

**INGLÉS-MAESTRO****Práctico/Tema: 25**

TOPIC 25: *Child centred approach in the teaching learning English process: foundations and applications. Motivation and attitude towards learning the English language. Practical applications.*

**1. Introduction:**

Individual differences when learning a language based on age, preferences, attention span, speed, etc. is a condition of human beings.

Motivation and interest contribute to success in learning so they should be considered by teachers when designing the lessons and choosing the activities.

Child centred approach has been embraced by the different educational laws (LOGSE; LOE and LOMCE) considering “pupils as the centre and the reason of education” including flexibility as a basic criteria to attend all the students’ needs and new concepts such as competences to enhance the students’ personal skills.

**2. Child centred approach in the teaching learning English process.**

Children have common features that make them similar such as habits and social traditions. These common characteristics help teachers to design their plans and design the group activities.

On the other hand, differences such as social background, learning styles, etc. make teaching complex as we should take into account the individualities while working with the class.

**2.1. Individual differences in the learning process.****2.1. a Differences in personal development.**

Children of the same age are at the same stage of development. However, some of them may be ahead or behind for different reasons.

In primary, children reach wider autonomy. In a first moment, they improve gradually the general control over their body. A second step is to get motor autonomy (coordination between hand and eyes)

Language development also improves and allows social development (when they express their thoughts) and cognitive development (as they represent reality better)

Motor autonomy and language development is shown by the ability for abstraction (classify, compare, order...)

Children will improve their understanding of society and their place in it as they develop language, social and cognitive skills. Social and personal values will appear during the process.

Teachers should consider all these factors Cognitive, motor, social, linguistic and affective aspects) when planning their lessons.

**2.1.b Cognitive styles.**

Cognitive style refers to the way every person learns concepts. It is referred as “individual differences” in the Spanish law. Cognitive style is based on our previous knowledge and our learning strategies, that is why it is different for every person.

Gardner establishes 7 different cognitive styles known as Multiple Intelligences.

**Linguistic:** enjoy literature, reading and writing.

**Logical:** mathematical: enjoy problem solving and reasoning.

**Spatial:** enjoy pictures and art, designing and drawing.

**Bodily, kinesthetic:** enjoy sports, games, dancing.

**Musical:** enjoy songs and have good sense of rhythm.

**Interpersonal:** interested and sensitive towards others, leaders.

Intrapersonal: independent, enjoy doing things on their own, dreaming.

### 2.1.c Personal conditions.

Children are born in a social environment which influences their development. The type of family (only child, position among brothers or sisters, step parents, etc), the place where they live (rural or urban) and the cultural background play an important part in children's learning process.

RD 126/2014 February 28<sup>th</sup> that establishes the basic curriculum for the Primary Education **later specified by the RD 1493/2015, 22<sup>nd</sup> May about attention to diversity** establish the students who need extra educative support and the specific plans to be designed according to their learning style.

- Students with Special Needs (SEN):
  - Cognitive, auditory, visual motor disability
  - Severe behavioural disorder.
- Learning disorder
- Attentional deficit disorder / hyperactivity.
- Over talented children.
- Special personal or schooling conditions.
- Students coming from different educational systems. Late entrance in the Spanish educational system.
- Madurative retard.

## 2.2. Individual differences when learning a second language.

L2 acquisition is a process which involves the use and development of specific strategies.

### 2.2.a. Language acquisition.

Learning a language is a creative constructive process. Children use natural strategies to assimilate language that make the process meaningful and understandable according to the communicative situation.

The learning process is influenced by the students' personal development and their relationship with the environment.

### 2.2.b. Second language acquisition.

Language is a code that we use to communicate and to represent reality. When acquiring a second language, our mother tongue is going to affect L2 acquisition.

L2 learning is a global process in which learners simplify and exclude what is not essential for communication. Errors will be made and silence is necessary to organize the speech. Finally, the acquisition should be achieved in the four skills as evidence of acquisition in a natural way.

Motivation and interest should be enhanced through a social and educational need to communicate in a second language (finding a job or cultural awareness)

## 2.3. Influence of these differences in the teaching process.

All these differences have an influence in teachers and their work.

### 2.3.a. Teacher's attitude.

Teachers have to bear in mind the following factors to attend to all their students:

1. Personal and linguistic development.
2. Cognitive style.
3. Personal/social / familiar background.
4. Students with need of educative support.
5. Interests / motivation.
6. Errors / silence.
7. Teaching in a global way.

