input they receive is one of the most important components of this linguistic environment. Therefore, the development of students’ listening ability and the learning of language by means of listening are two interrelated processes (Kemp 2010: 385). In order to improve students listening skills and to allow them to cope with a wide range of real life situations, EFL teachers have to employ a series of strategies, a set of techniques or activities that contribute directly to the comprehension of the listening input.

Listening strategies can be divided into top-down strategies and bottom-up strategies, according to the target on which they are oriented. Top-down strategies are based on the listener background knowledge of the topic, situation, context, type of text and language. This background knowledge helps him/her to interpret what he/she hears and anticipates what will come through a set of expectations. Top-down strategies include:

1. Listen for the main idea;
2. Predicting;
3. Drawing inferences;
4. Summarizing.

Bottom-up strategies are based on the text that is to say on the combination of words, sounds and grammar that creates the meaning. Bottom-up strategies include:
1. Listening for specific details;

2. Recognizing cognates;

3. Recognizing word order patterns (Schwarz, 1998).

On the basis of the assumptions listed below, and of my period of teaching practice within this master, in which I was surprised to observe the lack of any kind of listening activity, I have designed a proposal for an online training program for the improvement of listening skills, to be carried out by means of the online networking application for teachers and students "Edmodo". This social learning platform is becoming very popular in Spanish schools, but I have noticed that most of teachers use it as a sort of online store, in which they upload materials related to topics previously dealt with in class. My idea is completely different, since I conceive Edmodo, not only as an online tool for the implementation of my training program, but also as a virtual place where students can be actively involved in an autonomous learning process, interacting constantly with the teacher. The three main issues on which my research project is based are: the improvement of students listening skills through a systematic and gradual exposure to the oral input in the foreign language, the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of authentic materials in teaching listening skills, and the promotion of learner autonomy outside the classroom. In the following sections, I will present a general review of the research studies I considered more relevant in relation to the three issues on which this research project is based, I will pose the research questions that this study is supposed to answer, I will formulate a hypothesis about the results of the research, I will explain the methodology that I have chosen to conduct the present study, and I will write down some possible conclusions about my future results.
3.2. Literature Review

3.2.1. Teaching Listening Skills

Listening is the ability to identify and decode messages that other people are emitting; it implies that listeners have to develop a series of skills enabling them to understand the speaker's accent or pronunciation, as well as grammar and vocabulary, in order to try to grasp the meaning of what he/she is saying (Saricoban, 1999). Willis (1981) lists a series of micro skills of listening, that she called "Enabling skills", that are:

1. Predicting what people are going to talk about;
2. Guessing at unknown words or phrases without panic;
3. Using one's own knowledge of the subject to help one understand;
4. Identifying relevant points, rejecting irrelevant information;
5. Retaining relevant points (note-taking, summarizing);
6. Recognizing discourse markers (well, another thing is, now, finally etc.);
7. Recognizing cohesive devices, including linking words, pronouns, references etc;
8. Understanding different intonation patterns and uses of stress which give clue to meaning and social setting;
9. Understanding inferred information (speaker attitude or intentions).

Listening, as well as speaking, is a receptive skill, but in some ways even more difficult, because it requires attention, thought, interpretation and imagination. Austin (1970) suggests that if we really want our students to improve their listening skills, we should let them do the following things: Adopt a positive attitude, to be responsive, shut out distractions, listen for the speaker's purpose, look for the signals of what is to come, look for summaries of what has gone before, evaluate the supporting materials, look for non verbal clues.
Saricoban (1999), in his article "The Teaching of Listening", highlights the importance of giving the learners a clear listening purpose, in order to train them to properly understand what is being said in conversations, and to get them to disregard elements such as redundancy, hesitation and ungrammaticality. Saricoban divides the listening process into three stages: Pre-listening (purpose must be given at this stage), While listening and Post-listening.

