

## INTRODUCTION

I have always been interested in childhood. Those little people have always called my attention. I am greatly curious as to what they think, feel and how they perceive and interact with the world, where everything is new for them. In my second year at college I had the opportunity to study one of the best known psychologists specialized in childhood, Jean Piaget. At that time I discovered new interesting things about the world of young children. Since then, I started to see and interact with babies in a different way since I knew a little more about what I have always been interested in. Every time I am in the presence of a child I try to imagine how his or her mind works. Sometimes it is difficult to imagine how they understand, if they do, what people say to them or how they can express themselves in order to get what they want. In addition to this, I have also had the opportunity to study different theories and methodological approaches to teach young children, which provides me with a variety of tools to teach as effectively as possible. In other words, I have always been interested in babies and the appropriate methods to encourage them to learn and to guarantee an effective acquisition of the language.

Although English is not the official language in most countries, it is the most often taught as a second language around the world. It is the second most spoken language in the world. Besides, it is thought to give prestige and status and prepare our children for the future. As a result, there is a huge demand of English teaching in our country. What is more, the earlier the people start the better it is. Generally, parents want their children to get ahead and think it is essential for them to master such language. I strongly agree with those people who believe that children should learn English as a second language at a very early age. I sustain that since the knowledge of such language not only prepares them to communicate anywhere in the world but also, according to research and theory, it helps them develop their logical and creative thinking. I believe that every child should learn a second language in order to get cognitive benefits from learning it. As a result, we will have children knowing one of the most important languages in the world and also developing their right and left hemispheres effectively.

Learning a second language at a very early age is a growing trend. Countries such as Uruguay, Spain, Mexico, China and Argentina have subscribed to this new trend. In our country provinces such as Salta, Jujuy, La Pampa, Entre Ríos, Chubut, San Luis, San Juan, Santa Fé, Buenos Aires and Córdoba offer English teaching for babies. The reason behind my project is that in our city there is only one English institute which offers an English course for babies. As I have mentioned before, children and particularly babies have always been a subject of interest to me; consequently, everything related to teaching young children calls my attention. That is the reason why I have become in contact with an interesting and innovative institution which addresses the babies' market. I am referring to Centro Integral de Lenguas (CIL), where my project has been based.

The institution has offered an English course for babies for five years. Three different levels are offered: Nests, Clouds and Dreams. The first one is given to children from 4 months old to 1 year old; the second one is for learners from 1 year old to 2 years old; and the last one is given to kids that are 2 and 3 years old. The main aim for the three levels is to create a warm and friendly atmosphere for a positive anchoring of the learning. "Anchoring is the process by which an external stimulus is paired with an internal state. When the external stimulus is presented, the internal state is triggered." (J. Duncan, personal communication, February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2007). Such anchoring could be either positive or negative depending on the experience the learner has had when learning the language. CIL promotes a positive anchoring for a guaranteed and memorable learning. Regarding objectives, by the end of the first year (Nests) students will have incorporated sounds and structures in their minds in a spontaneous way. By the end of the second and third year (Clouds and Dreams) students will have imitated those structures and sounds incorporated by the first year by learning in a warm and friendly atmosphere. Regarding testing, there is no conventional type of test. However, an informal test has been adopted. The way learners are assessed is by their parents at home and by the teacher in the class. As regards parents, they observe how their children react to the language outside the classroom, if they use the language, when and how; they are supposed to complete a chart with information such as when their children uttered their first word in English, etc. Regarding the teacher, she focuses

attention on learner's recognition; she observes if learners obey commands. Regarding materials, the course is based on the communicative approach with a functional-notional syllabus. The techniques used in the class are songs, realia (real objects such as balls, balloons, toys and so forth) and commands by way of the Total Physical Response (TPR) method to learning. The exercise students are supposed to do is to follow the instructions the teacher and songs give; for example, "touch your nose, clap your hands, say what color something is" and so forth.

Although the course has been planned as a three stage course, at present there is only one course. Since there are few children from each period (4 months- 1 year old, 1-2 years old, 2-3 years old) the institution has decided to put them all together in the same group. This is an important shortcoming since, considering psychological theories, each developmental cognitive stage has its own characteristics. There are many differences between cognitive stages. If we have a child who is 1 year old and another who is 2 years old they will behave differently. For example, the one who is 2 will be able to imitate certain sounds while the one who is 1 will not. In other words, the outcomes of a mixed-age course will differ considerably from that of a course which is given to children from the same cognitive stage. From my perspective, the fact that CIL is the only English institute which offers an English course for babies in Córdoba City provides it with a unique opportunity in the market. However, the institution is not taking advantage of such a big plus. The clearest evidence lies in the number of students in the class. The mixed ages in the class are a consequence of the low demand; it is said that for a product to be sold, it should be advertised before in order to make it known and desired. I strongly believe that such course is an excellent product to be on the market; however, I think it should be promoted through different methods in order to have the outcome this brilliant idea is able to bear. Nevertheless, I will focus my attention on the methodological and psychological contribution I am able to do, which can have an impact, at least, on the word-of-mouth advertising. My project aims to analyze all the aspects of the course which deserve an improvement in order to redesign the curriculum for children to learn at the speed their ages require. \_

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

As it has been mentioned before, the aim of this project is to analyze all the aspects of the English course for babies which deserve an improvement in order to redesign the curriculum for children to learn at the speed their ages require. For this objective to be reached, extensive research on different disciplines has been necessary. In this section you will find theoretical contributions in medicine, psychology and methodology. First of all, there are investigations, which prove the effectiveness of learning a second language at a very early age. Then, you will become familiar with contributions made by one of the best known psychologists specialized in childhood, Jean Piaget. After that, there is a description of common characteristics of young pupils which lead to different methodological approaches for teaching young learners. Finally, you will find all the relevant steps to curriculum design.

First of all, in order to be able to identify those aspects of the English course for babies that deserve any improvement it is necessary to understand babies and young children' abilities and their most relevant characteristics. Many centuries ago, children were thought to be nothing at all. As the seventeenth-century philosopher John Locke believed, they were "tabulae rasae", alluding to the idea that newborn babies have no innate or built-in mental content. In other words, they were blank tablets whose knowledge was built-up gradually from their experiences and sensory perceptions of the outside world. However, new developmental research has shown that this idea was completely wrong. As Alison Gopnik, a professor of psychology and a leading cognitive scientist, Andrew N. Meltzoff, a professor specialized in the field of child psychology, and Patricia K. Kuhl, a professor and chairwoman of speech and hearing sciences at the University of Washington (2001) sustain, babies and children think, observe and reason; they do experiments, consider evidence, look for the truth, draw conclusions and solve everyday problems, such as what people, objects and words are like. The authors have carried out research on what and how children learn about people, things and words. I will share the results with you since they are relevant to the aim of this project; it is important to understand how children learn in order to know how to teach them a second language at an early age. To start with, according to

Gopnik, Meltzoff and Kuhl, babies are able to understand what their minds are like by understanding other people's minds. That is, by understanding the people around them they will understand themselves and feel identified with those around. Newborn babies will use other people to figure out the world. The ability babies have to imitate is something amazing: an internal feeling of their own bodies, kinesthesia, allows them to imitate what people usually do. For instance, they can imitate a person moving his tongue, although they have never seen their faces. That is, by understanding a similarity between that internal feeling and the external face they see, they are successful in imitating those movements that they can only see but not feel. As a result, it can be said that it is a myth that babies cannot see. What is more, newborn babies not only recognize that those faces are like their own faces, but also they distinguish and prefer certain faces. As Gopnik, Meltzoff and Kuhl have proved, after a few days babies are born, they recognize familiar faces, voices and even smells, preferring them to unfamiliar ones. Moreover, young children will distinguish a happy face from a sad one since they recognize, for example, that a happy face goes with the chirp of a happy tone of voice. In addition, it is important to highlight the fact that babies communicate even before they can talk. That is, they coordinate their own expressions, gestures and voices with those of other people. By way of illustration, one-year-old babies know that they are supposed to see where other people point, what they should do to something by looking at what other people do, how they should feel about something by seeing how other people feel. Even using no language babies can be told and transmitted cultural concepts. The authors believe that by imitating adults around them, babies will learn how to behave in the particular social world, which is something that deserves special attention as I will be a teacher. That is, it is important to bear in mind that any teacher is someone who teaches not only language contents but also, and first of all, 'social' content. For instance, by treating young children in a polite and friendly way we are, in a way, setting an example to our students for their lives. In other words, it is relevant to know how to interact with our students as human beings and what we should expect from them as learners.

The mechanism children have to learn deserves special attention since it is different from the one adults have. The theory developed by Stephen Krashen known as

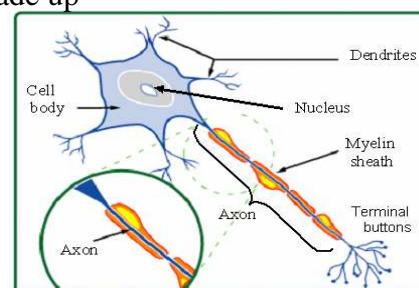
*Language Acquisition Theory* (Richards & Rogers, 2001), holds that there are two ways of developing competence when learning a second language: *Acquisition* and *Learning*. The former refers to a natural, unconscious process by understanding and using language for meaningful communication. The latter, by contrast, refers to a conscious process by learning language rules inductively. Therefore, learning cannot lead to acquisition. What is more, Jeremy Harmer (2004) supports that children react to meaning even if they do not understand individual words. He agrees with Krashen's theory since he claims that infants learn in an indirect way by taking information from all sides, learning from everything around them rather than focusing just on the topic they are being taught. Besides, they learn from what they see and hear and especially from what they can touch and interact with.

It seems advisable to encourage parents to give their children the opportunity to be exposed to a second language as early as possible since they will not only develop different skills but also acquire a second language for good. That is, not being aware that they are learning something new, they will enjoy it a lot, which implies a better acquisition of input. They will probably forget what the teacher says; however, they will never forget what they have felt.

#### Reasons for learning a second language at an early age

There are three main bases for learning a second language early. First of all, it is said that learning a second language enlarges the density of gray matter. That is, according to F. McPherson (2004), brain tissue is constituted by gray and white matter. The former is made up of cell bodies of nerve cells while the latter is made up

of the long filaments that extend from the cell bodies, which transmit the electrical signals carrying the messages between neurons. Thus, the density of grey matter correlates positively with certain abilities and skills. Besides, the volume of gray matter tissue appears to be determined by both genes and



A NERVE CELL

environmental factors, such as experience. By way of illustration, studies have shown that an increased volume of professional musicians' gray matter reflects the time

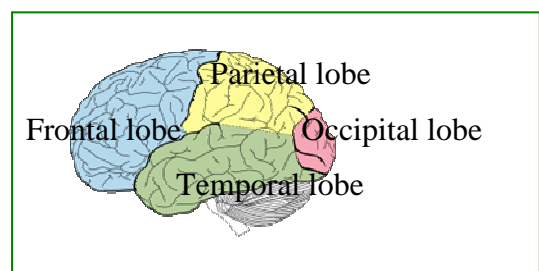
devoted to musical training. Researchers from University College London, namely Andrea Mechelli., Jenny T. Crinion, Uta Noppeney, John O’Doherty, John Ashburner, Richard S. Frackowiak, and Cathy J. Price (2004) found that learning a second language at a very early age correlates positively with different skills and abilities. 105 monolingual and bilingual brains were studied with a whole-brain technique, known as a voxel-based morphometry (VBM). The aim was to explore structural plasticity in healthy right-handed English and Italian bilinguals, who have been compared to monolinguals to examine potential differences in the density of gray and white matter. In order to assure the validity of the result it is important to highlight the fact that all volunteers for this study, namely bilinguals and monolinguals, were native English speakers of comparable age and level of education. Of the 58 bilinguals examined, 25 were ‘early’ bilinguals, who had learnt a second language before the age of 5 and who had practiced regularly since; 33 were ‘late’ bilinguals who had learnt a second language between the age of 10 and 15 years old and had practiced it regularly for at least 5 years. The effect shown by VBM is that grey-matter density in the inferior parietal cortex was greater in bilinguals than monolinguals. That is, as McPherson (2004) sustains, the cerebrum, the largest structure of the brain, is divided into four different lobes: *parietal*, *frontal*, *temporal* and *occipital*, each with a specific function and characteristics. The parietal lobe, situated at the top and behind the frontal lobe, is where the primary sensory area locates (i.e. sensations of pain, temperature, touch, and pressure carried by nerve impulses); besides, spatial

orientation, speech and language development, and attention are related to this specific lobe.

