

# Teaching and Learning English in the Degree in Infant Education: A Proposal for a Content-Enhanced Syllabus Model

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**Abstract**—This paper presents a proposal for a content-enhanced syllabus model aimed at teaching and learning English in the Degree in Infant Education. The proposal addresses the challenge of providing meaningful learning opportunities to develop the linguistic and communicative competence of the learners. It acknowledges the limitations of the general needs approach commonly used in coursebook-driven English Language Teaching (ELT) within this specific context. Instead, the proposal considers the future professional needs of the learners. Thus, the main goals of the proposal are to develop the learners' learning-to-learn competence, focusing on learning strategies and self-directed learning resources, while fostering their language awareness, particularly in terms of pronunciation and form-meaning mappings. Additionally, the proposal incorporates a lexical, discourse-based approach that emphasizes the importance of multi-word units in language structure, second language learning, and language use. It prioritizes practices like noticing and cognitive engagement, supported by thinking routines, as well as exposure to relevant and rich input. In this way, the proposed content-enhanced syllabus translates into an instructional design based on validated principles of Second Language Acquisition. It revolves around meaning-focused language tasks, functional activities, and the utilization of authentic multimodal materials. This type of syllabus requires active participation from the learners, encouraging them to take an active role in their own learning process. By implementing this proposal, it is hoped that learners will enhance their linguistic and communicative competence, as well as their ability to learn effectively.

**Index Terms**—content-enhanced syllabus, SLA principles, cognition, task-based and meaning-focused language teaching, Degree in Infant Education

## I. INTRODUCTION

This paper puts forward a proposal to rethink the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language (EFL) in the Degree in Infant Education. Much English language teaching today is coursebook-driven and focused on preparing learners to operate in the different domains or spheres of action in social life that the CEFR identifies (2001, 2018a): i.e. personal, public, occupational and educational. At this stage of their language learning, Infant Education undergraduates have repeatedly experienced this general approach that does not respond to their specific linguistic and communicative needs. A tentative profile of these needs is sketched in Table 1 below.

TABLE 1  
LINGUISTIC AND COMMUNICATIVE NEEDS OF INFANT TEACHERS

<i>Communication</i>	Be able to use the foreign language to understand and produce oral, written and multimodal messages and texts that are relevant in the field of early childhood education and for their own language learning, as well as to effectively interact and mediate with other speakers.
<i>Oral skills</i>	Understand and apply the phonetic and phonological system of the foreign language, as well as the forms and functions of verbal discourse for instruction, interaction, and management of the infant classroom.
<i>Learning to learn</i>	Become aware of their linguistic knowledge and communication skills, at the same time as they identify and make use of principles, strategies and resources for guided and self-directed learning of the foreign language and for the development of their intercultural communicative competence.

Infant teachers need to develop their own communicative competence at the same time as they acquire specific linguistic knowledge and skills that are relevant for stimulating and facilitating foreign language learning in early childhood. They also need to become more effective English language learners.

## II. OBJECTIVE

The aim of this paper is to introduce and critically comment on a proposal for a content-enhanced syllabus model for Infant Education undergraduate students which tries to respond to the needs identified above.

### III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### A. *A Content-Enhanced Syllabus Model*

Despite the fact that the majority of teachers would agree that they are teaching EFL for communication, what to teach continues to be an issue because, as Widdowson contended in the 1980s, “there is no such thing as a communicative syllabus: there can only be a methodology that stimulates communicative learning” (1984, p. 26). This is why we need to design language courses in which materials have the potential to engage learners and create a context for the communicative use of the L2, as Ellis et al. (2020) put it. In teacher education, a needs-based syllabus would ensure the relevance of course contents and materials and thus, potentially, create a context for communicative action.

It is our contention that a valid proposal for a needs-based syllabus in teacher education could be a version of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) in that this communicative approach is a form of convergence, as Coyle et al. contend in their seminal work (2010). CLIL was a response to the need identified at the turn of the 20th century for “better linguistic and communicative competence, more relevant methodologies, and higher levels of authenticity to increase learner motivation” (p. 5). It also provides teacher educators with an opportunity to regenerate our language teaching in a way that other communicative approaches that attempt to bring in authenticity and relevance, such as English for Specific Purposes (ESP), fail to offer.

