



UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI
DI PADOVA

Università degli Studi di Padova

Dipartimento di Studi Linguistici e Letterari

Corso di Laurea Triennale Interclasse in
Lingue, Letterature e Mediazione culturale (LTLLM)
Classe LT-12

Tesina di Laurea

English as a second language: preschool teaching and learning

Relatore

Prof. Irene Zanon

Laureando

Martina Spilimbergo

n° matr. 2003998 / LTLLM

Anno Accademico 2022/2023

Alla mia famiglia.

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
1. Bilingualism: an overview	5
1.1. What is bilingualism?.....	5
1.2. Bilingual children.....	6
1.2.1. Simultaneous acquisition of two languages in childhood	8
1.2.2. Successive acquisition of two languages in childhood.....	11
1.3. The effects of early bilingualism.....	13
2. English as a second language: teaching and approaches	17
2.1. An historical overview of second-language teaching.....	17
2.1.1. A concrete example: history of teaching English as a second language in the United States	19
2.2. Instructional practices in teaching English.....	20
2.3. Classroom organization and interaction patterns	26
3. The importance of teaching and learning English	31
3.1. Why is learning English so beneficial?	31
3.1.1. A case study: why do Indonesian students learn English.....	32
3.2. The evolution of English and its advantages.....	34
3.2.1. English as the Dominating Academic Language.....	36
3.2.2. How English is changing lives	37
3.3. English as a global language	38
Conclusion	41
Bibliography	43
Webography	47
Italian Summary	49
Ringraziamenti	55

Introduction

“You live a new life for every new language you speak.”
Czech proverb

The aim of my dissertation is to present and discuss theoretical and practical ways of teaching English as a second language in preschool children. I have chosen this subject for this work because I would like to learn more about how children are able to acquire more than one language throughout their lives. Particularly, I designate English as the second language learned since it is one of the two languages in which I have been specialising during my BA course in Cultural Mediation. Moreover, I have always studied it since the age of three at kindergarten; so, I cannot consider myself completely a bilingual. In truth, I could have become a bilingual today if I had studied it more consistently; for instance, if one of my parents had spoken to me in English every day. Being a bilingual means becoming fluent in two (or more) languages in a “natural” way and due to several reasons, as movements of people, intermarriage, and education.

The first chapter is a theoretical overview about bilingualism, as it is a phenomenon present in every country of the world. In fact, throughout human history, learning a second language has been an important part of the educational process: from ancient times to the present, school children have had to struggle to learn a second language. Firstly, it will investigate in a general way what bilingualism means and which types of it exist. Secondly, this chapter will focus on bilingual children: after having provided what is meant by first and second languages, it will explore how the acquisition of the languages takes place during childhood. Particularly, the differences between simultaneous acquisition and successive acquisition of two languages will be clarified. These concepts will be presented through different case studies of linguists’ experiments on their sons. Lastly, this section will clarify about the effects of early bilingualism, especially in preschool children. Additionally, two main viewpoints regarding the positive and negative effects of bilingualism will be introduced: a maximalist and a minimalist one.

The second chapter concentrates on the teaching and learning of English as a second language. In the first part is presented a historical overview of second-language teaching: it starts with Sumerians during the third millennium B.C. and continues with the Akkadian, Egyptians, the Roman Empire, the Medieval period, the Renaissance, until the 19th and 20th centuries. In this overall picture are also presented the first methods used by teachers in the education system, among which it is possible to highlight the grammar-translation method, the inductive approach, the direct method, the audio-lingual and the humanistic ones. Then, as a subparagraph, it is provided a concrete example of teaching English as a second language in the United States. In fact, this language has had a big impact on American education since early Colonialism to World War II. The second part of the chapter will explore some instructional practises in teaching English: among others, the Individualized Instruction, the Total Physical Response method, and the Natural Approach. Lastly, classroom organization and interaction patterns will be provided to better understand how to put into practice the different approaches mentioned above.

The third and last chapter will deal with the importance of teaching and learning English, since it is one of the most studied languages in the world. Through this assumption, I will indicate the reasons why learning is so beneficial and how it is changing people's life. Moreover, it is reported a case study about Indonesian students' approach to English, which aims to explore the causes behind students' decision to major in this language. In the second place, it will be provided an explanation on the evolution of English as a global language, understanding the reasons why it has spread so much through Americas, North Africa, Indies, China and so on. The benefits of learning and being proficient in English will then be discussed, as well as how many international positions and employment may require it. A subparagraph is dedicated to English as a dominating academic language since it serves as the primary language for publications in the emerging academic systems of the former British Empire. Finally, the last paragraph will discuss English as a global language, which is developing into a crucial key skill for millions of people worldwide.

1. Bilingualism: an overview

This first chapter of my dissertation aims to investigate what is meant by the term *bilingualism*, which has been a field of interest of many linguists, psychologists, sociologists, and educators for decades. Firstly, it is introduced in general what it means for the society to learn two languages and then explained what *bilingualism* signifies, giving as clear a definition of it as possible. The second part of the chapter continues with a clarification of why and how children acquire two languages. To conclude, a brief description of what effects bilingualism may have in childhood is proposed.

1.1. What is bilingualism?

In almost every country of the world linguistic diversity is the norm, so much that there are more bilinguals than monolinguals, which can be found at all levels of society and in all age groups (McLaughlin in Grosjean 1984: 1). Parts of the population of a society become bilingual when intergroup contact is more common and social mobility is less restricted in either direction. There are many factors that encourage bilingualism and hence bring different languages into contact: migrations of all types (economical, educational, political, and religious), nationalism and federalism, culture and education, trade and commerce, intermarriage, etc. Moreover, the question of whether the two languages will be maintained or if a linguistic shift will take place emerges as a multilingual speaking group grows. It was suggested that the social context-based specialization of the two languages is what guarantees the survival of bilingualism. As proposed by Ferguson, diglossia is “the complementary distribution of two languages in a single population according to social situation” (Wald 1974: 313).

For what concerns the meaning of the word *bilingualism*, we can say that there are some conflicting views in place. Some authors consider bilingual everyone who knows some words in another language, while others compare it with native-like control of two languages. In his work, *Second-Language Acquisition in Childhood: Volume 1. Preschool Children*, McLaughlin proposes the definition of “the ability to produce complete and meaningful utterances in the other language” (1984 in Haugen 1956:6). Actually, there are not advantages to setting unreasonable limits for a definition of bilingualism because what matters is how the person knows two languages; in fact, is preferred a description in terms of degree since it is more realistic, avoiding the

suggestion that a bilingual is someone who is equally proficient in two languages. As Soffietti (1960: 275) suggests, defining bilingualism is a much more complicated scenario than that of the use of two languages by someone. It needs differentiation and clarification. From the point of view of dictionaries definition this concept is quite simple. The Cambridge Dictionary¹ defines it as “the fact of using or being able to speak two languages”, while the American College Dictionary describes the bilingual as a person “able to speak one’s native language and another with approximately equal facility”. Complications begin to emerge when these definitions are applied to specific cases because they involve other factors, such as the fact that bilinguals live in a different cultural atmosphere at home, introducing in that way the aspect of *biculturalism*. Yet, one must pay attention to not misinterpret this concept because at one language system does not necessarily correspond a specific cultural area. According to Soffietti (1960: 275), “language, race and culture are not necessarily correlated”.

In addition, some researchers, Weinreich among others, have distinguished different types of bilingualism which depend on the sound; specifically, bilingualism can be *coordinate*, in which the bilingual commands two language-related systems because the linguistic signs of the two languages are maintained apart; *compound*, which means that, although the signs’ sound compositions are distinct, their meanings are the same, so that the difference regards only the lexical aspect; and *subordinate*, a subtype of *compound* bilingualism, in which the sign is the same in both languages. The author suggests that this type might occur when a speaker learns a second language through his native tongue instead of through direct exposure to a normal use of the second language in a communicative setting (Wald 1974: 307). However, this distinction has not been certified experimentally and it is not that simple to maintain in practice.

1.2. Bilingual children

Throughout the world, in many societies, children can acquire more than one language form, even four at the same time; we can think about, for example, young children born in the Amazon area of South America (Garcia 1980: 52). Some studies have shown that the infant brain is able to learn two (or more) languages and that infancy and early childhood represent the best possible time to do so (Ramirez and Kuhl 2017: 38). It is

¹ <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/bilingualism>

suggested that the acquisition of them occurs during the first five years of life and at some conditions, such as the fact that children are capable of understanding and/or producing some aspects of each language other than the ability to distinguish that either language is being spoken. Moreover, in early life, children are exposed naturally to the two systems of languages as they are used for social interaction (Garcia 1980: 52). But the acquisition of two languages may not be parallel: one could lag behind, outpace the other one or develop evenly; in any case it does not impede the acquisition of either language.

However, there are still some doubts regarding how a language develops in children, partly because is difficult to study them and, as McLaughlin (1984: 5) says, “one cannot analyse a child’s speech in a way a psycholinguist analyses an adult’s”, since a child’s language is still developing and is not unchanged. One thing that can be done to examine it is observing the child’s speech or try to elicit it from the infant. To do so, the most employed technique is the case-study method, which consists in recording utterances of a few children, learning about the stages through which they progress and trying to interpretate their meanings. This misunderstanding can become a significant problem when trying to determine young children’s understanding of semantic relations from their utterances (McLaughlin in Brown 1973). Nevertheless, this approach has been supplemented by elicitation methods, whose purpose is to determine more systematically if children are able to understand and produce specific grammatical construction. McLaughlin explains that from a specific psycholinguistic point of view there are three critical issues of interest in the study of bilingualism. The first one regards the developmental sequence on a bilingual child, the second concerns interference between languages and the third code switching, which is “the child’s ability to move from one linguistic code or language to another” (McLaughlin 1984: 7).

Thanks to the development of technology, some recent studies have proved and shown that the infant brain is able and adept at learning more than one language. The infant brain has recently been studied by scientists in order to gain insight into monolingual versus bilingual development. The safe, non-invasive and completely silent methodology used was, according to Ramirez, “magnetoencephalography (MEG), which measures magnetic changes given off by active nerve cells” and “can precisely pinpoint both the timing and the location of activity in the infant brain” (2017: 40).

Comparing the brain responses to language sounds in 11-month-old babies from a bilingual Spanish-English environment with those of a peer from monolingual English households, it was demonstrated that whatever language or languages are prevalent in the environment, the baby brain develops a specialization in them, and that the development of English is at the same level in each baby (Ramirez et al 2017: 40).

The more reliable results in the literature on children's language development is the fact that there are significant individual differences: some kids appear to learn language easily and quickly, while others move more slowly. Some scholars assume that pretty much one year is the time in which young children acquire a second language to get to the level of their peers (McLaughlin 1984: 136). What is assured is that all children are able to learn two languages (or more) from birth (Baker 1995: 35). One important aspect that can aid the child development as a bilingual is the fact that babies raised in bilingual homes develop native fluency in both languages. There are many different varieties of bilingual families, in this regard. The more the families are, the more the language strategies used by parents to produce bilingual children. As Baker suggests (1995: 3), the main ones are the one in which the child hears a distinct language from each of the parents; or one language is spoken by the parents and the other one is acquired outside the home, or both parents speak both languages to the child. In all these cases, both languages must have an abundance of stimulating language experiences (Baker 1995: 13).

