TRABAJO FIN DE MÁSTER

Modalidad A

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1. **<u>INTRODUCTION</u>**

The reason why I decided to do this Master was that, above all, I am a passionate person in terms of the art of teaching. Since I was a child, I have loved the way teachers tried to make us learn things, and I imitated them when playing with my friends. Besides, I have always loved English, and as I was good at English, I have had very clear that I would like to be an English teacher since I was eight. Thus, I decided to study the degree of - "*Filología inglesa*"- and once I finished it last year, I began this Master in order to be able to reach my dream.

This Master began 26th September,-2012-, with the *Welcome Week*, and it finished 6th July,- 2012-, with the defense of *Trabajo Fin de Máster*. The Master was structured in general and specific modules.

The general modules, which were in Spanish, were carried out along the first period of the (PGCE), and lasted for four months. They were: *Contexto de la Actividad Docente, Interacción y Convivencia en el Aula* and *Procesos de Enseñanza Aprendizaje.* Apart from them, there were two specific modules: *Diseño Curricular de Lenguas Extranjeras* y *Fundamentos de Diseño Instruccional, and Metodologías de Lenguas Extranjeras,* and we also had to choose one optional subject among: *Prevención y Resolución de Conflictos, Educación Emocional entre el Profesorado,* and *Atención a los Alumnos con Necesidades Específicas de Apoyo Educativo.* I chose the last one as I considered it to be interesting for my future as an English teacher, as each student is different from the other, and I consider it interesting to know how to face possible and daily special circumstances with them. In addition, we had the first school placement, called *Practicum I-* as a subject in the first term too. During this placement, which took place from 21st November to 2nd December, we dealt with formal aspects and documents which are essential in secondary schools.

The Specific modules, taught in the second term, were in English, and they were aimed at the students who were doing the PGCE in English. These subjects were: *La Comunicación Oral en Lengua Inglesa, Diseño, Organización y Desarrollo de Actividades para el Aprendizaje del Inglés, Evaluación e Innovación Docente e Investigación Educativa en Inglés.* We also had to choose one among the following optional subjects: *Enseñanza del Español como Lengua de Aprendizaje para Alumnado Inmigrante, Recursos Didácticos para la Enseñanza de Lengua Extranjera, Tecnologías de la Información y la Comunicación para el Aprendizaje* and *Habilidades Comunicativas para Profesores.* My choice was *Habilidades Comunicativas para Profesore s*in order to communicate in a better way with my future students. In this term the other two school placements, *Practicum II* and *Practicum III* took place. In *Practicum II*, from 12th March to 11th April, we had the opportunity of developing a unit of work with secondary-school students, while in *Practicum III*, from 12th April to 27th April, we had to observe a particular aspect we had chosen to design our Investigation and Innovation Research.

 Throughout this dissertation, I will present and explain in detail two projects I have designed in two of the modules done. The dissertation is structured in 5 different chapters:

Chapter 1, *Introduction, will be followed by* Chapter 2, *Justification of the selection of projects and Teaching Units, where* I will explain the reason why I have selected the Investigation and Innovation Research and the Designing of a Unit of Work for the analysis. In Chapter 3, *Critical reflection about the existing or possible relations among those selected projects, I will explain clearly and concisely the projects selected, then, in* Chapter 4, *Conclusions and future proposals,* I will conclude showing the positive or negative points concerning the school placements, and the different methods and ways of teaching and learning I would take into account in my future job as teacher, also taking into account the conclusions experienced in the two projects I have selected, and my future proposals. Finally, Chapter 5, *Bibliography*, will gather the bibliographical references quoted in the dissertation.

2. JUSTIFICATION OF THE SELECTED PROJECTS

This chapter presents the reasons for choosing the projects: Didactic Unit from the module of the second term: *Diseño, Organización y Desarrollo de Actividades para la Enseñanza del Inglés* and the Research Project on Innovation, Investigation and Evaluation from the module of the second term: *Evaluación e Innovación Docente e Investigación Educativa en Inglés.*

First of all, I would like to point out that I decided to concentrate on these two projects because they are the most important done during the second term, and in contrast to the projects of the first term, they are specific to the English teaching practice.
Moreover, I consider them to be really important for my future as a secondary education teacher, due to the fact that both of them show interesting features which must be taken into account when preparing and giving a lesson.

Regarding the Didactic Unit, I decided to select it because in my opinion this kind of project is essential for teachers to organize and know what to do with their pupils in class.
In this task, teachers have to include among other things: the objectives they want their students to achieve, the contents they are going to teach together with the way in which they are structured either by the course book or by their own choices and the scheduling of each session. Because of the importance of all these aspects, I strongly think that this task is extremely useful for teachers, and that is the main reason why I chose this project to be part of my dissertation.
From my point of view, competent teachers cannot give a lesson without knowing what they are going to talk about, and why they are teaching that and not another issue instead. That is why I consider didactic units important enough to be explained in my dissertation. In addition, I am conscious that didactic units attempt to structure in an ideal way the work of a teacher, and that it is quite difficult, rather impossible, to follow it exactly, but it is a way to know in advance what you as a teacher are going to teach and what your students are required to learn. Thus, in my opinion, didactic units can be used as tools to give self-confidence to teachers of any subject.
Moreover, I also decided to choose this project because it was part of a really interesting module, which was *Diseño, Organización y Desarrollo de Actividades para la Enseñanza del Inglés.* In this module, we learnt a load of different kinds of exercises to work on all the skills required of students and also new ways of teaching and of creating activities. This module definitely changed my mind regarding the way of looking at teaching and I enjoyed it a lot. Without a shadow of a doubt this is the subject I found most useful for my future as an English teacher.