Although CLIL and ESP may have things in common, as they aim for effective communication, they also differ significantly. An ESP syllabus includes content knowledge but is primarily focused on language and language use, on precision and accountability, and thus on specifying measurable learning outcomes in line with an efficiency view of education (Richards, 2013). A common approach to course design in ESP is based on identifying the situations in which learners need to typically use the language, and then selecting the linguistic features needed to perform effectively in those situations. ESP courses are built around a situational and topic- or theme-based syllabus (Ur, 2012, p. 188), and a systematic process of needs analysis to determine the kinds of communication learners need to master. This is an example of backward design (Richards, 2013), in which expected learner outcomes are used for choosing input and designing instruction.

An example of this for EFL teaching and learning in Infant Education studies is Kindergarten Teacher (Evans et al., 2015) in the Career Paths series and which is described as “a new educational resource for kindergarten teachers and other childcare providers who want to improve their English communication in a work environment” (back cover). The series addresses topics including classroom supplies, daily schedule, play, stories and reading, lesson plan formats and classroom management. But, although the situations, lexis and functions addressed through these topics are useful to the infant teacher, authenticity, relevance, and motivation are an issue. Firstly, because any ESP course is difficult to transfer to a specific sociocultural context (Almagro, 2002). Secondly, because the selected situations or the themes addressed are dealt with superficially, as linguistic material. That is, there is no powerful content that requires complex cognitive processing and which could be connected to educational interests, social or emotional needs. As Ellis et al. (2020) explain, courses whose contents are teacher-generated and fixed are not designed to “incorporate learners’ interests and sense of self and to use this experience to drive L2 use” (p. 162).

By contrast, CLIL courses are put together through forward design, since content and language are identified prior to establishing learning aims (Richards, 2013). This is so because CLIL tries to respond to learner demands in a more ambitious way, in connection to the development of Literacy Competence as a key competence for lifelong learning (Council of Europe, 2018b). In addition, the CLIL tenet “[S]tudents must be cognitively engaged” (Coyle et al., 2010, p. 29) makes the approach diametrically opposed to ESP. For cognitive engagement to happen, learners need to take on an active role and process conceptual content, rather than just be instructed in notions and functions, and topic-specific vocabulary. They also need to have some control of their own learning and a sense of responsibility for learning outcomes. As Ball (2016) contends, incorporating features of CLIL into language teaching courses in a way that makes sense to the teachers and the learners “makes for a powerful communicative framework with which to drive a syllabus” (p. 29) because “the more students ‘do’ with language, the more it seems to make sense to them” (p. 32). Ball also provides language teachers with a useful acronym that can help us rethink the language syllabus for specific purposes: CELT, namely Content Enhanced Language Teaching.

It is our contention that a CELT syllabus in the context of teacher education may help us adopt an integrated approach prompted by a type of needs analysis that is primarily process-oriented (i.e. it foregrounds procedural knowledge) and takes into account learner motivation at the same time as it provides learners with powerful, engaging content that creates opportunities to generate and communicate personal meaning. This kind of process-oriented syllabus will be concerned with “the development of understanding, not just the passive reception of ‘knowledge’ or the acquisition of specific skills”, as Finney puts it (2002, p. 73), calling for a flexible curriculum model for English Language Teaching. Process-oriented syllabuses are about creating possibilities for intramural and extramural learning and for future learning.

#### B. *Second Language Acquisition Principles*

A CELT syllabus needs designed for this specific context needs to be informed by general, validated Second Language Acquisition (SLA) principles since, as Ellis and Shintani contend (2014, p. 27), “[i]nstruction that is not compatible with the way L2 acquisition takes place cannot be successful”. They put together a list of principles (see

Table 2 below) that they introduce as “design features” that are “motivated by SLA theory and research findings” (p. 22). Although they are not infallible recipes, these principles can help us make decisions to design the proposed syllabus.

TABLE 2  
PRINCIPLES OF INSTRUCTED LANGUAGE LEARNING

<i>Principle 1:</i>	<i>Instruction needs to ensure that learners develop both a rich repertoire of formulaic expressions and rule-based competence.</i>
<i>Principle 2:</i>	<i>Instruction needs to ensure that learners focus on meaning.</i>
<i>Principle 3:</i>	<i>Instruction needs to ensure that learners also focus on form.</i>
<i>Principle 4:</i>	<i>Instruction needs to be predominantly directed at developing implicit knowledge of the L2 while not neglecting explicit knowledge.</i>
<i>Principle 5:</i>	<i>Instruction needs to take into account the order and sequence of acquisition.</i>
<i>Principle 6:</i>	<i>Successful instructed language learning requires extensive L2 input.</i>
<i>Principle 7:</i>	<i>Successful instructed language learning also requires opportunities for output.</i>
<i>Principle 8:</i>	<i>The opportunity to interact in the L2 is central to developing L2 proficiency.</i>
<i>Principle 9:</i>	<i>Instruction needs to take account of individual differences in learners.</i>
<i>Principle 10:</i>	<i>Instruction needs to take account of the fact that there is a subjective aspect to learning a new language.</i>
<i>Principle 11:</i>	<i>In assessing learners' L2 proficiency it is important to examine free as well as controlled production.</i>

