

University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice

Pedagogical Faculty

English Department

DIPLOMA THESIS



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**Teaching English in Spain within the SOCRATES/
COMENIUS- Language assistantships programme**

Výuka angličtiny ve Španělsku v rámci programu SOCRATES/
COMENIUS- Asistent při výuce jazyka

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České Budějovice 2007

Statement of Honesty

I declare that the following diploma thesis is my own work for which I used only the sources and literature mentioned. I have no objections to the diploma thesis being borrowed and used for study purposes.

České Budějovice, March 25, 2007

Dagmara Konopková

Signature

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Anotace

<i>Název práce:</i>	Výuka angličtiny ve Španělsku v rámci programu SOCRATES/ COMENIUS- Asistent při výuce jazyka.
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Abstrakt: Tato diplomová práce se zabývá mým pobytem na škole C.P.I. Tino Grandio, Guntín, Španělsko, kde jsem ve školním roce 2006/2007 měla možnost působit jako asistent při výuce angličtiny v rámci programu SOCRATES/COMENIUS. V teoretické části představuji program SOCRATES a zároveň se zabývám španělským systémem školství. Dále se pak v této části soustřeďuji na Společný Evropský Referenční Rámec a Evropské Jazykové Portfolio a jejich výskyt ve španělském a českém kurikulu. Praktická část této diplomové práce je zaměřena na hostitelskou instituci C.P.I. Tino Grandio, konkrétně např. na její technické vybavení, na učebnice, metody a cíle výuky angličtiny. V závěru praktické části jsou představeny některé aktivity uskutečněné v hodinách angličtiny, kde jsem působila jako asistent. Též se zde zaměřuji na to, jaký přínos měl můj pobyt na hostitelské škole a na to, co přinesla tato zkušenost mně. Dále zde poukazuji na problémy, s nimiž jsem se setkala. V úplném závěru hodnotím celý pobyt na C.P.I. Tino Grandio.

Klíčová slova: SOCRATES/COMENIUS, španělský systém školství, Společný Evropský Referenční Rámec, Evropské Jazykové Portfolio, hostitelská instituce C.P.I. Tino Grandio, aktivity, přínos hostitelské školy, hodnocení.

Abstract

Title: **Teaching English in Spain within the SOCRATES/
COMENIUS- Language assistantships programme**

Author: Dagmara Konopková

Abstract: This diploma thesis deals with my stay at C.P.I. Tino Grandío, Guntín, Spain where I participate in classes of English as the SOCRATES/COMENIUS language assistant in the school year 2006/2007. The Socrates programme as well as the Spanish system of education is presented in the theoretical section of this diploma work. Another part of this section is constituted by the presentation of the Common European Framework of Reference and the European Language Portfolio and their incorporation into the Spanish and Czech curricula. The practical section focuses on the presentation of my host institution C.P.I. Tino Grandío, in particular on its technical facilities, the course books employed in classes or on the aims of teaching English in general. The following part of the practical section contains examples of activities employed in classes of English where I participated as assistant. In this part, I also mention what the assistantship brought to me, what impact did it have on my host school and I comment on the problems encountered during my assistantship. In the final part, I evaluate the whole assistantship at C.P.I. Tino Grandío.

Key words: SOCRATES/COMENIUS, the Common European Framework of Reference, the European Language Portfolio, the Spanish system of education, host institution C.P.I. Tino Grandío, activities, the impact on the host institution, evaluation.

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I. INTRODUCTION

One of the key aspects of the European Union is the fact that it is built around the free movement of its citizens, capital and services. If citizens are to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by the EU, they must be able to communicate in foreign languages. One of the ways the EU motivates its citizens to study languages is through its funding programmes such as the SOCRATES programme. In the school year 2006/2007 I had the opportunity to participate in one of the SOCRATES programmes, the COMENIUS-Language assistantships programme. I participated as a language assistant in classes of English and French at **C.P.I. Tino Grandío**, Guntín, Spain. It was such a remarkable experience that I decided to write about it in my diploma work. The aim of my diploma thesis is to present the course of my assistantship at C.P.I. Tino Grandío. The diploma work is divided into four parts: introduction, theoretical section, practical section and conclusion. In the theoretical part I will briefly present the Socrates programme and describe the basic features of the Spanish system of education as well as the Common European Framework of Reference (CEF) and the European Language Portfolio (ELP) and their incorporation into the Czech and the Spanish curricula. A questionnaire was given to teachers of English in both countries in order to find out whether they were aware of the existence of CEF and ELP. The practical part is divided into two major parts. In the first one, I will speak about my host institution and in the second one about the assistantship itself. Activities presented in the practical part were chosen on the basis of a questionnaire and an interview with students. The same questionnaire was used to find out the motivation of both Spanish and Czech students and also to evaluate the assistantship in general. There is a CD with a PowerPoint presentation of photos and videos recorded in classes attached to this diploma thesis.

II. THEORETICAL SECTION

2) Languages and language diversity in Europe

“At long last, Europe is on its way to becoming one big family, without bloodshed, a real transformation ... a continent of humane values ... of liberty, solidarity and above all diversity, meaning respect for others' languages, cultures and traditions.”¹

Linguistic diversity is one of the European Union's defining features. Together with respect for the individual, openness towards other cultures, tolerance and acceptance of others, respect for linguistic diversity of the Union's languages is a founding principle of the European Union. It is this diversity that makes the European Union what it is: *not a 'melting pot' in which differences are rendered down, but a place where diversity can be celebrated as a source of wealth.*²



We are building a single Union in Europe out of many diverse nations, communities, cultures and languages. Building a common home in which to live, work and trade together means acquiring the skills to communicate with one another effectively and to understand one another better. In short, it is more important than ever that citizens have the skills necessary to understand and communicate with their neighbours. Thus the EU encourages new activities to raise awareness about language learning, motivate citizens to learn languages, improve citizen's access to language learning opportunities and gather information about best practice in language teaching.

¹ *Promoting Language Learning and Linguistic Diversity: Action Plan 2004-2006* [online], p.1, <http://ec.europa.eu/education/doc/official/keydoc/actlang/act_lang_en.pdf>

² *Linguistic Diversity* [online]. 2006. <<http://europa.eu/languages/en/chapter/5>>

Its aim is that every European citizen has a communicative competence in at least two other languages in addition to his or her mother tongue. In order to achieve this aim, new steps are being taken to promote all languages, including regional and minority ones, to provide more venues for learning languages, to make greater use of the internet for teaching and learning and to provide more subtitling on television and in the cinema.³ The EU together with the Council of Europe have also encouraged the adoption of new education and training policies that aim at improving language learning and teaching. The systems of education in EU countries have to improve on all fronts:

- Teacher training;
- Integration of Information and Communication Technologies;
- Language learning (introducing teaching at least two foreign languages to everyone at a very early age);
- Flexibility of the systems to make learning accessible to all;
- Mobility and international partnerships;
- Citizenship education, etc.

The main tools available to the Union in this field are its funding programmes, and especially those in the fields of Education, Training and Culture such as the Socrates programme.⁴

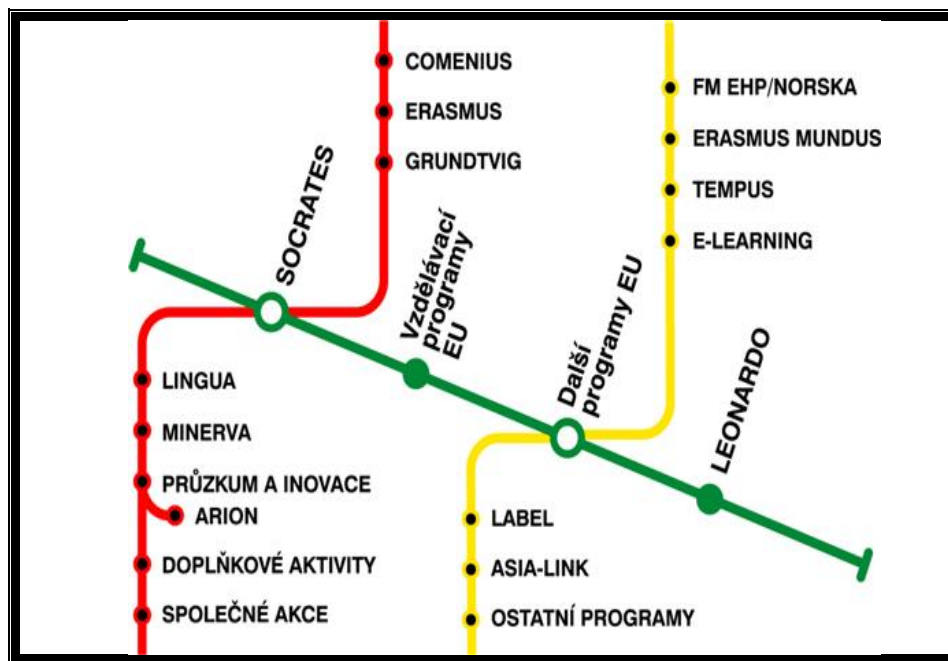
³ *Linguistic Diversity* [online]. 2006.<<http://europa.eu/languages/en/chapter/5>>

⁴ European programmes will be presented in detail in the following chapter 3 on p.10.

3) The European Union programmes

3.1 The overview of the European programmes

The European Union programmes include The Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci programmes. Since each Member State of the European Union is responsible for its own national education policy, including language teaching, these programmes are designed to complement the national education policies as well as they create links between countries and regions.



Picture 1 – European Union Programmes

The Socrates programme supports European co-operation on a range of educational projects, initiatives and professional development, providing opportunities for all sectors, including schools, higher education.⁵ Whereas Leonardo da Vinci programme is the European Community's vocational training programme.

⁵ *What is Socrates?* [online].2006. <<http://www.britishcouncil.org/socrates-what-is-socrates.htm>>

Although the European programmes are one of the priorities of the European Union in the field of intercultural exchange and education, the public knowledge of these programmes is unfortunately very low. Not many people in Europe are aware of the possibilities the European Union offers them, due to a lack of information on this matter. It should be a priority of each Member State to inform their people about these programmes. It is true though that the situation has improved particularly in the field of higher university education. Many university students in Europe spend at least one semester at a university in a foreign country within one of the Socrates programmes called Erasmus.

3.2 The Socrates programme

3.2.1 General characteristics of the Socrates programme

The Socrates programme is a programme of the European Commission that promotes co-operation among the European Union member states in the area of education. This cooperation takes different forms:

- mobility (moving around Europe);
- organising joint projects;
- setting up European networks (disseminating ideas and good practice);
- conducting studies and comparative analyses.

In practice, Socrates offers people grants to study, teach, undertake a placement or follow a training course in another country.

Socrates targets:

- pupils, students, people wishing to return to learning;

- teachers being trained or in service; administrative and managerial staff involved in education;
- educational establishments of all types;
- all external interested parties: civil servants and decision makers; local and regional authorities; parents' associations; the social partners; the business sector; associations and NGOs.

The programme is administered by national agencies in each participating country and is implemented through eight measures:⁶

- **Comenius** : school education;
- **Erasmus** : higher, university and post-university education;
- **Grundtvig** : adult education and other education pathways;
- **Lingua** : language learning;
- **Minerva**: information and communication technologies in education;
- **Observation and innovation in education systems**;
- **Joint measures**;
- **Accompanying measures**.

The Socrates programme is open to the Member States of the European Union (Czech Republic, France, the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Greece, Ireland, Belgium, the Netherlands, Austria, Luxembourg, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Estonia, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia, and). But also to the three countries of the European Economic Area (EEA - Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway) and to the two recent EU member countries (Bulgaria and Romania) and since 2004-2005 to Turkey.

⁶ *Official Journal L28* [online].03.02.2000.<<http://europa.eu/scadplus/leg/en/cha/c11043.htm>>

3.2.2 The Comenius action of the Socrates programme

The European Union enables teachers to gain experience abroad thanks to its educational programmes such as Comenius. Comenius is subdivided into three parts:

The structure of the Comenius programme	
Comenius 1	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Comenius 1: School Partnerships</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Comenius School Projects ➤ Comenius Language Projects ➤ Comenius School Development Projects ➤ Comenius Language Assistants ➤ Preparatory Visits
Comenius 2	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Comenius 2: Training of School Education Staff</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ European Cooperation Projects for the Training of School Education Staff ➤ Individual Training Grants for School Education Staff: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial Training • Comenius Language Assistantships • In-service Training Courses
Comenius 3	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Comenius 3: Networks</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Thematic Networks ➤ Preparatory Visits

Table 1 – The Structure of the Comenius Programme

3.2.3 Comenius Language assistantships

Future teachers of languages may participate as language assistants at a host institution in one of the Member States. This stay enables them to learn the language of their host school as well as to gain new experiences in teaching practice. They fully participate in the life of the institution and the whole community. Their main objective is to improve the language skills of the pupils/students at the host schools as well as to increase both their motivation to learn languages and their interest in the assistant's country and culture. Language assistantships take place in countries where the target language (language taught by the assistant) is not the official language of the host country. The stay lasts three to eight months and it is fully funded by the European Union. During assistantships, language assistants are appointed a tutor who helps them organize their stay prior to their departure to the host country as well as during their assistantships. A Comenius language assistant is required to:

- assist in language classes.
- help students with specific needs and learning disorders.
- help create learning materials.
- inform students about his country of origin.
- teach his mother tongue if demanded.
- help organize international projects between the host institution and the assistant's country of origin.

