

CURRICULAR FOUNDATIONS

Preschool
Elementary school
Secondary school

Piloting Stage (English version)

CURRICULAR FOUNDATIONS

National English Program in Basic Education. State Subject. Additional Language: English. Curricular Foundations. Preschool, Elementary school, and Secondary school. Piloting Stage (English version) fue elaborado por personal académico de la Coordinación Nacional de Inglés de la Dirección General de Desarrollo Curricular, que pertenece a la Subsecretaría de Educación Básica de la Secretaría de Educación Pública.

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Presentación

Los principios normativos que establece el artículo tercero constitucional, la transformación educativa que alienta el Plan Nacional de Desarrollo 2007-2012 y los objetivos señalados en el Programa Sectorial de Educación 2007-2012 (Prosedu) han constituido la base rectora para dar sentido y ordenar las acciones de política pública educativa en el México de las próximas décadas.

En este marco y con base en las atribuciones que le otorga la Ley General de Educación, la Secretaría de Educación Pública estableció como objetivo fundamental del Prosedu “elevar la calidad de la educación para que los estudiantes mejoren su nivel de logro educativo, cuenten con medios para tener acceso a un mayor bienestar y contribuyan al desarrollo nacional” (SEP, 2007:11). La principal estrategia para la consecución de este objetivo en educación básica dispone “realizar una reforma integral de la educación básica, centrada en la adopción de un modelo educativo basado en competencias, que responda a las necesidades de desarrollo de México en el siglo XXI” (SEP, 2007:24), con miras a lograr mayor articulación y eficiencia entre preescolar, primaria y secundaria.

El Prosedu también establece que “los criterios de mejora de la calidad educativa deben aplicarse a la capacitación de profesores, la actualización de programas de estudio y sus contenidos, los enfoques pedagógicos, métodos de enseñanza y recursos didácticos” (SEP, 2007:11). A su vez, la UNESCO¹ ha señalado que los sistemas educativos necesitan preparar a los estudiantes para enfrentar los nuevos retos de un mundo globalizado en el que el contacto entre múltiples lenguas y culturas es cada vez más común. La educación tiene, en este contexto, la obligación de ayudar a los estudiantes a comprender las diversas expresiones culturales existentes en México y el mundo.

¹ J. Delors, *La educación encierra un tesoro*, Informe a la UNESCO de la Comisión Internacional sobre la Educación para el siglo XXI, pp. 31 y ss.

Desde esta perspectiva, la Subsecretaría de Educación Básica reconoce la necesidad de incorporar la asignatura de Inglés a los planes y programas de estudio de educación preescolar y educación primaria, y realizar los ajustes pertinentes en los de Inglés para secundaria, con el propósito de articular la enseñanza de esta lengua extranjera en los tres niveles de educación básica y de lograr, a través de esta articulación, que al concluir su educación secundaria los alumnos hayan desarrollado las competencias plurilingüe y pluricultural que necesitan para enfrentar con éxito los desafíos comunicativos del mundo globalizado, construir una visión amplia de la diversidad lingüística y cultural a nivel global, y respetar su propia cultura y la de los demás.

Con el fin de instrumentar las diversas acciones que hagan posible la articulación de la enseñanza del inglés, la Secretaría de Educación Pública puso en marcha el Programa Nacional de Inglés en Educación Básica (PNIEB o NEPBE² por sus siglas en inglés), del que se derivan programas de estudio para los tres niveles de educación básica elaborados a partir de la alineación y homologación de estándares nacionales e internacionales, la determinación de criterios para la formación de profesores, así como el establecimiento de lineamientos para la elaboración y evaluación de materiales educativos y para la certificación del dominio del inglés.

Como se observa en el cuadro de la siguiente página, el PNIEB abarca diversas etapas de prueba y de expansión para su generalización, mismas que tienen como propósito recabar evidencias que proporcionen información valiosa respecto a la pertinencia del enfoque de la asignatura y de los contenidos de los programas de estudio, así como de la organización y articulación de éstos entre los cuatro ciclos que conforman el PNIEB.

Las etapas y las fases antes mencionadas permitirán obtener información tanto de los apoyos que requieren los maestros para desarrollar las competencias y los aprendizajes esperados, como de las implicaciones que tiene la nueva propuesta curricular en la organización escolar. De esta manera será posible valorar curricular y pedagógicamente los programas de estudio e incorporar los cambios necesarios antes de su generalización en los niveles de preescolar y primaria. Adicionalmente, los resultados del seguimiento a esta experiencia posibilitarán atender con mejores recursos la generalización de la reforma curricular en todas las escuelas primarias del país.

Asimismo, la articulación de la educación básica, prevista en el Programa Nacional de Educación 2001-2006 y concretada y perfilada conceptualmente en el Plan de estudios de educación secundaria que se publicó en el Acuerdo secretarial 384, en 2006, establece los siguientes principios orientadores:

² National English Program in Basic Education.

Cuadro 1. Diversas etapas de prueba

	Ciclo escolar	2009 - 2010	2010 - 2011	2011 - 2012
Etapa o fase	Primera etapa de prueba	Ciclo 1 (3er. grado de preescolar, 1° y 2° grados de primaria)		
	Fase de expansión para la generalización		Primera fase de expansión del Ciclo 1 (3er. grado de preescolar, 1° y 2° grados de primaria)	
	Segunda etapa de prueba		Ciclo 2 (3° y 4° grados de primaria) y Ciclo 3 (5° y 6° grados de primaria)	
	Fase de expansión para la generalización			Segunda fase de expansión del Ciclo 1 Primera fase de expansión de los ciclos 2 y 3
	Tercera etapa de prueba			Ciclo 4 (1°, 2° y 3er. grados de secundaria)

- a) El perfil de egreso de la educación básica, el cual expone el conjunto de rasgos que los estudiantes deben tener al egresar de la misma, y a cuyo logro deben contribuir cada una de las asignaturas de los niveles de preescolar, primaria y secundaria.
- b) Las competencias que se deben desarrollar en los tres niveles de educación básica para participar en la sociedad y resolver problemas de carácter práctico, mejorando la manera de vivir y convivir en una sociedad cada vez más compleja.
- c) Las orientaciones didácticas que permitan que el plan y los programas de estudio se reflejen en el aula proporcionando oportunidades y experiencias de aprendizaje para todos los alumnos.

En consecuencia, la elaboración de la propuesta de *Plan de estudios 2009. Educación básica. Primaria. Etapa de prueba* (cuyo pilotaje se realizó en aproximadamente 5 000 escuelas) se diseñó a partir del Plan de estudios 2006 de educación secundaria, de los programas de estudio derivados de éste y del Programa de educación preescolar 2004. Por esta razón, como la asignatura de Inglés se inscribe en el marco de dichos planes y programas de estudio, en el presente texto se hacen diversas referencias a los planteamientos curriculares contenidos en estos materiales.

Introduction

Contemporary society, predominantly governed by information and communication technologies, demands citizens with the necessary competencies to face and incorporate into a globalized constantly –changing world. Basic education has the responsibility of providing students with the opportunity to develop these competencies. Thus, in order to accomplish the aforementioned, students need to acquire a series of fundamental knowledge such as the use and command of these technologies and the knowledge of at least one foreign language.

From this perspective, the *National Development Plan 2007-2012*,³ in *Axis 3, Equal Opportunities*,⁴ points out as its twelfth objective: “Promote the integral education of people in the complete educational system”⁵ and indicates that “ [for education] to be complete, it should address, along with the abilities to learn, to apply, and to develop knowledge, the appreciation for ethical values, good citizenship, history, art and

the culture, and languages”.⁶ Likewise, PND proposes as a measure to reduce the disparity in the quality between private and public schools that the latter should offer “the possibility to study extracurricular subjects related with sports, arts, culture and languages”.⁷

At present, English teaching in basic education within the Mexican public educational system is only compulsory in secondary schools. However, significant efforts have been made to include the English language subject within the elementary education during the last few years.