The other project selected for a detailed analysis in this dissertation is: Research Project on Innovation, Investigation and Evaluation as it was a different kind of task and also very useful for my future career.
 I think it was interesting due to the fact that it makes students investigate and reflect on a particular issue which we consider relevant in teaching terms. I strongly think that the task of a teacher is not only to focus on teaching and on his or her subject, but also to be aware and to worry about the possible mistakes made in the teaching process. Nowadays, it is notorious that the art of teaching is being disregarded and considered inefficient in our country, and thus I consider it is very important to reflect on this situation, and of course,on how to improve it by bringing about new ideas. All this is

what we had to do in this project. We had to think about a topic we considered being important, and which may not be given such importance, and we had to concentrate on how it was carried out during our third school placement (*Practicum III*). After this, we had to study the data and give future proposals to improve on the weak points identified. I consider it a different kind of task since we, as students, are not used to working on these kinds of projects in which we have to investigate and formulate proposals. For this reason, I think it is a really profitable opportunity for us to reflect and think of possible ways of improving this difficult task which is teaching.

All these form the main reasons why I chose these two different projects for my dissertation. Although the two projects are different, as we had to work on different issues in each one, they also have things in common. The proposals made after the research project should be born in mind when arranging the variety of exercises in our didactic unit, both projects being interrelated as will be seen in the following chapter.

3. <u>CRITICAL REFLECTION ABOUT THE SELECTED PROJECTS</u>

Concerning the two projects I have selected for my dissertation, I would like to point out that despite the fact of being two different pieces of work, they actually have many things in common. They are interrelated since both pursue an educational end.

3.1: Learning unit of work

With regard to the first project selected, the Learning Unit designed in the second- term subject *Diseño, Organización y Desarrollo de Actividades para el Aprendizaje del Inglés,* I would like to explain what a learning unit is, how I designed it, the group it was created for and the parts which compound it. There is not only one definition for a learning unit, as there is not only one correct unit of work. Several definitions have been applied to designate what a learning unit is. Thus, the learning unit is defined as "the interrelation of every element which intervene in the teaching-learning process with an internal coherence and cohesion and for a determined period of time" (Ibañez, 1992: 13), or

> a way of planning the teaching-learning process focusing on a content which becomes in the main axle of the process, adding consistence and meaning. This way of organizing knowledge and experiences must take into account the diversity of the elements which make possible the process (the level of development of the student, the sociocultural and familiar context, the available resources) to regulate the practice of the contents, select the basic objectives, the methodological steps with which it will work and the necessary teaching-learning experiences to improve this process. (Escamilla, 1993: 39)

Although no unit of work is exactly the same, there are some basic parts which must always appear in order to be considered a good learning unit. For instance, every learning unit has to include the objectives that the teachers want their students to get and the contents, which must be interrelated and must have coherence so as to give some sense to the unit. Moreover, creating a learning unit is not an easy and comfortable task, as teachers must have in mind the extra-linguistic characteristics of the students, that is, the particular situations related to the social and familiar context of the students.

My learning unit was aimed at the two groups of 3rd of the Compulsory Secondary Education *(Educación Secundaria Obligatoria, ESO)* in the school *María Auxiliadora,* where I did my school placements. *María Auxiliadora* was a religious charter school located in the borough of San José, in Zaragoza. This borough is characterized by the high presence of immigrants and working-class people. In addition, there are a lot of students who come from broken families and this fact affects some students' behavior. There are two groups per course and in 3rd and 4th of ESO there is also one group per year of diversification for those students who want to get the Secondary Education Certificate, but have learning difficulties. In my case, I was in charge of the two groups of 3rd of ESO named 3rd ESO A and 3rd ESO B.

My unit of work was based on one of the topics of their English text-book, which dealt with natural disasters and world problems. I focused on it because my mentor wanted

me to follow the contents they had to cover in the academic year. However, she let me use my own materials to carry out the unit as long as I taught the contents from the unit. Thus, I looked for my own activities and materials on the internet and on some English books I had, and I adapted them to the contents of the unit.

My learning unit included the following parts:

- ❖ **Introduction.** This part, which was used as a brief explanation of the unit and of its aims, included three different sections:

  - ▪ **Contextualization.** It deals with the description of the school to which my learning unit was designed for. The main characteristics of it are that this school, *María Auxiliadora,* is located in a working-class neighbourhood with a high percentage of immigrant inhabitants, and that the students are people from different countries and cultures and some of them have behabioural problems.

  - ▪ **Justification.** It concentrates on the year and the groups to which the learning unit is aimed at. Moreover, there is a brief description of the unit's contents. In this case, the learning unit was designed for the two groups of the 3rd year of ESO of 18 students each without students with special needs, as there is a specific class of diversification for this year.

  - ▪ **Organization of the Learning Unit.** This part let us know the number of sessions in which the unit was divided, as well as the duration of each lesson. This learning unit was carried out in six different sessions of 50 or 55 minutes each. The first five sessions were devoted to the unit and the last one consisted on a test review of it. Finally, I made a little conclusion for this section in which I stated that what I tried to do was to create different kind of sessions from what students were used to, to cover all tasks and skills and to get an active role from the students.