### C. Language and Cognition

In a CELT syllabus, the connection between language and cognition needs to be given prominence. To this end, design features that provide scaffolded thinking can be integrated. Organizers such as think charts (Clark, 2009) and thinking routines encourage learners to explore ideas with more depth and breadth than controlled situational exercises. The routines developed by Harvard's Project Zero (Ritchhart et al., 2011), which “operate as tools for promoting thinking” (p. 45), are open-ended (that is, not “used to elicit specific responses” [p. 46]), promote deeper understanding of the issues or contents to which they are applied, make thinking visible to learners, and thus facilitate learner engagement. Although originally intended to tackle conceptual knowledge, think charts and thinking routines can be very useful for language learning. To start with, their sequential aspect may provide structure for language tasks, helping learners to generate ideas and giving them a sense of purpose. But most importantly, all thinking implies language use and communication (e.g., for describing, building explanations and interpretations, wondering and asking questions, or summarizing). In brief, tools for scaffolded thinking can serve a double purpose: that of promoting a more personal engagement with course contents and methodologies, on the one hand, and that of facilitating and promoting communicative, purposeful language use, on the other hand.

Furthermore, a process-oriented syllabus allows for the introduction of a metacognitive focus, which could be done both as powerful content and through task design so as to help the target learners to become aware of, reflect on, and evaluate their own learning (Ellis, 2003). As a component of a key competence for lifelong learning (“5. Personal, social and learning to learn competence”, Council of Europe, 2018b), learning to learn requires learners to “identify [their] capacities, [...] deal with complexity, critically reflect and make decisions”. This competence also includes “the ability to learn and work both collaboratively and autonomously and to organise and persevere with one's learning, evaluate and share it”, as well as “seek support when appropriate” (2018, p. 10). To promote this competence, the tasks that make up the syllabus could be supported by checklists and rubrics which can be applied autonomously and collaboratively, which will require criteria to be “written in a format that can be understood and used independently by the learner” (Clark, 2009, p. 60). In addition, direct and indirect language learning strategies need to be given a prominent role in the syllabus. As Brown (2007) proposes, strategies can be taught by administering a strategy inventory. In the context of teacher education and with a view to promoting self-regulation, introducing a strategy inventory and designing tasks around it can serve the double purpose of raising awareness about ways to become more effective learners and of constituting meaningful content, as language learning becomes the content that is talked about (as Breen, 1985; Ellis & Sinclair, 1989; in Ellis, 2003 propose).

### D. Meaning-Focused Language Teaching

As opposed to the common instructional procedure popular in coursebook design which consists in following the present-practice-produce sequence or versions of it, a task-based approach to language teaching with a lexical strand creates the conditions for learners to express personal meanings. In task-based language teaching (TBLT), semantic and pragmatic meanings are primary. Drawing on Ellis's 2003 synthesis of previous definitions of the concept, a language task is a contextualized instructional activity or workplan designed to stimulate the pragmatic use of the foreign language for a clear and explicit communicative purpose, which does not consist merely in the comprehension or production of language itself. The task incorporates some type of information, opinion or reasoning gap that makes

communication necessary in any of its modes (comprehension, production, interaction, mediation). That is, tasks create the conditions for learners to “pay primary attention to message content and engage in language use” (Ellis & Shintani, 2014, p. 136), as learners are not informed of a specific linguistic focus and thus are not required to concentrate on processing a preselected form or using it correctly, but are encouraged to rely on their own linguistic and non-linguistic resources.

TBLT is not just concerned with developing fluency: it also aims to develop learners’ linguistic competence. Tasks are usually implemented as part of a sequence in which different opportunities for attention to form may be integrated: explicit instruction during task performance, consciousness raising tasks, noticing activities, or production-practice activities at a post-task stage (see Estaire & Zanón, 1994; Willis, 1996). The difference with traditional form-focused pedagogy is that now the language that is focused on is a language that is “relevant to learners and required for a communicative purpose, rather than introduced because a syllabus dictates that it should be covered at a particular point” (Skehan, 1998, p. 128). In addition, TBLT is compatible with a lexical syllabus (Willis, 1990) that prioritizes the formulaic, memory-based nature of language. The lexical strand can be used to serve a double purpose: it may translate into a focus on chunks and lexicalized expressions which facilitate fluent production but from which learners can also make generalizations about how language works, instead of spending time on form-focused practice. On the other hand, a lexical, discourse-based strand would be more effective for language learning with classroom practices that encourage noticing (Schmidt, 1990), that is, the conscious awareness of linguistic features.

