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WARM-UP ACTIVITY PROPOSAL FOR ORAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE IMPROVEMENT IN SECONDARY EDUCATION

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Abstract

English

This master's dissertation presents an innovative teaching proposal to improve the oral communicative competence of students in obligatory secondary education (ESO). It is well known that most secondary education students are not provided with many other opportunities or contexts in which to practice and to communicate in English outside the ESL classroom. Consequently, many students are not competent enough to speak the foreign language once they finish ESO. The aim of this paper is to propose a 7-minute-long warm-up activity to be implemented with students in 1st of ESO from a state high school in a working-class municipality in Vallès Occidental, Catalonia. This paper follows a scientific approach because it was originally prepared during direct observation made in the field. It has been enriched with an accurate literature review and it includes, as a result, an innovative teaching proposal, which is based on the starting and closing routines used at the beginning and end of each English lesson and the "Bon dia" routine observed both during the Practicum. This observation-reflection-action approach was developed during the second semester of 2019-2020 in Catalonia, and it responds to personal interests and professional purposes. The final product consists of the presentation and application of an innovative warm-up, that is to aim for students' better oral communicative competence in English classes at compulsory levels of education. Finally, rubrics and charts are presented for data collection, students' assessment, and the research procedure.

Català

El present Treball de Fi de Màster es presenta una proposta didàctica d'innovació per a millorar la competència comunicativa oral dels estudiants d'Educació Secundària Obligatòria (ESO). Com tothom sap, a molts estudiants d'educació secundària no se'ls ofereix gaire oportunitats i contextos per a practicar o comunicar-se en anglès fora de l'aula ordinària. Conseqüentment, sembla ésser que molts estudiants no són prou competents a l'hora de parlar una llengua estrangera en acabar l'ESO. L'objectiu d'aquest treball és proposar un *warm-up* de 7 minuts dirigit a estudiants de 1r d'ESO en un institut públic situat en un municipi on predomina la classe treballadora del Vallès Occidental, Catalunya. Aquest treball segueix un mètode científic perquè originàriament es va preparar durant l'observació directa en el camp d'estudi. S'ha enriquit amb un rigorós anàlisi de bibliografia i inclou, com a resultat, una proposta didàctica d'innovació, la qual es basa en les rutines d'inici i acabament utilitzades al principi i al final de cada classe d'anglès i de la rutina del "Bon dia" observades durant el Pràcticum. Aquest mètode d'observació-reflexió-acció s'ha desenvolupat durant el segon semestre de 2019-2020 a Catalunya, i dona resposta als interessos personals i professionals. El producte final consisteix en la presentació i l'aplicació d'un *warm-up* innovador, amb l'objectiu de millorar la competència comunicativa oral dels alumnes a les classes d'anglès dels nivells educatius obligatoris. Finalment, es presenten les rúbriques i taules per a recollir dades, per avaluar els resultats dels estudiants i el procediment del projecte.

Castellano

En el presente Trabajo de Fin de Máster se presenta una propuesta didáctica de innovación para mejorar la competencia comunicativa oral de los estudiantes de la Educación Secundaria Obligatoria (ESO). Como es sabido, a muchos estudiantes de educación secundaria no se les muchas oportunidades o contextos para practicar o comunicarse en inglés fuera de la clase convencional. En consecuencia, parece ser que muchos estudiantes no son suficientemente competentes al hablar una lengua extranjera en finalizar la ESO. El objetivo de este trabajo es proponer un *warm-up* de 7 minutos dirigido a estudiantes de 1º de la ESO en un instituto público situado en un municipio donde predomina la clase trabajadora del Vallès Occidental, Cataluña. Este trabajo sigue un método científico porque originariamente se preparó durante la observación directa en el campo de estudio. Se ha enriquecido con un riguroso análisis de bibliografía e incluye, como resultado, una propuesta didáctica de innovación, la cual se basa en las rutinas de inicio y fin utilizadas al principio y al final de cada clase de inglés y de la rutina del "Bon dia" observadas durante el Practicum. Este método de observación-reflexión-acción se ha desarrollado durante el segundo semestre de 2019-2020 en Cataluña, y da respuesta a intereses personales y profesionales. El producto final consiste en la presentación y aplicación de un *warm-up* innovador, con el objetivo de mejorar la competencia comunicativa oral de los alumnos a las clases de inglés de los niveles educativos obligatorios. Finalmente, se presentan las rúbricas y tablas para la recolección de datos, para evaluar a los estudiantes y el procedimiento del proyecto.

Key words

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Communication works for those who work at it.

John Powell

1. Introduction

1.1. Identification of the paper

This document is the author's final university research, the TFM of the *Official Master's Degree in Teaching in Secondary Schools, Vocational Training and Language Centres* at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, done during the school year 2019-2020, on the topic "WARM-UP ACTIVITY PROPOSAL FOR ORAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE IMPROVEMENT IN SECONDARY EDUCATION".

This paper was thought of and designed following a scientific approach based on direct observations made in the field, during the Practicum sessions of the Master's Degree. These Practicum sessions took place in a state high school located in a working-class municipality of Vallès Occidental in the course of 1st of ESO with 12 and 13-year-old students. Throughout the dissertation all names have been kept in anonymity in order to protect the identity of the school and the participants mentioned.

This work has been enriched with a review of academic literature and it includes, as a result, an innovative teaching proposal. This observation-reflection-action approach was developed during the second semester of 2019-2020 in Catalonia, Spain, and it responds to personal interests and professional purposes. The final product consists of the presentation and application of an innovative warm-up, that is to aim for students' better oral communicative competence in the English classes at compulsory levels of education.

1.2. Purpose and personal interests

Communication is essential for people. It is the way to express oneself, to connect with others, to share feelings, and to exchange points of view. It is the way by which we comprehend others, learn and, in a broader view, connect to the world.

In my previous experience as a teacher and also as an ex-high school student, I have realized that most students do not have the opportunity or do not devote enough time to oral communication in ESL classrooms in Catalan secondary state high schools. Therefore, students do not have the chance to communicate in English and when they finish their obligatory education they are not trained to speak, communicate and express their opinion in public or even small groups of people.