This Turkish EFL teacher identifies the major problem related to the teaching of listening skills, in the actual way listening material is presented to the students. According to him, teachers should give them a clear lead of what they are going to hear, use some kind of visual backup for them to understand, provide them with questions and tasks to clarify the things in their mind, and be sure that these tasks help in learning and not confusing them. As regards, more specifically, listening to English as a foreign language, Saricoban lists the following main characteristics:

1. Coping with the sounds;
2. Understanding intonation and stress;
3. Coping with redundancy and noise;
4. Predicting;
5. Understanding colloquial vocabulary;
6. Fatigue;
7. Understanding different accents;
8. Using mental and environmental clues;

In Saricoban's opinion, in order to teach listening skills, a teacher should firstly state the difficulties for his/her EFL students, then he/she has to help them to distinguish sounds, and teach them to isolate significant content and informational items for concentration.
by means of controlled listening exercises. In these exercises, the learner is provided with general informational questions that he/she should be able to answer after listening to the material. These questions themselves suggest the content of the listening material and provide students with an organizational framework for selective listening.

The lack of sociocultural, factual and contextual information about the target language can be another obstacle to listening comprehension. Brooks (1960) specifies what he considers vital points for students to be aware of, such as contradictions and omissions, or the changes that can occur in natural speech as a result of environment, stress, intonation or rate of speed. According to Brooks, native speakers in an informal situation habitually reduce the clarity of their speech signals to the minimum required for comprehension. This is the reason why he emphasizes the necessity to give consideration also to the interdependence between language and culture, providing students with activities such as register, expletives, verbal taboos or culture-bound vocabulary.

Listening has always been a skill particularly difficult to acquire for EFL students for many reasons related to environmental and linguistic factors. Listening researchers believe that EFL learners generally perceive a text spoken at normal or even at slow speed as too fast. This is an important element to take into account because several research studies have suggested that there is a correlation between the speech rate and the comprehension success (Buck: 1995; Field: 2003). In teaching listening skills, we have necessarily to be aware of the fact that, for many EFL learners, the level of speech rate at which comprehension becomes impossible, is significantly lower than that for the more advanced learners, and that when words are woven together in speech, they can undergo radical phonological changes that can make EFL students’ comprehension a
considerably complicated process (Renandya and Farrell 2011: 53). Even so, listening researchers seem to disregard these essentially perceptual problems, mostly affecting EFL beginning learners, since they believe that the best way to solve students listening problems is to teach them higher lever cognitive and metacognitive strategies, such as inferencing or self-monitoring strategies. As a result of this theoretical framework and of the considerable research efforts devoted to understand the nature of these strategies, strategy-training activities have now become a standard characteristic of most modern listening coursebooks. Grenfell and Harris (1999), suggest a series of steps recommended in a standard strategy-training activity:

1. Raise students’ awareness;
2. Help them brainstorm the strategies used;
3. Model the strategies;
4. Have them practice the strategies;
5. Guide them in selecting the strategies that address their particular needs;
6. Evaluate their progress and strategy use.

