



FINAL DEGREE PROJECT

Early Childhood Education and Primary Education

Didactic Innovation aimed at the 3rd year of Early Childhood Education

Thinking Explorers: Thinking Routines in Early Childhood Education EFL

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1. RESUMEN/ABSTRACT

Resumen

Este trabajo propone una modalidad distinta de enseñanza del inglés en la etapa de Educación Infantil: la incorporación de las rutinas de pensamiento en el aula. La idea fundamental es lograr que los niños no solo mejoren su comprensión del idioma, sino también su expresión oral. Para ello, se ha diseñado un hilo conductor que suele despertar gran interés, el mundo de los animales y sus hábitats.

Durante nueve sesiones, se presenta una dinámica que se aleja de la enseñanza memorística tradicional. La implementación de estas rutinas implica un cambio de enfoque en los niños y niñas. En lugar de limitarse a memorizar vocabulario de forma aislada, comienzan a observar su entorno, formular preguntas e intentar explicar sus pensamientos en la lengua extranjera. A través de un proceso, aprenden gradualmente a estructurar sus ideas en inglés. Para evitar que el nivel de idioma constituya una barrera, el proyecto se apoya constantemente en recursos visuales, materiales físicos y en la guía continua del docente, garantizando la participación de todos. Aunque, por el momento, el diseño sea teórico y no se haya implementado en un centro escolar, todo indica que una metodología de este tipo tendría un impacto sumamente positivo. Contribuiría a motivar a los alumnos y alumnas y, sobre todo, a que adquieran la seguridad necesaria para expresarse oralmente.

En definitiva, esta innovación busca demostrar que las rutinas de pensamiento constituyen un recurso excelente para hacer la enseñanza del inglés desde los primeros años mucho más significativa.

Palabras clave: Rutinas de pensamiento, Educación Infantil, Enseñanza del inglés, Comprensión oral, Aprendizaje significativo.

Abstract

This work proposes a different approach to teaching English in the Early Childhood Education stage: the incorporation of thinking routines in the classroom. The main idea is to ensure that children not only improve their understanding of the language but also their oral expression. To achieve this, a guiding thread has been designed that usually sparks great interest: the world of animals and their habitats. Over nine sessions, a dynamic is presented that moves away from traditional rote learning. Implementing these routines involves a shift in focus for the children. Instead of merely memorising vocabulary in isolation, they begin to observe their environment, ask questions, and try to explain their thoughts in the foreign language. Through a process, they gradually learn to structure their ideas in English. To prevent language level from becoming a barrier, the project constantly relies on visual resources, physical materials, and the continuous guidance of the teacher, ensuring everyone's participation. Although the design is currently theoretical and has not yet been implemented in a school, all indications suggest that such a methodology would have a highly positive impact. It would help motivate students and, most importantly, enable them to gain the confidence needed to express themselves orally.

Ultimately, this innovation aims to demonstrate that thinking routines are an excellent resource to make the teaching of English much more meaningful from the earliest years.

Keywords: Thinking routines, Early Childhood Education, Teaching English, Listening comprehension, Meaningful learning.

2. JUSTIFICATION

This didactic intervention aims to innovate in Early Childhood Education to improve how English is taught and learned as a foreign language. In diverse classrooms and with the need to develop communication from a young age, it is crucial to use active, child-centred methodologies. The proposal stems from professional experience and reflection, where the focus has been on using direct communicative methods and avoiding translation to aid overall understanding. In Primary Education, this approach works well when teachers use only English and support their teaching with context,

repetition, and visual resources. However, some students find it difficult to understand instructions in English, which can lead to less participation or reliance on translation into Spanish. Frequently switching between English and Spanish, even with good intentions, can create a dependency that limits comprehension effort. Therefore, it is important to apply strategies that help understanding without always resorting to translation. Here, thinking routines are a key tool for innovation. These routines help children understand instructions, organise their ideas, and improve their oral expression in English, enabling them to grasp what is expected of them without always depending on Spanish. They also promote active participation, reflection, and the gradual construction of meaning, helping students interpret instructions, express simple ideas, and develop strategies for understanding spoken English. In this way, more autonomous and conscious learning is encouraged. In summary, the goal is to improve understanding and oral expression in English in Early Childhood Education using thinking routines and active methodologies. This reduces dependence on translation and fosters a more natural and progressive language learning process. The proposal advocates for a teaching model that prioritises understanding in context, interaction, and the development of communication from an early age.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Traditional teacher-centred methodologies in Early Childhood Education mainly focus on memorisation, limiting opportunities for critical thinking and meaningful connections. Whereas non-traditional, child-centred approaches, such as Montessori, place the child at the centre of their learning, fostering autonomy, creativity, and exploration (Salmon, 2010, 2016). However, these methodologies can make the thinking process difficult to externalise. Thinking routines complement this gap, providing structured opportunities where children can engage with creative ideas, analyse important information or justify their reasoning. Allowing teachers to observe their ideas while having autonomy and being at the centre of their learning.

Thinking is a process that cannot be learned by modelling, as it is not possible to learn to think just by looking. As Ritchhart et al. (2011) note, thinking is mainly invisible, and it is also a consequence of learning. Being this thinking action invisible, it is harder to evaluate and check. A visual example for this situation can be learning to dance without seeing dancers (learning to think without seeing thoughts). It may be quite

difficult to do; therefore, if teachers want to facilitate students' learning, thinking must be made visible not only to students themselves, but also to teachers, so that they can identify where students are in their learning process and provide appropriate scaffolding for their development. Thinking is visible when students can discuss, express and explain their ideas using thinking language (Elizondo, 2020). Thinking routines are structures to make this thinking visible in the class. Thinking empowers students to have the skills and knowledge for evaluating a wide range of options through life challenges. If teachers contribute to the development of thinking, students will inquire and question themselves, evolving into lifelong independent learners (Dajani, 2016).