The aim of this paper is to propose a warm-up activity to better the oral communicative competence of students in Catalan state secondary education ESL classrooms. Moreover, it is highly relevant for the purpose of this project to create a systematic procedure with which to evaluate the achievement of the objective of this teaching proposal, that is the expected students' results on the oral communicative competence.

For this reason, I propose to design an innovative 7-minute-long warm-up activity, as well as a systematic procedure with a rubric and two charts to evaluate the results of its implementation with students of 1st of ESO. The evaluation also includes a self-evaluation chart for student's evaluation of the project. This warm-up activity has been inspired by the starting and closing routines used at the beginning and end of each English lesson and the "Bon dia" routine, both observed during the Practicum, and it has been adapted to the innovative proposal for the improvement of students' communicative skills.

Finally, the broader objective of this innovative project is professional growth, development, and teaching improvement. This proposal is as well a useful tool for current ESL teachers, student-teachers and the educational community at large.

1.3. Context of the study

The following study would have been conducted in a state high school located in the municipality of Vallès Occidental, Catalonia. It is actually an active centre of the *Escola Nova 21* (2020). It is a primary school and a high school at the same time, which means that it integrates all stages of compulsory education. This allows the school to focus and continue with the same educational project without interruption between primary and secondary school.

As our mentor was the tutor of a group of 1st ESO students, we mainly had the opportunity to see how this course was organised and how it worked. As far as English

was concerned, 1st ESO students did two Linguistic Projects, which combined Catalan and English, during one of the terms, and they also had three more hours a week of English instruction. In English class they worked on the different competencies of the curriculum. A type of activity that played an important role in the school were routines. Two different types of routines were observed during the Practicum.

One of these routines was carried out in English class. These routines were divided into a starting routine which consisted in saying the date and recapping previous completed work and knowledge about it, and a closing routine which reflected on the material learned during the class and a reminder of the tasks that needed to be completed. They were thought out by the English teacher, our mentor, who told us she had come up with them based on her experience as a student and teacher.

The second routine was one that was done in all classes of the high school. The school created and implemented a "Bon dia" routine. It consisted of showing a picture, a graph or a video to students as the first activity they did at school in the morning. All the resources presented were of a formative nature, that is, all had a meaningful and sometimes additional concealed message related to ethics or to personal growth which benefited the development of students' critical and responsible thinking. After, students took a look at the picture or watched the short video and they were asked two questions in Catalan: "What do you see?" and "What do you think is happening?". Volunteers to answer the questions were chosen. After the responses by the students were given, which took between 5 and 10 minutes, the planned lesson proceeded.

The innovative warm-up proposal presented in this paper has been inspired by mixing the aforementioned starting routine in English lessons and the "Bon dia". Combining these both routines, permitted the creation of an innovative teaching proposal to use at the beginning of English classes.

2. Literature review

The following section is comprised of a selected review of specialised literature to further analyse the following three main components of this paper in a more in-depth way. These components are: the basic concepts, the current state of ESL classrooms, which is focused on the current situation of oral communicative competence in ESL classrooms in Catalonia, and a brief explanation of warm-ups.

2.1. Basic concepts

In the literature, as stated in the curriculum of *E q o r g v ³ p e k g u " d « u k s w g u* *lingüístic: llengües estrangeres*, the term *oral communication* refers to the ability to comprehend and express oral messages according to the receiver, the purpose and the communicative situation (Escobar, Gilabert, & Sarramona, 2015, p. 9). Listening and speaking are usually associated, as they are produced in an interactional context, in which conversational partners are alternatively speakers and receivers that build significance. Oral competence, through exchange with others, facilitates elaboration and expression of ideas, opinions and feelings, builds one's own thoughts and develops expressivity and fluency (p. 9)[1].

The term *warm-up*, also called *ice-breaker* or *warmer*, is generally understood to refer to all the activities that teachers use previous to the lesson in order to prepare and activate students for learning. However, in the field of learning, there seems to be no general definition of *warm-up*. Rushidi (2013) defines *warm-up* activities as a preparatory stage that helps students to feel relaxed and sets a positive attitude for learning so that they perceive learning as "easy and fun" (p. 130). In turn, Kay (1995) states that warm-ups are an effective way for students to begin thinking in English and reviewing materials (cited in Velandia, 2008, p. 11). According to Kay (1995), "different types of warm-ups help provide variety and interest in the lesson" (cited in Velandia, 2008, p. 11). Furthermore, Robertson, C., & Acklam, R. (2000) consider *warm-ups* to be short activities at the beginning of a lesson that engage students and get them using English from the start of the class (p. 34).

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[1] All citations from the Catalan booklet of *E q o r g v ³ p e k g u " d « u k s w g u " f g " n ø « o u* *estrangeres* (Escobar, Gilabert, & Sarramona, 2015) have been translated into English.

2.2. Current state of ESL classroom

One of the reasons behind the didactic proposal presented in this project is the available evidence that points to oral language as one of the most unperceived competencies, not only in the general linguistic curricula, but specifically in the ESL classrooms. Many professionals in the ESL field would say it is self-evident that oral communicative competence needs to be developed and practised as the main language-learning objective. Escobar (2009) states that: "*g n " n n q e " e g p v t c n " s w g " n n ø c x c n w c e k » " f g " n g u " e q o r g v ³ p e k g u " q t c n u " q e w r g es correspon amb el lloc que aquestes competències ocupen en les pràctiques escolars que u ø q d u g t x g p "*" (p. 99). Consequently, oral communicative assessment is not always clearly established. Escobar (2009) additionally points out that to assess writing competencies an officialised and visible system in which everything is clearly defined for all participants is used, whereas the indirect evaluation of orality makes it almost imperceptible, and as is well known, what is not visible, does not exist (p. 101). Teachers assess the language used in the ESL classroom daily activities, but there are no clear pre-established criteria to follow. Moreover, in many cases students do not have a specific space and time to practice oral language. Escobar (2009) argues that argumentative discussions or oral narration are not common activities in secondary school classrooms (p. 100), which clearly influences learner's competence acquisition. Escobar (2009) states that: "*lc " o c p e c " f ø w p c " v t c f k e k » k' x 'e k 'f ñ øo k x c n' vh c d k v x '" fg amb finalitats reguladores i certificatives es tradueix en una població adulta desposseïda f ø j c d k n k v c v u " e q 'ò" e c v k x g u " g u u g p e k c n u*" (p. 99)

Therefore, it becomes clear that by just listening to the teacher it is not possible to learn English. In addition, it is extremely important to practice the language from day one (Escobar, 2014, p. 15). Nonetheless, the teaching of oral language presents inherent characteristics that make the achievement of oral competence challenging to work on in class.

