

Topic 20. The FL area in the Curriculum. Criteria to be reflected in the School Educational Project and the School Curricular Project.

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1. Introduction

In the modern legal framework regarding the teaching of a foreign language (FLT) that language teachers must put into practice through the **learning situations**, the child is expected to become an active agent in charge of solving daily-life situations, using the FL as an instrument of communication. Obviously, the **role of the teacher as designer of learning situations**, demands new skills related to technologies and new methodologies to deal in more complex teaching contexts, such as the “classroom of the future”, promoted by the Regional Educational Administrations.

The new trends in foreign language teaching (FLT) are in 2022 identified as an **advanced view of communicative competence**, in which the **integration and use of technologies and purposeful use** of the language are at the heart of good teaching practice. In accordance, the new **Organic Law 3/2020, December 29th**, which modifies Organic Law 2/2006, May 3rd establishes in its article 4.4 concerning the Basic Education, a twofold educational goal grounded on both **training and socialization through competency knowledge**. In this sense, it is a fact that modern European societies show an increasing concern for population to have access to an effective acquisition of foreign language (FL), enabling people to satisfy their communicative needs. In this sense, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (**CEFRL, 2001 and its updated version, 2020**) intends to overcome the barriers of languages, providing a valuable framework through methodological guidelines and a common basis for the description of evaluation indicators. Besides, our State legislation, **LOMLOE**, for the improvement of quality in Education and **RD. 157/22, 1st March**, establishing the curriculum for primary education; are also enclosed in the Curriculum Act (**regional curriculum**) which considers the knowledge of a FL and the development of basic communicative competence as one of the main objectives to be achieved along this stage. The term communicative competence refers to enabling the learners to use the language as an instrument of communication through oral and written means, which implies using it to express and exchange meanings with the aim of applying different strategies and skills.

As for the second section in this paper, we find that one of the documents the title refers to, the **Curricular Project (CP)** was **abrogated** with the implementation of **LOE 2/2006**; whilst the **Educational Project (EP)** is still in force, and has been enriched along years with indispensable school plans, like the **Coexistence Plan (CP)** or the **Tutorial Action Plan (TAP)**. We shall take this apparent contradiction as an opportunity to describe the original document in the context of LOGSE (Organic Law for the General Organisation of the Spanish Educational System) in 1990, to finally note the **evolution** towards **competency learning** and new school documents like the **Annual General Programming (AGP)**, that eventually substituted the CP.

Given this, an updated but accurate approach to this topic entails considering some “historical aspects” of the legal framework as for FL teaching, without neglecting the current curricular organization, which also takes the teaching of English as a FL to the field of competence-based learning.

2. The FL area in the curriculum

At state level, **RD 157/22, 1st March**, which establishes the minimum teaching requirements for Primary Education; and **RD. 984/2021, 16th November**, which regulates the evaluation and promotion in primary, set establish the curricular and organizational development of LOMLOE. In our Autonomous Community, (**regional curriculum**) notes in its introduction to the curriculum for English as a FL, that the rapid evolution of current societies and their multiple interconnections demand the development of those competences that can help individuals practise independent, active and committed citizenship in an increasingly global, intercultural and plurilingual reality.

Understanding **the role of FL in primary education** requires an in-depth analysis of the different elements integrating it. In curricular terms, the **organization** established by (**regional decree**) places the **Outcoming Profile (OP)** for Primary Education at the heart of system, establishing that is the tool that gathers the principles and goals of the educational system. It identifies and defines, in connection with the challenges of the 21st century, the **key competences** that students are expected to achieve. The OP is the cornerstone of the **curriculum**; it must inspire the curricular decisions, methodological orientations and strategies. It implies a structural and functional vision of the key competences which are indispensable for personal development, solve problems, create opportunities to improve and participation in society. In practical terms, within the **OP**, the **Competences** are further specified through **Operative Descriptors (OD)**, which are the elements that describe the practical learning outcomes for students as a result of the contribution of all areas, English amongst them.