The introduction of thinking routines is deeply supported by the constructivist theories of Piaget (1977) and Vygotsky (1978), stating that knowledge is formed by individual discoveries combined with social interaction. Researchers such as Ritchhart et al. (2011) of Project Zero at the Harvard Graduate School of Education (<https://pz.harvard.edu/thinking-routines>) designed these routines as tools to make thinking visible. Furthermore, thinking routines align with the multidimensional model of intelligence (Guilford and Hoepfner, 1971) by allowing students to work through different cognitive domains like metacognition, analysis, and evaluation. By consistently working with these routines in class, educators help foster deep learning and metacognition, internalising their own thinking and articulating their own ideas. (Salmon, 2010).

Early Childhood Education is a critical period for cognitive, social, emotional, and language development. León (1995) reported that several disciplines, such as sociology, psychology, and education, have verified the importance of Early Childhood Education for the development of intelligence, but also for the correct cognitive, psychomotor, social and language development. This is why Early Childhood Education should promote integral development. The crucial periods of cerebral development occur during the first six years of life (Mora, 2020). Then, during Early Childhood Education, activities should be rich and more focused on social and language abilities than on phonology and literacy, as students are more prepared beyond 6 years. Early Childhood Education makes the perfect space for developing autonomy, creativity and thinking. Learning environments that are enriched and

combine structured activities for exploration promote reflective thinking, flexibility, and curiosity (Pinter, 2017).

Thinking routines fit in Early Childhood Education as they offer structured but flexible questions where children can develop habits of mind that are crucial for learning and fostering confidence and comprehension. As they internalise the routines, this helps them to understand what exactly is expected from them, making a safe space to express their own ideas, in a simple way. Routines also improve the students' comprehension abilities.

Thinking routines are structured and easy to remember cognitive sets of questions created to guide students through observation, thinking, and questioning. According to Project Zero, there are approximately ninety different thinking routines divided into ten categories listed below:

1. Core Thinking Routines
2. Introducing and Exploring Ideas
3. Digging Deeper into Ideas
4. Synthesizing and Organizing Ideas
5. Investigating Objects and Systems
6. Perspective-Taking
7. Considering Controversies, Dilemmas, and Perspectives
8. Generating Possibilities and Analogies
9. Exploring Art, Images, and Objects
10. Global Thinking

When these routines are repeated, they help students internalise thinking habits and make thinking visible (Ritchhart et al., 2011). By including them frequently in class, the students learn to articulate their own ideas, developing critical thinking and communicative skills (Salmon, 2010). Thinking routines can be implemented across diverse learning contexts, such as small-group collaboration or discussing several points of view, or during circle time. Due to their flexibility, they can be used from early years through higher education.

During the process of learning English as a Foreign Language in Early Childhood Education, the most important skill is the oral one, because of this, teachers must work hard on externalising students' thoughts through productive skills.

Routines are effective in Early Childhood Education English classrooms as they set predictable structures that support the development of cognitive and language skills. (Selman & Dilworth-Bart, 2024). They help children to feel secure and can understand the expectations they must meet. When integrating routines into the English class, students gain emotional security because they know exactly what they are asked to do, regardless of the difficulty of learning L2.

Studies also report how the implementation of routines reduces the frequency of behaviour problems in a classroom (Ostrosky et al., 2003), fostering an environment that minimises disruptive behaviours through routines in the English class.

Research also reveals how the implementation of thinking routines in English promotes a strong positive effect towards students' oral production (Cortés, 2016)

Working with routines such as Think, Pair, Share, enhances the discussion of ideas with peers, not only reinforcing collaborative learning, but also facilitating the creation of ideas together and promoting confidence when expressing them with the class (Kothiyal et al., 2013). In Early Childhood Education, these structured interactions cultivate production skills, specifically speaking, by including a scaffold for oral output. For instance, the “See-Think-Wonder” routine helps with the observation of childrens' work and encourages them to formulate questions in English; this practice also enhances the distinction between objective description (see) and subjective description (wonder).

The “Colour-Symbol-Image” introduces a non-verbal way for students to externalise complex ideas by choosing a colour, symbol, or image. Another interesting example is the “Outside In” routine, where the abstract concepts can be learned, such as emotions, a crucial area to work in Early Childhood Education.

With these routines, students understand what they are expected to do, participate in classroom tasks, and gain confidence without their English level being a barrier.

When discussing the teaching of English in Early Childhood classrooms, we must look well beyond simply encouraging children to repeat phrases without understanding. Students at this age are naturally wired to learn; they learn best through doing, playing, and engaging with their immediate environment. If the language feels disconnected from their daily experiences, it simply will not stick (Coyle et al., 2010). Even if the focus in an early year's setting is English itself, adopting CLIL principles means

children use the language to genuinely explore their world, for instance, learning about animals and habitats (Mehisto et al., 2008). At this age, everything needs to be hands-on. If they can touch things, move around, and visually process the information, the concepts are much more likely to stick (Otto & Estrada-Chichón, 2023).

Thus, thinking routines may offer Early Education students a systematic cognitive framework to achieve this. This is where thinking routines come in. They act as a fundamental scaffold that supports children in shaping and expressing their thoughts in English (Ritchhart et al., 2011). Because these routines are repeated regularly, children know what to expect, which significantly boosts their confidence.

In an ordinary EFL classroom, students understand far more than they can express. It is frustrating for them as they have ideas but lack the words. Thinking routines help close this gap by outlining how to think and what to say. When connected to engaging topics, children shift from merely memorising to genuinely communicating. They motivate children to become more independent and inquisitive, exploring beyond the obvious answers (Dajani, 2016). Essentially, they act as a cognitive map. Because the format is predictable, students feel confident, as knowing what to expect significantly reduces their language anxiety (Dörnyei, 2005).

