# Second Language Teaching and Learning: Evolution and Adaptation to the Different Educational Contexts of Present-Day Society

## [es] Enseñanza-aprendizaje de segundas lenguas: evolución y adaptación a diferentes contextos educativos de la sociedad actual

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Communication is without any doubt one of the traits that best defines the human species since the beginning of time (Tomasello, 2008). Without communication, the development and evolution of society to the current paradigms would not have been possible (Martín-Serrano, 2007; Vidales 2015). Even though the human capacity to use more than one language has always existed, two events have been decisive in shaping the processes to teach and learn second languages: on the one hand, the consolidation and institutionalisation of Applied Linguistics as an independent science in the 20th century (Schmitt & Rodgers, 2020) and, on the other, the establishment of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) at the beginning of the 21st century. Although the CEFR was initially conceived and developed from a Eurocentric perspective (Fulcher, 2004), its influence has expanded beyond the borders of the European continent.

Subsequently, the methodologies for teaching second languages underwent significant change, adopting communicative approaches geared at understanding and making oneself understood by means of four basic skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking) (Martín Sánchez, 2009; Muñoz, 2010). In consequence, students' learning styles were also modified, as they sought to develop the effective use of the language, in which the ultimate objective is not to acquire a comfortable interlingua that allows for an acceptable level of communication, but rather true mastery (Ellis, 2010). Moreover, the reasons for learning a second language have become more diversified and specialised, depending on personal and social needs (Sylvén, 2017). Society often imposes requirements for survival that go beyond one's individual interests. One of these is learning English as a second language before choosing some other

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language which may be considered more attractive at an individual level (Mahu, 2012). Last but not least, the generalised use of new technologies (Infante-Moro, Infante-Moro & Garllardo-Pérez, 2019) inevitably requires having certain knowledge of a language that is not one's mother tongue.

In consequence, the models for teaching and learning foreign languages have transformed formal, non-formal and informal education, exerting their influence in a wide variety of environments, such as schools, high schools, universities, academies, social networks, cinema, television and gatherings of friends, amongst others (Cook, 2008; Tudor, 2013). Although there have been noteworthy changes in respect to teacher training, it is still not fully adapted to the current situation (Alfaro & Bartolomé, 2017). Every day bilingual education is encroaching on non-bilingual education (García, 2009; Mears, De Graaff & Coyle, 2020), even though the formal education sector has not yet succeeded in complying with the quality standards it should be expected to meet (Krashen, 1997; Jiménez-Martínez & Mateo, 2011).

In the context described above, the articles that comprise this edition of the Journal of Learning Styles describe six different matters connected to the process of **teaching-learning second languages** and within said process, with **aspects that define and describe its evolution and adaptation to different educational questions of present-day society**: CLIL methodology, motivating students to learn English in rural environments, teaching English for to learners with hearing impairment, the importance of learning English to have better employment and other options in the future, Spanish as a foreign language and its importance in certain contexts, and lastly, the evolution of bilingual teaching at pre-university school levels within the Spanish educational context.

The first matter mentioned is related to the use and correct application of the CLIL methodology (Content and Language Integrated Learning) in order to attain a good level of bilingualism. Although the teaching-learning of languages other than the mother tongue was considered increasingly important throughout history (Martín Sánchez, 2009), it was after the two World Wars when the major world powers determined that learning more than one language should be a priority for their citizens. Given the historical, economic and political context at that time, knowing English became a MUST, giving rise to processes to regularise and standardise the learning of second languages. In the European context, the establishment of the CEFR was used as a guideline for member states to develop educational policies leading to a desired and necessary plurilingualism (Council of Europe, 2001 and 2018). Countries like Spain established the objective that school children should learn, in addition to their mother tongue, the language of Shakespeare. Bilingual programmes based on the CLIL methodology were developed and applied, whereby subjects not directly connected to learning the English language use it to explain and work on the subject matter (Dalton-Puffer, 2011). In schools that have adopted this methodology, students are usually exposed to the English language most of the school day in order to achieve the objective of bilingualism. Obviously, the more input there is, the greater the output (Al-Zoubi, 2018).

In respect to the second matter, in other words what children in rural settings feel about learning English, it should be noted that compliance with the Sustainable Development Goals and the Millennium Development Goals requires providing education to all children everywhere. The objective is not only to be equitable and impartial in respect to gender, race or economic and social condition, but also that education be the same for everyone, with the same opportunities irrespective of the place of residence (Luzón & Sevilla, 2015). This means that teaching English in both urban and rural settings must comply with the same quality standards. Part of a teacher's task is to motivate students and make them understand, together with the rest of the educational community, that nowadays English is a common good that is not only useful to have better employment perspectives in the future, but also to enjoy a better life based on knowledge. This is applicable to all students at the primary, secondary and university

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levels (Shaaban & Ghaith, 2000). In addition to these external motivations (extrinsic motivation), students may also have their own special interests for learning English (intrinsic motivation) (Reiss, 2012).

This second matter leads to the third one, namely teaching English to hearing impaired students. As mentioned above, education must be inclusive, which implies the requirement to adapt to students' needs (Richards & Armstrong, 2015). A student with a disability requires more attention, material adapted to his/her needs and if necessary, specialised teachers. In the specific case of students with hearing impairments, depending on the degree of the impairment, there is always the possibility of teaching them English through sign language (Herrera, 2005). What is absolutely clear is that unless there exist specific circumstances which impede learning, education for everyone is always possible, irrespective of the subject matter.

The fourth matter mentioned above links learning English to better future life options. In our present-day globalised world, English has become the perfect medium for the dissemination of ideas and knowledge to all corners of the planet, and it is present in all imaginable sectors and settings. Having become the *lingua franca* of the 21$^{st}$ century (Fernández, 2009), English has crossed all borders. This implies that a command of the English language opens the door onto a much wider range of employment, commercial, educational and leisure possibilities, amongst many others (Jenkins, 2007).

In respect to the fifth matter listed, namely internationalisation of a language, the presence, use and importance of Spanish has placed it nearly on a par with that of English, and is thus closely linked to the better life options mentioned above. The interest in and demand for learning Spanish is growing exponentially (Sankhé, 2014; Villa & Del Valle, 2015), which entails the need to have classes and well trained teachers in order to ensure that students learn the language correctly (Dolz & Idiazabal, 2013).

Finally, the last article of this edition explicitly analyses the evolution of bilingual education at pre-university educational levels in a specific region of Spain (Castilla-La Mancha). The state of the matter described, which may entail certain differences with other parts of the country, stems from the implementation of bilingual programmes (mainly for the combination English-Spanish) in all of Spain in the context of formal education, entailing the requirement to comply with current legislation regarding education. At present, the advance of bilingualism seems unstoppable, despite existing controversy regarding its quality and effectiveness (Jiménez-Martínez & Mateo, 2011).

It is clear that all the different matters described are interconnected. Second language teaching and learning is currently a need which, irrespective of the language that exercises the role of intercultural mediator at the international level, will continue to evolve *in crescendo* in view of the positive results obtained. Methodologies will change; probably linguistic codes as well, but the need to communicate effectively with other receivers or other persons will always exist.

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