1.2.1. Simultaneous acquisition of two languages in childhood

First of all, before talking about how the acquisition of the languages takes place in children, it is important to differentiate between first and second languages. By first language is meant the one learned chronologically first, even though, according to McLaughlin (1984: 10), “it may belong to a brief stage of the child’s development and subsequently may be forgotten and never used”. In fact, it is possible for the second language to replace the native tongue in daily communication. In those cases of children who acquire two languages simultaneously is inappropriate to speak of first and second language because both are first languages, even if one tends to predominate in particular circumstances. Nevertheless, different degrees of bilingualism are admitted. Problems about this type of acquisition can regard the definition of a threshold at which one

language is considered to have been established. This cut-off point is instituted by McLaughlin (1984: 73) at the age of three: when a child is exposed to a second language before that time it will be considered that he/she is learning both languages simultaneously; otherwise, after three years, the kid is regarded to have established one language for sure and to acquire the other one as a second language. For what concerns guaranteeing retention of both languages, simultaneous acquisition is not necessarily superior to successive one. When a child changes his/her bilingual environment, the original language may be lost. In fact, the two languages will be retained in the long run depending on a large number of factors.

The first exhaustive study of childhood bilingualism is that of Ronjat², a French linguist who proved that each language must be taught by a different person in children. Thus, he started to talk to his son Louis in French and his wife in German; in that way at the age of three years he could correctly utter both languages phonemes. As McLaughlin (1984: 74) reports, the child deliberately attempted to learn words in both languages at the same time. The most important aspect of Ronjat's study is clear then: the child spoke both languages fluently, just like a native speaker would. The linguistic records that his son learned both French and German similarly well and that his bilingualism had no negative effects on his intellectual development. This was due to the principle *une personne, une langue*, because it was evident that parents who were not as constant in their behaviour, could not teach their children two languages simultaneously so easily.

Another interesting study report is Leopold³'s one, which analyses in detail the language development of his daughter Hildegard, who was spoken to in German by him and in English by her mother. This is a particular case because, excluding few visits in Germany, she was always in an English-speaking social environment; so, she obviously did not manage the same level of balance in her bilingualism as well as others linguists' sons did. At the age of two years, German became more passive over time and for active employment English words were increasingly preferred and used. Of particular interest are changes in usage from a word in one language to its counterpart in another.

² The study discussed here can be found in *Le développement du langage observe chez un enfant bilingue*. Paris: Champion, 1913.

³ He noted it in *Speech development of a bilingual child: A linguist's record*. Vol. 1.: *Vocabulary growth in the first two years*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1939.

Although some bilingual synonyms were achieved simultaneously in both German and English, in other instances a word originally appeared in one language and its synonym didn't arise in that language until much later. At the end of his study, Leopold believed that his daughter's awareness of handling two languages started early in the third year, when the active division between the two languages did begin. After that moment these evolved into independent systems (McLaughlin 1984: 78).

In general, we can say that children appear to be able to learn and distinguish sounds in a bilingual environment with ease. Some scholars have found a predisposition from the bilingual child to mix words from different languages in the same sentence. In this case, the child's disorientation was probably exacerbated by the parents' continual mixing of the two languages. Leopold's study noted that, in order to create words in the other language, the kid may apply knowledge of the vocabulary of one language. By the findings, it seems that "interference between languages can be held to a minimum if the domains of use are clearly defined and if the two languages are maintained somewhat in balance" (McLaughlin, 1984: 95). Thus, it is suggested that the best circumstances for decreasing interference require the constant use of both languages in the home by different speakers. At a certain point the child becomes aware of speaking two different languages. It can happen at different ages (Ronjat's child at one year and six months, Leopold's daughter at three years and six months) and there are different opinions about these issues because authors use different criteria of awareness. In fact, Ronjat believed that his child was conscious of his bilingualism once he started to use synonymous pairs of words from the two languages he knew. Other scholars claimed that this does not certainly mean a realization of bilingualism because in that case the child is just using what he/she know to communicate; for him/her the two terms represent only a side of a single linguistic code. In fact, when he/she begins to utilize the two languages separately to interact with different people in various languages, that is when he/she becomes conscious of bilingualism. Once it happens, code switching turns to a normal aspect of behaviour. The bilingual child has the capacity of shifting languages easily and quickly, even when he/she dreams. However, this does not mean that changing languages is always done with ease for the child; he/she might remain in silence until some degree of balance is achieved (McLaughlin 1984: 99).

1.2.2. Successive acquisition of two languages in childhood

As said before, the cut-off point by which a language acquisition is considered successive rather than simultaneous is set at the age of three for a child. There are some interesting case studies reported by McLaughlin that can help to explain in a better way this type of language learning.

The earliest study was reported by Volz, who told about his child's acquisition of German as a second language, after he lived in Sumatra (and thus learning Malay) for the entire three years of his life. What was shown is that at the beginning the child used both languages without mixing them, but then, after few months and a period of silence due to being not understood, Malay was almost forgotten, and the child began to express accurately his ability in the German language (McLaughlin 1984: 102).

Another peculiar case is that of the six and a half years old Eva, Kenyeres⁴' daughter. She acquired French after moving from Hungary to Geneva, knowing nothing about this language, but she was strongly motivated because this allowed her to communicate with other children. According to the judgment of his mother, in ten months she was able to speak French as good as native children at her age. She acquired her second language differently from how she learned her first one because she did it by analogy, using her knowledge of the first language to obtain the rules of the second (McLaughlin 1984: 103).

Otherwise, most recent studies, differently from the first ones, were centrally interested in specific aspects of syntactic development and the question of interferences between first and second languages. We can take as an example Ravem⁵, who tried to steer the conversation in different directions to elicit various types of sentences from his six-and-a-half-year-old Norwegian-speaking son in order to study the development of English syntactic regularities in his speech. What the study suggests is that more noticeable than the differences are the similarities between the evolution of first and second language. Hernandez instead examined the language development of a Chicano child of 3 years learning English and the interesting founding was that the influence of the sound system

⁴ He noted it in *Comment une petite Hongroise de sept ans apprend le français*. *Archives de Psychologie*, 1938.

⁵ He talked about this in *Language acquisition in a second language environment*. *International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching*, 1968.

is particularly significant for a child of this age acquiring a second language. Furthermore, other studies confirmed that Spanish-speaking children are tempted to talk in English through its phonological features with Spanish vocabulary and grammar. However, interference in second-language learning is one argument against the idea that first and second language acquisition entail comparable processes. For several times many linguists have thought that the main obstacle to learning a second language was interference from the learner's first language. It was proved, indeed, that the existence of interference between languages is surprisingly insufficient. Once that a child differentiates the two languages, he/she seems to keep them apart and does not overlap one language structure on the other one, so the interference between the two is minimal (McLaughlin 1984: 105).

Researchers have found that bilingual individuals occasionally employ a separate code that combines structures from both languages for linguistic enrichment and emotional purposes. This phenomenon is particularly common in the speech of Mexican Americans, analysed by Gumperz and Hernández-Chavez, in which is demonstrated how the selection of speech forms is highly significant and meet certain communication needs. For example, the child may insert Spanish words into English sentences as identity makers with strangers. By doing this, the speaker was implying that since they were of the same ethnicity, they need to get to know one another better. Alongside mixing languages, switching from one to another is often common in bilinguals' speeches due to the nature of the topic or because it is more personal. However, children who grow up in a bilingual setting where there is a lot of switching and mixing may find it challenging to distinguish between the two codes in formal speaking. On the other hand, it appears that children acquire how to blend languages for stylistic purposes. Moreover, it often happens that young children appear to prefer a single linguistic form rather than the two codes required for multilingual speech. In any case, is preferred to view the successive acquisition of two languages in the same way as the simultaneous one is seen, so as a process of learning how to differentiate two linguistic codes (McLaughlin 1984: 131).

1.3. The effects of early bilingualism

The acquiring of a language throughout early childhood has an extraordinary importance because it helps to fulfil the child's curiosity about the environment in where he/she lives and to explicit his/her feelings (Jensen 1962: 133). Year by year researchers have found more and more beneficial aspects of bilingualism, which, from young children to mature adults, demonstrate improvement in both executive functioning, such as attentional and inhibitory control skills, and cognitive flexibility, that means problem solving and planning. They seem to be a result of the mental training the brain receives when switching between different symbolic codes. According to recent studies in this subject, these linguistic differences start to show up at an early age and continue all the way through the school years and adulthood. Other studies also have demonstrated that handle attention to two languages encourages children's metalinguistics abilities. Seven- and twelve-months old children have been shown as more adaptable learners of languages patterns than monolingual peers. In general, a bilingual person has more opportunities to interact with a wider range of people than a monolingual one and has two (or more) worlds of experience to do, such as two (or more) cultures to know (Baker 1995: 10). In addition, some research has proven that bilingualism is advantageous from an economic point of view because throughout the majority of the economy's sectors, businesses mainly prefer to hire bilingual or multilingual workers and, between the millennial generation, they typically earn more money. (Ramirez et al 2017: 41).

On the other hand, there are many critical viewpoints concerning the disadvantages of bilingualism. In this regard, Jensen highlighted that "numerous handicaps may accrue to the individual in his speech development, over all language development, intellectual and educational progress, and emotional stability" (1962: 133). A child might develop wrong articulation and improper pronunciation and lots of substitutions in one or both languages will result. For instance, some sounds of English cannot be found in other languages or vice versa, so a person will fail in these fields. Moreover, other potential effects of early bilingualism are disorders in rhythm and articulation: in 1937 some researchers discovered that 26% of the stutters began to hesitate in speaking when the second language was introduced. Even in the literature was asserted that the child who has acquired two languages may have many problems in the development of these. In

most cases, it will result a littler active and passive vocabulary due to the fact that the bilingual child attends to use fewer different words. In general, we can say that due to lexical borrowing and his/her propensity to hyphenate words, he/she will end up with a mixed-up vocabulary doing several errors in trying to use correctly verbs and tense, connectors, prepositions, nouns, pronouns and articles. Smith's study of preschool children of non-American origins showed that when bilingual children start school, their language development is roughly at the same level with that of monolingual children who are three years old. Many authors concur that it is impossible for an individual learn both languages equally well because there will inevitably be some linguistic interference. In addition, it was asserted that the intellectual development can also be compromised. Thinking in one language and speaking in another can make uncertainty and confusion; as Jensen said in his script, "bilingualism for a child becomes an additional mental burden" (1962: 135). Furthermore, childhood bilingualism also has the handicap of slowing down the child's educational development, specifically in reading and studying. His attentiveness and enthusiasm in class could decrease and he might make a poor adjustment to school and education in general. According to some claims, another disadvantage is the fact that bilingual children are more likely to experience severe emotional instability and social maladjustment. He/she may become incredibly quiet and introverted or, on the opposite, he/she may turn violent if he/she loses his/her sense of security and self-assurance. Many authors affirm that some handicaps will enlarge also to the society in where the individual lives. The mother might not be able anymore to communicate with her child with ease, losing even respect and obedience. His/her younger siblings normally have a lesser level of speech proficiency because they are set such a poor example. Furthermore, society will not effectively utilize all of its human resources, due to the needing of additional time, effort and financial resources to provide bilingual educational facilities (Jensen 1962: 137).