From a neurological perspective, it is like a workout for the brain. It enhances memory and cognitive flexibility, allowing children to untangle their thoughts before speaking (Church, 2016; Salmon, 2015). Moreover, teachers gain a notable advantage because learning becomes completely visible. When a child's thinking process is displayed on a classroom wall, assessing their progress becomes much easier (Heritage, 2013). However, challenges are also present. The main obstacle is often the "output gap," that is, the frustrating space between a child's complex ideas and their limited English vocabulary (Dajani, 2016). Without scaffolding, such as pictures or sentence starters, children may become disengaged. Indeed, encouraging very young students to analyse their own thinking is a tall order (Salmon, 2010), which is why everything must be kept very visual and grounded.

Furthermore, alongside these cognitive challenges, it is also necessary to consider introverted learners, who may sometimes feel uneasy when speaking L2 aloud in front of the class. To address this, routines such as Think–Pair–Share have been adopted

as an effective method to enhance the participation of children within the classroom environment. These strategies enable students to collaboratively develop and refine their ideas before sharing them with the broader group; consequently, this approach reduces cognitive load and bolsters linguistic confidence (Mundelsee & Jurkowski, 2021).

Ultimately, all of this demonstrates one key point: teaching English to young children is a complex, active process, not merely singing songs and repeating words.

Success depends on balancing the child's innate brain plasticity with a strong pedagogical framework. As shown, the CLIL approach provides the perfect environment for learning content, while thinking routines serve as practical tools that help naturally connect thoughts and language.

If thinking routines support children in organising their ideas and boosting their confidence when speaking, it is essential to examine their real effects within the classroom. Therefore, this study is guided by the following research question:

To what extent does the implementation of thinking routines improve the oral participation and English language production in 5-year-old EFL students?

4. INNOVATION/INTERVENTION PROPOSAL

4.1. SUBMISSION OF THE PROPOSAL

This proposal has been formulated based on various contributions from Early Childhood Education, English as a Foreign Language, and Visible Thinking approaches. The intervention integrates language learning with sensory exploration and active participation, fostering meaningful experiences tailored to young learners' interests and developmental stages.

Firstly, the proposal relies on active, child-centred methods: students learn through exploration, interaction, and manipulation of their environment, which is essential for their development.

Learning corners are essential to this proposal, as they provide adaptable spaces for students to experiment and learn collaboratively through play and exploration.

Developing oral skills in L2 at this stage is crucial, as children are still mastering receptive skills and cannot read yet. Therefore, learning primarily happens through

listening, interaction, and speaking. This is why the proposal emphasises these skills, using visual support, repetition, gestures, and guided oral practice to help students learn in a meaningful way.

Additionally, thinking routines are integrated into the sessions to promote observation, reasoning, and metacognition. Using See-Think-Wonder, “What makes you say that?” and “I used to think...now I think...”, students share their thoughts and ideas in a structured way, knowing exactly what is being asked of them.

This innovative proposal is organised around the exploration of three habitats (jungle, savannah, and ocean), with students mastering all three over the weeks.

Overall, the project aims to foster an engaging and confident environment where students can develop their language, social, and thinking skills in meaningful ways.

4.2. SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this intervention is to improve the oral comprehension of instructions and the oral production of the students through the discovery of the natural environment. This objective is aligned with the DECRETO 36/2022 from the Madrid Community, which states that in the second cycle of Early Childhood Education, one of the main contents is oral expression and communication in the foreign language (L2).

Other specific objectives that are crucial for the proposal are:

- To promote deep observation and critical thinking from a display picture
- To develop question skills through thinking routines
- To enhance active listening when sharing ideas as a whole group or in pairs
- To provide evidence of learning with the creation of a documenting mural
- To enhance collaborative learning and interaction between peers
- To develop critical thinking skills and communicative skills through thinking routines
- To make students conscious and protagonists of their own learning

Contents of the proposal

All of the contents of this proposal have been extracted from DECRETO 36/2022 from the Madrid Community,

Contribution to key competences : b) Competencia plurilingüe.

Contribution to specific competences:

Área 3

2. Interpretar y comprender mensajes y representaciones apoyándose en conocimientos y recursos de su propia experiencia para responder a las demandas del entorno.

Evaluation Criteria

2.3. Mostrar interés por conocer y comprender mensajes muy sencillos en lengua extranjera relacionados con rutinas y situaciones cotidianas.

Área 3

5. Valorar las diferentes lenguas presentes en su entorno, así como otras manifestaciones culturales.

4.3. CONTEXT

The following proposal is designed for implementation in a public bilingual centre in the Community of Madrid. This centre is situated in a middle socio-economic environment; families are actively involved in the school's educational project and maintain smooth communication with the teaching staff, thereby fostering a collaborative and effective school climate. It aims to make English a vehicular language for meaningful and functional contexts. One relevant aspect of this setting is that the classroom groups are not entirely uniform in terms of English ability. This makes it a suitable environment to explore inclusive teaching practices, because there are different rhythms and learning needs within the class. Regarding the schools' facilities, the classroom is wide and bright, providing enough space to organise the learning environment and to display the Thinking Wall. This mural is a key element, as it must be located in a visible area where students can constantly refer to their previous thoughts. Finally, the school has a language assistant who participates in the English sessions as part of an institutional project to reinforce oral skills. The assistant serves as a facilitator of natural oral input, helping students feel more comfortable as they discover the natural environment in English class. Regarding timing and organization, the English subject in this grade consists of three 50-minute sessions per week. This proposal is developed in nine sessions, which will take five weeks to complete, ensuring constant contact with the foreign language and allowing the thinking routines to be integrated naturally into the class's weekly schedule.