The Foreign Language Area (FLA) contributes to the acquisition of the **Key Competences** that make up the **Students' Outcoming Profile** at the end of basic education and, in a direct way, it contributes to the attainment of Plurilingual Competence, which implies at this stage the use of at least one foreign language for learning and communication. It integrates not only the communicative dimension, linked to Linguistic Communication Competence, but also the historical and intercultural that get students to know, understand and respect the cultural and linguistic diversity in their surroundings. In consonance with this approach, **the FL area in Primary education has as its main aim the acquisition of basic communicative competence, as well as the development and enrichment of the students' intercultural awareness.**

These **Specific Competences** of the FL come down to:

- 1 To **understand** the general and specific and predictable information in brief and simple texts, clearly expressed in standard language, **using** diverse **strategies**...
2. To **produce** simple texts in a comprehensible and structured manner...
3. To **interact** with other people using daily expressions, resorting to cooperation strategies and using analogic and digital resources, in respectful communicative interchanges.
4. To **mediate** in **predictable situations**...
5. To recognise and use the **personal linguistic repertoires** between different languages...
6. To **appreciate and respect linguistic, cultural and artistic diversity from the FL**...

The axis of the Curriculum in the FL is directly connected to the two dimensions of plurilingualism: the communicative and intercultural dimensions. The **specific competences of the area**, related to the descriptors of the Key Competences of the Outcoming Profile and the

challenges of the XXI century, permit students communicate efficiently in the FL, in correspondence with their developmental stage and interests, and widen their individual linguistic repertoire, taking advantage of the own experiences to improve communication. This includes putting into motion activities and communicative strategies of comprehension, production, interaction and mediation, understood at this stage as the activity oriented to facilitate mutual comprehension and to process and transmit basic and simple information. Likewise, the language functioning reflection is initiated, starting to establish relation with the students' linguistic repertoires. The specific competences of the area also include the appreciation of linguistic, cultural and artistic diversity for students to learn to deal with intercultural communicative situations.

The **evaluation criteria (EC) of the area** check the students' level of acquisition of the **specific competences**, thus these elements are linked. The competency formulation refers to a process and capability that students must acquire, together with the context or mode of application and the use of this process or capability. The levelling of the EC is based on the CEFR, but adequate to the students' developmental stage in Primary education.

Thus, according to **RD 157/22, 1st March**, at the end of Primary Education and expressed **in terms of relation with the specific competences**, the **evaluation criteria** refer to:

1.1 To **recognise** and interpret global sense, as well as specific words and sentences in brief and simple oral, written and multimodal texts about frequent and daily life topics of personal relevance for students and close to their experience...

1.2 To **select, organise and apply** in a guided way adequate **strategies** and knowledge in daily life and relevant communicative situations to catch global sense and process explicit information in diverse texts.

2.1 To **orally express** brief and simple texts, previously rehearsed, about daily life topics of personal relevance for students...

2.2 To organise and **write** brief and simple texts...

2.3 To select, organise and apply in a guided manner, **strategies** to prepare and produce adequate texts to the communicative intentions...

3.1 To plan and **participate** in brief and simple interactive situations...

3.2 To select, organise and use in a guided way and in daily situations, basic **strategies** to greet, say goodbye and introduce themselves; and ask and answer simple questions, express messages, and initiate and finish communication.

4.1 To infer and explain texts, concepts and brief and simple communications...

4.2 To select and apply, in a guided way, basic strategies which help bridge and facilitate comprehension and production of information and communication...

5.1 To compare and contrast similarities and differences between different languages...

5.2 To use and differentiate in a progressively autonomous way knowledge and strategies to improve their capacity to communicate...

5.3 To register and use, in a guided way, learning progress in the European Language Portfolio (ELP) or in a learning diary.