In this sense, O.Malley and Chamot (1990) have validated a range of language learning strategies, classifying them in terms of cognitive theory. According to this schema, we can distinguish between three main types of strategies: cognitive strategies, metacognitive strategies and socio-affective strategies. Cognitive strategies regulate or direct the language learning process and include thinking about the learning process, planning, monitoring and evaluating. Cognitive strategies manipulate the material to be learnt or apply a specific technique to the learning task. Finally, socio-affective strategies describe what happens when language learners cooperate with classmates, question the teacher for clarification, or apply specific techniques to lower their anxiety
level. Rubin (1988) and Vandergrift (1999) conducted an experimental study with high
school learners of Spanish in order to investigate the effect of different types of listening
strategy instruction on performance. Three experimental groups were compared with
two control groups in the comprehension of video and, even if not all the hypothesis
were confirmed, the results demonstrated that the use of some listening strategies, in
particular the use of a story-line strategy, can help students to cope with more difficult
material (Rubin, 1988: 32).
Renandya and Farrell criticize the strategy-based approach because the implementation
of these activities place a heavy demand on the teachers, since it requires them to know
a series of aspects related to the theories and principles beyond the strategy-training, the
way of selecting the strategies that the students need to learn, the order in which these
strategies have to be presented and practiced, how to integrate these strategies into the
curriculum, and how much time should be allocated for strategy-training.
Renandya and Farrell (2011) claim that these requirements are unrealistic and
excessively burden for the majority of EFL teachers and that there is not a clear one-to-
one correspondence between teaching listening strategies and an increasing listening
comprehension. What is more, EFL methodologists, such as McDonough (2006) or
Littlejohn (2008), have called into question the strategy-training programs for their cost
in terms of time and efforts, while Ridgway (2000) argues that in listening, working
from texts may be a more productive approach in terms of comprehension than working
from the notion of strategies. Ridgway (2000) as well as Renandya and Farrell (2011)
remark the value of practice as an essential tool through which students can develop
skills and automaticity in processing oral language. I personally share Ridgway as well
as Renandya and Farrell's opinion about the relevance of practice in foreign language
learning and teaching process. In my opinion, especially as regards the acquisition of listening skills, students need to be constantly exposed to the foreign language they are learning, in order to autonomously develop their own strategies to cope with all environmental factors that may obstacle their comprehension. A significant improvement of students listening skills can only be obtained, as Renandya and Farrell suggest, by providing them with a wide range of listening activities that can allow them to receive a lot of enjoyable input (Renandya and Farrell, 2011: 56). Several studies have been conducted in order to demonstrate the validity and the effectiveness of extensive listening. Zhang (2005), for example, carried out an experimental study with her middle-school students in China, providing a group of them with extensive listening activities in which they listen to a large amount of comprehensible and interesting stories read aloud by the teacher that adjusted her speed rate to her students EFL level of comprehension. Another group of students (the control group) received intensive and systematic listening strategy-training. At the end of the six weeks experiment, Zhang extensive listening students perform notably better in the cloze and recall listening tests than students of the control group, obtaining better results in terms of receptive measures as well as of the productive use of the language (Renandya and Farrell 2011: 56).

3.2.2. The authenticity of materials

The use of authentic listening material is an important element to take into consideration when designing listening comprehension activities, since the learners have the opportunity to learn and develop the skills needed to comprehend and to use the language typical of real life situations. The issue of the authenticity of listening
comprehension material has raised an interesting debate between theoreticians and practitioners about what kind of material could be considered authentic. Nunan (1989) defines authentic every kind of material with has not been specifically produced for the purpose of language teaching. Widdowson (1983) modifies this definition and divides the concept of authenticity in into two different aspects: genuine and authentic. According to Widdowson, a text can be considered genuine if it represents the typical language used in real life situations. The term authentic refers to the appropriateness of the listener's response. So, genuineness is related to the text, while authenticity is related to the task (Latifi, Youhanaee and Mohammade, 2013: 8). Brown (2001), and Mangubhai (2002), recommend the use of authentic texts to help students further develop their communicative skills. In his article titled "ESL Listening Comprehension: Practical Guidelines for Teachers". In this vein, Ross (2006) remarks the importance of using listening authentic materials to allow students to learn how to comprehend double meanings, predict meaning, make allowances for performance errors committed by other speakers or deal with interruptions. Ross highlights how the use of authentic material stimulates and motivates learners to comprehend the content of an oral text, contributing to a significant improvement of their level of comprehension, because they feel that they can achieve a meaningful level of proficiency that adds value to their live when speaking English as a second or foreign language. Saricoban (2011) points out that the majority of EFL teachers tend to prepare listening comprehension exercises based on lectures, record news or broadcasts. All these types of exercises, even if they have value, don't present the redundancies, the colloquialisms or the hesitations that are peculiarities of the spoken language; they emphasize informational content, but fail to provide the signals used to communicate information and meaning. Consequently, it
would be appropriate for teacher to use material cast in real life situations to prepare their listening comprehension exercises. According to this view, a comprehension exercise must be as close as possible to a slice of life rather than an artificially delivered discourse. It means to say that the teacher has a great work to do and has to be a very creative person to teach listening in a communicative way. Broughton (1978), calls into question the efficacy of pedagogical material, by stating that language learners are exposed to text that are not representative of the target language they are studying. Crystal and Davy (1975) also question the adequacy of graded material, claiming that there is a gap between these texts and the real life usage of language, and that they are a poor representation of their real life counterparts. Swaffar (1985) openly criticizes the simplification of the language of pedagogical material, considering it, not only unhelpful, but also detrimental to the comprehension process, since it removes the authorial cues that are available in original texts. Vandergrift (2007) considers the use of authentic material as the best option, since the ultimate goal of second language learners is to understand the language that is used in real life communication. Nuttal (1996) claims that authentic texts can be motivating because they are proof that the language is used for real life purposes by real people. Moreover, Blanco (2002) emphasizes the fact that exposure to such texts is considered to result in greater gains in comprehension ability than exposure to only simplified texts. Richards (2006) suggests three advantages for the implementation of authentic material in classroom:

1. It provides cultural information about the target language;
2. It provides exposure to real language;
3. It supports a more creative approach to teaching.
On the other hand, Richards also lists some possible disadvantages of using authentic material:

1. Created materials maybe superior to authentic ones because they are generally built around graded syllabus;

2. Authentic materials often contain difficult and irrelevant language;

3. Using authentic material is a burden for teachers and for learners as well (Latifi, Youhanaee and Mohammadi, 2013: 8/9).

Several experimental studies have been conducted in order to demonstrate the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the implementation of authentic materials in EFL or ESL classroom. Parker and Chaudron (1987), for example, after having conducted an experimental study, conclude that cognitive and elaborative modification are more useful than authentic material in helping the comprehension process. On the contrary, Young (1999), in a study on reading comprehension of Spanish language students, noted a tendency for better recall scores on authentic, as opposed to simplified versions of texts. Weyers (1999) also conducted an experimental study taking as a reference a semester Spanish course in 1994, at the University of New Mexico. The experiment lasted 8 weeks and involved 37 students that were divided into two groups: an experimental group and a control group. Both groups followed the routine curriculum of the university, but the experimental group was exposed to an additional listening training program based on an authentic Spanish language soap opera. At the end of the semester, the result of data analysis, based on a post-listening test, showed that the members of the experimental group better performed in listening comprehension than the control one, and, therefore, Weyers concluded that the exposure to authentic material is helpful for the improvement of listening skills. In another experimental
study, Miller (2005) divided 41 Japanese college students, enrolled in English classes for beginners, into one experimental and one control group. Both groups were exposed to the same amount of listening comprehension training, but the control group's listening program was based on pedagogical material while the experimental group's one was based on a set of unedited news from BBC. Also in this case, the result of the data analysis supported the usefulness of the implementation of authentic material for listening comprehension improvement (Latifi, Youhanaee and Mohammadi 2013: 10). Finally, also a study conducted by Youhanaee and Mohammadi supports the use of authentic material in EFL classroom. It is an experimental study conducted during a full English course on 48 intermediate level EFL students. All participants were divided into 2 groups of 24 students per group: the authentic learning group and the pedagogical learning group. At the beginning of the experiment, all participants were submitted to a pre-listening test in which they were asked to transcribe a 2 minutes passage from an authentic movie. After that, during seven weeks, the authentic movie group worked on three movies "The Blind Side", "The Lake House", and "The Truman Show", while the pedagogical movie group worked on some episodic parts of the movies of Interchange Book 3 and the "How Do You Do" series, specifically designed for intermediate level learners. At the end of the experimental period, all participants were put through a post-listening test, following the same procedure of the pre-listening one. A statistical and detailed analysis of the results showed how the mean score obtained by authentic movie learners was higher than the mean score obtained by pedagogical movie ones. Latifi, Youhanaee and Mohammadi (2013) have consequently demonstrated that integrating authentic listening materials into L2 classrooms can have a positive effect on listening
comprehension of L2 learners, whether the task given to them is suitable for their level of proficiency.

3.2.3. The implementation of educational social networks in EFL teaching process

Information technology has significantly developed in the last decades and now it represents an alternative means of teaching and learning English as a foreign language. The most tangible evidence of such a rapid and transversal development is represented by the incredible widespread of the internet, an extremely powerful tool enabling human beings to interact with each other in every corner of the world in real time. From an educational point of view, the use of new technology tools and resources increases students’ motivation and interest towards the learning subject and, at the same time, it also promotes learner autonomy. Roblyer suggests several ways in which new technology can be used to encourage students’ motivation:

1. Getting students’ attention towards learning materials and exercise through the visual and interactivity features of technology;
2. Using artificial intelligence to support manual activities such as word-correction exercises or calculations;
3. Employing authentic illustration of the real world to make students aware of the values and benefits that they will learn in the future from learning the materials;
4. Using web and blog to publish students writing in order to motivate them to work at their best capability because many people will read their work (2006: 6).