4.4. METHODOLOGY

This proposal is based on learning corners, which is a space organisation that actively encourages students' autonomy. This model allows the classroom to be organised into different work areas where the student interacts with manipulable materials that promote learning through action. The teacher acts as a guide and provides support tailored to the student's needs, but the main protagonist of their learning is the student themselves. In this design, thinking routines serve as essential cognitive tools for achieving learning objectives. Following Harvard's Project Zero, learning results from thinking; therefore, these routines are not merely activities but structured patterns that act as motors to help students process information and make connections. This provides the necessary scaffolding for students to externalise their thoughts and develop oral skills using limited linguistic resources.

To ensure a comprehensive and highly manipulative and multisensory approach, the methodology integrates three essential dimensions through the corners:

Exploration corner: This corner is organised around a large floor mat that represents the habitat being explored each week (jungle, savannah or ocean). First, the teacher models the activity using simple language structures, such as "I can see a zebra" or "It lives in the jungle." Afterwards, students will play a guessing-and-description game and identify the animal the teacher asks about, pointing to it. Once students become familiar with the activity, they will be the ones (with the teachers' support, when necessary) to try to describe the animals, they see.

Sensory corner: Following the principle that children in Early Childhood Education learn best by doing, a sensory table is implemented. Instead of just observing, students explore each habitat in a sensory table. Using materials like sand, water or rice, they build the environment and place the 3D animal figures (realia) within it. This manipulative experience is key for students to bridge the gap between concrete experience and abstract vocabulary, internalising the language through touch and creation. During sessions 2, 4, and 6, several incorrect animals will be intentionally introduced into the habitats. With the teacher scaffolding and guided support, the students will identify which animals are incorrect and, using the routine 'What makes you say that?' justify their ideas, providing arguments and evidence of their learning.

- **Creative corner:** This area incorporates origami as an effective pedagogical tool. When working with origami, students are expected to develop fine motor skills, patience, and the ability to follow sequential instructions as they transform a square of paper into a representation of a wild animal, which requires them to exercise precision and perseverance while processing oral input in the target language through Total Physical Response (TPR) provided by the language assistant.

For this to be effective, all the teachers must stay consistently attentive to students' productions across all corners. When they capture students' ideas, discoveries, and creations, students feel heard and valued, which is essential for building their self-confidence. This approach helps students with language anxiety feel more at ease participating. When they see their thoughts and work displayed on the Thinking Wall, they understand that their input is important, no matter their English proficiency. The mural makes their progress visible, turning the classroom into a supportive environment where each child's thinking is appreciated. The proposal is influenced by several CLIL principles, as English is presented as a tool for exploring and understanding the natural environment. Through meaningful experiences, manipulative activities, and thinking routines, language is introduced in a natural way that encourages communication, interaction, and active thinking rather than focusing only on isolated vocabulary. According to the 4Cs framework of CLIL (Coyle et al., 2010), the content of this proposal focuses on animals and their habitats, while communication is developed through students' oral production in English. Cognition is covered with the use of the think routines, and finally, the culture is addressed by fostering respect towards nature and the environment.

To guarantee that all students can participate regardless of their English level, two jars ("Needs a turn" and "Had a turn") are used to manage the oral interventions fairly and inclusively.

Resources

Human Resources:

- The English teacher: The teacher stays primarily in the sensory corner, enriching this way the interaction and oral production of the students with questions like

“What do you think it is?”, “Is it big or small?” “What do you think it eats?” , as well as guiding the “What makes you say that?” routine.

- The Language Assistant stays in the creative corner as she uses Total Physical Response (TPR) to guide manual tasks, ensuring students understand the "doing" without translating into L1. She also assists the teacher when collecting learning evidence, which will later be added to the Thinking Wall.
- The support teacher facilitates the Explorers Corner by guiding students through questions and providing scaffolding through language chunks such as “I can see...”, “The ... is...”. Supporting the students to articulate their observations in L2.

Spatial Resources:

- Ordinary classroom: Divided into three specialised Learning Corners: Exploration, Sensory, and Creative.
The class features the Thinking Wall, a central mural where all evidence of learning is displayed. The circle time carpet serves as the meeting point for initial modelling of the students' final reflections.
- School playground or garden: Used to simulate habitats on a large scale, allowing children to move freely while practising target language and action verbs in a natural setting.

Material Resources:

Cognitive Tools

The Explorer Notebook (Annex 1): An individual learning portfolio utilised by the students for graphic annotations and registering thinking throughout the sessions.- Explorer notebook for annotations and registering thinking.

Thinking Icons (Annex 2): Large visual symbols representing an eye, a brain, and a question mark. These resources serve as visual scaffolds to identify the different stages of the *See–Think–Wonder* routine.

The Paper Camera (Annex 3): A creative craft used during the initial sessions to simulate taking photographs of the habitats, fostering student imagination and focus.

Sensory and Fine Motor Resources

- **Sensory Corner Tools:** Scoops, tongs, and wooden rakes specifically selected to develop fine motor skills, hand-eye coordination, and tactile exploration.

- **Habitat Mats:** Three distinct thematic mats representing the ecosystems of the jungle, the savannah, and the ocean.
- **Three-Dimensional Animal Figures (Realia):** Realistic plastic animals providing tactile and concrete learning experiences for young learners.
- **Origami Paper, Crayons, and Pencils:** Basic art supplies and stationery used to create structural elements and to record individual ideas.

Classroom Management and Socio-Emotional Resources

- **The Turn Jars:** Two transparent jars labelled as "*Needs a turn*" and "*Had a turn*". This system ensures equitable participation, manages turn-taking, and guarantees emotional safety during oral interactions.