    In the introduction I realized that it is important to bear in the different context of each student. In fact "the teacher's most important job is to create the conditions in which learning can take place" (Scrivener, 1994:9). This will allow us to relate the activities to the characteristics of the students

- ❖ **Learning Unit of Work:** This part included the internal features of my learning unit such as its key competences, objectives, contents, the methodology applied and the criteria for assessment.

  - ▪ **Key Competences.** The students of ESO have to work on different key competences trough the different subjects *(Órden del 9 de Mayo de 2007, Boletín de Aragón, Real Decreto 1631/2006, de 29 de Diciembre).* Therefore, the learning unit I designed for the English subject, 3rd year of ESO, included the competences in linguistic communication as English is a subject focused on

language; the digital competence and information management as the use of ICT's is encouraged along the unit and above all with some activities. Apart from these two key competences, the social and civic competence was also promoted, as the unit was based on talking about natural disasters and world problems; and the competence on learning and competence on autonomy and entrepreneurship, since the students had to rely on their use of strategies and techniques of intellectual work. Moreover, cooperative working, peer and self-assessment and planning strategies were encouraged in the unit in order to promote responsibility, self-esteem and creativity among others.

- **Objectives.** Objectives were related to the contents worked throughout the learning unit and from the students' perspective.

- **Contents.** They were extremely interrelated to the objectives. They included different grammatical structures related to obligation, prohibition and permission, such as the use of must/mustn't and have to/ don't have to, and the use of 'be going to' to talk about future plans. Regarding vocabulary, students dealt with terms connected with the world problems, natural disasters, ways of helping charities and expressions to use in e-mails. Finally, students had also to work on phonetic features.

- **Methodology.** Instead of relying on the traditional approach of the grammar-translation in which the teacher was the main participant in the process learning, I opted for the communicative approach. As (Hymes, 1971: 54) suggests "being able to communicate requires more than linguistic competence; it requires communicative competence". Thus, what I tried to do with my learning unit was to make the students be the main participants. I wanted them to take an active role and to learn to be autonomous and able to assess their partners and themselves. Consequently, I created many activities in which students had to work in pairs or in groups in order to promote cooperative work, which, in my opinion, is essential for students to gain autonomy in their learning process. I also relied on peer-assessment to make students achieve a valid criteria to assess their partners and make them aware of the real difficulty this activity entails. To end with this section, a mixture of English and Spanish was used by me as teacher in class, because I wanted to maintain the students' attention and observe if they understood the changing from one language to the other.

- **Evaluation Criteria.** This part of the unit dealt with the aspects the teacher would take into account when evaluating the students. The evaluation criteria were related to the aforementioned objectives and contents of the unit. I evaluated if my students were able to use the modal verbs to express prohibition and permission and if they were able to express their plans for the future. Apart from this, I also observed if they were able to understand information about natural disasters and world problems, and to interact with their classmates making use of the vocabulary and grammatical structures learnt in class.

- **Assessment Tools**. I relied on the formative and summative assess, as I consider formative assess really important to provide the students with valid criteria and information of their development and improvement. Thus, I made a direct observation of the students' class work and participation. Apart from this,

I checked their notebooks and homework. I checked the informal e-mail they had to write at the end of the unit. I also made them a written and oral test.

▪ **Marking Criteria.** They refer to the percentages of each part evaluated. I found this task a little bit difficult taking into account its importance, as it is extremely arduous to decide what someone, as a teacher, is going to evaluate and what percentage of the final mark is going to give to each part. All the tasks a teacher includes in a unit are supposed to be relevant, so everything should be evaluated. However, this ideal fact is not always possible because of the lack of time that teachers have. Nevertheless, I opted for continuous and summative marking criteria. My unit was 40% of the final mark, being 20% for the written part of the test and another for the oral. Another 40% of the final mark was allotted to a term test and the remaining 20% was for the student's participation, daily work and attitude. The written text was made up of some grammar and vocabulary exercises, a listening comprehension exercise and a short reading in which the students had to show their reading comprehension. The oral test was made in pairs and it was related to some communicative functions seen in the unit.

❖ **Lessons Plans.** From my point of view, this part of the didactic unit is extremely important because it refers to teachers' arrangements of their lessons taking into consideration the parameters of time and contents. As I learnt in (Marzano's 2007: 23) paper: *"The Art and Science of Teaching"* read in the subject *Diseño, Organización y Desarrollo de Actividades para la Enseñanza del Inglés* "it is necessary to develop effective lessons organized into a coherent unit". After implementing my learning unit, I realized that it is really difficult to follow the exact timing of the activities. However, it is also important to plan the lessons by putting them into practice to get the lessons' best. Throughout my placement, I realized that although there is no doubt that preparing the lessons is crucial, teachers must not adhere to what they have previously prepared but to be flexible as Scrivener (1994: 44) suggests by saying "as a general rule: Prepare thoroughly, but in class, teach the learners, not the plan. This means that you should be prepared to respond to the learners and adapt what you have planned".