Candidates eligible to apply for this programme are:

- future teachers (students or graduates of faculty of pedagogy or philosophy) of an official EU language or Irish or Luxembourgish, or one of the languages of the EFTA /EEE countries .

- teachers of primary schools who will teach foreign languages in the future.
- teachers who might be required to teach a non-language subjects through a foreign language.

Not only are language assistants confined to teach foreign languages, they can also contribute to the teaching of other non-language subject. Moreover, in many cases language assistant will work in a single school, but in certain circumstances may be shared between a maximum of three establishments.⁷

⁷ EUROPEAN COMMISSION.2002. *Comenius language assistantship:A good practise guide for host schools and language assistants*. Brussels: European Commission, Education and Culture

4) The Spanish system of education

4.1 Demographic situation of Spain

Spain is located in the South-west of Europe, covering a large part of the Iberian Peninsula, the Balearic Islands (Mediterranean Sea) and the Canary Islands (Atlantic Ocean), as well as the cities of Ceuta and Melilla, on the north-western coast of Africa. In accordance with the Spanish Constitution of 1978, Spain's political regime is a parliamentary monarchy, which is characterised by the King being the Head of State and the separation of the legislative, executive and judicial powers. Legislative power is vested in the Spanish Parliament, whereas the executive power is entrusted to the Government of the Nation, comprised of the President, Vice-Presidents (if applicable) and Ministers. As stipulated by the Constitution, Spain's territory is divided into municipalities, provinces and autonomous communities, all of them having autonomy to manage their respective interests.⁸

Spain is divided into 17 Autonomous Communities and the Autonomous Cities of Ceuta and Melilla. The responsibilities they have embrace for example the organisation of their institutions; territorial organisation, urban planning and housing; agriculture promotion of culture, research and, if applicable, teaching of the co-official language of the Autonomous Community. As far as education is concerned, the Autonomous Communities have the power to develop State regulations from a legislative

⁸ *Eurydice* [online].2005.

<<http://194.78.211.243/Eurybase/Application/frameset.asp?country=SP&language=EN>>

point of view and to administer the education system within their own territory.⁹

There are three groups of Autonomous Communities to be distinguished:

- those with more than four million inhabitants: Andalusia, Catalonia, Madrid and the Valencia .
- those with one to three million inhabitants: Galicia, Castile and Leon, Basque Country, Canary Islands, Castile-La Mancha, Murcia, Aragon, Extremadure and Asturias .
- those with less than one million inhabitants: the Balearic Islands, Navarre, Cantabria, La Rioja, Ceuta and Melilla.



Picture 2 - The territory of Spain

The Autonomous Communities are further divided into provinces consisting of municipalities. Municipalities are basic entities in the State territorial organisation and immediate ways of civil participation in public affairs; they have autonomy and full legal capacity. Moreover, Educational establishments have autonomy to organise groups and subjects on a flexible basis as well as to adopt those measures of attention

⁹ see Chapter 4.2, on p.18, for more detailed description of the Spanish system of education

Picture 2 This picture is available at <http://protectioncivil.org/imagenes/espanaccaa.gif>

to diversity which are suitable to the students' characteristics. This is example in my host school in Guntín with the class in 4th year where they have a special educational curriculum.¹⁰

4.2 General organisation of the Spanish system of education

The legislative framework governing the Spanish education system comprises the Spanish Constitution of 1978 and a series of Organic Acts such as the 2002 *Ley Orgánica de Calidad de la Educación, LOCE* (Organic Act on the Quality of Education). The Constitution addresses another essential aspect of educational organisation, i.e., the decentralisation of responsibilities and the distribution of educational powers between the State and the Autonomous Communities. The latter may undertake the organisation and administration of the education system in their respective regions. The LOCE established a new organisation of the education system. It divides education into:¹¹

- [Educación Infantil](#): from 3 to 6 years of age.
- [Primary Education](#): from 6 to 12 years of age divided into 3 cycles:
 - the first cycle: pupils from 6-8 years of age;
 - the second cycle: pupils between 8 and 10 years old;
 - the third cycle: pupils from 10-12 years old.
- [Secondary Education](#): from the ages of 12 to 18; it covers the following stages:
 - [Educación Secundaria Obligatoria -ESO](#)
 - [Bachillerato](#) and [Intermediate Specific Vocational Training](#)

¹⁰ Eurydice [online].2005.

<<http://194.78.211.243/Eurydice/Application/frameset.asp?country=SP&language=EN>>

¹¹ see appendix 1, p. 85

Primary Education and *Educación Secundaria Obligatoria* constitute the ten years of basic, compulsory education, common to all pupils. Pupils that meet all the standards set for this stage of education are awarded a Graduado en Educación Secundaria certificate, which provides them access to *Bachillerato* or to Vocational Trainings. At the end of *Bachillerato*, pupils who get a passing mark in all the subjects receive a Bachiller diploma. This enables them to continue their studies either at the university (generally after passing an entrance exam) or in advanced Specific Vocational Training.

The State has the following powers as regards education: general organisation of the education system, the laying down of minimum requirements for educational establishments, formulation of the nation-wide general plan for education, the establishment of common educational standards and the regulation of academic and professional diplomas and certificates valid nation-wide, the basic education required to guarantee the learning of Spanish Language, general investment planning for education and the policy of educational grants. The *Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia*, MEC (Ministry of Education and Science) is the state department responsible for the proposal and execution of the general policies.

The Autonomous Communities have regulatory powers and are responsible for the implementation of basic State standards and administration of establishments located in its region.

As far as the curriculum is concerned, the State is responsible for establishing the basic features of the curriculum (objectives in terms of skills, methodological principles, content and assessment criteria), so called *core curriculum*. Building on these basic elements, the autonomous communities set out their own curricula (nonetheless, these curricula scarcely differ). Each school must in turn adapt the curriculum to its own socio-economic and

cultural context, establish general methodological criteria. In the curriculum, teaching is organised around six compulsory areas of knowledge: *Natural, Social and Cultural Environment; Artistic Education; Physical Education; Spanish Language and Literature; the other official languages and Literature in the respective autonomous communities; Foreign Languages and Mathematics*. General objectives, contents and assessment criteria are set out for each area. The contents are organised in blocks and constitute topic units which cover those suitable for developing the capacities targeted by the objectives. The State minimum timetables are also included. The curriculum for ESO is more complex. The compulsory subjects that constitute the common core studies are as follows: *Natural Science, Physical Education, Plastic and Visual Education, Social Studies, Geography and History, Foreign Languages, Spanish Language and Literature, Co-official Language of the corresponding Autonomous Community and its Literature, Mathematics, Technology and Music*.¹² Religious Education, as in the other educational levels, must be offered by the schools but may be taken on a voluntary basis.

The Autonomous Communities have the power to establish the timetable for each cycle in their respective territories. It is up to educational institutions, in turn, to define and develop the curriculum established by the various autonomous communities, taking the minimum core curriculum established for the entire State as a basis for drawing up the so-called proyectos curriculares and classroom programmes.

¹² *Eurydice* [online].2005.

<<http://194.78.211.243/Eurybase/Application/frameset.asp?country=SP&language=EN>>

4.3 Languages in the Spanish Curriculum

- **Primary Education**

In the core curriculum, it is stated that the study of foreign languages is compulsory from the second cycle of Primary Education. However, it is being experimentally or definitively implemented in the first cycle in all autonomous communities. Furthermore, in some of them, the voluntary study of a second foreign language is becoming generalised in the third cycle of Primary Education. The purpose of the Foreign Language area is not that of teaching a foreign language, but rather teaching how to communicate through it.¹³ The aim is to improve the four basic skills: oral and written comprehension and oral and written expression. In Primary Education, children are assigned a tutor teacher who is in charge of teaching most knowledge areas except for Physical Education, Music and Foreign Language.

- **Educación Secundaria Obligatoria -ESO**

In ESO, students may take a second foreign language. The main objectives of learning a foreign language in ESO are: to communicate with people from different cultures and to understand and express themselves in one or more foreign languages in a correct way. These aims are achieved through contents that include aspects of the culture and society where the foreign language under study is spoken¹⁴.

¹³ *The Spanish System of Education* [online].
<<http://194.78.211.243/Eurybase/Application/frameset.asp?country=SP&language=EN>>

¹⁴ *The Spanish System of Education* [online].
<<http://194.78.211.243/Eurybase/Application/frameset.asp?country=SP&language=EN>>

The Spanish curriculum resembles in many ways the Czech curriculum, the so called Rámcový vzdělávací program (RVP). RVP for primary education is a document which specifies the level of basic competences students should reach at the end of primary education. It also determines the content of education which should lead students to reach the demanded level of competences. Moreover, for example it allows schools to modify its content for students with special educational needs. Both in the Spanish and the Czech curricula, teaching is organised around compulsory areas such as for example the area of language and language communication involving the Czech language and Foreign languages in the case of RVP. Each school then elaborates the contents cited in RVP, adapts it to its own socio-economic and cultural context, establishes general methodological criteria and divides it into subjects. The major difference is for instance in the area of teaching languages, in particular foreign languages. The contents of RVP for this domain are based on the Common European Framework of Reference and it determines the competence pupils should reach at the end of the primary education.¹⁵

RVP is an open document which may undergo certain innovations in the future based on the needs of the society, on the experience of teachers and on the needs and interests of students. According to what I have heard from the teachers in Spain, the Spanish curriculum is not inclined to these changes in such an extent. It is true though that there are going to be some changes made by certain Autonomous Communities next school year. This is the case of Galicia, where for example the number of hours of English a week will be reduced and some other subjects will be included.

¹⁵ This topic will be treated in chapter 5.4 on p.26.

5) The Common European Framework of Reference (CEF)

In a Europe which will always be multilingual, learning languages opens doors. For individuals, it can open the door to a better career, to the chance to live, study or work abroad. For companies, multilingual staff can open the door to European and global markets.¹⁶ To improve and facilitate learning and teaching foreign languages, the Council of Europe in collaboration with other European institutions elaborated The Common European Framework of Reference (CEF).

5.1 What is The Common European Framework of Reference?

The formal origins of the CEF date back to 1991, when it was agreed that “the mutual recognition of qualifications, and communication concerning objectives and achievement standards would be greatly facilitated if they were collaborated according to agreed common reference standards, purely descriptive in nature.” (Trim: 2001: 5) The Common European Framework describes in a comprehensive way what language learners have to learn to do in order to use a language for communication and what knowledge and skills they have to develop so as to be able to act effectively. The description also covers the cultural context in which language is set. Thus it provides a common basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks, etc. across Europe. The Framework also defines levels of proficiency which allow learners’ progress to be measured at each stage of learning and on a life-long basis. By providing a common basis for the explicit description of objectives, content and methods, the Framework will enhance the transparency of courses, syllabuses and qualifications, thus promoting international co-operation in the field of

¹⁶ *Linguistic Diversity* [online]. 2006.<<http://europa.eu/languages/en/chapter/5>>

modern languages. The provision of objective criteria for describing language proficiency will facilitate the mutual recognition of qualifications gained in different learning contexts, and accordingly will aid European mobility.¹⁷

According to Morrow (2004: 8): “at the heart of the CEF are the Common Reference Levels-the global scale. This is a broad description of what a user of a language can ‘do’ at six different levels of performance ranging from ‘basic’ (A1, A2) through ‘independent’ (B1, B2) to ‘proficient’ (C1, C2). They function as a reference point both for descriptions of levels/achievement, and for definitions of objectives. They give a peg on which to hang labels such as ‘pre-intermediate’, ‘university level’, or ‘year 3’, and they allow us to specify what do we want our learners to be able to do at a certain level.” The global Common Reference Scale is complemented by additional more specialized scales. These descriptor scales- and there are 58 of them- are all based on the reference levels, and are valuable sources for curriculum and syllabus design.¹⁸

5.2 For what uses is CEF intended?

The uses of the Framework include:

The planning of language learning programmes in terms of:

- their assumptions regarding prior knowledge, and their articulation with earlier learning, particularly at interfaces between primary, lower secondary, upper secondary and higher/further education;
- their objectives;
- their content.