The result of early exposition is remarkably evident in the left hemisphere and a trend is also evident in the right hemisphere.

Although increased grey-matter density in the inferior parietal cortex is common to both early and late bilinguals, the effect is greater in the early bilinguals in the left and right hemispheres due to greater plasticity.

In order to understand the importance of such effect I will share with you the main differences between right and left hemispheres. According to Ernest R. Hilgard, Rita L.



CEREBRUM

Atkinson and Richard C. Atkinson C. (1979), our cerebrum is made up of two hemispheres, the right and the left. While the former controls the functions of the left side of the body, the latter controls the functions of the right side. However, our brain functions as an integrated whole. That is, information in one hemisphere is immediately transferred to the other by connecting nerve fibers- a process known as *corpus callosum*. Making a close examination, the left hemisphere is almost larger than the right hemisphere, even in fetal brains. Such asymmetry is due to different functions performed by the two hemispheres. On the one hand, the left hemisphere is specialized for the use of language. Besides, it can perform many complicated sequential, analytic and mathematical activities. On the other hand, the right hemisphere is specialized for mental imagery and the understanding of spatial relationships. What is more, it is superior to the left hemisphere in constructing geometric and perspective drawings. It can assemble colored blocks to match a complex design much more effectively than the left hemisphere. Besides, it plays an important role in musical and artistic abilities, emotions and dreaming.

Considering what researchers have brought to light about early bilingual brains and having analyzed the functions of the two hemispheres, it seems reasonable to sustain that learning a second language early not only enables us to develop it effectively but also makes us more creative and passionate human beings.

The second main benefit of learning a second language when very young is the fact that the grey-matter density decreases as the age of acquisition increases. In the same study previously mentioned, researchers investigated whether there was a relation between brain structure and proficiency in the second language and age of acquisition. They tested 22 native Italian speakers who learned English as a second language at an age between 2 and 34 years old. What they identified is an increase in the density of grey-matter in the left inferior parietal cortex of bilinguals, which is more pronounced in early rather than late bilinguals. These effects could result from a genetic predisposition to increased density, or from a structural reorganization induced by experience. Early bilinguals probably acquire a second language through social experience, rather than as a result of a genetic predisposition. Their findings therefore suggest that the structure of the human brain is altered by the experience of acquiring a second language.



In addition to this, it is said that a sensitive period exists for the acquisition of a nonnative phonological system. In a study conducted by Susan Oyama in 1976 native speakers of Italian were judged for degree of accent in English. They were 60 Italian-born male immigrants who learned English at various ages and who were in the US prior to the age of 6. It was found that the earlier they had arrived to The United States the more native-like pronunciation they acquired. Moreover, Dr. Patricia Kuhl, sustains that children learn language with remarkable speed, having a native-like accent by the end of their second year (1993). Besides, it was shown that phonetic prototypes were the essence of speech perception, which acted as “perceptual magnets”. A test made to children of 6 months old proved that the effect of such perceptual magnets was language-specific. Thus, a child exposed to a specific language would alter his or her perception of speech by 6 months of age. These results offer an explanation for the findings of a variety of studies on cross-language speech perception in infants and adults, have implications for second-language learning, and are consistent with data on the representation of cognitive categories outside the domain of speech. The results support a new model which describes how innate factors and experience with a specific language interact in the development of speech perception. What is more, Gopnik, Meltzoff and Dr. Patricia Kuhl (2001) have proved that this mental representation of sounds, phonetic prototypes, are well formed and become more fixed as the learner gets older, which makes it more difficult to perceive the distinctions of a foreign language.

In short, a child being exposed to a second language at a very early age will develop their right and left hemisphere effectively and will acquire a native like accent. That child will not only learn one of the most widely spoken languages in the world but also develop his or her analytic and creative thinking related to any aspect in life, not only to language. Hence, teaching very young learners is a growing trend in our country. There are many English institutions which offer English classes for babies, such as CIL, the only institution which offers such course in Cordoba City. Alternative Language Learning (ALL), an institution whose headquarters are located in Buenos Aires, offers English courses for babies, promoting an early immersion in ESL. According to its director María Marta Suarez (2008), a course of such characteristics is a good opportunity to be exposed to the whole of a language since the linguistic input is

almost as rich in grammatical structures as it is in the mother tongue since children are good at internalizing grammatical structures in an unconscious way.

#### Developmental cognitive stages

It is important to bear in mind children's intellectual limitations in order to assure a language acquisition. A child will be able to perform certain activities according to his or her cognitive stage. The Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget (1972, as cited in Berk, 1999) developed a theory of how cognition evolves through a series of stages as children mature. He sustained that the *schemas*, specific psychological structures, change throughout the intellectual development. At the beginning, the schemas are developed through a level of motor actions. Then, they are based on a mental level. Children will think before performing an action. Piaget believed children mature through four developmental stages: sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational and formal operational, which may vary according to intelligence, cultural background and socioeconomic factors but the order of progression is supposed to be the same for all infants. As the English course for babies in CIL is offered to children between 4 months old and 3 years old, only the Sensorimotor Stage and the Preoperational Stage will be developed.

To start with, the *Sensorimotor Stage* lasts from birth to two years old. As the name implies children use senses and motor abilities to understand the world around them. It is subdivided into six sub stages. During the first month infants' actions derive from their reflexive schemas. They apply reflexive conducts to every stimulus in contact with their mouth and hands. Between one and four months children work on primary circular reactions. They start to have voluntary control over their actions, repeating those actions they perform by chance from which they get successful results, such as opening and closing their hands. Besides, they have a limited capability to anticipate events. For instance, they will look forward to seeing their mums coming to feed them. Between four and eight months children turn to secondary circular reactions, which implies that they will try to repeat interesting sounds and actions, performed by themselves. The control they already have over their actions enables them to imitate others' behaviors more efficiently. However, they are not able to imitate quickly and

fluently those actions which are completely new. Therefore, they will enjoy watching an adult playing *peekaboo*, although they will not be able to participate yet. From eight months to twelve months infants start to coordinate secondary circular reactions. That is, actions that were performed by accident are now performed with a purpose. They are able to solve sensorimotor problems such as finding a hidden object. They will coordinate two schemas; they will “push” the obstacle in order to “catch” the toy. One of the skills children develop during this stage is the awareness that an object continues to exist even when it is not present to the senses – concept of *object permanence*. For example, if a cloth is placed over a toy for which a ten-month child is reaching, he or she will actively search for an object that has been hidden under a cloth or behind a screen. Then, he or she has attained the concept of object permanence. In contrast, a younger baby in a similar situation will lose interest and make no attempt to search for the toy since “...for the younger baby ‘out of sight is out of mind’.” (Gopnik, Meltzoff and Kuhl, 2001:72). However, at the age of ten months their research capacity is limited. If a hidden toy is removed from a place (A) to another (B), the baby will try to find it in the first place the toy was hidden (A). Consequently, it could be said that although babies between 8 and 12 months are aware of an object’s permanence they do not have a clear image of an object’s existence since they will not try to find the hidden object in a different place where it was covert before. This is the reason why their research capability is limited during this cognitive developmental stage. Another important characteristic during this cognitive stage is babble. It is said that babies learn about speech before they begin to talk. That is, at about seven or eight months babies begin to babble, producing strings of consonant-vowel syllables such as *dadadada* or *babababa*. Babies from any culture will babble at first in an identical way, using sounds like *d*, *b*, *m* and *g* with the vowel *ah*. Once they reach the babbling milestone, they will produce the distinctive noises of their own community. Hence, *Motherese*, a child-directed speech, helps children learn specific sound of their own language. That is, when a person talks to a child, he or she unconsciously produces sounds more clearly and pronounces them more accurately when they talk to babies. Besides, the pitch of the voice rises dramatically, the intonation becomes melodic and singsongy and the speech

slows down with exaggerated, lengthened vowels. This makes it easier for babies to map the sounds of their language.

Once they are 12 and 18 months old they will repeat actions, which they are familiar with, but they will incorporate new ones to have unfamiliar results. They perform tertiary circular reactions; *tertiary* because reactions are now creative and experimental. This is why they will be able to manage new experiences solving sensorimotor problems more efficiently. For instance, they will consider using a stick in order to reach an object. By the end of the Sensorimotor Stage children between 18 months and 2 years old will acquire the ability to make mental representations of reality. They refer to inner images of objects, which are not present, and past events; this implies that children will figure certain actions in their minds before performing them. This new aptitude leads to a better comprehension of object permanence. They know that objects can be moved when they are hidden from sight. What is more, mental representation enables a deferred imitation- the ability to remember and imitate models of actions, which are not present at that moment. Finally, the way they play will change due to this new aptitude of mental representations. By the end of this stage children will reproduce different familiar situations. For instance they will simulate they are eating, sleeping or driving. This new way of playing is known as *symbolic game*. Symbolic representations are the major tools of thinking.

In other words, it is important to know what children are able to do according to the cognitive developmental stage they are in. From my point of view, a teacher should bear in mind who the learners are; that is, if there is a first level course (Nests) which is made up of children between 4 and 8 months years old, she or he should not encourage learners to find a hidden object since they do not have the ability to understand that an object exists even though it is not in front of them. However, the teacher should stimulate the kids to play *peek-a-boo*, even though they will not perform it but they will enjoy seeing others playing it. In short, it seems advisable to take into consideration cognitive characteristics of our learners in order to prepare a class, which ends up being enjoyable, successful and memorable for both learners and teachers.

Once children have developed all the abilities mentioned before, they will move into the *Preoperational Stage*, which lasts from 2 to 7 years old. The main evolution

during this new period is the use of language due to an improvement in mental representations. According to Gopnik, Meltzoff and Kuhl (2001), language has the advantage of allowing human beings to communicate and coordinate their actions with other people in their group. Besides, it is the way we know who is part of a group and who is an outsider; language lets us differentiate ourselves and others. What is more, young children should find out about the grown-ups' language and also make that language their own. As Hilgard, Atkinson L. and Atkinson C. (1979) sustain, one of the first things infants learn is concepts of the things they have around them. A one-year-old child probably has concepts of parents or pets of their family but they do not know the names for them. When they start to speak they will relate this knowledge of concepts with words they hear from adults. However, this happens progressively; a child of 3 years old may have concepts of different colors and know that there are certain words for them but they will not probably know which word goes with which color. The child will use the appropriate name for the appropriate color after having observed older people using such terms. What is more, a preoperational child will focus their attention on certain aspects of concepts, which are relevant for them. For instance, they will *overextend* the meaning of "dog" to other animals since a dog is an animal; it has four legs and it moves similarly to a cat, a lion or a cow. Such overextensions will decrease as they grow up. This new ability of speaking is also important to plan a class since a teacher should know what preoperational learners are able to utter. The teacher should not expect a 2-year old student to utter the name of a color, although he or she has concepts of different colors. However, the teacher should give them a model to imitate later. Besides, as Gopnik, Meltzoff and Kuhl sustain, babies will use those words which make sense to them, even if adults do not use the words that way. For instance, American babies use *there!* to show success and *uh-oh!* to describe failure. Although parents do not think of *uh-oh* as a word, it is meaningful for babies. What is more, at about one and a half to two and a half years old, a two-word speech appears. That is, children will combine single words into two-word utterances without articles, auxiliary verbs and prepositions, focusing on the most important words, which express the main idea of what he or she wants to utter. For example, a child will say "Daddy car" meaning "That's daddy's car". These two-word utterances will become complete

sentences as the child acquires larger vocabulary and learns to use certain critical grammatical morphemes such as suffixes “-ing” (for the progressive form), “-ed” (for the past forms) and “-s” (for plurals and present tense for the third person singular).