In the national sphere, the endeavour carried out by twenty-one federative entities in generating their own English programs for elementary education is acknowledged. However, the fact that these are not at a national level has caused their operation to be extremely heterogeneous in aspects such as coverage, achievement levels, types of contents addressed as well as teach-

³ Programa Nacional de Desarrollo 2007-2012.

⁴ Igualdad de oportunidades.

⁵ “Promover la educación integral de las personas en todo el sistema educativo”.

⁶ “Para ser completa, debe abordar junto con las habilidades para aprender, aplicar y desarrollar conocimientos, el aprecio por los valores éticos, el civismo, la historia, el arte y la cultura, los idiomas” (p.190).

⁷ “La posibilidad de cursar materias extracurriculares relacionadas con el deporte, el arte, la cultura y los idiomas”.

ing hours. In some cases, this has hindered the continuity of proposals in the subsequent educational levels. This has generated the necessity to design study programs for the teaching of English based on current regulations (not only for secondary schools but also for preschool and for all grades of elementary education) and to create conditions so that these can operate with equity and quality in all basic education schools in the country.

To respond to this necessity and based on what PND and Prosedu have established, the English Program 2009. Basic Education. Elementary School⁸ now includes the teaching of English in elementary education. Since English is part of the Language and Communication formative field, this is integrated into the basic education curricular map as State Subject. Additional language: English.⁹ Thereby it assures its consistency with the subject of Spanish and its articulation with preschool, elementary, and secondary education. Therefore, as shown in the following curricular map, the English subject takes, for the first time in its history, a position within the totality of the national basic education curricula.

The fact that the English Program 2009. Basic Education. Elementary School –which came into effect during the school year 2009-2010 in first and sixth grades– includes English teaching as a foreign language, undoubtedly represents a headway. However, the possibility of putting this teaching into practice is limited due to several conditions, in particular, the shortage of teachers trained for this purpose.

⁸ *Plan de estudios 2009. Educación básica. Primaria.*

⁹ *Asignatura Estatal. Lengua Adicional: Inglés*

Therefore, it is important to clarify that the pilot and expansion stages for the Study Programs of English in basic education follow a scheme different from those of other subjects. Among other reasons, it outstands two distinctive features that characterize the program:

1. Its design is organized by cycles and not by school grades, which guarantees continuity and articulation in the different grades and the different levels of basic education. Thus, the program for cycle 1 comprises third grade preschool, and first and second grades of elementary school; cycle 2 includes third and fourth grades of elementary school; cycle 3, fifth and sixth grades, while cycle 4 includes first, second and third grades of secondary school.
2. It is open and flexible, since it offers guided sequences of contents that enable the teacher to carry out the adaptations demanded by the specific scenarios of the complex Mexican educational system reality:
 - Contents are of basic nature and two main references define them: the *social practices of the language* and *specific activities with the language*. This allows them to give contents a different treatment according to the learning progress of the students and the needs that communicative situations demand to tackle such contents. Thus, the relationship between the contents and their transversal reading is guaranteed.

Basic Education Curricular Map

Formative fields for basic education	Preschool			Elementary						Secondary		
	1°	2°	3°	1°	2°	3°	4°	5°	6°	1°	2°	3°
Language and communication	Language and communication			Spanish						Spanish I, II & III		
		State Subject: Additional Language***		State Subject: Additional language***						Foreign Language I, II & III		
Mathematical thought	Mathematical thought			Mathematics						Mathematics I, II & III		
Exploration and understanding of the natural and social world	Exploration and knowledge of the world			Exploration of Science and Society	Natural Sciences*				Sciences I (emphasis in Biology)	Sciences II (emphasis in Physics)	Sciences III (emphasis in Chemistry)	
	Physical development and health				Study the State where I live	Geography*			Technology I, II & III			
						History*		Geography of Mexico and the World	History I & II			
Personal and social skills development	Personal and social skills development			Ethics and Civic Formation**							Civics and Ethics Development I & II	
				Physical Education**						Counselling and Tutoring		
	Artistic expression and appreciation			Art Education**						Physical Education I, II & III		
										Arts: Music, Dance, Theatre or Visual Arts		

*Includes contents related to technology. **Formative links are established with Natural Sciences, Geography, and History. ***In process of approval.

From this perspective, the basic education program for English teaching faces the challenge of redefining its object of study so that the selection, presentation, and organization of its contents is viable to the social practices of the language both, in school and out-of-school contexts. It is important to mention that the *social practices of the language* and the *specific activities with the English language* presented throughout the four cycles of the NEPBE, make the recognition of the disciplinary underpinnings and the learning contents in the subject possible. Among other reasons because, as Zabala A. and Arnau, L. (2007:124) state:

Every education project entails an intention, which sets its results for a future application and, therefore, is essential. To educate does not have an immediate intention, its purpose is to use what is now being taught and

learned within a school context, someday in the real world, when the knowledge, skills, or attitudes once learned become necessary. Therefore, these will never be used as they were once taught in the classroom [...]. What is going to be taught is not a series of contents logically organized as part of an academic discipline; rather, their selection, presentation, and organization will be done depending on the possibilities they have to respond to "real" situations or needs.¹⁰

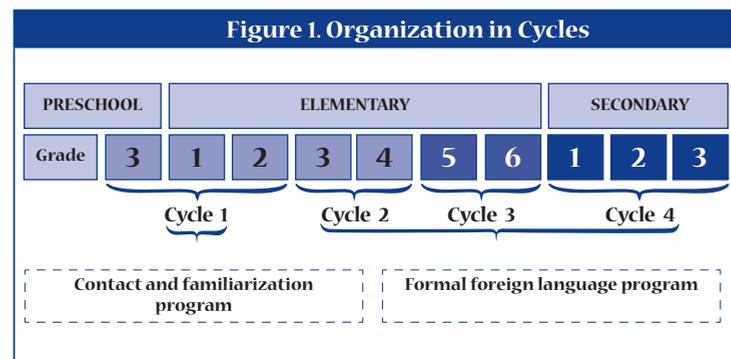
The aforementioned, as well as the pilot and expansion stages of the curricular guidelines, will allow the opportunity to have progressively enough teachers with the required qualification for the appropriate teaching of the subject in the levels prior to secondary education.

¹⁰ A. Zabala y Arnau, L. (2007), *II Ideas clave. Cómo aprender y enseñar competencias*, Barcelona, Graó, p.124. "Todo proyecto de enseñanza conlleva una intencionalidad que fija sus resultados en una aplicación futura y que por ello es imprescindible. Se educa con una finalidad que no es inmediata, sino que tiene el propósito de que aquello que ahora se enseña y se aprende en un contexto escolar pueda ser utilizado en su día en la realidad, en el momento en que estos conocimientos, habilidades o actitudes aprendidas se hagan necesarias y, por tanto, nunca serán empleadas como fueron enseñadas en el aula[...]. Aquello que se va a enseñar no será un conjunto de contenidos organizados en función de la lógica de una disciplina académica, sino que su selección, presentación y organización se realizará según la potencialidad para dar respuesta a situaciones o necesidades reales".

National English Program in Basic Education. General observations

As shown in Figure 1, the NEPBE considers two ample stages. The first one is devoted to contact and familiarization (Cycle 1); its main purpose is to sensitize students with the foreign language by means of getting them involved in *social practices of the language* and *specific activities with the language* that are carefully planned and are the basis for later learning. The second stage focuses on the formative teaching of the foreign language (Cycles 2, 3, and 4). In this stage, the students will obtain the required competencies to use English in an effective way, by means of participating in specific activities with the language, defined by and based on the social practices of the language in different social learning environments.

The time allocated to each cycle and the *Common European Framework of Reference for languages: learning, teach-*



ing, assessment (CEFR) were used to determine the scope and extent of the program.

The CEFR describes and establishes levels of common reference for 18 languages, English among them. The six levels of this framework and their descriptors are shown in Chart 2.