Now, I will briefly comment my lesson plans. As I already mentioned, I divided my learning unit in six sessions, in which the last one consisted of a test. I tried to incorporate in it the five macro-skills of the European framework: reading, listening, writing, speaking and spoken interaction. Each session was divided in different parts:

➢ Title of the session

➢ Objectives of the session

➢ Expected learning outcomes

➢ Materials and resources used

➤ Activity (1) : Description – Time expected – How it is carried out –
    Teacher's actions

➤ Homework (If any)

▪ **First session.** I used this session as an introductory class to the unit we were going to begin. As the topic was about world problems, I decided to choose John Lennon's song *Imagine,* a song related to this subject-matter. Students had to listen to it and to fill some gaps from the lyrics. They also had to find some opposites to words that appeared in the song. Finally, the class was divided into groups of three people and had to debate some questions related to the song and the topic of world problems, firstly in their groups, and then with the whole class.

▪ **Second session.** This session was different from the previous one, since it was more focused on vocabulary and grammar. This session can be said to be more traditional because of the contents dealt in the session. However, I tried to make it as communicative as possible by letting students participate. The first activity we made was related to natural disasters. I handed in a photocopy in which some exercises of matching pairs of sentences and imagining situations in which they were involved in a natural disaster, appeared. Instead of completing the exercises by writing them on the sheet, I encouraged them to tell the imaginary situations to the rest of the class. After completing these activities, I handed in another photocopy. In this case, it was related to the use of the modal verbs. Before letting the students work on these activities, I explained to them the difference between the two verbs, and I asked them for some examples to be able to know whether they had understood the slight difference between them.

▪ **Third session.** This was my favorite session because I think that my students enjoyed it a lot and it was extremely different from what they were used to doing. This class was related to modal verbs again, but in a complete different way. First of all, I provided my students with a photocopy with the lyrics of a well-known song of the group U2. This song was full of modal verbs, but they were missed out in the photocopies. Students had to listen to the song and had to complete the gaps without knowing that they were all modal verbs. Once they had completed it, I asked them what these words had in common in order to let them think of it and reach a conclusion. When they realized that all the missing words were different modal verbs, we made a brainstorming on the blackboard with the different uses of the different modal verbs. After it, we did a complete different exercise which was interrelated to the previous one. I divided the class in pairs. Each member of the pair had a different role which was related to the other pair´s role and which was about some neighbours' problems. They had to think of a dialogue following the steps and clues that they had written in their roles, and finally they had to perform their dialogues in front of the class. While each pair was performing their roles, the rest of the class had to guess the kind of problems they had by means of some headings that I had previously written on the blackboard. With this activity, I worked the fifth macro-skill, 'spoken interaction', because apart from practicing speaking, students interacted with their pairs, as they did not have to learn by heart any dialogue, but prepare a draft with some ideas to talk about, and improvise their final dialogue while

interacting. As homework, students were given a photocopy in which they had to practice with modal verbs with some multiple-choice activities.

- **Fourth session.** This session was focused on reading and showing comprehension. I consider that all skills must be worked when learning a language, as I have learnt that "our role as teachers is not only to teach the 2L but to educate, to encourage critical thinking, the formation of opinions, we must involve students in readings" (Brown, 2003: 47). Thus, I chose a reading related to the topic of the unit. It was about different ways of helping charities. In particular, it was about the association *Médecins sans Frontières.* First of all, we did a pre-reading activity, in which I let students work in pairs in order to look at the photo which appeared in the reading and they had to suggest the topic of the text. After this, all the students exposed their ideas about it. The second activity consisted on reading the text and answering some comprehension questions. As a final task, students had to think about other possible ways of helping charities and we made a debate about which were the best ways.

- **Fifth session**: This last session before the test review consisted in learning how to write an informal e-mail. I consider the use of ICT's really important as nowadays everything is digitalized and the ICT's let us communicate all over the world in only some minutes or even seconds. I think that we, as teachers, must make students aware of the importance of ICT's. Because of this, I wanted to incorporate an exercise related to them and I let students bring their laptops or in case they had not a laptop, they could use the computers in the computer's room. What we did first was to review the use of the structure '*be Going To',* which they were going to use in order to write the e-mail. As a pre-writing activity, students had to read the e-mail which appeared in their text-books in order to identify some useful expressions used in e-mails and to classify what the boy who wrote the e-mail had done and what he was going to do. After it, they had to do exactly the same process with the information they wanted to write in their e-mails. In this way, they had a structure to write their e-mails in an easier way. Once they had completed this pre-writing activity, pupils had to write their e-mails following their tables. When they had finished, in pairs, they exchanged their e-mails and each member had to correct their partner's e-mail, and provide them with some feedback. I decided to include peer-assessment because I think it is useful in order to promote maturity and ability to assess with valid criteria to the students.

- **Sixth session:** In this, a test review of the unit was made. Students had 50 minutes to complete the text that consisted of a written and an oral part. The written part had to be done individually and it was made up of some grammar and vocabulary exercises. On the other hand, the oral part was made in pairs and it was related to contents seen in the unit. There were two possibilities for the students: a role-play based on neighbours' relationships and an imaginary situation related to natural disasters. Once each pair had decided they had to perform the role-play or discuss about natural disasters for 5 minutes. This oral part was carried out while students were finishing the written part. I decided to include an oral exam because I cannot understand why English teachers do not add an oral test to their lessons. Languages are studied in order to be able to communicate with them, and students are not tested about it. It is

incomprehensible. As I learnt in the subject of *Diseño, Organización y Desarrollo de Actividades para la Enseñanza del Inglés,* "the goal of teachers who use Communicative Language Teaching is to enable students to communicate in the target language and the role of the teacher is to facilitate communication in the classroom".(Larsen-Freeman, and Anderson, 2011: 78).