Furthermore, children during this period will express their mental representations through drawings, which will reach reality, as they get older. As Piaget sustained (1972, as cited in Berk, 1999) infants’ drawing is another relevant demonstration of symbolic expression. At the beginning drawings will be difficult to interpret since they are not close to reality but as infants get older drawings will be a clearer representation of objects. Although children cannot draw a real picture they enjoy scribbling with crayons or pencils. Such scrawls, which have no relation to reality at first sight, are the way in which children try to represent what they have in their minds. Consequently, it could be said that a simple line deserves consideration since the infant has started to use his or her mental representation. It is advisable to be aware of what type of drawing a child is able to do, according to his or her age and cognitive stage, in order to plan a successful task. To my way of thinking, the fact that young babies can only draw lines or scrawls is not a reason for avoiding certain tasks in the class. For instance, I would deliver pieces of paper and different color pencils to babies to present and practice the colors. It is important to be mindful of how children learn; that is, they grasp from what they touch and interact with; as a result, the baby will be in contact with different shapes drawn in a piece of paper and with colors he or she is mastering. Once they are older, they will be able to draw real pictures and they will have the ability to perform other different tasks by making use of drawing. Apart from drawings, symbolic game will be also performed in a better way day after day. What is more, it will separate from reality, as children get older. That is, at the beginning children will play with real objects, such as a real telephone, but then they will incorporate their creative thinking in order to make phone calls but through a piece of wood. What is more, they will not take part in the game as the main character. In other words, first they will feed themselves but then they will feed a doll, for instance. Infants become independent participants of the game as they reach a new step in this period. Finally, children include simulation to their game; this is called *creative play*. They will, for instance, use a box instead of a table, a piece of paper instead of a dish.

In short, early immersion to English as a Second language (ESL) is a growing trend in our country. The reasons for this are not only English being one of the most widely spoken languages in the world and parents' wants of seeing their children get ahead but also the fact that learning this language at a very early age enables children's mind to develop their creative and logical thinking. In order to gain benefits from this early immersion to ESL, it is vital to plan the English class carefully. That is, the moment a class of such characteristics is prepared a teacher should consider not only the methodological approaches but also the underlying psychological theory in order to know what to do, with whom and at what moment. In other words, I would consider which cognitive developmental stages their learners are in to select the task to be performed by them appropriately. I would combine my methodological knowledge with psychological theories to guarantee the learning of such language for good. As all the psychological contributions have been developed above it is important to focus on all the relevant methodological approaches, according to the aim of this project.

#### Methodological approaches for teaching young learners

It has been said that certain activities are appropriate to specific cognitive developmental stages. Similarly, there are many methodologies which were designed for specific purposes. That is, a teacher will choose the most appropriate method, depending on what he or she wants to teach and who will be taught. Hence, CIL has opted for Total Physical Response (TPR) to teach young learners since it is a household word among language trainers teaching young learners. TPR was created by Dr. James J. Asher in 1977 from the premise that adult learning could be similar to young learning acquisition. As it has been mentioned before, it is said that children learn in an indirect and unconscious way. Besides, they do a lot of listening before they are able to utter a word. Hence, Asher (1977, as cited in H. D. Brown, 2000) claimed that a second language young learner should be taught as he or she learns his or her mother tongue, through physical activities (*Open the door, Eat this, Sit down, Bring this and so forth.*), and interrogatives (*Where's Paul?, Where's the book?*); students do not have to utter a verbal answer, they just point to the object or perform the action they are asked to perform. TPR can be linked to Series Method, proposed by Francois Gouin in 1880.

Gouin, a French teacher of Latin, tried to learn German by memorizing each single word and verb. However, he did not succeed; as a result, he observed his young nephew and discovered how he learnt his mother tongue. He realized that children use language to represent what they perceive from outside. Consequently, he stated that a second language should be taught *directly*, without translation, and *conceptually*, without grammatical rules and explanations. That is, a “series” of connected sentences, easy to perceive, stored and related to reality. Much later, psychologists developed a theory based on Gouin’s insights. It is called Trace theory and it “holds that the more intensively a memory connection is traced, the stronger the memory association will be and the more likely it will be recalled.” (Richards & Rodgers, 2001:73). Besides, it seems that the more unconscious this trace is, the more relaxing and enjoyable it is. Asher (1977, as cited in Richards & Rodgers) sustained that second language learning should take place in a stress-free environment as children acquire their first language, focusing on meaning rather than on forms. Infants can do this since they focus their attention on what an adult tells them to do. Thus, TPR teaches grammar and forms inductively. It would be said that the key is to concentrate on what they have to perform, without paying attention to how such command is uttered. What is more, TPR is directed to right-brain learning. As it has been mentioned before, according to Piaget, children learn through motor movements, which requires a right-hemisphere activity. Once an amount of right-hemisphere activities has been developed, the left hemisphere will be able to produce language. What is more, as Asher believed, movement reduces stress and creates a positive mood in the learner, facilitating the learning. Consequently, this is one of the reasons for early immersion to ESL mentioned before. A baby learning English as a second language will not only learn it but also will develop his or her creative thinking due to right- hemisphere activities. All these characteristics are linked to the ultimate aim of TPR. It is to teach basic speaking skills for which it is necessary to use action-based drills in the imperative form. Although the learners in Sensorimotor and Preoperational stage attending CIL’s courses are not likely to utter a word yet, the exposure to the language is a vital step for a later use of it. That is, even though babies are not able to produce the language, they start to master it through listening to it, which then will enable them to produce it. Then, learners play the role of listener and



performer since they are supposed to listen and respond physically to commands given by the teacher. Thus, the teacher has an active and direct role since he or she is the one who decides what to teach, who models and presents and selects the new material for classroom use. What is more, M. M. Suarez from ALL sustains that “the appropriate teacher to teach the course for babies should be someone who is fluent and accurate and who enjoys singing, dancing and playing with babies and young children” (M. Suarez, interview, April, 2008). Although a course of these characteristics is different from others in that it is not likely to involve feedback because of the abilities of the learners, Asher suggested the teacher should follow the example of how parents give feedback to their children. That is, when children are very young they are corrected very little but as they get older they are not supposed to make mistakes. Besides, the teacher should not interrupt them while speaking since they will probably feel embarrassed and inhibited.

Considering all the characteristics and objective of TPR, it could be said that it is similar to The Natural Method in that it fosters a pre-speaking phase before children have the capacity to speak. The Natural Approach, developed by Krashen and Terrell in 1983, gives importance to the exposure and input of a language rather than the practice; that is, they are attentive to what learners hear before they try to produce the language. The authors focus their attention on teaching communicative activities as they consider communication the primary function of language. Most people believe that Natural Method and Natural Approach are synonyms. However, there are similarities and differences between them. First, they are similar in that they hold that a second language should be taught like first language learning. That is why they use the term “natural”, referring to the natural way children learn their mother tongue. However, The Natural Approach does not put emphasis on teachers’ monologues, direct repetition, formal questions and answers and correct pronunciation and grammar production as The Natural Method does. Terrell and Krashen see language as a vehicle for communicating meanings and messages. They stated that acquisition could take place only when people understand messages in the target language (Richards & Rodgers, 2001:180). That is why The Natural Approach gives prominence to presenting comprehensible input in the target language. Terrell and Krashen, as Asher, emphasized the primacy of meaning rather than forms, giving special importance to vocabulary. Besides, this Approach took

certain teaching activities from TPR, such as command-based activities (*Close the door, Sit down*, and so forth) and the role of the learner and the teacher are the same as in The TPR method. Consequently, it seems that The TPR method, The Natural Method and The Natural Approach are similar in that they suggest learning a language under the same conditions a first language is learnt. It is important to highlight that it is not necessary to choose only one teaching method. A teacher could opt for combining two or more methods, according to students' needs and classroom objectives. Hence, it seems advisable to implement a combination of these three methodological approaches in the English course for babies..

### Curriculum design

Before selecting the most appropriate method or methods, it is crucial to go through different steps in order to design a successful language curriculum. According to James D. Brown (1995), a language curriculum is composed by six different elements, which provide a framework that helps teachers and learners teach and learn as effectively as possible in a given situation. The six elements are Needs analysis, Objectives, Testing, Materials, Teaching and Evaluation. Considering the aim of this project, these elements have been taken into consideration, making the redesign of the babies' language curriculum possible.

#### Needs Analysis

To start with, J. D. Brown (1995) defines a *Needs Analysis* as the process of gathering information to develop a curriculum, which will meet the learning needs of a specific group of students. Such needs will determine the goals and objectives, which can serve as the basis for selecting materials, teaching activities and tests and evaluation strategies, as well as for reevaluating the original needs analysis. In order to perform this type of analysis, it is important to decide who will be involved, the type of information that will be gathered and which viewpoints will be taken.

Regarding who will be involved in the needs analysis, Brown mentions four different groups of people that can take part in the process. First, the *target group* is

made up of people who will provide the ultimate information, such as students, teachers or sponsors. Then, the *audience* is constituted by any governing body or supervisor in the bureaucracy above the language program. Besides, there are the *needs analysts* who will conduct the analysis. Finally, the *resource group* consists of any people who are able to give information about the target group.

Regarding what type of information that will be gathered, according to Stufflebeam (1977, as cited in J. D. Brown, 1995), needs analysis can be based on four different philosophies, derived from the type of information that should be gathered. That is, the *discrepancy philosophy* sees needs as differences between what students are supposed to learn and what they are actually doing. Then, the *democratic philosophy* defines needs as what the majority of the group involved desires to learn. In addition, the *analytic philosophy* defines needs as whatever students will need to learn, considering what they already know; that is, hierarchical steps involved in the language learning process. Finally, the *diagnostic philosophy* sustains needs are anything that would prove harmful if it was missing; for instance, language needed by immigrants to survive in a foreign country.

Regarding which viewpoints will be taken, there are three dichotomies, which help narrow the choices of what to investigate in a needs analysis. The first dichotomy is *Situation Needs – Language Needs*; the second one is *Objective Needs – Subjective Needs*; finally, *Linguistic Content – Learning Process*.

#### *Situation Needs – Language Needs*

According to Brown, while *Situation Needs* refer to information about the program's human aspects (physical, social and psychological contexts in which learning takes place and so forth), *Language Needs* refer to the information about target linguistic behaviors (circumstances in which language will be used, the learners' reasons for studying the language and so forth). Regarding *Situation Needs* it is important to underline how significant the physical environment of the class is in order to guarantee a successful learning. According to H. Douglas Brown (2000), what children see, hear and feel when they enter the classroom will affect positively or negatively the amount of knowledge they will acquire. For instance, if the classroom is clean, neat, free from external noises, heating or cooling systems are operating, chairs

are appropriately arranged and the teacher and students can move easily in the room learning proficiency will be boosted. All these factors that seem to be irrelevant are crucial for learners to learn since, for example, if the teacher plans to do TPR activities but the classroom is not big enough to do so, the activity would be omitted, giving students no opportunity to learn appropriately, being in contact with the language through realia activities.

#### Objective Needs – Subjective Needs

*Objective Needs* are determined on observable data about the situation, the learners, and the language students will acquire and so forth. However, *Subjective Needs* call attention to the “wants”, “desires” and “expectations”. It is important to highlight that the differences between these two types of needs are due to their observability, not to the type of data gathered on them.

