METHODOLOGY OF ENGLISH LEARNING AND TEACHING

"Learning is important but how you learn is more important." -
3rd of ESO student at Escola Pia de Granollers, course 2013-2014.

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INTRODUCTION

I am a 2nd of Batxillerat student at Escola Pia de Granollers. My research project "Methodology of English L2 learning and teaching: an experimental study involving Catalan speakers of English and the importance of individual differences" analyses how teaching and learning styles have changed during the years and what is the best way to learn a foreign language.

Antecedents to carry out this project

There were different reasons that led me to choose this topic for my research project. I have always loved learning English, especially at secondary school. On the other hand, next year I would like to start a degree related to languages and also, one day, I would like to become an English teacher, so I decided that this was a good opportunity to learn more about learning and teaching. Finally, I decided to make this project in English instead of in Catalan or in any other language because, even I knew it would be much more difficult for me and that it would take much more time, I thought it was a good opportunity to improve my English and especially because thanks to different personal motivations I have had in the last two years, more or less, I have realised I like this language much more than I thought.

Hypothesis

I have based my research on the following hypothesis:

✔ *When one learns English, it is not enough to study the grammatical and spelling rules to master the language; a varied learning approach is the most efficient.*

Even if this is the main hypothesis, while I was doing the project I realised I could orientate some of the practical part to see if the English Catalan speakers speak is similar to the one native English speakers speak or if it is more similar to Catalan, so I formulated the following sub-hypothesis:

✔ *Catalan people's English pronunciation has several Catalan phonetic traits due to the not enough exposure to English.*

Aims

In order to be able to see if my hypothesis was true or not and to delimit my research, I set myself a series of goals:

➔ Discover how students can learn English in a better way.

➔ See how teaching and learning methods have changed during the years.

➔ See if a varied learning approach is better than one which uses a single mode.

➔ Know if Catalan students have a good English (L2) pronunciation.

➔ See how teachers and students can adapt to each other taking into account that they all have their own way of learning and teaching.

➔ Improve my English.

Methodology

In order to carry out this project, I used the following methodology:

- I looked up for information in different sources (books, the Internet, magazines, etc.)

- I wrote all the information in a way that was easier for me to understand and explain.

- I was able to interview different teachers who shared with me their experiences as English teachers and their point of view about learning and teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL):

  o Montserrat Travé Ramis (Escola Pia de Caldes de Montbui)
  o Carmen Pérez Vidal (Universitat Pompeu Fabra (UPF), in Barcelona).
  o Elena Muñoz López (Institut El Sui, in Cardedeu).
  o Maria Luz Celaya Villanueva (Universitat de Barcelona (UB), in Barcelona)
  o Cathy Gaulter (CES, a private school in Wheatley, near Oxford, where students from all over the world study).

- I had the opportunity to participate in the "Programa Argó", organized by the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB) during almost two weeks during the summer holidays (in the annex[1] there is an explanation of it).

- I was able to attend different English classes at Escola Pia de Granollers and Escola Pia de Caldes de Montbui, where I was able to do the practical part of this project (activities, writings and/or recordings).

- I made a survey on learning English as a foreign language in Catalonia, from which I was able to see different EFL students' habits and preferences when learning.

Limitations/problems

While I was doing this project, I had different limitations:

- I contacted the British Council, in the UK, and they told me they did not facilitate any meetings or interviews with school staff, so I was not able to talk to them.

- I contacted the University of Cambridge and they did not answer back, so I was not able to go there.

- At the beginning, my research project was about linguistically and/or culturally diverse families but then I changed it to the methodology of English learning and teaching, so I had less time to do all the research project.

- In order to have more reliable results from the survey (with only a 5% of margin error), I should have passed it to 384 students, which was not possible because when I knew this, it was already too late. (calculated with Sample Size Calculator).

- As I needed to work with students, I had to do the majority of the practical work before the summer and as a consequence I did not have time to change some things I then realised I could have done in another way.

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SPECIAL THANKS TO...

First of all, I would like to say thank you to everyone who has believed in this research project.

I want to thank Montserrat Folcrà, my research project tutor, for helping me throughout the project and letting me attend one of her classes.

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I want to thank Marta Ventura, Lourdes Rubio and Ingrid Alberola for letting me attend their classes in order to be able to do different parts of the practical part of this project.

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I want to thank Montserrat Travé, Carmen Pérez, Elena Muñoz, Maria Luz Celaya and Cathy Gaulter, the teachers who very kindly took the time to answer my interviews and helped me with my research.

I want to thank all the teachers I met at Escola Pia de Caldes de Montbui for being so kind to me when I went there to do some of the practical part of this project.

I want to thank the "Programa Argó" for giving me the opportunity to go there for about two weeks and Elisabet Pladevall, Susagna Tubau and Montserrat Capdevila, our teachers there.

I want to thank the "Noies Argó", for being a great inspiration, motivation and moral support when we were at the UAB last summer.

I want to thank my English family for giving me moral support when I was doing this research project when I stayed with them in England this summer.

I want to thank Daniel, my English teacher at English Language Institute (ELI), and Miquel Strubell for helping me with this project.

Last but not least, I want to thank my friends for listening to me and for being a great support when I needed it most.

Previous knowledge

In order to be able to understand this piece of work, below there are the definitions of some specific vocabulary. As it can be seen, all of them appear several times throughout the project and it is for this reason that it is important to understand their meaning right from the beginning.

EFL and ESL

Basically, EFL refers to the English which is studied in a country where that language is not used, contrary to ESL.

When teachers prepare a lesson, this must be taken into account. An English language learner who is studying ESL normally has more immediate needs, which means that they do not need to worry about grammar at first and what they need is to learn basic skills for living. On the contrary, an EFL student normally does not need English so they do not have to learn it as quick as possibly.

Even though, as the reasons why a student is learning English can be very varied, teachers must take into account the circumstances and the needs of the students in order to achieve a successful and useful learning.

L1 and L2

L1 or first language refers to the language a person has learnt from birth or to the language one knows best. In the case of the people who have participated in the practical part of this project, L1 is Catalan and/or Spanish. On the contrary, L2 refers to any other language which does not meet the previous requirements.

1. HOW ARE LANGUAGES LEARNT?

1.1. First language (L1) acquisition

First of all, it is important to know how the first language (L1) is learnt. Language acquisition, which normally refers to first-language acquisition, is described by Patsy M.Lightbown and Nina Spada in their book *How languages are learned* and by the Wikipedia as the process by which humans acquire the capacity to perceive and understand a language as well as to use different words and meaningful sentences to communicate with other people. Language acquisition is what makes humans unique, as we are the only species who have it, and it is for this reason that it is also described as one of the most impressive and fascinating aspects of human development.

Even if the way parents and children interact is different around the world, it is proved that all normally developing children acquire language more or less at the same time and that this process follows a specific pattern. The most important thing thanks to which children learn their first language is by being exposed to it as soon as possible. Since humans are born, the earliest vocalizations are very clear: the crying of a baby is a way to say that they feel hungry or uncomfortable, for example. Even if they have little control over the sounds they produce, they are able to distinguish between the voice of their mother from those of other people and, more incredibly, it is been demonstrated that babies are capable of very fine auditory discrimination, so they can notice the difference between "pa" and "ba", for example.

As time goes by, babies lose the capacity of making distinctions between sounds that are not phonemic in the language that is spoken around them, so those who are exposed to more than one will continue to respond to a wider number of differences for a longer period of time (Werker, Weikum and Yoshida, 2006).

At twelve months old, most babies start to produce a word or two that everyone recognizes and when they are two they are able to produce around fifty words. Little by little, children put all of them together and they produce "telegraphic sentences", called like this because they leave out things (e.g. "baby wants play").

By the age of four, when they have already started school, the majority of children are able to communicate with other people without making many mistakes and it is when they learn vocabulary at the rate of quite a lot of words a day.

Children aged between two and six acquire language so quickly that when they are six years old they are competent language users and they have an extraordinary ability and its acquisition seems effortless (Cole & Cole, 1993; Curtiss, 1977: Goldin-Meadow, 1982; Lindfors, 1991; McLaughlin, 1984; Newport, 1991). Also, this is the time when they start to read and as consequence, they are able to see that words can be represented by letters and other symbols and this gives them the new understanding that language has form, a part from meaning.

Lev Vygotsky[2], a psychologist who observed interactions between children and adults in different schools in the Soviet Union in the 1920s and 1930s, concluded that language develops primarily from social interaction and that in an environment which supports interaction, children are able to advance to higher levels of knowledge and performance.

Even if it seems clear that the exposure to a language at an early age is very beneficial to be able to learn a language and from all this the conclusion could be that if a language is not spoken and heard since being babies this will not be learnt, different studies and evidence show that even if the process can be more difficult, a language can be learnt at more or less any time.

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2 **Lev Vygotsky.** He was a Soviet Belarusian psychologist who invented a theory of human cultural and bio-social development.

1.2. Foreign language (L2) acquisition

In the following section, we will see how any foreign language (L2) can be learnt. First of all, some ways of teaching and learning which can be applied to different fields and not only to foreign language teaching will be explained and then some which are especially designed for teaching and learning foreign languages.

1.2.1.1. Introduction to learning and ways of teaching

Didactic strategies can be described as the whole skills, with the help of different educational techniques, which have the objective of achieving a good learning. In the same way, a didactic technique is a skill that helps to develop a part of an objective learning and it is a logical procedure with a psychological basis destined for orienting the learning of the student. The didactic technique is the way that the teacher uses in order to obtain good results of all the purposes planned from the strategy.

In the process of a technique there are different necessary activities to achieve the expected results. These activities are more partial and specific than the technique and change depending on the type of technique or the people with whom the teacher is working. The activities can be isolated and are defined from the needs of learning of the group.

The ways of teaching vary: some teachers give master lessons, some others prove or discuss, some emphasize memorizing and others comprehension, for example. In the same way, how students learn can also be very varied:

- Watching
- Listening
- Thinking
- Acting
- Logically and intuitively reasoning
- Memorizing
- Visualizing and establishing analogies
- Creating mathematical patterns
- ...

The quantity that a student learns depends on their native capacity and previous preparation but also on their compatibility between their way of learning and the way of teaching of the teacher (Felder[3], 1998 and 2000), so the most important thing is that the teachers and the students try to adapt to each other.

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3 **Richard M. Felder.** American Professor who has studied different types of learning.

1.2.1.2. Learning styles by Honey and Mumford

Peter Honey and Alan Mumford[4] (1922) developed <<Learning Styles>>, a study based on the work of Kolb[5] which suggests that four different learning styles exist: activist, reflector, theorist and pragmatist. The learning approaches recommend that, in order to learn more and better, each learner should:

• Understand their learning style.

• Look for opportunities to learn using that style.

• Try to develop the ability to learn in other styles.

The following table can be useful for anyone to know how they learn:

LEARNING STYLES BY HONEY AND MUMFORD		
LEARNING STYLE	**ATTRIBUTES**	**ACTIVITIES**
Activist	Activist learners: • Learn by doing. • Have an open-minded approach to learning. • Involve themselves fully.	• Brainstorming • Problem solving • Group discussions • Puzzles • Competitions • Role-plays
Reflector	Reflector learners: • Learn by observing and thinking about what happened. • May avoid getting involved and prefer just to watch. • Prefer to view experiences from a number of different perspectives, collecting information and taking the time to draw an appropriate conclusion.	• Paired discussions • Self-analysis questionnaires • Personality questionnaires • Time out • Observing activities • Feedback from others. • Coaching • Interviews

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4 **Peter Honey and Alan Mumford.** They both developed the "Learning Styles".

5 **David A. Kolb.** American educational theorist whose interests and publications focus on experiential learning, the individual and social change, career development, and executive and professional education.

Theorist	Theorist learners: • Like to understand the theory. • Need models, concepts and facts. • Prefer to analyse, synthesise and to put new information into a logical 'theory'.	• Models • Statistics • Stories • Quotes • Background information • Applying theories
Pragmatist	Pragmatist learners: • Need to be able to see how to put the learning into practice in the real world. • Are experimenters. They try out new ideas, theories and techniques to see if they work.	• Time to think about how to apply learning in reality. • Case studies • Problem solving • Discussion

1.2.1.3. Learning methods by Richard M. Felder

Richard M. Felder (1998 and 2000) defines four types of learning and the styles of teaching which adapt to them.

Learning		Teaching	
SENSING **INTUITIVE** } Perception	→	**CONCRETE** **ABSTRACT** } Content
VISUAL **VERBAL** } Entrance	→	**VISUAL** **VERBAL** } Presentation
ACTIVE **REFLECTIVE** } Processing	→	**ACTIVE** **PASSIVE** } Students' participation
SEQUENTIAL **GLOBAL** } Understanding	→	**SEQUENTIAL** **GLOBAL** } Perspective

All of them are different and good depending on the person. The preference for one category can be strong, moderate or mild, but a balance between some of them is normally the best option. In the following four pages, there is an explanation of each of them.