The planning of language certification in terms of:

¹⁷ COUNCIL OF EUROPE. 2001. *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

¹⁸ see appendix 2, p. 86

- the content syllabus of examinations; assessment criteria, in terms of positive achievement rather than negative deficiencies.

The planning of self-directed learning, including:

- raising the learner's awareness of his or her present state of knowledge;
- self-setting of feasible and worthwhile objectives;
- selection of materials;
- self-assessment.

The self-assessment grid with descriptors beginning with 'I can...' can be used for learners to look at their own competence in relation to the scale. This has been adopted as a key feature of the European Language Portfolio.

5.3 The European Language Portfolio

The European Language Portfolio (ELP) and CEF were developed simultaneously between 1991 and 2001, and influenced each other in many ways (cf. Lenz and Schneider 2002). Both share the common reference levels of language proficiency as a core element. The aim of ELP is not only to support language users (including learners), but also to help develop learner autonomy, including learner self-assessment. "Every ELP must consist of three parts (Morrow 2004: 24):

- The *Language Passport* gives an overview of the 'linguistic identity' and the current level of communicative language proficiency of the holder, and summarizes his/her learning and intercultural experiences.
- The Language Biography documents the personal history of language learning and intercultural experiences; it encourages reflection on these experiences in order to make them more fruitful. It also contains instruments for self-assessment of language proficiency and helps plan (further) learning.

- The Dossier is a collection of documents of different kinds- mostly produced by the learner him/herself- that have played a role in the learning process.”

A wide range of portfolios, differing in target group of students (portfolios for young learners, for students aged 11-15 etc.) or their formats, have been produced in a number of European countries including the Czech Republic and Spain.

5.4 CEF and ELP in the Czech Republic and Spain

The Czech Republic was one of the first European countries which included the Common European Framework of Reference in all relevant documents in the field of education and evaluation of languages (e.g. the Framework of education- Rámcový vzdělávací program: RVP). The RVP for example determines that students at the end of primary education should reach the A2 level of the CEF thus having knowledge of for example understanding very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography or employment. Pupils should also be able to communicate in simple and routine tasks and should be able to describe aspects of his/her background etc.

As far as European Language Portfolio is concerned, there are five different portfolio published in the Czech Republic:

- ELP for young learners till the age of 11.
- ELP for pupils of 11-15 years of age.
- ELP for students of 15-19 years of age.
- ELP for adult learners.
- ELP- Guide for Teachers and Teacher Trainers.

On the contrary, Spain has not included CEF in its national curriculum yet. Having read through the national curriculum as well as the regional one, I have not found any mention about the competences students should reach at the end of the primary education or ESO based on CEF. There were three European Language Portfolios validated in Spain in 2003:

- ELP for learners from 3 to 7 years of age
- ELP for pupils from 8 to 12 years of age
- ELP for *Educación Secundaria Obligatoria*

What is interesting is that although the CEF and ELP are considered the most innovative documents influencing teaching and learning of foreign languages in Europe, not many teachers and learners both in Spain and the Czech Republic are aware of their existence. I questioned a few teachers of English in both countries about CEF and ELP in order to find out whether Czech teachers know about CEF and ELP more or whether it is the other way round.¹⁹ The result is not surprising to me at all. Out of 20 teachers of English in both countries, eleven Spanish and nine Czech teachers answered that they had never heard of CEF before. Out of those who answered my other questions, five Spanish and seven Czech teachers answered that they knew CEF existed, but they had never used it. Two Spanish teachers answered that they had read several parts of CEF and only two that they had used some of the ideas mentioned in CEF in their work. As far as Czech teachers are concerned, three teachers answered that they had read several parts and only one answered he/she used it in class. We can see that Czech teachers know about CEF a little more, but the situation is not satisfactory. I believe it is due to the fact that CEF has only been incorporated into the Czech curriculum recently and that it has not been incorporated in the Spanish one at all. As far as ELP is concerned, teachers answered questions 1, 2, 3 as presented in the following chart:

¹⁹ see examples of CEF questionnaires in appendix 3 on p. 87 and p.88

EUROPEAN	LANGUAGE PORTFOLIO	ES	CZE
To what extent is ELP familiar to you?	I have never heard it exists:	3*	5
	I know it exists, but I have never used it:	13	12
	I have never seen ELP:	4	3
	I use it on everyday basis:	0	0
	Yes	3	7
Is there a valid portfolio in your country?	Under preparation	2	1
	No	2	0
	I do not know	10	7
How did you find about ELP for the first time?	During my studies	2	9
	Through my colleagues at work	11	6
	Other (specify):	4	0

Table 2 - The results of CEF questionnaire

*the number of teachers who answered to the question in this way

It is interesting to see that although not many of the teachers I asked know about CEF, they are familiar with ELP. In this case there were more Spanish teachers who knew about the existence of ELP, but in a nutshell, no one uses it in class.

III. PRACTICAL SECTION

6) Host institution: C.P.I. Tino Grandío, Guntín, Galicia

I participated as a Socrates/Comenius language assistant at C. P. I. Tino Grandío. My host school is situated in Guntín, a small village in the municipality of Lugo. This municipality is one of the 67 municipalities in the Lugo province, which constitutes (together with A Coruña, Pontevedra and Ourense) the Autonomous Community of Galicia.



Picture 3 - The Autonomous Community of Galicia

6.1 Administrative organisation of C.P.I. Tino Grandío, Guntín

C.P.I. Tino Grandío comprises *educación infantil* (preschool education), primary education as well as *Educación Secundaria Obligatoria-ESO*. There are twenty pupils in the *educación infantil* and they are divided into classes of 10.

In primary education, there are 48 pupils aged from six to twelve years.

Primary education is organised in 6 classes:

- *Primero*: eight pupils
- *Segundo*: three pupils (*Primero* and *Segundo* share classes)
- *Tercero*: six pupils
- *Cuarto*: twelve pupils
- *Quinto*: seven pupils
- *Sexto*: twelve pupils

This division corresponds to the first cycle of the primary education in the Czech Republic (první stupeň Základní školy). As already mentioned in the chapter 4.3, each class is assigned a tutor teacher who teaches most subjects except for Physical Education, Music, Foreign Language and Religion.

In ESO, there are 84 students altogether. They are divided in:

- *Primero A de ESO*: twelve students;
- *Primero B de ESO*: thirteen students;
- *Segundo de ESO*: fourteen students;
- *Tercero de ESO*: nineteen students.

As far as English is concerned, *Tercero de ESO* is separated into two classes. There are seven students in one class and twelve in the other one. They are separated because of their belonging to the European Section in English as well as because of their level of English.

- *Cuarto de ESO*: twenty students;
- *Cuarto de ESO*- special class: five students.

Students in this class have a special educational curriculum as mentioned in chapter 4.1. This class is the only class which does not have English classes

with me, probably because of the reason that their knowledge of English is very basic.

Each of the sections of **Tino Grandío** has its own headmaster. The headmaster of primary education as well as *educación infantil* is Mrs. Inés Fernandez Cabado and Mrs. Celia Seijas Quiñoa is in charge of ESO. Nevertheless, the overall director of **C.P.I. Tino Grandío** is Mrs. Teresa García Cresente. All three of them are teachers. While they have these functions they get a reduction in their teaching hours (about 6-10 hours less per week out of about 18). There is altogether 42 staff employed at **C.P.I.**

Tino Grandío:

- two teachers of *educación infantil*
- one *cuidadora*- a special needs assistant who takes care of a little girl with Down syndrome
- nine teachers of primary education
- eighteen teachers of ESO
- two teachers of Religion (one for primary, one for ESO)
- a psychologist
- the kitchen staff: one cook and two assistants
- a caretaker
- the office staff: a secretary (she is also a teacher, but has less hours per week) and an assistant of secretary.

All students are provided free bus transportation to and from school. This is due to the lack of bus transport in the villages where students live. This free transportation is assured by the *Xunta de Galicia*- the government of the Galician Autonomous Community.

6.2 Programación de Inglés 2006/2007- a curriculum for English courses 2006/2007

There are three teachers of English at **C.P.I. Tino Grandío**: Mrs. Ana María Arias Castro (an English teacher of *Tercero* and *Cuarto* de ESO), Mrs. María Pilar Quiroga Fernandez (a teacher of *Primero* and *Segundo* de ESO) and Victoria Eugenia Merino Rielo who teaches all classes of primary school and *educación infantil*. Each of the English teachers of **C.P.I. Tino Grandío** must prepare a curriculum for English courses for each school year based on the curriculum in the Galician Autonomous Community as well as the national curriculum. These curricula basically include the contents of the course books used in each class.²⁰ Here are the basic objectives and contents that pupils at **Tino Grandío** should achieve in each of the levels of ESO as stated in the *Programación de Inglés* for the school year 2006/2007:

a) 1st ESO

In 1st year ESO students should:

- participate in the most habitual situations in oral and written communication.
- make use of the most common expressions in oral communication.
- know and use the most common rules of comprehension and production in a coherent oral discourse.
- produce oral and written texts.
- identify and analyse the form, function and meaning of known elements in a linguistic system.
- understand the global meaning of texts of starter level with the help of a dictionary.

²⁰ This topic will be further dealt with in chapter 6.5 on p. 45.

- know basic sociocultural facts about English speaking countries and compare them to the situation in their country.
- be conscious of the presence of English in Spain: songs, advertisements, films...

The contents that are to be taught at this level are for example:

- basic vocabulary to communicate in the classroom;
- the article: *a, an, the*;
- present continuous;
- *some, any, there is, there are*;
- basic vocabulary connected with the house, the school, the family;
- value the contact with other cultures as part of one's personal enrichment.

b) 2nd ESO

In 2nd year ESO students should for example:

- participate in habitual situations in oral and written communication;
- make use of the most common expressions in oral communication;
- understand the global meaning of oral messages from different sources;
- pay attention and show respect to others in oral communication;
- admit mistake as part of the learning process;
- understand the global meaning of texts with the help of a dictionary;
- use previous knowledge to spot their own mistakes;
- understand the importance of communication to improve peaceful coexistence.

The contents to be taught at this level are:

- basic vocabulary to communicate in the classroom;
- personal pronouns: subject, object and possessives;
- demonstratives;
- present simple: form and use;
- past simple: form and basic uses;

c) 3rd ESO

In 3rd year ESO students should:

- know and use the most common rules of comprehension and production in a coherent oral discourse.
- understand the global meaning of texts of higher level with the help of a dictionary and texts of a lower level without this help.
- communicate by letter, e-mail, etc or on the phone within their level.
- be conscious of the preeminence of English as the language of information technology and computing.
- understand the importance of communication to improve peaceful coexistence.

The contents to be taught at this level are:

- past simple: form and use;
- *like/love/hate + -ing*;
- adverbs and expressions of frequency (*always, sometimes, once a day...*) forms and use;
- vocabulary connected with personal relationships, the house, the school, the family, friends, etc.;
- the most important differences between life in Spain and English-speaking countries.

d) 4th ESO

In 4th year ESO students should:

- participate in habitual situations in oral and written communication;
- produce oral and written texts with a different communicative intention;
- pay attention and show respect to others in oral communication;
- communicate by letter, e-mail, etc or on the phone within their level;
- use previous knowledge to spot their own mistakes;

- be conscious of the preeminence of English as the language of information technology and computing;
- understand the importance of communication to improve peaceful coexistence.

The contents that are to be taught at this level are:

- the article: *a, an, the* and the most common quantifiers;
- past continuous: form and use;
- present perfect: form and use;
- the most common verbs followed by infinitive and gerund;
- vocabulary connected with personal relationships, the house, the school, the family, friends, etc.;
- the most important differences between life in Spain and English-speaking countries.

Studying English in the first cycle of primary education is not obligatory, as stated in the curricular documents, but at **C.P.I. Tino Grandío** it is taught already at this stage of education (it will be obligatory in 2007/2008). The school believes that learning a foreign language at an early age contributes to a general enrichment of young learners, to a better development of basic capacities of pupils as well as it serves as a basis for the following years of English studies. The objectives of the first cycle are then:

- to understand the global meaning oral message including gestures;
- to get used to English sounds and be able to imitate them;
- to be able to communicate with the teacher and classmates in basic English (greetings, asking for something...) etc.;

The contents of the first cycle are:

- to learn numbers, colours, animals, characters that appear in the course book, basic greetings and phrases (How are you?).