Digital Devices

- **Tablets and Digital Cameras:** Devices used by the teaching team to document key thinking moments, capturing evidence of the learning process for subsequent formative evaluation.

4.5. ACTIVITIES

Routine	When?	Why?
See-Think-Wonder	Sessions 1,3 and 5 at the beginning of each new habitat.	To activate prior knowledge and stimulate oral production.
What makes you say that?	Sessions 7 and 8 during the review and consolidation phase.	To let students justify their choices and ideas in L2 when classifying animals, promoting critical thinking and reasoning with evidence.
I used to think...now I think...	Session 9 as a final reflective activity for the closure of the project	To facilitate metacognition, as the learners are able to evaluate and visibly reflect on their evolution regarding wild animals and their habitats.

Session 1

Stage	Activities (Teacher/Language Assistant/ Support Teacher/ Students role)	Grouping	Time (min)	Materials
Introduction of the Lesson Plan	The teacher introduces the Wild Animals lesson plan, explaining that students will take the role of explorers. Each student will be provided with a paper camera to support observation and an explorer notebook to record their ideas. Students listen to the introduction.	Whole group	2	Explorer notebook, camera
Previous knowledge phase	The teacher displays a picture of the jungle and introduces the thinking routine See- Think- Wonder . Students individually draw their ideas in their explorer notebook. Afterwards with the support of the teacher, they share their ideas orally with the group. The language assistant and the support teacher observe the activity, taking notes and photographs of the students' ideas as evidence of learning.	Students are in the assembly mat as a whole group.	5	Jungle habitat image, crayons, and explorer notebook.
Input phase	The teacher introduces vocabulary related to the jungle habitat and its animals (monkey, snake, tiger, parrot, jungle, tree, river...). This vocabulary is supported by flashcards, real images, gestures and repetition. Students repeat the target vocabulary and point at the images while describing what they see through guided oral production with scaffolding provided by the language assistant.	Whole group	8	Flashcards, animal images.
Practice	Students rotate through the three learning corners. In the Sensory Corner , the students explore the sensory table featuring the jungle habitat and engage with the 3D animals. With the guidance of the teacher, who offers scaffolding, they articulate phrases such as 'This is a tiger,' 'The tiger lives in the jungle,' and 'There is a snake.'	Groups of 5	30 (10 each corner)	Sensory table, 3D animals, grass, leaves, natural elements related to the jungle habitat, jungle mat, cameras, origami paper, crayons.

	<p>In the Exploration Corner, The students engage in a guessing and descriptive activity by identifying the animals indicated by the teacher, subsequently providing guided descriptions of them. Oral production is scaffolded by the teacher.</p> <p>In the Creative Corner, students create jungle animals through simple origami activities guided by the language assistant using TPR strategies and visual modelling.</p>			
Closure	During the closure stage, students sit together in the assembly area and talk about what they discovered about the jungle habitat with flashcards. The language assistant models step by step using gestures, visual demonstration, and TPR support.	Whole group	5	Flashcards, stickers.

Session 2

Stage	Activities (Teacher/Language Assistant/ Support Teacher/ Students role)	Grouping	Time (min)	Materials
Activation phase	The teacher reviews vocabulary from the previous session using flashcards and gestures. The students identify and name jungle animals with the support of linguistic scaffolding.	Whole group	5	Flashcards, images, visual support
Input phase	The teacher introduces a few key words linked to jungle animals, mostly actions and food (run, climb, fly, swim / eat leaves, eat meat). It's all very supported with images, gestures and repetition. Students repeat, sometimes together, sometimes individually, and start linking ideas (monkey climbs, bird flies, etc.).	Whole group.	10	Flashcards of actions
Practice	Students rotate through three corners. In the Sensory Corner , the savannah habitat includes intentional errors, such as animals that do not belong there. Using the thinking routine “What makes you say	Groups of 5	30 (10 each corner)	Sensory table, 3D animals, grass, leaves, natural elements related to the jungle habitat,

	<p>that?”, students identify these inconsistencies and justify their ideas with teacher support, encouraging oral justification.</p> <p>In the Exploration Corner, they return to the savannah mats and describe animals and their actions using simple structures, guided by the teachers' scaffolding.</p> <p>In the Creative Corner, students make a simple savannah animal through origami, following the modelling and gestures from the language assistant step by step.</p>			jungle mat, cameras, origami paper, crayons.
Closure	During the closure stage, students sit together in a circle and briefly share what they have done during the session.	Whole group	5	Flashcards.

Session 3

Stage	Activities (Teacher/Language Assistant/ Support Teacher/ Students role)	Grouping	Time (min)	Materials
Previous knowledge phase	The teacher shows a picture of the savannah in the board. Students look carefully and use See-Think-Wonder to share what they notice, what they think might be happening and the questions that come to mind while looking at the images. Some students share ideas straight away, while others take a little longer to think. The teacher keeps the conversation moving naturally, only helping when needed. The support teacher stays close to students who need extra help expressing or organising their ideas.	Whole group	5	Savannah image, explorer notebook
Input phase	The teacher starts by introducing words about the savannah habitat and its animals, such as zebra, lion and rocks. To help students learn, the teacher uses flashcards, real pictures, gestures, repetition and TPR. Students practice saying the new words and point to the images as	Whole group.	10	Flashcards, real images

	they describe what they see, with help from the language assistant.			
Practice	<p>Students rotate through three corners.</p> <p>In the Sensory Corner, students explore the sensory table depicting the savannah habitat and interact with the 3D animals. Guided by the teacher, who provides scaffolding, they practice saying phrases like 'This is a cheetah,' 'The cheetah lives in the savanna,' and 'There is a giraffe.'</p> <p>In the Exploration Corner, students participate in a guessing and descriptive activity, where they identify animals pointed out by the teacher and then give guided descriptions. The teacher supports oral production throughout.</p> <p>In the Creative Corner, students make a simple savannah animal using origami, step by step, with visual support and gestures from the language assistant.</p>	Groups of 5	30 (10 each corner)	Sensory table, 3D animals, grass, leaves, natural elements related to the savannah habitat, savannah mat, cameras, origami paper, crayons
Closure	Students sit together and talk about what they have discovered about the savannah. The language assistant supports students when they need help to express their ideas.	Whole group	5	Flashcards