Along these lines, Vilà & Castellà (2016) offer a sufficient realistic standpoint of the current situation of orality in our classrooms: it is worth recalling that, unlike written assessment, oral assessment requires a much more personalised attention. Therefore, the

two experts on oral communication mention that one of the main problems when practising oral communication is the required significant time investment during a lesson (p. 9).

Further evidence supporting Vilà & Castellà (2016) may lie in the findings of Rubio & Tamayo (2012) who, for their part, share the same perspective and affirm that a solution for the time and space problem in state high schools to assess each student orally should be found (p. 298). In addition, they justify that student/teacher ratios need to be reduced, since with the current number of students it is difficult to work oral skills optimally (p. 298).

Another difficulty which is found is related to the fact that commonly only one oral final product made by students, such as an oral presentation is assessed. There is no focus on the process and progression of students' improvement from the starting point, as Vilà & Castellà (2016) claim:

> *N ø c x c n w cllengua oraf abraça molts aspectes diferents i planteja el repte f ø c d qlas fimb una aproximació que realment desemboqui a aprenentatges concrets i objectivables. Això no és possible fer-j q " À p k e c o g p v " c o d " n ø h k p c n " f g " n ø c n w ozqr gna intervenció didàctica durant el procés c n k v de planificació.* (p. 14)

Vilà & Castellà (2016) share the same idea as Rubio & Tamayo (2012) in that they consider competence assessment one of the main issues in oral communication. Rubio & Tamayo (2012) support teacher training as the key tool for proper assessment, so that teachers do not only know how to develop their students' communicative competence, but that teachers are also able to properly assess this competence (p. 298). Vilà & Castellà (2016) point to the use of rubrics as an ideal tool for educators to successfully assess the oral competence, as it permits breaking down into more delimited tasks the complexity of linguistic usages (pp. 12-13). They claim it also distributes the complexity of the task in a progressive and operational way (pp. 12-13). Rubio & Tamayo (2012) also consider the use of rubrics as a tool for the assessment of oral communication, and even suggest criteria to take into consideration when making rubrics: understanding of the general idea, slow and clear speech, reference to previous knowledge, use of strategies to continue the discourse, comprehensible speech and appropriateness to the communicative situation, among others (p. 301).

The last concern underlined by the authors is how oral competence is currently implemented in schools. They claim that it is mainly carried out through formal and previously prepared oral presentations in which the information is only transmitted in a unidirectional way (Rubio & Tamayo, 2012, p. 314). Vilà & Castellà (2016) maintain that most people feel tension during public oral intercessions, due to looks and judgemental stances by others and stage fright, which does not allow the possibility of developing the speaker's skills to the fullest (pp. 15-16). Rubio & Tamayo (2012), in the same vein, suggest preparing students from the very beginning, when they start taking L2 lessons, to employ a communicative methodology to boost interaction among speakers (p. 298).

Vilà & Castellà (2016) draw up a possible alternative to the typical oral presentation we all know, which is to work in small groups and individually, with mid-term assessments, error corrections and new goal attachments. The educator is concurrently able to go around the classroom to provide group support and examine students' work, as well as provide them with the necessary instruction and feedback in order to ensure an individual formative assessment (pp. 14-15).

A further note to be highlighted is found in the following paragraph. Rubio & Tamayo (2012) summarize in it the current situation of oral language in our classrooms and reveal a clear goal for this project, which is interaction:

> *Nuestros estudiantes, al acabar sus estudios de lengua inglesa en la enseñanza obligatoria, no son suficientemente competentes en las destrezas comunicativas orales. Esto se puede deber, entre otras razones, a que en los instrumentos de evaluación las destrezas orales y los aspectos comunicativos quedan o bien olvidados o, con suerte, relegados a un segundo plano. Esto ocurre a pesar de que la normativa que regula las enseñanzas mínimas para la ESO fomente el desarrollo de la competencia comunicativa y tenga como objetivo que, al finalizar esta etapa, el alumnado sea capaz de interaccionar y hacerse entender en un conjunto de situaciones.* (p. 296)

Therefore, instead of producing decontextualized oral speeches, in this teaching proposal we aim to focus on the ability emphasized by Rubio & Tamayo (2012), this is, the interaction among students in class. According to Kerbrat-Orecchioni (2005), conversation is the interactional speech type that provides more interaction as a result of collaborative work and, at the same time, it turns out to be the prototype of oral discourse (cited in Turró, 2013, p. 29). For that reason, presenting the teaching proposal with an

activity which allows working on oral communication throughout interaction among students, not only enables students to work on the L2, but also promotes students' cognitive development (Perret-Clermont, 1979; Coll and Edwards, 1999, cited in Turró, 2013, p. 25). Social interaction allows students to develop their critical thinking, as well as display abilities related to conversation, communication skills, identity, and social management (Turró, 2013, p. 25). Besides, Turró (2013) argues that the development of all these abilities in a peer interaction scenario can lead to a greater participation of all students (p. 25) and, as Rogoff (1993) claims, the willingness to structure the interactive situation by themselves, since the awareness of shared responsibility among all members appears (cited in Turró, 2013, p. 25). Willis (1996) claims that "through interaction learners have the chance to acquire discourse skills" (cited in Gutiérrez, 2005, p. 84). Moreover, an educator's contribution can benefit from the one-time conversation management among students. Likewise, according to Willis (1996), "creating a low stress atmosphere and using the language for real purposes are ways to get meaningful communication" (cited in Gutiérrez, 2005, p. 84). Thus, Gutiérrez (2005) claims that to encourage the learners' interaction it is very important to create a positive environment, in which students feel comfortable enough to express their ideas, feelings and opinions without the pressure or being ashamed of making mistakes (p. 84). In fact, this is also mentioned in the second competence of the *E q o r g v ³ p e k g u " d « u k s w g u " f g " llengües estrangeres*, which is to plan and produce different types of oral texts according to the communicative situation (Escobar, Gilabert, & Sarramona, 2015, p. 21), in particular to the methodological orientations. In the competencies, it is stated that a positive environment can be achieved when the communicative success of the productions is prioritised in the formal correction, and only if the formal mistakes are presented to students as a learning opportunity (Escobar, C., Gilabert, R. & Sarramona, J., p. 22)[2].