ACTIVE AND REFLECTIVE LEARNERS

ACTIVE LEARNERS	
DEFINITION (CHARACTERISTICS)	Learners who tend to retain and understand information by doing something active with it (discussing, applying or explaining it to other people). "Let's try it out and see how it works"
HOW DO THEY LEARN?	• Working in group.
WHAT'S DIFFICULT FOR THEM?	• Sitting through lectures without doing anything physical. • Taking notes
HOW CAN THEY LEARN BETTER? What should they do if they are in a class that allows little time to their type of learning.	• Studying in a group in which everybody explains different topics to each other. • Working with other people to try to guess what they will be asked on the next test and figure out how they will answer.

REFLECTIVE LEARNERS	
DEFINITION (CHARACTERISTICS)	Learners who prefer to think first about what they are learning. "Let's think it through first"
HOW DO THEY LEARN?	• Working alone.
WHAT'S DIFFICULT FOR THEM?	• Sitting through lectures without doing anything physical.
HOW CAN THEY LEARN BETTER? What should they do if they are in a class that allows little time to their type of learning.	• Don't simply reading or memorizing the material. • Stopping periodically to review what they have read and to think of possible questions or applications. • Writing short summaries of readings or class notes in their own words (It can take extra time but will enable them to retain the material more effectively).

AGAINST → Active learners, as they act before reflecting, can jump into things prematurely and get into trouble, while those who spend too much time **reflecting** may never get anything done.

SENSING AND INTUITIVE LEARNERS

	SENSING LEARNERS
DEFINITION (CHARACTERISTICS)	Learners who like learning facts, tend to be patient with details, practical and careful.
HOW DO THEY LEARN?	• Solving problems by well-established methods. • Memorizing facts. • Doing laboratory work.
WHAT'S DIFFICULT FOR THEM?	• Complications and surprises. • Courses that have no apparent connection to the real world.
HOW CAN THEY LEARN BETTER? What should they do if they are in a class that allows little time to their type of learning.	• Ask their teacher for specific examples and try to find out how the concepts apply in practice.

	INTUITIVE LEARNERS
DEFINITION (CHARACTERISTICS)	Learners who often prefer discovering possibilities and relationships and who tend to work fast to be more innovative.
HOW DO THEY LEARN?	• They like innovation. • They are good at understanding new concepts. • With abstractions and mathematical formulations.
WHAT'S DIFFICULT FOR THEM?	• They dislike repetition. • Courses that involve a lot of memorization.
HOW CAN THEY LEARN BETTER? What should they do if they are in a class that allows little time to their type of learning.	A lot of intuitors like college lecture classes. However, if an intuitor is in a class that deals basically with memorization and formulas, they can: • Try to find the connections themselves. • Read the entire question before answering and be sure to check the results in order to not make mistakes caused by impatience.

AGAINST → **Intuitors** may miss important details or make careless mistakes in calculations or hands-on work and students who overemphasize **sensing** may rely too much on memorization and not concentrate enough on understanding and innovative thinking.

VISUAL AND VERBAL LEARNERS

	VISUAL LEARNERS
DEFINITION (CHARACTERISTICS)	Learners who learn best thanks to what they see.
HOW DO THEY LEARN?	• Seeing pictures, diagrams, flow charts, time lines, films, demonstrations, etc.
WHAT'S DIFFICULT FOR THEM?	• Listening to lectures. • Read material written on boards and in textbooks.
HOW CAN THEY LEARN BETTER? What should they do if they are in a class that allows little time to their type of learning.	• Trying to find diagrams, sketches, schematics, photographs, flow charts or any other visual representation. • Consulting reference books or see if any multimedia resources of the course material are available. • Preparing different concept maps. • Highlighting their notes so that everything related to one topic is in the same colour.

	VERBAL LEARNERS
DEFINITION (CHARACTERISTICS)	Learners who get more out of words (written and spoken explanations), who find it easy to express themselves, both in writing and verbally, and who love reading and writing.
HOW DO THEY LEARN?	• Reading (written words). • Listening to explanations.
WHAT'S DIFFICULT FOR THEM?	• Abstract visual information.
HOW CAN THEY LEARN BETTER? What should they do if they are in a class that allows little time to their type of learning.	• Writing summaries or outlines of course material in their own words. • Working in groups.

AGAINST → There are very few visual classes at college, so students mainly listen to lectures and read material written on chalkboards and in textbooks and handouts. Unfortunately, most people are **visual** learners, which means that most students do not get as much as they would if more visual presentation were used in class.

SEQUENTIAL AND GLOBAL LEARNERS

	SEQUENTIAL LEARNERS
DEFINITION (CHARACTERISTICS)	Learners who tend to understand things in linear steps, with each step follows logically from the previous one.
HOW DO THEY LEARN?	• Understanding things in linear steps.
WHAT'S DIFFICULT FOR THEM?	• Following and remembering information taught by teachers who jump from topic to topic or skip steps.
HOW CAN THEY LEARN BETTER? What should they do if they are in a class that allows little time to their type of learning.	• Trying to fill in the skipped steps by consulting references. • Outlining the lecture material in a logical order.

	GLOBAL LEARNERS
DEFINITION (CHARACTERISTICS)	Learners who learn absorbing material almost randomly without seeing connections.
HOW DO THEY LEARN?	• By being actively involved with information which is interesting and can be related to their lives.
WHAT'S DIFFICULT FOR THEM?	• Explaining how they did it. • Endless facts tend to bore them and they lose interest fast.
HOW CAN THEY LEARN BETTER? What should they do if they are in a class that allows little time to their type of learning.	• By introducing things to them through short stories, illustrations, humour or anecdotes. • Reading it all first to get an overview. • Trying to relate the subject to things they already know. • Using colourful drawings or lists to illustrate points. • Taking breaks when doing homework or studying.

AGAINST → Global learners who do not have good sequential thinking abilities may have many trouble until they have a general understanding of what it being taught and **sequential** learners maybe know a lot about specific aspects but may have difficulties relating them to different aspects of the same subject or to others.

1.2.2.1. How have ideas changed concerning English Foreign Language (EFL) teaching and learning?

During all the history of teaching there has been an enormous quantity of learning and teaching styles. Some of them are explained below in a chronological order.

The grammar-translation method in language teaching

The grammar-translation method, also known as the Prussian method, appeared in the 19th century and was originally used to teach dead languages such as Latin or Greek. As Latin was considered the most prestigious language for education, culture and business, among many other things, this became an essential subject used as the base of any knowledge and it is for this reason that the analysis of the Latin grammar and rhetoric became the way of teaching foreign languages during the 19th and 20th centuries. The main objectives of this method are the acquisition of the ability of being able to translate texts to and from the L1 and the capacity to read literature. Its main characteristics, divided into advantages and disadvantages, are:

ADVANTAGES
• Translation is the easiest way of explaining the meaning of words and phrases.
• Learners find it easy because the lesson is explained with the help of the L1.
• Students have the ability to read and write.
• A very well-done correction is emphasized.
DISADVANTAGES
• The vocabulary is taught and learnt by memorizing bilingual lists of it by heart and without seeing its connection with the real world.
• The memorization of all the grammatical rules is only through the deductive method.
• The skills on which they work are only the written and not oral, so there is not speaking or any kind of spontaneous creative output.
• Students do not have an active role in the classroom.
• Very little attention is paid to content.

As it is been a very criticized method, it is not long being used but even so, we can see that some of the characteristics of this method are still being applied in different schools, high schools and universities. It is for this reason that foreign languages teachers not only have to learn all the new didactic strategies but also have to use them in their lessons to get the students to learn in and significant and motivating way.

Language teaching innovations in the nineteenth and twentieth century

Toward the middle of the nineteenth century, the way foreign languages were taught was questioned. Europeans saw the need they had to communicate between each other and as the grammar-translation method was used and as consequence very little oral skills were learnt, they were not able. Specialists from different countries developed, each of them, a specific method for reforming the teaching of modern languages. Each one of them emphasized different things:

Claude MARCEL (1793-1876, France)	Thomas PRENDERGAST (1806-1886, England)	François GOUIN (1831-1896, France)
• The importance of meaning in learning. • Reading should be taught before other skills.	• The importance of the situation and the context. • The use of memorized sentences and routines.	• The importance of situations and themes. • Gouin "series". He used situations and themes as a way of organizing and presenting oral languages.

The Reform Movement

From the 1880s, practical-minded linguists such as Henry Sweet[6] in England, Paul Passy[7] in France and Wilhelm Viëtor[8] in Germany questioned whether the learning method was good or not. Thanks to them, different things happened:

- Linguistics started gaining importance.
- Speech was considered the primary form of language.
- Phonetics were born and were used in order to achieve good pronunciation habits.
    - 1886 → Foundation of the *International Phonetic Association*.
    - 1888 → Creation of the *International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA)*.

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6 **Henry Sweet.** 1845-1876. He was an English philologist, phonetician and grammarian.

7 **Paul Passy.** 1859-1940. He was a French linguist who founded the *International Phonetic Association* and took part in the elaboration of the *International Phonetic Alphabet*.

8 **Wilhelm Viëtor.** 1850-1918. He was a German philologist and phonetician.

- Conversation texts and dialogues were used to introduce conversational phrases and idioms.

This linguists also became interested in the existing controversies about the best way of teaching foreign languages and each of them stood up for different aspects:

Henry SWEET (1845-1876, England)	Wilhelm VIËTOR (1850-1918, Germany)
• What is to be taught must be carefully selected and some limits must be imposed. • Teaching is divided into the four skills: speaking, listening, reading and writing. • Learning materials must be graded from simple to complex.	• He defended that phonetics enables teachers to pronounce and teach the language properly. • He criticized the Grammar Translation method.

VIËTOR, SWEET and other reformers
• The spoken language is fundamental and this should be reflected in an oral-based methodology. • Phonetics should be applied when teaching. • Learners should hear the language before seeing it written. • Grammatical rules should be taught after the students have practised the grammar in context. • Translation should be avoided. • The language should be learnt in context.

The Direct Method

The Direct Method appeared in the nineteenth century from the Natural Method, which consisted in the observation of children's language learning, and its objective was to overcome the problems of the grammar-translation method.

L. Sauveur[9], F. Franke[10] and other believers in the Natural Method agreed that a foreign language can be taught without the use of the L1 if meaning was showed through demonstration and action. This meant that the foreign language can be taught in the same way of the L1 and the main characteristics of this method are:

- Oral skills are more important than the written ones.
- The target language (L2) is the only language used for teaching.
- Only useful "everyday" language is taught.
- There is a focus on listening and speaking.
- Pronunciation and grammar are fundamental.
- Learners are able to induce rules of grammar after having used the L1 spontaneously. → Grammar learnt by practice.
- Actions and pictures are used to meanings clear.
- The teacher does not need to know the student's L1.

Nevertheless, the direct method also has some disadvantages, which are:

- Students sometimes have to represent situations which in reality will never happen.
- Abstract vocabulary is difficult to be taught because mimics can not be used.

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9 **L. Sauveur.** (1826-1907). He used intensive oral interaction in the target language in class and opened a language school in Boston in the 1860s.

10 **F. Franke.** German scholar who defended that a language can best be taught by using it actively and spontaneously in the classroom.

The Reading approach

In the twentieth century, the reading was viewed as one of the most useful skills and it is for this reason that the Reading approach appeared. Its main characteristics are:

- The only grammar that is taught is the one that is useful for reading.
- The amount of vocabulary is controlled at first (based on its frequency and usefulness).
- Translation is permitted.
- Reading comprehension is the only skill emphasized.

The Situational approach

Also in the twentieth century, H.E. Palmer[11], A.S. Hornby[12] and Pittman[13] wanted to improve the way foreign languages were being taught. It is for this reason that they created the Situational approach and its main characteristics are:

- Speaking is essential.
- Everything is presented orally before than written.
- The target language is the only one used.
- Grammatical structures are graded from simple to complex.
- New vocabulary and grammar is introduced and practised in a context (at a shop, at the post office, etc.).

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11 **Harold Edward Palmer.** (1877–1949). He was an English linguist and phonetician.

12 **Albert Sidney Hornby.** (1898–1978). He was an English grammarian, lexicographer and pioneer in the field of English language learning and teaching (ELT) and worked with the British Council and the BBC, among other places.

13 **George Pittman.** (1937-2014). He was an Australian English teacher who taught English as a Foreign Language in different places in the world.

1.3. Second language (L2) learning and individual differences

Introduction to L2 learning and individual differences

Nowadays, the majority of researchers and teachers believe that, as every student is different from the others, taking into account individual differences when teaching is really important. In the following section some of these individual differences and the way they can be detected are explained.