Session 4

Stage	Activities (Teacher/Language Assistant/ Support Teacher/ Students role)	Grouping	Time (min)	Materials
Input phase	The teacher introduces some simple vocabulary linked to savannah animals, mainly actions and food (run, jump, hunt, eat grass, eat leaves). Pictures, gestures and repetition support the activity all the time. Students repeat the new words, copy movements and begin connecting	Whole group	10	Flashcards, real images

	them to different animals through short oral chunks such as “the lion hunts” or “the giraffe eats leaves”.			
Practice	<p>Students rotate through three corners.</p> <p>In the Sensory Corner, the savannah habitat includes intentional errors, such as animals that do not belong there. Using the thinking routine “What makes you say that?”, students identify these inconsistencies and justify their ideas with teacher support, encouraging oral justification.</p> <p>In the Exploration Corner, they return to the savannah mats and describe animals and their actions using simple structures, guided by the teachers' scaffolding.</p> <p>In the Creative Corner, students make a simple savannah animal through origami, following the modelling and gestures from the language assistant step by step.</p>	Groups of 5	30 (10 each corner)	Sensory table, 3D animals, grass, leaves, natural elements related to the savannah habitat, savannah mat, cameras, origami paper, crayons
Closure	During the closure stage, students sit together in a circle and briefly talk about what they did during the session with the support of the language assistant.	Whole group	10	Flashcards

Session 5

Stage	Activities (Teacher/Language Assistant/ Support Teacher/ Students role)	Grouping	Time (min)	Materials
Previous knowledge phase	The teacher shows a picture of the ocean and introduces the See-Think-Wonder thinking routine. Each student draws their ideas in their explorer notebook. The language assistant supports the conversation naturally with short prompts whenever students need help expressing what they want to say.	Whole group	5	Ocean image
Input phase	The teacher introduces the target language about the ocean and its animals, such as octopuses, sharks, turtles,	Whole group	10	Flashcards, real images

	corals, and shells. For visual support, flashcards and real pictures are used, along with gestures and repetition. Students repeat and practice vocabulary, describing what they see with the support of the language assistant.			
Practice	<p>Students rotate through three corners.</p> <p>At the Sensory Corner, students engage with the sensory table representing the ocean habitat and interact with three-dimensional animals. Under the guidance of the teacher, who offers scaffolding support, they practice articulating phrases such as 'This is a shark,' 'The shark inhabits the ocean,' and 'There is a whale.'</p> <p>In the Exploration Corner, students engage in a guessing and descriptive activity. They identify animals indicated by the teacher and then provide guided descriptions, with the teacher offering support for oral production throughout.</p> <p>In the Creative Corner, students make a simple ocean animal through origami with modelling and gestures from the language assistant.</p>	Groups of 5	30 (10 each corner)	Sensory table, 3D animals, natural elements related to the ocean habitat, ocean mat, cameras, origami paper, crayons
Closure	For the closure stage, students sit together and briefly talk about what they discovered about the ocean habitat.	Whole group	5	Flashcards.

Session 6

Stage	Activities (Teacher/Language Assistant/ Support Teacher/ Students role)	Grouping	Time (min)	Materials
Input phase	The teacher introduces a few simple words linked to sea animals, mainly actions and food (swim, dive, jump, eat fish, eat plants). Everything is supported with gestures, images and repetition. Students repeat the vocabulary, copy actions and start connecting ideas with different animals in short oral exchanges.	Whole group	10	Flashcards, real images

Practice	<p>Students rotate through three corners.</p> <p>In the Sensory Corner, the ocean habitat features deliberate errors, like animals that are out of place. Students use the thinking routine “What makes you say that?” to spot these inconsistencies and explain their reasoning with teacher guidance, promoting oral justification.</p> <p>In the Exploration Corner, students use ocean mats and describe what animals are doing using verbs from the input phase such as “the dolphin jumps” or “the shark swims”. The support teacher supports oral production when students get stuck.</p> <p>In the Creative Corner, students make another simple sea animal through origami following TPR from the language assistant.</p>	Groups of 5	30 (10 each corner)	Sensory table, 3D animals, natural elements related to the ocean habitat, ocean mat, cameras, origami paper, crayons
Closure	Students sit together in a circle and use the routine “I used to think... now I think...” to reflect on what they learned about ocean animals and habitats during the session, they will use their explorers' notebook to draw their thoughts.	Whole group	10	Flashcards, explorer notebook

Session 7

Stage	Activities (Teacher/Language Assistant/ Support Teacher/ Students role)	Grouping	Time (min)	Materials
Revision	Students will revise the three habitats with flash cards	Whole group	5	Flashcards
Explorers abroad	Students will go to the playground or garden, where all the photographs and flashcards of all the habitats will be upside down display on the floor. The teachers will give an animal flashcard, and students must collect all the material they think belongs to the animal, for example if they have a parrot, they must take the jungle photograph, the feathers photograph and whatever they think belongs to it.	Individual	35	Flashcards, hoops, photographs, camera

