

## 2. INITIAL APPROACH, AN OVERALL VIEW.

“Our greatest weakness lies in giving up. The most certain way to succeed is always try just one more time”.

**Thomas A. Edison**

The ultimate **purpose** of this book is to provide teachers with the necessary **resources** to **succeed** in the second part of the state exams for primary school English teachers. This complex and ambitious task shall bring about practical analysis, models, ideas, techniques and strategies to design a **FL syllabus** and a series of **didactic units**. Subsequently, as an additional matter of concern but in no case less important, it is crucial to think of a consistent framework to train for the **oral presentation**, due to its weight in the final decision of the examiners.

In this light, the present guide should be seen as a training tool which intends to serve as a deep source of training, guidance, motivation and inspiration, so that candidates eventually **feel** able and **self-confident** to orally **defend a quality FL programming** proposal. In other words, our intention is to walk teachers through the construction of their programming document, and to inspire their oral presentation.

As we all know, the **second part** of the state exams consists of the **oral presentation** of the programming document and the analysis of a didactic unit. This means that the **first requirement** we should consider is the need to devise an **excellent product** that responds to high quality standards of teaching practice, and which is valued by the examiners as innovative, creative and feasible.

The **analysis of the OA** (published by the autonomous communities) usually sets the general guidelines as for the curricular elements that must be present in our programming, together with the legal references at regional level. This document deserves **special attention**, not only to accomplish the formal aspects already mentioned in the introduction, such as number of pages or typefaces, but also because it encapsulates valuable information concerning the general evaluation criteria that the examiners shall use to measure our programming and oral presentation.

Nevertheless, the **OA** is just the tip of the iceberg, a starting point to familiarise with the process itself and the programming we shall defend. In trying to find an answer to what a **quality curriculum** is, the **International Bureau of Education (IBE, UNESCO, 2016)** works with countries seeking to improve their curricula with the broad aim of enabling young people to acquire and expand knowledge, skills and values to ensure successful lives in this era of rapid changes.

In broad terms, the **IBE** remarks some **questions** for curriculum designers to note before deepening into more specific aspects:

- Which knowledge, skills and values should we include in our curriculum?
- Would the acquisition and enlargement of such capabilities and competences, enable our young people to lead meaningful and productive lives?
- Is our current paradigm of a set of ‘subjects’ constituting a curriculum adequate? How can we make learning relevant and interesting to students?

Due to its importance, this **competence-based** type of learning should be central to any **FL** programming; therefore, the practical implementation of **ICT** and active methodologies shall merit full attention throughout this guide. Up to this point, we may conclude that our **FL programming** must meet certain **quality criteria**:

- Accomplish all the requirements in the **OA**;

- be designed for a **specific group** of students in a particular socioeconomic and sociocultural context;
- consider the natural **heterogeneity** in any group of children, and the possible cases of specific needs of educational support (**SNES**);
- be organised according to the peculiarities of the **regional curriculum** (i.e. relation amongst contents, evaluation criteria and learning standards; possible inclusion of **FL** objectives; reflection upon the articles dealing with methodological proposals, and the like); and describe **clear learning outcomes** that really describe what we intend to do with children;
- be grounded on a **modern** communicative **perspective of FLT** where essential principles like meaningfulness, motivation and active involvement for practical use of the **FL** are brought to life;
- represent a **creative** English learning **proposal** which results attractive and “profitable” from a linguistic viewpoint, within the scope of competence-based tasks;
- be **original** and catch the eye of the examiners.

Turning to the matter in hand, giving an **oral presentation** in a state exam is not exactly a smooth sailing. On the other hand, being the authors of this book aware of the **weight of the oral presentation** in this examination, it seems evident that an ideal practical guide must consider the incorporation of varied **resources** and **script models** that facilitate the candidates’ oral performance in both the long term-planning (**FL syllabus**), and short-term programming (**units**). Without a shadow of a doubt, a performance which accomplishes the evaluation criteria of the panel is more likely to be better valued if the speech is originally organised and presented. In this concern, it is indispensable to rely on a “basic script model” to start rehearsing. In further chapters, we shall slip into the **strategies** to organise a **powerful speech** and some possible **models** to be taken as an **inspiration** for your personal outcome (**FL syllabus**). As we will see, a **strong opening** and **closing** may be illustrative examples of the “performing style” to make the most of our presentation.