Aptitude

Aptitude, which has been described by John Carroll[14] (1991), one of the pioneers in this area, as the ability to learn quickly, is one of the individual differences that must be taken into account when teaching. A lot of research on this has been done and different tests which measure students' aptitude have been created. The two most well-known are the *Modern Language Aptitude Test* (MLAT) (Carroll and Sapon[15], 1959) and the *Pimsleur Language Aptitude Battery* (PLAB) (Pimsleur[16], 1966).

The MLAT is destined to students who are 14 and above, it measures an individual's aptitude for learning a foreign language and it is used to predict success in any basic communication skill but especially speaking and listening. The test is divided into five parts, whose order can change depending on the source but without a change in content (the full version is not available because it can only be sold to government agencies, missionary groups and licensed clinical psychologists and not to individual researchers teachers or students but an example of each part can be found in the annex[17]). The five parts are explained below:

1. **Number learning → rote memorization, aural comprehension and induction of grammar systems.** Students have to learn the names of the numbers in a new

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14 **John Bissell Carroll.** (1916-2003) He was an American psychologist who studied educational linguistics, among other things, and the co-author of the MLAT.

15 **Stanley Sapon.** (1924-2010). He was a professor of Psycholinguistics at the University of Rochester (N.Y.), where he was Director of the *Verbal Behaviour Laboratory* and the *Child Language Development Center*. He is the co-author of the MLAT.

16 **Paul Pimsleur.** (1927-1976). He was a scholar of applied linguistics who developed the Pimsleur language learning system, which had an important effect on theories of language learning and teaching.

17 Annex → page 35

language (e.g. "ba" is "one" and "dee" is "three") and when they hear the numbers they have to write them down in the new language.

2. **Phonetic script → sound-symbol coding.** Students are tested if they have the ability to learn a system for writing English sounds phonetically. First they hear some phonetic symbols and then they are given a set of four separate syllables, from which they have to select the one that has a phonetic spelling that matches with the syllable they have heard.

3. **Spelling clues → sound-symbol coding and English language vocabulary.** Students are tested on the ability to associate sounds with symbols. The success partly depends on the knowledge of English vocabulary and also on the speed.

4. **Words in sentences → grammatical sensitivity in English and some induction.** Students are tested on their capacity of recognizing and understanding syntactic structures.

5. **Paired associates →** rote memorization and associative learning. Students are tested if they have the capacity of memorizing some vocabulary by heart. They have two minutes to memorize the Maya-English vocabulary (24 words) and then they have to do a practice exercise.

As everything, it has some good and bad things and these are the reasons theorists have found:

FOR		AGAINST
It is good at identifying the worst and the best candidates	but	it fails to measure the middle two-thirds students' aptitude.
It is highly analytic	but	it might not measure so well the global language learning abilities which are necessary for natural and spontaneous communication.
It measures different skills	but	it does not take into account that some learners might have a strong aptitude for L2 learning but that they might learn in a different way.
Some of the abilities measured can predict success	even	if little communication skills are tested.

The PLAB is another test which is used to determine the language learning aptitude or even a language learning disability among secondary school students. Of a big quantity of intellectual and motivational factors which were thought to help to success in foreign language learning, four have been proved to be significantly related: grade point average, motivation, verbal ability and auditory ability. The test is divided into six parts which assess these four factors.

- **Part 1** → Grade Point Average in academic areas different from foreign languages.
- **Part 2** → It tests the interest students have in learning a foreign language.
- **Part 3** → It tests the knowledge students have of vocabulary.
- **Part 4** → It tests the students' understanding of an artificial language grammar.
- **Part 5** → It tests the ability students have to differentiate between pitch, orality and nasality when hearing words in a new language.
- **Part 6** → It tests the students' ability to associate different sounds to their written form.

Intelligence

Intelligence, which can be described as the ability to acquire and apply knowledge and skills, has traditionally been used to describe the performance on certain kinds of tests. Many research on how intelligence affects second language learning has been done. On the one hand, some of them have made clear that a high intelligence quotient (IQ) means that the learning of a second language will be successful but on the on the other hand, some research has shown that IQ tests are normally more related to metalinguistic knowledge than to communicative ability. This means that, maybe, those who have a high IQ result will be good at learning the rules and at analysing the language, but this does not necessarily mean they will be able to communicate properly. Also, it has been demonstrated that some students with a bad academic performance can succeed if a good opportunity is given to them.

Age

Age is often mentioned as one of the factors which influence the learning of a foreign language but some research leads to the conclusion that it is not always like this. Even if it

is clear that age is easier to define and measure than motivation, for example, the relationship between age and success in learning is still complicated. On the one hand, some studies show that learning a foreign language in early ages is better but on the other hand, some of them prove that older learners attain higher levels of proficiency of the foreign or second language. The following table shows some different opinions and conclusions about it:

Younger people are more successful	Older people are more successful
• Younger learners get more fluency and a native-like pronunciation quicker. • "Language learning is an innate ability, one that dissipates with age." (Chomsky[18], 1972). • "One's neural plasticity decreases with age, thus affecting language learning ability." (Lenneberg[19], 1967).	• Older learners have an advantage in the acquisition of syntax and morphology. • Some studies show that older learners are more efficient than younger ones. • It is been demonstrated that in some cases, learners who begin learning L2 at primary school are not better than those who start during their adolescence.

An important concept is the "critical period hypothesis" (CPH), which says that learning a language and age are biologically related because there is a specific time when learning is very successful and that after it, it is much more difficult its acquisition. Even though, as we have just seen, in the case of second or foreign language it is not so clear if the CPH exists because some studies show that younger people learn better and some prove that it is older people who do. However, with what most researchers agree is that the acquisition of the pronunciation has a CPH because people who have learnt a foreign language at an older age tend to have a noticeable "foreign accent".

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18 **Avram Noam Chomsky.** (1928). He is an American linguist, philosopher, cognitive scientist and activist considered "father of modern linguistics".

19 **Eric Heinz Lenneberg** (1921-1975). He was a linguist who talked about language acquisition and cognitive psychology, particularly innateness. He wrote "The Capacity of Language Acquisition" (1960).

Self-esteem

Self-esteem is an important variable when learning and it is usually described as the confidence in one's own worth or abilities or the feeling that one is as important as other people. It is often seen as invariable: a person either has high-esteem or low esteem, without changing depending on the situation they find themselves in. Even so, some people believe that this is not quite like this, that self-esteem can be (Brown, 1994):

- **Global** (an inherent personality characteristic)
- **Situational** (related to a particular situation)

Normally, students who have particular problems in the L2 learning have lower self-esteem than successful ones but even so, normally, their global self-esteem will only be affected if language learning is very important for them. A study carried out by the *Foreign Service Institute*[20] suggests that positive beliefs about oneself makes an important contribution to learning success.

Inhibition and risk-taking

Normally, inhibition is related to low self-esteem: it is thought that those students who have low self-esteem are more inhibited than those who have a high one. When one is learning makes mistakes, which is normal and part of learning and life, but inhibited students tend to judge themselves too much for it and as a consequence, these students are afraid of taking risks, something necessary for progress in language learning.

Anxiety

Anxiety, when it is related to learning a foreign language, can be described as a state of feelings of worry, nervousness and stress that a lot of students experience and during a lot of years, anxiety has been considered as a permanent personality trait.

On the one hand, some L2 experts agree that anxiety can be helpful rather than a bad thing. The good one, called **facilitating anxiety**, can be useful to make sure students are aware of what they are doing and the bad one, called **debilitating anxiety**, can be harmful

20 ***Foreign Service Institute.*** It is the Federal Government's primary training institution for officers and support personnel of the U.S.

because it makes students too worried and self-doubting, which reduces their participation at anything related to L2.

Teachers can see if a student is anxious in many ways: The *Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale[21],* for example, is an easy way because they just have to make students answer the test, which assumes that those who "strongly agree" with the written statements are anxious. Even so, it must be taken into account that it does not consider the possibility that anxiety can be temporary. Other ways of knowing is students are anxious is by observing them. If some of them normally do some of the following things is possibly because they are anxious in L2 learning environments:

- Avoidance or forgetting
- Moving a lot
- Tapping
- Stammering
- Headaches
- Pain
- Tension
- Exaggerated laughing, nodding or joking.
- ...

Willingness to communicate

Willingness to communicate (WTC) has been related to anxiety and it refers to the decision of speaking up that a person makes instead of remaining silent. The reasons why someone decides to or not to talk can be very different: the number of people present, the formality, the topic of conversation, the mood, if one's energetic or not at a given moment, shyness, etc. It is shown that people with a higher WTC learn more, make more friends and have a better experience of learning, among other things (Yashima[22] and Tanaka[23], 2001). Also, in many studies it has been shown that communicative confidence is determined by two factors, which are influenced by previous contacts with L2 speakers:

1. How relaxed L2 learners are.
2. How competent or incompetent they feel about their L2.

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21 ***Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale*** → a copy of it can be found in the annex.

22 **Tomoko Yashima.** She is a professor who has identified several ways in which young people try strategies to communicate with L1 speakers revealing their WTC as a key reason for facilitating learning.

23 **Yu Tanaka.** He is a graduate student from UCLA Department of Linguistics.

Motivation

Motivation has been described in many ways. Richard Schmidt[24] said, in 1989, that motivation is composed of:

- Four different internal attitudinal factors (**interest, relevance, expectancy and outcomes**) which depend on the learner's existing attitudes, experiences and knowledge.

- Three external behavioural characteristics (**decision-making, persistence and activity level**) because it is the learner who decides to choose, to pay attention and to engage in one activity instead of others.

Another definition for it can be the one by Robert Gardner and Wallace Lambert (1972), two Canadian professors of psychology, which says that motivation in second language learning can be of two different types:

- **Instrumental motivation** (language learning for immediate or practical goals).
- **Integrative motivation** (language learning for personal growth and cultural enrichment through contact with foreign speakers).

Most teachers agree that those students who participate most in class, express interest and study a lot is because they are motivated. Teachers can make a good influence on students by teaching relevant and interesting content, establishing goals which are challenging and reachable at the same time and creating a supportive atmosphere, for example. Not a lot of research has been done on how pedagogy interacts with L2 teaching classrooms but Marie Guilloteaux[25] and Zoltán Dörnyei[26] carried out a study, the *Motivational Orientation of Language Teaching* (MOLT), thanks to which they were able to classify the identified 25 motivational practices used by the teachers into four main groups:

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24 **Richard Schmidt.** He is an American linguist whose primary research area is cognitive and affective factors in adult second and foreign language learning, including the role of attention and motivation.

25 **Marie-Jose Guilloteaux.** She is a EFL teacher in Korea and who has taken part in different investigations related to EFL teaching, motivational practices and classroom management, among other things.

26 **Zoltán Dörnyei.** He is a Professor of Psycholinguistics at the University of Nottingham (UK) and he has worked on motivation in second-language learning.

1. **Teacher discourse:** creating curiosity and attention, promoting autonomy, starting communicative purpose/utility of activity, etc.

2. **Participation structure:** work in groups and/or in pairs.

3. **Activity design:** individual and team competition, intellectual challenge, tangible task product, etc.

4. **Encouraging positive retrospective self-evaluation and activity design:** effective praise, elicitation of self and/or peer correction session, etc.

1.4. Is a multistyle approach the best way to teach and learn foreign languages?

A multistyle approach refers to the fact of matching several ways of teaching and learning. A lot of research has been done on how languages are learnt, which are the best ways for doing so, the different types of existing learners, etc. Several studies (Griggs and Dunn, 1984; Smith and Renzulli, 1984; Brown, 1978; Wallace and Oxford, 1992, etc.) have shown that matching different ways of teaching to learning ones is good because it improves academic achievement and students' attitudes and behaviours.

Even though, this does not mean that the best way to learn is by always using one's favoured method. As we have seen at the beginning of this work, in the section about "Learning Styles" by Peter Honey and Alan Mumford, to learn more and better one must understand their learning style, look for opportunities to learn using that style but also one must try to develop the ability to learn in other styles.

All educational psychologists agree that teaching in a varied way is positive for the students instead of using only one. This is supported by different studies made several years ago (Stice, 1987; Oxford, 1990). The conclusions of Stice's one are:

Of what students read...

10%
90%

■ They retain
■ They don't retain

Of what students hear…

26%
74%

■ They retain
■ They don't retain

Of what students see...