2.3. Warm-ups

Warm-ups offer meaningful and purposeful contributions practices. In an attempt to practice oral communication in ESL classrooms in an interactional context, we propose using a short warm-up activity as an essential part of the ESL lesson plan.

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[2] All citations from the Catalan booklet of *E q o r g v ³ p e k g u " d « u k s w g u " f g " n ø « o ɑ estrangeres* (Escobar, Gilabert, & Sarramona, 2015) have been translated into English.

According to Velandia (2008), there are eight principles for teachers to take into consideration when preparing a warm-up activity (p. 13). The eight principles are shown in the following figure:
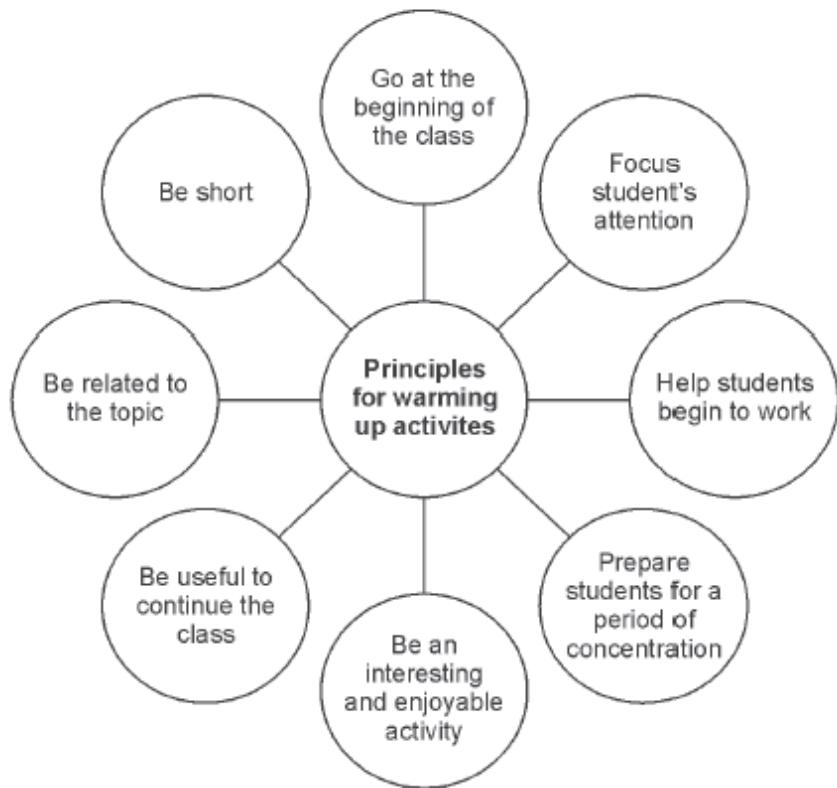
Figure 1: Principles for warming up activities

Velandia (2008) also mentions the stages of ESL lessons described by Kay (1995) as the following: warm-up, presentation, practice, application, and assessment. Therefore, warm-ups are considered to be the preparatory stage for the other stages of a lesson.

In the field of warm-ups many experts have found that the advantages to warm-up activities are manifold. However, we will only cite two as they perfectly summarize the most important advantages.

First, Allwright (1984) states that "warm-up activities are designed to attract students' attention, to help them put aside distracting thoughts, and to get them ready to focus individually and as groups on whatever activities that follow. (…) We could say a warming up activity is a motivating starting point that will lead students to become animated to work efficiently in the language class" (cited in Velandia, 2008, p. 11).

Second, Lady Patricia Espíndola (2010), highlights the benefits of this practice claiming that warm-ups are the first activity ESL students should engage in after the

greeting, and they should be included in daily lesson plans (p. 36) as previously mentioned by Kay (1995). According to Espíndola (2010), warm-ups should be an easy exercise that permits the participation of all students (p. 36). This author considers it very important that all students are able to participate in the warm-up activity as it is a way for students to get ready to start the lesson and to focus on English.

Finally, we would like to add that based on our experience we know ESL teaching warm-up activities are very popular. There are many online sources that offer a variety of warm-up activities for ESL lessons such as games, debates, listening activities, vocabulary revision, grammar tips, etc., that can be adapted depending on the context, level, student/teacher ratio, students' age and learning styles, and learning objectives.

3. Methodological approach

The teaching proposal presented in this paper has been designed to facilitate a place and time in ESL secondary education classrooms for all students, without exception of any kind, to practice oral communication in every English lesson. Even though the oral competence is already being developed in some Catalan state high schools in one way or another, it seems that students are not competent enough to speak the foreign language once they finish ESO. Therefore, we suggest implementing the following innovative warm-up, a small activity from a teaching unit, for students to improve their oral competence in secondary education classrooms.

This teaching innovation has not been carried out in-person because of the lockdown, but the proposed methodological approach to evaluate this proposal includes quantitative and qualitative elements. This work is based on observation-reflection-action research.

During the Practicum, different working methodologies from different teachers were observed. However, what surprised us most was the "Bon dia" routine, which we had never experienced before either as a teacher or as a student. This routine was an effective way to empower students' critical thinking and personal development. In addition, we also saw how useful routines in English classes were for students, because they permitted students to know perfectly well what they had to do when entering and leaving the class, and in addition this established routine facilitated classroom management.

The teaching proposal presented in this paper has been inspired by mixing the "Bon dia" and the warm-up routines seen in the Practicum. The teaching proposal would take place in the three classes of 1st ESO of the Practicum state high school located in Vallès Occidental, Catalonia. It would consist in devoting the first seven minutes of each lesson to speaking. The first day of its implementation, the teacher would give instructions on how to accomplish the assigned task and would offer some useful sentences and models for students to start using.