#### Linguistic Content – Learning Process

Finally, *Linguistic Content* differs from *Learning Process* in that it consists of needs that are analyzed objectively from a language need perspective and explained in linguistic terms while the latter analyzes needs on the affective domain subjectively.

All these decisions about the needs analysis are relevant since they will determine the direction and effectiveness of a language curriculum. Considering the objective of this project, it seems advisable to use an *analytic philosophy* in order to determine student’s needs in relation to what they should be able to learn about the world around them and how to express that knowledge in a second language (English). For instance, they should know “el cielo es azul” and they should also be able to utter “the sky is blue”. What is more, it is appropriate to take into consideration all three dichotomies in order to have a clear idea of what specific information should be gathered and what for.

#### Goals and Objectives

All the information gathered during the needs analysis will be used to state the program’s goals and objectives. J. D. Brown (1995) describes *goals* as general statements of the program’s purposes, which refer to what learners will be able to do at the end of the course. Such goals should never be seen as permanent statements since

they are based on perceived needs, which may change. For instance, if a new student enters the course, language and situation needs may vary. It is necessary to underline that in a language program, as J. D. Brown (1995) claims, there are two main categories within goals of education, namely, *cognitive* and *affective* goals, which are termed cognitive and affective domain. The *cognitive domain* makes reference to the language knowledge and skills the students will be learning in the program. In contrast, the *affective domain* refers to feelings, values, emotions, and so forth, which influence the learning. In other words, the *cognitive goals* would be those reflecting the language learning content of a program while the *affective goals* would be those designed to increase or alter affective factors, having an impact on the learning process. Once goals are identified they should be broken into smaller units to set the objectives. That is, *instructional objectives* are specific statements, illustrating what the learner will be able to do at the end of the course in a specific way. Mager (1975, as cited in J. D. Brown, 1995:74) indicates that objectives are specific since they determine three essential components: “*Performance* (what the learner will be able to do), *Conditions* (important conditions under which the performance is expected to occur) and *Criterion* (the quality or level of performance that will be considered acceptable)”, for instance, “By the end of the course, students will be able to understand other people talking to them doing listening activities applying effectively with a 70 percent of accuracy.” J. D. Brown adds two elements for objectives to be as specific as possible. He includes a *subject* and a *measure*. It is important to think of objectives in terms of what the *learners, students or participants* will be able to do at the end of the course. Besides, it is essential to express who the learners are in relation to their language level. For instance, “By the end of the first level course, the students in the English course for babies (Nests) will be able to ...”. The *measure* is the part of an objective that determines how the desired performance will be observed or tested, such as by way of multiple-choice questions, true and false, matching and so forth. It is important to highlight that objectives as well as goals are not permanent; they must be flexible enough to adapt to learners’ needs, and they should be specific to a particular program. In short, it is important to gather the appropriate information about the learners and the course in itself in order to determine the goals and objectives, which will guide the following steps in the design of the

language curriculum. In other words, according to what students are supposed to attain, the curriculum designer will opt for the most suitable way of testing, materials, style of teacher, teaching methods and program evaluation.

### Testing

After having set the goals and objectives of the course, the next step is to decide which type of test will be used. First of all, it is necessary to differentiate a *test* from an *assessment* since people tend to refer to them as if they were synonyms when they are not. On the one hand, H. D. Brown (2000) sustains that a *test* is an instrument which measures learner's performance in a given domain and which is generally scheduled in a curriculum. On the other hand, he claims that an *assessment* encloses a wider domain than a test and it usually happens every time a student produces the language. For instance, whenever a learner utters a new word, makes a sentence, responds to a question or tries out a new structure, the teacher assesses the learner's performance. It is said that a good teacher assesses students all the time, being those assessments either incidental or intended. Assessment can be informal or formal. An *informal assessment* takes place in all unplanned, incidental evaluative situations to elicit performance. They are called 'formative' evaluation since students are assessed in forming their competences and skills in order to improve them. It does not aim at scoring and making judgments about students' competence; consequently, there is a focus on the process rather than the product. On the other hand, a *formal assessment* is a planned exercise, which should be done in a short time to show students' achievement. It is usually 'summative' since it occurs at the end of a unit, lesson or a course, focusing on the product, as opposed to an informal test. Returning to the type of test which will be used it is important to highlight that, as H. D. Brown points out (2000), a good test consists of practicability, reliability and validity. That is, a test should be *practical* in terms of money, time, administration, scoring and interpretation. For instance, a test which takes ten hours to be completed is impractical, or a test which takes few minutes for students to do and many hours for examiners to design is impractical. What is more, a *reliable* test is that which produces consistent results even if it is delivered on different occasions. However, there are factors which are not under the control of the test writer;

for instance, illness or having a bad day. Results of a listening test taken in a noisy room will differ considerably from those of a test taken in a quiet atmosphere; as a result, there is the same test administered on different occasions with no consistent results. Nevertheless, the test writer must do his or her best to avoid unreliable results. Finally, a *valid* test should test what is intended to measure. For instance, if the teacher wants to measure students' writing abilities, he or she might ask them to write a paragraph about a given topic. All these characteristics should be taken into consideration when a test must be made. Besides, the teacher should decide on what type of test will be used to measure students' abilities, according to what he or she wants to test. That is, there are, according to Harmer (2000), four different types of tests, each with a specific purpose. They are: *proficiency*, *placement*, *diagnostic* and *achievement* tests. The *achievement* test is used to measure student's language and skill progress in relation to the syllabus they have been following. It should show progress, not failure; it must contain similar activities as students have practiced before.

It is difficult to imagine those little babies taking an exam; however, they can do this but not in a written form, obviously. As a result, I suggest an oral test since babies would not be able to write a word but they would be capable of uttering a word or responding physically to commands. What is more, I suggest an indirect assessment which will take place every time students produce the language and respond physically to it.

Therefore, once the teacher has decided on the type of test he or she would choose the best way of doing this; written or oral form. Harmer, sustains that "whatever purpose a test or exam has, a major factor in its success or failure as a good measuring instrument will be determined by the item types that it consists." (2004:322). He argues that a test item can be either *direct* or *indirect*. An *indirect* test item aims at finding out about students' knowledge through controlled items, such as cloze procedures, multiple choice questions, sentence re-ordering, paraphrasing, responding physically to commands, and so forth. This type of item examines abilities and language knowledge in an indirect way since it will focus on what lies beneath students' perceptive and productive skills.

In a word, every step in the curriculum design depends on the previous one. That is, according to the needs students have, the objective will be determined; then, the type of test will be based on such objectives, and so on.

Once the teacher has determined what type of test will be used, he or she should decide how the test will be scored. J. D. Brown (1995), states that there are two major families of test: *norm-referenced* and *criterion-referenced*. *Norm-referenced test* (NRT) compares the performance of a particular group or students with the one of another group or students. Here the scores students have are given as the norm. In contrast, *Criterion-referenced test* (CRT) measures a student's performance based on a particular criterion, agreed upon. Then, students must reach certain level of performance to pass the test. The main difference lies in the interpretation of scores. That is, while CRT examines how much language knowledge a student has, NRT examines the performance of a particular student in relation to the scores of all other students. In a word, while CRT is based on *percent*, NRT on *percentile*. That is, CRT' emphasis is on the percent of the correct answers given by a student in relation to the material taught during the course. However, in a NRT the focus is on percentile scores- proportion of students who scored above and below the student in question. Hence, to assure the effectiveness of a NRT there should be students scored very low, others very high and the rest in between. In contrast, a CRT would accept that all the students score 100 percent of a given test. What is more, while NRT is generally used to measure general abilities, CRT is most suitable to give precise information about individual performance on established language points. As a result, on a CRT students usually know what language points will be examined; however, students will rarely know what language to expect in a NRT since it measures general and varied abilities. In short, there is one type of test for a specific purpose and a specific way of scoring according to what the teacher wants to test. Generally, proficiency and placement tests are scored by a NRT while achievement and diagnostic tests by CRT. Therefore, I suggest a test for babies that applies CRT to examine specific learners abilities. To sum up, there are many alternatives to test students, each of which fulfills a specific goal. The test writer should identify such goals in order to design the most suitable type of test and achieve what the instructional objectives determine.



### Materials

The next step in the curriculum design is the development and implementation of materials. J. D. Brown (1995) defines materials as “any systematic description of the techniques and exercises to be used in classroom teaching.” (Brown, 1995:139). First of all, it is necessary to highlight that the selection of materials will depend on the approach and syllabus adopted by the course, which are closely related to the instructional objectives. What is more, as H. D. Brown sustains, it is important to bear in mind that children’s attention span differs considerably from adult’s attention span. That is, although children can spend hours in front of the TV set watching their favorite cartoons, they do not have the same attention when they have to deal with difficult, useless or boring activities. Therefore, materials should be selected to capture their immediate interest since they are focused on the immediate here and now. Besides, it is important to vary the activities to keep them interested and to tap into their natural curiosity. In a word, materials should be designed based on the objectives, the syllabuses and learners’ characteristics. First, Richards and Rodgers, following Anthony’s model, define an *approach* as “theories about the nature of language and language learning that serve as the source of practices and principles in language teaching.” (Richards & Rodgers, 2001:20). After deciding which approach will be adopted, it is important to plan, organize and make decisions about what should be taught and in which order. That is, it is time to make decisions about the *syllabus*- “the form in which linguistic content is specified in a course or method.” (Richards & Rodgers, 2001:25). Based on what has been decided to be taught there are different types of syllabus: *structural*, *situational*, *topical*, *functional*, *notional*, *skills*, and *task*. First, J. D. Brown (1995) calls *topical syllabuses* to the syllabuses that are organized by topics or themes, which are selected by the book’s author according to the target the book is designed for. For instance, crime, friendship, leadership, pop music, trends in living, and so forth. Second, *functional syllabuses* are those which organize materials around language functions such as greeting people, interrupting, saying good-bye, and giving information, among others. These language functions will be determined by the needs of the students and presented in order of usefulness. Finally, *notional syllabuses* are those organized around general notions -abstract conceptual categories- such as

distance, duration, quantity, quality, locations, size, and so forth. Although there is one type of syllabus according to what should be taught, it may occur that teachers implement *mixed syllabuses*. That is, two or more types of syllabuses together, one prevailing over the other. For instance, a notional-functional syllabus, situational-topical syllabus, and so on. In my opinion, these three syllabuses would be the most appropriate for teaching young learners since they are discovering some notions in the world around them and they are also learning how to interact in that world; that is, greeting people, saying thank you, asking for some food, and so on. As a result, all those functions and notions can be taught when presenting different topics. For instance, when children are learning about “animals” they can also learn how big or small they are; besides, they can interact with a teddy bear by saying “Hello” to it.