30%
70%

■ They retain
■ They don't retain

Of what students see and hear…

50%   50%

■ They retain
■ They don't retain
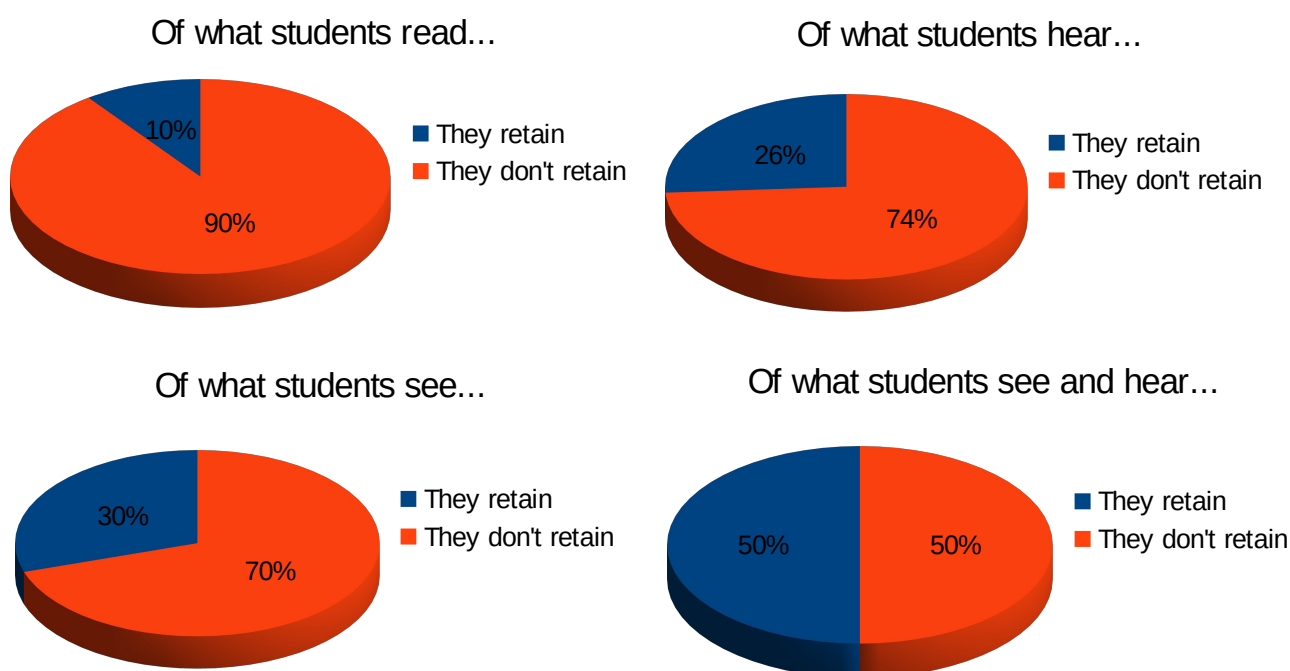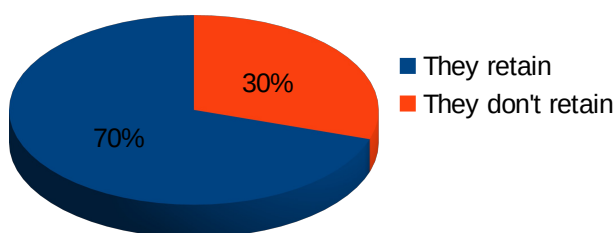
Of what students say...   Of what students say as they do something...

■ They retain
■ They don't retain

30%
70%

10%
90%

■ They retain
■ They don't retain
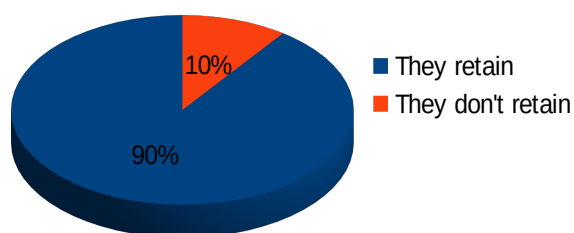
R.L.Oxford said that what must be done in order to achieve a good learning is to structure the class in a way that all learning styles (Richard M. Felder) are simultaneously or at least sequentially used and teacher should:

1. **Motivate learning** by teaching new material in the context of situations which the students see useful and significant in their lives (intuitive, global and inductive).

2. **Balance concrete** (word definition, rules for verb conjugation, etc.) (sensing) **and conceptual information** (e.g. syntactical and semantic patterns) (intuitive).

3. Balance **structured** learning approaches which highlights formal training (deductive and sequential) and **unstructured** ones which emphasize conversation (inductive and global).

4. **Use visual material** (photographs, films, presentations, etc.) (visual and global).

5. Assign some **repetitive drill exercises** to practice vocabulary and grammar (sensing) but not too much (intuitive).

6. Give students some **breaks** to think about what they have learnt and assign short exercises (reflective). Ask questions to discuss in groups (active).

7. Give students the opportunity to cooperate on some activities and/or homework (active).

8. Combine inductive and deductive course material.

2. PRACTICAL PART

The practical part of this research project consists of different activities especially prepared to be able to see if my hypothesis was true or not and it is divided into four clear sections:

1. Is a varied learning approach the most efficient way to learn?

2. Survey

3. Do Catalan speakers speak an English (L2) similar to English or one which is more similar to their L1?

4. What do students want?
    1. Compositions

2.1. Is a varied learning approach the most efficient way to learn?

2.1.1. Methodology

To be able to see if my hypothesis "When one learns English, it is not enough to study the grammatical and spelling rules to master the language; a varied learning approach is the most efficient." was true, I attended a class of 3rd of ESO in Escola Pia de Granollers. Previously, two different types of paper activities had been designed and each half of the class had to do one of them. The first one consists of two fill-in-the-gaps exercises and the second one has different types of exercises.

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1. PAST SIMPLE AND PAST CONTINUOUS

1. Complete the text using past simple and past continuous.

Last week I _____ (decide) to invite some friends to dinner. I _____ (buy) lots of delicious food, including some Parma ham and at about 6.00 I _____ (cook) in the kitchen. The sun _____ (shine) and it was a beautiful evening, so I _____ (open) the back door. Then the telephone _____ (ring). I _____ (go) to answer it and when I _____ (come) back the ham wasn't on the table. I _____ (look) out of the window. A cat _____ (sit) on my garden wall and it _____ (eat) my ham. What _____ (can) I do? I _____ (fill) a pan with water and I _____ (go) quietly outside. The cat _____ (not look) in my direction and it _____ (enjoy) the ham so much that it _____ (not hear) me. I _____ (walk) slowly up to it, I _____ (want) to empty the water over its head. A bit cruel, I know, but the ham _____ (be) very expensive but at the last moment the cat heard me and _____ (escape) in the neighbourhood.

2. Complete the gaps.

It _____ (be) just before midnight on October 31st last year. Susan Lee _____ (drive) home after visiting her sister. The road was clear and she _____ (drive) carefully. Suddenly, out of nowhere, a young man _____ (step) out in front of her. He _____ (wear) a dark coloured raincoat and carrying a backpack. Susan _____ (step) hard on the brake pedal but it was too late. She _____ (get) out of the car but, to her surprise, there _____ (be) nobody there. While she _____ (look) under the car, she felt a cold wind on her face and a strange presence that _____ (send) shivers down her spine. She was still looking under her car when a lorry _____ (stop) behind her. The lorry driver, a middle-aged man, _____ (walk) up to her and _____ (ask) her if she needed help to start her car so she _____ (tell) him what had happened. He _____ (don't) seem surprised when Susan told him about the young man. 'In October 1978, there _____ (be) a car accident on this road and a hitchhiker was fatally run over. You're not the first to have seen his ghost here', he _____ (say) in a mysterious tone.

Escola Pia
Granollers

Name: _____

2. PAST SIMPLE AND PAST CONTINUOUS

1. Complete the sentences using past simple and past continuous.

1. Wendy _____ (break) her arm last week. It _____ (happen) when she _____ (paint) her room. She _____ (fall) off her ladder.

2. The train _____ (arrive) at the station and Paula _____ (get) off.

3. Yesterday Susan _____ (walk) along the road when she _____ (meet) Peter.

4. How _____ (you / break) the window? We _____ (play) football. I _____ (kick) the ball and it _____ (hit) the window.

5. When you _____ (call) me at 8 o'clock, I _____ (have) a bath.

6. Rick _____ (watch) TV when his girlfriend _____ (get) home.

7. They _____ (get) married while they _____ (study) at the London School of Economics.

2. Match the two parts of the sentences.

1. We were sitting at the breakfast table   a. their parents were watching TV.

2. He met a lot of friendly people   b. while he was talking to his friend.

3. When they left the museum,   c. they went to have a cup of coffee.

4. The students were standing up   d. when the doorbell rang.

5. While the children were sleeping,   e. his wife was swimming in the sea.

6. It started to rain   f. she was already waiting for me.

7. When I opened the door,   g. when the teacher came in.

8. While Henry was having a drink at the bar,   h. while she was watering the flowers in her garden.

9. He heard a loud noise   i. while he was working in California.

10. While she was having a shower,   j. her husband was cooking the lunch.

3. In pairs, describe the two pictures aloud using different past tenses.

Yesterday,...
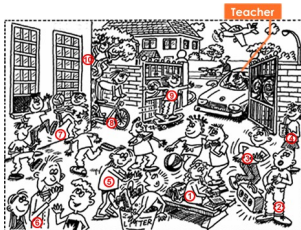
After having done the different activities, they corrected them all together and then they all had to take the same test, which was the following one:

Escola Pia
Granollers

Name: _____

PAST SIMPLE AND PAST CONTINUOUS - TEST

1. Complete the text using past simple and past continuous.

James Ellis _____ (go) on a business trip last week. He _____ (visit) some customers in Frankfurt. He _____ (leave) home early on Monday morning and _____ (take) a taxi to the airport. He _____ (get) there at about 8 o'clock. He _____ (check in) and _____ (go) to the airport lounge. He _____ (buy) a newspaper and _____ (go) to get a coffee.

He _____ (drink) his coffee when he _____ (see) an old friend, Bob. He _____ (be) very surprised that Bob (be) in London and _____ (find out) that he _____ (start) a new job in the city. As they _____ (talk) they _____ (hear) an announcement. "Would all passengers for the 9.30 flight to Frankfurt please go to boarding gate 10". James _____ (say) goodbye to Bob and as they _____ (leave) Bob _____ (give) him his business card and _____ (ask) him to phone when he _____ (return) from Frankfurt.

Then James _____ (put) his briefcase in the overhead locker and _____ (sit) down. During the flight, James _____ (do) some paper work and _____ (speak) to the woman sitting next to him. While they _____ (speak) the flight attendant _____ (bring) breakfast and finally the plane _____ (land) in London at almost 11 o'clock.

After having taken the exam, I corrected them and also all the activities, which in theory had been already corrected by the students. Out of the 25 students, 8 of them corrected properly the activities (32%), 11 did not correct them well (44%) and 6 did not correct them at all (24%).

2.1.2. Results

The two following diagrams show the results of the two different activities, in blue, and the ones of the test, in orange.

Varied learning activities results
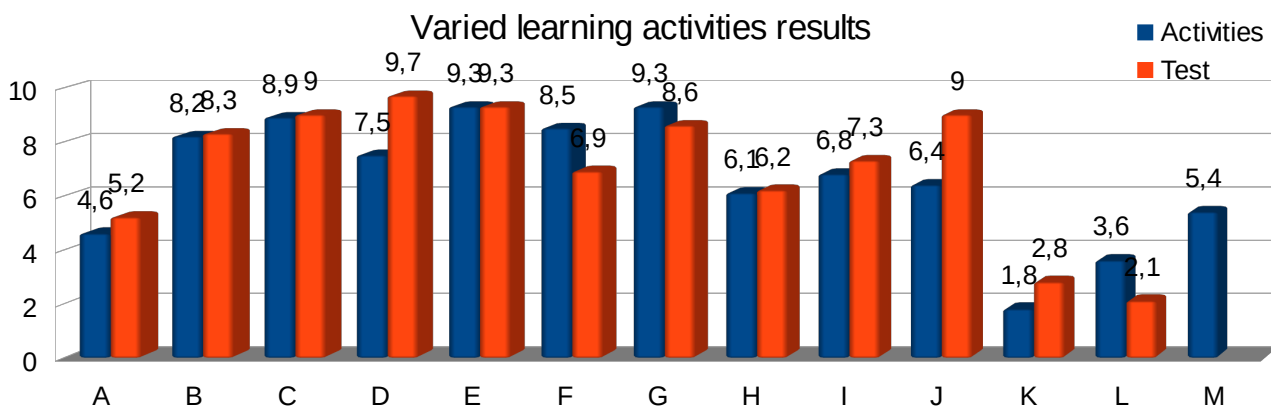
■ Activities
■ Test

* M refused to do the test.

From the 13 students who first did the varied activities, 8 of them then got a better mark in the test, 1 got the same, 3 got a worse mark and 1 refused to do it.