Chart 2. CEFR Common Levels of Reference

Common levels of reference from the Common European Framework of Reference for languages: learning, teaching, assessment	
Competent user	<p>C2 Mastery</p> <p>Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarize information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in the most complex situations.</p>
	<p>C1 Effective Operational Proficiency</p> <p>Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognize implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organizational patterns, connectors, and cohesive devices.</p>
Independent user	<p>B2 Vantage</p> <p>Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialization. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.</p>
	<p>B1 Threshold</p> <p>Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics, which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes & ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.</p>
Basic user	<p>A2 Waystage</p> <p>Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.</p>
	<p>A1 Breakthrough</p> <p>Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.</p>

(Global scale, taken from COE, 2001:24)

Based on this framework of reference, *Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP)* developed a series of national standards for foreign languages and created the *Certificado Nacional de Nivel de Inglés (Cenni)*,¹¹ with the purpose of showing the equivalences between both groups of standards (see Chart 3). The Cenni standards were taken into account to establish the minimum levels that students should attain after having completed each NEPBE cycle.

Chart 3. International and national standards

Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) International Standards		National Certificate for language level. National Standards and approximate number of hours		
Levels	-		+	Horas
C2	17	18	19	1251-1300
C1	14	15	16	851-900
B2	11	12	13	651-700
B1	8	9	10	451-500
A2	5	6	7	321-350
A1	2	3	4	161-200

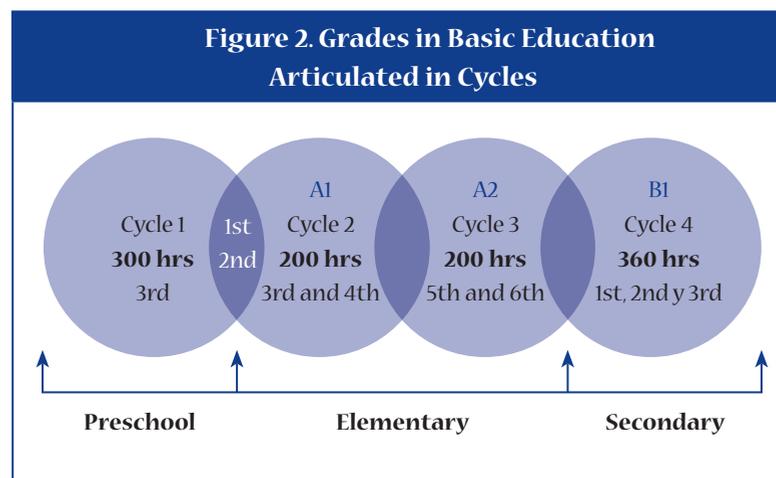
} Basic Education

However, in the CEFR as well as in the Cenni, the number of hours suggested for each level has been estimated for an adult population this is why the NEPBE uses these documents only as

¹¹ Level of Language National Certificate (Cenni, according to its initials in Spanish).

parameters to establish the contents for each cycle and the different time scales required to attain each of the achievement levels.

As shown in Figure 2, unlike the rest of the subjects in the *Plan de estudios 2009. Educación básica. Primaria*, the English subject is comprised into four cycles that articulate the levels of basic education; the first and last include the greatest amount of hours, opposed to the intermediate ones. Preschool education articulates to elementary education in Cycles 1 and 2, while elementary education articulates to secondary education in Cycles 3 and 4.



This is how the basis for familiarization, approximation, acquisition, and consolidation of the required curricular content for the English subject are established in order to achieve the purposes of the program and achievement levels.

On the other hand, as shown in the Chart 4, the amount of weekly sessions and their duration varies depending on where the school grades are within the cycles of the program.

Chart 4. Time and number of weekly sessions for the English language subject

Cycles 1 to 3	Cycle 4
Preschool and Elementary	1st, 2nd and 3rd grades Secondary
Three 50-minute sessions	Three 40/45-minute sessions

About the number of hours for English teaching, the NEPBE includes a total of 1060 hours, which correspond to the sum of hours allocated to this subject in each school grade (200 days, 40 weeks). As shown in Chart 4, they are distributed throughout the cycles in such a way that these, besides being accumulative, are necessary to attain the profiles (-/+) corresponding to the achievement levels for each one.

From this perspective, the 300 hours assigned to work with Cycle 1 study programs are necessary to attain A1 level of achievement corresponding to Cycle 2. Likewise, the total 500 hrs that comprise Cycles 1 and 2 are those required to reach level A2 of Cycle 3 (260 hrs.). Whereas the 760 hrs based on the sum of Cycles 1, 2, and 3 are those necessary to achieve level B1 of Cycle 4 (1060).

Based on the previous information, the expectation is that the students attain at least Cenni level 3 at the end of Cycle 1, levels 4 and 5 towards the end of Cycle 2, levels 6 and 7 at the end of Cycle 3, and levels 8 and 9 when they conclude Cycle 4, as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3 also shows how NEPBE cycles compare with the levels of proficiency demanded by the international standards for the achievement of English competency. This competency, however, does not only depend on the amount of class time allocated

to the additional language, but also to other factors such as student’s competency in their mother tongue, teachers’ level of English proficiency, and the accessibility and availability of printed and multimedia resources (audios, videos, compact disks, etc.) in this language.

One of the conditions to learn a foreign language is the exposure to it. Thus, in order to achieve the purposes set for the different cycles and, consequently, to guarantee that students attain the expected domain levels at the end of each cycle, it is essential that teachers have a solid domain of the language, both in the minimum levels of English proficiency as in the desirable levels.

Figure 3. Expected achievement levels by cycle and grade

Grade	3	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	
CEFR	...			A1	A2		B1-				
Cenni	0	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	Cycle 1			Cycle 2		Cycle 3		Cycle 4			

Purposes

General Purpose of English Language Teaching in Basic Education

The purpose of foreign language teaching in basic education is for students to get the necessary knowledge to engage in social practices with spoken and oral language to interact with native and non-native English speakers by means of *specific activities with the language*. That is, by using activities that involve production and interpretation of oral and written texts –of a familiar, academic and literary nature– the students will be able to satisfy basic communication needs in different every day, familiar, and known situations.

Thus, children need to learn to use the language to organize their thoughts and speech, to analyze and solve problems, and to gain access to different cultural expressions from their own and other country. Moreover, it is essential that they acknowledge the role language plays in building up knowledge and cultural values; children should also develop an analytical and responsible attitude to face the problems that affect our world. Competence in a foreign language does not stem from mere repetition or exposure to it, or from studying it for a very long time. Quite the opposite, it is necessary to have

acumen of individual and collective experiences that include different ways of participating in oral exchanges and text reading and writing.

The school's responsibility is greater in the case of students that come from low literacy communities with a scarce or non-existent contact with an additional language. Therefore, it should provide students with the necessary conditions to participate in such experiences, to reach gradual autonomy in their intellectual work, and to be competent in transferring what they have learned in the classroom context to out-of-the-classroom communicative situations.

Purpose of English Language Teaching for Cycle 1

The purpose of English language teaching for Cycle 1 in basic education (3rd grade preschool, 1st and 2nd grades elementary school) is to raise students' awareness about the existence of a language different from their own. In addition, it aims to get them acquainted with the foreign language by participating in routine and familiar *social practices of the language* via spe-

cific activities with the language, which promote interaction among students and spoken and written texts from different social environments. Therefore, in this cycle, students will be able to:

- Recognize the existence of other cultures and languages.
- Feel motivated and keep a positive attitude towards the English language.
- Develop basic communication skills, especially the receptive ones.
- Reflect on how the writing system works.
- Get acquainted with different types of texts.
- Start exploring children's literature.
- Develop learning and metacognitive strategies, which can be transferred to other areas of knowledge.
- Use some linguistic and non-linguistic resources to give information about themselves and their surroundings.

Purpose of English Language Teaching for Cycle 2

The purpose of English language teaching for Cycle 2 in basic education (3rd and 4th grades elementary school) is for students to acquire the necessary knowledge to understand and use the English language to recognize, understand, and use common expressions. Students achieve this goal through participating in *social practices of the language* via *specific activities with the language* engaged with the production and interpretation of oral and written texts, pertaining to the familiar, academic,

literary formation environments. At the end of this cycle, the students will be able to:

- Express simple opinions and requests in familiar contexts.
- Recognize basic instructions, information, and signs.
- Identify basic aspects of pronunciation and vocabulary used in everyday life contexts.
- Use expressions to refer to personal aspects and needs.
- Respond to spoken and written language in different linguistic and non-linguistic ways.
- Use different strategies to solve everyday problems, as well as to look for information about concrete topics.
- Understand unfamiliar or unknown vocabulary by means of specific strategies.
- Identify the most relevant similarities and differences between their mother tongue and the target language.
- Establish basic social contact with their linguistic repertoire.