In the second cycle of primary education, learning of English is based on previous knowledge and it continues to be developed further on. There are a few objectives added at this stage of education such as:

- to get used to reading short text and working with them;
- to learn class expressions, routine questions;
- to be able to produce short, brief texts etc.

The contents of the second cycle (*tercero, cuarto*) are as follows:

- to be able to communicate in basic English (greetings, simple questions...);
- learn new vocabulary (school objects, clothes...);
- to be able to use already known vocabulary in context, etc.

In the following cycle, the objectives remain very similar. In addition to what has been stated before, pupils should:

- participate in habitual situations in oral and written communication;
- understand the global meaning of texts with the help of a dictionary;
- produce oral and written texts on higher level;
- identify and analyse the form, function and meaning of known elements in a linguistic system etc.

The contents should included for instance:

- learning to use ordinal numbers;
- express obligations;
- speak about daily routines;

6.3 Technical facilities of C.P.I. Tino Grandío

Since both primary education and ESO follow their own curricula and have their own teachers, the school is organised according to this fact. **C.P.I. Tino Grandío** is thus divided into two buildings, one belonging primarily to primary education and *educación infantil* whereas ESO students follow their classes in the other building. Nevertheless there are a few classrooms at the disposal of all students such as the computer laboratory, the gymnasium, the audiovisual room, the library or the multifunctional room. This multifunctional room is used on many occasions such as for organising Christmas parties or a recital of Rosalía de Castro, a famous Galician poet whose anniversary students celebrated by reciting some of her poems. I used this room when I organised a Halloween celebration, but I also use it whenever I have an activity which involves more space. Another room students share is *comedor*- the canteen. Pupils do not necessarily have lunch at the same time since ESO has a completely different schedule than primary education.



Picture 4 –C.P.I. Tino Grandío, Guntín (Spain)

Each level in ESO, primary education and *educación infantil* has their own classroom. Students stay in their classrooms for all courses and teachers move except for Music, Physical education, Computer Science and in the case of primary education, English classes.

I am persuaded that having a special classroom only for English classes in primary education is a brilliant idea. Not only is it very useful, but it also contributes to a better atmosphere for learning a foreign language. I believe that as a teacher I should create an atmosphere where students feel welcome, comfortable and where they have optimal conditions for learning English. Having a special classroom destined only to teach foreign languages, in this case English, certainly helps to create such atmosphere. The room is furnished with many shelves where students can leave their English books, with a library with a collection of young learners' English books as well as a teaching material for teachers. The room is decorated with many posters showing vocabulary, various English grammar structures etc. Moreover, all things that we work on in class such as drawings of daily routines done by pupils of *quinto* (5th grade) are hung on the walls. What I appreciate very much is the fact that I can move the desks and the chairs around as much as I want. I think children enjoy changing seats and changing the organisation of the classroom for different activities as well. It keeps them "awake" and more motivated for following classes since they never know what will follow once chairs are changed. I am mentioning this fact because the tutor teachers do not appreciate me very much moving the desks in other classrooms, as I have witnessed when teaching French in a different classroom.



Picture 5 – English classroom in primary education

In the English classroom, I also have at my disposal three computers with internet connection. But it is unfortunately quite a recent present from the *Xunta* so I have not been able to use it in class so far. On the contrary, I have been using other electric devices such as a video recorder, a tape recorder, a CD player and a TV, which can also be found in the classroom. It is true though that I prefer using the audio-visual room when watching videos or working with this type of material since the electric devices in there are more modern and they are in general in a better condition.

As far as ESO is concerned, there is no special classroom for English. Children are taught in their classrooms and I have to move around, with the exception of small groups in the 4th and the 3rd year. I use special classes **C.P.I. Tino Grandío** has for extra-curricular activities or the so called *apoyo* - one to one classes for students with special educational needs and behavioural problems.

I also have to bring in all the materials necessary for teaching since there are no electrical devices in the classrooms or no materials to work with.

Nevertheless, I have been using the library and the computer laboratory for many activities, especially in the classes of 4th year of the European Section.²¹ It is true though that organising a class in the computer lab or in the library needs more preparation since they are not always available. I think having a special English class even in ESO would be a great idea because the schedule that ESO has does not allow me to prepare well in advance. There are days when I do not have any break between the classes and having to prepare video or other materials does not give me enough time to work on the activity. Once again, I must emphasize the importance of the classroom atmosphere for learning a foreign language, which would definitely improve if there was a special English class as in primary education.

6.4 Materials and methods of teaching employed in classes of English at my host school

The main reason why C.P.I. **Tino Grandío** participates in the programme Socrates/Comenius-Language assistantship and thus hosts a language assistant is to improve the level of oral comprehension and oral expression in English of its pupils as well as to give information about the assistant's country of origin. Teaching foreign languages in Spain is mainly based on the knowledge of grammar and vocabulary. Students are capable of producing written texts using complex grammatical structures and vocabulary, but on the other hand, their capacity in oral expression and comprehension does not correspond to this knowledge at all.

In my opinion, the communicative approach in Spain, or to be more precise in Guntín, is not taken into account to such an extent as it has been lately for example in the Czech Republic. Although, one cannot generalize since the situation varies in different educational establishments both in Spain and the

²¹ I will speak about the activities in the 4th year of the European Section in chapter 7.2.2 on p.67.

Czech Republic. I found out from teachers at **C.P.I. Tino Grandío** that the lack of oral expression and comprehension is not only a matter of foreign languages, but it occurs in other subjects as well. Students are not used to speaking in front of their classmates; they are not given any oral tasks to prepare at home such as “referáty”-presentations. There are not for example any oral exams at **C.P.I. Tino Grandío** in any subjects, or even at the universities students have more or less written exams. This is the major difference between the Czech Republic and Spain which I have noticed. I feel like Czech students in general tend to find it a little bit easier to speak in a foreign language when compared to Spanish students. This might be due to the fact that Czech students participate in oral activities in forms of presentations in foreign language classes as well as in other subjects. Thus they gain a certain habit of speaking in front of their classmates.

Pupils at **C.P.I. Tino Grandío**, coming mainly from rural backgrounds, have never had an opportunity to travel and discover other cultures. Some of them have not even crossed the borders of the Autonomous Community of Galicia. Thus meeting a foreigner who would introduce them to his culture, the traditions in his country or the language might have an enormous impact on them. It might motivate them to discover other countries and also to learn a foreign language.

Having in mind this fact as well as the aims of **C.P.I. Tino Grandío** in teaching English, I tried to organize my classes so that mainly oral expression and comprehension were practised and so that the importance of meeting different cultures was emphasized.²² I did not concentrate on learning grammatical structures (in communicative approach grammar is taught implicitly), but I focused mainly on speaking, listening and the sub-skills

²² Exaples of activities done in my classes will be presented in chapter 7.2 on p.56.

such as pronunciation. I also tried to make my classes entertaining and different to what students have been used to so far. I used many games with a specific aim, especially in primary education. I think games are the best way to learn, especially at a very young age, and it should have its place in the class of a foreign language. Nonetheless, it should be used wisely and it should always have an aim of what we want to practise or achieve.

Other important elements of language learning in primary education are drawings and songs. My pupils of primary education at **C.P.I. Tino Grandío** loved activities involving drawing or singing. It helped them to remember given vocabulary and practise its pronunciation when singing. As far as ESO is concerned, the methods differed from primary education due to the difference in age, attitudes towards learning English and knowledge of English. Whereas students in primary education were interested and participated in all activities I employed in the classes of English with pleasure and with abundance of motivation, the attitudes of pupils in ESO were completely different. Hence I had to adapt the activities. Pupils participated more in activities based on picture describing, reading texts about topics they are interested in, gap-filling activities when listening to a popular song etc.

Moreover, I tried to use role plays in my classes. I was surprised how well the role plays were accepted in the end. It seems to me that students at C.P.I. Tino Grandío do not have too many experiences with such a type of activities and they found it very difficult at first. But with a little bit of practice, they managed to get into their roles without a major problem and performed their roles in a brilliant way. This activity involved both primary and secondary education. Obviously, in secondary education the role plays were more complex and they demanded a better knowledge of English.



*Picture 6 – Students of tercero of ESO
role playing*

“At the doctor’s”

In the picture, there are students of the third year of ESO role playing a situation at dialogues students had to prepare using the doctor’s. This role play was based on vocabulary they had learnt in previous lessons. As a warm-up activity, students were to work on the vocabulary necessary for this activity and they had to put in order a jumbled dialogue.

Since I had to my disposal an audio-visual room as well as other audio-visual materials, I tried to prepare activities for students involving these materials. We worked mainly on cultural topics such as watching videos in original version and listening to British or American music etc. I think these activities worked well. Students were motivated, they participated in these activities and what is more, they learnt new vocabulary in a funny way. The audio-visual materials were always used with an aim, either to practise vocabulary or grammatical structures studied in class, but more often they served as a basis for a communicative activity.

“Wallace and Grommit- The Wrong Trousers



*Picture 7 – Wallace
and Gromit*

This activity is based on watching the last chapter of Wallace and Grommit video. As a warm-up, students talked about Wallace and Grommit and read a resume of previous chapters. They watched the video three times, each time having a different task to complete. In order to understand the film better they were given photocopies with various activities including the transcript.

I did this activity in all classes of ESO and in *sexto* of primary education. Surprisingly, students in “worse” classes (*tercero* B and *cuarto* B) as well as students of *sexto* participated and enjoyed this activity much more than students in the other classes.

The department of English at **C.P.I. Tino Grandío** provided me with a lot of materials for teaching English in ESO. Teachers of languages have at their disposal a language room with all the available material for teaching foreign languages. Although there are many materials to choose from, they do not always correspond to the level of students in ESO, thus I had to use my own resources. I used internet many times and also materials that I gained at the British Council of České Budějovice. It is a pity that there is not the British Council or a similar establishment in the nearby area of Guntín or Lugo.

As far as the materials in primary education are concerned, I found them insufficient. I will deal with this matter later on, in chapter 7.3, on page 71 when I speak about problems I encountered as a Socrates/Comenius language assistant.

Since the “Programación” for both primary education and ESO follow more or less the contents of the course books, the latter remain the main support in the class.

6.5 English course books used at C.P.I. Tino Grandío

Educational establishments in Spain are free to choose the study books and other materials to be used in the teaching of the different subject areas. Publishing companies are responsible for drawing up such books, taking into account the principles and core curriculum established by law. The edition and the choice of the books do not require the authorization of the education

authorities. As a general rule, study books are chosen for a minimum four-year period, although educational authorities may modify this period if the educational planning thus requires. It is the case of **C.P.I. Tino Grandío** where four different course books are chosen. There are:

- *My Friends*: a course book used in *primero* and Segundo of primary education.
- *Super Starlight*: a course book used in remaining classes of primary education.
- *New Thumbs up!*: a course book used in first two years of ESO.
- *Oxford Spotlight*: a course book used in the third and fourth year of ESO.



Picture 8– Course books at C.P.I. Tino Grandío

“*Oxford Spotlight* is a four-level course for ESO. The syllabus covers all the requirements of the ESO curriculum. *Oxford Spotlight* aims to develop communicative competence while ensuring that students gain a thorough understanding of the rules of English grammar and acquire a core of essential vocabulary.” (Really et al: 2005: IV) It includes: Student’s book, Class CDs/Cassettes, Workbook, Teacher’s Guide, Teacher’s Resource Book, Poster Pack 3+4, Video/DVD and Student’s MultiROM. Student’s Book contains:

- an introduction unit
- 9 teaching units, 3 revision units
- 5 report spreads, 5 song pages
- a grammar, a word and an expression bank
- a list of irregular verbs

The first page of each unit presents the main **vocabulary** for the unit and establishes the topic. The latter is then developed in a **photo story** where the new language through the lives of ordinary British teenagers is presented. There is a **Pronunciation section** in each of the nine main teaching units, located on the page following the photo story. **Grammar** is presented in the next part of each unit and it is then followed by **reading** activities. The main **listening** section is on the **Everyday English** page where students are asked to listen and repeat model dialogues and then perform their own dialogues. It includes a discussion section as well. In the next section students have to produce written work based on a model text. At the end of the main unit, students are advised to consult the **Report unit** or the **Song unit** where students have the possibility to explore the British culture.

