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TEACHING DISCOURSE MARKERS TO EFL PRIMARY EDUCATION STUDENTS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	5
1.1 THE EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT	5
2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	7
2.1 THE INPUT HYPOTHESIS.....	7
2.2 THE INTERACTION HYPOTHESIS	9
2.3 PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE.....	12
2.4 TASK-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING	14
2.5 DISCOURSE MARKERS	17
2.6 RESEARCH CONDUCTED ON DISCOURSE MARKERS	18
2.7 PURPOSE OF THE PROPOSAL	20
3. TEACHING PROPOSAL.....	21
3.1 OBJECTIVES.....	21
3.2 RELATION WITH THE CURRICULUM.....	21
3.3 METHODOLOGY	28
3.4 FIRST SESSION.....	29
3.5 SECOND SESSION	31
3.6 THIRD SESSION.....	33
3.7 FOURTH SESSION	35
3.8 FIFTH SESSION.....	37
3.9 ASSESSMENT.....	38
4. EXPECTED RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS.....	40
REFERENCES	41
APPENDICES	45
APPENDIX 1: INTRODUCTION.....	45
APPENDIX 2: FLASHCARDS	46
APPENDIX 3: SONG : ‘JUST THE WAY YOU ARE’	50

APPENDIX 4: CONVERSATIONS.....	54
APPENDIX 5: SPOT THE DIFFERENCES.....	55
APPENDIX 6: MIKE THE KNIGHT.....	57
APPENDIX 7: COLLABORATIVE DRAWING.....	58
APPENDIX 8: WRITING A COMIC.....	61
APPENDIX 9: THE TREASURE MOUNTAIN.....	63
APPENDIX 10: MY COLLECTION OF DISCOURSE MARKERS.....	66
APPENDIX 11: EVALUATION SHEET.....	68
APPENDIX 12: TEACHER’S SELF-EVALUATION.....	69
AUDIOVISUAL APPENDICES.....	70
AUDIOVISUAL APPENDIX 1: DISCOURSE MARKERS INTRODUCTION:	70
AUDIOVISUAL APPENDIX 2: JUST THE WAY YOU ARE:	70
AUDIOVISUAL APPENDIX 3: MIKE THE KNIGHT, SQUIRT’S STORY.....	70

1. INTRODUCTION

Students of English as a foreign language in primary schools usually have problems with their communicative competence. The activities they do in the English classroom do not allow them to gain fluency in their speech and are more directed to improve grammar and vocabulary, focusing more on the written channel. As a consequence, their speech is very schematic and students have several problems to establish coherent and fluent conversations among them using the English language.

The following teaching proposal pretends to demonstrate if the acquisition and use of discourse markers helps student to acquire fluency and coherence in their speech and their ability for understanding information raises. It also pretends to help students to develop communicative competence and improve their English language knowledge.

1.1 THE EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

The following teaching proposal is thought to be implemented in a primary school named Pare Melchor. CEIP Pare Melchor is located in Benissa (Spain). The school is divided in two buildings: one for primary education, and the other for pre-primary education, both separated by 200 meters. The city has 12.500 inhabitants and two primary schools. This school is in the old zone of the city, so students mainly come from its native families. During the last decade, the city has received a large number of immigrants, but due to the economic crisis and the closure of several workplaces, many immigrant families have left the city.

The socioeconomic level of families has been medium-high during the last years. Now, there are many more families with economical problems and this situation also affects the students. The education of families is medium-high level, so almost all the parents of the students have studies, and some have also studied at university. The majority of the families are involved actively with the education of their children and are willing to help them with their studies.

The school has 462 students and 33 teachers. There are 13 groups for primary education and nine for childhood education. Only 8% of the students are foreigners. They are from Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, China, Germany, Morocco, Romania, Ukraine, Peru and Belgium.

Although not being a new building, the school is equipped with new technological facilities and has lots of resources. There are new digital boards in each class and a laptop in each one. In the school there is a gym, an audio visual room, a computer room, a lab, an English class, a Music class, a library, a staff room, a canteen and a big playground.

The present teaching proposal is thought to be implemented with students involve in their sixth year of primary education (11 years old). The school has got two different groups of this grade, with 25 pupils in each group. The sample of the teaching proposal will be 21 boys and 29 girls, all of them aged 11, who have been studying English as a foreign language since they were 4 years old. The vast majority of the population is Spanish (45) and there are also people from Ecuador (2), Morocco (2) and Romania (1); although all of them have started their educational process in Spain and are integrated in the city as natives.

They have got English lessons three hours per week, but they have not got English language input out of the school, despite of those who go to English language academies (18%). Despite of having been studying English during 6 or 7 years, the level of the group in general is lower-intermediate, with few special cases where the level is low.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The following teaching proposal is related to the acquisition of English as a foreign language and deals with interaction theories, pragmatics (specifically discourse markers), the importance of receiving real and comprehensible input to acquire a language and the use of tasks in foreign language teaching; all based on the theoretical contents of the Màster Universitari en Ensenyament i Adquisició de la Llengua Anglesa en Contextos Multilingües. The subjects of the master that deals with the contents addressed in this work are: Theories about the acquisition of English as a second language, on which we refer when we speak about the input hypothesis and the importance of receiving comprehensible and real input; Pragmatic competence, essential to deeper into discourse markers and all the pragmatic content that they involves; and Discursive perspectives on the acquisition of English, in order to deal with hypothesis related with interaction and make use of tasks in the classroom to acquire a foreign language.

Investigations on the field of discourse markers have been demonstrated that their acquisition and their use help learners to acquire communicative competence and results show an improvement on the foreign language of the students after have been working with these linguistic forms, helping them to gain fluency and coherence in their use of the target language.

2.1 THE INPUT HYPOTHESIS

Krashen's input hypothesis attempts to understand how people acquire language. Krashen defined a learner's current state of knowledge of a language as 'i' and the next stage as 'i + 1'. Second languages are acquired 'by understanding messages or by receiving "comprehensible input"' (Krashen, 1985: 2). It means that a person acquiring a language who is at 'level i' needs to receive comprehensible input, which is the 'level i + 1'.

It exists a necessary condition, although there is not enough, to move from level i to i + 1. The acquirer must understand input that contains i + 1. Here, the word 'understand' refers to focus on the meaning rather than the form of the message. Krashen states that language is acquired by meaning first and, as a result, structures are acquired.

We are able to understand language containing unacquired grammar with the help of context, which includes extra-linguistic information, our knowledge of the world, and previously acquired linguistic competence. (Krashen, 1985: 2).

Language is only understood when it contains a structure that is slightly ahead of our current state of grammatical knowledge. It is possible to understand new structures because we use more than our linguistic competence to help us to understand—often using the concepts introduced by Krashen (1985). In acquisition, using language structures that a learner already knows has no purpose as no acquisition of new structures takes place. In the same way, language structures that are far away from the grammatical knowledge of a learner are not useful, as it will be impossible to establish any connection between the current knowledge and the new structures; instead, they will simply be noise in the system.

For success in language acquisition, the input provided to the acquirer first needs not being only centred in containing $i + 1$. This requires that communication works successfully to provide $i + 1$ —in other words, when there is enough quantity of input and this input is understood, $i + 1$ will be provided automatically. It is a natural process, so the teacher should not provide input and should only attempt to deliberate the aim at $i + 1$. It is also impossible to teach fluency directly. Providing comprehensible input is the only way that speaking emerges—which is to say, on its own. Early speech will take place only when the student feels ready to start. At the beginning, it will not be grammatically accurate, as accuracy will come with hearing and understanding more quantity of input. These implications for the classroom are clearly reflected in Krashen's work (1985: 2):

- a) Speaking is a result of acquisition and not its cause. Speech cannot be taught directly but “emerges” on its own as a result of building competence via comprehensible input.
- b) If input is understood, and there is enough of it, the necessary grammar is automatically provided. The language teacher need not attempt deliberately to teach the next structure along the natural order – it will be provided in just the right quantities and automatically reviewed if the student receives a sufficient amount of comprehensible input.

Krashen assumes an internal language processor, Chomsky's Language acquisition Device (LAD), which is an innate mental structure that, with the exposure of comprehensible input, is activated and allows people to generate language rules. There is evidence that people differ in many ways and that it affects the acquisition of knowledge, although there are some things that we do and acquire in the same way.

Chomsky (1975) suggests that the language acquisition device operates the same way in everyone. The evidence for the input hypothesis supports this position and extends it to the acquisition of a second language.

In order to summarize input hypothesis, Krashen (1982: 21-22) states four basic parts of the hypothesis:

- (1) The input hypothesis relates to acquisition, not learning.
- (2) We acquire by understanding language that contains structure a bit beyond our current level of competence ($i + 1$). This is done with the help of context or extra-linguistic information.
- (3) When communication is successful, when the input is understood and there is enough of it, $i + 1$ will be provided automatically.
- (4) Production ability emerges. It is not taught directly.

2.2 THE INTERACTION HYPOTHESIS

In communication, learners and interlocutors together make efforts to deal with communicative difficulties that appear as a result of a learner's limitations in the target language. Hatch (1978) and Long (1980) proposed that learners and interlocutors negotiate the meaning of their messages by modifying and restructuring their messages in order to achieve mutual understanding. This is known as the negotiation of meaning. From this negotiation, learners can comprehend words and grammatical structures which are more complex than their level of competence and then incorporate them into their current knowledge of the language. It has been hypothesised that negotiation makes input comprehensible and, in this way, promotes second language acquisition. Authors have claimed that interactional modification is the main mechanism which allows comprehension. Hatch (1987: 403) argued that it was a necessary explanation of the process of second language acquisition, so she proposed a shift towards conversational analysis to explain how children learn a language:

It is not enough to look at input and to look at frequency; the important thing is to look at the corpus as a whole and examine the interactions that take place within conversations to see how the interaction, itself, determines frequency of forms and how it shows language functions evolving.

The Interaction Hypothesis initially proposed that comprehensible input promotes acquisition when the less competent speaker provides feedback on his/her lack of comprehension (Long, 1983). Additionally, Long (1996; cited in Gass, 2008: 234-235) used the following words to define the Interaction Hypothesis:

[...] negotiation for meaning, and especially negotiation work that triggers interactional adjustments by the native speaker or more competent interlocutor, facilitates acquisition because it connects input, internal learner capacities, particularly selective attention, and output in productive ways.