To conclude, we can say that on the subject of the effects of early bilingualism, it is reasonable to distinguish between two viewpoints: a maximalist and a minimalist one. Maximalists believe that exposure to two languages at a young age benefits children, hence there is no such thing as a bilingual handicap. In fact, because of the linguistic and cognitive benefits that are believed to result from such an experience, parents are

urged to raise their children bilingually. Instead, the minimalist viewpoint argues that early bilingualism has limited and negative impacts on children. They also note that the majority of case studies were conducted by linguists using their own children and that they were immigrant workers, which means that many of these kids appear to have had trouble mastering both of their languages. However, there is an intermediate position between these two mentioned above, according to which what actually counts when considering the effects of early bilingualism is how the languages are introduced to the child. Everything depends on how languages are distinguished in adult speeches since a child would be better able to differentiate between them and prevent combining their lexicons and syntaxes as a result. It appears clear, though, that a bilingual child has a linguistic advantage over a monolingual child and that the parents' contribution to this process is fundamental for the kid's language learning (McLaughlin 1984: 213-214).

2. English as a second language: teaching and approaches

This second chapter focuses specifically on the teaching and learning of English as a second language. In further detail, in the first paragraph is provided an overview about second-language teaching throughout human history, along with an illustration of how English has been taught in the United States from colonial times to the early 20th century, while the last two paragraphs offer some instructional practises experimented in teaching English, such as the organization of the classroom and the materials needed.

2.1. An historical overview of second-language teaching

According to McLaughlin (1985: 2), “the teaching of a second language has been part of the curriculum of many forms of educational institutions for centuries”. For instance, as early as the third millennium B.C., in what was perhaps the world's first significant civilization, the Sumerians had scribes who were solely focused on education. When they were conquered by the Akkadians, the amanuenses formulated the oldest known bilingual dictionary. Line by line, long constant passages were translated from Sumerian into Akkadian, so much that school children used bilingual tablets. In Babylon and Assyria, second language training must have been fairly successful because students were expected to be able to speak several languages fluently after three years. The Egyptians had scribes who instructed them in the languages of their conquered subjects. There is a lot of evidence that Egyptian scribes were fluent in other countries’ languages in the Middle and New Kingdoms, even though nothing is known about how languages were taught at the time. It was common for the majority of people who lived in Asia Minor or Egypt to read and speak in Greek, their second language. This also occurred within the boundaries of the Roman Empire, where the most well-educated Romans were able to communicate in Greek. Roman children grew up bilingually due to the Greek nurse or slave in their houses or by Greeks that had come to Rome and opened bilingual schools, in which children studied both Greek and Latin, even though in some cases the Greek language was taught to children before they had any formal instruction in their first language. Throughout the Medieval period, Latin was the common language for communication and culture in Europe. Having studied it since childhood, every educated man was bilingual. This tradition continued until well into the Renaissance period, when the emphasis started to change from language learning as a

practical tool to language study as a means to an end. Texts were read and translated since Latin and Greek were no longer spoken, making them and the study of grammar the essence of language training. By the 19th century, languages were taught using the methodical study of paradigms, tables, declensions, and conjugations. Modern languages were taught as ancient ones were: translating written texts line by line, reducing to a minimum oral work and removing conversational exercises. This method, the *grammar-translation*, was maintained in many schools until the middle of the 20th century (McLaughlin 1985: 2-4). During these ages, four distinct approaches to the teaching of second language emerged. Firstly, it was highlighted the need to learn a language by speaking it and that there is not only one method for all learners, but that the teacher has to adapt it to individual needs. According to the American educator Ticknor (McLaughlin 1985: 5), the *inductive approach* was more suited for younger learners, while older ones typically prefer to learn through deriving general principles from specific examples. However, other authors disagreed with focusing exclusively on the grammar-translation method. Otherwise, they encouraged teachers to emphasize sentences in a variety of exercises based on actual classroom scenarios. In opposition to the grammar-translation method, the *direct method* focused on oral speech and the rejection of translation; it is also necessary to use the second language with constancy, without reverting to the first language. As concerns the classroom setting, teachers must be native speakers and classes must be of ten children at most, so that the teaching is as individualized as possible. As mentioned above, grammar should be learned inductively and reading and writing are skills that one acquires after the spoken language has been handled. In a similar point of view, linguistic principles and phonological precision were fundamental in the *audio-lingual* era, during which were used repetitive exercises with audio-feedback to attain a high degree of accuracy in language learning laboratories. However, this approach was criticized for being dehumanizing by those who prefer a *humanistic* orientation to second-language teaching, leading to nondogmatic experimentation with different methodologies (McLaughlin 1985: 7).

2.1.1. A concrete example: history of teaching English as a second language in the United States

As a concrete example, we can state that the teaching of English as a second language has played a significant role in the American education. The issue of how to teach it to people who do not speak it has always been present in this country throughout its history, together with the problem of being a multilingual and multinational society. (Cavanaugh 1996: 40). It has always been this way, even before the early Colonists won their right to be a nation. English, Scottish, French, German, Dutch, Swedish, Irish, Hungarian, Polish and Russian were the languages spoken in the territory. But as time went on, they started to feel a need for unity and a development toward a cohesive whole. Early settlers began to create schools of their own, even though these were gradually assimilated by the English-speaking people around them, becoming in this way English speakers themselves. However, according to Cavanaugh (1996: 40), “two factors continued to influence early American education in the late 1700s: the diversity of the languages and religions of the immigrants and the continual movement of the people to the lands in the West.” In fact, despite the leaders’ preferences and forethought, the Colonial government was forced to allow schools of various religions and languages. The consequently American Revolution and the resulting creation of a new country brought on awareness of the need for common secular schools, in which all citizens must learn the same language and principles of the republican government. In the following century, a sky-high number of immigrants entered the United States, poor and illiterate. This concern induced the state-controlled common schools to propose public education as mandatory and the creation of a policy of Americanization all over the country. Even though some ethnic groups, such as Germans, insisted on the inclusion of their language in the public schools, in 1889 the Compulsory Education Law was promulgated, in which was requested both compulsory attendance and compulsory English-only instruction for all children from seven to fourteen years old. By the end of the century, the dominant feeling was against immigration, especially for those from southern and eastern Europe because they were not only illiterate in English, but also in their native language. Only through education, illiteracy, wrong attitudes, and crime were solved. At the same time, however, schools were not fully equipped to deal with numerous foreign-speaking children and tended to evaluate each student's

performance with a set of standards that caused feelings of frustration and failure. In a similar way as for the American Revolutionary War, the World War I raised a renewed preoccupation for education: on the one side, ethnic groups insisted on teaching their languages in public schools, while on the other side, employers needed better educated and English-speaking workers. Once the war was concluded, there was a general belief that immigrants should learn English in order to study the U.S. Constitution and be part of the American culture. This was called the *Americanization movement*. Nevertheless, after some years and the starting of World War II, broke out a new wave of anti-immigrant sentiment and during the post-war era the public opinion feared the future and other possible wars (Cavanaugh 1996: 40-43).

2.2. Instructional practices in teaching English

Research about first-language acquisition and the rising conviction of many educators that comprehending the process of first-language learning has crucial implications for second-language teaching have had the most impact on second-language teaching (McLaughlin 1985: 113). Regarding the types of English teaching given to kids with poor or any English fluency, we can say that there is not only one single ESL (English Second Language) approach, but rather different methods. In some cases, the *audio-lingual* method is used: it consists of learning through dialogues, which contain everyday expressions and basic high-frequency-structures. In this way, the kids learn “by a process of mimic/memorization” (McLaughlin 1985: 112); they first listen to someone talking and then, after being able to distinguish the sounds accurately, they can repeat and learn the phrases or the entire dialogue. Pattern drills based on particular syntactic forms underlie this approach, even though there are different ways of working used by teachers: there is who prefers to create exercises about other structures than dialogues, providing in this way a more rational development of basic language structures; while others believe they can offer generalizations about the structural patterns that their students have learned. The limits of this teaching method are related to the decreasing motivation and interest that students may eventually experience. In fact, for that reason most teachers have abandoned dogmatic respect to this approach’s principles, preferring to use its techniques together with other methods. Grammar instruction takes on a variety of approaches as well. Some teachers provide their students rules to work with deductively, while others systematically introduce

grammatical structures to students and ask them to draw their own conclusions. Typically, ELS teachers use a textbook that sequentially organizes linguistic structural components (like noun phrase, verb phrase, subordinate and coordinate clauses, etc). In addition, the formation of vocabulary usually starts with concrete words and moves on to more abstract ideas. It can be taught both applying a word to a notion or teaching the concept (McLaughlin 1985: 113).

Individualized Instruction is one method that I would like to discuss in particular. It dates back to the 1970s, when educators discovered through experience with the audio-lingual technique that kids learn at varied rates and were open to various techniques. Moreover, the reactions to the teachers were different: some children required support, while others needed to be left alone; some responded to praise, while others did not. Teachers must get to know well each kid personally, so that they can adjust their objectives to better reflect students' needs and interests (McLaughlin 1985: 113). According to Henry (1975: 32), "the Seattle Symposium on the Training of Foreign Language Teachers in 1970 defined individualization as "an attitude of teaching students as individual persons"." As Robert Polizer observed⁶, there are three basic ways to conceptualize this method. The first step concerns the different goals that have to be assigned to learners, or better which learning objectives they choose for themselves. Then, there is the individualization of the method, that allows students to choose the learning modalities that are best compatible with their individual aptitudes. Individualizing learning pace is the third and final step, which receives the most criticism because it is difficult to comprehend how children may be taught at different speeds in the same classroom (McLaughlin 1985: 114). When compared to a standard one, an individualized classroom differs in appearance. It is, in fact, necessary to redefine every term related to teaching in the lock-step approach for individualization, including classroom, teachers, materials, and learners. For example, the arrangement of the desks is the first thing you notice when you walk into the classroom. The room is split into five learning spaces to be used by all students according to their own judgment: a speaking area, a reading area, a listening area, a test area, and an individual/group work area, each of which has its own materials dedicated (see Figure 1).

⁶ In Toward individualization in foreign language teaching. *Modern Language Journal*, 1971.