When designing their lessons teachers should try to keep a personal and close relation with

children and to answer their particular needs.

### 2.3.b Teaching program.

The teaching program should incorporate the following aspects:

1. School Educational Project and School Curricular Project which includes what/ how and when to teach (objectives, contents, activities, methodology, resources, assessment instruments)
2. Child centred teaching including verbal and non-verbal strategies which involve the whole group but at the same time answer particular needs for diversity and foster autonomy.
3. Children's experiences and familiar situations using a global approach.
4. Previous knowledge and cultural context. How much knowledge or contact the students have about the new language.
5. Flexibility: the program should be checked and reorganized according to the learning process and the assimilation of concepts.
6. Students with extra educative support and specially SENs may need and extension or a parallel program.
7. Coordination with all teachers and specialists involved.

### 3. Motivation and attitude towards learning a second language.

Individual differences and social context play an important role in motivation and interest for successful learning.

#### 3.1. Importance of motivation and attitude in second language learning.

Lambert followed an interesting experience in a school in Quebec (Canada) during the 60's. French was the official language. A group of English speaking parents suggested exclusive French study to help their children integrate in a French speaking society. Those children reached a high level of competence in French and kept their excellent competence in English becoming totally bilingual.

The reasons for this success were:

1. Parent's motivation.
2. High socio-cultural level
3. Excellent prestige for both languages.

Waldman dealt with a similar experience in the USA with English and Spanish. English speaking students participating in Spanish programs developed open minded ideas and feelings towards the Hispanic culture.

Motivation and interest will increase if children appreciate the language prestige and value as they will get a high communicative competence and a positive attitude towards L2 learning.

#### 3.2 Practical considerations to maintain motivation.

How can schools and teachers keep children's motivation and interest?

##### 3.2.a. Individual differences.

Children will produce and receive different messages which are the main key in the communicative process. If they are interested in the message, their understanding and productivity will improve highly.

Students must be active participants choosing different aspects of learning to feel that they are important. This way, their language competence, autonomy and self initiative will be enhanced.

##### 3.2.b. Global approach.

A global approach in L2 teaching provides a progressive awareness of language and culture of the spoken language. Teachers should make the students' contact with L2 for the

first time positive, meaningful and joyful (e.g. using games). After getting a little knowledge (8 years old) L2 learning will start to be more productive.

### 3.2.c. Teaching program.

- It must be realistic and challenging, based on the students' needs and abilities.
- It must be flexible and varied to suit the whole group and individuals.
- It must be suitable for children trying to avoid boredom or lack of attention.

### 3.2.d. Teacher's role.

Teachers must be thoughtful and responsible about their work and keep updated in linguistic and didactic competence. They should develop abilities and attitudes such as respecting students, being patient, etc.

When designing their lessons, teachers should create communicative situations for L2 to be used such as cooperative work. Finally, they must foster these values, attitudes and skills so children feel free and secure increasing their motivation and participation.

### 3.2.e. Classroom management.

It means organizing different aspects of the learning environment in order to enhance the teaching-learning process.

Teachers should create a happy and relaxed atmosphere where students feel free and supported. To obtain this atmosphere teachers need to:

- Organize space in the classroom, distributing furniture and displaying the students' work.
- Organize the students: how they are going to work: individually, in groups, pairs...
- Choose the methodology to foster communication (routines, learning to learn...)

### 3.2.f. Teacher-parents communication.

In general terms, parents in primary school are supportive and have a positive attitude. In taking a time to communicate with parents, we maintain their support in what we do. Parents need to understand our methodology and what we do in class.

At the same time, parents are a valuable source of information about our pupils as they help us understand the background of every child.

## 4. Conclusion.

Children follow similar patterns and paces in L2 acquisition but do not evolve the same way. These differences affect learning. Teaching must be complex, flexible and varied.

Teachers should keep children's motivation and interest in order to improve their language competence by

- considering the students' differences
- being well prepared
- designing and following a flexible program
- creating meaningful communicative situations.

The Child centred approach help teachers to design a teaching learning process including individual differences and taking into account the students' motivation and interests.

## QUESTIONS:

- What type of reasons for learning English can you explain to children to increase their motivation?
- Which type of classroom organization/distribution would you choose for communicative activities?
- What actions would you take to involve parents in their children's L2 learning?