Same type of activities results

■ Activities
■ Test
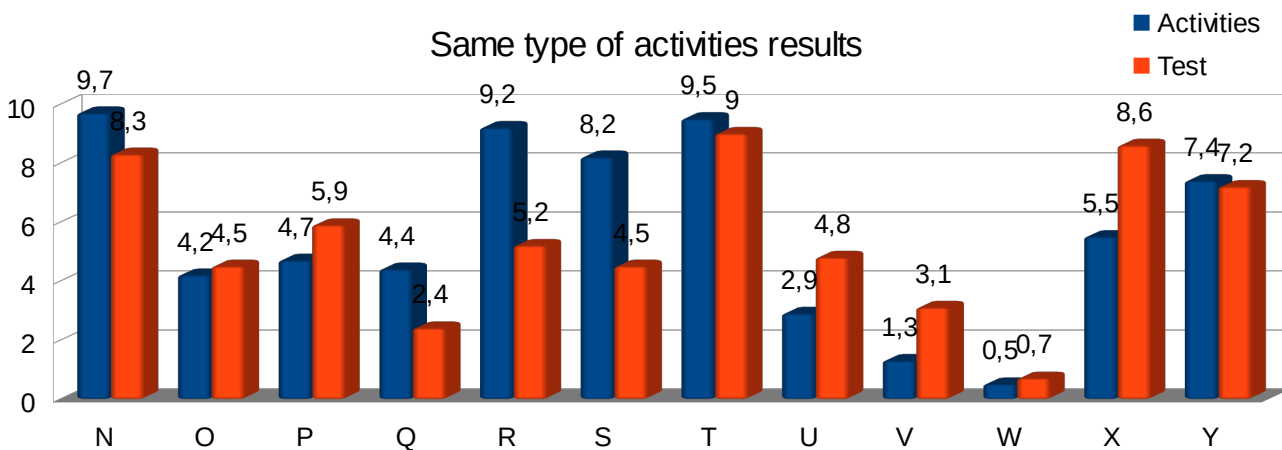
From the 12 students who did the fill-in-the-gaps activity, 6 of them got a better mark in the test and 6 got a worse one.

After having done this, all the people who had taken the exam answered a survey in order to then be able to compare the exam results to the use of English. Below there is a sample of it:

Research project: Learning English as a Foreign Language in Catalonia

Name:

1. What languages do you speak?

☐ Catalan   ☐ German   ☐ Chinese

☐ Spanish   ☐ Russian   ☐ Japanese

☐ English   ☐ Arabic   Others:

☐ French   ☐ Italian

2. How often do you speak in English?

☐ Every day   ☐ Three times a week

☐ Six times a week   ☐ Twice a week

☐ Five times a week   ☐ Once a week

☐ Four times a week

3. Where do you speak English?

☐ At school   ☐ With friends

☐ At home   ☐ Others

☐ At an academy

4. Do you watch films and TV series in original version or dubbed?

☐ Always in original version

☐ Both original and dubbed

☐ Always dubbed

5. Do you know that there are some institutions which organize cinema in original version?
For example, the "Associació Cultural de Granollers"

☐ Yes, and I've been there.

☐ Yes, but I haven't been there.

☐ No, I haven't heard about them before.

6. Do you communicate with people from abroad in English?

☐ Yes, very often.

☐ Sometimes.

☐ Never

On the following three pages there are the results of the previous survey (question number 5 has not been taken into account due to the fact that even if students answered that they had been there, maybe it would have been only once and for this reason its repercussion to their level of English would not be very significant):

Student	Exam	Survey
A	5,2	• She speaks Catalan, Spanish, English and French. • She speaks English three times a week. • She speaks English at school. • She watches both original and dubbed films. • She sometimes communicates with people from abroad.
B	8,3	• He speaks Catalan, Spanish, English and French. • He speaks English every day. • He speaks English at school, at an academy and with friends. • He watches both original and dubbed films. • He sometimes communicates with people from abroad.
C	9	• She speaks Catalan, Spanish, English and French. • She speaks English every day. • She speaks English at school, at home, at an academy and by social media. • She watches both original and dubbed films. • She communicates with people from abroad very often.
D	9,7	• She speaks Catalan, Spanish, English and French. • She speaks English four times a week. • She speaks English at school and at an academy. • She watches both original and dubbed films. • She communicates with people from abroad very often.
E	9,3	• She speaks Catalan, Spanish, English and French. • She speaks English every day. • She speaks English at school, at home, at an academy and with friends. • She watches both original and dubbed films. • She sometimes communicates with people from abroad.
F	6,9	• He speaks Catalan, Spanish, English and Italian. • He speaks English three times a week. • He speaks English outside school (he does not specify where). • He watches both original and dubbed films. • He sometimes communicates with people from abroad.
G	8,6	• He speaks Catalan, Spanish, English and French. • He speaks English four times a week. • He speaks English at school and at an academy • He only watches dubbed films. • He sometimes communicates with people from abroad.
H	6,2	She did not answer the survey because she was not there.
I	7,3	• He speaks Catalan, Spanish and English. • He speaks English every day. • He speaks English at school, at an academy and at other places (he does not specify where). • He watches both original and dubbed films. • He never communicates with people from abroad.

J	9	• She speaks Catalan, Spanish, English and French. • She speaks English three times a week. • She speaks English at an academy. • She only watches dubbed films. • She sometimes communicates with people from abroad.
K	2,8	• He speaks Catalan, Spanish, English, Japanese, LAPAO, Lapapaya and Valencian. • He speaks English five times a week. • He speaks English at school and at an academy. • He watches both original and dubbed films. • He sometimes communicates with people from abroad.
L	2,1	• She speaks Catalan, Spanish and English. • She speaks English once a week. • She speaks English at school. • She only watches dubbed films. • She sometimes communicate with people from abroad.
M	She refused to do it.	• She speaks Catalan, Spanish, English (more or less), French (more or less) and her mother tongue. • She speaks English three times a week. • She speaks English at school. • She only watches dubbed films. • She never communicates with people from abroad.
N	8,3	• She speaks Catalan, Spanish and English. • She speaks English every day. • She speaks English at school, at home and at an academy. • She watches both original and dubbed films. • She sometimes communicates with people from abroad.
O	4,5	• He speaks Catalan, Spanish, English, French and German. • He speaks English three times a week. • He speaks English at school and at school. • He only watches dubbed films. • He sometimes communicates with people from abroad.
P	5,9	• He speaks Catalan and Spanish. • He speaks English once a week. • He speaks English at school. • He watches both original and dubbed films. • He never communicates with people from abroad.
Q	2,4	• He speaks Catalan, Spanish and English. • He speaks English three times a week. • He speaks English at school. • He only watches dubbed films. • He sometimes communicates with people from abroad.
R	5,2	• She speaks Catalan, Spanish, English and French. • She speaks English three times a week. • She speaks English at school. • She watches both original and dubbed films. • She never communicates with people from abroad.

S	4,5	• He speaks Catalan, Spanish and English. • He speaks English three times a week. • He speaks English at school. • He only watches dubbed films. • He never communicates with people from abroad.
T	9	• She speaks Catalan, Spanish, English and French. • She speaks English every day. • She speaks English at school, at an academy and at other places (she does not specify where). • She always watches films in OV. • She sometimes communicates with people from abroad.
U	4,8	• He speaks Catalan, Spanish, English and French. • He speaks English every day. • He speaks English at school and outside it (he does not specify where). • He watches both original and dubbed films. • He communicates with people from abroad very often.
V	3,1	• He speaks Catalan, Spanish and English. • He speaks English four times a week. • He speaks English at school and at home. • He only watches dubbed films. • He sometimes communicates with people from abroad.
W	0,7	• She speaks Catalan and Spanish. • She speaks English four times a week. • She speaks English at school. • She only watches dubbed films. • She never communicates with people from abroad.
X	8,6	• He speaks Catalan, Spanish, English and French. • He speaks English five times a week. • He speaks English at school, at an academy and at other places (he does not specify where). • He watches both original and dubbed films. • He sometimes communicates with people from abroad.
Y	7,2	• He speaks Catalan, Spanish, English and French. • He speaks English five times a week. • He speaks English at school and at an academy. • He watches both original and dubbed films. • He sometimes communicates with people from abroad.

2.1.3. Recompilation of the survey results in relation to the previous test

| High: 8-10
Medium: 6-7.9
Medium-low: 5-5.9
Low: 2-4.9
Very low: 0-1.9 | | Survey | | | | | |
Student	Exam	Exam mark	Number of languages	Frequency (days a week)	Number of places / situations	OV vs dubbed	Interaction with native speakers
A	5,2	Medium-low	4	3	1	Mixed	Sometimes
B	8,3	High	4	7	3	Mixed	Sometimes
C	9	High	4	7	4	Mixed	Very often
D	9,7	High	4	4	2	Mixed	Very often
E	9,3	High	4	7	4	Mixed	Sometimes
F	6,9	Medium	4	3	1	Mixed	Sometimes
G	8,6	High	4	4	2	Dubbed	Sometimes
H	6,2	She was not in class that day.					
I	7,3	Medium	3	7	3	Mixed	Never
J	9	High	4	4	2	Dubbed	Sometimes
K	2,8	Low	7	5	2	Mixed	Sometimes
L	2,1	Low	3	1	1	Dubbed	Sometimes
M	She refused to do it.		5	3	1	Dubbed	Never
N	8,3	High	3	7	3	Mixed	Sometimes
O	4,5	Low	5	3	2	Dubbed	Sometimes
P	5,9	Medium-low	2	1	1	Mixed	Never
Q	2,4	Low	3	3	1	Dubbed	Sometimes
R	5,2	Medium-low	4	3	1	Mixed	Never
S	4,5	Low	3	3	1	Dubbed	Never
T	9	High	4	7	3	OV	Sometimes
U	4,8	Low	4	7	2	Mixed	Sometimes
V	3,1	Low	3	4	2	Dubbed	Very often
W	0,7	Very low	2	4	1	Dubbed	Never
X	8,6	High	4	5	3	Mixed	Sometimes
Y	7,2	Medium	4	5	2	Mixed	Sometimes

2.1.4. Interpretation of the activity results

Students who first did the varied learning activities got in general a better mark than those who only did the fill-in-the-gaps activity. After comparing the results with the test marks, it is possible to see that, in general, those students who got a high mark (8 and above):

- All speak English at least four times a week (5 out of 9 of them do it every day).

- All except one of them speak four languages, which could make us think they are more motivated to learn foreign languages, an important individual difference which has been explained in the section about second language learning and individual differences of this research project.

- All of them said they communicated with native speakers very often or at least sometimes, so this shows their willingness to communicate, another individual difference already explained.

- All of them speak in English at at least two places.

- When it comes to whether they watch OV or dubbed films, the difference between those who got a high mark and those with a lower one is not very relevant.

On the other hand, those who got a low or very low mark (between 0 and 4.9):

- They all speak English up to four times a week, except one which does it five.

- The number of languages they speak is quite varied: the majority speak four or less than four languages but one speaks 7 and another one 5.

- Many of them also sometimes communicate with English native speakers but contrary to those who got a higher mark, in this group there are some students who never communicate with foreign people, which may be related to less willingness to communicate.

- All of them speak English at a maximum of two places.

- As it has been said before, the difference between those who watch OV or dubbed films and TV series is not very significant.

Finally, the answers from those students who got a medium mark (between 5 and 7.9) are much more varied than those in the previous two groups:

- One of them speaks English every day and another one once a week, while all the other ones are in the middle.

- The number of languages they speak is quite varied: the majority speak four languages but one speaks 3 and another one 2, who considers he does not speak English.

- The quantity of people who sometimes speak to English native speakers is the same to those who never do.

- The majority of them speak in English at only one place.

- All of them combine OV and dubbed films and TV series.

2.1.5. Conclusion of the activity

First of all, from the first part of this practice, where students had to do the fill-in-the-gaps exercises or the different types of exercises, we can conclude that "When one learns English, it is not enough to study the grammatical and spelling rules to master the language; a varied learning approach is the most efficient." is true because those who had done the varied exercises got a better mark in the test than those who had done the other kind of exercises.

Also, as it can be seen, in general, those who got a high mark have a greater exposure to English than those who got a lower one. As in everything, there are some exceptions and this should make us think that maybe it is because of the individual differences already explained in the theoretical part of this research project. As every student is different, everyone has interests, motivations, willingness to communicate and many other factors which make each student unique.

2.2. Survey

Apart from the previous survey, which was only for those students who had done the activities, other students answered the following one and then the most significant questions were chosen and analysed.

Research project: Learning English as a Foreign Language in Catalonia

School
(Name and locality):

_____

Type of school:

☐ Private
☐ Concertada
☐ State school

☐ English school in Catalonia

Others:

Present course:

☐ 1st ESO   ☐ 4th ESO
☐ 2nd ESO   ☐ 1st Batx.
☐ 3rd ESO   ☐ 2nd Batx.
☐ CFGM   Others:

Sex:

☐ Male
☐ Female

1. What languages do you speak?

☐ Catalan   ☐ German   ☐ Chinese
☐ Spanish   ☐ Russian   ☐ Japanese
☐ English   ☐ Arabic   Others:
☐ French   ☐ Italian

2. How often do you speak in English?

☐ Every day   ☐ Three times a week
☐ Six times a week   ☐ Twice a week
☐ Five times a week   ☐ Once a week
☐ Four times a week

3. Where do you speak English?

☐ At school   ☐ With friends
☐ At home   ☐ Others
☐ At an academy

4. Do you watch films and TV series in original version or dubbed?
When you choose (without taking into account those which you watch at school)

☐ Always in original version
☐ Both original and dubbed
☐ Always dubbed

5. Do you know that there are some institutions which organize cinema in original version?
For example, the "Associació Cultural de Granollers"

☐ Yes, and I've been there.
☐ Yes, but I haven't been there.
☐ No, I haven't heard about them before.