***Personal evaluation of the course book:** I think this course book is very well organised and what is more important, it enables students to build vocabulary of useful and relevant English words. Students learn real English expressions in the photo story and in the Everyday English section. The topics are focused on the themes teenagers are familiar with so they find them more interesting. I especially like the fact that this course book develops all the skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking), but it gives a high importance mainly to oral activities.*

New Thumbs Up! is also specifically designed for the Spanish secondary system. It is designed to build on the English that students have learned at primary school. It includes: Student's book, CDs/Cassettes, Workbook, Teacher's Guide and Teacher's Resource Pack. The Student's book contains:

- an introductory unit: *Hello!*
- 9 teaching units, each divided into 4 parts
- 3 culture spot units
- 6 optional projects and 2 optional stories
- reference material: Grammar help, Pronunciation help, Word list

The beginning of each unit introduces the main language of the unit. New **grammar** structures and **vocabulary** are presented in the context of a presentation story. In the following part of the unit, the new grammar structures are thoroughly practised. In the next part, students focus on **vocabulary** and **English across the curriculum**, where students read and talk about familiar topics that arise from curriculum (Science, Geography...). The last part of each unit contains **reading** and **writing** activities. The Culture spot units are included after units 3, 6, 9 and it focuses on contemporary issues of interest to today's teenagers.

Personal evaluation of the course book: *In my opinion, this course book is a very useful support in English classes. I like in particular the fact that Study skills section, which shows students how to develop language learning techniques, is included. On the other hand, I think it could include more communication activities and more focus on cultural aspects of English speaking countries.*

Super Starlight is a course book designed according to the curriculum of primary education. It includes: Course Book, Practice Book, Student's video,

Activity Cards, Teacher' s Book, CDs/Cassettes, Class Posters. The Course Book is divided into ten units, each units contains these elements:

- Comic
- New language
- Skill time
- Review break
- Cultural link

Each unit is introduced by **a comic** about Strek and his friends. In this part pupils practise their listening, reading as well as speaking skills. This part is followed by **New Language** where students practise already known grammar and learn new grammatical structures. Next section called **Skill Time** focuses on the practise of vocabulary. **Review Break** serves as a revision section. Each unit ends with **Culture link** where pupils get very basic information about the British culture.

***Personal evaluation of the course book:** I do not think this book corresponds to the needs of pupils in primary education. The dialogues in the comic are very complicated and boring. Students do not like the stories of Strek at all. The listening activities that accompany the comic are very bad as far as the quality is concerned. There a lot of games included, but they are impossible to use. Some of them are incomprehensible and many of them repeat throughout the course book. I think that even students at this age should learn about the different cultures in the English speaking world. This book includes a section focused on culture, but the activities in this part bring no interesting cultural information. Moreover, the videos and the CDs are not nice to listen to at all.*

My Friends is a course book also destined to primary education. **C.P.I. Tino Grandío** uses this support only in the first cycle of primary education.

This course book includes:

- Class book
- Teacher's book
- CDs/Cassettes
- Posters and Puppets
- Flashcards

There are six study units in the class book and two extra units which focus on Christmas and Easter celebrations. The activities in this course book concentrate mainly on **vocabulary** and **basic phrases** of the world of children. Thanks to many **listening** activities such as songs, pupils are in contact with the English language. They gradually get used to English sounds and they also learn to repeat them. The whole course book is based on the puppet Mumbo and his friends.

Personal evaluation of the course book: My friends is a great support in the first years of English in primary education. It contains a lot of fun activities based on drawing, listening, but it also focuses on the development of basic speaking skill of young learners. I appreciate the fact that children learn vocabulary in the context of Mumbo and his friends and I especially like the fact that vocabulary children comes from their world. On the contrary, the CDs and DVDs are of a very low quality. They are too complicated so children get easily bored when watching or listening to them.

I must admit that the fact of having four different course books was very surprising for me at first. In my opinion, it would have been better to use only one book for each stage of education. Nevertheless, I like the fact that

there are different course books in primary education and in ESO. The course books in ESO are more complicated, they have a different structure which counts on student's self-studying and self-assessment. Moreover, they are focused on teenagers so they seem more interesting for the ESO students. I especially like the way *Oxford Spotlight* is organised, because its structure is more modern, its topics are up-to-date and it motivates students to think about various global issues. On the other hand, I am completely disappointed with *Super Starlight* since there are hardly ever the cultural aspects of studying English mentioned and students find the main story boring, with irrelevant vocabulary. Using this course book requires a lot of preparation of extra material from the teacher. I think children of primary education find it quite difficult to change from Mumbo, the main character in *My Friends*, to Strek, the hero of *Super Starlight*. As far as I know, they enjoy Mumbo's activities much more. In my opinion, *My Friends* is a more interesting course book and it should be used in all the cycles of primary education.

7) My assistantship at C.P.I. Tino Grandío

In this part of the thesis I will speak in detail about my stay at **C.P.I. Tino Grandío** as a language assistant. I would like to concentrate in particular on the activities employed in my classes in both primary education and ESO.

7.1 Organisation of my assistantship at C.P.I. Tino Grandío

As stated in the Socrates/Comenius guide book, “the work plan must be fully agreed between the Comenius language assistant and the host school(s).”²³ The schedule is agreed prior to the assistant’s departure, but it is only a flexible outline. It might be subject to changes and should be finalised after the arrival. **C.P.I. Tino Grandío** asked me about my preferences of how to organise my 12 to 16 hours a week of assistantship. Although my preferences were not respected, I was proposed a suitable timetable and so we agreed without any major problems. It was decided that I would teach 14 hours a week in total, separated into four working days, out of which 12 hours were classes of English, 1 hour of French and 1 hour of English in the classes of the European Section.

The classes at **C.P.I. Tino Grandío** start at 9:45 am and finish at 4:15 pm. I have found out from my tutor that the timetable is subject to the organisation of free transportation provided by the *Xunta*. The buses follow a certain order, going from one school in the area to another, picking up children going to the same direction as the corresponding bus. Therefore the school cannot make any changes in the timetable. All students must start at 9:45 am

²³ **European Commission:** *Socrates/Comenius language assistantships- A good practice guide for host schools and language assistants*, Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2004, p.13

and must leave school at 4:15 pm. The timetable in primary education differs from the one in ESO, which created an enormous confusion for me at first since I had some classes in primary education, some in ESO. The non-existing breaks between some classes made it especially difficult for me at the beginning, mainly when I had to go from one building to another. Nonetheless, it was just a matter of getting used to it.

Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
	9:45-10:45 5º Primaria Victoria Merino	9:45-10:45 3º Primaria Victoria Merino	9:45-10:45 6º Primaria Victoria Merino
11:25-12:15 2º E.S.O. Pili Quiroga	11:25-12:15 1ºB E.S.O. Pili Quiroga	10:45-11:45 4º Primaria Victoria Merino	Break
Break Primary education 11:45-12:15 Secondary education 12:15-12:35			12:35-13:25 3º E.S.O. de S.E. Ana Arias
13:15-14:05 1ºA- E.S.O. Pili Quiroga	12:35-13:25 3º E.S.O. Ana Arias		13:25-14:15 4º E.S.O. de S.E. Ana Arias
14:30-15:30 Extra-curricular Classes (cuarto, quinto)	14:30-15:30 Extra-curricular Classes (primero, segundo,tercero)	14:45-15:30 5º&6º Primaria Eva Vilabrille (French)	14:15-15:05 4º E.S.O. Ana Arias
15:30-16:15 1º & 2º Primaria Victoria Merino	15:30-16:15 3º & 4º E.S.O. European Sec. Ana Arias		15:15-16:15 Extra-curricular Classes (Sexto, 1ºE.S.O.)

Table 3 - Weekly timetable at C.P.I. Tino Grandío

Furthermore, I participated in extra-curricular classes of English in primary education and in the first year of ESO. These classes were organised on a voluntary basis. It took place in the English classroom during my lunch break three times a week. Students were divided into classes according to their age. Group 1 consisted of pupils of the first three years of primary education, group 2 then the fourth and the fifth year and Group 3 consisted of *sexto* of primary education and the first year of ESO. Altogether I had 26 students. In these extra-curricular classes, I did not follow any course book, but I tried to focus on motivating students to further studying of English. In

these classes students had a chance to practise mainly speaking and listening. The classes contained various speaking activities, listening to and singing songs, playing games or working on projects. For example with Group 3, we worked on a project called “My Friend”.

a) “My Friend”

Students of *sexto* and of the first year of ESO participated in this project. It involved speaking, in particular asking questions and giving answers.

- **RULES:** *Students, working in pairs, had to ask their partner questions corresponding to various parts of body and write down the answers. Then they had to put the answers in the third person of singular. In the following section, they had to trace the body of their partner on a big sheet of paper and finally they had to write in all the pieces of information they had found out about their partners.*
- **MATERIALS:** *pens, pencils, felts, markers, big sheets of paper.*
- **AIMS:** *The aim of the activity was to make students think about themselves, about things they like, do not like. But also to make them think about the others. As far as English is concerned, the main aim was to practise asking questions and giving answers, but also to transform first person sentences into the third person (I have found out that this is an enormous problem for Spanish students, even bigger than for Czech students; probably due to the fact that Spanish does not use personal pronouns and thus students are not aware of the fact that they are speaking in the third person).*
- **EVALUATION:** *Overall the evaluation of this activity is quite positive. Nevertheless, I was disappointed. I thought it would have a bigger success. Students got bored after a while (the project took 3 lessons in total) and did not really concentrate on what they were supposed to do. They enjoyed the tracing part the most and asking questions the least.*



Picture 9 – José Manuel and Laura, students of primero of ESO.



Picture 10 – Lucas and Alejandro, students of sexto of primary education.



Picture 11 - The final result of the project "My Friend"

As far as the French classes are concerned, I participated in classes of primary education. In primary education, there are only *quinto* and *sexto* that study French. Both *quinto* and *sexto* are joined for the classes since there are altogether only fifteen students. The level of French students have corresponds to the level of complete beginners. Since they only have one lesson a week, we decided together with the French teacher Mrs. Eva Villabrille that I would only come to the class once in two weeks. My main task in the class was to practise the vocabulary students had learnt as well as to teach them basic phrases in French and to work on the pronunciation. Being the second language, students find learning French quite difficult (although it is very similar to the Galician language). They get confused with English and mix words in English and French. There are no course books used for this French class; the teacher always brings in photocopies with vocabulary she wants students to learn. I myself found teaching French quite a challenge, because it involved speaking a third language (besides English and Spanish) and it is not always easy.²⁴

7.2 Example of activities in English classes where I participated as an assistant.

In this part of the thesis I would like to present some of the activities done in classes where I participated as an assistant. The activities presented constitute only a small part of those employed in class. They were chosen on the basis of a questionnaire and in the case of the first five grades of primary education, on the basis of an interview with pupils. I asked pupils which activities they had enjoyed the most and which the least. Out of those that students elected as the best ones or the worst ones, I have chosen those that I personally think were important and I will try to explain why. Furthermore, each activity will be presented in this order:

²⁴ I will mention the problems I encountered in classes in chapter 7.3 on p. 71.

- **RULES:** *I will try to explain the basic rules of the games or the course of the activity.*
- **MATERIALS:** *I will briefly name materials I used for the particular activity.*
- **AIMS:** *I will present the main aims of the activity and also the reason why I chose it.*
- **EVALUATION:** *In this part I will evaluate how the activity was accepted by students, what went well and what did not and if there was anything that could be improved; I will also speak about my personal opinion about the activity, what surprised me etc.*

7.2.1 Example of activities in English classes in primary education

As I have already mentioned in previous chapters, the main aim in classes of the first cycle of primary education was to initialize the learning of English, to get used to listening to a foreign language and to be able to reproduce sounds in English as well as to learn basic vocabulary. Having in mind these objectives, I suggested activities which I thought would motivate children to further studying of English. These activities include games, drawings, songs etc. I must admit that I did not follow the course book too much since most of the activities in the course books were done in the other classes with the English teacher. In the first cycle, the activities were:

a) "The Ninjas"

Teacher: "What activity did you like the most?"

(¿Qué actividad te gustó más?)

Diego, 7 years old: "I like 'The Ninjas'."



Picture 12 - "The Ninjas" by Diego 7 years old

- **RULES:** Pupils are divided into two teams. Every member of the team has to get across the river in the forest in order to save kidnapped children. To get across the river, they have to recognize the given vocabulary (flashcards). Each team chooses one member who will compete against a member of the other team. They are shown a flashcard with a word they know and the first one to answer can step on the following stone. But they must be careful since they can only step on stones in the river otherwise they would be eaten by crocodiles, which means they would have to return to their team. The game is finished when all the team members are on the other side of the river. If none of the children in the pair who is competing knows the correct answer, other team members can reply when asked to do so. Children are disguised as ninjas, they have paints on their faces, headbands etc.