[...] it is proposed that environmental contributors to acquisition are mediated by selective attention and the learner's developing L2 processing capacity, and that these resources are brought together most usefully, although not exclusively, during negotiation for meaning. Negative feedback obtained during negotiation work or elsewhere may be facilitative of L2 development, at least for vocabulary, morphology, and language-specific syntax, and essential for learning certain specifiable L1-L2 contrasts.

Through negotiation, learners can realise the discrepancies between their knowledge of the language and the reality with regard to the target language, or acquire new knowledge of the language in an area about which they had no previous information. Interaction facilitates acquisition because of the conversational and linguistic modifications that occur during the discourse.

The Interaction Hypothesis suggests that interaction provides opportunities for negotiation and it contributes to language acquisition. Pica (1992, 1994) proposed three principal ways in which the negotiation of meaning helps language learners. First, negotiation facilitates comprehension, when the conversational modifications that appear through negotiation divide the input into units that learners can process more easily. Second, negotiation provides feedback on learners' use of the language and helps them to reformulate what they think they meant by the attempts of more competent speakers to provide specific feedback on the problem. Finally, negotiation allows learners to adjust and modify their own output and learners are pushed to produce more comprehensible output.

Swain (1995) stated that learners have opportunities to understand and use the language that was incomprehensible through interaction. They also receive more or different input and have more opportunities to produce output through interaction. Gass (1997) noticed that the effects of interaction may not be immediate in language acquisition. Acquisition may take place during interaction or it may be an initial step, putting an emphasis on examining delayed developmental effects of interaction.

In order to understand the main principles of Long's Interaction Hypothesis (1985), it can be summarised into three steps that clearly show the arguments upon which the hypothesis is based:

1. When interactional modifications lead to comprehensible input, acquisition is facilitated.
2. When learners receive feedback, acquisition is facilitated.
3. When learners are pushed to reformulate their own utterances, acquisition is promoted.

The treatment of linguistic form in the context of performing a communicative task refers to a particular type of form-focused instruction named ‘focus on form’ instruction. Long (1996; cited in Alcón & García Mayo, 2008: 3) described focus on form instruction as:

...interactional moves directed at raising learner awareness of forms by briefly drawing students’ attention to linguistic elements (words, collocations, grammatical structures, pragmatic patterns and so on), in context, as they arise incidentally in lessons whose overriding focus is on meaning, or communication.

Meaning is the centre of attention in focus on form instruction. The attention to form arises from a communicative task, when students have to focus their attention on linguistic forms. Two types of focus on form instruction can be distinguished: planned focus on form and incidental focus on form (Ellis et al., 2002). Planned focus on form involves the use of focused tasks such as communicative tasks designed to elicit specific forms in the context of meaning-centred language use. Then, the focus on form is predetermined, for instance, with tasks that promote learners’ use of the prepositions ‘at’ and ‘in’ by comparing pictures. Planned focus on form instruction differs from traditional grammar instruction because the attention to form takes place in interaction where the main focus is meaning, and learners are not conscious that a specific form is targeted and that they are expected to act as language users more than learners. Incidental focus on form involves the use of unfocused tasks such as communicative tasks designed to elicit general samples of the language rather than specific forms. Communicative tasks are used in both types of focus on form instruction but, in planned focus on form, the teacher selects a task to practise a specific language feature while, in incidental focus on form, the forms attended appear naturally out of the performance of the task.

Incidental focus on form could be reactive or pre-emptive. Reactive focus on form involves the treatment of the errors committed by the learners. The interlocutor

reacts to learner erroneous utterances and provides corrective feedback, implicit or explicit. Pre-emptive focus on form consists of attempts by the teacher or the student to make a linguistic form the topic of the conversation.

2.3 PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE

In order to be communicative and competent in a second language, a learner needs to know more than grammar. Communicative competence approaches give importance to functional abilities such as producing language appropriately depending on the situation and according to specific socio-cultural factors. When teaching a language, components such as vocabulary or grammar can be taught as structured and isolated when referring to the interlocutors, pragmatics cannot. The interpersonal nature of pragmatics is what separates it from syntax or semantics. According to the definitions of pragmatics stated in O'Keefe (2011: 137), Leech (1983) and Kasper and Rose (2001) describe pragmatics as 'the study of the way the speakers and writers have to get things done while at the same time attending to the relationships they have with others'. On the other hand, Celce-Murcia and Olshtain (2000) define pragmatic competence as 'a set of internalised rules of how to use language in socio-culturally appropriate ways, taking into account the participants in a communicative interaction and features of the context within which the interaction takes place'.

Studies about the effectiveness of teaching pragmatics in the language classroom have showed that instruction is both, necessary and effective. It has been also demonstrated that an explicit and deductive instruction, combined with ample practice opportunities, is more effective in teaching pragmatics than an implicit and inductive instruction.

Instruction versus non-instruction studies have demonstrated a clear advantage for instruction. Studies show that pragmatic features are teachable and, without instruction, English learners turn to their mother tongue background and pragmatic differences increases until the point that so much misunderstandings between non native speakers and native speakers occurs, due to pragmatic language transfers. Cultural pragmatics misunderstandings could also make that non native speakers seem rude or insincere.

In order to acquire pragmatic competence is not enough with a simple exposure to the target language. Another point to consider is that pragmatic competence is not

developed in conjunction with grammatical competence, so a good level of grammatical competence does not equal to a good level of pragmatic competence. In this way, the importance of teaching pragmatics is supported by the need and the effectiveness of doing.

In recent studies in the field of teaching pragmatics, Takimoto (2009: 22) claimed that ‘effective learning occurs when the tasks provide learners opportunities for processing both pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic features of the target structures’. Kasper and Roever (2005: 317-318) made the following definition of sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic competence:

‘Sociopragmatic competence encompasses knowledge of the relationship between communicative action power, social distance, and the imposition associated with a past or future event (Brown & Levinson, 1987), knowledge of mutual rights and obligations, taboos and conventional practices (Thomas, 1983), or quite generally, the social conditions and consequences of “what you do, when and to whom” (Fraser, Rintell & Walters, 1981). [...] Hence, pragmalinguistic competence comprises the knowledge and ability for use of conventions of means (such as the strategies for realizing speech acts) and conventions of forms (such as the linguistic forms implementing speech act strategies) (Clark, 1979; Thomas, 1983)’.

Bardovi-Harling and Mahan-Taylor (2003; cited in O’Keefe, 2011: 141) proposed three key practices when teaching pragmatics to second language learners:

- (1) The use of authentic language samples;
- (2) input first followed by interpretation and/or production; and
- (3) the introduction of the teaching of pragmatics at early levels.

The development of pragmatics should be an incremental process, which need to be started with a solid basis or simple strategies and structures, and incrementing the level of the pragmatic competence by the time with more complex knowledge. Short-term goals have to be to give students a basis to be competent when communicating in pragmatic terms, and the long-term goals should be to expand the pragmatic competence from this basis to the acquisition of a more sophisticated level, so that the language learner could be pragmatically competent in any communicative situation.

When teaching pragmatics, it is important that learners acquire the concept and the different grades of politeness. Kasper (2006, cited in Salazar et al., 2009: 140) defined politeness as ‘a form of linguistic behaviour which is conceptualized as a dependent variable determined by the values of the context’. Despite of the norms involving politeness, what really determines what is polite or impolite are the

participants of the interaction. Social rules determine the appropriateness of politeness, but 'politeness scales' could vary across cultures and speech communities. This intuitive level of politeness in pragmatics also takes place in language classes. It is important for learner to be able to develop noticing pragmatic strategies and to identify what constitutes the language of politeness.

Politeness in English is seen in two ways: positive politeness, which means that we show people that we have respect and value them; and negative politeness, what makes what we say or write less direct in order not to seem too forceful. The words we say or write to address someone are very important in interaction. Depending on the relationship between the interlocutors or the context, we need to know how to show respect to readers or listeners in an appropriate way being sensitive to those variables. In the same way, depending on the same variables, the directness we use to address to others is also important to maintain an appropriate grade of politeness.

This proposal tries to develop communicative competence in ESL students, from a pragmatic approach. More specifically, it intends to develop ESL learners' refusal strategies. The methodological issues described above have been taken into consideration, as well as the previous studies in the field, which are treated below. Tasks are addressed to an explicit instruction approach, accompanied with extracts from real situations in order to present the contents from a real and natural use of the language.

2.4 TASK-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING

Modern tendencies in language learning seem to be that learners do not acquire a language following an order when it is presented to them. Language learning is a natural process that develops according to the particular rhythm of the learner. According to Ellis (1994; cited in Foster, 1999: 69), 'errors are not necessarily the result of bad learning, but are part of the natural process of interlanguage forms gradually moving towards target forms'. Modern language learning tendencies have led to the development of task-based approaches. These approaches, despite their particular characteristics, all follow the same idea of providing learners task to interact and not linguistic items. By interacting when developing meaningful activities, learners develop their interlanguage system and transfer new information to their partners. The success of the tasks rely on the meaning and comprehension of the language used.

‘Task-based language teaching (TBLT) proposes that the primary unit for both designing a language programme and for planning a lesson should be a task’ (Ellis, 2009: 223). A task is an activity that requires language use to establish communication, where the main focus is on meaning, and involves some process of thought to complete it. It provides opportunities to language learners to use the language and practise with the new language knowledge acquired. Tasks have an objective and a process to arrive at completion, which allows teachers to assess the work and knowledge of students. But a process of completion of a task is also closely related to the real world. In fact, Long (1985: 89), after providing a large list of examples of work that an average person realises every day, described tasks as ‘things people will tell you they do if you ask them and they are not applied linguists’.

To distinguish a task from an exercise, tasks have to fulfil a number of criteria. According to Ellis (2009: 223), for a language activity to be a task it must satisfy the following criteria:

- 1) The primary focus should be on ‘meaning’ (by which is meant that learners should be mainly concerned with processing the semantic and pragmatic meaning of utterances).
- 2) There should be some kind of ‘gap’ (i.e., a need to convey information, to express an opinion or to infer meaning).
- 3) Learners should largely have to rely on their own resources (linguistic and non-linguistic) in order to complete the activity.
- 4) There is a clearly defined outcome other than the use of language (i.e., the language serves as the means for achieving the outcome, not as an end in its own right).

Tasks can be ‘focused’ or ‘unfocused’. Focused tasks are designed to provide opportunities for communication but eliciting some specific language feature. However, the design of unfocused tasks is carried out to provide students with opportunities for communication, fostering a general use of the language.