6. Do you communicate with people from abroad in English? It doesn't matter if they are friends, family or through any platform designed especially for this (e.g. Students of the World)

☐ Yes, very often.
☐ Sometimes.
☐ Never

7. How do you think you learn English pronunciation best? Choose a maximum of two options.

☐ Watching videos

☐ Listening to the teacher and watching how they pronounce.

☐ Listening and singing in English

Others:

8. How do you prefer to learn English pronunciation?
Choose a maximum of two options.

☐ Watching videos

☐ Listening to the teacher and watching how they pronounce.

☐ Listening and singing in English

Others:

9. How do you think you learn English grammar best?
Choose a maximum of two options.

☐ Doing a lot of written exercises.

☐ Studying the theory.

Others:

10. How do you prefer to learn English grammar?
Choose a maximum of two options.

☐ Doing a lot of written exercises.

☐ Studying the theory.

Others:

11. In general, when you have to do exercises, how do you prefer doing them?

☐ On paper

☐ In the book

☐ On the computer

Others:

Thank you very much!

2.2.1. Results and interpretation of the survey

How often do you speak in English?
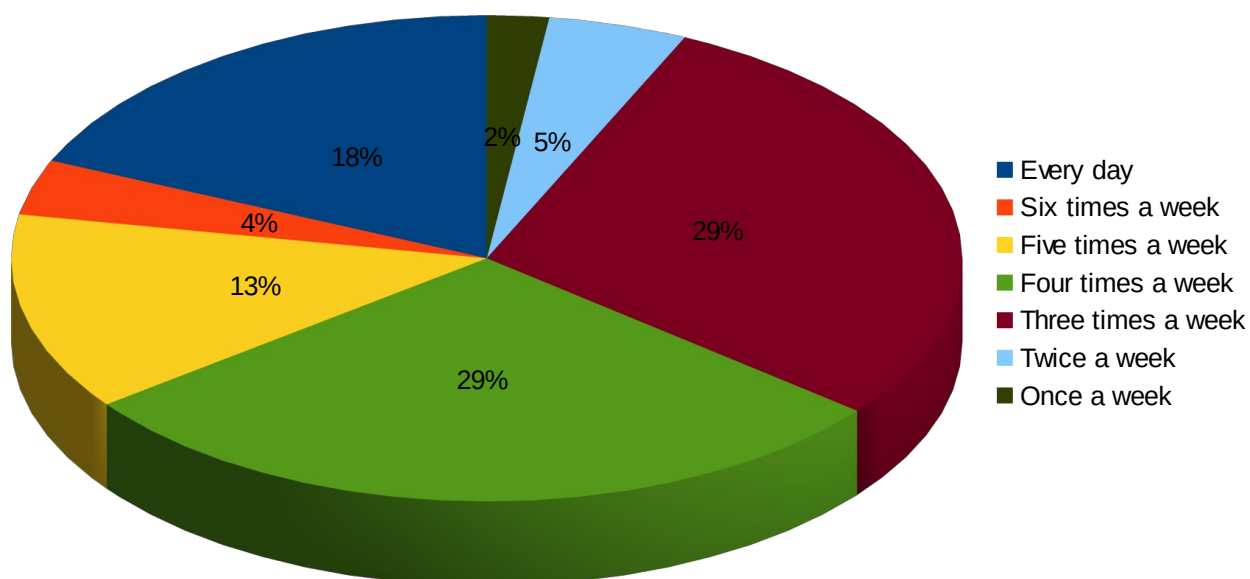
Answers from 190 students from state and public schools in Catalonia

As it can be seen, from the 190 people who answered the survey, 35 speak in English every day (18%), 7 six times a week (4%), 25 five times a week (13%), 55 four times a week (29%), another 55 three times a week (29%), 9 twice a week (5%) and finally, 4 once a week (2%).

The biggest groups are the ones who speak three and four times a week: the majority of people who speak three times a week have answered that they only speak English at school and those who do it four times a week say they speak at school and at an academy.

Another important fact is that if students speak in English from once a week to three times a week, this means that their exposure to English is quite low and as a consequence improving it is more difficult for them.

Do you watch films and TV series in original version or dubbed?
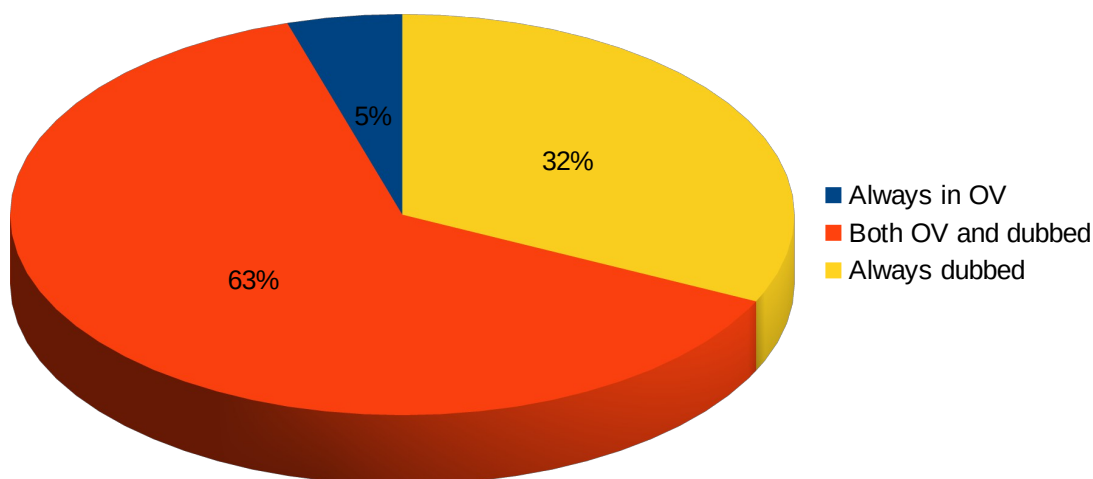
Answers from 190 students from state and public schools in Catalonia

As it can be seen, from the 190 people who answered the survey, 9 always watch films and TV series in OV (5%), 120 combine OV and dubbed (63%) and 61 always watch the dubbed version of them (32%).

Many studies show that it is the exposure to a language what makes people learn it and as it can be seen with this graphic, quite a lot of people do not watch films and TV series in original version and some combine OV with dubbed ones. What is very impressive (but completely understandable at the same time!) is the fact that only a 5% of all the surveyed students always watch them in OV. The beginning of a solution for this problem would be the help that the Government and TV companies could give Catalan people by not dubbing films and TV series, like many countries do, and this would make a huge difference on the exposure they would all receive.

Do you know that there are some institutions which organize cinema in OV?
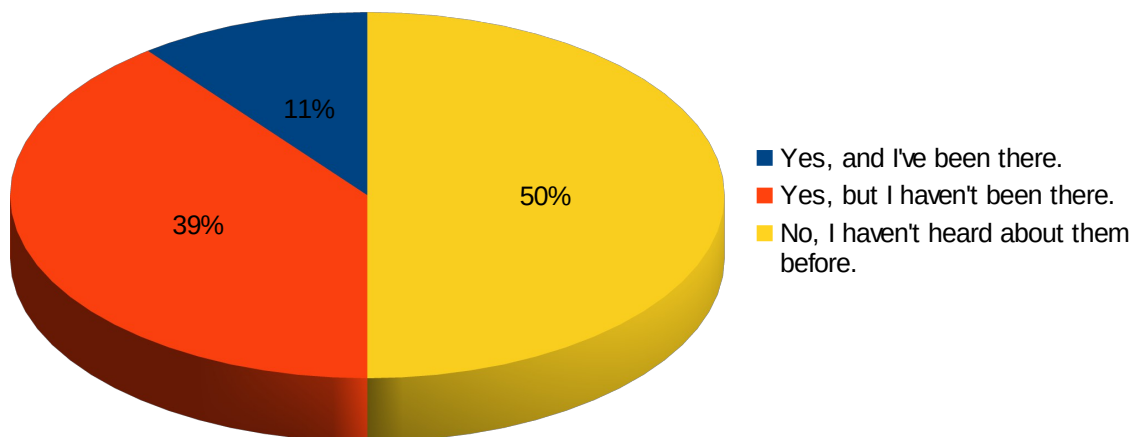
Answers from 190 students from state and public schools in Catalonia

From the 190 people who answered the survey, 20 know about institutions which organize cinema in OV and have been there (11%), 75 also know about them but they have not been there (39%) and 95 had never heard about them before (50%).

It is very significant the fact that half of the interviewed people do not even know that this kind of institutions exist. The solution to it would be to try to advertise them much more than now, especially in places where foreign languages students often go.

Do you communicate with people from abroad in English?
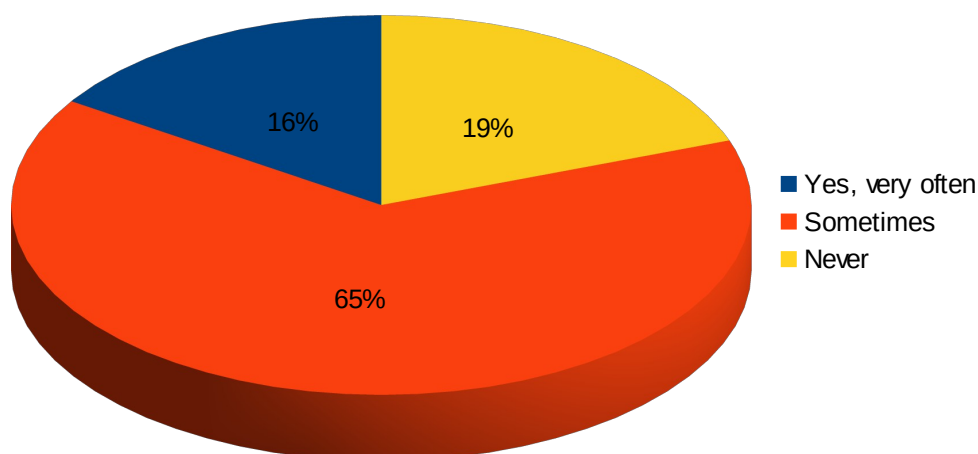
- Yes, very often
- Sometimes
- Never

16%

19%

65%

Answers from 190 students from state and public schools in Catalonia

From the 190 people who answered the survey, 30 communicate very often with people from abroad (16%), 132 do it sometimes (65%) and 37, never (19%).

People who communicate with foreigners in English is reasonably high but still not enough if it is taken into account that those who do it very often only represent a 16%. A possible solution would be the same that could be for people who do not know about institutions which organize cinema in OV: its advertisement. There are many platforms through which pen friends can be made, so there is no excuse!

2.2.2. Conclusions of the survey

From these four selected questions of the survey we can conclude that:

- Quite a lot of people speak in English quite often, but this is still not enough because there are still some people who only speak once or twice a week.

- Most people watch dubbed films or TV series or combine them with OV. As hearing a language is very important, original version should be strengthen by public institutions.

- A lot of the students do not know about institutions which organize OV cinema or if they know about them, they have never been there. A possible conclusion of this could be that these institutions do not advertise themselves enough and/or people are not interested in them.

- Quite a lot of people communicate with people from abroad in English. Even if with this survey we can not know why, a conclusion could be that nowadays it is very easy to get in contact with anyone in the world thanks to the Internet, for example.

2.3. Do Catalan speakers speak an English (L2) similar to English or one which is more similar to Catalan (L1)?

2.3.1. Methodology

While I was doing my research project, I realised it would also be interesting to know if the English Catalan students speak is similar to English native speakers' pronunciation or to Catalan, so I formulated a sub-hypothesis. In order to see if "Catalan people's English pronunciation has several Catalan phonetic traits due to the not enough exposure to English." was true, a total of 26 students of 2nd, 3rd and 4th of ESO and also from 1st of Batxillerat from Escola Pia de Granollers, Escola Pia de Caldes de Montbui, Institut El Cairat in Esparreguera, and Institut Guillem Català in Manresa, were recorded. All of them, without distinction in age, had to read the following text:

> *"Motivation is something that energizes, directs and sustains behaviour; it gets students moving, points them in a particular direction and keeps them going. We often see students' motivation reflected in personal investment and in cognitive, emotional and behavioural engagement in school activities."*

After having done this, a British English native speaker was recorded reading the same text in order to then be able to see which were the mistakes that Catalan speakers made when reading in English. From all the recordings, six of them were chosen, taking only into account the pronunciation and not the intonation and the stress.