Picture 13 - Pupils of the first cycle of primary education as ninjas

- **MATERIALS:** facial paints, paper or coloured plastic foil to make headbands, drawings of crocodiles, black paper in a shape of a stone, chairs.
- **AIMS:** The aim of this activity is to practise vocabulary and to motivate students to further learning of English.

- **EVALUATION:** *Children enjoyed this activity very much since they had headbands, they painted their faces so they felt like real Ninjas. I think this game had an enormous influence on their motivation, because it made them revise their vocabulary and learn new one a funny and a competitive way thus they realized that learning English can be fun.*

To conclude, the activity called “The Ninjas”, which pupils of the first cycle of primary education chose as the one they liked the best, was an enormous success. Children liked being disguised. They enjoy the type of activity when they have to compete with one another. Nonetheless, this activity was quite difficult for me to organize since it demanded a lot of preparation and a lot of concentration during the game itself. I had to make sure children understood the rules and that they only did what they were asked to. I needed to get face paints, to cut out the crocodiles, to organize the class so that it resembled a little bit a river and a forest. In the end, I did not have that much time to prepare the activity as I would have liked to thus the decorations and the costumes were quite poor.

b) “My house”

This is one of the activities based on the course book. Students were to learn the vocabulary of the house. This is one of the activities students did not like.

- **RULES:** *Pupils draw a house with its basic parts (a roof, a window, a door, a wall, a chimney). Then they are given little cards with names of the parts of the house and they have to match them correctly with their drawing. In the end, they have to describe their house using simple phrases such as a red roof, a blue window etc.*



Picture 14 - Antía, 6 years old



Picture 15 - Pablo, 6 years old

- **MATERIALS:** *coloured paper, felts, pencils, crayons, glue, cards with the vocabulary*
- **AIMS:** *The aim of this activity is to teach the students basic vocabulary of the parts of the house.*
- **EVALUATION:** *Although children seemed to enjoy this activity, they were quite bored in the end. It took them a long time to draw and so they lost interest after a while.*

To summarize, this activity was based on the course book. It was not too well appreciated by pupils. They got bored after a while. Paradoxically, the part of the activity they enjoyed the most was when they had to match the drawings with the cards. Some of the students worked faster so they finished earlier than others and it was difficult for me to motivate them to do further work.

Whereas in the first cycle of primary education the activities were not based on the course books too much, it is the contrary in the second cycle. I used *Super Starlight* as a basis for example for these activities:

c) *“What time is it, Mr. Wolf?”*

Pupils of the third year of primary education were supposed to learn how to tell the time (It’s two o’clock...), as it is written in the curriculum. I chose this game, because I remembered a similar game we played as children, called *Honzo vstávej! Kolik je hodin?* and I thought it could be an interesting way to learn telling the time.



Picture 16 - *“What time is it, Mr. Wolf?”* by Anna, 9 years old

- **RULES:** *Students stand by a wall and a teacher in the middle or on the other side of the classroom. He is Mr. Wolf. Pupils ask Mr. Wolf: “What time is it, Mr. Wolf?” and Mr. Wolf answers: “It’s 1, 2, 3...o’clock“. Pupils then have to make the number of steps Mr. Wolf said (when he says it’s 2 o’clock, students make two steps forward). The point is to get to the other side of the classroom. When Mr. Wolf thinks that students are too close to him or the other side of the classroom, instead of saying it’s 5 o’clock, he shouts out: “It’s DINNER time!!! He starts chasing the other students. They are safe on the side of the classroom where they started from. If any of them is caught, he becomes Mr. Wolf.*
- **MATERIALS:** *There are not any special materials needed for this game. It is better to play this game in a big classroom or a gym. We played this activity in the multifunctional room.*
- **AIMS:** *The aim of this activity is to practise spoken language, but also to practise numbers and telling the time.*
- **EVALUATION:** *Pupils loved this activity so much that we ended up playing it many times. They especially liked the fact that they were out of their normal classroom and that they could run when learning.*

In conclusion, in this activity pupils practised the question *What time is it?* and telling the time. It was very entertaining and children never got tired of it. It does not require any preparation.

d) "The ZOO"

As part of the curriculum, pupils in the fourth year of primary education learn the names of animals in English. After a few lessons when we worked on activities in *Super Starlight*, we decided together with all the children to make our own ZOO.



Picture 17 - Pupils of the fourth year of primary education with the ZOO

- **RULES:** Each student chose an animal which he liked or which he thought may represent him. Then pupils had to draw it on a piece of paper. Later we talked about why they liked the particular animal or why they thought it represented them. In the end, we drew a map of the ZOO, glued all the pictures on and decorated the rest of our ZOO.

- **MATERIALS:** *sheets of paper, one big clipboard paper, felts, crayons, pencils etc.*
- **AIMS:** *The aim of this activity was to practise the vocabulary of animals and also to make the pupils think about what animals they like or what animals they think they resemble. Moreover, to practise oral expression in basic English.*
- **EVALUATION:** *At first, pupils found it quite difficult to choose the animal. Most of them said they did not know what animals they liked or what animals could resemble them. But in the end, this activity had an enormous success. Once they found out what to draw, they did a great job working on the ZOO and they were very proud of the result.*

To sum up, pupils practised the vocabulary of animals and used it in daily speech. They found it very difficult at first, because they had to think about what they liked and what animal could represent them. They also found it a bit difficult to work as a team since they do not really do it in their ordinary classes. But in the end, they were able to talk in basic English and they managed to draw a beautiful picture of the ZOO working together. In my opinion, this activity was very important, because it helped the children to realize that they can achieve their aims and work as a group although it is not always an easy task. They proved that they were able to use English when speaking about themselves.

In the third cycle of primary education, the activities were more or less based on the course books, but I tried to modify them a little bit so that they seem more entertaining for pupils. One of the activities employed in the class of the fifth year of primary education was:

e) *“Daily Routines”*

- **RULES:** *Students were to draw a picture of their daily routines. These pictures then served as a basis for a communicative activity.*



Picture 18- Antón, 10 years old / Picture 19 - “Daily routines”, by quinto / Picture 20 - Lucía, 10 years old

- **MATERIALS:** *cardboard paper, crayons, pencils...*
- **AIMS:** *The aim of this activity was to practise speaking about daily routines in present simple.*
- **EVALUATION:** *Students enjoyed drawing their daily routines. Although they found it difficult to speak at first, it went very well in the end.*

In conclusion, students prepared sentences in present simple based on pictures of their daily routines. Then they had to speak about their pictures in front of the class while the other students listened. Although this game did not involve any movement and it was not as entertaining as playing games, pupils of *quinto* enjoyed it very much.

I tried to introduce different cultures into all classes of primary education as well as ESO, in particular the culture of the English speaking countries and the Czech Republic. In this matter, I organized a Halloween party and a Christmas party. I will briefly mention the course of the Halloween party. I

think that students found Halloween and its traditions very interesting since Halloween is not celebrated in Spain.

f) "Halloween"

Before the actual party took place, we talked about Halloween in class, in particular about its celebrations and traditions. We also drew invitations for a Halloween Party, we made masks etc.

The Halloween Party took place on October 31st in the multifunctional room and all classes of primary education participated.

- **RULES:** *Students of primary education were divided into four teams, each one having a different name (the Witches, the Ghosts...). The party consisted of 4 games. For each one, students were given a corresponding number of pieces of puzzle (the winning team 4 pieces of puzzle, the 2nd team 3 pieces...). In the end, they had to put the puzzle together (cut out pictures of Halloween themes) and look for the same picture at school. There were sweets hidden nearby the pictures.*

The games were:

- 1) A picture card relay: students ran in pairs around chairs which had flashcards on. They had to remember as many words as possible and tell it to the teacher at the end of the race, run back and pass it on.
- 2) Each team had a table with things on it (books, pencils, rubbers...). I called out what I wanted them to bring, e.g. 3 blue pens. The team who brought it first got 4 points, second 3 points...
- 3) Make a ghost: Teams were given a toilet paper and they had to wrap it around a teacher as beautifully and in the shortest time as possible. The winner was the team who made the teacher into a ghost in the

shortest time. Special points were given to a team with the “best” ghost.

4) Apple bobbing relay: Students had to bob for apples, when they got one, they had to run back and the following student could go apple bobbing. Whoever finished first, was the winner.

- **MATERIALS:** *apples, water, bowls, decorations, flashcards, objects (pencils, books, rubbers, rulers...), pictures cut out as puzzle, pictures put in the corridors of the school, toilet paper, envelopes for the children to keep their puzzle in, chairs, tables, sweets.*
- **AIMS:** *The aim of this activity was to introduce Halloween to my students, but at the same time to practise vocabulary and speaking.*
- **EVALUATION:** *This activity had an enormous success. Children loved it and enjoyed it very much. As far as I am concerned, I did not enjoy it at all. I thought it went well, but it did not go as I would have loved to. The main problems were surprisingly not the kids, but the teachers. They did not have a clue about what Halloween was about, although I tried to explain it to them. They always told children to do things that I did not want them to do etc.*



Picture 21 – Apple bobbing / Picture 22 – The Puzzle



Picture 23 – Halloween activities

7.2.2 Examples of activities in English classes in ESO

Most activities in the first grades of ESO were based on the course book *New Thumbs Up*. These classes were the most problematic ones, because the level of English did not correspond at all to what I expected, but also there were many children with behavioural problems. The atmosphere for working was unbearable since neither I nor the teacher was able to control the situation. Preparing classes for these classes was a challenge. Nevertheless I tried to follow the course book as much as possible, but also to bring in some extra activities.

As far as the third and the fourth year of ESO are concerned, the situation was completely different. I followed the course book only to a certain extent. The majority of activities employed in these classes were speaking activities on topics included in the course book.

In the questionnaire, most students of ESO replied that they liked the following activities:

a) "Pass the ball"

This is one of the activities that I employed in classes of primary education. It was very successful so I thought I could try to do the same activity in classes of ESO. Surprisingly, students enjoyed more than in primary education.

- **RULES:** *Students pass the ball around while music is playing. When the music stops, the one who has the ball must say a sentence in English (using the past tense if practising the past...). Then the music goes on.*
- **ALTERNATIVE:** *the same activity with two balls. When the music stops, students have to make simple conversations.*
- **MATERIALS:** *CD player, music, one or two balls.*
- **AIMS:** *The aim of this activity is to practise speaking and using grammatical structures in spoken language.*
- **EVALUATION:** *Students enjoyed this activity very much. It was motivating for them to see others speaking and they did so as well. It introduced an entertaining element in the class. The teacher must make sure students do not throw the ball in order to hurt their classmates.*



Picture 24 - "Pass the ball" activity

In conclusion, this activity involves speaking, listening and also playing when learning a foreign language. It was very successful in both primary education and ESO. It is important to choose music students like so that they are interested. It is also necessary to set the rules before the game starts in order to prevent possible accidents. I must admit that it was so new to students that there were no major problems even in the first two problematic grades of ESO.

7.2.3 Examples of activities in the European Section of ESO

The main objective of the European Section is to make students be aware of the European issues and to be able to talk about them. Thus most of the activities include oral expression activities, but also oral and written comprehension. In the first term of the school year, students in the European Section were working on projects called: *Presentation of the Autonomous Communities of Spain*. I chose this topic because as a foreigner I do not know much about Spain and I thought it might be an interesting way to find out about it. In addition, I thought it would be easier for the students to speak about their own country first.

- **RULES:** *Students were working in groups and each group was assigned one Autonomous Community to present orally in front of other students at the end of the term. They had books in the library, internet and other materials brought to class by the teachers at their disposal. The project was considered a "home project" so the major part of the projects should have been done at home. Nonetheless, we met every two weeks in classes and worked on the projects together. We discussed the problems students had with the project, I answered their questions or I helped them with pronunciation etc.*
- **AIMS:** *The aim of this activity was to make students speak in front of their classmates and to improve their oral expression in English. Furthermore, to*

be able to work with authentic materials, to look for information and use it in their speech.