**Authors’ note:** the terms syllabus or programming refer to the long-term planning for a school year; whilst for the short-term programming proposals we must include in the programming document, we will understand formative, didactic or competency units as synonyms.

However, prior to engaging the “presentations front” (training for the oral performance), we have to prepare our pitch. A golden rule is that if we want to **sell** the “benefits” of our **product**, there should be no questions about its quality. Therefore, we must embark on a deep reflection concerning the **formal elaboration of a FL syllabus** in all its fields: curricular elements organisation, updated competence-based methodologies, integration of digital resources and design of attractive communicative learning scenarios for children to promote the main aim in our area, the attainment of a certain degree of **communicative competence**. From our training experience, we understand that teachers find it useful to count on “written examples” of the different points in the **FL** programming (i.e. introduction, methodological principles and so on).

In addition, in **Road to your Post** we strongly believe that any **FL** syllabus must encompass **appealing units** where children make real use of the **FL** in contextualised situations. Thus, along the **units’ examples** (models to be included in the **FL** syllabus) and its further development (contextualisation of the unit, explanation of curricular elements and sequence of sessions), we shall present how a **project-based methodology** can be taken to practice. Obviously, this **communicative** overlook of **FLT** brings about valuable teaching strategies, such as **collaborative learning**, **supportive environment** to cater for the natural **diversity** in any group. Equally relevant shall be the active involvement of children in the use of English on a daily basis, arousing **a taste** for this prominent language. There is plenty of research on the **field of motivation** and its benefits in the teaching process to understand that we should not expect much out of demotivated children in traditional **FL** lessons.

Given this, the **first chapters** in this volume concentrate on the necessary **training tools** for teachers to **produce** a modern and **attractive FL syllabus** and **didactic units**. By doing so, we ensure to meet the aforementioned golden rule of counting on a quality product.

It is of prime importance to understand that this guide provides the hints to **adapt our FL syllabus to any autonomous community**. This is one of the reasons why before reading the models, it is convenient to study the **analysis** in the **first chapters**, where we set the ball rolling with an in-depth study on **how to design a FL syllabus**, its components and variables. In consonance, the contents revolve around the rules to organise curricular elements, the legal references at autonomous community level to be mentioned in the different programming points, and an insight of all the **FL syllabus elements**. To supplement these chapters, you may find it useful to browse the website [oposicionesingles.com/legislacion](http://oposicionesingles.com/legislacion), where we have uploaded all the indispensable legal references in all autonomous communities.

In this sense, the present volume intends to be a decisive “**training tool**” for teachers to steel themselves for the hard task of **obtaining a post**, as it caters for all the needs of this part of the examinations: syllabus and units design, and oral presentation.

As we have already noted, “copying and pasting” what others have done or written is not an option, because the outcome is very likely to result poor and standardised. Rather, we are strongly convinced that through the **understanding of programming mechanisms**, reflective **study of the models** and **practical examples**, this method shall be of invaluable help for **self-training** or as **additional resource** to enrich our existing background or already made syllabuses. Moreover, far beyond the usefulness of the models for the different syllabus components, the reader shall find **interesting hints** to devise original projects and all possible connections with recent trends in the field of **FLT**.

The training **philosophy** at the heart of this volume does not differ from our **previous works** covering the **set of topics** and a **method** to learn how to cope with a **practical case study**, first and second volumes respectively. Our main concern is to **pave the way to success** for those who place their trust in **Road to your Post**. We believe that in the present method, candidates shall find a valuable ally. It is **easy** to understand, but at the same time with a **rigorous** treatment of technical concepts; **feasible** in its proposals, yet endowed with considerable doses of **creativity**, **innovation** and learning to learn hints to facilitate **personalisation** and the candidates’ autonomous work.