Subsequent to determining the approach and syllabus, it is necessary to make decisions about the materials: techniques and exercises. J. D. Brown defines *techniques* as the way the language points are presented to students. For example, showing videotape where native speakers have a dialogue about what they are going to do on the weekend. The criteria for selecting this technique are based on the idea that it is useful to provide examples of native speakers using the appropriate language when meeting someone, telling future arrangements and so on. On the other hand, *exercises*, as defined by J. D. Brown, are ways of practicing the language presented before. For instance, after seeing the videotape students are supposed to make a dialogue talking about their future plans. In order to choose the most appropriate materials, which meet the needs of the students, there are three different strategies: *adopting*, *developing*, or *adapting*. First, when adopting materials it is necessary to decide what type of material is desirable since they take different physical forms and are presented on a number of media; for instance, books, maps, journals, magazines, pictures, videotapes, charts, cassettes, computer software, and so forth. Information about all these materials can be found in publishers' catalogs, teachers' shelves and Book Received. Once they have been found it is important to evaluate at firsthand their suitability for a particular program. Stevick (1971, as cited in J. D. Brown, 1995:160) suggested that materials should be examined in terms of three qualities (strengths, lightness and transparency), three dimensions (linguistic, social and topical) and four components (occasions for use, sample of

language use, lexical exploration and exploration of structural relationship). What is more, materials should be evaluated while they are being used as well as after each implementation period in order not to become banal to the particular curriculum involved. Second, when there are no suitable materials for a specific program it is necessary to develop such materials, although it takes time. In order to do so it is essential to find teachers who are willing to work on materials. They will if they feel they will have an easier job with the new material, if they are paid for the effort, and so on. After developing the material it is important to test it. That is, to give the new material to a teacher who has not been involved in its production to try it out and discuss about its effectiveness. Finally, materials should match students' needs, however, there are occasions in which there is no perfect book, for instance, to that specific course. As a result, it seems advisable to adapt materials that are on the market to the needs of students. The process of adapting materials involves finding and evaluating those materials that serve at least some of the students' needs; then, analyzing the degree to which each existing material matches the course objectives, that is, deciding which material contains the highest percentage of matches. Finally, it is important to fill in the gaps with the chosen material and reorganize where and when to include the adapted materials in order to achieve existing objectives. In short, materials, as every aspect of a class, should be selected based on what students need to learn and how linguistic content is specified in a specific course. Sometimes, teachers can adopt materials from the market since they meet students' needs; however, there are cases in which materials should be adapted or even developed by the teachers in order to reach what instructional objectives determine. As a way of illustration, I would adopt ALL Alternative Language Learning CDs and books and I would also adapt some other materials to that particular course. That is, I suggest the implementation of some other CDs, puppets, toys, story tales and DVDs, which meet student's needs. Besides, I would develop some materials in order to present the language through realia, flashcards, games, and so on.

### Teaching

The following step in the curriculum design is to apply the information gathered in the needs analysis, objectives, tests, and materials to the *teaching* phase. In other words, the way in which instructions will be delivered in order to achieve the goals of the program. J. D. Brown (1995) refers to teaching as the techniques and exercises, selected by the teacher to help students learn. Such activities, as it has been mentioned before, will be based on the objectives, approaches and syllabuses of the particular program. Although teachers are accustomed to doing this, there are elements which can make their jobs more enjoyable and effective. That is, it is important to orient and involve teachers in the curriculum by providing them with initial information as regards the context of the program (government policies, community support, school support as regards students' behavior, and so forth), the learners (number of learners, previous learning experiences, responsibilities within the program, expectations, success of their own learning, and so forth), the teachers (teaching skills, proficiency level, place in the classroom, how a good teaching would be regarded, expectations as regards approaches, syllabuses and materials, among others), the administration of the program (personnel involved, ways of monitoring and evaluating teachers, number of teachers, responsibilities and duties, budgets, and so on) and types of instruction (adopted approaches, goals and objectives, learning outcomes, physical environment of classrooms, duration and intensity of the program, number of learners in each class, kind of syllabuses, and so forth). To sum up, the teaching phase is a relevant step in the curriculum design since it will determine the success of the program's goal. That is, this is the stage in which the teacher should implement all the information gathered in the previous steps in his or her teaching; how the teacher delivers instructions and all the information and the support he or she will be provided with will make the program's goals achievement possible.

### Program Evaluation

Finally, there is a never-ending process called *evaluation*. This is not a separate step in the curriculum design since it should be applied to every single step, starting

with needs analysis and progressing through the following steps. This evaluation program connects and holds all the elements together; as a result, if there is no evaluation, all the elements will lack cohesion. J. D. Brown defines *evaluation* as “the systematic collection and analysis of all relevant information necessary to promote the improvement of a curriculum and assess its effectiveness within the context of the particular institutions involved” (Brown, 1995:218). In order to perform a program evaluation there are four suggested approaches: *product-oriented*, *static-characteristic*, *process-oriented*, and *decision-oriented approaches*. First, a process-oriented approach gives importance to a formative evaluation in order to facilitate curriculum revision, change and improvement. It is necessary to think about the very worth of goals before evaluating their achievement. Then, decision-facilitation approach sustains that the most important function an evaluation has is to help in making decisions. That is, evaluators tend not to make judgments but to gather that information which will help the administrators and faculty make their own decisions. These two last approaches seem to be the most suitable to study the babies’ program in order to facilitate its revision and to make suggestions about potential changes when redesigning the curriculum. On the other hand, as J. D. Brown points out (1995), there are three dimensions that shape the point of view on evaluations. First, according to the purpose of gathering information with a certain approach, two types of evaluations can take place: *formative* and *summative*. The former takes place during the process of curriculum development in order to collect and analyze information that will help in improving the curriculum. In contrast, the latter occurs at the end of a program to determine the degree to which the program was successful, efficient and effective. Second, two different types of information can be collected; that is, a *process evaluation* collects any information about the workings of a program (processes) while a *product evaluation* gathers information about the achievement of the program’s goals (product). Finally, information can be gathered in form of *quantitative* or *qualitative* data. Quantitative data is information gathered by measures that produce results in form of numbers, such as tests, quizzes, grades, and so forth. Qualitative data, in contrast, is holistic information based on observations, students’ journal entries, and minutes from meetings, among others. Consequently, according to the aim of this project, it would be

appropriate to implement a formative and process evaluation to analyze how the babies' program is working in order to revise, change or improve aspects of the curriculum, if necessary.

To put it briefly, early immersion in ESL is a growing trend in Argentina. In this section the main reasons why parents should encourage their children to be in contact with English have been outlined. Besides, in order to understand how those little people start to perceive the world and interact with it, other theories have been developed, for example, Piaget's theory, among other contributions by prominent authors in that field. What is more, all the relevant methodological approaches, considering children's cognitive characteristics, have been described. Finally, a detailed description of all the necessary steps to curriculum design has been provided.

## METHODS OF COLLECTING DATA

In order to find more data about the different English courses for babies offered by CIL I have decided to use three different methods of collecting data. First, I have chosen a *structured interview*, which will be conducted to the Principal to know more details about the courses. I have chosen this method since, as Mackay (1978, as cited in Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998) sustained, it allows the gatherer to clarify any misunderstanding which may alter the interpretation of information; what is more, the gatherer can follow up any avenue of interest that arises during the question and answer session, which has not been planned before (See appendix I). Second, to gather information about the infants and their desires I have decided to do research through an *unstructured questionnaire*, which consists of open questions admitting rich answers. According to Ron White (1994), questionnaires can be an effective way of ensuring that managers learn what is working successfully and what changes need to be made in the institution. They will be delivered to babies' parents since they are the ones who have decided to take the course; it will be carried out in Spanish so that parents do not have problems when interpreting them (See appendix II). Finally, in order to examine closely how students are learning and how the program is working I have opted for *classroom observations*.

## CURRICULUM DESIGN

In order to find specific and relevant information for the development of a curriculum that meets babies' learning needs, different elements were necessary, namely, Needs Analysis, Objectives, Testing, Materials, Teaching and Program Evaluation.

### Needs Analysis

Initially, a *Needs Analysis* was carried out for the purpose of gathering relevant information to recognize the students' needs, which will determine all the other elements previously mentioned. Such analysis was possible by virtue of different people who were involved: a *target group*, made up of babies's parents since they are the ones who decided to take their children to English classes; an *audience*, constituted by the Principal of CIL; a *resource group*, composed by kindergarten teachers, and a *needs analyst*, who conducted the analysis, me.

The audience was interviewed in order to collect necessary information about the course. First of all, I asked the Principal why she thinks English should be learnt at an early age. She told me it is important for children to be taught the language when young since if they learn a second language at an early age they learn it for long; what is more, they acquire a rhythm and pronunciation similar to a native speaker. Therefore, what she expects from the course is learners acquiring acquainted sounds and structures in order to be able to produce them when older, in the following course levels. The program has three different levels: Nests, Clouds and Dreams. The first one is run for children from 4 months old to 1 year old; the second one is for learners from 1 year old to 2 years old; and the last one is offered to kids that are 2 and 3 years old. As it has been mentioned before, in view of the fact that there are few children the institution has decided to put them all together in the same group unless they are from different ages. Consequently, at present there is only one course, constituted by eight girls who are from 1 year and four months to three years old. Then, in order to select the materials for the course, techniques and exercises, I asked the Principal about the resources that are available for the course. She informed me that there are a tape recorder, a cd recorder, a



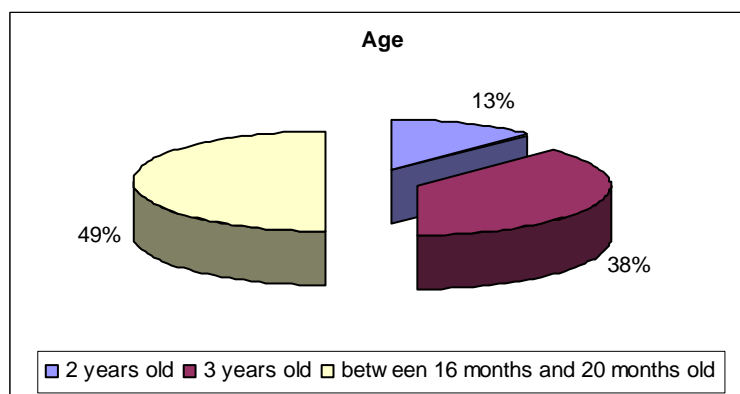
TV and DVD set, boards and plenty of toys. What is more, the teacher has the opportunity of adapting or adding those materials and aids which are suitable for the course. Regarding classroom facilities, she told me that the rooms are medium size with enough light and they are generally free from external noises; besides, there are heating and cooling systems. In addition, I asked her if there is any opportunity for out of class activities; she would not recommend this type of activities for two reasons: learners are very young to take them outside the institution and the course takes place at 7 pm, which implies that it is dark outdoors; however, she suggests the garden to do outdoor activities. As a result, the program takes place in a classroom, once a week, on Fridays, at 7 o'clock in the evening. Finally, I wanted to know why learners attend classes with their parents. The Head gave three main reasons; first of all, as learners are too young the presence of parents is necessary to have the group under control. Besides, parents are generally the ones who teach their children their mother tongue; as a result, parents should know what their little ones are learning so that they can help in their learning process; what is more, the most important reason why learners attend classes with their parents is that parents usually transmit their feelings to their children. That is, if they like the class they will transmit that feeling to their kids, learners should be encouraged by their parents to attend classes and to participate in the class. To put it briefly, all the information gathered by the interview to the Principal of CIL will be used to state Learning and Situation needs in order to be able to determine the program's goals and objectives.

In order to determine the contents of the course I interviewed two kindergarten teachers to learn what a young learner is usually taught. They told me that they usually teach numbers (from 1 to 10), primary colors in the first level and secondary colors in the higher levels, parts of the body and face, animals, the weather, means of transport, family members, feelings, food and greetings. Besides, 2 and 3 year olds are taught some notions such as big and small, tall and short, long and short, inside and outside, at one side and at the other side and high and low. As a result, I will take into consideration this information to decide what exercise and techniques should be applied the program.

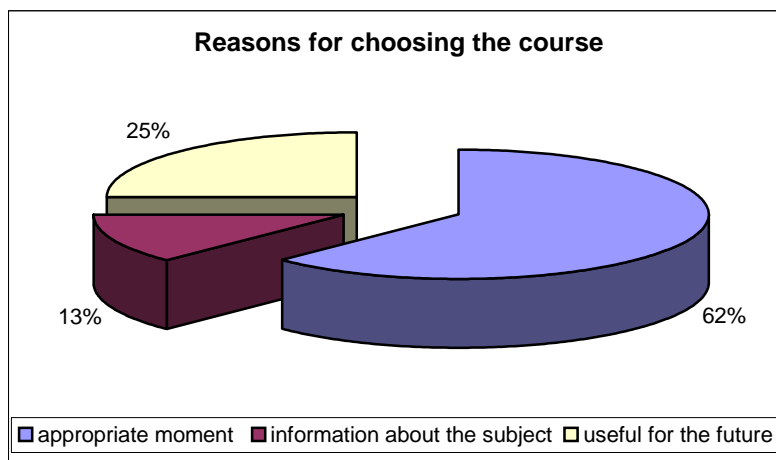
The target group was administered an unstructured questionnaire to collect information about the students and their desires in order to establish the program's goals and objectives. What they need English for and why they want to learn the language is the most important reason to set the goals and objectives of the course. I would like to share the results and interpretations with you.

