Methodology techniques for teaching English in Bachillerato


The Spanish curricular framework explains to us what contents should be taught to our students and what objectives they should achieve at the end of the Non-Compulsory Secondary Education stage. However, it is our decision as teachers to choose the best methodology to achieve those aims.

Language must be seen as a means for communication, so activities have to be designed in order to reach communicative purposes. This means that:

a) The programme must be based on a broad and integrated multi-syllabus approach. It should be broad in the sense that it has to cover grammar and language functions, vocabulary, reading, listening, speaking, writing and topics, learner training and multilingual and intercultural competence implicitly. It should be integrated in the sense that each step of the programme design has to form the overall theme of the course. This is justified by the communicative purpose of each activity sequence.

b) The English language is not centred in isolated features of language, such as communicative functions, structures or linguistic skills. On the contrary, a key aspect of learning and use of a language is the integrated development of language, skills and contents. The didactic units must favour a global methodology, with activities that look for the integration of those elements. Language has to be presented in terms of communicative functions, grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. The four skills (listening, reading, speaking and writing) have to be worked throughout the course. The contents must also be related to aspects of personal identity, the present world and the historical and cultural past.

c) The pupils are in the final stage of secondary education. At this age, they have different interests and capacities. For this reason, the course must contain a great variety of topics in order to improve their motivation, such as sports, holidays, computers, literature... These topics accomplish two functions: on the one hand, they connect with other areas of the curriculum and, on the other hand, they encourage the pupils to recognise and think about the importance of a foreign language in present society.

d) An important aspect in the course is grammar. Students must realise that grammar is essential to acquire communicative competence. It is relevant to notice that the main point about grammar is its use. Therefore, grammar is not presented just as a series of rules, but it is focused to its use. Students are expected to apply grammar rules to determinate contexts. It is necessary to know the rule, but it is also necessary to use it properly. Moreover, students are encouraged to infer rules from examples, improving their autonomy and acquiring learning skills.

e) The student is the most important actor in the teaching-learning process. For this reason, methodology must be student-centred, taking as a premise that they must learn some contents in order to reach the aims.
f) **Students have to be grouped in different ways to do the activities.** They can do individual work; pair work and group work, favouring relations and the exchange of ideas; and co-operative learning strategies, used as a measure of attention to diversity.

g) **The teacher must adapt his/her explanations to the level or levels of the class.** He/she acts as a monitor, correcting the students where accuracy is necessary, and as an encourager, because motivation plays an important role in the teaching-learning process. Moreover, the teacher will also encourage students to participate in cultural exchanges or English courses in Britain.

h) The presentation of contents in didactic units which are based on topics and the choice of different materials (songs, computers...) allow **interdisciplinary work.** Students should be exposed to texts about history, songs that improve their musical culture, computer activities that will make them use their knowledge about computer...

i) **The English language should be the normal means of communication.** The natural use of the target language for virtually all communication is a sure sign of a good modern language course.

j) **Learners must often work cooperatively in groups.** To learn to use the language spontaneously, learners need frequent opportunities to work with each other on suitable tasks. Many of these will give them the opportunity to negotiate their way of working with the teacher or other learners.
k) **Some activities should be planned in collaboration with other Departments.** The fact that the study of a foreign language involves learning another way of expressing oneself makes it very suitable for cross-curricular work.

l) **Learners must read extensively for information and pleasure.** Reading is a part of many activities, but it is also an occupation in its own right. The habit of reading in a foreign language is more likely to be caught if from the start it has a purpose beyond learning the language, as in simple instructions for carrying out tasks.

m) **To learn how to learn.** It is not enough with transmitting contents; to the same extent we must teach them how to learn, that is to say, to provide the students with the learning strategies that will help them to access knowledge when needed.

n) **Social interaction.** It is the student who builds his/her learning. However this process must not be carried out in an isolated way between the student and the learning contents. On the contrary, this process has to be accomplished in a social context.

o) Most of the basic contents and grammatical structures dealt with in Non-Compulsory Secondary Education have already been studied in previous years along the Secondary Education period; so, we have to rely and build up on them – following the tenets of Constructivist learning theories -, thus progressing both in structures and vocabulary; complexity will obviously increase, and new topics and functions will come up. Connection with following years (in case the students wish to continue learning English) must be ensured.

In conclusion, we could say that there are some premises that must be born in mind: the aim of the area is to increase students’ communicative competence, so the methodology will be centred on communication. Students are the centre of the teaching-learning process and they must have a high motivation to reach the communicative competence.