Purpose of English Language Teaching for Cycle 3

The purpose of English language teaching for Cycle 3 in basic education (5th and 6th grades elementary school) is for the students to participate in *activities with the language* suitable for *social practices of the language* through the interaction with oral and written texts. This will enable them to understand and use English in order to carry out basic and everyday communicative tasks about known or usual topics within familiar,

academic, and literary environments. At the end of this cycle, students will be able to:

- Understand and produce everyday or usual information and its general meaning.
- Begin to or participate in conversations or transactions using verbal and non-verbal strategies.
- Recognize similarities and differences in the form and social uses between their mother language and the foreign language.
- Use strategies to present information, understand academic texts, and solve simple problems.
- Express opinions and provide simple descriptions.
- Produce comprehensible messages by adapting their linguistic forms and pronunciation.
- Use strategies to recognize form and understand content in a variety of simple literary texts.
- Interact with and use oral and written texts for specific purposes.
- Socialize using common expressions.

Purpose of English Language Teaching for Cycle 4

The purpose of English language teaching for Cycle 4 in basic education is for students to reinforce language in basic communicative situations in order to participate in *activities with the*

language suitable for social practices of the language in different communicative contexts. It is expected that students understand and produce oral and written texts on various topics in a general way. At the end of this cycle, students should be able to:

- Identify the main idea and details from a variety of oral and written texts by using their knowledge of the world.
- Understand and use information based on different textual sources.
- Produce texts that respond to personal, creative, social, academic, and institutional purposes.
- Adapt their language to unexpected communicative needs.
- Recognize and respect differences between their own and the foreign culture.
- Express some appraisal and opinions about matters that are interesting to them or resemble their everyday reality.
- Use appropriate communication styles in different situations.
- Look for cohesive devices to understand the relationship between the parts of a statement or text.
- Edit their own or their classmates' writings.
- Use appropriate grammatical, spelling, and punctuation conventions.
- Participate in formal communicative acts.
- Keep communication flow, recognize breakdowns and use strategic resources to repair it when required.

Foundation

Language definition

The NEPBE shares the definition of language expressed in Program of Preschool Education 2004, the Study Program 2006. Spanish. Basic Education. Secondary, and the Curricular Parameters 2008. Indigenous Language. Basic Education. Indigenous Elementary School:¹²

Language is a communicative, cognitive, and reflective activity by means of which we express, exchange and defend our ideas; we establish and keep interpersonal relations and gain access to information; we participate in knowledge building, organize our thoughts, and reflect on our own discursive and intellectual creation.

Language shows a variety of forms that depend on the communicative purposes, the interlocutors, the type of text or oral interaction, and on the medium by which the exchange is carried out. Writing a letter, for instance, apart from involving creating phrases and sentences, implies se-

lecting appropriate expressions that convey the purpose of the author, the circumstances of the recipient and the patterns the writing process follows. In a similar way, a conversation requires intonation, intensity, rhythm, speed, and pauses to adjust the meaning of the sentences.¹³

From this perspective, learning a language implies to acquire rules of use socially imposed (implicit) and the ways of using them in different social environments where people participate, in order to:

- Communicate ideas and convey feelings
- Establish and develop relationships with people

¹² *Educación básica. Programa de Educación Preescolar 2004, Educación básica. Secundaria. Español. Programas de estudio 2006 y Parámetros curriculares 2008. Lengua Indígena. Educación básica. Primaria Indígena.*

¹³ "El lenguaje es una actividad comunicativa, cognitiva y reflexiva mediante la cual expresamos, intercambiamos y defendemos nuestras ideas; establecemos y mantenemos relaciones interpersonales; accedemos a la información; participamos en la construcción del conocimiento, organizamos nuestro pensamiento y reflexionamos sobre nuestro propio proceso de creación discursiva e intelectual. El lenguaje presenta una variedad de formas que dependen de las finalidades de la comunicación, de los interlocutores, del tipo de texto o interacción oral, y del medio en que se concretan. La escritura de una carta, por ejemplo, además de la elaboración de frases y oraciones, involucra la selección de expresiones acordes con los propósitos del autor; las circunstancias del destinatario y los patrones propios de los escritos. De manera semejante, una conversación requiere de entonación, intensidad, ritmo, velocidad y pausas para modular el significado de los enunciados." (*Educación básica. Secundaria. Español. Programas de estudio 2006*, p. 9).

- Gain access to information
- Build up knowledge
- Organize thoughts

Accordingly, the NEPBE –like the Spanish teaching programs and the curricular parameters of indigenous languages– is far from omitting or excluding the formal study of the internal structure of the language or narrowing it to the study of its uses and functions. It establishes an approach to teaching in which the capacity to reflect on the language is closely related to the communicative functions of language, whose purpose is to analyze and improve the communicative competence of students. Therefore, not only does it take into account the lin-

guistic learning, but also the cultural learning, since one of its functions is socialization, whose purpose is for students to relate with each other, to progress and reconstruct the social world where they live.

From this perspective, to claim that the teaching approach that underpins language studies –as the mother tongue, second language, or foreign language– minimizes or ignores the importance of grammatical learning in the classroom is inexact and ill favoured. This teaching approach promotes and encourages reflection on the linguistic aspect of the language, its functions, and communicative uses necessary to achieve the effective and successful participation of students in social practices of the language of the 21st century societies.

English teaching approach

Social practices of the language

The social practices of the language represent the core referent in the definition of NEPBE'S contents. This decision complies with the approach for language teaching adopted by the SEP, as stated in the study programs of subjects, such as Spanish and Indigenous Language:

The social practices of the language are patterns or ways of interaction, which, apart from production and interpretation of spoken and written texts, include several activities linked to them. Every practice has a specific communicative purpose and has a history linked to a particular cultural situation. For instance, nowadays, the spoken language practices used in dialogs vary quite often. The dialog is established or kept according to social and communicative conventions of the culture where the exchange takes place.¹⁴

¹⁴ Las prácticas sociales del lenguaje son pautas o modos de interacción que, además de la producción o interpretación de textos orales y escritos, incluyen una serie de actividades vinculadas con éstas. Cada práctica está orientada por una finalidad comunicativa y tiene una historia ligada a una situación cultural particular. Por ejemplo, en la actualidad, las

Besides the *social practices of the language*, a series of *specific activities with the language* were established. Their purpose is to preserve the formal aspects and the functions of the language within social life. This is conceived as a complex and articulated configuration of a 'learning to do' with knowledge and the consequences of that doing.

The programmatic contents involve three different types of "learning":

"Learning to do" with the language. This corresponds to the communicative actions carried out in concrete interactive situations, which besides the production and interpretation of oral and written texts are necessary to accomplish the communicative aim associated with participating in specific activities with the language. Other reason is that "individuals learn to talk and interact with others while being in the same context. They learn to interpret and produce texts (in spoken and writ-

prácticas del lenguaje oral que involucran el diálogo son muy variadas. Este establece o se continúa de acuerdo con las regulaciones sociales y comunicativas de las culturas donde tienen lugar" (*Programas de estudio 2006. Español. Educación básica. Secundaria*, p. 11).

ten form), to reflect on them, to identify problems and solve them, to transform them and create new genres, graphic formats and supports; in other words, to interact with the texts and with other individuals who are linked to them”.¹⁵

Therefore, the educational treatment for this type of contents entails, on the part of the teacher, a planning that guarantees that the students “will learn by doing”, that is to say they learn to listen by listening, to speak by speaking, to read by reading, and to write by writing in real communicative situations and with different purposes.

As a result, the contents of “learning to do with the language” are not to be conceived as a simple list of instructions or things to do with students. Opposite, they should be viewed as curricular contents, whose clear intention is to teach what a competent English speaker “knows how to do” to successfully participate in activities with the language in different social spheres where he/she dwells.