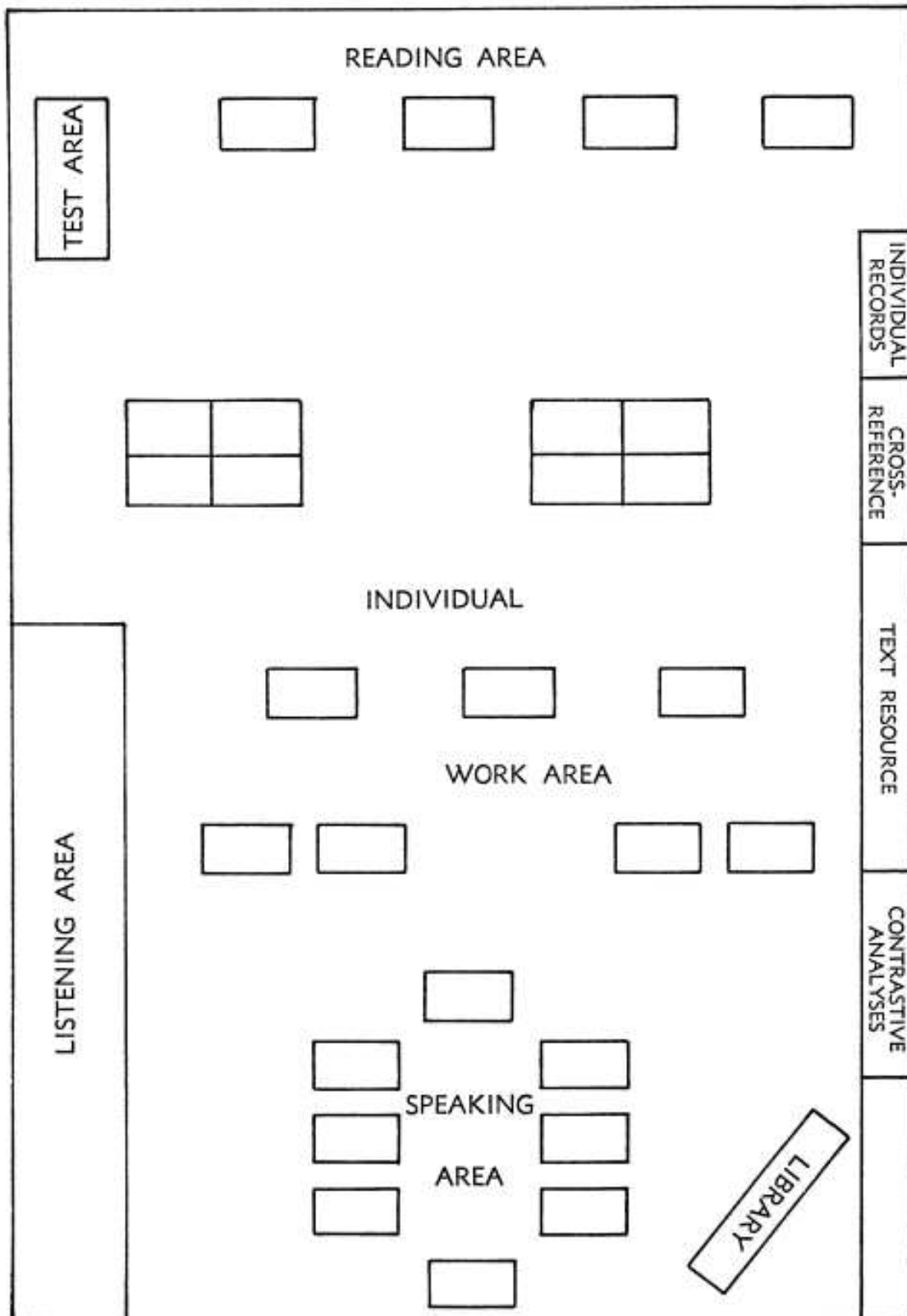


Figure 1: Floorplan for an individualized classroom (Henry 1975: 33)

If this classroom was to be observed in action, it would be clear that the job of the teacher differs from that of other teachers. He/she is not the single focal point of the room because the focal point is the individual learner. The latter, instead of being a frightened respondent and a passive listener, now participates actively in the planning of his/her specific learning. Furthermore, the learner also becomes an active member of groups of various sizes and frequently teaches other students a topic in which he/she is an expert. As concerns materials and methods, Henry (1975: 35) explains they “are regarded as facilitators of learning”: only resources that promote communication among students should be employed. The concept of individualization, which require a personalization of the sources based on the distinctive characteristics of the learner, is at odds with the use of a single text or resource. In classrooms there are numerous texts available, and anyone can select the one they find most helpful. Moreover, an infinite number of approaches and any combination of methods can be employed since a personalized program has the advantage of being more effective than most lock-step ones. It is important to remember that a cohesive program that is both meticulously planned and yet flexible enough to allow for socialized learning is required for the four fundamental language skills. Grouping is a crucial component of any personalized classroom. Criteria used by a teacher to form learning groups might be learners’ competence in the language, range of preferences, language experience, etc. In other words, an individualized classroom should not be a quiet one: a little noise is accepted as a learning process. To conclude, we can say that individualized ESL instruction aims to help students learn English in a method that is most comfortable for them and for the teachers it means being sensitive to the needs of their students, experimentations and creativity in developing new methods of teaching (Henry 1975: 39).

Another interesting method is the *Total Physical Response*. Introduced by James Asher⁷, it has its roots in first language acquisition studies, as it was demonstrated that approximately 50% of all speech made at a twelve-month-old baby was a response to commands, and that an approach of this type was possible. If during a natural language development a child can understand more than he/she can express, then the same process can be used in second-language learning. In this way, Asher emphasized the necessity of building up overall skills (and listening and observing) before students started

⁷ In Children’s first language as a model for second language learning. *Modern Language Journal*, 1972.

speaking. He was able to show that a student has learned the vocabulary of a second language adequately when he/she is trained to identify terms that describe actions as they conducted them out in response to commands (McLaughlin 1985: 115). This technique asks students to listen to a command in a foreign language and respond with a physical action. The training starts with one-word utterances, but within 30 minutes, the morphological and syntactic complexity of requests has risen (Asher 1969: 4). Methods like this resulted more efficient with some learners than with others. For example, in a study conducted on Spanish-speaking 5-year-old children, boys were discovered to learn English with a method using physical activities much more than girls, since in schools they are outgoing and energetic and are allowed a lot more freedom. Socialization habits may thus provide an explanation for the disparities in students' responses to the teaching method (McLaughlin 1985: 116).

However, other authors believe that the language that is a little above the learners' current level is the ideal type of input for second-language learners. Even though the language has new structures, the learner can use context and knowledge of the world around him/her to interpret the communication's meaning. It may be used as intelligible input for learning a second language as long as the language is not too difficult for the learner. It is fundamental that when teaching a language to young children, communication should take precedence over form. The student should be provided chances to experiment and utilize language creatively. Arguments like this form the foundation of the so-called *Natural Approach* to teaching second languages. This approach emphasizes the parallels between learning a first and second language and prioritizes communication above studying grammar rules. Some principles of this type of teaching, in fact, regard the fact that children's speech must have a purpose and a reason to communicate that message, unlike sentences taught to prove the understanding of a rule of grammar, which are unnecessary. Moreover, the environment should be stress-free when learning a language: the child must not be forced to produce utterances until he/she is ready. A period of time between three and six months is what is necessary for children to develop enough knowledge in understanding the second language (McLaughlin 1985: 117).

Anna Uhl Chamot defines⁸ the *Natural Approach* as “one that provides children with the language functions and notions needed to study school subjects in English”. Language functions are actions that can be performed using language, as well as ideas of general or particular semantic categories. The main points of this method are to teach students how to do things with language and to help them in learning the concepts and skills that constitute the decontextualized language proficiency they need to succeed in school. Some guidelines for applying this approach consist of an analysis of the linguistic skills necessary for English classroom (such as instructional objectives, textbooks, and materials) to measure students’ competencies (McLaughlin 1985: 118).

Throughout all these methods of teaching English, we can say that is crucial to educate a learner to speak a language before having him/her try to read it. According to Charles Carpenter Fries (Blossom 1962: 17), if a child initially acquires the language, he/she will learn to read from two to three times faster. It is similar to a child trying to read having little knowledge of the sounds that have been given to the different alphabet letters. We can assume, in fact, that there are three fundamental elements of teaching a second language: listen, repeat, and memorize. This is the same way a little child learns to speak both first and second language. However, even though teaching situations differs from classroom to classroom, these guidelines must be carefully considered. It is necessary to forget about reading at least till the child knows four hundred words to talk and to enter in a meaningful context. As concerns materials, the teacher needs to decide which are needed and then write them down in plain English and throughout short sentences (not over five words). In writing them, each new word used must be emphasized to completely allow the teacher to manage the oral language program. As was previously stated, in order to effectively teach, it is crucial to remember these three important principles. Students must repeat the native English-speaking teacher’s sentences when spoken to them, whether by rote memorization, a game, or singing. In this way, the teacher has the opportunity to check for mispronunciations and accent. A learner who masters accurate imitation of a native speaker of the target language will talk without an accent and with the intonation of that language. A teacher must avoid making these mistakes habitual because once they are established, they are nearly impossible to reverse (Blossom 1962: 19).

⁸ In *Toward a functional ESL curriculum in the elementary school*. *TESOL Quarterly*, 1983.

2.3. Classroom organization and interaction patterns

If education is to be effective, the teacher will need to pay close attention to organizational issues, such as the one of the classrooms. The bilingual teacher's first challenge is deciding how much help will be needed in the class and then it is fundamental to understand how the students will be divided into groups. Students from minority-language backgrounds sometimes range in English proficiency in a single class from fully proficient to non-existent. In order to provide better role models for poorer speakers, the teacher, then, must decide how to organize students with such a wide variety of skills and whether to put the best students in a single group or distribute them among the groups. Even though there are English-speaking children, minority language students might not communicate much with them. To avoid it, numerous creative grouping approaches have been proposed. For instance, Gonzales (1979 in McLaughlin 1985: 146) suggested peer teaching, self-paced learning, flexible scheduling, and collaborative teaching. As concerns peer teaching, some authors discussed about a successful model where junior and senior high school students tutored primary school students. The ideal environment from the perspective of a language learner is one where there are numerous native speakers with whom they can communicate. However, not all students are able to benefit from this help, even when bilingual aides and classmates are available to offer input and comments, the result is may be frustration and fear of failure. Children seem to learn well in a bilingual classroom where the teacher guides both whole-class and small-group learning activities. This does not imply that teacher-directed classes are the most effective way to guarantee successful English acquisition. According to reports, proficient second-language acquisition occurred in a classroom that encouraged student interaction, especially between minority language students and native English-speaking classmates (McLaughlin 1985: 148). To make this happens, teachers must set up their classrooms in a way that encourages cooperation, which is defined as a two-way classroom interaction in which learning occurs with the participation of both teachers and students. One example of how this criterion might be applied is when teachers have groups of students discuss one particular issue and then explain their groupings to the rest of the class, instead of simply lecturing the entire class about it. Moreover, each teacher has a set of guidelines for organizing classroom interaction in general, which are typically

decided before students enter the class for the first time. These are immediately accepted by students and serve as implicit social norms all over the rest of the year for both the teacher and the students. The primary one that must be embraced is “yes, talking”, which allows children to talk with each other; it also means that teachers have to encourage all forms of collaboration in daily classroom life. Other examples of rules that can support learners in their education can be “help each other without bothering each other” or “use everything you can to learn” (Enright and McCloskey 1985: 443). Therefore, the idea given by scholars is that teachers should carefully review their implicit expectations for interaction, as represented in general classroom rules, and change them considering the organizational requirements.

Figure 2 and Figure 3 are two examples of how the environment in a classroom is arranged to promote second-language learning. The layout of the room and the furniture (smaller and lighter is preferred) provide options for one or more events to take place. Moreover, the various areas of the classroom are set up so that it is evident what they are for and how interaction should take place. There are signs around in order to mark the different areas and teachers supply rules for how cooperation might happen in these. Materials (such as games, cooking implements, musical instruments, etc.) are movable and can be used by more than one child to allow collaboration, so essential to language development; they can also be used to perform a wide range of tasks and purposes. To make them more enticing, classrooms are set up to allow for the usage of teacher exposition and student seat work; while the walls are covered with posters, displays of students’ work and different types of signs. In other words, there are lots of fascinating materials to consider in communicative classrooms, and the way in which these are discussed depends on the rules and activities of the room. These types of environments tend to be more student-owned: as said above, teachers are guides that can help communication between children and almost everything is chosen by learners. Many of the exhibits and the materials are made by students, just as they participate directly in the creation of events (Enright and McCloskey 1985: 448).