According to the relationship between task interaction and language acquisition, Ellis (2003: 69) states that ‘the relation between task and language acquisition is an indirect one’ and that for understanding it, it is necessary to explore ‘the relationship between task and language use on the one hand and the relationship between language use and language acquisition on the other.’

It can be difficult for learners to maintain a conversation because of their lack of language items to make themselves understood and also their lack of understanding of what is being said. Studies show that native speakers, when making linguistic modifications to speak with non-native speakers, pay more attention to the modification of the interactional structure of the conversations. Native speakers also try to avoid conversational problems when interacting but, when they occur, they use strategies to repair the problems. The work done to solve misunderstandings in communication is known as negotiation of meaning.

Kasper and Kellerman (1997; cited in Ellis, 2003: 74) describe communication strategies as ‘a form of self-help that did not have to engage the interlocutor’s support for resolution’. Communication strategies are used by the speakers, when they have not enough linguistic knowledge to transmit a message, in order to compensate this lack. A variety of strategies have been identified when analysing tasks performed by learners. The point at which participants become involved in negotiation of meaning and use communication strategies in a task will affect their communicative effectiveness. Yule (1997; cited in Ellis, 2003: 76), proposed a model of communicative effectiveness which includes two dimensions: the identification of referent dimension, which includes the necessity of the speaker to identify and encode referents wished to communicate about; and the role-taking dimension, which engages the ability to consider their communicative partners in order to achieve intersubjectivity. It is necessary to analyse the effects of communication to study communicative effectiveness. It can be managed by examining whether participants can accomplish a task successfully. According to Ellis (2003: 77), ‘a model of communicative effectiveness is of enormous promise for the study of tasks’. It provides a means to assess the interactions that arise out of a task in connection with the results obtained.

It is necessary to consider how interaction affects acquisition in language learning to establish a link between tasks and language acquisition. Interactionist theories consider language learning as a result of participating in interaction. The importance of interaction lies in the return process it comprises, that helps to discover how language units can be used together and separately. The interaction learning process also entails the process of learning grammar.

The Interaction Hypothesis proposes that interaction provides opportunities to negotiate meaning. In this process, comprehensible input is provided to learners, so negotiation of meaning provides feedback that promotes acquisition. In this way, it is possible to arrive at the conclusion that interaction promotes acquisition. Communication strategies play an important role in understanding communication greater than just explaining acquisition. Communication strategies contribute to the development of strategic competence, which is comprised of linguistic competence. The process of language acquisition comprises more aspects than the development of linguistic competence. However, one of the goals of task-based instruction is to develop a strategic competence to help learners to communicate effectively when using the language. The relationship between communicative effectiveness and language acquisition has not been explicitly addressed. One theory suggests that language acquisition and communicative effectiveness are complementary and there is a trade-off relationship between them. Another, more advanced theory, states that learners are more communicatively effective as they acquire more language, and that they have more opportunities for language acquisition as they become more effective communicators.

2.5 DISCOURSE MARKERS

There are certain invisible rules that govern interaction and are applied by native speakers without noticing. Native speakers use certain units of talk naturally in their oral discourse in order to make the speech more coherent and understandable. Crystal (1988; cited in Asik & Cephe, 2013: 144) referred to discourse markers as the ‘oil which helps us perform the complex task of spontaneous speech production and interaction smoothly and efficiently’. Speakers use verbal or non-verbal means to guide their listeners to understand and interpret their new contributions in the conversation, discourse markers are verbal items that play a very important role in this intention. Schiffrin (1987; cited in Lenk, 1998:247) defined discourse markers as ‘sequentially dependent elements which bracket units of talk’ that signal relationship between immediately adjacent ‘units of talk’ and which thus have a coherence building function on a local coherence level. Redeker (1991; cited in Lenk, 1998: 246) defined discourse markers (discourse operators) as ‘a word or a phrase that is uttered with the primary function of bringing to the listener’s attention a particular kind of linkage of the upcoming utterance with the immediate discourse text’.

Schourup (1999: 230-232) summarized the main characteristics of the discourse markers. Three characteristics are necessarily attributes of discourse markers: connectivity, ‘discourse markers are addressed as items that signal relationships between units of talk; optionality, ‘discourse markers are claimed to be optional (but no redundant) in two ways: syntactically (the removal of a discourse marker does not alter grammatically of its host sentence) and semantically (discourse markers does not enlarge the possibilities for semantic relationship between the elements they associate)’; and non-truth conditionality, ‘discourse markers do not affect the truth conditions of the propositions expressed by an utterance’.

Other less consistent characteristics of the discourse markers by Schourup (1999: 232-234) as: weak clause association, ‘discourse markers occur either outside the syntactic structure or loosely attached to it; initiality, ‘discourse markers prototypically introduce the discourse segments they mark’; orality, ‘most forms claimed to be discourse markers occur primarily in speech’; multi-categoriality, ‘discourse markers are heterogeneous with respect to morpho-syntactic categorization’.

2.6 RESEARCH CONDUCTED ON DISCOURSE MARKERS

According to Andersen et al. (1999: 1), research into the field of discourse markers has mainly been focused on their textual uses in adult speech, analyzing how people: ‘(1) create coherence and structures within a discourse by coordinating speech acts, turns, and propositional content; (2) provide feedback from listeners about whether a prior utterance has been understood or not, and whether they agree or disagree; and (3) signal production problems on the part of the speaker’.

Andersen et al. (1999) examines the use of discourse markers as markers of the social relationships between interlocutors. By making a comparison between the findings about the acquisition of discourse markers in English, French and Spanish, this demonstrates the linguistic similarities in the way children learn to use the discourse markers, both to convey social meaning and to manipulate the social situation where power relationships are not pre-established.

Trillo (2002) studies the phenomenon of “*pragmatic fossilization*” referred to as an inappropriate use of certain forms at the pragmatic level of communication, one of the main problems non-native speakers have in their process of learning English as a foreign language. The study compares the use of certain discourse markers in Spanish

non-native speakers of English with the use that native speakers of English make with the same structures. The findings reveal the limited use of discourse markers and some pragmatic errors committed by the non-native speakers. The author attributes the errors to inadequate pragmatic resources in the learning process and to unnatural teaching environments.

Fung and Carter (2007) analyzed the production of discourse markers in language classroom settings using data from both English as a foreign language learners and native English speakers. The results showed that non-native speakers used a considerably lower number of discourse markers than the English speakers and that the diversity of these forms in non-native speakers is very limited. The authors proposed a pedagogical model which includes the learning of discourse markers ‘in order to facilitate more successful overall language use and at the very least for reception purposes’.

Hellerman and Vergum (2007) investigated the interaction between 17 adult English learners with no previous formal instruction in the language in class, in order to discover the use of certain discourse markers which were not explicitly taught. The results demonstrate that few learners used discourse markers in their discourse, only those who were more acculturated to English culture. The findings suggest that language and culture must be taught together in an English as a Foreign Language classroom.

Lam (2009) stated that discourse markers help non-native language learners to use the language in a closer way to native speakers and that they attain “nativeness” in their discourse. The feeling of being involved in the culture of the target language helps learners to feel comfortable using the language.

Asik (2013) investigated non-native English speakers’ production of discourse markers and their occurrences using the target language in comparison with those used by native speakers. The results showed that non-native speakers of English use a very limited number of discourse markers in their discourse and that variety within that limited number is also very restricted. The study highlights the importance of raising awareness in non-native speakers in their discourse and advice about the importance of teaching these language forms in the language classroom.

2.7 PURPOSE OF THE PROPOSAL

The present teaching proposal will use a specific model to teach discourse markers to English as a Foreign Language students. The students will be exposed to real English language input and to situations that recreate reality as closely as possible to that of English culture. Studies have showed that the acquisition of an appropriate use of discourse markers helps learners to gain fluency in communication. They also become more capable of elaborating more coherent speech, as they acquire linguistic forms that generate coherence in the discourse. To create a real and natural environment in the foreign language classroom is important to bring students to the culture of the target language and use the language in a way that is close as possible to how native speakers use it.

Fluency and coherence in the discourse is one of the most problematic aspects that English as a second language presents when the learners finish their primary stage of education. This teaching proposal aims to help to improve this problem, by improving students' communicative competence.

The aim of the study is to see if primary school children are able to learn the use of these linguistic forms and to use them appropriately in their discourse with the exposure to pragmatic information, without being directly immersed in the English culture; and if the acquisition of discourse markers also helps them in gaining fluency and coherence in their speech and their ability to understand the information they receive raises. It is also possible to observe if students' mother tongue has a direct influence in the acquisition and use of discourse markers in the target language.

3. TEACHING PROPOSAL

The following teaching proposal involves sixth grade primary education students of English as a foreign language (fifty students, divided into two classes of twenty five). It is developed over five sessions of one hour. The central topics of the unit are discourse markers and fostering communicative competence in students. The activities are designed to work through oral interaction and the discourse markers treated in the unit are characteristics of the oral discourse in a colloquial register. In this way, the kinds of discourse markers that are going to be treated in this unit are those such as *ok, but, well, so, now, oh, right, really, just, you know, fine, of course*, and other discourse markers used in oral discourse that arise during the unit. All activities and tasks are mainly designed to foster interaction between students, and also between students and teachers. The following didactic unit revolves mainly around communication.

3.1 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this didactic unit are based on the general objectives of primary education, the specific objectives of the English language area and the contents of the third cycle of primary education that the Royal Decree established in order to obtain greater efficiency and educative coherence. The specific objectives of this didactic unit for students are:

- To understand the linguistic function of discourse markers
- To acquire different discourse markers for use in speech
- To use discourse markers appropriately in their speech
- To gain fluency in communication
- To acquire communicative competence
- To be able to elaborate a more coherent speech
- To gain ‘nativeness’
- To improve their ability to understand the message of the speakers

3.2 RELATION WITH THE CURRICULUM

Now that the teaching proposal is contextualized and the main objectives are established, it is important to contextualize this proposal into the present educational law.