### Questionnaires

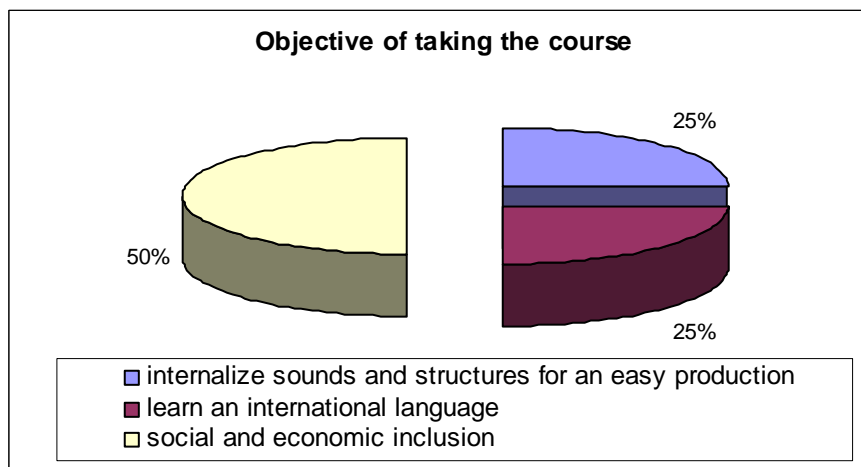
The questionnaires were given to eight parents, one per student. My analysis was based on this percentage.



In order to learn who the learners are, parents were asked about the age of their children. 49% of the learners are between 1 year and 4 months and 1 year and 8 months old while 12% is 2 years old and thirty-eight per cent of them are 3 years old. This fact suggests that there is a clear mixed-ability course due to the ages of the students since a child will be able to perform certain activities according to his or her cognitive stage. As it has been mentioned before, considering the age of the learner is essential when selecting learning activities and materials because of their natural abilities. We cannot interrupt or speed up their cognitive development. Therefore, the needs analysis was based on an *analytic philosophy*, which implies hierarchical steps in the language learning process. That is, first of all I took into consideration what they already know about the world around them in order to know what and how they can express such knowledge in a second language.

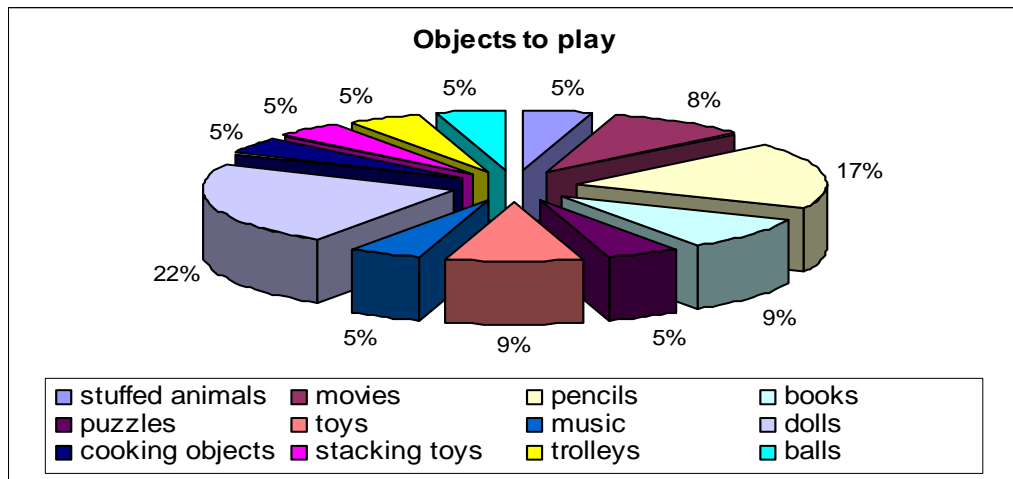


Parents were also asked about what motivated them to take their children to English classes. 25 percent of the people surveyed reported that learning English will be useful for their kids in the future. A small proportion of those who responded chose the course because of information they received about early immersion to English learning. The majority of the parents believe that this is the appropriate moment to expose their children to a new language. As it has been mentioned before young learners learn a second language in a natural way as they learn their mother tongue. As a result, learners will comprehend and produce the language effortlessly. This fact suggests that learners are motivated by their parents to be in contact with a second language, which is very important at that age when their knowledge about what is good and what is bad is limited.



Parents were enquired about what their children need English for. That is, what the objective of taking the course is. Fifty percent of those interviewed said that they want their little ones to learn the language for a social and economic inclusion. In other words, they believe that by learning English children will have more possibilities to get a job, have no problem when traveling abroad, understand native speakers of English, and so forth. Twenty-five percent of those who responded expressed that they take their children to English classes in order to internalize sounds and structures, which will help them to produce the language in a natural and effortless way. Finally, the remaining percentage replied that they want their girls to learn a language, which is widely spoken in the world. To my way of thinking, the last two answers could be related to the first reply. That is, some parents have expressed that they want their girls to learn English since it is an international language and some others mentioned that their children should internalize structures and sounds so that they can produce the language effectively. These two objectives could be considered as the necessary steps to achieve the inclusion desired in the first answer. In other words, for a language to be learnt (3rd answer) it is necessary to internalize sounds and structures in order to be able to produce such language (1<sup>st</sup> answer). As a result, a person would have one of the conditions to be “part of” certain social groups (2<sup>nd</sup> answer). To put it briefly, the results indicated that the main objective of children’s parents is to give the opportunity to their little ones to learn a language which will give them more opportunities in life. Consequently, the linguistic content should be based on language functions suitable for every day

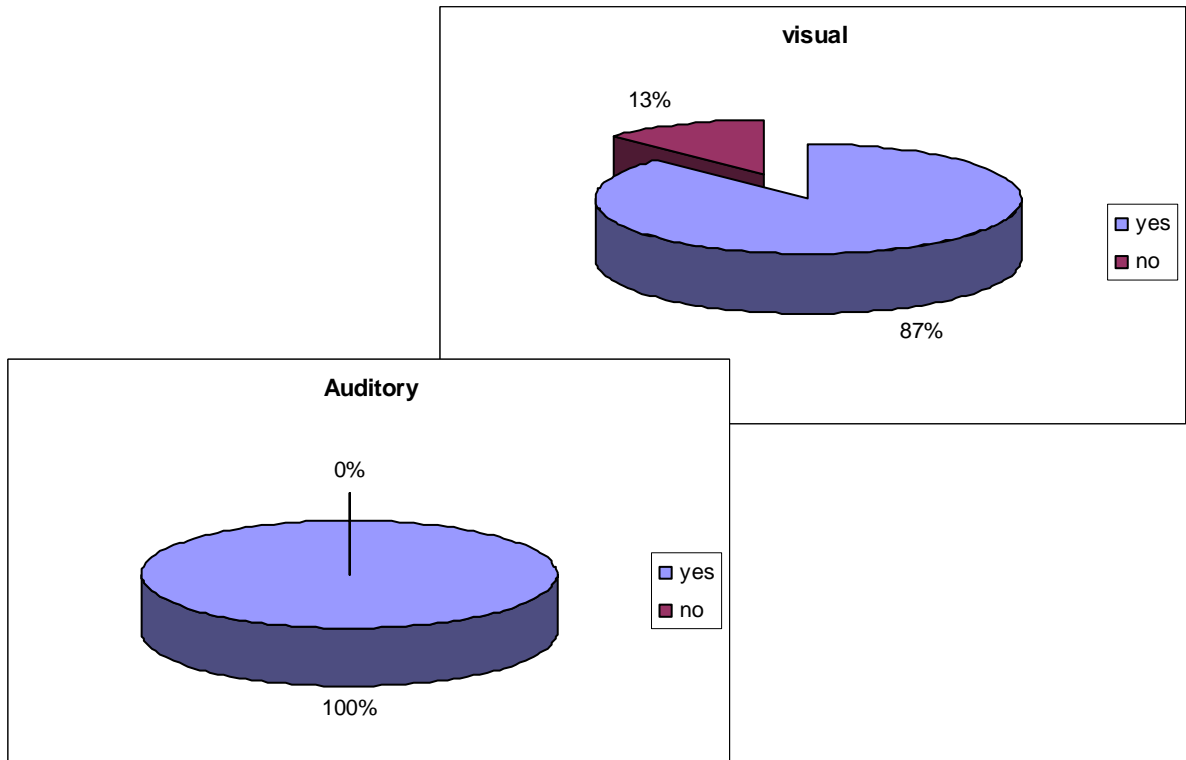
situations (General English) and general notions, according to the developmental stage of the learners.



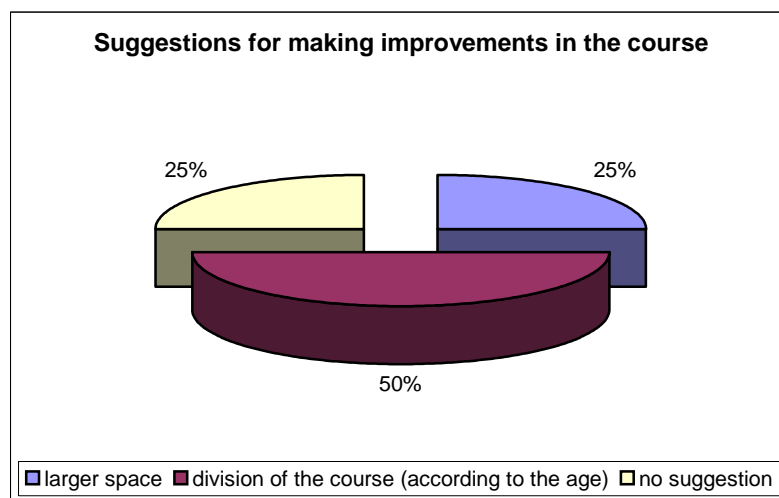
In order to learn what calls children’s attention, parents were questioned about what their girls play with. Evidence shows that the majority of the learners have a preference for dolls. Seventeen percent of them find playing with pencils attractive. A small proportion of children are fond of browsing through children’s tale books while another nine percent of them enjoy playing with different toys. Eight percent of the learners like seeing movies. The remaining percentage of the learners have a passion for puzzles, stuffed animals, cooking objects, music, trolleys, balls and stacking toys.

What is more, I looked for more information in an interesting book, called “Babytalk”. According to Sally Ward (2001), babies from 4 months old to 1 year old are fond of exploring the objects they are playing with. That is, they will explore the colors, the shape and the texture of the objects and also the sound they produce. Then, they will enjoy playing with rattles, maracas, stacking toys, soft cubes, balls from different size and texture, sheets of paper to cut with their hands, and so on. When they are older they also find simulation toys attractive. For instance, telephone, cooking objects, dolls to put some clothes on, and so on. Furthermore, they love pushing and pulling some objects and clasifying objects according to size, playing with plasticine, assembling simple puzzles, among others.

All this information will be considered when taking decisions about the techniques and exercises to be implemented in the program.



For the purpose of being familiar with babies' learning style, parents were asked if their children feel attracted by visual images and sounds such as movies, television, songs, etc. By far the largest number of those consulted replied that their little ones take pleasure in watching cartoons, musicals and movies, which they imitate enthusiastically. The learner's learning style as well as the objects they play with will influence the type of materials chosen by the teacher to be used in the program.