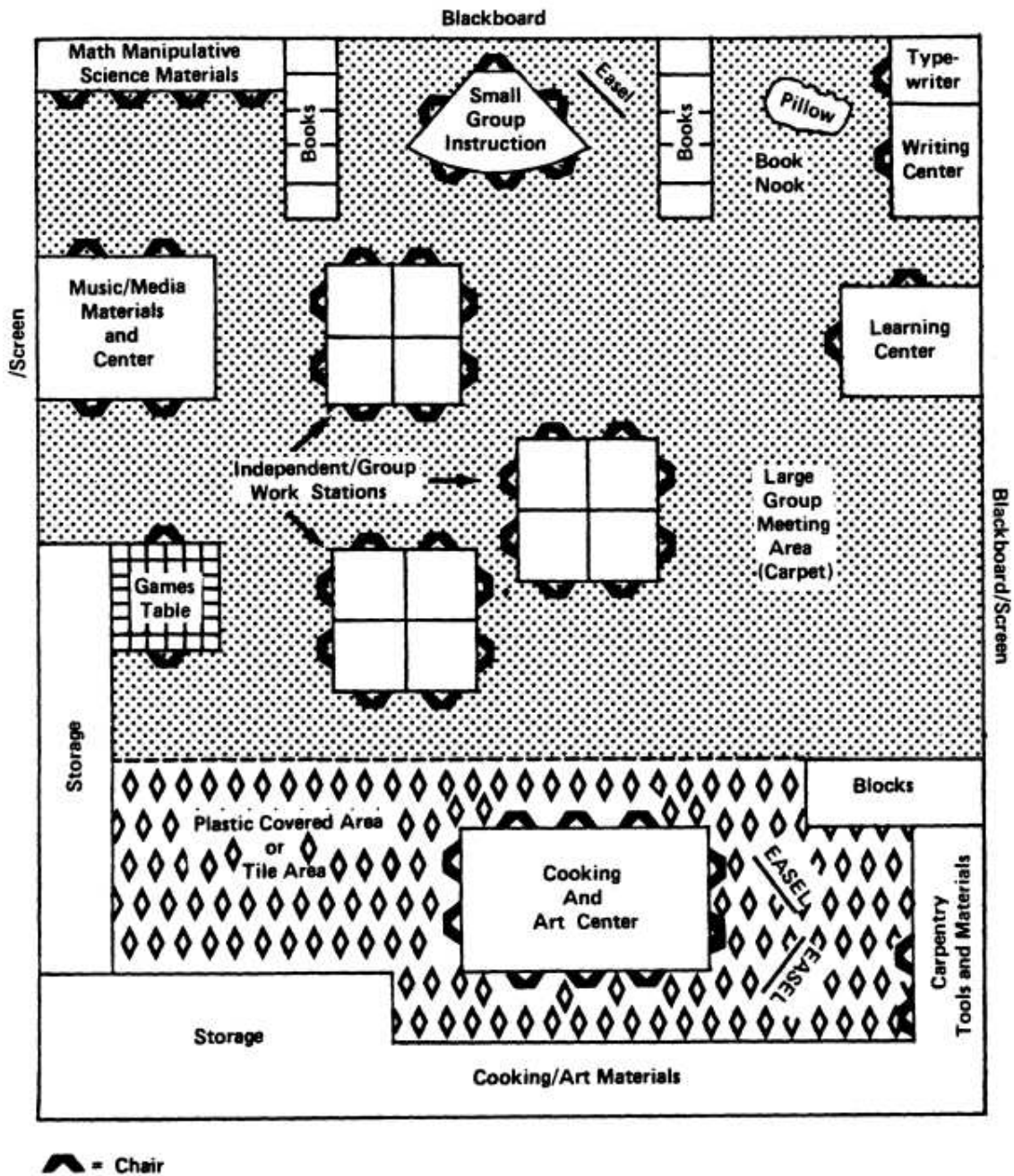


Figure 2. One Possible Communicative Classroom Environment (Enright and McCloskey 1985: 446)

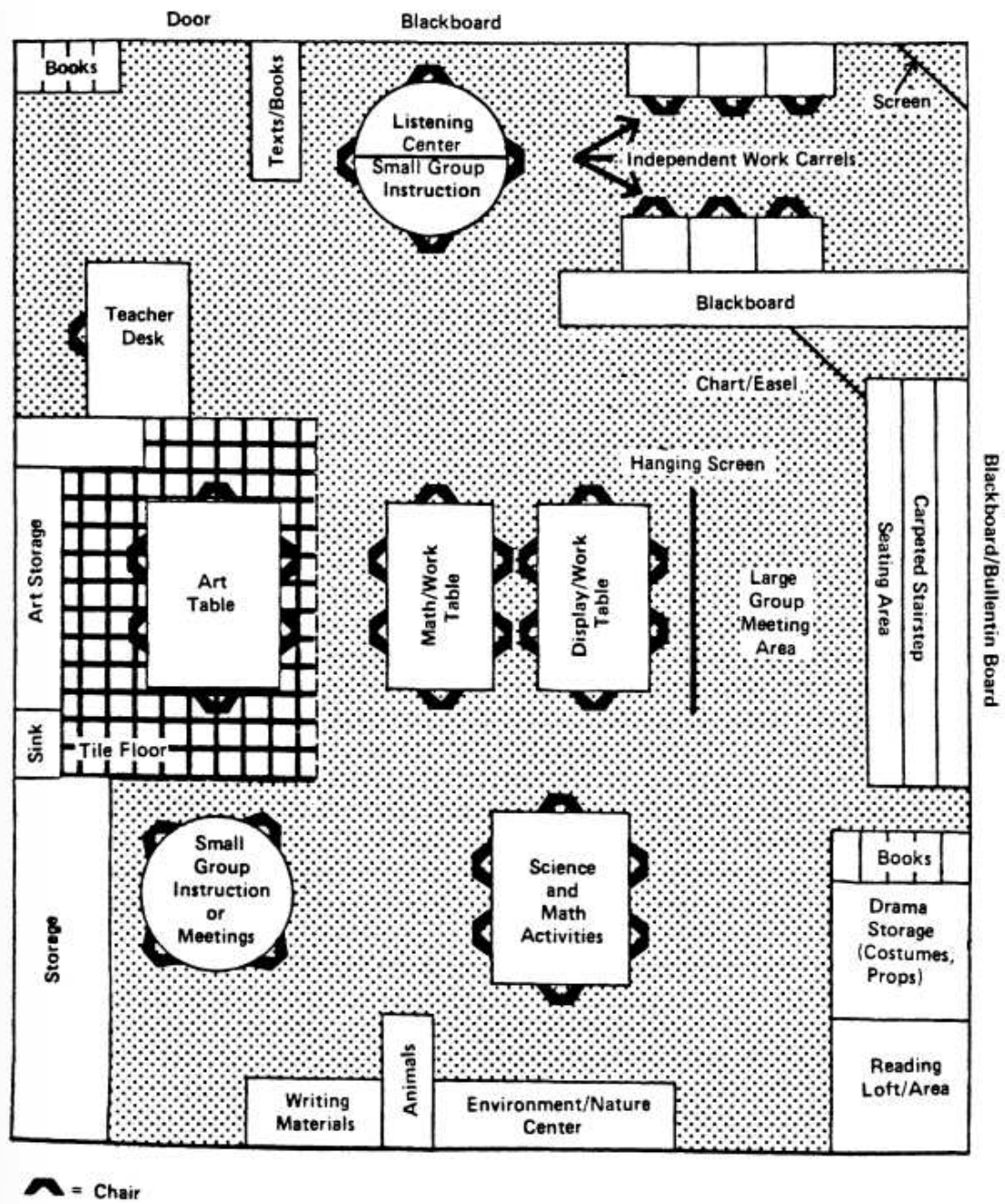


Figure 3. Another Possible Communicative Classroom Environment (Enright and McCloskey 1985: 447)

To conclude, I would reaffirm that most ESL teachers utilize a variety of approaches that best fit their needs. However, as concern oral communication, the best suitable method for it is the *Natural Approach* as it aims to encourage meaningful conversation to improve oral interpersonal skills. Although advocates of the *Functional Approach* believe that language learning in the classroom involves more than competence of interpersonal face-to-face communication, this last one is present and needed in the classroom. These two approaches are the most prominent ones in second-language pedagogy, even though they both share the risk that all trends in language instruction have of being applied dogmatically and rigidly. If used in the correct way, they can help teachers orient their teaching more to the special needs of young children with poor English proficiency. The best conditions for second-language learning are created, in fact, in classes that aim to provide students with limited English competence a great deal of oral language input from teachers and native English-speaking peers as well as the chance to use the language in meaningful contexts. In the same way, successful bilingual teachers to some extent intuitively adapt their speech to the needs of the students and provide them the kind of feedback they require to advance in language acquisition, as well as making thoughtful plans and decisions about the instructional activities that will take place.

3. The importance of teaching and learning English

After having seen some possible instructional strategies that can be put into practice in teaching English as a second language, I would now like to examine in this third and last chapter the benefits of learning English as a second language, as nowadays many countries include it in their school syllabus and children are starting to learn English at an ever younger age. Particularly, the first paragraph provides some reasons that make learning English so crucial, while the subparagraph presents a case study of Indonesian students learning a second language. Then, the chapter continues with an explanation about the development of English and the advantages it can give. Finally, is outlined the subject of English as a global language.

3.1. Why is learning English so beneficial?

For many years, English has been the most common language on Earth; finding a country where studying English has not become the norm is now impossible. In fact, English is the most spoken language around the world (Mahu 2012: 374). According to the research done by Statista Research Department⁹, “in 2022 there were around 1.5 billion people worldwide who spoke English, either natively or as a second language”. It is the official or co-official language in 45 countries, and it is spoken widely in other nations where it does not hold an official position since it is necessary in many fields and jobs. English is also used as the language of science, technology, aviation, diplomacy, and tourism. You can better understand a country’s culture and its background by learning English as a foreign language, which expands your way of viewing things. In fact, it is possible to bridge the gap between various cultures by understanding them and by learning another language besides your native one – skill that is extremely useful in today’s world. Additionally, it increases your comprehension of your own culture, which can be seen from another point of view if you study English and its culture. By doing so, you will get the rare chance of stepping outside the boundaries of your ordinary existence. Moreover, if you master English, travelling will be more enjoyable. You will be able to go anywhere in the world and locals from a non-English-speaking-country will understand you more if you speak to them in the most

⁹ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/266808/the-most-spoken-languages-worldwide/>

worldwide spoken language. You may also get entertainment from all over the world since the majority of the best well-known films and songs are composed in English. In some cases, translations and dubbing aren't sufficiently adequate because many linguistic components cannot be transferred accurately from one language to another. Furthermore, speaking English is a huge advantage for your career, especially if you plan to work for businesses or organizations where it is the primary language of communication. The globalization of nations from less developed countries to countries that speak English, including China and Thailand, is a relatively recent development. Due to these considerations, there is a high need of English speakers who can command an appropriate salary. No matter what profession you pick or what your life goals are, it is clear that learning English will benefit you. Another reason why English is so beneficial is that it will help you interact and integrate with the local population if you emigrate and move to a different nation or location. A good understanding of the English language would give immigrants who are currently looking for work an advantage over those who do not in the employment market. Finally, you acquire practical life skills by learning a foreign language, since it requires a variety of methods of instruction that can help in the development of fundamental abilities through reading, writing, and listening. In particular, early exposure to English will have a very noticeable positive impact on cognitive growth, including creativity, problem-solving, and reasoning. According to Mahu (2012: 375), "research has shown that having an understanding of English as a foreign language also helps your native language development". To conclude, it is important to remember that, unlike many other foreign languages, English is not very challenging to master, but it demands dedication and time. Acquiring it would be extremely beneficial to everyone who wants to learn it because it is significant in all aspects of society (Mahu 2012: 376).