To start the warm-up activity[3], students would sit in pairs while the teacher is preparing the timer on the digital board. Then, students would be given a free copyright picture on the same topic each (see Appendix V), as we want them all to participate and

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[3] See the schematic procedure of the whole teaching proposal at the end of section *4.Data collection*.

to interact. As each student of this school has a laptop, we would use a virtual platform to share the pictures with them. If we wanted to implement this teaching proposal in a high school where students do not have access to a laptop, computer, or an electronic device with connection to the Internet, the teacher would print the pictures. Each student would have to keep their own picture and not show it to their peers.

We would make use of the 1-2-4 cooperative technique we have learned in this Master's Degree, in particular in Psychology. Using the 1-2-4 cooperative technique would provide students with the opportunity to work individually, in pairs and in groups of four in only one activity. Students would have to answer the same two questions as in the "Bon dia" routine: "What do you see?" and "What do you think is happening?". It must be said that pictures would always be about meaningful, relevant, interesting, or current and real-life topics to stimulate students' critical thinking and personal development such as values, bullying, the environment, a healthy lifestyle, stereotypes, etc.

The 1-2-4 cooperative technique consists of three steps. First, each student would look at the picture for one minute and start thinking what he or she is going to say. If students had a laptop, a computer or any other electronic device, they could search for unknown vocabulary they might need on the Internet, which would boost their autonomy. In the event they do not have access to Internet, they could directly ask the unknown words to the teacher or look them up in a dictionary provided by the teacher.

The following two minutes would be devoted to getting into pairs and to start interacting. The first student (S1) would start asking the first question ("What do you see?"), to the second student (S2), which would then start describing his or her picture. Once S2 finished, he or she would ask S1 to describe his or her picture. Once both students had described their pictures, they would proceed to the second question ("What do you think is happening?"). In this case, the interaction would be conversational, and both students would have to interact and discuss the topic. In the third step, once the two minutes were over, S1 and S2 would need to join another pair of students. The four students would have to ask each other which picture they had and discuss the topic. The idea is that all students would have the opportunity to express themselves by giving their opinion or conveying their belief regarding the picture. There is no need for students to reach a consensus regarding the topic. In fact, if the teacher perceives that a topic leads to a large amount of interaction and most students need more time to complete the discussion,

he or she could consider prolonging the last part of the warm-up, depending on the flexibility and the planning of the English session.

With this warm-up activity, students would be active participants of their own learning process, even those who are not naturally very talkative. Besides, they would already know what to do at the beginning of the lesson, which could also be helpful for class management, and it would activate students for the lesson. The teacher would not correct errors so as to create a positive environment and encourage learners' interaction.

Devoting around 7 minutes to this warm-up activity in each class would boost the oral competence of students. Since it is a type of drill, it could also help them lose their inhibition about speaking in English and consequently add to their self-esteem. In fact, it is highly likely that most of them are not exposed to many other situations or contexts to practice and to communicate that deal with topics whose nature adds to their personal development in English outside the classroom.

In the event this teaching proposal had been carried out during the Practicum, we would have compared the data with the co-teacher and the school mentor. In the event this teaching proposal was carried out by other language teachers in their classrooms, the data could be compiled and the notes and observations of these teachers with the same group of students could be collected. Therefore, as a consequence of having more data observations, the results of the analysis would be more conclusive.

4. Data collection

To carry out the research, we would adhere to the following ethical procedures. First, we would ask the centre, students and their families for consent to do the research. In the event a student's family did not want their son or daughter to take part in the research, this student in particular would not enter into the research project and data regarding his or her improvement would not be collected. Second, we would guarantee the anonymity of students throughout the study by using numbers instead of names. In addition, in the event of compiling the resulting data with another language teacher, we would ask him or her to follow the same ethical procedures we established. Finally, as all research ethically requires, at the end of the project we would share the results obtained with the school, the students and their families.

Data collection would proceed from the observations made in all classes of 1st of ESO during the warm-up activity, especially when students are interacting in pairs and groups. We would not select a specific number of students as we want to have data concerning all types of students regardless of their learner type or language level. Therefore, the more cases we can analyse, the more representative the data analysis would be.

The teacher would go around the class observing and taking field notes of students' oral productions and interactions, and students *per se* would not know they were being observed or assessed. Observations would be carried out every day during the whole school year. The teacher would observe and take notes of a group of four students sitting together in the last phase of the warm-up. Considering students attend three hours of English lessons a week, each one of them would be observed at least once a month.

The teacher would use a rubric (see Appendix I) to organise his or her qualitative data. From the beginning of the course until the end, the teacher would also use a chart (see Appendix II) to collect data about individual students' progress each time that they are observed. In this chart the teacher would collect all the levels of acquisition individually, from the first observation until the last one, which would be approximately eight observations during a school year. However, the total number of observations could vary depending on the opportunities the teacher has to observe each student during the course.

Also, for each observation period, the teacher could add a new rubric, as rubrics can be modified whenever some repeated phenomenon among students interaction and

communication occur, because as Vilà & Castellà (2016) state, rubrics must be adaptable to the specific difficulties of each group of students and in any period of the didactic sequence (p. 13). All in all, the objective of this teaching proposal is that each student is able to improve at least one level of acquisition (No Assolit [NA], Assolit Satisfactori [AS], Assolit Notable [AN] and Assolit Excel·lent [AE]) in each of the criteria (see Appendix I) from the beginning of the course until the end of it.

Description	The student describes the image in detail.
Interpretation	The student gives different valid interpretations of the image.
Speech structure	The student uses complex sentences and syntax to complete sentences.
Speech cohesion	The student uses a range of cohesion correctly.
Coherence	There are no contradictions in the student's speech.
Fluency	The student speaks at a calm and clear speed and comprehension is complete and easy.
Accuracy	The student's speech shows rich and accurate use of grammar and vocabulary.
Attitude	The student shows great interest and willingness to perform the activity and always follows the instructions.
Participation	The student always participates, listens, and helps others.
Interaction	The student uses appropriate strategies for starting, continuing, and ending a conversation in all situations and always respects speaking time.

