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Physical Education through English Teaching Experience

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Abstract

The implementation of a multilingual program which contains the teaching of a subject through English in addition to the subject of English language in our region is a reality that is slowly arriving to more and more schools. Since the management team accepts this new educational challenge until the chosen subject begins to work as it should, it is a process in which the teacher has a leading role. In the following article we will focus on the most important points that have to be taken into account by physical education teachers in order to achieve a good implementation of this subject through English.

Keywords: Secondary school, physical education, plurilingualism program, Spain

1. Introduction

This article is an educational experience that arises from the implementation of a multilingual teaching program through English at the schools of San José de Calasanz (research Focused on Secondary School) and Santa Ana (research Focused on Elementary School) located in Algemesi and Sagrada Familia (research focused on secondary school) from Alzira. This program is regulated by the Decree 127/2012 of the 3rd of August and regulates the non University levels in the Valencian Community, although physical education is not linked by the decree previously mentioned, several schools have opted to implement the program through the teaching of PE through English.

It is well known that teaching through L2 means an added difficulty for both the teacher who teaches the lesson and the students who are taught. Using a different vehicular language from your mother tongue creates the needing of the teacher to plan and prepare the classes more, using visual resources, specific vocabulary (simple and understandable), and everything necessary so students understand the activities performed.

So, the line of research of this article focuses on finding if there are real benefits for students receiving these classes of physical education through L2 or if the damage occurred by implementing the program are more than the benefits got.

In order to develop the research, we intend to do a study case into three different schools, which already do Physical Education by English. It will be presented through a descriptive methodology to do "*an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context"* (Yin, 1994, p.2) towards to develop a table with the most important items of students learning skills and how the PE teacher must work on it during the teaching process.

2. Why do some schools choose physical education to be taught through English?

Once the school take the decision to implement the plurilingual program, the following step is to choose the best non-linguistic subject to develop it. To make this decision, the school management team take into consideration English skills of the teacher staff, being a CEFR B2 that the 127/2012 decree demands. Besides this consideration, it is also important to consider the subject itself and the didactic possibilities that it has. We are going to talk about some Physical Education (P.E.) features that could lead a school manager team to choose it as a CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) subject to develop the plurilingual program.

Physical Education has always been such a subject that can't "*illuminate other areas of life ...[and] have ... a wide-ranging cognitive content ...There is very little to know about riding bicycles, swimming or golf ... .Furthermore what there is to know throws very little light on much else*" (Peters,1966, p. 159). As is well known, PE is not valued in the school as a science subject such as maths, biology… "*It is suffering from budgetary controls with inadequate financial, material and personnel resources, has low subject status and esteem, and is being ever more marginalized and undervalued by authorities*" (Hardman & Marshall, 2000, p.223). Furthermore, students aged between 11 and 12 think that is that passing PE is passing others subjects as Moreno and Hellín (2002) claim in their research. Why could it be a reason of choosing PE? Because it is easier and less noisy experimenting with a subject less valued by the Education Community than science subjects. Is not our aim in this article to

make a deep research to try to convince of the Physical Education benefits (EUPEA, 2002) in lifestyle, affectivity, social-life, cognition and health (Bailey, 2006; Bailey et. al, 2009; Staiano, Calavert 2011), because in our opinion this argument is already surpassed.

There are also some critics to PE teacher from UK: "*If PE teachers have thought that they had a fundamental part to play in the education of every child, that they provided an essential basis on which active life for work and leisure could be built for everyone, then, clearly, they have to think again*." (Spectator, 1975, p. 93). As Spectator said, one of the proposals of this article is to make PE teachers "think again" their teaching role. In order to help in this reflexion, we are going to introduce some positive PE aspects which can turn the subject into a more appraised one.

- PE teachers have different possibilities to drive lessons into an attractive way of learning called "analogic mediator" by Moliterni; by moving there appear good opportunities to attract the learner's attention (2013). It is also interesting to use the "total physical response" (Asher 2009) in order to learn languages by moving. (Ràcz 2015).