3.1.1. A case study: why do Indonesian students learn English

In Indonesia, secondary and high school students are required to choose English as a subject, even though it is only taught one or twice a week. Many students view English as nothing more than a requisite for graduation. This is because English is not widely used in daily life and is regarded as a language that has no special standing but is merely just another language. Even though many students desire to improve their English language skills after graduating from school, they are only limited to a select set of

people with specific needs who are influenced by outside factors, such as students who are interested in finding an adequate job when they finish their studies. This reality presents complications because many students who are studying a foreign language feel motivated only in the beginning stages of their studies, and their enthusiasm gradually decreases as they encounter challenges along the way (Nuraeni 2020: 52). In fact, according to Dörnyei (2003 in Nuraeni 2020: 52), “motivation has been acknowledged as an important element for success in the second or foreign language learning”. When students run into difficulties during studying, motivation transforms into a mood enhancer to boost effort and prevent boredom. Motivation is therefore thought of as the initial learning stimulant. It then can be emphasized that a person's incentive has a major impact on how effective they are.

Some interesting studies conducted by scholars as Vatankhan and Tanbakooei (2004 in Nuraeni 2020: 53) shown how social support from family, instructors, and siblings affects students' motivation to study English as a second language. The results demonstrated that students were initially motivated to learn English through extrinsic motivation. However, as they received encouragement from their parents and teachers, it evolved into intrinsic-extrinsic motivation. Huang and Wang (2013 in Nuraeni 2020: 53) were interested in discovering how students learning achievement was influenced by motivation. According to the results, learners who demonstrated integrative and intrinsic motivation performed better on several English proficiency tests. Additionally, they encouraged teachers to focus more on students' motivation and establish a friendly classroom atmosphere so that they may benefit from learning English. Another study led by Busse and Walter (2013 in Nuraeni 2020: 54) showed that motivated students encountered a decrease in motivation after continuing their education in higher level. From the data it comes out that people who were actively learning a foreign language in school were inspired to do so also in higher education. They initially had a strong desire to learn the target language, but as they studied it at college level and encountered challenges with their tasks, their confidence began to decline.

The current case study aimed to learn what factors led students to choose English as their field of study. From data analysis, it emerged that they have a variety of reasons, which both come from intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. Some participants have more interest in English than others since they learned it seriously from childhood and wanted

to master it as a form of satisfaction. Others are persuaded by their families, mainly their parents, to study English. Among all, job is at the top of the list of factors influencing students' decisions to major in English. The general agreement among all participants was that learning English increases one's chances of finding employment. They also underlined that one benefit of acknowledging English was that many jobs required English proficiency tests as entrance requirements for new hires. In fact, the majority of Indonesian students are interested in learning English since it is a global language that is essential in many disciplines, particularly in the working world (Nuraeni 2020: 65).

3.2. The evolution of English and its advantages

The primary language used internationally in the 21st century is English. One-fourth of people on the planet speak it at a conversational level. It has gradually taken on the role of the operating system for the global discussion as the language of communications, science, information technology, business, entertainment, and diplomacy. Momentum and adaptability have played major roles in the evolutionary progress of English. The first was initially provided by the political, military, ecclesiastical, and commercial elites. The English language spread around the world as a result of colonization, shipborne trade with the Americas, North Africa, the Indies, and China, as well as the support of Christian missionaries. Even if Arabic and Spanish spread similarly, they were not able to adapt and adopt with the speed and flexibility of English. As English became widespread, it was also evolving and absorbing, taking terminology from other languages. Today the process has escalated, with many more scientific, technological, and artistic advances (as well as their patents and trademarks) being described and recognized in English after first being made public in German and French. Words take on new meanings as circumstances change, and to express new ideas the language adopts or develops new concepts. Change is the only constant (Paul Howson 2013: 5).

Due to the language's globalization, there are now many various "Englishes" that are barely distinguishable from one another and from "standard" English. For instance, the European Commission¹⁰ admits that "European institutions have developed a

¹⁰ European Court of Auditors, Translation Directorate (May 2013). *Brief List of Misused English Terms in EU Publications*.

vocabulary that differs from that of any recognised form of English. It includes words that do not exist or are relatively unknown to native English speakers outside the EU institutions.” Moreover, it is crucial to say that the development of English and the introduction of the Internet as a medium for international communication are developments that reinforce one another. According to Paul Howson (2013: 6), “previously, the spread of a language was governed by those physical encounters, then by the circulation of printed materials, then by radio, television, cinema and other mass media.” The advent of the Internet and social media, which have the ability to reach an even wider audience, has led to the most popular forms of online communication and exchange taking place in the languages that have gained momentum and the most desirable qualities. A question that several authors ask themselves is if English can easily absorb the rate of change or if it will in some way lose its ‘integrity’. However, its trajectory is difficult to foretell. Loan words and structural changes have been enhancing the language for the past 1,500 years. We now need to be ready to firmly embrace the changes brought about by instant worldwide access rather than simply tolerating them, as online and social media usage will play a crucial role in the next stage of English’s growth. English has always changed and that is one of its greatest strengths (Paul Howson 2013: 6).

Similar to how a single currency or successful free trade agreement can ease commerce, so can a single language code, or at least a common tongue, help with communication, comprehension, trust, and deal-making. Technical proficiency in global English, or the ability to speak one of the numerous worldwide “Englishes”, is highly valued. It can be a requirement for many international roles, an advantage in diplomacy, international relations, and development, as well as an entrance for achievement in the international media, entertainment, and finance sectors. For instance, the ex-President of Germany, Joachim Gauck, demanded that English become the official language of the European Union at a speech on the future of Europe¹¹. He affirmed that “one of the main problems we have in building a more integrated European community is inadequate communication within Europe”. In the Continent is required a common language and multilingualism should be encouraged in order to inspire a better sense of shared identity. The feeling of being at home in your mother tongue and a functional English

¹¹ To an invited audience at his official residence, Schloss Bellevue, Berlin, 22 February 2013.

for all of life's situations and all age groups can, in fact, coexist side by side (Paul Howson 2013: 6).

3.2.1. English as the Dominating Academic Language

The fields of science, research, and education are all dominated by English like never before. Additionally, English is the primary language used for teaching and publication in the newly developing academic systems of the former British Empire, particularly in India, Pakistan, and Nigeria. In any case, it is not difficult to understand why English is the most widely used academic and scientific language. The US and other English-speaking countries have emerged as intellectual superpowers. The academic pecking order is heavily influenced by size and wealth. Nearly half of the world's research and development budget is spent in the US alone, which is also home to many of the top universities listed on the increasingly important league tables. Because their editors and the majority of their writers are in English-speaking universities, the major intellectual and scientific periodicals are published in English. Similarly, the vast majority of academic websites and scientific networks operate in English worldwide. English is the most commonly learned second language worldwide. As a result of the huge number of speakers and the fact that it is by far the most extensively used language, it has a substantial edge in many non-English speaking countries. Furthermore, English is a recognized official language in more than 70 nations. Early in the 18th century, colonialism helped spread English (and other European languages) to North America, South Asia, and the Caribbean. Later, it moved to Africa, other regions of Asia, Australasia, and the south Pacific. English also spread because of American and later British economic and political power (Altbach 2007: 3608). The majority of scholarly publications worldwide are now published in English and edited in the US and the UK. These periodicals are almost the only ones with international distribution. Moreover, many nations that do not speak English as their first language have started to offer academic programs in English. Universities in Europe, Asia, and to a smaller extent Latin America, are combining education in the national language with degree programs in English. The majority of critics view the influence of English in higher education as a beneficial development that promotes globalization and an international academic culture. English is the only language that is suitable as a common medium of communication in a worldwide academic setting (Altbach 2007: 3609).

3.2.2. How English is changing lives

English has become a universal language for a variety of reasons, many of which are historical rather than linguistic in origin. The use that can be made of the language instantly in terms of society, business, and culture serves as one of the strongest motivators for learning it. English language proficiency offers chances that can change a person's life and advances global wealth and security (Paul Howson 2013: 10). At the individual level, there is a beneficial relationship between English competence and national income per capita: “improving English skills (drive) up salaries, which in turn give governments and individuals more money to invest in English training [...] improved English skills allow individuals to apply for jobs and raise their standards of living”.¹² Research conducted by Euromonitor International¹³ on the advantages on English in countries as Cameroon, Nigeria, Rwanda, Bangladesh and Pakistan, observed that each government makes a long-term commitment in education, but the main driver is each citizen's own ambition. Those who want to study English do so for more reasons than just the fact that it is a pleasant second language or hobby; they typically learn it because it provides access to different areas. For instance, interviews¹⁴ with English language learners in six cities – Muscat, Cairo, Rome, Madrid, Kuala Lumpur, and Ho Chi Minh City – show the variety of effects that classes have on students' lives, effects that go beyond the obvious linguistic objectives of accuracy and fluency. They claimed that learning English made them easier to hire and gave them the opportunity to advance in their careers. It gave them access to undergraduate and graduate programs, nationally and internationally, as well as professional development programs for the workplace. In addition, their capacity to interact with the Internet and social networking sites was improved. As a result, they were better able to get information, operate more effectively, make friends with individuals around the world, and they had better access to unbiased news about global events. Therefore, it was widely believed that English is a liberating force (Paul Howson 2013: 12).

¹² United Nations. GNI per capita PPP (\$), 2011. Gross national income converted to international dollars using purchasing power parity rates. Quoted in *EF English Proficiency Index 2012*, www.ef.com/epi

¹³ Euromonitor International (December 2010) *The Benefits of the English Language for Individuals and Societies: Quantitative Indicators from Cameroon, Nigeria, Rwanda, Bangladesh and Pakistan*.

¹⁴ Simon Borg (July 2009), Centre for Language Education Research, University of Leeds: The impact on students of British Council teaching centre EFL classes.

3.3. English as a global language

English has matured into the “global common language” after emerging from a colourful past and evolving and adapting in a Darwinian way, almost beyond recognition. Different types have appeared as a result of its seemingly unstoppable proliferation, which started over the past centuries but has accelerated significantly in the last few decades. It is continuously shaped and changed by new user communities, whether they be geographical or digital. It now has multiple centres and hubs around the world that individually and together create its character, rather than having a single centre, like the UK, that impacts its usage standards. In this way, it has come to belong to all of its speakers. English is a global medium with local identities and messages, and this tendency will continue due to the fact that non-native speakers currently outnumber native speakers. A British Council’s projection indicates that the demand for English will increase by double digits in several significant nations, including Indonesia, Pakistan, Brazil, Mexico, and Nigeria. But as English develops to become a crucial key skill for millions around the world - as Paul Howson (2013: 4) suggests - the UK will need to invest in its own competitive advantage by sending more of its best and brightest young people abroad to learn and share the language as well as other languages, cultures, and customs; they can then return home to further enrich their own culture. It seems obvious that what we currently consider to be the “English-speaking world” will soon lose real authority over its “own” language. As David Crystal¹⁵ states, “if there is one predictable consequence of a language becoming a global language, it is that nobody owns it any more [...]. Everyone who has learned it now owns it [...] and has the right to use it in the way they want” (Howson 2013: 7). However, a high-quality instruction of English is more than ever fundamental to preserve the purity or integrity of the language, and then to make sure that the various dialects that are permitted to proliferate are aware of the source code from which they are deviating and have enough in common to ‘interoperate’ as a global operating system.