As to assessment, since in TBLT there is no explicit presentation of grammar points that need to be practiced before they can be produced, “task accomplishment is to be assessed not in terms of whether learners use language correctly but in terms of whether the communicative outcome is achieved” (Ellis et al., 2020, p. 10). That is, there is no precise grammatical syllabus on which learners are to be tested but a performance that requires specific conditions to be met and which promote certain cognitive and linguistic processes conducive to language learning. Since success is determined in terms of whether learners are “capable of performing specific target tasks” (p. 20), it is our contention that this feature of TBLT may particularly be helpful in the mixed-ability context of teacher education, for the didactic sequence allows for integration of the scaffolding that may help all learners to potentially succeed. Another reason would be that focusing on task accomplishment lends itself very well to formative assessment: “After completing a task, learners can be guided to self-assess their own performance of it” (p. 21), thus helping learners to develop self-regulation. In addition, assessing a particular performance makes sense in the context of an undergraduate course, for which the system-referenced tests (Baker, 1989; in Ellis, 2003) for assessing language proficiency in official examinations prove inadequate (i.e., a general, system-reference test would measure a prior proficiency level rather than actual course accomplishment).

#### IV. ACADEMIC CONTEXT

In the basic disciplinary module of the curriculum of the Degree in Teaching in Infant Education of the University of Zaragoza (Spain), there are two 6-ECTS mandatory courses in EFL. The target students differ greatly in their English language competence level and have experienced grammar-focused practices in the previous education stages, in particular in non-compulsory secondary.

Since this curriculum was implemented for the first time in the academic year 2010-2011, building up an optimal syllabus for these EFL courses has been a concern in the Department of English and Germanic Philology in the Faculty of Education, in parallel to the process followed in the Degree in Teaching in Primary Education (see Delgado-Crespo et al., 2020). Some proposals have been made to combine the General English approach adopted by the vast majority of textbooks, official exams and EFL curricula in previous education stages, together with different kinds of response to the specific needs of the Infant Education teacher. Such proposals were typically focused on developing general language proficiency, with materials (i) lacking in a systematic approach to the phonological component of the English language; (ii) structured around a grammatical syllabus delivered through the traditional model of the four skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing), “which has increasingly proved inadequate to capture the complex reality of communication” (Council of Europe, 2018b, p. 30); and (iii) on topics related to infant education and education in general but treated as a theme which provides a context for a focus on language rather than as meaningful content. Such proposals also came with insufficient focus on developing self-directed learning and with testing oriented towards language competence rather than actual accomplishment.

#### V. PROPOSAL

Only the first of the two courses mentioned above will be commented on here for brevity’s sake. The table in the Appendix illustrates key features of the materials designed for this course, which is built around four topic-based modules and three workshops. For systematicity, the critical commentary is structured through Ellis and Shintani’s validated principles or design features “motivated by SLA theory and research findings” (2014, pp. 22-27), and developed by establishing connections with the key issues introduced above.

*Principle 1: Instruction needs to ensure that learners develop both a rich repertoire of formulaic expressions and a rule-based competence* translates into the adoption of a lexical approach to complement the content-enhanced syllabus

proposed, since the focus on rules has been the norm in the previous educational stages. Learners are instructed to pay attention to chunks or phrases in the oral, written or multimodal texts they encounter in the course, note them down and retrieve them to support their production, interaction or mediation. An activity that is used specifically to promote retrieval is retelling. Throughout the course, several opportunities for retelling have been programmed: for example, in Module 2 learners are required to watch a cartoon episode, note lexical chunks and then retell the episode, using a retelling rope as scaffold.