Figure 2: Criteria to assess the oral communicative competence

Once the methodology and the data collection process are explained, a sequence of the teaching proposal is presented below to facilitate and schematically delimitate the different timings, the teacher's role and the students' role during the implementation of the innovative proposal.

Context:
- Participants: 3 groups of 1st ESO students (aged 12-13)
- Place: state high school in Vallès Occidental, Catalonia
- Class: English lessons
- Duration: each lesson during the whole school year
- Teaching material: projector, Internet, timer, students' laptops/computers/electronic devices or printed images, dictionaries if necessary

SEQUENCE	V G C E J G T ø U " T	U V WF G P V U ø "
Beginning of the course BEFORE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TEACHING PROPOSAL	T counts the total number of sessions throughout the year. The assessment of each session is planned for 4 students per lesson.	
	First day: T gives instructions. T provides useful sentences and models for SS to use.	PARTICIPATION: Listen and perform.
During the school year DURING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TEACHING PROPOSAL	T sets timer on digital board.	SS sit in pairs.
SS have to answer 2 questions: - What do you see? - What do you think is happening?	T gives students' the pictures (online or printed).	SS look at their pictures (online or printed).

1-2-4 cooperative technique:		PARTICIPATION: SS perform (speaking and listening, interacting in pairs and groups).
		For 1 minute: SS think individually.
DATA COLLECTION 4 students observed in each lesson	T observes and takes notes. (every day = 4 students = 2 pairs)	For 2 minutes: SS interact in pairs.
	T observes and takes notes (every day = 4 students = 1 group) T collects data using a rubric with criteria (Appendix I). T collects data using a chart of SS's individual progress (Appendix II).	For 4 minutes: SS interact in groups of four.
	Optional: T prolongs the time depending on SS's needs.	Participation: SS' interaction
At the end of the course AFTER THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TEACHING PROPOSAL	T passes the data from the chart of SS's individual progress (Appendix II) to the chart for the final evaluation of the students' results (Appendix III).	

EVALUATION OF STUDENTS' RESULTS	T uses the chart (Appendix III) to evaluate students' results.	
EVALUATION OF THE RESEARCH (each trimester)	T takes into consideration SS' self-assessment of the process (see Figure 5).	SS' self-assessment of the process (see Figure 5).

Figure 3: Sequence of the teaching proposal

5. Expected u v w f results

To interpret the students' results, and the functioning of this teaching proposal, the following criteria has been designed to be used during and after the implementation of the teaching proposal.

First, to evaluate the achievement of the objective of this proposal, which is that each student is able to improve at least one level of acquisition (NA, AS, AN and AE) in each of the criteria of the rubric (see Appendix I), the teacher would take into account the level of acquisition obtained during the first observation and the last observation for all the criteria in the rubric for each student. The summary of the results would be represented in the chart of each student's progress (Appendix II). Therefore, if the level of acquisition in the first observation is lower than the one obtained in the last observation, the student would have progressed between the first and last observation, which is the objective of the teaching proposal.

Second, we would use a chart (see Appendix III) in which we would mark in green the table cells when the student has been able to improve a level of acquisition in one of the criteria. This way, we would be able to count the total number of improvements that each student has obtained in the right column, which would be useful to assess if this teaching proposal works. All in all, the results achieved with the implementation of the teaching proposal could be examined and analysed with the following points:

1. How many students have improved at least one level of acquisition (NA, AS, AN and AE) in **each** of the criteria from the beginning until the end of the course?
    a. X/total number of students observed*100 = total percentage of students

2. How many students have improved at least one level of acquisition (NA, AS, AN and AE) in **6 or more** of the criteria from the beginning until the end of the course?
    a. X/total number of students observed*100 = total percentage of students

3. How many students have improved at least one level of acquisition (NA, AS, AN and AE) in **less than 6** of the criteria from the beginning until the end of the course?
    a. X/total number of students observed*100= total percentage of students

% of students that have improved in **each** of the criteria	% of students that have improved in **6 or more** of the criteria	% of students that have improved in **less than 6** of the criteria

Figure 4: Summary of improvement r g t e g p v c i g u " v qr ë s wj t x c n w c v g " u v w f g p v u

If the percentage of students that have improved in **each** of the criteria is higher than 75%, we could consider that the teaching proposal has improved the speaking assessment scores for almost all students. However, as we want all students to improve, without exception, we would have to consider why all students have not been able to improve their level and to reconsider changing the teaching proposal according to the observations obtained throughout its implementation in order to allow all students to achieve this goal. For example, depending on students' needs, we could consider providing more visual resources, a higher quantity of and more specialized development of resources for students with special needs, the providing of more frequent feedback, and possible other actions based on the teacher's previous experience and the result of professional consultation. However, if the percentage of students that have improved in **less than 6** of the criteria is higher than 10-20%, we would consider that the teaching proposal is not especially useful or adapted to the criteria of these students' needs, since an analysis as to why the research objective was not met would need to be made.

6. Evaluation of the research

This innovative project was thought of during the Practicum but developed after the Spanish government imposed a lockdown. Before the lockdown, the initial idea for the research project was an attempt to do research on corrective feedback. However, as we could not collect enough data to do the research, we decided to change the project typology and the topic. Furthermore, as we could not put into practise this innovation proposal, we did not have the chance to give the results of the research to the participants (the centre, the students and their families). However, in the event of having completed this teaching proposal the results would have been delivered. Therefore, doing this project we have become aware that all researchers must have the ability to quickly adapt to unforeseeable situations, even if this involves feelings, work situation inconvenience or lifestyle changes.

In order to systematize qualitative assessment on this project, a students' self-assessment of the process would be included. Each participant would be asked to fill out the following chart every school trimester.

TASK	Difficulties	Benefits	Suggestions
Individual work			
Pair work			
Group of four work			
Speaking aloud			
Pronunciation			
Making errors			
Teacher Correction			
Student Self-Correction			
Feeling observed			
Learning new things			
Doing it well			

Figure 5: Students' self-assessment of the process

Using rubrics for assessment is beneficial for students and teacher since students' feedback is invaluable to modify procedures and practices. Rubrics also increase awareness of the most important processes, difficulties, and benefits of learning new things (see more charts and rubrics in Appendixes I, II, III).