The implementation of technological tools in foreign language teaching plays also an essential role in promoting a student-centered learning, a process that contributes to make students more independent, active and autonomous in their learning process. In
this sense, Harmer defines an autonomous learner as the student who has the capability of taking their own way of learning by using their own resources and styles without the teacher's help. There are several ways in which technology can be used to prepare learning activities such as: video, audio, computer assisted learning, projectors or word processor programs. All these features are usually consider attractive for most of the students and can be used to teach all the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing (Azis, 2011: 402). As already mentioned above, the internet is the most evident display of the social development of the new technologies. Also in the field of education, there are several suggestions of internet-based technology tools that can be integrated in the teaching and learning process. Within the different possible options, it is appropriate for this study to focus our attention on the social network specifically designed for educational purposes "Edmodo", a virtual platform on which the research proposal of this work will be based. "www.edmodo.com" is a web dedicated to every grade of education whose interface looks like Facebook. Edmodo can be defined as a social education network, since it provides a network between teachers and their students, among teachers themselves and also among students all over the world. As other new technological tools, also Edmodo can be used to teach all the four language skills. As for the teaching of listening skills, Azis (2011) proposes a series of suggestions for preparing listening tasks. Listening activities can be done by either sharing a link or attaching audio or video files and have the students listen to these materials, ask several questions and let the students share their level of comprehension. Edmodo has no feature of videoconference, consequently it can not mediate teachers to deliver speaking activities online to students. In any case, they can always share listening material, have students practice it at home and perform it in the class later on.
This way of proceeding will allow learners to study and practice more, since classroom activities usually don't provide much time for them to learn and practice (2011: 404).

Another interesting characteristic of Edmodo is the possibility for teachers to give badges that are awards that teachers can decide to give to certain students for having accomplished a task or for owning qualities that other students don't have. Even if they can be considered very simple items, badges can have a very big impact on students learning process, because they are tangible signs of appreciation for the students work and, at the same time, they can increase students awareness of their capacities. The badges can be created and modified according to the needs of teachers, nonetheless Edmodo gives them the possibility to use standard badges such as: good citizen, good question, hard worker, homework helper, participant, perfect attendance, star performer and student of the month. Teachers can also receive badges for their activities in using the site, in order to encourage them to be more creative and take the maximum advantage of the social network in teaching and managing the classroom (Azis, 2011: 405).

Edmodo also provides students the opportunity to work in groups. Generally, the teacher gives to each group a group assignment to work on. The members of each group can share links, materials and ideas at the group page, a page to which other group members cannot have access. Another activity that can be developed is the creation of debate groups, with the pros and the cons groups preparing the debate at the respective group page privately and then they can conduct the debate as itself.

Another characteristic of Edmodo that can contribute to the increasing of students’ motivation is the possibility for parents of monitoring their sons’ activities, writing and grades. According to Furger (2003, as cited in Roblyer, 2006: 6), parents’ involvement
gives students a great deal of motivation to write more and to do better, because they know that their parents constantly read and see their work. Finally, another useful feature of Edmodo is the possibility for teachers to share the schedule of their learning activities or lesson planning on the calendar. It can bring benefits to both teachers and students; teachers can manage the planning for all the classes they teach, and students can always be aware of the coming activities like assessments, group presentations, and assignment due dates (Azis 2011: 405).

3.3. Research questions and hypothesis

The present study has been thought to investigate the following research questions:

1. Does an online listening training program contribute considerably to the improvement of Spanish secondary students listening comprehension skills?

2. Does the implementation of authentic materials in an online training listening program has more positive effects on students listening comprehension than the implementation of a pedagogical one?