For example, in order to record information on a specific topic, it is necessary to know the purpose of that information (a conference, a community exhibition, to convince someone to do something, etc.), to recognize the intended audience (children, young adults, well-known or unknown people, etc.), to identify where to find the information, what sources to use

(books, newspapers, specialised texts, etc.) or how to look for them (key words, dictionaries, etc.).

The contents of “learning to do with the language” are organized in a sequence that articulates the rest of the contents –“learning to know about the language” and “learning to be through the language”– in a cyclic and recurrent way. This is with the purpose of helping teachers to plan the necessary stages to create a product, solve a problem, attain a specific goal, and decide when and how to address the ‘knowledge about the language’ required to develop the previously planned stages.

In the case of foreign language teaching, this approach is fundamental since the functions of the language are those that guarantee that practice be meaningful to students and similar to what they will face in real life. Therefore, it is necessary to develop methods to organize the educational work as shown in the following Figure.

It is important to stress that routine activities are not prescriptive; whether they are included or not, depends on the students and the teacher’s interests and needs. However, since they represent the opportunity for students to decide what to do with the language –reading a story, listening to a song, practicing writing, analyzing a linguistic topic, etc.– one session a month is suggested.

¹⁵ “Dentro de la esfera de su acción que los individuos aprenden a hablar e interactuar con otros; a interpretar y producir textos [orales y escritos], a reflexionar sobre ellos, a identificar problemas y solucionarlos, a transformarlos y crear nuevos géneros, formatos gráficos y soportes; en pocas palabras, a interactuar con los textos y con otros individuos a propósito de ellos” (SEP, *Educación básica. Secundaria, Programas de estudio 2006. Español*, p. 12).

Guidelines to organize educational work

Plan *communicative situations* that:

- Integrate or articulate the programmed contents in a process that make learning coherent (learning to do with, know about, and be through the language). For example, it is necessary to plan communicative situations in order to create a product (a memory game with words, an informative mural, or an exhibition of a specific topic).
- Favour cooperative work. That is to say, distribute actions that involve responsibilities among students, offer opportunities in which everyone participates, make sure pairs exchange knowledge and are aware of what they need to learn.
- Allow to foresee difficulties and possible solutions as well as to evaluate each stage and the process as a whole.
- Ease the way to approach unknown or particularly difficult contents that require an in-depth treatment to continue with the process and obtain the intended product.
- Boost the students' self-esteem and confidence in the use of a foreign language.

Guarantee the development of *routine activities* that:

- Are the product of consensus and negotiation between teacher and students, instead of being predetermined; for example: to use dictionaries to deal with doubts; to listen, explore, read, and comment on printed materials and multimedia in English, do research on a particular topic, etc.
- Help fostering confidence in students in the classroom, give a sense of belonging to the class, extend learning, and allow the processes to be more efficient in this situation.

“Learning to know” about the language. This type of contents involves a series of aspects, concepts, and topics for reflection on features, characteristics, and elements of the language, aiming at students to “raise awareness about their knowledge, know aspects of the language they had not reflected on before, and develop greater confidence and versatility to use the language. The purpose of learning more about grammar, increasing vocabulary, getting acquainted with writing conventions is to improve the students' skills for reading, writing, speaking, and listening.¹⁶ This is why it is fundamental to introduce

students to a challenge of oral or written interaction in a real communicative situation –such as creating a product, reaching a goal or solving a problem. The intention of this procedure is to deal successfully with the task, so that reflection on the language processes makes sense and stimulate interest and motivation to learn.

Therefore, the teaching treatment that implies this type of contents will depend on the students' need “to know” to successfully overcome the challenges they will face when partici-

¹⁶ “Cobren conciencia de sus conocimientos, conozcan aspectos de la lengua sobre los que no habian reflexionado y desarrollen con mayor confianza y versatilidad el uso del lenguaje.

Conocer más sobre la gramática, incrementar su vocabulario, conocer las convenciones de la escritura tiene como único propósito mejorar las capacidades de los alumnos al leer, escribir, hablar y escuchar.” (SEP, *Programas de estudio 2009. Español. Educación básica. Primaria*, p.13).

pating in specific activities with the language throughout the school year.

On the other hand, there will be times when it becomes necessary to formulate explicitly the knowledge of the linguistic system and the resources of the oral and written texts. From this perspective, the students' own needs and difficulties will let the teacher determine which contents of 'the learning to know about the language' and to what extent they will require a specific teaching treatment, as this will allow students to progress

and be successful in the tasks prepared for each stage of the process. In this sense, these contents are not expected to be totally covered or to be treated in the same way or extent. For this reason, specific suggestions or examples are provided only when they are indispensable for an activity. Students are expected to learn, develop, increase, and consolidate their knowledge in English to participate efficiently in specific activities with the language. The following chart shows a list of the aspects or topics for reflection that are included in the cycles of the NEPBE.

Topics for reflection about English

- *Features and types of oral and written texts*: these focus on the characteristics of different types of texts, including the communicative purposes they pursue and graphic and textual components they use.
- *Phonic, syntactic, and semantic elements of texts*: these are included in the second cycle. Their purpose is for students to reflect on the English language and its structure so that they can understand the content of the oral and written texts they study and can efficiently produce their own texts. In addition, it seeks to provide the necessary bases to raise students' awareness about the differences between their mother tongue and the foreign language, with the aim of achieving competent communication. It is about providing students with a tool to recognize the organization of the texts they interact with. Some of the listed aspects involve their use in different learning environments, which are repeated in several social practices since the change of context determines their form and/or meaning.
- *Knowledge of the writing system and basic mechanics of writing conventions*: this type of content is addressed in the first cycle, which includes among other processes, the initial stage of literacy in the students' mother tongue. Its purpose is to reflect on the elements and functions of the linguistic system as well as to identify how they relate to the knowledge of their mother tongue. This is why the basic mechanics of writing are tackled through exploring texts.
- *Mechanics of writing*: its purpose is to provide students with the necessary knowledge to deal with questions regarding norms of correspondence between speaking and writing, as well as the mechanics of writing. This knowledge will result in a better performance of students in the production of texts. It is important to keep in mind that unlike other cycles, in Cycle 1 the emphasis is on understanding language exchanges in the foreign language, so spelling is not the focus of attention.

From this perspective, the contents of “learning to know about the language” comply with two basic functions of the language: to be a means of communication and to be used as an instrument for thought. In turn, topics and aspects for reflection on the language are approached based on oral and written texts in different social spheres, because:

- It is by means of production and reception of texts or speech that the interaction and the communication among people is established.
- It is the text and not words, sentences or isolated and out-of-context phrases, which correspond to the minimum unit with meaning and social sense. It is worth mentioning that it does not imply eliminating their analysis, but focusing on the learning of their function in a text/speech according to the contexts of use.

Also, it is necessary to recognize that to understand and to produce oral and written texts in real communicative contexts involves –besides the linguistic “knowledge” itself–, a series of abilities and strategies. Although these belong to the field of the pragmatic use of the language, they are also part of a cognitive field, since they imply generating ideas, selecting information, making outlines, etc. This recognition entails that depending on the communicative situation, although the use of language is intentional, it is the cognitive abilities and strategies that are put into practice which regulate it.

“Learning to be” through the language. These contents refer to aspects related to the role of intercultural education

in general and to language diversity in particular as well as the multiple functions they carry out and the attitudes and values underlying oral and written interaction. Their goal, on one hand, is to increase the opportunities for students to share their knowledge and experiences with the foreign language through socializing the different products obtained during the work through tasks in and out of school. On the other hand, it is to appreciate the importance of fostering a harmonious, effective, tolerant, and inclusive atmosphere of communication.

The ‘learning to be’ through the language contents are transverse and permanent throughout the entire NEPBE. It is important that students become aware of their own and other countries culture; learn how to act with the language in different environments of social life and value the consequences of their actions. For this reason, these contents have a specific place within the program. However, given their transverse nature, the treatment of this type of contents should not be limited to a particular moment, on the contrary, they should be present in a permanent way.