6.1 To act with respect in intercultural situations, building bonds amongst languages and cultures...

6.2 To accept and respect linguistic, cultural and artistic diversity from FL speaking countries...

6.3 To understand and appreciate linguistic, cultural and artistic diversity.

The **Basic Knowledge** in the **FL area** is divided into **three blocks**: namely **communication, plurilingual and intercultural**. It is expected that students put into motion the basic knowledge in varied communicative situations: personal, social, educative, from daily life and relevant texts, including aspects related to the Sustainable Development Objectives (SDO) and the challenges of the 21st century. In consonance with the action-based approach in the CEFRL, which contributes to the design of eclectic methodologies, the organization of the formerly known as contents implies certain level of mastery and fluency in the following aspects:

Basic Knowledge

A. Communication.

A.1 Self-confidence. Error as an instrument to improve.

A.2 Basic strategies for the **comprehension and production** of brief, simple and contextualised oral, written and multimodal texts.

A.3 Knowledge, skills and attitudes to initiate in activities of mediation in basic daily life situations.

A.4 Basic communicative **functions** adequate to the environment and the context: greet, say goodbye, introduce themselves or others; describe and compare people...

A.5 Contextual models and basic discursive genres in comprehension, production and co-production of brief and simple oral, written and multimodal texts...

A.6 Basic linguistic units of common use and meanings associated to those structures such as expression of entity and its properties, quantity, order...

A.7 Basic **lexis** of interest for students related to personal identification, close interpersonal relations, close places and environments, spare time...

A.8 Stress, rhythm and basic intonation patterns... (**basic prosodic features**)

A.9 Basic orthographic conventions and meanings associated to the formats and graphic elements.

A.10 Basic syntactic structures.

A.11 Basic conventions and conversational strategies...

A.12 Learning resources and strategies for guided search of information in analogic and digital media.

A.13 Intellectual property of the sources and contents consulted and used.

A.14 Basic analogic and digital tools of common use for the oral, written and multimodal comprehension and production and co-production; digital platforms of interaction and educative collaboration (virtual classroom, videoconference, collaborative digital tools...) for learning, communicating and development of projects with speakers and students of the FL.

B Plurilingualism.

B.1 Strategies and techniques for the detection of communicative lacks to efficiently respond to a specific need...

B.2 Basic strategies of common use to identify, retain, retrieve and use linguistic units (lexis, morphosyntax, sound patterns, etc)...

B.3 Strategies and tools for analogic and digital, individual and cooperative self and peer evaluation.

B.4 Basic lexis and expressions of common use to understand statements about communication...

B.5 Basic comparison between languages from elements of the FL and other languages.

C Interculturality.

C.1 The FL as a means of communication and relation with people from other countries...

C.2 Interest and positive valuation towards establishing contact and communicating...

C.3 Basic cultural patterns of frequent use in the FL.

C.4 Basic sociocultural and sociolinguistic aspects.

C.5 Strategies to understand and appreciate linguistic, cultural and artistic diversity...

C.6 Strategies for the detection of discriminatory use of verbal and non-verbal language.

Finally, the presence of the FL in the curriculum is also present in the **methodological orientations** in a modern approach to FLT:

- The tasks and activities can contain a high amount of oral tasks.
- For the design of tasks, the interests of students are taken as references, starting from their previous knowledge.
- Design of integrated learning activities that permit students advance in more than one competence at the same time.
- Promotion of the European Language Portfolio (ELP), as it provides a format which permits formal registration and recognition of FL learning, as well as varied intercultural experiences.
- The teaching action shall promote application of learning in different contexts.
- Students must have opportunities to express their ideas in the FL, as well as interact in activities.
- Use of updated and attractive graphic resources.
- Students must have opportunities to interact and be able to participate in tasks such as dramatizations, group presentations, face-to-face or online conversations...
- The FL class turns into a support for the presentation of didactic resources, as well as those materials elaborated by students, so as to reinforce and acquire basic knowledge.