- ❖ **Evaluation of Teaching.** Apart from planning lessons and preparing classes, teachers have always to evaluate their teaching and the tools they use. Teachers' job is not only to evaluate students, but also to evaluate themselves. In my opinion, this process is really important since not always what it is clear for us is also clear for the rest, so, in many occasions, teachers do not really give good lessons or they could do it better if they received some feedback. That is why, in order to improve teaching, it is advisable to let the students assess the labor of the teacher. Likewise, teachers should undergo a process of self-assessment, evaluating their own work. What I did in order to get mine, was to create a questionnaire for the students in which they evaluated some aspects of my work as teacher and another different questionnaire for self-assessment. I found them really interesting and useful in order to improve some aspects of my teaching which I considered they were right, but once I read the students' answers, I realized that they were not, and they also were useful for me to be aware of the things that my students liked about me as teacher the most.

- ❖ **Attention to diversity.** As I had no student with special needs in my classes, I did not use much time to complete this part of the learning unit. I only let it clear that in case of having students which presented a noticeable higher or lower level, I would incorporate some other adapted exercises in order to help them to achieve the same as the other partners.

- ❖ **Conclusions.** I also decided to add a last section titled 'conclusions'. In this section, I gathered the conclusions draw once I finished putting in practice my learning unit with the two different groups of students I had. I will comment on them in the next part of my dissertation devoted to conclusions and proposals for improvement. For now, I would like to point out that it is amazing how the same activities can provoke such different responses by students of the same age.

3.2: Research project: *How Pronunciation is Taught in Different Educational Schools*

The research Project was designed for the second-term subject *Evaluación e Innovación Docente e Investigación Educativa en el Ámbito de la Especialidad del Inglés.* "Research is an exploration of experience of one kind or another, sometimes formal and technical, but not necessarily so. A good way of understanding the nature of research is to first experience it by doing it". (Brown and Rodgers 2002:3). Doing research and knowing what to study on that research is not a simple task. One has to think carefully about a topic of interest before doing research and, as Brown and Rodgers (ibid:3) say, the only way to know the nature of research is by doing it, practice. I wrote my research

project with two other classmates, Eva Brinquis and María Cuello. We decided to do it together because all of us were very interested on the topic we chose after our school placements in different types of schools. The topic we chose to investigate was *How Pronunciation is Taught in Different Educational Schools.* We three considered pronunciation a crucial issue when learning a language and especially in the case of English. Besides, we consider that pronunciation is frequently forgotten and disregarded in Spanish schools, and hardly any teacher tries to focus on this aspect. As I mentioned before, we thought that the fact of doing our school placements in different sorts of schools could help us to get wider and more accurate results in our research project. It was the first time that we wrote a research report and for this reason we decided to follow the structure of traditional research projects which appears in Brown and Rodgers (2002) paper 'Doing Second Language Research' and which includes the following sections:

❖ **Introduction.** All good projecst has to include a good introduction which provides the readers with general information about the focus of attention of the project, its aims, the way in which information is presented, etc. Bearing in mind the importance of coherence and clarity, we organized the introduction in two parts:

▪ **Literature review.** Firstly, we provided the background of pronunciation, the area of research. For that, we made use of a lot of the literature on the subject and specially on that referring to the role of the communicative approach in teaching languages. We showed how the great majority of approaches to teaching languages did not take into account communication in general and pronunciation in particular. The exception was the communicative approach, which seems to be at present the preferred to teach English. This new way of teaching languages implanted the idea of the supra-segmental features being even more important than the segmental ones. It is the first time in history that supra-segmental features are considered so important. Nowadays, the topic of pronunciation continues being questioned and is considered to be taken into account to be worked in an integrated way during the lessons. However, we are conscious of the various difficulties that Spanish learners encounter with pronunciation, and apart from this, it is not really worked in class-rooms, as we suspected and could realize during our school placements.

▪ **Purpose:** The second part of the introduction deals with the purpose we have for carrying out this research in this topic, and not in another one. The main purpose for us to work on this topic was that the three of us really liked the topic of pronunciation and consider it to be extremely important when learning a language. Moreover, we as beginner teachers and also as students are aware of the problem which Spanish learners have when learning English. Spanish people get ashamed when having to talk in a different language which delays the learning process. In order to study the different ways in which pronunciation is taught in Spanish Centers, we analyzed our experience in the three schools in which we did our school placements, the charter school *María Auxiliadora*, the state school *Pilar Lorengar* and the Official School of Languages *Fernando Lázaro Carreter.* The fact of being different types of schools allowed us to extrapolate the conclusions.

❖ **Methods.** The second section of the project presented the participants and the materials and the procedures applied in the process of collecting data.

▪ **Participants:** We took a sample of five groups from the different schools we attended during our school placements. From the charter school *María Auxiliadora* we chose a 24- student group of 2nd year ESO and another of 13 students of diversification from 4th year ESO. From the state secondary school *Pilar Lorengar,* we chose an 18-student group one group of 3rd year ESO and from the Official School of Languages we chose two groups of an upper-intermediate level of a total of 25 students. It was a wide sample of students from different ages and levels. On the one hand, we had a sample of 14 and 15 year-sold students, who are in their adolescence and, on the other hand we had some samples of more mature students.