General objectives for primary education:

According to the Decree 111/2007 of 20 July of the Valencian Community, the goals for primary stage are the followings:

- A) To know and appreciate the values and norms of coexistence, learning to act in accordance with them, and prepare for active citizenship respecting and defending human rights and pluralism in a democratic society.
- B) To develop individual and team work, effort and responsibility in the study, as well as attitudes of self-confidence, critical sense, personal initiative, curiosity, interest and creativity in learning, to discover the satisfaction of a well done job.
- C) To develop a responsible attitude and respect for others favouring an ideal atmosphere for personal freedom, learning and coexistence, and foster attitudes that promote coexistence in school, family and social spheres.
- D) To know, understand and respect the values of our civilization and different cultures and differences between people, equal rights and opportunities of men and women and the non-discrimination against persons with disabilities.
- E) To know and use appropriately the Spanish language and the Catalan language, to value the communicative possibilities of the Catalan as a language and develop reading habits.
- F) To acquire, in at least one foreign language, a basic level of communicative competence to enable the students to express and understand simple messages and act in everyday situations.
- G) To develop basic math skills and initiative in solving problems that require elementary operations of calculation, geometry and estimates, as well as being able to apply them to everyday life situations.
- H) To know the Spanish cultural heritage, especially those that belong to the Valencian Community, as well as the world history.
- I) To know and appreciate the natural, social and cultural environment of the Valencian Community and the possibilities of action and care of the same. To start acquiring knowledge about the Valencian Community, Spanish and world geography.
- J) To start using technologies of information and communication and develop a critical mind to the messages they receive and produce.
- K) To value the hygiene and health, know and respect the human body, and use physical education and sport to encourage both personal and social development.
- L) To communicate through verbal means, physical, visual, musical and mathematical expression, develop aesthetic sensibility, creativity and the ability to enjoy their work and artistic expression.
- M) To know the cultural Spanish heritage, to participate in their conservation and improvement and respect the cultural and linguistic diversity.
- N) To know and value the natural, social and cultural heritage of the Valencian Community, in their social, cultural and linguistic context and to participate in their conservation and improvement.

- O) To develop all aspects of personality and an attitude against violence and prejudices of any kind.
- P) To know and value animals and plants, and adopt behavior measures that promotes their attention.
- Q) To promote road safety education and respectful attitudes that influence in the prevention of traffic accidents.

General objectives for the English area:

According to the Decree 111/2007 of 20 July of the Valencian Community, the teaching of a foreign language at this stage will be the development of the following capacities:

1. To listen and to understand messages, using information given to them to do activities related to their own experiences.
2. To express orally in simple and usual situations, using verbal and non-verbal procedures and presenting a respectful and cooperative attitude.
3. To write texts with different purposes about topics previously worked through in the class and with the help of models.
4. To read comprehensively as source of pleasure and personal satisfaction and to extract information according to a previous objective.
5. To learn how to use with increasing autonomy all the sources at their disposal, including new technologies to obtain information and to communicate in a foreign language.
6. To use progressively the foreign language to affirm and expand the contents of non-linguistic areas already learnt and to learn new ones.
7. To value the foreign language, and languages in general, as a mean of communication and understanding between people of different backgrounds and cultures as a tool for learning diverse contents.
8. To manifest a receptive, interested attitude and confidence in one's ability to learn and use a foreign language.
9. To use the knowledge and previous experience with other languages for a faster acquisition and independent learning of the foreign language.
10. To use indifferently the languages of the curriculum as a tool for information and learning, taking into account the ability in each of them.
11. To identify phonetics aspects, rhythm, stress and intonation, as well as linguistic structures and lexical aspects of the foreign language and use them as basic elements of communication.

Contents of the third cycle of primary education:

Block 1. Listening, speaking and conversation.
1. Understanding of instructions, explanations directed oral interactions and other

	<p>oral messages of progressive complexity to obtain global and specific information.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Listening, comprehension and extraction of concrete information from recordings to complete different tasks. 3. Participation in real or simulated acts related to oral exchanges of ritualized speech acts, through verbal and non-verbal responses provided by communication routines to do classroom activities in communicative contexts. 4. Use of basic communication strategies, verbal and non-verbal, to participate in oral linguistic exchanges in communicative contexts. 5. Listen attentively and understanding of very short and simple texts related to meaningful classroom activities and produced in different communicative situations. 6. Production of appropriate oral messages according to their age with progressive autonomy, effectiveness and complexity of the used expressions. 7. Development of fundamental basic strategies to support the comprehension and oral expression: use of the visual and non-verbal context and the previous knowledge about the topic or the situation transferred from their L1 to the foreign language. 8. Transference of communication strategies from the known languages as a help to overcome the oral communication difficulties. 9. Appreciate the foreign language as an instrument to communicate.
Block 2. Reading and writing	
<i>Foster reading:</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Global and specific reading and comprehension of diverse written texts, adapted to the linguistic competence of the students and related to their experiences and interests, to develop a task or a project. 2. Reading and comprehension of written texts of authentic simple or adapted texts, to find out information, enjoy of a foreign language reading experience or as a part of a task, project, investigation, etc. 3. Autonomic progressive use of reading strategies, used to identify the important information, deduce the meaning of words and expressions and using dictionaries. 4. Reading of comics, tales and other kind of appropriate books or texts, with the aim of foster reading. 5. Use of the dictionary as a reference element, to know the meaning of words and for learning new words. 6. Reading of students' elaborated texts to communicate or as a final product of a group of tasks made in class. 7. Value the foreign language reading as an instrument for learning.

<i>Development of writing:</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Composition of varied written texts, previously prepared with the concrete finality of communicating knowledge, experiences and necessities or with a literary aim, in a determinate communication situation and, progressively, more extended and richer in lexicon and structures. 2. Use of the basic text production strategies: decisions about the basic elements of the situation of enunciation, planning, drafting, assessment and revision of the text for its improvement. 3. Knowledge of the different texts of the practical, literary and from different kinds of discourse they contain communication, as a help for comprehension and production. 4. Use of the information and communication technologies to produce texts and presentations to transmit information. 5. Interest for the attention, elaboration presentation and organization of written texts and value of their role to satisfy the communication needs. 6. Valuation of the foreign language writing as an instrument of communication.
Block 3. Knowledge of the language	
<i>Uses of language</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To know the possibility of exchanging information, express feelings and desires, and give orders and instructions, using the linguistic resources appropriated to the communicative situation. 2. Use of the basic linguistic functions in simple communicative exchanges, using the simplest appropriate linguistic structures. 3. Practise of various contextualized linguistic uses in real or simulated communicative situations using appropriate linguistic elements.
<i>Reflection on language</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Careful pronunciation, rhythm and appropriate intonation and accentuation; in oral interaction and expression, as in recitation, drama and reading aloud. 2. Accurate pronunciation and discrimination of the most characteristics phonemes of the foreign language. 3. Recognition of the use and functionality of forms and structures of the foreign language to use them on expression in the different situations of communication. 4. Relation between the pronunciation and the graphical representation of the known vocabulary and language expressions. 5. Use of the basic strategies of text production, since very structured models. 6. Interest in using the foreign language correctly in different situations with a progressive extension taking care of the expressions correction and adequacy. 7. Comparison and reflection about the use of the foreign language since the languages known.

<i>Reflection on learning</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use of abilities and procedures that facilitates communication and autonomous learning: association, connection, classification, memorization, organization, reading and text consulting, observation of models and use of media resources for the new linguistic elements acquisition or for the consolidation of the acquired elements. 2. Control and reflection about the own learning. 3. Implication on the educational process through self-correction and self-evaluation. Acceptance of errors as part of the learning process. 4. Appreciation of the cooperative work, needed to develop determined activities, tasks, drama and projects in the language classroom. 5. Use of consultation tool and information that support, reinforce and complement the language work. 6. Confidence on the own capacity for learning a foreign language. 7. Use of the new information and communication technologies to reinforce and expand the foreign language learning.
Block 4. The language as a learning instrument	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Development of vocabulary and topics related to the students' immediate environment, interest and experiences based on already acquired concepts in their L1 or L2. 2. Development of tasks, small projects, investigations and development of topics, about topics related with the interests and experiences of the students, or taking, consolidating or expanding contents acquired in the L1 or L2 and contents with little cognitive demand of the non-linguistic areas. 3. Development of tasks, small projects, investigations and topics, from simple contents of the non-linguistic areas not treated, complementing the curriculum imparted in the L1 or L2. 4. Use of consultation, selection and organization strategies, to elaborate small texts that systematize the results. 5. Valuation of the foreign language as a tool to learn, organise and think. 	
Block 5. Sociocultural aspects	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Motivation for learning languages, acquiring information about the countries where the language is spoken and their inhabitants, and know their culture. 2. Interest to establish communication with other speaker using the new communication technologies. 3. Valuation of the foreign language as an instrument to know other cultures, to have access to new information and as a tool for communicate and relate with colleagues from other countries. 4. Knowledge of the customs and use of the social relation forms of other countries where the foreign language is officially spoken. 5. Receptive, positive and tolerant attitude to the people who speak a different language and have a different culture. 6. Performance of sociocultural activities relatives to the foreign language studied. 7. Knowledge and use of the social interaction formulas that facilitate intrapersonal relationships in concrete communication situations, used in class with the appropriate moments and contexts. 	
Block 6. Technology of the information and communication	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use of the basic technological means to access to an oral and written input of quality in the foreign language, with the purpose of facilitating the application of the own learning strategies (repetition, snatch practice...) o to be used in their own productions (recording of songs or dialogs, films of role-plays...) 	

2. Use of different media and computer resources as an information source in the activities or tasks and in the elaboration of simple projects.
3. Knowledge and use of the appropriate programs for the treatment of texts, the incorporation of texts and images to documents and the publication of them.
4. Use of the e-mail to communicate and exchange experiences with foreign language speakers, and collaborate with them in the planification and staging of common projects.
5. Interest for a progressive personal use of the information and communication technologies as a tool to contact with other cultures and speakers, having access to information using other language, as a tool for learning.

Evaluation criteria:

According to the Decree 111/2007 of 20 July of the Valencian Community, the evaluation criteria for the English language area during the primary education stage are the followings:

1. To understand the main idea and identify specific information in different oral texts of different communicative situations.
2. To read silently and aloud, different texts with increasingly extensive vocabulary and more complex expressions, with the help of basic strategies to obtain explicit information.
3. Maintain daily and familiar conversations about known topics in predictable situations of communication, respecting the basic norms of exchange as hear and look to the speaker.
4. To elaborate different kinds of written texts using models, with a digital support or paper, giving special attention to the production sentences: planification, textualization and revision.
5. To recognise and reproduce better sounds, rhythm, stress and intonation indifferent communicative contexts, and in the use of basic shapes and typical structures of the language.
6. To use strategies that favour the learning process : the use of visual resources and gestures, asking questions to obtain relevant information, request clarification, using bilingual and monolingual dictionaries, search, collect and organize information in different formats, using communication and information technologies to compare and verify information, and identify some ways that help you learn better.
7. To appreciate the language as an instrument to communicate with other people and as a tool for learning, and show curiosity towards those who speak a foreign language and interest to establish relationships helped by new technologies.
8. To identify some features, customs and traditions of English spoken countries, relating and comparing them to their own, in order to develop intercultural competence.