The majority of English’s new growth markets are outside of the conventional developed world nations. China and India show significant demand, while having very distinct population trends and educational systems. The trend toward growing

¹⁵ He is a British linguist, academic, and prolific author best known for his works on linguistics and the English language.

urbanization, one of the most significant aspects of globalization, is intimately tied to the increase in the demand for English. Elsewhere, the Russian government has declared that future civil servant applications will need to demonstrate fluency in English. In Japan and Vietnam, all primary schools now require students to take English beginning in the fourth grade; while the Thailand government has the ambitious objective of teaching English to 14 million students in 34,000 public institutions, ranging in age from pre-primary to university. Moreover, English can play a unique role in nation building in the newest states. As a result, fluent English speakers are in greater demand all over the world as teachers. Despite the fact that there are over 12 million English teachers working today, there is still a severe shortage on a global scale. Furthermore, according to Paul Howson (2013: 9), “the ways of learning are changing – the face-to-face classroom is being supplemented by the virtual world, broadcast media, and the mobile phone.” For this industry, which is expected to triple in size in the major markets stated above, UK providers compete with businesses from around the world. However, real teachers will still be required for high-quality English instruction, whether it takes place in person, online, or in a “blended” format, and there are still plenty of job prospects for smart British graduates abroad.

In conclusion, we can say that great part of how the world develops sustainably is thanks to English. It facilitates trade between nations without a common tongue. When comprehending different points of view is important, such as in peacekeeping and conflict resolution, where security forces and other uniformed services increasingly communicate in English, it is employed as a language of convenience, promoting discussion, and fostering trust. English is becoming more and more the language that unites the global dialogue and debate on issues like climate change, terrorism, and human rights.

Conclusion

In conclusion to this dissertation, we can say that studying English is essential in the 21st century's highly connected society. The significance of communication skills and the acquiring of the English language as a second language has become paramount. Many global businesses run meetings in the English language, in several universities English is the medium of instruction for teaching courses, and tourists and travellers around the world use English as a common language. In fact, it is not surprising that it is the most spoken language in the world.

In the first chapter it is said, in fact, that the best possible time to acquire a second language is during early childhood, in particular during the first five years of a child's life. Even though some scholars believe that bilingualism has more drawbacks than advantages, certain benefits are undeniable. Teaching young children English, in fact, will help boost memory, problem-solving and critical thinking skills, and develop an ability to multitask. In addition, bilingual children demonstrate signs of enhanced creativity and mental flexibility. They will have a supplemental ability to connect with people at a global level in later life, more confidence in talking, and they better understand how to present themselves before the world.

What I can certainly draw from this work is that one fundamental aspect on the acquisition of a second language in childhood is the parents' and teachers' contribution to the process. There are a variety of approaches teachers can use to grow bilingual children. Among all, the best suitable method is the *Natural Approach* since it attempts to promote meaningful discussion to enhance oral interpersonal skills. However, it is clear that there are also various other sources that can be used by parents to help their children in the acquisition of English. For instance, English movies and cartoons for kids can give their brain a great push, enhance the vocabulary and understand the pronunciation by listening.

The aim of this dissertation, in conclusion, is to provide some theoretical and practical instructions in the teaching of English as a second language. Moreover, it wishes to emphasize the importance of learning English since it is constantly growing as a global language and spreading in many different countries nowadays.

Bibliography

- Adams, D. A. 1957. Materials and Techniques in Teaching English as a Second Language. *The Modern Language Journal*. Vol. 41, No. 8. Wiley on behalf of the National Federation of Modern Language Teachers Associations, 376-383.
- Altbach, P. G. 2007. The Imperial Tongue: English as the Dominating Academic Language. *Economic and Political Weekly*. Vol. 42, No. 36. Economic and Political Weekly, 3608-3611.
- Asher, J. J. 1969. The Total Physical Response Approach to Second Language Learning. *The Modern Language Journal*. Vol. 53, No. 1. Wiley on behalf of the National Federation of Modern Language Teachers Association, 3-17.
- Asher, J. J. 1972. Children's first language as a model for second language learning. *Modern Language Journal*. 56, 133-139.
- Asher, J. J. 1977. Children Learning Another Language: A Developmental Hypothesis. *Child Development*. Vol. 47, No. 3. Wiley on behalf of the Society for Research in Child Development, 1040-1048.
- Baker, C. 1995. *A Parents' and Teachers' Guide to Bilingualism*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters Ltd.
- Barac, R., Bialystok, E. 2012. Effects on Cognitive and Linguistic Development: Role of Language, Cultural Background, and Education. *Child Development*. Vol. 83, No. 2. Wiley on behalf of the Society for Research in Child Development, 413-422.
- Blossom, G. 1962. Teaching English as a Second Language. *Journal of American Indian Education*, Vol. 2, No. 1. University of Minnesota Press, 17-19.
- Brooks, C. K. 1964. Some Approaches to Teaching Standard English as a Second Language. *Elementary English*. Vol. 41, No. 7. National Council of Teachers of English, 728-733.
- Cavanaugh, M. P. History of Teaching English as a Second Language. *The English Journal*. Vol. 85, No. 8. National Council of Teachers of English, 40-44.

- Chamot, A. U. 1983. Toward a functional ESL curriculum in the elementary school. *TESOL Quarterly*. 17, 459-472.
- Copland, F., Garton, S., Burns, A. 2014. Challenges in Teaching English to Young Learners: Global Perspectives and Local Realities. *TESOL Quarterly*. Vol. 48, No. 4. *Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages*, 738-762.
- Crookes, G. 1992. Theory Format and SLA Theory. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*. Vol. 14, No. 4. Cambridge University Press, 425-449.
- Crystal, D. 2003. *English as a Global Language*. Cambridge University Press.
- DeBey, M., Bombard, D. Expanding Children's Boundaries: An Approach to Second-Language Learning and Cultural Understanding. *YC Young Children*. Vol. 62, No. 2. National Association for the Education of Young Children, 88-93.
- Ellis, R. 1997. SLA and Language Pedagogy: An Educational Perspective. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*. Vol, 19. No. 1. Cambridge University Press, 69-92.
- Enright, D. S., McCloskey M. L. 1985. Yes, Talking!: Organizing the Classroom to Promote Second Language Acquisition. *TESOL Quarterly*. Vol. 19, No. 3. *Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc. (TESOL)*, 431-453.
- Garcia, E. E. 1980. Bilingualism in Early Childhood. *Young Children*. Vol. 35, No. 4. National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), 52-66.
- Henry, R. A. The Individualization of Instruction in ESL. *TESOL Quarterly*. Vol. 9, No. 1. *Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc. (TESOL)*, 31-40.
- Howson, P. 2013. *The English Effect*. British Council.
- Jensen, J. V. 1962. Effects of Childhood Bilingualism. *Elementary English*. Vol. 39, No. 2. National Council of Teachers of English, 132-143.
- Kenyeres, A. 1938. Comment une petite Hongroise de sept ans apprend le français. *Archives de Psychologie*. 26, 321-366.
- Leopold, W. F. 1939. *Speech development of a bilingual child: A linguist's record. Vol.1: Vocabulary growth in the first two years*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

- Mahu, D. P. 2012. Why is learning English so beneficial nowadays? *International Journal of Communication Research*. Vol 2. No. 4, 374-376.
- Matsuda, A. 2003. Incorporating World Englishes in Teaching English as an International Language. *TESOL Quarterly*. Vol. 37. No. 4. Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, 719-729.
- McLaughlin, B. 1984. *Second-Language Acquisition in Childhood: Volume 1. Preschool Children*. Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., Publishers.
- McLaughlin, B. 1985. *Second-Language Acquisition in Childhood: Volume 2. School-Age Children*. Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., Publishers.
- Miller, J. S. 1966. Individualized Instruction. *The Elementary School Journal*. Vol. 66, No. 7. The University of Chicago Press, 393-395.
- Nunan, D. 2001. English as a Global Language. *TESOL Quarterly*. Vol. 35, No. 4. Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, 605-606.
- Nuraeni, S. A. 2020. Understanding EFL Students' Motivation to Learn: Why Do You Study English? *Jurnal Bahasa Lingua Scientia*. Vol. 12, No. 1. 51-70.
- Politzer, R. L. 1971. Toward individualization in foreign language teaching. *Modern Language Journal*. 55, 207-212.
- Ramirez, N. F., Kuhl, P. 2017. The Brain Science of Bilingualism. *YC Young Children*. Vol. 72, No. 2. National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), 38-44.
- Ravem, R. 1968. Language acquisition in a second language environment. *International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching*. 6, 175-185.
- Ronjat, J. 1913. *Le développement du langage observé chez un enfant bilingue*. Paris: Champion.
- Schneider, E. 2014 & 2015. The fate of a global language. *The World Today*. Vol. 70, No. 6. Royal Institute of International Affairs, 16-18.

Snow, C. E., Hoefnagel-Höhle, M. 1978, The Critical Period for Language Acquisition: Evidence from Second Language Learning. *Child Development*. Vol. 49, No. 4. Wiley on behalf of the Society for Research in Child Development, 1114-1128.

Soffietti, J. P. 1960. Bilingualism and Biculturalism. *The Modern Language Journal*. Vol. 44, No. 6. Wiley on behalf of the National Federation of Modern Language Teachers Associations, 275-277.

Wald, B. 1974. Bilingualism. *Annual Review of Anthropology*. Vol. 3. Annual Reviews, 301-321.

Webography

<https://www.statista.com/statistics/266808/the-most-spoken-languages-worldwide/>

<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/bilingualism>

Italian Summary

Il presente elaborato si propone come un'illustrazione, con successiva analisi, delle diverse tecniche, sia teoriche che pratiche, di insegnamento dell'inglese come una seconda lingua nei bambini in età prescolare.

In particolare, il primo capitolo tratta del bilinguismo in una visione generale, a partire da una definizione del termine. Innanzitutto, si può dire che si tratta di un fenomeno presente in ogni paese nel mondo: ci sono quasi più persone bilingue che monolingue al giorno d'oggi. Sono diversi i fattori che incoraggiano e influenzano la diffusione del bilinguismo nei paesi moderni, come, ad esempio, l'immigrazione (economica, educativa, politica e religiosa), la cultura, l'educazione, il commercio, i matrimoni misti, etc. Successivamente, viene fornita una spiegazione il più possibile dettagliata sul significato della parola *bilinguismo*, nonostante esistano diversi punti di vista sulla questione. McLaughlin (1984) propone come definizione che riassume al meglio le altre quella di "abilità di produrre frasi complete e di senso compiuto in un'altra lingua". Inoltre, è importante specificare che si distinguono diversi tipi di bilinguismo: da una parte, si parla di bilinguismo *coordinato* se i sistemi linguistici delle diverse lingue sono indipendenti; dall'altra, di bilinguismo *composito* quando una lingua tende a prevalere e serve da "traduttore" per esprimersi nell'altra. Si continua, poi, con un approfondimento sui bambini bilingue. Grazie allo sviluppo continuo della tecnologia, alcuni studi, infatti, hanno dimostrato come il cervello infantile sia in grado e sia più adatto ad apprendere due (o più) lingue e che l'infanzia e la preadolescenza rappresentino il periodo migliore per farlo. È stato appurato che l'acquisizione di due sistemi linguistici avviene durante i primi cinque anni di vita e ad alcune condizioni, come dimostra il fatto che alcuni bambini sono capaci di comprendere e/o produrre alcuni aspetti di ciascuna lingua, oltre ad avere l'abilità di distinguere quale lingua si sta parlando. La tecnica meno invasiva e più sicura utilizzata è la magnetoencefalografia (MEG), che misura i cambiamenti magnetici emessi dalle cellule nervose attive. Grazie a questo, si è riusciti a comprendere che qualunque sia la lingua prevalente nell'ambiente del parlante, il cervello infantile sviluppa una specializzazione in essa. Tuttavia, ci sono significative differenze individuali in ogni sviluppo del linguaggio del parlante: alcuni bambini sembrano apprendere una nuova lingua facilmente e anche velocemente, mentre altri sono più lenti. È stato ipotizzato, a tal proposito, che il tempo nel quale un bambino