In the light of the studies previously conducted and cited in the literature review, I presume that the study will produce the following results:

1. The online listening training program will bring benefits to both experimental and control group, because of their periodical exposition to the target language listening input;

2. The experimental group will perform significantly better than the control group after the treatment.

3.4. Methodology
This study has been conceived as an experimental and longitudinal study. According to Richards and Schmidt, the experimental method is an approach to education research in which an idea or hypothesis is verified by setting up situations in which the relationship between different participants or variables can be determined (2002: 192). In every experimental study there are always two groups: the experimental group and the control group. In this case, the participants will be 40 students in the fourth year of Spanish Secondary Education, allocated into two groups of 20 students. All of them will be put through an online intensive listening training program in order to improve their listening comprehension skills. The experimental group's training program will be based on authentic listening materials provided by the teacher, while the control group's one will be grounded on pedagogical listening materials included in textbooks specifically designed for Spanish Secondary Education. This study can also be considered longitudinal since the experimental treatment will be administered during 9 months, that is to say, during the entire academic year. At the beginning of the experiment, all participants will be submitted to a pre-listening test that will measure their listening comprehension skills. Before listening, the teacher will introduce the topic on which the listening session will be based on, providing students with a general view of the main lexical and conceptual points to deal with. Then they will have a listening session in which they will be asked to listen to a file that won't be longer than 7 minutes and to answer correctly to some general comprehension questions. The results will be collected by the teacher that will use them as a starting point for the implementation of the online training program. Every three months, all participants will sit for a test that will measure their progress. Those students performing better will be rewarded with an extra point in their mark. Differently from most of the studies carried out in the same field, this
research project is based on a program designed to be developed online, by means of the online networking application for teachers and students "Edmodo". In my opinion, this choice has got multiple advantages for students as well as for teachers. From the students’ perspective, the possibility to carry out a curricular activity outside the class will increase notably their responsibility towards their own learning process. Secondly, the fact that they will be constantly required to complete online tasks will contribute considerably to the enhancement of their digital competence. Finally, the familiar and comfortable setting in which the listening sessions will take place will substantially decrease the level of anxiety that they tend to manifest when listening comprehension abilities are tested. On the other hand, this approach will allow the teacher to ignore the time limitations imposed by the curriculum, often regarded as the hardest obstacle to overcome when implementing any kind of extra activity. At the same time, the fact that the listening training program is based on a wide range of online tasks to carry out at home, will give the teacher the opportunity to promote a higher degree of autonomy in his/her learners. All the participants will be firstly asked to sign up for free to the webpage http://www.edmodo.com. Afterwards, they will be provided with a special access code, corresponding to the research group in which they will be involved. Each Edmodo group will be managed and controlled by the teacher; therefore, students only have the possibility to interact with the teacher or with the rest of the class, private messages between students are not possible. The complete schedule of the listening training program in question will be established and shared on two calendars, uploaded respectively on the page of the experimental and of the control group. All over the academic year, students will have a listening session every weekend, in which they will be asked to complete a series of activities related to an audio or video
file posted by the teacher. In the middle of each week, the teacher will provide their students with some general information about the topic on which the following listening session will be based, in the form of pictures, news articles or a list of web references they will have to consult autonomously. Each Friday, the teacher will upload the experimental and the pedagogical online task that the members of each group will have to complete individually and submit to the teacher before 10 pm on Sunday. Every week, the teacher will give a badge to the best student of the week, that is to say to the student who will have complete the task in the best way and in the shortest time possible, in order to increase students’ motivation, awareness of their capacities and competitiveness. Teachers will have the possibility to monitor constantly their students’ performances and grades, in order to stimulate them to do their best and to help them if it is necessary. In the first quarter of the year, each activity will be introduced by a pre-listening activity, generally a vocabulary preparatory exercise in which students will be asked to match a series of words that they will hear in the session to a list of correspondent definitions or pictures. Students will be asked to listen to an audio or video file twice. On the first hearing, students will have to get used to the voice and to the speech rate of the speaker, trying to grasp the meaning of what he/she is saying. When the recording is played for the second time, students will be asked to take some notes in order to focus their attentions on the aspects of the oral text they consider to be most relevant. After listening, they will be asked to complete a post-listening task that could be a true-or-false exercise or a fill-in the blanks activity. The structural model of the activities will remain the same all over the experimental period, but the content of pre and post listening activities, as well as the duration of each listening session, will vary from one term to another. In the second term, the vocabulary preparatory exercise
will be accompanied by a multiple-choice exercise, in which students will have to answer some predictive questions selecting the correct option, trying to infer the content they will hear later.