3.3 METHODOLOGY

Methodology is the integration of different teaching methods by the teacher to guide student learning. There are different methodologies for use with learners so as to achieve the objectives proposed, depending on the object of the learning, the personal characteristics of students (age, interests, and motivations) and their different learning styles and rhythms.

Students are considered the centre of the teaching process; the teaching proposal is student-centred, which means that the starting point for the activities must be their needs, interests and previous knowledge, and the role of the teacher in class must be that of a guide and of a facilitator of learning. The methodology must be active because children do not have to act as receivers of information unless they take part in the educational process. They must experiment, practice, observe, think or reflect, in order to acquire the content taught and improve their language knowledge.

Nowadays language is considered a means of communication, not simply a system of structures and words. Errors must be seen as something natural and logical, since they are positive evidence of the learning process. Students should not have to be worried about making errors, which must be treated as something natural during the learning process so students do not feel inhibited. Children's minds are not mature enough to deal with abstract contents, and consequently, it is extremely important to use visual aids that help them to concentrate on the reality with which they are dealing.

The methodology used in this teaching proposal has been selected taking into account student ages, interests, rhythms of learning, classroom resources and previous knowledge. The following methods have been followed during this unit.

The communicative approach is the most important method. This approach understands language as communication. The communicative approach is one of the most appropriate methodologies, because it is chosen and the most common method throughout the European Union, and recommended by the European Council. Its main assumptions are based on the promotion of the use of authentic language, enhancing real communication in real-life situations, avoiding the use of the L1 and translations into the mother tongue. As the main aim is to achieve the communicative competence skills of integration, fluency is encouraged over accuracy (emphasising the fact that

something can be said in different ways). Language should be acquired in an inductive way, through its use.

Task-based language teaching, which has been developed in the theoretical framework, is based on the use of tasks in class to acquire a language, the use of authentic material and on asking students to carry out meaningful tasks using the foreign language. The natural approach, which has been also followed in this unit, is a language teaching approach which claims that language learning is a reproduction of the way humans naturally acquire their native language, with the help of receiving comprehensible input and taking into account emotional factors such as motivation, self-confidence or anxiety. The natural approach adheres to a communicative approach to language teaching.

3.4 FIRST SESSION

The first session is an introductory lesson where students start to be aware of the role of discourse markers in a conversation. Students start to receive input helping them to acquire discourse markers, be able to distinguish them in a conversation and use them appropriately. The main difference between the first session and the others is that the teacher participate actively in the session, introducing the concepts to students, but without forgetting that is better that students discover the contents autonomously. All vocabulary be introduced in the first lesson and students start to realise the role of discourse markers in the foreign language. At the end of the first session, students also discover one of the evaluation tools, in which they have to write down the knowledge they acquire about the discourse markers, reflect on it and share the information with their partners.

Activity 1: Introduction

Students hear two different recordings (Audio-visual Appendix 1). Both are equal, but in the first the interlocutors use discourse markers and in the second they do not. After having heard the conversations, the teacher give out a worksheet (Appendix 1) with some questions to help them reflect on what they have heard, and students hear both conversations again. When the students have finished the questions individually, the class discuss their answers together.

Time	25 min.
Disposition	Individually and class-group work
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To understand the linguistic function of discourse markers - To acquire different discourse markers they can use in their speech - To be able to elaborate a more coherent speech - To gain 'nativeness'
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recording of the conversations (Audio-visual Appendix 1) - Worksheet with the questions about the conversations (Appendix 1)

Activity 2: Flashcards

The teacher starts presenting the discourse marker vocabulary using flashcards and by making games with them. Students must participate actively in the games in order to start acquiring the vocabulary. Games suggested for the flashcards include the following (they may vary depending on the students):

- The teacher presents the flashcards one by one and asks the students if they know the meaning of the words.
- Students have to distinguish the words of the flashcards in the recording of Activity 1.
- The teacher speaks to the students making use of the different discourse markers in a real context and they have to find the words of the flashcards in the monologue.
- Teacher and students group the flashcards depending on the use of the discourse markers in the conversation.
- Each student chooses a flashcard randomly and makes a sentence using it.
- The teacher selects a flashcard and makes a sentence, either using the word appropriately or not. Students decide whether the use of the discourse marker is appropriate depending on the context.

Activity 2	Flashcards
Time	20 min.
Disposition	Class-group work

Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To understand the linguistic function of discourse markers - To acquire different discourse markers they can use in their speech - To be able to elaborate a more coherent speech
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discourse marker flashcards (Appendix 2) - Recording of the conversations (Audio-visual Appendix 1)

End of the session: students use the last ten minutes of each class to reflect on what they have learnt and they complete a table (Appendix 10) in which they reflect on the new discourse markers acquired during the lesson, and give an example of their use, followed by any comments they consider important regarding the use of the discourse marker.

3.5 SECOND SESSION

The second session starts with a review of the student discourse marker tables from the previous session. In this session they receive input from a song and real conversations and they have to complete the information they have using the information they receive. In the second part of Activity 4, students start classifying the discourse markers depending on their use in different moments of the conversation, so as to start learning the most appropriate moments in which to use what they are learning. In this session the role of the teacher is less prominent, and the students conduct the lesson themselves. The teacher must be a passive observer so as to evaluate the students, and only has to be a guide and act as moderator in the second part of the final activity. Students continue completing their tables of discourse markers as a kind of portfolio where they write down the knowledge they acquire and reflect on its use.

Beginning of the session: with the exception of the first, the rest of the sessions begin with a review of what students have written in their tables the previous session. The teacher selects students randomly to explain their language acquisition to the rest of the class in the first five minutes of the lesson so as to review the contents of the previous lessons and help other students acquire the language and complete their tables.

Activity 3: Song: ‘Just the Way You Are’

The students listen to the song “*Just the Way You Are*” (Audio-visual Appendix 2). The teacher gives them a worksheet with an exercise involving filling in gaps in the lyrics of the song (Appendix 3) and students hear the song again in order to complete the activity. After correcting the activity, students can ask for the words they did not know and then all the students sing the song.

Activity 3	Song: ‘Just the Way You Are’
Time	20 min.
Disposition	Individually and class-group work
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To acquire different discourse markers for use in speech - To be able to distinguish discourse markers in a conversation - To improve the ability to understand the message of the speakers - To gain ‘nativeness’
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Song: Just the way you are (Audio-visual Appendix 2). - Worksheet with the lyrics of the song (Appendix 3).

Activity 4: Conversations

Working in pairs, the students complete different conversations with the discourse markers they consider appropriate and then classify those they have used depending on their use. They discuss in their pairs the appropriateness of using different discourse markers in different moments of a conversation, using the information they already know about these language forms. The teacher hands out a worksheet or the activity (Appendix 4). Finally, the students share their conclusions with the rest of the class to complete a table that contains the appropriate use of different discourse markers depending on the context and the conversation.

Activity 4	Conversations
Time	25 min.
Disposition	Pair work and class-group work
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To be able to distinguish discourse markers in a conversation - To understand how to use discourse markers appropriately depending on the situation - To acquire communicative competence

Materials

- To improve the ability to understand a speaker's message
- To gain fluency in communication
- Worksheet with conversations to complete and table in which to classify the discourse markers (Appendix 4)

End of the session: students use the last ten minutes of each class to reflect on what they have learnt and to complete a table (Appendix 10) in which they reflect on the new discourse markers they have acquired during the lesson, when they should be used, and give an example of its use, followed by any comments they consider important in reflecting on the use of the discourse marker.

3.6 THIRD SESSION

During the third session, after having demonstrated student progress through their discourse marker tables, students complete two activities where interaction is essential in order to understand the information they receive. They must share information to complete the first activity as they have part of the information required, here interaction is essential. During the second activity students receive real English language input, watch an episode of a cartoon series on television, and then discuss the answers to questions about the video with their partners. In this session the students are the main agents and the teacher is only an observer and a guide if necessary, who must evaluate the progress of the students through observation. Students continue reflecting on their progress in their discourse marker tables.

Beginning of the session: with the exception of the first session, the rest of the sessions begin with a review of what was written in their tables the previous session. The teacher selects some students randomly to explain their language acquisition to the rest of the class in the first five minutes of the lesson so as to review the contents of the previous lessons and help students to acquire the language and complete their tables.

Activity 5: Spot the differences

Working in pairs, students spot the differences in two pictures. The teacher hands out a worksheet with an individual photo to each student (Appendix 5) and they have to share the information they are given in their pictures so as to guess the differences between the two photos without showing the pictures to their partner.

Students must be encouraged to unconsciously use the discourse markers they are acquiring in their conversations.

Activity 5 Spot the differences	
Time	15 min.
Disposition	Pair work
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To acquire communicative competence - To improve the ability to understand the message of the speakers - To gain fluency in communication - To use discourse markers appropriately in their speech
Materials	- Worksheet with photos to spot the differences (Appendix 5).

Activity 6: Mike the knight

The students watch a video of the cartoon series “*Mike the Knight, Squirt’s Story*” (Audio-visual Appendix 3). The teacher hands out a worksheet with questions to discuss about the video (Appendix 6) and they have to write their conclusions after having discussed the answers to the questions. The students must be encouraged unconsciously to use the discourse markers they are acquiring in their conversations.

Activity 6 Mike the Knight	
Time	25 min.
Disposition	Small groups (3-4) work
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To understand the linguistic function of discourse markers - To acquire different discourse markers for use in speech - To use the discourse markers appropriately in speech - To gain fluency in communication - To acquire communicative competence - To improve the ability to understand the message of the speakers - To be able to elaborate a more coherent speech - To gain ‘nativeness’
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Video “Mike the Knight, Squirt’s Story” (Audio-visual appendix 3). - Worksheet with the questions about the video (Appendix 6).

End of the session: students use the last ten minutes of each class to reflect on what they have learnt and they complete a table (Appendix 10) in which they reflect on the new discourse markers acquired during the lesson, when they have to use it and an example of its use, followed by any comments they consider important in reflecting on the use of the discourse markers.