Since the lexical strand of the syllabus is given prominence, the course includes a workshop on learning lexis. In this workshop students are provided with information about different types of lexical knowledge and pieces of information related to the form of a word that are necessary to use words and chunks (Nation, 2013), and asked to reflect on their vocabulary learning strategies and techniques to register, learn and retrieve lexical items. They are also instructed to build word networks, using a choice of categories, around the lexis they encounter in course materials. This semantic mapping is intended to help them process lexis with more breadth and depth, as they are also encouraged to make associations and provide personal, relevant meanings (e.g., childhood memories associated to a word or phrase). According to Hedge (2000), writing down words and chunks as they occur during lessons and building networks around them “can be used to establish and consolidate meaning, exploiting the natural strategy learners seem to use” (p. 126). This is a move away from the approach of standard English Language Teaching coursebooks, which adopt a more systematic but superficial treatment of lexis (usually through the mechanical present-practice-produce procedure) and which has not found much support in SLA research, since “learning is more effective when it involves deeper engagement with new words” (Ellis & Shintani, 2014, p. 107).

Finally, a significant way in which the formulaic nature of much language has been foregrounded is through the rhymes, songs, traditional outdoor games, picture books and fairytales that are given a central role in the proposed syllabus. These oral, written or multimodal texts share characteristics like their use of formulaic language (e.g., starters and endings, refrains), lexical intensity (e.g. figurative language, similes), and repetition. Literary texts in particular are powerful content material that requires cognitive engagement. Two writers feature prominently in the proposal, Julia Donaldson and Michael Rosen. Together with Michael’s Rosen creative bio, his poetry and his famous True or False one minute stories are explored through his videos<sup>1</sup>, which facilitate attention to the formulaic nature of language and meaning-making features of multimodal texts such as facial expressions and other visual elements. The potential of the visual to generate meaning is also a powerful ingredient in the picture book that occupies a central space in the syllabus, Julia Donaldson’s Charlie Cook’s favourite book (2005). This circular book within a book, never ending rhyming story made out of different classical fairytales and children’s fiction is used at some point as a textbook (to trigger communication and to focus on lexis and oral language through read aloud and pronunciation features). These kind of rich, relevant, authentic material provides learners with a repertoire of formulaic language, facilitates language awareness and can be very motivating, as it allows for the expression of personal meaning.

*Principle 2: Instruction needs to ensure that learners focus on meaning* is the rationale behind the content-enhanced approach which has been justified above. To this end, materials are built upon issues that are relevant to the infant teacher or to the language learner, as is the case with children’s fiction. An example of this would be the task sequence in Module 3, in which learners are required to make up their own story, collaboratively in small groups, out of a number of key words and phrases taken from Michael Rosen’s video retelling of the Indian folktale “The Raja’s Big Ears”, then tell the story to the class to finally check which version is closer to Rosen’s. This creates a communicative purpose for listening to the story and ensures a focus on meaning.

*Principle 3: Instruction needs to ensure that learners also focus on form* is implemented in two different ways. One way of focusing on form is through the present-practice-produce procedure which is here adopted to deal with pronunciation in connection to spelling in the context of the different oral, written and multimodal texts the course is built upon; that is, within a communicative framework (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010). Focusing on some basic spelling and pronunciation rules to tackle vowel length may contribute to the target learners’ intelligibility as, in accordance with the Lingua Franca Core (Jenkins, 2000), long-short differences between vowels is an area that requires error-free production. To this end, learners are provided with an interactive phonetic chart and a small number of basic spelling and pronunciation rules (i.e. CVC words, magic “e”, controlling “r”, etc.) which they are required to apply to identify vowel length, practice and produce it. This constitutes both language learning knowledge and skills but also specific disciplinary knowledge and skills for future infant teachers. Other Lingua Franca Core features that are integrated in the syllabus are nuclear stress placement and consonant clusters. Though traditional, the PPP procedure is integrated in communicative activities and tasks which are accompanied by self-assessment: many of the texts and tasks are followed by a focus on form stage where learners are required to find examples of and exceptions to those basic spelling and pronunciation rules and other pronunciation features. For example, the rhyming lines of Charlie Cook’s favourite book are particularly useful to deal with consonant clusters that pose a problem to Spanish speakers: /sk/ /sp/ at the beginning of words and /st/ and regular past endings at the end.

The materials also integrate a reactive focus on form at a post-stage to help learners consolidate form-function mappings. For example, after a matching task on a text on ideas for outdoor learning in Module 4, learners are required

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.michaelrosen.co.uk/>

to identify different structures in the text used to express purpose and, the other way round, they are required to identify the different functions of the imperative form that predominates in the text. Another example would be the discourse analysis activity, based on some YouTube comments, which students have to carry out after a listing task on a video that introduces Forest School (the outdoor children's education program originated in Scandinavia in the 1950s). They are guided to make form-function mappings in order to potentially improve their communicative effectiveness when commenting on education videos or replying to other people's comments. Yet another example in Module 4 is the activity that follows a compare and contrast Venn diagram task based on two different texts, formal and informal, which deal with the issue of advertising aimed at children. Students are required to focus on language form and lexis in connection to pragmatic function. This reactive focus on form involves guided discovery and can be said to be an interpretation task (Ellis & Shintani, 2014) since these practices "aim to help learners construct a form-function mapping but without formulating an explicit rule" (p. 91). In this way, "the emphasis is placed on simply inducing learners to pay attention to a particular feature in the input", rather than making them produce it, which SLA research recognizes as a valuable alternative procedure to focus on form.