As this project aims to analyze all the aspects of the course which deserve an improvement in order to do a redesign of the curriculum, I invited them to give suggestions for making improvements in the program. It is important to ask our “clients” how they feel, if they are satisfied with the product and make them participate in making decisions about the course for them to feel part of the project, that is, for them to have a sense of belonging. According to the results, fifty per cent of the respondents think the course should be divided according to the age of the students since there are exercises which are interesting for some learners while they are boring for the others, among other reasons. Twenty-five percent of those who responded believe there should be larger space in the room for learners to participate more and feel more comfortable. The remaining percentage gave no suggestions. The two suggestions given by parents deserve special attention since they are relevant to the characteristics of the course for babies. That is, the physical environment of the class is important to guarantee successful learning. It seems appropriate to consider the possibility of having larger space in the classroom for learners to move freely, as their ages require, to perform TPR activities appropriately, and so forth. What is more, the importance of knowing, understanding and considering learners abilities according to their developmental cognitive stages when designing a class activity has been explained. Besides, it is not advisable to have a mixed-age class due to the differences in such cognitive stages learner are in. Hence, parents’ suggestions about dividing the course according to the age of the learners sounds reasonable when thinking about the pros and

cons of having a mixed-ability class due to the developmental cognitive stage of the learners.

### Goals and Objectives

According to all the information gathered during the Needs Analysis, I have identified the following program's *Goals and Objective*:

#### Goals

Since students will be exposed to the language in a warm, relaxing and friendly atmosphere for a positive anchoring, they will be able to understand and produce English with focus on greetings, personal information and vocabulary used by young learners such as colors, numbers, animals, common objects and general notions as distance, duration, quantity, quality, among others.

#### Instructional Objectives

By the end of the first level course (Nests), the students in the English course for babies will be able to recognize common objects having incorporated sounds and structures in their minds applying effectively with a 70 per cent of accuracy.

By the end of the second level course (Clouds), the students in the English course for babies will be able to recognize common objects and respond physically to command applying effectively with a 70 per cent of accuracy.

By the end of the third level course (Dreams), the students in the English course for babies will be able to recognize common objects, respond physically to commands and utter certain words when singing and having an everyday life dialogue with the teacher applying effectively with a 70 per cent of accuracy. (See appendix III)

#### Testing

After having considered the gathered information in the needs analysis and having determined the goals and objectives of the program, I can conclude that the most



suitable type of test to be used for the English course for babies is an indirect oral achievement test scored by a criterion-referenced test (CRT). Besides, an indirect assessment will be applied. That is, the test will be indirect and oral since students will be supposed to respond either physically or verbally to oral commands, according to their ages. For instance, learners will be asked to touch their heads or to say what color some object is. As a result, student's abilities and language knowledge will be examined in an indirect way by focusing on what lies beneath students perceptive and productive skills. What is more, the test will have the characteristics of an achievement test since it will take place at the end of the course to measure student's language and skill progress in relation to the syllabus they have been following. This achievement test will be scored by a CRT; the specific abilities that will be examined will vary according to the level of the course. For instance, learners in the first level (Nests) will be supposed to recognize certain objects; those in the second level (Clouds) will be able to recognize certain objects and perform physical activities to respond to commands; finally, students in the third level (Dreams) will be supposed to recognize certain objects, respond physically to commands and also utter simple words and sing songs.

It is important to highlight the fact that sometimes there are factors which are not under the control of the tester to have consistent results. That is, it may occur that a child does not feel well the day of the test, which may influence the results of the test. For that reason, I would not consider only the results of the achievement test but also the learner's process by assessing him or her every class. In other words, the students' performance will be measured by an informal assessment. That is, learners will be assessed every time they produce the language or respond physically to it. Whenever a learner recognizes an object or tries to do so, utters a word, sings a song, responds physically to commands, and so on, I would assess his or her competences and skills in order to improve them class by class.

To sum up, students will have an achievement test at the end of each level course in order to know what they have incorporated and learnt during the program. However, learners will be examined every time they produce the language or respond physically to commands in order to analyze their learning process. (See appendix III)

### Materials

The development and implementation of materials depend considerably on the approach and syllabus adopted by the course, which are closely related to the objectives of the program and learner's characteristics. Hence, before making decision about the materials it is important to determine the approach and syllabus.

### Approach

Considering the age of the learners and the cognitive stages they are in, from my perspective it seems advisable to combine three methodological approaches, the Total Physical Response method (TPR), the Natural method and the Natural approach. These three methodologies are similar in that they suggest learning a second language under the same conditions a first language is learnt; that is, learners are supposed to learn in a natural and unconscious way. While the Natural Approach puts emphasis on meaning, giving special attention to vocabulary, the Natural Method focuses attention on teacher's monologues, direct repetition, formal questions and answers and correct pronunciation and grammar production. A combination of these two approaches is suitable for the English course for babies. As children will not be able to utter a word at the beginning of the course, the teacher should present the language through monologues, expecting no answers or repetition from the students. The language will focus on vocabulary children need for their everyday life, which should be presented by repetition for the learners to produce it when they have the capacity to do so. It is important to highlight the fact that the exposure to the language is a vital step for a later use of it. At the moment students start uttering isolated words, the teacher will encourage them to acquire the correct pronunciation. What is more, the Natural Approach has adopted certain teaching activities from TPR, such as command-based activities. As a result, children will learn in a natural way by listening to the teacher repetitively, responding physically to commands, which is suitable for sensorimotor and preoperational children.

### Syllabus

After having decided which approach will be adopted, it is time to make decisions about the syllabus. That is, what should be taught and in which order.

In order to determine what type of syllabus should be implemented it is necessary to consider who the learners are. That is, as the students of this program are all young learners and their objective is to acquire an international language to be used in any situation in their life, in my opinion it seems advisable to implement a *mixed syllabus*. In other words, it seems suitable to implement a topical syllabus prevailing over a functional and notional syllabus. A topical syllabus would be appropriate for the course since learners know a little about the world around them; hence, the contents of the course will be organized around vocabulary children use in their everyday life such as colors, numbers, animals, parts of the body, members of their family, food, clothes, parts of the house, and so forth, as kindergarten teachers claimed. Besides, they are discovering some notions such as big and small, long and short, tall and short, high and low, inside and outside, and at one side and at the other side. What is more, they are learning how to interact with the people around them, for instance, saying thank you, asking for some more food, greeting people, and so on. As a result, they will be taught such functions and notions while learning different topics. As a way of illustration, learners can be taught different fruits while learning how big or small an apple is. (See appendix III)

#### Techniques and exercises

Once the approach and syllabus have been determined, techniques and exercises should be chosen.

Since students are very young and they have not developed their writing and reading skills yet, language should be presented in an oral way through realia, songs, toys, puppets, and TPR activities. Besides, learners are supposed to practice the language by responding physically to commands, recognizing certain objects by pointing them, singing songs and uttering certain words. Students will be able to do certain exercises according to the cognitive stages they are in. For instance, students in the first level will be able to respond physically to commands but they will not sing a song since they cannot utter a word yet.

ALL for babies suggests interesting techniques and exercises to be implemented. As a way of illustration, ALL for babies suggests presenting the colors by playing with

balloons of different colors while singing a song about balloons and colors. Besides, the program suggests TPR activities such as putting a balloon inside and outside a ring, touching parts of the body, clapping, among others. Considering what young learners love doing I suggest some other TPR activity. That is, students stand in a circle and respond physically to commands such as jump, stamp your feet, shake (your body, your head, your hand) twist, roll, push (a box or another object), kick (a ball or some other toys), walk, run, wave, rock, sit down, lie down, sit up, stand up, give a balloon to your mummy, hug the balloon, throw the balloon up and then catch it, and so on.

Another activity that the course suggests is to play the missing object. That is, the teacher should put three or four objects on the floor and ask learners to close their eyes while she removes one object. When students open their eyes they are supposed to discover what object is missing. To my way of thinking, this activity should be planned carefully, bearing in mind who the learners are. That is, if there is a first level course (Nests) which is made up of children between 4 and 8 months years old, she or he should not encourage learners to find a hidden object since they do not have the ability to understand that an object exists even though it is not in front of them. It is important to highlight the fact that for very young learners what is out of sight is out of mind.

When students enroll the course they are given a CD with different songs, each of them related to specific topics, for example, weather, colors, parts of the body, food, animals, and so on. Since young learners develop their listening skill before they can utter a word, I think songs are an effective way of presenting and practicing the language. Hence, I would adopt ALL for babies CD. What is more, I would adapt some other CDs to that course which will be suitable for young learners. That is, I suggest *Descubriendo en ingles by Primeros Pasos*, *100 Songs for kids by Disney* and *Find Out and Squeeze by Macmillan*. Furthermore, I suggest the implementation of some other visual inputs such as tale books, for students in the third level and DVD with follow-up activities, for the three levels. Since babies and children learn in an indirect way by taking information from all sides, as stated by Jeremy Harmer (2004), and they use other people to figure out the word, according to Gopnik, Meltzoff and Kuhl (2001:72), I believe that the use of DVD in the class is a good opportunity for students to learn the language from what they see and also from what they hear. Besides, if they see on TV

that a child is clapping her or his hands, the learners will tend to imitate that child they are watching on TV. Besides, children can do some follow-up activities. For instance, they are supposed to see a chapter in which different animals are presented, namely, a giraffe, a monkey, an elephant and a hippo. After that, they are delivered the same animals, which were previously made by the teacher, in order to do TPR activities; for example, they should put the monkeys in the red ring and the elephants in the green ring, they should point to the animal that the teacher is talking about, they should produce the sound of the animal, they should count the animals they have, and so on. Besides, I suggest a game as a follow-up activity. That is, students are delivered the four animals they have seen on TV, then, they are supposed to roll a dice, which has an animal on each face, and show the same picture in the dice while repeating the name of the animal. If the learners are in the first level they will not utter a word, however, they can do this activity without saying the name of the animal, just pointing it. To this end, I suggest *Descubriendo en ingles by Primeros Pasos*, *English Adventure by Longman* and *Disney movies*.

In short, I would adopt ALL Alternative Language Learning CDs and books and I would also adapt some other materials to that particular course. Besides, I would develop some materials in order to present the language through realia, flashcards, games, and so on. (See appendix III)

### Teaching

As it has been mentioned before, materials have been based on the objectives, approaches and syllabuses of the program. What is more, the techniques and exercises have been designed according to the type of instructions such as physical environment of the classroom, duration and intensity of the course, number of learners in each class, and so on. Besides, what the Principal of CIL expects from the course has been considered when redesigning the curriculum. For this reason, as it has been stated before, I have interviewed the Principal to learn about the characteristics of the course as well as the expected learning outcomes. She told me that the course takes place once a week, on Fridays, from quarter past seven to eight o'clock in the evening. The program has three different levels: Nests, Clouds and Dreams. Besides, learners attend

classes with their parents since they are very young. Regarding materials, she informed me that there are tape and Cd recorders, a TV set and DVD set, boards and plenty of toys. The rooms are medium-sized with enough light and they are generally free from external noises; there are also heating and cooling systems. What is more, I asked her if there is any possibility for outdoor activities; she would not recommend this type of activity since learners are too young to take them outside the institution. Finally, what she expects from the program is learners becoming acquainted with sounds and structures to be able to produce them when older, in the following course levels. In other words, I have implemented all the information gathered in the interview to the Principal when making decisions about the course's materials.