3.7 FOURTH SESSION

During this session students work in small groups (3-4). Communication is essential to complete both activities as students have to share information and make group decisions in order to complete them. In the first activity each member of the group has part of the information required to complete the activity, and they need to share all the information to achieve their final objective. During the second activity students discuss and establish conclusions about the use of discourse markers, and design a comic demonstrating how to use discourse markers appropriately. In this session the students are the main agents and the teacher is only an observer and a guide if necessary, who evaluates the progress of the students through observation. The work with the discourse markers tables continues as in the previous sessions.

Beginning of the session: with the exception of the first session, the rest of the sessions begin with a review of what was written on the tables in the previous session. The teacher selects some students randomly to explain their language acquisition to the rest of the class in the first five minutes of the lesson so as to review the contents of the previous lessons and help students acquire the language and complete their tables.

Activity 7: Collaborative drawing

Working in small groups (3), students draw a picture. Each student has part of the information needed to complete the picture (Appendix 7). They have to share information in order to draw the picture, but they must do it through interacting, they are not allowed to show their worksheets to their partners. Students must be encouraged unconsciously to use the discourse markers they are acquiring in their conversations.

Activity 7	Collaborative drawing
Time	20 min.

Disposition	Group-work (3)
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To use discourse markers appropriately in their speech - To gain fluency in communication - To improve the ability to understand the message of speakers - To be able to elaborate a more coherent speech
Materials	- Worksheet with directions for drawing the picture (Appendix 7)

Activity 8: Writing a comic

Working in small groups (3-4), students read a comic and discuss the questions given by the teacher (Appendix 8). They have to share their group's conclusions with the rest of the class. Students reflect on the use of discourse markers in conversations by reading the comic. Finally, they have to rewrite the story of the comic making appropriate use of discourse markers in the dialogues.

Activity 8	Writing a comic
Time	25 min.
Disposition	Group-work (3-4) and class-group work
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To understand the linguistic function of discourse markers - To acquire different discourse markers for use in speech - To acquire communicative competence - To improve the ability to understand a speaker's message - To gain fluency in communication - To be able to distinguish discourse markers in a conversation - To know how to use discourse markers appropriately depending on the situation
Materials	- Worksheet with comic and questions (Appendix 8)

Activity for the following session: the teacher gives students the script of a theatre play '*The Treasure Mountain*' (Appendix 9) in order for them to form groups, allocate the characters and take a look at the play so as to perform it during the next session.

End of the session: students use the last ten minutes of each class to reflect on what they have learnt and they must complete a table (Appendix 10) in which they reflect on the new discourse markers they have acquired during the lesson, when they have to use it and an example of its use, followed by any comments they consider important in reflecting on the use of the discourse marker.

3.8 FIFTH SESSION

This is the final session of the unit. The students perform the theatre play ‘*The Treasure Mountain*’ (Appendix 9) in groups to the rest of the class. They have received the script during the previous lesson so as to make the conversations more fluid and natural. Students act characters as if they were native English speakers, and they must be able to perform the theatre play in a foreign language in a natural way, with the help of the script if necessary (the most important element is not memorization). The unit ends with the students sharing the information collected in their discourse marker tables, and making comments and noting reflections about what have they acquired during this unit and the use of discourse markers in conversations.

Beginning of the session: with the exception of the first session, the rest of the sessions begin with a review of what was written in their tables the previous session. The teacher selects some students randomly to explain their language acquisition to the rest of the class in the first five minutes of the lesson so as to review the contents of the previous lessons and help students to acquire the language and complete their tables.

Activity 9: The Treasure Mountain

The students have to present a play in class “*The Treasure Mountain*”, which contains dialogue in which the characters use discourse markers during their interaction. They work in groups of five. The teacher gives the script to the students (Appendix 9) and they have to distribute the characters between themselves and prepare the presentation. Finally, the students present the play, with the help of the script, in front of the rest of the class.

Activity 9	The Treasure Mountain
Time	45 min.
Disposition	Group-work (5)
Objectives	- To improve the ability to understand a speaker’s message

- To acquire different discourse markers for use in speech
- To understand the linguistic function of discourse markers
- Script of the play (Appendix 9)

End of the session: students use the last ten minutes of each class to reflect on what they have learnt and complete a table (Appendix 10) in which they reflect on the new discourse markers they have acquired during the lesson, when they have to use it and an example of its use, followed by any comments they consider important in reflecting on the use of the discourse marker.

End of the unit: this time, as it is the last session of the unit, the students share their acquisitions and the conclusions from their worksheets with the rest of the class. This is a final revision of the unit, where students have the opportunity to clarify any final doubts and complete their tables of the discourse markers they have acquired during the unit.

3.9 ASSESSMENT

Decree 111/2007 of 20 July, which establishes the curriculum for primary education in the Valencian Community, states that assessment of the learning process of students must be continuous, global and formative. Teachers must take into account the specific objectives and the knowledge acquired in different areas, according to the evaluation criteria established in the curriculum. Assessment demonstrates the results of the teaching-learning process from different perspectives. It is a process that allows teachers to analyse the results of educational practice in class and to implement changes or continue with the practice depending on the quality of the results, helping teachers to anticipate, detect and correct problems.

Assessment should be global as it involves the achievement of basic competences and the general objectives of each stage, and the referent is student progress in all the areas of the curriculum together. The progress of a student be taken into account in their evaluation. Assessment be also continuous as it is part of the teaching-learning process of the student, detecting difficulties when they appear, detecting the causes of there difficulties and, consequently, adopting measures to allow students to continue with their learning process. Finally, assessment has a formative role

and guides the educational process, providing constant information that allows processes for improvement and the results of educational interventions.

The above teaching proposal does not contain tests through which to evaluate students. The activities proposed during the unit are used to assess students by the teacher, who has to act as an observer and take notes about student progress on an evaluation sheet (Appendix 11) where the objectives of the unit and the curriculum are present as evaluation criteria, while the students undertake the activities proposed in the unit. The main objective of this is to ensure that the students do not work only for evaluation towards a specific mark, but that they participate and use language freely, without the pressure that the marking process can generate. Students also complete a table during the unit where they write down the language they acquire, related discourse markers and considerations about their use (Appendix 10).

Teachers should also reflect on the performance of the teaching method in this proposal once implemented, in order to anticipate, detect and correct problems for future implementations of the unit. In this sense, the last piece of work before finishing implementation of the unit is a teacher's self-evaluation, analysing the problems and benefits, reflecting on them and proposing changes to improve the future implementation of the teaching proposal (Appendix 12).

4. EXPECTED RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

First of all it is necessary to mention that the described teaching proposal has not been implemented in class, so there are not definite data to establish final results and conclusions but, based on previous theories, hypothesis and studies, although it is possible to expect particular results based on the previous work in the field.

The main objective of the proposal, as mentioned above, is to acquire communicative competence and to gain fluency and coherence in students' speech. The methodology and the activities of the proposal have been designed according to the existing theories that deal with these objectives. In all the activities and tasks presented above, the main objective is that students interact and practise using the target language, which is essential to acquire communicative competence. Thus, it is expected that the results will be satisfactory.

It is also necessary to make an assessment of the unit after its implementation to reflect about the results and consider if it is necessary to make methodological changes or modify activities in order to obtain better results and achieve all the objectives proposed at the beginning of the proposal.

The implementation of this unit could be done as a complete unit or as a complementary work in the foreign language classroom. It is an introductory work to students in order they starting being familiarized with appropriate children realia as it could be cartoon series, songs or comics, which is very important because they must be familiarized with this kind of resources as they need real input to acquire communicative competence and use the language appropriately.

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APPENDIX 2: FLASHCARDS

Ok

Well

So

Now

Oh

But

Right

Really

Just

You know

Fine

Of course

APPENDIX 3: SONG : 'JUST THE WAY YOU ARE'

Listen to the song. Complete the lyrics with the words in the box.

so	just	that	girl
I know	oh	and	just
when	you know	but	ok

BRUNO MARS: JUST THE WAY YOU ARE

_____, her eyes, her eyes make the stars look like they're not shining
Her hair, her hair falls perfectly without her trying
She's so beautiful
And I tell her every day.

Yeah, _____, I know when I compliment her, she won't believe me
And it's so, it's so sad to think that she doesn't see what I see
But every time she ask me do I look _____?
I say

When I see your face
There's not a thing that I would change
'Cause you're amazing
_____ the way you are

And _____ you smile
The whole world stops and stares for a while
'Cause girl, you're amazing
Just the way you are

Her lips, her lips, I could kiss them all day if she'd let me
Her laugh her laugh, she hates _____ I think it's so sexy
She's so beautiful
And I tell her everyday

Oh, you know, _____, you know I'd never ask you to change
If perfect's what you're searching for, then just stay the same
_____ don't even bother asking if you look okay
You know I'll say

When I see your face
There's not a thing _____ I would change

'Cause girl you're amazing
Just the way you are

_____ when you smile
The whole world stops and stares for a while
'Cause girl, you're amazing
Just the way you are

The way you are
The way you are
_____, you're amazing
Just the way you are

When I see your face
There's not a thing that I would change
'Cause girl you're amazing
_____ the way you are

And when you smile
The whole world stops and stares for a while
'Cause girl, you're amazing
Just the way you are.
Yeah yeah

BRUNO MARS: JUST THE WAY YOU ARE

Oh, her eyes, her eyes make the stars look like they're not shining
Her hair, her hair falls perfectly without her trying
She's so beautiful
And I tell her every day.

Yeah, I know, I know when I compliment her, she won't believe me
And it's so, it's so sad to think that she doesn't see what I see
But every time she ask me do I look okay?
I say

When I see your face
There's not a thing that I would change
'Cause you're amazing
Just the way you are

And when you smile
The whole world stops and stares for a while
'Cause girl, you're amazing
Just the way you are

Her lips, her lips, I could kiss them all day if she'd let me
Her laugh her laugh, she hates but I think it's so sexy
She's so beautiful
And I tell her everyday

Oh, you know, you know, you know I'd never ask you to change
If perfect's what you're searching for, then just stay the same
So don't even bother asking if you look okay
You know I'll say

When I see your face
There's not a thing that I would change
'Cause girl you're amazing
Just the way you are

And when you smile
The whole world stops and stares for a while
'Cause girl, you're amazing
Just the way you are

The way you are
The way you are

Girl, you're amazing
Just the way you are

When I see your face
There's not a thing that I would change
'Cause girl you're amazing
Just the way you are

And when you smile
The whole world stops and stares for a while
'Cause girl, you're amazing
Just the way you are.
Yeah yeah

APPENDIX 4: CONVERSATIONS

Read the following conversations. Working in pairs, complete the conversations using the appropriate discourse markers and write a complete conversation.