Once having seen the presence of the FL area in the curriculum, we must be aware that effective teaching organization entails the elaboration of a series of school documents.

3. Criteria to be reflected in the Educational Project and the School Curricular Project

The **School Curricular Project (CP)** in the topic's title was a LOGSE school document which was abrogated with the establishment of **LOE**. The CP defined the educative offer and the methodological style of the school. The **main elements** in this document which was approved by the **School Council** were:

Analysis of the socio-cultural variables and psychological characteristics of children, selection of methodologies, Attention to Diversity Plan and Curricular Adaptations, Inner Discipline Plan (RRI by its Spanish Acronym), amongst others. Moreover, one important aspect to be considered is that the type of **FL programming** included in the CP responded to the curricular organisation as for contents, which distinguished amongst **concept, procedures and attitudes**. From a modern competency perspective of FLT, this basic distinction may seem useless; and in fact, it may be. However, in the framework of the **DCB** (Basis Curricular Design, 1991), designed by the Ministry of Education, **the changes were substantial at the time**, since they affected **methodologies and evaluation**.

The recognition of **procedures** and **attitudes** as important knowledge to be evaluated implied observing the teaching of FL and the teaching in general from a different perspective, since now the stress was not only on the traditional contents, but also in new volitional fields like the attitudes of children towards learning and the procedures to approach situations. Somehow, this **pre-competency framework** has led to the **Annual General Programming (AGP)**, the document which compiles the

rest of school plans, the **curricular proposal or the planning of extra-curricular activities**. Amongst those plans, it is worth highlighting the **Equality Plan** to foster equal rights and opportunities for boys and girls, far beyond traditional stereotypes.

The **recent organization of school documents** stresses a **schools' autonomy** to favour open models of programming, teamwork, the elaboration of common projects and didactic resources. Nonetheless, **the regional curriculum** establishes the components that give shape to the **Annual General Programming (AGP)** and the **Educative Project (EP)**, letting clear that the AGP comprises the EP as one of its constituent elements. For a better comprehension of the **criteria to be reflected** in both documents and due to its importance, we shall distinguish between ordinary components and **school plans**.

From general to specific, the **AGP** gathers **all the aspects related to the school's organization and functioning, including projects, the curriculum, norms, and all school plans, which must be approved by the School Council**. Summing up, the AGP must consider **the measures to develop that stem from the previous year school memory, the measures to be implemented during the school year that stem from the Head Master project, the document that gathers the school's organization norms, general timetable and pedagogic criteria for their elaboration, school meetings calendar for coordination and organization; the planning of extracurricular and complementary activities, and all the school plans not included in the Educational Project**.

In broad terms, the **EP** constitutes the **identity signs** of the school; and expresses the **type of education the school intends to carry out**. Similarly, the EP contemplates the specific learning conditions, thus considering **additional aspects to the curricular ones**, defining the particular objectives the school intends to achieve, considering the specific reality.

The **Educational Project (EP)** comprises the characteristics and relations with the school's immediate environment, considering the students' educative, social, economic and cultural background.

More specifically, the **EP must consider**:

- The values, goals and priorities of action.
- The curricular specification through the **curricular proposal**.
- The educative offer and the complementary services.
- The treatment of transversal contents in the different areas.
- Academic measures to foster equality between men and women.
- School's Digital strategy.
- Improvement plan with the strategies to improve educative results and procedures of coordination and relation with families and students' environment.
- Plans: **Coexistence, Attention to Diversity, School's Linguistic Plan (former bilingual program), the Reading Plan and the Tutorial Action Plan**.

Due to their importance, we shall now focus on some of the most relevant **school plans**:

The Coexistence Plan shall compile the objectives, activities, procedures and measures to ensure a positive coexistence climate at schools. This also entails the necessary school norms and protocols to be implemented to redirect negative behaviour. Being the language a means of social relations, the **FL area** implies the management of social contexts in which learners will be addressed

towards positive models and application of social abilities to solve daily situations. Last but not least, this plan must necessarily consider the improvement of coexistence, including the action protocols towards possible bullying situations.