As mentioned throughout the paper, this teaching proposal is meant to be put into practise with students of 1st of ESO in a state high school located in Vallès Occidental, Catalonia, where we did the Practicum. However, we actually recommend it be put into practise in a large number of high schools and with different languages to boost oral communicative competence. Another possible way to implement this teaching proposal would be to begin its use at all levels of ESO and to continue using it during the following 4 years (if applicable), increasing the level of difficulty and modifying the criteria used in the rubric (Appendix I) to assess students. To improve communication skills at a younger age, this teaching proposal could also be implemented in primary education with adaptations to level and criteria. For instance, images could be made simpler with the use of cartoons or basic graphs for example, and key words and short sentences would be accepted for young learners to communicate.

The presented teaching proposal has been the result of two activities seen during the Practicum and created with the intention to be implemented in our professional future to constantly improve our teaching practices and enhance our students' communication skills. This way we can connect the two worlds, the one experienced in the Practicum as a student-teacher and the one that will later be developed in our professional future as an English teacher.

7. Conclusions

This innovative teaching proposal, the data collection method utilized during implementation and the subsequent systematic evaluation procedure are in response to a curricular shortcoming in ESO students' oral competence practices and procedures. With this Master's Dissertation we pretend to respond to different aspects of the present situation with the objective to address and ameliorate them. The insufficiency is the lack of time and space in ESL classrooms in most state secondary education Catalan high schools to practise the oral communicative competence. Our objective is: i) to observe and give support to each student individually focusing on the process and students' improvement from the starting point and during a whole school year, and not only on a final product, ii) to offer an individual formative assessment giving constant feedback, iii) to arouse students' motivation, which is the key for the learning process, with the preparatory stage of ESL lesson plans, the warm-up activities.

While writing this paper we became aware of the important role warm-up activities play on students' activation and motivation. After recapping previous knowledge and UAB classes regarding the building of communication skills, assessment for learning and classroom management, we saw that mixing and shaping of the two routines seen in the Practicum offered the ideal context to practice students' oral communicative competence in ESL classrooms.

It was unfortunate that we could not carry out this research project as planned because of the situation created by the COVID-19. This situation did not permit us to have the complete research experience we had initially planned. We were not able to carry out the original plan, which was to do corrective feedback, but by chance we were able to go more in depth with the topic of warm-ups, which during the Practicum captivated our attention.

While searching for the literature to write this paper, we were able to do in depth research on the current situation of oral competence in Catalan secondary education, a knowledge that will surely be very useful in our professional future. We were also made aware of how important it is for future teachers to fight for an educational system reform and constant development in order to find the best solutions to boost students' competencies and guide them to acquire all necessary skills to become competent citizens in a globalized world.

The broader objective of this innovative project is professional growth, development and teaching improvement, as well as the practical usage of a motivational, communicative enhancing activity which current ESL teachers, student-teachers and the educational community at large can carry out. When implementing this teaching proposal in the future, we as teachers must be willing to be flexible and adapt to our students' needs. This is why we must consider changing the methodology employed if there is no success in our students' oral communication acquisition. This rationale should be applied with respect to all other classroom practices in the development of competencies at large. We should constantly check our way of implementing activities and changing them when necessary to improve our teaching and always keep in mind that we must guarantee that all our students have the resources and support they need to learn the competencies presented in the current competence-based curriculum (DECRET 187/2015). There is no need to do this process alone as an individual professional. In fact, it is necessary and advisable to share our ideas, procedures, doubts, students' successes and failures to try to find the best way for students to acquire these competencies. Our objective is to provide our students with the resources and the support they need. If this teaching proposal were implemented and had good results, our students would realise that English is not a foreign language they must obligatory learn in school, but rather a dynamic language in which they will effectively be able to communicate.

Finally, we would like to thank the UAB Master's Degree community to have allowed us to do the Practicum in an innovative and active centre with highly qualified professionals, to provide us student-teachers the chance to do research on a specific topic useful for our teaching future and in this way bridge both worlds, the academic and the professional one. Last but not least, thanks to the Master's Degree for providing us with support, knowledge and training to become future professionals in the educational field.

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9. Appendixes

Appendix I: Rubric of the levels of acquisition

	NA	**AS**	**AN**	**AE**
Description	The student can not describe anything in the image.	The student describes the image with very little detail.	The student describes the image using details.	The student describes the image in detail.
Interpretation	The student does not make any interpretation of the image.	The student gives a simple interpretation of the image.	The student gives a valid interpretation of the image.	The student gives different valid interpretations of the image.
Speech structure	The student only uses key words without correct syntax.	The student tries to create sentences using correct syntax.	The student uses simple but correct syntax to complete sentences.	The student uses complex sentences and syntax to complete sentences.
Speech cohesion	The student does not use any type of cohesion when speaking.	The student uses some cohesion, but with some errors.	The student uses some basic cohesion correctly.	The student uses a range of cohesion correctly.
Coherence	There are many contradictions in the student's speech.	There are some contradictions, but they do not affect the student's speech.	In general, there are few contradictions in the student's speech.	There are no contradictions in the student's speech.
Fluency	The student speaks with lots of pauses which impedes comprehension.	The student speaks at a proper speed, but comprehension is difficult.	The student speaks at a steady speed and comprehension of words is complete.	The student speaks at a calm and clear speed and comprehension is complete and easy.
Accuracy	The student does not present any kind of	The student's speech shows regular accurate	The student's speech shows frequent	The student's speech shows rich and

	grammatical, vocabulary or language resource.	use of grammar, and vocabulary.	accurate use of grammar and vocabulary.	accurate use of grammar and vocabulary.
Attitude	The student does not show interest nor willingness to perform the activity and does not follow the instructions.	The student shows limited interest and willingness to perform the activity and usually follows the instructions.	The student shows some interest and willingness to perform the activity and always follows the instructions.	The student shows great interest and willingness to perform the activity and always follows the instructions.
Participation	The student does not participate, listen nor help others.	The student sometimes participates, listens and helps others.	The student usually participates, listens and helps others.	The student always participates, listens and helps others.
Interaction	The student does not use strategies for starting, continuing, and ending a conversation and does not respect speaking time.	The student uses appropriate strategies for starting, continuing, and ending a conversation in some situations and usually respects speaking time.	The student uses appropriate strategies for starting, continuing, and ending a conversation in almost every situation and always respects speaking time.	The student uses appropriate strategies for starting, continuing, and ending a conversation in all situations and always respects speaking time.