<p>1-Hi! Did you see the movie on TV last night? 2-_____ yes, it was amazing! 1-_____? I don't think so. It was funny, _____ not the best film I've seen in my life. 2-_____, maybe you are right, I think the movie of tonight will be better. 1-_____, I will see it tonight. Bye!</p>
<p>1-Hey! What are you going to do this afternoon? 2-_____, I think I will to the sports centre, do you want to come? 1-_____ it sounds good, _____ I prefer to stay at home. 2-_____? I can't believe it, _____you can come after to have dinner. 1-_____, I will think it.</p>
<p>1- 2- 1- 2- 1-</p>

Now classify the discourse markers you and your partners have used according to the use we make of them depending on the moment in a conversation.

To start a conversation	
To express agreement	
To express surprise	
To add information	
To express disagreement	
To maintain the attention	

APPENDIX 5: SPOT THE DIFFERENCES

Spot the 12 differences. Share your information with your pair to discover the differences between your pictures. Don't show your picture to your partner.

STUDENT A:



http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spot_the_difference

Spot the 12 differences. Share your information with your pair to discover the differences between your pictures. Don't show the picture to your partner.

STUDENT B:



http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spot_the_difference

APPENDIX 6: MIKE THE KNIGHT

MIKE THE KNIGHT

1. Describe the character of Mike the knight.



2. How are the knight stories?

3. Is the same a knight story than a dragon story? Which are the differences?

4. Can Squirt tell a bed time story? How is it?



APPENDIX 7: COLLABORATIVE DRAWING

Read the following instructions and share the information with your partners. You have part of the necessary indications for drawing a picture. You have to draw a picture using all the information that you and your partners have. Then, compare your pictures with the other groups.

Student A

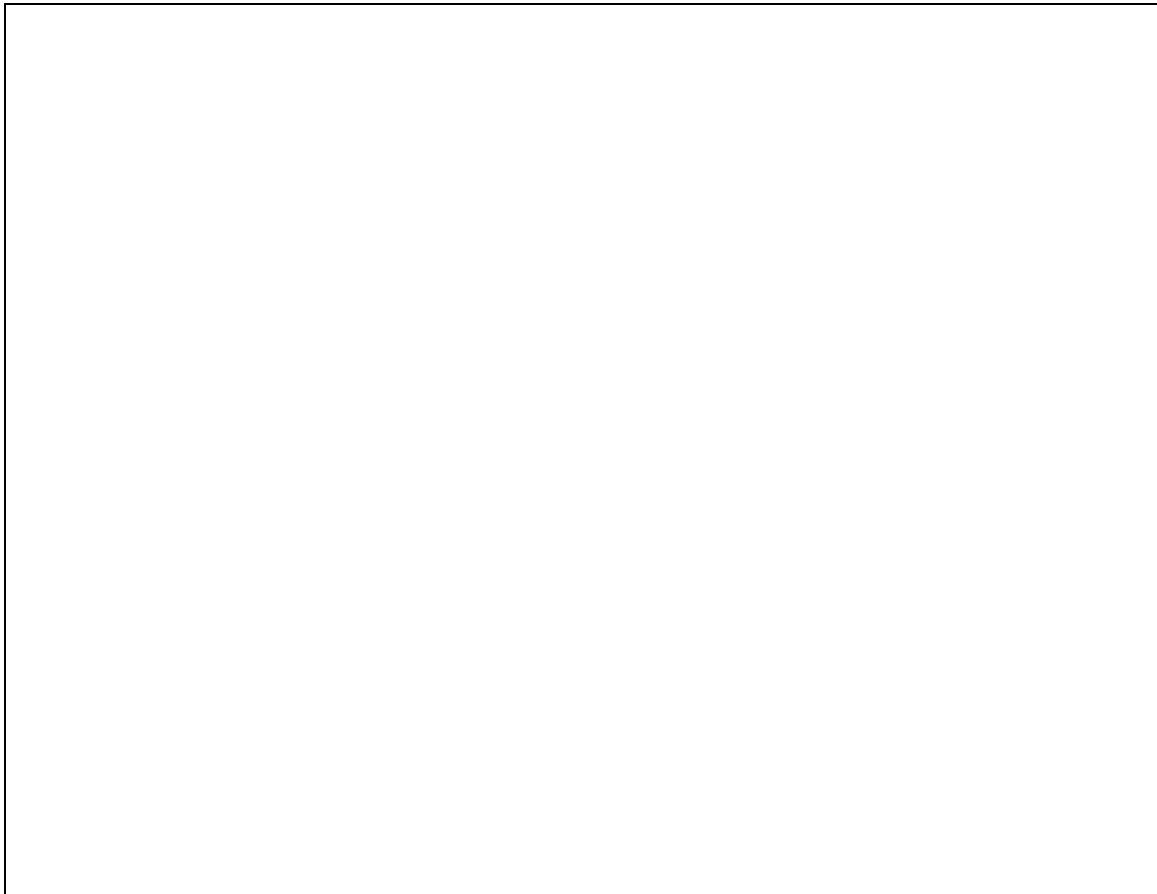
- There is a tree on the top right corner.
- A big park is located on the bottom left corner of the picture.
- The man is wearing jeans, a t-shirt, glasses and trainers.
- The wife of the man is sitting on one bench



Read the following instructions and share the information with your partners. You have part of the necessary indications for drawing a picture. You have to draw a picture using all the information that you and your partners have. Then, compare your pictures with the other groups.

Student B

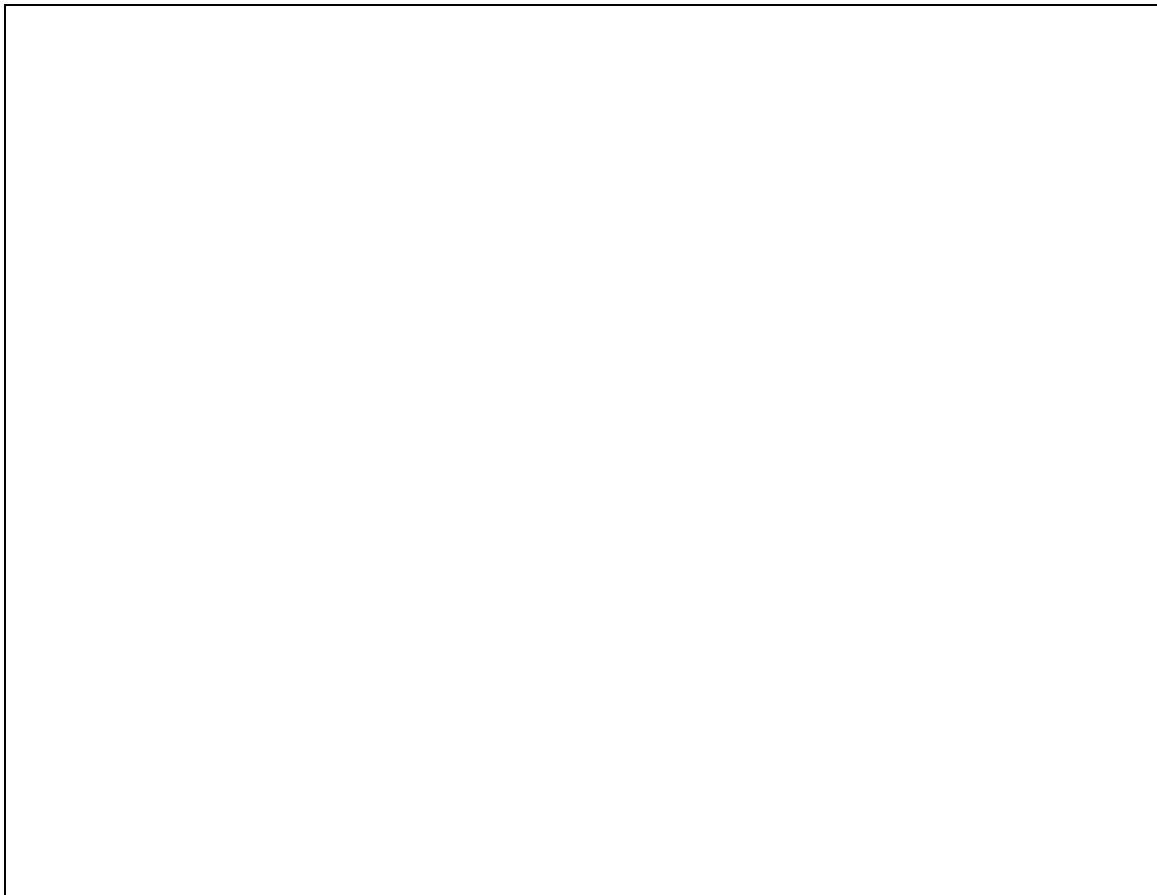
- Draw a man under the tree.
- There is a big bridge in the middle of the picture.
- Two mountains cover the top of the picture.
- Two funny ducks are swimming in the river.



Read the following instructions and share the information with your partners. You have part of the necessary indications for drawing a picture. You have to draw a picture using all the information that you and your partners have. Then, compare your pictures with the other groups.