*Principle 4: Instruction needs to be predominantly directed at developing implicit knowledge of the L2 while not neglecting explicit knowledge* is the reason why the proposed syllabus is built upon communicative activities and language tasks. According to Ellis (2003) "[i]mplicit knowledge refers to that knowledge of language that a speaker manifests in performance but has no awareness of" (p. 105). As has been pointed out, this type of activity or workplan for learner activity prioritizes semantic and pragmatic meaning and it is not designed to make learners focus on practising or using specific linguistic forms or features, as they are "free to use their own resources" (p. 142). For example, Module 1 opens with a task called "Learning Languages" that makes use of an actual video commercial for an app for language learning. The video satirizes the traditional procedures of a learner that needs to make great efforts to learn a foreign language and the terrible things that happen to him because he is not using the said app. Learners are asked to watch the video and list all the things that happen to this poor traditional learner, for which they need to use their own linguistic resources, perhaps making use of chunks they pick up from the video. Next they are also asked to identify the audiovisual elements that are used in the commercial to produce the intended effect on the viewer. Implicit knowledge is the kind of knowledge developed as a result of participating in communicative activities. This is followed by a focus on form activity in which learners are required to note specific language chunks and pronunciation features. Implicit knowledge is the kind of knowledge developed as a result of participating in communicative activities such as these, but this sequence does not neglect explicit knowledge, which is introduced by the methodology, i.e., by answering students' questions and providing examples and/or metalinguistic explanations when necessary.

*Principle 5: Instruction needs to take into account the order and sequence of acquisition* is here used to justify the absence of situational grammar exercises, understood as those exercises that have been designed "to provide contextualized practice of a specific linguistic feature" (Ellis, 2003, p. 141) because "instruction generally does not change the natural sequence of acquisition" (Ellis & Shintani, 2014, p. 68). This means that instruction is potentially more effective if focused on helping learners to develop implicit knowledge via communicative practice. This takes us to *Principle 6: Successful instructed language learning requires extensive L2 input*, which in the syllabus translates into intramural and extramural access to rich and authentic input in the form of oral, written and multimodal texts which the lessons are built upon, together with other supplementary materials. For example, learners are required to design their own reading plan based on two different types of written texts: informational texts on EFL teaching and learning and children's education issues and concepts (e.g., an introduction to pronunciation, motivation in the language classroom, the Lexical Approach, introduction to process writing, or intercultural education) and creative texts in the form of children's poetry and picture books. Some of the texts of this reading plan require some self-assessment. Access to extensive L2 input also takes the form of a video bank on the topics dealt with in the course and from which exam tasks will be designed.

*Principle 7: Successful instructed language learning also requires opportunities for output* and *Principle 8: The opportunity to interact in the L2 is central to developing L2 proficiency* can be discussed together, as they both translate into communicative activities and tasks that are implemented using task-based pedagogy (Ellis, 2003). This means that learners are "able to control topic development" (p. 253) and turn-taking is regulated by speakers themselves, who function both in initiating and responding roles, using language for a wide range of language functions, negotiating meaning when necessary. The primary role of the teacher is that of supporting students to help them get their meanings across. To this end, informational feedback on students' productions is provided. It is supported by checklists and rubrics that focus primarily on task performance. For example, after a series of different tasks on traditional stories and fairytales in Module 3, learners are invited to cook up their own fairytale in teams and following the guidelines of a current British Library program which features Michael Rosen<sup>2</sup>. Learners are given support along the stages of the writing process, which includes different opportunities for production and in which they are also asked to edit and revise their own production, as well as peer edit the production of another team. According to the Comprehensible Output Hypothesis (Swain, 1985, 1995), this kind of output may help learners test their hypotheses about the L2, reflect consciously about L2 forms and notice their problems. The written story is then used for storytelling, followed by peer

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.bl.uk/childrens-books/activities/cook-up-your-own-fairy-tale>

and teacher feedback focused on delivery and task completion, which includes story design features and language use for the intended effect.