In conclusion, far from reducing the curriculum content to a disjointed and out of context teaching of skills, knowledge, and values of the structure of a foreign language, English teaching is expected to share the same approach as the other two language subjects. In other words, to provide an education that preserves the functions and uses of language in social life. From this perspective, the problem is not when to begin teaching a foreign language –before literacy in the mother tongue, but rather why, what, and how to teach and learn this language.

Hence, the contact with social practices of the language and the specific activities with the language derived from the

former should be included since the initial grades of basic education (preschool, first and second grades elementary school), as the presence, contact, and familiarization with these practices and activities provide the basis to guarantee:

- Acknowledgment of the linguistic and cultural diversity of our country and the world that facilitates the promotion and development of positive, appropriate, and flexible attitudes required for the understanding among people and nations.
- Confidence in the capacity of learning and being able to communicate in more than one language.
- Broadening of opportunities to interact with the oral and written language, that is to say, to think about it, question it, compare it, use it, amongst others.

Finally, it is important to stress that one of the conditions for learning a language is to understand the situation where it is used. For this reason, it is fundamental that the learning of a foreign language is centred on the students' experiences and interests when engaging in communicative situations. Therefore, students are not expected to master English as a native speaker, nonetheless the necessary actions are prescribed to reach the purposes and achievements established in the cycles of the NEPBE.

Social learning environments

Unlike the students' mother tongue (Spanish or an indigenous language), English is not present in most of their social envi-

ronments due to its condition of foreign language. This makes it fundamental to promote social uses of this language in the classroom by creating social learning environments that compensate the absence of English in the out-of-school context. Their implementation provides opportunities to learn the diverse communicative registers and formats necessary to participate successfully and with autonomy in everyday practices of the language in social life.

The purpose of the social learning environments established in the NEPBE is to preserve the social functions of the specific activities carried out with the language, so that they become meaningful to students and the latter can participate actively in reading and writing activities as well as in oral exchanges.

Social environments contribute to create foreign language learning conditions, since they entail the development of collective activities that favour exchange among peers, making sure every participant knows what to do and what s/he needs to learn to successfully overcome the challenge of communicating in a foreign language with a specific social purpose.

Making the practices of the language cooperative activities based on social learning environments will allow students to internalize them so that they can gradually become capable of carrying out self-regulated tasks and strategies to deal with the difficulties that may arise.

On the other hand, the diversity that an intercultural context represents, as in the case of Mexico, can and should be taken as an advantage for linguistic learning, as it opens up the possibility of linguistic and cultural enrichment.

Incorporating a foreign language into the national curriculum implies –according to one of the CEFR objectives– stressing the relationship between the languages so that both can benefit from the exchange:

The plurilingual approach emphasizes the fact that as an individual person's experience of language in its cultural contexts expands [...] he or she does not keep these languages and cultures in strictly separated mental compartments, but rather builds up a communicative competence to which all knowledge and experience of language contributes and in which languages interrelate and interact.¹⁷

From this perspective, it is assumed that no linguistic variety is better than other; therefore, rather than a correct or incorrect way of speaking English, there are appropriate or inappropriate uses depending on the situation where communication takes place. Thus, the aim is to establish spheres of usage in the classroom, and in the case of English as a foreign language, to generate intentionally social environments in the classroom in order to recreate specific communicative situations. This is fundamental to achieve the purposes of the four cycles of the NEPBE. Specifically in the first cycle, where the references to the elements of the communicative situation such as non-verbal language, register, meaning conveyed in words,

participants attitudes, affective expressions, and all aspects involved in a communicative interaction, are as important as, for instance, the recognition of the elements that form words and sentences.

It is through participating in specific activities with the language situated in diverse social environments that the conditions to recognize the following aspects will generate:

- A linguistic use and its characteristics
- Students' linguistic competence (pronunciation, intonation, accent, syntactic and semantic structure, etc.)
- Type of errors made (systematic or casual)
- Attitudes in communicative interactions
- Values students give to events and people.

Familiar and community environment

In the familiar and community environment, students should approach the foreign language through situations close to them, well known and familiar, which favour high self-esteem and confidence in their own capacity to learn. Thus, the basis and necessary conditions are set so that by means of the “learning to do” with the language students can activate “knowledge” and “values”, as well as build and generate meaning in oral and written communication, real or semi-real situations, within a well-known context.

¹⁷ COE (2001), *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment*, p. 4.

Formation and academic environment

The specific activities with the language for this environment emphasize the strategies required to learn and study in situations where students use formal and academic language both in oral and written texts. The purpose of this environment is for students to participate in oral and written situations that imply acting in and out of the classroom and continue learning to face successfully the challenges that our present world poses.

Therefore, in this environment the emphasis is on the learning strategies that will allow students to adjust their understanding (listening/reading) and production processes (speaking/writing) in order to identify meanings and solve problems that arise to fulfill the aimed goals. In this environment, students are expected to learn how to participate in specific language activities that include knowledge about different areas of knowledge.

Literary and ludic environment

This environment focuses on the approximation to literature through participating in reading, writing, and oral exchanges in order to activate students' experiences and knowledge so that they share and contrast their interpretations and opinions. This generates the necessary learning conditions for them to participate in a social construction to broaden their socio-cultural horizons and to value beliefs and expressions different from their own.

Unlike the two previous social environments, this one in particular "...intends to foster a freer and more creative attitude, to encourage the students to appreciate and value other cultures, to go beyond their immediate environment, to discover the creative power of the word and experience the aesthetic enjoyment that the diversity in the ways and the literary fiction can produce".¹⁸ Therefore, it is in this learning environment where the students get an opportunity to play with words (by speaking and writing), using either their own or others' literary texts of interest to the teacher and the students.

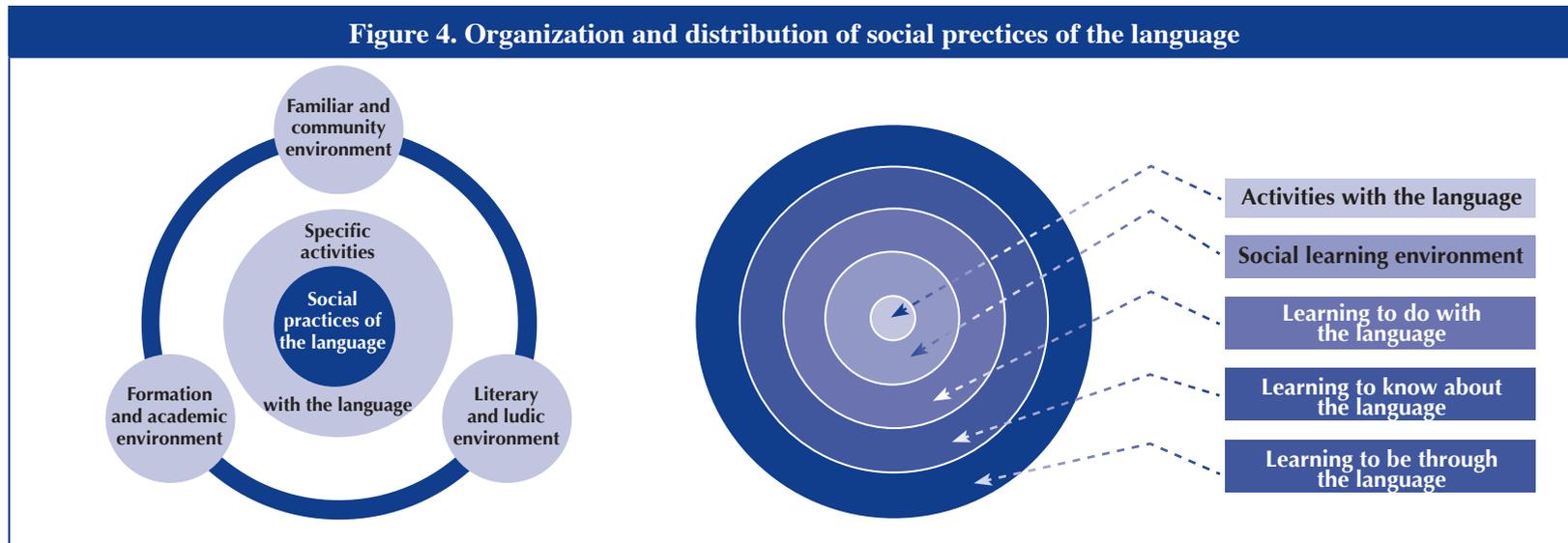
¹⁸ "Busca fomentar una actitud más libre y creativa, invitar a los estudiantes a que valoren y se adentren en otras culturas, crucen las fronteras de su entorno inmediato, descubran el poder creador de la palabra y experimenten el goce estético que la variedad de las formas y la ficción literaria pueden producir" (*Educación básica. Secundaria. Español. Programas de estudio 2006*).