- Learning by imitation is a good opportunity to provide all students a learning situation. The ENGSO, which stands for European Non-Governmental Sport Organization, recommendations approved by the General Assembly, on April 1998 for children and youth sport, remark "*the content of the activities must be of such a nature that everyone is given the opportunity to acquire basic sports skills*" (ENGSO, 1998). This is one of the best tools that PE has; the ability of involving the whole teaching group despite some of the components do not understand the meaning of the activities. We can also find in the European Physical Education Association's (EUPEA) Code of Ethics that teachers have to "*treat everyone equally regardless of sex, age, ability, ethnic origin, sexuality, religion or political persuasion. In this regard, teachers should ensure that all are given sufficient opportunities to participate in the activity*" (EUPEA, 2002, p.9).

- The first point that we highlighted as important was the limited quantity of theoretical content that PE contains. It allows the development of the PE teaching program through L2 starting from simply vocabulary without lowering the subject content level too much.

- Many sport vocabulary comes from English language, so learners know better the meaning (and reasons), and we use some of this terminology in our vocabulary.

There are also school structural points:

- In the Secondary School, there is usually only one PE teacher for all levels. (In this way) it is easier to implement the Plurilingual Program because only one teacher (has to be prepared to do it), otherwise if the chosen subject is Maths each teacher (normally 2 or more) has to be prepared to teach through L2 in each level in order to make a progressive program application.

- The other point is that as PE subject is not in the University Access Assessment Test (Prova Accés Universitat), there is no need to have correctors of the three languages.

There is another important point that supports teaching PE through L2. This is the difference between Multilingualism and Plurilingualism. The European Council claims that multilingualism is "*the knowledge of a number of languages, or the co-existence of different languages in a given society*." (In this way), they continue saying "*it may be attained by*

simply diversifying the languages on offer in a particular school or educational system, or by encouraging pupils to learn more than one foreign language." (European Council, 2001, p.4)

On the other hand "*the plurilingual approach emphasises the fact that as an individual person's experience of language in its cultural contexts expands, from the language of the home to that of society at large and then to the languages of other people*" (European Council, 2001, p.4). Consequently, PE teachers should focus on making their subject into tool to support the implementation of the Plurilingualism program in the school.

Doing it in an organised way, not only by PE teachers but also by all of them, the plurilingual program will help PE to be more valued because the English approach is associated to a high teaching level, and this is because of the social demand of learning foreign languages.

3. Students' and teachers' point of view about improving English through PE

Physical Education, due to its spontaneous and success-oriented experiences environment, is a very valid way for language teaching, in fact, with this pleasant environment offered, academic growth can be promoted (LePage ,Mills 1990).

Morrison (1988) suggests that concrete experiences offered by motor activity provide the basis for the development of mental representations that can be used in a future to improve the communication field. Therefore, motor activity offers a significant context for the development of linguistic concepts (Morrison, 1988).

In the same vein authors such as Caplan & Caplan (1973) propose that motor activities provide a basis for language. Concepts related to space, quantity or size and colour, structured consistently in the academic context or integrated in the teaching of Physical Education, as remarked by Kaczmarak (1985) and Hildebrand (1991), can stimulate the learning of a new language and benefit more from the motor activities because it arouses great interest (Adler, Farrar, and King, 1983).

Faced with such firmness in the researches that claim the high performance offered by the PE, we accomplished a study on this assertion, to know the reality in a particular place at a particular moment. In this vain, we've developed a basic question on which our analysis will be developed.

* Does P.E. through English help you to improve your English level?

To answer this question, we took into account two points of view:

1. Student

2. Teacher

We've considered that the point of view of the student is more relevant than the teacher's because they are key characters in the teaching-learning process. With tat porpuse, we've done a study (Figure 1) at Santa Ana College in Algemesí (Valencia) with an heterogeneous group of 75 students, all of them aged 10, to test all the possible answers to this question.