▪ **Materials.** For our research, we created two different questionnaires, one for the students and another for our mentors and other English teachers. The questionnaire aimed at the students was made up of 9 questions focused on the importance of pronunciation in the subject of English, the role of teachers and their own role to improve it, their motivation to learn the language and its pronunciation, the reasons why they were afraid of speaking in English and their self-assessment of the measures taken to improve English pronunciation. The questionnaires aimed for the teachers were consisted of 8 questions dealing with the methods used to teach pronunciation, the use of RP and other varieties of English during the lessons, the effectiveness of the materials used to teach pronunciation, the devices and strategies that the teachers use to improve the pronunciation of students and the suggestion of ideas to get a more effective learning and solve the problems and difficulties the students find in pronunciation. We decided to write the questions in Spanish in order to facilitate the communication with the students. We also decided to include open questions to let students express themselves and give their opinions freely. Apart from the use of questionnaires, we also observed the way in which our mentors introduced pronunciation in their lessons to assess which aspects we would change, omit or include in our future.

▪ **Procedures.** As the members of the group were doing their school placement in different centres, we followed different procedures although the process was similar in each centre. Firstly, we explained the groups that we were going to hand in some questionnaires related to the topic of English pronunciation and that they had to be honest when they were completing them. Then, we handed in the questionnaires and waited for students to complete them, solving any possible doubts with the questions. After having finished our school placements, the three members of the group met and contributed with the data we had acquired.

❖ **Results.** After having finished our school placements, the three members of the group met and put in common the data obtained**.** The results based on the answers of the questionnaires and our observations were reflected in this section of the project. The students' results were classified taking into consideration the type of the school and the age of the students. Among the results, we found that

the vast majority of students were aware of the importance of pronunciation and that they strongly thought that they were not carefully instructed. I was really positively shocked by the first general result because I previously thought that students did not realize how important English was all over the world and how important good pronunciation is in order to be understood. However, after revising the results of the questionnaires, I observed that students, no matter their age, did consider English important and relevant in their lives, above all in terms of the labor market and in the communication with other people.

In addition, the youngest students, those who were in the 2nd year and 3rd year of ESO, considered their pronunciation to be quite good, ranging their marks from 3 to 4 over 5, which is not very reliable. However, the students in the official school of languages were more realistic and they were not so optimistic in the enquires ranging their marks from 1 to 3. We thought that this fact could be related to their ages and, consequently, to their maturity.

Generally speaking, students considered that more time in teaching pronunciation should be invested and that a new methodology which provided pronunciation with a higher status should be also used. Students thought that a good way of learning pronunciation would be by using real materials taken from daily life like songs or films.

An interesting result was that many students answered that they would not do anything in order to improve English. We did not know if it was because they considered that they were proficiency enough in these terms or because they were not interested in English language at all and improve their pronunciation.

The three members of the group think that Spanish people usually have an overdeveloped sense of ridiculous that makes their language learning more difficult. Students admitted that this fear was one of the main problem and they would have to cope with it to avoid pronunciation errors.

With regard to our mentors' and teachers' results, they opted for the variety of RP in the centres. Nevertheless, other varieties were also used in the official school of languages. In general terms, our mentors thought that the pronunciation exercises from the textbooks were not enough and they had to add extra materials if they wanted to teach some pronunciation skills. However, they also thought that the included exercises were at least efficient.

Our mentors and teachers agreed that the high number of students per class and the lack of time are the main problems they confront. Consequently, they claimed smaller groups for the English lessons and longer sessions in order to offer a more individualized attention to students. Besides, teachers attributed the pitfall of improving pronunciation to shyness, in the case of adults, and to the lack of interest, in the case of teenagers.

- ❖ **Discussion.**   Throughout this section, we explained the results obtained from the questionnaire. Thus, we observed that although the centres have different ways of teaching pronunciation, there were some identical methods such as drilling and the explanation of the English phonemes. The majority of those

polled thought that pronunciation is a failure because the number of students per class is too high and the English lessons are not long enough, .including direct answers to the research questions that I mentioned before.

After having analyzed the questionnaires and the results, what we as future teachers would propose was to prolong the sessions' duration, being lessons of 90' or 120' and to make smaller groups of students. We would also propose the publishing companies to include more phonetic exercises. Finally, we would also include new resources such as *The Pronunciation Booklet* in order to make the students know about the different phonemes. It would also be advisable to count on a native speaker to whom the students could practice some speaking activities for at least 30'.

- ❖ **Conclusions.** This part of the research report was made up of a discussion of the theoretical and practical implications of the study as well as the limitations we had when putting it into practice; and some suggestions for future research. The general problem that we found was that pronunciation occupied a marginal position. Our mentors focused much more on grammar and vocabulary than in pronunciation or speaking skills. Moreover, the demotivation of students and the high number of them per class also impeded the pronunciation learning. Taking into account all the problems, we proposed to prepare sessions focused only on pronunciation. It would also be interesting to create a *Pronunciation Booklet* in class. Students would create a pronunciation dictionary by adding words seen in class and classifying them in sections depending on their phonemes. Every day, they would have to write down at least five words with the same phonemes. Then, the students could share their booklets with other classmates so as to have more words. At the end of the month, those students who have the pronunciation booklet more complete get an extra point in the exam. By means of it, students would be more motivated to get the extra point. Others things that could contribute to learning pronunciation would be to create specific courses out the lessons to provide students with other methods to study English pronunciation; and to do pronunciation exams to evaluate specific aspects of the pronunciation.