Closure	After collecting all the flashcards and pictures, students will return to the classroom. Teachers will prompt students to justify their choices using the “ What makes you say that? ” routine.	Individual	10	Flashcards, photographs.
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Session 8

Stage	Activities (Teacher/Language Assistant/ Support Teacher/ Students role)	Grouping	Time (min)	Materials
Review phase	To reinforce the knowledge acquired, the teacher carries out a global review of the three habitats through flashcards and images. The students are expected to respond to questions posed by the teacher, such as "Where does the shark live?", "What does the giraffe eat?", and "Which animals were in the jungle?". They should utilize the vocabulary they have acquired. The language assistant offers scaffolding support through sentence starters and modelling when necessary.	Whole group	5	Flashcards, real images
Habitats	In this stage, each student will receive a flashcard depicting an animal. Students must then identify peers with animals from the same habitat and form groups of five, with each group representing a specific habitat. On a large table, materials from the sensory corner will be displayed, including three-dimensional animal models, grass, water, and rocks. Based on their assigned animals, each group will select appropriate materials and collaboratively construct a realistic habitat. For example, the group with the snake, monkey, frog, parrot, and tiger will first choose the necessary materials and then create their habitat.	3 groups of 5 students	30 (10 each corner)	3 sensory tables, 3D animals, natural elements related to the jungle, the savanna and the ocean habitat display on tables.
Evaluation	To conclude this session, students will take turns presenting their constructed habitats to the class. The	3 groups of 5 students	15	

	teacher will then facilitate the “What makes you say that?” routine, prompting students to justify their choices regarding the elements included in their habitats.			
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Session 9

Stage	Activities (Teacher/Language Assistant/ Support Teacher/ Students role)	Grouping	Time (min)	Materials
Evaluation of the Thinking Wall	Students will receive pictures and flashcards representing the target vocabulary, which they will be required to place on the Thinking Wall. To finish, with this learning, all their thoughts from the classes will be displayed on the Thinking Wall, with a picture of each student. They will have to choose one thought and, with the “I used to think...now I think” tell how some idea changed, for example, I used to think giraffes eat fish, now I think they eat leaves.	3 groups of 5 students	15	Thinking wall, pictures of the students through the sessions, photographs, drawings, flashcards.
Habitats	In this stage, each student will receive a flashcard depicting an animal. Students must then identify peers with animals from the same habitat and form groups of five, with each group representing a specific habitat. On a large table, materials from the sensory corner will be displayed, including three-dimensional animal models, grass, water, and rocks. Based on their assigned animals, each group will select appropriate materials and collaboratively construct a realistic habitat. For example, the group with the snake, monkey, frog, parrot, and tiger will first choose the necessary materials and then create their habitat.	3 groups of 5 students	30 (10 each corner)	3 sensory tables, 3D animals, natural elements related to the jungle, the savanna and the ocean habitat display on tables.
Self assessment -	In this stage, each student reflects on their own learning, by placing animal stickers on the final section of their explorer notebook. The teachers will ask questions and	Individual	5	Stickers and explorer’s notebook

	the students will place the stickers on the final section of the explorer notebook.			
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4.6. ATTENTION TO THE DIVERSITY

This educational proposal is based on the principles of inclusion outlined in the LOMLOE (Ley Orgánica 3/2020) and the prevailing regulations of the Community of Madrid, thereby ensuring an equitable educational response for all students. Moreover, Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is also regarded as a reference framework to provide diverse methods of accessing information, demonstrating learning, and engaging in all activities. A variety of resources are used, including gestural, manipulative, and mainly visual tools such as flashcards, real images, and Total Physical Response (TPR). This approach brings English comprehension closer in Early Childhood Education, as students understand the meaning without relying solely on translation.

Furthermore, activities cater to different levels of response since not all students participate in the same way or at the same pace. Therefore, constant supports such as sentence starters or guided repetition are provided, allowing each student to express themselves according to their level in the foreign language. As the classroom is organised into different corners, it enables content to be worked on through various methods. Some students learn better by observing, others through manipulation, and some through creative production. This ensures that everyone can participate actively. With a language assistant and a support teacher, individualised attention within the classroom is strengthened, as groups become significantly smaller.

The aim is to create a classroom environment where all students feel safe and motivated, and where making mistakes is not seen as negative but as part of the learning process. Thinking routines allow all students to participate regardless of the level of their responses and eliminate the fear of making errors, as there are no wrong answers.

In conclusion, the proposal seeks to respond to the diversity present in classrooms with a practical, flexible, and realistic approach, encouraging all students to participate and learn in line with the principles of the LOMLOE and the regulations of the Community of Madrid

4.7. APPLICATION TIMELINE

This intervention proposal is developed over five weeks, with a total of nine fifty-minute sessions, scheduled in two English classes per week, in accordance with the bilingual programme of the Community of Madrid. This timetable has been designed to

progressively and meaningfully integrate English and thinking routines in relevant learning contexts. During the first week, sessions one and two focus on the jungle habitat, introducing the initial work structure, where the difficulty of tasks gradually increases. In the second week, sessions three and four concentrate on the savannah habitat. During this phase, students have partially internalised the class dynamics, allowing them greater autonomy and freedom in oral interaction. The third week centres on the ocean habitat, where concepts such as 'corals' and 'shell' are introduced to enhance the target language level.

The fourth week, which includes sessions seven and eight, is dedicated to reviewing and assessing all the information learned in previous classes. Through routines, students increase their oral production, explain their arguments when choosing materials, and work cooperatively and independently to create a habitat from scratch.

Finally, the last week consists of session nine, which is focused exclusively on the evaluation of the project.