As for the contribution to the **Tutorial Action Plan (TAP)**, in addition to the orientations and prescriptions in our legal framework, we must consider the amount of benefits that stem from a fluid and **positive relations** with our learners' **families**, an **optimal learning environment** in our classroom and an appropriate and **effective coordination** with the rest of the **teachers**. Therefore, these are the three main elements constituting our contribution to the TAP:

- **Teachers.** Throughout coordination in the same and different levels.
- **Families.** Guiding their participation in school life and ensuring information regarding their children development and advances.
- **Students.** Creating a positive learning environment is of utmost importance, especially in an area where we encourage learners to assume linguistic risks and error as natural part of the FL learning process.

The **Attention to Diversity Plan (ADP)**, compiles the educational actions to meet the needs of students with **Specific needs of Educational Support (SNES)**, under the scope of the main ordinances concerning the general framework to attend diversity. The **specific measures** and actions to be taken to cater for the students' diversity are regulated by (**regional ordinance**) which dictates the **instructions for the elaboration of the Personalised Attention Plans (PAP)**. The PAP shall consider the professionals involved in the actions, the specification of SNES, the specific measures to be applied, coordination with families and evaluation of results.

The **Digital Plan** must be designed by schools to give response to the digital shift that our society is going through. Its main goals are focused on the transformation of schools into digitally competent spaces which promote the improvement of digital competence of the whole school community. It should contain an introduction explaining the starting point and reality description, catalyst elements for change and advance and action plan. In accordance, the **ICT proposals for the EP** must gather the organisational measures to maximise the school's technical resources and their integration in current teaching practice. This obviously includes timetable for the use of the digital classroom; the measures to promote the inclusion of the smart boards as indispensable tools to work with interactive materials; the measures to facilitate coordination amongst teachers to promote teacher-produced materials adapted to the learners' needs, and the like.

The **Linguistic Plan**, has as its main goal the support and necessary actions to put into motion a global school action towards the learning of FLs in the specific reality of the school. At this point, special attention deserves the "internationalisation strategy" on the part of the educative administrations to include the participation in European programs like eTwinning or Erasmus+ as part of the digital strategies to design real-life attractive learning scenarios.

The **Equality Plan** deserves special attention due to its relevance. Following the constitutional and democratic transversal contents and values clearly expressed in the curriculum, the equality plan intends to overcome the barriers of stereotypes and create an atmosphere of real and effective equality between boys and girls at school.

The **Reading Plan** is especially important for the development of the Key Competences, and has as main goal the improvement of children's comprehension and management of information, as well as arousing and maintaining a taste for reading.

A prime example of contribution of the FL area to both the Equality and Reading plans may be the use of stories, through which children get involved in different realities. Indeed, the world of storytelling, reading and in general the magic in the **fictional space** of **literature** provides English

teachers with invaluable resources to develop attractive communicative situations in the FL class, being these transversal elements a “hidden” integral part of the **contents**.

4. **Conclusion**

The **regional educative framework** establishes the main principles, focusing on the development of the **students’ capacities and personality**, the education in respect for basic rights, tolerance and responsibility, the acquisition of intellectual habits and **the development of autonomous learning capacities and attitudes**.

There are obvious reasons justifying the presence of a FL within the curriculum of primary education. These reasons do not refer to social demands exclusively. On the other hand, there are pedagogical reasons for the presence of FL in the curriculum, since it can clearly contribute to the general aims of education and to the **Key Competences** and, hence, to the **Stage General Objectives**.

Apart from these weighty features of the FL, in this topic we have analysed the presence of the FL area in the curriculum through the different elements integrating it, and the decisive contribution of our area to the development of the key competences.

Finally, we have seen how the new educational framework sets the basis for schools to adapt the prescriptive **programming elements** to their realities.

5. **Bibliography**

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