*Principle 9: Instruction needs to take account of individual differences in learners* translates into the context of autonomy and self-directed learning resources and opportunities. It also takes the form of reflection on the learners' own language learning strategies that is triggered by class work on Oxford's Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (1990). All throughout the course, students are directed to identify their strategy use and encouraged to try out new strategies. In addition, there is a session devoted to exploring motivation in the language classroom carried out after a brief lecture on Dörnyei's (2005) "L2 Motivational Self System". Learners are asked to map their possible L2 selves (Ideal L2 self and Ought-to L2 self) and ideal language learning experience, to then identify specific actions they could take to become those possible selves and to improve their learning experience.

The subjective aspect pointed out by *Principle 10: Instruction needs to take account of the fact that there is a subjective aspect of learning a new language* is taken into account in different ways. One such way is by planning for personalization in tasks and activities, such as when students are invited to recall different types of childhood memory and through creative tasks such as storytelling or poem writing. An example of such a creative task is the writing of a protest poem after two sessions focused on gender stereotyping and intercultural education issues. In one such session an experiment is carried out in which learners are randomly paired with a classmate and asked to make assumptions about this person without speaking to them. This is followed by an interview to find out if such assumptions make sense or are just an example of superficial judgement. Learners are then encouraged to write the protest poem that connects superficial observation and stereotyping. As many of the tasks described above, these tasks are also cognitively challenging. For this reason, learners are provided with think charts and thinking routines that help them generate, focus and organize their ideas. For example, in the assumptions task above, learners are encouraged to make use of a chart to note down their observations, the evidence that supports such observations, and their partners' comments and answers in the interview.

Finally, *Principle 11: In assessing learners' L2 proficiency it is important to examine free as well as controlled production* is a key design feature adopted for their oral communication skills test in particular. This test has two parts. In the first one, students are required to pronounce words and chunks and read aloud fragments from poems in their text bank which contain pronunciation features that have been focused on in the course. The second part is a communicative activity. Taking into account both that oral communication skills do not seem to be a priority in the previous education stage and that it is the source of much learner anxiety, this activity is given prominence all throughout the course. A key feature of this activity is that it takes the form a well-defined language task built upon the VT routine for introducing and exploring ideas called "See-Think-Wonder". This routine "emphasizes the importance of observation as the basis for the thinking and interpretation step that follows the close looking" (Ritchhart et al., 2011, p. 55). The task is prompted by two images that illustrate issues related to any of the course topics. It consists in identifying a course topic and then using the stems "I can see... I think... I wonder" to describe one of the images, interpret it, and finally express some wondering in connection to it. This is to be followed by some teacher-prompted interaction on the issues brought up by the students. Sometimes responses need to be scaffolded with extra prompts. Some other times this is unnecessary: students have been working on these issues throughout the course, so they can draw on their repertoire of ideas and lexical units. In addition, the students have access to an image bank from which images for the test are taken. Besides, at the beginning of the course they are also provided with a cheat sheet with useful language to carry out description, speculation and wondering. To sum up, the design of the task allows for both controlled and free production. In addition, a rubric describing three levels of attainment in four different categories (task completion; fluency, cohesion and coherence; interactive communication and content; correctness and complexity) and written in student-friendly language is shared and used in the course. In this way, the oral communication skill test is oriented towards task accomplishment, rather than measuring language proficiency. It is our contention that this task constitutes optimal cognitive and linguistic challenge.

Other assessment tasks are also focused on accomplishment. This is why learners are tested on the specific knowledge and skills that are targeted in the course. For example, they need to carry out similar comprehension, production or mediation tasks, based on the specific course topics and on texts included in their text and video banks. There are also some traditional discrete item activities (e.g. multiple choice, matching, identifying, fill in gaps) but always focused on the specific lexis or pronunciation features of the course. In addition, one of the assessment tasks is focused on their learning to learn knowledge and skills (for example, identifying specific comprehension subskills and learning strategies and building a word network).

## VI. CONCLUSION

A proposal has been put forward to respond to the actual and future specific linguistic and communicative needs of the target undergraduate students. It has been argued that a needs-based ESP syllabus built upon situational activities and a precise language syllabus is too limited because it does not allow learners to express personal meanings, is cognitively undemanding, and leaves little room for individually-established learning paths and aims, since the emphasis is placed on the language itself and accountability. By contrast, a content-enhanced language course inspired

on the key features of CLIL, that is, contextualized content, cognition, communication and culture, promotes learner motivation and self-directed learning and provides authenticity and relevance.