## HOW TO USE THIS BOOK?

As the reader may have already noted, the way to **make the most of this method** goes through following a series of **steps**:

- **Study** the first chapters describing all syllabus components, the strategies to organise them in our syllabus and the methodological implications of a modern **FL** teaching proposal. This shall involve students’ grouping in collaborative learning scenarios, practical integration of **ICT** to engage children, management of classroom dynamics or contribution to the school plans (i.e. reading plan, coexistence plan), amongst many others.
- **Personal decisions** as a reflection after the first step, which shall start giving shape to our final document: form (or grade) our **FL** syllabus is aimed at (i.e. fifth form); classroom profile (i.e. definition of the school context, social background, number of students and specific needs of educational support detected, and so on).
- Organisation of the **curricular elements** for our specific group. This step is of utmost relevance to **get familiar** with the contents, evaluation criteria, and especially the **learning standards** (also called indicators in some communities). It is indispensable to understand the curricular requirements our programming document must attain.

- The next phase entails using the **programming models** of the different syllabus elements, to initiate in the **creative task** of personalisation and creation of a personal product. At this point, we are in the **starting line** to devise the documents that shall eventually be presented to an educational panel; and in doing so, the **role of models** acquires especial relevance. According to **Hyland (2003)**, models are used to illustrate features of the text under study, that is, *representative samples of the target language can be analysed, compared and manipulated... for students to construct their own examples*. Indeed, through appropriate samples we shall easily infer the organisation of ideas, language style; and keep a clear idea on all the elements that must be present in the final document that the panel shall read, so as to meet the requirements of the official announcement. As an added value, we also intend models to **foster** the teachers' **creativity** to produce **original units** which capture the panel's interest. The fact that our target audience are experienced **FL** teachers is something we cannot lose sight of; and again, it is indispensable to find the right balance between creativity and feasibility, under the scope of **communicative** and **active methodologies**.
- **Study the official announcement** for the state exams in the autonomous community we decide to sit the examinations. Remember that a brilliant work may be spoilt if it does not accomplish the requirements in the "**convocatoria**". In consonance, it seems more than advisable to **know all formal aspects** (i.e. number of pages, type of font, line spacing, possibility to elaborate annexes to our **FL** syllabus, and the like). As common sense suggests, we shall follow these considerations from the very beginning of our programming construction.
- Using the **units' models** and their formal analysis and subsequent explanation to come up with an original product. On the one hand, the proposals in the book should be seen as **valuable insights** on how to **organise** the curricular elements in this short-term planning, according to the context we have selected for each unit. In addition, they intend to serve as source of inspiration to create new programming units connected to the students' likes, interests and ideas, considering their digital natives' nature.
- Once we have rounded off our programming, it is time to **prepare the oral presentation** of both parts, **FL** syllabus and didactic unit. As experienced candidates know, in this decisive part of the exam we need to convince the board of examiners that we are the right teacher to get the post, by only using a time **limit oral presentation**, supported with paper and images in some cases. In our opinion, if we really want to train with the **unwavering objective** of exerting a positive impression, it seems crystal clear that we cannot rely on improvisation.

Up to this point, the reader may have guessed that this book pays special attention to how to give a **successful oral presentation**, focusing on oral techniques to talk to an audience, interesting and practical tips to be had in mind, and of course examples of **script models** on both syllabus and didactic units.

We find it interesting to reflect on the fact that there should be a balance between **technical accuracy** and a "fresh teaching proposal". In all lights, the teachers in the panel are very likely to tell a "standard unit" from a deeply worked and elaborated teaching proposal upon which we show sense of ownership. Obvious as it may seem, being on the shoes of the teachers in the second group sounds much more promising.

Arousing the **teachers' abilities** to think of attractive learning scenarios and boost their imagination is indispensable to devise **creative units**. Throughout the book, this issue is covered following a **twofold strategy**:

- Providing examples of didactic units (in different formats) meeting the quality principles we have already referred to.

- Connecting the legal framework, curricular elements and methodological suggestion to practical aspects of the programming model or units.

Before concluding this short insight, remember that being original is always better than being a copy. Therefore, trust yourself and your uniqueness to accomplish this part of the exam, since that conviction is very likely to be transmitted to the examiners.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY.**

- In-Progress Reflection No.2 on Current and Critical Issues in Curriculum and Learning. What makes a quality curriculum? IBE. UNESCO International Bureau of Education. March, 2016.