Student C

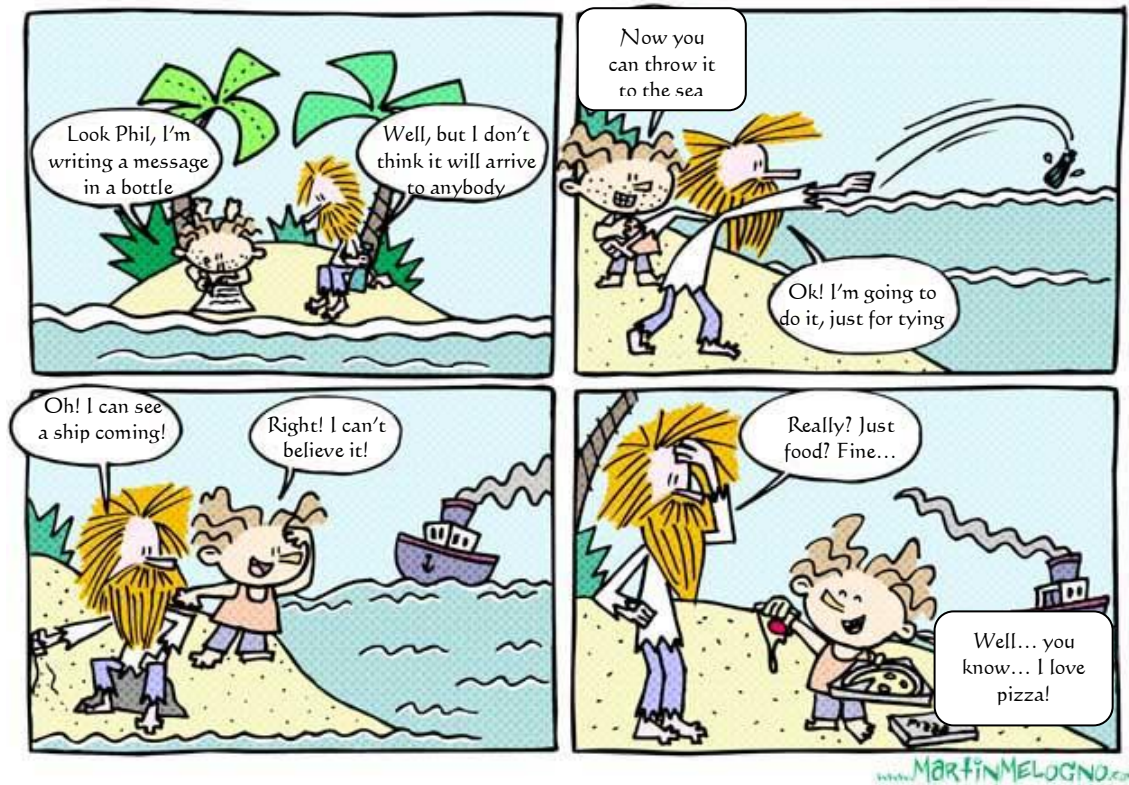
- A river goes through the picture from the top left corner to the bottom right corner.
- There are three children playing in the park.
- Children play in the park with a ball.
- Near the tree you can see two benches.



APPENDIX 8: WRITING A COMIC

1. Read the comic and observe the language used by the characters.

Tom and Phil are in a desert island...

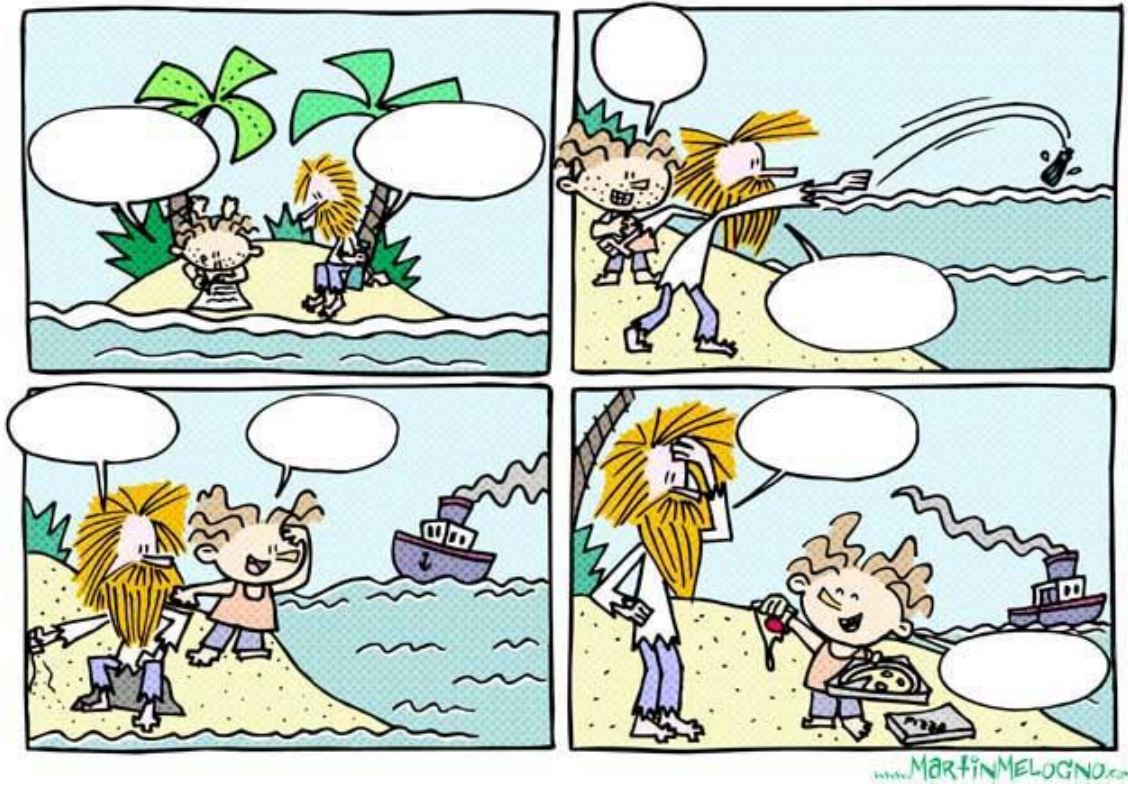


<http://melogno.com/category/historietas/>

2. Discuss the following questions with your partners.

- a. Do the characters use discourse markers in their dialogue?
- b. Do the characters use the discourse markers appropriately?
- c. Would the conversation be fluid without the use of discourse markers?

3. Now, working in groups, you can change the meaning of the comic, making up new dialogues and using discourse markers also.



APPENDIX 9: THE TREASURE MOUNTAIN

THE TREASURE MOUNTAIN

Narrator: Once upon a time there was an fairy who lived inside a mountain which was full of gold, silver, and precious stones.

Fairy: Oh, I'm so bored in this place! I wish I could go out into the world and see the sun, the lakes and rivers... the flowers... but that's impossible. I have to stay here...underground taking care of all these rubies, diamonds, and emeralds.

Narrator: One day she heard a noise coming from outside the mountain. Some people were making a hole to get inside.

Fairy: Now I see... they are coming to steal my treasure! Men are greedy and ambitious! Anyway... I will help them get in, and I will even give them some of my treasure.

Narrator: The fairy used her magic to open up a hole, and a few minutes later three sweaty, dirty, and tired men entered the treasure mountain.

Man 1: Where are we? I can't see anything!

Man 2: Me neither!

Man 3: Where's that bright light come from? I can't even open my eyes!

Narrator: Finally, the three men could open their eyes.

Three Men: Right! This is wonderful!

Man 1: OK! Come on... everything is ours!

Fairy: Stop where you are!

Man 2: Who are you?

Fairy: I live here... you don't have to take anything... I give it to you.

Man 3: Really? Are you sure?

Fairy: Of course, take everything you want.

Man 1: Thank you good fairy!

Man 2: Now I'll fill my pockets with all these precious stones!

Man 3: You are so kind, really.

Fairy: Ok, don't say anything more, just take whatever you want to, and leave.

Narrator: The three men took everything they could, and left the mountain feeling satisfied. One day, one of them came back to the mountain.

Fairy: What did you come back? Didn't you have enough? Is it possible that you don't have anything I gave you?

Man 1: Oh, yes I do! I have everything you gave me! In fact, I hid the treasure in a safe place... not even my son knows where it is!

Fairy: You're so greedy! You were not capable of sharing your treasure with anybody... not even your son. Get away from here! I will not give you more!

Man 1: No... listen to me... please.

Fairy: Get out!

Narrator: The man left, and after a few months another man came back to the mountain.

Fairy: What do you want?

Man 2: Please, help me! I have lost everything you gave me. I don't have a single precious stone!

Fairy: What did you do with all the treasure I gave you?

Man 2: Well... you know... I used it to get to know people better. Money makes people betray each other, even an honest man can turn disrespectful and dishonest!

Fairy: So you used the treasure to turn people against each other...and you dare to come and ask for more... I don't want to see you anymore... get out!

Narrator: The man left and a few months later the third man came back to the mountain.

Fairy: Now it's you! I won't give you anything... Get away from here!

Man 3: Wait... I don't want anything else from you. I just came to give you back some of the treasure you gave me. I don't want to be rich!

Fairy: So... you don't want to be a rich man?

Man 3: No.

Fairy: why?

Man 3: Because money doesn't make me happy. People came to me just because I was rich... they were not sincere... they were not my true friends.

Fairy: Oh, surely wealth is not a good thing! Go back to your own world. You are poor once again and you can now live in peace.

Narrator: The man left, and she forgot her dream of going out into the world. She forgot about the sun, the lakes, the rivers, and the flowers.

Fairy: Well... I prefer to stay here, in my underground world with my treasure... men don't understand that wealth doesn't bring happiness. Wealth can also bring misfortune.

The End

<http://www.kidsinco.com/2009/05/treasure-mountain/>

APPENDIX 10: MY COLLECTION OF DISCOURSE MARKERS

Discourse Marker	
Use	
Example	
Comments	
Discourse Marker	
Use	
Example	
Comments	
Discourse Marker	
Use	
Example	
Comments	
Discourse Marker	
Use	
Example	
Comments	
Discourse Marker	
Use	
Example	
Comments	
Discourse Marker	
Use	
Example	
Comments	

Discourse Marker	
Use	
Example	
Comments	
Discourse Marker	
Use	
Example	
Comments	
Discourse Marker	
Use	
Example	
Comments	
Discourse Marker	
Use	
Example	
Comments	
Discourse Marker	
Use	
Example	
Comments	

APPENDIX 11: EVALUATION SHEET

DISCOURSE MARKERS						
Student:						Grade:
	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Notes
Understands the linguistic function of discourse markers						
Uses different discourse markers in his/her speech.						
Is able to add the contents learnt to his/her speech.						
Uses discourse markers appropriately.						
His/her speech is fluent.						
His/her speech is coherent.						
Understands the information he/she receives.						
Is able to use and value the target language as a tool for communication.						
Uses the target language properly to transmit information with a communicative purpose.						
It presents a participative and respectful attitude towards the teacher and classmates.						
Presents the work completed daily and properly.						
Presents a positive attitude to solve communicative and comprehension problems using the target language.						

APPENDIX 12: TEACHER'S SELF-EVALUATION

TEACHER'S SELF EVALUATION
Most successful activities
Objectives not achieved
Problems with activities
Changes
Additions
Problems with motivation and future suggestions
Final reflection and considerations

AUDIOVISUAL APPENDICES

AUDIOVISUAL APPENDIX 1: DISCOURSE MARKERS

INTRODUCTION:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z-GG2R30Hk8&feature=youtu.be>

AUDIOVISUAL APPENDIX 2: JUST THE WAY YOU ARE:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LjhCEhWiKXk>

AUDIOVISUAL APPENDIX 3: MIKE THE KNIGHT, SQUIRT'S STORY

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1pxfuRXjQms>