piccolo apprende una lingua secondaria per arrivare al livello dei suoi compagni è di poco più di un anno. Ciò di cui si è sicuri, comunque, è che tutti i bambini sono in grado di imparare almeno due lingue dalla nascita e un aspetto fondamentale che può essere d'aiuto nell'apprendimento di queste è il fatto che i bambini cresciuti in famiglie bilingue sviluppano una padronanza nativa di entrambe le lingue. È chiaro, dunque, che ciò che gioca un ruolo determinante nello sviluppare la conoscenza di due lingue è l'età in cui avviene il contatto con la seconda lingua. In funzione della scansione temporale della competenza bilingue, è possibile infatti distinguere un bilinguismo *simultaneo*, che definisce la condizione di chi acquisisce una pluralità di lingue simultaneamente alla formazione delle sue abilità linguistiche, dal cosiddetto bilinguismo *successivo*, in cui l'apprendimento è avvenuto in fase più tarda (ad esempio in età scolare), quando la competenza nella prima lingua si è già fissata. Infine, il capitolo si conclude con un approfondimento dei diversi vantaggi o svantaggi del bilinguismo infantile. Si possono distinguere, infatti, due principali punti di vista: uno massimalista, secondo cui l'esposizione a due lingue a una giovane età può beneficiare il bambino, poiché apporta alcuni benefici come il soddisfacimento della curiosità del bambino riguardo il contesto in cui vive e l'esplicitazione dei propri sentimenti; e uno minimalista, il quale, invece, crede che il bilinguismo prematuro possa avere impatti negativi sui bambini, come numerose disabilità nello sviluppo del discorso di un parlante, sul suo sviluppo del linguaggio e sulla sua stabilità emozionale. Tuttavia, esiste anche un'altra posizione, intermediaria tra le due sopracitate, secondo cui ciò che davvero conta quando si considerano gli effetti del bilinguismo precoce sia come le lingue sono introdotte al bambino; quindi, in che modo le due sono distinte nei discorsi degli adulti, cosicché il bambino sia capace di differenziarle.

Il secondo capitolo della presente tesi, invece, si focalizza specialmente sull'insegnamento e l'apprendimento dell'inglese come una seconda lingua. In particolare, nel primo paragrafo viene presentata in una visione d'insieme la storia dell'insegnamento. Più in particolare, sin dal III millennio a.C. – periodo in cui i Sumeri avevano scribi che si dedicavano esclusivamente all'istruzione – l'insegnamento di una seconda lingua è sempre stato parte del piano di studi di molte forme di istituzioni educative. Si arriva, così, al secolo attuale, in cui ancora alcuni metodi di insegnamento, come il metodo grammaticale-traduttivo, l'approccio induttivo, il metodo diretto, il

metodo audio-orale e il metodo umanistico, sopravvivono. Dopo una breve digressione sulla storia dell'insegnamento dell'inglese come una seconda lingua negli Stati Uniti, il capitolo prende in analisi alcune pratiche didattiche nell'insegnamento dell'inglese. Per esempio, il sopracitato metodo audio-orale viene spesso utilizzato in quanto consiste nell'apprendimento della lingua tramite dialoghi che contengono espressioni quotidiane e strutture basiche molto utilizzate. In questo modo i bambini possono imparare tramite il processo della memorizzazione mnemonica: prima ascoltano qualcuno parlare e poi, una volta in grado di distinguere accuratamente i suoni, possono ripetere e imparare le frasi di dialoghi interi. Tuttavia, all'interno di uno stesso metodo si possono trovare alcune differenziazioni: c'è chi preferisce creare esercizi con altre strutture oltre ai dialoghi, e chi, invece, offre generalizzazioni sui modelli strutturali che gli studenti hanno imparato. Tuttavia, il limite di questo metodo è legato alla decrescente motivazione e interesse che i bambini potrebbero provare. Infatti, per tale ragione, molti insegnanti preferiscono mescolare vari metodi di insegnamento al fine di creare uno che sia il più adatto e coinvolgente possibile per i bambini. Uno tra i tanti metodi possibili che viene discusso, in particolare, è l'*insegnamento personalizzato*, che risale agli anni '70. Per questo approccio è richiesto che gli insegnanti conoscano molto bene ogni bambino, cosicché possano rendere i loro obiettivi adatti alle esigenze di ciascuno degli studenti. Inoltre, questo permette agli studenti stessi di scegliere quali modalità di insegnamento sono più compatibili con le loro attitudini individuali. Il lavoro delle insegnanti in questo tipo di classi è diverso poiché non sono loro il singolo punto focale della stanza, ma il singolo studente, che partecipa attivamente nella pianificazione del proprio apprendimento. Egli diventa anche un attivo membro di vari gruppi della classe e spesso insegna loro argomenti su cui magari è più esperto. Dopo aver fornito anche qualche suggerimento sull'organizzazione della classe, dei materiali e degli strumenti possibili da utilizzare, si esamina un altro metodo, quello della *risposta fisica totale*, introdotto da James Asher. Lo psicologo ha dimostrato che lo studente impara il vocabolario della seconda lingua in modo adeguato quando è addestrato a identificare termini che descrivono azioni svolte in risposta a dei comandi. Questa tecnica, infatti, richiede allo studente di ascoltare un comando in una lingua straniera e di rispondere con un'azione fisica. Si continua, successivamente, con alcuni consigli su come organizzare l'aula e come gestire i diversi modelli di interazione. Infatti, se l'educazione

vuole essere effettiva, l'insegnante deve prestare attenzione anche alle questioni organizzative, come quelle delle classi. Vengono pertanto presentati due possibili ambienti di classe comunicative, così da promuovere a pieno l'apprendimento della seconda lingua. Le varie zone della classe sono allestite in modo che sia evidente a cosa servono e come l'interazione tra i bambini deve avvenire. I materiali (come giochi, strumenti musicali, strumenti da cucina, etc.) sono movibili così da essere usati da più bambini, per consentire la collaborazione, elemento essenziale durante l'apprendimento di una lingua. Per rendere le aule più allettanti all'insegnamento, i muri possono essere tappezzati di poster, disegni dei bambini, e diversi tipi di cartelli. In questo modo, queste tipologie di ambiente tendono ad appartenere maggiormente agli studenti: gli insegnanti sono solo guide che possono aiutare la comunicazione tra i bambini, ma quasi tutto è scelto da loro stessi. Le migliori condizioni per l'apprendimento di una seconda lingua sono create, dunque, in classi che mirano a fornire agli studenti con limitate o nulle competenze nella lingua inglese una grande quantità di input orali da parte degli insegnanti e dei compagni madrelingua inglesi.

Nel terzo capitolo, infine, vengono esaminati i benefici nello studiare la lingua inglese come seconda lingua, essendo al giorno d'oggi una delle lingue più parlate in tutto il mondo. L'inglese è la lingua ufficiale e co-ufficiale di 45 stati ed è anche parlata in quei paesi in cui non detiene la posizione di ufficialità poiché è necessaria in molti ambiti e lavori. È la lingua della scienza, della tecnologia, dell'aviazione, della diplomazia e del turismo. Inoltre, si può conoscere meglio la cultura di un paese e il suo passato imparando l'inglese come seconda lingua, poiché espande il proprio modo di vedere ciò che è circostante. Oltretutto, accresce la comprensione della propria cultura, che, in questo modo, può essere vista da un altro punto di vista. Conoscendo l'inglese naturalmente viaggiare nel mondo sarà più piacevole, gli abitanti del posto in cui si è potranno capire maggiormente ciò che gli viene detto o chiesto. Si può, inoltre, ottenere intrattenimento da tutto il mondo poiché la maggior parte dei migliori e più conosciuti film o canzoni sono composte in inglese, e non sempre le traduzioni o i doppiaggi sono sufficientemente adeguati a mantenere l'accuratezza della lingua originale. Infine, parlare inglese è un grande vantaggio per una carriera futura, specialmente se si ha intenzione di lavorare per aziende o organizzazioni in cui è la prima lingua di comunicazione. In particolare, una precoce esposizione alla lingua inglese avrà un

impatto positivo molto evidente nella crescita cognitiva, incluso nella creatività, nella risoluzione dei problemi e nel ragionamento. Dopo aver presentato un caso di studio effettuato su studenti Indonesiani per comprendere le ragioni che li spingono a imparare l'inglese, il capitolo procede con un approfondimento sull'evoluzione dell'inglese e sui suoi molteplici vantaggi. Questa lingua, infatti, si è diffusa grazie alla colonizzazione, al commercio marittimo, e ai missionari cristiani tra il XII e il XV secolo nelle Americhe, nell'Africa del Nord, nelle Indie e in Cina. Così come ha cominciato a diffondersi in un modo tanto facile, si è anche evoluto e ha assorbito diversi termini da altre lingue, permettendo un suo sviluppo progressivo nel tempo. Inoltre, a causa della globalizzazione della lingua, ora esistono diversi "inglesi" che sono difficilmente distinguibili tra di loro e dall'inglese considerato "standard". È importante dire che lo sviluppo dell'inglese e l'introduzione di internet e dei social media per la comunicazione internazionale sono evoluzioni che si rafforzano a vicenda. Peraltro, la conoscenza tecnica in un inglese globale, o la capacità di parlare uno dei numerosi "inglesi" in tutto il mondo, ha un grande valore agli occhi delle aziende. Questo può essere un requisito per molti ruoli internazionali, un vantaggio nella diplomazia, nelle relazioni internazionali e nei settori finanziari. La lingua inglese, dunque, è diventata un linguaggio comune globale, dopo essere uscita da un ricco passato ed essersi evoluta e adattata in un modo darwiniano. Attualmente gran parte di come il mondo si sviluppa in modo sostenibile è grazie all'inglese: facilita il commercio tra nazioni che non hanno una lingua comune, è utilizzata come un linguaggio di convenienza, che promuove la discussione e la fiducia; infine, sta diventando sempre di più una lingua che unisce il dialogo globale e il dibattito su problemi come il cambiamento climatico, il terrorismo e i diritti umani.

Ringraziamenti

Ci tengo a ringraziare la mia relatrice, la professoressa Irene Zanon, che mi ha seguita e aiutata durante la stesura del presente elaborato in questi mesi, dandomi preziosi consigli.

Ringrazio la mia famiglia, che è sempre stata (e sempre sarà) al mio fianco, sia nei momenti di difficoltà che in quelli di felicità. Mamma, papà e Alice mi hanno sempre spronato ad andare avanti, mi hanno insegnato a non abbattermi di fronte a nessun ostacolo e mi hanno sempre circondata d'amore. Fin da quando sono nata mi hanno insegnato i valori più importanti, senza cui ora non sarei in grado di vivere questa splendida vita che mi hanno donato. Sono stati da sempre i miei più grandi sostenitori e per questo non posso far altro che ringraziarli dal profondo del mio cuore.

Ringrazio tutti i miei amici: le mie coinquiline e le mie compagne di corso, con cui ho condiviso questi tre anni universitari; le mie amiche e tutte le persone che nel loro piccolo hanno contribuito al raggiungimento di questo importante traguardo.

Infine, ringrazio le ragazze di Eyespeak, che mi hanno accolto, anche se per poco tempo, nella loro scuola e che mi hanno dato l'ispirazione per scrivere questa tesi.