Organization and distribution of contents

The specific activities with the language derive from the social practices of the language and their distribution occupies three large social learning environments: community and familiar, literary and ludic, and formation and academic. These environments are where the interaction between individuals and texts takes place both, in spoken and written form. In ad-

dition, it is where the interaction acquires a different nuance and where the activities with the language fulfill different social and communicative purposes that makes sense and gives meaning to the three types of curricular contents (learning *to do* with the language, learning *to know* about the language and learning *to be* through the language). See Figure 4.

Figure 4. Organization and distribution of social practices of the language



The components that organize and grade the curricular contents of the subject are:

- Social practices of the language that articulate the school grades in each of the cycles, and
- Specific activities with the language that define the specific curricular contents for each school grade in the cycles.

In this way, each cycle includes ten social practices of the language distributed along five units that correspond to the five two-month periods of the school year. As shown in Chart 5, units include a social practice of the language and a specific activity with the language for each social learning environment, from which the contents and the actions to create a product derive.

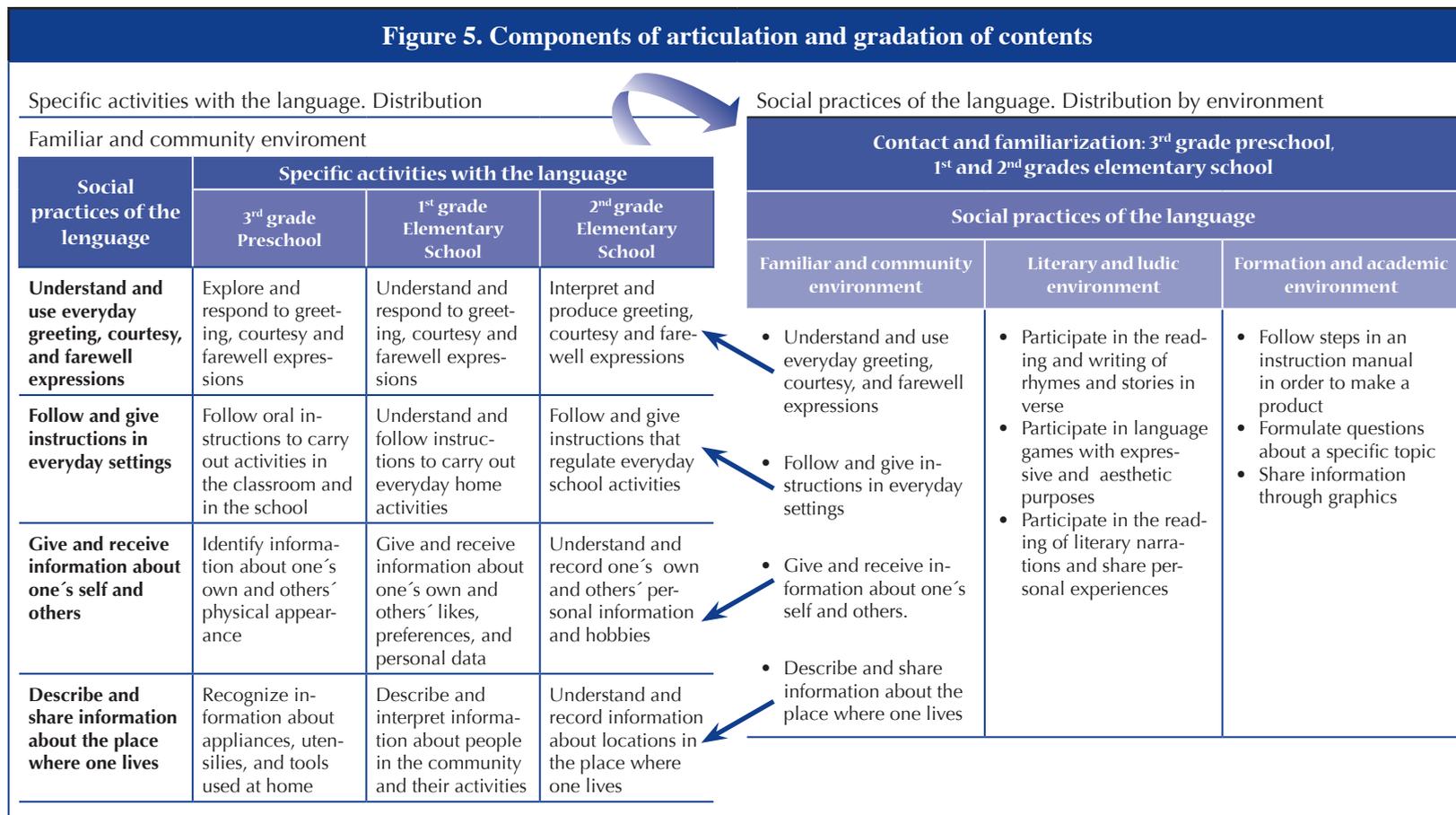


Chart 5. Unit components

Social Practices of the Language: understand and use everyday greeting, courtesy, and farewell expressions.

Familiar and community environment	
Specific activities with the language: explore and respond to greeting, courtesy, and farewell expressions.	
Learning to do with the language	Learning to know about the language
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore everyday communicative situations in which greeting and courtesy expressions are used with the support of visual aids, non-verbal language, and the teacher's help. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Identify purpose – Recognize sender and intended audience • Recognize words in greeting, courtesy, and farewell expressions used in introductions and everyday communication. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Detect similarities and differences among words • Distinguish the written form of greeting and courtesy expressions. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Observe writing directionality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Features and types of oral and written texts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Purpose and participants in the communicative situation – Non-verbal language (gestures, body language, signals, glances, etc.) • Knowledge of the writing system and basic mechanics of writing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Differences and similarities in words: beginning, ending, number and type of letters – Writing directionality: left to right, top to bottom – Repertoire of words suitable for this practice of the language: greeting (hello, good morning, how are you, etc.), farewell (goodbye, see you, etc.) and courtesy (thank you, you're welcome, please, etc.)
Learning to be through the language	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attention to the sender and intended audience. • Curiosity for a foreign language. • Comparison of expressions in the foreign language and the mother tongue. • Use of greeting, courtesy, and farewell expressions in everyday communication. 	
Product: Poster with courtesy expressions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribute among teams the actions to make a poster with courtesy expressions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Draw the illustrations – Color the images on the poster – Write courtesy expressions based on a model – Read aloud expressions on the poster • Display the poster in a visible place to record who uses courtesy expressions throughout the school year. 	

Unit 1

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Teaching guidelines

To develop work in the classroom requires that teachers take into account teaching guidelines such as the following:

- a) Consider students as active participants in the construction of learning, which means that, by using their own knowledge and experiences, students will be able to:
 - Take part in real-life or life-like communicative activities as language users and learners at the same time.
 - Develop their own ideas and questions about the relation between linguistic forms and communicative functions of the language, based on the analysis of language use that students and people around them have in different social environments.
 - Make decisions, accept responsibilities, and have an opinion about the activities related to the use and analysis of the English language, as well as, the creation of products developed in the different social learning environments along the five units included in each grade in the four cycles of the NEPBE.
- b) Consider teaching as a process that fosters and encourages use (meaning) and reflection (form) on language through specific communicative situations or tasks, which challenge students and involves to:
 - Develop, expand, and apply the necessary knowledge and strategies to respond successfully in different communicative situations.
 - Analyze their own communicative practices and those of the people around them in order to understand, explain, question, adapt, and correct them depending on the social sphere where they are and the intentions they have.
 - Face new and unfamiliar communicative situations, which enhance the students' ability to solve problems and deal with questions related to language use and form and the behavior and attitude in specific activities with the language.
 - Work the activities with the foreign language as a means of promoting cooperative work in order to deal with oral interaction and writing problems based on negotiations, feedback, and analysis of knowledge, strategies, and problem-solving.

