

ACTAS

I Congreso Internacional de Enseñanza de Inglés en Centros Educativos



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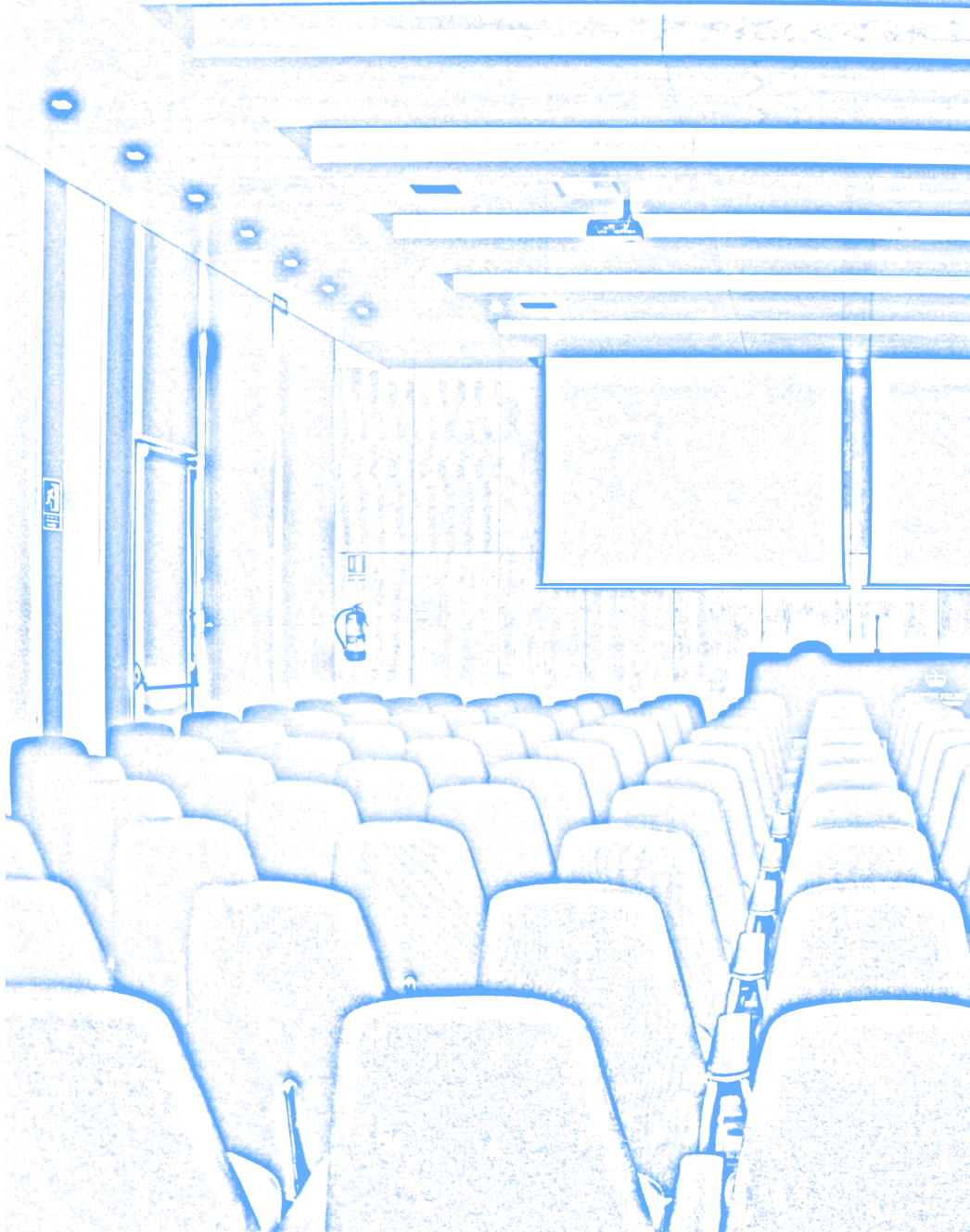


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**Actas del I Congreso Internacional de
Enseñanza de Inglés en Centros Educativos**

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Virginia Vinuesa y Manuel Lázaro
(Coordinadores)



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CEU Ediciones
Julián Romea 18, 28003 Madrid
Teléfono: 91 514 05 73, fax: 91 514 04 30
Correo electrónico: ceuediciones@ceu.es
www.ceuediciones.es