As regards the post-listening activity, the true-or-false exercise will be replaced by a scrambled version of the oral text that the students will have to reorder according to what they will have just heard. The duration of the listening sessions will vary from 3 to 5 minutes. In the third and last term, the pre-listening activity will be based on some predictive opened questions that students will have to answer trying to infer the content of the text they will listen to later. The post-listening activity will consist on some opened comprehension questions that students will have to answer on the basis of what they will have understood about the oral text they will have just heard. In this case, the length of each listening session will vary from 5 to seven minutes. Regarding the experimental group, the teacher has to guarantee that the materials selected will cover a wide range of topics and accents, and that their difficulty complies with the students’ listening comprehension level. Each end-of-term test will be based on a topic dealt with and will include the same type of activities used during the quarter in question. The study will conclude with a post-listening test, in which the only variation compared with the pre-experimental one will be the topic dealt with.

3.5. Data collection and analysis

This study includes a lot of statistical variables to take into consideration when collecting, elaborating and analyzing the data. First of all, the results of each end of term test of all participants were compared in order to verify if there has been a real progressive listening comprehension improvement from one stage to another. Secondly,
the results of the participants from the experimental group will be compared to the results of the control group, in order to verify the effectiveness of the implementation of authentic listening material over the pedagogical one. Apart from the progressive trend of both group listening comprehension skills improvement, also a global comparison based on the entire experimental period will have to be made. In this case, the results obtained by all participants in the pre-listening test will be compared with the results obtained in the post-listening one, in order to determine the success or failure of the experiment. Also a comparison between the results of the members of the experimental and control group will have to be drawn, in order to establish the most appropriate type of material for this research purpose. All data and results obtained will be measured and elaborated by means of a two-sample t-test; a statistical tool whose function is to test if two independent groups have different value on some measure. In this study, the two independent groups are the experimental and the control group's listening comprehension global and their end-of-term performance.

3.6. Conclusions

I have decided to focus my research project on listening skills for two main reasons: first of all, because I consider it as one of the most difficult skills to acquire when learning English as a foreign language, and secondly, because of the limited amount of space and time that EFL textbooks and teachers seem to dedicate to listening comprehension acquisition and improvement. During my teaching practice time, I was negatively surprised by the fact that many secondary educational EFL teachers and course-books still dedicate so much time and space to explain and consolidate grammatical aspects that, among other things, should have already been taught and
acquired in Primary Education. In open contrast with what indicated in the Common European Framework, teachers pay little attention to the improvement of speaking and listening skills, often relegating them to a secondary level, and many of them attribute this lack of attention to the time limitations imposed by the curriculum. It is just for trying to address this problem that I have based this study on an online training program, implemented through an accessible and freeware web tool like Edmodo. The idea has been to provide students with flexible learning options outside the classroom in an interactive way, in order to improve significantly their listening comprehension level and, at the same time, to promote their autonomy. The fact that I have chosen the participants of this experiment within students of the fourth year of Secondary Education, is due to the intellectual maturity and English level of proficiency that these students should have reached at this time of their life; two key factors that should help them to cope with an intensive listening training program of this type and to understand the importance of their cooperative and active participation for a correct and effective implementation of the experiment. Moreover, the fourth year of Spanish Secondary Education is the last stage of Spanish Compulsory Education, that is to say, according to my opinion, a stage in which providing students with the adequate tools and knowledge to use the foreign language in their daily life is particularly important. On the basis of the research studies previously cited in the Literature Review, and according to my personal point of view, I forecast that the implementation of this program will improve all participants listening comprehension level, because of their constant and regulated exposure to the foreign language oral input all over the academic year. I think that it will also contribute to decrease the level of anxiety students display about listening comprehension On the other hand, I believe that the members of the experimental group
will perform significantly better than the members of the control group in the final listening test, because they will be accustomed to deal with a wide range of features, typical of real life communication such as accents, speech rates, interruptions, pauses or double meanings. In any case, I hope this experimental study could call teachers and researchers attention to a point that I consider especially relevant for the improvement of our students English proficiency, and I also trust that it could open the path for a wide range of detailed and effective studies in this field.

3.7. References


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