It is also necessary that teachers define, along with their students, the tasks (or projects) that will give meaning to the contents of the program and at the same time, take into account the following criteria:

- Use previous knowledge, experiences, and interests that students have and know about the social practices of the language, both in their mother tongue and in English.
- Choose real-life or semi-real life tasks the students are familiar with in order to pose a challenge that involves creating a product, solving a problem or reaching a goal.
- Consider the level of complexity of the contents derived from the specific activities with the foreign language, so that they are both challenging and feasible from the students' point of view.
- Guarantee that the tasks (or project stages) are organized as a recurrent cycle for the students to be able to work on aspects or topics for reflection about English in the three social learning environments.

It is convenient to take into account that the point is not to go over the same contents repeatedly, but to establish teaching sequences that allow a suitable and adequate work in different levels of depth and complexity.

Characteristics of the English language teacher

In order to achieve the NEPBE's goals successfully, it is necessary that teachers be competent in the following areas:

- a) *Language mastery.* In the process of teaching a foreign language, the teacher is the most important model for spoken and written language, and sometimes the only model available. Therefore, the teacher must be a competent and proficient language user as well as a critical, well-informed agent knowledgeable of the aspects related to linguistic analysis.
- b) *Knowledge related to the students' development at different ages.* The teacher must have solid knowledge about children and adolescent development in order to understand their needs, interests, and abilities, as well as the difficulties students face in the foreign language learning process.
- c) *Knowledge related to foreign language teaching.* Teachers must understand the essence of the subject matter (social practices and activities in and with the English language), such as the "learning to do with", "to know about", and "to be through the language" that derive from the process, so that they can adopt teaching strategies that can fit their nature and the socio-cultural approach which lead to teaching practices such as:
 - Modeling strategies used by expert English language users in different social practices for oral and written communication, so that students can understand the choices and decisions they can make to participate successfully in those practices.
 - Enabling and promoting students' attitudes toward reflection and analysis by means of questions or problems

that draw their attention and encourage their interest in the uses, functions, and linguistic forms of the English language, as well as in the similarities and differences between English and the students' mother tongue.

- Planning activities that maintain the social functions of the English language and, at the same time, enable the distribution, sequencing, and articulation of the program's contents, giving students the opportunities to participate in them.
- Deciding on the product to obtain based on the teaching approach of the contents in each specific language practice, in order to guarantee the practice of uses and social functions in communication, as well as the necessary aspects that help present and socialize the product in a formal context.

- Selecting or creating, if necessary, printed and multimedia resources, which guarantee permanent contact with different models and styles of the English language use.
- Organizing and creating social learning environments, which foster and guarantee permanent interaction with oral and written texts through English language materials as well as the distribution and use of the classroom's physical space.
- Creating and fostering oral and written interactions, which enable students to be aware of the consequences and impact when language is used.
- Building a respectful atmosphere in which students feel enough confidence to practice and use English without fear of criticism by their peers or the teacher.

Assessment

Learning assessment should be conceived as a group of actions aimed at getting information about the students' performance in order to intervene at different moments (before, during and after) in the teaching-learning process. Thus, in order to decide whether the teaching situations, the organization of work in the classroom, the use of materials and the kind of help or guidance provided are on the right track towards reaching the program's purposes.

Therefore, assessment is neither defined, nor established on the grounds of the progressive levels for Cycles 2, 3 and 4, but by taking into account the teaching purposes, the social and communicative practices and activities with the English language, and the program contents.

From this perspective, the purpose of assessment is to help students identify what they have learned in a specific period and what needs to be reinforced. In addition, to help teachers revise and analyze their practice, so that they can re-consider, make decisions or innovations, and in general, improve the language teaching-learning process.

Assessment is a core element in study programs because it can influence the teaching-learning process, as well as its

outcomes. In other words, assessment becomes the focus for the teacher, the students, and the parents and it affects the interaction among students and between them and the teacher in the classroom.

For this reason, it is necessary that assessment take into account:

- The students' performance during the development of tasks or programmed activities;
- The progress students make, related to their own starting point and the products derived from the specific activities with the English language set in different social spheres.

Nowadays, it is important to mention that the expectation is not for students to create language products, which are identical to those of a proficient user of the language or a native speaker; they are expected to acquire in a sequenced way, the linguistic and written resources given by different text provided to fulfill communicative purposes. The aim is to create opportunities for the students to compare their products with those in the classroom and out-of-the-classroom contexts, so that with

the teacher's support and guidance, the students will broaden and deepen their knowledge.

Therefore, assessment should provide information about the extent of progress each student shows in the different stages of the teaching-learning process. This allows the teacher to give a mark and help students identify what they have learned after a specified period of time (unit, semester, year, and cycle), becoming a continuous, permanent process and not an isolated event which happens at the end of a teaching period. Here are some methods that allow for the gathering of information about the students' learning process as well as their performance in class:

- a) *Self-assessment and peer-assessment (co-assessment)*: It involves the students' appraisal concerning their own and their classmates' performance on the grounds of some clear and well-planned criteria.
- b) *Portfolios* (folder or file) that correspond to a gathering process of learning evidence. The teacher and the students create a file or a folder where they will keep the products derived from different tasks carried out during a specific period. For the portfolio to be used properly, there must be shared control and responsibility between the teacher and the students.

The NEPBE states that as the ways to gather information about learning vary, a vision of students' learning will be clearer and therefore, there will be a fairer assessment.

Teaching assessment

Assessment is fundamental to the improvement of the teaching-learning processes. Just like the learning assessment, teachers can gather data about their teaching practice from different sources, for instance:

- a) They can get feedback from their students in a not-very-structured way, be it from observing their reactions and performance, by means of formal interviews and questionnaires applied to different people from the school community (for instance, the students' parents or fellow teachers) or even through casual conversations.
- b) They can get feedback through personal reflection on their own practice, preferably in a structured way, in order to focus on specific areas, for instance, recording a session, writing down the details of a lesson or keeping a journal of everyday activities.
- c) They can get feedback from other teachers who are willing to observe some sessions and share honest and respectful comments. An important element in this process is the ability to reach agreements on those aspects to pay attention to before the observation takes place, in order to have a clear objective during that session.

Assessing the teaching practice allows for the improvement of teaching quality, which will benefit and have a positive effect on the teacher's personal and professional development.

Educational materials

Teaching materials play a highly significant role in this program. As it can be inferred from the characteristics and definition of the components in the English study programs, the quality and type of materials that the students will use –printed or multimedia– influence greatly on their learning of English as a foreign language.

Since the social practices and activities of and with the language are the main referent of the NEPBE, texts and materials should be authentic, for instance, commercial labels, letters, dialogues, instructions, rhymes, etc. However, it is also true that teachers do not have frequent access to these English language materials or texts. Nonetheless, it is paramount that those –particularly the spoken and written texts– designed for teaching reflect the characteristics of those used in real life, that is, that they have a clear social and communicative purpose, a context, and respond to authentic language models.

Information and communication technologies (ICT'S) offer countless opportunities to interact with oral and written texts

in the English language. It is important to foster and take advantage of their effective use, allowing new ways to acquire knowledge. It is necessary to mention that ICT'S are not limited to computer-related tools, but they also include media such as radio, TV, and video.

ICT'S are very useful tools to stimulate the specific activities with the English language, and in some cases, they are bound to enhance the social practices of the language like writing and recording texts, looking for information in electronic sources, listening to native speakers of English in a conversation or a song, among others. Therefore, a good recommendation is to use these tools as often as possible.

Finally, it is important to bear in mind that the authenticity of the tasks is as important as the authenticity of the spoken and written materials. If the students are to be successful participants in the social practices of the language, it is paramount for them to engage in tasks that resemble the real world.

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