- ❖ **References:** In this section we included all the bibliography we used in order to write our research project.

- ❖ **Apendixes:** The two different questionnaires created for teachers and students were included in this part of the project.

- ❖ **Graphs:** To finish with our report, we added the graphs which showed more clearly the different results of the students' questionnaires.

Overall, I found these two projects extremely important and relevant for my labor as a teacher. A learning unit is indispensable for teachers of any subject in order to plan their lessons, their activities and the time they will need. Despite the fact of being a non-

extremely exact plan, because of time and context factors, good teachers should always have a planning in which they base their classes. On the other hand, the research project has also a high importance for teachers and people who dedicate their lives to education should do research in order to improve it. It is known that the educational system of Spain is not in its best moment. It has always been casted doubt on and these days the situation has got to the worst. For this reason, I strongly think that every person who is involved in educational purposes should do research about many aspects of it. We chose the topic of pronunciation because we thought that it is a disregarded topic in terms of English teaching in the country, and that it has been pushed into the background despite its importance.

Although these two projects are different pieces of work for different subjects in the master, they share some characteristics. What I have most learnt from this master is that we, as future teachers, should not focus our lessons on talking all the time and making students write what we say. We should not rely on the traditional teacher-centred approach. The teaching-learning process of English should be focused on a communicative approach because the purpose of learning a language is to be able to communicate in a different language. English teachers should be interested in making their students talk in English, listen into English, write in English. For this reason, our aim as teachers should be to center our lessons on students and to let them participate. In fact,:

"There are three broadly categories of teachers: The explainer, teachers who know how to explain very well, but have limited knowledge of teaching methodology. The involver, this kind of teacher knows the contents but also how to teach methodology and involve students in the learning-process and The enabler, who knows about the subject-matter and how to teach methodology, but also has an awareness on how individuals and groups are thinking and feeling within the class" (Scrivener, 1994: 6)

I decided to take the role of the third kind of teacher, the enabler one, because I consider that it is the most complete one. This kind of teacher enables the students to learn for themselves. Sometimes, this involves to teach in a more or less traditional way, but also to become a guide to give information to the students when needed, and to let them construct their own learning-process. Therefore, I included a lot of communicative and oral exercises in my lesson plan in order to encourage students to participate in the class. I am conscious of the difficulties that this goal entails. That is why teachers should guide their students in their way to acquire their goal which is learning English. I also consider that in order to talk in English and to be competent in the language, students must know some grammatical structures and vocabulary. The problem is all this has always been associated with the ancient Grammar-Translation method, which was boring for the students. In my future, I would like my students to have a solid grammar as well as a good preparation in communication.

For all these reasons, I tried to connect my two projects chosen for this dissertation, the learning unit and the research report. As I pointed out, the lack of importance of pronunciation in class led me to think about the possibility of using more communicative and speaking activities. That is why I included so many activities of this sort in my learning unit. Although we worked on other skills like reading in the fourth session, I also made some pre or post reading activities in which students had to talk and express themselves in English, with activities like that in which students had to talk about possible ways of helping charities and people in the world. I am conscious that speaking activities are not limited to pronunciation, but, as I said before the way of

improving pronunciation is talking in English as much as possible. Consequently, I consider that my oral activities are a good way of improving pronunciation. Besides, when I took my school placements, I realized that students did not talk in English at all, and what is more, they did not do any oral exercise in the subject. I considered it absolutely nonsensical if we focus on the main goal of learning a language. For this reason, I decided to include communicative activities in order to let the students face and overcome their fears. All my lessons had some activities in which speaking and communication were the main goals. In session one, after listening to John Lennon's song, students had to discuss some questions in groups of three people, and then they had to comment on their ideas with the rest of the class. In session two, in spite of being a more grammatical class, students had to talk about imaginary situations in which they were involved in some natural disasters, and they had to say what they would do in each case. In session number three pupils did a great communicative activity in which they had to acquire different role-plays and had to create a dialogue to reproduce it in front of the class. In session number four, as I mentioned before, they had to talk about different ways of helping charities and people all over the world. In session number five, apart from having to give some feedback to their partners about the e-mails created, they had to tell them their mistakes and explain their corrections and, of course, all this had to be done in English. Finally, in session six which corresponded to the unit test, there was an oral exam in which students had to show their comprehension and ability to talk about topics previously seen in class.

4. <u>CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE PROPOSALS</u>

As it could be observed, my project was completely designed with the aim of encouraging students to talk and express themselves in English, apart from learning English structures. My goal as a language teacher was centered on making students aware of the importance of communicating in a different language. I wanted my students to overcome all their fears concerning speaking in English, and I also wanted to change the fossilized thought of learning a language as if they were learning History. Thus, I followed the nowadays Communicate Approach of languages, which states that "being able to communicate requires more than linguistic competence, it requires communicative competence". Consequently, what I tried to do as a teacher was to encourage them to be competent in communicative terms, giving them possible contexts related to the topic studied, in which students could develop their oral and communicative strategies.