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Learning in a bilingual school

BEGOÑA RUIZ PÉREZ DE PIPAÓN. CEIP BILINGÜE RAMÓN SAINZ DE VARANDA – ZARAGOZA

Resumen

Esta comunicación presenta cómo se lleva a cabo el trabajo en talleres en un colegio bilingüe. Esta metodología, que se centra en actividades prácticas, puede ayudar a nuestros alumnos a practicar sus conocimientos y a mejorar sus habilidades sociales. Además, permite a los profesores llegar a diversidad de estilos de aprendizaje. Desde la experiencia docente en el aula, se presentan unas reglas básicas para todos aquellos que quieran llevar a la práctica este tipo de rutinas y propone una serie de actividades que pueden ser útiles en clase.

Abstract

This communication presents how workshops or learning centres are implemented in a bilingual school. This kind of methodology, focused on hands-on activities, can help our pupils to practise their knowledge and improve their social skills. It also allows teachers to reach multiple learning styles. From the teacher experience in the classroom, some principles are explained for those who would like to put into practice these routines and it gives ideas of activities that can be useful when working with a group of students.

Introduction

Workshops or learning centres consist of multiple stations for children to rotate through. They are activities that invite students to practice and apply strategies that have been taught or modelled in whole group instruction. Stations contain activities from the subjects we teach in English: science, literacy and art. This kind of methodology allows teachers to reach multiple learning styles, particularly visual and kinesthetic learners. It is a way to create classroom environments that are engaging and inviting places for students to grow and learn, where we provide opportunities for success, because our classrooms include children of mixed ability levels. Students have access to a variety of hands-on activities and materials that allow them to learn by doing. They are designed to enhance the learning of concepts, skills, themes or topics. They also encourage students to learn social skills as well as cognitive skills, when they use higher levels of thinking to discuss, help and clarify information. Workshops keep pupils motivated and looking forward to participate.

Objectives

- Develop good practices in language teaching and learning that help students to reinforce the basic competences.
- Take advantage of the infant school work, where this methodology is widely used, and make the change from one level to the other one gently.
- Provide opportunities for students to work in flexible groups, generating interaction in the classroom.
- Foster peer learning, develop and share their own learning strategies and promote cooperative work. Students have to work together to complete the centres, they make an individual effort to participate and to come to an agreement.
- Recall and reuse information, techniques and games presented in whole group instruction.
- Assume as teachers the role of facilitators, to monitor and to observe the progress, to create a friendly atmosphere, to help students when they need it, to guide or make changes when it is necessary.

- Engage children actively in their learning process, being more autonomous. They learn to ask for help and to help.
- Allow children to learn in the way they learn best: through play.

Parts of a Learning Centre

The following ideas provide us options to include or consider for a workshop. The main criterion is that they match all learners' interests with curricular needs. Here are some suggestions to get us started:

Objective: Identify the objective, what you want students to be able to do. You also take into account the multiple intelligences, the way in which these intelligences are involved and combined to carry out the different workshops.

Name: Provide an interesting name that identifies the centre. It could be appealing to attract children's attention or well known so that students can easily recognise it.

Space: Set a defined physical placement in the classroom for each game and make sure children know where they have to go. Arrange necessary furniture in a productive manner; decide how you will set up chairs, tables, materials, whiteboards, computer stations, storage facilities... Students need to be able to move and have easy transitions among centres with minimal disruption and time.

Materials: Each centre should have the necessary material. It has to be accessible to students, they learn how to take care of them and how to clean them up. Determine how you will obtain materials. You might be able to obtain materials from local shops or web sites. You may also want to consider other sources such as recycling or using traditional games. It is also important to have an adequate supply of consumable materials (paper, paint, chalk, etc.).

Storage: Keep materials in a place where they are easily accessible by students and teachers. Decide if you are going to use the same materials in different classes and if they can be portable.

Instructions: Plan time to share and discuss each set of directions and routines with students as part of one or more introductory lessons. Post a set of directions in each centre. Make sure they know what they have to do and insist on if one student knows how to play he or she can explain the others the rules.

Sequence of activities: It may be important to consider if there is a relation between the activities and how they will be sequenced or if they are independent.