1. The best one (vowel and consonant sounds).
2. The worst one (vowel and consonant sounds).
3. The best one (only vowel sounds).
4. The worst one (only vowel sounds).
5. The best one (only consonant sounds).
6. The worst one (only consonant sounds).

After having chosen them, the phonetic transcription of the text was done, in British English, to then be able to see in which sounds Catalan people have more difficulties when reading and/or speaking in English.

[məʊtɪˈveɪʃn ɪz ˈsʌmθɪŋ ħat ˈenədʒaɪzəz daɪˈrekts ənd səsˈteɪns bɪˈheɪvɪə/ ɪt ˈgets ˈstjʊdənts ˈmuːvɪŋ ˈpɔɪnts ħəm ɪn ə pɜˈtɪkjʊlə dɪˈrekʃən ənd kiːps ħəm ˈgəʊɪŋ/ wi ˈɒftən siː ˈstjuːdənts ˌməʊtɪˈveɪʃən rɪˈflektɪd ɪn ˈpɜːsənəl ɪnˈvestmənt ənd ɪn ˈkɒgnɪtɪv/ ɪˈməʊʃənəl ənd̚ bɪheɪvɪərə̄l enˈgeɪdʒmənt ɪn skuːl æ̂kˈtɪvɪtɪz]

These are the six selected recordings. The most significant mistakes, taking into account vowels and/or consonants depending on the text, have been marked; in red, the vowels and diphthongs and in green, the consonant sounds. The words which are underlined are words which have been replaced with another word by the student when reading.

The best pronunciation (vowels and consonants)

[m**əʊ**tɪˈveɪʃn ɪz ˈsʌmθɪŋ ħat ˈenədʒaɪzəz daɪˈrekts ənd səsˈteɪns bɪˈheɪ**vɪə**/ ɪt ˈgets ˈstjʊdənts ˈmuːvɪŋ ˈpɔɪnts ħəm ɪn ə pɜˈtɪkjʊlə d**aɪ**rekʃən ənd kiːps ħəm ˈgəʊɪŋ/ wi ˈɒftən s**i**ː ˈstjuːdənts ˌm**əʊ**tɪˈveɪʃən rɪˈflektɪd ɪn ˈp**ɜ**ːsənəl ɪnˈ**v**estmənt ənd ɪn ˈkɒgnɪtɪv/ **ɪ**ˈməʊʃənəl ənd̚ bɪheɪvɪərə̄l enˈg**eɪ**dʒmənt ɪn skuːl æ̂kˈtɪvɪtɪz]

The worst pronunciation (vowels and consonants)

[m**əʊ**tɪˈveɪʃn ɪz <u>ˈsʌmθɪŋ</u> ħat ˈenədʒ**aɪzəz** d**aɪ**ˈrekts ənd səsˈt**eɪ**ns bɪˈh**eɪ**vɪə/ ɪt ˈget**s** ˈstj**uː**dənts ˈmuː**v**ɪŋ ˈpɔɪnts ħəm ɪn **ə** pɜˈtɪkjʊlə d**aɪ**ˈre**kʃ**ən ənd kiːps ħəm ˈgə**ʊ**ɪŋ/ **wɨ** ˈɒftən siː ˈ**stj**uːdənts ˌm**əʊ**tɪˈveɪʃən r**ɪ**ˈflektɪd ɪn ˈp**ɜ**ːsənəl ɪnˈ**v**est**mən**t ənd <u>ɪn</u> ˈk**ɒ**gnɪt**ɪv / ɪ**ˈməʊʃənəl ənd̚ **bɪheɪvɪərə̄l enˈgeɪ**dʒmənt ɪn **s**kuːl æ̂kˈtɪ**v**ɪtɪz]

The best pronunciation (vowels)

[m**əʊ**tɪˈveɪʃn ɪz ˈsʌmθɪŋ ħat ˈenədʒaɪzəz d**aɪ**ˈrekts ənd s**ə**sˈteɪns bɪˈheɪvɪə/ ɪt ˈgets ˈstjʊdənts ˈmuːvɪŋ ˈpɔɪnts ħəm ɪn ə pɜˈtɪkjʊlə daɪˈrekʃən ənd kiːps ħəm ˈgəʊɪŋ/ wi ˈɒftən siː ˈstjʊdənts ˌm**əʊ**tɪˈveɪʃən rɪˈflektɪd ɪn ˈpɜːsənəl ɪnˈvestmənt ənd ɪn ˈkɒgnɪtɪv/ **ɪ**ˈməʊʃənəl ənd̚ bɪheɪvɪərə̄l enˈgeɪdʒmənt ɪn skuːl æ̂kˈtɪvɪtɪz]

The worst pronunciation (vowels)

[məʊtɪˈveɪʃn ɪz ˈsʌmθɪŋ ħat ˈenədʒaɪzəz daɪˈrekts ənd səsˈteɪns bɪˈheɪvɪə/ ɪt ˈgets ˈstjuːdənts ˈmuːvɪŋ ˈpɔɪnts ħəm ɪn ə pɜˈtɪkjʊlə daɪˈrekʃən ənd kiːps ħəm ˈgəʊɪŋ/ wi ˈɒftən siː ˈstjuːdənts ˌməʊtɪˈveɪʃən rɪˈflektɪd ɪn ˈpɜːsənəl ɪnˈvestmənt ənd ɪn ˈkɒɡnɪtɪv/ ɪˈməʊʃənəl ənd bɪheɪvɪərəl enˈɡeɪdʒmənt ɪn skuːl æ̂kˈtɪvɪtɪz]

The best pronunciation (consonants)

[məʊtɪˈveɪʃn ɪz ˈsʌmθɪŋ ħat ˈenədʒaɪzəz daɪˈrekts ənd səsˈteɪns bɪˈheɪvɪə/ ɪt ˈgets ˈstjuːdənts ˈmuːvɪŋ ˈpɔɪncd ħəm ɪn ə pɜˈtɪkjʊlə daɪˈrekʃən ənd kiːps ħəm ˈgəʊɪŋ/ wi ˈɒftən siː ˈstjuːdənts ˌməʊtɪˈveɪʃən rɪˈflektɪd ɪn ˈpɜːsənəl ɪnˈvestmənt ənd ɪn ˈkɒɡnɪtɪv/ ɪˈməʊʃənəl ənd bɪheɪvɪərəl enˈɡeɪdʒmənt ɪn skuːl æ̂kˈtɪvɪtɪz]

The worst pronunciation (consonants)

[məʊtɪˈveɪʃn ɪz ˈsʌmθɪŋ ħat ˈenədʒaɪzəz daɪˈrekts ənd səsˈteɪns bɪˈheɪvɪə/ ɪt ˈgets ˈstjuːdənts ˈmuːvɪŋ ˈpɔɪnts ħəm ɪn ə pɜˈtɪkjʊlə daɪˈrekʃən ənd kiːps ħəm ˈgəʊɪŋ/ wi ˈɒftən siː ˈstjuːdənts ˌməʊtɪˈveɪʃən rɪˈflektɪd ɪn ˈpɜːsənəl ɪnˈvestmənt ənd ɪn ˈkɒɡnɪtɪv/ ɪˈməʊʃənəl ənd bɪheɪvɪərəl enˈɡeɪdʒmənt ɪn skuːl æ̂kˈtɪvɪtɪz]

Then, after having chosen and analysed them, four different charts with all the phonetic sounds (vowel and consonant) in Catalan and in English have been elaborated to be able to compare them and see if the majority of sounds with which Catalan people have more difficulties when reading in English (L2) are those sounds which do not exist in their mother tongue (L1).

First of all, in the first two charts, we can see all the consonant sounds in Catalan and in English:

1. **In blue** → sounds which only exist in Catalan.
2. **In red** → sounds which only exist in English.
3. **On top of each other** → sounds which exist in English and in Catalan.

CATALAN CONSONANTS										
		Voicing	**MANNER OF ARTICULATION**							
			ORAL						**NASAL**	**GLIDE**
			Liquid		**Stop (Plosive)**	**Approxi-mant**	**Fricative**	**Affricate**		
			Rhotic	Lateral						
PLACE OF ARTICULATION	BILABIAL	Voiced			/b/	/β/			/m/	
		Voiceless			/p/					
	LABIO-DENTAL	Voiced					/v/		/ɱ/	
		Voiceless					/f/			
	DENTAL	Voiced			/d/	/ð/				
		Voiceless			/t/					
	ALVEOLAR	Voiced	/ɾ/ /r/	/l/			/z/	/dz/	/n/	
		Voiceless					/s/	/ts/		
	PALATAL	Voiced		/ʎ/			/ʒ/	/dʒ/	/ɲ/	
		Voiceless					/ʃ/	/tʃ/		
	VELAR	Voiced			/g /	/ɣ/			/ŋ /	
		Voiceless			/k/					
	GLOTTAL	Voiced								
		Voiceless								

			MANNER OF ARTICULATION							
ENGLISH CONSONANTS										
		Voicing	ORAL						NASAL	GLIDE
			Liquid		Stop (Plosive)	Approxi-mant	Fricative	Affricate		
			Rhotic	Lateral						
BILABIAL		Voiced			/b/				/m/	/w/
		Voiceless			/p/					
LABIO-DENTAL		Voiced					/v/			
		Voiceless					/f/			
DENTAL		Voiced					/ð/			
		Voiceless					/θ/			
ALVEOLAR		Voiced		/l/	/d/		/z/		/n/	
		Voiceless			/t/		/s/			
PALATAL		Voiced	/r/				/ʒ/	/dʒ/		/j/
		Voiceless					/ʃ/	/tʃ/		
VELAR		Voiced			/g /				/ŋ /	/w/
		Voiceless			/k/					
GLOTTAL		Voiced			/ʔ/		/h/			
		Voiceless								

PLACE OF ARTICULATION

CATALAN CONSONANTS (with examples)

Place		Voicing	Liquid (Rhotic)	Liquid (Lateral)	Stop (Plosive)	Approximant	Fricative	Affricate	NASAL	GLIDE
BILABIAL		Voiced			/b/ (**b**ol)	/β/ (ne**v**ar)			/m/ (**m**ón)	
		Voiceless			/p/ (**p**ol)					
LABIO-DENTAL		Voiced					/v/ (**v**ela)		/ɱ/ (i**n**forme)	
		Voiceless					/f/ (**f**um)			
DENTAL		Voiced			/d/ (**d**os)	/ð/ (ne**d**ar)				
		Voiceless			/t/ (**t**os)					
ALVEOLAR		Voiced	/ɾ/ (mi**r**a) /r/ (mi**rr**a)	/l/ (ho**l**a)			/z/ (**z**inc)	/dz/ (do**tz**e)	/n/ (**n**ap)	/l/ (ho**l**a)
		Voiceless					/s/ (**c**inc)	/ts/ (po**ts**er)		
PALATAL		Voiced		/ʎ/ (o**ll**a)			/ʒ/ (**j**oc)	/dʒ/ (me**tg**e)	/ɲ/ (**ny**ap)	/ʎ/ (o**ll**a)
		Voiceless					/ʃ/ (**x**ic)	/tʃ/ (me**tx**a)		
VELAR		Voiced			/g/ (**g**oma)	/ɣ/ (ne**g**ar)			/ŋ/ (ci**n**c)	
		Voiceless			/k/ (**c**oma)					
GLOTTAL		Voiced								
		Voiceless								

ENGLISH CONSONANTS (with examples)

Place		Voicing	Liquid (Rhotic)	Liquid (Lateral)	Stop (Plosive)	Approximant	Fricative	Affricate	NASAL	GLIDE
BILABIAL		Voiced			/b/ (**b**it)				/m/ (**m**an)	/w/ (**w**ay)
		Voiceless			/p/ (su**pp**er)					
LABIO-DENTAL		Voiced					/v/ (o**v**er)			
		Voiceless					/f/ (co**ff**ee)			
DENTAL		Voiced					/ð/ (bro**th**er)			
		Voiceless					/θ/ (**th**ink)			
ALVEOLAR		Voiced		/l/ (fa**ll**)	/d/ (**d**eep)		/z/ (**z**oo)		/n/ (**n**o)	
		Voiceless			/t/ (**t**wo)		/s/ (**s**oup)			
PALATAL		Voiced	/r/ (**r**un)				/ʒ/ (vi**s**ion)	/dʒ/ (**j**ump)		/j/ (**y**ou)
		Voiceless					/ʃ/ (ca**sh**)	/tʃ/ (**ch**air)		
VELAR		Voiced			/g/ (ti**g**er)				/ŋ/ (si**ng**er)	/w/ (**w**oman)
		Voiceless			/k/ (lu**ck**y)					
GLOTTAL		Voiced			/ʔ/ (bu**tt**on)		/h/ (**h**ome)			
		Voiceless								

The following table compiles the main differences between English and Catalan consonant sounds:

DIFFERENT CONSONANT SOUNDS			
		ENGLISH	**CATALAN**
[p]	→	Aspirated	Non-aspirated
[β]	→		x
[w]	→	Bilabial	Velar
[ɱ]	→		x
[t], [d]	→	Alveolar	Dental
[ð]	→	Fricative	Approximant
[θ]	→	x	
[ɾ]	→		x
[r]	→	Palatal	Alveolar
[dz]	→		x
[ts]	→		x
[ʎ]	→		x
[ɲ]	→		x
[j]	→	x	
[k]	→	Aspirated	Non-aspirated
[ɣ]	→		x
[ʔ]	→	x	
[h]	→	x	
[v]		x	It does not exist in central Catalan.