#### Program evaluation

Throughout this project I have applied a *process-oriented* and a *decision-facilitation* approach in order to revise and analyze those aspects of the program that deserve either improvements or changes. That is, I have done a *formative* evaluation which has taken place in every step of the curriculum design during the process of such curriculum development. Besides, I have gathered information through interviews, questionnaires and classroom observations based on qualitative data. Finally, in order to assess the effectiveness of the program I suggest a formative evaluation through observations and questionnaires. English teachers will be asked to observe a class three times a year to and parents will be delivered questionnaires to contribute their opinion and suggestions. What is more, I suggest a summative evaluation through an indirect oral achievement test to learn what students would have achieved at the end of the course. In short, the curriculum of the English course for babies should be analyzed before, during and after its implementation.

### General conclusion

The aim of this project was to analyze all the aspects of the course for babies which deserve an improvement in order to redesign the curriculum for children to learn at the speed their ages require. Hence, I did some extensive research on different disciplines, namely, medicine, psychology and methodology.

First of all, I proved the effectiveness of learning a second language at a very early age. It is said that learning a second language enlarges the density of gray matter since the volume of gray matter tissue appears to be determined by both genes and environmental factor, such as experience. That is, the volume of gray matter will depend on the time devoted to a specific training. In addition to this, the effect is greater in the early bilingual brains in the left and right hemisphere due to greater plasticity. As a result, learning a second language early not only enables young people to develop such language effectively but also makes them more creative and passionate human beings. That is, while the left hemisphere is specialized for the use of language and it can perform many complicated sequential, analytic and mathematical activities, the right hemisphere plays an important role in musical and artistic abilities, emotions and dreaming and it is specialized for mental imagery and the understanding of spatial relationships. Finally, it is said that a sensitive period exists for the acquisition of a nonnative phonological system. That is, it was found that the earlier people are exposed to a second language the more native-like pronunciation they acquire. We all have mental representation of sounds, phonetic prototypes, which are well formed and become more fixed as we get older; therefore, it is more difficult to perceive the distinctions of a foreign language.

Then, in order to analyze all the aspects of the course for babies which deserve an improvement it was necessary to understand babies and young learners abilities and their most relevant characteristics. Consequently, I studied children developmental cognitive stages to assure their language acquisition. It was possible by virtue of contributions made by well-known psychologists specialized in childhood, namely, Alison Gopnik, Andrew N. Meltzoff, Jean Piaget and Patricia K. Kuhl. Piaget sustained that children mature through four developmental cognitive stages; since the course for

babies is offered to children from 4 months old to 3 years old I considered the *sensorimotor stage* which lasts from birth to two years old and it is subdivided into six sub stages, and the *preoperational stage* that lasts from 2 to 7 years old. Having learnt about specific characteristics of each cognitive stage and sub stage, I suggest the division of the course according to the age of the students. At present there is only one course for babies, although it has been planned as a three stage course. It is essential to consider the age of the learners when taking decisions about the course materials since those kids who are 2 years old will be able to understand and perform certain activities while those babies who are 1 year old will not. As a result, I also suggest to plan a missing object activity carefully since younger learners will not understand and enjoy the task.

What is more, considering what young learners are able to do and enjoy doing, I suggest adopting ALL CDs and books and also adapting some other CDs and DVDs with follow-up activities, as well as the use of tale books. Besides, I suggest implementing some other TPR activities for students to respond physically. Furthermore, bearing in mind the age of the students and their cognitive development I believe it is advisable to combine three methodological approaches, the Total Physical Response method, the Natural approach and the Natural method. Besides, since the students` objective is to acquire an international language to be used in any situation in their life I suggest the implementation of a *mixed syllabus*. That is, it seems suitable to implement a topical syllabus prevailing over a functional and notional syllabus.

In addition, after analyzing students` needs and determining the goals and objectives of the course, I can conclude that the most suitable types of test to be used for the English course for babies are an indirect assessment and an indirect oral achievement test, scored by a criterion-reference test (CRT). The specific abilities that will be examined will vary according to the level of the course.

Finally, I suggest a program evaluation before, during and after its implementation. That is, I have applied a *process-oriented* and a *decision-facilitation* approach in order to revise and analyze those aspects of the program that deserve either improvements or changes. In other words, I have done a *formative* evaluation which has taken place in every step of the curriculum design during the process of such curriculum



development. Besides, I suggest a formative evaluation through observations and questionnaires. English teachers will be asked to observe a class three times a year to and parents will be delivered questionnaires to contribute their opinion and suggestions. What is more, I suggest a summative evaluation through an indirect oral achievement test to learn what students have achieved at the end of the course.

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# APPENDIX

## I

## QUESTIONNAIRE TO PARENTS

A continuación le solicitamos responder con sinceridad las siguientes preguntas. La información será anónima y privada.

1- Cuántos años tiene su hijo/a?

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2- ¿Qué razón lo incentivó a traer a su niño/a a tomar clases de inglés?

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3- ¿Cuál (o cuáles) es el objetivo de exponer a su niño/a a una segunda lengua?

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4- ¿Con qué objetos suele jugar su hijo/a?

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5- ¿Cree usted que su niño/a se siente atraído por imágenes visuales emitidas en videos, televisión o películas? ¿Cómo lo sabe?

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6- ¿Cree usted que su niño/a se siente atraído por sonidos emitidos en la radio, televisión, CDS, etc.? ¿Cómo lo sabe?

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7- ¿Tiene usted sugerencias para la mejora del curso? ¿Cuál o cuáles?

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*¡Muchas gracias por su colaboración!*

APPENDIX  
II

## INTERVIEW TO THE PRINCIPAL

- 1- Why do you think English should be learnt at an early age?
- 2- What do you expect from the program?
- 3- How many levels does the course have?
- 4- How many students are attending the course?
- 5- What resources are available for the course? ( tape recorder, cd recorder, tv set, dvd set, toys, boards, etc. opportunities for out of class activities, for enlarging materials and aids), classroom facilities- noises, size, lights, etc-, and so on)
- 6- When will the course take place? (Time, day, frequency)
- 7- Where will the course take place? (classroom management: size, noises, lights, etc).
- 8- Why do they attend classes with their parents?

APPENDIX  
III



**COURSE:** Nests

**TEACHER:**

**YEAR:** 2009

## **GOALS**

- In the program, students will be able to understand and produce English with focus on greetings, personal information and vocabulary used by young learners such as colors, numbers, animals, common objects and general notions as distance, duration, quantity, quality, among others.
- Students will be exposed to the language in a warm, relaxing and friendly atmosphere for a positive anchoring, which implies a guaranteed and memorable learning.

## **INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES**

- By the end of the first level course (Nests), the students in the English course for babies will be able to recognize common objects having incorporated sounds and structures in their minds applying effectively with a 70 per cent of accuracy when been showed certain objects by the teacher.

## **CONTENTS**

- **Greeting**
  - Hello
  - Goodbye
- **Feelings**
  - Happy, sad and angry.
- **Weather**
  - Sunny, rainy and windy.
- **Numbers**
  - From 1 to 5
- **Colors**
  - Primary colors
- **Body**
  - Parts of the face
  - Parts of the body

- **Family**  
Mother, father, brother and sister.
- **Animals**
- **Actions**
- **Classroom**  
Window, door, board, floor.

## **METHODS OF INSTRUCTION**

- TPR activities
- Songs
- Games
- DVDs

## **ASSESSMENT:**

At the end of the course students will be examined by an indirect oral achievement test, in which they will be supposed to recognize common objects. Besides, learners will be assessed every class when doing the exercises determined by the teacher.

## **TEXTBOOK AND MATERIALS**

Suarez, Ma., M, Garda, C., Derfler, M. and Borlenghi, D. (2003) *Nests*. ALL Alternative Language Learning. (book and CD)

## **OPTIONAL TEXTBOOKS AND MATERIAL**

Descubriendo en Ingles CD audio and DVD  
 Songs for kids by Disney  
 Squeeze by Macmillan  
 Find out by Macmillan cd and dvd  
 English adventure by Longman cd and dvd

**COURSE:** Clouds

**TEACHER:**

**YEAR:** 2009

### **GOALS**

- In the program, students will be able to understand and produce English with focus on greetings, personal information and vocabulary used by young learners such as colors, numbers, animals, common objects and general notions as distance, duration, quantity, quality, among others.
- Students will be exposed to the language in a warm, relaxing and friendly atmosphere for a positive anchoring, which implies a guaranteed and memorable learning.

### **INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES**

- By the end of the second level course (Clouds), the students in the English course for babies will be able to recognize common objects and respond physically to command given by the teacher applying effectively with a 70 per cent of accuracy.

### **CONTENTS**

- **Greeting**
  - Hello
  - Goodbye
  - How are you?
- **Feelings**
  - Happy, sad, angry and sleepy.
- **Weather**
  - Sunny, rainy and cloudy.
- **Numbers**
  - From 1 to 10
- **Colors**
  - Primary and secondary colors
- **Body**
  - Parts of the face
  - Parts of the body

- **Family**  
Mother, father, brother and sister.
- **Animals**
- **Actions**
- **Food**
- **Clothes**
- **Home**

## **METHODS OF INSTRUCTION**

- TPR activities
- Songs
- Games
- DVDs
- Stories

## **ASSESSMENT:**

At the end of the course students will be examined by an indirect oral achievement test, in which they will be supposed to recognize common objects and respond physically to commands. Besides, learners will be assessed every class when doing the exercises determined by the teacher.

## **TEXTBOOK AND MATERIALS**

Suarez, Ma., M. and Borlenghi, D. (2003) *Clouds*. ALL Alternative Language Learning. (book and CD)

## **OPTIONAL TEXTBOOKS AND MATERIAL**

Descubriendo en Ingles CD audio and DVD  
 Songs for kids by Disney  
 Squeeze by Macmillan  
 Find out by Macmillan cd and dvd  
 English adventure by Longman cd and dvd

**COURSE:** Dreams

**TEACHER:**

**YEAR:** 2009

### **GOALS**

- In the program, students will be able to understand and produce English with focus on greetings, personal information and vocabulary used by young learners such as colors, numbers, animals, common objects and general notions as distance, duration, quantity, quality, among others.
- Students will be exposed to the language in a warm, relaxing and friendly atmosphere for a positive anchoring, which implies a guaranteed and memorable learning.

### **INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES**

- By the end of the third level course (Dreams), the students in the English course for babies will be able to recognize common objects, respond physically to commands and utter certain words when signing and having an everyday life dialogue with the teacher applying effectively with a 70 per cent of accuracy.

### **CONTENTS**

- **Greeting**
  - Hello
  - Goodbye
  - How are you?
  - Name
- **Feelings**
  - Happy, sad and sleepy.
- **Weather**
  - Sunny, rainy, snowy and windy.
- **Numbers**
  - From 1 to 12
- **Colors**
  - Primary and secondary colors
- **Body**
  - Parts of the face
  - Parts of the body

- **Family**  
Mother, father, brother, sister, grandmother and grandfather.
- **Animals**
- **Actions**
- **Food**
- **Home**

## **METHODS OF INSTRUCTION**

- TPR activities
- Songs
- Games
- DVDs
- Stories

## **ASSESSMENT:**

At the end of the course students will be examined by an indirect oral achievement test, in which they will be supposed to recognize common objects, respond physical to commands, utter single words and sing songs. Besides, learners will be assessed every class when doing the exercises determined by the teacher.

## **TEXTBOOK AND MATERIALS**

Suarez, Ma., M. and Derfler, M. (2003) *Dreams*. ALL Alternative Language Learning. (book and CD)

## **OPTIONAL TEXTBOOKS AND MATERIAL**

Descubriendo en Ingles CD audio and DVD  
 Songs for kids by Disney  
 Squeeze by Macmillan  
 Find out by Macmillan cd and dvd  
 English adventure by Longman cd and dvd  
 Andersen, H. C. (2001) *Thumbelino*. Barcelona: Bibliografia internacional.  
 Andersen, H. C. (2001) *Little red riding hood*. Barcelona: Bibliografia internacional.