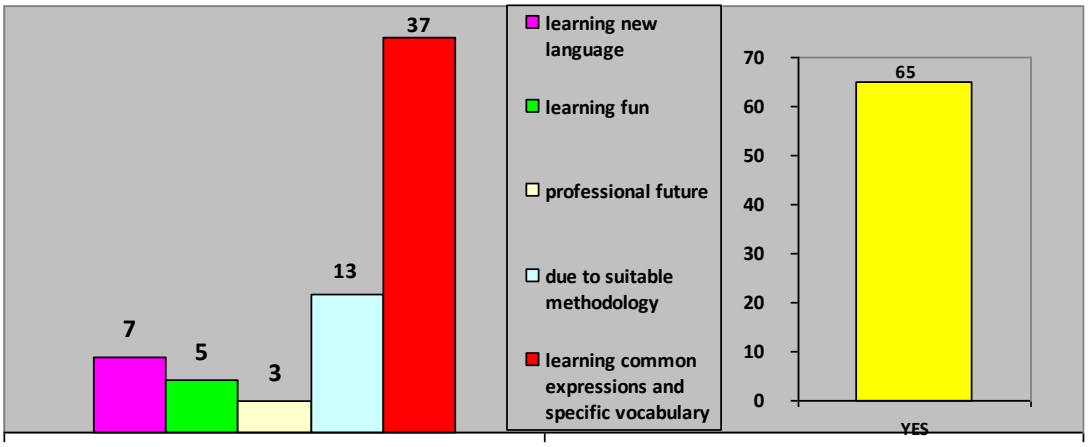
In order to prepare their answers, students took into account their progression during a school year.

The weekly timetable of P.E., taught through English, was of two sessions of 50 minutes each; a total of 64 sessions during the 2013-14 school year.

Figure 1 shows the number of students who answered the question affirmatively, their reasons and how P.E. through English has helped them to improve their English, being the most remarkable the learning of common expressions, the acquisition of specific vocabulary or the content review of English classes.

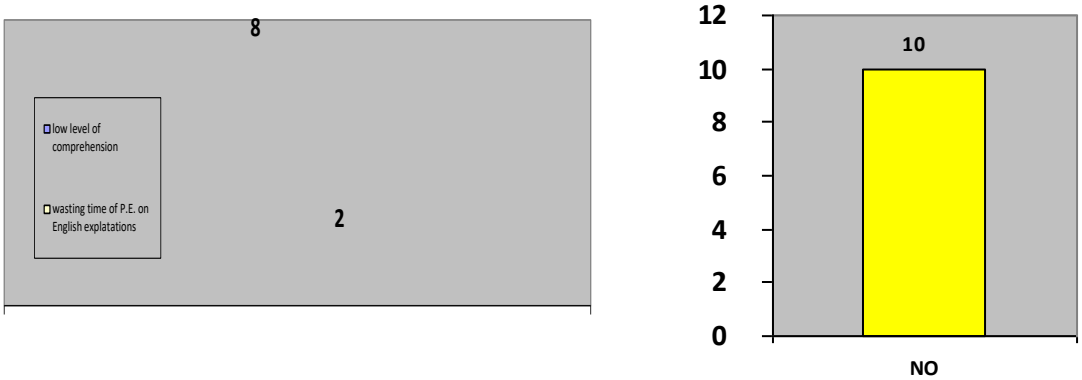
Secondly, it was particularly important the mention of an appropriate methodology in each of the sessions, which leads us to highlight the role of the teacher and the importance of adopting a useful strategy, selecting what is relevant in the transmission of oral messages and remembering tasks and objectives in order to help students in the learning a foreign language. We also remark the importance of proper specific training in this new approach to P.E.

Figure 1



In Figure 2 appear the reasons for the students surveyed who think negatively and their reasons why P.E. through English has not helped them to improve their English. Although the percentage is very low in this graph, it can be used as a reference point for further researches and improvements.

Figure 2



Moreover, to take into account the point of view of the teacher, we prepared a table (Table 1) using a very useful tool to observe the reality: the methodology for discussions and decision-making method known as the six thinking hats or six hats of de Bono (1989). The asked professor stood sequentially in each colour hat expressing his opinion about the question: Does PE through English help your Pupils? The only restriction was, following this

methodology, that each opinion has to follow the rules that are associated with each hat colour. We have also avoided the blue hat to because it was a non-group review.

The data collected are stored through the experience of a school year in three control groups in Santa Ana College of Algemesí, these data are reflected in the graphs presented above (Graph 1, 2, 3). This information was obtained through the objective question: Does PE through English help you to improve increase your English level?