4.8. EVALUATION

The assessment framework for this proposal is conceived as a continuous, formative process designed to monitor student progress throughout the various sessions. This design strictly complies with the legal dispositions established in DECRETO 36/2022, de 8 de junio, which regulates the curriculum of Early Childhood Education in the Community of Madrid. According to Article 12 of the mentioned regional decree, evaluation in this educational stage must be global, continuous, and formative, positioning direct and systematic observation as the primary instrument for data collection.

To conclude the learning process, students will construct a **Thinking Wall** (Annex 4), a visual and reflective space that consolidates evidence of their progress throughout the educational activity. On the mural, students will collaboratively place meaningful materials from the process, such as drawings from their explorer notebooks, flashcards from the sessions, and photographs or documentation captured by the educators during the activities. Upon completion of the mural, the teacher will facilitate the thinking routine "**I used to think... Now I think...**," enabling students to articulate how their initial perceptions regarding animals and habitats have developed and transformed over the course of the project. The teacher will demonstrate phrases such

as “I used to think giraffes eat fish, now I think giraffes eat leaves” to assist students' understanding. This phase promotes metacognition, as students become aware of their own learning and thinking processes. Furthermore, the Thinking Wall serves as a formative assessment instrument, rendering learning visible and encouraging oral communication in English. It also provides tangible evidence of students' progress in a meaningful and motivating manner, as students feel acknowledged and respected when their thoughts or work are displayed.

While the Thinking Wall serves as the final evaluable outcome, the evaluation encompasses the entire series of sessions. Given that the intervention is situated within an Early Childhood Education context, the process shifts away from standardised written tests, focusing instead on direct observation, active participation, and spontaneous interaction during daily routines. The focus is not restricted to the acquisition of English vocabulary; it also places significant value on the students' communicative confidence, their willingness to express ideas, and their level of engagement with the thinking routines.

Considering the developmental stage of five-year-old learners, the assessment is designed to be flexible and naturally organised within the classroom environment.

A key feature of this proposal is the collaborative assessment carried out by the three teachers involved (English teacher, support teacher and language assistant). To ensure that no students' output or breakthrough is missed, each teacher is provided with a checklist to complete during the sessions. This cooperative observation allows for a more comprehensive and objective view of each students' progress in oral tasks, learning centres, and cooperative experiences. A variety of assessment instruments will be employed to track progress systematically as follows:

- **Observation and checklists:** To assess systematic observations throughout the sessions, a checklist (Annex 5) will be used. As mentioned before, all three teachers will use checklists during the sessions to register indicators such as oral interaction, vocabulary use, and speaking confidence. This ensures that every meaningful contribution is recorded in real-time.

- **Records and notes:** These tools will complement the checklists, helping the teaching team collect qualitative data regarding students' attitudes, specific difficulties, and individual breakthroughs over time.
- **Assessment Rubric:** While the daily process is formative, a rubric (Annex 6) will be specifically used to evaluate the Thinking Wall as the final product of the intervention, measuring the integration of knowledge and the ability to express ideas visually and orally.

Furthermore, the proposal incorporates, during the evaluation stage a simplified self-assessment routine adapted to the characteristics of five-year-olds. At the conclusion of designated sessions, students will reflect on their own participation using visual supports, with animal stickers. Through teacher-led questioning, children will gradually develop metacognitive awareness of their own learning path.

5. CONCLUSIONS

My objective with this proposal was to ensure that learning transcends mere memorisation of words, aiming instead for children to experience, manipulate, and comprehend the content through practical activities.

In the process of preparing the proposal, I recognised the significance of hands-on learning for young children, including touching, observing, and playing. This is why active methodologies and work corners are particularly effective in Early Childhood Education. Furthermore, I found thinking routines highly beneficial, as they facilitate children's initial thinking processes, careful observation, and attempts to articulate what they observe, even when using simple language or relying on gestures and drawings.

During my research, I encountered a challenge: most studies concerning thinking routines focus primarily on Primary or Secondary education. This highlighted the need for further investigation and adaptation of such strategies for Early Childhood.

Nonetheless, after developing the proposal, I am convinced that thinking routines can be highly effective in the early years if adapted appropriately. Therefore, in answer to the question of how this proposal can improve language production and oral participation, I believe the potential impact is enormous. By providing five-year-olds

with a visual and predictable framework to draw on, it breaks down the barrier of fear of speaking English, enabling them to participate actively and naturally in line with their abilities. With visual aids, repetition, gestures, and substantial support from educators, children can participate actively and begin to formulate basic ideas in English, even if in a highly guided manner.

Unfortunately, for reasons beyond my control, it has not been possible to put this innovation into practice in a real classroom context during the present academic year. However, this methodological framework is intended for future professional practice, with the intention of implementing the project in a real classroom as an educator. If applied in a real Early Childhood environment, it could produce very positive outcomes—particularly in oral participation, the motivation of the children, and their willingness to overcome the fear of speaking in a foreign language.

In conclusion, this project has taught me that learning English in Early Childhood is significantly more Effective when it is combined with children's experiences, play, and innate curiosity. Additionally, thinking routines act as a helpful tool to support children in thinking, expressing themselves, and learning more mindfully and naturally.

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7. ANNEXES

Annex 1: Explorer notebook: <https://canva.link/kr64hjueovdrpkk>

Annex 2: See, Think, Wonder Icons; <https://canva.link/wp9e2htp93o2cor>

Annex 3: Paper Camera: <https://canva.link/dnal2mduajqq16z>

Annex 4: Thinking Wall: <https://canva.link/66zqxl29iubt3dp>

Annex 5 :Checklist: <https://canva.link/rd3yi5ewkpc2wax>

Annex 6 :Rubric: <https://canva.link/ytwu43rrn9g54qq>

Annex 7: Materials for the sessions: <https://canva.link/uyp9p9m2h2xi222>