- **EVALUATION:** *Students had many problems with this task. They were not used to speaking in front of the whole class. They found it very difficult to speak about the Autonomous Communities. But I think that in the end it went very well. Although they had many problems at first, they were capable of overcoming them and presented their projects in a very interesting way. The biggest problem I encountered was the pronunciation. As far as students are concerned, there were some who found working on the project enriching and interesting, but to my disappointment, the majority of students found it too difficult or boring.*

To conclude, the main objective of the European Section is to speak about European issues. In this matter, students were to present one Autonomous Community of Spain in whatever way they wished. Some students preferred traditional presentation with pictures, some groups made Microsoft PowerPoint presentations, others brought in traditional food from the Autonomous Community they were presenting. To make it easier for the students, I prepared a presentation of the Czech Republic in order to show how the projects can be presented. I made a presentation in Microsoft PowerPoint where I focused on basic information about the country as well as my family. As part of the presentation, I brought in Czech money, drinks or I even cooked Czech food (bramboráky). I also taught them some words in Czech and we sang a song Vodník in Czech. The presentation was such a success that I decided to present the Czech Republic in other classes as well including primary education.²⁵

²⁵ A video is available on a the CD attached to this thesis.



Picture 25 - The 4th of ESO presenting projects about Andalusia

7.3 Problems encountered when teaching English

Possibly the most important thing to bear in mind at all times, and especially during the early stages of the language assistantship, is that practice in the host school may be very different from that in schools in the assistant's country of origin. This is the case in **C.P.I. Tino Grandío**. There were a few things that shocked me at the beginning of my stay and it took me a long time to get used to it. One of the things was the discipline. I have always thought that the teachers I had in the Czech Republic when I was at primary or secondary school were strict and focused a lot on the discipline. Thus we had more or less very "cold" teacher-student relationship. It is exactly the contrary in the classes where I have been to at **C.P.I. Tino Grandío**. Students for example call the teachers by their names, which was completely unthinkable during my studies. I think it has both positive and negative sides. The positive one is that calling the teacher by his or her name evokes a rather friendly relationship. The negative thing is that students use this fact

to their own advantage - they shout at the teacher during the lesson, they do not greet the teacher at the beginning or at the end of the class, they stand up and walk around the classroom without permission etc. I have witnessed this behaviour in my classes as well and I must admit that coming from a different country where the emphasis is put on the discipline, I struggled with this attitude for a long time.

As far as teaching is concerned, I encountered mainly these problems:

- a) The language barrier.
- b) The lack of motivation of students for studying English.
- c) The course books and the lack of other materials especially in primary education.

a) The language barrier

One of the problems that I had as a Socrates/Comenius Language assistant was the language barrier. The official language of the Autonomous Community of Galicia is Galician. Although all students at **C.P.I. Tino Grandío** speak Spanish, the majority of them speak the Galician language most of the time. At the beginning of my stay I spoke neither Spanish nor Galician so I had many problems to understand and make myself understood by students of primary education and the first two years of ESO. The worst situation for me was in the first two grades of ESO since they had many behavioural problems and the teacher hardly spoke English. We simply did not understand each other at all. Although there were problems in primary education, I was able to control the situation because the teacher spoke English therefore we communicated easily. I have not had any problems in the last two years of ESO since the level of English was very high therefore the lessons were conducted only in English. And also the teacher was a proficient speaker of English.

b) The lack of motivation of students for studying English

Many students at **C.P.I. Tino Grandío** come from low-class or middle-class families, the majority of them living in rural areas. The parents often have a very low level of studies and no need to learn foreign languages. Many students also have not had any opportunities to meet foreigners or to travel. All these elements are key facts influencing the motivation of students for studying languages, in particular English. Based on a questionnaire where I asked students of ESO why they studied English and if they thought they would need English in the future²⁶, I found out that nearly half of the students in ESO at **C.P.I. Tino Grandío** do not count on using English in the future. The rest of the students replied that they needed foreign languages for work, for studies and for travelling.

Andrián from the second year of ESO answered: *“I need English in the future because when I am in NBA, I will need to talk to my coach and to my team mates.”*

I gave a similar questionnaire to students in the Czech Republic and out of approximately 60 students coming mainly from villages, none of them answered they did not need English in the future as in the case of students at **C.P.I. Tino Grandío**. I think the main difference is that Spanish is spread world-wide whereas the Czech language is not and so the attitude of Czech people towards learning as well as teaching foreign languages is different than in Spain. Preparing classes for students where the motivation is very low was quite difficult for me. Once again the biggest problems I had were in the classes of the first two grades of ESO.

c) The course books and the lack of other materials especially in primary education

²⁶ see appendix number 4, p. 89

I was quite satisfied with the course books and all the material available in ESO, but very unhappy with the situation in primary education. I have already mentioned the problems I had with the course books in primary education in previous chapters. Apart from all the course book materials, I had at my disposal a few DVDs and CDs, a few books in English, some posters and flashcards etc. Unfortunately the films and the songs were too difficult for pupils in primary education. Most of the time, I had to search for other materials myself, but the choice was quite limited. In the main library in Lugo they do not have anything in English. When teaching in České Budějovice, I had the opportunity to use the material of the British Council. I realized in Lugo that having that opportunity made my work easier. Nonetheless, I could use the internet, in particular web pages dedicated to teaching English. I think that if I had more materials to work with, I could have made my lessons more interesting and enriching.

7.4 The impact of a Socrates/Comenius assistant on students of C.P.I. Tino Grandío

Language assistants have an enormous impact on students at their host schools. By taking part in classes as assistants, not only do they bring to the school and local community a linguistic and cultural resource, but they also introduce or reinforce a European dimension. Many students at **C.P.I. Tino Grandío** come from low-class or middle-class families, the majority of them living in rural areas. Many of them have not had any opportunities to meet foreigners or to travel. Hence my presence at **C.P.I. Tino Grandío** opened the borders and allowed them to discover the world outside Spain, in particular the Czech culture. In the already mentioned questionnaire that students of ESO had to fill in, I asked them about their opinion on my assistance in their classes, in particular if they had learnt new things in English and if they had gained information about other cultures. To the question- *“Did you like my*

assistance in your English class? Why?" - most students replied that they liked it. They felt like they had learnt more than in previous years. They found my classes entertaining, full of activities focused on oral expression and comprehension which enabled them to improve their speaking and listening skills. When I asked students if they had learnt something about other cultures, the majority of them answered they had, in particular about English music, food, Halloween and Christmas traditions etc. To the question - *"What about the Czech culture?"* - most students answered that they had found all the information about the Czech Republic very interesting. Most of them remembered what I had told them about female surnames (I explained why my surname is Konopková and that of my father is Konopka). They had also learnt to sing a Czech song Vodník and they had tried Czech food and drink.

Natalia, a student of the first year of ESO answered: *"Sí, aprendí mucho sobre los apellidos en la República Checa pero también que se jugaba mucho al pinpon y que siempre ganabas."* (Yes, I learnt a lot about the surnames in the Czech Republic, but also that people play ping-pong a lot and that you always win.) I talked about Christmas traditions in my village where we have a ping-pong tournament and she remembered this fact.

According to teachers at **C.P.I. Tino Grandío**, my assistance was very enriching not only to students, but also to the staff. They were persuaded that my work had an enormous impact on students. In their opinion, they had learnt English in an active and entertaining way which help them to loose the fear of speaking and therefore to gain more motivation to further studying of foreign languages. The fact of being from a different country obliged students, in particular students of the third and the fourth year of ESO, to speak to me in English at all times and it made them realize that they were able to communicate in a foreign language in everyday life. Teachers

also believed that not only did my presence bring them new methods and ideas on teaching, but it also made them think about the way the Spanish system of education is organized, the differences and similarities between two European countries as far as education was concerned.

7.5 What has Socrates/Comenius- Language assistantships programme brought to me?

Participation in Socrates/Comenius programme gave me the opportunity to enhance my knowledge of foreign languages, of other countries and education systems, as well as to improve my teaching skills. It helped me to clear-up my ideas about my future career as a teacher. Until now, I have not been persuaded that the career as a language teacher is what I really want to dedicate me to. Being an assistant at **C.P.I. Tino Grandío** showed me that I was “born” for this type of work since it brings satisfaction and enrichment to both the students and me. I learnt new techniques of work in particular with very young learners, I got new ideas about activities which can be employed in class, I gained new materials and I improved my organisational skills. Moreover, it allowed me to compare the educational systems in Spain and in the Czech Republic. It was very enriching to see the different educational environments both in the Czech Republic and Spain- one country focusing on the discipline a lot whereas the other hardly at all. It was interesting to see for example the problems Spanish students encounter when studying English and compare them to what I know from the Czech Republic.

Having not had any knowledge of Spanish before, the most important contribution for me is the fact that I am able to communicate, understand and make myself understood in Spanish without any major problems. Being a Czech teacher, teaching English and French in a Spanish surrounding is not

an easy task to do and it demands a lot of concentration. Therefore I had to learn how to co-ordinate the usage of three foreign languages at the same time. I also had to get used to the Galician language since students talked to me either in English or in Galician.

Apart from the professional point of view, Socrates/Comenius programme allowed me to see that Spain is not only “¡Olé!”, “Flamenco” and “Fiesta”, but that there are many more interesting things about Spain so different to the Czech Republic. I learnt that Spain is not only Madrid, Barcelona or Andalusia, but that even other parts of Spain such as the Autonomous Community of Galicia are worth visiting or living in. I have completely changed my opinion about the Spanish weather since in this part of Spain, the weather is much worse than in the Czech Republic. It rains all the time and the city I live in, Lugo, is a “city in the fog”. I learnt that Galician people are very proud of their culture, of their language and that they do not like being compared to the rest of Spain. I learnt that it is not easy to be a vegetarian in Spain. Nevertheless I had the opportunity to taste some typical Spanish food such as *tortilla*. I learnt that living in a foreign country is not always easy and sometimes one must force himself to be strong and not to give up. But in the end, the most important thing that I learnt is that all the troubles with getting used to different cultural habits, to learning a foreign language, to being an “ambassador” of its own culture are worth it.

7.6 Overall evaluation of my assistantship at C.P.I. Tino Grandío, Guntín, Spain

The school year 2006/2007 was the second year when **C.P.I. Tino Grandío** participated in Socrates/Comenius Language assistantship programme. Therefore based on previous experience, my stay was well organized. I did

not encounter any major problems that would make my stay difficult and unpleasant. On the contrary, all the staff at **C.P.I. Tino Grandío** and in particular my tutor Ana Arias Castro helped me to integrate into the Galician community and helped me to get used to the working conditions at **C.P.I. Tino Grandío**.

As I have already mentioned in previous chapters, participation in language classes as a language assistant within the programme Socrates/Comenius had an enormous impact both on students and on me. By my presence I contributed to a more interesting learning of a foreign language, I brought new information about European issues and different European cultures. On the other hand, this programme helped me to gain more confidence, more experiences and more will to work as a language, in particular English, teacher.

IV. CONCLUSION

As I have already mentioned in previous parts of this diploma thesis, participation in the SOCRATES/COMENIUS- Language assistantship had an enormous impact on my future career as a language teacher.

Only after having participated in this programme, I realized that being a teacher is a perspective employment. Whereas in the Czech Republic only a small percentage of university graduates of Pedagogical faculties devote themselves to teaching, the situation in Spain differs in many aspects. **In Spain, the conditions to exercise such work are better** thus this type of career is more appreciated by the society.

On the other hand, it seems that **the background for teaching foreign languages in the Czech Republic is more favourable than in Spain**. As set in the national curriculum, one of the goals in learning a foreign language in primary education is to achieve the A2 level according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEF). In Spain, the principles of CEF have not been incorporated into the curriculum yet. I was also surprised at the fact that neither teachers in the Czech Republic nor in Spain use CEF and ELP in their classes.

Participating in classes of English and French as an assistant gave me the possibility to compare the way languages are taught in two different countries. Although I had to get used to many things, especially the differences in the discipline, I had to overcome the language barrier and I had to get used to speaking three foreign languages at the same time, I think that **in practice the teaching remains the same**.

Finally, I would like to emphasize the importance of such programmes as SOCRATES / COMENIUS which **give rural areas the opportunity to familiarise with European issues.** It also **brings benefits to countries where the learning of foreign languages needs to be improved and encouraged.** This was the case of C.P.I. Tino Grandío in Spain where the simple fact of having a foreigner as an assistant motivated the students to look for information about other EU countries as well as to speak English on everyday basis.

Resumé

Cílem této diplomové práce bylo představit průběh mého asistentského pobytu na škole C.P.I. Tino Grandío, Guntín, ve Španělsku, kterého jsem se zúčastnila v rámci programu SOCRATES/COMENIUS ve školním roce 2006/2007. V úvodních kapitolách teoretické části jsem se zaměřila na přestavení tohoto programu, především jeho obecnou charakteristiku. V následující kapitole jsem se snažila přiblížit Španělsko jako takové, zejména pak jeho systém školství. Jelikož se španělský systém od českého poměrně liší, uvedla jsem přehled rozdělení španělského systému a pravomocí s ním souvisejících. Shrnula jsem, jakým způsobem jsou učeny cizí jazyky v daných fázích povinné školní docházky. V závěru této části jsem systémy školství ve Španělsku a České republice porovnala.