The negatives aspects were several; on the one hand, the lack of a tool for teachers in order to facilitate the assessment of the student's progress related to the level of English in PE, a tool that helps locating at what stage of the learning process is each course, which has prevented from a better look at the facts and information received during the study period in the control groups. On the other hand, the slowness with which each session was developed, being a subject where the activities happen on the tracks or at the gym of the school, which implies the movement of students and the loss of attention. Moreover, the small weekly and daily time of PE has been a negative factor to consider. Also it is remarcable the loss of contents from PE and few motor games due to having to use more time to make understandable the explanations in English.

A lot of stress due to making the students understand the explanations and not making mistakes in sentence construction, insecurity. Feeling of lossing the student's attention. Frustration at the loss of time to do more games. Joy to see the students motivated with the new language.

From what is stated in the black hat a it could be created a tool table set for the different levels or stages of learning English in order to help the teacher to place their starting point and where it should go. Another option to improve the agility of the session would include a specific conversation helper on the subject.

Big benefits in students front a new language. Opportunity to meet common expressions used in the sports world. Increased oral communication situations between student-teacher and student-student.

4. Practical approach stages and students' skills

Within the paradigm of plurilingual programs we should consider that not all schools make the same application, or rather, not everyone has the same demanding level in its application. That's because there is no educational law, appropriate didactic material or teacher training for this porpoise. This is the key for carrying out this qualitative research and providing some data and some solutions to this concern.

The physical education teacher is interested in the achievement of the specific PE curriculum objectives. But at the same time he must be aware of teaching the lessons through English (L2). This fact besides the average English level of the students implies that the application to all schools won't be accomplished in the same way.

So we thought it could be interesting to expose a table with the different stages that might appear during the implementation of a plurilingual program developed in a current real context. So you can know what steps have already been achieved and, better than that, which are the final steps to offer an optimal plurilingual program to the students.

Table 1. Stages reference

	STAGE 1	STAGE 2	STAGE 3
INITIAL EXPLANATIONS	**GROUPING**		
	All class sited relaxed focusing on teacher's white board explanation.	Class sited focused on teacher explanation without whiteboard)	Informal aggrupation where teacher make the explanation.
	VOCABULARY		
	Use similar terms to L_1. Write it on the whiteboard. Sometimes could appear the translation.	Use many terms from L_2 language besides similar terms.	Accurate vocabulary to identify each thing or action.
	ORDERS		
	Teacher use always the same sport orders in English. Initial speech in English helped by L_1.	Teacher use always the same sport orders in English and introduce some quotidian orders, in English. Initial speech in English.	Teacher use different sport orders in English and introduce some quotidian orders, in English. Initial speech in English.
	WHITEBOARD		
	Class schema with vocabulary in English helped by some pictures. (It is possible because of the informal aggrupation).	Used just in case of activities that required it. (Lots of changing orders, spin in Volleyball court)	Not needed (informal aggrupation).
COGNITIVE KNOWLEDGE	**CLASS NOTES**		
	The text is in English but helped by lots of pictures. Reducing the content (adapting not translating). Large Vocabulary table.	Text in English helped, sometimes, by some picture. Translate the reduced content. Low Vocabulary table.	Text in English, not pictures needed. There isn't no vocabulary table. Content at same level as PE in L_1 with the same comprehension difficulty
	EXAMS		
	All test by multiple-choice questions with short answers.	All test by multiple-choice question with few questions with short composition answers. 4's: stamina, strength, speed, suppleness.	Some multiple-choice test question with some questions with short compositions answers and one or two large compositions answers. Where did rugby born?
ORAL EXPRESSION	**TEACHER TO LEARNER**		
	Activity explanation in English. Communication (correction) in L_1 but hardly ever in English.	Activities explanation in English, helped by L_1. Communication (correction) in English helped by L_1.	Activities explanation, communication and correction in English.
	LEARNER TO TEACHER		
	Questions and answers are formulated by L_1. (Some advanced learners show interest of speaking in English)	To formulate questions and answers both languages can be used, but normally L_1.	Questions and answers are always formulated in English.
	BETWEEN LEARNERS		
	All the conversations are in L_1. (Some advanced learners show interest of speaking in English)	They can use both languages: L_1 and English.	All the conversations are in English.