This proposal is informed by validated SLA principles and integrates a focus on cognition: different resources are used to provide scaffolded thinking to engage with content with some depth and breadth, and to facilitate the kind of mental processes that promote language learning. Through work on strategy use and tools such as checklists and rubrics, target learners are encouraged to become aware of, reflect on, and evaluate their own learning with a view to promoting self-regulation.

On the other hand, the instructional design around language tasks and rich, authentic, relevant materials, together with the lexical strand added to the syllabus, create the conditions for a focus on meaning and communication, as opposed to traditional form-focused pedagogy that is still paramount in ELT coursebooks. The development of linguistic competence is promoted reactively, through the different opportunities for attention to language form that are integrated in the task sequences, on the one hand, and through a deductive approach to selected pronunciation features. This is both necessary knowledge and skills for the target learners (as pronunciation tends to be disregarded in the previous educational stage), but also specific disciplinary knowledge and skills for infant teachers.

As to assessment, it is addressed in terms of whether communicative outcomes have been achieved and through the performance of specific target tasks, as well as through demonstration of learning of specific course contents and skills, rather than in terms of language proficiency. Finally, this proposal needs to be understood as work in progress but is intended to open windows onto possibilities and encourage teacher trainers to rethink the language syllabus for specific purposes in the context of teacher education.

APPENDIX. SELECTED CONTENTS FROM 26511 INGLÉS EN EDUCACIÓN INFANTIL I

MODULES	CELT TOPICS	COGNITION	COMMUNICATION	CULTURE
1. Learning and teaching	Learning languages Whole Brain Teaching Learning experiences Teaching experiences Intercultural education Stereotypes and assumptions	<i>What makes you say this?</i> VT routine <i>See-Think-Wonder</i> VT routine Oxford's (1990) SILL Giving peer feedback Comprehension subskills	Pragmatic meaning in an app commercial Mediating a technical text Mediating a funny teacher story Collaborative writing of a funny story Writing a protest poem	Assumptions based on quick impressions Redraw the Balance: Gender stereotypes at Junior School
2. Children's games	Table games Outdoor games: "What's the Time, Mr. Wolf", at the playground	<i>Think-Pair-Share</i> VT routine <i>See-Think-Wonder</i> VT routine Comprehension subskills	Generating and ranking criteria to choose a table game Retelling a narrative cartoon episode and a playground anecdote Writing directions to play an outdoor game Mapping form and function	Traditional table and outdoor games
3. Children's literature	Classic fairy tales Picture books: <i>Charlie Cook's Favourite Book</i> (Donaldson 2005) Children's writers: Meet children's laureate, Michael Rosen Cooking up a fairy tale	Investigating Fairy tales think chart Fairy tale mashup think chart Comprehension subskills Writing as process Self-assessment, peer-editing and assessment	Writing and retelling a fairy tale mashup Retelling childhood memories Retelling a narrative video Read aloud Putting up a creative bio Putting up a story together ("The Raja's Big Ears") Storytelling	Classic children's literature Visual literacy The journey of a story across cultures: The Raja's Big Ears
4. Health, emotional development and safety	Children and nature: Last child in the woods (forest schools) Consumerism: Consuming kids; Kids and advertising	<i>See-Think-Wonder</i> VT routine <i>Think-Puzzle-Explore</i> VT routing <i>Think-Pair-Share</i> VT routine Venn diagram Comprehension subskills Investigating commercials think chart Peer-assessment	Retelling a childhood anecdote Writing and critically analysing a YouTube comment Relaying information: Critical analysis of a TV commercial	Children's (lost) connection with nature. Alternative education (Forest school) Digital discourse Marketing to children
<b>WORKSHOPS</b>				
Learning languages (I)	Learning strategies	Investigating own learning strategies think chart Self- and peer-assessment	Collaborative mediation activity of a technical text: short informational text on learning languages	Identity and self-directed learning
Learning languages (II)	Motivation (Dörnyei 2005)	Mapping possible L2 selves and ideal learning experience think chart	Mediating an academic text	Identity: possible selves in L2 learning (Ideal L2 self, Ought-to L2 self, L2 learning experience)
Learning lexis	Understanding vocabulary: Semantic mapping and other vocabulary learning strategies and tools (Hedge 2000)	Mapping own vocabulary learning strategies Word networking	Mediating an academic text	Self-directed learning
Pronunciation workshop	Understanding pronunciation (Hewings 2004) Basic spelling and pronunciation rules	Pronunciation think chart	Mediating an academic text	Self-directed learning

Source: Own elaboration

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