V další části jsem se zabývala Společným evropským referenčním rámcem pro jazyky (SERR) a Evropským jazykovým portfoliem (EJP). Zajímalo mě, jestli je SERR zahrnut v sylabech školy a jestli je používáno EJP. Na základě dotazníku rozdaném jak ve Španělsku, tak v České republice, jsem zjistila, že o existenci SERR ví pouze malá část dotázaných učitelů. Co se týče EJP byl výsledek nepatrně lepší. Ukázkou SERR dotazníku jsem zahrнула do příloh. Dále jsem zjistila, že zatímco Rámcový vzdělávací program v České republice charakterizuje výstupní úroveň žáků ZŠ jako A2 podle referenčních úrovní SERR, španělské kurikulum se o SERR zatím nezmiňuje.

Praktickou část diplomové práce jsem zaměřila především na svůj asistentský pobyt v C.P.I. Tino Grandío. Zmínila jsem způsob, jakým je výuka na C.P.I. Tino Grandío organizována a jaké je technické vybavení školy. Dále jsem se zaměřila na aktivity a materiály v hodinách, kde jsem působila jako asistent. Stručně jsem analyzovala učebnice používané při výuce angličtiny. Zároveň jsem vyjádřila svůj názor na práci s danými

učebnicemi. Poté jsem konkrétně popsala, jak můj asistentský pobyt probíhal a jaké aktivity jsem v hodinách používala. Vybírala jsem aktivity dle výsledků dotazníků mnou rozdaných ve třídách *ESO*. V dotazníku jsem žádala žáky o zhodnocení mé výuky a vybrání nejvíce i nejméně oblíbených aktivit. Mladší žáky ve třídách *educación primaria* jsem požádala též o nakreslení těchto aktivit. Některé jejich obrázky a fotografie pořízené během těchto aktivit jsem do této práce zařadila. Jiné jsou pak spolu s videozáznamy k dispozici na příloženém CD.

V závěru praktické části jsem se zaměřila na to, jaký přínos měl můj pobyt na hostitelské škole a na to, co přinesla tato zkušenost mně. Asistentský pobyt byl velmi prospěšný pro obě strany. A to zejména z jazykového hlediska. Naučila jsem se další cizí jazyk a studenti si zlepšili jak *listening*, tak i *speaking* v angličtině. Zároveň jsem přinesla na C.P.I. Tino Grandío trochu české kultury, což pro studenty bylo novou zkušeností, jelikož většina z nich se nikdy s jinou než španělskou kulturou nesetkala. Také jsem poukázala na problémy, s nimiž jsem se jako asistent setkala. Zmínila jsem především problém nedostatečné motivace za strany studentů na C.P.I. Tino Grandío, danou především prostředím, ze kterého studenti pocházejí. Pomocí již zmíněného dotazníku jsem zjišťovala, jaká je motivace studentů C.P.I. Tino Grandío k učení angličtiny a zda se motivace liší od českých studentů. Výsledkem bylo, že důvody pro učení se angličtině jsou v obou zemích stejné, ale samotný přístup k učení se liší. Zatímco španělští studenti mohou používat svůj rodný jazyk téměř na celém světě, v případě českých studentů to tak není a tím pádem jejich motivace k učení se cizímu jazyku je větší. Celkovým zhodnocením svého pobytu na C.P.I. Tino Grandío jsem tuto diplomovou práci uzavřela.

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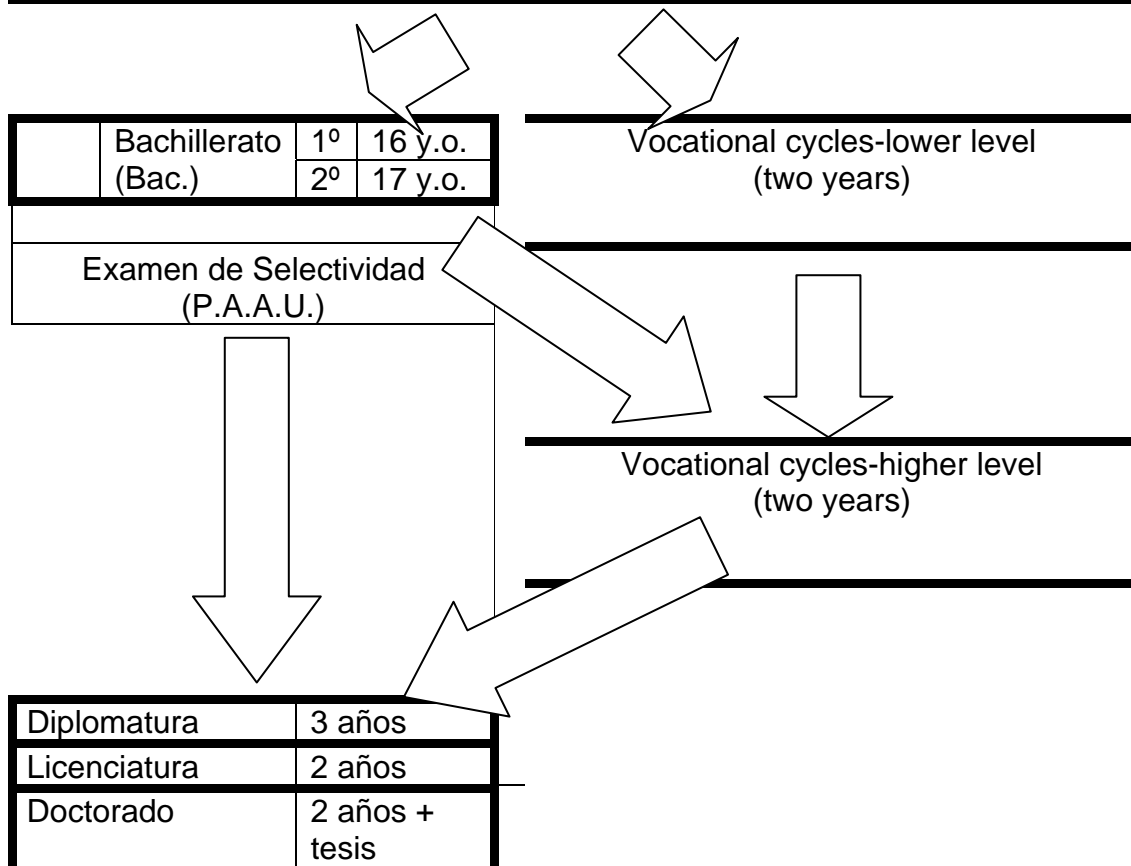
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Appendix 1: An overview of the Spanish system of education

Education in Spain

		Age	Subjects
	Educación Infantil	3 years old	
		4 years old	
		5 years old	
Compulsory Education	Educación Primaria	1º 6 y.o.	Spanish, Galician, English, "conocimiento del medio", mathematics, physical education, religion (or an alternative subject), music and art.
		2º 7 y.o.	
		3º 8 y.o.	
		4º 9 y.o.	
		5º 10 y.o.	
		6º 11 y.o.	
	Educación Secundaria Obligatoria (ESO)	1º 12 y.o.	Compulsory subjects: English, Galician, Spanish, social studies, science, religion (or an alternative subject), physical education, mathematics Optional subjects: technology, music, art, French, physics, chemistry, biology, Classical culture...
		2º 13 y.o.	
		3º 14 y.o.	
		4º 15 y.o.	
Degree in Secondary Education			



Appendix 2: the Common Reference Levels- the global scale

Proficient User	C2	Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.
	C1	Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.
Independent User	B2	Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.
	B1	Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.
Basic User	A2	Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.
	A1	Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.

Appendix 3: Example of CEF questionnaire answered by a Spanish teacher of English (A) and a Czech teacher of English (B)

Questionnaire A

QUESTIONNAIRE

The Common European Framework of Reference (CEF)

- 1) To what extent is CEF familiar to you?
 - a) I have never heard of CEF before
 - b) I know it exist, but I have never used it
 - c) I have read several chapters/ parts of CEF
 - d) I have used some of the ideas mentioned in CEF in my work
- 2) How did you find out about CEF for the first time?
 - a) During my studies
 - b) Through my colleagues at work
 - c) Other (specify) _____
- 3) If this document is familiar to you, which of its chapters do you find:
 - a) the easiest to read _____
 - b) difficult to understand _____
 - c) useful for your everyday classes _____
- 4) How would you evaluate CEF? (pros and cons)

European Language Portfolio (ELP)

- 1) To what extent is familiar to you?
 - a) I have never heard of CEF before
 - b) I know it exist, but I have never used it
 - c) I have seen several models of ELP
 - d) I use it on everyday basis
- 2) Is there a valid ELP in your country?
 - a) Yes
 - b) Under preparation
 - c) No
 - d) I do not know
- 3) How did you find out about ELP for the first time?
 - a) During my studies
 - b) Through my colleagues at work
 - c) Other (specify)
- 4) If ELP is familiar to you, which of its sections do you find:
 - a) the most attractive _____
 - b) useful to fill in _____
 - c) useful for students _____
 - d) interesting for you to use in your classes _____
- 5) How would you evaluate ELP? (pros and cons)

Questionnaire B

QUESTIONNAIRE

Ca_vazquez

The Common European Framework of Reference (CEF)

- 1) To what extent is CEF familiar to you?
 - a) I have never heard of CEF before
 - b) I know it exist, but I have never used it
 - c) I have read several chapters/ parts of CEF
 - d) I have used some of the ideas mentioned in CEF in my work
- 2) How did you find out about CEF for the first time?
 - a) During my studies
 - b) Through my colleagues at work
 - c) Other (specify) _____
- 3) If this document is familiar to you, which of its chapters do you find:
 - a) the easiest to read _____
 - b) difficult to understand _____
 - c) useful for your everyday classes _____
- 4) How would you evaluate CEF? (pros and cons)

European Language Portfolio (ELP)

- 1) To what extent is familiar to you?
 - a) I have never heard of CEF before
 - b) I know it exist, but I have never used it
 - c) I have seen several models of ELP
 - d) I use it on everyday basis
- 2) Is there a valid ELP in your country?
 - a) Yes
 - b) Under preparation
 - c) No
 - d) I do not know
- 3) How did you find out about ELP for the first time?
 - a) During my studies
 - b) Through my colleagues at work
 - c) Other (specify)
- 4) If ELP is familiar to you, which of its sections do you find:
 - a) the most attractive _____
 - b) useful to fill in _____
 - c) useful for students _____
 - d) interesting for you to use in your classes _____
- 5) How would you evaluate ELP? (pros and cons)

Appendix 4: Example of a questionnaire answered by a students of ESO at C.P.I. Tino Grandío

4º A ESO.

QUESTIONNAIRE

for students of 4th year

This questionnaire is part of my thesis. Please, fill it in as soon as possible.
Thank you.

- > Did you like my assistance in your English class? Why?
Yes, I did. Because this class is very funny and interesting, I learn a lot.
- > Do you think you've learned more than in the previous years?
Yes, I do. I have learned a lot of vocabulary and traditions of other countries.
- > Did you learn anything about other cultures?
Yes, I did. I learn culture of Czech and England...
- > What about the Czech culture?
I learn a lot typical food and traditions for Christmas...
- > What would you change out of what we've done in class? Why?
I don't change ~~nothing~~ ^{things} because we make a lot of different goods.
- > What did you like the most? The least?
I like Simon's songs and the projects...
I don't like most describe one person.
- > Would you like me to come back next year?
Yes, I like. Because you speak and explain very good.

- > Do you think studying foreign languages is important? Why?
Yes, I do. Because this is the future and for the job, and I like traveling for other country.
- > Do you think you'll need English in the future? Explain!
Yes, I do. Because in the future everybody speak English. English is the languages most important.
- > Do you like studying English or would you prefer other language?
I like ^{to} English.
- > From 1 to 10, how would you mark your English classes at Tino Grandío?
8,5
- > Do you use English out of class?
No, I don't but I listen music in English and I read book in English.
- > If you do, on what occasions?
 - I watch films, TV in English
 - I listen to the music in English
 - I read books, magazines in English
 - I play video games in English
 - I talk with people in English
 - I have got a pen-friend
- > You are:
 - a girl
 - a boy
 - age: 15

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