As I implemented my learning unit with two different groups of the same level, the results of the activities I prepared were not the same. Although the two groups were in the same year, they were completely different in character. The class of 3rd year ESO, group A, was an extremely shy group generally speaking. On the contrary, the class of 3rd year ESO, group B, was characterized by their open-minded and talkative temperament. Consequently, their responses were not the same in the activities. I wanted them all to work on the same skills with the same activities without taking into account the shyness of some of the students. That is why the group A was really ashamed when having to face an oral activity and my unit was full of them. On the contrary, when we did more traditional activities such as the grammatical sheet on session two, they felt comfortable and they did not have any problems with filling it, but, when they were asked to do any communicative activity, they changed their faces and found several difficulties that actually were excuses for not doing the exercises. However, my experience was completely different with the group B. As I already mentioned, they were a really cheerful and happy group. It was really easy to work with them in oral exercises. They enjoyed them and they did even more than I asked them to do, so I was very satisfied with their effort.

I am conscious of the difficulties that some students encounter when having to express themselves in another language as they are not used to. However, I strongly think and recommend language teachers that it is highly important to make students feel comfortable and look oral activities as something positive and common in a language subject. Thus, although my students from group A felt no really comfortable with this sort of activities, I tried to encourage them by giving some ideas of what they could add and I tried to create a relaxed and familiar atmosphere in class to make communication easier.

Concerning the future proposals related to my learning unit, the most relevant for me would be to change teachers' and students' mind in the sense of having a different concept of what learning a language means. In order to get it, I would substitute the traditional approach that many English teachers continue using in class by a communicative approach in which the oral activities and the improvement of communicative competence were the main goal to achieve. Moreover, I would change

the students' minds concerning the learning of English by getting them used to doing these sorts of activities since the beginning of their process of learning English.

Regarding the conclusions and future proposals I could conclude after this Master and my implementation of the learning unit that students were conscious of the importance of English and pronouncing it correctly in order to be well-understood, but they did not really want to do much for improving it. It could be due to the habit of many teachers of using traditional and boring methods to teach English. Students seemed to be demotivated and it is the worst characteristic when learning a language. Because of this, I would include new methodologies in order to teach languages in general and English in particular. One example of these methodologies would be **creating a "pronunciation booklet"** in classroom. Students would have to create a pronunciation dictionary adding words seen in class and classifying them in sections depending on the phonemes. Every day, they would have to write down at least 5 words with the same phoneme in the booklet. Then, the students could share their booklets with other classmates so as to have more words. At the end of the month, those students who had the pronunciation booklet more complete would get an extra point in the exam. I think that this is a good tool in order to make students know about the different phonemes and its pronunciation and at the same time, they could get motivated because they could get an extra point.

Secondly, students affirmed that they were not instructed enough in pronunciation terms and teachers also stated that pronunciation and oral activities were not the main focus of their lessons. Teachers complained in the questionnaires about the lack of time and consequently I would recommend to **extend the time of the English sessions** because I consider that they are now too narrow in order to be able to focus on all the necessary skills for learning a language. That is why I would propose to lengthen the sessions to 90' or 120', as the official schools of languages do, in order to include communicative and pronunciation-centered activities. Apart from this measure, I would also include **oral tests** to evaluate aspects specifically related to pronunciation and to the ability of communicating in English, as the actual exams only focus on grammar and vocabulary. Finally, I would include **native speakers** to give communicative lessons of about 30' in order to make students to get used to listening to a native accent and to be aware of the importance of communicating in English.

In order to conclude, I would also like to express some conclusions related to the master. I consider that I have learnt several concepts and relevant aspects related to education and teaching languages that I did not know before or that, at least, I disregarded. To be honest, I did not know almost anything about the Communicative Approach and what this concept meant. I did not know anything about multiple intelligences and the importance of doing research in some educational aspects in order to improve many of the actual situation of education. To sum up, it is undeniable that I have learnt a lot of useful aspects concerning my future as an English teacher, and for this reason I am extremely proud of having had the opportunity of studying it. However, if I studied it again or if I could change some features of it. I would change the dates in which we took our school placements II and III. We had little time to learn some relevant aspects to put them in practice and we had to hurry in order to learn everything. Even though, when we finished the placements, we came back to lessons to watch our partners learning units' presentations. For this reason, I would change the date of the school placements, and I would delay them in order to have more time to learn the

theory we should apply in them. Moreover, I would also modify the aspects related to the organization of our learning units' presentations. I consider it very boring to listen to all our partners' presentations. I think that all were really worth of seeing, but to be honest, I also think that this was an extremely boring task. We were more or less 50 students and we all had to listen to everyone. What I would do instead is to organize the class into groups and establish one or two sessions per each group in order to present their units and, at the same time, watch the others' presentations. In this way, we all would not been so fed up with presentations, and we could have taken more advantage of them.

I would also like to say that, after having attended this Master and after having acquired so many useful education concepts, I am now sure that I really want to be an English teacher because I love this language and what is more, I love teaching. This Master gave me the chance of being an English teacher for some weeks, and I could make my dream of being a teacher true. Moreover, I could confirm that my students understood what I tried to transmit to them and I was so glad and satisfied that I would like to be a real teacher as soon as possible. I appreciate the feedback given by my Master's teachers and the contents learnt in, and I am conscious of the importance of continuous learning for being a better teacher in the future.

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6. ANNEXES