The two following pictures are the representation of the vowel sounds in Catalan and in English. In Catalan, the length of the vowel is not distinctive, contrary to English, and it is for this reason that sometimes the vowel is similar in quality but it is the length or quantity what makes them different in the two languages.
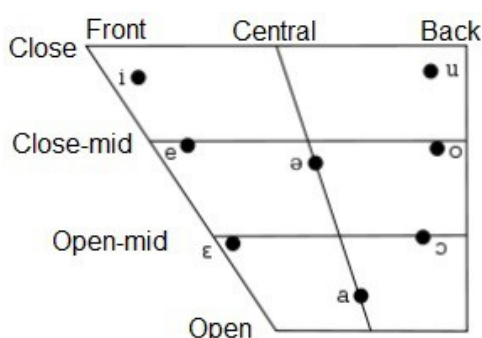

Illustration 1: Representation of the Catalan vowel sounds
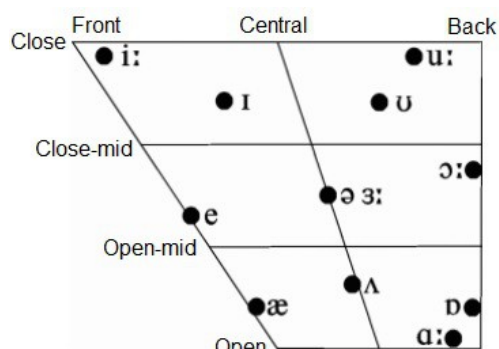
Illustration 2: Representation of the English vowel sounds

VOWEL SOUNDS IN ENGLISH

1 **[ɪ]** bit	**2** **[e]** pen	**3** **[æ]** cat	**4** **[ʌ]** cup	**5** **[ɒ]** not	**6** **[ʊ]** book
7 **[ɪː]** beat	**8** **[ɑː]** car	**9** **[ɜː]** bird	**10** **[ɔː]** bought	**11** **[ʊː]** fool	**12** **[ə]** students
13 **[eɪ]** way	**14** **[aɪ]** buy	**15** **[ɔɪ]** boy	**16** **[aʊ]** house	**17** **[əʊ]** so	**18** **[ɪə]** behaviour
19 **[eə]** fair	**20** **[ʊə]** poor				

Short		Neutral	
Long		Diphthongs	

VOWEL SOUNDS IN CATALAN

1 **[ə]** estona	**2** **[a]** mar	**3** **[ɛ]** mel	**4** **[e]** festa	**5** **[i]** iglú	**6** **[ɔ]** escola	**7** **[o]** amor
8 **[u]** fum	**9** **[aj]** aigua	**10** **[əj]** mainada	**11** **[ɛj]** remei	**12** **[ej]** rei	**13** **[ɔj]** noi	**14** **[uj]** avui
15 **[aw]** taula	**16** **[əw]** caurem	**17** **[ɛw]** peu	**18** **[ew]** teu	**19** **[iw]** niu	**20** **[ɔw]** nou	**21** **[ow]** pou
22 **[uw]** duu	**23** **[ja]** iaia	**24** **[jɛ]** veiem	**25** **[jə]** feia	**26** **[jɔ]** iode	**27** **[ju]** iogurt	**28** **[wa]** quatre
29 **[we]** següent	**30** **[wə]** aigua	**31** **[wi]** pingüí	**32** **[wɔ]** quota			

Vowels	
Descending diphthongs	
Ascending diphthongs	

2.3.2 Interpretation of the results

DIFFERENT ENGLISH CONSONANT SOUNDS				Do these students, in general, have problems with it?
		ENGLISH	**CATALAN**	
[p]	→	Aspirated	Non-aspirated	No
[w]	→	Bilabial	Velar	No
[t], [d]	→	Alveolar	Dental	Yes
[ð]	→	Fricative	Approximant	No, people learn it quickly.
[θ]	→	x		No, people learn it quickly.
[r]	→	Palatal	Alveolar	Yes
[j]	→	x		No
[k]	→	Aspirated	Non-aspirated	No
[ʔ]	→	x		It has not appeared in the text.
[h]	→	x		No
[v]		x	It does not exist in central Catalan.	Yes, because they all speak central Catalan and it does not exist in this dialect.
[s]				Yes. Even if it exists in the two languages, in English one must not pronounce a vowel before it, as many Catalan people do. e.g. **s**ku:l (correct) **æs**ku:l (incorrect)

When it comes to vowels, these students have shown that they have quite a lot of problems with diphthongs and with neutral sounds. As it has been said before, in Catalan, the length of the vowel is not distinctive, contrary to English, so this is one of the reasons for students not to pay attention to it when they are speaking, as they think it makes no difference.

2.3.3. Comparison of the results with the surveys and interpretation

	Number of languages	Frequency (days a week)	Number of places / situations	OV vs dubbed	Interaction with native speakers
The best one (V & C)	4	3	2	Dubbed	Sometimes
The worst one (V & C)	3	1	1	Dubbed	Sometimes
The best one (vowels)	3	4	2	Both	Very often
The worst one (vowels)	4	7	3	Dubbed	Never
The best one (consonants)	5	4	3	Both	Sometimes
The worst one (consonants)	5	4	2	Both	Sometimes

☐ The best ones
☐ The worst ones

In this part of the practice, the impact that the exposure to English makes to the two groups of students (those who did the best recordings and those who did the worst ones) are not so clear as in the other activity. Even though, these are the results:

(In green, the ones which help to confirm the sub-hyphothesis, in red the ones which are against and in blue, those which are neutral):

- When it comes to the number of languages they speak, the results are exactly the same in the two cases (3, 4 and 5 in the two groups).

- In reference to the frequency, the median of those who pronounced worse is higher than those who did it better.

- In regards to the number of situations or places they speak in English, the median of places where those who did the best recordings are higher than the other group.

- Taking into account whether they watch original version or dubbed films and TV series, the number of people who combine the two is higher in those who did a better recording than those who did it worse.

- Finally, those who pronounced better interact more with native speakers than those who did it worse.

2.3.4. Conclusions of the activity

From this part of the practice, we can conclude that "Catalan people's English pronunciation has several Catalan phonetic traits due to the not enough exposure to English." is true. As it can be seen, three of the five items confirm it, one is against and another one neutral, so from this we can confirm it.

Even though, the existent differences are not very big so, even if from these results we are able to confirm the sub-hypothesis, we should think that maybe there are other reasons which also make Catalan people speak an English with several Catalan (L1) traits. As it has been explained at the beginning of this research project, individual differences make a very big impact when learning something, in this case, English. The aptitude, self-esteem, risk-taking or motivation that a student has, for example, makes a huge difference when learning, so this could be another explanation to why some people are better than other at it.

On the other hand, in some cases this could be due to not paying enough attention to how native speakers pronounce and to the fact that most people are not aware that mispronouncing in English can lead, in many cases, to misinterpretations and/or incomprehension of what the Catalan people, in this case, are trying to express. As in Catalan there are not many situations like this, because even if foreigners pronounce words differently than the way natives do they are more or less well understood, Catalan people think this is the same at the other way round, which is not, and an effort is not done.

2.4. What do students want?

2.4.1. Compositions

In order to know what English learners like and dislike about their English lessons, some students from 1st, 3rd and 4th of ESO had to write a composition, whose topic was:

> "How do you like learning and how would you like to learn different English skills and why?".

Here there are some of the things students wrote, divided into what the like, what they do not like and what would they like to change. Numbers are not very significant (even so, they can be found in the annex) and what must be taken into account is that answers were very varied, which could make someone reach the conclusion that a varied learning approach is the most suitable way of teaching because it is much easier that everybody finds things they like and less which they do not like about the English lesson.

The things students like about their English lessons are:

StucturedBooks
ApplySkillsToRealSituations
DynamicLessons
Dictations   Combination   ExplanationsInCatalan
DynamicActivities
computer   PlentyOfExercices   OralExpositions
Grammar
Debates   LearningByHeart   SurfingOnTheInternet
StructuredExplanations
ReadMore   Games   Speaking   AllTheLessonInEnglish
TV   Exercises
Teacher   Films   Singing   ListeningToNativeSpeakers
Videos
Travelling   vocabulary
Writing   ListeningToMusic
Exchanges   FewerPeopleInAClass
LanguageAssistantInClass
Interioritat
Studying

The most repeated things students like:
- Films, TV and videos
- Dynamic lessons
- Listening to music and singing.

The things students do not like about their English lessons are:

DoingEasyThings
Dictations
Tests Homework
StudyingUselessThings
NotHavingALanguageAssistant
Book
TooManyStudentsInTheClass
WorkingQuickly
FewHoursOfEnglishLessons Interioritat
DigitalBook Songs

Word
It Out

The most repeated things students dislike:
- Homework
- Tests

The things students would like to do more often in their English lessons:

MoreExchanges Writing
Reading
Videos Speaking
Games
Listening Films
Singing TV
MoreExercices
LivingAbroad
DynamicLessons

The most repeated things students would like to change:
- More dynamic lessons.
- More speaking.
- More films, TV and videos.
- Listening to more music and singing.

2.4.2. Conclusion of the compositions

Basically, from this activity we can see that each student likes and dislikes different things and in some cases, the things some of them like are the same that others dislike or they would like to change. It is for this reason that we can conclude that each student is different and this should make us think about individual differences, an important factor explained at the beginning of this paper.

3. CONCLUSIONS

When I started this research project, I formulated the following hypothesis:

✔ *When one learns English, it is not enough to study the grammatical and spelling rules to master the language; a varied learning approach is the most efficient.*

Even if this is the main hypothesis, while I was doing the project I formulated a sub-hypothesis, which is:

✔ *Catalan people's English pronunciation has several Catalan phonetic traits due to the not enough exposure to English.*

After compiling and analysing information, I have reached the conclusion that a **varied learning approach** is very important to be able to achieve a successful English as a foreign language learning. From the first activity, the one with which it was investigated if a varied learning approach is the most efficient way to learn, it can be seen that those who did the varied activities got a better mark than those who did the same type of exercises piece of paper, so it is for this reason that we can conclude that a varied learning approach is better and the main hypothesis of this research can be confirmed.

On the other hand, from the **pronunciation** activity, it can be seen that, even if the results of this activity are more mixed, in general, those students who have a higher exposure to English pronounce better than those who have a lower one. It is for this reason that the sub-hypothesis can also be confirmed.

Even though these are the results, from these two activities and from the compositions we can conclude that, as some of the results are not very different, there may be many more things which have an influence on second language learning, in this case, of English. The one which has appeared most and that from my point of view is a very important one is the impact of learners **individual differences**. If it was not this, how could the good marks or pronunciation of those students who do not have a high exposure to English be explained, for example? Obviously, this is something which should be more researched into before reaching a final conclusion, but from these activities it can be seen that this is a

probable explanation for it. As each student is different from each other, all of them have different motivations, internal or external; aptitudes, self-esteem, intelligence or willingness to communicate, for example. It is also because of individual differences that a **varied learning approach** must be used when teaching, because if it is done like this, all students are able to find some activities which match with their learning styles but also they will sometimes have to try to adapt to other ones, something considered important by Honey and Mumford, as it has been explained. Thanks to this, the main hypothesis can be confirmed again.

The goals I initially set myself are:

➔ Discover how students can learn English in a better way.

➔ See how teaching and learning methods have changed during the years.

➔ See if a varied learning approach is better than one which uses a single mode.

➔ Know if Catalan students have a good English (L2) pronunciation.

➔ See how teachers and students can adapt to each other taking into account that they all have their own way of learning and teaching.

➔ Improve my English.

From all the information and the practical work of this research I can say I have been able to reach all these goals.

I personally feel satisfied with the result of this research project, which has helped me to develop the capacity of resolving problems when necessary. I have also enjoyed going to different places (universities, schools...) in order to be able to get more information from teachers and students and I am sure that all I have learnt will help me in my future, personally and academically/professionally.

4. FURTHER RESEARCH

While I was doing this research project, different ideas of interesting related topics which I would like to research into came to my mind. Some of them are:

- ➢ Is motivation the main individual difference which helps to achieve a successful learning?
- ➢ How can a good relationship between a student and their teacher benefit learning?
- ➢ How can a teacher motivate a non-motivated student?
- ➢ How does the classroom environment affect learning?
- ➢ How can a teacher take into account individual differences without being unfair?

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