Before starting a PE lesson the teacher must do a small explanation to the students about the activities they are going to do. So, this is the first content block of the table to be explained. It is divided in 3 groups: Vocabulary, Orders and Grouping, because in any initial lesson explanation the teacher must use basic vocabulary and some orders to follow, so students can understand the explanation, and they must also be placed in an appropriate way to listen to the teacher's explanation.

Usually the information given in the schoolyard is usually disrupted by noise pollution, e.g. children of other classes, it tend to be more informal because there is not an absolute silence, as it could happen in other classroom subjects, and requires high efficiency, in a short period of time everything must be explained, because what really matters is the activity or game. Moreover, teaching the class through L2 implies an added difficulty for the teacher.

So, grouping the students is the first part that would point out the stage in which we are. A plurilingual program applied, let's say, to an English uninitiated group of students who hasn't studied Physical Education through L2 during Elementary School would require an initial explanation where all the students must be seated in front of a whiteboard and focused on the activities explanation. In addition, all the vocabulary and the orders must be simple, written on the whiteboard and emphasized repeatedly by body-language. That's because, as Scott and Ytreberg (1990) describe, "Their own understanding comes through hands and eyes and ears".

However, we aim to stage 3 when the groups are informal most of the time, the whiteboard is barely used and the vocabulary and orders used are accurate, specific and different depending on the situation required.

The second content block in discussion is the cognitive knowledge used. This part would be the theoretical content that students must learn in every unit. Teaching in units or themes will help students to focus more on content and comunication (Joan Kang Shin, 2006).

About the class notes, the first thing to take into account for the physical education teachers who start teaching PE through L2 is that the theoretical content must be adapted and not directly translated from L1. But, of course, all class notes must be written in L2 without any translation or explanation in L1.

So, in the stage 1, in this theoretical content adaptation we would find a huge content reduction accompanied by many clarifying pictures. In addition, there would be a large list of basic vocabulary at the beginning of the class notes to be translated by the students. There would be a theory test to assess all these contents. This test must be, undoubtedly, on the context of a stage 1 level, a multiple choice test where students must recognize the answers. Maybe there would be very few short answer questions.

Therefore, as we move from one stage to another, we would reduce the basic vocabulary list, until we remove it in the stage 3. And so we do with the clarifying pictures or diagrams. In these cases the multiple choice questions would be reduced in the exams and replaced by some short answer questions and one or two essay questions.

Finally, the third content block to study is the oral expression. This part is essential because we can discern which terms must be fulfilled by any plurilingual program, regardless of the level, and which terms must be reached to become an optimal plurilingual program.

5. Conclusion

First of all, any plurilingual program should start under the consideration that the teacher's explanations must be in L2, but probably the corrections made during the class, where situations are more unstable, would be in L1. You can use L1 when necessary in a lesson as a resource forwarding the learning process without becoming too reliant on it (Joan Kang Shin, 2006). This part will be improved until stage 3 where all explanations or corrections would be in L2.

Secondly, in a stage 1 level the students would address to the teacher in L1, which is the mother tongue, but maybe some advanced students could try to make some sentences in L2.

Last but not least, we have the conversation between students. This part would clearly show us if we are in front of a plurilingual program that improves our students' English skills. When we start a plurilingual program all the students would speak in L1 between them and it would take a very long time until a few students try to speak in L2. Finally, we guarantee that we are offering an optimal plurilingual program to the students when all of them speak in L2 between them during the class in any situation.

To sum up, we must consider that it's not easy to determine the stage in which we are. That's because all the contents do not involve neither the same difficulty to be explained nor the same methodology used. In addition, the school year and the English level would determine if we are in stage 1, 2 or 3. So, it's very difficult to decide the stage of the plurilingual program in each part.

Therefore, it is not the same teaching Fitness & Health in 1st ESO than teaching Baseball in 4th ESO. In the latter case, these students were taught during 4 years through L2, which means that they acquire specific knowledge about PE vocabulary and orders. And, even that, the baseball unit is easier to explain and to understand for the students because it's an Anglo-Saxon team sport.

So, at last the teacher must be the one who determine in a global form the stage where the plurilingual program is placed in each part of the table.

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