Number of centres: You will need to decide on the number of centres you want to establish in your classroom. Base your decision on your management skills as well as the needs of your students.

Time: Decide how long a centre will be active. Keep a centre in operation only as long as students' interest is high and it meets your curriculum goals. Talk with students about the amount of time necessary to work on or complete the activities to fulfil all the class' needs.

Management system: You can assure the success of your centres by teaching your students familiar routines (how to work cooperatively, how to move between workshops, how to clean up, how to manage with noise). Invest several minutes at the beginning of the class to review rules and routines.

Help!: Establish a routine that will allow students to signal when they are having difficulty with a specific centre activity. The 'Three-before-me' rule can work. When a student has a question, he or she consults at least three classmates before asking the teacher. We want students to be proactive problem solvers. Another strategy is to assign a teacher's assistant. The student assigned to this role should be responsible for answering questions and assisting students in doing their tasks.

Learning log: It is a resource for children and teachers. It consists of a worksheet with information of each workshop. It goes with the student as they move from centre to centre, it helps them to know what is their next step. They write a brief statement or words about what they have learned or practiced.

It is also interesting to have a chart with the name of the workshops and the name of the groups where they tick each time they go to a centre. This allows everybody at a glance to know the situation of each group.

Suggested Learning Centres

This is a partial list of suggested learning centres you might want to consider for your classroom:

Literacy centres (reading and writing)

- Reading illustrated books.
- Silent reading: where we can have cushions for quiet reading or for group discussion.
- Word games (Hangman, Boggle, Wheel of Fortune, Password, Still standing) on blackboards or whiteboards.
- Traditional games: dominoes, tic tac toe, bingo, loto, Kim's game, memory.
- Board games: snakes and ladders, Scrabble.
- Vocabulary games (anagrams, letter race, guess my word, lose your letters, don't say my word, who is twice, missing letters, crosswords, vowel or consonant) where we use different alphabets: magnetic letters and sounds, wooden letters, foamy letters, laminated letters, clothes pegs ...
- Other games: Borobil, fishing rods, Lince
- Creative writing with variety of pens, markers, coloured pencils, chalk, paper, etc.
- Printing and stamps.
- Magazines that can be cut up for images and letters.
- Pocket charts and wordcards.
- Number and letter dice
- "Math manipulatives," such as snap or unifix cubes, pattern blocks, cuisinaire rods, and geoboards used to "write".
- Construction blocks.
- Plasticine and clay.
- Role-play and drama.
- Computer

Science centres

- Exploration and experimentation tools.
- Observation with magnifying glass, microscope, telescope, or binoculars.
- Measurement devices (rulers, graduated cylinders, etc.)
- Bug jars and boxes, plastic containers for collecting specimens (botanical, entomological, geological, etc.)
- Skeleton and torso with internal organs.
- Plants and seeds.
- Puzzles, cards and games that involve logical thinking (looking for patterns, sequences, process of elimination, inference, etc.)

Art centres

- Painting (watercolors, poster paints, finger paints) and drawing materials (pens, pencils, colored chalk)
- Materials for attaching things to other things (glue, staplers, sewing materials, pins, clips, etc.)
- Recycled containers, bottles, cardboard, metal, carton and tools to work with them.
- Various types and colours of paper and cardboard.

Assessing Learning Centers

Assessment is ongoing and essential during workshop time. It is important that the teacher moves in and out of centres to interact with learners and monitor progress. Monitoring how well students accomplish tasks is important for student growth and for the teacher's awareness of when centres need to change. Assessment provides the teacher with the necessary information to reorganize flexible groups, determine needed materials, assist groups who become stuck and need feedback in order to move on, and design centres that target specific learning objectives.

We can observe the relationships between the group members, how they talk to each other, if they are respectful and who can help the others and explain the rules of each workshop, in other words, their attitude in group work and the appropriate behaviour. It is also important to check if they share the materials and their knowledge. They are working on their autonomy and that implies being creative and using their imagination. Finally we evaluate the use of English, taking the four skills into account. Students are also responsible of their assessment and they can talk about and discuss how they are working together and what they can do to change for the better.

To summarize, all the workshops have to be designed to help improve the children's abilities and learning. It is necessary to know the group possibilities to create a context to understand, to produce and to play.

'Tell me and I'll forget. Show me and I may remember. Involve me and I'll understand.'

Chinese Proverb

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