Figure 6: Appendix I Rubric of the levels of acquisition

This rubric has been created based on the oral expression assessment criteria by Rubio, F., & Tamayo, L. (2012). Estudio sobre prácticas docentes en la evaluación de la lengua inglesa en la ESO. *Profesorado. Revista de currículum y formación del profesorado, 1*, 295-316. Retrieved June 2, 2020, from https://recyt.fecyt.es/index.php/profesorado/article/view/42849/24733

Appendix II: Chart of one student's progress

Student 1:

	Description	Interpretation	Speech structure	Speech cohesion	Coherence	Fluency	Accuracy	Attitude	Participation	Interaction	Comments
1st observation	AS										
2nd observation	AS										
3rd observation	AS										
4th observation	AS										
5th observation	AS										
6th observation	AN										
7th observation	AN										
8th observation	AN										

Figure 7: C r r g p f k z " K K " E j c t v " q h " q p g " u v w f g p v ø u " r t q i t g u u

We would use this chart throughout the course for each student. The first column has been completed as an example. This rubric has been created by the author of this paper.

Appendix III: Final classroom chart with the number of improvements

1st ESO XXX		Description	Interpretation	Speech structure	Speech cohesion	Coherence	Fluency	Accuracy	Attitude	Participation	Interaction	Number of improvements
Beg.	S1	AS	AN	AN	AN	AS	NA	AS	AS	NA	AS	7
End		AN	AE	AN	AN	AN	AS	AS	AN	AS	AE	
Beg.	S2											
End												
Beg.	S3											
End												
Beg.	S4											
End												
Beg.	S5											
End												
Beg.	S6											
End												
Beg.	S7											
End												
Beg.	S8											
End												
Beg.	S9											
End												
Beg.	S10											
End												

1st ESO XXX		Description	Interpretation	Speech structure	Speech cohesion	Coherence	Fluency	Accuracy	Attitude	Participation	Interaction	Number of improvements
Beg.	S11	AS	AN	AN	AN	AS	NA	AS	AS	NA	AS	7
End		AN	AE	AN	AN	AN	AS	AS	AN	AS	AE	
Beg.	S12											
End												
Beg.	S13											
End												
Beg.	S14											
End												
Beg.	S15											
End												
Beg.	S16											
End												
Beg.	S17											
End												
Beg.	S18											
End												
Beg.	S19											
End												
Beg.	S20											
End												

1st ESO XXX		Description	Interpretation	Speech structure	Speech cohesion	Coherence	Fluency	Accuracy	Attitude	Participation	Interaction	Number of improvements
Beg.	S21	AS	AN	AN	AN	AS	NA	AS	AS	NA	AS	7
End		AN	AE	AN	AN	AN	AS	AS	AN	AS	AE	
Beg.	S22											
End												
Beg.	S23											
End												
Beg.	S24											
End												
Beg.	S25											
End												
Beg.	S26											
End												
Beg.	S27											
End												
Beg.	S28											
End												
Beg.	S29											
End												
Beg.	S30											
End												

Figure 8: Appendix III Final classroom chart with the number of improvements

We would need one chart like this one for each group of students observed and depending on the number of students we would need to modify the

total number of participants. The first rows have been completed as an example. This rubric has been created by the author of this paper.

Appendix IV: Authorization paper for students and families

Jo, _____, alumne de 1r d'ESO, faig constar que autoritzo que Cristina Surroca pugui incloure les **observacions de les meves produccions orals a e n c u u g " d**e **m**ҫ**a**n**e**ra **p**i**o**t**n**a**l**a**r**h**e**n**t** **anònima** i durant **tot el curs escolar**, per tal que pugui dur a terme el seu estudi, els resultats del qual se'm faran saber un cop l'hagi finalitzat.

A_____, _____ de _____ de 20____

Signatura de l'alumne/a

En/Na _____, com a pare/mare/tutor legal de l'alumne/a_____ de 1r d'ESO, autoritzo que s'utilitzin algunes **q d u g t x c e k q p u " f g " n g u " r t q f** w**d**e**l** **e**n**d**u **f**i**l**b**/**a**u**d**é **q t c n u " o** manera totalment **anònima** i durant **tot el curs escolar**, per tal que Cristina Surroca pugui dur a terme el seu estudi, els resultats del qual se'm faran saber un cop l'hagi finalitzat.

A_____, _____ de _____ de 20____
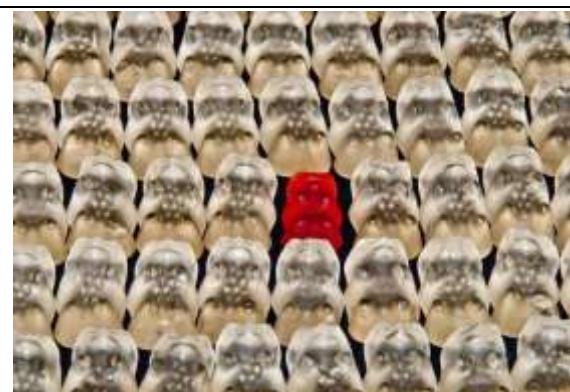
Signatura del pare/mare/tutor legal

Appendix V: Examples of pictures for the warm-up activity

All these images are taken from free copyright websites like ©Pixabay and ©Shutterstock.

Student A	Student B
Figure 9: Environment (Student A)	*Figure 10: Environment (Student B)*

Student A	Student B
Figure 11: Healthy eating (Student A)	*Figure 12: Healthy eating (Student B)*

Student A	Student B
Figure 13: Individual vs. group (Student A)	*Figure 14: Individual vs. group (Student B)*